



INVEST IN KING COUNTY'S INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

“Every day is the right time to honor Native culture, strength and fortitude. Every day is an opportunity to tell the world: **We are here. We are still here!**”

— First Nations Development Institute

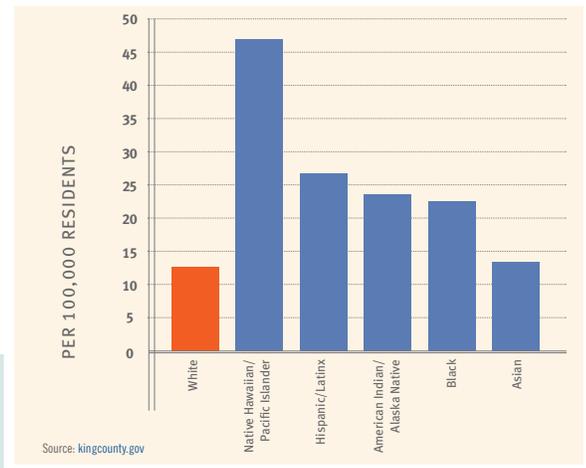
BACKGROUND

The Indigenous Communities Fund was born out of COVID-19’s differential impact on Indigenous people and their increased risk of illness, hospitalization and death due to existing social inequities and racial disparities. The impact of this pandemic was a symptom of something larger—racism.

We wanted to get critical resources out to King County’s Indigenous communities to support their equitable recovery and long-term viability. And we decided to do that by directing funds to organizations that amplify the cultures, concerns and courage of the area’s Indigenous people.

While Indigenous staff at United Way have been instrumental in bringing this Fund together and donor dollars are making more investments possible, we invite YOU to join us as we learn and unlearn, listen and collaborate, and invest in and stay committed to this journey. **Together.**

COVID-19 CASES AMONG KING COUNTY RESIDENTS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY



HONORING THE STRENGTH & RESILIENCE OF OUR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Every day is a good day to respect and reflect on the culture and values of our Indigenous neighbors

- 1] Dedication, cohesiveness & willingness to get involved:** Their strong cultural bond that cuts across tribal differences, a willingness to support each other when in need and their values of family, community, nature, ceremony and support for tribes.
- 2] Organizational mission and focus:** While focusing on their unique mission, the number of Seattle’s urban Indian organizations dedicated to the community and their diversity is an important asset.
- 3] Skilled, talented, formidable force:** There are many visible, well-known members of the community—not only leaders of Native organizations but also leaders in other professional fields.
- 4] Emerging youth leaders:** A large population of urban American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) youth in Seattle-King County are engaged in their community’s efforts. Native organizations are engaging younger people to take on leadership roles, play a role in local organizations and their boards.
- 5] Art, culture and valuing native artists:** From Chief Seattle, from whom the city takes its name, to contemporary Pacific Northwest Coast art galleries and emerging artists, work supported by the American Indian Women’s Service League and the Potlatch Fund, Seattle places a high value on Native art and culture.
- 6] Volunteerism:** The volunteer spirit that first defined the urban Indian community still lives on today. Many volunteers are engaged in helping local organizations and starting new ones.

THE HOW & WHY OF FUNDING

Research has shown that, while many Black, Indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC) don't trust going to mainstream organizations that have failed them, they will turn to organizations where they feel safe, heard, understood and are represented.

That's why the Indigenous Communities Fund embraces a [participatory funding approach](#).

This equitable funding model cedes decision-making power around funding decisions to the people closest to the need. Centering our values of redistribution, representation and reparations, we are connecting with organizations that are closely tied with the realities of these communities.

With the flexibility of offering unrestricted funds with minimal reporting requirements, we shift the power and decision-making to the Indigenous community. This approach is both innovative and proven¹—and creates new approaches by addressing historic inequities.



DID YOU KNOW?

The National Coalition to End Urban Indian Homelessness (NCEUIH) was established in 2015 with support from United Way to end urban Indian homelessness in King County. The coalition has gained national recognition for its work!

INVESTMENT IMPACT

Since 2020, United Way of King County has provided two rounds of investments totaling \$2 million.

The first \$1 million was part of COVID-19 relief and funds were specifically restricted for the use of food and housing. We were fortunate to build on our existing relationship with and between organizations to support the four founding organizations of the Coalition to End Urban Indigenous Homelessness, including Chief Seattle Club, United Indians of All Tribes Foundation, Seattle Indian Health Board and Mother Nation to cover critical staffing needs for COVID-19 relief efforts and to help open a 66-room temporary hotel shelter, serving more than 608 individuals.

Our second investment—another \$1 million—supported the Seattle Urban Native Nonprofits (SUNN), a collaborative of 12 (and growing) American Indian & Alaskan Native (AI/AN) organizations that have come together for Native unity and advocacy. It annually serves more than 22,000 individuals with programming and services while creating spaces for smaller organizations to join with larger groups, amplifying their ability to advocate for their communities.

“ Designated funding for the Indigenous population of Seattle is important.

Period full stop.

And this funding is a dream—something that is truly rocking our nonprofit world. It has been an amazing experience in participatory funding that has been shaped by the collective of Native nonprofits and the team at United Way. The SUNN (Seattle Urban Native Nonprofit) collective has been trusted to know what is best for its own community. We are excited to see how this impact will lead to further investments into the community that is tragically underrepresented in philanthropy dollars.”

—**Jessica Juarez-Wagner**
Interim Advocacy & Grants Management
Potlatch Fund

Stronger together, the SUNN comprises:

- Na'ah Illahee Fund
- Urban Native Education Alliance
- Chief Seattle Club
- Potlatch Fund
- Native Action Network
- Duwamish Tribal Services
- Indigenous Showcase
- Red Eagle Soaring
- United Indians of All Tribes Foundation
- Native American Women's Dialog on Infant Mortality (NAWDIM)
- Northwest Justice Project
- National Urban Indian Family Coalition (NUIFC)

¹ Edgar Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth*, Second Edition (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2021), <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/588996/decolonizing-wealth-second-edition-by-edgar-villanueva/>.

WHY WE DO IT

Today, King County stands on the ancestral lands of the Muckleshoot, Snoqualmie, Puyallup, Tulalip, Suquamish, Coast Salish Tribes and the Duwamish People—and Seattle is home to an influential community of urban American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) organizations, individuals and nations. We hold the responsibility to acknowledge the [history](#) of the first people of these lands.

15%

of population experiencing homelessness is AI/AN despite representing just 2% King County's population

31%

of AI/AN 6th graders in Seattle public schools lack access to breakfast, contributing to childhood hunger and community food insecurity

21.6%

of Native people in King County don't have a high school diploma, compared to 5.8% of non-Hispanic white people

0.23%

of philanthropic funds are awarded to Native-led nonprofit organizations (NPOs) despite Native people being among communities of greatest needs

Source: Seattle Urban Native Nonprofits

At United Way of King County, we recognize this history and acknowledge that we work on the unceded, traditional land of the Coast Salish Peoples, specifically the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish People, original stewards of the land, past and present. This acknowledgment only becomes meaningful when combined with accountable relationships and informed actions. By investing in this fund, we're showing our commitment to Indigenous people by directing funds to groups led by them.

While we bring in our experience with participatory processes to help Indigenous organizations continue carrying their missions forward, we're also working to advance racial equity in King County by strengthening our relationships with Indigenous communities.

“

As an Indigenous person in a non-Indigenous organization, the Indigenous Communities Fund means visibility of Indigenous people and recognition of Indigenous culture that exists in King County and beyond. I look forward to not just its sustenance and long-term funding but also good and favorable relationships with Indigenous agencies across King County.”

— Dora Joe

Indigenous Fund Committee Member
Customer Service Specialist, United Way of King County

JOIN OUR COMMITMENT

Your support is crucial as [disparities](#) continue to grow and overwhelm Indigenous communities.

By investing in this program and helping United Way meet this goal, you and your company will advance the fight for greater racial equity within our community. We invite you to join us in this journey of learning and collaboration.



COMMITTED TO A JUST RECOVERY