LESSONS FOR PHILANTHROPY:
A JOURNEY INTO INDIAN COUNTRY
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THANK YOU TO NATIVE LEADERS AND ALLIES WHO HELPED US BY PARTICIPATING IN PROGRAMS, HOSTING SITE VISITS, COUNSELING US ON APPROACH, OR IN ANY WAY ADVANCING OUR JOURNEY.

2006  Andrea Alexander, Makah
       Potlatch Fund
         Jason Baldes, Eastern Shoshone
         Young Warrior Society
         Jolene Catron, Navajo Nation
         Wind River Alliance
         Justin Finkbonner, Lummi Nation
         Potlatch Fund
         Vonda Limpy, Northern Cheyenne
         Prayer Lodge
         Dr. Richard Littlebear, Northern Cheyenne
         Chief Dull Knife College
         Dr. Henrietta Mann, Cheyenne/Arapaho
         Montana State University
         Major Robinson, Northern Cheyenne
         Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs
         Redstone Consulting
         Rick Robinson, Northern Cheyenne
         Boys & Girls Club of the Northern
         Cheyenne Nation
         Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer
         Hopa Mountain
         Curtis Yarlott, Crow Tribe of Indians
         St. Labre Indian School
         Dr. David Yarlott, Jr., Crow Tribe of Indians
         Little Big Horn College

2007  Lucille Echohawk, Pawnee
       Casey Family Programs
       Ricardo Lopez, Aleut
       Rasmuson Foundation
       Dr. Martina Whelshula, Arrow Lakes
       Spokane Tribal College
       The Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations

2008  Doyle Anderson, Red Pheasant First Nation
       Idaho State University, Native American Business
       Susan Anderson, Tlingit
       The CIRI Foundation
       Dr. Johnel Barcus, Blackfoot
       Browning Community Development
       Corporation

2009  Christine Dupres, Cowliatz/Cree
       Native American Youth and Family Center
       Ken Gordon
       Potlatch Fund
       Judge Cynthia Jordan
       Coeur d’Alene Tribal Court
       Jo Ann Kauffmann, Nez Perce
       Kauffmann & Associates, Inc.
       Janie Leask, Haida/Tsimshian
       First Alaskans Institute
       Jeanie Louie, Coeur d’Alene
       Coeur d’Alene Tribe
       Leslie Louie, Blackfoot
       Coeur d’Alene Tribe
       Dr. Chris Meyer, Coeur d’Alene
       Coeur d’Alene Tribe
       Kohl Miner, Ho-Chunk
       Native Americans in Philanthropy
       Jim Murphy
       Coeur d’Alene Tribe
       Judge Mary Pearson, Coeur d’Alene
       Coeur d’Alene Tribal Court
       Joy Persall, Ontario Ojibwe
       Native Americans in Philanthropy
       April Pierce, Kalispel
       Kalispel Tribe
       Robert Spaulding
       Coeur d’Alene Tribe
       Marc Stewart
       Coeur d’Alene Tribe
       Jeanette Taylor
       Couer d’Alene Tribe

2009  Felix Aripa, Coeur d’Alene
       Coeur d’Alene Tribe
       Janeen Comenote, Quinault/Hesquiaht/Oglala
       United Indians of All Tribes
       David Cournoyer, Rosebud Sioux
       Native Americans in Philanthropy
Jenine Grey, Tlingit
Chief Seattle Club

Charles Hudson, Hidatsa
Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

Janie Leask, Haida/Tsimshian
First Alaskans Institute

Nichole Maher, Tlingit/Haida
Native American Youth and Family Center

Byron Mallott, Tlingit
First Alaskans Institute

Shelley Means, White Earth Chippewa/Oglala Lakota
Native Americans in Philanthropy

Matt Morton, Squaxin Island
National Indian Child Welfare Association

Elizabeth Woody, Yakama Nation/Navajo Nation
Native Arts and Cultures Foundation

2010
Shasta Cano-Martin, Cheyenne River
Lummi Cedar Project

Natalie Charley, Quinault Indian Nation
Taala Fund and Northwest Native Chamber

Cheryl Crazy Bull, Sicangu Lakota
Northwest Indian College

Chandra Hampson, Winnebago/White Earth Chippewa
Enterprise Cascadia

Darrell Hillaire, Lummi Nation
Lummi Youth Academy

Kellie Jewett, Cheyenne River Sioux
First Nations Oweesta Corporation

Eric Jordan, Confederated Tribes of the
Grand Ronde
ONABEN

Y. Elaine Stephens, Hopi/Cherokee
Native Americans in Philanthropy

Johnny Arlee, Confederated Salish
and Kootenai Tribes
Salish Kootenai College

Dana Arviso, Diné
Potlatch Fund

Tina Begay, Navajo
Salish Kootenai College

Carly Hare, Pawnee/Yankton Sioux
Native Americans in Philanthropy

2011
Tony Incashola, Flathead
Salish-Pend d’Oreille Cultural Committee

Martin Jennings, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Northwest Area Foundation

Darrell Kipp, Blackfoot
Blackfoot Language School

Veronica Maday, Bad River Band of
Lake Superior Chippewa
Indian Nonprofit Association

Tachini Pete, Salish
Nkwusm Salish Language Revitalization
Institute

Gerald Sherman, Oglala Lakota
Indian Nonprofit Association

Marissa Spang, Northern Cheyenne/Crow Nations
Boys & Girls Club of the Northern
Cheyenne Nation

Geri Small, Northern Cheyenne
Boys & Girls Club of the Northern
Cheyenne Nation

Organizations:
American Indian Business Leaders
Bobcat Singers
Dull Knife Indian College
Native Americans in Philanthropy
Native Arts and Cultures Foundation
Nkwusm Salish Language School
Potlatch Fund
Rose Creek Singers
Salish-Kootenai College
St. Labre Indian School
The Salish Institute
Wind River Group

Tribes:
Colville Confederated Tribe
Crow Indian Nation
Lummi Nation
Northern Cheyenne Indian Nation
Suquamish Tribe
Tulalip Tribe

…and to any who offered their reflection and
guidance whom we have forgotten to list.

The list identifies leaders and allies in the year they
began work with us.
INTRODUCTION

From the Northwest Coast to the Northern Plains, our region is rich with the history, art, and culture of its indigenous people. Its largest city is named for a Suquamish chief. Regional museums display masks, beadwork, and baskets that celebrate Native artistry. Totem poles grace city parks. In raw number, approximately half of the 565 federally recognized Tribal entities make their home in the six states that Philanthropy Northwest serves. The United States Census Bureau estimates roughly half a million Native people live in our region (or 3.7% of our population versus 1.4% nationally). Alaska Natives make up 19% of the Alaska population.1

In light of this, it is notable that organized philanthropy has relatively little engagement in Indian Country. Nationally, less than half of one percent of all foundation dollars are directed to Native people. Northwest numbers are slightly better, ranging between 1% and 2%.2 Still, the intersection between the region’s philanthropy and its indigenous people is modest. Additionally, most of the grants to Indian Country originate from a relatively small number of foundations. Considering that Native populations face such significant socio-economic challenges, this weak alignment between philanthropy and Native communities is all the more striking.

In 2006, Philanthropy Northwest set out to promote more philanthropic engagement in Indian Country. We began that effort by acknowledging our limitations. Our staff knew very little about Indian Country. We had few relationships and experiences with Native people. Only a small number of our members were actively working in Native communities. In short, we faced a steep climb. Fortunately, we had board members and colleagues who were experienced in Indian Country and thoughtful about how we might begin.

Our colleagues at Native Americans in Philanthropy3 and Potlatch Fund4 were storehouses of information. Our board member Byron Mallott, Tlingit, who also serves on the board of trustees for First Alaskans Institute,5 was insightful about the challenges we would face and generous with his time. Daniel Kemmis, chair of the Northwest Area Foundation board at the time (and current Philanthropy Northwest board member), inspired us with candid stories of his foundation’s work in Indian Country. He and fellow Philanthropy Northwest board members Sue Coliton, vice president of the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, and Jo Ann Eder, president of the O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation, encouraged us and introduced our staff to Native leaders.

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3 Native Americans in Philanthropy is a national affinity group of Native Americans engaged in philanthropy. Learn more at www.nativephilanthropy.org.
4 Potlatch Fund is one of the nation’s first community foundations started by Native Americans and focused on grantmaking in Indian Country. Learn more at www.potlatchfund.org.
5 First Alaskans Institute is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to advance Alaska Natives through community engagement, research, and leadership development. Learn more at www.FirstAlaskans.org.
With gentle coaching and wise counsel from many, Philanthropy Northwest began its journey into Indian Country. It is important to say that our guides were consistent in their advice. They recognized that the most important first step would be for Philanthropy Northwest to begin its journey, not by doing, but by learning. They told us that philanthropic engagement in Indian Country would require us to embrace longer time horizons, build true relationships, and develop a deep appreciation for the gifts we would receive. Rather than think of ourselves as beneficent agents of money and power, we should open ourselves to all that Native communities would offer us.

We were also cautioned not to think of this journey as a project or an initiative, but rather as a core value, and a logical extension of our organization’s commitment to community building. Our standard style of working — starting with plans, budgets, schedules, and measurable outcomes — was unlikely to move us closer to our goal. Indeed, it made more sense for us to start by having meals with potential Native partners — inviting relationships that might develop over time. With that good advice, and a commitment to “listening and learning,” we began.

In 2007, Philanthropy Northwest staff attended the national conference of Native Americans in Philanthropy. We began compiling the basic demographic data for Northwest Indian Country and started visiting Native communities with our members. We made trips to the Cheyenne and Crow Reservations in Montana, and to the Squamish and Tulalip Reservations outside Seattle. In 2008, we devoted a three-hour session at the Philanthropy Northwest Annual Conference to a revealing conversation between Native leaders and philanthropists. Titled “Everything You Wanted to Know about Working with Native Communities but Were Afraid to Ask” and led by Native leaders, the session invited grantmakers and grantseekers to speak honestly about the barriers separating philanthropy and Indian Country. The room was filled to capacity.

This event was a turning point for Philanthropy Northwest. It introduced people who might otherwise have never met, and it sparked a series of conversations that continue today. Beyond that, it confirmed for us that the region’s Native people and our members shared a desire to learn to work together. Ever since that 2008 conference, we have made it a priority to participate in and promote deeper, more meaningful conversations between Native leaders and philanthropists. In this we have been greatly aided by the leaders of two of the largest funders in Indian Country: Kevin Walker, president of the Northwest Area Foundation, and Diane Kaplan, president and CEO of the Rasmuson Foundation.

Building relationships in Indian Country is now a defining principle for Philanthropy Northwest. We routinely invite diverse Native voices to participate in our programs. We visit Native communities. We collect and share the lessons learned by our Philanthropy Northwest members committed to Indian Country. And all along this journey’s path, we have been rewarded with the gifts of Indian Country. We have met inspiring people, explored new ideas, and deepened our connection to the history and spirit of this region we call home. Most importantly, we have been reminded that honesty, reciprocity, and mutual respect are essential values when working in Indian Country — and, indeed, when working in any community.

Our goal is to continue this journey. This paper shares a few of the stories we have collected along the way. It is organized around seven simple lessons. Our hope is that these stories and lessons will inspire philanthropists to learn more about the good work underway in Northwest Indian Country. We are deeply indebted to all who have shared and continue to share their stories with us, and we look forward to the road ahead.

If you are intrigued, join Philanthropy Northwest on this journey. You can learn more at www.philanthropynw.org/JourneyIntoIndianCountry. We are also available in person. Call us at 206-443-8431.
Gene Tagaban, Cherokee/Tlingit, MCing at 2010 Native Arts and Culture Foundation’s Inspiring the Spirit Auction

LESSON #1
LISTEN FIRST
One of Philanthropy Northwest’s first trips to Indian Country occurred in 2006, when we visited Northern Cheyenne and Crow communities in eastern Montana. Those of us who were first-time visitors immediately grasped the severity of life for the people living on the reservations. The eastern Montana landscape, beautiful and vast, is also desolate. The land is hard. There are no factories silhouetted on the skyline. Employers are scarce, and poverty is pervasive.

There are undeniable disparities between Native peoples and the general population when it comes to educational attainment, health, violent death, and substance abuse. In a 2011 report to Philanthropy Northwest, Ken Gordon, executive director of Potlatch Fund at the time, provided a snapshot of these indicators:

### NATIVE AMERICAN STATISTICS (2005 – 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All U.S.</th>
<th>Native</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unemployment and Poverty</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate (2005)</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Indian Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median family income (2007)</td>
<td>$50,740</td>
<td>$35,343</td>
<td>U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families below poverty line (2007)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropout rates in high school (2009)</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>National Center for Education Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A. degree or higher (2006 – 2008)</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>National Center for Education Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suicide</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate per 100,000 for 15 – 24-year-old males (2009)</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>Centers for Disease Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Violence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent deaths per 100,000 for 15 – 24-year-old males (2009)</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>60.21</td>
<td>Centers for Disease Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth rates for 15 – 19-year-old women, per 1000 women (2009)</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>National Center for Health Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes in adults 20 years and older (2009)</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking among adolescents 12 – 17 years old (2004 – 2009)</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The numbers in the table reflect the hardships of real people, many of whom are our neighbors. They also reveal the legacy of a brutal western expansion that many of us would rather forget, but that Native Americans live with every day. European culture brought pandemic disease, violent conquest, diaspora, and cultural subjugation to Native communities. Native governance and knowledge were systematically suppressed. Families were separated.

When understood in this context, the disparities in health, education, and economic opportunity are not remarkable. What is remarkable is Native resilience and determination to overcome those hardships. Martin Jennings, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, is a program officer for the Northwest Area Foundation. He observes that “funders too often focus on deficits or problems. Their thinking needs to shift to asset-based approaches that build on local cultural values, Tribal assets, and knowledge that exists in Indian Country.”

A small but invaluable book, Context is Everything, from One Fire Development Corporation,6 thoughtfully explores how philanthropy can strengthen its appreciation and understanding of Native communities. It echoes Martin’s point: “Given the enormous adversity they have faced, it is miraculous that many Native Americans have retained a sense of cohesion as well as some of the core values that sustained their people over time. Even in the most challenged Tribal communities there is a sense of reciprocity and a clear understanding by Tribal people that their lives are part of and inseparable from each other and the land. This enduring value of interdependence fuels a duty and a responsibility to help other people and to conserve and protect the natural world that is a sacred provider of food, medicine and spiritual sustenance.”7

6 Context is Everything: Reflections on Strengthening Partnerships Between the Philanthropic Communities and Native Americans is one of the most helpful written guides for funders that we have seen. You will find it at www.onefiredevelopment.org/wp-content/themes/H5/images/Context_is_Everything.pdf.
7 Ibid.
A powerful sign of this resilience is the young Indian leaders who are returning to their reservations in surprising numbers to claim their heritage and build a different future for their people. They are bringing new skills and determination to their communities. They are upholding and championing values of interdependence, responsibility, connection to the land, and commitment to the common good — values central to their culture for thousands of years; values that can be the building blocks for creating strong partnerships between philanthropy and Indian Country.

Forming these partnerships will take a commitment to listening that goes beyond what philanthropy typically offers. Northwest Area Foundation president Kevin Walker explains, “My impression in doing this work is that Indian Country is more different than we non-Natives in philanthropy are conditioned to recognize. The fact that each Tribe is a sovereign entity older than the United States; the power of place that Native people on reservations live with, that deep sense of multigenerational belonging that is beyond the ken of many of us more recent arrivals in North America; the related consciousness that their place used to be so much more vast and sustaining than the reservations that remain; the specific, policy-driven reasons why Native people relocated to cities like Portland and Seattle: these are deep waters that matter tremendously. I think it’s truly more complex than acquiring the level of cultural competence that is a good philanthropy worker’s stock in trade.”

Data is important. But the journey into Indian Country requires a deeper understanding of Native communities — one that begins with recognition that Tribal identity, knowledge, history, and tradition are cultural riches that have allowed Native communities to survive overwhelming odds.
LESSON #2

CULTURAL IDENTITY MATTERS

Pow wow at the Omak Rodeo, Washington
As we began this journey, Tlingit leader Byron Mallott became an invaluable guide. Byron served on the Philanthropy Northwest board between 2005 and 2010 and led many public and private conversations about philanthropy’s role in Indian Country. Clan leader of the Kwaash Ki Kwaan, founder and the first president and CEO of First Alaskans Institute, former mayor of Juneau, former director for the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, current board member of Alaska Airlines and Sealaska Corporation, Byron is a compelling advocate for indigenous people. While he travels frequently, he maintains a home in Yakutat, Alaska, where he was born. (Yakutat is home to Athabaskan, Eyak, and inland and coastal Tlingit peoples.) His Native traditions, stories, and identity are important to him and important to pass on to his grandchildren.

Byron is emphatic that building Native communities in Alaska “is not just about putting dollars into programs. It is more about what we are placing in the minds of individuals.”

It is true that much of the past “help” to Native communities has done more harm than good. Some of the most egregious stories are found in Indian boarding schools first established in the late 1800s by government and churches. These schools, common in the Northwest into the 1920s, routinely worked to sever all connection between Native children and their cultural roots, erasing language, religion, and Tribal notions of family structure. In 1892, army officer Richard Pratt infamously explained his philosophy for the Indian schools he founded: “Kill the Indian in him and save the man.”

In 2006, Philanthropy Northwest members visited the modern-day version of one of these schools, St. Labre Indian School in eastern Montana. The school was started in the 1880s, as the U.S. Army attempted to move the Northern Cheyenne onto reservation land (an effort which led to the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876). An ex-officer observed at the time that “Catholic Sisters could do as much for the good of the Cheyenne as a regiment.” In 1884, six Ursuline nuns from Ohio responded by opening a mission school in Ashland, Montana. The nuns’ goal was to bring civilization and Christianity to Cheyenne children. Their initial class had fourteen students.

While there is evidence that the sisters cared deeply about the well-being of their charges, the prevailing attitudes about the Cheyenne are captured in government documents describing the mission: “Indian prejudices are breaking down and the way made easier every day; but the obstacles in the way of bringing these savages to light are still very great.”

St. Labre continues today, serving roughly 700 Northern Cheyenne and Crow students. But, in the intervening years, a new philosophy has taken over: Cultural traditions and identity are regarded as fundamental (rather than detrimental) to the educational efforts of Native students. Now, administrators proudly explain that the school’s philosophy relies on “education, spirituality, and Native American culture (emphasis added) to educate the whole child.” Cheyenne language is part of the curriculum. Campus tour guides proudly point visitors to architecture that evokes traditions of the Plains Indians.

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8 Carly Hare, executive director of Native Americans in Philanthropy, is a thoughtful, accessible, and knowledgeable resource for funders working in Indian Country. On previewing this section of the report, she referenced one of her frequent reminders to the field — a charged statement by her own account, but one that helps make the point: “U.S. policies of termination weren’t as detrimental to American Indians as the good intentions of white women.”

9 The school environment was frequently harsh, prompting students to run away. A Makah woman described her experiences in 1922 at Chemewa, a boarding school in Oregon. “Two of our girls ran away...but they got caught. They tied their legs up, tied their hands behind their backs, put them in the middle of the hallway so that if they fell asleep or something, the matron would hear them and she’d get out there and whip them and make them stand up again. (Helma Ward, Makah, interview with Carolyn Marr). See this website from the University Libraries at University of Washington for more information about the boarding schools in the Pacific Northwest: content.lib.washington.edu/aipnw/marr.html.

10 To learn more about St. Labre, see www.stlabre.org/visitorscenter/100_chapter04.asp.
Culture is paramount in Native communities. In 2009, Dr. Martina Whelshula, Arrow Lakes, executive director of the Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations\textsuperscript{11} outside Spokane, Washington, described to Philanthropy Northwest members the Healing Lodge's treatment program for chemically dependent teenagers. She articulated the program's success, demonstrating the powerful transformation of youth in their recovery through ceremonies and cultural practices. Similarly, in 2011, Native Americans in Philanthropy hosted Philanthropy Northwest on a trip to several Native-led organizations in the Puget Sound area, including the Chief Seattle Club in downtown Seattle. There our members witnessed how critical storytelling and traditional Native arts programs are in reducing homelessness and substance abuse among Native peoples in the city. The Suquamish, the Yakama, the Lummi, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, the Crow and the Cheyenne, along with Native organizations like First Alaskans Institute, The CIRI Foundation, and other Alaska Native corporations have all designed programs to improve well-being by emphasizing cultural identity, history, and community.

One of the best statements about why culture matters comes, again, from Byron Mallott, a man who could work and live anywhere in the world. Byron maintains his home in Yakutat because it gives him a “sense of place, values, and connection, a place of comfort.” In Indian Country, he explains, “it is never about a single person or a single relationship. It is about a web of relationships that you inherit when you are born. Communal interests transcend personal interests. I don’t find that in the larger society... Even when day-to-day life is hard, [Indian Country] is the place you go to, rather than flee from.”

\textsuperscript{11} In October 2011, Washington state’s Department of Behavioral Health and Recovery recognized the Healing Lodge with their Innovative Program of the Year award.
PHILANTHROPY NORTHWEST SITE VISITS

- Coeur d'Alene Reservation, Idaho (2008)
- Northern Cheyenne and Crow Reservations, Montana (2006)
- Lummi Reservation, Washington (2011)
- Tulalip Reservation, Washington (2007)
- Suquamish Reservation (with Potlatch Fund), Washington (2009)
- Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Oregon and Washington (2009)
- Salish Kootenai College, Montana (2011)
LESSON #3

HONOR NATIVE VOICES
Native people were not granted U.S. citizenship until 1924, reflecting the policy of colonization which characterized federal actions through the early part of the 20th century, if not beyond. Indian schools focused on eradicating Native culture, Tribes were isolated on reservations, and Native people were easily excluded from established power structures. Given wildly different experiences in society, it is hardly surprising that Native and non-Native people do not always see the world the same way. This historic and structural reality is further exacerbated by vastly different cultural traditions and beliefs about how people should work together.

The 21st-century world relies on reports, contracts, email, and predominantly impersonal business transactions. In contrast, Native people place a high value on long-standing personal relationships and oral communication. Opportunities for misunderstandings abound between these two value systems and operating cultures. This means that philanthropic organizations must be prepared to invest time and energy if they want to engage in authentic conversations with potential Native partners. As Bill Vesneski from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation explains, “A typical hour visit from the funder is not enough. It takes time to get to know each other.” But as Bill explains later in this report, the investment of time pays off for the funder in better grants and stronger partners.

Philanthropy can also help to strengthen leadership and communication within the Native community by supporting Native-led organizations that give voice to Native concerns. As Janie Leask, Haida/Tsimshian, former president and CEO of First Alaskans Institute explains, Native people “are eminently capable of analyzing politics, economics, and social behavior... We have something to add to the discussion, and we have the right, at long last, to be listened to.”

Two Northwest organizations offer models for bringing the Native voices into the civic conversation, and both have been important partners for Philanthropy Northwest.

**POTLATCH FUND**

Potlatch Fund was established in 2002 to revive the ancient spirit of potlatch ceremonies that were at the heart of a philanthropic tradition among Northwest Coastal Tribes. The creation of the fund was the culmination of years of conversation among Native leaders about the need to create “new paradigms for how progress can be achieved and sustained in Indian Country.” This new organization committed itself to “honor the Native tradition of giving for the common good.” It sought to expand philanthropy in Northwest Indian Country by (1) strengthening ties with mainstream philanthropy, (2) developing new leaders among Native communities, and (3) making strategic grants to Native organizations. By committing itself to grantmaking (versus simply grant-seeking), Potlatch joined First Nations Development Institute.12

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12 To learn more about First Nations Development Institute, see www.firstnations.org.
and the Seventh Generation Fund\textsuperscript{13} to become one of the first Native-focused philanthropies in the United States, as well as an important bridge between Native and non-Native philanthropy.\textsuperscript{14}

Potlatch Fund’s stated goal is to break down the systemic challenges facing Northwest Indian people. Central to its strategy is building the capacity of Native-led organizations. Potlatch offers Native leaders training throughout the year, including sessions in board governance, fundraising, and social media, to name a few. In 2011, Potlatch Fund made more than $250,000 in grants to approximately 80 small and emerging nonprofits, small Tribal programs, and Native artists. Potlatch Fund also sponsors the Inter-Tribal Canoe Journey, which celebrates Native values and traditions and offers mainstream funders a remarkable experience and opportunity to learn about Coastal Tribes.

The former executive director of Potlatch Fund, Andrea Alexander, Makah, was an early resource for Philanthropy Northwest, accompanying our staff and members as we visited Tribal communities and reservations in 2006. Her successor Ken Gordon began working with us in 2007, helping us improve our programs about philanthropy’s role in Indian Country. He and the Potlatch staff regularly shared information about Tribal life in our region and introduced Philanthropy Northwest members to potential partners in Indian Country. Gordon stepped down in 2011 and the board promoted Dana Arviso, Diné, to lead the organization. We have been guided by the wisdom and experience of each of these three leaders.

\textsuperscript{13} To learn more about the Seventh Generation Fund, see http://7genfund.org/index.php.

\textsuperscript{14} Potlatch Fund is one of the nation’s first community foundations started by Native Americans and focused on grantmaking in Indian Country. Learn more at www.potlatchfund.org.
FIRST ALASKANS INSTITUTE AND THE ALASKA NATIVE POLICY CENTER

First Alaskans Institute works to keep Alaska Natives informed and engaged in leading the decisions that shape their future. It provides policymakers with vital information about Native people, promotes collaboration across Tribes and sectors, and trains Native people to assume leadership roles in society. It also convenes and facilitates difficult conversations about values, race and culture and makes grants each year to Native organizations.

One of the Institute’s most important achievements is the creation of the Alaska Native Policy Center. The Policy Center creates, collects, and analyzes data that is germane to the future of Alaska Natives and that would not be available without their work. It empowers Native people to engage in the political process by offering training and coaching, and has not shied away from bringing Native and non-Native peoples together to talk about inequality and racism. But as its first president, Byron Mallott, pointed out, the challenges are not just between Natives and non-Natives. “[There is] a need for increased communication, transparency, and working together [among Native people] to break down silos of thought and action so that we establish a sense of shared priorities…”

First Alaskans Institute has distributed almost $1 million since it began in 2006, making grants to support early education, youth development, leadership development, and cultural learning among Native people. According to former president and CEO Denise Morris, Aleut, “When we empower our people, grow our leaders, contribute to our communities, convene meaningful dialogues, and foster and share our Native knowledge, First Alaskans Institute is taking gigantic strides toward achieving a vision of progress for the next 10,000 years.”
LESSON #4

LEARN FROM MISTAKES

Hands of a Navajo Elder at Sheep is Life Festival
Misunderstandings and disappointment are inevitable in any relationship — particularly in a relationship challenged with cultural differences, power imbalances, and very different communication styles. Philanthropy, no matter how well-intentioned, is not immune to these realities. Things will go wrong. But, as our grandmothers told us, the important thing to do when we fall down is to get back up.

For more than a decade the Northwest Area Foundation has been working to reduce poverty in the eight-state region that parallels the old Great Northern Railway line from Minnesota to Washington. It has worked extensively in Indian Country, today working successfully to address poverty on the Cheyenne River Sioux, Turtle Mountain Chippewa, and Lummi Reservations. One of its most remarkable successes is a $500,000 investment to help a dedicated group of Native Americans bring a lawsuit against the U. S. government to contest mismanagement of Native lands by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Led by Elouise Cobell, elder of the Blackfoot Tribe and lawyer, the suit was successfully settled, returning $3.7 billion to Native people. Cobell v. Salazar resulted in the largest government class-action settlement in the nation’s history. Less than a year after President Obama signed legislation authorizing the settlement, Elouise died of cancer at age 65. She continues to be a beloved figure in the Pacific Northwest and around the country.

However, not all investments by the Northwest Area Foundation have been successful. In 2008, the Northwest Area Foundation calculated that in the past ten years it had granted almost $50 million to Native programs focused on poverty reduction. Reflecting on that decade, the staff drafted an internal memo analyzing what they had learned from their work in Indian Country. Daniel Kemmis, then chair of the Northwest Area Foundation board, generously shared a paper reporting on this internal review, along with his own thoughts, at a Philanthropy Northwest board retreat that also featured Janie Leask, then president of First Alaskans Institute.

The paper was notable for several reasons. First and foremost, it was honest. It stated plainly that while the Foundation “has always been sincere in its commitment to reduce poverty in Native American communities, we have not always done things correctly… Early missteps taught us some hard and valuable lessons.” It highlighted several lessons, including (1) the need for cultural competency within the foundation, (2) the importance of clear communications, and (3) the need to set clear expectations with grant recipients. It also spoke eloquently about the dangers for foundations that lead with money. Daniel cited two examples where the foundation invited communities to apply for large amounts of money. These communities expended considerable time and effort trying to create shared strategies, which the foundation then found insufficiently promising for a grant award. The hard feelings that resulted led to a lawsuit in one case, and a sharp exchange¹⁵ in the pages of Responsive Philanthropy in the other. In both cases, it became clear that the people on the ground knew from the outset that the alliances the foundation wanted to forge were unnatural and unworkable. But the lure of substantial funding made it irresistible to attempt it anyway.

After a decade of on-the-ground experience, the Foundation decided to change its practices going forward, embracing more collaboration and more “learning as we go.” Daniel agreed to share the Northwest Area Foundation’s experiences and reflections with the full Philanthropy Northwest membership at its Annual Conference in 2008. In his conference session entitled “Lessons Learned: Philanthropy in Progress,” he candidly told the story of Northwest Area Foundation’s work in Indian Country.16

By illustrating that even the most committed funder can make mistakes, Daniel confronted an unspoken obstacle facing many funders who consider working in Indian Country: a fear of failure.17 In its place, Daniel offered a more hopeful message: Mistakes will be made, but funders who proceed with honesty, clarity, and respect for the land and people, will find loyal partners in Indian Country.

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16 Two years later, the foundation published a comprehensive paper: “Gaining Perspective: Lessons Learned from 10 Years of Work in Poverty Reduction.” It is an extraordinarily thoughtful self-assessment and useful reading for funders of all sizes and interests. Find it on the Northwest Area Foundation’s website at www.nwaf.org/FileCabinet/DocumentCatalogFiles/Other/GainingPerspective_Full_1-10.pdf.

17 The Northwest Area Foundation’s Kevin Walker wonders why fear of failure seems to be more potent in Indian Country than in other environments where funders are facing big problems: “Is it that funders view Native communities as a lost cause, or an anachronism best ignored? Is it that Tribal politics are too inscrutable? That sovereignty is a hard concept to grasp? Is it that funders believe it’s been proven that nothing works in Indian Country? There is more here to understand.”
THE IMPORTANCE OF STORYTELLING

Susan Anderson, President/CEO, The CIRI Foundation
Daniel Kemmis’ willingness to share the story of the Northwest Area Foundation’s experience honored the Native tradition of storytelling, a strong tradition that lives on today. Native voices like prize-winning author Sherman Alexie are helping to demystify life in Indian Country. With humor and compassion, his books, poetry, and movies map the underlying psychology of modern life on the reservation. From Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* comes the teenage voice of Junior:

> It sucks to be poor, and it sucks to feel that you somehow deserve to be poor. You start believing that you're poor because you're stupid and ugly. And then you start believing that you're stupid and ugly because you're Indian. And because you're Indian you start believing you're destined to be poor. It's an ugly circle and there's nothing you can do about it.

To promote storytelling, a conference session in 2008 invited everyone who attended to share a personal story about working in Indian Country. Susan Anderson, Tlingit, president and CEO of The CIRI Foundation, co-designed the three-hour “deep-dive” session “Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Working with Native Communities, but Were Afraid to Ask” to include small-group discussions that invited Native leaders and mainstream funders to share their experiences directly with each other.

Even with expert guidance, a three-hour conversation between people who do not know each other seemed a risky venture. Native leaders would be attending the conference for the first time. Funders were unaccustomed to meeting with grantseekers in the conference setting. Because the planning committee had scrapped a traditional panel format, all those attending would be expected to participate in small discussion groups.

The room was filled to capacity. More importantly, the conversations were filled with both useful information and honest emotion. Ken Gordon later reflected that introductions made that day ultimately resulted in new grants to several Native organizations. The session demonstrated the importance of (1) clear information about working in Indian Country, (2) more honest and unstructured conversations between grantmakers and grant recipients, and (3) adequate time for people to get to know each other. It also proved a turning point for Philanthropy Northwest, ensuring our commitment to continue building relationships and best practices for philanthropy in Indian Country. We’ve been holding sessions like this one at our conferences ever since.

19 Ibid., chapter 2, paragraph 53.
20 Located in Anchorage, Alaska, The CIRI Foundation is a private foundation whose mission is to encourage education and career development of Alaska Native original enrollees of Cook Inlet Region, Inc. and their direct lineal descendants. Learn more at www.thecirifoundation.org.
BUILD TRUE PARTNERSHIPS

Philanthropy Northwest board member Jo Ann Eder, O.P. & W.E. Edwards Foundation, with Dr. Henrietta Mann, Professor Emeritus, Montana State University, at the Philanthropy Northwest 2006 Annual Conference, Big Sky, MT
Philanthropy Northwest offers its members valuable opportunities for professional development. Training programs and events held year-round cover topics from A to Z: federal regulation to program evaluation, early learning to health care reform. But, our members report that the most important benefit is simply the chance to meet and work with one another. In contrast, nonprofit leaders express a deep sense of isolation from funders. Native nonprofit leaders experience these barriers more than most. Eighty percent of funders surveyed by the Foundation Center do not give to Native projects.21

Breaking down walls between grantmakers and grantseekers is widely understood to be difficult. However, it is not an impossible problem. There are proven strategies for building new and deeper relationships. Sometimes, it happens when a single foundation takes a bold step. Other times, it happens when funders act collectively to break down the barriers. Here are three stories that have inspired us.

**NATIVE AMERICANS IN PHILANTHROPY AND THE CIRCLE OF LEADERSHIP**

At Philanthropy Northwest we are particularly grateful for our partnership with Native Americans in Philanthropy (NAP), a national affinity group offering on-the-ground support to the field, as well as professional development to Native Americans pursuing philanthropic careers. NAP-sponsored Native Regional Institute conferences, programs, a website, and ongoing communications have improved Philanthropy Northwest programs and helped our members build stronger connections in Indian Country. One small story illustrates how NAP’s bridge-building changes lives.

In 2009, Shelley Means, White Earth Chippewa/Oglala Lakota, was at a turning point. Her son was entering the first grade, and for the first time in years, Shelley could think about how she might devote more energy to her community. An unexpected email from NAP arrived in her inbox announcing that applications for NAP’s Circle of Leadership Academy were now being accepted. The program offered young Native leaders an opportunity to learn about organized philanthropy through an 18-month schedule of seminars, peer learning, and practical experience. If accepted, Shelley would need to find a mentor to serve as a coach through the program.

While the Russell Family Foundation’s mission does not mention work in Indian Country, its CEO, Richard Woo, believes deeply in the importance of diversity in philanthropy. He was intrigued when Shelley called him, and ultimately agreed to serve as her mentor. Shelley was accepted into the academy, and Richard helped her to fulfill her obligation as a NAP Fellow. Shelley began “shadowing” Richard at work, attending foundation and community meetings, working directly with foundation staff, and presenting information about the nearby Puyallup Tribe. She also helped Philanthropy Northwest plan conferences in 2010 and 2011.

With the Foundation’s support, Shelley became a bridge builder in the region, connecting mainstream members of Philanthropy Northwest, Potlatch Fund, and NAP. Operating seamlessly between organizations, she hosted meetings, planned conferences, counseled both philanthropists and nonprofits alike, wrote blogs, and arranged site visits to Native organizations. (Her post “What Can Be Gained from a Day on the Bus” is a wonderful example of her initiative and energy.22) She was the embodiment of NAP’s mission to advance philanthropic practices grounded in Native values and traditions.

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22 See the blog post at www.potlatchfund.org/blog/?p=728.
At a NAP event in spring 2010, Richard and Shelley spoke about becoming co-mentors to each other, and the challenges of transformational leadership across cultures. Listening to each of them, it was clear that inviting Shelley into the Russell Family Foundation had changed both of their perceptions about philanthropy. And, as our story demonstrates, it allowed Shelley to continue to build bridges between philanthropy and Indian Country.

THE MONTANA ROUNDTABLES AND 2030 VISION

At about the same time, the Northwest Area Foundation, along with the Foundation for Community Vitality in Montana, launched their own bridge-building work in Indian Country. The two foundations were determined to create and deepen connections between Northwest funders and Native leaders. They started with an invitation to representatives of both groups to meet in Billings, Montana, for a three-day roundtable discussion. There, stakeholders would explore how philanthropy could better engage with and be more effective in Indian Country. This first roundtable would inform a second larger convening among funders and Native leaders.

By all accounts, the first meeting was a success. One funder, Jean Agather, executive director of Oro Y Plata Foundation, reflecting on the meeting, sent a heartfelt message and gift to her colleagues:

After the roundtable, I headed my car west for the 450-mile trip home, turned on my CD player, and settled in thinking about...the collaboration we achieved. One of my all-time favorite Montana CDs began to play and I was struck by how the songs spoke poetically to the topics and relationships we pondered at our gathering... I hope that [these songs] will remind you of the special time we shared.23

Ultimately more than 20 funders joined the second meeting at the Mountain Sky Guest Ranch three months later to “examine gaps and misconceptions, develop a far-reaching vision, and outline a long-term framework for grantmaking in Native communities.” All agreed that the work had to begin with a clear commitment to Native values of respect, reciprocity, long-term commitment, and trust. The roundtable conversations were the basis for a report entitled The 2030 Vision for Self-Determined Native Communities.24

A FOCUS ON COMMUNITY-BUILDING

At the 2011 Philanthropy Northwest conference, eight philanthropic leaders25 reflected on the significance of the Montana roundtables and the excitement they shared about learning together with Native leaders. While the conversation started by reflecting on the creation of 2030 Vision and its goals, it quickly shifted to personal stories of relationship-building, appreciation, and applications of the vision to current philanthropic work. Dana Arviso served as a witness to the conversation, recording it for Philanthropy Northwest and others.

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23 Private email communication from Jean Agather, Oro Y Plata Foundation, 2010.
24 The 2030 Vision for Self-Determined Native Communities describes a future where vital and vibrant Native communities are common across Indian Country. See www.nativephilanthropy.org/system/files/user/NWAF%20Presentation%20for%20Native%20Vision%20at%202011%20NPI.pdf.
To learn more, see www.philanthropynw.org/2030Vision.
25 Leaders participating were Justin Huenermann, president and CEO of Native American Community Development Institute; Carly Hare, president of Native Americans in Philanthropy; Kevin Walker, president of Northwest Area Foundation; Lynda Bourque-Moss, executive director of Foundation for Community Vitality; Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer, executive director of Hopa Mountain and board member of the Charlotte Martin Foundation; Harvey Stewart, trustee, Foundation for Community Vitality; Bill Vesneski, program officer, Paul G. Allen Family Foundation; and Martin Jennings, program officer, Northwest Area Foundation.
2030 VISION FOR SELF-DETERMINED NATIVE COMMUNITIES

Values

- Be mindful of Tribal sovereignty and value the uniqueness of each Tribe
- Seek to understand Native culture and customs
- Appreciate Native intelligence and embrace affirmative, asset-based frameworks
- Deepen understanding of shared values
- Build long-term, reciprocal relationships based on respect, trust, honor and humility
- Invest for the long-term; be patient and willing to take risks
- Be willing to recast what success looks like and use a Native lens to do so

Principles

- Engage in and encourage long-term relationships that are contextual to the community of focus
- Trust that the community knows what is best for its current and future vitality, and respect their right to act as they choose
- Leadership is a primary need for progress, should be authentic within the community, and sustained by the community
- The nature and form of our relationships will promote truth and transparency as we learn and grow together
- Be committed to collaboratively realizing our full potential while demonstrating that each person has a place in community vitality; we are in relationship with each other and the world around us
- No participant is without wealth that should be shared with each other, so our collective wealth will resolve our collective poverty
- A vision is a journey that has not happened, which will be different than conceived, is better experienced in relationship with others, and requires the community to achieve success
The last formal presentation came from Bill Vesneski, director of evaluation, planning, and research at the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation. Bill’s job clearly requires a high degree of comfort with data, timelines, analysis, and reports. He evaluates how millions of dollars in grants from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation are making a difference to the organizations and people they support. By his own description, the Montana roundtables reframed the way he thinks about the Foundation’s role in Indian Country. “There is always this tension in philanthropy around what we measure. The truth is that funders measure what is available and that leads to measuring deficits. We need to figure out how to measure assets.” The conversations in Montana clarified for Bill the need for philanthropy to create deeper connections with Native leaders and to develop a more concrete appreciation for assets and partnership.

Bill told his story eloquently and persuasively, explaining the relationships of trust he is developing in Indian Country, and the commitment the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation has made to work in partnership with Native communities. On January 31, 2012, the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation announced almost $1 million in grants to Native organizations.

**PAUL G. ALLEN FAMILY FOUNDATION GRANTS TO NATIVE ORGANIZATIONS (2010 - 2011)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant Organization</th>
<th>Grant Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaska Conservation Foundation</td>
<td>$225,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys &amp; Girls Club of the Northern Cheyenne Nation</td>
<td>$143,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft3 To support technical assistance and a loan fund for Native entrepreneurs</td>
<td>$240,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Nations Development Institute</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopa Mountain Foundation</td>
<td>$180,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koahnic Broadcast Corporation</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lummi Nation Service Organization</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon Native American Business and Entrepreneurial Network</td>
<td>$165,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southcentral Foundation</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,693,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, the Northwest Area Foundation, guided by *2030 Vision*, announced that it was launching a Native American Social Entrepreneurship Initiative to increase the number and strength of reservation-based Native businesses. Supported by $1.6 million in grants, the initiative is intended to bolster Native financial institutions that grow new businesses and jobs that, over time, build stronger communities.²⁶

²⁶ Martin Jennings, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, program officer at Northwest Area Foundation explains that the grants of this initiative focus on strengthening operations and long-term sustainability of Native institutions, and apply entrepreneurial principles to address social issues. Participants will pilot innovative asset-based strategies to lead to community change.
NORTHWEST AREA FOUNDATION NATIVE AMERICAN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP INITIATIVE GRANTEES (2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Grant Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oregon Native American Business and Entrepreneurial Network</td>
<td>$491,627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Bands Community Fund Inc.</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation – Business Service Center</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunkpati Investments Inc.</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakota Funds</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Native Development Fund</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taala Fund</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,591,627</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the grants listed above, the Northwest Area Foundation is also supporting three Tribal communities through their Ventures program. The Cheyenne River Sioux from South Dakota, Lummi Nation from Washington, and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa from North Dakota all have created community development financial institutions (CDFIs) as an integral part of their 10-year community plans to reduce poverty and build prosperity.
One of the youngest participants of Philanthropy Northwest 2006 Annual Conference, Big Sky, MT
It is undeniable that the history of deprivation in Indian Country has created systemic disparities and ineffective governance structures for Native people, robbing many of them of their health, their economic potential and, in some instances, their hope. As our Native guides reminded us, Native people need more than dollars and good intentions from philanthropists; they also need to be heard.

Recognizing that Native communities are resilient and cohesive — that they safeguard values critical to civil society like cooperation, common purpose, reciprocity, and respect — is a good place to start. Funders can also remain open to the possibility that Native knowledge, history, values, and culture are assets in building communities and advancing Native health. And, finally and importantly, funders can begin to acknowledge that their own misperceptions and built-in assumptions may get in the way of productive partnerships. The underlying thesis of this paper is that funders will make a bigger contribution to life in Indian Country if they listen to and learn from their Native partners.

There is also one final challenge that may be difficult for funders to address: Working successfully in Indian Country requires long-term engagement. To illustrate this, let’s return to Shelley Means. Prior to her fellowship in the Circle of Leadership Academy, Shelley demonstrated her commitment to reducing high rates of infant mortality on reservations by working with a group called Native American Women’s Dialogue on Infant Mortality (NAWDIM), a community group focused on improving health care for Native women and increasing the likelihood that they would have healthy pregnancies. The group relies on cultural traditions, oral history, advocacy, and strong community to achieve its goal.

While in the Circle of Leadership program, Shelley helped NAWDIM write a grant proposal to the Washington Women’s Foundation, a network of philanthropic women in Seattle. The goal of the grant was to reduce the social isolation of Native mothers by bringing women together to make cradleboards and to share stories as a first step toward increasing healthy behaviors and access to health care.

At the Washington Women’s Foundation, the project found a responsive audience. After a thoughtful and competitive process, the foundation’s membership made a small grant to NAWDIM’s program. It was an important connection for both organizations.

Investing in a new generation is “taking the long view.” So is investing in organizations that train leaders, build community, and encourage new political alliances. Some of the most exciting programs we’ve seen in the past five years are engaged in long-term capacity building work. Consider First Alaskans Institute

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27 This is one of the most troubling disparities between Native and non-Native populations. Similarly, premature births and low birth weight are also higher among Native infants. Fetal alcohol syndrome is ten times more likely to occur in a Native infant than in a white child, and it has profound consequences for the long-term well-being of the child. Without question, better access to prenatal care and parent education would allow more Native children to grow up to become healthy and successful adults.

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Funding for this work came from the Washington Women’s Foundation and from the Seattle Foundation, as well as the Northwest Philanthropic Fund. The Rock and the Eagle Speaks by Hank Lee LaRose.
and its work to bring Native voices into public policy conversations. Although there is no certainty about where such efforts will lead, nor are there metrics to measure the full impact they may achieve, First Alaskans is starting a chain reaction that will improve the lives of Alaska Natives. Similarly, the Northwest Area Foundation believes new investments it is making in Native businesses will have a payoff well beyond dollars and cents. By incorporating Native wisdom into its grantmaking strategies, the Northwest Area Foundation is building the capacity of Native people to chart their own destiny.

There are hopeful signs that philanthropy is learning to play a creative and constructive role in Indian Country. One final observation perhaps is most helpful. Several years ago, the Northwest Area Foundation made a lead grant to the Native Americans in Philanthropy Circle of Leadership Academy — the fellowship program that Shelley Means participated in. The program officers had no way of knowing exactly how their grant might change lives. Certainly they didn’t know that their grant would connect a White Earth Chippewa/Oglala Lakota woman to the family foundation of the man for whom the Russell 500 Index is named. Nor could they have known that she would write a compelling grant proposal for the Native American Women’s Dialogue on Infant Mortality (NAWDIM), or that her words would inspire the 500-member Washington Women’s Foundation to make their first-ever grant to a Native-led nonprofit. No one could have predicted those results, and no one can predict the new possibilities that these connections will open.

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

Throughout Native songs and prayers, the image of a circle helps to convey many of the most important spiritual concepts of Native culture: a deep reverence for the earth and sky, the connection between human beings and the environment, the cycle of seasons. A Crow prayer implores, “May I see the new grass of summer.” An Eskimo song celebrates, “Earth and the great weather move me, have carried me away and move inward parts with joy.” These poems celebrate life and remind us that each of us is part of a larger, interconnected universe.

Philanthropy Northwest’s membership represents the six states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming. This region is our landscape, and our home. It is also and has always been Indian Country. The joy of working with our neighbors in Indian Country is that we deepen our commitment to values of relationship, reciprocity and honesty. We learn more about our shared landscapes and history. We strengthen our conviction that all Northwest communities, when properly understood, respected, and supported, have within them the capacity to create a vibrant, healthy future.

Philanthropy Northwest has been enriched by its journey into Indian Country. We have made new friends, started creative partnerships, and been reminded of how important it is for human beings to value each other and the land they live on. As Philanthropy Northwest’s journey continues, we remain deeply grateful to all those who have been such generous guides.

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Eskimo Song

And I think over again
My small adventures
When from a shore wind I drifted out
In my kayak
And I thought I was in danger.

My fears,
Those small ones
That I thought so big,
For all the vital things
I had to get and to reach.

And yet, there is only
One great thing,
The only thing.
To live to see in huts and on journeys
The great day that dawns,
And the light that fills the world.28
Although we alone are responsible for the content of this report, we want to acknowledge that it is better for the generous participation of the following reviewers and editors. Throughout the process of writing this report, we looked to them for guidance and wisdom. In each case they were generous beyond reasonable expectation.

Dana Arviso, Diné
Kelly Brown
Anne Focke
Barbara Dingfield
Ken Gordon
Audrey Haberman
Carly Hare, Pawnee/Yankton Sioux
Lyn Hunter

Martin Jennings, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Daniel Kemmis
Ted Lord
Byron Mallott, Tlingit
Shelley Means, White Earth Chippewa/Oglala Lakota
Denise Morris, Aleut
Bill Vesneski
Kevin Walker

Thanks to the former and current Philanthropy Northwest board of directors, who consistently supported this work, especially David Bley, Kathy Bryon, Jeff Clarke, Sue Coliton, Jo Ann Eder, Diane Kaplan, Daniel Kemmis, Byron Mallott, Ruth Massinga, and Kevin Walker.

We also want to thank the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation for making this report possible, and acknowledge the ongoing contributions of the D5 Initiative and Native Americans in Philanthropy.

For more information, visit our website at www.philanthropynw.org/JourneyIntoIndianCountry.

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