

NATIVE AMERICAN EARLY CHILDHOOD FUNDERS COLLABORATIVE

LESSONS LEARNED WITH PHILANTHROPY



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Thank you to the ECFC Indigenous Workgroup members who were able to take the time to complete the survey and/or meet with the consulting team and candidly reflected with us. We recognize that this approach took additional time away from your day-to-day activities but was incredibly foundational to how we build relationships and move the collective work forward. Ahéhee' (Thank you in Navajo)

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Executive Summary

Roanhorse Consulting, LLC (RCLLC) and Community Connects Consulting, LLC (CCCLLC) co-created a survey and interview questions with ECFC and the NAP team to learn about members and also ground our understanding of key themes and strategies for future workgroup meetings. Nine organizational interviews and surveys were completed and analyzed by RCLLC and CCCLLC.

The survey revealed that while half of the organizations who completed the survey had funded Native Nations, Native-led organizations, or Native-serving organizations, the majority had very low portfolio investments dedicated to Native communities (<2%) overall. The interviews revealed that while there are many challenges in building relationships with Native communities (the need to learn more context (historical and contemporary), and addressing the fear of creating harm, there are some opportunities to ground shared learning with members who have had some positive personal and professional experiences in working with Native communities. There are current strategies led by ECFC members that can be shared among this group. These strategies are grounded in centering Native communities' culture and languages, building on a Trust-Based Philanthropies approach to grant making, creating a funders community of practice, and regularly reflecting on how white dominant culture characteristics are harmful to building relationships.



Given these themes, the report ends with seven recommendations.

1. Creation of a collective space to share concrete tools and resources (building on and/or expanding on NAP's work) for members to build their understanding of Native communities (past and present).
2. Build a relational culture with each other and spend some time at each workgroup meeting discussing Tema Okun's White Culture Characteristics and how to shift this culture within the group and in working with Native communities.
3. Host opportunities for members to provide "case stories" of their work with Native communities, what worked well for them, what was challenging, and if there are places for members to further learn from one another and/or work together on a project.
4. Consider the Trust-Based Philanthropy framework and how it could be a key guide for members.
5. Investing in ongoing professional and organizational development within foundation personnel and in partnership with community partners is critical to trust and capacity building.
6. Agreeing on processes and approaches that are meaningful and culturally appropriate for community partners and philanthropy in the early stages of relationship building normalizes that differences will emerge and not always be easy to address. However, having agreed-upon approaches builds a relational safety net.
7. Ways that ECFC and NAP Might Continue to Build/Strengthen Partnership

The ECFC Indigenous Workgroup is in a great place to build on the learnings from this report as they collectively work to deepen investment into Native Communities and Native Hawaiians. We close this report with some tangible recommendations for not only how the workgroup can learn from one another but also can strategize on key areas for building relationships with Native communities.

Goals

The goals of the interviews and survey were to provide our team (Roanhorse Consulting and Community Connects Consulting) with an opportunity to get to know members and help us strategize on how best to facilitate future workgroup conversations. In addition, these interviews also provided us with some wonderful insights into how members have and continue to navigate their partnership with Native communities and where there are opportunities to share knowledge, and reflections, and most importantly continue to grow investment in Native communities.



Methods

The consultants participated in the Native American Early Childhood Funders Collaborative for a few meetings to better understand the group, some of their shared interests, and collective efforts. Together the consultants created a series of questions to help deepen their own and the group's understanding of early childhood funding in Native American communities. A series of survey and guided interview questions were drafted and shared with the leadership team to collaborate and finalize questions.

Three requests were made of ECFC members:

- 1) Complete the online survey about their foundation's approach to funding Native American early childhood initiatives;
- 2) Participate in a guided interview with the consulting team to build a deeper analysis of attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to partnering with Native American grantees; and
- 3) Sharing contact information of existing or potential grantees who might be willing to explore similar surveys and guided interview questions from the perspective of community partners/Tribal entities for the next phase of consultation.

We were able to conduct nine organizational interviews with 14 people over two months. The organizations ranged from family foundations to regional and national foundations with varying investments in Native communities. The analysis was focused on centering what we heard from individuals and lifting up the key themes and reflections, while also reflecting on our lived experiences in this report. With this in mind, it's important to briefly describe who we are and what we feel is important to learn about us.



Prologue

Research is rarely objective and the researcher is often deeply connected to the people, the ideas, and the learning that happens in real-time. As many Native scholars have shared, it's all relational. Instead of separating ourselves from the research, we are centering who we are, our lived experiences, and our collective interest in transformation. We want to properly introduce ourselves in this report and acknowledge that while we work to center the participant's voices in key themes and reflections, we are also centering ourselves in the work.

Olivia Roanhorse, COO, Roanhorse Consulting, LLC

I am Diné (“the people” in Navajo) and I grew up in Window Rock, Az, the capital of the Navajo Nation with my twin sister. My maternal clan is Near to Water (To’ahanií) and my paternal clan is Bitter Water (To’dichiinií). The Diné recognizes and grounds ourselves in our connectedness through our clans and we greet one another as relatives, recognizing our places in the world. I currently reside in Tewa territory, also known as Albuquerque, NM with my daughter and partner. I grew up playing with my cousins in the dirt along the big red rocks of my family's home and was fortunate to have not only my mother to guide me in my childhood but also my maternal grandparents and many aunts and uncles. As a twin, my sister and I were blessed into our community. Twins are prominent in Diné creation stories, and also in the form of the warrior twins who fought big monsters in the creation stories. In our early years, we were loved and cared for at home with our extended families and later in Head Start so our mom could get her college degree.

In this report, I bring my lived experiences growing up with my large connected family in the Navajo Nation, with little material wealth, but with the wealth of our land, our elders teaching, our culture, and our language. I may live in a city and often be named an “Urban Indian” but I am more than that. And while I have learned from Western educational approaches in my lifetime, they rarely align with how I wish to navigate and understand the world and I often find myself thoughtfully questioning them in my work.



Lilly Irvin-Vitela, CEO, Community Connects Consulting, LLC

I grew up in a semi-rural area in Albuquerque, New Mexico with three siblings, several cousins, and a big extended family. I started Head Start when I was 3 and my sister started when she was 4. We attended Alameda Head Start together. It was located in a building near where catechism was taught at Nativity Church. My Mom was on the Head Start Policy Council and my dad was our bus driver. Their roles sent a strong message to me about being welcomed. Together my sister and parents and I flourished in Head Start. It was a fun, interesting, and loving place. We received early intervention with speech and occupational therapy, took interesting community field trips, and participated in celebrations and our lifelong love of learning was cultivated.

Our younger brothers came later and while our family was still eligible for Head Start, there was no longer a program in our neighborhood and buses didn't come to our area. Our family couldn't afford the gas money to Head Start, so their participation was short-lived. In addition to the fun and joy in learning that they missed, early intervention would have likely helped set a more positive course for how they experienced school.

My best early childhood days were with my great grandma or at Head Start when we worked in committee and learned together. I remember going home and excitedly telling my mom and dad about what we did in committees. As an adult, I've continued to excitedly tell my parents about committees or groups of people that are working to make a difference in diverse communities. My early beliefs about collective learning and the power of community are deeply tied to being a Head Start family.

Outside of early care and education experiences, not all formative experiences were positive. While I grew up knowing that I was loved, I also grew up with experiences leading to a high ACEs score. My commitment to restorative and transformative work in inter and intrapersonal relationships that are centered in healing and justice, was also forged early. All of these experiences inform the types of systems and policy change work that I support on a professional and volunteer basis in the early childhood and family engagement sectors and beyond. They inform fundamental questions I ask about power sharing, equity, and how the most impacted are engaged in co-creating healthy community and just relationships.

Survey Findings

The goal of the survey was to provide a baseline of what investment in Native communities looked like for members of the ECFC Indigenous Workgroup. Recognizing that only 0.4% of funding by large U.S. foundations is directed to Native communities, there is a need to track and discuss how foundations are changing this. The focus was not only on the total investment in Native communities when considering workgroup members' early childhood portfolio, but also their overall funding portfolio. In addition, the survey asked whom they were funding in Native communities - Native-led organizations, Native Nations, or Native-serving organizations.

At the heart of the questions about who is being funded and who is making the funding decisions are fundamental issues around sovereignty, self-determination, and building capacity in philanthropy to decolonize funding partnerships. Decolonization must center respect for the agency of Native Communities to identify, implement, and evaluate approaches to early childhood that are aligned with their own values, beliefs, and best practices.

Nine organizations completed the survey. The majority of organizations that completed the survey (7) have been in the early childhood funding space for at least three years with four funding in this space for more than 10 years. Of the nine organizations, four had Native Nations/Native-led serving organizations in their portfolios. In considering the percentage of portfolio investments that were going to either 1) Native Nations, 2) Native-led organizations, or 3) Native-serving organizations, only one organization is funding more than 10% of their portfolio to these groups, most are less than 2%. Only one organization has Native Americans on their staff (about 3% of their total staff) with 1% in a leadership role. One organization shared that its advisory board has Native Hawaiians represented. In considering the percentage of portfolio funding in the last five years aimed at Native Nations/Native-led early childhood projects/initiatives, one had dedicated 65% of their funding, one with 25%, one with 10%, one with 5%, and five with 2% or less (two reported 0%). The survey findings with additional comments can be found [here](#).

There is an opportunity for organizations to start or continue to track some of this information on a more regular basis. Perhaps this is building on the existing Candid platform and/or something new with NAP. This baseline information could help organizations see trends over time, set internal and/or external goals to increase funding to Native communities, and create a much-needed space for transparency and learning in tracking this data. Most importantly, investing in those most impacted as they are leading the work in their communities, requires targeted funding to Native-led organizations and Native Nations.

Guided Interview

Overview of Findings


Members bring their personal and professional knowledge and experiences in working with Native Americans/Native Hawaiians in this space. Some members have been working with Native communities for many years, while others are new to these communities, but have experience working with other communities of color. Most members have little knowledge or experience in working with Native Hawaiians and none are currently working with Alaska Natives.

While there are some similar challenges and strengths found across Native Americans and Native Hawaiians, it's also important to note that Native Hawaiians have a unique history that is often not included in the learning of Native American communities. As such, there is a steep learning curve for almost all members in their journey to learn about Native Hawaiian history. While funders partnering with Native Alaskans did not participate in this project, understanding their shared and unique needs, history, and relationships with philanthropy is important.

Most members recognized the importance of culture and language in working with Native communities but did not know what this could look like in their partnership with Native Communities: Many asked how we best engage with Native communities. How do worldviews and lived experiences get centered in building relationships? How do we not get stuck/paralyzed in what is unknown and our continued learning process? And balance urgency with ethical investment and relationships?

ECFC members that fund in multiple Tribes/places across the country can benefit from partnering with local foundations that have experience working with Tribes in the area. This allows an opportunity for philanthropy to help each other build knowledge capacity and funding capacity. It provides Tribal grantees/partners to leverage resources to extend or deepen the work without having to design a completely new project.





ECFC members are very interested in tangible existing resources, tools, and best practices to inform their learning and in some cases, unlearning. This includes definitions for grounding our understanding and working together moving forward. For example, some additional guidance members are interested in are tools to understand Tribal sovereignty and the diverse decision-making structures across Tribal governments. While a one-size fits all approach is not effective, a potential framework for analyzing and learning about Tribal government and decision-making might be supported through a question guide that helps learning unfold in a collaborative, systematic, and beneficial way that promotes trust and stabilizes expectations and strategies for partnerships.

Ambivalence on the part of some Native Americans about land acknowledgments and philanthropy's uncertainty about what is meaningful and respectful vs. what will be experienced as performative and patronizing was an area that some interview participants thought might be helpful to explore as a group.


The importance of mutual accountability and honesty about the constraints that impact early childhood efforts are essential to trust-building between the philanthropic sector, Native-led community-based organizations, and Tribal governments.

While Tribal Consultation is important in government-to-government relationships, there may be relevant strategies for philanthropy to consider when seeking to fund Tribal governments. Some key things to keep in mind are that current consultation practices are sometimes done well and sometimes not. Not all models are created or deployed effectively. To provide benefit to the partnership, it must be thoughtful and have agreed-upon rules and guidelines. The more people know about the Tribe they are partnering with, the better consultation will go. Working with Tribal advisors is helpful. Listening sessions, similar to those used by NAP can be instructive. Governments can also provide insight to philanthropy about employing and empowering Tribal liaison's to help cultivate and retain funding partnerships.



What Stands in the Way of More Relationships/Partnerships/Funding?

- The discomfort with what is unknown and the potential to do harm is acutely felt. Many people in the philanthropic sector come to the sector with deep content and process expertise. Not knowing is especially uncomfortable. With so few partnerships and investments in place and little written or shared about lessons learned, the barrier to entry can feel difficult to overcome.
 - What is true in one Native American community at any given time may not be true for that community at another time and may have very little relevance to another Native American community. Lessons learned must not be assumed to be relevant always and in more places. Conversation and consent are not built once. They must be built and actively maintained. The need for more time to communicate, clarify, and collaborate is evident and this requires funded capacity for grantees as well as sufficient staffing and capacity for philanthropy to take time to center relationships with one another and not just resources for organizational operations or programmatic activities and outcomes.
 - Context always matters in relationship building but understanding the histories and experiences of Native American communities is important. While there are some shared historical experiences there is also significant variation across and among regions in the US.
 - Even those with long-established and productive partnerships in Native American communities were able to identify instances in which relationships went sideways and there was a need to heal relationships. Honesty, time, respect for the rhythm of relationship, and centering the needs of the Native American community over philanthropy's need to save face were recurrent themes across instances in which trust needed to be rebuilt.
 - Native American communities are sometimes bombarded with competing priorities around both systemic and immediate needs, competing jurisdictions, and complex social and structural determinants of health and educational outcomes. These barriers are not insurmountable. They require time, trust, and extended effort which may or may not align with a foundation's understanding of smart investments and accountability.
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When asked to think about philanthropy as a sector and what is preventing greater investment in Native American early childhood initiatives, it was interesting how many barriers identified aligned with Tema Okun's categorization of white supremacy norms and antidotes (see list below). As Dr. Okun explains, the prevalence of these norms is a systemic issue rather than a simple by-product of individual beliefs, values, and practices. While individual choices and practices matter, those factors positive and negative are reinforced by culture, language, laws, and institutions that privilege parts of some cultures at the expense of others. Predominantly white organizations as well as BIPOC organizations can play a role in perpetuating or disrupting the unhelpful and damaging patterns of white supremacy culture. Awareness and a commitment to learning, unlearning, and principled action are foundational to more just relationships and outcomes in early care and education.

Characteristics of White Dominant Culture

- Perfectionism
- Sense of Urgency
- Defensiveness
- Valuing Quantity Over Quality
- Worshipping the Written Word
- Believing in Only One Right Way
- Paternalism
- Either/or Thinking
- Power Hoarding
- Fear of Open Conflict
- Individualism
- Believing I'm the Only One
- Believing Progress is Bigger and More
- Believing in Objectivity
- Claiming a Right to Comfort




Guided Interview Themes

Strong personal and professional experiences and knowledge that can contribute to shared learning.

Several of the ECFC members have personal and professional experiences and knowledge working cross culturally both specifically with Native American and Hawaiian Native communities as well as other people of color communities. Knowledge of sovereignty issues, understanding and navigating decision-making pathways in Tribal governments, co-creating model Native-led initiatives that can be shared with and spread to additional interested Native American Communities, and successful language revitalization strategies are among the expertise of members of the Native American Early Childhood Funders Collaborative. ECFC members are at different junctures on the journey to recruiting and retaining staff and board members that reflect the communities where philanthropy would like to establish or build partnerships. In addition, members of the team from the ECFC foundations have lived experiences growing up in or with Native American communities. While there isn't an expectation that people with this lived experience speak on behalf of all Native Americans, thought partnership and peer coaching about strategies to understand and respectfully learn about existing or potential partner cultures could help strengthen efforts at building trust and collaboration with Native-led early childhood efforts.

Some members discussed how their "entry" point into working with Native communities is an important experience that they felt impacted how they were introduced and worked with Native communities. Most folks described their "entry" point through two major pathways, as someone who worked for the government or as someone who has worked at a nonprofit or academic institution. Others talked about lived experiences outside of professional settings of growing up with or in Native American Communities. These personal relationships and experiences informed their professional work and created greater comfort in pursuing collaboration with Native-led early childhood efforts.

Several members discussed how they started "small" in first learning about their local Native communities, relying on first educating themselves with available public resources and seeking out institutions and nonprofits led by




Native people. When asked about specific resources in the philanthropic sector to guide ethical relationship building and retention, a few agencies pointed to internal documents but as a whole, there weren't resources identified outside of NAP to guide knowledge building. Learning is highly relational and grows by reaching out to the organizations/potential partners with clear intentions, transparency, and with a focus on learning and the opportunity to learn about them and how philanthropy might support and partner with them.

What's working among ECFC members and Tribal-led Initiatives?

Several participants in the ECFC discussed long-term funding vs. annual funding as a way to respect and appreciate the social and structural conditions that grantees/partners must navigate to thoughtfully plan and implement effective and culturally appropriate strategies. There were examples of funding for multiple years of planning before having implementation expectations. One example was shared of a foundation that has a staff member who was born and raised in the Native American communities in which she was planning. Not only did language and cultural knowledge enhance trust, part of her time was also allocated to adding capacity and support to planning through convening and staffing meetings which supported customized and individualized planning time for each Tribe as well as the support of multi-Tribal planning sessions so participants could learn and share ideas with one another. Unsurprisingly but inspiringly, grantees have met or mostly met the vast majority of the goals they set.

Another very effective set of strategies is related to application and reporting processes. A lesser focus on the written word and a center of authentic communication in any form is leading to positive results. A few participants described application and reapplication processes that involved videos or interviews rather than written applications. In foundations where boards prefer written communication, foundation leaders/staff provided written documentation of oral application or report processes. An attitude of openness and creativity about mutual accountability rather than standard application and reporting processes has allowed the successful use of promising practices like interviews and videos while leaving room for emerging promising practices that are negotiated between funders and grantees.



Another promising trend that several participants discussed was the importance of creating space and sufficient trust for candid ad hoc conversations about needs, progress, and barriers. While expanding options from written to oral or creative applications and reporting are vital, communication in between high stakes application or reporting processes are critically important. In one instance an ECFC member described a relationship with a Native-led partner in which they agreed to have really direct/candid phone conversations as needed. Similar to any valued relationship or partnership, the parties to the funding agreement can communicate about things that are difficult or sensitive without fear of irreparably rupturing their relationship or when there is a need to work through misunderstanding and create repair. This restorative/transformational approach to relationship is allowing people and communities to decolonize funding relationships and build authentic partnerships.

One foundation with a long history of working with Native American Tribal governments discussed a key element of their strategy. They respond to interest expressed by Tribal leaders. Together the community and philanthropy built a highly customized strategy which philanthropy supported through multi-year funding. Throughout the partnership, the community and philanthropy worked in close collaboration. Philanthropy provided maximum flexibility and respect for self-determination. With permission, those success stories were then shared with other Tribal leaders or their designees in other communities who were, in turn, supported to build individualized strategic early childhood goals and plans. Where there were overlapping goals, interests, and opportunities for multi-Tribal strategies, those strategies were pursued and engaged multiple Tribes. Partners were not forced to align with collective efforts at the expense of concrete and specific needs and goals that are a priority in their Nation. This both-and- approach allows for focused action with measurable outcomes around child and family well-being and systems development while bringing the collective benefit of change management, professional development, and policy strategies to collective efforts.



Beliefs about Native American worldviews about children and families

Many participants were struck by this guided interview question as they explored and gave voice to how their own understandings of Native American (and specific Tribe) worldviews about children and families impact funding relationships. In organizations in which some program officers or foundation staff members share the language and culture of the communities being funded and are empowered to use cultural and linguistic knowledge to respond to dynamic relationships, the deepening understanding of the foundation as a whole about the community allows for more durable partnerships. In partnerships where there is not alignment or there is limited alignment between funders' understanding of their partners beliefs and values about children and families, the need for deepening understanding to deepen trust is clear.

Questions about if and how a foundation's values and worldview around early childhood and family aligned or differed from that of their grantees, sparked rich dialogue and curiosity. There was a theme that emerged about how a common worldview across Native American communities is understanding children in the context of their family, community, culture, and place. This is an emergent understanding in the mainstream early childhood literature, especially around infant and early mental health. A prevalent sentiment is that early childhood at its best is deeply aligned with Native American traditions and practices. However, there was also an acknowledgment in discussions that there is more intentional work to do to make sure that programs, practices, and research that philanthropy embraces are always balanced with a Native American community's right to self-determination.



The importance of centering Native American languages and cultures

Most participants discussed the importance of supporting Native communities as they strengthened and/or revitalized their culture and languages in their communities. Some participants advocated for this strategy as the center of any early childhood programmatic effort investment, while others shared it as one strategy for strengthening access to quality early childhood programming. The nuance of this conversation is an important discussion for this group as they consider how best to authentically and meaningfully partner with and support Native communities. Is the approach to first center the expertise and authority of Native communities in any investment and/or support? If, so how do you know you are doing this? If this is not the initial approach, why not?

It was unclear the level of education and knowledge members had about the history of Native communities (almost none with Native Hawaiians) and how the impacts of colonization over generations have dramatically shaped every Native community's efforts to revitalize their culture and language. A strength-based approach is needed in understanding the gifts and inherent knowledge, cultural values, and gifts of Native American and Native Hawaiian communities. While we learn/unlearn about the inequities, colonization, and oppression Native communities faced in this country, we must also balance the importance of a strength-based approach.



Approaches to grant-making: reimagining philanthropic norms

Most members were acutely aware of the power dynamics in building relationships with Native communities and were interested in reorganizing themselves and their institutions, to work on this. The existing institutional structures can impede the process of building meaningful relationships and many acknowledged that this was the system they had to work in. However, there were several participants who shared how they were navigating these changes within their organizations and with the Native communities they partnered with. This reimagining process is central to the overwhelming change that is needed across philanthropy working in spaces of racial equity and healing. And members are interested in how this works at a practical level as well as within their organizational leadership. One organization, struggling with recruiting Native scholars looked at what wasn't working within their internal systems, requirements, and structures and had to acknowledge their systems could be perpetuating racial and health inequities. The result was a change to requirements and a targeted focus on working with Tribal colleges.

Given the lack of Native people working for foundations and other institutions (i.e. academia), participants discussed the value, strength, and importance of hiring people from the communities they'd like to build funding partnerships with were emphasized. People who have cultural knowledge and are able to navigate or provide a "cultural broker" role while honoring the boundaries and social norms of their communities were seen as a catalyst for strengthening relationships. This role could also be considered in partnering with Native-led intermediaries, like First Nations Development Institute, First Peoples Fund, or Hopi Foundation. However, being the only person with this role or perspective can also be alienating. If diversity, equity, and inclusion are not honored across foundation priority areas on the staff and on the board, the isolation and pressure of carrying the weight of the work can lead to overwhelm, burnout, and turnover.



Learning strategies

Best practices for funding in Native-led and Native-serving organizations and initiatives in the early childhood space are emergent. With Native Americans making up 2.9% of the US population and receiving .4% of philanthropic dollars, an explicit commitment to learning with and from grantees/partners and sharing information, insight, and promising practices is essential to reducing real and perceived barriers to greater investment in Native-led initiatives. Several themes emerged related to the importance of intentional learning within the philanthropic sector;

- peer learning;
- honoring and valuing the expertise of Native American early childhood leaders; and
- using a community of practice models for funders and grantees.

The guided interviews reinforced that while each foundation is at a unique place in their work to understand, partner with, and fund Native American serving organizations, there is significant knowledge and experience in the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative and Native Americans in Philanthropy. If funders share their policies, procedures, and application and reporting materials with one another, it can help everyone to review and perhaps revise their approaches to reduce barriers to relationship building for existing and potential grantees. In addition, dedicating some agenda time during the monthly ECFC meetings for sharing a member celebration or challenge, and getting questions and feedback could support members in deepening their confidence and competence in working with Native-led and Native-serving efforts.

When existing or potential grantees are asked to share their experience/expertise about building partnerships, overcoming barriers to partnerships; resolving conflict; or developing culturally/linguistically responsive plans, it is vital that the expertise is valued and honored through fair compensation or an understanding of how the request for information is mutually beneficial rather than extractive in nature.

Community of practice models could bring together funders, grantees, or combination groups of funders and grantees to learn from what's working



or practice together to resolve shared or common barriers. While there are many models for communities of practice, some common elements include ongoing engagement of a cohort overtime; facilitated space for authenticity and reflection on applied efforts; exploration and dialogue about shared content of interest; opportunities to apply new information or strategies in existing work; and collective learning through the sharing of lessons learned and group feedback.



Recommendations

1. Creation of a collective space to share concrete tools and resources (building on and/or expanding on NAP's work) for members to build their understanding of Native communities (past and present). For example, understanding the history of structural racism and colonization on Native communities and how that impacts communities today. On recent brief and well-written article is: [The Generational Impact of Racism on Health: Voices from American Indian Communities](#). Health Affairs. February 2022
2. Build a relational culture with each other and spend some time at each workgroup meeting discussing Tema Okun's White Culture Characteristics and how to shift this culture within the group and in working with Native communities. There is no final arrival of this culture shift, but a regular reflection of the change. A great resource on this is [here](#).
3. Host opportunities for members to provide "case stories" of their work with Native communities, what worked well for them, what was challenging, and if there are places for members to further learn from one another and/or work together on a project.
4. Consider the Trust-Based Philanthropy framework and how it could be a key guide for members. Several members shared their approach to grantmaking, which included key approaches that mirror the workarounds of Trust-based philanthropy. Trust-based philanthropy's core values are rooted in advancing equity, shifting power, and building



Recommendations cont'd

mutually accountable relationships, trust-based philanthropy seeks to demonstrate humility and collaboration in what they do and how they show up in all aspects of their work as grantmakers. The following values from Trust-Based Philanthropy showed up in several discussions with participants in how they work to build relationships with Native communities. These values could be foundational in how this workgroup approaches their work with Native communities:

- **Work for systemic equity:** Recognize the racial, economic, and political inequities in which we operate, and take an antiracist approach to change practices and behaviors that perpetuate harm.
- **Redistribute power:** Be willing to share power with grantee partners and communities who are closer to the issues we seek to address.
- **Center relationships:** Prioritizing healthy, open, honest relationships can help us navigate the complexity of our work and our world with greater confidence and effectiveness.
- **Partner in a spirit of service:** Be a supporter and collaborator, rather than dictating what is needed. Lead with trust, respect, and humility.
- **Be accountable:** Our work will only be successful if we hold ourselves accountable to those who we seek to support.
- **Embrace learning:** We can only advance impact if we remain open to learning as we go, and embrace opportunities for growth and evolution along the way.

5. Investing in ongoing professional and organizational development within foundation personnel and in partnership with community partners is critical to trust and capacity building.

- Building healthy, just, and effective relationships with Native-led early childhood entities is an iterative process that requires ongoing professional and organizational development for funders and grantees alike.
- Experiential and participatory learning that allows for exploration and reflection about real-world efforts, creates space for authentic learning and innovation.



Recommendations cont'd

- Convening people committed to strengthening partnerships, investment, and improved early care and education programs and outcomes in Native American communities create spaces where peer learning can thrive, practices can improve, and outcomes can be strengthened.
- Reducing barriers to convening so that collective learning is not an unfunded obligation that is layered onto existing deliverables is important.
- Shared learning objectives need to include but go beyond a capacity building for programming and include issues around cultural considerations; governance; decision-making; having right-sized approaches to data collection, reporting, and quality improvement; relationship-based practices; operations; and other topics that are a response to emerging needs, interests, and opportunities.

6. Agreeing on processes and approaches that are meaningful and culturally appropriate for community partners and philanthropy in the early stages of relationship building normalizes that differences will emerge and not always be easy to address. However, having agreed upon approaches builds a relational safety net.

- Focus on sustaining a principled relationship that serves shared interests over compliance and provides a balanced approach to problem-solving.
 - Recognize that open differences and conflict are healthy, they indicate that there is sufficient trust to keep it real.
 - Acknowledge that challenges and conflicts arise, as part of the contracting/agreement development process. Identify 3-4 strategies that the funder and grantee are comfortable using in advance. This doesn't mean additional strategies cannot be attempted, it means there is a relational safety net in place that can be counted on to keep conflict from escalating and irreparably rupturing relationships.
 - Offer and be willing to ask for second, third, fourth chances, and beyond. Working through challenges to existing and potential partnerships increases the potential for a better child, family, and community outcomes.
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Recommendations cont'd

7. Ways that ECFC and NAP Might Continue to Build/Strengthen Partnership
- Discuss and review a new resource that NAP is developing with member profiles and “online matchmaking” between potential funders and tribal communities and organizations. Review the upcoming new NAP tool “online matchmaking” and how members might use this.
 - Facilitate spaces where resources, training, and technical assistance can be shared across networks
 - Brainstorm during a workgroup meeting on building tangible resources and products; pick the top three tools & strategies for development amongst workgroup teams.
 - Develop a case study built on developing relationships in the field and how to navigate relationships and repair them.
 - Share with and add to from workgroup input best practices around communication and feedback loops: pick up the phone, have multiple conversations, listen, build comfort, overcome the sense of urgency and agenda/ask, recognize that there may technological barriers such as limited to no internet access.
 - Trust-based Philanthropy Model- framing how to work with communities of color, being thoughtful. NAP uses it but believes that NAP has (ask Greg/Joel)



Appendix 1- Survey Questions

Name (please submit one response per foundation)

Name of your foundation/organization

How long has your foundation been funding in the EC space?

Given your response above, how long have Native Nations/Native-led serving organizations been in your funding portfolio?

What percentage of your portfolio investments (based on above response) are

1) Native Nations

2) Native-led organizations or

3) Native-serving organizations?

(Native-led denotes board/leadership is at least 51% Native American)

What percentage of your foundation staff is Native American?

Given your response above, what percentage of Native American staff are in leadership roles?

Optional: Feel free to provide your brief definition of leadership.

What percentage of your portfolio funding in the last 5 years has been aimed at Native Nation/Native-led early childhood projects/initiatives?

What percentage of overall funding/total annual investment has been allocated to Native-led and Native-serving initiatives?

Given your above answer, what percentage of Native Americans on your staff are in leadership positions?

Please provide any additional comments/context that would be helpful.



Appendix 2- Guided Interview Questions

1. Please tell us about yourself.

2. Both personally and professionally, why is early childhood work important to you?

3. Please describe your work role.

4. How aligned are your personal values around early childhood with those of your funders?

5. Please describe what percentage of your funding comes from Tribal Government, the Federal Government, Philanthropy, fundraisers, and fees to people who use services.

6. How would you describe your funders' understanding of what values are shared with them or different from their views in Native American communities about early childhood?

7. How much importance do you think the philanthropic sector places on investments in Native American led-organizations and communities?

8. What do you wish funders understood about the ethics of funding in your community?

9. How should philanthropy track equitable funding in Native American communities and communicate progress with grantees/funding partners?

10. How has philanthropy built relationships with Native American partners/communities in early childhood spaces?

11. What are your perceptions/experiences about barriers to attracting philanthropic funders and retaining partnerships in NA?

12. Think about a time when you struggled in a relationship with philanthropic funder, how did you work together to create/repair trust and move forward?

13. What approaches have you seen philanthropy use to reduce barriers to entry for Native-led efforts?

1. What are best practices related to reporting to reduce the administrative burden?

14. What are your perceptions/experiences about unique gifts or strengths about funding in Native communities?

15. What feedback loops do you have or wish were in place to understand if funding relationships are leading to more equitable and just funding relationships?

16. Given our discussion, is there anything that you'd like philanthropy to understand about strengthen partnerships in NA communities, NA led-efforts?

Appendix 3- Characteristics of White Dominant Culture and Their Antidotes

White Dominant Culture by Tema Okun

This article on white supremacy culture also known as white dominant culture builds on the work of many people, including (but not limited to) Andrea Ayvazian, Bree Carlson, Beverly Daniel Tatum, M.E. Dueker, Nancy Emond, Kenneth Jones, Jonn Lunsford, Sharon Martinas, Joan Olsson, David Rogers, James Williams, Sally Yee, as well as the work of Grassroots Leadership, Equity Institute Inc, the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, the Challenging White Supremacy workshop, the Lillie Allen Institute, the Western States Center, and the contributions of hundreds of participants in the DR process. These sections are based on the work of Daniel Buford who has done extensive research on white supremacy culture.

This is a list of characteristics of white supremacy culture that show up in our organizations. Culture is powerful precisely because it is so present and at the same time so very difficult to name or identify. The characteristics listed below are damaging because they are used as norms and standards without being pro-actively named or chosen by the group. They are damaging because they promote white supremacy thinking. They are damaging to both people of color and to white people. Organizations that are people of color-led or a majority of people of color can also demonstrate many damaging characteristics of white supremacy culture.

sense of urgency

- continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think long-term, to consider consequences
- frequently results in sacrificing potential allies for quick or highly visible results, for example sacrificing interests of communities of color to win victories for white people (seen as default or norm community)
- reinforced by funding proposals which promise too much work for too little money and by funders who expect too much for too little

Appendix 3- Continued

antidotes: realistic workplans; leadership which understands that things take longer than anyone expects; discuss and plan for what it means to set goals of inclusivity and diversity, particularly in terms of time; learn from past experience how long things take; write realistic funding proposals with realistic time frames; be clear about how you will make good decisions in an atmosphere of urgency.

defensiveness

- the organizational structure is set up and much energy spent trying to prevent abuse and protect power as it exists rather than to facilitate the best out of each person or to clarify who has power and how they are expected to use it
- because of either/or thinking (see below), criticism of those with power is viewed as threatening and inappropriate (or rude)
- people respond to new or challenging ideas with defensiveness, making it very difficult to raise these ideas
- a lot of energy in the organization is spent trying to make sure that people's feelings aren't getting hurt or working around defensive people
- the defensiveness of people in power creates an oppressive culture

antidotes: understand that structure cannot in and of itself facilitate or prevent abuse; understand the link between defensiveness and fear (of losing power, losing face, losing comfort, losing privilege); work on your own defensiveness; name defensiveness as a problem when it is one; give people credit for being able to handle more than you think; discuss the ways in which defensiveness or resistance to new ideas gets in the way of the mission

quantity over quality

- all resources of organization are directed toward producing measurable goals
- things that can be measured are more highly valued than things that cannot, for example numbers of people attending a meeting, newsletter circulation, money spent are valued more than quality of relationships, democratic decision-making, ability to constructively deal with conflict
- little or no value attached to process; if it can't be measured, it has no value.

Appendix 3- Continued

- discomfort with emotion and feelings
- no understanding that when there is a conflict between content (the agenda of the meeting) and process (people's need to be heard or engaged), process will prevail (for example, you may get through the agenda, but if you haven't paid attention to people's need to be heard, the decisions made at the meeting are undermined and/or disregarded)

antidotes: include process or quality goals in your planning; make sure your organization has a values statement which expresses the ways in which you want to do your work; make sure this is a living document and that people are using it in their day-to-day work; look for ways to measure process goals (for example if you have a goal of inclusivity, think about ways you can measure whether or not you have achieved that goal); learn to recognize those times when you need to get off the agenda in order to address people's underlying concerns.

worship of the written word

- if it's not in a memo, it doesn't exist
- the organization does not take into account or value other ways in which information gets shared
- those with strong documentation and writing skills are more highly valued, even in organizations where ability to relate to others is key to the mission
- only one right way
- the belief there is one right way to do things and once people are introduced to the right way, they will see the light and adopt it
- when they do not adapt or change, then something is wrong with them (the other, those not changing), not with us (those who 'know' the right way)
- similar to the missionary who does not see value in the culture of other communities, sees only value in their beliefs about what is good

antidotes: accept that there are many ways to get to the same goal; once the group has made a decision about which way will be taken, honor that decision and see what you and the organization will learn from taking that way, even and especially if it is not the way you would have chosen; work on

Appendix 3- Continued

developing the ability to notice when people do things differently and how those different ways might improve your approach; look for the tendency for a group or a person to keep pushing the same point over and over out of a belief that there is only one right way and then name it; when working with communities from a different culture than yours or your organization's, Be clear that you have some learning to do about the communities' ways of doing; never assume that you or your organization know what's best for the community in isolation from meaningful relationships with that community.

paternalism

- decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it
- those with power think they are capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power
- those with power often don't think it is important or necessary to understand the viewpoint or experience of those for whom they are making decisions
- those without power understand they do not have it and understand who does
- those without power do not really know how decisions get made and who makes what decisions, and yet they are completely familiar with the impact of those decisions on them

antidotes: make sure that everyone knows and understands who makes what decisions in the organization; make sure everyone knows and understands their level of responsibility and authority in the organization; include people who are affected by decisions in the decision-making.

either/or thinking

- things are either/or – good/bad, right/wrong/, with us/against us
- closely linked to perfectionism in making it difficult to learn from mistakes or accommodate conflict
- no sense that things can be both/and
- results in trying to simplify complex things, for example believing that poverty is simply a result of lack of education

Appendix 3- Continued

- creates conflict and increases sense of urgency, as people are felt they have to make decisions to do either this or that, with no time or encouragement to consider alternatives, particularly those which may require more time or resources

antidotes: notice when people use 'either/or' language and push to come up with more than two alternatives; notice when people are simplifying complex issues, particularly when the stakes seem high or an urgent decision needs to be made; slow it down and encourage people to do a deeper analysis; when people are faced with an urgent decision, take a break and give people some breathing room to think creatively; avoid making decisions under extreme pressure.

power hoarding

- little, if any, value around sharing power
- power seen as limited, only so much to go around
- those with power feel threatened when anyone suggests changes in how things should be done in the organization, feel suggestions for change are a reflection on their leadership
- those with power don't see themselves as hoarding power or as feeling threatened
- those with power assume they have the best interests of the organization at heart and assume those wanting change are ill-informed (stupid), emotional, inexperienced

antidotes: include power sharing in your organization's values statement; discuss what good leadership looks like and make sure people understand that a good leader develops the power and skills of others; understand that change is inevitable and challenges to your leadership can be healthy and productive; make sure the organization is focused on the mission.

fear of open conflict

- people in power are scared of conflict and try to ignore it or run from it
- when someone raises an issue that causes discomfort, the response is to blame the person for raising the issue rather than to look at the issue which is actually causing the problem

Appendix 3- Continued

- emphasis on being polite
- equating the raising of difficult issues with being impolite, rude, or out of line

antidotes: role play ways to handle conflict before conflict happens; distinguish between being polite and raising hard issues; don't require those who raise hard issues to raise them in 'acceptable' ways, especially if you are using the ways in which the issues are raised as an excuse not to address the issues being raised; once a conflict is resolved, take the opportunity to revisit it and see how it might have been handled differently.

individualism

- little experience or comfort working as part of a team
- people in organization believe they are responsible for solving problems alone
- accountability, if any, goes up and down, not sideways to peers or those the organization is set up to serve
- desire for individual recognition and credit
- leads to isolation
- competition more highly valued than cooperation and where cooperation is valued, little time or resources devoted to developing skills in how to cooperate
- creates a lack of accountability, as the organization values those who can get things done on their own without needing supervision or guidance
- antidotes
 - I'm the only one
 - the belief that if something is going to get done right, "I" have to do it
 - little or no ability to delegate work to others

antidotes: evaluate people based on their ability to delegate to others; evaluate people based on their ability to work as part of a team to accomplish shared goals; include teamwork as an important value in your values statement; make sure the organization is working towards shared goals and people understand how working together will improve performance; evaluate people's ability to work in a team as well as their ability to get the job done; make sure that credit is given to all those

Appendix 3- Continued

who participate in an effort, not just the leaders or most public person; make people accountable as a group rather than as individuals; create a culture where most people bring problems to the group; use staff meetings as a place to solve problems, not just a place to report activities.

progress is bigger, more

- observed in systems of accountability and ways we determine success
- progress is an organization which expands (adds staff, adds projects) or develops the ability to serve more people (regardless of how well they are serving them)
- gives no value, not even negative value, to its cost, for example, increased accountability to funders as the budget grows, ways in which those we serve may be exploited, excluded, or underserved as we focus on how many we are serving instead of quality of service or values created by the ways in which we serve

antidotes: create Seventh Generation thinking by asking how the actions of the group now will affect people seven generations from now; make sure that any cost/benefit analysis includes all the costs, not just the financial ones, for example, the cost in morale, the cost in credibility, the cost in the use of resources; include process goals in your planning, for example make sure that your goals speak to how you want to do your work, not just what you want to do; ask those you work with and for to evaluate your performance.

objectivity

- the belief that there is such a thing as being objective
- the belief that emotions are inherently destructive, irrational, and should not play a role in decision-making or group process
- invalidating people who show emotion
- requiring people to think in a linear fashion and ignoring or invalidating those who think in other ways
- impatience with any thinking that does not appear 'logical' to those in power

antidotes: realize that everybody has a world view and that everybody's world view affects the way they understand things; realize this means you



Appendix 3- Continued

too; push yourself to sit with discomfort when people are expressing themselves in ways which are not familiar to you; assume that everybody has a valid point and your job is to understand what that point is.

right to comfort

- the belief that those with power have a right to emotional and psychological comfort (another aspect of valuing 'logic' over emotion)
- scapegoating those who cause discomfort
- equating individual acts of unfairness against white people with systemic racism which daily targets people of color

antidotes: understand that discomfort is at the root of all growth and learning; welcome it as much as you can; deepen your political analysis of racism and oppression so you have a strong understanding of how your personal experience and feelings fit into a larger picture; don't take everything personally.

One of the purposes of listing characteristics of white supremacy culture is to point out how organizations which unconsciously use these characteristics as their norms and standards make it difficult, if not impossible, to open the door to other cultural norms and standards. As a result, many of our organizations, while saying we want to be multi-cultural, really only allow other people and cultures to come in if they adapt or conform to already existing cultural norms. Being able to identify and name the cultural norms and standards you want is a first step to making room for a truly equitable organization.