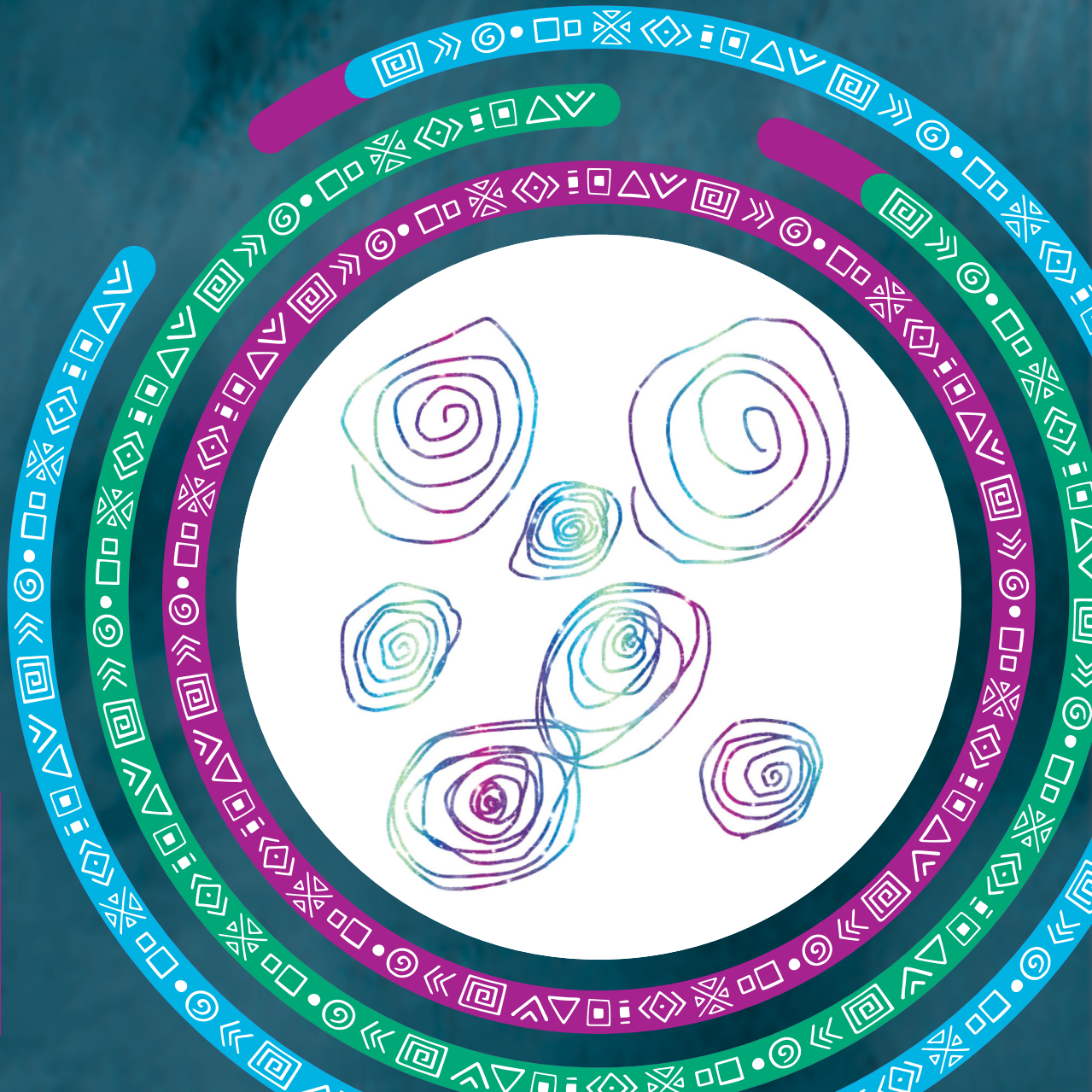


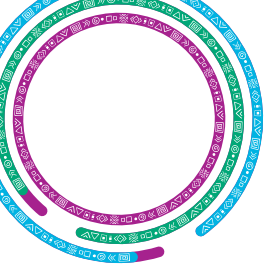
Tired Of Dancing To Their Song: An Assessment of the Indigenous Women's Reproductive Justice Funding Landscape

Written by:

Coya White Hat-Artichoker and Zachary Packineau



Ms. FOUNDATION
FOR WOMEN

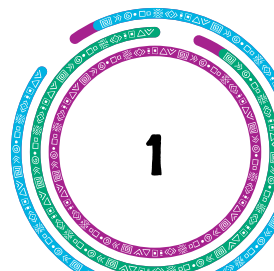


**Our collective journeys to
achieve reproductive justice
intersecting and connecting
in our circles of life.**

**“The journey we will take
together, collectively, that
will intersect and connect in
various ways with each other
over the three-year period.”**

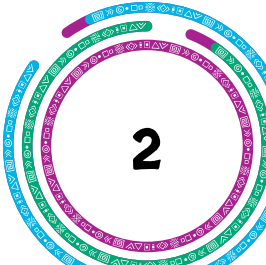
– Dr. Peggy Bird (Kewa Pueblo)

Cover Illustration and Poem by **Dr. Peggy Bird** (Kewa Pueblo)



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About the Authors



Zachary Packineau (he/him/his) is a citizen of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation and a descendant of the Santa Clara Pueblo. His work spans public service, community organizing, and community health education at the confluence of sexual and reproductive health and rights and LGBTQ+ rights, and centers identities and voices on the axes of race, gender, and class. While mastering the art of wearing multiple hats in movement building, he has worked on two incredibly successful campaigns to defeat two restrictive ballot measures in North Dakota, each by a 2-to-1 margin. Zach is a proud alumnus of the Midwest Academy of Organizing for Social Change, the Social Justice Training

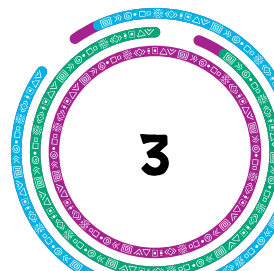
Institute, Camp Wellstone, and the inaugural cohort of the North Dakota Change Network. He has had successful stints with the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library; the American Civil Liberties Union; Planned Parenthood Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota; Planned Parenthood Federation of America; the American Indian Public Health Resource Center at North Dakota State University; and the National Democratic Training Committee. Zach has previously served on the Board of Directors for PFund Foundation, the upper Midwest's only LGBTQ+ community foundation, and Pollen Midwest. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for Prairie Action North Dakota and North Dakota Native Vote. Zach is also a certified yoga instructor and has held a daily asana practice since 2010.



Coya White Hat-Artichoker (she/her/hers) was born and raised on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota; she is a proud enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. Coya has been doing activist work in various communities and movements since the age of 15. She was a founding member of the First Nations Two Spirit Collective, which works to build a stronger political presence for Two Spirit people within the national dialogue of queer rights. Coya has worked with a number of philanthropic organizations, including the Astraea Foundation, Funding Exchange Out Fund, Headwaters Fund, PFund, and Bush Foundation. She is a former board member of the American Indian OIC, PFund, and

currently serves as the Treasurer of the SisterSong board. Most recently, she was a Community Health and Health Equity Program Manager at the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross Blue Shield doing community funding across three health initiatives. She or her writing has appeared in: *After Stonewall* (After Stonewall Productions) a film; *The Advocate*; "40 under 40" LGBTQ Leaders in the United States for 2010; "Sharing Our Stories of Survival" (Altamira Press 2007), the Bilerico Project blog; and The Huffington Post.

Both Zach and Coya have long histories of organizing for reproductive justice. They were honored and uniquely positioned to create this report because of their relationships in Native communities and their abilities to craft a culturally competent conversation and product.



Executive Summary

In 2020, the Ms. Foundation for Women's [*Pocket Change: How Women and Girls of Color Do More with Less*](#) report revealed a dearth of philanthropic dollars for [*Indigenous women and girls*](#). Less than 3% of the more than \$350 million in foundation funding was allocated for this group, which has enormous ramifications especially when it comes to reproductive justice. *Pocket Change* set the stage for larger conversations and initiatives that addresses the historically low levels of philanthropic investment in Indigenous women and girls – examining the needs of Indigenous communities, with Indigenous leaders, to understand how such funding discrepancies are a direct byproduct of colonization and institutional systems and how to shift the philanthropic paradigm to one that prioritizes Native communities.

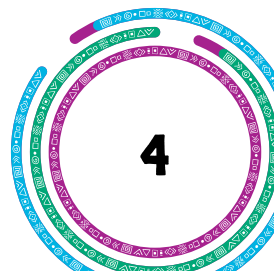
In early 2021, the Ms. Foundation and the Collaborative for Gender and Reproductive Equity first convened Indigenous women leaders to identify vital funding needs for Indigenous women, and what emerged was the lack of quality health care and that the limits placed on native women's reproductive choices are directly tied to colonization. **Instead of being relegated to a secondary issue, Indigenous women's reproductive justice must be put front and center and made part of a fully inclusive conversation.**

This assessment, which is a continuation of that work and informed by an Indigenous Women's Council, shows how funders' priorities are not aligned with the needs of the very people who are most lacking reproductive justice. In fact, there is a traditional unwillingness to work with communities who are feeling the destructive impacts of 500-plus years of colonization and colonialism. In the past, foundation and philanthropic partners have shared their funding priorities and demanded that proposals cater to their own organization's identified priorities. However, what is deemed helpful and innovative in populations that have been spared the forces of colonialism may not be replicable or even possible in the predominantly rural setting of a Tribal nation.

Informed by these historical patterns and their modern-day implications, Indigenous leaders conducted a field assessment and in doing so created a space by and for Indigenous people.

The Women's Council defined a fully intersectional understanding of Indigenous women's reproductive justice—inspired by SisterSong's emphasis on personal bodily autonomy and safe and sustainable communities—as follows:

Abortion access, comprehensive sex education, full spectrum doula and birth care, miscarriage management, stillborn and grief and death care, fertility treatment, menopause research, land reclamation and water protection (encapsulated in environmental justice), language revitalization, family and community care within multi- and intergenerational households, State violence and the abolition of the prison industrial complex, cultural preservation and education, domestic violence and sexual assault prevention, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, historical trauma and resiliency, and living wages are all intertwined.



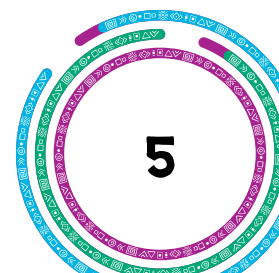
Convening over three sessions, the Women's Council devised three questions to guide their work:

- 1. If there were to be a significant investment into Indigenous Reproductive Justice, where should that funding go?**
- 2. What do we need and how will we get it?**
- 3. What has the most impact and what would you bet on?**

The top funding needs were identified as: capacity building, policy and advocacy, and education, followed by prevention, direct service, and health and wellbeing. But before this work can begin, philanthropic partners must support a fully inclusive reproductive justice movement. From the outset, there's a need for multi-year, unrestricted funding investment for the continued convening of this group of Indigenous women stakeholders, along with others from across Indian Country. Through these ongoing discussions, Indigenous women will lead the work of developing a full-scale Indigenous women's reproductive justice funding platform, facilitated and curated by the Ms. Foundation for Women. This assessment further shows how these convenings and a funding platform could lead to the creation of an established and fully realized Native-led Indigenous women's reproductive justice advocacy organization.

It is imperative this work is built upon a trust of Indigenous communities' experiences and expertise and guided by the leadership of Indigenous women. Funders must broaden their own understanding of the cultural contexts and applications at play and offer flexibility and multi-year funding without restrictions, regardless of trends in national conversations. Any funding of projects not led by Indigenous women leaders or their communities would be inauthentic and equates to the historical looting and theft of Indigenous peoples. The framework for Indigenous Reproductive Justice will be further developed and will engage the broader reproductive justice movement, the field of philanthropy, and other potential allies. By networking and bringing together Indigenous leaders already doing reproductive justice work this project will create a new ecosystem that supports movement building.

**It is time to trust the leadership
of Indigenous women.**



Foreword

The Ms. Foundation for Women's mission is to build women's collective power in the U.S. to advance equity and justice for all. We seek to achieve our mission by investing in and strengthening the capacity of women-led movements, particularly by women and girls of color, to advance meaningful social, cultural, and economic change in the lives of all women and girls.

The Ms. Foundation has long held a unique position in the philanthropic world and taken risks to support those who have systematically been pushed to the margins. As a high-engagement social justice funder, we center women and girls of color and the grassroots organizations they lead, often in historically under-resourced regions. Our key focus areas are women's safety, health, and economic justice, and address the multiplicity of challenges faced by women and girls of color.

Since 1973, the Ms. Foundation has invested more than \$80 million into building the power of women in social justice fields, serving as a conduit to the philanthropic sector as an intermediary funder investing in women and girls. Our vision is to create a just and safe world where power and possibility are not limited by gender, race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or age. We believe that equity and inclusion are the cornerstones of a true democracy in which the worth and dignity of every person is valued. **Our values reflect this vision:**

Integrity:

We believe in holding ourselves responsible and accountable for all that we say and do.

Trust and Respect:

We believe in the truth that comes from those that we work with and those most impacted by the issues affecting their communities and honor their voices in our work.

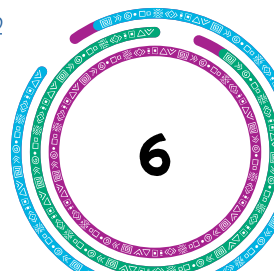
Interconnectedness:

We believe that by achieving equity for women of color, we achieve equity for all. Given the complexity of the issues we face, we are committed to addressing issues, holistically understanding that we need to build power and alignment across multiple movements and sectors to win battles we are facing.

Social justice:

We believe that structural changes are needed to increase the opportunity for those who are least well off politically, socially, and economically.

The Ms. Foundation has a long history of funding and building capacity within the reproductive justice, health, and rights movement, including a long-term partnership with the Native American Community Board (NACB). Taking a deep look at the high rates of rape and sexual assault of Native girls, in 2015 we partnered with NACB and its affiliate, the Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center, to produce [*What to Do When You're Raped, an ABC Handbook for Native Girls*](#). Contributing editors of the handbook included key Indigenous women thought leaders: Charon Asetoyer, Elizabeth Black Bull, and Donna Haukass.



Consistent with our strategic grantmaking approach, we will prioritize strategic conversations with Indigenous women leaders in grassroots reproductive health/reproductive justice (RHRJ) movements that center Indigenous women and girls who live on reservations and in other communities outside of reservations.

As a social justice public foundation with a mission to build women's collective power in the U.S. to advance equity and justice for all, we recognize our vital role and responsibility in philanthropy.

We have developed a set of values and an approach that prioritizes the voices, needs, and strengths of women and girls most affected by racism, misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia, and colonization, as described here:

We are unapologetic about gender and racial equity and justice.

We value the power of women and girls of color, including transgender women and girls of color, to transform systems of oppression and build equitable societies for all.

We aim to understand issues and communities holistically by utilizing an intersectional analysis that recognizes the interconnectedness of communities, issues, and policies.

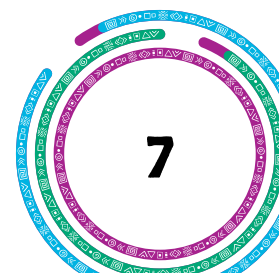
We value our grantees' lived experiences, ideas, and partnership and leverage our national platform to center their leadership, analysis, campaigns, and networks.

We prioritize grassroots organizing and advocacy strategies that address root causes of inequity that are led by and for those who are most directly impacted.

We strive to strengthen and sustain leaders, organizations, and movements through resources, capacity building, and leadership opportunities.

The Ms. Foundation understands that Native women have long seen a connection between their tribal sovereignty and their body sovereignty; the right to make choices about their bodies is deeply rooted in their cultural understanding. The limits placed on Native women's reproductive choices are directly tied to colonization. Native women experienced significant freedoms prior to the colonization of their traditional lands. Restricting their reproductive freedom is a direct byproduct of colonization and institutional systems that resulted from loss of land promised to them and poor quality of health care. The voices of Native women are critical to the conversation around reproductive justice because Native women understand what true sovereignty means to them, and their ability to share that history can only augment movements across the United States.

The U.S. has reached a pivotal moment in history. Amidst a global pandemic that has devastated Indigenous communities, greatly impacted our knowledge-bearers, and kept us physically separate from each other even as we grieved the losses of our



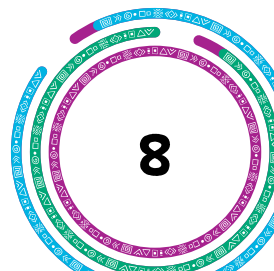
elders and relatives; a national reckoning on racism and white supremacy, predicated by centuries of whitewashed revisionist history that still continues to seek the erasure of Native people, intentionally and inadvertently; international awareness and a raised consciousness of the rights of Indigenous peoples to protect sacred lands and water and the unnecessary and excessive militarized police response; and increased attacks on LGBTQ+ and Two Spirit people in state legislatures across the country, Native people have remained and will always remain, with the visions of our ancestors and with the leadership of strong Indigenous women.

A Note About Terminology

We use the term Indigenous to be inclusive of our people who are not recognized by the U.S. federal government. However, the term should not be used as a substitute for the 574 federally recognized Tribal nations who are eligible for funding and services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).¹ There are over 200 Tribal nations without federal recognition status.²

1 US Dept of the Interior, Indian Affairs, "FAQs: What is a federally recognized tribe?"
<https://www.bia.gov/frequently-asked-questions>

2 National Public Radio, "Unrecognized Tribes Struggle Without Federal Aid During Pandemic,"
<https://www.npr.org/2021/04/17/988123599/unrecognized-tribes-struggle-without-federal-aid-during-pandemic>



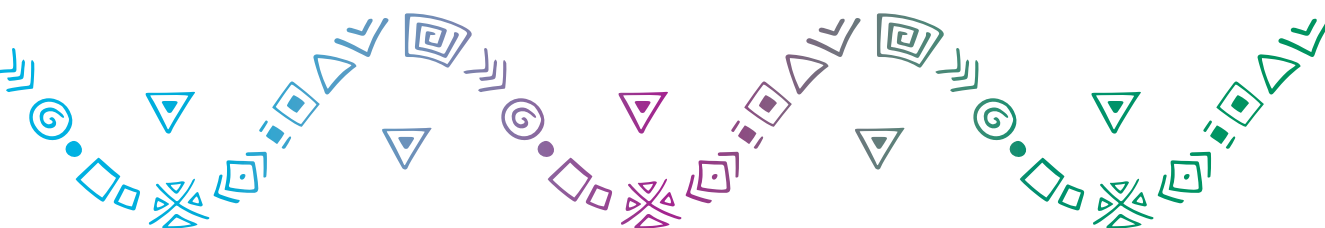
Introduction

Throughout the early spring of 2021, and under the auspices of the Ms. Foundation for Women and the Collaborative for Gender and Reproductive Equity, Indigenous women leaders convened with the purpose to identify vital funding needs for Indigenous women-led Reproductive Justice efforts in and across Indian Country for Tribal communities and urban settings where Native women live outside of the Indian Health Service system, which changes the landscape of reproductive justice access.

According to the Ms. Foundation for Women's 2020 *Pocket Change: How Women and Girls of Color Do More with Less* report, philanthropic dollars for Indigenous women and girls is miniscule within the bigger picture of foundation funding: the roughly \$9 million, or barely 3% of over \$350 million, that went toward Indigenous women and girls does indeed call attention to the historically low levels of philanthropic investments in Indigenous women and girls.³ **That significantly low investment stems from philanthropy's unwillingness to prioritize the needs of Indigenous people, in which direct service delivery, community organizing or base building, and voter registration and education have taken precedence and are considered the most fundable, or safe methods of aid.**

It is important to note that while direct service delivery is the dominant model for Tribal communities, Indigenous Women's Reproductive Justice is often an evolution beyond direct services and becomes a secondary issue. Instead, we must have a mechanism that puts Indigenous Women's Reproductive Justice front and center.

In the past, foundations and philanthropic partners have shared their funding priorities and have demanded that proposals cater to their own organization's identified priorities. Buzzwords like "innovation" and "resourceful" take on different meanings and are defined differently in the cultural contexts of Tribal communities. What might be considered and funded as "innovative" in an East Coast population hub may not be replicable or even possible in the predominantly rural setting of a Tribal nation. Access to resources may come in limited supply, if at all, for some Tribal communities. Barriers to broadband internet infrastructure, for instance, can sometimes leave significant gaps in a program's ability to reach a wider audience across the large geographic landscape of their Tribal community, potentially leaving some community members to go without services and leading to heightened disparities in health care, nutrition, and beyond. Some Tribal members who may go unsheltered also might have very limited or no access to smartphones, landlines, and transportation. In recognizing these barriers and in coming back to the notion of "innovative," a heavy and increasing emphasis of the reliance on digital rollouts may not always work for some Tribal communities.



3 Ms. Foundation for Women, "Pocket Change: A Data Brief on Organizations Serving Indigenous Women and Girls in the United States," <https://forwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Pocket-Change-Indigenous-Subpop-Factsheet.pdf>

The aforementioned examples of disparities exist for a number of reasons, most importantly due to the forced removal of Indigenous people from their lands since first contact on Turtle Island, or what has been known as North America. The goal here is not to minimize the issues our Tribal communities face. Rather, it is to be direct about the historical impacts of forced removal, genocide, and land allotment—that is to say, Indigenous people did not arrive at these disparities ourselves. The disparities faced by Indigenous people today are the long-lasting impacts of 500-plus years of colonization, felt by generations upon generations and brought on by violence through imposed structures of government, capitalism, religion, and blood quantum levels (in that Native people are the only people to have their blood measured). This is solely a genocidal tactic with the intent to make Indigenous people disappear and thus complete the American Project.

Indigenous societies were balanced; women were always part of decision-making processes. Accustomed to a communal society, Indigenous people are now trying to survive under systems that demand and prioritize individualism, selfishness, and competition in ways that were unknown to us. This includes the introduction of the white supremacist cisgender heterosexual patriarchy and the gender binary. Intricate cultural systems of family and kinship, food, and ceremony were eradicated after hundreds of thousands of our ancestors were hunted and killed, and our lands and our bodies violently looted, including the forced sterilization of Indigenous women.⁴ And the impacts of colonization continue to reverberate ever so closely with the traumatic legacy of the boarding-school era having only come to an end vis-à-vis policy in 1978 with the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act.⁵ The impacts of trauma do not end simply because a policy has been repealed.

Although there is a shared Indigenous experience of historical trauma, it is important to understand that while there are common threads that unify Tribal nations, each one uniquely carries out how they care for the land and water and how their community lives out a value like respect. That same level of self-determination and body sovereignty, both personal and communal, also comes to light when identifying the funding needs of Indigenous women-led Reproductive Justice efforts in Indian Country.

These Indigenous women-led Reproductive Justice efforts spanned several areas of funding needs, chief among them:

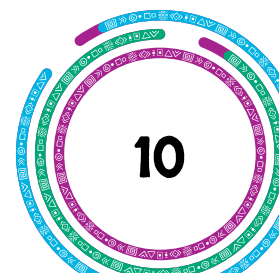
- **Capacity Building**
- **Policy and Advocacy**
- **Education**

Additional areas of funding needs identified by our stakeholders include:

- **Prevention**
- **Direct Service**
- **Health and Wellbeing**

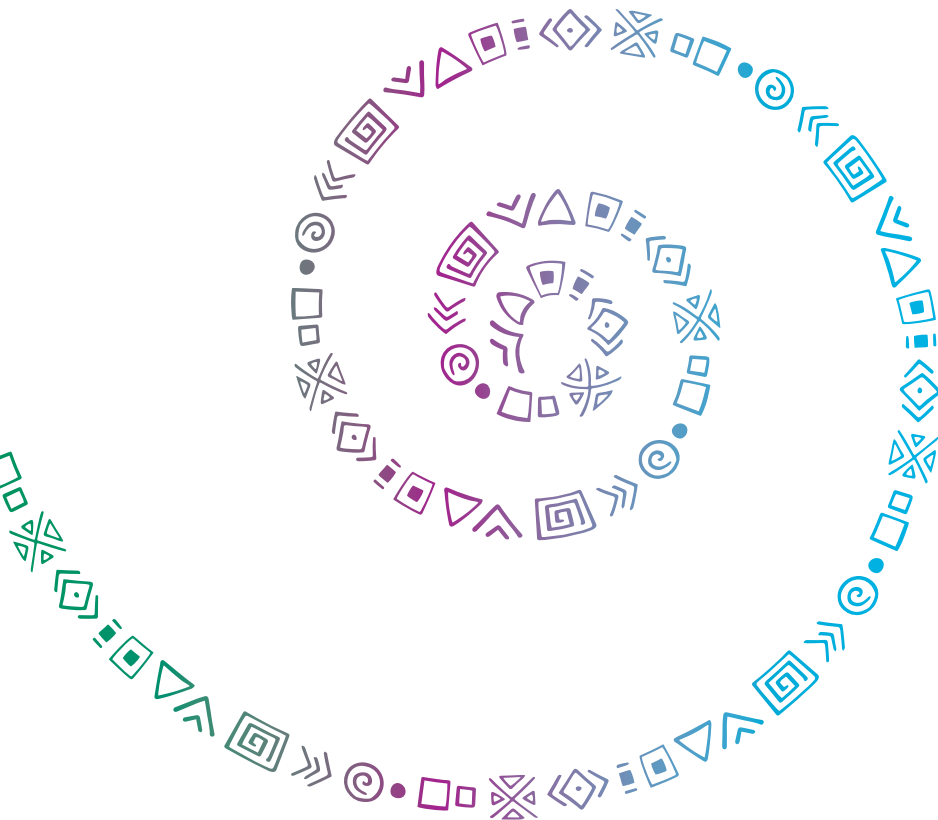
4 National Library of Medicine, Native Voices: Native Peoples' Concepts of Health and Illness, "1976: Government admits unauthorized sterilization of Native women," <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/timeline/543.html>

5 Northern Plains Reservation Aid, "History and Culture: Boarding Schools," http://www.nativepartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=airc_hist_boardingschools



While our stakeholders highlighted these areas of need, the first three areas were the most critical. We as Native nations understand that an ecosystem of survival includes the preservation and protection of land, water, and air as the cornerstone of healthy communities for our people to live in a good way. Indigenous people have walked this land since time immemorial and our worldview is holistic and interconnected.

With these understandings, we also want to put in place the scaffolding for important cultural and historical contexts of what being Indigenous means in the face of the existing crooked edifices of colonialism, both in philanthropy and globally. After that, we will dig deeper into what the previously identified funding needs are and what being an Indigenous woman means in the spheres of reproductive justice and sexual and reproductive health and rights, followed by a call to action from philanthropic partners.



Women's Council

This project is deeply grateful to the following stakeholder group of Indigenous women leaders for being so generously giving of their time and for their decades of knowledge and expertise. We have benefitted from their hearts and their dreams to build toward these historic convenings to identify high-priority funding needs of Indigenous women-led Reproductive Justice efforts.



Charon Asetoyer (Comanche Nation)
*Founder, Native American Community Board and
Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center*

Charon is a longtime leader within the Indigenous feminist community. She has done a lot of advocacy work with the Indian Health Service to provide access to reproductive care, specifically for folks who have experienced sexual violence.



Dr. Peggy Bird (Kewa Pueblo)
Attorney and Advocate

Peggy is a longtime advocate and has contributed to multiple efforts providing her expertise as a lawyer. She has a long history of doing this work.



Katrina Cantrell (Western Shoshone)
Executive Director, Women's Health Specialists of California

Katrina has been running Women's Health clinics in Northern California for years. She is often found on the frontlines of the struggle, always working hard to ensure that women have access to the reproductive care needed. She also serves on the board of SisterSong, a Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective.



Stephanie Lozano (Ho-Chunk Nation)
Tribal Liaison, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

Steph does extensive work with Tribal communities in Wisconsin. She has a deep understanding of the relationships between the tribes and the U.S. government. She also serves on the board of SisterSong, a Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective.



Malia Luarkie (Laguna Pueblo)
Co-founder, Indigenous Women Rising

Malia has co-founded a Native women's abortion fund. She brings experience and expertise on what it means to provide resources to women who need abortions. The organization she co-founded is the only one of its kind serving Native women in the country.



Tia Oros Peters (Zuni Pueblo)
Chief Executive Officer, Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples

Tia is a longtime advocate for Indigenous women across various movements and forums. Tia also brings a wealth of experience in philanthropy. Her overall skill set helped to inform this report from a philanthropic perspective, as well as from an international- and community-based lens.



Dr. Corrine Sanchez (San Ildefonso Pueblo)
Executive Director, Tewa Women United

Corrine has been working to highlight the struggle of Indigenous women and support her community for over 20 years. She has built an organization that is seen as a model throughout the country. She and her mother have truly modeled intergenerational leadership.



Coya White Hat-Artichoker (Sicangu Lakota)
Program Officer, Ms. Foundation for Women

Coya has been doing activist work in various communities and movements since the age of 15. She was a founding member of the First Nations Two Spirit Collective, which works to build a stronger political presence for Two Spirit people within the national dialogue of queer rights. Coya has worked with a number of philanthropic organizations and currently serves as the Treasurer of the SisterSong board.

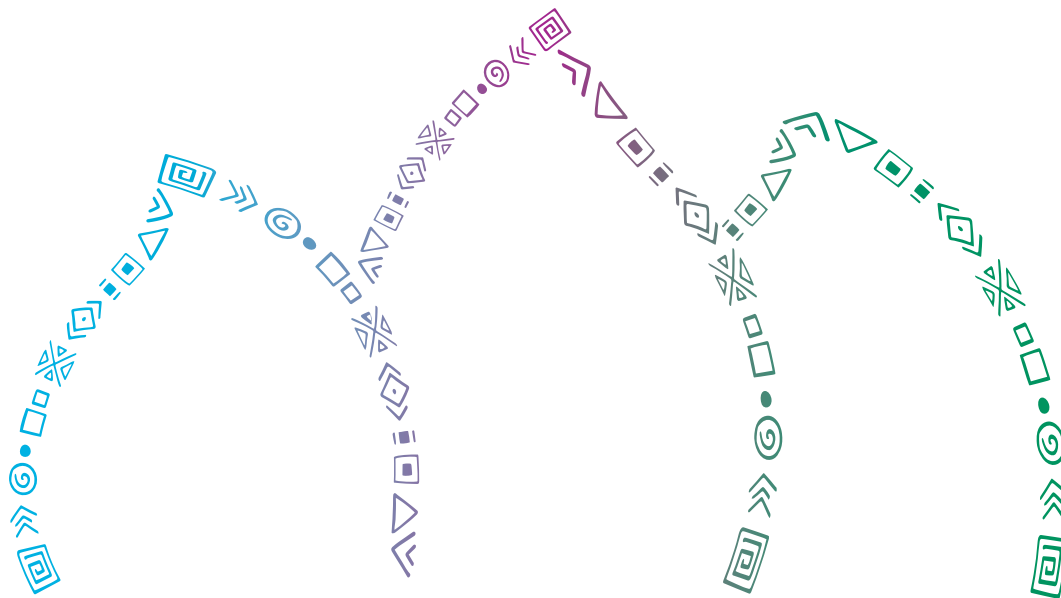
**Organizational affiliation provided for identification purposes only*

Building the Fire

Throughout February and March 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Women's Council convened for three facilitated working sessions of three hours each. They graciously devised a set of mutually agreed upon community terms to guide their conversations, which acknowledged the expertise each person contributed, as well as their time commitment. Stakeholders wanted to hold these gatherings in a way that felt authentic to them as Indigenous women and in doing so, the meeting space was created by and for Indigenous people only. Before the onset of the ongoing global pandemic, the meeting was originally intended to be held in-person, allowing for a stronger sense of closeness in and among the stakeholder group.

In-person gatherings are highly valued by Indigenous people, as they offer the ability to see each other face-to-face and gather as a community, to create meaningful and deep relationships, and to share food. The pandemic created an unknown way of building community together that this group successfully navigated, which highlights their outstanding commitment to this effort and should be noted as such. However, it was also possible to achieve that closeness in the virtual space thanks to the shared trust and transparency from each member. Indigenous people are not defined by historical or individual trauma, and it was essential for the stakeholder group to sit with each other and lift each other up with tenderness in the sharing of their stories.

In keeping with traditional practice, each meeting was opened with a prayer by one of our Indigenous women elders. It was important to enter into each meeting space with an intentional commitment to learn from one another, build trust, share experiences, and articulate a vision to fund the future of Indigenous women-led Reproductive Justice. We highlight this because, as Indigenous people, our ability to create community with one another has often equated to our collective survival.



Convening Our Sacred Women's Council

Before we go further, we must define reproductive justice. According to SisterSong, it is “the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities.”⁶ It is also important to note that SisterSong’s definition of reproductive justice encompasses more than abortion access:

Abortion access is critical, and women of color and other marginalized women also often have difficulty accessing: contraception, comprehensive sex education, STI prevention and care, alternative birth options, adequate prenatal and pregnancy care, domestic violence assistance, adequate wages to support our families, safe homes, and so much more.⁷

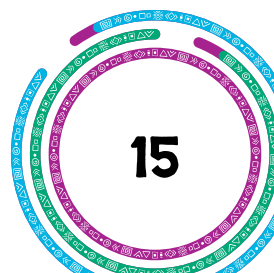
This understanding of reproductive justice held true for our Indigenous women leaders, but it necessitated additions that were specific to the cultural values of land, language, traditions, and Indigeneity. While an intersectional lens and framework has contributed to the broad definition of reproductive justice, our Indigenous women leaders talked about intersectionality differently, and took those intersections and braided them together to acknowledge the full range of reproductive health care specific to and throughout the cycle of an Indigenous woman’s life on the physical plane:

Reproductive Justice Defined

Abortion access, comprehensive sex education, full spectrum doula and birth care, miscarriage management, stillborn and grief and death care, fertility treatment, menopause research, land reclamation and water protection (encapsulated in environmental justice), language revitalization, family and community care within multi- and intergenerational households, State violence and the abolition of the prison industrial complex, cultural preservation and education, domestic violence and sexual assault prevention, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, historical trauma and resiliency, and living wages are all intertwined.

6 SisterSong, “Reproductive Justice,” <https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice>

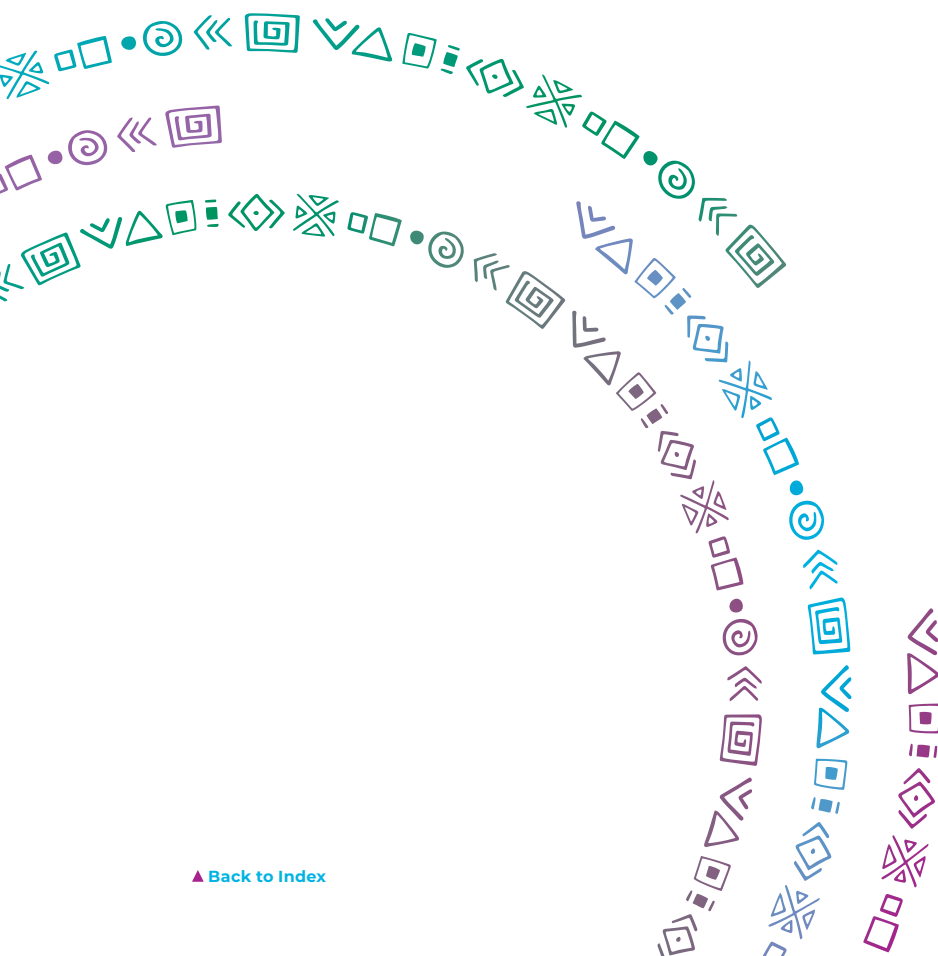
7 Ibid.



Indigenous people consider our hair to be sacred and a source of our power. The framing of intersectionality as braided hair allows for Indigenous individuals to consider other issues that affect their communities beyond reproductive justice, similar to the ways non-Native feminists understand intersectionality.

All of these intersections are embedded within the sinews of the woven strands in the newly augmented definition of reproductive justice, and these added intersections are inseparable from and serve to paint a fuller picture of Indigenous identity and Indigenous women identity within reproductive justice. Therefore, one intersection, or one strand in the braid, cannot exist alone and cannot be addressed without the others—Indigenous women are connected to all life, the land and the water, the ancestors and foremothers, and all sisters, daughters and granddaughters, nieces, and mothers and grandmothers. Furthermore, Indigenous Women’s Reproductive Justice encompasses what it means to be a woman and to be a woman in a healthy environment. We understand that what you do to the land, you will do to yourself. Indigenous women cannot have healthy children when the water is poisoned, and Indigenous women cannot grow their families and raise children on land that is decimated.

Going forward, it is important to keep close this enhanced definition of reproductive justice based on the stakeholders’ experiences and traditional knowledge. Their definition informs their conversations, assertions, and their recommendations to fund Indigenous women-led Reproductive Justice efforts in and across Indian Country for Tribal communities and urban settings where Native women live outside of the Indian Health Service system, which changes the landscape of reproductive justice access.



Further Gatherings

The approach to the convenings can be best articulated through a conceptual framework of looking into and reflecting on the First Space (the past), the Second Space (the present), and the Third Space, where we dream of possibilities. **The primary goal in convening the stakeholder group was to create a list of recommendations so as to achieve funding for current and future Indigenous women–led Reproductive Justice efforts.**

It was in the Third Space where stakeholders boldly dreamed of how those funding recommendations could create a lasting impact, now, and for the next seven generations. Honoring the next seven generations is a value shared from the Haudenosaunee (Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy) in which Tribal leaders “determine how present-day decisions will impact their descendants. Nations are taught to respect the world in which they live as they are borrowing it from future generations.”⁸

Throughout the three convenings, a central point of discussion was the ever-present need to educate and re-educate non-Indigenous people on the important historical and cultural contexts of the Indigenous experience, including the ongoing ramifications of historical trauma brought on by colonization. This contributes to the continuous erasure of Indigenous people, most recently exemplified by the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, which, even with years of ongoing work, has only started to receive more attention both in the U.S. and Canada.

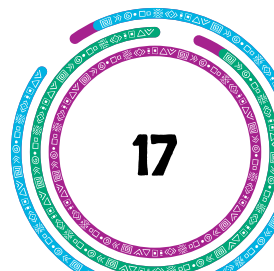
Each of the three convenings focused on one big-picture question that served as a north star in our conversations that would create and lead into funding recommendations. Those questions are bulleted below.

- **If there were to be a significant investment into Indigenous Reproductive Justice, where should that funding go?**
- **What do we need and how will we get it?**
- **What has the most impact, and what would you bet on?**

Responses to these questions centered around a common theme: **Indigenous people already know what their communities need to thrive, to be healthy, and to live in a good way.** Because we already know what works and what is needed, funders and philanthropic partners must demonstrate more than a short-term desire to fund Indigenous women–led Reproductive Justice. It must be a long-term commitment, exceeding three years, with reverence for cultural protocols and an understanding of the unique positions that Tribal nations hold in and with their own governments and local, state, and federal governments.

Because of this unique position, funding needs look different for each Indigenous community and funding needs for Indigenous communities will look different because of our unique nation-to-nation relationship with the U.S. government. Native organizations cannot be pitted against each other. The remedies or methods to funding Indigenous women–led Reproductive Justice should not be considered quick or easy because of the distinctiveness of Indigenous people. And the idea of simply “throwing money at it until it goes away” contributes to Indigenous erasure in philanthropy and leads to more disparities, uncertainty, and the lethal return to find or create “innovation” in and for Tribal communities.

8 Haudenosaunee Confederacy, “Values,” <https://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/values/>



Indigenous women-led Reproductive Justice and all of its braided strands show that funders and philanthropic partners must adapt to the needs of Indigenous communities, and in doing so must challenge and dismantle their own systems of patriarchy and white supremacy. There is ongoing work being done at home in Tribal nations, too. As we were told, “we are sovereign unto ourselves and unto our Tribal nations, living out self-determination and body autonomy, both personal and communal, at their most cellular level in our own communities.” Barriers to obtaining funding for programs can often be steamrolled by patriarchy in Tribal communities, particularly in Tribal councils and program leadership who often approve proposals even before they can be submitted.

Recommendations

It is important to preface this section with the understanding that there is not one Indigenous experience that is indicative of all other Indigenous experiences. Native nations are not a monolith, and this proclamation underscores, bolds, and highlights this fact.

While Indigenous women hold this truth, we also define the strategies and methods because we know what is measurable, and we know what matters to us and to our people. And because of federal removal policies and urbanization, we know why our communities look the way that they do. It is equally important here to raise that Indigenous communities utilize practice-based evidence to inform activities and interventions because, again, we know what works. Our practice-based evidence does not seek to disregard or undermine evidence-based practice. Rather, we seek to emphasize the intrinsic and holistic knowledge of our communities. In essence, we need to be trusted with what we already know.

Before we can accomplish the full list of recommendations from our stakeholders, as told to us and which are fully outlined in the Appendix, these three steps must be taken first and must be fully supported by philanthropic partners:

- 1. As the critical first step, investment must be made in the continued convenings of this group of Indigenous women stakeholders to lead this work.** Many times we heard that there have not been these kinds of gatherings before and support is needed to help lay the groundwork for the movement of Indigenous Women’s Reproductive Justice with the current stakeholders and with many more stakeholders from Tribal nations across the country.
- 2. Indigenous women leaders will build the reproductive justice field through funding the expansive list of recommendations and will continue to pinpoint critical reproductive justice funding needs.** Through the ongoing series of regional and national convenings, similar to this project, they will identify and assert their role in the larger reproductive justice movement and develop an Indigenous Women’s Reproductive Justice funding platform, all facilitated and curated by Ms. Foundation for Women, who is readily equipped to co-lead this effort with their experience as an intermediary, with the infrastructure already in place to begin supporting this work.
- 3. Finally, the two previous pieces leading to the establishment of a fully realized Native-led reproductive justice organization.**

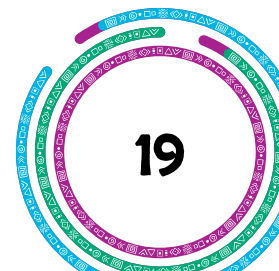
The following areas of funding needs and recommendations below, as shared to us by our stakeholders, are arranged by category with a brief narrative on the recommendation and its impact[s].

- **Capacity Building:** Indigenous women-led Reproductive Justice requires more convenings of this kind with current and additional stakeholders who will affirm the ongoing need for higher-dollar, multi-year investments. This will lead to the creation of a Native-led reproductive justice organization that will partner with existing organizations already prioritizing and championing reproductive justice work to strengthen and train Indigenous leaders and advocates who will center reproductive justice in their communities.
- **Direct Service:** Funding needs require more higher-dollar, multi-year investments to advance Indigenous health equity and result in broader representation of Indigenous providers who will be trained in a reproductive justice framework that covers all aspects and the full range of reproductive health care—from abortion care and body sovereignty to birth justice and menopause care, and all the strands in between—to better respond to the health care needs of our communities. The investment into direct service must include funding that allows for legislative advocacy that will enhance and expand reproductive health care access via Indian Health Service, which “provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.2 million of the nation’s estimated 3.7 million American Indians and Alaska Natives.”⁹
- **Policy and Advocacy:** Funding commitments require higher-dollar, multi-year investments to ensure access to legislative vehicles that will drive proactive policy change that impacts and enhances direct service and will help to outline roadmaps for the dissemination of this information for the nearly 60% of Native people who receive care from Indian Health Service. It is critical that both Native patients and providers can access and advocate for all forms of reproductive health care regardless of their living situation (on or off an Indian reservation).

For the full list of funding recommendations as told to us by stakeholders, please see the Appendix.

These recommendations lay the groundwork for the movement of Indigenous Women’s Reproductive Justice with the current stakeholders and with many more stakeholders from Tribal nations across the country. It also arranges for the creation of an advocacy organization led by Indigenous women that solely focuses on the full spectrum of Indigenous Women’s Reproductive Justice and works to end the scarcity mindset in our communities that colonization has continued to use as leverage in pitting programs and tribes against each other.

9 Indian Health Service, “Quick Look,” <https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/factsheets/quicklook/#:~:text=The%20IHS%20provides%20a%20comprehensive,American%20Indians%20and%20Alaska%20Natives>



Call to Action

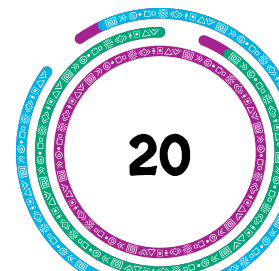
How do we move forward?

1. **Funders need to understand Indigenous communities by broadening their own understanding of the cultural contexts and applications of what a funding need such as capacity building means to Indigenous communities, and how capacity building is implemented through Tribal programs and services.** We know what we are talking about, and we know what we need and what our communities need, and funders need to trust our innate understanding.
2. **We know what we need, and funders and philanthropic partners need to be more flexible and more adaptable to our needs and not vice versa. We are tired of dancing to their song.** This is not a transactional relationship for either of us because we need each other. It is beyond time to examine your investment portfolios:

**What have you given to
Native-led organizations in the
last three, five, and 10 years?**

3. **Multi-year funding without restrictions is imperative because our issues are not annual trends. The issues in our communities are not one-year, two-year, or three-year commitments.** The work to end missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls has been ongoing for decades, although this epidemic is just now attracting attention and has entered the national conversation. And despite a burgeoning philanthropic commitment to Native communities by directing funding toward organizations working to expand and protect Native voting rights, the battle has been ongoing for centuries—since first contact, for citizenship in our own ancestral lands, which was affirmed in 1924 with the passage of the Snyder Act, and with full voting rights granted decades later with the Voting Rights Act in 1965.¹⁰

¹⁰ Library of Congress, “Voting Rights for Native Americans,” <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/elections/right-to-vote/voting-rights-for-native-americans/>



Conclusion

In the past, foundations and philanthropic partners have shared their funding priorities and have demanded that proposals cater to their own organization's identified priorities. Buzzwords like "innovation" and "resourceful" take on different meanings and are defined differently in the cultural contexts of Tribal communities. What might be considered and funded as "innovative" in an East or West Coast population hub may not be replicable or even possible in the predominantly rural setting of a Tribal nation. It goes without saying that funders and philanthropic partners need to be more flexible and more adaptable to our needs and not vice versa.

Indigenous Women's Reproductive Justice is a braid containing the many inseparable strands of:

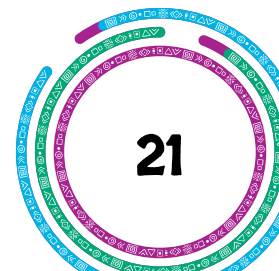
Abortion access, comprehensive sex education, full spectrum doula and birth care, miscarriage management, stillborn and grief and death care, fertility treatment, menopause research, land reclamation and water protection (encapsulated in environmental justice), language revitalization, family and community care within multi- and intergenerational households, State violence and the abolition of the prison industrial complex, cultural preservation and education, domestic violence and sexual assault prevention, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, historical trauma and resiliency, and living wages are all intertwined.

As mentioned, **currently there is no Indigenous Reproductive Justice organization led by and for Indigenous women.** Indigenous women leaders are and have been piecing together what the Indigenous Women's Reproductive Justice movement looks like because Indigenous Women's Reproductive Justice is often a secondary outcome to the direct service model that is dominant in Indian Country. But what if it were the primary focus, and not tertiary to the direct service work being provided? The investment of time and resources needs to be made because the investment has not existed to center Indigenous Women's Reproductive Justice.

A fully inclusive reproductive justice conversation is always mindful of Indigenous people because we are often left out and are forgotten from conversations. Going forward, we hope that every movement will always make space for us at every table. **Funders have a responsibility to acknowledge the work of Indigenous women, and a shared commitment to dismantling patriarchy.** The opportunity for growth on this frontline issue is immense and helps to create a better and more just world that understands the complexities of the issues and values the solutions Indigenous women bring forward.

All of the recommendations outlined by our stakeholders can and will be achieved by an ongoing series of regional and national convenings of Indigenous women to identify the role of Indigenous Women in the larger reproductive justice movement. An Indigenous Women's Reproductive Justice funding platform will also be developed, facilitated and curated by Ms. Foundation for Women, which is readily equipped to co-lead this effort with its experience as an intermediary, with the infrastructure already in place to begin supporting this work.

Furthermore, ANY funding of projects not led by these Indigenous women leaders or their communities would be inauthentic and equates to the historical looting and theft of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous women have continued to have the doors of philanthropy open just a sliver, if that, or entirely shut on them altogether.



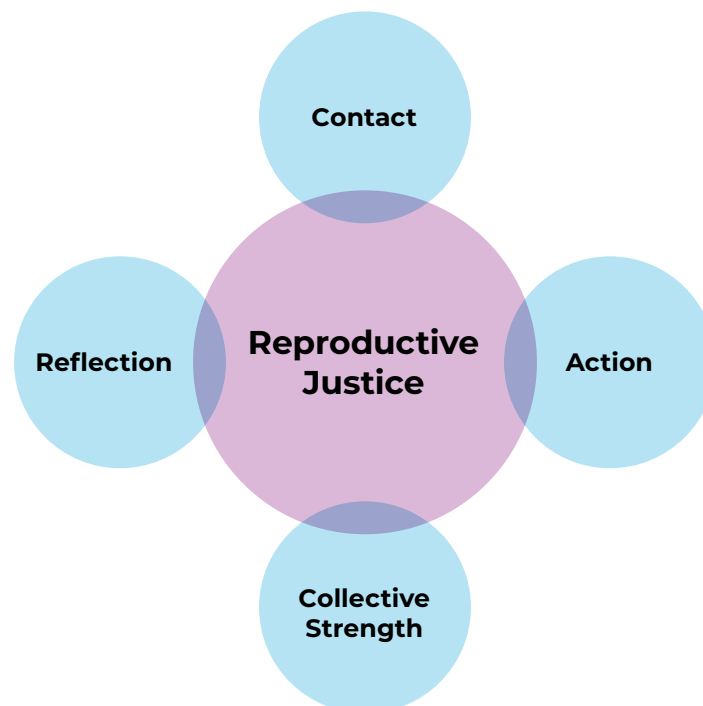
Appendix

We are including the recommendations verbatim from the Women’s Council because we did not want to synthesize these and possibly dilute their impact or meaning. We asked them to dream big and to come up with specific details, and you will see that below.

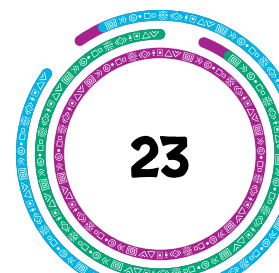
Each Women’s Council member had varying ideas around engagement and strategies of what could happen; this is not meant to be one plan, we wanted to include all of the possibilities in which to create change. Please note it is important not to read all numbers cited as one budget, but to view it as each Council member’s vision for the future.

Capacity Building

- **\$1,000,000 per year for three years (\$3,000,000 total)** for four regional convenings and for funding of one to four projects from each region at \$250,000 per region
 - Four regional gatherings during each year of the three-year grant, and each regional convening will be held at a time that works best for the Indigenous women of their region according to the season or moon cycle, with a total of 12 regional gatherings over the three-year grant period and each regional gathering will be held at a different location, to grow, expand, and strengthen our collective work in centering and upholding Indigenous Women’s Reproductive Justice
 - Project ideas to advance Indigenous Women’s Reproductive Justice will be generated at each regional meeting and funds from the respective region will go toward supporting one to four projects they all collectively agree on and that cover the following areas of funding needs: Prevention, Education, Policy/Advocacy, Capacity Building, Direct Service, Healing and Well-being
 - The project selection process is one of Decolonization, as shown in the diagram below and explained further



- Contact: Indigenous women are brought together in person or virtually for a total of four convenings each year from the Six Directions: North, East, South, West, Above, and Below. Above represents the youth as they are the ones who are held up and supported by those Below, who are the elders
 - Action: Indigenous women brainstorm, have discussions, cook together, eat together, sing, share, connect, dream, teach each other and learn from one another, and create strategies and action steps
 - Collective Strength: We move together, we support each other, we find ways to hold each other up as we face the obstacles and challenges that may get in our way. We speak! We march! We advocate! We let our voices be heard in many ways!
 - Reflection: We take time to reflect on what we are working toward and/or what we have accomplished, or what we are planning to achieve. We take care of ourselves. We take some quiet time to meditate, to pray, to connect and think. Then we start all over again with Contact!
- **\$200,000 each year for the next three years (\$600,000 total)** to launch a public education program in which we train trainers who are Indigenous women to work in their own communities to expand Indigenous women’s knowledge on the issues of population control and genocide and to identify and prevent within the Indigenous communities and to pass on our history of Indigenous women’s RJ to the next generation. The control of our Indigenous women’s body autonomy has been, and will continue to be, a very high priority of those who want to control the resources of our lands.
 - We will measure the success of the program by increased participation and interest. Social media and public community radio will be a large part of program implementation
 - Develop and implement a strategic plan with stakeholders, youth, and elders to ensure the next generation is ready to lead and to combat and prevent “zero population growth” of Indigenous Peoples
- **\$250,000 for each of three years (\$750,000 total)** capacity building for Indigenous women-led work and Native networks between projects and organizations by creating spaces for peer learning, individual and collective skills building, and uplifting traditional responses to health, healing, and violence prevention centering Indigenous Women’s Reproductive Justice to build collective power and multi-generational learning and mentoring
- **\$250,000 for each of three years (\$750,000 total)** to support the critical needs for advocacy, training trainers, and education
- **\$100,000 for the coordination of these effort** for each of three years (\$300,000 total)
- **\$50,000 emergency** / set-aside funds for emerging or urgent issues and rapid response not yet determined that to allow organizations to respond to needs on the ground led by Indigenous women
 - Identify a partner organization to grant or regrant these funds and create a process for disbursement and tracking



- **The creation of a non-profit entity to start with gathering information** about Tribal Reproductive Justice resources, eventually this entity could serve as a clearinghouse of Tribal Reproductive Justice information and resources across the country (i.e., a Tribal capacity building center for Reproductive Justice).
 - Build the knowledge capacity of tribal leaders so they are better positioned to understand the impacts of Reproductive Justice and to advocate for expanded Reproductive Justice resources for and within their communities.
 - Ideally, the entity would also be able to provide financial resources (through fundraising or grants) to tribal communities for Reproductive Justice related training for providers or services to tribal communities
 - Funding needed would cover the cost of, at least, 3 full-time staff members, travel, technology, and a small initial grant program that focuses on one or two Reproductive Justice services for tribal communities.
 - ▶ Years one and two would serve as major planning and implementation years respectively before being fully able to implement additional resources or services based upon the needs identified by the tribes, tribal communities, and tribal leaders.
 - ▶ Significant amounts of consultation with tribal leaders, tribal providers, and tribal communities will be necessary to best understand the needs of the communities to better focus the work of the entity.
 - Examples of measurable goals for the initial funds would be:
 - ▶ Increased Access to Abortion Services
- **Provide funding** for x# of abortions in tribal communities
- **Provide funding** for x# of providers in tribal communities to be trained on medically assisted abortion services
- **Provide funding** for x# of tribal communities to receive resources and information on the importance of access to abortion services
 - Increase the knowledge capacity for tribal leaders, tribal providers, and tribal communities on Reproductive Justice
- **Create a training** curriculum with a focus on Indigenous Reproductive Justice
- **Create resources and documents** to assist tribal leaders, tribal providers, tribal communities in their understanding of Reproductive Justice in tribal communities
- **Provide Reproductive Justice training** to x# of tribal leaders
- **Provide Reproductive Justice training** to x# of tribal providers
- **Indigenous women-led leadership and organizational development**, as self-defined by the organization to identify their own needs and to continue to foster all levels of grassroots and community-based voices

- ▶ For example, one organization may need “Abortion 101” branding and messaging, while another organization may need a financial assessment to put the infrastructure in place to become a fiscal agent for new and allied programs and to support pathways that are already in place
- ▶ State-level networking and collaborations, ensure that Indigenous voices are represented and heard (i.e., doula coalitions); and not just in Tribal communities, but statewide and national to broaden the networks of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

Direct Service

- **\$350,000 for each of three years (\$1,050,000 total)** to support, regenerate, and advance community centered, culturally grounded remedies and responses that engage traditional healing practices and that honor and center Indigenous women’s knowledge
 - This takes long-term planning, funding, and investment of resources such as research and project innovation, and assurance that this support includes all stages (i.e., birth, coming of age, midwifery, abortion access and body sovereignty, menopause, etc.)
 - ▶ Direct services to Native women for reproductive health and justice are critical and currently not being remedied by conventional methods (i.e., Indian Health Service, etc.)
- **Providing equitable and sufficient reproductive care for all Native people** by training and licensing Indigenous nurses and other providers so we can more fully represent and be responsive to our communities because until we get our own people through licensed programs we will not be able to truly serve our communities.
 - Utilizing established clinic sites as places of advancement and training for reproductive health services, education and movement building
 - ▶ Identify a regranter to distribute grants to fund training programs and other community groups who are working on similar issues and will provide a means of continued support for the training programs
 - ▶ A training and licensing program housed in a self-determination and liberation-focused, progressive, feminist clinic will teach providers to utilize a Reproductive Justice framework while providing care for our communities
- **Funding abortion access and Birth Justice for Indigenous women** via start-up organizations and/or established programs
 - The needs must be defined by the communities, with an understanding that Reproductive Justice is Environmental Justice and all the pieces are connected and cover the full lifespan of Indigenous women
 - ▶ In Birth Justice, ensure that programs like lactation support circles and Indigenous doulas and midwives have access to credentialing services

- ▶ Implementing Medicaid reimbursement for health care providers, removing stigma that IHS is inferior to private hospitals for pregnancy care, advocating for non-experimental Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) use at IHS providers, and tracking hysterectomies and interrogating why this is and has been considered a necessary procedure for Indigenous women
- ▶ Training the next level of health care providers (OBGYNs, nurses, midwives, doulas, social workers) and building connections with education programs at local Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)

Policy and Advocacy

- **\$100,000 for each of three years (\$300,000 total)** in the current Administration to work closely with key congressional allies to develop high-impact legislation, gain support for the issues on the ground in the community, and to develop partnerships in advocating for proactive laws and policies at Indian Health Service (IHS) and tribal health systems that impact so many of our most vulnerable Native women and children
 - Measurables:
 - ▶ Legislative meetings with congressional champions
 - ▶ Letters of support from legislators for identified issues
 - ▶ US Food and Drug Administration allows for over-the-counter low-dose progestin-only hormonal birth control pill
 - ▶ Letters from legislators to IHS in regards to unanswered FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) requests and other inquiries
 - ▶ Schedule meetings with IHS leaders and staff
 - ▶ Release a new Government Accounting Office (GOA) report
- **US Representative Ruben Gallego (AZ) is willing to request and to push for its publication**
 - Implement three areas of Tribal Law and Order Act that IHS has neglected regarding their incomplete Sexual Assaults and Domestic Violence Policies
- **Ensuring the enactments of laws** already on the books is vital for Tribal nations to advance any progress at the federal and tribal levels
- **Broad sharing** of these findings with Indian Country

Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the support and participation of the following individuals and organizations:

Charon Asetoyer (Comanche Nation)

Peggy Bird (Kewa Pueblo)

Katrina Cantrell (Western Shoshone)

Stephanie Lozano (Ho-Chunk Nation)

Malia Luarkie (Laguna Pueblo)

Tia Oros Peters (Zuni Pueblo)

Dr. Corrine Sanchez (San Ildefonso Pueblo)

Trishala Deb, Senior Program Officer at
Collaborative for Gender and Reproductive Equity

The Ms. Foundation for Women team:

Zachary Packineau (Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation / Santa Clara Pueblo),
Consultant

Coya White Hat-Artichoker (Sicangu Lakota), Program Officer

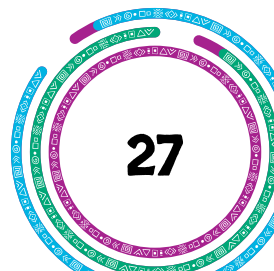
Tamara Vasan, former Director of Institutional Partnerships

Roz Lee, former Vice President of Grantmaking

Ellen Liu, Senior Director of Grantmaking and Capacity Building

Teresa C. Younger, President and CEO

Additionally, we benefited from the knowledge and contributions of people not named in this report.



**It is time to trust the leadership
of Indigenous women.**



Ms. Foundation for Women
1 Willoughby Square, Suite 2000
Brooklyn, NY 11201
212.742.2300

forwomen.org