

NATIVE AMERICAN EARLY CHILDHOOD FUNDERS COLLABORATIVE

LESSONS LEARNED WITH COMMUNITY



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Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative (ECFC) and Native Americans in Philanthropy (NAP) for providing names of Native American early childhood leaders and Native-serving early childhood leaders as potential thought partners and interview participants. Native-led and Native serving early childhood leaders answered the call to build greater insight into the early childhood philanthropic landscape.

Each participant from community has played a role in implementing early childhood efforts in Native American communities. They represented Tribal communities/government, Native-led and Native-serving non-profit organizations. There was a broad range of experiences with philanthropy from serving as staff at philanthropic organizations, writing and securing millions of dollars in philanthropic grants on behalf of their community, and limited experiences with securing small awards for limited periods of time. The range of experiences and geographic representation provided a multi-faceted perspective.

Participants were assured that their candor would be welcomed and that their identities would be held in confidence. Members of communities were clear and courageous in how they lifted up the needs, values, strengths, and challenges associated with partnering with philanthropy. Truth-telling is at the heart of healing and transforming systems and Roanhorse Consulting, LLC and Community Connects Consulting, LLC greatly appreciate the participants' time, reflections, and thoughtful approaches in this report.



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Executive Summary

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 American communities and Native Hawaiian communities. 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.

Tangible recommendations include operationalizing principles and practices of truth and reconciliation, uplifting mutual accountability, unlearning and disrupting white supremacy norms, honoring Native American and Native Hawaiian languages and cultures, exploring and testing new funding models which center self-determination and sovereignty, and making a commitment to place-based and relational approaches.

Roanhorse Consulting, LLC (RCLLC) and Community Connects Consulting, LLC co-created guided interview questions with ECFC and the NAP team to learn about values, beliefs, successes, and challenges, strengths and opportunities for growth. In the fall of 2022, some members of the ECFC bravely shared their own learnings about what is contributing to and hindering relationship building between philanthropy and Native-led and Native-serving initiatives. Members from the workgroup courageously shared their relationships with Native grantees and then Tribal early childhood leaders reflected on parallel questions and shared candid feedback.



This period of individual and collective semi-structured reflection, which was facilitated by principled outside third parties is intended to ground ECFC Native American Workgroup members in what's possible to heal, transform, and inspire partnerships that make a positive difference for Native children, families, and communities.

Ideas about shared learning and unlearning, pooled funding, and a community of practice within early childhood funders to focus on and strengthen relationships with Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Native Alaskan early childhood professionals emerged prior to this supported reflection and learning phase. How to approach these ideas and shift approaches to more deeply center the diverse needs and values of Native early childhood initiatives has expanded with the themes and recommendations from the survey work and two-phases of interviews.

There is an opportunity to deeply consider the themes and recommendations that emerged from community voices to refine an action agenda among the workgroup members for meaningful growth and change within the early childhood and philanthropic sectors.

The goals of the phase two interviews were to learn from those working directly for and with Native communities about what they needed from philanthropy. The participants candidly shared both their challenges and their frustrations in working with philanthropy while also balancing their input with hopes, ideas, and recommendations.

Roanhorse Consulting, LLC and Community Connects Consulting LLC, reviewed notes and direct quotes from interviews with the community and identified major themes and recommendations. While uplifting themes such as strengths-based approaches, respect for sovereignty and self-determination, relationship-based practices, and boundaries and ethics rose to the forefront, the themes often overlap and are intended to support the reader in making sense of complex dynamics without limiting the reader's own ability to identify additional distinct and cross-cutting themes.



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. The interview questions were drafted and shared with the leadership team to collaborate and finalize questions. Workgroup members were updated on the process, invited to participate in guided interviews, and asked to share names and contact information for Native-led or Native-serving initiatives to participate in Phase 2, community voices.

In Phase 1, we were able to conduct a survey to better understand investment in Native communities, and Native representation in governance, staffing, and decision-making **in philanthropy**. In addition, nine organizational interviews with 14 people in the philanthropic sector were conducted over two months. 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 which focuses on **Phase 2**, we were able to conduct seven interviews with 8 people **in the early childhood sector** over two months. Participants were given the interview questions in advance and several people shared that they had talked about the questions with colleagues in advance of the 90-minute guided interviews. Because knowledge is so valuable but frequently uncompensated, a \$250 stipend was offered to individuals for their own time or as a donation to an organization of their choice. Participants were given opportunities to co-steer the interviews and address the questions they wanted and skip questions they preferred not to answer. The interviews were conversational and interwove findings from phase one to encourage reflection about the philanthropic landscape.

The analysis in this report is focused on centering what we heard from individuals and lifting up the key themes and reflections, while also reflecting on our lived experiences. 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, its 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 our selves into this report and acknowledge that while we work to center the participants 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 ground 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 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 culture in the form of 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 early childhood programming, Head Start, and child care, 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 land, elders, culture, and our language. I may live in a city and be named an “Urban Indian” but I am much more than that. And while I have learned from Western educational institutions in my lifetime, they have rarely aligned 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 when she enlisted me with some project or another 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 at Head Start. As an adult, I've continued to excitedly tell my parents about committees or groups of people that are working to make a positive 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.



Guided Interview Overview of Findings

Indigenous (Native American and Native Hawaiian) communities **know** what their communities and families need to thrive. Before their ways of living were violently disrupted (400 years of colonization), they had intact intergenerational family connections based on their worldviews, values, languages, and culture.

One of the central questions was, **what stands in the way of more relationships/partnerships/funding?**

- Understanding (or at a minimum creating a safe non-extractive space to learn about) Native history, worldviews, and values are foundational to supporting, investing, and partnering with Native communities. One participant shared,

“If they don’t understand our way of thinking and structures, it’s really hard to engage in conversations, [and] then they are already viewing our people from a different mindset, for example in a deficit-based view.”

- It starts with a lack of understanding and acknowledgment of the history of genocide, violence, extraction, treaty violations, and the intergenerational impacts of systemic trauma on Native American people at all levels. This lack of context, understanding, and acknowledgment of philanthropy results in superficial relationships, mistrust, and disconnection.

Guided Interview Overview of Findings Continued

- Recognizing that the dominant Western worldview surrounding early childhood high-quality education and care is rooted in a deficit approach that centers on Western culture and the focus is on learning English. For example, a deficit approach is defining success as reading by third grade in English and then dismissing the importance of land-based care values and approaches in Indigenous communities. Several participants shared they viewed Head Start, which has made its way into every Tribal Nation as not only a deficit-based approach to viewing children and their families but also it has so many rules and regulations that don't foster Indigenous ways of living.
- There is a growing understanding that philanthropy secured their wealth from Native lands and natural resources and that much of philanthropy has yet to acknowledge and actively address this contribution to systemic inequities. Philanthropy is holding grantees accountable for their investments, but who holds philanthropy accountable?
- In considering the Western dominant narrative, all community members pushed back on who gets to define success and what is high quality in early childhood education. The problem with focusing on evidence-based programs is that they rarely include Indigenous communities in their development and evaluation. This is part of the problem, but also part of the solution. **What if Indigenous communities were given the investment and opportunity to grow their culturally and language-based early childhood programs and systems to create their evidence-based data and stories and focus on what is most meaningful to them? One participant shared that her community always ends up Indigenizing or adapting Western-based models anyway, but that this not only takes time and community input, it incorrectly assumes communities don't have the answers.**

In addition to the overarching perspectives above, there were several other strong and distinct themes including:

- The Importance of Promoting Language and Culture
- Self-determination Cannot be Compromised
- Consensual Boundaries and Ethics Create Healthier Relationship-based Practices
- Strengths-based Approaches Honor Native Communities
- Managing Timelines
- Exploring and Practicing Healthier Funding Models
- Transparency and Mutual Accountability Build Trust and Repair Harm
- National Level Efforts are Needed

The Importance of Promoting Language and Culture



"The health of our languages is a reflection of the health of our people."

- An emphasis in early childhood is an intentional strategy to retain and promote language and culture.
- Supporting language and culture matters; there are so many strengths in the values and ways of life that Tribes have continued to practice in the face of tremendous pressure and histories. Language and culture have been tools for maintaining strengths.
- The life and culture of Tribal/Pueblo communities is very different from the life and culture of many in the philanthropic sector.
- As a result of systematic oppression, government, and faith institution-sanctioned disruptions to language, culture, and family, there has been significant historical and ongoing trauma at the individual, family, community, and Tribal levels.
- A key set of values that are practiced around programming include a recognition that families participating in early childhood programming don't only have needs, they also have gifts that can be shared. An example of family engagement that was shared included a story about a dad who played a strong role in improving the grounds/facilities of an early childhood center. That opportunity to contribute strengthened engagement in other areas of the programming for their family.

Promoting Language and Culture Continued

"American society does not value children. Not valuing generational families. The dominant narrative of EC is based on saviorism. How has early childhood shown up in our Tribal Nations? It's been with Head Start and Head Start is extremely deficit based focused on school readiness. We've been conditioned to think about early childhood without thinking about our Tribal Nations' beliefs about raising children, through our languages."

- For example, WKKF updated its language, it now states, "We focus on improving access to high-quality early childhood education and education systems where families are engaged in schools **and practices are rooted in the communities' cultures and language**" That last part is an add-on that was pushed on them to understand.

Shared Resource: Podcast hosted by Lyla June titled Nihizhí, Our Voices: An Indigenous Solutions Podcast. Episode 3. Indigenous Languages: Raising Fluent Speaker.





Self-Determination Cannot be Compromised

- One participant shared that they adapted a Westernized civic engagement parent leadership curriculum for their community. **In other words, “they Indigenized it”**. Because the focus of investment is often on “evidence-based” models with some practice-based approaches, most Indigenous communities have to heavily adapt existing curriculums and models.
 - In this example, the participant shared that they had to pull apart the curriculum to see what would work and not work. They looked at language and processes. One way they did this was by framing the question to elders, what components of a strong cultural foundation do you feel would benefit young parents? Indigenizing requires a grassroots approach to seeking input and parent voices.
 - In understanding the impacts of this approach, they interviewed new parents and asked them why are they interested in the program. The parents shared that they have seen the changes in others (a focus on healing and activating their voices) and they also wanted that for themselves.
 - The participant shared that trust is key in implementing a new program. So having someone come into the community and use a Western curriculum that doesn't resonate with families, rarely works.
- Several participants shared that philanthropy doesn't want to fund self-determination and sovereignty because it challenges their own structures of existence. “You can count all of these things, and maybe you're doing well but you're still holding them up to the Western constructs of success. Because the outcomes that you're expecting are [still] so Western [focused].”

“But when we are given the freedom? We're given support, both financially and otherwise. You know, it's gonna work because it's created for tribal communities by tribal communities.”



Consensual Boundaries and Ethics Create Healthier Relationship-based Practices

- Learning intended to strengthen partnerships should be directed by the Tribe/Pueblo themselves so that knowledge is shared in ways that are healthy and respectful rather than minimizing, superficial, and extractive.
- In the absence of an accurate context that does not acknowledge genocide, extraction and exploitation, treaty rights, and treaty violations, philanthropy cannot accurately understand and partner with Native Communities. There isn't a one-size fits all approach as each Tribe has their own unique history and relationships with the US.
- The lack of understanding of history and context results in;
 - Negative judgments are formed by philanthropy about communities that need to be “fixed” without taking responsibility that what they want to address is a symptom of colonization and conquest not a lack of know-how, wisdom, and strength on the part of the Native communities.
 - Expectations about the capacity that is out of touch with the realities of communities.
 - Data collection and reporting requirements that are not mutually agreeable or respectful.
 - Short-term funding cannot even begin to address the harm caused.
 - Quick timelines and benchmarks fail to consider the layers and time that are needed for healing and lasting change that is self-directed.
 - One-side accountability is required of grantees with power imbalances that make negotiating something meaningful and worthwhile out of reach.



Consensual Boundaries and Ethics Create Healthier Relationship-based Practices, Continued

- Philanthropy can engage with already established Native-centered early childhood groups to support a learning curve. (Consider NAPs efforts and investment in by Natives for Natives T/TA system)
- Relationships are centered on the work and sometimes funders go to surrogates rather than approaching community and community leaders directly. People talk and this creates barriers to trust and partnerships moving forward. It is better to work through trust-building openly, honestly, with as much time as is needed on the front end rather than trying to launch quickly and push an approach that doesn't have authentic community buy-in.
- Taking the time and energy to learn about the communities that funders wish to fund is very important.
- Place matters.
- Relationships matter.
- Even small populations of people matter and funding can have a significant impact.
- Representation matters. Native leaders on the board of foundations and as CEOs and program officers are needed. In the absence of philanthropy achieving success in that area, having advisory groups from priority communities who are informing funding decisions matters.
- Attending community events when invited to understand a program and initiative within context matters; especially if there is nothing high-stakes associated beyond demonstrating a desire to understand and build relationships.
- Funders must be open to understanding and respecting the communities where they want to partner.



Consensual Boundaries and Ethics Create Healthier Relationship-based Practices, Continued

- There needs to be a level of readiness on the philanthropic side. Philanthropy can perpetuate a story that does not serve Native people. "If they don't understand our way of thinking and structures, it's really hard to engage in conversations, then they are already viewing our people." from a different mindset, for example, a deficit-based view.
- There are high stakes in early childhood with outside money that can have negative impacts on program leaders and their teams when they cannot find healthy ways forward with philanthropy; little acknowledgment on the part of philanthropy that leaders also have a higher proportion of ACEs, it's not just true of the families they serve; people are serving their own families and relatives and share similar psycho/social characteristics toward building trust.
- Basic lack of knowledge about what to call people, hesitance, and lack of knowledge often sets philanthropy off on a bad foot.
- There doesn't seem to be sufficient understanding on the part of philanthropy in how to approach Native-led efforts in early childhood. The lack of understanding and willingness to first learn about communities, government, and Native-led organizations creates mistrust.
- Settler funders with long relationships sometimes think they know the needs and values of Native people better than the Native people themselves. This may be well-intentioned but is deeply problematic.



Strengths-based Approaches Honor Native Communities

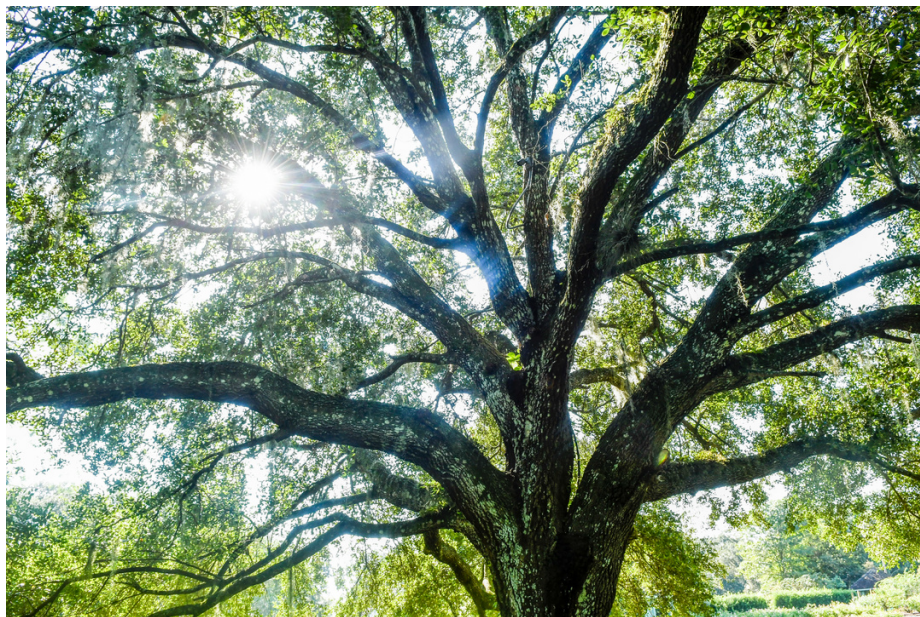
- While each Tribal community is unique, there are shared gifts and challenges.
- Most communities have people who can navigate outside systems and also have internal respect and authority; taking the time to establish strong relationships with these people from the community is essential.
- The solutions are in the community. And any needs/requests should be coming from the community. There is a role in understanding what their community assets are and coming up with potential space for figuring it out, together.
- "It's challenging because the values of Native people and their culture and language are not recognized. We haven't recognized those values yet in our communities, which is just mind-blowing to me, because once they start to get recognized, they're sort of treated like a Western innovation. No, we've been doing this the whole time. But now it's like this new thing that some Western person created. And it's like, I guarantee you they got it from one of our Native communities. And the easiest example, of course, is around land base care. We were living this way. For generations."

"Now it's saying family involvement is so important and it's the way our kids were raised as a family unit, first. And it wasn't until the Western structure that actually separated our kids from parents that created that deficit of family and engagement and now [they] want to put it back in but [they're] still wanting to put it back in with the Western structure? When we say family engagement, we really mean please read to your child for five or 10 minutes a day. Right? And that's not the way we engage. And so how do you start to raise the value of our Native communities in really being the solution, holding much of the solution for what we're trying to solve at a wider level?"

- Even with research, we have good-meaning people who want to conduct research but want to do it within Western constructs. What about the wisdom and practice of our ancestors - and cultural experts?

Managing Timelines

- Spending time in the community routinely goes a long way toward building trust.
- Many existing and potential grantees have sophisticated understandings of their own systems, cultures, and approaches but have limited understanding of a philanthropic foundation. A greater period of time for onboarding, trust building, and mutual learning could create a more stable basis for partnership.
- Multi-year funding with a greater lead time for planning is important; a lack of patience and respect for how people build momentum and endurance or an effort within their own community pushes people/programs receiving funding to break community norms. This is disruptive and damaging.
- What doesn't work - is when they only provide some funding and let communities "fight over it" and there is no longevity in that. There needs to be at least a five-year commitment to funding. Funders need to seek out those programs that are already doing things that ARE working, instead of reinventing something. And they need to spend time finding that out.





Exploring and Practicing Healthier Funding Models

- There's often a disconnect between the amount of money available, expectations, and the time and money needed for operations and capacity building for communities.
- Philanthropy has a responsibility to better understand their own and Native American histories in ways that are justice/equity-oriented and trauma-responsive. There is a need to create more healing approaches.
- Philanthropy needs to understand white supremacy culture and what they do to perpetuate or disrupt it.
- Pre-work needs to occur and communities should be compensated for that.
- There is a growing understanding and candor that philanthropy secured their wealth from Native lands and natural resources. Redistributing money now, with conditions, does not undo that harm.
- Native communities don't lack knowledge about what children and families need. Often there is a lack of money and infrastructure to respond to needs because of the history of extraction, exploitation, and disinvestment.
- If philanthropy wanted to put money to work most ethically at this point, supporting tribes through money for land back efforts would allow greater wealth building, self-determination, and sustainable ability to heal and educate children and families in a way that is aligned with a Tribe's own culture.
- There is learning, healing, and power in more spaces and places for Native early childhood professionals to share experiences, lessons learned and strategies.
- Invest more in operations and leave program decisions about children and families entirely to Native-led efforts.
- The early childhood field has a colonized narrative of its approach in its focus on the well-being of young children and families.

Transparency and Mutual Accountability Build Trust and Repair Harm

- Many Tribal early childhood programs or initiatives have limited knowledge about the philanthropic community, what's possible, how to build relationships; and why it is or isn't to their benefit.
- Grantees are held accountable and risk loss of funding when efforts to address deeply rooted issues progress differently than anticipated in an application process. There is not widespread recognition on the part of philanthropy as a sector that these deeply rooted issues are linked to the land and cultural displacement strategies that gave the foundation access to tremendous natural resources and wealth.
- One participant shared that one strategy is to have a conversation with philanthropy to help develop a public statement. For example, "We realize that early childhood, as it exists as the dominant narrative of health in America, exists on a legacy of genocide [and] is dealing with land and resources and disruption of early childhood systems that existed in every Tribal nation. To this end, we have a responsibility as a foundation, which has accumulated wealth as a result of the stealing of land and the displacement of tribal nations inclusive of their children to actively fund Indigenous communities."
- Discussion on the focus of investment, we run into issues with philanthropy pushing back saying, well this is for all children and we don't discriminate.
 - A principled response is, "That's not the point. You cannot put us in those categories. We are the first peoples of these lands. We have special rights. None of those other groups have because of who we are. You cannot compare us. This is about repairing. This is about truth-telling. This is about making it right. We're not asking you for anything you owe it to our children."

"But can you imagine if we did this earlier on? Our children are going to have to wait to get this political consciousness. Like they could hit the ground running, knowing what to do, knowing what to attack and not be fooled by the system and they'll be able to hold people accountable earlier on."



National Level Efforts Are Needed

- Indian Country national organizations that focus on Native communities and families - very few focus on early childhood, birth to five advocates. They need to learn about the research and return on investment. There are not enough big funders or big indigenous organizations looking at this - so this working group could make a difference.
- Tried to do this with the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), but you have to be a tribal leader.
- This (ECFC) membership group is needed, as there are no other big Indigenous/national EC groups focusing on young children and early childhood.
- There is a lack of intentionality nationally with Native-led organizations on their focus on early childhood. This is problematic because early childhood is the foundation of our children to grow from. Every national Native focused/led organization should have an office of early childhood.
- Indigenous Montessori Network is a national resource. There are few national Indigenous-led EC resources/networks.
 - From [website](#), "Purpose Statement: To ensure Indigenous education keeps language and culture at the forefront while honoring our kinship systems and the way we historically and traditionally raised our babies, children, and youth, recognizing that early childhood is the foundational period. At the core of all Indigenous education and growth, our language, culture, families, community, values, and beliefs that honor the interconnectedness of all things; inclusive of the integration of spiritual knowledge and inter-generational learning through a holistic approach."

Resources: articles/blogs

- Let's Talk about Fundraising: [A Perspective from Cochiti Pueblo in Nonprofit Quarterly](#)
- Indigenous Educators Blog - [The ECE Field: How it Aligns and Doesn't to Cultural Experience](#).



Recommendations

1. Truth and Reconciliation
2. Mutual Accountability
3. Unlearning White Supremacy
4. Honoring Language and Culture
5. New Models
6. Place-based and Relational Approaches



Recommendations

Truth and Reconciliation

"Truth and reconciliation to me means accountability and recognition and the actions taken to make things right. And it's acknowledging the wrongs of the past, learning about our true history so that we can work together to make positive changes." - participant of the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation in Canada.

Participants would like to see philanthropy actively take the time to think about the process of truth and reconciliation in learning and partnering with Native American and Native Hawaiian communities. This includes learning the truth about the violent history of Native American people and its generational impacts on communities today, while also recognizing the innovations and strengths of Native communities in that learning. The second step of the process is reconciliation, which is a process to repair a relationship with accountability and recognition and the actions taken to make things right. This step is critical because it's focused on actions that philanthropy can take, individually, with leadership, and across the organization, and sector.

Mutual Accountability

Building on the truth and reconciliation process to create mutual accountability for both philanthropy and grantees. Accountability falters on an unhealthy power dynamic when there is a relationship of harm that has not been acknowledged and addressed. There is a need for restorative approaches in how philanthropy engages with Native American and Native Hawaiian communities. This could be in the form of each foundation creating a public statement and commitment to actions, and/or it could be in funding that centers on supporting and strengthening the self-determination of Indigenous people and Tribal Nations. This requires funding to be operational vs. programmatic and recognizes a transformational approach, like investing in Land Back efforts. Finally, foundations can build into their work, the use of Trust-Based Philanthropy values and approaches.

Recommendations

Unlearning White Supremacy Culture

"Culture reflects the beliefs, values, norms, and standards of a group, a community, a town, a state, a nation. White supremacy culture is the widespread ideology baked into the beliefs, values, norms, and standards of our groups (many if not most of them), our communities, our towns, our states, our nation, teaching us both overtly and covertly that whiteness holds value whiteness is value. It teaches us that Blackness is not only valueless but also dangerous and threatening. It teaches us that Indigenous people and communities no longer exist, or if they do, they are to be exoticized and romanticized or culturally appropriated as we continue to violate treaties, land rights, and humanity. It teaches us that people south of the border are "illegal." It teaches us that Arabs are Muslim and that Muslim is "terrorist." It teaches us that people of Chinese and Japanese descent are both indistinguishable and threatening as the reason for Covid. It pits other races and racial groups against each other while always defining them as inferior to the white group." - Tema Okun, 2021

White supremacy culture is so deeply embedded into all of our lives that it takes time and reflection to understand how this happens. Tema Okun and many others have created educational resources and tools to self-reflect on the culture and how to do things differently. Participants in our interviews asked for these many of these approaches again and again. For example, a constant sense of urgency to invest in Native American communities, without doing some of the deep work of learning, reflecting, and building relationships with communities. This is also reinforced by funding proposals that promise too much work for too little money and by funders who expect too much for too little. There are many more examples of this in our conversations with participants related to the characteristics of perfectionism, focusing on "qualified" individuals vs. lived experiences, either/or binary thinking (a cultural assumption that we can and should reduce the complexity of life and the nuances of our relationships with each other and all living things into either/or, yes or no, right or wrong in ways that reinforce toxic power.)

"Philanthropy needs to understand white supremacy culture and what they do to perpetuate or disrupt it in their work with Native communities."



Recommendations

Honoring Culture and Language

Investments in early childhood in Native American and Native Hawaiian communities require an investment in their culture and languages. These are not separate investments. Again and again, we heard from participants about how there are so many strengths in the values and ways of life that Tribes have continued to practice in the face of tremendous pressure and histories. Language and culture have not only helped them focus and maintain their strengths as a people, but it is the foundation of their Tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

"The health of our languages is a reflection of the health of our people."

New Models

Native communities expressed the need for philanthropy to seek ethical and non-extractive ways of learning, building partnerships, and investing in Native communities. Trust-Based Philanthropy approaches and values were highlighted as foundational to these changes. Specific requests included;

- Fund longer planning periods which include greater planning and learning on the part of funders too.
- Explore expectations about learning, communication, conflict management, and mutual accountability in a deeper values-driven way on the front-end of contracting to create stronger channels for equity, justice, and healing to flourish including what place-based learning might look like for philanthropy.
- Fund communities at a minimum of 5 years per cycle to allow for a pace of work and change that can be rooted in and responsive to community values vs. quick results for funders and their boards.
- Build capacity for data and reporting that is as meaningful to grantees as funders through negotiation of what partners wish to learn and practice and how to share that learning.
- Provide more operational grants to support the organic expansion and evolution of Native-led, intergenerational, early childhood efforts. Trust that communities want and know what is best for their people.
- Consider providing core funding/reparations for land-back efforts so that communities can build wealth and capacity rather than dependence on philanthropy.



Recommendations

Place-based and Relational Approaches

Throughout this report, participants candidly shared their feelings, experiences, and frustrations with philanthropy not centering relationships and place in their work with the community. Beyond compliance, philanthropy has to set aside its own agenda and consider the context, history, and values they bring to their relationship with the community. Relationships require in-person conversations to help understand the context of the community, and balancing challenges and strengths to deepen relationship with communities. Investing in visits to the community, with the community leading the agenda, shows the community that your investment can and should be more than a transaction. Showing up is key to building a relationships with those leading the work in their communities. And finally in philanthropy's dialogue with communities, staff may have some expertise in an issue area. Remember there are many ways of knowing and kinds of expertise, it is important to have a peer-to-peer dialogue with the community and change the dynamics of power. The community has expertise and knowledge that philanthropy needs to hear and learn. in order to operate ethically and co-create positive outcomes.



Appendix 1- 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 2- 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 2- 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 2- 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 2- 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 2- 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 2- 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 2- 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 2- 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.