





A Decade of Rebuilders

An Evaluation of the Native Nation Rebuilders Program (2010 – 2019)

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External Evaluation Firm BOWMAN PERFORMANCE CONSULTING Funding Organization BUSH FOUNDATION



NGC Opening Remarks

I'm Wayne Ducheneaux II (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe), the Executive Director for Native Governance Center. The Native Nation Rebuilders Program emerged in 2009 under leadership from the Bush Foundation. In 2015, Native Governance Center was established. Shortly afterward, the Bush Foundation transferred the direction of the program over to Native Governance Center. The Rebuilders Program was designed to equip both grassroots and elected Tribal leaders with nation building skills and empower them to implement effective and positive change in their communities. Rebuilders have made positive impacts in many sectors, influencing nation building at all levels in their communities-- from tribal governments and education to language revitalization and entrepreneurship. This report demonstrates how the program uplifts, inspires, connects, and strengthens Rebuilders and communities.

Wayne Ducheneaux II Executive Director Native Governance Center

As a traditional Lunaape/Mohican woman who has been an active Indigenous community member for 40 years and an Indigenous evaluator for over 20 years, I have been honored to be a part of this project evaluation. The data gathered during the last year is reflected within this report and shows the value, impact, and culturally responsive design of the Native Nation Rebuilders program. The innovative and inspired leadership by Rebuilders demonstrates the diversity in evidence-informed practices. At the core, Rebuilders are community-driven change agents who use policy, sovereignty, and cultural values to create and sustain change within and well beyond their local context. It has been an honor to know the Rebuilder program leadership and staff as well as the alumni and current Rebuilders who are strategically and impactfully making change. I would like to thank you all for allowing me into your lodge and providing me the opportunity to share your stories in hopes that these narratives will inspire new Rebuilders in the future.

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V ABouman-farree

Nicole Bowman, Ph.D. External Evaluator, Rebuilder Program President, Bowman Performance Consulting

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Executive Summary

The Rebuilders Program evaluation study was conducted from January to December 2019. The Bush Foundation (BF), in partnership with the Native Governance Center (NGC), commissioned the external evaluation team at Bowman Performance Consulting (BPC) to co-construct a Rebuilders Evaluation Study Design document (Appendix A). From there existing data was inventoried (spring 2019) before new data was collected (summer-fall 2019). The Rebuilders Program evaluation study seeks to understand the value and impacts of the program by ten cohorts of Tribal leader participants from three states (Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota). The findings from the three primary Rebuilders Program evaluation study questions are outlined in this executive summary.

1. Is the design and implementation of the current iteration of the Rebuilders Program creating the intended experiences and results for Tribal participants and Native nations? Did the experience engage participants actively in the Rebuilders program?

Rebuilders overwhelmingly value their experiences in the program, the curriculum content, and how they engaged with fellow Rebuilders. On average, over 96% of Rebuilders agree/strongly agree that the Rebuilders Program's instructional practices, learning experience, and empowering curriculum met their needs. Active participation is carried out through regular coursework, before and after trainings, and upon Rebuilders completing the two-year program. Being able to learn from other Rebuilders, through real world Native governance and community examples, and by being active within their community contexts on Rebuilder action plans helped participants to learn through the curriculum and active learning experiences.

2. How is Rebuilders' participation most valued and utilized by alumni within their Native nations? What changes are most evident individually or regionally for strengthening the five core Native Nation Building (NNB) principles? How does the program engage post-Rebuilders Program participants?

Rebuilders know other Rebuilders and relied on in-programming and postprogramming networks, competencies, strategies, and supports that they gained as part of the two-year Native Nation Building leadership experience. All five NNB principles (Figure 1, pg. 9) and self- determination were valued and used by Rebuilders. The principles spirited leadership, sovereignty, and cultural match were the most valued and utilized by Rebuilders. Rebuilders' work is dynamic, and Rebuilders are redefining, renewing, and reengaging in community-driven and culturally responsive Indigenous leadership practices. There are many examples of local, regional, and national impacts being realized through workforce development, environmental justice, and educational initiatives being led by Rebuilders that Tribal nations are effectively carrying out.

3. What aspects of the Rebuilders program are least utilized and need the most improvement?

Overall, Rebuilders shared that intentionally building stronger Rebuilders' networks and supports after completing the program, and increasing resources to support NNB are critical. Formal Tribal leadership involvement in building greater capacity and involvement at the local Tribal nation level and mobilizing more Rebuilders in each community are often cited as leverage points that could be utilized to maximize supports and impacts for program participants. More support for implementation of NNB and Rebuilders action plans within the two-year program timeframe but, outside of the actual trainings, was most requested. Being in tune with current and future Tribal leaders to best understand what is on the horizon for Tribal communities to address and documenting best practices and evidence informed strategies or models are other Rebuilders Program components that were recommended by evaluation study participants to keep the Rebuilders Program innovative, responsive, and effectively engaging the future generations of Tribal leaders.

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Who We Are

In winter 2019, three organizations came together to co-create and collaborate as evaluation learning partners to design and support the implementation and reporting of the Native Nation Rebuilders (NNR or Rebuilders) program external evaluation study. Our teams represent the private, non-profit, and philanthropic sectors. Funded by the Bush Foundation (BF), administered by the Native Governance Center (NGC), and externally evaluated by Bowman Performance Consulting (BPC), this section provides detail about who we are and our roles in supporting this study.

Native Governance Center

Native Governance Center. Mission/info: <u>https://nativegov.org/team/</u>. Administrator of the Rebuilders Program. Key staff: Wayne Ducheneaux II (Cheyenne River Sioux), Executive Director; Jayme Davis (Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa/Standing Rock Sioux), Program Director; Apryl Deel-McKenzie (Diné); and Pearl Walker-Swaney (Standing Rock Sioux/White Earth Nation).

Bush Foundation

Bush Foundation: Funding organization. Info at: <u>https://www.bushfoundation.org</u>. Key staff: Eileen Briggs (Cheyenne River Sioux), Nation Building and Government Redesign Portfolio Director, and Erica Orton, Learning and Evaluation Manager. Bio info:

https://www.bushfoundation.org/about-us/bio/eileen-briggs and https://www.bushfoundation.org/about-us/bio/erica-orton.

Bowman Performance Consulting

Bowman Performance Consulting (BPC), an Indigenous research and evaluation consulting firm in Wisconsin, was hired in February 2019 to lead and facilitate the Rebuilders external evaluation study. BPC contributors are Dr. Nicole Bowman (Mohican/Lunaape), Evaluation Leader; Ms. Alison Bowman (Stockbridge-Munsee); Dr. Andrea Guajardo (Cherokee/Latinx); Ms. Eden Huntington (Ojibwe/Oneida/Menominee); and Ms. Danielle Pingel (Brothertown). Questions regarding the evaluation should be directed to Dr. Nicole Bowman







(Mohican/Lunaape), BPC President and External Evaluation Leader for the Rebuilders study, at nicky@bpcwi.com. More info about BPC is at: <u>https://bpcwi.com/</u>.

You may request copies of this document from the Native Governance Center, Mr. Wayne Ducheneaux II (Cheyenne River Sioux), Executive Director, at 651-571-0826, or from the Bush Foundation by contacting Ms. Eileen Briggs (Cheyenne River Sioux), Nation Building and Government Redesign Portfolio Director, at ebriggs@bushfoundation.org.

Native Nation Rebuilders Program Background

The Native Nation Rebuilders Program (Rebuilders) was launched by the Bush Foundation (BF) in 2009. It is a two-year, cohort-based leadership experience that empowers participants to develop knowledge, skills, and connections needed to effectively lead nation building efforts in their own communities. Rebuilders was created in response to and through the guidance of Native nations and leaders who envisioned having leadership, Native Nation Building (NNB)^{i ii iii}, and Tribal governance trainings provided by and for Native people. NNB is a phrase defined as the processes and efforts by which a Native nation enhances its own capacity for effective self-governance and self-determination (Native Nations Institute, University of Arizona, 2019). It is also the title of a curriculum designed around five core principles or tenets. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Nation Building Principles



The curriculum facilitates Rebuilders participants' development of knowledge, skills, and connections to effectively lead NNB efforts in their own communities. The purpose of the Rebuilders program is to support the self-determination of the 22 Native nations geographically located within the boundaries of Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Supporting the individual leadership development of Native nation leaders is crucial for ensuring the long-term success of their communities. In early 2016, the Bush Foundation transitioned administration and delivery of the Rebuilders program to the Native Governance Center, a Native-led nonprofit organization that assists Native nations in strengthening their governance systems and capacity to exercise sovereignty. Since the start of Rebuilders in 2009, ten Rebuilders cohorts consisting of 176 participants from 23 Native nations have participated (unduplicated counts). The 23 sovereign Native nations are shown in Figure 2 below. Figure 3 offers a decade of Native nation rebuilding activities by the numbers. More detailed information can be reviewed via the Rebuilders Excel database that is on file with NGC.



Figure 2: Map of Native nations in BF/NGC region

The operational goal of the Rebuilders program is to prepare and empower Rebuilders to effectively lead NNB efforts in their own Native nations. The Rebuilders program delivery model implements NNB learning activities through a two-year cohort design. Learning in year one is facilitated through the Native Nation Institute's NNB curriculum. It is delivered through four sessions lasting two to three days for each session. Year two is focused on implementation of year one learning. Participants are mentored and supported in the implementation of individual or team action plans created specifically for each participating Native nation. For this Rebuilders evaluation study, a logic model was created which provides a visual depiction of the program design, inputs, activities, outputs, intended outcomes, and impacts. This draft logic model (Appendix B) is considered a tool to support data visualization for describing the programming related to the evaluation.

Figure 3: Summary of Rebuilders program participants (2009-2019)



Figure 4

Evaluation Participants



120 online survey respondents



15 in-person interviewees



Interviewees represent...



Evaluation Design: How We Did Our Work Evaluation as Good Medicine

For the first three months of the Rebuilders study, the three organizations came together frequently to learn and listen to each other. This time and resource investment brought clarity and trust, and informed the values, purposes, and questions that the Rebuilders study would consider. Throughout the nearly 12 months together, the three organizations continued to meet frequently, on both remote and face-to-face bases, to coconstruct the methods, instruments, and data collection activities that would generate information for this report. This frequent and authentic engagement continues to ensure that the final Rebuilders report is not only accurate and trustworthy, but it is written in a style and includes the content most important to the Rebuilders stakeholders who will be using this information in the future. Being responsive to community contexts, inclusive of Indigenous culture and values, utilizing Indigenous theories and methods, and being actively engaged in a collaborative leadership approach throughout the design and implementation of the Rebuilders study, provided a way for evaluation to be "good medicine."

Historically, Western evaluations focus on individualism, used rigid and quantitative measures of "success," and often are designed and carried out by non-Indigenous people or by academics who lack lived experiences (i.e. praxis) within Indigenous community contexts necessary for conducting a strong evaluation. By contrast, the teams from the three organizations came together to respectfully and meaningfully contribute to the process, created success indicators which included individual and community narratives, and used the evaluation as a way to be together as learning partners throughout the process. Evaluation was done in a way by us and for us which resulted in a <u>culturally responsive and practical approach</u> to our work. The purpose of the Rebuilders' program evaluation was to study three areas of inquiry:

- 1. *Program Design*: to understand the value and/or effectiveness of program design, curriculum, and implementation.
- 2. *Program Impact*: to document and define Rebuilders impacts from an individual level, community level and Native nations level (priority focus areas).
- 3. *Program Value*: to share key findings on how investing in Rebuilders has built the capacity to improve and strengthen Native nations per the five NNB core principles.

The mixed-method data collection strategy was carried out from March through November of 2019. Key document review, building a 10-year Rebuilders participant database, conducting a survey with Rebuilders in early summer 2019 (n=120 or 66% response rate), and conducting remote and inperson Rebuilders interviews (19 interviews and 20 interviewees) from late summer through fall of 2019 were completed. () Broad evaluation questions and sub-questions were developed that correspond to the three areas of inquiry (Program Design, Program Impact and Program Value). In the next section, the study report shares findings by the three areas of inquiry noted above. Information regarding the Rebuilders evaluation instruments, summary reports or detailed tribal response rates or representation per instrument, and program participant evaluation databases are on file with NGC. Below is a timeline that provides an overview of this project. For additional information about the Rebuilders program evaluation design instruments, please see appendix documents C, D, and E. Below is a timeline that provides an overview of this project. For a complete timeline of the study see appendix F.

January 2019-March 2019

- Relationship building between Native Governance Center, Bush Foundation, and Bowman Performance Consulting
- Define goals and purpose of the project
- Develop project design and logic model

April 2019-June 2019

- Develop survey design and instrument
- Develop interviewing design and instrument
- Identify recruitment strategy

July 2019-September 2019

- Online survey distribution
- Interview recruitment
- First round of interviews
- Survey data analysis

October 2019-December 2019

- Data analysis
- Second round of interviews
- Drafting report
- Report complete



A Decade of Rebuilders: Study Findings

Evaluation Study Findings

The evaluation study findings will share key themes that address each of the three areas of inquiry mentioned previously in this report. We begin by sharing an overview of the levels of participation and quantify the impacts of the Rebuilders program. Using mid-year and final report data sets, review of key documents, and a Rebuilders database.

Program Design Findings

Rebuilders program participants were asked in a survey and in interviews about the value and effectiveness of the Rebuilders program design, curriculum, and implementation. The next subsections highlight key findings that Rebuilders shared about their experiences regarding effectiveness of the program, value of the curriculum content and learning experience, and areas that they would like to see improved or with which they would like more support.

In the past 10 years, what program elements have been effective?

On average, over 96% of Rebuilders agree/strongly agree that the Rebuilders program's instructional practices, learning experience, and empowering curriculum met their needs. When asked, 82% of respondents said the Rebuilders program met or exceeded their expectations.

The use of case studies and real-life experiences were most often cited in the data as the strongest aspects of curriculum content and learning experiences. Sharing stories of challenges, successful strategies, and evidence of transformation and change helped address many uncertainties that Rebuilders may have had when they started the program. "I think that anyone who is wanting to make a difference in their tribal community and does not know how to do so, should do this program," remarked one participant. From the broad strokes of discussion regarding the five Native Nation Building (NNB)

principles to sharing the intimate details of how specific NNB strategies were being done in other Tribal communities, this sharing offered a good balance of reinforcing the curriculum. Learning through lived experiences and sharing stories of success kept Rebuilders engaged and inspired during sessions. It was an effective pedagogical tool for deepening and personalizing Rebuilders learning as well. "I've also been inspired by the guest speakers/leaders by learning to be more understanding of where my tribe is at," remarked one Rebuilder. This demonstrates critical thinking, self-reflection, empathy and patience, and comparative analysis – all excellent and necessary leadership characteristics of effective Rebuilders.

Next, it is important to acknowledge that learning together in a cohort design was also a valued and effective way to learn. This builds connections within and across cohorts over time.

"During the year, we really did bond. When we were put in smaller groups, mine was the Lakota/Dakota Tribes of South Dakota; all of us were hesitant to work together. But after going through strength-building exercises we were able to form a mutual respect and an actual liking for one another." -Rebuilder

Throughout the study, many Rebuilders were observed making similar statements about how the program helped heal relationships and transcend historical or cultural gaps that sometimes keeps Native nations, communities, and peoples divided. Cohort learning also builds Indigenous identity and connects unique Indigenous leadership styles that can transcend oppressive historical narratives and contemporary contexts where Indigenous leadership is practiced. This quote from a Rebuilder exemplifies the relationships and building indigenous identity.

"I feel like a lot of these pieces within the nation building stuff that we learned through Rebuilders helped strengthen, not only my identity as an indigenous person and a tribal member here, but giving me that lens to best articulate that then to this dominant culture that I work within, to see those connections of how we were a part of this. There's a design here and we're part of this design, whether we're keeping people oppressed or are we building bridges to those pathways of allowing for selfgovernance and self-determination and all those things." -Rebuilder

Rebuilders also shared that connections they made with other Rebuilders during and after the program was one of the most valuable aspects of the program. When asked, 73% of survey respondents have met with other Rebuilders to discuss Nation Building efforts and 63% of respondents continue to connect via social media.

"I think we have a good strong network and we can pick up the phone and call each other. I know that for our cohort, I built some good strong relationships with other community members which I didn't have going in, so to me that was a really important outcome [and] a real blessing for me." -Rebuilder Rebuilders see each other's communities and encourages Tribal nations to stand together to be seen and heard as a stronger and unified Indigenous voice. A Rebuilder shared their examples of this in the following quote.

"By getting the message out, getting the curriculum out, building the curriculum together and delivering that...so that they see what our people see....and so does the mainstream society also see how serious we are." -Rebuilder

These internalized values and external changes in speaking, behaviors, and community actions demonstrate the impacts of the Rebuilders curriculum content and design as the NNB principles are expressed through Rebuilders' advocacy and justice activities.

When asked to describe the most positive memory respondents had from the Rebuilders program the following phrases came up most often: relationships with fellow cohort members (35 mentions), learning (21 mentions), and positive experience (10 mentions).

"There were so many positive memories but [the most positive one was] the final activity when we received our certificates. It was empowering to see how much we had learned as a group, how close we have grown and ... how great some of our cohort was doing after. It was like they had new wings and that they weren't afraid to impact their communities and themselves." -Rebuilder

What program improvements could be made in the future?

The data showed that Rebuilders cited time as the most needed resource: more time between sessions, more time in sessions to process information, more time outside of sessions to implement a plan within a community context. Rebuilders also want more time before programming starts in order to have the best learning experience. A Rebuilder made a suggestion to address this in the following quote.

"In this respect, I would actually have liked more at-home work to prepare for the inperson sessions. Sometimes we do not make the space for things unless they are required, even if we have the desire to learn more. One possible requirement early on is for Rebuilders to demonstrate knowledge of their tribal constitutions, government, and legal systems. I wish I had known more about my own tribe coming into the first session." -Rebuilder

Time was also a factor for travel and trying to create strategies for decreasing distance and isolation. Use of virtual get togethers or meetings or changing locations where Rebuilders programming is typically offered, were suggested as mitigating actions.

Next, Rebuilders mentioned that the program could offer more structured support for better understanding of the action plans. Although 68% of Rebuilders surveyed agreed/strongly agreed that they were successful in implementing their action plans, they also shared in the survey suggestions for improvement such as, having clarity about the design, being given more structure and concrete examples of what types of action plans generated the most impacts and positive changes in Native

communities.

Suggestions from Rebuilders included to improve the action plan experience are in the following quotes:

"Creating mock action plans"

"Partners to be inclusive to help implement community action plans"

"...the need for a deeper but operational way to develop or create realistic action plans. I feel like there could be more training in breaking a plan down into doable parts. I feel like my team didn't quite understand how to break a plan down. Also help us to scale back when the plan are unrealistically ambitious. We all have full-time jobs and we can't make the plans, so they require a full-time person to complete them."

Reducing the confusion of content and action plans across instructors was an area in which Rebuilders would like to see improvements.

Another theme that arose from the survey was the suggestion to provide examples of successful action plans. An example of this from a Rebuilder was, "I would like case studies of exemplar nation building efforts but feel that I am not well-versed in the area to explain the information accurately in my community." Rebuilders also suggested providing examples of alumni that were using the work started in their action plans to make a difference and help sustain change in Native communities' years after completing the Rebuilders Program. A suggestion from a Rebuilder is in the following quote.

"Bring in different examples of some of the people that have done some work – those that are actually fulfilling those action plans...what's effective and what's not...governing in different contexts, different organizations." -Rebuilder

Rebuilders expressed the value in learning from the actions and impacts of alumni of the program and the long-term impacts those alumni can have on their communities. "Rebuilders is for you professionally. But it's also for the future. The stuff you, or we, are doing now affects others down the line...for the next seven generations."

In summary, longer sessions (12 mentions), more time to process the content of the curriculum (five mentions), hands-on activities (four mentions) and learning how to apply leadership to community of practice (four mentions) were all phrases used most often in the survey when asked for the areas they would like to see the program improve. Of the remaining respondents, lack of execution of action plans, personality conflicts, poor mentoring matchups and time were mentioned as reasons the program did not meet their expectations. Other suggestions for program improvements by Rebuilders were addressing historical and intergenerational trauma as part of leadership development, bringing in guest presenters and subject matter experts who understand NNB in theory and practice, and bringing in mentors from Tribes currently implementing Rebuilding effectively were mentioned.

What additional program supports do Rebuilders want/need?

The overall themes of support needs gleaned from hundreds of individual responses reveal that intentional and strong Rebuilders networks, supports after completing the program, and increases in resources to support NNB are critical. Formal tribal leadership involvement, building greater capacity and involvement at the local Tribal nation level, and mobilizing more Rebuilders in each community are often cited as leverage points that could be utilized to maximize supports and impacts for program participants. More support for implementation of NNB and Rebuilders action plans outside of the trainings was most requested. A suggestion from a Rebuilder is in the following quote.

"There needs to be a set of partners to be addressed who can help immediately as these action plans are set up. From the program's perspective, I think there needs to be a letter written by them so that each nation can present that to potential partners in the process of implementing the action plans. Identifying ways NGC could support these efforts. But I do like how it rolled out initially." - Rebuilder

Building networks of support across systems, communities, and virtual spaces would help mobilize Rebuilders who are using sovereignty and putting the other NNB principles in action. Another suggestion from a Rebuilder can be found in the following quote.

> "Native Governance Center needs to create a culture of tolerance, of Native Nation Rebuilding, intentional design or connection or inclusion of alumni – creating networking platforms...talking about our work. This helps us to realize how we can be partnering together, how we can be Native Nation Rebuilding and thinking through a statewide approach because that's where any policies change, to benefit us, as Native Nations, with Native Nations or Native Nation people." - Rebuilder

Setting up more formal networks and having resources, policies, and evidence-based practices to support Nation Building in context will continue to be an area of continuing education and development that NGC will need to address.

Program Value Findings

Understanding the value of Rebuilders programming helps us learn about why investing in NNB results in stronger Native Nations and Native leaders who are effectively engaging in implementing and leading use of the NNB principles in community context. Next, we share perspectives on how Rebuilders value their experience in the program and provide examples of how NNB is utilized by Indigenous leaders back in their home communities.

In what ways do Rebuilders share that they value the Native Nation Building principles?

The Rebuilders Program was based around the five NNB principles of Sovereignty, Capable Governing Institutions, Cultural Match, Strategic Orientation, and Spirited Leadership (described in Figure 1, page 8). Rebuilders often mentioned self-determination as distinct from sovereignty but related, in this study (see Figure 6). Survey respondents were asked about how frequently they used each of the five NNB principles in their communities.. Spirited leadership, cultural match and sovereignty were used most often (Figure 5). Interviewees (n=19) were asked which of the NNB principles they valued most. Similar to the most frequently used principles, Spirited Leadership, Cultural Match and Sovereignty were the most valued principles (Figure 6).

How often have survey respondents used each Nation Building principles in their community?



Figure 5: Rebuilder frequency of use of Nation Building Principles

Figure 6: Rebuilders Value of Nation Building Principles

Of these Rebuilder program content areas, which principle do you value most?

n=19



For both the value and frequency of NNB principles, interviewees shared that they felt an overarching and foundational nature of Sovereignty and Spirited Leadership allowed them to have a greater role in their daily and long-term strategies. An example of this is in the following example shared by a Rebuilder.

It's us that needs to be sovereign, that needs to make our own decisions that need to be determined. It all comes from ourselves and then our families of how we deliver that. That we choose to be sovereign and that we don't be so dependent but that we're helping give back to the tribal government. We're not waiting for them to give to us, we're giving back to them." -Rebuilder

This is an example of personal sovereignty that many interviewees shared as distinct from Tribal Nation sovereignty.

"We can't understand government, tribal sovereignty until you truly understand and exercise your self-sovereignty." -Rebuilder

Tribal Nation sovereignty is when the Tribal government uses policies, resources, and political advocacy and action to put forward a Tribal Nation agenda or an agenda shared by many Tribal Nations demonstrated in the Dakota access pipeline turmoil and fight for justice as shared by several interviewees. Another shared, "We can't understand government, tribal sovereignty until you truly understand and exercise your self-sovereignty." Interviewees also spoke passionately about Leadership. One shared, "You're not going to exercise the other tenets without leadership." Another Rebuilder remarked, "When you have good leadership and you have a horrible system, you can still make things work as opposed to chaos."

How have Rebuilders used the five Native Nation Building principles and self-determination to improve their Native Nations?

Rebuilders shared stories of what these NNB principles look like in action. Moving beyond what Rebuilders value most about NNB and self-determination, we wanted to better understand the leadership impacts based on what Rebuilders used the most in their daily leadership activities.

In terms of utilization, some Rebuilders discussed leading projects without enough knowledge, budget, or staff – and making it work through innovative methods. Another described the dynamic nature of the work, as they are "defining and redefining what it is to be Indigenous." For example, using the governing body of a Tribal Nation, Tribal college/university, or Tribal nonprofit for educational and capacity building purposes was mentioned frequently by interviewees. Specifically, one Tribal interviewee remarked about strategic orientation in action, "

> Because of Tribal staff turnover and partnerships with non- Natives, we have to provide training and technical assistance to be sustainable for the short and long-term." -Rebuilder

Cultural match and spirited leadership in action were shared by all interviewees in the work they do as Rebuilders. For instance,

> "We have done the blanket exercise and we'll talk about the design of how we're in the system together and about how the Indian Reorganization Act and the government were imposed and still impact our Tribal Nations." -Rebuilder

As Tribal interviewees shared their stories of NNB in action, many of them passionately and measurably articulated their improved skills and confidence.

How NNB priciples are being used by Rebuilders today...



"As a trailblazer in language revitalization efforts, tribal language in and of itself is an act of sovereignty."

"I research and speak from a place of being informed about my nations inherent sovereignty. Within my homelands I exercise my nations sovereignty whenever possible. Including using my nations ID, speaking up when misinformation about my nation is being perpetuated in political public and private spaces."



CAPABLE GOVERNING INSTITUTIONS

"I frequently find that our governing institutional structure is at the root of our solutions, problems, successes, failures. On a daily basis I look with a constructively critical eye at my Tribe's various governing institutions and think how or whether they could be improved."

"Recognizing that tribes do and can run many of their own programs and encouraging government to government collaborations."



"Advocating for cultural competence in addressing behavioral health and implementing cultural teachings in curriculum in our education systems."

"Given my work in Lakota and Dakota language I constantly push that the basis of our rules as a nation have to come from our language and culture...We have to make sure there is a means to connect what we do as a governing system/institution to who we are. And the first step is reclaiming our language."

Program Impact Findings

Levels of Rebuilders Program impacts demonstrate stories of success, change, and sustained transformation. Impacts of the Rebuilders Program are seen at the individual, Tribal Nation, and broader levels beyond the local Tribal community.

What impact has the Rebuilders Program had on individual participants?

Impact statements must move beyond just counting heads of Rebuilders participants (outputs) or only considering impacts through statistical frameworks. Hearing success indicators through impact stories tells us about the perceptions and experiences during the two-year program and beyond. When asked how the Rebuilders Program has impacted participants as leaders, 96% of respondents answered with a positive sentiment. Words that were most often used to describe their impacts were: "better leader" (31 mentions), "community" (25 mentions), and "leadership" (14 mentions). Interviewees also gave insight into which Rebuilders Program elements contributed to the most impactful changes. They shared strategies of advocacy and empowerment, creating interpersonal connections, and providing a sense of place in the community. One interviewee remarked, "I think that's the biggest thing I see with our cohorts is that it's empowering people versus keeping our people dependent." Interviewees also mentioned mindset shifts several times. One said,

> "More people from the program are in the community talking about things and solutions. They are going about solving issues in different ways rather than just seeing the doom and gloom side of it."



STRATEGIC ORIENTATION

"My work is founded on this principle, always thinking/moving from a visionary process and pointing out how we have become reactionary (due to oppression and colonization). To be deliberate and planful in all we do. What is the outcome we are working towards."

"I always function in strategy and try to see the long term implications for actions taken and not waste resources or duplicate efforts. The Rebuilders gave me efficient tools to that helped me do this better."



"I believe that I am a strong advocate for Native families and youth. I credit the confidence that I gained as a Rebuilder for the impacts that I am having as a school board member, Tribal administrator and community volunteer."

"I appreciate the program and the Rebuilder pushing me out of my comfort zone... I used to sit back and let other people speak for us and now I ask questions and share my thoughts. I used to have to make sure I had the right answer and the perfect thing to say before I spoke...this program is pushing me to get out more and connect with sunshine yellow..." While most described this in a positive direction and toward long-term improvements, one shared that their Tribal community still had too much colonized thinking and an inability to accept change enough to make significant improvements. Some other interviewees also described the positive affect of increased professional development opportunities for Tribal employees.

Impacts for Rebuilders are being sustained long-term. Interviewees shared that the connections they gained with other Rebuilders have continued to support them professionally over the years and give them confidence to lead and govern effectively in their communities. Many have maintained regular contact with their fellow Rebuilders and receive great professional support from these relationships. One Rebuilder shared, "They hold me up. They're shoulders that I stand with

97% of survey respondents

agreed or strongly agreed that the Rebuilders program curriculum was empowering to them

94% of survey respondents

agreed or strongly agreed that the Rebuilders program helped them to be a more effective leader in their community

and stand on." Nearly all the interviewees stated that they felt being a Rebuilder has had an enduring emotional and social impact on their leadership. These strong social networks were described as essential connections that helped to sustain their leadership. Being able to have likeminded peers that use a shared framework and language and who understand their challenges in a parallel position, enables them to offer practical and confidential supports while bringing innovation to share new ideas and approaches for constructive solutions.

While most referenced a positive relationship with their Rebuilder peers, a small subset shared their hopes for more peer support. At least three Rebuilders felt competitiveness and what they perceived as outright jealousy from their Rebuilder peers. Overall, however, the Rebuilders connections are helping program alumni have greater impact in their nation building where multiple Rebuilders are employed by the same Tribal nation. One participant shared that these organic supports from their co-Rebuilders create "ripple effects" of impact and continue to grow.

What impact have Rebuilders had in their Native nations?

In reflecting on their time in the Rebuilders Program, Rebuilders shared stories of change in the communities they served. Several interviewees discussed expanded community building and professional networks because of the Rebuilders Program. Others shared the growth of new ideas and innovation in the community, which resulted in increased self-sufficiency. When surveyed, 90% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that they have supported their community's use of Tribal sovereignty for community initiatives and programs. (Figure 7) Interviewees also shared their community's improved planning and decision-making based on data. However, one interviewee also encountered pushback from their Tribal community, sharing that the trainings did not fit that community, and it did not ultimately adopt them. When asked about the influence within their Native

Nation at a regional or national level, 82% of survey respondents replied with positive sentiments. Most influenced was "community" (21 mentions). A few responses supporting this theme include: "...when you are a Native Nation Rebuilder, it elevates your opportunities to be engaged with the community", "...[the Rebuilders Program] empowered me to want to be more involved and do more for my community", and "...helped me to integrate the Native Nation Rebuilding approach in my communities."

Figure 7: Rebuilders' impact in their community

Survey respondents agreed that they have supported...



When asked to describe how they know the community has sustained positive impact, some interviewees discussed measurable differences such as increased participation. Others described more intangible differences such as energy and gratitude, and once again mindset changes. Examples of these changes include the building of coalitions, increased grant awards, rebuilding from professional failure to national recognition, listening to the youth, and looking to the future. For example, one shared, "They're [Rebuilders] not thinking on an election cycle. They're thinking, you know, 10 years from now, 20 years from now, a hundred years from now, a thousand years from now... What are we going to look like?" This is seven generations thinking and traditional leadership-in-action that can be related directly back to the five NNB principles.

Some of the most significant changes in Rebuilders' communities were described as improving the number and quality of conversations and as well as networking and community advocacy efforts. One interviewee stated that since becoming a part of the program, they "moved from tunnel vision to thinking about community more." This growth in conversations brought their community (Tribal and county) together. Other documented methods for Rebuilders to assess community changes and impacts were collected through elder stories, historical narratives, activist narratives, observations of community advocacy and protesting, community needs assessments, and physical changes in the built environment which impacted and increased greater access, programming, and services for Tribal members to meet educational, economic, cultural, health, transportation, housing, and other social/human service needs.

What impact have Rebuilders had in their region and/or beyond?

Rebuilder impacts include:

- starting a Tribal credit union
- political identity and public service announcements
- Tribal constitution revisions and activism or partnering with other non-Tribal governments and partners
- improvements in public and private health services to Tribal members
- positive changes in student and adult academic planning
- educational outreach trainings and improving curriculum content related to Tribal nations by schools and other public agencies

Rebuilders also shared changes outside of their local communities that could be related to Rebuilders programming. Several interviewees referenced the recent NoDAPL (No Dakota Access Pipeline)^{iv} struggles, with Rebuilders adding increased diplomacy, for example. DAPL refers to the Dakota Access Pipeline project, also known as the underground Bakken oil pipeline, that runs under North and South Dakota, Iowa, and Illinois and threatens the natural resources and human guality of life for treaty lands of the Standing Rock Sioux and Dakota Nations. One Rebuilder shared, "During DAPL, I saw a lot of that diplomacy happen. If we didn't have some of the teachings that we had or the respect that we had understand for each other, we probably wouldn't be friends today." Some interviewees also mentioned increased nation-to-nation activities, with more intertribal participation evident at their professional organizations. Another broader impact by Rebuilders is from the work of the Zaagibagaang group. Through this grassroots efforts led by Rebuilders and other members of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (MCT) there is an increase in knowledge and resources on the history of the six Ojibwe tribes that make of the MCT., Additionally, Rebuilders stated that new businesses are opening in Tribal communities and there is an improved and increased selection of Tribal politicians running for and being seated in both public and Tribal governments. These multi-cultural and multi-jurisdictional efforts are having systemic impacts as stronger relationships, deeper understandings, and a new willingness to work together have emerged. This has helped with political advocacy, policy changes, and new resources coming to Native nations and peoples.

Rebuilders are having systemic impact regarding data sovereignty, access, and use across Native nations. Sharing data, models, and evidenceinformed practices across Tribal networks through websites, public service announcements, or newsletters (e.g. Native Governance Center) provided information on "happenings across Tribes" has helped make NNB better understood and more accessible. These transformative impacts are noticed by some of the many examples Rebuilders shared: "we're moving from bars to flower and coffee shops "and "we now have surveys and conversations about self-care vs. self-sabotage." These social impacts are

"[Native Nations Rebuilders (NNR)] has given me hope where there was none before. I was very disheartened by my tribal council but the NNR training helped me to understand that things can change when trained leaders (such as Rebuilders) step in to help motivate the change."

influencing intergenerational discussions in which Native families and communities are talking more regularly about such as "credit scores," "increased networks of support," and "more diverse faces (Native and non-Native) [r]epresented". The impacts of being able to tell stories of community driven leadership allow Rebuilders to share successes as well as communicate how they have been able to use information from fellow Rebuilders. Story telling by Rebuilders also used oral knowledge from traditional teachings to help them be better leaders and to govern more effectively in their local context.

Cultural match is also a big part of having individual impacts that influence systemic impacts within Tribal communities. One Rebuilder remarked, "Positively affect one area, strategize to impact cultural match with the same decisions. Language revitalization, focus on traditional ceremony and celebration, changing the mindset of 'hide our culture' to 'celebrate our culture." Finally, one only needs to look at the many awards, public news records, social media feeds or newsletters of NGC, or publications of public or Tribal agencies to see the profound impact Rebuilders have had regionally, nationally, and even globally – particularly with environmental protections, sovereignty, and political educational advocacy issues. Rebuilders are leading and sustaining change and the momentum for NNB programming continues to deepen and broaden with every Rebuilders Program cohort.



Reflections and Recommendations to Consider

Evaluator Reflections

Rebuilders continue to use what they learned while participating in the program. There are hundreds of pages and thousands of examples and quotes that a decade of Rebuilders experience has generated for this study. Sufficiently, concretely, and responsively Rebuilders have internalized and utilized the NNB principles, curricular content, social networks, and nation building resources and tools long after their time in the Rebuilders Program. Connections with Rebuilders alumni have provided a network that is priceless and deeply valued. One alumnus stated, "to have a group of people what can support you professionally and personally, and are Tribal leaders also, that's amazing." These connections have helped many of the Rebuilders stay in the loop on what's happening in their communities and have provided a place of collegial support and professional understanding in situations that would otherwise have been conflicted, ignored, or co-opted by western agencies and "scholars" who have far less capacity to truly support Indigenous-centered leadership and NNB practices. Rebuilders genuinely care about their fellow Rebuilders and are described as helpful, encouraging, and a shoulder to lean on – Native style! These relationships help sustain Rebuilders' leadership by providing a culturally responsive support system and a deep understanding and wisdom that transcends the written word.

From a Rebuilders perspective, impacts are framed as changes in their leadership that they observed in the community context. Measuring and evaluation may include formal or informal ways of knowing and a gut-level to a quantifiable measure that these impacts have happened as a result of the Rebuilders programming and related leadership influences. It is important to note that success is valued and defined uniquely, culturally responsive, and in a community contextualized manner for Rebuilders. Indicators for success (vs. performance metrics) and other strengths-based or appreciative aspects of Rebuilders' shared perspectives are important to understanding long-term and sustained impacts in communities where Rebuilders practice leadership. From "positive attitudes" to "using a formal evaluation," to multi-generations "talking about the changes" and being "more engaged and plugged in," the many impacts of the Rebuilders programming and influence and use of NNB principles was seen within and across participating Rebuilders' communities and their leadership behaviors. Continuing to utilize the instruments, databases, and methods that BF and NGC invested in this evaluation study will help with comprehensive upkeep and data mining and analysis for helping with data-driven leadership, programming, and practices.

Evaluator Recommendations

As we conclude the Rebuilders Program evaluation, we must pause to think about evaluation and how data is used to influence evidence-informed polices, governance, and practices. Whose knowledge, voices, and frameworks matter or are included in the politics of evidence? If sovereignty and selfgovernance are not upheld between Tribal governments and other nation states, then the foundations of evidence-based policy making acts by the U.S. Congress threaten the quality of life and life itself for Tribal Nations and community members if Tribal nations are not involved. When oral histories and community narratives are no longer counted as evidence, this has far-reaching impacts regarding human, cultural, and community protections for those most at risk: Tribal nations and Indigenous people. Case law shows there are evident issues in Indian country, but an urgency for data governance, policy, and protections is not a high priority for many Tribal nations. The need for more evidence-based practices for what works in Indigenous contexts needs to be led by Tribal nations and Indigenous leaders. Lack of resources, infrastructure, and professional (i.e. academic) representation and capacities in these areas by Indigenous scholars and Tribal nation officials allows the western narrative to dominate, colonize, and continue to cause harm. Therefore, a recommendation is that the data collected, evaluation design and processes, and data governance should also reflect the Indigenous content and design of the Rebuilders Program. Using a Western evaluation design on an Indigenous program is not a good fit. Continue to build capacity and resources in this area so the evaluation is as culturally responsive as the programming itself.

A second recommendation is to use data to help with making modifications and decisions about the Rebuilders Program as needed. Data and evaluation are only good if you use that in which you have invested. Use of data should not only change content, resources, and/or design, but it also should change behaviors, competencies, and skills that Rebuilders Program staff and leadership, Rebuilders participants, and Rebuilders alumni have as well. Sustainable changes begin by Rebuilders understanding their personal sovereignty before they can learn how to lead and govern a sovereign Tribal nation effectively. Evaluation is good medicine and the Rebuilders want more information about what works, how to know it is working, and what they need to do to replicate excellent and transformative NNB in their communities. This can't be done without designing studies that document measurable change. And that is what is needed to create evidence-based policies and models that other Native nations can start testing out in their own communities. Learn from each other and grow capacities as you replicate studies and implement models across different types of Native contexts. Continue to stay involved in NNB and data sovereignty activities. Use models and frameworks for designing your own evidence-based practices. The rich amounts of data from Rebuilders who participated in the survey and/or interviews could be used for refreshing the curriculum, developing new outreach and recruitment materials, and also to follow up by, for example, creating spotlight stories or video vignettes of Rebuilder alumni who can provide direct connections of use, strategies, and impacts related to the core curriculum and purpose of the Rebuilders Program. There is so much evidence and use for the evaluation study data that has not even been tapped yet! So, consider how the data, databases, and other evaluation study work products can be utilized in many ways for future Rebuilder Program efforts.

A final recommendation is to continue to utilize the investment in this evaluation study to continue building the evidence basis and to make modifications for Rebuilder programming. Consider not only posting on social media but finding ways to publish and present these findings with external and national or international partners. The <u>United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues</u> and

the U.S. Indigenous Data Sovereignty Network are global networks to consider. Studies about data protections, addressing the deep inequities and injustices in evidence-based practices or data systems gaps (i.e. MMIW), and support for new data sovereignty and Tribal data governance policies and principles is more recently gaining support by some of our national Native agencies. And there are expanded resources and new offerings at the Native Nations Institute annual January conference in Tucson. Some of the topics, including Indigenous Research Governance, Data Sovereignty, and Evidence for Native Nation Building, could use this Rebuilders evaluation study as part of a body of growing evidence about what is working in Tribal communities. Other Tribal nations and Indigenous communities in North America and worldwide would benefit from this study: the co-design, process for implementation and supports, and utilizing the findings.

In closing, we must continue to build capacities in these areas as Native nations but also step into the non-Tribal contexts where politics, policies, and governance of federal agencies determine on a daily basis what counts (or what gets ignored), what is funded (or not), and what policies and programs based on evidence get forced upon (or welcomed in by) Native nations. Without our Indigenous voices at the table, we can only expect to have more decades and centuries of trauma and poor outcomes for Native people and nations. Getting out in front of this and at the root causes is the future transformative way out. Rebuilders are doing that on a policy and systems level already, and through NGC expanding into Youth Rebuilders, provides a fresh take on an already impactful program! Sharing these stories of success and impacts led by youth and adult Rebuilders will be influential for many generations to come.

Appendices (Separate PDF)

- 1. Rebuilders Program Evaluation Design Document (Final 5.15.19)
- 2. Rebuilders Program Logic Model Document (Final 3.22.19; pgs. 1-2 only)
- 3. Rebuilders Program Participant Database (5.14.19)
- 4. Rebuilders Program Evaluation Survey Instrument (7.3.19)
- 5. Rebuilders Program Interview Instrument (8.29.19)
- 6. Rebuilders Program Evaluation Study Timeline (10.31.19)

Endnotes:

ⁱ What is Native Nation Building? (n.d.) Retrieved from https://nni.arizona.edu/programs-projects/what-nativenation-building

ⁱⁱ HPAIED (Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development), Henson, Eric, Taylor, Jonathan B., Curtis, Catherine, Cornell, Stephen, Grant, Kenneth W., Jorgensen, Miriam, Kalt, Joseph P. and Lee, Andrew J. (2007). The State of the Native Nations: Conditions Under U.S. Policies of Self-Determination. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

ⁱⁱⁱ Jorgensen, Miriam and Lyons, Oren R. (2007). Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.

^{iv} NoDAPL Archive: Standing Rock Water Protectors (n.d.) Retrieved from https://www.nodaplarchive.com/