

LOOKING BACK LOOKING FORWARD



An Evaluation of California Native Grantmaking by the
NATIVE CULTURES FUND
2002 – 2018

PREPARED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH **LIVE OAK CONSULTING**

**NATIVE
CULTURES
FUND**



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INTRODUCTION

Contracted by the Humboldt Area Foundation, **Live Oak Consulting conducted a summative evaluation of Native Cultures Fund's 17 years of grantmaking.**

Working with Lindsie Bear, the fund's new Senior Program Director, a strategy was developed to achieve the best possible representation for the service area, which stretches from the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation in the north of California to the Chumash tribal lands in the south, and from the Pacific coast to Paiute ancestral lands along the eastern border of the state. The fund had identified seven "cultural areas" which were used for maps, outreach and grantmaking in California over the length of the fund. Though there are limits to defining such areas and lumping several distinct language and cultural groups into regions, this was the structure that came with the history of the program so this is also the way we structured the outreach and process for gathering data.

Native Cultures Fund and Live Oak staff set out to hear from as many former, current, and future Native Cultures Fund grantees as possible, with the hopes that their words and feelings would create the framework by which NCF's effectiveness could be evaluated, informed by the people most impacted. Funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The California Endowment, and the Humboldt Area Foundation, the evaluation aimed to determine the effectiveness of grants over the organization's life and equip Native Cultures Fund with knowledge and direction for a strategic plan and a clear path forward.

A photograph of a Native woman, likely from the Northern California region, wearing a large feathered headdress and a beaded necklace. She is looking upwards and to the right, with her right arm extended. The background is a soft, hazy landscape.

Mission

NCF supports Native arts,
cultural revitalization and
cultural transmission
between generations.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF NATIVE CULTURES FUND

A VISION OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

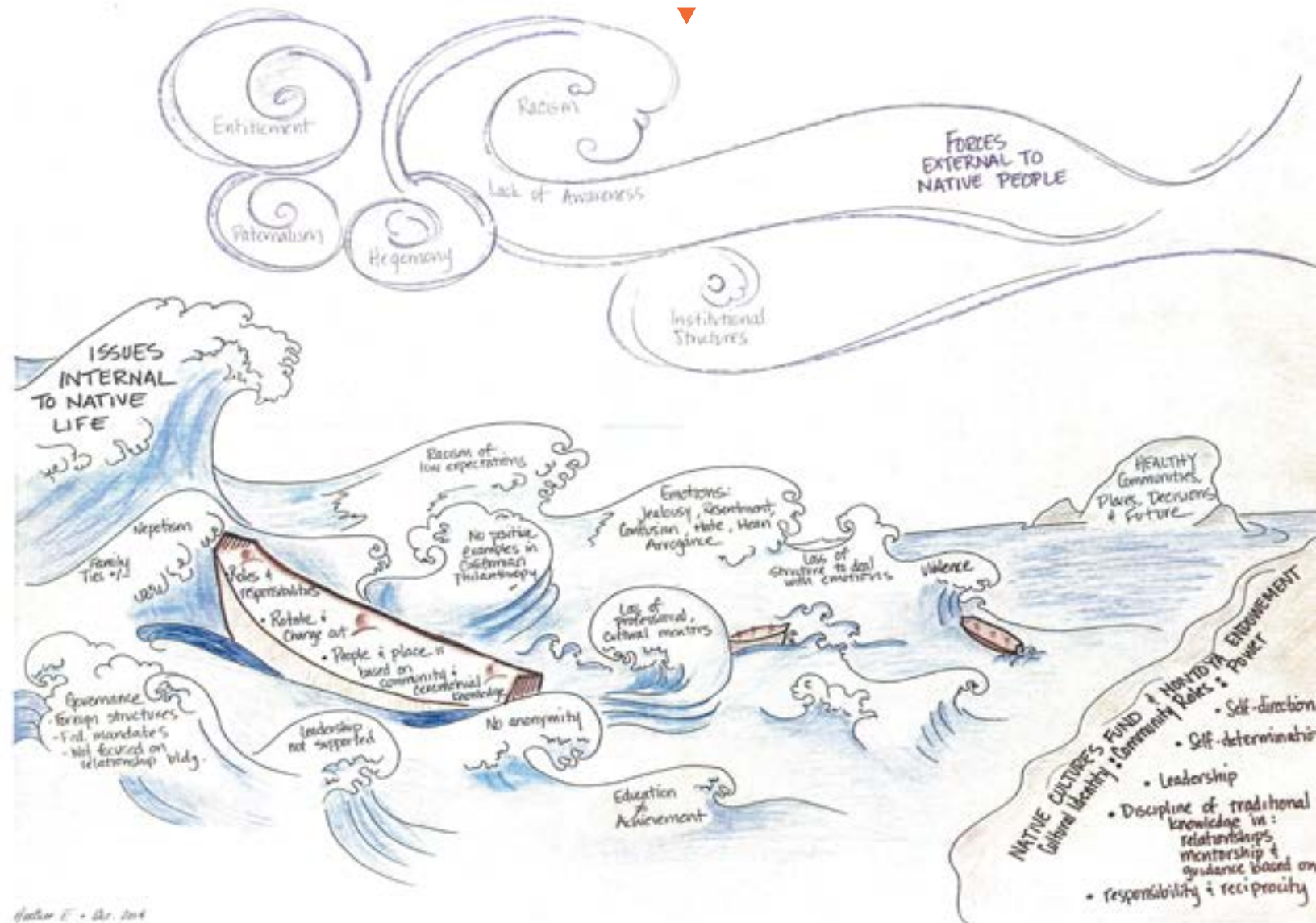
NATIVE LEADERS in the 1990s, Native Cultures Fund has supported over 320 artists, culture bearers, and tribal researchers, granting over **\$1.2 million** to Native communities and individuals for preservation, revitalization and the perpetuation of the rich indigenous cultures of California. Initiated and led by Native peoples, Native Cultures Fund is a partnership between Native Nations, the Humboldt Area Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and other donors. The program supports the transmission of knowledge between generations through the renaissance of California Native art,

cultural practices, sacred sites protection and language preservation and revitalization. Native Cultures Fund was founded as the Native Performance Fund in 1999 to support regalia makers and dance families in Northern California. Conceived as a joint venture of the Humboldt Area Foundation and the Seventh Generation Fund, the fund was first staffed by Pimm Allen, Javier Kinney, and Rebecca Haff Lowry, who built the program through site visits and grassroots community engagement. The initiative grew and changed its name to Native Cultures Fund in 2002, when staff and operations of the fund moved into the Humboldt

Area Foundation offices, where it was staffed by Rebecca Lowry and Heather Hostler until 2004. Chag Lowry was the Program Manager of Native Cultures Fund from 2004 to 2014, during which time the funding also took on large-scale, regional initiatives such as financial support of the first Humboldt State University “Big Time,” the development of the Live Your Language Alliance, and the groundbreaking exhibition

River As Home, as well as dozens of smaller projects and ongoing grantmaking. Upon Lowry’s departure, Native Cultures Fund was without dedicated staff until Lindsie Bear was hired as Senior Program Director in 2017. This evaluation was completed under Bear’s tenure, as the fund began a new phase of expansion and stabilization, including the hiring of Program Coordinator, Tayshu Bommelyn.

Graphic recording of NCF goals and challenges by Heather Equinoss, 2004.





EVALUATION METHODOLOGY:

AN INDIGENOUS VALUE-BASED FRAMEWORK

WHEN LIVE OAK WAS HIRED IN 2018 TO PERFORM THE EVALUATION, we decided collectively that the process needed to be informed by indigenous methodologies (Smith 1999). Therefore, this evaluation has involved and has been accountable to community stakeholders at each phase of data collection, analysis, and report writing. In so doing, the goal has been to build upon the Native Cultures Fund legacy of community service and meaningful, reciprocal relationships. Scholarship has revealed that mainstream (Western) evaluation strategies have been historically challenging and even inappropriate for indigenous communities.

THE KEY ELEMENTS

TO A SUCCESSFUL INDIGENOUS MODEL (AGREE SCHOLARS OF THE SUBJECT) INCLUDE:



Research on the topic of indigenous evaluation discusses the commonly held values of respect, relationship, and reciprocity and defines indigenous evaluation as “an approach to evaluation that understands the tribal context, contributes knowledge and builds capacity in the community, and is practiced by evaluators who value building strong relationships with those involved in the evaluation” (LaFrance 2004, 45). As with all work with Native communities, the challenge is that relationship development is vital and not always meaningfully accomplished in a short, prescribed amount of time.

Some of the guiding principles of indigenous methodologies include honoring the community—its history, context, and individuals—and empowering the community through using culturally valid measures. Important cultural values in Native communities are not always shared nor understood by mainstream funders. As a result of attention to these values, the evaluation can serve as a tool for program improvement for Native Cultures Fund as well as a potential framework for future granting efforts throughout California’s Native communities.



GOALS OF EVALUATION

- ▼ • To evaluate and learn from NCF's history and grantmaking to understand what has been done well, and what changes would be most beneficial;
- To focus on identifying the core values of the California Indian world and use these to develop the framework for the future, which will include convening practitioners, establishing an Advisory Council and partners to connect and set priorities;
- To develop understanding of efficacy and lessons from NCF's history as well as constituent priorities to set and communicate a clear vision for future work.

PURPOSE

- ▼ • To have a public document that can be shared with all communities and stakeholders and that is honest and authentic;
- To strengthen program capacity and ability to meet cultural practitioners where they are, and;
- To restore and substantially expand connections with past, current and prospective grantees and organizations with similar missions.

THEORETICAL FRAMING

- ▼ • With these goals in mind and a strategy to have Native people themselves inform the work, we defined a three-pronged approach to collecting the data, through defining the History and what was produced, the core Values of the Native communities, the Native needs and goals, and how to determine how those things align—the aspects of the program that appear to be effective, and those that are not;
- Native women leaders shaped the California Native Values framework of the evaluation through identifying key advisors and cultural ambassadors and continuing to bring the question of cultural values into the data collection.



DATA COLLECTION

TO IDENTIFY WHAT WAS PRODUCED

- We reviewed archival documents from the past 17 years of fund history, including grantee spreadsheets, final grantee reports, NCF-generated reports to the Hewlett Foundation compiled over the course of several years of funding;
- Interviews were conducted with current and former staff of Humboldt Area Foundation and Native Cultures Fund;
- These data provided a lens for seeing how the work carried out (as reported) aligns with the values of the communities;

- This material was also used to inform and develop new questions from interviews and listening sessions.

TO IDENTIFY NATIVE VALUES: CREATING THE FRAMEWORK

- The first phase of the project was to identify core values among California Indian groups (informed by indigenous language experts) in the NCF service area, to shape the framework and ongoing interviews to assess effectiveness from a California Native value set;

- We continually revisited the initial goals and vision of Native Cultures Fund, and continued to grow the list of values as they emerged from the conversations;
- It's important to understand that much indigenous language knowledge has been lost due to colonial impacts and that many of the values here are articulated in the dominant English, where local Native languages were unknown to participants.

TO IDENTIFY NATIVE GOALS

- To gauge the effectiveness of past grantmaking in meeting the needs/goals of Native communities, listening sessions were conducted over a nine-month period in each of the seven cultural areas that NCF serves, except for northeastern California. We ultimately decided, due to the limited number of grantees in the northeast, to communicate through other means—namely phone interviews and questionnaires;
- At each listening session, extensive outreach and the use of cultural ambassadors (defined as engaged culture bearers from the Native community to assist in the process) was key to getting people to attend. As a matter of Native protocol, food was provided at each session, using local, indigenous chefs where possible. (Many comments were made that the food was crucial—that having good food encouraged people to talk freely.) Each session was approximately two hours in length. Though the same questions were asked at each, we also built upon the Native Values conversation;
- Data collection tools such as Survey Monkey, email, and phone calls were used to communicate with former grantees. We also sent out a hard-copy questionnaire to all 334 grantees for whom we had current contact information;
- Interviews were conducted with key cultural leaders.



▲
*Fathers and sons working on the Blue Creek
 Ah Pah Traditional Yurok Village, 2010.
 Photo © Thomas Dunklin.*



▲
*Levi Tripp aligning posts of the dance house
at Blue Creek, 2010.*

ANALYSIS

- Using tools and strategies of indigenous methodologies (Smith 1999), we developed narrative and thematic content analysis tools (values) while in contact with Native advisors and participants.
- We built upon what we were hearing, as in Grounded Theory methods (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Straus 1967) by bringing the values and insights we heard to subsequent listening sessions and interviews. In this way, we created a feedback loop that helped us identify nuances to what we were hearing and enabled us to create a more detailed set of data.
- Recognizing that each session was attended by people from as many as eight different tribal communities and that diversity of thought and cultural understanding should not be diluted, we are working with a large list of Native values—some that appear to be shared across regions and others not shared beyond cultural group.
- We realize the limitations of the data—these sessions are only partly representative in that not all voices could be included. We don't propose that values stated here are universally true for all people in each region or in California as a whole. Values were articulated by Native leaders as important to them and their understanding of the cultural community of which they are a part. Text analysis was conducted for the frequency of particular words in those reports, to gauge whether what the fund set out to support was congruent with the work that was conducted. We also used the data compiled in the questionnaires to assess alignment with funding goals and funding outcomes.



▲
Canoe by George Blake, obsidian blade by Bob Benson, River as Home exhibition, 2013.

FRAMEWORK: CALIFORNIA INDIAN VALUES

THE VALUES THAT EMERGED over the course of the eight listening sessions and from interviews and questionnaires are grouped as eight relatively distinct subjects, which are outlined below with quotes for examples of each. It's important to recognize that California Native values expressed in the following projects and programs all reflect direct and indirect trauma and grief work as part of goals for health and healing as well as environmental education and restoration, and toward adaptation and mitigation of the climate crisis. Since these values might not be obvious to the non-Native reader, we found it important to call them out when possible (to the grantor or potential funder) and signal that though the activity might appear mundane, what is at play is a significant, enduring value deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of the community—as an aspect of fulfillment of intrinsic goals/values through art and cultural projects tied to the land.

For example, the Native value of intergenerational teaching is present in most of the grants funded over the past 17 years, whether they are identified as event, project, or individual artist expression. A value was articulated in one case as “Funding will allow storytellers to learn from each other and pass down cultures through stories” as the goal for a storytelling gathering, an “event.” Cultural values are woven into the lives and daily activities of the people we spoke to and their communities, so they are inextricably linked and overlap in every way. The following were the most frequently articulated in the stories and comments we heard throughout the process. Because of the overlapping way these values exist, it is impossible to quantify the frequency with which each was expressed. Statements in quotes come directly from listening sessions or questionnaires, rather than risk changing meaning by summarizing or trying to extrapolate meaning from what was said. The values appear in alphabetical order of the overarching core value.

ACCOUNTABILITY—INCLUDES RESPONSIBILITY AND THE PRIVILEGE TO SERVE COMMUNITY

A strong sense of responsibility and accountability for one's community, the land, and future generations is present among the core values of California Indian people. Not out of obligation, responsibility in Native communities is motivated by a sense of privilege to serve a greater vision, one that has been culturally shared for millennia. Those who do not operate in this same mindful way are viewed as not aligned with tribal or culturally appropriate principles and behavior.

▼ *Tokseemek'—I respect (Yurok)*

- Know where you come from—be proud
- Positivity in all we do
- Be involved, share and learn
- It's our privilege and responsibility to restore balance to the world
- *Ch'ee-nvk nay-ghe, k'wee-nvk nay-ghe*—"that which you put out is what comes back" (Tolowa Dee-ni')

BALANCE | INTEGRITY | RECIPROCITY

To maintain balance in the Native world there must always be give and take. The notions of authenticity and wholeness are present in this value. To be in balance with all things is key, and part of establishing or restoring balance is through recognition of one's value as well as one's impact on the whole.

▼ *Naqmi—to listen (Acjachemen)*

- Intertribal connectedness
- *Xoji*—real/genuine (Pomo)
- Think of the whole (all people) before individual

- Humor to balance grief
- *Tse tuy* or *Ce tuy*—speak the truth—even when it's hard (Pomo)

CULTURE | TRADITION | LANGUAGE | SOVEREIGNTY

A Native worldview is shaped by the spoken language. Some argue that once the language is lost, so is the culture. There is abundant evidence that as language revitalization programs are established, culture flourishes. Long-held traditional cultural protocols provide structure for maintaining distinction as specific groups and the freedom of each community to determine how that structure works to maintain cohesion among its members. Most non-Natives do not fully comprehend the necessity of sovereignty and self-determination for Native peoples to be who they are, maintain their integrity, and continue to thrive as culturally distinct. The value of cultural continuity, the right to self-determination, and need for language to inform Native life were consistent in every conversation, whether through interviews, questionnaires, or within the listening sessions.

- The traditional values are coming back
- Learn our culture/our indigenous way
- Building and growing cultural understandings
- The culture lives in the language
- Language transmits culture

HEALTH | CULTURALLY PRESCRIBED REST | NOURISHMENT

One of the disparities between Native and mainstream Western culture is the degree of acknowledgment that we as humans require rest and nourishment in order to maintain balance. A strong cultural value in Native communities is to take care of one's physical needs

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PEOPLES



and those of community members. A cultural value that is sometimes hidden, because Native groups are forced to live within the dominant system, is that of health. The conflict is evidenced in the high rates of diabetes and obesity among Native people (from a Western diet high in carbohydrates) and in the unsustainable expectation around work and productivity above all else. Core cultural values teach that to keep or restore health, one must be in balance and connected to the whole—and nurture a recognition that emotional and spiritual health goes hand in hand with physical well-being. Another goal and intrinsic value fulfilled by many funded art and cultural projects, directly or indirectly, is work with historic intergenerational trauma, as well as grief work in the face of environmental damage to tribes' traditional territories, watersheds, and fisheries—these being an essential aspect of emotional, physical, and spiritual health for youth and all ages (including suicide prevention).

▼ *Šumawiš—Health as a verb, and it's something that cannot be done alone, we do health together...or it's not health (Šmuwič Chumash).*

- *K'ima:w*—Health/Balance (Hupa)
- Community health
- “Some of our people struggle with not being able to be indigenous people is because we don't have the time. You know, our rest time is taken by the dominant culture”
- Culturally prescribed rest when we come together

INTERGENERATIONAL TEACHING— RESPECT FOR THE CHILDREN | ELDERS | ANCESTORS

Deep respect and care for elders and children is a core value of Native people in California. The elders are always fed first and cared for as valuable, honored carriers of wisdom. Children, too, are seen as wise and worthy of attention and reverence. Ancestral teachings are necessary for cultural continuity and the value of the lineage from the ancestral to the young members was regularly discussed as key to transmission of culture and survival.

▼ *Nuum Neweh weh—Family and Belonging (Paiute)*

- Elders speak first
- “Our greatest resource are our children, our babies, and we don't like to see them hurting, and it's important how we interact with our kids, and the way in which you talk to them and respect them... treating them like somebody that has a mind and a spirit of their own... and they also have something to offer. Because part of that lifelong learning is sharing of our eternal knowledge, but also learning from them.”
- Fight for the future generations

HUMILITY | GRATITUDE | GENEROSITY

The value of humility was evident whether it was discussed or not. People grounded in their cultures are humble people and arrogance is seen as distasteful. Another core value that is clear in Native cultures is the value of humility and gratitude for one's responsibility to culture and community. It's important to note that humility is not bowing down, but rather recognizing

the intensity of the natural and spiritual world and having deep respect for it and one's place within it.

▼ *Be proud of our people*

- Giving/generosity
- *Nishe Guneh*—have mercy (Paiute)
- “You either learn something, or you share something—it’s your responsibility to keep it going no matter how perfect or imperfect it is”
- *Yah Weh*—Thank you/Giving thanks (Pomo)

LAND | HOMELANDS | CONNECTION TO PLACE | NATURAL WORLD

(Important to note that this value is intrinsically linked to all others) This value is certainly true of California Native peoples. Responses ranged from the need for access to important historical, ceremonial, cultural, and resource sites, healing the trauma that the land has endured since colonization, and the land informing all aspects of cultural traditions.

▼ *Know who we are and where we come from*

- Respect for community, culture, and the land
- Culture is tied to your home, meaning your land, environment, and region
- Respecting nature, preserving and protecting the sacred sites, the plants, the animals, and fish in their natural environments, keeping the waters and air clean, and “cleaning up our own back yards.”
- *Kuuyam*—to be a good guest (Acjachemen)

RELATIONSHIP | HOLISM | CONNECTIVITY | LOVE | RESPECT

Native Californians truly live within a worldview of holistic thinking, recognizing that relationship characterizes everything. A person cannot be healthy unless the land and its inhabitants are healthy. Therefore, respect and love of oneself is a reflection of the love of family, community, homeplace.

▼ *Focus intention on the whole, we impact everything*

- *Nuum Muu*—the people, me, my body and soul, life, my essence (Paiute)
- *Na-ka-hee*—Listen! (Mono)
- Hold each other up
- *Enesha min kho kin*—wishing good things for you always (Mono)
- “I was raised with the understanding that you’re here because you’re loved, that your ancestors before you loved you enough to do whatever they had to, for you.”
- “Culture in California: it’s 187 ways of being a good human. All the teachings, everything. The idea is for this to support that.”



KEY FINDINGS

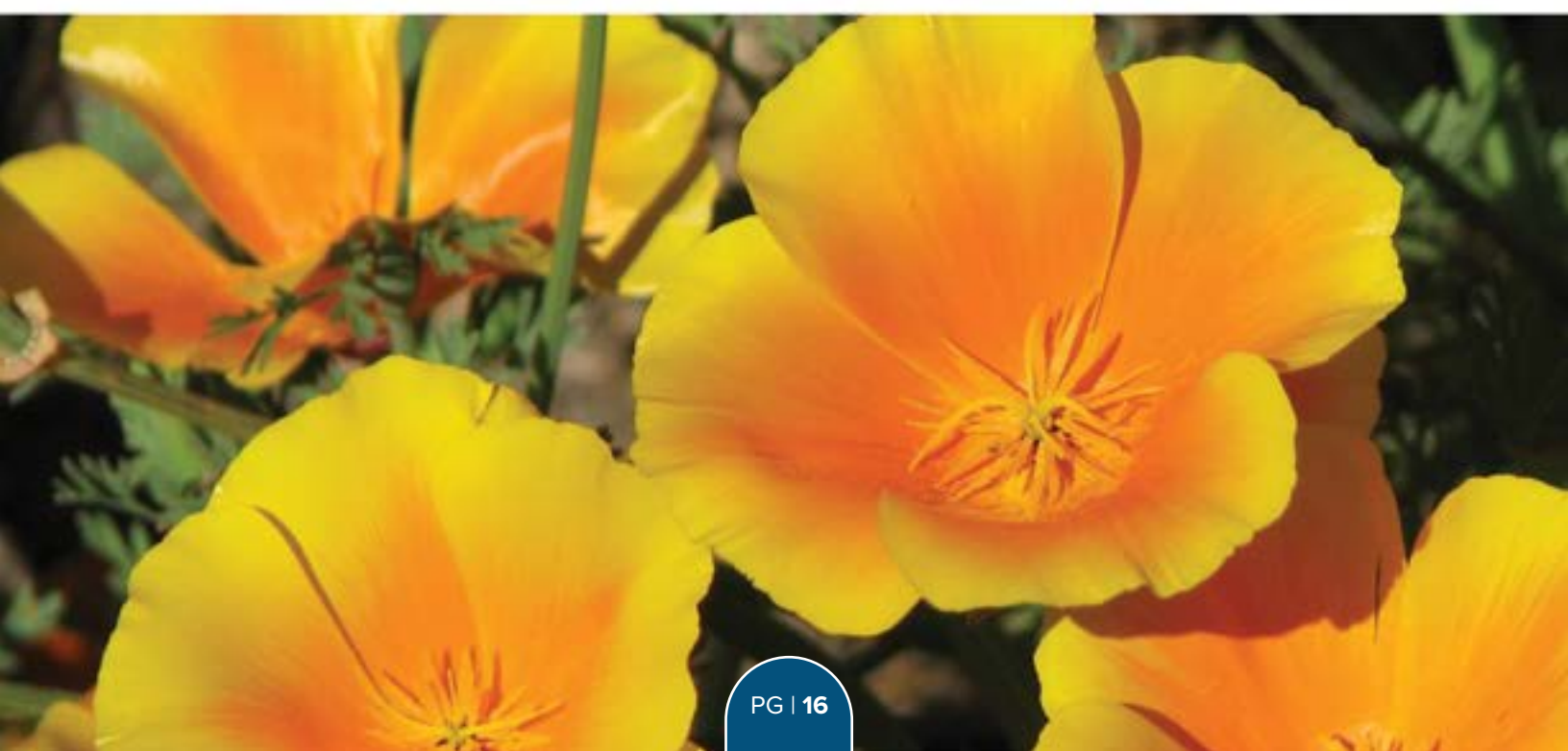
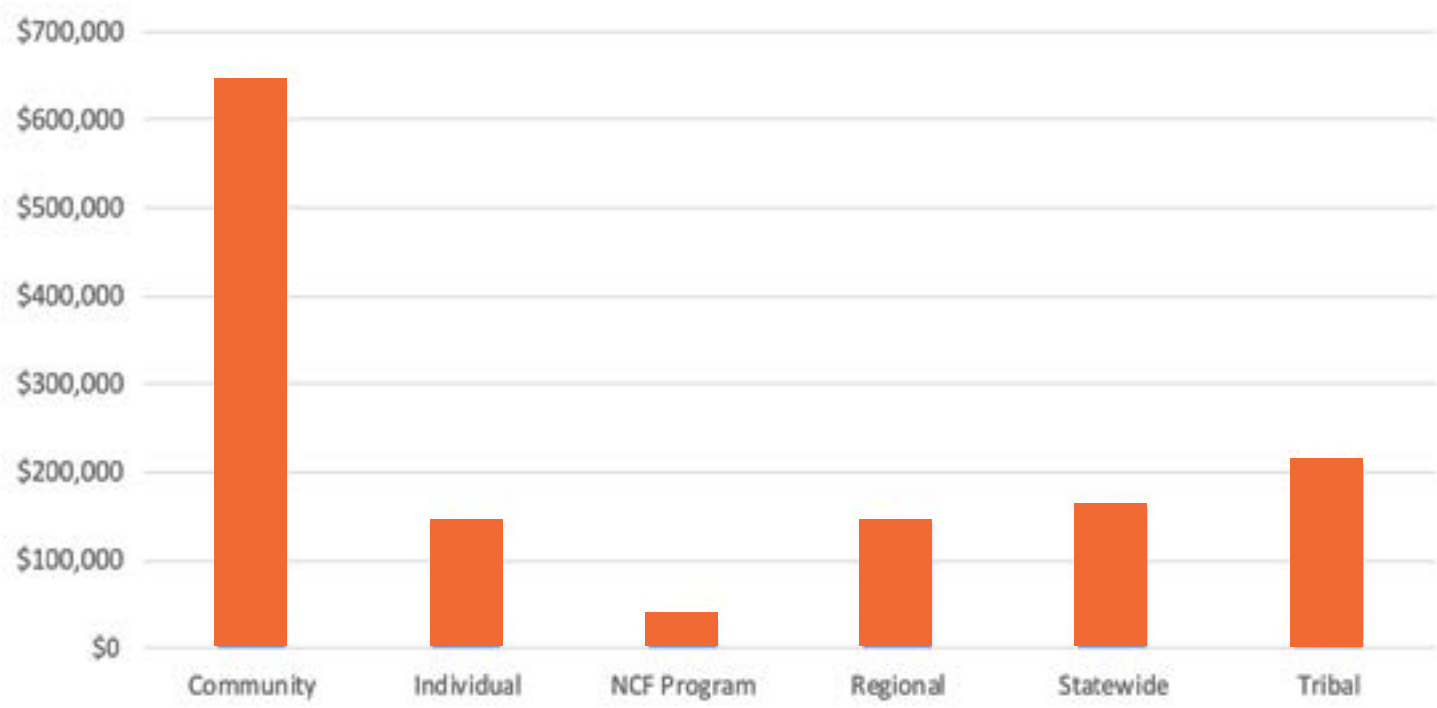
Working with grantee lists and reports to funders, **we identified five types of grantees receiving funding over the past 17 years.**

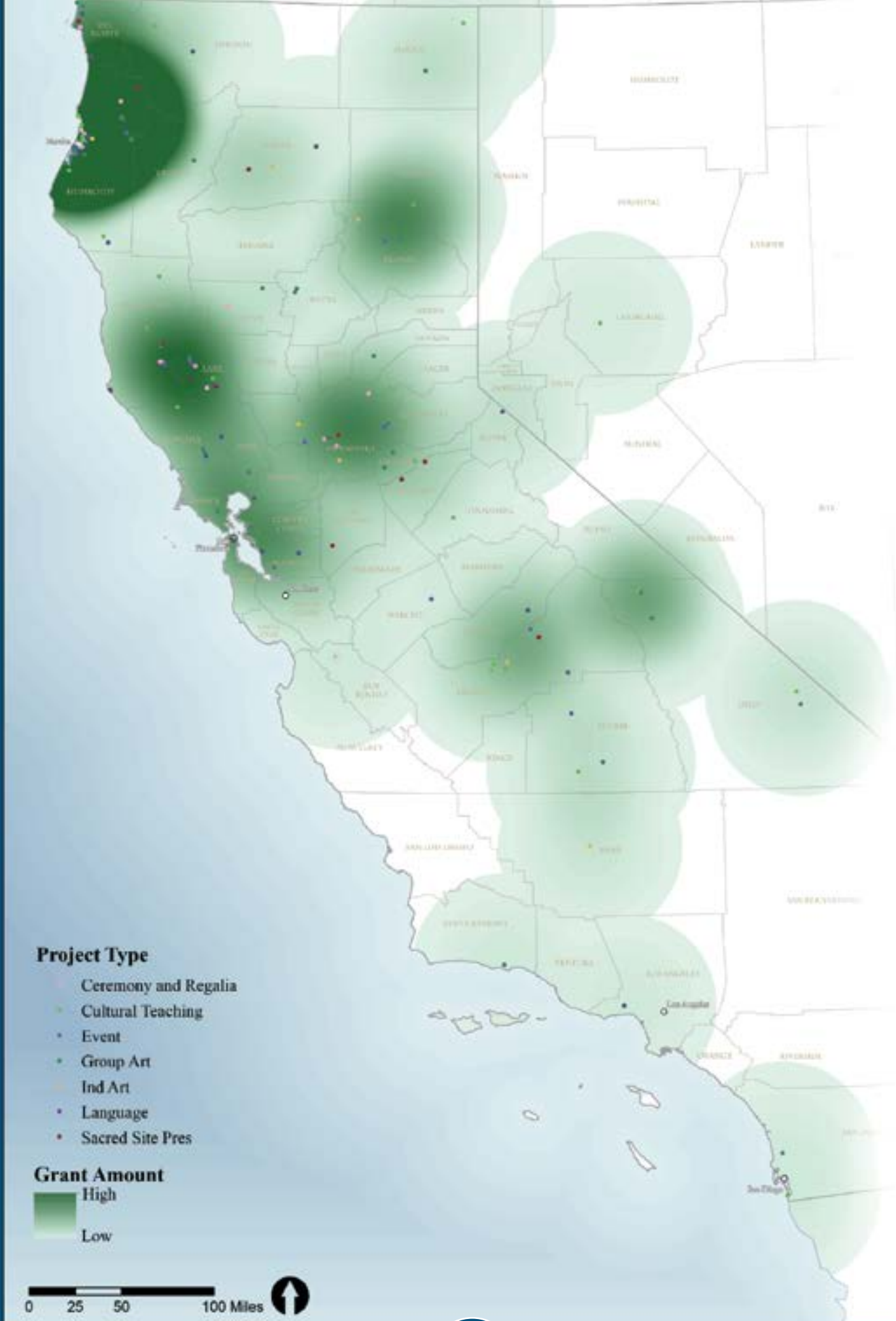
By far, the most support was received by community and tribal initiatives. In the graph, “tribal” is defined as a federally or non-federally recognized group. “Community” might include, for example, more than one tribal group, a language group, or a smaller group of weavers within a tribe. The designations indicate who initiated the grant and not the affiliation of the members of the funded project.

339 PROJECTS TOTALING \$1.2 MILLION

- STATEWIDE INITIATIVES: **37**
- REGIONAL INITIATIVES: **43**
- NCF-SPONSORED PROGRAMS: **3**
- COMMUNITY: **155** | TRIBAL INITIATIVE: **56**
- INDIVIDUAL ARTIST **11** | TEACHER SUPPORT: **34**

GRANT AMOUNT BY GRANTEE TYPE



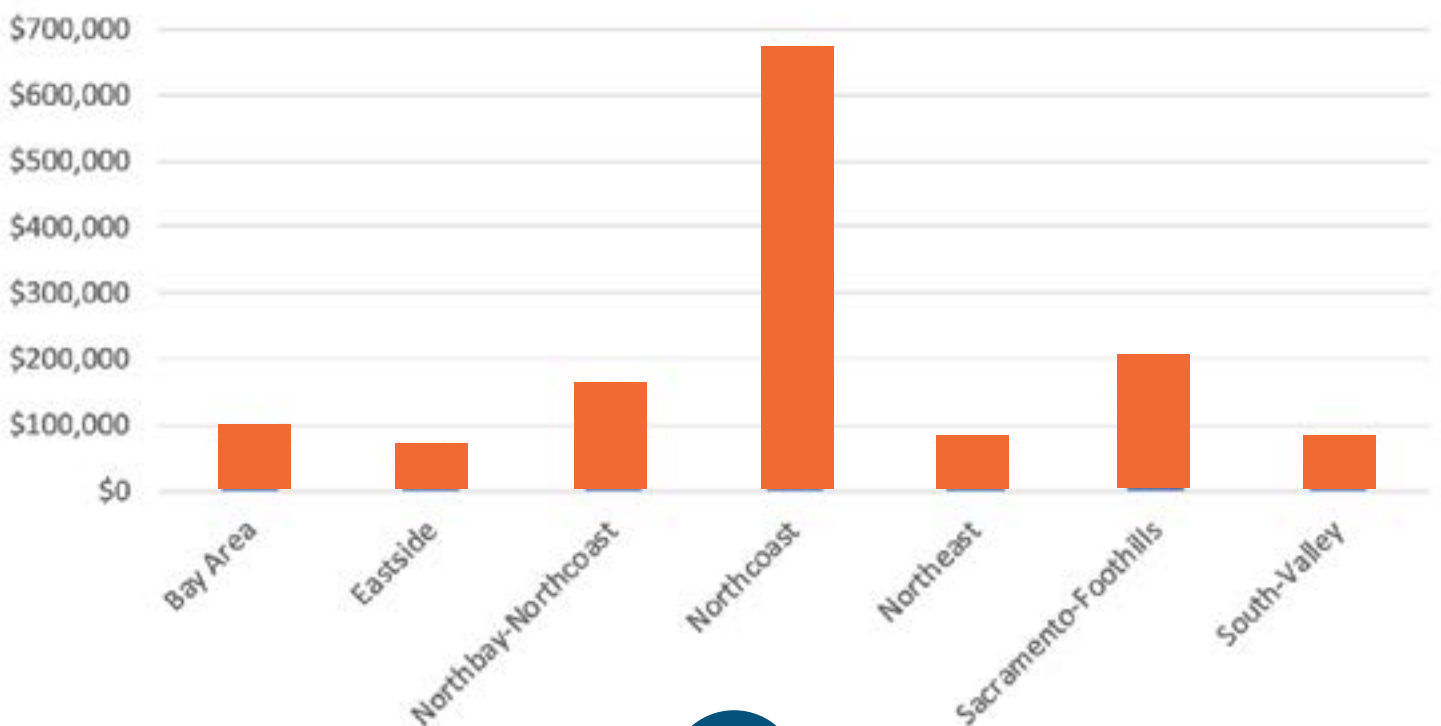


INVESTING IN CALIFORNIA:

STATEWIDE, REGIONAL, AND NCF-SPONSORED TRIBAL INITIATIVES



GRANT AMOUNT BY REGION





STATEWIDE INITIATIVES

Thirty-seven projects were funded that served a vast number of the Native peoples from a variety of communities across California. Language, Group Cultural and Artistic Practice and Events/ Gatherings were the types of projects and supported initiatives, initiated by groups in all regions except the northeast region of California. Below are descriptions of two grants awarded to support statewide initiatives, California Indian Basketweavers Association and Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival. Other statewide initiatives funded included book publishing for Native California authors, *News from Native California*, a periodical dedicated to serving the state's indigenous people, teaching fellowships, violence awareness conference planning, Wellbriety convening, the California Indian Conference, and the California Indian Storytellers gathering (CISA), to name just a few.



CALIFORNIA INDIAN BASKETWEAVERS ASSOCIATION

One of the largest gatherings with multi-year support is the California Indian Basketweavers Association convening, which brings together weavers from throughout the state and beyond to share knowledge, teach attendees, and be together as community.



ADVOCATES FOR INDIGENOUS CALIFORNIA LANGUAGE SURVIVAL

NCF has provided multi-year support for the Language is Life conference, which brings Native language speakers and learners from throughout the state to share strategies, challenges, and victories in maintaining and revitalizing California indigenous languages. The preservation and perpetuation of the diversity of California's Native languages are vital for the flourishing of those cultures. The fund has also provided support for travel expenses for participants and presenters.



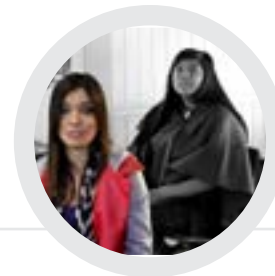
REGIONAL INITIATIVES

A regional initiative is defined as one that serves a larger cross-section of the state than one tribal or culturally related group. Some, such as Ink People, who serve the Northwest area of California, provided support for individual art projects as well as group efforts, but all were regionally specific. There were forty-three regional grants awarded in all seven of the cultural regions funded by NCF. The five types of projects funded were Cultural Teaching, Group and Individual Art, Language, and Events/Gathering and include grants such as a weaving class that included people from Sierra Miwok and Valley Yokuts groups, and a youth quilting art project that included youth from Nisanan and Konkow Maidu groups. Regional initiatives also included, among others, the Indigenous Youth Foundation and the Inyo County Council for the Arts.



INDIGENOUS YOUTH FOUNDATION

The Indigenous Youth Foundation, with headquarters in northern and southern California, seeks to empower Native youth to become active participants in community building by educating them through their own cultural experiences. The organization has worked since 1999 towards the protection, preservation, and teaching of Native oral histories, language, songs, traditional foods and medicines, arts and crafts, and the environment. Their grants have supported language learning through a group art mural project and other cultural teachings appropriate to areas of Chumash and Yokuts territory as well as the Hoopa and Yurok in the north.



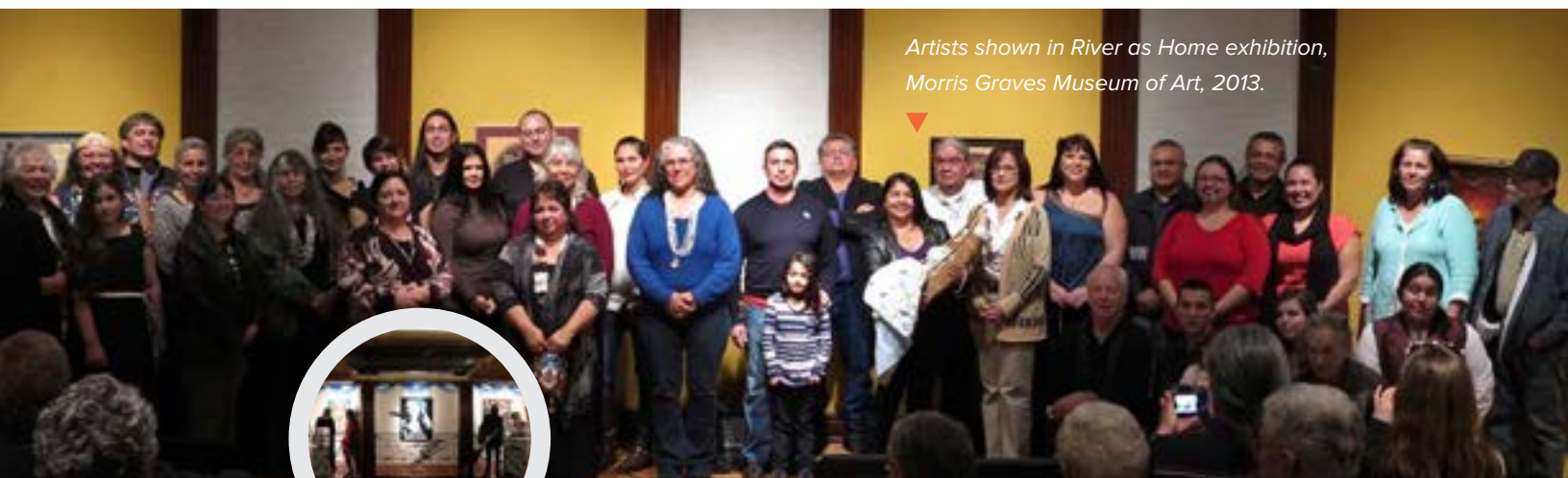
INYO COUNTY COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

Inyo County regularly partners with the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley, and applied for funding to support a play in which Big Pine Paiute students reenacted the *Alice Piper v. BPUSD* lawsuit, the landmark case of 1924 that guaranteed California Native students could attend public schools, leading the way for court rulings such as the well-known *Brown v. Board of Education*. Though not a Native organization, this example demonstrates the way funding has been mobilized in a variety of collaborative ways to achieve Native goals.

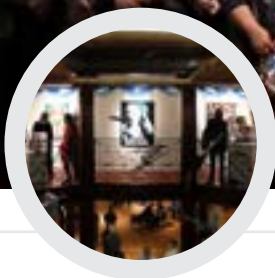


NCF-SPONSORED PROGRAMS

A statewide convening was held in the early years of the NCF program that informed ongoing initiatives, and over the course of NCF's granting history three main projects have been created and supported in part by NCF and its staff. The fund determined early on that these would require substantial and even multi-year support to be successful. While the River As Home exhibition received substantial NCF support, it was a one-time event. The Live Your Language Alliance (LYLA) and the Humboldt State University Big Time are ongoing—they now receive additional, outside support, yet NCF has remained committed to these initiatives as they have proven to be extremely valuable to the intertribal communities that they serve.



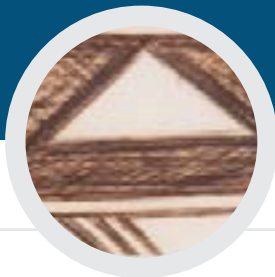
*Artists shown in River as Home exhibition,
Morris Graves Museum of Art, 2013.*



THE RIVER AS HOME

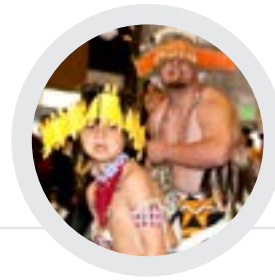
In 2012 the NCF partnered with the Morris Graves Museum of Art in Eureka in Northern California on its first large-scale exhibition of Native American art. "The exhibition represented the visual pulse of Native artists from the Klamath and Trinity rivers and surrounding river systems. It was a comprehensive look at the spiritual and physical place through the worldview of the area's

original peoples." The Wiyot, Yurok, Hupa, Tsnungwe, Karuk, Tolowa, and other North Coast tribes working to defend and restore their rivers and watersheds were represented by more than 90 artists from throughout Humboldt and Del Norte counties. The exhibition was complemented by several talks by the artists and other educational programs.



LIVE YOUR LANGUAGE ALLIANCE

One of the most robust of the ongoing programs is the Live Your Language Alliance, California Indigenous Language Conference held biannually at the HSU campus, which has continued to be supported by NCF. The Live Your Language Alliance was started in 2008 to support language preservation and revitalization in Northern California, but has grown beyond its initial conception to encompass all of California and welcomes attendees from elsewhere as well. The conferences have planted the seeds of inspiration for many language program activities and events, says Leo Canez, one of the founders and coordinators of LYLA.



HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY BIG TIME

The Big Time, an intertribal gathering at the campus of Humboldt State University, was started by HSU faculty and NCF staff in 2006 and has become a popular annual event, attracting dance families and individuals from throughout the state and beyond. Founded on the principles of enhancing and sustaining Native languages, cultures, and traditions, HSU's Big Time has provided Native communities with a space to honor the ways of life and the values of their ancestors. Similar to powwows in terms of their purpose of gathering together, socializing, and searching for a potential marriage partner, California Native communities have historically come together at Big Times. The HSU Big Time offers space for dancing but also a variety of makers workshops, vendors, and of course food.



INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES:

TRIBAL AND COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES

155 COMMUNITY AND 56 TRIBAL PROJECTS WERE FUNDED over the course of NCF history to support Native communities (both organized and loosely affiliated) and tribes (both federally recognized and non-federally recognized). These types of projects honor the distinct tribal and cultural identity within an ancestral area and complement intertribal initiatives by helping to keep specific traditions and lifeways intact. It is important to note that each “tribe” or cultural group has deep, ancestral laws and protocols as well as distinct languages that are necessary to the continued heritage of those peoples. The overwhelming number of grants awarded in this category signifies the importance of ongoing work to maintain these important distinctions. In the face of globalization, it is more important than ever for these communities to have the support they need to preserve and revitalize language, ceremony, sacred places, and community-held traditions, as well as projects that help eco-restoration learning/inspiration such as Potawot Environmental Program and other funded projects, including Wiyot regalia making; Susanville Rancheria’s Cultural Identity through the Arts; Tuolumne Rancheria cultural skill building; Me’dil Institute’s Deerskin Dance headgear regalia making; and the North Fork Mono Tribal Arts Festival, to name only a handful.

SHE SANG ME A GOOD LUCK SONG

The California Indian Photographs of Dugan Aguilar

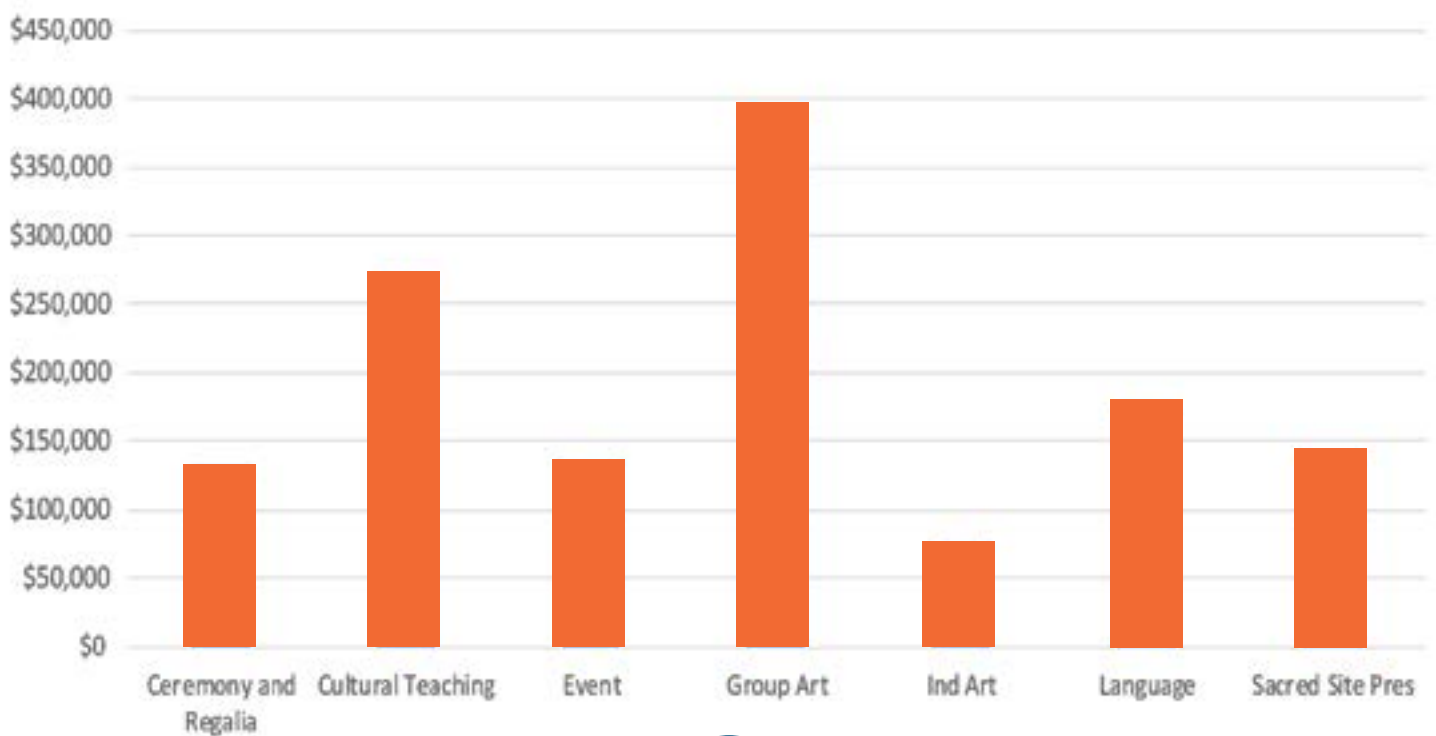


INVESTING IN INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSION AND TRANSMISSION OF CULTURE

INDIVIDUALS RARELY APPLY FOR NCF FUNDING FOR PROJECTS THAT DO NOT INCLUDE COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND HAVE A TEACHING COMPONENT TO THEM. Only 11 grants to date fall squarely into the individual category—because the grant was initiated by an individual—and most of these have a reciprocal aspect. Grants were made to honor some of the most revered individual artists in California and grants have been awarded to individuals seeking to curate work and create a book or photo display to celebrate creative and cultural achievements. A handful of grants have indeed been made to individual artists working in traditional or contemporary forms, for which funding provided much needed support in the way of materials as well as exhibition or production costs. In the Northcoast region Dugan Aguilar’s photo exhibition that resulted in the book *She Sang Me a Good Luck Song* was one such grant.

In 34 cases, grants were made to individuals for the purpose of teaching others. Some of these grants include the Traditional Performance/ Master-Apprentice program in the Northeast; and Making a Basket, a teaching program in Owens Valley.

AREA OF FOCUS: GRANTS BY PROJECT TYPE







ASSESSMENT: ALIGNMENT WITH **CALIFORNIA INDIAN VALUES**

ONLY 11 GRANTS TO PROJECT REPORTS, REPORTS TO FUNDERS, CONVERSATIONS, AND QUESTIONNAIRES FROM PAST GRANTEES YIELDED A WINDOW into the impacts and alignment between what was produced over the past 17 years of grantmaking and the values of the communities. We looked at impact in terms of lasting results of the work conducted, finding that funding has supported goals and needs of the Native communities with alignment with sovereignty and self-determination. Native people have been involved over the life of the fund, serving on grant committees to decide which grants will be funded and supporting that the fund allow grantees the freedom and trust to use the money as they need.

**CULTURE | TRADITION | LANGUAGE |
SOVEREIGNTY**

The 339 grants awarded through December 2018 are all grounded in this Native value set. All projects whether funds were granted to an individual, tribe, community or larger group are steeped in culture, language, and traditions. We found that work carried out in ways that align more closely with Native California goals, values, and vision than Western expectations is a manifestation of self-determination.

*“Proud to say they
(NCF) promote
cultural/traditional
values and projects.”*



*“I appreciate that it (NCF) allows
Native people to be Native... it sup-
ports the individual in maintaining
their traditional, cultural life way.”*

*“The (NCF) group supports
tribal and individual cultural
events, trainings, ceremonies,
and more.”*



*“They’re providing
opportunities for
tribal self-preservation,
self-definition.”*



*“By assisting the Native community in
bringing back their languages/regalia/
storytelling.”*



BALANCE | RECIPROCITY

The data suggests that Native Cultures Fund works to support balance and reciprocity in its willingness to acknowledge that the needs of Native communities are their own and not necessarily the business of a funder. The imbalance of power since colonization has been so weighted on the non-Native side that there is a need for non-Native organizations to yield that power to restore balance. It is recognized that NCF is aware of the role philanthropy has had in continuing that imbalance and seeks to work toward equilibrium.

“I think what it (NCF funding) had done for me and my family, it gave me an opportunity to show our community our culture and how important it is to maintain.”

“In my experience Cultural people will do whatever it takes to ensure Ceremony and the like continue, not asking others for help as it is a burden of theirs to bear. However, I know that they all could use assistance in their endeavors and rarely ask for it.”

▼ Julie Tex and Jennifer Malone at the Minkler Weave In, 2005.



“NCF helped me to connect with who I am, what I set out to do and helped connect with other Native communities in a collaborative way.”



HUMILITY | GRATITUDE | GENEROSITY

A deep gratitude for the fund and how it has enabled important work to occur is clear. There is also a sense that NCF, over its history, has been generous. In terms of humility, the feedback we received from interviews and questionnaires expressed that the current leadership of the NCF is humble and gracious and their influence has had a stabilizing, legitimizing effect on the organization as a whole.



“They (NCF) support restoration of traditions, culture, and values.”

“What we see is indigenous people doing the outreach, exposing others to grant-writing experiences, and providing funding to enhance the cultural educational efforts of our California indigenous people.”



LAND | HOMEPLACE

There is a strong sense that the work of cultural preservation and revitalization lies in connection to the land. The NCF has historically supported this value more than (according to grantees) any other funder they are aware of. The need to protect and restore indigenous lands and the people's connection to them, as well as allowing grantees to conduct the necessary work in these places sacred to them, without strings and obligations, is key.

“No other funder would give us money for a site they couldn’t visit. These places are sacred and we need help to preserve them.”

“They (NCF) helped us restore our connection to our ceremonial place.”



“Building and protecting ceremonial houses is at the heart of everything we do.”



ASSESSING IMPACT

BEYOND A STRONG EMPHASIS ON CULTURE

/CULTURAL ARTS, evaluation responses reflected a common thread of gratitude for NCF allowing Native people to do what Native people want. Data from interviews, listening sessions and questionnaires demonstrate Native Cultures Fund maintains a focus on community, family, and tribal-determined priorities without requiring the limiting and alienating reporting requirements of sharing cultural knowledge to obtain funding. Respondents overwhelmingly reported that they felt the NCF trusts that the money is going where it is needed. Many stated that this is a great demonstration of support for self-determination, a counterpoint to how other foundations operate. As peoples who have been treated as wards of the state requiring the supervision of colonial players, it can be extremely damaging for Native people to be forced to conform to uniform, Western expectations (see Villanueva 2018, for example); it literally stifles cultural expression and freedom. In contrast, NCF has served as a bolster to creativity and re-

spondents uniformly asserted the necessity of such support.

Many of the initiatives, both internally and externally led programs that have been supported by NCF funding over the past 17 years are ongoing. Several have grown into programs adopted by tribal or public organizations, such as the Big Time and the Live Your Language Alliance now annual and biannual (respectively) Humboldt State University programs (while still receiving some ongoing support from NCF).

In all eight listening sessions, participants spoke at length of the impacts that NCF-funded projects in their communities have had on their cultural practices, many years later. People spoke of the impact of gatherings at the sacred sites and roundhouses that have been protected, restored, or traditional buildings built with NCF funding, and how they are an integral part of their living cultures. Language programs are having a lasting and intergenerational impact that may be the most significant and measurable in terms of cultural preservation.

WE HAVE GROUPED IMPACTS OF FUNDING

IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS TO OUTLINE THEIR LONGEVITY AND EXTENT, FROM THE MOST MINOR (SOME IMPACT DISCUSSED AND/OR OBSERVED) TO THE GREATEST EFFECT.

SOME IMPACT DISCUSSED OR OBSERVED

Respondents discussing projects that are not ongoing:

100%

CLAIMED THAT THEY
RECALL THE BENEFITS
(SOCIAL, CULTURAL, LANGUAGE-BASED)
THAT THE PROGRAM HAD

**over
60%**

SAY THAT THERE ARE
ASPECTS OF THE PROJECTS
THAT CAN BE WITNESSED
TODAY

**over
70%**

STATED THEY BELIEVE
NCF FUNDING HAD A LASTING
AND SUSTAINED IMPACT
ON CULTURAL PRACTICE
AND KNOWLEDGE

CONTINUED NCF SUPPORT/ CONTINUED IMPACT

Dozens of programs that NCF provided seed funding for are now thriving, ongoing programs that also receive funding from other sources. Their existence is evidence of the importance of such seed and initial (potentially multi-year) funding for initiatives to become established.

SOME OF THESE INCLUDE:

- Large-scale, multi-tribal language projects such as the Live Your Language Alliance (housed in Native American Studies at HSU), and the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS);
- Community Health such as the Potawot Programs, which center food sovereignty and health in partnership with Indian Health Services;
- Intertribal gatherings such as the HSU Big Time, California Indian Storytellers Association, California Indian Basketweavers Association;
- Sacred site/cultural preservation such as the Blue Creek Ah Pah Restoration Project—a village to focus on rehabilitating the land, forests, and rivers and providing a place for all local tribal groups to renew their cultural and spiritual roots;
- Several youth leadership projects, the most prominent of which is the Warrior Institute at Hoopa established “to awaken a new generation of youth leaders with healthy minds, bodies, and spirits empowered to create health, economic equality, and environmental justice” (Warrior Inst. website, March 2020);
- Several tribally based language initiatives that continue to thrive with and beyond NCF support.

BEYOND NCF SUPPORT/ SIGNIFICANT ONGOING IMPACT

While it would be presumptuous to say that funding from Native Cultures Fund has enabled revitalization and preservation of cultural practices, we can measure impact by looking at how a particular activity that was not occurring or occurring only minimally took hold as a result of NCF support. In assessing significant ongoing impact, we borrow the definition of “significant” from Webster’s (2019):

“The quality of being important, of being statistically noticeable and observable in a visible and substantial shift in behavior.”

While we do not have a baseline for these projects, we know that, for example, the Native Performance Fund (later changed to the NCF) was formed out of a need for dance regalia on the North Coast to coincide with the unprecedented return of traditional ceremonies in the area. The support for regalia making was a primary need in the region in the late 1990s and was the impetus for creating the Native Performance Fund. Though the grant support is obviously not the source of the revitalization (that can be credited to the heart of the people responsible for its flourishing), the making of regalia has been extremely well supported by NPF and later NCF and is no longer considered an endangered practice—at least not in the North Coast area.

AN EXAMPLE OF SUCH SENTIMENT WAS ARTICULATED IN A QUESTIONNAIRE FROM THE NORTH COAST REGION;

“Several of the women that participated in the dressmaking project are now making ceremonial dresses for their granddaughters. It is heartwarming to see the ceremonial dresses used during our traditional ceremonial dances, and to know that the prayers will continue.”

IN ADDITION TO THE CONTINUATION OF INITIATIVES BEYOND NCF FUNDING, EXEMPLIFIED IN REGALIA MAKING IN THE NORTH, THERE WERE OTHER IMPACTS THAT WERE STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT. SOME EXAMPLES ARE:

- An increased comfort level in writing grants to other organizations
- Use of NCF project success to leverage other grants
- A sense of community cohesion experienced as a result of NCF-supported project(s)
- Familiarity with and increased use of media and other tools for outreach and production
- Production and preservation of stories, art works, performances for future use
- Supporting the creation of a new generation of teachers—language, basketmaking, dance leaders
- Preservation of sacred sites and archival materials about those places for future generations
- New experiences that led to continued education for participants
- New associations and connections that led to other projects and cultural healing



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE: SUPPORT SELF- DETERMINATION AND SOVEREIGNTY

Listening sessions, questionnaires, and interviews yielded information and insights to suggest a path forward—essentially to explore how the communities want to see NCF operate in the future to better support the work of Native Californians.



WE SET OUT TO ASK A SET OF QUESTIONS THAT RELATED TO:

- An increased comfort level in writing grants to other organizations
 - Use of NCF project success to leverage other grants
 - A sense of community cohesion experienced as a result of NCF-supported project(s)
 - Familiarity with and increased use of media and other tools for outreach and production
 - Production and preservation of stories, art works, performances for future use
 - Supporting the creation of a new generation of teachers—language, basketmaking, dance leaders
 - Preservation of sacred sites and archival materials about those places for future generations
 - New experiences that led to continued education for participants
 - New associations and connections that led to other projects and cultural healing
-

Although we did hear many specific answers to the questions, we also heard again and again the need to base all current and future work on core Native values. The need is evident, throughout the data, to support self-determination and sovereignty as an overarching theme. Creating ways to be true allies to Native communities is key. We heard it said many times that “money can be helpful but also hurtful” and that funding “can throw things off,” creating dependency and unequal relationships that Native people know all too well, and which can undermine their own rights and self-governance. We believe that adherence to the values we’ve outlined can guide the future direction of the fund and create a framework for ongoing decision-making. The quotes below exemplify the way California Native values manifest, offering paths forward for the organization as it tries to visualize how to realize the community’s recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS



OUTREACH | BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH US | HELP US BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

Throughout our year of listening and poring over written materials it became clear that the people want to be involved in all aspects of the organization, to feel a sense of ownership and greater responsibility for shaping the goals and vision of NCF. There is an overall sense that they are still being left out of many aspects of the functioning and vision of a fund that is meant to reflect their needs. And although there is a trust for the current leadership, there exists a sense that more involvement is needed through an official Native advisory board, greater transparency about how decisions are made, and a feedback loop for people to feel heard. Also mentioned was the desire to know how decisions are made, who has been funded, and other aspects of transparency that might be remedied by a more robust website and a newsletter.

Some comments to that effect were:

- *“Bring us to the table, not just sit here and singing songs and we’re your entertainment for the night. But actually sit down and we’re at the same table eating and mutually benefiting from the relationship.”*
- *“We learn from one another. If I don’t know that people in a certain region are struggling from something, then how am I, when I go into granting meetings, supposed to have empathy for that understanding or understandings? So, I think it’s important for us to learn from one another in that way.”*
- *“Support gatherings to bring us together, like the Evergreen Longhouse, and they have those international indigenous artist gatherings—and just this minor curation to ensure certain things are happening, but then just let people be, you know?”*
- *“Yeah, well like an outside space where someone can carve, and enough tables, and some yummy food, and letting people know what’s going to happen in those spaces. That would be powerful.”*

APPLYING AND REPORTING | SUPPORT OUR CULTURAL PROTOCOLS | CULTURAL-INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Native people feel very strongly about the protection of their cultural and intellectual property. The NCF commits to keeping informed and being proactive about legal protections and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and to have resources on the website for potential and current grantees to see, and to be transparent about expectations of sharing what is produced. Many people felt glad at the flexible reporting requirements, but some grantees felt that (during years without a Native Executive Director) the privacy of cultural protocols was not respected. These kinds of cultural disconnects can undermine years of relationship building. Having clear and transparent protocols is key.

- *“It’d be nice to have support whenever we come to them, because we are cutting to the chase, this is what we’re coming to you for. I know you want to help us in your way, but this is what we need, so it would be good to have more support from that voice.”*

MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP | EMPLOY A TRULY DECOLONIZED PROCESS

Evaluation comments about NCF and the Humboldt Area Foundation (HAF—the non-Native organization that houses NCF) were forceful on the subject of decolonization. Decolonization is the process by which organizations recognize the legacy of colonialism and its devastating impacts and take actions aligned with restorative justice practices.

- *“HAF should center decolonization (see Yellowbird and Waziyatawin 2012) and de-centering the organization as the first action that*

they take. Then HAF needs to support indigenous people in our right to co-manage resources (a legal requirement between recognized tribes and agencies, but often ignored).”

- *“Kuuyam. It’s the word for guest, as Charlie Sepulveda (Acjachemen/Tongva scholar) articulates it in his article, ‘Theorizing Kuuyam as a Decolonial Possibility.’ He asserts that non-indigenous Californians have to understand local indigenous principles of what it means to be a good guest, to the planet and to each other. I feel like that could be somehow woven into the principles of NCF and foundations in general”*
- *“HAF should help set policy for accepting funding that specifically comes from natural resources (timber, minerals, water)— identifying that these types of funds get set aside for Native peoples. Since this money was made from land and resources that were stolen from indigenous peoples it should be first approached with donors that they could start a truly meaningful process with Native peoples.”*
- *“I think it should be HAF that leads the way in starting to build true capital and endowments. This would make HAF and NCF true visionary institutions. And it would help to truly work toward healing and reconciliation (see Villanueva 2018).”*
- *“It would be nice to see HAF center education of its board and staff members to understand how they can work toward the decolonization of our communities and the empowerment of those in our communities who have been historically silenced and dismissed.”*
- *“Wealth has been built because of colonizing practices, seizure and stealing of land, resources, and peoples. It’s important as donors come to HAF that they understand and are approached in a way that helps to educate them about the*

possibilities of their donations far beyond supporting ongoing wealth for colonial institutions. I look forward to the visionary ways the NCF can help to move forward with this type of effort.”

SERVICE AREA | BUILDING COMMUNITY IN CALIFORNIA

It is a shared perspective that California is distinct from other places and really needs the support and focus of funding specific to Native peoples in the state, but there was not a great deal of conversation about what area should be covered. Currently, NCF’s grantmaking service area extends from the tribal communities that straddle the Oregon border, south to Chumash territories that extend roughly to the southern edge of Santa Barbara County. While many people liked the idea of reaching out to the entire state, there was concern that to expand the area to the whole state might make it harder to manage. Still, people felt strongly about community building and learning from others with whom they might not normally be in contact. This is something they feel the NCF is uniquely able to do—provide funding, space, and other resources to bring people together to explore and strategize about issues affecting Native people in California. It was suggested that former grantees would form a group of “alumni” that would be convened annually or semi-annually.

- *“I’d like to see funding for cultural exchanges—things like large canoe gatherings with peoples from throughout California, or dance sharing groups, travel funds to bring CA Indians together to exchange songs, etc.”*
- *“Build camaraderie between California native people, which is not something that we necessarily have.”*

- *“There’s a lot of funding out there and very little of it is going to Native people, and then a very small percentage of that is going to California Indian people because of the huge population of relocation folks here.”*
- *“I’d like to see NCF also work on a fund specifically for Native women or to support projects for Native women or LGBT Native peoples.”*
- *“I also think it’s important for NCF to always center indigenous peoples in the conversations happening at the larger foundation level.”*
- *“Support for rural, unincorporated areas and Native language reclamation projects.”*
- *“There is a need to overcome the racism that Native people still experience in California, and that through some projects, education, curriculum, general eye-opening content has potential to overcome—seeing as a human rights issue. In our classrooms in schools, there should be more involvement and curriculum available for teachers, families, and community.”*

SHARE TOOLS | MAPS AND STRATEGIES

The commitment of the NCF and the evaluation team at Live Oak is to make accessible all aspects of this work, including useful framework strategies and maps developed for the evaluation. These include current reservation and rancheria data, traditional Native territories, and the service areas for all philanthropic organizations in California granting to Native American individuals and groups. We believe we can do better as a unified system of support and our goal is to partner and serve as a resource for others.

CONCLUSIONS



Native Cultures Fund is overall a beloved institution. People we encountered were happy to talk about their experiences as grantees or were excited to learn more about a funding source that prioritizes their values. A key concern among many people familiar with the fund's history was for it to continue to be Native led. Of the concerns and negative comments, most prominent was the need for the fund to stay grounded in and accountable to California Native communities, through leadership and advisory committee influence. The grantmaking methods established in the foundational vision have continued to guide funding and this appears to be effective. These include reliance on community-based decision-making, keeping application process and reporting simple, providing capacity building, and keeping in relationship with grantees.

Grantees want to have face-to-face contact with the organization and want to be brought together to share with other grantees for inspiration, connection, networking, and strategizing. The communities feel somewhat isolated and see the NCF as a vehicle to bridge them—bring them into contact with one another—the way the listening sessions did.

The concern about the Humboldt Area Foundation, the non-Native organization housing the fund, is a concern in terms of the NCF's ability to truly represent the communities it serves. We heard recommendations for decolonizing work and cultural competency standards, as well as furthering Native goals for self-determination. This might manifest as HAF support to NCF to take a greater role in organizing and strategizing with Native leaders outside of grantmaking. Greater autonomy for NCF within HAF and more support staff for the Director is also important for the fund to grow in ways that address the urgency of resilience-building and the great need of California's Native communities in relation to culture and language loss, with the passing of each elder.

Ultimately, the greater Native community of California sees that the heart of the people who established the Native Performance Fund to provide support for regalia makers in the 1990s is really still present. Native Cultures Fund has continued to partner with Native people to accomplish many of their goals over these 17 years. While Native Cultures Fund should never take credit for these achievements, the people

who have been involved over the history of the fund (most of whom have been Native people themselves) should feel proud that their work has had such a lasting and beautiful impact.

Some clear steps have been made in the organization since Live Oak and the Native Cultures Fund set out to produce this evaluation in 2018. Some of these include permanent Advisory Council made up of California Indian cultural leaders from across the service area to guide and ground next steps, and a doubling in full time NCF staff to carry out the work, and reinvestment of the NCF endowment into socially responsible funds focused on mitigating climate change and ensuring human rights for workers.

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