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# NATIVE GOVERNANCE CENTER

*Impact Report 2023*

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Holly Young (Thizáptaŋna/Wichíyena Dakota)  
for Native Governance Center.



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# INTRODUCTION

## 2023



*From Native Governance Center’s (NGC) inception, we have been committed to strengthening Tribal governance systems and capacity to exercise sovereignty. NGC supports grassroots Native changemakers, elected Tribal leaders, and the 23 Native nations that share geography with Mni Sota Makoce, North Dakota, and South Dakota.*

We also create educational resources and host community events that are open to all, regardless of geographic location or Tribal affiliation. Our educational programming reaches diverse individuals across the nation and world, each working to be better relatives to Indigenous people. From the beginning, NGC has been dedicated to transforming our communities one ally at a time.

With this in mind, our organization saw continued growth and expansion in 2023. We also bade farewell to our inaugural Executive Director Wayne Ducheneaux (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe).

Having led the organization from its inception, Wayne helped provide a strong foundation from which we have been able to expand our vision, mission, programs, and initiatives. We are in a process of refinement and integration. We are weaving our past and present together in pursuit of a future filled with strong Tribal governance across our region and Indian Country overall.

**Our Impact Report captures some of the highlights and significant achievements of our work, providing a glimpse into the comprehensive impact we are making. We are proud of the accomplishments featured, knowing they reflect only a portion of the full scope of our efforts.**

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# WHO WE ARE

**NATIVE GOVERNANCE CENTER** is a Native-led nonprofit dedicated to assisting Native nations in strengthening their governance systems and capacity to exercise sovereignty. We serve Native nations that share geography with Mni Sota Makoce, North Dakota, and South Dakota. We're working to cultivate a Native nation rebuilding movement so that all Indigenous people can thrive on their own terms.

## CORE PROGRAM AREAS

### **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

We provide leadership development training for Indigenous changemakers through our Native Nation Rebuilders program.

### **TRIBAL GOVERNANCE SUPPORT**

We engage elected Tribal leaders, administrators, and citizens in strengthening their Tribal governance systems.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

We bring mission-driven, accessible, educational content to the broader community

### **TRIBAL FINANCE**

We help support Native nations in building their financial leadership and capacity.

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# OUR VALUES

## **HONOR SOVEREIGNTY**

We honor the inherent sovereignty of every Native nation. We show respect for and learn from each nation's unique history, culture, and insight.

## **PRACTICE HUMILITY**

We recognize that we will not always know the answer. We embrace moments that humble us, seeking knowledge and wisdom to move forward.

## **BE A GOOD RELATIVE**

Being good relatives is foundational for how we work. We build kinship through trust, mutual respect, and mindful listening.

## **CENTER INDIGENEITY**

We embody and ground ourselves in Indigenous worldviews, uplifting Indigenous culture and practices across our work.

## **EMBRACE FUN, UNAPOLOGETICALLY**

We balance the hard work of decolonization with the good medicine of laughter and fun.





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# FOUNDATION

*This past year was one of significance for NGC. We expanded our programming and reach, resulting in two awards and affirming our commitment to impact. We completed the second year of our three-year strategic plan. We took our team on the road to spend a week immersing ourselves in community. And, we bade farewell to our inaugural Executive Director, Wayne Ducheneaux.*



Wayne's legacy is woven into the very fabric of our organization, ensuring that his spirit of collaboration and partnership will continue to guide us. As we move forward, we honor Wayne's contributions – his impact on our organization and the broader community will be felt for many years to come.

As NGC navigates our executive transition and welcomes our next Executive Director, we remain steadfast in our vision of a future where Native nations flourish through effective, culturally rooted leadership and governance. To support this vision, we have partnered with Wilder Research on a comprehensive evaluation project. This collaboration is designed to provide invaluable insights into our past programming and guide us in making decisions that will bring us closer to our desired future.

Deepening our connections with the communities we serve has always been, and will continue to be, at the heart of our work, ensuring that our mission continues strong in this next iteration of NGC. With a renewed commitment to our values and an optimistic outlook, we are poised to build on our successes, embrace new opportunities, and drive meaningful change.

**Danielle Gangelhoff**  
**Interim Executive Director**



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# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



Native Governance Center provides leadership development training through our Native Nation Rebuilders program. We are also exploring how to expand grassroots leadership offerings in our region.

The Native Nation Rebuilders program is a two-year, cohort-based leadership training experience for Indigenous changemakers. The goal of the program is to strengthen Native leadership and equip changemakers with Indigenized tools and frameworks they can use to help rebuild their nations.

**“My biggest takeaway is that nearly all of us here fit in the ‘Visionary’ category. We all have the same ideas of the direction we want Tribal nations to go— essentially reclaiming our culture and embedding it into the way Tribes function.” - Native Nation Rebuilders Participant**

## NATIVE NATION REBUILDERS COHORT 12

In 2023, the Leadership Development program supported the 12th cohort of the Native Nation Rebuilders Program as they completed their action plans and graduated from the Rebuilders program.

The Leadership Development program participated in more than 20 community events, such as powwows and Indigenous-led conferences. We also engaged with numerous individuals across our region for Native Nation Rebuilders cohort 13 through innovative outreach efforts such as “lunch and learn” webinars.





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# TRIBAL GOVERNANCE SUPPORT

Our Tribal Governance Support (TGS) program engages elected Tribal leaders, administrators, and citizens in strengthening their governance systems through educational opportunities, technical assistance, and resources. TGS uses the Native nation rebuilding philosophy to empower leaders and citizens to create change that will impact the next seven generations and beyond.



**“In the beginning, I didn’t know what to expect from the group work we engaged in but I found myself with several new tunwins (aunties) by the end of our 4 workshop series. I have gained so much!”**

**- Tribal Civics Participant**

## TRIBAL CIVICS

In 2023, we provided our Tribal Civics Program to 22 grassroots community leaders from two Native nations. We hosted a cross-cohort gathering that brought together Tribal Civics teams from four nations to share successes, challenges, and opportunities for growth.





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# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Native Governance Center's Community Engagement (CE) 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. An informed public is more likely to advocate for and support Native nations' goals.



**In 2023, we facilitated 28 sessions with 21 external partners.**

## **Some of the topics we covered included:**

- Beyond Land Acknowledgement
- How to Talk About Native Nations
- Native Nations 101
- Appreciation not Appropriation
- Meaningful Community Engagement
- Indigenous Leadership

**We also launched the Community Committee which gathered volunteers who had attended past NGC programming to provide feedback on what we were doing well, what we could improve on, and potential areas of focus in the future.**



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# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## BY THE NUMBERS

**Wings with Wayne  
Season 2:**  
*136,236 views*

**Virtual Community  
Engagement Series:**  
*344 watching live with  
3,758 watching the  
event recording*

**5 Conference  
Presentations:**  
*300+ attendees*

## AWARD-WINNING

NGC was the recipient of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits' 2023 Mission Award for Anti-Racism Initiative. This award recognizes organizations that actively engage audiences in anti-racism activities. We are dedicated to bridging the gap between outdated learnings and authentic Indigenous narratives and providing ongoing free educational events and resources to the public. NGC staff were able to accept the award in person during the MCN annual conference.



**“Amazing, insightful presenters who have such clear and compelling messages - this really covered a lot of ground, provided solid education, and gave a good understanding of the rich diversity of perspectives among Native communities.” - Event Attendee**

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# TRIBAL FINANCE

Our Tribal Finance program is a two-year, cohort-based experience. We deliver the program in partnership with CliftonLarsonAllen LLP to help support Native nations in building their financial leadership and capacity. Participating nations benefit from assessments, training, resources, and mentorship.

Our program involves both elected Tribal leaders and finance staff. Small groups from each participating nation work together to identify their vision for their financial future. We equip them with skills, tools, and networks grounded in Native nation rebuilding principles to help them realize that vision.



In 2023, our Tribal Finance program hosted two in-person and one virtual convenings and awarded grants to all participating Native nations. We brought representatives from each of the three teams to the annual RES Conference in Las Vegas for professional development and networking.

**Three Tribal nations graduated from Cohort 1.**

## NEW RESOURCES

In 2023, we developed two animated explainer videos “Rebuilding Tribal Finance” and “Rebuilding Tribal Human Resources.”

Tribal Finance also completed a literature review on Diversification of Tribal Revenue to contribute to the body of knowledge related to Tribal finance in partnership with the University of Minnesota.





# NATIVE GOVERNANCE CENTER

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