

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR NATIVE COMMUNITIES

20
23

ANNUAL
POLICY &
ADVOCACY
REPORT



The Native CDFI Network's mission is to be a national voice and advocate that strengthens and promotes Native community development financial institutions (CDFIs), creating and providing access to capital and resources for Native peoples.



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Native CDFI Network is a 501(c)(3)
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NATIVE CDFIs BY THE NUMBERS

64

Number of Native CDFIs serving American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities in the United States

86%

Percentage of Native communities that lack a single financial institution within their borders

\$19.5M

Amount of funding through the Native American CDFI Assistance (NACA) base and TA programs for fiscal 2022

45%

Increase in annual funding for Native CDFIs through the NACA program for fiscal 2022

\$79M

Amount of funding awarded to tribes in 2023 through the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI)

\$47M

Amount of funding for Native CDFIs through the Treasury Department's CDFI Equitable Recovery Program (ERP)

29

Number of Native CDFIs that received CDFI ERP funding in 2023

\$27B

Total amount of funding available under the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund

A photograph of Pete Upton, NCN CEO, smiling and wearing a dark suit and a bright blue tie. He is standing in front of the U.S. Capitol building, which is visible in the background. The image is partially overlaid by a dark blue graphic on the left and a large purple text box in the center.

NCN CEO
Pete Upton

TO OUR MEMBERS, SUPPORTERS, AND COLLABORATORS,

2023 was a pivotal year for the Native CDFI Network.

As in years past, we made strides in furthering our mission to empower Native CDFIs and promote financial inclusion for Native communities. We continued our efforts to ensure that Native CDFIs had a seat at the table when policies were being shaped and decisions were made that affected Indian Country.

Our work also played a significant role in channeling historic amounts of capital into Indian Country through federal programs such as the Native American CDFI Assistance (NACA) fund, New Market Tax Credits, State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI), and the Treasury's Emergency Relief Program.

However, 2023 wasn't just about the milestones we achieved; it was about the foundation we laid to fundamentally reshape the future landscape of Indian Country.

Without question, one of the standout achievements of the year was the unprecedented collaboration of 63 Native CDFIs uniting to pursue a \$6 billion federal grant program, the Clean Communities Investment Accelerator (CCIA). The Native CDFI Network spearheaded this initiative, submitting the only Native-led, exclusively Native-serving application for consideration by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This groundbreaking collaboration of 63 certified and emerging Native CDFIs from across all 10 EPA regions has the potential to transform Indian Country. It will allow Native communities to be part of a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fight climate change and build energy independence and resilience.

We launched this effort because no one else understands our communities better than we do. If the CCIA money were given to any other non-Native coalition, there would be a significant learning curve for them, and critical funding would likely be misallocated by others who don't understand Native American communities as we do.

The CCIA application process exemplified one of the things NCN excels at: collaboration. Throughout the year, we worked closely with various partners, including prominent organizations like the Opportunity Finance Network, NeighborWorks America, three branches of the Federal Reserve Bank, and the Center for Indian Country Development. Additionally, we actively united with other Native-led advocacy groups, federal agencies, philanthropic organizations, and corporate funders. These collaborations demonstrate NCN's ability to bring diverse stakeholders together in our pursuit of financial inclusion and opportunities for Native communities.

As a result of these collaborations and our collective efforts, we also witnessed a positive shift in how federal officials engaged with us. They actively reached out to understand how they could support our mission, indicating a growing alignment between government agencies and our goals. We're encouraged by their curiosity and interest in Indian Country, reflecting an opportunity for better collaboration and understanding.

Now, we need them to stand with us as we envision a future where Native communities are not merely pursuing financial inclusion, but actively pursuing financial opportunity. We need their engagement to increase the number of Native CDFIs from the 64 that are currently certified by the Treasury to the 200-plus that are needed to serve our Native communities.

We also need their help with one of our most pressing needs: securing capital to lend in Indian Country. However, it's essential that this funding be the right kind of capital. One common misconception is that there is an abundance of business funding available, but it often comes in the form of short-term financing, typically spanning five to seven years. To truly address the housing, community, and economic development needs of our communities, Native CDFIs need long-term, low-interest capital. This is a hand-up, not a hand-out and it's good business for the lenders and investors who work with us.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we reflect on the transformative year of 2023, it's clear that we've laid a solid foundation and initiated a shift in our work. The accomplishments highlighted throughout this policy and advocacy report are not standalones; they're the building blocks for a future where financial inclusion and opportunities become a reality for Native communities. We remain committed to empowering Native CDFIs, advocating for Native communities, and ensuring they have

a "seat at the table" whenever decisions affecting Indian Country are being made.

We're excited about the future and the possibilities it holds. 2023 was a watershed year for the Native CDFI Network, and we believe this momentum will propel us toward a promising future for Native communities.

The work Native CDFIs do, such as providing funding for Native homeownership, Native small-business loans, credit repair, and financial literacy education, remains the core of what our members bring to their communities. However, we need to evolve and expand our capacity to create more change in Indian Country.

The time for this evolution is now, with historic funding opportunities available through programs like the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, the New Markets Tax Credit program, and SSBCI — all potentially transformative for Native communities.

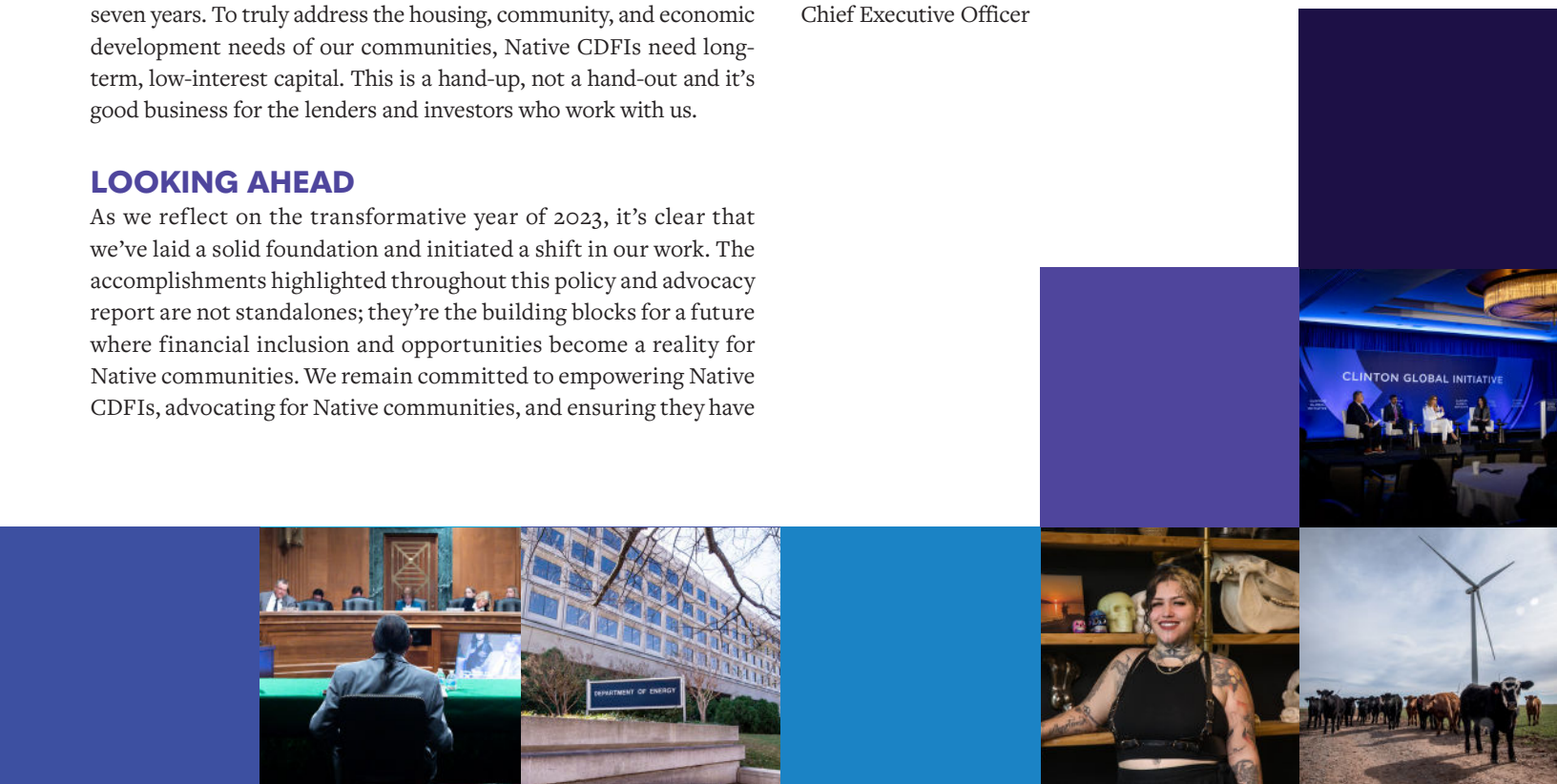
To help our members access these opportunities, NCN will provide education, training, services and expert resources, creating a comprehensive ecosystem to support their expansion into the clean energy financing space and community development.

None of this will be easy, but we are prepared for the challenges. We must seize these opportunities, step outside our comfort zones, and be bold, as the moment demands.

Weblaho (thank you to all of you),



Pete Upton
Chief Executive Officer



WHY NATIVE CDFIs MATTER



CASEY
LOZAR

"Native CDFIs are a vital source of credit and financial services in Indian Country. Recent studies have shed light on Native CDFIs' success with clients who have limited credit histories and have provided evidence that Native CDFIs' relationships with their clients and knowledge of their communities make a difference."

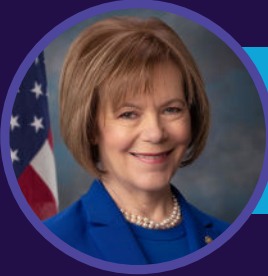
Casey Lozar, vice president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and director of the Center for Indian Country Development, during a July 2023 webinar that is part of its "Cultivating Native Economies in the 21st Century."



U.S.
SENATOR
CYNTHIA
LUMMIS

"I believe CDFIs are a wise investment to multiply our federal dollars for maximum impact."

U.S. Senator Cynthia Lummis (R-WY) during a June 2023 Senate hearing on Native housing that included Native CDFI Network CEO Pete Upton.



U.S.
SENATOR
TINA SMITH

"I have seen first-hand that Native CDFIs are bringing capital and financial services to some of the most under-served communities in the country. And these are communities that are so rich in so many ways and have so many assets, but they have been held back by systemic gaps in access to capital, in small business development, in homeownership, and in economic development, including broadband. CDFIs are there ... to bridge that gap, and you need the federal government to be a good partner in that effort."

U.S. Senator Tina Smith (D-MN) during the 2022 Native CDFI Network Policy and Capacity Building Summit.



CHIEF
MARILYNN
"LYNN"
MALERBA

"Native CDFIs play a very vital role in Indian country. They provide capital for economic development and the rebuilding of our Indigenous nations. (They) perform a role that banks typically do not — that's why Native CDFIs are so important. Because you understand your communities, you understand how to get capital to people, and how to get capital to businesses."

Chief Marilynn "Lynn" Malerba (Mohegan), the first Native American Treasurer of the United States, speaking at the December 2022 Native CDFI Network Policy and Capacity Building Summit.



CHRIS
JAMES

"Unfortunately, in a lot of our rural communities there was no financial institution, there just wasn't a pathway to get financing for small business or a bank did not see a \$25,000 small business loan as a good loan because it just wasn't part of their lending strategy. So CDFIs created that lending strategy, created the idea of a whole new sector of entrepreneurship in our community."

Chris James, president and CEO of The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development and a former CDFI Fund official at the Treasury, speaking in a February 2023 "Difference Makers" interview.

NCN POLICY & ADVOCACY UPDATE 2023

Throughout 2023, the Native CDFI Network demonstrated its commitment to advocating for structural and policy changes that would empower Native CDFIs and foster financial inclusion in Native communities. The work took on many forms, as outlined below, and engaged our members, staff, board of directors, supporters, policymakers and collaborators.

JANUARY 2023

- Engaged Native CDFIs across the country to submit formal comments on the CDFI Fund's proposed changes to the Annual Certification and Data Collection Report Form (ACR); comments were joined by 17 Native CDFI co-signatories.
- Conducted a comprehensive survey to understand likely impacts of the CDFI Fund's proposed changes to the ACR on Native CDFIs and Indian Country.
- Resumed the popular "Difference Makers" interview series with Native CDFI chief executives.
- Launched a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of Tribal Relations to increase access to Rural Development programs and funding for Native CDFIs.
- Distributed Native CDFI 2022 Policy and Advocacy Report to policymakers, state and federal officials, media outlets, donors, and other stakeholders.
- Submitted a guest op-ed by CEO Pete Upton sharing NCN research on the capital needs of Native CDFIs that was published in *Tribal Business News* and *Native News Online*.

FEBRUARY 2023

- Released results of NCN's comprehensive survey to federal agencies, policymakers, and the media to help build awareness.
- Launched *NCN Live*, a new streaming series of conversations with industry experts, policymakers, and finance experts. Initial guests included:
 - Casey Lozar of the Center for Indian Country Development;
 - Noel Andrés Poyo, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Economic Development at the Treasury Department; and
- Attended and advocated for Native CDFI priorities at the CDFI Fund's NMTC Program Native Initiative, hosted by Big Water Consulting.

MARCH 2023

- NCN CEO Pete Upton participated in a roundtable meeting on the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund hosted by JP Morgan Chase & Co.
- Initiated new efforts to ensure Native CDFIs receive their fair share of the funding available through the Inflation Reduction Act and its Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund; coordinated a survey with a coalition of BIPOC financial organizations.
- Opened registration for the 2023 NCN Institute Training Series for Native CDFI leaders and team members.
- Collaborated with the National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) and Sovereign Council of Hawaiian Homestead Associations on a letter to Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-NY) and Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) calling on Congress to increase funding for the HUD Section 4 program to \$50 million and establish a 10% set-aside for Native communities for fiscal 2024.
- Launched a new capacity-building service for NCN members to assist with reporting and compliance on key CDFI Fund reports.
- Announced a two-part training series on how Native CDFIs can bring solar energy to communities; collaborated with Inclusive Center for Resiliency and Clean Energy, the University of New Hampshire and the U.S. Department of Energy.

APRIL 2023

- NCN CEO Pete Upton joined the advisory board of the University of New Hampshire's Carsey School of Public Policy's Center for Impact Finance (CIF), which addresses the role that access to capital plays in turning the tide on widening economic inequality.
- The Treasury's CDFI Fund announced \$47.5 million in funding awards for 29 Native CDFIs through the Equitable Recovery Program (ERP). The funding was about 3% of the overall \$1.7 billion grant program supporting more than 600 certified CDFIs.
- NCN CEO Pete Upton attended the National Community Reinvestment Coalition's 2023 Just Economy Conference. He participated in a panel that explored a variety of investment

and grant opportunities and highlighted efforts to build wealth and provide greater access to capital in Indian Country.

- Encouraged member outreach to the U.S. Senators in support of Senate Bill 185, the Native American Direct Loan (NADL) Improvement Act of 2023, originally introduced by Senators Mike Rounds (R-SD) and Jon Tester (D-MT). The legislation would create a \$5 million relending program that would allow Native CDFIs to obtain loan capital at a 1% interest rate for relending to qualified Native American veteran borrowers.
- Encouraged member outreach to support Senate Bill 326, the Veterans Improvement Act of 2023, sponsored by Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT).
- Hosted a two-session NCN Live webcast focused on commercial solar finance for CDFIs, highlighting the leadership role that Native people are playing to reduce carbon emissions while building their own energy sovereignty.

MAY 2023

- Helped advance member priorities by submitting formal comment letters to federal agencies on two key policy and funding issues: the Native American CDFI Assistance (NACA) Program and the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund.
- Hosted webinars to update members on proposed changes by the CDFI Fund to the NACA Financial Assistance and Technical Assistance applications, as well as an update on Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund revisions.
- Brought awareness to several opportunities for members, including a notice of funding availability through the USDA's Native CDFI Relending Demonstration program, as well as webinars on credit-ready meat and poultry lending and a CDFI Fund Q&A on reporting in its Awards Management Information System (AMIS).
- Joined the Federal Reserve Bank, CDFI Fund, and other organizations in a collaborative national survey aimed at understanding the current challenges and opportunities for CDFIs nationwide.
- NCN CEO Pete Upton advocated for Native CDFIs and Native communities at a daylong event hosted by the U.S. Treasury on climate-focused community finance. In addition to plenary and breakout sessions, the event offered opportunities to network with Treasury, CDFI Fund, and White House officials, as well as federal officials from HUD and the Department of Energy.
- Native CDFI Network kicked off the 2023 NCN Institute to a sold-out crowd. The virtual training series for members began with a two-part workshop on Capitalization Planning, facilitated by Caleb Selby of Selby Consulting.

JUNE 2023

- NCN CEO Pete Upton joined policymakers, housing advocates, and Native CDFIs at the South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition's 10th Annual Convening, Site Visit, and Lender Symposium.
- NCN CEO Pete Upton participated in a Financial Innovation Roundtable at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, joining experts and leaders in a discussion of the connections between climate, equity, and social determinants of health.
- NCN CEO Pete Upton joined a panel of finance executives in Florida during the African-American Alliance of CDFI CEOs "Unapologetically Building Black Equity Conference" to discuss collaboration and efforts to fight for climate justice.
- NCN CEO Pete Upton testified at a Senate subcommittee hearing on the "State of Native American Housing" to highlight the challenges Native CDFIs face in helping Native Nations and their citizens remove barriers to homeownership.
- The Biden Administration announced the first 15 Tribal State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) awards, providing \$73 million to 39 Tribal governments.
- Mel Willie of NeighborWorks America joined NCN Live for a conversation about expanding the development of Native housing and homeownership throughout Indian Country.
- The 2023 NCN Institute series continued with a training session led by New England Market Research's Jack Northrup who shared his expertise with members on "Priming the Loan Pipeline."
- NCN CEO Pete Upton was a featured speaker during a policy advocacy discussion at the OWEESTA Capital Access Convening in Juneau, AK.
- Organized Native CDFIs and other stakeholder groups to join in a formal request to Congressional leaders that \$50 million be appropriated for the Native American CDFI Assistance (NACA) program in fiscal year 2024.

JULY 2023

- Co-hosted a regional meeting of CDFI executives with the Opportunity Finance Network (OFN). The event at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis highlighted Native CDFI policy, best practices, and a first look at new research on the success of character-based lending practices of Native CDFIs.
- Organized member sign-on for a letter to Congressional leaders requesting increased funding for the CDFI Fund and the Native American CDFI Assistance (NACA) program.
- Hosted an informational webinar for NCN members about

the historic Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and the opportunities it includes for Native CDFIs.

- Released a comprehensive white paper for NCN members that outlines funding opportunities available to Native CDFIs through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. The white paper provides important information about how Native CDFIs can access funding and develop loan products to finance clean energy projects in Native communities.
- Promoted member participation in a Treasury Department listening session for Native CDFIs. The listening session was a result of repeated formal requests by NCN and its members to discuss critical issues, including certification reform and proposed changes to the NACA program.
- NCN CEO Pete Upton shared the Native CDFI perspective on financing activity in Indian Country during a briefing session of the Community Development Advisory Council at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.
- Gathered input from Native CDFIs on the state of Native American housing as part of a request by the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation and Community Development. The request stemmed from NCN CEO Pete Upton's testimony during a subcommittee hearing in June.
- NCN was awarded a Department of Energy (DOE) Energizing Rural Communities Prize, which will support a market study of clean energy finance needs in Indian Country and inform the design of model energy finance loan products, including standardized documents and core underwriting standards to support clean energy projects across Indian Country.

AUGUST 2023

- Submitted a formal letter to Congressional leaders requesting increased annual funding for the CDFI Fund and the NACA program in fiscal year 2024. The letter, signed by 38 Native CDFIs and other key stakeholder organizations, was sent to U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and U.S. Representative Kay Granger (R-TX), who chair the Senate and House appropriations committees.
- Hosted a transformative three-day event in Gallup, N.M. in collaboration with Native Partnership for Housing and NeighborWorks America. This summit, attended by stakeholders, leaders, and experts from across the nation, focused on strategies to build thriving Native economies through housing, jobs, and clean energy projects.
- Organized Native CDFI partners to pursue Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund opportunities, including the Clean Communities Investment Accelerator to build clean energy financing capacity, as well as the Solar for All competition that will provide grant funding to expand solar development

in low-income and disadvantaged communities.

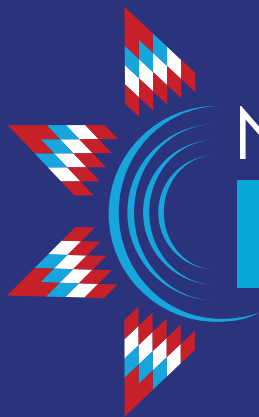
- Led Native CDFI participation in a listening session with federal officials from the Treasury and the CDFI Fund. The session — attended by Chief Lynn Malerba, Treasurer of the United States, and Noel Andrés Poyo, Treasury's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Economic Development — featured 20 Native CDFI leaders sharing their perspectives on critical issues that stand in the way of their service to Indian Country.

SEPTEMBER 2023

- Hosted a strategy session with members of an advisory group consisting of Native CDFI executives and United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Development leaders. The session is part of the two-year cooperative agreement between the USDA-RD Office of Tribal Relations and NCN to increase access to capital in rural areas of Indian Country.
- NCN CEO Pete Upton highlighted the importance of Native CDFIs during the 2023 Clinton Global Initiative in New York as part of a panel discussion titled "Finance the Underfinanced: Lessons Learned Across Geographies." Joining world leaders on the stage, Upton brought to the forefront the unique challenges and successes encountered in Native communities within the United States.
- NCN CEO Pete Upton spotlighted the pivotal role that Native CDFIs play in supporting Native homeownership, empowering Native small businesses, and fueling community development in Indian Country during the 2023 Great Lakes Tribal Economic Summit, hosted by *Tribal Business News* in New Buffalo, MI.
- Promoted NCN member participation in an interactive discussion on advancing Native homeownership with experts from Freddie Mac and Lakota Funds.
- Received an award from the SBA Program for Investment in Micro Entrepreneurs (PRIME) grant to expand policy advocacy and capacity-building programs and services to Native CDFIs.

OCTOBER 2023

- Submitted the only Native-led, exclusively Native-serving application for the EPA's Clean Communities Investment Accelerator program, representing a groundbreaking collaboration of 63 certified and emerging Native community development financial institutions (CDFIs) and CCIA-qualified community lenders across all 10 EPA regions.



Native CDFI Network

2023 Policy Priorities

The Native CDFI Network, founded in 2009, is the only national member coalition of Native CDFIs in the country. The NCN mission is to *grow and strengthen Native CDFIs through policy advocacy, capacity building and access to capital to support the economic prosperity of American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities*. NCN is governed by a 9-member national board of directors elected by NCN member CDFIs. Priorities are identified in the categories of Federal and Capacity Priorities and are subject to revision year-round.

A. Federal Priorities in Service to Native Peoples, Lands, and Communities

1. U.S. Treasury

- a. Increase NACA Program Appropriations to at least \$50M annually
- b. Ensure Equitable Tribal Access to New Markets Tax Credits: Permanently and amply fund the CDFI Fund's New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC) Program and establish a 10% set-aside for tribal governments and Native financing entities to enhance their ability to attract much-needed private investment in economic development projects on tribal lands.
- c. Adopt CDFI Fund Certification Requirements that Strengthen Not Disenfranchise NCDFIs
- d. Cooperative Agreement with CDFI Fund to Improve Census Mapping, Service County Designations, and Data Sovereignty through Data Interpretation

2. U.S. Department of Agriculture – USDA

- a. Make Permanent & National, USDA 502 NCDFI Direct Lending Pilot Successful in South Dakota
- b. Support 2023 Farm Bill that Enhances Flow of Subsidies/Capital to Indian Country Farmers/Ranchers
- c. Cooperative Agreement with NCN to Increase Farm Service Agency/RMAP Programs in Tribal Areas

3. Housing and Urban Development – HUD

- a. Increase Annual HUD Section 4 Program Funding to \$50 Million: and create a 10% set-aside for Native communities to ensure the program equitably serves low-income communities across the U.S. based on their affordable housing needs.
- b. End Redlining in Home Loan Origination, Servicing and Loan Loss Mitigations with HUD/CFPB and Congressional Report on Data in at least 20 States
- c. Streamline HUD 184 Mortgages and Pilot NCDFI Packaging Capacity
- d. Cooperative Agreement with HUD/Fannie/Freddie on Secondary Markets to Recapitalize NCDFIs

4. U.S. Department of Interior – DOI

- a. Cooperative Agreement with NCN to Support Funding Flow of Existing BIA Business Programs and Delivery of Financial Literacy in BIA Schools.
- b. Streamline Lease Processing/Recordation on Mortgages and Security Instruments
- c. Implement Rezillience Fund in Partnership with DoI and Oweesta Corporation



5. Other Agencies, Government Sponsored Agencies, and Regulators

- a. Establish a White House Office on Non-Profit Organizations
- b. Create a Federal Home Loan Bank program for economic prosperity similar to the Affordable Housing Program it successfully operates, with designated seats for NCDFIs on FHLB advisory boards
- c. Establish Office of Native Americans or Native Advisory Boards within CFPB & OCC
- d. Cooperative Agreement to Support CRA Regulations that Improve Services in Indian Country
- e. Cooperative Agreement with SBA to facilitate Navigators & SBA Program into Tribal Area

B. Capacity Priorities in Service to Native Peoples, Lands and Communities

1. National Housing Intermediaries and Philanthropic Organizations

- a. Execute Intermediary MOUs with Federally Funded Housing Intermediaries on NCDFIs
- b. Execute Philanthropic MOUs with Philanthropy to Promote Understanding of NCDFIs
- c. Execute NeighborWorks America MOU to Distribute NWA Scholarships to NCDFIs
- d. Improve Direct Funding to Native Missioned, Governed, and Led Organizations over Non-Native Intermediaries to Serve Tribal Areas

2. National Tribal/Native Intermediaries – NCAI, NAIHC, Oweesta, NDN Collective, AFN, SCHHA

- a. Engage with fellow Tribal/Native policy leaders to share policy priorities relevant to NCDFI industry
- b. Engage in partnerships on training and capacity building on NCDFI industry issues where relevant
- c. Coordinate joint policy dialogue and advocacy regionally and nationally on NCDFI industry issues
- d. Advance partnerships between sovereign tribal governments and NCDFIs serving Indian Country

2023 Policy Priorities are based on input from NCN Members, the NCN Policy Committee, and the NCN Board of Directors and are updated throughout the year.

NCN is the only national member-based coalition representing the interests of the Native CDFI Industry. NCDFIs are located in 27 of the 50 states serving Native peoples in rural and urban areas.

POLICY PROGRESS & HIGHLIGHTS

Native CDFI Network made good progress in 2023, thanks to the efforts of our staff, Board of Directors, and Policy Committee. The list below highlights a few of the key policy wins that Native CDFI Network helped earn for its members and the Native communities they serve.

NATIVE AMERICAN CDFI ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (NACA)

In March, the U.S. Department of Treasury's CDFI Fund announced a significant increase in financial assistance funding for Native CDFIs through the NACA program. The CDFI fund awarded \$2.4 million in technical assistance awards and \$17.1 million in financial assistance awards — a 45% increase over the prior fiscal year — to Native CDFI organizations.

The NACA program provides financial assistance awards to Native CDFIs in the form of loans, grants, equity investments, deposits, and credit union shares. NACA also provides technical assistance grants to certified Native CDFIs, emerging Native CDFIs, and sponsoring entities to help increase capacity.

Why it matters: The increase in total NACA funding during this cycle will help Native CDFIs build their staff capacity and make more small-business, housing, and consumer loans in Indian Country. Still, there is more than \$50 million of need for annual NACA funding, according to research and surveys that NCN and other organizations have conducted. We will continue to advocate for increased NACA funding for Native CDFIs.

HUD SECTION 4

In March, NCN collaborated with the National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) and the Sovereign Council of Hawaiian Homestead Associations to ask Congress for a boost in total funding to \$50 million in the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Section 4 program, along with a 10% Native set aside.

HUD's Section 4 program — officially known as the Capacity Building for Affordable Housing and Community Development Program — was created to enhance the capacity and ability of community development

corporations (CDCs) and community housing development organizations (CHDOs) to carry out community development and affordable housing activities that benefit low-income persons. The funding has reached Indian Country through three non-Native nonprofit intermediaries: Enterprise Community Partners, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and Habitat for Humanity. Collectively, they received \$36 million for projects in Indian Country in 2020.

Why It Matters: The requested funding increase is much needed to invest in Native American communities, especially in the development of housing. The proposed 10% set-aside — \$5 million, as proposed — could be effectively administered through direct cooperative agreements between HUD and national Native intermediary organizations, including NAIHC and Native CDFI Network. As Native nonprofit organizations, NAIHC and Native CDFI bring a depth of knowledge about the distinct challenges facing tribal communities and the proven solutions that need to be scaled to effectively address them.

CDFI EQUITABLE RECOVERY PROGRAM (ERP)

In mid-April, the CDFI Fund announced \$1.73 billion in grant awards to more than 600 certified CDFIs, including 29 Native CDFIs that were awarded \$47.5 million in ERP funding. Authorized by Congress to respond to the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CDFI ERP is designed to provide funding to certified CDFIs to expand lending, grantmaking, and investment activities in low- to moderate-income communities and to borrowers with significant unmet capital and financial services needs that have experienced disproportionate economic impacts from the pandemic. It also funds programs that catalyze growth

in the financial and organizational capacity of CDFIs for the purpose of carrying out equitable recovery activities.

Why it matters: The ERP funding provides a significant one-time boost of additional capital for participating Native CDFIs to make business and consumer loans in Indian Country. NCN played an important role in ensuring Native CDFIs were eligible for the program. When the CDFI ERP was originally released, it omitted federally recognized service counties — an omission that would have made most Native CDFIs ineligible for the funding. NCN worked with the Treasury's Office of Native Affairs to help provide background information and context to agency officials to ensure the eligibility criteria was revamped.

CDFI FUND CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Starting November 2022, the Native CDFI Network stepped up its communication and advocacy efforts after the Treasury released newly proposed changes to the CDFI certification application. Those changes, as initially written, would have had a devastating impact on Native CDFIs, prohibiting or restricting loan products and development activities.

In the ensuing months, the NCN worked to raise awareness and engage with the Treasury Department about the gravity of the likely impacts of proposed revisions on Native CDFIs. Throughout 2023, NCN has organized its members and allies, delivering comments, supplying survey data, hosting webinars, inviting federal officials to events, and leading Native CDFI participation in an August 2023 listening session hosted by the Treasury and the CDFI Fund.

Why it matters: The total number of CDFIs nationally has grown to 1,400 over the past decade, which has both strained the system

and necessitated the updating of regulations, especially those relating to certification and compliance. Native CDFIs, which represent less than 5% of the total number of CDFIs nationwide, need to play a role in that process. We serve some of the poorest communities in the country, including rural areas that need access to commercial and consumer credit, housing, community development, and small-business development. Our voices need to be heard to ensure our communities are considered when decisions are being made that affect Indian Country.

GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION FUND (GGRF)

Funded at \$27 billion, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) GGRF provides funding for states, Tribal nations, municipalities, and other eligible entities to finance, provide technical assistance to, and build capacity to deploy low- or zero-emission technologies that will reduce greenhouse gas, carbon, and other pollutant emissions.

As part its ongoing efforts to provide education, information, and other assistance to its members, NCN organized Native CDFI members and allies to pursue new opportunities, including the \$6 billion Clean Communities Investment Accelerator to build clean energy financing in Indian Country, as well as the Solar for All competition that offers \$7 billion in total grant funding to expand solar development in low-income and disadvantaged communities.

In July, NCN also hosted informational webinars and published a comprehensive white paper outlining how GGRF funding can be accessed by Native CDFIs to capitalize clean energy project loan programs; provide examples of the types of loan products Native CDFIs can develop – in conjunction with grants, tax credits, rebates, and other financial assistance – to finance clean energy projects in Native communities; and propose recommendations for next steps Native CDFIs can take to prepare for and access the EPA GGRF.

Why it matters: The GGRF is a historic opportunity to expand access to capital in Native communities throughout Indian Country. It provides opportunities that are “tailor made” for Native CDFIs, as funding can be used for two types of “investment” – direct and indirect. Direct investments consist of financial support made directly to a green-

house gas reduction technology project. An indirect investment is financial or technical assistance made to entities that will invest in such projects.

STATE SMALL BUSINESS CREDIT INITIATIVE (SSBCI)

The SSBCI program was reauthorized as part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021. Originally established in 2010, the revamped SSBCI provides a combined \$10 billion to state, city, and tribal governments that can be used to expand access to capital, build entrepreneurial ecosystems, and create high-quality jobs. Under ARPA, for the first time ever, the SSBCI set aside \$500 million in support for tribal governments to spur economic growth in Indian Country.

In July, the Biden-Harris Administration announced the first 15 SSBCI awards for tribal governments, providing \$73 million to 39 tribal governments. The funds will be used to support tribal enterprises and small business owners.

Why it matters: The first round of funding announcements brings a considerable amount of capital to tribal lands. A sizable portion of that funding will flow directly to Native CDFIs to support small businesses throughout Indian Country. NCN has advocated for tribes and Native CDFIs over the past two years on the SSBCI, working closely with senior Treasury officials to bring Native CDFIs and Tribal officials together for a series of roundtables, issuing a white paper on the topic, and hosting a series of webinars on how Indian Country could implement the SSBCI program.

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

In January, NCN formally announced a two-year cooperative agreement with USDA-RD to help increase awareness and access to the agency's Rural Development (RD) programs for Native Americans. NCN has begun working in earnest with USDA-RD and the USDA Office of Tribal Relations to build a digital toolkit that will support economic development in Indian Country. As we work on that initiative, the relationship has given us new insights and information about programs that can benefit our members, such as a recent Notice of Funding Availability through USDA's Native CDFI Relending Demonstra-

tion program.

In September, NCN hosted a strategy session with members of an advisory group consisting of our members and USDA-RD team. The session provided insight and direction for the cooperative effort to increase access to capital for Native communities through Native CDFIs.

Why this matters: The USDA-RD has more than 50 programs and billions of dollars of funding for a variety of essential needs in rural America – from housing and healthcare, to energy, broadband, and environmental programs. But it has been underutilized in Indian Country and by Native CDFIs. By working collaboratively with the NCN, the USDA will be able to more effectively communicate with Native CDFIs, including development of a digital tool – the NCN e-toolkit – that's tailored to the unique needs and different aspects of working with Native CDFIs and native nations.

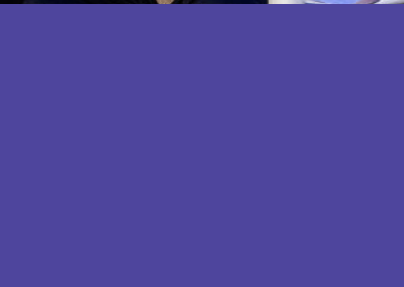
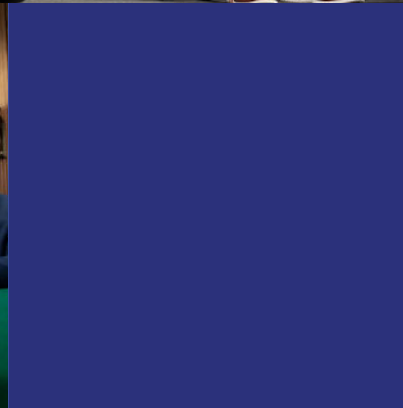
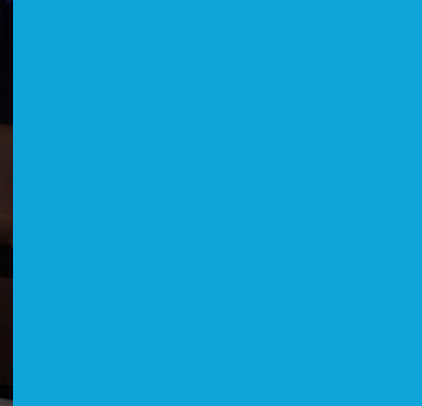
NEW MARKETS TAX CREDIT (NMTC)

The (NMTC) program incentivizes community development and economic growth through the use of tax credits that attract private investment to distressed communities. While the NMTC program has allocated nearly \$20 billion nationally in recent years, Native-led applicants received a tiny fraction – less than 0.004% – of the allocations.

NCN has taken a multi-faceted approach to advocating for Native-led organizations, providing resources, requesting set-asides, and working to increase awareness among Congressional members and the Treasury about the fact that Indian Country has been largely ignored by the program.

In September, two Native American organizations – Native American Bank and Chickasaw Nation Community Development Endeavor LLC – were each named as recipients of \$50 million allocations under the NMTC program.

Why it matters: Large economic development projects often require significant amounts of capital to help fund infrastructure, as well as complementary community projects such as housing, schools, and healthcare facilities. Tax credits are an important tool for luring investors and capital to community large development projects that are needed in Indian Country.



SHAPING POLICY TOGETHER

NATIVE CDFIS SECURE THEIR SEAT AT THE TABLE

For years, Native CDFIs found themselves sidelined, with non-Native voices often taking the lead on matters of policy and funding.

In recent years, there has been a shift in that dynamic, thanks to the efforts of the Native CDFI Network and its allies. Leaders within the Native CDFI movement have worked diligently to secure a place at the decision-making tables, establishing direct connections with key players in Congress, federal agencies, philanthropic organizations, and corporate funders. NCN staff

and members have earned board seats at influential institutions like the Federal Reserve, the Center for Indian Country Development, various funding intermediaries, national nonprofit boards, and local organizations.

NCN CEO Pete Upton underscores the significance of Native representation, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that Native voices are heard and Indian Country's unique needs are addressed. He highlights the growing interest and engagement from non-Native leaders at these tables,

offering an opportunity for understanding and meaningful collaboration.

"I've seen a positive shift in how federal officials are engaging with us, reaching out to understand how they can support our Native CDFIs," Upton said. "They want to know what's needed to facilitate our progress, open doors, and provide assistance."

Still, there is work to be done, especially when it comes to connecting government officials directly with Native CDFI executives working in Native communities.

"We need leaders from the top federal agencies that fund Indian Country, such as Treasury, HUD, USDA, and the Department of Energy, to actively participate and join Native CDFI executives at our regional and national meetings. That way, they can gain firsthand insights into the challenges we face while serving Indian Country."

GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION FUND

A HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIAN COUNTRY

Native communities have faced historical underinvestment despite being on the frontlines of climate change. Generations of financial exclusion, wealth-stripping policies, and government subjugation have contributed to financial fragility, leaving Native communities vulnerable to economic fluctuations and natural and man-made disasters.

Funded at \$27 billion, the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) provides funding for states, Tribal nations, municipalities, and other eligible entities to finance, provide technical assistance to, and build capacity to deploy low- or zero-emission technologies that will reduce greenhouse gas, carbon, and other pollutant emissions.

As part of its ongoing efforts to provide education, information, and other assistance to its members, Native CDFI Network (NCN) organized Native CDFI members and allies to pursue new opportunities, including the \$6 billion Clean Communities Investment Accelerator to build clean energy financing in Indian Country, as well as the Solar for All competition that offers \$7 billion in total grant funding to expand solar development in low-income and disadvantaged communities.

NCN undertook a rigorous, multi-faceted field engagement and recruitment process that resulted in a 63-member CCIA Community Lender Network, all of whom have formally agreed to participate in the program. With that commitment, NCN led an effort to submit the only Native-led, exclusively Native-serving CCIA application for consideration by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

In July, NCN hosted informational webinars and published a comprehensive white paper outlining how GGRF funding can be accessed by Native CDFIs to capitalize clean energy project loan programs; provide examples of the types of loan products Native CDFIs can develop – in conjunction with grants and other financial assistance – to finance clean energy projects in Native communities; and propose recommendations for the next steps Native CDFIs can take to prepare for and access the GGRF.

In the process of developing its application, NCN conducted one-on-one meetings with each community lender who expressed interest in joining the CCIA Community Lender Network and/or learning more about the opportunity. During these meetings, NCN shared the vision for its CCIA program and how it will be a game-changer for the ability of Native communities to develop clean energy solutions that meet their distinct needs and goals for climate resilience; answered questions from interested organizations; gained deep insights into each organization's existing readiness to deploy CCIA financing, the market demand for clean energy financing in the Native communities they serve, and the types and size of the specific projects they are already positioned to finance or envision financing during the six-year CCIA deployment period; and ultimately secured formal approval from each organization's principal to participate in NCN's CCIA program.

To gain a deeper understanding of the clean energy needs of Native communities and capacity-building needs of Native Community Lenders, NCN conducted a comprehensive survey. This data informed NCN's design and refinement of its overall vision for CCIA, including how the CCIA program will be structured, and how the Network-wide training and technical assistance services need to be designed to support the capacity-building priorities and specific projects of the Community Lender Network writ large.

NCN also proactively engaged with tribal governments serving low-income and disadvantaged populations to initiate discussions around clean energy priorities in Native communities, including planned projects and initiatives that could potentially qualify for project financing under the CCIA program.

If awarded, NCN's Community Lender Network will deploy clean energy project financing across Native communities in as many as 35 states within the EPA's 10 geographic regions. It is the objective of NCN and its Community Lender Network to transform the lending market to build wealth and financial resilience in Native



Photos: Department of Energy

communities through access to affordable lending products and services.

"Uniting 63 Native CDFI lenders to come together and put forth the Clean Communities Investment Accelerator (CCIA) application had to be one of our greatest accomplishments this year," NCN CEO Pete Upton said. "It creates the financial inclusion for Native communities to be part of a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fight climate change and build energy independence and resilience."

Q&A: Pilar Thomas

Partner, Quarles & Brady LLP

Co-author, *Native CDFI Network White Paper on the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund*

The \$27 billion Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund has the potential to be a transformative program for Native American tribes by helping them reduce greenhouse gas emissions, invest in clean energy, create new jobs, and build a more sustainable future for their communities.

That doesn't mean it will be easy. Potential challenges include state regulatory policies, negotiations with utilities and, more than anything, tribal risk-tolerance when it comes to investing in clean energy projects.

"There will be two or three major roadblocks, but all of which are within our control," according to attorney Pilar Thomas, a partner at Quarles & Brady LLP and a leading expert in tribal energy law and policy. A member of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe in southern Arizona, Thomas has over 20 years of experience practicing Indian law and representing tribes in negotiations with federal agencies, state governments, and utilities to develop and finance renewable energy projects on tribal lands.

She previously served as deputy solicitor for Indian Affairs in the U.S. Department of the Interior and the deputy director of the Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs at the U.S. Department of Energy, where she developed and implemented federal policies and programs to support tribal energy development.

Thomas discusses the potential for clean energy projects in tribal communities, the importance of Native CDFIs in making these projects successful, and Native CDFI Network's plans to help members develop their financial engineering capacity.

So there are really three buckets under the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund: the National Clean Investment Fund, Solar for All, and the Community Clean Investment Accelerator, or CCIA as it's called. The first two are really aimed at larger projects, but the CCIA is kind of a perfect fit for Native CDFIs, isn't it?

Absolutely. CCIA is intended to get money into the hands of community lenders who, in turn, would make loans or investments in a variety of clean energy and zero-carbon emission technologies. The CCIA funding

would capitalize Native CDFIs so they can use the money to lend to a tribe or tribal enterprise that wants to deploy community solar projects, electrify their fleet vehicles, or launch energy efficiency projects that reduce the use of fossil fuels. And in addition, it includes things like supporting energy efficiency efforts for government buildings, community centers, and hospitals to save money for tribal governments.

This is the program that Native CDFI Network applied for on behalf of 63 Native CDFIs. It's got \$6 billion in funding and could bring several hundred million dollars to Indian Country for clean energy. Why is the Native CDFI Network an ideal organizer for this effort?

They know Native CDFIs, and Native CDFIs know Indian Country. Congress intended that much of the EPA Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund go into low-income, disadvantaged, and tribal communities. But it would be very hard for non-native organizations, even if they are great friends, colleagues or collaborators with Native CDFI Network, to be able to service or support Indian communities. They are not as familiar with Indian Country, and Indian Country, for the most part, doesn't know them. To support these kinds of projects in Indian Country requires two-way trust. And two-way acknowledgement.

Why does the program make sense for Native CDFIs?

They know their communities and they know what's needed. Many Native CDFIs have begun investing in areas like infrastructure, economic development, water infrastructure, or broadband. So, a smaller clean energy project, like a two-megawatt solar project that costs \$5 million, could be a relatively easy loan for a Native CDFI to make. Especially if they're making it to a tribe or tribal enterprise, that is going to be able to repay the loan and save money on their electric bills. The biggest benefit for Native CDFIs is that tribal governments and enterprises also have access to all kinds of grants to further reduce the cost of clean energy projects. And most banks aren't going to make that loan—at least not without a



lot of paperwork. But a Native CDFI should be able to make that loan just about every day of the week.

Traditionally, Native CDFIs have focused on small-business loans, consumer loans, and mortgages, but these programs involve billions of dollars in capital. How will this work at a small scale?

Let me give you an example: A lot of tribal members own their own homes, and they work with Native CDFIs that are already used to making mortgages. But now you parlay that lending experience into making a rooftop solar loan for that tribal member. That loan is paid off through the homeowners tax credit of 30% and energy savings because you're going to reduce your energy bill and that can go towards paying off the solar loan. If a low-income tribal member is the homeowner, then instead of them getting the tax credit — because they probably don't pay income taxes — the Native CDFI can potentially get a grant from the Solar for All program.

That connection with grants would be kind of a value-added that comes with working with CDFIs.

One of the key points we've emphasized with Native CDFIs is to marry up their capital with projects that are eligible for grants, tax credits, or other incentives available to reduce the cost of the project and consequently, the amount of the loan. This approach frees up capital for the Native CDFI to recycle those funds in the community, and reduce the amount of loan that has to

be repaid by the tribe, tribal member, or other borrower.

There may also be tax credits that allow tribes to receive rebates for eligible projects, which can be a valuable source of project financing. So Native CDFIs are going to be uniquely positioned through the Native CDFI Network CCIA program to work with tribes, assess their financial needs for a clean energy project, and then source the funds.

Sounds like there are a lot of new wrinkles in this funding.

There are, but one of NCN's goals is to help Native CDFIs enhance their financial capabilities, which I like to refer to as "financial engineering capacity." It's important for these CDFIs to learn how to effectively assemble funds for clean energy projects because it's unlikely that the tribe or tribal member will receive enough grant or loan money to cover the costs of all their desired projects. They need to be adept at piecing together the financial puzzle.

It seems like financing energy projects has never really caught on with a lot of tribes. Why is that?

I mean, there is no reason on Earth why more tribes aren't pursuing more projects. Sometimes tribes mention financial concerns or other issues, but the truth is, lack of funding has never been the primary problem. In fact, there has always been plenty of funding available.

One real issue is that tribes don't always want to, or can't, borrow money to build projects. So, they overly rely on grant funding, which is never enough to cover the cost of these projects. But if you want to achieve meaningful progress, sometimes you need to make those financial investments.

What are the other roadblocks?

There are going to be headwinds at the utility and state regulatory levels. But for the most part, I think we've got other options that can be pursued, like energy efficiency, electrification, and other ways to improve the lives of tribal members and reduce energy costs. To make that happen, the tribal council has to say, "We want to do this, we need to do this." And tribal leadership and staff can engage with tribal members to determine what they need or buy-in to what the tribe wants to accomplish.

NCN PROGRAMMING

Through its webinar series, training institutes, events, outreach, and collaborative efforts, Native CDFI Network has worked with dozens of difference makers already in 2023, including these organizations and individuals:

U.S. Department of Agriculture | Office of Tribal Relations

U.S. Department of Agriculture | Rural Development

U.S. Department of the Treasury | CDFI Fund

U.S. Department of the Treasury | Office of the Treasurer

U.S. Department of the Treasury | Office of Tribal and Native Affairs

U.S. Department of Energy | Solar Energies Technology Office

JP Morgan Chase & Co.

National American Indian Housing Council

Sovereign Council of Hawaiian Homestead Associations

Inclusiv

Prosperity Now

Rico Frias, NAFOA

Pilar Thomas Quarles & Brady LLP

Casey Lozar, Center for Indian Country Development

Tina Poole Johnson, University New Hampshire Carsey School

Noel Andrés Poyo, U.S. Treasury Office of Community Economic Development

Jeff Gilbreath, Hawai'i Community Lending

Chris James, National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development

Mel Willie, NeighborWorks America

Caleb Selby, Selby Consulting

Lisa Wagner, Bluestem Consulting

Jack Northrup, New England Market Research

Christian Weaver, Tribal Solar Accelerator Fund

Tanksi Clairmont, Tribal Solar Accelerator Fund

Clayton Mitchell, University of New Hampshire

Rollin Wood, Native Partnership for Housing

Garry Cunningham, Prosperity Now

Rohit Chopra, Consumer Protection Financial Bureau

Tim Rios, Wells-Fargo

David Black, Office of the Comptroller

Wava White, Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development

Denise Zuni, Attorney and Native housing expert

Catherine Houlihan, Freddie Mac

Ben Navarro, Fannie Mae

Onna LeBeau, Department of the Interior

Xochitl Torres Small, USDA

Jessie Huff, USDA Rural Development

Robin Puanani Danner, Homestead Community Development Corp.

Patricia Dominguez, USDA Rural Development

Andy Gordon, Clearinghouse CDFI

Suzanne Anarde-Devenport, Rural Community Assistance Corp.

Nancy Bainbridge, Chickasaw Community Bank

Jim Van Winkle, Chickasaw Community Bank

Robert J. Miller, Professor of Law at Arizona State University

Kris Beecher, Dickinson Wright Law Firm

Phil Gover, Center for Indian Country Development

Sheila D. Herrera, Tiwa Lending Service

Brett Isaac, Navajo Power

Adrian John, Native Partnership for Housing

Jim VanWinkle, Chickasaw Community Bank

Deborah Webster, Concept Consulting Group, LLC

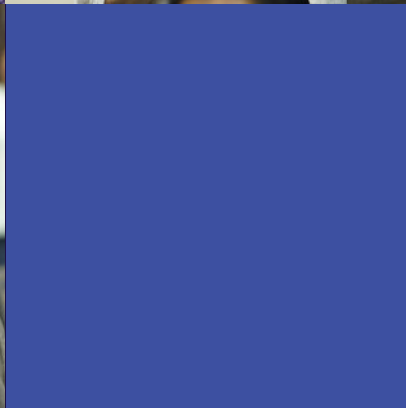
David Westfall, Freddie Mac

Wava White, Navajo Nation

Denise Zuni, Sh'eh Wheef Law Offices

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)

NCN IN 2023



A YEAR OF EMPOWERING NATIVE CDFIS

In 2023, the Native CDFI Network (NCN) continued to be a pillar of support for its members, including certified and emerging Native CDFIs, individual members, and other supporters from across the U.S. and throughout Indian Country.

This year, NCN not only reaffirmed its commitment to the mission of Native CDFIs, but also expanded its reach, providing a diverse range of programs and services to meet the evolving needs of its members.



MEMBERSHIP: ***BUILDING A STRONG COLLECTIVE VOICE***

At the heart of NCN's mission is a robust membership program. Membership in NCN means being part of a collective voice advocating for expanded access to capital and promoting the pivotal role of Native CDFIs as providers of essential financial products and services within Native communities. The organization recognizes the power of unity in advocating for legislative and policy matters at the federal level, including the White House, Congress, and key agencies (e.g., Treasury, HUD, USDA, DOE).

NCN members benefit from working and networking with a group of like-minded pro-

fessionals who share their commitment to Native communities. Access to members-only events and webinars allows members to stay up-to-date with the latest industry insights. Additionally, exclusive white papers, analysis, and policy updates help members stay equipped to address the unique challenges they face in their communities.

NCN's newsletters provide valuable information, including breaking news, policy alerts, and industry reports, ensuring that members remain well-informed and connected. The highlight of the membership benefits is the opportunity to participate in NCN's annual policy summit and regional events. These events foster connections, knowledge sharing, and collaboration among members, contributing to the strength of the Native CDFI network.

ONLINE TRAINING: ***STRENGTHENING CAPACITY AND EXPERTISE***

NCN recognizes the importance of strengthening the capacity of Native CDFIs and their teams. In response, NCN continued to deliver a comprehensive range of online training programs, skill-building workshops, and informational webinars on a wide range of topics relevant to Native CDFIs.

Online training sessions in 2023 included discussions on EPA Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund opportunities, capitalization planning, and building sustainable communities. These sessions equipped Native



CDFI professionals with the knowledge and skills to address challenges and capitalize on opportunities effectively.

NCN also leveraged its online platforms to bring Native CDFI leaders together for meaningful conversations with key Treasury officials throughout 2023. This included a webinar with Treasury's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Economic Development, Noel Andrés Poyo, in April, and a listening session with Treasury and CDFI Fund officials, including U.S. Treasurer Marilynn "Lynn" Malerba (Mohegan) in August. These sessions allowed Native CDFI leaders from across the country to voice their priorities and concerns, effectively shaping the dialogue around critical issues.

EVENTS: FOSTERING COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

In 2023, NCN is hosting two significant events that served as platforms for collaboration, innovation, and knowledge sharing.

The first was a three-day regional summit held in Gallup, New Mexico, in partnership with the Native Partnership for Housing and NeighborWorks America. Attended by stakeholders, leaders, and experts from across the nation, the summit focused on the economic empowerment of Native communities through financial inclusion, housing initiatives, and community development. A key highlight was the tour of Karigan Estates, a housing project on the Navajo Reservation, which showcased the positive impact of thoughtful housing solutions on community well-being. The summit in Gallup exemplified the potential for economic empowerment and community development within Native communities.

The second event is the December 2023 Policy and Capacity Building Summit in Washington, D.C. This three-day event brings together Native CDFI practitioners, funders, policymakers, and industry partners to explore ideas and resources aimed at advancing Native CDFI efforts in various areas, including housing development, home ownership, and clean energy solutions. The summit provides a platform for participants to bridge ideas and resources that will contribute to the economic resilience and sustainability of Native communities.

Now in its fourth year, the annual member event in D.C. has evolved into a summit that also draws leaders from a diverse range of sectors, including government, foundations, the financial sector, and policymakers.

"The annual Policy and Capacity Building Summit is focused on providing great information and value to our members, but in some ways it's also grown into a government and philanthropic gathering," Native CDFI Network CEO Pete Upton said. "We now bring together investors and capital, aiming to connect the capital with the CDFIs. And many of the federal agencies and Congressional representatives come to the Summit to learn how they can assist us and to be in the same room with our members from across Indian Country."



UPLIFTING INDIAN COUNTRY

Cideahzia Barnes, owner
of The Sanctuary Salon
(Photo: Pacific North-
west Tribal Lending)

'DIFFERENCE MAKERS' SERIES SHOWCASES THE TRANSFORMATIONAL ROLE OF NATIVE CDFIS

In March 2023, NCN put the wraps on its widely read “Difference Makers for Indian Country” interview series. The interview series featured informative one-on-one conversations with chief executives of 39 different certified and emerging Native community development financial institutions (CDFIs) across the country.

NCN initiated the weekly series in April 2022 to cast a much-needed spotlight on the significant positive contributions of Native CDFIs for Native communities and the leaders who help make Native CDFIs the transformational success of these organizations.

Based on extensive feedback from NCN's partners and network contacts across the CDFI industry, the interview series helped to significantly raise the visibility of the distinct and often underappreciated impacts of Native CDFIs. These institutions play a vital role in bridging capital access and technical assistance gaps faced by Native homebuyers, small business owners, and consumers across the nation. Many of the Native CDFIs chronicled in “Difference Makers” subsequently featured the interviews with their chief executives on their organization websites, expanding the readership of the series.

Each “Difference Makers” interview delved into important subjects such as the fundamental role and continued

growth of Native CDFIs over the past three decades. It also highlighted the knowledge gap that exists among policymakers, philanthropy, banking institutions, and the general public regarding the activities and significance of Native CDFIs.

The series explored what Native CDFIs require to realize their full potential and maximize their impact. “Difference Makers” also asked interviewees to share their CDFIs’ most compelling and uplifting client success stories, such as Pacific Northwest Tribal Lending client Cideahzia Barnes, owner of The Sanctuary Salon.

According to Interim Executive Director Nancy Jordan, with Pacific Northwest Tribal Lending’s financial and technical assistance, Barnes took “her passions and skills as an esthetician from being a beautician in someone else’s shop to having three spaces in the Lummi Te’Ti’Sen Center’s Native small business incubator. She has grown, small step by small step, to where she is able to provide for her family – on her own terms. She has another esthetician working for her in her salon.”

The interview series also provided NCN, whose sole mission is to strengthen and promote Native CDFIs, with deeper insights into the types of lending different Native CDFIs currently provide, as well as the new types of lending they

wish to pursue if equipped with the appropriate resources.

For many Native CDFIs, these new types included financing clean energy projects, knowledge that proved critical to NCN as it embarked on developing the nation’s lone Native-led and exclusively Native-serving application to EPA’s Clean Communities Investment Accelerator (CCIA) program. NCN’s “Difference Makers” learnings enabled it to target particular Native CDFIs with prior or current clean energy financing experience and those determined to enter this finance arena to recruit them to join NCN’s CCIA application as participating Community Lenders. A total of 63 Native CDFIs chose to join NCN’s application, which if awarded will provide several hundred million dollars to NCN’s CCIA Community Lenders to finance clean energy projects in Native communities.

To learn more about the “Difference Makers” interview series, please go to: <https://nativecdfi.net/difference-makers-interview-series/>.



Board of Directors



Pete Upton (Ponca)
Chairperson

Pete is the CEO of Native CDFI Network and executive director of Native360 Loan Fund, which serves Native communities in three states. He's been involved with NCN since it was a grassroots movement and is known nationally as a powerful advocate for equal access to capital.



Cindy Mittlestadt
Secretary

Cindy serves as the general manager of Native Edge Finance — an emerging Native CDFI and an affiliated entity of National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development (NCAIED). She has a long history of working with Native CDFIs, nonprofit entities and the corporate banking community on social and economic development in Indian Country.



Cindy Logsdon
Treasurer

Cindy is CEO of Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation, one of Indian Country's largest Native CDFIs. Over two decades, Cindy has created innovative and much-needed financial products and made nearly \$50 million in loans to Native entrepreneurs.



Russ Seagle
Board Member

Russ is the executive director of The Sequoyah Fund, a North Carolina based Native CDFI that specializes in working with Native businesses and entrepreneurs. He has an extensive background as an entrepreneur, business owner and a small-business advisor.



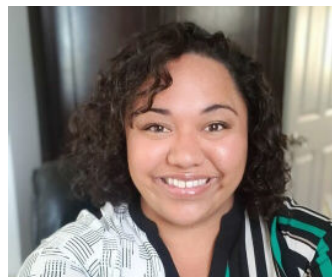
Dave Tovey (Umatilla)
Board Member

Dave is executive director of Nixyáawii Community Financial Services, a developing Native CDFI. Dave has extensive experience as both a tribal executive and corporate executive, as well as expertise in economic development.



Rjay Brunkow (Chippewa)
Board Member

Rjay is CEO of Indian Land Capital Company, a Native CDFI providing alternative loan options to Native nations for tribal land acquisition and economic development projects. An attorney, Rjay also worked as an investment banker at Wells Fargo with a focus on infrastructure in Indian Country.



Rolina Faagai (Native Hawaiian)
Board Member

Rolina is the Deputy Director of Economic Development at the Homestead Community Development Corporation. She has considerable experience in policy research, strategic planning, operational excellence and finance, working with firms AIG and Pacific Financial Partners.



Rollin Wood (Cherokee)
Board Member

Rollin is the executive director of the Native Partnership for Housing, a Native CDFI that serves the housing and home ownership needs of Native and non-Native clients in rural and urban areas of the Four Corners region. He has a diverse background across a variety of industries including broadcasting, mining, natural resources and work with startups.

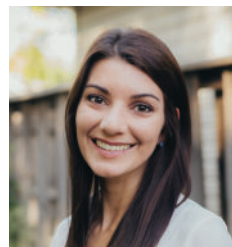
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Pilar Thomas
Quarles & Brady LLP
Senior Advisor/ Legal Counsel/
Energy Advisor

THANK YOU

Thank you to the following organizations for making a difference in Indian Country through their generous support of Native Community Development Financial Institutions and Native CDFI Network.

Administration for Native Americans
BMO Harris Bank
Catholic Campaign for Human Development
Climate United
Department of Energy
Energy Foundation
Farmer Mac
Flagstar Bank
Native American Agriculture Fund
NDN Fund
Northwest Area Foundation
NeighborWorks America
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
U.S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Development
U.S. Department of the Treasury – CDFI Fund
U.S. Small Business Administration
U.S. Bank
Wells Fargo




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