



PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Brittany VanSnepton 612.429.1731 bvansnepton@nativeways.org

Philanthropy Must Act Now to Support Native-led Nonprofits

Han Mitakuyepi (Hello Friends and Relatives),

We are living in incredibly challenging times, and this past week has been particularly difficult to witness, let alone process. As an organization founded to support Native-led nonprofits, Native Ways Federations stands with our sector, tribal nations, and our communities, as we collectively navigate an uncertain future. Our indigenous teachings remind us that we are interconnected and have a responsibility to care for one another. These values are not only essential to our survival but our ability to thrive on this planet. Our Board Chair, Cheryl Crazy Bull, American Indian College Fund's President and CEO, recently wrote:

“Every one of us has a gift to give, no one person's gift is greater than another's, and we cannot afford to squander anyone's talents. We believe we are all relatives. We are colleagues, classmates, family members, and community members. In short, we are all connected. That is the very definition of community.”

What happens to one of us affects all of us. Yet, we are witnessing a strategy unfolding that intends to divide communities, create confusion, and disrupt generations of progress towards equity and justice benefitting all communities. Policies and actions targeting our immigrant and transgender relatives, dissolving DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) initiatives, and threatening federal funding streams and jobs pose significant risks—not just to specific groups, but to all of us.

Unfortunately, these challenges are not new to Tribal Nations and communities. Federal policies and practices have long been used as tools of oppression against Native peoples—from boarding schools to forced relocation and more. Yet, our ancestors fought for future generations, ensuring that we are here today. Their resilience and commitment to community continue to guide us and we will stand together against hate and division, advocating for our nations, nonprofits, families, and the planet.

About NWF:

The Native Ways Federation was founded in 2008 by a group of seven national Native-led nonprofits to activate and expand informed giving in Indian Country through donor education and advocacy. NWF strengthens the circle of giving by uniting the Native nonprofit sector, advocating for Native nonprofits, and influencing philanthropy.



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Now, more than ever, the work of Tribal Nations and Native-led nonprofits is critical. However, the volatility of the federal policies presents a particularly large challenge for our communities. Tribal Nations rely on federal funding and cooperation to provide essential services, a responsibility the United States must uphold due to treaty obligations. Many Native-led nonprofits also depend on government funding to serve Native people—78 percent of whom live off-reservation and in cities.

During this critical moment, philanthropy has the opportunity to step up in a big way for our communities by committing to sustained action and investment. Native Ways Federation has spent the past few years attempting to address systemic underfunding by philanthropy, with Native-led nonprofits receiving only 0.27 percent of private foundation dollars. A report we published last year recommended that foundations commit 10 percent of their giving to Native-led nonprofits to address decades of underfunding and historical injustices.



We are calling on our relatives in philanthropy to provide immediate, unrestricted support to Native-led nonprofits, including direct service providers, policy and advocacy leaders, systemic capacity builders, and research and innovation practitioners. Private foundations have great flexibility in determining how their resources are spent. While they have used this power to respond in times of crisis before, it is critical that foundations hold their ground and even double-down on supporting the communities who are being most impacted by the recent and emerging administrative actions and policies. It is not illegal to support our nations, communities, and people—it is vital, especially during times like this.

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While we do not know what each new day will bring, Native Ways Federation remains focused on our mission—to activate and expand informed giving to Native-led nonprofits across Indian Country. We know Native nations and nonprofits have the solutions to address the issues our communities are facing, and we are proud to host the [Native Nonprofit List](#), a searchable resource highlighting Native-led organizations who are working throughout Indian Country. We will continue to monitor, respond, and engage with our partners to ensure that Native-led nonprofits have the resources they need to provide critical services, accurate information, and defend the sovereignty of Tribal Nations as we all navigate a rapidly changing environment.

To that end, our work continues. Please join us and support us in this work. You can [sign up for our newsletters](#) and follow us on social media to get the latest updates or contact us at info@nativeways.org.

In solidarity and with gratitude to you all. Wopida tanka eciciyapi ye.

Carly Bad Heart Bull
Flandreau Santee Nation

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