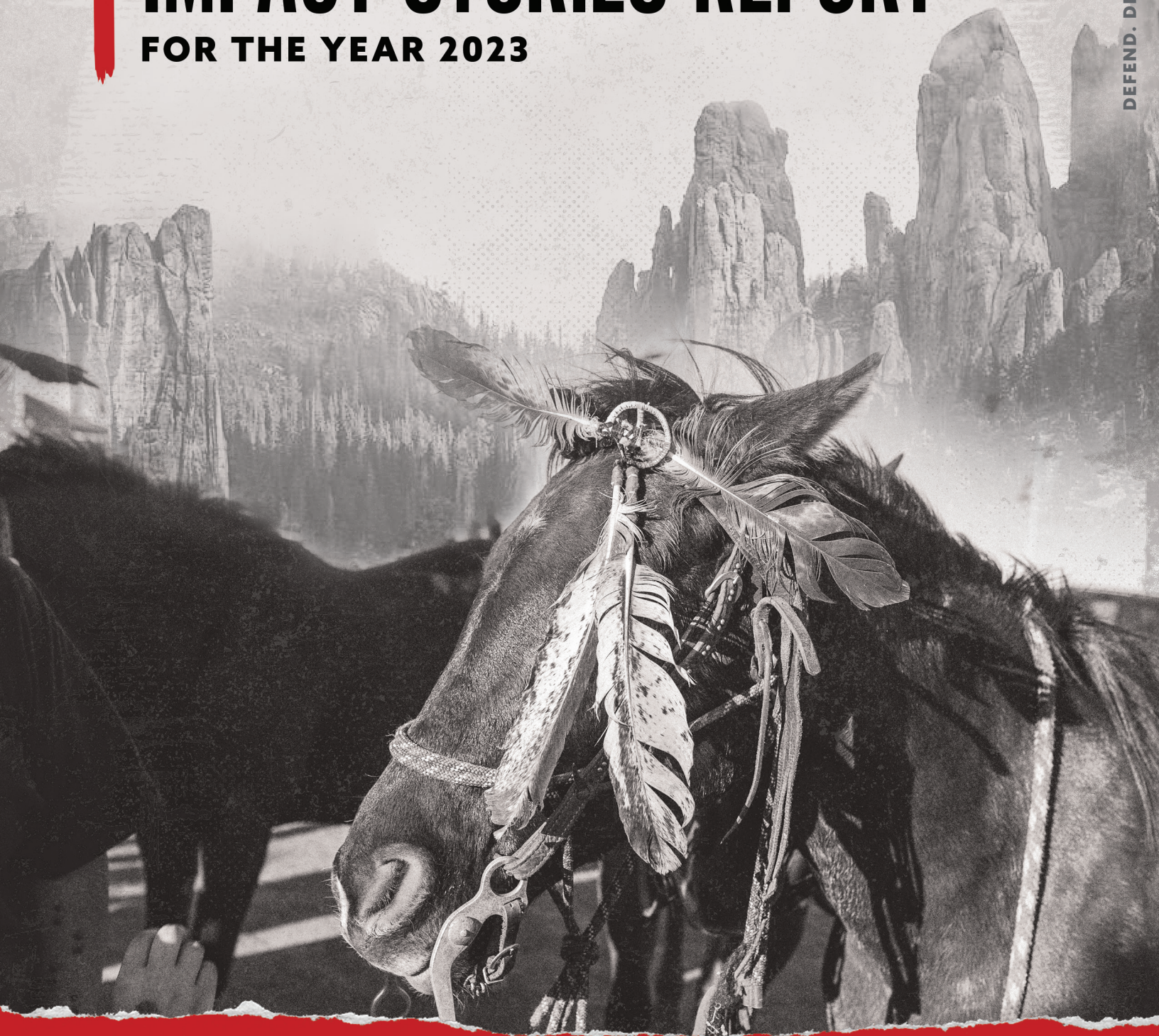


NDN COLLECTIVE

IMPACT STORIES REPORT

FOR THE YEAR 2023

DEFEND. DEVELOP. DECOLONIZE.



**408 KNOLLWOOD DR
RAPID CITY, SD 57701**

NDNCOLLECTIVE.ORG



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY >>>

NDN Collective is an Indigenous-led organization dedicated to building Indigenous power. Through organizing, activism, philanthropy, grantmaking, capacity-building and narrative change, NDN is creating sustainable solutions on Indigenous terms. NDN Collective's mission is to build the collective power of Indigenous Peoples, communities, and nations to exercise their inherent right to self-determination while fostering a world built on a foundation of justice and equity for all people and Mother Earth.

NDN Collective contracted Kauffman and Associates, Inc., (KAI) to undertake an impact analysis study. The impact analysis project aims to understand how well NDN Collective's work aligns and supports the theory of change. Through this project, KAI will recommend updates to decolonize, Indigenize, and further alignment of the impact pathways and the theory of change.

Collaboratively, NDN Collective and KAI supported the identification of four impact stories that highlight the way NDN Collective works with Indigenous communities to transform systems, shift power, and generate sustainable solutions through three core strategies:

- » **Defend:** Indigenous Peoples, communities, and nations defend and protect our land, air, water, and natural resources.
- » **Develop:** Indigenous Peoples, communities, and nations that are developed in a regenerative and sustainable manner based on our values and connection to land, culture, and identity.
- » **Decolonize:** Indigenous ceremonies, cultures, languages, and ways of life are revitalized, recognized, and celebrated.

The four impact stories have been highlighted that took place across Turtle Island and include:

- » **Story 1:** Oceti Sakowin Community Academy and school-related development based in Rapid City, South Dakota, U.S.
- » **Story 2:** Keepers of the Water, based in Athabasca, Alberta, Canada
- » **Story 3:** Miss Anne's Maypop Herb Shop Story, based in New Orleans, Louisiana
- » **Story 4:** The Anahuacalmecac International University Preparatory Story, based in Los Angeles, California

This report highlights NDN Collective's dedication to building Indigenous power through a variety of ways including organizing, activism, philanthropy, grantmaking, capacity-building and narrative change. Most importantly, NDN Collective is supporting the creation of sustainable solutions on Indigenous terms and is redefining and revolutionizing the way in which nonprofits collaborate with Indigenous communities. The impact achieved through NDN Collective's support contributed to each community's ability to transform their systems, shift power, and generate sustainable solutions through Defending, Developing, and Decolonizing that will last for generations to come.

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INTRODUCTION >>>

NDN works to transform systems, shift power, and generate sustainable solutions through three core strategies: **Defend, Develop, Decolonize**. Indigenous Peoples, communities, and Nations achieve the healing, growth, and connection to spirit that is integral for prosperity. The NDN Foundation provides grants to Indigenous-led organizations, tribes, groups, projects, and individuals whose work align with the NDN mission, values, principles, and three core strategies.

- » **Defend:** Indigenous Peoples, communities, and nations defend and protect our land, air, water, and natural resources.
- » **Develop:** Indigenous Peoples, communities, and nations are developed in a regenerative and sustainable manner based on our values and connection to land, culture, and identity.
- » **Decolonize:** Indigenous ceremonies, cultures, languages, and ways of life are revitalized, recognized, and celebrated.

Through these core strategies, NDN Collective works with communities to ensure:

“Indigenous Peoples, communities, and nations are free from oppressive systems and able to exercise our inherent right to self-determination that values the interconnected relationships and systems between people, nature, society, and all living things.”

In doing so, the organization supports communities in meeting needs of the present generation without compromising future generations’ needs and ensures that the interconnected relationships and systems between people, nature, society, and all living things is recognized by and acted upon in all aspects of society. Through this approach, NDN Collective works across communities and aims to realize a world that is just and equitable for all people and Mother Earth.

NDN Collective’s grantmaking process honors and advances the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples. Its geographic grantmaking focus is Turtle Island (also known as North America), which includes the post-colonial regions of the United States and the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as Canada and Mexico. Examples of grants supported by the organization include COVID-19 Community Response & Action, COVID-19 Phase 2, Community Renewable Energy, Community Self-Determination, and President’s Partnership Fund, to list a few.

Storytelling is a central feature of NDN Collective’s work. Through storytelling, NDN Collective can lift stories of Indigenous communities and movements, producing content that builds Indigenous voice and power. In alignment with this approach, NDN Collective worked with KAI to support the development of impact stories from communities they have worked with and continue to support in various ways. This report provides a journey through four communities that received support from NDN Collective and were able to impart an impact for the people and community served.

METHODOLOGY >>>

NDN Collective worked with KAI to support the identification of potential impact stories. KAI reviewed key report documents and organizational meeting minutes to extract information related to pre-determined story topics. Information was summarized and shared with NDN Collective to review and support identification of additional content to support and inform the decision-making process. Once all information was gathered, NDN Collective team members met to review and prioritize the primary impact stories. Through discussion, the following impact stories were identified:

- » Oceti Sakowin Community Academy and school-related development based in Rapid City, South Dakota, U.S.
- » Keepers of the Water, based in Athabasca, Alberta, Canada
- » Miss Anne's Maypop Herb Shop Story, based in New Orleans, Louisiana
- » The Anahuacalmecac International University Preparatory Story, based in Los Angeles, California

Since both Miss Anne's Maypop Herb Shop and Anahuacalmecac International Preparatory are loan relatives that work closely with NDN Fund, we decided that NDN Fund staff would be responsible for developing and drafting those two impact stories. Upon confirmation of the of the two stories KAI would develop, additional reports, videos, and supporting documents were provided to KAI for review.¹ This information supported identification and development of an interview guide and focus group guide for use with key knowledge holders. Interview participants included individuals that are champions in leading the work in their respective communities. Participants for focus groups included NDN Collective staff across its ecosystem who were involved in the work with each of the communities. Interviews and focus groups took place between August and December 2023.

Following the focus groups, key informant interviews with community leader(s) were scheduled to verify information gathered from focus groups. From the information analyzed, additional more specific questions regarding their individual story were drafted and uploaded to the Google share drive prior to holding one-hour key informant interviews. All interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed using an online service, Rev.com. Qualitative analysis of the transcripts identified key themes, sub-themes, and relevant quotes to support development of impact stories. For both the focus groups and key informant interviews KAI maintained the same analysis processes. To triangulate the accuracy of each impact story, drafts of each story document were shared with the key informants and their respective feedback integrated into the final document.

¹ NDN Fund developed two of the impact stories that were related to the program's efforts. NDN Fund used similar methodology to KAI in creating its stories.

A JOURNEY THROUGH IMPACT STORIES >>>

This section of the report navigates through each community's impact story. Each story includes the following sections: background, key movements and actions, and overall impact achieved in alignment with NDN Collective's theory of change.

Story 1: Oceti Sakowin Community Academy

This story analysis highlights the Oceti Sakowin Community Academy (OSCA), a joint initiative between NDN Collective and Native American Community Academy (NACA) Inspired Schools Network (NISN). This initiative aims to close the opportunity gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students that has gone unaddressed for decades. NISN intends to close this gap by teaching conventional subjects through Indigenous lenses, what they call Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings (OSEU).

The school opened in Rapid City, South Dakota in September 2022. Initially housed in the St. Andrews Episcopal Church building, it is currently located in He Sapa New Life until construction on the facility is complete. Mary Bowman, whom students call Unci (Grandma) Mary, is the Founder and Principal of OSCA. Mary Bowman is Oglala/Hunkpapa Lakota and has worked in education for over 15 years, which left her perfectly positioned to create the necessary changes in education to improve academic and wellness outcomes for Indigenous students. The following sections will highlight the findings from interviews and research of the school's development, opening, and progress. The events recollect in these interviews took place between 2019 and 2023 and demonstrate an impact in alignment with NDN Collectives the Defend, Develop, and Decolonize principles.

The OSCA's influence extends beyond the classroom, empowering Indigenous youth to be proud of their heritage and to be agents of change in their communities. OSCA's Indigenous-grounded curriculum is intentional and purposeful. It aims to prepare current and future generations to be leaders in their communities. Starting from kindergarten kids are taught the significance of their culture and encouraged to engage in activities such as treaty meetings and council meetings. They learn about the land and their tribe's systems, such as government operations and land management. The impacts of this approach will be summarized below in alignment with the NDN Collective's three pillars of Defend, Develop, and Decolonize.

OSCA is a result of the perseverance and resilience of the community amidst the multiple obstacles and challenges. The grand opening of the Academy was an event filled with joy, gratitude, and pride. It was a celebration for the community, and everyone was invited. The 35 students, families, and staff gathered while the student drum groups sang a traditional Lakota prayer. It was a momentous occasion that marked the beginning of a new era of education for Indigenous youth. This type of event is an important part of developing and demonstrating that the Indigenous community has the internal expertise necessary to build successful Native institutions, organizations, and partnerships.

The collaborations resulting in OSCA—between the NDN Collective and NISN, clearly show the advantages of an indigenized approach, enhancing the visibility and intersectional support for Indigenous-led movements. The collaboration between OSCA and NDN Collective offers a solution for future generations of Indigenous children by shaping Indigenous education globally. This is achieved through collaboration with existing Indigenous-led schools, ensuring a meaningful impact on Indigenous education on a global scale.

"This school's purpose is to create new models of Indigenous education. ... OSCA is about creating leaders who have a sense of identity, who have a sense of purpose, who know where they are, who know where they come from."

- Nick Tilsen, President, and CEO, NDN Collective

These efforts would not have been possible without NISN, a nonprofit aiming to develop Indigenous schools to create strong, academically sound leaders committed to Indigenous causes, identities, and transformations. By working together, the NISN and NDN Collective have been able to provide quality educational opportunities to long-overlooked Indigenous students. The interviews revealed some of the sustainable practices that paved the way for the success of the OSCA. One example is how prior Indigenous immersion schools have served as a model for schools like OSCA. Other immersive school models-built support by gradually integrating Indigenous curriculum into schools for specific subjects that would serve both Native and non-Native students. While other schools like OSCA opted to develop sustainable, Indigenized curriculum that was interwoven at school inception. OSCA, NDN, and NISN are at the forefront of the movement to further build Native expertise and consolidate support for future legislative initiatives.

Located in the Upper Midwest of the United States, South Dakota has a total population of 909,824, of which just under 78,000 people are Indigenous. South Dakota's Indigenous population comprises nine tribes, each with its own distinct culture, language, and traditions.² The Rapid City Area School District serves approximately 14,000 students, 25 percent of whom are Indigenous. However, Indigenous teachers comprise only one percent of all teachers in the district. The dramatically lower graduation and college-readiness rates for Indigenous students are partly the result of this disparity.

Integrating Native American history and culture into the South Dakota public school system has proved to be challenging, as decolonizing the existing curriculum isn't a state or federal priority. As a result, the NDN Education Equity Team envisioned creating a new school system prioritizing Indigenous ways of knowing. In this school system, Indigenous children would receive an education that honored their culture, traditions and values while also receiving a quality education that would prepare them for the future. Access to culturally relevant education increases student engagement and interest in the content. It also ensures that students see themselves reflected in the curriculum, fostering an educational experience where they can thrive.

The initial years of OSCA were marked by numerous successes, most notably reflected in the students' ability to share Lakota songs, language, and teachings of interconnectedness with their families when they return home. During parent teacher conferences, many shared that having their child in this school provides healing through reconnection to their own culture. Commonly, traditional teachings had not been passed on because of the boarding school trauma inflicted on their parents and grandparents.

It is important to note that the successes of OSCA cannot always be numbers on a spreadsheet. This is because the school was not designed following the metric-driven approach typical of public schools but rather as a result of decolonization efforts, representing a culmination of transformational forces for the upcoming generations of Indigenous leaders.

² The nine tribes in South Dakota include: Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Yankton Sioux Tribe.

OSCA in its first two years of operation has captured regional and national support from organizations like the South Dakota Education Equity Coalition, educators, and NISN. As a result of the school's academic excellence, cultural identity, and community engagement, Rapid City Area schools are beginning to expand their educational offerings on Indigenous culture, language, and history. Over the past two years OSCA has hosted various community events with partners, traveled and hosted ceremonies.

The significance of incorporating Indigenous culture and language into schools is closely tied to a student's confidence, self-identity, and future. The low graduation rates and opportunity gaps for Indigenous students are indicative of the need for a strong cultural identity to help address these issues. Bowman shares stories of the positive impact the school has had on students, including their ability to confidently sing Lakota songs and prayers, and their understanding of the interconnectedness of all things. For example, a kindergarten student from OSCA was able to offer the opening prayer for the White House Native Women Symposium.

"When working with Indigenous kids in our district, I feel they have the ability. I feel what's lacking is they don't see themselves—they don't feel that connection to what they are, and I felt that that was important."

-Mary Bowman

OSCA works diligently to recruit Indigenous teachers who are prepared to teach Indigenous students; offering a unique opportunity for students to learn from teachers who share their cultural background and can provide them with a deep understanding of their culture. Consequently, students experience a stronger connection to their culture, heightened motivation and engagement levels, and a deep sense of belonging. Additionally, students develop a stronger sense of self-awareness and confidence, ultimately leading to improved academic outcomes, holistic wellness, and higher graduation rates. Moreover, the Academy's focus on personalized education ensures that every student receives the attention and support they need to succeed in their academic and personal lives.

Additionally, Bowman emphasizes the healing aspect of OSCA for students and their families who have experienced trauma from boarding schools, more specifically those who have connections to the Rapid City Indian School (closed 1933).

The Oceti Sakowin Community Academy provides an inclusive and diverse education to Indigenous students in the Rapid City area. The academy's curricula take a decolonized approach driven by rigorous academics grounded in the language, culture, thought, and philosophy of the Oceti Sakowin, which means "seven council fires" in the Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota dialects. The academy's work is guided by four core values rooted in Lakota culture: wocantognake (generosity), woksape (wisdom), woohitika (bravery), and wowacintanka (fortitude). This approach is presented in Figure 1.

When Bowman started the iterative design process of the curriculum, she wanted a representation of the Lakota culture, language, and teachings that were going to be constructed around the academic areas of reading, mathematics, and writing. These elements were intended to be integrated into the academic areas of reading, mathematics, and writing. Ultimately, the curriculum emphasized Lakota culture, language, and teachings as the primary foundation for education and then incorporated the necessary school topics into their curricula.

CORE VALUES



Figure 1. Oceti Sakowin Academy core values

Following the curriculum design, the team deliberated the best grade level to target for their educational initiative, ultimately, they chose to start with kindergarteners. This decision was based on the realization that early interventions could significantly impact a child's future development. Next, the school will scale by adding a new grade level each year until the school serves students in K-12 grade. By taking a thoughtful decision-making process, the team arrived at an informed and effective strategy for creating the academy and shaping its future.

OSCA is a vital component of the LAND BACK movement, which seeks to revitalize and empower Indigenous communities by redistributing resources and power. The physical location of the school serves as a symbolic representation of the movement, with the purchased land embodying the principles of LAND BACK. Nestled at the heart of this land, the school emerges as a beacon of hope and progress, uniquely functioning as both an educational institution and an apartment/housing project actively endorsing and promoting the Land Back movement. By doing so, the school is contributing to a larger movement toward Indigenous self-determination, sovereignty, and acquisition efforts.

By strategically acquiring and safeguarding the sacred landscape of the He Sapa in the Black Hills, OCSA defends its momentum and long-term growth, all while carefully controlling the narrative and data shared about the academy. The decolonization journey intersects with defense and development, as OCSA's location on the foothills of the He Sapa contributes to the revitalization of language, culture, and ceremonies—a testament to its commitment to holistic and meaningful Indigenous education.

Story 2: Keepers of the Water

Keepers of the Water (Keepers) was founded in 2006 and contributes to Indigenous-led stewardship, advocacy, and education by exercising Indigenous sovereignty and advocating for the spirit and intent of relevant treaties (Treaty 8, Treaty 11, and Treaty 6) in opposition to extractive industries in Canada. Led by Executive Director Jesse Cardinal, Keepers of the Water are essential to preserving the voiceless rivers, creeks, watersheds, and all those who depend on them for life. Keepers of the Water primarily work in the Boreal Forest region of Northern Alberta, Northwest Territories, and Northern Saskatchewan, and have also done work in Northern BC.

An ally acknowledges the harms of genocide that have been done to Indigenous people...and knows that Indigenous People are the first scientists of this land, are the knowledge-keepers, have the solutions to climate change, and that we lead, and [they] are here to listen and support."

—Jesse Cardinal, Executive Director, Keepers of the Water

Currently, the Keepers board is primarily Indigenous, with two non-Indigenous allies as members. The organization itself has a staff of seven, all of whom are Indigenous, except for their in-house science expert. All members of the organization, regardless of their background, share a deep understanding of how the issues they work on are rooted in colonialism and land theft. This recognition is essential in addressing the problem and moving forward. Acknowledging the past and the current situation is critical to solving these problems.

Keepers of the Water's Indigenous-led environmental action aligns directly with the principles of the NDN Collective—Defend, Develop, and Decolonize—which positioned Keepers to be awarded both a NDN Changemaker Fellowship and two NDN Collective-funded projects during the COVID-19 pandemic. One was for food sovereignty and security work and the other for their Athabasca Watershed Monitoring Program. The collaboration and funding provided by NDN Collective have contributed to the expansion and sustainability of Keepers of the Water, both in supporting operations and ensuring that staff have health insurance, equitable pay, and reasonable benefits. Together with NDN Collective, Keepers of the Waters plays a complex, evolving role in Indigenous-led water-protection efforts.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Indigenous communities faced more mobility challenges along with food scarcity. This resulted in more Indigenous communities returning to the land through hunting parties to harvest moose, deer, and rabbits. Prior to the pandemic, the organization had been discussing the need for food security and sovereignty as they believed that the solutions lie in the land and the need to return to it. KOW understands that when people's needs aren't being met, they tend not to listen until it is far too late. This delay in response happens for a variety of reasons ranging from bureaucracy, funding, institutional racism, and various other factors at play. The COVID-19 pandemic amplified the voices of those unheard through social media and international mobility restrictions that left people confined to their homes for months. As a result, the organization received a grant from NDN Collective to support food security and sovereignty work in Indigenous communities in Alberta.

The Keepers of the Water's Tar Sands Toxic Tailings Campaign combats the grotesquely harmful environmental effects of the Athabasca Tar Sands mining projects in Northern Alberta and offers a useful study of the profound impacts that Keepers of the Water and NDN Collective can create together. The Tar Sands projects are massive, so much so they can be seen from space. This fact is alarming and speaks volumes about settler society's unrestricted access to Indigenous territories. It is a poignant example of how industrialization is encroaching upon the natural resources as demand increases for nonrenewable energy is exploited through Indigenous People's lands through coal mining, tar sands mining, and uranium mining.



July 23, 1984

The Fort McMurray tar sands mine in Alberta had been operating for 27 years by the time this photo was taken from space by the U.S. Landsat satellite on October 3, 2011.

All these industries are interconnected, and their operations on Indigenous lands are highly problematic. Coal fires, the independent infrastructure used in tar sands mining, and Alberta's small nuclear reactors as clean energy are all based on misinformation. The increase of misinformation in our technological age is often connected to greenwashing of industries like coal, nuclear energy, tar sand mining and many other industries. The impacts of numerous energy industries' activities further exacerbate the already fragile ecological balance and Indigenous People's lives and livelihoods.

The region has 19 tailing ponds that are entirely toxic and consist of large chemical concentrations of ammonia, mercury, and naphthenic acids. Despite being called ponds, they are massive toxic bodies of water that contaminate groundwater and can kill living organisms that come into contact. The tailings ponds are a byproduct of the oil sands mining process and are used to store the toxic waste produced during the extraction process. These liquid holding places are twice the size of the city of Vancouver, BC and continue to grow, posing a significant threat to the environment and the communities that live near the ponds.



Figure 2. Image of the Arctic Ocean Drainage Basin

Figure 2 displays the Arctic Ocean Drainage Basin, that visually shows the interconnectedness of water through Arctic Ocean Drainage Basin in relation to tailing pod contamination regions shown above.³

For over a decade, communities located near the Tar Sands have been raising their voices about the quality of water. For the past two decades industry promises have led to an increase in toxic tailings that leach into the surrounding groundwater Indigenous communities are reliant on. Despite facing numerous challenges, they have never given up their fight for justice. The board of Keepers of the Water has been working tirelessly to support the community, bring attention to their plight, and dispel misinformation. Most recently on February 4, 2023, 5.3 million liters leaked from the Imperial Oil's tailing "pond." For comparison, this is enough to fill two Olympic-sized swimming pools. This massive leak came from tar sands' tailing ponds containing 1.4 trillion liters of toxic waste.⁴ These ponds continue to pose the risk of irreversible damage to the life of both humans and ecosystems in proximity.

The LANDBACK movement is an important aspect of this issue, as it seeks to protect the land and reduce health issues and sickness in the area. This movement aims to empower Indigenous communities by advocating for their rights, including their right to self-determination and control over their lands. There is an opportunity to improve regulations and ensure that industries operate more responsibly by listening to and collaborating with the communities. This can be achieved by engaging with Indigenous communities to understand their needs and concerns and working together to develop solutions that benefit everyone. By doing so, industries can operate in a way that is more sustainable and respectful of the land and its inhabitants.

³ Keepers of the Water. (n.d.) Arctic Drainage Basin. Retrieved from: <https://www.keepersofthewater.ca/arctic-drainage-basin>

⁴ Cardinal, J., and Gray, P. (2023, February 9). Imperial Oil Kearn's tailings leak. Retrieved from: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6014527b90b10920133c710b/t/63e5729d1819aa7ebbd8612/1675981469326/Imperial+Oil+Kearn%E2%80%99s+tailings+leak+-+Joint+Statement.pdf>

While there has been increased engagement between the federal government and First Nations leadership, the Albertan provincial government abruptly ended engagement when it did not align with their interests. This highlights the need for continued advocacy and support for Indigenous communities—a mission which deeply informs the work done by Keepers of the Water and NDN Collective.

To effectively combat the Tar Sands project, Keepers of the Water has also learned to fight the amplifying effects of climate change and misinformation. Climate change is an urgent problem that requires immediate attention and action. It is a complex issue that involves consistent accountability for energy corporations and governments that hold power and vast resources of entire populations. It is essential to continue monitoring the data and calling out the governments and corporations responsible for the damage caused to the environment and the communities living in the area. The fight to protect the environment and the lives of the people who depend on it is ongoing, and we must continue to work together to make a difference.

"It's never a good feeling when you are trying to warn the government to say, "You need to stop. You need to slow down because this is going to cause disaster. Then when disasters happen, we do feel that COVID spreads so quickly because of the climate situation that we're in."

- Jessie Cardinal

Climate change is an urgent problem that requires immediate attention and action. It is a complex issue that involves consistent accountability for energy corporations and governments that hold power and vast resources of entire populations. It is essential to continue monitoring the data and calling out the governments and corporations responsible for the damage caused to the environment and the communities living in the area. The fight to protect the environment and the lives of the people who depend on it is ongoing, and we must continue to work together to make a difference.

Additionally, misinformation—both in terms of intentionally inaccurate and difficult-to-find information—makes it difficult to squarely address, or even define, the problem. For the average person, finding reliable information on water quality online can be a daunting task. Different organizations, governments, and companies test for different things, and it can be hard to make sense of it all. This makes it easy for companies to manipulate data. For instance, the Canadian Oil Sands Industry Association (COSIA), which includes big companies such as Suncor, CNRL, Exxon, and Cenovus, is a well-funded organization formed by the tar sands industry. COSIA, also formed a sister organization called the Pathfinders Alliance, which is allegedly spending a lot of money on a greenwashing program to claim that they have solved the climate problem through carbon capture and storage. The cited treatment methods, however, are not safe, and Indigenous communities bear the cost of their actions. These communities are completely reliant on the surrounding land and water, and any damage to the delicate ecosystem carries devastating consequences for their health and well-being and that of future generations.

"We do need to address those structural causes of climate change, which include things like capitalism and colonialism. So, if we use [capitalism and colonialism] to try and find the solutions, we are never going to stop this problem because it's something that was inherently created by those oppressive power structures. That's why it's necessary to be coming at this work from the perspective of... Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination."

- Daniel T'seleie, Northwest Territories Outreach Manager, Keepers of the Water

As Keepers of the Water analyzed all available water monitoring data around the biggest industrial project on the planet, they realized how much of the data was inconsistent and manipulated. Without truthful science, it is impossible to make good decisions. KOW recognized the growing impacts of poor decisions made through misinformation and in attempts to rectify water monitoring data launched the water community-based monitoring program in 2022.

The water monitoring program is a community-led effort where data is collected on oxygen levels, temperature, and various other factors that impact water quality. This program's development began as a solution to dispel the many inconsistencies and manipulation in the water data the government provided.

In addition to industry producing data that was inaccurate it was also incredibly inaccessible to the public. The communities and ecosystems most impacted by the declining water quality are not only those who live near the Athabasca River, but also through the Columbia Glacier in Jasper National Park where it travels northeast across Alberta and drains into Lake Athabasca in the north-east. Lake Athabasca flows into the Slave River and joins the McKenzie River, which eventually flows to the Arctic Ocean, traveling over 1230 kms from start to glacier to mouth.⁵

The ripple effect of incorrect water quality data is apparent in the bodies of water that the Athabasca River crosses, and the ecosystems and communities it crosses. Provincial and federal environmental decisions were made on the safety risks of tailing pods with inaccurate information that lead to more disinformation and destructive decision making. When available, this information was rarely accessible to the public, and so the impacts of these efforts—in education, advocacy, and truth-telling—are essential to the current day and future preservation, protection or water. The Keepers of the Water's water monitoring program has made it possible for these communities to unify around accurate data collection to bring forward awareness and action around the inaccurate data that has led to poor decisions made. Today, there is an active website hosted by Keepers of the Water that shares information collected about water conditions across the Athabasca regions.⁶

This movement is being led by remarkable Indigenous individuals, like Jessie Cardinal, who seek to connect the past and future of Native experience by tying Indigenous scientific knowledge to modern means and goals. The individuals involved in this movement refuse to back down, as they believe their scientific knowledge is valid and deserves to be at the forefront. Decolonizing teachings are a key aspect of their work, emphasizing the interconnectedness of

⁵ Athabasca River Basin Research Institute. (n.d.). About the Athabasca River Basin. Retrieved from: <http://arbri.athabasca.ca/About-the-Athabasca-River-basin/Index.php>

⁶ Keepers of the Water. (2021). How to use our map. Retrieved from: <https://www.keepersofthewater.ca/kow-mapped-water-data>

all things. The Cree word “wahkotowin” embodies this idea, meaning “all my relations” or “everything’s connected.” Traditional knowledge has been passed down through generations via oral tradition, predating modern Western science. Nevertheless, they continue to advocate for the recognition of Indigenous knowledge as a valid form of scientific inquiry. Elders share stories with them, stories about the land. Protecting water and elevating Indigenous knowledge as a legitimate form of scientific investigation are top priorities for this group. Their message is clear: they are the original scientists of their territories. Although some may scoff at their creation stories, they know that Western science is only beginning to catch up to their traditional knowledge.

Science literacy is an essential part of everyday life, particularly for those who live off the land. Traditional knowledge has been validated by modern science, and it is hoped that Indigenous knowledge will continue to be elevated as a legitimate form of scientific inquiry. The individuals involved in this movement are guided by their unwavering belief in the validity of their scientific knowledge. Decolonizing teachings are a cornerstone of their work, with wahkotowin encapsulating their conviction that everything is connected. Traditional knowledge, passed down through generations via oral tradition, predates modern Western science, and they will always advocate for the recognition of Indigenous knowledge as a valid form of scientific inquiry.

The collaboration between NDN Collective and Keepers of the Water has contributed to an increase in visibility of the atrocities industries are willing to commit for profit. Simultaneously, NDN Collective has demonstrated the strength of Indigenous-led community-based organizing and action to national and international audiences. Together, these organizations have facilitated cross collaboration among various environmental groups combating misinformation through education and direct action. All the while maintaining an ever-present, consistent stronghold for local Indigenous Peoples protecting all sacred ecosystems. Sustaining this ongoing impact and expansion of advocacy happens through the collaborative education and investment of all people, organizations and federal agencies. The stewardship of this work for decades has been led and driven by Indigenous People and it is all people’s collective duty to join this stewardship with the direction of Keepers of Water.

Story 3: Miss Anne's Maypop Herb Shop Story

It was a sunny day on Rosebud Reservation when a young Miss Anne White Hat, Aske Glupwipi Tiospaye of Sicangu Lakota, got her hand sliced open by a heavy metal cot. She was in tears as she burst through her grandmother's door, who covered the wound in a poultice of her own herbs. "I always remember that moment", reflects Miss Anne, who now runs her own herb shop in Bulbancha (now called New Orleans) - a city far away from her homelands in the He Sapa (The Black Hills).

Lakota tradition is rich with stories of herbalists and a deep knowledge of plant medicines, but through the violent process of colonization and continuous disenfranchisement of her community, access to this knowledge and its practitioners has become all too rare. "That's our struggle out here in the rural native communities", reflects Miss Anne. Growing up, healthcare in general was difficult to access. "It would take hours just to get seen by a physician at Indian Health Services, and the closest herb shop was hours away". For Miss Anne, the pursuit of an herbalist way is a direct response to this structural lack of access to necessary resources that her own, and many rural Indigenous communities face on Turtle Island.

Miss Anne has always been a traveler, so it makes sense that she was on the road when her path with plants really took hold about 30 years ago. She was excited to pursue an education at a naturopathic program, but after looking at its curriculum, she noticed no Indigenous representation in their instructors. She dropped the program and continued down her own journey to soon meet Doña Enriqueta Contreras, an Indigenous curandera, Zapoteca midwife and Master Teacher from Oaxaca, Mexico, who took Ms. Anne under her wing. This was the first "official" herbalist trainer that Miss Anne ever studied with, and although Doña was Indigenous to another nation; the knowledge, practices and traditional ways of relating with plant and other natural medicines contained the same spirit as the teachings from her own culture. Miss Anne shared, "I can still go back to naturopathic school, but they are not in the same sphere of knowledge as Indigenous herbalists. [We practice] very deep and spiritual healing. That's not represented in these programs... Our Indigenous herbalism is unique and incorporates our tribal thoughts and philosophy to our relationship with the plants".

The relationship with Doña Enriqueta Contreras started Miss Anne on a long herbalist road, as she traveled to herbalist teachers throughout Turtle Island in a "self-determined education plan". Through her journey, she finally became a beacon of knowledge and wisdom herself, with so many offerings to share with her global family.

These offerings were vital during COVID-19, when Miss Anne kickstarted a mutual aid herbal care package service, full of fire ciders, elderberry syrups, immunity boosting tea blends, and more, to support Indigenous communities in their fight against the pandemic. At this time, she was helping to run a project called Delta Rootz, a mutual aid herbalism group. Together, they were able to send out more than \$100,000 worth of herbal medicine in one year. "We had to do something," she says. Together they were able to mail thousands of packages around Turtle Island to different Indigenous nations that needed medical, spiritual and emotional support as they dealt with the grave losses associated with COVID-19.

Miss Anne was able to share offerings again at an Ishnati (coming-of-age ceremony) in South Dakota, where she crafted and offered some specially made herbal products for the girls. "They were so excited to see what was possible", Miss Anne shared. Along with perfumes, makeups and traditional remedies, Miss Anne also apprehensively included deep healing

bundles related to healing sexual and domestic trauma. She was happy when she saw a “relief ... that these things were available”, in the girls and women at the ceremony.

Through this mutual aid work, and the commitment to her responsibilities as an Indigenous herbalist, this work for Miss Anne is about “defending our rights to practice after the American Indian Religious Freedom Act”. It’s about “providing that access” that so many Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island have been stripped from, of their traditional ways, their lands, original knowledges, and ultimately, their sovereignty. It was after Hurricane Katrina that Miss Anne was finally able to open her herb shop, which now boasts the largest collection of bulk herbs in its region of the so-called United States. Miss Anne’s Maypop Herb Shop also holds a deep commitment to mutual aid work, as well as a collaboration with herbalists of all backgrounds.

In this way, Miss Anne’s Maypop Herb Shop encapsulates all three of NDN Collective’s pillars: to Defend, Develop and Decolonize. To practice herbalism as an Indigenous person is paramount to uplift. Ms. Anne shared, “it’s important that people know it’s stewarded by me: a Lakota herbalist.” This instills a “sense of confidence in the products”. If a non-Indigenous person was sharing these medicines, we always must question: “Did they make an offering” or ask permission before harvesting? Did they make this medicine in a good way? “We don’t always have a choice in that”, she said. “Now folks know that the products are always respectfully made and available for them”. Miss Anne is defending Indigenous knowledges, bringing in new herbal traditions to develop new herbal practices, and decolonizing the way that herbalism, a usually white dominated space, is practiced.

Miss Anne’s Maypop Herb Shop works to defend Indigenous knowledges and herbal practices — many of which were made illegal by the colonial American government for generations. The violent estrangement from these practices was deepened through the boarding school system, and continuous dislocation of Indigenous communities from their original territories. The development and colonization of lands into cities and other extractive colonial infrastructures like dams, cattle ranching, mines, etcetera, have also deeply shifted the composition of nutrient flow, waterways, flora and fauna on Indigenous lands, so that traditional practices with land are now more convoluted to access. In this way, defending herbal knowledges also extends to a defense of land, as Indigenous herbs and medicines are grown on Indigenous lands. In order to have access to these medicines, we must protect our lands and our rights to them.

Miss Anne is developing Indigenous herbalist networks through the creation of her herb shop and her traveler nature, where her native community is “wherever I’m living. I have family all along the way”, she says, expressing solidarity with all Indigenous peoples, their lands, and their traditions. In this spirit, Miss Anne is developing a broader native herbalism network by bringing Indigenous herbalists and medicine makers to the shop, which hosts “one of the largest selections of bulk herbs and botanical extracts in the southeast”. The herb shop is also supporting Indigenous herbalism in the marketplace, so that Indigenous herbalists can make a living off their important craft. “There aren’t many of us, and I feel like I really want to work with the platform that I have to uplift other medicine makers”, says Miss Anne. Eventually, Miss Anne wants to develop hubs of Miss Anne’s Maypop Herb Shop all around Turtle Island, “to continue to develop this Indigenous herbalism on the medicine trail.”

The stories that root Indigenous herbalists to their medicines are so unique to their specific practice. Ms. Anne remarks that the way Indigenous herbalists “talk about our relationship with medicinal herbs and plants is really grounded here on Turtle Island. It just shifts to our worldview and our cosmology - which is refreshing and necessary to decolonization”. Miss Anne acknowledges the importance of Western and folk practices as well, mentioning “I want to know the science, all of it!” Western and folk modalities for herbal medicines have been well preserved, but Indigenous forms of medicine are so vital to do the same with. These medicinal traditions are laced with intricacies of how, where and when to process medicines. They are imbued with cultural values and cosmologies. Making sure to get that deep spirituality and connection to the land back into these practices is vital to a decolonized herbalism. Decolonization is also about not only creating space for Indigenous peoples to be welcomed into the world of herbalism, but more so to create independent herbalist ways that are deeply supported by their own networks and communities. Just like Miss Anne’s decision not to join the non-Indigenous naturopathic program, but to pursue her own self-directed education that allowed her to buy and run her own herb shop: decolonization is not about trying to join non-Indigenous spaces, but, like Ms. Anne does, creating our own.

Ms. Anne lights up when speaking about NDN Fund, and their role in supporting the herb shop. She says, “NDN Fund has taken so much time, care and stewardship in helping me to pull this whole vision together”. Even the application process, which included deep market analysis, was daunting at first. With the support of NDN staff though, the process of developing this analysis helped to solidify an abstract vision into solid achievable goals and visions. She continued, “NDN Fund is not like any other entity I’ve ever worked with”. That Indigenous lens that NDN brings is so unique within granting organizations and helps “motivate me and keep me thinking about my next projects”. On top of granting the capital she needed to purchase her herb shop, NDN has supported Ms. Anne in creating a new website, inventing new marketing tactics, and providing vital access to important relationships through their wide network. The “technical assistance has [also] been amazing”, she shared. From web development to artistic talent with rebranding and marketing ... “they’re just brilliant and responsive. It’s so nice to work with other native folks in this capacity – it’s refreshing... I appreciate the deep conversations and feedback I get during our meetings”. Ms. Anne, who has worked for years in grant writing and non-profit work, reflects that the combination of true professionalism with Indigenous styles of communicating, relating to one another and spending time, is so rare and unique in the philanthropy world.

Story 4: The Anahuacalmecac International University Preparatory Story

The story of Anahuacalmecac International University Preparatory (AIUP) and NDN Collective is one that speaks to the power of self-determination through material and ideological means. This partnership has created a means for LAND BACK for the Gabrielino Shoshone and the Indigenous and local communities of Los Angeles. Through both the material acquisition of land and the practice of learning language and culture, AIUP is building communities of autonomy for intertribal Indigenous people, youth, and families. Parts of this work have been catalyzed by the Social Enterprise & Economic Development for Indigenous Growth (SEEDING) loan capital that assisted in securing land and encouraging additional funders to believe in the vision AIUP is co-creating with the Gabrielino Shoshone of Tovaangar (Los Angeles).

Since its inception, the story of Anahuacalmecac International University Preparatory (AIUP) has been centered around not only fighting systems of oppression, but envisioning and actualizing the spaces that are needed for Indigenous peoples to thrive. AIUP was born from using traditional dance (danza) as a form of spiritual resistance to the many issues marginalized groups faced at the time in LA. Many of these struggles took place at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), since Ethnic Studies as a program was being threatened and AIUP founders were based in UCLA before the creation of the school. Their organizing and taking part in hunger strikes and occupations were welcomed by the community and were rooted in international ties to communities in Mexico, especially the Zapatistas. The connection AIUP has with Mexico both generated support for their efforts and became a source of knowledge for creating communities based in self-determination once AIUP founders, Minnie Ferguson and Marcos Aguilar, left UCLA to eventually open the K-12 school. It took about 8 years to get to a point where they were considering questions of land and space. From 2000-2002 they were considering where they would create the school and in 2001, Marcos Aguilar sought guidance from Chief Vera Ya'anna Rocha and asked for her guidance on opening an Indigenous school. This practice of consultation to center the traditional stewards of the land would become regular custom for Marcos and others from AIUP, especially during the process of securing and stewarding the land they would later acquire. They eventually came to find an abandoned building and with funding from Raza Fund, they were able to attain the building.

However, after 20 years of operating from the building they secured, AIUP ran into problems due to the lack of outdoor space available to the school. As the pandemic ramped up and quarantining became standard, students were further alienated and isolated from the world. Being able to have a safe outdoor environment meant reconditioning the young people to the world, which put responsibility on leaders of AIUP to begin another search, this time for land. AIUP began consulting with San Gabrielino and Chumash councils to discuss the idea of AIUP caring for land. With their support, AIUP started caring for a garden and grew to secure grant funding for about 20 acres of land. On this land they planted 500 Black Walnut Trees, which populated an additional 300 trees. AIUP and their student body were cultivating deeper relationships with the land and with the San Gabrielino tribe.

At the same time these connections were happening, AIUP was also on the search for a campus that would include outdoor spaces for the students. Having access to land would greatly impact the ability of AIUP to see some of their goals come into fruition. Outdoor space would not only create a sense of responsibility and connection to the land, but it would enhance the pedagogy of AIUP as putting into practice land-based learning. It was through a random search that

Marcos came across a property that was on the market in June of 2022. The property had been recklessly developed by the city and was abandoned, as it was subject to limitations due to the local neighbors wanting to have restrictions around construction in that area. When Marcos found the listing for 12 acres that would become Ya'anna Village, it was put on the market by a third developer who had intentions of turning it into high density housing but couldn't get past the restrictions around construction. With a strong desire to purchase the property, fears of the property being bought up once again, and uncertainty about how to have the resources to make the purchase, Marcos consulted some of AIUP's long-standing relationships for assistance. He brought this idea to Josue Rivas, Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, Tekpatl Kuauhtzin, and Aria Maya. Each of these young people had developed personal long-standing relationships around the work AIUP was doing, environmental justice, and Indigenous rights. When asking them for guidance, Marcos specifically asked them if they could help start a relationship with NDN Collective. Josue and Xiuhtezcatl had done extensive work with Nick Tilsen and NDN Collective at that time and were willing to bridge a connection.

"It was really key that that generation of students that had grown up in our school, you know, that had benefited from our work at UCLA, that were connected to our international work in Mexico and across the United States, all had a perspective about the importance of an Anahuacalmecac and about the importance of land back in Los Angeles and connecting that to the Gabrielino Shoshone nation as an important first of many steps."

- Marcos Aguilar, AIUP.

Together, the group walked the land and talked about the vision for Ya'anna Village. They began to realize the short timeline they were under due to the property being on the market for an under-market rate, so AIUP got connected with NDN Fund through Nick Tilsen and applied for funding. With Nick Tilsen emphasizing the urgency and importance of the vision of AIUP, NDN Fund worked diligently and quickly to approve and underwrite the loan for AIUP. Within a month they were able to secure the property in August of 2022.

With now understanding the multiple properties in the stewardship of AIUP and over 20 years of operation as a school, we asked about the goals AIUP has for its school. The first autonomous Indigenous school in the United States— what were the intended outcomes when AIUP was first being created? Marcos shared:

"Well, we kind of had Intellectual goals and then we had heartfelt goals. And the heartfelt goals were self-determination and what I understand clearly now as creating an alternative of schooling as assimilation and creating an example of education as self-determination, meant to me that our children wouldn't be subjected to a process of Americanization that was foreign to them and that would alienate them from their own nations, understanding, and from their languages and their culture. That is still very- and especially at that time, now 21 years ago, was still- a very sharp edge."

AIUP working to center the culture and language of Indigenous peoples from South of the border was particularly counter narrative during a time in LA where anti-immigrant sentiments were rampant. Their goals of self-determination for Indigenous children and their families is one that is revolutionary when it comes to creating an Indigenous present and future that is rooted in liberation. Their intellectual goals included language learning and immersion, spiritual resistance and survivance, and creating an environment outside of the colonial education system where they are protecting the wellness of their community's children. Many of the cultural and linguistic aspects are rooted in Nahuatl language and culture due to the affinity of the community and the makeup of the AIUP board and the makeup of the student body. However, there is a desire to expand the languages offered by AIUP. All of the goals Marcos laid out carry out into practice our theory of change– Defend, Develop, Decolonize – and in practice, they have made sweeping changes as a key navigator in creating communities and pedagogies rooted in self-determination.

After getting access to the property that was purchased through the help of NDN Fund, AIUP has made several key achievements. These achievements were identified by Marcos and were all tied to the ability to have access to outdoor space. Marcos shared with a pause followed by a laugh, “biggest accomplishments... collecting coffee berries the first season, that was a huge accomplishment”. He explained:

“We’ve never had a place to collect native plants from. It’s very prevalent in Los Angeles, but I think across California that tribal members are very perturbed by the fact that they have to ask for permission for everything. So even just collecting the seeds was a big deal— that they didn’t have to ask permission from anybody.”

Marcos also notes other key events as having the students on the ground for the first time, having a circle, and planting white sage that was donated to them by Gabrielino Shoshone community members, Tina Calderon and her husband, who brought a truckload of white sage to plant on the land. White sage being gifted meant that it could be entrusted to AIUP and the caretakers of the land to be protected from abuse. These seemingly small victories are big deals because they speak to the practice of what it means to return land to Indigenous hands. Native species being rematriated to the land, seed saving, and being a good relative through creating community and consulting with the traditional stewards. All of these key events were also made possible by the student land stewards, Teocentlapishke, who tend to the land and act as key stakeholders of the community.

Beyond the tending and cultivating of native plants, Marcos also mentions the organizational and due diligence milestones that have occurred. One of the biggest accomplishments noted was the tribal leaders realizing how important it was to stay in relationship with the school as a continuity of Chief Vera Rocha’s work. As it has provided them with an infrastructure to reorganize their tribal council. This work has been giving root to tribal autonomy and sovereignty. The diligence milestones include soil report studies, visioning with partners on watershed restoration, and having grant dollars flowing in. Since receiving a loan from NDN Fund, AIUP has had multiple funders come forward to financially support the organization, including the million dollars from the California Endowment. The impacts of NDN Fund’s SEEDING loan had created ripple effects– which have meant that funders are now seeing the urgency that was not present before for the need to fund Land Back movements.

"Without NDN, other foundations would not have stepped in. We needed to have a way to do this quickly, and on a timetable, and at the same time, give people [time] to wrap their head around it, because it was a lot to chew. So having the opportunity to work with NDN Collective and the experience that [they] bring to the table has been critical. Otherwise, we would not have gotten to the point where we have this partnership with the California Endowment and their contribution of one million dollars towards the LAND BACK vision of work."

- Marcos Aguilar

NDN's theory of change has been contributed to in other ways as well by AIUP. They have worked and are still working on building a practice of defending land in LA. To them this means thinking of current city structures in place and how they might change them to uplift more tribal control. This would mean supporting tribal autonomy in ancestral burial sites, reclaiming mission lands, and taking back ceremonial sites. They are also working to develop access to resources in the community. They have assets in their communities, cultural knowledge, and people power and use these assets to partner with organizations like NDN Collective to contribute to the narrative of shifting national and international systems of power to the benefit of Indigenous peoples. Prior to the experience with NDN Fund, access to financial resources has been alienating. Where other CDFIs would lose funding and must shut down schools, NDN Fund is accountable to their loan relatives. NDN Collective's model has contributed to an empowerment of developing their own communities in a way that is sustainable and mutually beneficial.

Decolonization for AIUP has occurred on multiple levels. Their implementation of Indigenous Resurgence Education has meant valuing the interconnectedness of all things and self-determination. At its core is learning on the land, having relationships to everything that gives us life: Tloque Nahuaque (that which is near and far). This has meant centering the life of the land on the campus through signage and in the curriculum, which ranges from incorporating Environmental Studies from UCLA for the students to having an adobe building workshop. Valuing hands-on learning and culturally based learning decolonizes the ways we are taught to think of education in the United States. Not only is AIUP decolonizing how we think of education, but they are also challenging the ways that justice and equity is thought of. They emphasize to the students what it means to think of waterways, plants, and animals as citizens of other nations. Through doing so, justice and equity means being a good relative to the land. It is through outdoor space that this is land based learning and practice of being in relationship possible. While there are external inequities AIUP faces from the city, Marcos finds hope:

"I find confidence in that we have a whole community thinking on the time of the mountain as opposed to the time of the internet and that's important. That's an important distinction to make, that they're not just city kids, that they can see the world with different eyes."

The scale on which this work is being done is international, a scale that has not yet been done by other loan relatives. AIUP is connected with the Nahuatl communities in Cuentepec, Morelos, who participated in the Congreso Nacional Indígena that convened “La Caravana Por El Agua y La Vida” (The Caravan For Water and Life) to defend water rights in Mexico. Their Nahuatl teacher went to the conference and spoke on behalf of the work being done in Los Angeles with Land Back, which in Nahuatl is Mocuapa Tlalli (to return the land). This principle was communicated to their allies in the highlands of Guerrero, where an Olmeca ancestral site lies at Teopantecuanitlan. The community there then organized their authorities to set aside land to create a cultural learning space in an ancient cultural region. They are further developing their practice of land back to have a part of the government be of the pueblo (of the people). Leaders from AIUP are continuing this relationship of exchanging knowledge, with Marcos noting “whatever you teach us, we’re going to teach them and share best practices to think about how that space emerges as a collective space and as a LAND BACK learning experience also.” AIUP has taken Defend, Develop, Decolonize from families in LA having peaceful walks at sunset to catalyzing LAND BACK across borders.

The impacts of this work and of getting access to land to return it to the Gabrielino Shoshone cannot be simply measured. AIUP is working to emphasize the message of LA being native land and ruffling feathers by giving LAND BACK boldly to the tribal communities. They have worked to center land-based learning, student wellness and leadership, and native plant relationships. They are continuously putting into practice what it means to be a good guest on those lands and sharing decolonial strategies intercontinentally. They are revitalizing Nahua language and culture and changing the narrative of education to be a way to have self-determination. All of this being done across generations and tribes. When asked about the future of this work, Marcos shared:

“We envision the village as being a center of education and healing for Indigenous peoples that is stewarded by the community of the school, held in title by the Gabrielino Shoshone nation as the owner, and establishing what we’re calling an ecocultural center to have community science involving Indigenous science and our understand of climate change and climate resilience and decolonization through what we call the Tuatukar Ecocultural Center, which is named after one of their ancestors... You can theorize about defense but you have to actually become strong at it. I think that that is part of its continuity as a place of learning about that.”

On September 22, 2023, AIUP officially announced that the legal title to the 12 acres of land will be returned to the Gabriel Shoshone Nation of Southern California. Marcos emphasized that they are humble to share the visionary nature of this work with NDN Collective. They are grateful for support they have received and thankful for the ways that NDN Collective has welcomed Indigenous people from South of the border. AIUP is looking at the many ways they are planning to expand and structure their work. It is in this spirit of gratitude that reciprocity takes place and that this level of work can continue, for both AIUP and NDN.

SUMMARY OF NDN COLLECTIVE IMPACT IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES >>>

As an Indigenous organization, the impact stories highlight NDN Collective's intentional dedication to align with Indigenous-led organizations through a variety of ways including organizing, activism, philanthropy, grantmaking, capacity-building and narrative change. Most importantly, NDN Collective is supporting the creation of sustainable solutions on Indigenous terms and is redefining and revolutionizing the way in which nonprofits collaborate with Indigenous communities. The impact stories highlighted in this report are a testament to the dedication NDN Collective puts forth when working with Indigenous communities across Turtle Island.

NDN Collective provides grants to Indigenous-led organizations, tribes, groups, projects, and individuals whose work, goals and intentions align with the NDN mission, values, core principles and strategies. Indigenous led is defined as 100% board of directors/decision makers, and 70% staff. While national or international organizations may be supported, NDN prioritizes community-based solutions and community-based organizations, for it is community-based solutions and organizations that are most often under-funded, under-resourced, underinvested and underestimated. NDN grantmaking is intended to honor and advance the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples. This includes flexible, unrestricted, and meaningful grant support.

Due to its Indigenized approach, NDN Collective's support is based in community-led self-determination as opposed to initiatives being centered around a nonprofit's metrics or agendas. These impact stories represent a model of Indigenous Peoples, communities, and nations exercising their inherent right to self-determination while fostering a world built on a foundation of justice and equity for all people and Mother Earth. The support NDN Collective provided contributed to communities' ability to transform their systems, shift power, and generate sustainable solutions through Defending, Developing, and Decolonizing that will last for generations to come.