

WE

ARE

THE

SEVENTH



GENERATION

An Assessment of the Needs and
Potential of Native Youth Organizing

AN HONOR THE EARTH PUBLICATION

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An Assessment of the Needs and Potential of Native Youth Organizing

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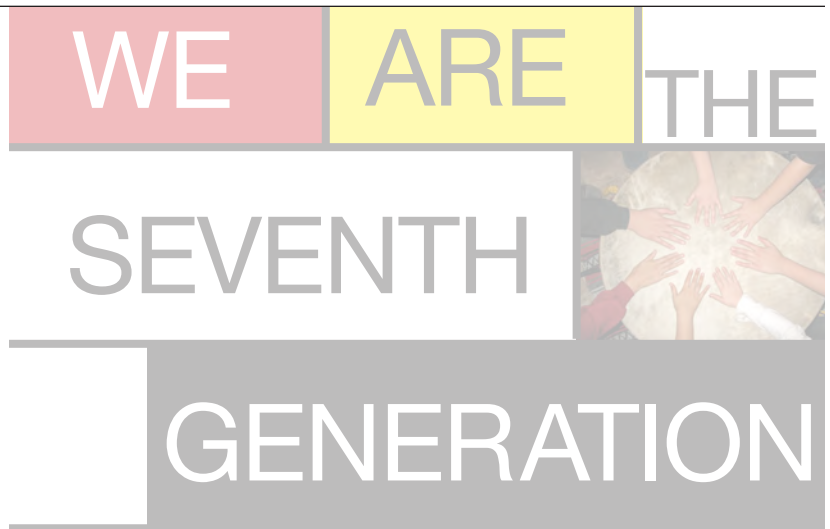


Photo by Keri Pickett

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WE ARE THE SEVENTH GENERATION



I. Introduction: Why Support Native Youth Organizing?

“If we don’t train and give young people what they need in order to succeed then we failed as a society. If we don’t teach people the culture or the language, and teach them to be proud of themselves and do good things for their people then we failed our own ancestors.”

— HEATHER MILTON-LIGHTENING, FORMER IEN YOUTH ORGANIZER

WHO IS THIS GENERATION OF NATIVE YOUTH?

In Ojibwe prophecies, this time is called the time of the seventh fire. It is a time when our people have gone through horrific loss and grief and been forced down paths of destruction for centuries, but survived. It is a time when the generation before looked back to find out who we were before colonization - before the boarding schools, the inundation of assimilation, the loss of language and forced conversion to Christianity - and that generation said knowingly, “this is the people our ancestors were. And, we are also these people.” It is a time when our people can make deliberate choices that will allow us all to live in peace with the Earth.

This generation of young people is the seventh generation after the Indian Wars. They have a genetic memory of resistance, a memory of devastation and horror and a memory of beauty. This generation of young people was born after the Red Power movement and cultural renaissance of the 1960’s and 1970’s. The resurgence grew urban and reservation-based Native institutions and programs- from American Indian Centers to tribal colleges- and resulted in a remarkable reclamation of art, ceremonies, social gatherings and traditional knowledge.

While the landscape of Native America has changed dramatically in the last twenty years, this generation faces a set

of struggles that do not differ radically from their parents’ era. Struggles over land and treaty rights, self-determination and decolonization, struggles to preserve and protect culture and life ways persist. Emerging from the natural resource and energy wars of the late 20th century, including battles over dam projects that drowned entire cultures and histories and the encroachment of uranium and coal mining to feed a voracious and wasteful U.S. economy, this generation grew to adulthood living and learning about environmental justice, and they can draw on the experience and movements of their parents. This generation learns from the victories, mistakes, and endurance of previous generations, which enables them to create paths for today.

This generation of youth is more multi-racial than previous generations. Some of the youth interviewed in this report are Native and Asian, some are Native and Jewish, some are Native and Euro-American, and others are Native and African American, just to name a few of the bloodlines. How does this impact consciousness and identity? They proudly draw on the many ancestors they have and embrace their heritage, facing the specter of blood quantum, enrollment, and skin color divisions, as well as off-reservation versus reservation legitimacy, in a way that breaks down artificial barriers that allegedly define who is an Indian. These difficult racial and ethnic identity challenges are being addressed while simultaneously creating cross-cultural and multi-cultural forms of

political expression, such as Indigenous hip hop and spoken word, which are organically growing in a unique Native style.

Some of these youth were born into families who tried to find a path in the dominant culture- who studied, emulated, and found ways to survive in industrial and corporate America. Their children were born far from the reservations of their ancestors. Others were raised in foster and adopted homes, some full of love and support, some full of abuse. Studies indicate that in this generation, over one quarter of the Native youth in Canadian reserves and almost as many in the U.S. may have been raised in non-Native households.

In this new millennium, the expansion of technology, along with the groundwork of alliance building forged by previous generations, means our youth are more exposed to, and therefore influenced by, political and social movements nationally and internationally than were their elders. While tribal identity remains strong, our youth also embrace a Pan-Indian and global Indigenous identity where struggles, defeats and victories around the world, from Bolivia to New Zealand, reverberate in their own hearts.

During the course of our lives, we have watched this next generation emerge. We have had a hand in raising their consciousness, feeding them, and bringing them along with us to ceremonies, protests and the corn fields. We have done

our best to give them the tools they need to continue this struggle for our land, water, and relatives, and we pray that they will succeed. We recognize that their interpretation of teachings is different than ours, and that the world they live in has changed. Strategies of organizing differ: they are now on twitter and use technologies that baffle their parents. At the same time, some of the core principles of movement building, community and cultural restoration, direct action, and strategic analysis remain essential parts of how change is made. Today's youth undertake this work with new vigor and enlightenment.

The fact is that our youth need to be fully empowered to make a better future for themselves and for the next seven generations. In this report, we attempt to bring light and focus to current organizing work led by Native youth. It is apparent that a foundation exists for building the intellectual and social capital needed to make change. Already in existence is bare bones organizing capacity along with extremely dedicated leaders. Targeted and significant investment will be essential to nurture the work of young people in restoring our culture, language and ways of life, and in resisting the onslaught of corporate development. This support will not only renew Indigenous communities, but also American society as a whole. As we look at creating a sustainable America, the work in Native America is central- whether that work is in resisting a reboot of nuclear power



or the further development of coal or in restoring and building sustainable economies based on land, wind and sun, or whether it is the protection of sacred sites or the revitalization of language. The concept that Indigenous knowledge is essential to our collective survival on this Earth is gaining ground globally, and it is our youth who are applying this knowledge system to solve today's immense challenges.

Honor the Earth's assessment emerged from years of reflection around a set of questions that pertain to how change is made in our communities and how to further support young people in making a better world for those who have not yet arrived. We wanted to know how and why youth did this work and what we needed to do to nurture our young peoples' efforts for the long-term. That is why we engaged in this process of interviews and report.

This assessment is based on information gathered from 29 Native youth organizers across the continent, ranging from coast to coast, both north to south and east to west, along with contextual demographic statistics. The organizers' interviews provided important insight into the status of Native youth organizing, illuminating its strengths and challenges and resulting in key recommendations for funders of Native youth organizing work.

UNIQUE NATURE OF NATIVE YOUTH ORGANIZING

Even the term "youth" has a broader definition in Indian country than the rest of the U.S. and extends roughly to the age of 30, but is fluid. Organizing also looks different and may not have some of the formal structures or quantifiable outcomes that come with more widely accepted organizing models. Indeed, measuring restoration of culture isn't an


easy thing to do. Similarly, restoration activities are widely varied and lack "deliverables" that can be checked off in a grant report. For example a community garden project may only produce a few pounds of produce whose direct health benefits are hard to account for, but reconnecting a community with the land, demonstrating self-sufficiency, and gathering youth and elders around a common project clearly reverberate in a more significant way than can easily be measured.

Many Native youth come from a position of wealth despite a lack of financial resources. Most know who they are, have extended families, ceremonial practices and ways upon which to rely. This is more than identity politics; this is the basis for understanding position in the world, from a place of power. Native youth strive to nurture this strength and wealth.

NATIVE YOUTH MOVEMENT- DOES IT EXIST?

There's not consensus among our interviewees around whether a single cohesive Native youth movement exists and if it exists what it looks like. There seem to be geographic pockets of location-based movements, especially in southwestern cities with significant Indian populations. Isolated reservation communities seem less likely to feel connected to a broader Native youth movement as Lilian Hill pointed out, "[It's] hard to see [the movement] when you're isolated, rural." Many answered the question "Is there a Native youth movement?" with variations on Hertha Woody's response, which was that yes in her area there is a movement, but she's not sure about other places. Most responses were positive, that a movement does exist, but described it as "segregated," "isolated," "abstract" and "not cohesive."

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II. What Our Youth Are Up Against

STATE OF NATIVE YOUTH & WHAT THE STATISTICS REVEAL

The challenges our Native youth face as activists and organizers are huge. The dark statistics that depict the ongoing suffering in Indian country are well-known, but deserve to be re-told here as they portray the multiple barriers our young people must overcome in their own development as well as in their work with communities in order to aggregate and build personal and political power.

HISTORICAL TRAUMA AS BACKDROP FOR BLEAK STATISTICS

Scholars Marie Yellow Horse Brave Heart and Lemyra De-Bruyn explain that, “American Indians experienced massive losses of lives, land, and culture from European contact and colonization resulting in a long legacy of chronic trauma and unresolved grief across generations. This phenomenon... contributes to the current social pathology of high rates of suicide, homicide, domestic violence, child abuse, alcoholism and other social problems among American Indians.”¹

Carrying around a combination of trauma from unresolved historical injustice and the feeling that it’s not okay to express the grief that weighs heavy on our youth, whose parents and grandparents experienced genocide firsthand. The historical violence reverberates today as racism and oppression, which exacerbate destructive behaviors.² It is difficult for the dominant culture to comprehend how much this historical trauma permeates Native American concepts of identity.

Systemic social issues plague Native communities. Loss of

control over our land, economies, political structures and cultural institutions along with the deliberate installation of shame and stigma through forced assimilation and institutionalized racism are reflected not only in dire statistics, but also in day to day life, which all too often is filled with tragedy, crisis, violence, and death.

The experience that one has no options and that the future will be no different than the present or past is scarring to the soul. In terms of social stratification, Native peoples remain either on the bottom or very near bottom in every indicator of material and social well-being.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY

The national average reservation unemployment rate is 49%.³ In 2005, the most recent year for which we have reservation employment data, the national unemployment rate was 4.9%⁴ and the current national unemployment rate had risen to 9.7%. Unemployment rates on reservations have likely also risen due to the economic downturn.

The 49% unemployment rate in Indian Country lies in stark contrast not only to the national average, but also to the rates of other racial groups. In 2009, the unemployment rate for Caucasian Americans was 8.3%, Asian-Americans had an unemployment rate of 14.8%, Hispanic-Americans an unemployment rate of 11.6%, and African-Americans an unemployment rate of 14.8%.⁵

Corresponding household wealth is also low. In 2007, the median income of Native households was \$35,343.⁶ This income ranks second-worst among racial groups in the U.S. and is far lower than the \$50,233 median income for the whole population.⁷

Not only is the median income for Native families low, the percent of families living below the poverty line, at 27.1%, is the highest among all racial groups in the United States.⁸ In communities where a subsistence economy and agriculture remains strong, these income statistics have less resonance because we can at least feed ourselves from our land. However, a cash economy continues to inundate our reservations, and with present dominant economic policies pushing more cash dependence into tribal communities, income disparities become more pronounced and significant in terms of impact.

VIOLENCE

As a result of internalized oppression, poverty and historic trauma, Native communities often deal with ongoing crises of violence. Gangs are rampant in many Indian communities and Native Americans experience violent crime at twice the national average. In some places it is twenty times higher.⁹ Much crime goes unpunished, if it's even reported. Only 3,000 law enforcement officers patrol 56 million acres of tribal land and even then, jurisdictional issues make prosecution of non-whites (responsible for two-thirds of violent crimes against Native people) next to impossible, meanwhile tribal courts have limited authority to handle crimes committed by Indians.¹⁰

Particularly troubling is the United States Justice Department finding that American Indian and Alaska Native women are 2.5 times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than women in the United States in general; more than one in three Native women will be raped in their lifetimes.¹¹ 86% of those attacks are committed by non-Natives, over whom tribal officers have no jurisdiction.

CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY

It is no secret that alcohol and substance abuse is rampant and causing serious problems in Indian country. Native Americans have the highest rate of substance abuse of any demographic group, leading to high rates of violent and property crime.¹² The risk for alcohol-induced death in Native communities is the highest among all racial groups.¹³ Native youth are particularly vulnerable. American Indians between the ages of 15 and 24 are 17 times more likely to die from an alcohol related accident or illness than their counterparts in the general United States population.¹⁴ Native youth also have the highest rates of illicit drug use.¹⁵

EDUCATION AND COMPUTER LITERACY

Native students often struggle in school for a variety of reasons that include a lack of cultural competency of educators, harassment, racism, and a laundry list of social problems that are on average much more likely in one of our students' homes. According to a 2007 study, a larger percentage (66%) of Native 8th-grade students report absences from school than 8th-grade students of any other race or ethnicity (36% to 57%).¹⁶ Native students also report a higher suspension rate than students of all other racial groups except for African American students.¹⁷ Native Americans fare second-worst in attaining a high school and college education,¹⁸ and Native students drop out at nearly twice the national rate.¹⁹

Computer literacy rates are also low for Native youth. In 2007, 78% of Native 8th-graders in public schools reported using a computer at home, which was lower than the percentage for 8th-graders of any other racial/ethnic group (82% to 96%).²⁰ In rural/reservation areas, computer literacy is even lower. One study found that only 26.8% of rural Native American households have access to computers and only 18.9% have access to the internet.²¹

SUICIDE

Native youth aged 15 through 24 have a suicide rate 4.4 times higher than the national average, the highest rate for all ethnic groups in the United States.²² Some reservation communities like Pine Ridge and Rosebud in South Dakota have seen such high levels that they have declared suicide states of emergency.^{23 24} And while more than half of the people who commit suicide in Indian Country have never been seen by a mental health professional, 90% of all the teens who die of suicide suffer from a diagnosable mental illness at the time of death.²⁵

Native youth also face dire physical and emotional strife. Native children suffer the highest rate of child abuse and neglect.²⁶

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Native youth suffer the second highest rates of asthma out of any ethnic group²⁷ and suffer from diabetes at a rate that is higher than any other population, since one third of the service population in many reservation areas suffers from diabetes. Indeed, if the youth do not have diabetes, they suffer from the specter of diabetes, as they watch parents and relatives on dialysis and the ongoing high rates of amputation with Native Americans being almost three times as likely to die of diabetes as the general population.²⁸

Similarly, rates of many cancers, obesity, heart disease, stroke and HIV/AIDS are much higher in our communities than those of whites.²⁹ Even those youth who are not physically ailing almost certainly have family and friends that are very sick.

TEEN PREGNANCY

The complexity of Native youth and women's health is not addressed fully in this report or the statistics we analyze. Birth in Native communities, or for instance "birth out of wedlock," carries a different valuation than that in a Euro-American society. Historically, Native family structures were different, less nuclear, and Native people had our own forms of birth control, as well as young women's and men's puberty ceremonies which afforded more clear roles and decision-making in Native lives. The loss of control over this age-orientation and teachings about birth is a dire strike at Native values.

This historic trauma was compounded by the 1970's era sterilizations of Native women, on top of a previous five-generation-old experience of genocide. Understanding that Native youth fertility and birth in Native America cannot be viewed with Euro-centric eyes, the loss of control over Native women's bodies, lack of access to birth control knowledge (traditional or in western medicine) remains a primary factor in the rise of Native youth pregnancy rates.

At the same time, having children and bringing forth more Indigenous people is also a form of resistance when communities are seen as "disappearing" or becoming extinct, either politically or in terms of blood quantum genetics. Having stated this (a political point discussed more widely by Indigenous scholars), youth having children without a conscious process, without full maternal health benefits, with potential impacts from alcohol and drugs running from their blood streams to their unborn children, is increasingly problematic. Hence, while the Native teen birth rate saw declines for more than a decade, it increased by 12% between 2005 and 2007, seeing the highest increases among racial groups and increasing at more than twice the national average. Now, 21% of Native teen girls will become mothers before turning 20.³⁰ In 2006, 90% of births to Native teens aged 15 to 19 were to unmarried moms.³¹ This statistic has some resonance, but must be interpreted carefully because it refers to marriages documented in U.S. institutions, not necessarily including all marriages that may be recognized by a family or tribal government, without regard for making it "official" with a marriage license.

Native youth are often not raised by their parents. In fact, 54% of American Indians and Alaska Natives ages 30 and older live with their grandchildren and are responsible for their care. The corresponding rate for the general population is 40%.³²

INCARCERATION

Our youth suffer quite oppressive arrest and incarceration rates as compared to youths in other racial groups. The rate of incarceration for American Indians and Alaska Natives is about 24% higher than the overall national rate. Between 2000 and 2007, the number of American Indians confined in jails and prisons nationwide grew an average of about 4.6% each year.³³ Nationwide, the average rate of new commitments to state prison for Native youth is 1.84 times that of white youth.³⁴

If arrested, our youth are more likely than their counterparts in other racial groups to receive the most punitive sanctions. Native youth are 1.5 times more likely to receive waivers to the adult system and out of home placement than white youth.³⁵ To ground these numbers with a specific example, in Oklahoma, Native youth account for 11% of the state's population. However, 16% of the youth sentenced to an institution and 28% of the youth prosecuted as adults in the state were Native youth. Those Native youth who were detained were 2.5 times more likely to have their cases petitioned for court involvement, 2.4 times more likely to be transferred to the adult criminal system, and 1.6 times more likely to be placed in secure custody than their white counterparts.³⁶

In South Dakota, the difference is even more stark. South Dakota's Native youth population is approximately 13%, but Native youth accounted for approximately 45% of the youth incarcerated at the South Dakota State Training School in 2000. That particular facility placed youths in dangerous conditions and utilized abusive practices, such as placing youth spread-eagled in four-point restraints. Before class action litigation challenged the practices of the South Dakota juvenile correction system, most Native youth in custody were deprived of access to important cultural and spiritual development activities.³⁷

In short, the prison complex has a devastating impact on Native communities, and is a huge shadow in Native organizing work- one that is barely addressed today in many of our communities- yet requires and deserves more attention. Most of the work we profile in this report involves individuals and organizations who seek to keep Native youth from entering the

predatory and destructive system, but very few Native youth organizers, or indeed very little of the Native community, has the resources to deal with the epidemic of incarceration and its impact on Native America. Indeed, in many Native communities, the loss of young men from the reservation area to prisons and jails has a demographic mark on the community, and certainly a huge impact in terms of loss of potential labor and intellectual power. This treatment only contributes to the tragedy that our Native youth face.

MILITARY ENLISTMENT

Another source of suffering in Native communities is traumatized veterans bringing the psychological impacts of war back home to the reservation. Native American enlistment rates are historically the highest of any ethnic group. At the turn of the century there were nearly 190,000 Native American veterans in the US³⁸ and a Native veteran organization estimates that 22% of Native Americans over 18 are veterans.³⁹

Not only are there a lot of Native veterans, but they tend to come back more traumatized than their non-Native counterparts because they are more likely to experience direct combat. Not surprisingly, Native soldiers show higher levels of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) than other soldiers. For example, a study of Native Vietnam veterans found rates of PTSD in the 45-57% range, likely caused by increased exposure to intense fighting.⁴⁰

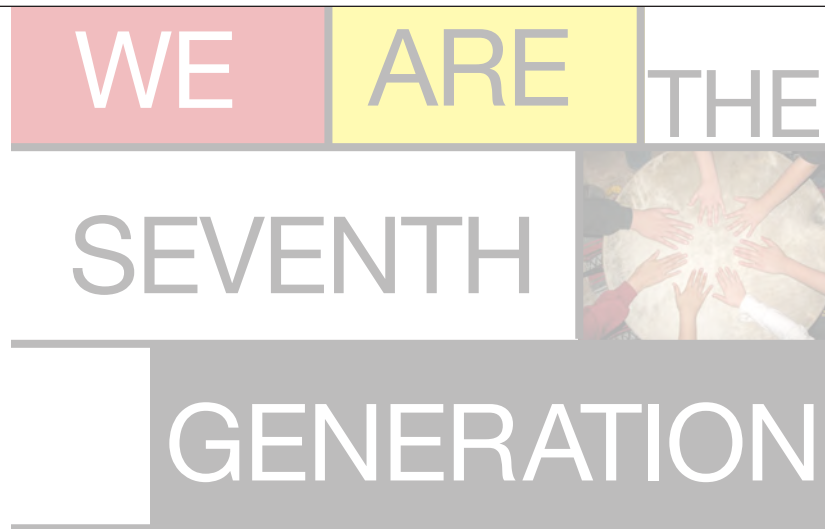
SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

Our people suffer from unresolved and ongoing multi-generational trauma which manifests itself and is exacerbated by dire economic and social circumstances. The process of “under-development,” where the continued loss of wealth, whether that be the loss of water rights, trees and forests, agro-biodiversity, sacred sites, or intellectual capital, continues to encumber Indigenous communities in our ability to have meaningful control over our own destinies.

Persisting and endemic racism, both societal and within the progressive movement at large, add to the accumulation of internalized oppression. Institutional racism means that the correctional, education and other systems often add to the problems they’re designed to prevent. Our people are often a footnote or invisible in politics, mainstream media, the art world and even in the social justice and environmental movements.

Many Native youth despair that the past and present represents their future. This is why the work of youth organizers is so critical to Native America. Creating mechanisms that allow other young people to channel anger, to envision and to begin creating alternatives and achieve small victories is a means to heal the people, the culture and the land.

Native youth address this reality as foundational to the work they are doing. The organizers interviewed for this report have worked hard to address and attempt to overcome their own oppression to carry out their conscious work. This set of interviews and assessment is a tribute to their work and a call to support them with more resources, and to do our part to remove some of the obstacles they face.



III. *The Promise of Native American Youth Organizing*

REASONS FOR HOPE: NATIVE YOUTH ORGANIZERS' POTENTIAL TO CREATE A BETTER FUTURE

A heartening reality is that rather than giving up, there are many and varied examples of vibrant and vital youth campaigns and projects growing throughout Indian country. Many Native youth have embraced new technologies and are leveraging the power of social networking sites to build community. A great example of this is filmmakers Dallas Goldtooth and his brother Migizi Penseneau. They've made the hypocrisy and challenges many of our youth face much more real through parody videos than years of academic studies and social work. We refer you to "New Moon Wolf Pack Auditions"⁴¹ and "Indian Names for Sale!"⁴² as two (hilarious) videos to view on Youtube that parodize Indian stereotypes and create a broader awareness of serious issues. Another excellent example is SNAG magazine,⁴³ led by Ras K'Dee, which showcases youth-created writing and visual art. The magazine is visually striking and a poignant expression of the feelings and thoughts of the Native youth that create it. The success and influence of SNAG has expanded beyond the arts and into other culture-centered programs for youth.

Native youth are building awareness, capacity and a real infrastructure for self-determination in our communities. This work, if allowed to become rooted and prosper, will provide the essential elements of restoring and creating healthy Native communities.

Despite the daunting task of overcoming the historical trauma and social ills facing them, our youth organizers remain confident. One interviewee states, "I think our generation is starting to break the boundaries that a lot of our old genera-

tions accepted. I know that for my grandma's generation a lot of people suffered oppression so long that it just became accepted... now for our generation, I think things are starting to bloom. Now it's ok to be Native again."

We interviewed many Native youth organizers to get a sense of where they are, where they came from and where they are going. Common factors emerged and in the pages that follow we detail the themes that emerged.

THEME ONE: DEDICATION TO YOUTH ORGANIZING

An overarching theme that emerged from the interviews is tremendous dedication. Despite the challenges facing organizers, they remain committed. Several interviewees work on a volunteer basis, and many of their organizations rely heavily or exclusively on donated time and resources. Native youth organizer, Shelby Ray, explains, "It would be really amazing to get paid for your work." Endemic social problems and inadequate funding are in some ways already being overcome by the hard work of a group of incredibly dedicated individuals.

It is important to note that a majority of interviewees cited guidance received during their own youth as the reason for their dedication. Youth organizer Morning Star Gali, for instance, was raised by a Northern California Pit River family who was immersed in a land rights struggle. Her family has been politicized by this struggle, an instance known as the 1969 occupation of Alcatraz Island. Today, Morning Star works at the International Indian Treaty Council. She said, "I was raised with an understanding that I have a responsibility to protect the land. The ability to pass traditional Indigenous knowledge on to my children is so important to me."

THEME TWO: SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS AND EFFECTIVE WORK

Although barely funded or resourced, the Native youth movement undertakes and succeeds at critical junctures in our struggles by bringing in a new source of power and energy to communities often beleaguered with decades of resisting multinational oil and energy companies. “We have reached thousands of people, have raised awareness and have prevented major destruction of people doing things to themselves and to the land,” explained Evon Peter from Indigenous Leadership Institute. Evon emerged in the later part of the 20th century as a crucial organizer in Alaska, and was the youngest chief ever of Arctic Village, a community central to the opposition to oil exploitation in ANWR. Evon’s leadership has been critical to the emergence and nurturing of Native youth organizing as well as the larger Native environmental movement.

Many of the impacts of Native youth organizing are hard to immediately measure. They show themselves as increased sense of pride, better leadership skills, and increased awareness of culture, language and the issues facing Native peoples. None of these are easy to quantify, but they are the backbone of increasing our Native youths’ ability to make change in their communities. On a local level youth are involved in teaching culture, language and ceremony in formal alternative schools and less formal outings and meetings. They conduct workshops on topics as varied as leadership skills, financial literacy, and gardening. Art and media projects are also important components of the Native youth movement. Films, music and visual art serve both as creative outlets and organizing tools. In addition, youth organizers have seats on national committees, influence the actions of large banks, and impact sacred site legal work, environmental permit proceedings, and policy work from the tribal to international level. Below are a few highlights of the successes our interviewees have experienced.

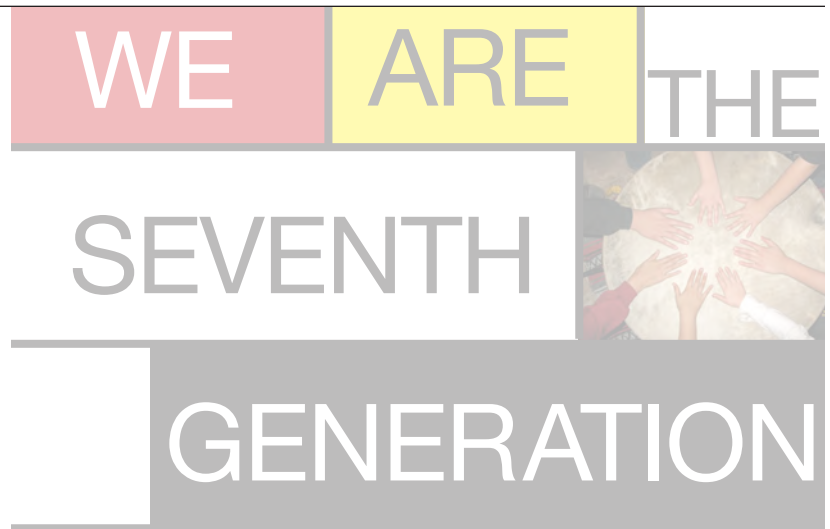
NATIVE YOUTH SUCCESES:

- **Eriel Deranger** – Large bank now consulting with First Nations and considering their interests, which is “huge”
- **Evon Peter** – Successful marches, reaching more than 700 youth a year with programs, providing support to Native leaders nationally, contributing \$3 million to Indigenous youth projects
- **Hertha Woody** – Seeing countless hours of work contribute to environmentally damaging water permits being withdrawn by the EPA.
- **Day Got Leeyos** – Youth getting to hear music they created played on a professional sound system.
- **Dallas Goldtooth** – Worked to enhance the culture of Native urban kids by bringing them together to participate in cultural ceremonies and to spend time with positive Native role models.
- **Morning Star Gali** – Organized youth-led sacred site protection campaigns and has contributed to favorable legal rulings to protect sacred sites such as the San Francisco Peaks and Medicine Lake.
- **Bunky Echo-Hawk** – Mentored kids at Standing Rock, many of whom have attempted suicide and/or lost family members to suicide. The mentoring included workshops and resulted in kids doing well in school.
- **Jessica Yee** – Seeing the country’s first Queer and national two-spirit Native youth photography project and the first Inuit sexual health conference ever.
- **Kandi Mossett** – Staying in contact with students and graduates, getting thank you notes, hearing from students trying to live more sustainably.
- **Ben Powless** – Formed a youth climate group with representatives from 50 youth groups in Canada. Assisted youth delegations in getting to climate negotiations in Copenhagen and the Powershift Climate Change Conference.

THEME THREE: EFFICIENT CAPACITY BECAUSE OF INADEQUATE FUNDING

Less than one percent of all philanthropic money in the country goes to Native America.⁴⁴ A miniscule amount of this gets to reservation communities, even less supports Native-led work and less yet goes to Native youth organizing. “We continually have to do more with less,” is how Donny Smoke-Adolph from American Indian Child Resource Center put it. Considering the tiny piece of the funding pie directed to youth organizing, Native youth do amazingly well. It’s ironic that a lack of funding has developed a positive outcome, but the Native youth movement has emerged largely in a funding vacuum. The benefit of this is that organizers are equipped to make extremely efficient use of funds. Native youth learn how to stretch a dollar because they must.

Funding Native youth who have few resources means that funds are used to leverage much more compared to conventional organizing work- every dollar is extremely appreciated and well-used. This means the return on investment of foundation dollars is huge in Native youth organizing. While the means of getting to this situation are not ideal, it poises Native youth organizing to make excellent use of financial support. It is also worth noting that this level of ‘efficiency’ is likely not sustainable because of the toll it takes on those working so hard for so little. In addition, this should not be misconstrued as advocating for small grants, rather as an indicator that grant funds are very well spent.



IV. Challenges Facing Native Youth Organizers

A. FUNDING

LACK OF GENERAL OPERATIONS FUNDING

Many organizers have difficulty acquiring funds to sustain or create basic organizational infrastructure. Maintaining an office and paid staff is not possible for many Native youth groups and a daunting challenge for nearly everyone interviewed. Project-specific funding is more common, but it does not address crucial capacity needs. Native youth organizer Hertha Woody says, “It is so disheartening to see the good [that organizers] want to do but can’t because of a lack of funding.” A functioning office with qualified staff is a basic necessity that does not exist for many Native youth groups. Staff salaries are often abysmally low or nonexistent and staff work long hours, taking on numerous organizational roles even when they’re not equipped to do so successfully. Combined with the sobering nature of the work itself, in the words of one organizer, this is, “a certain recipe for burnout.” In addition, this lack of funds coupled with great need creates damaging competition for funds among groups working on similar issues.

LACK OF LONG-TERM FUNDING

Multi-year funding and funding in significant quantities to satisfy longer-term needs are also seriously lacking. Relying exclusively on small grants means more time is necessary to write grants, and budgets must be put together piece meal. As one organizer explained, “I spend a ton of time doing the paperwork required to get the funding we need to survive rather than spending my energy on programming for the kids.” Inconsistent small funding streams make planning and implementing long-term workplans a challenge. One

organizer put it this way, “We are always having to ask ‘how much longer are we going to be able to keep going financially?’” And, in terms of the converse, funders often question the viability of these projects, which are penalized by their lack of access to resources. Hence, it is a cycle of lack of access to resources, lack of confidence by funders because there is no capacity to build infrastructure, and ongoing budget pinching and foundation reporting for grassroots groups. On the other hand, some movements and organizations are not needed to be in the presently funded form for more than two or three years, and therefore flexibility needs to be supported and strategies in funding need to be adapted.

LACK OF FUNDRAISING CAPACITY

Amplifying the challenge of not having sufficient funding is a severe lack of fundraising capacity. Organizers already tasked with piecing together small amounts of project-specific funding to make projects work are taking time off from their areas of expertise to fundraise. The process by which organizations must apply for funding is seen as arduous and extremely time consuming. Many youth organizers are unfamiliar with the process of applying for grants or methods of fundraising. Ben Powless from IEN/Youth Climate Coalition describes the dilemma by saying, “No one ever goes into the Native communities and says ‘you can get money and you can do projects, and here’s how.’” As a result, Native youth organizers find themselves without capacity and unable to hire an experienced grant writer or train existing staff members to fundraise due to lack of funds.

In addition, individuals often felt that gaining access to financial support from funders or foundations was over-

whelming due to the amount of requirements and lack of flexibility to accommodate Native youth organizations that may lack formal structure. As one interviewee put it, “It’s crazy that we have to jump through a lot of hoops as it is, just to get barely enough.” Meanwhile, others find the task daunting and often curb applying altogether. “You have to meet certain requirements for a lot of funding, it can be done, but it can be intimidating. I think that less people apply because of restrictions,” explained one organizer.

OUT OF TOUCH FUNDERS: THE NEED FOR CULTURAL COMPETENCE

An important part of the fundraising challenge identified by organizers is a lack of understanding between funders and Native youth groups. Funders often want to fund work with easily and immediately quantifiable outcomes that fall into specific pre-determined categories, even when that doesn’t match what those closest to the situation feel is needed to support Native youth. This dynamic forces Native youth organizers to stray from what they think is best in order to fit in a box so they may appeal to funders. “Funders don’t want to fund self concepts. They want to fund things like sports. So, we have to be creative and mix our cultural practices with mainstream practices in order to legitimize ourselves. Sometimes we cannot provide services that are specific to what our kids need,” is how one organizer explained it.

One interviewee pointed out that funders can also be out of touch with the healing from historic injustice that needs to take place within the Native community before work can get accomplished, “Funders are often detached from the reality of grassroots organizing and feel like we aren’t making enough progress.” One experienced organizer offered this advice, “Philanthropists need to understand that the people in the communities, the people who live here, we are the practitioners who create change— we have a vested interest because we are the ones raising our children here.” Cultural resurgence, improved self-concept, language-learning, and building relationships were identified as key components of successful work, but all are difficult to measure and funding for them is scarce.

This lack of understanding is also a barrier in terms of allying with and reaching out to the general public. Several organizers pointed to mainstream ignorance, mistrust, and misconceptions as barriers in their work. As one person stated, “I just got really tired of feeling the lack of support for Indigenous efforts in society at large. I am really tired of explaining myself over and over again and not having the type of support that I feel like could be coming from broader

society.” Native youth organizer, Heather Milton-Lightening pointed out the ramifications of not supporting Native youth organizing, “I think if we don’t train and give young people what they need in order to succeed then we failed as a society.”

B. ISOLATION: TRANSPORTATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Much of Native youth organizing is concentrated in isolated geographic locations (that is, isolated from American infrastructure but often at the well spring of Indigenous sacred society). Hence, access to reliable transportation and communication can be a serious challenge. Ben Powless explained that isolation (geographic and otherwise) plays a big role in the Native youth movement’s lack of cohesion. Many Native communities often have little technical infrastructure, making communication and travel expensive and difficult if not impossible. This barrier is especially large because of the combined impact of low income levels, increasing transportation costs and large distances to cover to organize and/or communicate with allies or the general public. In addition to unreliable and expensive transportation, basic services like internet and telephone access (when financially attainable) are often unreliable in rural reservation communities. Native youth organizers may need to travel long distances just to make a phone call or check e-mail and there are some communities that are only accessible by air travel, making any travel very expensive. Organizer Lilian Hill explained that isolation has led to a movement that lacks coordination, but has much more potential than is being currently realized.

C. MISCONCEPTION OF TRIBAL SUPPORT

The general consensus on Native youth organizers’ relationship with official tribal governments is that tribes are not doing nearly enough to support our youth’s work. Donny Smoke-Adolph attributes this in part to (in his case) working with kids from multiple tribes, resulting in no tribe funding the work.

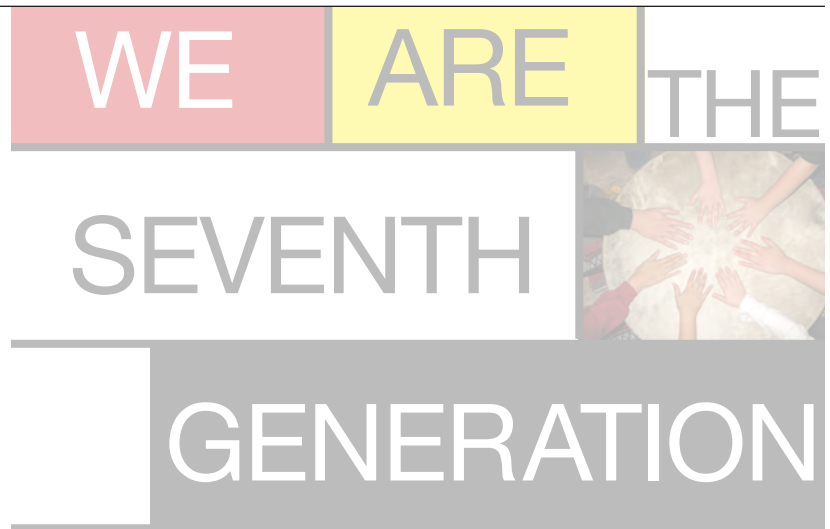
Varying degrees of Native youth support exist in tribal communities ranging from outright opposition to misguided support to solid healthy support. On the whole, it is not safe to assume that a given Native youth organization receives any support from tribal governments. In reality, many tribal governments have recently received a huge influx of funding to support policing of tribal youth, not supporting re-traditionalization or youth organizing, so the counter to supportive nurturing is underway. Tribal governments them-

selves may be dysfunctional, in dire financial circumstances, fighting ongoing jurisdictional battles with state governments, and in some cases just seeking to secure housing for their families, remaining unaware of the needs of Native youth organizers. Organizers also pointed out that there are numerous instances of bureaucratic barriers to seeking tribal funds, which prevent youth groups from approaching tribes for help.

And another important note is that despite media portrayals to the contrary, casino funding is rare, as Kandi Mossett pointed out, few tribes have successful casinos. Often, even successful gaming tribes do not provide support to youth organizing.

D. COLONIZATION'S LASTING IMPACT

Organizers mentioned that some of the issues they're advocating for are divisive in and out of their own communities. Issues like extraction and energy development are often controversial regardless of their affiliation with Native America, but are even more so in Indian Country because of limited jobs and the desperate need for income and revenue. Campaigns can be an uphill battle from the start with public opinion divided or against Native organizers. Additionally, issues like women's health and gay and lesbian rights remain controversial in many parts of Native America, which is the result of a long history of religious and social colonization. Hence, some of those individuals we interviewed face social obstacles to dialogue with tribal governments over such basic issues as access to birth control. Both Jessica Yee and Lilian Hill specifically mentioned decolonization as a clear part of the work of the Native youth movement.



V. Recommendations to Funders

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS TO SUPPORT NATIVE YOUTH ORGANIZING

1. PROVIDE LONG-TERM GRANTS WITH MINIMAL STRINGS ATTACHED

“Slow money” and a “triple bottom line” are terms used in the broader social investment movement and they need to be applied in supporting Native communities. The work these young people undertake is foundational to societal change. This is to say that our Native youth movement is on the front lines of battling behemoths like tar sands development in Canada, which is the single largest industrial project in world history and the bane of carbon emission reduction advocates this decade. The front lines of this and many related fights are Native youth organizers who are seriously underfunded. Simply stated, if foundations and socially responsible investors want to ensure that the planet does not bake, we might want to ensure that we invest in that change.

Native youth organizers are also the antithesis of dominant corporate culture. Studies indicate (and we just know) that culture is the antidote to gangs, to violence, and to high levels of over-consumption that plague Native and non-Native youth in an America that is addicted to consumption and corporate media. Native youth know who they are, can re-affirm life in ceremonial practices and stand for land, and because it is the place of our origin, Native youth have the potential to catalyze and inspire a larger youth movement for re-grounding and creating a just society. Native youth organizers and our movements need to see the light of day, the light of media and the ongoing support of foundations.

More large grants, especially multi-year general support grants, would build and sustain basic capacity and create durable examples that will create a ripple beyond Native communities. These types of grants would allow for planning and staffing of projects over their duration and create a much better chance of success. It would result in less staff burn out and turn over, create consistent leadership, and empower groups to make their own decisions about where to focus their energies. A build up in capacity and focus on self-determination would enable groups a chance to think long-term, build internal capacity, and have much more effective and sustainable operations in the long run.

SPECIFIC AREAS OF FUNDING THAT ARE SECOND PRIORITY TO GENERAL SUPPORT ARE:

- **Capacity Building**- especially to support fundraising, leadership, and organizational management training.
- **Youth Mentoring**- whether formal or informal, the majority of organizers cited guidance in their youth as a primary motivating factor in their own work. To sustain this work, this generation’s leaders must be able to pass the torch to the next. An important distinction should be made here to support mentoring that helps youth help themselves rather than creating more dependence.
- **Travel**- travel funds need to be disbursed especially in remote areas where ‘travel’ is part of normal daily operations because of sparse population density.
- **Technology access**- computers, internet access, and phone access are essential organizing tools that are lacking in many Native communities.

2. LEARN MORE ABOUT NATIVE YOUTH GROUPS TO BUILD TRUST AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Funders need to become more educated about the communities and efforts they are being asked to support and put more trust in the Native groups they fund. Native youth organizers demonstrate tremendous dedication and are immersed in their work. Their judgment should be trusted when it comes to deciding the details of how funds are allocated.

Funders taking a more active role in understanding the groups asking them for funding will help build understanding and trust, without which progress will not occur. Foundations have a right to have strong feelings about the projects their funds support, but it is essential, especially when crossing cultural borders, that those strong feelings be well informed and grounded in the community that the work is taking place in.

Researching specific communities applying for funding and recognizing their uniqueness within Native America, the issues they face, and their unique solutions will help break through the perception that funders lump all Native issues and communities together and do not understand cultural differences among Native communities, nor the unique points of view of each community.


When appropriate, site visits can be a powerful way for funders to gain insight into the on-the-ground realities facing Native youth organizers. It is difficult to comprehend the isolation facing Native communities without experiencing it through travel to remote areas and seeing the technological barriers first hand.

It is important not to impose European American concepts of organizing, as each community has its own style and obstacles.

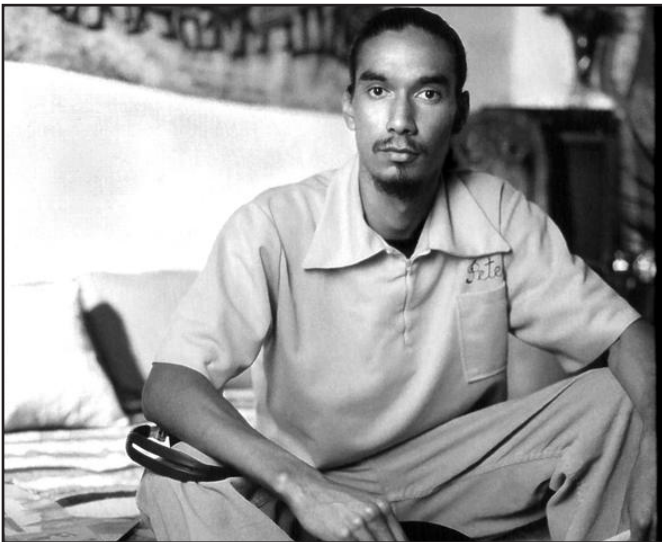
3. SUPPORT GATHERINGS AND COMMUNICATION-RELATED TECHNOLOGY UPGRADES.

The Native youth movement in the words of Lilian Hill, “comes alive” at gatherings. Funders should support regional and national gatherings that build Native youth solidarity and allow for the sharing of skills and experience. The lack of a broad, connected youth movement means that breaking down barriers that isolate organizers is a must. Funders should increase technology funding so organizers can connect digitally and travel funding so that face-to-face gatherings can be more regular and allow for more broad participation.

WE ARE THE SEVENTH GENERATION



VI. Profiles of Six Native Youth Organizers



RAS K'DEE (POMO)

**Seventh Native American Generation (SNAG)
San Francisco, California**

SNAG was co-founded by Ras in 2002 with other young leaders like himself. SNAG is designed to provide Native youth with the opportunity to address historical trauma and grievances experienced by Native peoples through the use of leadership in arts and cultural expression. Ras and others at SNAG train Native youth in multi-media skills and social communications in a way that is sensitive to Native traditions and spirituality. SNAG's work is multi-faceted including the production of magazines, music and international experiences. Ras' work with Native youth can be seen in communities across the globe.

A short selection from Honor the Earth's interview with Ras follows.

What have been some of your major successes?

Having our magazine come out every year - last year there were two issues produced and distributed. Also, with the magazine- we were able to publish a more professional magazine- 100% in color, about 40 pages long- printed in three different languages (Arabic, English, Spanish). We also started including a music CD in each issue. We've been collaborating with other Native musicians and artists. I think another success of ours is the fact that we continue to have free weekly workshops for the past three years. We're still learning and changing our program, it's not easy, but we end up impacting a lot of youth, which is the important part of what we do.

What kinds of support and infrastructure do you need to continue your efforts?

I think our biggest need is probably sustaining growth- we are relatively new and I think it's taken some time for funders to see that we are capable of creating quality projects, and we can sustain as an organization.

We always tell funders that the work that we do is supplemental education- we are supplementing what the schools aren't providing- we provide media arts training- layout design, video editing, audio production- those are they type of things that we teach. Eventually we would like to visit more reservations and do mobile training- where we train the youth at a given site, for a year, and when we were done, leave the equipment there for the communities- we would like to go to more rural communities and provide them with access to technology that we get in the cities.

Why are you dedicated to improving youth in Native America- why do you believe in your culture?

I'm inspired by the young people, our youth have a connection to the land, and more awareness than most people - it's a gift that not all people have. They can share experiences that are amazing and can be learned from. I do media work because I feel like Native people need a voice in mainstream media - people are starting to think about Natives in a different way. SNAG provides a platform for young Native people to speak, and feel empowered, and allows non-Natives to learn from our youth.



ADAM RECVLOHE (EUCHEE AND MUSCOGEE)
Language Revitalization Work
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Adam is a youth organizer working out of Tulsa, Oklahoma with tribal communities. Working for language and cultural preservation, Adam finds himself partnering with a number of groups to provide the most impact in his community, including groups such as the Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative and the United Methodist Church's Native American International Caucus. Adam's work has helped keep the Euchee language alive through Native youth language projects.

Why are you dedicated to improving youth in Native America?

It's important that we recognize how we treat our youth because ultimately that is how we treat ourselves. Youth are often forgotten. We don't actualize our own potential within our communities because we aren't looking at our youth to be the ones to take on responsibilities. The values and beliefs of our community are important and I want to be sure to

pass them onto the next generation.

Do you think there is a Native Youth Movement and where is it heading?

I think that there is a youth movement and it's picking up more interest because of issues of sustainability. People are seeing how their communities are being effected and how they will be effected in the future by climate change. The issues of food security, traditional knowledge and language- it goes all together. I think this has spurred interest in tribal knowledge and keeping that intact.

What pitfalls do you encounter in getting funding?

I think that, from personal experience- the funders need a better understanding of the expectations- they should have a better understanding of what it is they are funding. Funders should look more closely at who the project leaders are so that the money goes towards organizations and people that have the leadership ability to carry the grant out- I know that's hard to do, but if they could go further to find out more, I think it would help the whole process. Another challenge is getting the funders to see the importance of the project. Sometimes when projects don't necessarily produce tangible results, it can work against you. The language project is a good example of that - we have children learn the language and make significant progress but it's hard to show that to funders. For the Euchee community there aren't that many fluent speakers left - this is really important for us, I think for funders it's a harder outcome to grasp. In the long run, it's important for our people to learn the language.



JESSICA YEE (MOHAWK)
Native Youth Sexual Health Network
Toronto, Canada & Wisconsin, United States

Dedicated to creating social change in sexual and reproductive health for Indigenous youth, Jessica Yee founded the Native Youth Sexual Health Network at the age of 20. In doing so, Jessica has founded a remarkable group that now works internationally to empower and educate Indigenous youth. Jessica's stance on sex and reproductive education is simple: Indigenous youth need to re-learn traditional values apart from colonized views imparted on them. The network focuses on four main areas of work: Healthy Sexuality, Reproductive Justice, Cultural Competency and Youth Empowerment. The network is led by 25 staff members, all of whom are under the age of 30. With 13 collaborative projects spanning across the continent, the network is careful to avoid pan-Indian melting pot approaches and instead tailors their work to each individual community's needs.

A short selection from Honor the Earth's interview with Jessica follows.

What are some of your major successes?

Our greatest success isn't when people tell us we've done a good job, when other Native youth say we want to do this too is the real success. They can see themselves in the work and when people can envision them moving these issues. Take for instance the Native Youth Photography Project. This project is the first time that Native youth have nationally talked about fighting homophobia and healthy sexuality in public.

What are some of your greatest challenges?

A lot of work is being concentrated in the environment and tribal politics. We need to expand that and think about Indigenous worldviews on all issues and not put one on top of the other as more important. It's the topics that we're dealing with, sexuality and reproductive health & rights. People don't have sexual knowledge that these are Indigenous concepts. Homophobia is imposed by colonization and people aren't aware of this. So, people see this as bad or wrong. Truth is that Indigenous work is not just about land, it's about bodies, and our bodies are connected to our spirits. Our work is intersectional and multi-faceted.

What are the greatest needs of your organization?

To have more support from other Indigenous organizations, especially environmental justice organizations. The work needs to be taken seriously and there is a lot of decolonization work to be done within tribes and tribal governments.

Why are you dedicated to improving youth in Native America?

Because I exist. I don't know any different. I feel it, I live it, I breathe it. I become part of the problem or the solution. I take my role in the 7th generation very seriously. My family has shaped my activism and has shaped me to where I am today.



NICK TILSEN (LAKOTA)

**Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation
Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, South Dakota**

Nick is a fourth generation organizer who has participated in organizing campaigns from human rights to environmental justice and community economic development. At Thunder Valley he organized the building of the Thunder Valley Community House, built entirely by volunteers in the Pine Ridge community. The Community House is now used for anything from baby showers to board meetings and provides a central space for community-building activities. Thunder Valley also organized an entrepreneurship and financial literacy program for youth in the community and a partnership with local schools to teach children about their sacred sites and culture. The organization is now working to build an emergency youth shelter and is in the process of purchasing 85 acres of property for sustainable community development.⁴⁵

A short selection from Honor the Earth's interview with Nick follows.

What are your thoughts on philanthropy in Native communities?

One of the biggest problems with philanthropy on Indian reservations is that they have their own agendas and a mentality that is like "save the Indian." They often think that because they come from money, or a place of privilege that [since most Indians live in poverty] they can come into the community with their own ideas and enforce a plan or action.

Also, a lot of people have made great strides in challenging this, but when the statistics come back at the end of the day,

philanthropy in Native communities hasn't budged in the last 30 to 40 years, it's still less than one percent. If it can reach over one percent, that would be huge.

What is your vision for Native youth? What should the future look like?

I think it's important for young people to really know who they are, and where they come from. That is why we focus on the cultural aspect so much, because it helps build that confidence.

We want young people to realize that we [Native people] have the potential to create the future that we want for our communities. Once we have developed this sense of empowerment, I think that young people will create ways to support themselves and take care of their families.



**ERIEL DERANGER (ATHABASCA CHIPEWYAN
FIRST NATION)**

**Tar Sands Campaigner
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada**

Eriel works within the Rainforest Action Network (RAN) to build relationships between the mostly-white organization and First Nations communities impacted by tar sands development in Canada. As she puts it, she is "fighting tar sands as the First Nations' liaison." Eriel also targets Canada's financial sector, trying to get the country's largest banks to obtain free, prior, and informed consent from any Indigenous group impacted by a proposed project needing financing before the bank will lend the required funding for the project.

A short selection from Honor the Earth's interview with Eriel follows.

What are your greatest challenges in meeting your organization's goals?

One of my biggest challenges, as a young Indigenous person working in an all- white organization, is explaining to my co-workers how some of their goals are unrealistic. I feel like the white community is more fast paced and doesn't understand the healing that needs to be done, the relationships that need to be built, between the white and Indigenous communities before we can begin making leaps and bounds in the movement. The white community needs to build the trust of the Indigenous community before they can get these things done.

What pitfalls do you encounter in getting funding?

Funders are often detached from the reality of grassroots organizing and feel like we aren't making enough progress with the First Nations. However, they are starting to realize that even if you don't have concrete evidence of our efforts (in the form of letters or the like) we are starting to build the relationships we need in order to move forward.

Why are you dedicated to improving youth in Native America- why do you believe in your culture?

I grew up with a strong base of being proud of where I come from and who I am. I come from a political family so I have a strong understanding of colonization and the destructive nature of that— what it has done to my people. That same force hasn't just happened to my people but to many people across North America. Now we are standing forward and being proud.

I see so many of our young people displaying strong traits of internalized oppression. We represent 3% of the general Canadian population but 40% of the people are incarcerated. For me, that is a representation of what colonization has done to our people. Young people need to take positions of power to make changes. They need to be represented and make people proud of where they come from.

I have seen people from my family fall into that destructive cycle of abuse and destruction that we see in our communities. It means a lot to me that my family can look at what I do and be proud. I hope I am doing something that is inspiring to other young people.



EVON PETER (GWICH'IN)
Indigenous Leadership Institute
Fairbanks, Alaska

Evon has been working on improving the state of Native youth for 17 years, since he was 18 years old. He started the organization Native Movement, which has spawned about five major projects that are well on their way to becoming their own organizations. Through his various organizations, he has reached over 700 youth a year and has given speeches at conferences reaching forty thousand individuals. He has also contributed substantially to the protection of sacred sites and environmental justice and has raised \$3 million for Indigenous youth programs. Despite these amazing accomplishments, Evon is planning to soon cease his work in the non-profit sector because of his overwhelming frustration with the fundraising process.

A short selection from Honor the Earth's interview with Evon follows.

Do you think there is a Native Youth Movement?

I would say, yes there is. And it is showing up in unique ways. There is a whole generation of young Indigenous people under 40 (the age in which you are still considered a young person on reservations) that has been going through a process of shifting identity. It is up to our generation what we will learn and pass on to preserve our culture and languages. Otherwise we will be lost. We are now living in the last days of those elders who don't speak any English. This current generation is very different.

We are also living in the technology era. We are more fluent in English and the ways of Western systems than any generation of Native people before us. My mom's generation, for example, was boarding school era— that generation is heavily traumatized. Because of that trauma, that generation heavily suffered from alcoholism and drug abuse.

We are different. We didn't have to go through the boarding school experience unless we chose to. And the schools are different now. They now support the use of our Native languages rather than trying to eradicate them. So we, as young Indigenous people, are able to organize ourselves now. I just got an email about a young professionals organization starting up here in Alaska. We can now feed off each other's ideas and thinking.

So if you call that a movement, I don't know. I would say it is an organic manifestation of the need for change in community and society. There is a movement of change but it is not all organized through 501(c)(3)s. We are utilizing more creative ways to effect change. I, for example, have a for-profit LLC that I am using to promote social change (through facilitating Native philanthropy and running suicide prevention programs, among other things).

What pitfalls do you encounter in getting funding?

A lot of the larger organizations that have the capability to fund us enough to let us avoid having to write 30-40 grants a year won't grant to us because we are too small. We don't move enough money for them. So, we are stuck having to write multiple small grants.

The larger foundations have bureaucratic systems in place that don't allow them to grant to organizations that don't move \$400,000 a year. So, I have to write 20-40 grants a year and that is very frustrating.

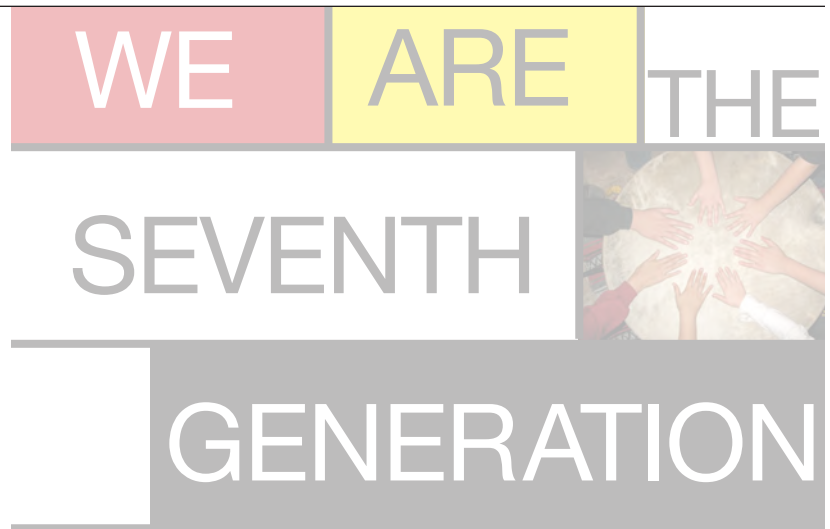
What kind of support and infrastructure do you need to continue and improve your efforts?

A solid, continuous funding stream. We are highly likely going to shut down our entire organization next year. Most of us are having to take other jobs and create for-profit organizations to feed our family. So that means we are shutting down even Native Movement (not just the Institute).

Why are you personally dedicated to improving youth in Native America?

Because I hate to see people suffering unnecessarily. In our society and culture there has been so much hardship and pain and traumas that are carried on and I would like people to have an opportunity to live a healthy, fulfilling life. I want to see people have a connection to a place, a family, and a community. That way they can live a healthy life rooted in culture.

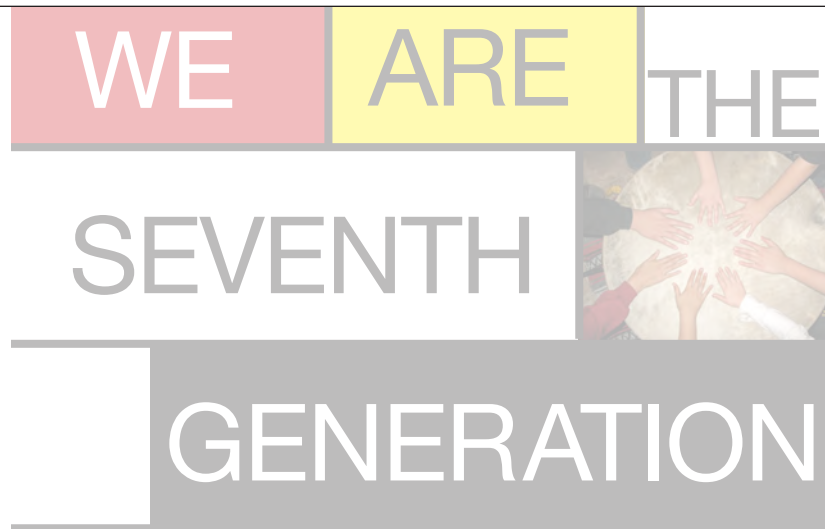
The path of developing identity is connected to social decay and environmental destruction. We need to stop that in order to foster a healthy way of life.



VII. Conclusion: Invest in the Seventh Generation

Corporations have long-term investment policies. Governments have twenty-five year plans. Youth organizing work is our future and deserves similar long-term planning and investment. Our societies have raised leaders, chiefs, and head women. For generations we have had this inter-generational perspective, a view, fogged perhaps, by a few decades of deep crisis. We recover, and we see what needs to be done to ensure a prosperous future. This requires a commitment of our hearts, our ceremonies, our knowledge, and our resources.

Changing society takes time, and it is not a road map well marked. Honor the Earth is committed to funding Native youth organizing work, to mentoring Native youth, and to demanding of ourselves and our Native youth to do the best of our abilities. We believe that the foundation community should do the same and direct significant funds to Native youth organizers so they may make a better future for their communities.



VIII. *Research Methodology and Participants*

The following provides more information regarding the methodology and people behind this assessment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Honor the Earth's methodology for ascertaining the state of the Native Youth Movement consisted of both primary and secondary research.

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Honor the Earth conducted primary research by identifying and interviewing those on the front lines of the Native Youth movement. The staff mined through past Honor the Earth grantees and organizational contacts to create a list of about 70 individuals central to the Native youth movement. We tried to interview a geographically diverse sampling of individuals and also tried to interview individuals working on a wide variety of issues.

We were able to secure interviews with 29 people working intimately within the Native Youth movement. The list of questions used to guide the interviews follows:

Can you briefly describe what you do?
What are your greatest challenges in meeting your organization's goals?
Where do you get most of your funding?
Who are your allies?
What pitfalls do you encounter in getting funding?
What is your view of/association with tribal governments?
What are the greatest needs of your organization?
How do you recruit members/staff to your organization?
What have been some major obstacles you have encountered in your work?

What have been some of your major successes?
What kind of support and infrastructure do you need to continue and improve your efforts?
What are some of the projects you are currently working on?
Do you think there is a Native Youth Movement?
Where do you see the Native youth movement heading?
Where is a lot of work being concentrated?
What impact does your work have on Native Youth?
Why are you dedicated to improving youth in Native America- why do you believe in your culture?

After completing the interviews, three members of Honor the Earth's staff independently analyzed the interview responses, looking for commonalities and themes.

SECONDARY RESEARCH

Honor the Earth studied and analyzed several secondary sources to paint a statistical picture of the state of Native youth. The sources studied include: United States government census data; organizational publications, websites, newsletters, government agency reports, congressional findings, testimony, and news articles.

The data gleaned from this research was used to supplement our primary research and informed our overall analysis of the state of the Native youth movement.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Nikke Alex (Navajo; Flagstaff, AZ) Environmental Advocate, Black Mesa Water Coalition

Sasha Brown (Dakota/Santee Sioux; Minneapolis, MN) Environmental and Food Sovereignty Advocate, Little Earth, Honor the Earth, Birchbark Books

Terry Day (Akwasasne Mohawk Nation; Akwasasne Reservation, NY) Teacher and Office Administrator at the Akwasasne Freedom School

Eriel Deranger (Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation; Edmonton, Alberta) Tar Sands Campaigner, Rainforest Action Network

Anpao Duta Flying Earth (Lakota/Ojibwe/Akimel O'odham; Albuquerque, NM) Community Programs and Outreach Coordinator, Native American Community Academy (first public collaborative charter school in New Mexico)

Bunky Echo-Hawk (Pawnee/Yakama; OK) Native Youth Advocate specializing in media/arts, NVision

Caroline Edwards (Swinomish Tribal Community; La Conner, WA) Youth Liaison for the Climate Change Education Group within the Swinomish Climate Change Initiative

Morning Star Gali (Achumawi Band of Pit River; Bay Area, CA) Community Liaison Coordinator for the International Indian Treaty Council; Former Executive Chair of the Board of Directors for the Intertribal Friendship House

Dallas Goldtooth (Dakota/Diné; CA, MN) Youth Advocate and Cultural Therapist, currently enrolled at the University of Minnesota's Dakota language program

Lilian Hill (Hopi; Kykotsmovi Village, AZ) Project Director of the Hopi Tutskwa Permaculture Project within Native Movement's Bioregional Lifeways Network

Savannah Joe (Diné, Lawrence, KS) American Indian and Alaska Native Climate Change Working Group

Ras K'dee (Pomo; San Francisco, CA) Co-founder of S.N.A.G.: Seventh Native American Generation

Suzanne Kennedy-Howard (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe; Detroit Lakes, MN) Economic Development Department, Red Lake

Day Got Leeyos (Oneida; Oneida Homelands, WI) Makes music with Native youth in various communities

Douglas Miles (San Carlos Apache/Akimel O'odham; San Carlos Apache Nation, AZ) Owner, Coordinator, Creator of Apache Skateboards

Heather Milton-Lightening (Cree/Stoney Blackfoot/Ojibwe; Northern Alberta, Canada) Environmental Justice work, Indigenous Environmental Network & U.S. Social Forum

Leona Morgan (Diné/Navajo; Albuquerque, NM) Youth Coordinator for the Western Mining Action Network

Kandi L. Mossett (Mandan/Hidatsa/Arikara; Fort Berthold, ND) Tribal Climate Challenge Organizer, Energy Action Coalition of the Indigenous Environmental Network

Nadine Padilla (Navajo; Albuquerque, NM) Environmental Advocate, MASE: Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment

Evon Peter (Gwich'in; Fairbanks, AK) Executive Director, Indigenous Leadership Institute

Ben Powless (Six Nations; Ottawa, Canada) Environmental Advocate, Indigenous Environmental Network and Youth Climate Coalition

Shelby Ray (Navajo; Tempe, AZ) Youth Coordinator, Outta Your Backpack Media

Adam Recvlohe (Creek/Euchee/Muscogee; Tulsa, OK) Language and Cultural Revitalization

Crystal Salas (Lakota/Mescalero/Apache; Oakland, CA) Director of the Native American Health Center Youth Services Program (Drug, Alcohol, and Gang Prevention Program)

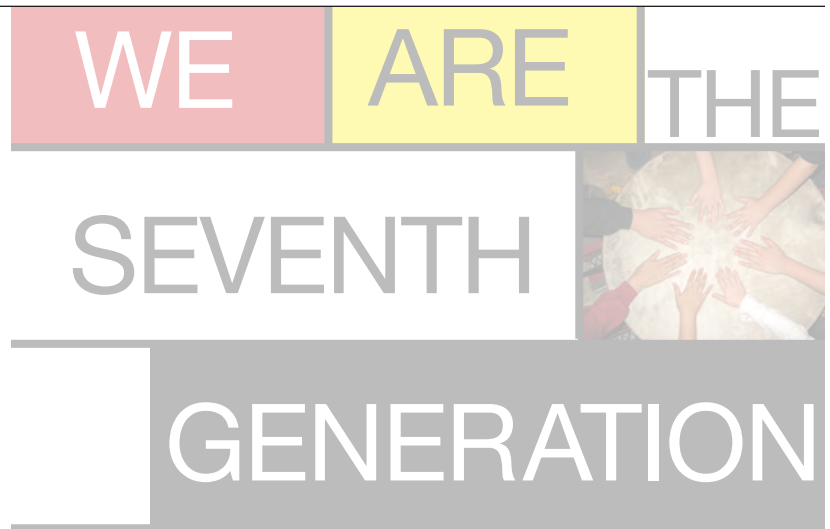
Elvera Sargent (Akwasasne Mohawk; Fort Covington, NY) Manager of the Friends of the Akwasasne Freedom School

Donny Smoke-Adolph (Six Nations Seneca; Oakland, CA) Youth Advocate, American Indian Child Resource Center

Nick Tilsen (Lakota; Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, SD) Executive Director of Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation

Hertha Woody (Navajo; Flagstaff, AZ) Volunteer with Black Mesa Water Coalition, Grand Canyon Trust, and Sierra Club

Jessica Yee (Mohawk; Oneida Reservation, WI & Toronto, Canada) Reproductive Rights/LGBT/Sexual Health Activist



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