





The images in our report reflect the strength, resilience, and creativity that Native people and nations demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The photos feature Native Nation Rebuilders Leah Monroe, Becky Graves, and Veronica Veaux (Leech Lake Ojibwe) and were taken by Jacob Laducer (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe). Cover art by Mer Young.

CONTENTS	3	Reflecting on 2020	12	Give to the Max Day 2020
	4	Who We Are	13	We Are Still Here Minnesota
	6	Leadership Development	13	2020 Census
	8	Tribal Governance Support	14	Finance and Organization
	10	Community Engagement		



NATIVE GOVERNANCE
CENTER

Reflecting on 2020

It's hard to know where to begin when reflecting on the year 2020. We witnessed the emergence of a global pandemic that disproportionately impacts Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities, including Native nations. Elected Tribal leaders acted quickly, putting strategic, creative plans into place to protect their citizens from COVID-19. Our relatives working at the grassroots level organized mask and PPE drives, fed our elders, and taught online language classes. In 2020, we also watched the police continue to enact violence against our Black relatives. We stood in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and the global uprising that began in Minneapolis in May 2020.

The devastating effects of the events in 2020 were not just a case of bad luck. They were—and continue to be—a direct result of the inevitable failure of centuries-old systems rooted in colonization, genocide, slavery, racism, and inequality.

Indigenous people stood strong in 2020, working to rebuild their nations and forging a path toward an Indigenized future. While the year challenged us, it also brought us several victories for Tribal sovereignty. In that spirit, we are excited to present our 2020 impact report, which showcases some of these powerful narratives. We hope the report inspires you to take meaningful action to support Indigenous people and BIPOC-led movements for justice.

Who We Are



Native Governance Center is a Native-led nonprofit organization that serves Native nations in Mni Sota Makoce, North Dakota, and South Dakota. We support Native leaders as they work to rebuild their nations through our leadership development and Tribal governance support programs. We believe that strengthening governance is a direct pathway toward improving quality of life for Native people.

Core Program Areas:

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
TRIBAL GOVERNANCE SUPPORT
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Leadership Development

We provide leadership development opportunities for Indigenous changemakers through the **NATIVE NATION REBUILDERS PROGRAM**. We built this program for citizens of the 23 Native nations in our region who have a passion for learning about innovative Tribal governance practices and ways to take these ideas to their own nations to make a positive difference. The program is a two-year commitment; enrolled citizens of the Native nations that share geography with Mni Sota Makoce, North Dakota, and South Dakota are eligible to apply.

COHORT 11

Sessions for all previous 10 cohorts of the Native Nation Rebuilders program have been held in person. In response to the pandemic, we rapidly developed and moved to an online-only training model for Cohort 11. The Rebuilders participated in weekly online training sessions for three months in fall 2020.

In addition to the new virtual format, we launched a brand new curriculum focused on our region. We collaborated with the University of Minnesota-Duluth (UMD) American Indian Studies faculty to develop five case studies featuring success stories

from Native nations in and around Mni Sota Makoce. Feedback from Rebuilders and our 10-year evaluation of the program illuminated the need to develop these new, regionally-focused case studies.

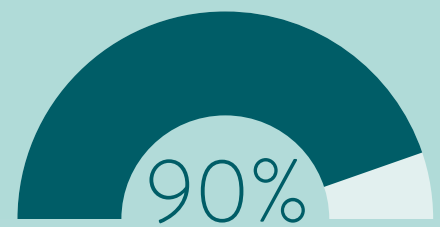
Our Cohort 11 Rebuilders reported that the training they received made an impact on their leadership style and their understanding of how to enact community change. They expressed gratitude for the opportunity to build community and meet with one another during the pandemic.

IT'S IN THE NUMBERS

The following data show the percentages of Cohort 11 Rebuilders who responded "agree" or "strongly agree" to the following statements:



"Since starting the program, I've made positive changes to my leadership style."



"The case studies increased my understanding of nation building."

COHORT 10

During the second year of the program, we provide participants with customized support (such as one-on-one coaching) to help them develop an action plan to strengthen their community. In 2020, our Cohort 10 Rebuilders worked to complete their action plans during their second program year.

We asked Cohort 10 Rebuilders to reflect on the impact the program had on their lives and leadership journeys:

“I have learned so much about governance and already applied most of it to my daily life and job.”

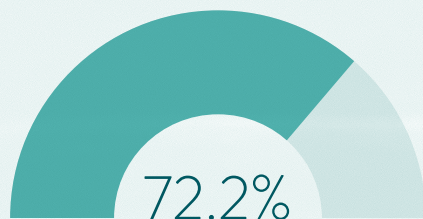
“I am so proud to be in the program, and I cannot wait to continue to use what I have learned.”



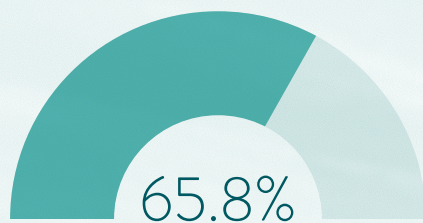
*“Being a part of
Native Nation Rebuilders
means that I’m part of a legacy
that began before European contact.
It’s the manifestation of all the
hard work and preservation
efforts of our ancestors.”*

Tribal Governance *Support*

Our Tribal Governance Support program delivers on-the-ground assistance that's designed to meet Native nations' unique goals. For example, some nations want to modify their constitutions to better align with their values, culture, and visions for the future. Other Native nations seek a neutral party to facilitate their candidate forums when a Tribal election is approaching. We respond to requests for assistance by delivering customized content directly to Native nations. Behind each of these projects is a common goal: Improve quality of life for Native people.



agreed that the forums gave them a better understanding of their candidate options for the upcoming election.



agreed that the forums increased their confidence in the fairness of the election process.

MILLE LACS BAND OF OJIBWE CANDIDATE FORUMS

Over the course of five days in March 2020, we moderated the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe's (MLBO) Candidate Forums. The forums provided citizens with the chance to learn about candidates' platforms for an upcoming Tribal election. 280 MLBO citizens attended the forums; over 1,632 people streamed the forums on YouTube.

Participants reported that the forums gave them a better understanding of their candidate options and increased their confidence in the election's fairness. Broad community participation and confidence in Tribal elections is a key element of strong governance.

“Everything we do has such a huge impact for the next seven generations. Native Governance Center is educated, they're understanding, and they also understand that there's uniqueness with each one of these Tribes.”

—MLBO CHIEF EXECUTIVE MELANIE BENJAMIN

COVID-19 RESOURCES FOR NATIVE NATIONS

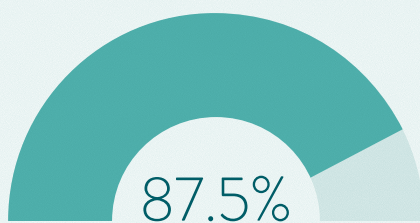
COVID-19 disproportionately impacted Native nations in 2020. We created new resources and launched new programming to support Native leaders and nations in their response to the pandemic:

Starting in spring 2020, we sent out monthly COVID-19-focused emails to Tribal leaders. The emails served to support and uplift Tribal leaders as they worked to protect their nations. We also created a COVID-19 virtual call series specifically for elected Tribal leaders. Between October and December 2020, we hosted three calls that focused on important topics such as the CARES Act, government-to-government relations, and COVID-19 vaccinations.

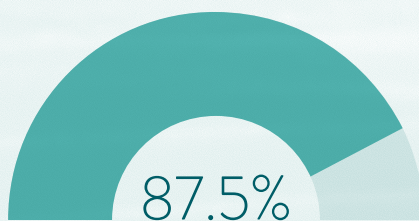
We also developed a list of regional COVID-19 resources to connect Native people and nations to health and safety information, funding opportunities, and Tribal nations' COVID-19 response strategies. Over 2,300 people viewed our COVID-19 resource guide in 2020.

COVID-19 VIRTUAL CALL SERIES

We had an overwhelmingly positive response to this series, based on participant polls:



of participants agreed that the virtual call provided them with useful information and resources.



of participants agreed that, as a result of attending the virtual call, they felt better informed about ways they could support their nation through the pandemic.

ROSEBUD SIOUX TRIBE NATION REBUILDING SEMINAR

In partnership with the Native Nations Institute, we developed and delivered a nation rebuilding seminar for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in February 2020. Nation rebuilding refers to creating Native-run, self-determined programs and governance structures that elevate a Native nation's values and strengths. 27 Rosebud Tribal citizens attended the seminar. Participants reported valuing working alongside their fellow elected leaders to identify governance priorities and solutions.

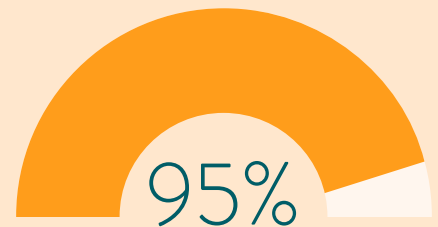
Community Engagement

Our community engagement program brings accessible, educational content related to our mission to the broader community. Awareness is the first step toward action; we educate the community with the goal of seeing increased respect for Tribal sovereignty and better outcomes for Native people.

VIRTUAL EVENTS

We brought four virtual events to the community in 2020. Our presenters covered topics ranging from cultural appropriation to using our core values to build an Indigenized future.

Overall, our event attendees reported feeling impacted by our content and motivated to continue learning about and/or take action on issues related to our event topics. We design our events with the goal of encouraging our audience to engage and work in solidarity with Indigenous communities for the long-term. We saw evidence of their desire to continue to learn about and support Indian Country from the survey data we collected:



“This event made an impact on me.”

AS A RESULT OF THESE EVENTS, WE:

*Reached over 700
community members live.*

*Reached 6,000
community members via
shared recordings.*

Gained new 51 donors.



Many of our attendees noted through qualitative feedback that our event content caused them to make **positive changes to their thinking and actions**. For example: “Native Governance Center’s event helped me learn how I, as an ally, can help call attention to cultural appropriation and the harm it causes to the greater community.”

“Attending one of Native Governance Center’s events gave me clarity on my life. I was looking at two options for a livelihood, and watching this presentation helped me to decide to do the work available that aligns with my core values.”

ANIMATED EXPLAINER VIDEO SERIES

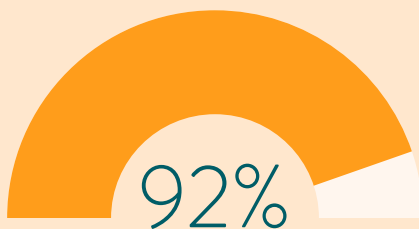
We partnered with our friends at the Minnesota Humanities Center to create animated explainer videos on topics fundamental to our mission:

- “What is Tribal Sovereignty?”
- “What Do Tribal Governments Do?”
- “Why Do Treaties Matter?”

We were honored to work with Marlena Myles (Spirit Lake Dakota, Mohegan, Muscogee), Leah Lemm (Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe), and callsign51 to develop the video series.

Pictured: a still from the video, “What is Tribal Sovereignty?”

In 2020, we heard from teachers (elementary level to college professors), like-minded organizations, and community members who used our videos to educate and inform others about Tribal sovereignty, treaties, and Indigenous governance. We’re committed to raising the general public’s awareness of topics fundamental to our mission; an informed public is more likely to advocate for and support Native nations’ goals.



“I feel motivated to take action and/or continue learning as a result of attending.”

Our three videos have received a total of 6,274 views since their launch in fall 2020.



We featured Rebuilder Deanna StandingCloud as part of our GTMD #SovereigntySquad.

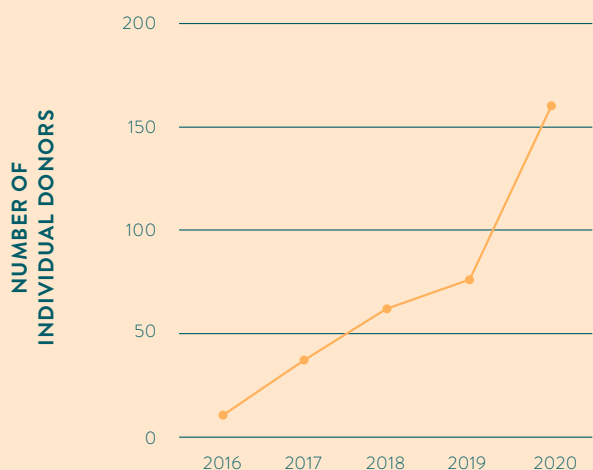
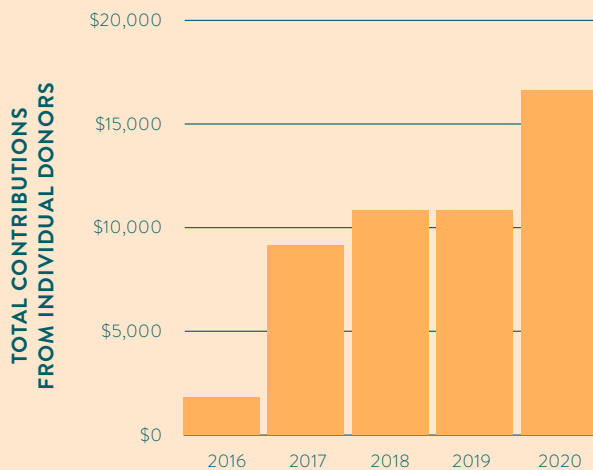


GIVE TO THE MAX DAY

Give to the Max Day is Mni Sota Makoce's biggest giving holiday and our most important day of the year for individual donations. To celebrate Give to the Max Day 2020, we created an Indigenous Superheroes campaign highlighting the Indigenous changemakers in our network. Our campaign featured original artwork created by artist Dale Deforest (Diné).

A first for our organization, we leveraged two community partnerships to kick off our campaign and received a shout-out by the *Star Tribune*.

More than 150 individuals joined the #SovereigntySquad and donated to our 2020 campaign. Give to the Max Day 2020 was the most successful individual giving campaign in our organization's history. Miigwech, pidamayaye, and wopila tanka (thank you) to everyone who supported us!



*Give to the Max Day 2020
was the most successful
individual giving campaign
in our organization's history.*

*Miigwech, pidamayaye,
and wopila tanka
(thank you) to everyone who
supported us!*

WE ARE STILL HERE MN

Stereotypes and untruths about Native people are extremely prevalent in our society. On top of that, many of our major institutions—such as the media, pop culture, and government—exclude modern-day Indigenous voices. Exclusion leads to invisibility, further fueling the creation of damaging myths about Native people.

Indigenous people are tackling invisibility and stereotypes head-on through the Native narrative change movement. We Are Still Here Minnesota (WASH-MN) is leading

narrative change efforts in Mni Sota Makoce, bringing together opinion leaders from education, philanthropy, government, and media/pop culture to share resources and create action steps. WASH-MN is a special project of Native Governance Center.

In 2020, four WASH-MN subcommittees met regularly to develop work plans and next steps. The subcommittees' current focus areas include creating strong relationships and advocating for "Indian Education for All" legislation (bringing accurate content about Native communities and people to schools).



2020 CENSUS

Historically, Native people have been shut out from and undercounted during the Census process. Native nations launched innovative programs and initiatives in 2020 to help boost Census count numbers and secure needed resources. Native Governance Center amplified this work by collaborating with philanthropic partners to direct critical Census funding to Native nations.

In Mni Sota Makoce, we supported the creation of the MN Tribal Coalition for Civic Engagement. Comprised of Census liaisons from 11 Native nations, the coalition succeeded in getting March 21, 2020 declared "Census Pow Wow Day" by Governor Tim Walz. In addition, Mni Sota Makoce saw an increase in Native Census participation rates in 2020 as compared to 2010; two Native nations (Red Lake and Grand Portage) achieved a 100% targeted response rate.

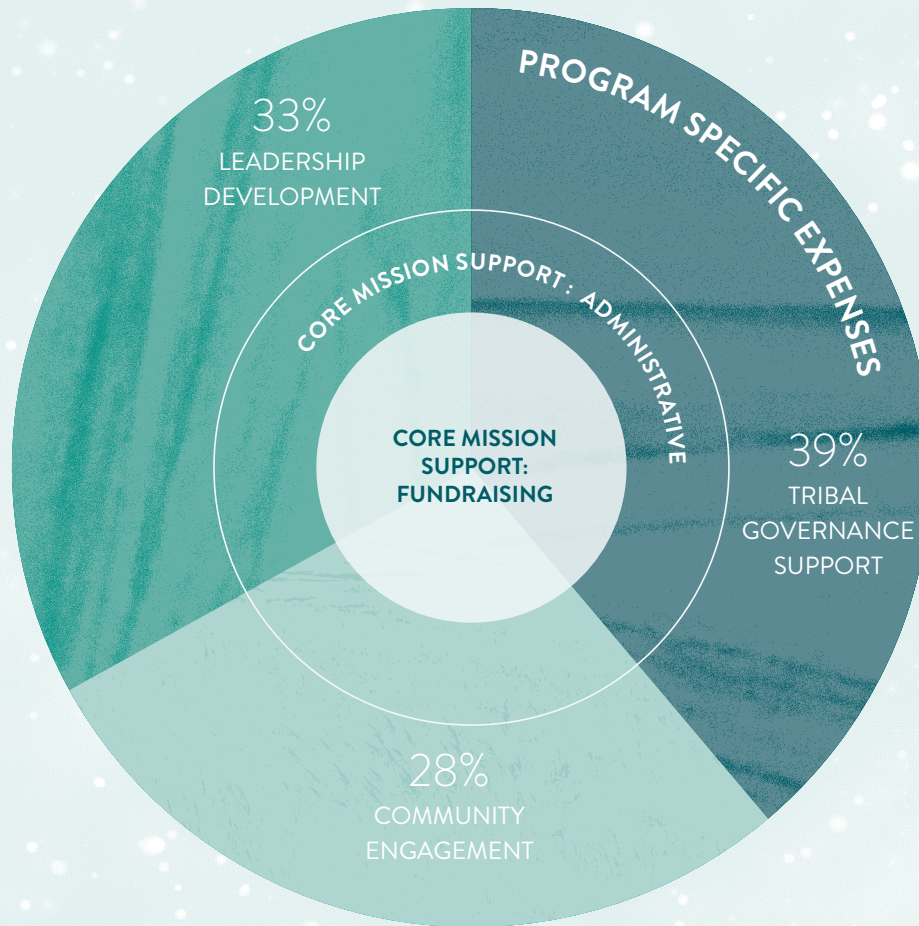


Similar to the MN Tribal Coalition, Native nations in North and South Dakota established Complete Count Committees to raise awareness about the Census. We supported their efforts through regranteeing, and they saw an increase in Native Census participation rates as compared to 2010.

Native Governance Center received a Census outreach grant from the National Congress of American Indians. We used the funding to create an animated explainer video on the importance of the 2020 Census for Native nations. We reached approximately 6,000 people after sharing our video on a variety of platforms.

*2 Native nations
(Red Lake and Grand Portage)
achieved a 100% targeted
response rate in the 2020 Census*

**PARTICIPATING IN THE CENSUS
IS AN ACT OF SOVEREIGNTY**



2020 brought challenges and transformation to communities across the globe; it fundamentally changed our organization. The year also marked our fifth anniversary as a nonprofit.


Organization & Finance

While 2020 challenged us, it also offered us the opportunity to think differently about how we work, both internally and externally, using Indigenous values to guide us. We kicked off several organizational development initiatives rooted in impact, sustainability, and team building. We also transformed and expanded our core programming, setting the stage for the next five years at Native Governance Center. Our financial strategy focused on increasing and diversifying our


revenue streams and building a collaborative culture of fiscal understanding management. In addition to generous funding by the Bush Foundation, we expanded our institutional funder portfolio by more than 40% over 2019. We increased our program service revenue opportunities and expanded our individual giving base. We also shifted the way we think about spending by introducing collaborative budgeting and instilling a mindset of values-based spending.



NATIVE GOVERNANCE
CENTER

 /nativegov

 @nativegov

 @nativegov

1730 New Brighton Blvd, Suite 104-236

Minneapolis, MN 55413

651.571.0826 | hello@nativegov.org

NATIVEGOV.ORG