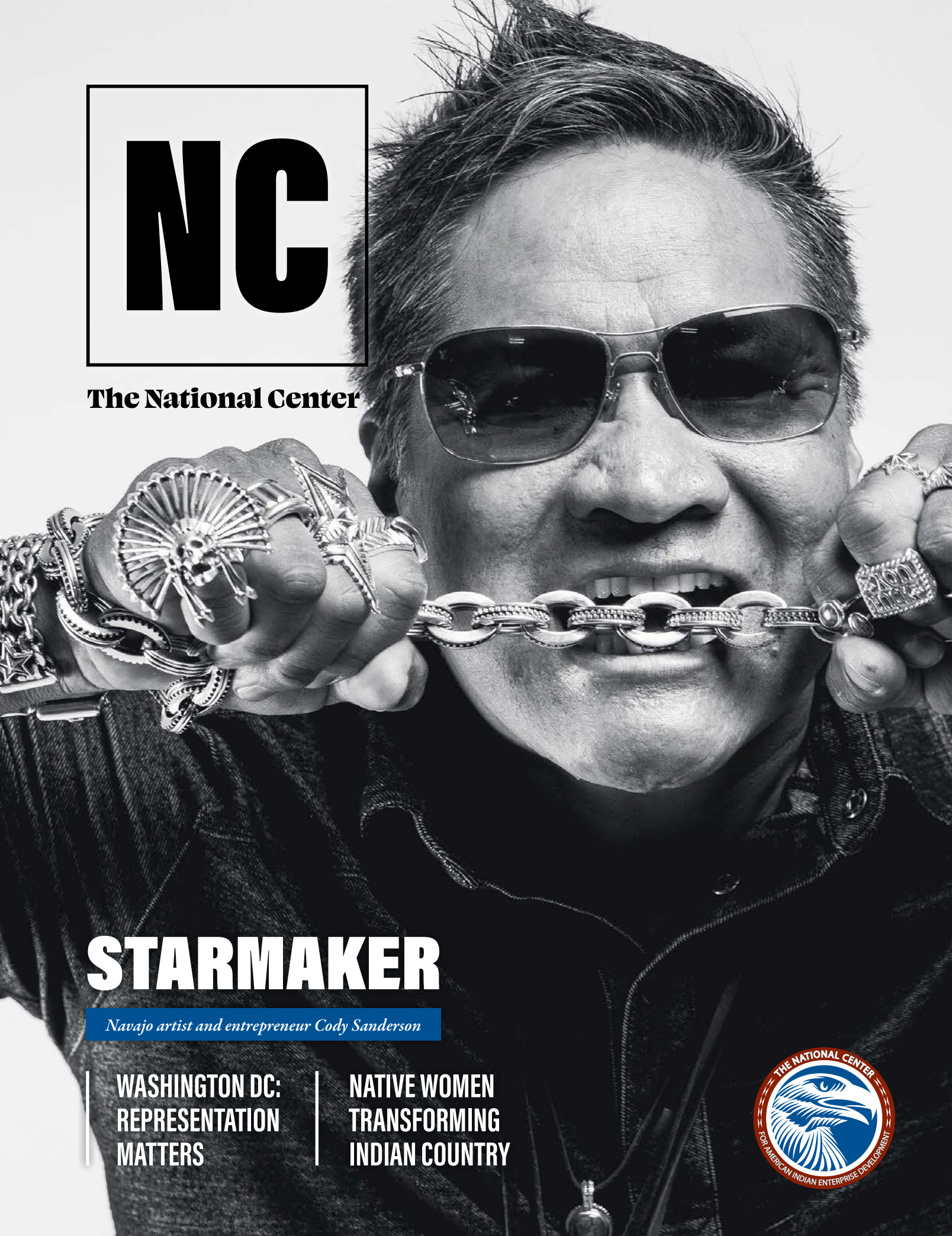


NC

The National Center

STARMAKER

Navajo artist and entrepreneur Cody Sanderson

WASHINGTON DC: REPRESENTATION MATTERS

NATIVE WOMEN TRANSFORMING INDIAN COUNTRY

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR AMERICAN INDIAN ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

NATIVE AMERICAN BANK

Banking Indian Country is not a side project, it's our identity.

WHERE YOUR $$$ SLEEPS AT NIGHT MATTERS

- *Open a checking account today and Bank Native!*
- *Commercial and Personal Checking Products Available!*

INDIAN COUNTRY'S LENDING EXPERTS

- *Contact our Lending team for your financing needs!*
- *Commercial Financing Available Nation-wide for Tribes, Tribal Enterprises, and Native-owned Businesses!*

SCAN ME

@NativeAmericanBank

@nativeamericanbank

@NABNA2001

Native American Bank, N.A.

201 N. Broadway, Denver, CO 80203

Toll Free: 800.368.8894

Email: info@nabna.com

Member FDCI


BRISTOL WILD
SEAFOOD
FED FROM
THE ORIGIN
Sustainably caught seafood from
Alaska's richest waters
As an Alaska Native-owned company, we fish in the pristine, piercingly cold water that flows through Alaska's Bering Sea and Bristol Bay, home to some of the world's most valuable wild fisheries. We guarantee the quality and responsible harvesting of our fish by using longline hooks, and only hauling in wild-caught fish. We are proud to say that our fish come from responsibly managed, certified, sustainable fisheries.
GET HOOKED
on your new seafood supplier
bristolwildseafood.com
CERTIFIED AUTHENTIC
MADE/PRODUCED BY AMERICAN INDIANS®
CERTIFIED
NMSDC
MBE
2021

ARIZONA

LEVEL UP *your* NATION-BUILDING SKILLS

Graduate & Professional Development Programs:

–Master of Professional Studies–
in Indigenous Governance

–Graduate Certificate–
in Indigenous Governance

–Continuing Education Certificate–

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
NATIVE NATIONS INSTITUTE
Founded by the Udall Foundation & the University of Arizona

JAMES E. ROGERS COLLEGE OF LAW
Indigenous Peoples Law & Policy

THE
INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE PROGRAM
AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
presents

3-DAY ONLINE & IN-PERSON *ACCELERATED* COURSES
on

Indigenous Governance, Law & Policy

Entrepreneurship

Native Nation Building

Economic Development

LEARN MORE:

igp.arizona.edu

FROM CULTURE TO CASUAL, ALL CHEROKEE

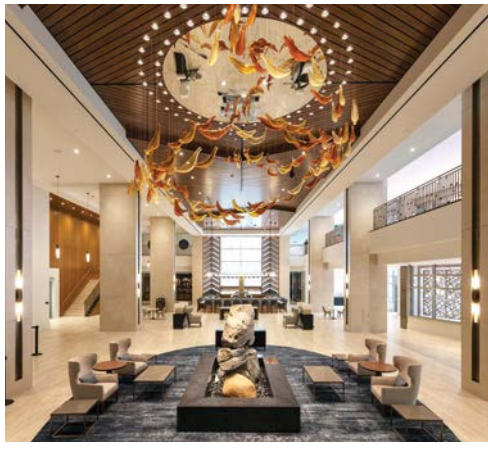












CHEROKEE
north carolina

CAESARS
ENTERTAINMENT

Harrah's
CHEROKEE
CASINO RESORT

VisitCherokeeNC.com | CaesarsMeansBusiness.com

FILMED ON LOCATION IN
KODIAK ISLAND, ALASKA

Jeff Barehand
President/CEO
Gila River/Navajo

We're ready to go.

Video Production for All Indian Country

SKY BEAR MEDIA

Summer 2022 • Volume 2 no. 1

Also: Don't miss stories about the rise of Native Books and Publishing (page 29); Red Planet Books and Comics (page 52); Michelle Kauhane of the Hawai'i Community Foundation (page 54); a chat with one of the winners of the Native Youth Business Plan Competition (page 56); and an interview with National Center Advocate of the Year Jodi Archambault (page 58).

On the Cover:

Navajo artist and entrepreneur Cody Sanderson
Photo: Brandon Sanderson

NC

The National Center

A publication of The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development

Publisher
Chris James

Associate Publisher/Sales Director
Alexandra Rumbaugh

Senior Editor
Emerald Skye Byrd

Editorial, Production and Circulation Management provided under contract by Indian Country Media, LLC.

Business Offices
953 E. Juanita Ave., Mesa, AZ 85204;
(480) 545-1298

NC Magazine is published annually by The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development at 935 E. Juanita, Mesa, AZ 85204. Telephone (480) 545-1298. Email: info@ncaied.org.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to Indian Country Media, LLC, at P.O. Box 1629, Grand Rapids, MI 49501.

To Our New National Center Readers

A Message from Chris James, President and CEO of The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development

Osiyo (hello) and thank you for supporting The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development and *NC Magazine*! We are proud to deliver the second edition of *NC Magazine,* which is focused on the people and businesses making positive impacts across Indian Country. Through original reporting and commentary, *NC Magazine* brings you the latest news on the topics most important to you.

This edition showcases the diversity of Indian Country's economy. That's why we feature Native artist Cody Sanderson on the cover. A jeweler who uses traditional Navajo techniques, Cody's artistry has led to numerous awards and fellowships at the Smithsonian and the Southwestern Association for Indian Arts. I can't wait for you to learn more about Cody Sanderson's life, art, and career.

Of course, Indian Country's economy is dynamic and far-reaching. FX on Hulu's *Reservation Dogs*—led by an Indigenous cast and crew—swept in a new era of Native representation in media. Tribes, native entrepreneurs, and artists are staking their rightful claim in entertainment. Beyond the world of show business, you'll find stories on Native literature and publishing, female leadership in Indian Country, Native cuisine and restaurants, and emerging entrepreneurs in the following pages.

There is a good chance you are reading this while attending the 2022 Reservation Economic Summit. I could not be more excited to welcome you to The National Center's premier networking and economic development conference. This summit is bigger and better than ever before, with a new venue at Caesars Palace, new events hosted by various businesses and organizations, an exciting speaker lineup, and a focus on economic development post-pandemic. If you're at RES 2022, don't hesitate to say 'Osiyo'!

Of course, there's more to The National Center than our annual RES conference. We offer incredible programming to Native entrepreneurs and businesses. Our Native Edge Institutes continue to host free, one-day training sessions in-person and virtually, accessible to anyone nationwide. Our American Indian Procurement Technical Assistance Centers have helped clients win more than $5 billion in contracts. In the halls of Congress, The National Center has helped usher in victories for Indian Country's economy and businesses.

We're also tackling new initiatives to help businesses reach new, international markets. In 2021, we established The National Center-operated Arizona Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) Export Center, and we're already helping minority-owned businesses begin and grow their export operations.

You can learn more about our work right here in *NC Magazine*!

Again, thank you for reading our magazine and for everything you do to support the work of The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development. I look forward to continuing to share the positive news with you through future editions of *NC Magazine*. Happy reading!

Chris James
President and CEO
The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development

BRUNTON
ARCHITECTS & ENGINEERS

At Brunton, we focus on impactful development and meaningful designs. Our innovative solutions support the physical and mental well-being of the building's occupants and capture the morals, values and cultural elements most important to our clients. Our ultimate goal is to help create an environment in which you can live, work and play for years to come. To us, each project and each client is unique and as such requires its own personal solution that satisfies the needs of all users.

BRUNTONARCHITECTS.COM

"Our goal is to interpret YOUR VISION and help express it through CUSTOMIZED projects in your community."

– Frankee Hall
Hunkpati Dakota
Business Development

TRIBAL BORDER ALLIANCE

JOIN THE TRIBAL BORDER ALLIANCE

A chorus of strategic, collaborative partners seeking your voice

Immigration and border security affects all Indian Country – no matter land base nor proximity to an international border. Migration and mobility have been intrinsic aspects of our survival, our security, and our self – determination. The Tribal Border Alliance is a living and breathing initiative that gives structure, purpose, and direction to address the collective challenges indigenous people face at international borders.

The Tribal Border Alliance is keenly aware that now, more than ever, Indian Country needs the collective efforts and combined experience of tribal leaders from all regions of the US as we emerge from over two years of border closures, shutdowns, isolation and quarantines. The Coronavirus pandemic has been the most impactful collective experience in modern history; it has fundamentally changed border security while we simultaneously grapple with historical unsolved issues. Policies should be developed in consultation with Tribal Nations, molded around human rights principles and crafted while considering our health, cultural, and religious rights. Remember, the Tribes predate contemporary borders.

TRIBAL BORDER ALLIANCE MEMBERS

Kickapoo of Kansas
Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas
Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria
Ewiiaapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians
Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians
Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
Pascua Yaqui Tribe
Sovereign Nation of the Chiricahua Apache
Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
Chilkat Indian Village (Klukwan)
Mohawks of Akwesasne

www.tribalborderalliance.org
520-879-6293 | 520-879-6231

SAVE THE DATE

2022 Tribal Border Summit
October 19-20, 2022

Casino Del Sol, Pascua Yaqui Tribe
Tucson, AZ

Drawing on the successful outcomes of the 2018 TBA Summit, the much-anticipated 2022 Summit will propose updates and have draft legislative language ready for final review to submit to the Biden Administration including updated positions on:

- Amend Section 289 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1359)
- Indigenous Visa Category
- Annual consultation with DHS and Tribal Governments
- Funding for Tribal driven border security and home security
- Required local training for CBP, ICE and CIS Personnel

Enhanced Tribal Cards:

More than just an ID card.

Sacred Path, an enterprise of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe recognizes that Tribes need identification more than ever. With the effects and transition from the pre-pandemic era fast forward to 2022, verification of one's identity is of crucial importance more than before.

Sacred Path can create a secure product that safeguards user data, prevents identity theft and thwarts imposters from claiming native heritage. The value of the card is beneficial not only to the enrolled member but to the Tribe itself when verifying allocated resources.

Understanding how to leverage and utilize the technical advances in card production allows Tribes to offer a cost-effective realistic solution, as the issuing authority of a federally recognized identity document. A partnership with Sacred Path enables Tribes to create this unique, custom designed, WHTI-approved Enhanced Tribal Card (ETC) that:

- Equates to a U.S. Passport Card
- Recognizes the cultural inherited values of all Tribal nations
- Provides a more secure tribal identification card for your members

To date, Pascua Yaqui Tribe has helped nearly a dozen Federally Recognized Tribes to implement successful ETC Programs. With over a decade of experience, we streamline the learning curve process for Tribes who would otherwise spend dedicated time and resources towards research and development, reducing the process down to one year from start to finish!

Our tailored turnkey program offers solutions to:

- Creating ETC Management Software Application that meets technical specification and security requirements of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
- Designing and implementing the program
- Training tribal staff
- Developing policy
- Designing a card that prevents counterfeits and meets the latest technology standards
- Facilitating a collaborative relationship between Tribes and DHS

Visit our website at **www.sacredpath.net** or call us at **520-879-6231** or **520-879-6293** to schedule an onsite visit to our facility or a presentation to your Tribal Council.

SACRED PATH®

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

A roundup of recent and current legislation related to economic development in Indian Country.

WASHINGTON — Despite its roller coaster feel, 2021 saw major legislative victories for Tribes and Tribal enterprises, especially enactment of the American Rescue Plan and Bipartisan Infrastructure Package that have begun to infuse significant sums into Indian Country. With funds flowing to Tribal governments for recovery efforts, and several key programs supporting Tribal enterprises, Native American entrepreneurs and businesses, these and other Biden Administration initiatives will spur significant progress for Tribal economies over the next several years.

The National Center recommended key economic and business developments of these mega measures and promoted their enactment to benefit Indian Country, reported Kate Boyce, president of KRBR Consulting LLC. Boyce has worked with The National Center for three decades on legislation and appropriations to help advance business and economic development programs, expand procurement opportunities, and increase access to capital for Tribes and Native businesses.

"The COVID-19 pandemic and economic fallout opened more eyes in Congress to the dire healthcare and economic development needs in Indian Country," Boyce said. "Indian Country leaders coalesced, demanded and successfully secured delivery of substantial COVID relief funds to Tribal governments and healthcare systems."

2021 also saw The National Center and Tribal leaders build close working relationships with the

new Biden Administration. They also witnessed the reestablishment of the White House Council of Native American Affairs, chaired by Interior Secretary Deb Haaland with active participation of her fellow Cabinet Members.

Here's a brief overview of the 2021 White House progress report for Indian Country:

American Rescue Plan – among the key programs benefiting the economic well-being of Native communities: the Economic Impact Payments ($1,400 per individual); the Child Tax Credit; extension of the Earned Income Tax Credit; 15 percent increase in SNAP benefits; rental, mortgage and homeless assistance; temporary discounts on broadband bills and computers; extended unemployment benefits; grants to small businesses; and $35 million in Tribal public transit programs; plus allocation of the $30 billion provided specially for Tribal governments to recover and reinvest in their communities.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act – invests $13 billion directly in Tribal communities in addition to hundreds of billions in other investments for which Tribal communities are eligible. Funding includes: $6 billion to ensure clean, safe drinking water and other improvements by supporting water and sanitation infrastructure projects; $2 billion in long-overdue expansion of broadband access on Tribal lands; over $4 billion to build and repair roads, highways and bridges to address chronically underdeveloped, unsafe, and poorly-maintained road networks and bridges; and funds to clean up and protect local communities from the impacts of resource extraction.

To ensure full access to myriad opportunities in this Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Biden Administration has published a very helpful, 460-page guidebook (see whitehouse.gov/build). This guidebook for state, local, Tribal and territorial leaders presents a roadmap to the funding available with explanations in as much detail as currently available on each program, who is eligible, and who to contact. And to ensure that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law advances equity, racial justice, gender equality, and environmental justice, the President instructed agencies to take steps to ensure that every program is accessible for underserved communities by providing technical assistance and simplifying the federal funding process. Executive Order 14052 makes the Infrastructure programs subject to the President's Justice40 Initiative providing that 40 percent of the benefits of relevant climate, clean energy, affordable and sustainable housing, clean water and other investments flow to disadvantaged communities.

There has also been considerable progress on programs that support small businesses and jobs in Indian Country.

Grants for Entrepreneurship Training and Business Development – Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) received additional funds for grants to support entrepreneurship training and business development curricula and promote entrepreneurship and business development. The Small Business Administration (SBA) also received new funds for a Community Navigator Program and other grants supporting entrepreneurial development assistance provided by The National Center and other native entities.

Grants for Economic Development and Master Plans – The Economic Development Administration (EDA) received ARP funds to distribute $100 million in grants to Native communities for economic development activities and development of Tribal economic development master plans to help Tribes leverage and secure additional funding from philanthropic organizations and other federal agencies.

Tribal Enterprises Now Eligible for EDA Grants – A long-sought rule change now allows Tribal government-owned corporations to apply for EDA grant funding and opens new opportunities for Tribal businesses.

Expansion of Buy Indian Act Procurement Authority – The National Center successfully spearheaded enactment of the Indian Community Economic Enhancement Act that prompted revisions to the Buy Indian Act implementing regulations of the Departments of the Interior (DOI) and Health and Human Services (HHS). Both DOI and HHS held Tribal Consultations on their proposed rule changes. The National Center filed comments on both sets of the proposed regulations. On January 13, 2002, the Indian Health Service (IHS) published final regulations, which became effective on March 22 for IHS procurements.

IHS predicts the expanded provisions will generate about $200 million in contract opportunities — an estimated increase of $144 million over the FY 2021 level of $56 million. HHS has committed to work closely with DOI to improve and, many hope, expand beyond IHS implementation of this important procurement authority. DOI also proposed updated Buy Indian Act rules, which should be finalized soon.

Equity in Federal Procurement – President Biden directed federal agencies to grow by 50 percent their federal contracting with small disadvantaged businesses, including Native-owned businesses. That could add an additional $100 billion over 5 years.

Indian Business Incubators Program – Another new program, resulting from The National Center's successful advocacy of the Native American Business Incubators Program Act, became effective with publication of DOI's final rule establishing this grant program. The program will award three-year grants to Tribes, nonprofits, Tribal colleges and institutions of higher education to establish and operate business incubators for Native American communities.

Enhancing SBA's Office of Native American Affairs – As another campaign with its national native organization partners, The National Center promotes formal authorization and strengthening of the SBA's Office of Native American Affairs (ONAA). Bipartisan bills to enhance the ONAA have been introduced (S. 1735 and H.R. 5160), and similar provisions were included in the House-passed version of the Build Back Better package. The National Center will continue to advocate for Congress to elevate the ONAA, double its budget, and expand its capacity to support and promote Native American entrepreneurs and businesses. ■

Celebrating the American Indian Enterprise

For the past 28 years, Ho-Chunk, Inc. has been a resilient company by working **together as one** for our customers and employees. This approach has guided us through adversity time and time again; We are now a global company that never lost sight for a greater future for our business partnerships, valued clients, hard-working employees and most notably for the Winnebago people.

WE WELCOME YOU TO RES2022, *"Be the Change!"*

CHECK OUT OUR BOOTHS IN THE HO-CHUNK, INC. PAVILION AT RES 2022

ALL NATIVE GROUP

Booth #: 528

The All Native Group is the **Federal Services Division** of Ho-Chunk, Inc. that contains a network of small businesses supporting the critical missions of various U.S. Government customers. Capabilities include information technology (IT), telecommunications, health, logistics, specialized training, and other professional services.

allnativegroup.com

flatwater GROUP

Booth #: 525

The Flatwater Group is the **Government Products Division** of Ho-Chunk, Inc. Their companies offer a broad variety of products and comprehensive business solutions to clients throughout the U.S. including IT products/services, supply chain tools, office furniture/machines/products, logistics, transportation, warehousing and metals products.

flatwater-group.com

HO·CHUNK CAPITAL

Booth #: 526

Ho-Chunk Capital is a real estate investment and management company with an integrated team of experienced real estate, development, and investment professionals offering a full range of development and portfolio management services from site selection and urban planning to build-to-suit construction, leasing, management, financing, and asset repositioning.

hochunkcapital.com

SWEETGRASS TRADING

Booth #: 523

SweetGrass Trading Company is a nation-wide manufacturer and distributer of authentic premium Native American food and handcrafted artisan gift items for both the consumer and wholesaler. Our team works tirelessly to bring our customers quality products, delivered with exceptional service and value to help them build successful revenue streams with our unique products.

sweetgrasstradingco.com

HO·CHUNK INCORPORATED

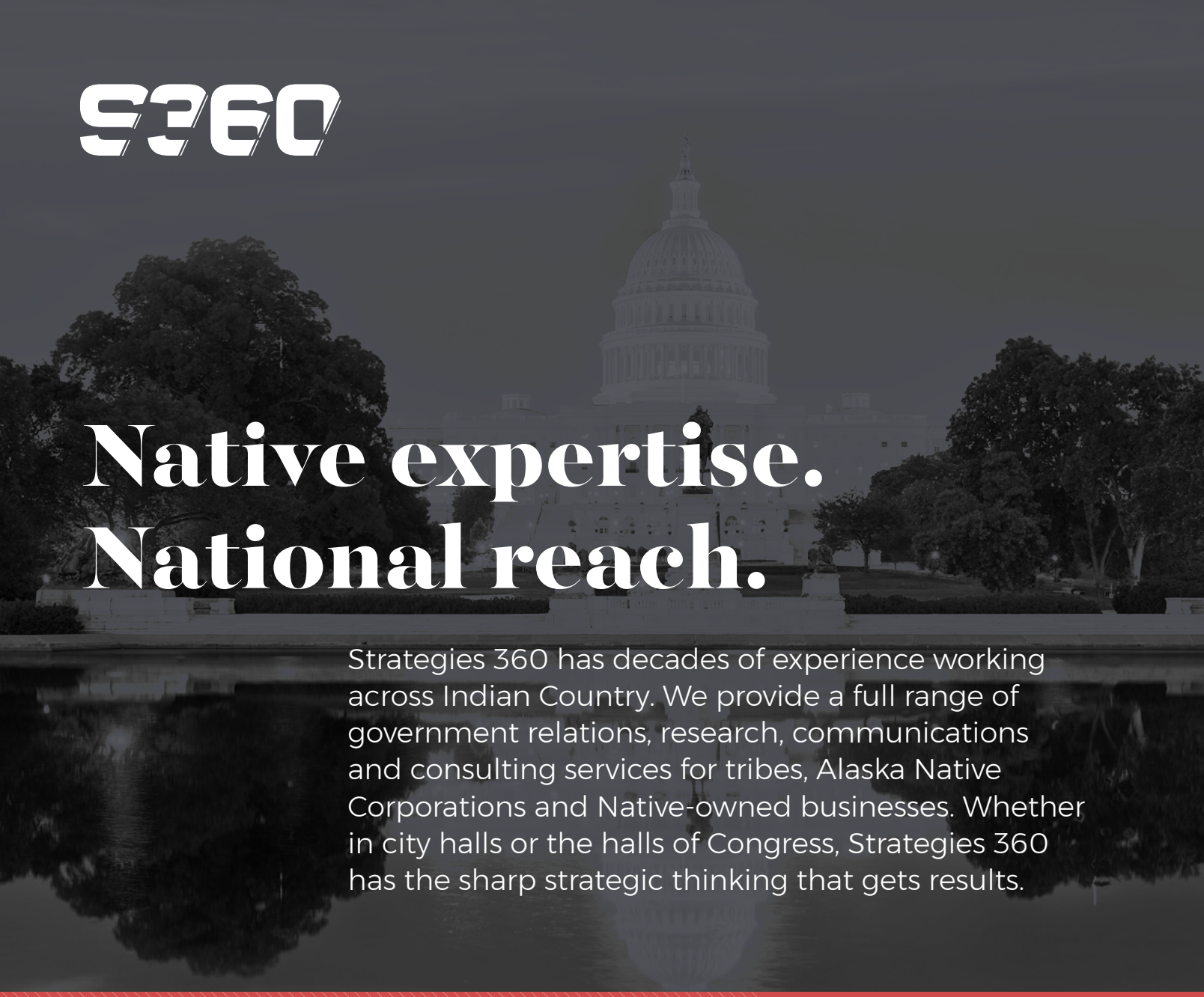
DIVISIONS OF HO-CHUNK, INC.

PROUD TO BE TRIBALLY OWNED

Corporate Headquarters: 818 Saint Augustines Drive, Winnebago, NE 68071

800.439.7008 | 402.878.2809 | 402.878.2560 | hochunkinc.com

Ho-Chunk, Inc. is the award-winning economic development corporation for the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska



S360

Native expertise. National reach.

Strategies 360 has decades of experience working across Indian Country. We provide a full range of government relations, research, communications and consulting services for tribes, Alaska Native Corporations and Native-owned businesses. Whether in city halls or the halls of Congress, Strategies 360 has the sharp strategic thinking that gets results.

WASHINGTON, D.C.
601 New Jersey Avenue NW Suite 250 | Washington, D.C. 20001
202.333.2234 | tylynng@strategies360.com

SEATTLE HEADQUARTERS
1505 Westlake Avenue N Suite 1000 | Seattle, WA 98109
206.282.1990 | johno@strategies360.com

Strategies 360 has offices in 13 western states, D.C. and Canada.

(Photo: U.S. Small Business Administration)

A SEAT AT THE TABLE

Native American Representation Grows in the Biden-Harris Administration

It's a new era for Native Americans in Washington, DC.

After less than 18 months on the job, the Biden-Harris administration has ushered in the new wave of Native American leadership and representation in the nation's capital, as well as unprecedented levels of federal funding that will be invested throughout Indian Country.

The funding came through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, often referred to as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. ARPA allocated more than $32 billion into Indian Country with $20 billion in direct funding to Tribes to help them recover from the pandemic. The Infrastructure Law will infuse more than $13 billion in indirect investments into Indian Country. Another $2 billion has been allocated to Indian Country to overcome the lack of broadband.

While the federal funding for Indian Country is historic, so is the number of American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians who are serving at the highest levels of the federal government.

The administration's commitment to have Native Americans at the table began with the selection of Rep. Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo) to serve as the secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior — the first Native American to serve in a cabinet secretary role.

"We must ensure that Tribes have a seat at the table for every decision that impacts them and their communities," Haaland said following her confirmation. "From clean energy projects and economic development to addressing past injustices against Tribal communities, the Biden-Harris administration is committed to fulfilling federal trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribal Nations and working for Indian Country."

Last August, Charles F. Sams, III (Umatilla) was chosen by President Biden and confirmed by the U.S. Senate in December to serve as the director of the National Park Service. He is the first Native American to ever head the National Park Service.

The Biden-Harris administration has appointed or hired highly qualified Native Americans to serve at the high levels within the federal government.

Other notable Native Americans in key positions in the Biden-Harris administration are: Bryan Newland (Bay Mills Indian Community) who serves as the assistant secretary of the Interior - Indian Affairs; Libby Washburn (Chickasaw), special assistant to the President, Domestic Policy Council; and Robert Anderson (Bois Forte Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe), the solicitor general of the Department of the Interior.

NC Magazine spoke with some of the other highly qualified Native Americans serving at high levels in the federal government.

Jackson S. Brossy

Assistant Administrator, Office of Native American Affairs

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

Jackson S. Brossy (Navajo) serves as a senior executive at the SBA providing executive oversight, management, leadership, and championing of Native American entrepreneurship. Before joining the SBA, Brossy served as executive director for both the Native CDFI Network and the Navajo Nation's intergovernmental affairs office in Washington.

Upon Jackson Brossy's appointment, SBA Administrator Isabella Casillas Guzman elevated the Office of Native American Affairs so that Brossy would report directly to her.

"We needed people at the table at the SBA at the highest levels, so that we are included in the conversations, and I am thankful for that," Brossy told *NC Magazine*.

Brossy said he is impressed with Guzman's commitment to Indian Country. He cites a trip she took to the Navajo Nation in February.

"To have the head of the SBA come out to listen to our people is important. Just getting into Window Rock is a two-day trip. It's not like going to Los Angeles where she could fly in and out in one day. To me that shows real commitment," Brossy said.

Earlier this year, the SBA updated its Tribal consultation guidelines that requires Brossy to go out into Indian Country to hear from Tribes that can raise any issue they want to discuss relating to business.


Native Americans such as Janie Simms Hipp (left), Jackson Brossy (center) and PaWee Rivera (right) are bringing Native perspectives to the nation's capital and helping ensure Indigenous voices are being heard. (Photos: Wikipedia, Courtesy)

"President Biden specifically has set really high standards to increase small underserved business utilization," Brossy said. "Our new updated emphasis on Tribal consultation will lead to significant impact on Native communities."

Janie Simms Hipp

General Counsel
US Department of Agriculture

Janie Simms Hipp (Chickasaw) has an extensive history with the USDA, having led multiple department programs over her long tenure. She served as program leader for Farm Financial Management, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Risk Management Education, and Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development. An attorney, she previously served as the founding executive director of the Native American Agriculture Fund and the founding director of the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the University of Arkansas.

President Biden nominated Janie Hipp to serve as the general counsel for the USDA. The role required Senate confirmation.

When Hipp was introduced at her confirmation hearing, Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Michigan) said Hipp was the first nominee in 20 years with such an expansive background in agricultural law. She has more than three decades of legal experience, mostly in agriculture law.

With her vast experience, Hipp hit the ground running.

While her role as the USDA's general counsel is not specific to Native Americans, she says she thinks about how various policies impact Indian Country in everything she does on a daily basis.

"It's just a huge honor to be in this role. And I'm going to do my best to make sure that whatever I do every day, that I bring the voices of a whole lot of people into the conversation and some of those voices are going to be Indigenous voices, clearly because I do want those voices to be in the conversation," Hipp told *NC Magazine*.

In March, during an oversight hearing on economic development before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, Hipp echoed Brossy's comment on Tribal consultations.

"We have engaged many times with Tribal leadership in consultation on a variety of topics. Specifically, we heard and understand that food sovereignty is Tribal sovereignty. To that end, we have launched an Indigenous Food Sovereignty initiative which is meant to aid USDA in rethinking our programs in new ways to support food sovereignty in Indian Country," Hipp said.

Hipp also told the senators she will explore ways that the USDA and other federal departments and agencies can participate in the Buy Indian Act, which currently applies to the Department of the Interior and Indian Health Service, which is part of the Department of Health and Human Services.

"It's a legal matter. We have seen at USDA how beneficial it would be to have it part of the Buy Indian Act. It would require the Congress to act on this," Hipp said.

"I'm going to do my best to make sure that whatever I do every day, that I bring the voices of a whole lot of people into the conversation and some of those voices are going to be Indigenous voices, clearly because I do want those voices to be in the conversation."

—Janie Hipp, general counsel, United States Department of Agriculture

PaaWee Rivera

Director of Tribal Affairs
The White House

PaWee Rivera (Pueblo of Pojoaque) grew up in a family where public service was a priority. His father, George Rivera, is the former governor of the Pueblo of Pojoaque. An alumnus of Dartmouth University, Pawee Rivera is just the second Native American to serve as liaison between 574 federally recognized Tribes and the White House.

As director of Tribal affairs at the White House, Rivera sees his job as one to help Tribal leaders navigate the various programs of the administration and to properly connect them with the proper departments or agencies within the federal government according to their Tribal needs.

Rivera says the American Rescue Plan Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act were significant investments for the future of Indian Country.

"It was the largest infusion of resources ever into Indian Country. Investing in critical issues like water, sewer and broadband will help us better educate our children, run

Waleah Johns, director of Indian Energy Policy and Programs, U.S. Department of Energy (Photo: Department of Energy)

our businesses successfully, and be significant," Rivera told *NC Magazine*. "I think we'll really start to see the impact over the course of these next few years. The scope of these projects are large and transformative.

Waleah Johns

Director, Indian Energy Policy and Programs
U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)

Waleah Johns (Navajo) has built an outstanding reputation over the years for her work on energy and the environment. In 2019, she was awarded the Nathan Cummings Foundation Fellowship for her groundbreaking work in groundwater protection, creation of green jobs, and environmental justice.

She is the co-founder of Native Renewables Initiative, where she worked to bring solar energy and increase affordable access to other renewable energy resources to Native communities.

Nominated in January 2021, she joined the Department of Energy to revitalize its Indian Energy Policy and Programs unit, which saw its annual budget slashed by two-thirds during the Trump Administration's final year.

The Indian Energy Policy and Programs office provides a variety of energy services to the 574 Federally recognized Tribes, including reducing Indian Tribal energy costs, strengthening Indian Tribal energy infrastructure, and promoting Indian Tribal energy development, efficiency and use.

"I feel honored for my nomination to serve in the Biden-Harris administration as the Director of Indian Energy at DOE. As the original caretakers of this land, I believe Tribes can lead the way to solving our climate crisis and building a regenerative and clean energy future," Johns Tweeted following her nomination a year ago. Since then she's been busy on the job, working to ensure there are more and better opportunities for Native Americans.

"We want to create more opportunities for dialogue about how Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and Native communities can lead the way to a clean, secure, and reliable energy future," Johns testified at the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs oversight hearing on March 16, 2022. "We are striving to ensure that matters associated with broadband, transportation, water, and energy in American Indians and Alaska Native communities are also highlighted and addressed."

All of the Native Americans working in the Biden-Harris administration know that working closely with Tribal leaders is a major component of success. They all talk about strong Tribal consultation and they also know their time to make a mark is now. ■

empowerment
WORKSHOPS
We are bridge builders.

Business Workshops created for Native Entrepreneurs

Curriculum
Culturally customized

Created by
Native American Entrepreneurs

Delivered by
Native American Trainers

Successfully trained
941 Entrepreneurs
from **401 tribes**

Available
Onsite and **Virtual**

Host a workshop
in your community
completely **FREE!**

SBA U.S. Small Business Administration

SISTER SKY INCORPORATED

Under contract with the Office of Native American Affairs of the U.S. Small Business Administration. Sister Sky, Inc., is a 100% Native American-owned business.

www.sisterskyinc.com

Book your 2023 Workshop at Booth #602

STAR-MAKER

Navajo artist and entrepreneur Cody Sanderson's tough, textured takes on heavenly bodies and Indigenous symbols attract superstars like Lady Gaga, Vin Diesel and Luis Fonzi.

(Photo: Brandon Sanderson)

Cody Sanderson is the starman of the fine jewelry galaxy.

The Navajo artist's tough, textured silver and gold takes on the heavenly bodies adorn rings, pendants, cuffs, and even zipper pulls and safety pins. The celestial creations are his signature and have helped him shoot to the top of the jewelry universe.

Sanderson, who launched his line in 2001, creates his masterpieces with a combination of traditional hand forging and modern methods like 3-D printing in his sprawling Santa Fe studio. He's drawn to the star partially for personal reasons.

"My son's middle name and his mother's last name is Agoyo, which means star in the Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo language," explained Sanderson. "I don't own the five-point star, but I think my brand has more stars in it than any other jewelry company in the world."

There are also plenty of superstars of the music and movie variety who shine with the Sanderson star and the artist's other defining designs, like plump hearts pierced with arrows, scary-cool skulls and intricate feathers. They're sexy, attitude-exuding pieces that magazine editors, celeb stylists and the celebs themselves can't resist. And we're talking top-tier stars here.

Lady Gaga appeared in *V Magazine* wearing a playfully profane silver Sanderson ring with a very in-your-face expletive, a double arrow star ring and spiked cross ring. Vin Diesel wears chains with Sanderson's dangling stars and arrows on the cover of *GQ Taiwan*, and Jeremy Renner appeared in the same magazine modeling Sanderson star pins and rings. International music superstar Luis Fonzi wore Sanderson pieces while singing "Despacito" during the 2018 Grammys.

Jewelry is the core of Sanderson's brand, but his business also branches out into other avenues, including apparel, stone and ceramic planters, and niche collaborations.

Sanderson also creates one-offs that further demonstrate his seemingly boundless creativity and cultural references, like a pendant portraying Edvard Munch's iconic painting *The Scream*, and a studded silver version of a Rubik's Cube that won Best of Show at the Heard Museum Guild Indian Market and Fair in 2008.

For the devoted following that clicks with Sanderson's spiky style, the jeweler's pieces are worthy of marking major life moments. NCAIED board member Charlie Galbraith and his family have amassed quite a Sanderson collection.

(Photos: Brandon Sanderson)

"I've been a huge fan of Cody's work for a long time and was first introduced to him by my parents who commissioned him to do their wedding rings," Galbraith said. "I have several pieces, a bolo, our rings, a couple cuffs and some of the clothes. He's a great fit for The National Center because of how he's been able to effectively and successfully share Native design with a broad and international customer base."

National Center President and CEO Chris James echoes Galbraith's sentiments about Sanderson.

"We are so excited to feature Native artist and entrepreneur Cody Sanderson as the cover story for this edition of *NC Magazine*," James said. "Cody has combined his skills as an artist with an entrepreneurial drive that has seen him open businesses in Arizona and Japan, as well as showcase his jewelry and designs at New York Fashion Week, picking up numerous awards along the way. Sanderson's passion for his craft combined with his business savvy shows there are no limits to how far Native art and artists can go."

At this moment, Sanderson is at a crossroads due to COVID-inflicted issues and other challenges. He's pivoting and rethinking his entire brand, and a symbiotic relationship with The National Center could help him reach his new goals.

Pandemic transformation

The pandemic has totally transformed Sanderson's business.

His biggest market is in Asia, where his work can be found in high-end boutiques like Dover Street Market in Tokyo, Beijing and Tanglin,

Singapore, and Hankyu Men's Tokyo. Taiwan has a dedicated Cody Sanderson storefront in Kaohsiung, that will soon relocate to the capital city of Taipei. Sanderson also sells in Europe at Dover Street Market in London and in the U.S., his work can be purchased at Dover Street Market in Los Angeles and New York City. Dover Street Market was founded by Rei Kawakubo of legendary high-fashion house Comme des Garçons and her husband Adrian Joffe.

Sanderson's strong international presence had him traveling abroad on a regular basis. In the past few years, Sanderson's jet-setting has stalled.

"Before, I was gone almost every other month somewhere in the world," Sanderson said. "Since the pandemic transpired. I've kind of kept everything close to home. I've gone to Dallas, Miami, Aspen, New York, LA, Atlanta ... and I've done some of the casino shows like the National Indian Gaming Association Tradeshow and Convention. I've done the Indian Market here in Santa Fe and a Cowboy Christmas in Las Vegas."

Sanderson says he's eager to attend RES this spring. He says he's up for doing any workshops or events for the Center, where he can share his art and experience with other aspiring Native artists and entrepreneurs.

The pandemic has also left Sanderson with a drastically reduced operation. Pre-COVID, he had a staff of 27. It has since dwindled down to five.

Adding to Sanderson's current challenges is a rash of much cheaper counterfeit Sanderson items across Asia and the US, which has taught him a valuable lesson that he wants all artists to learn from: copyright your designs in every country in which they are available before counterfeiters can do their dirty work.

Cody Sanderson

Tribal affiliation: Navajo

Age: 58

Specialty: Silver and gold jewelry with Sanderson's signature symbols including stars, skulls, hearts and arrows.

Where to find it in the U.S: codysanderson.com. Dover Street Market in LA and New York

(Photo: Brandon Sanderson)

"With any success that you have, there are always people who will just bring you down and just try to belittle you ... I always say appreciate and embrace your haters because without them, you're not going to be (motivated.) They keep you in the limelight, too."

— Navajo Artist Cody Sanderson

He is currently working with his legal team to do just that, even though a lot of damage has already been done.

"There are a bunch of counterfeits coming out of China, mostly rings. Now I have to do a whole new level of designing because of all the counterfeits that are out there," he said. "I'm trying to get a whole new look and a whole new line. Just so they'll have to start over again in trying to knock it off. "

To help his brand thrive in the modern digital economy, Sanderson is also exploring the world of NFTs.

NFTs, or "non-fungible tokens," are digital assets that represent real-world and digital items, including works of art. The owner gets exclusive rights to the image, and with some NFT agreements, the NFT creator receives royalties every time the image is sold or traded.

Sanderson is still learning the finer points of the NFT business, and he has decided a rendering of his Diamond Candy Ring will be his first NFT.

"The buyer can do whatever they want with the image," Sanderson said. "But if they sell it again in another 10, 20 years, I'll get a residual, which can be 5 to 10 percent off any sale that transpires."

Big in Japan

Sanderson's amped-up efforts to promote his brand in the U.S. have the potential to gain him new ground in a market that has weakened for him in recent years for several reasons.

"A number of people in my circle of collectors in the U.S. — people who really used to appreciate the finer things — are maturing and they're no longer adding to their collections, and the younger audience is more into social media or streetwear," he said.

About a decade ago, Sanderson and his team started setting their sights on the Asian market, and the effort has paid off. Sanderson himself has become a cult jewelry hero there, and his popularity in Asia — particularly in futuristic, fashion-forward Japan — speaks to the genius of his jewelry.

"Whatever happens in Japan, the rest of the Asian world follows," he said. "Japan dictates fashion."

When he goes to Asia on business trips, which also include plenty of pleasure and partying, the continent opens for him like an ultra-deluxe oyster. The charming and charismatic Sanderson always makes a splash and attracts big crowds as he schmoozes and cruises through press interviews and signings and appearances at A-List clubs, eateries, galleries, boutiques and VIP events.

It's like stepping into a scene of a recent hit film where the upper crust of Asian society indulges in every exclusive, over-the-top advantage of the good life.

"The people in the movie *Crazy Rich Asians*; those are the kind of people I hang out with. They have everything and they cater to me and take care of me. I really appreciate it.

"Sometimes I'm in a Rolls Royce, sometimes I'm in a Porsche G-Wagon. That's just the way that they roll," Sanderson said. "We'll roll up to a club, and there's a hundred people standing outside in line. They jump out, pull that velvet rope to the side, and we walk in."

His success in the Asian market shows that his style and the symbols he's embraced and made his own can break through any cultural barrier.

"In America, a lot of people associate stars with Texas. But in Asia, there are over a billion people who love stars more than Texas does. They just really appreciate and enjoy them. Stars and skulls are international. They're everywhere."

Ascent of a salesperson

Creating art wasn't a part of Sanderson's upbringing on the Navajo Nation. He forged his path independently.

"None of my family made jewelry, and mom was a nurse. My uncles are principals or teachers or they had other careers, but no one was really into art," he said. "With a lot of other Native artists that are jewelers, or even artists in general, the family is involved in it; the brothers, the sisters, everyone. My brother does construction. My sister works for the tribe. Nobody ever thought, 'Hey, I want to be an artist. I want to make jewelry. I want to paint. I want to do sculptures.' No one really ever did that."

Representing Navajo culture isn't the main impetus behind his work, but feathers, arrows, headdresses, and the images and iconography of his heritage organically weave their way into his pieces.

"It's just a byproduct, as far as I happen to be Native, but I feel I'm an artist before I am Native. Yes, I was raised on a Navajo reservation. Yes, I know a lot of traditional things, but I don't really push that I'm an Indian," he said. "I make art the way I want to make it. And if it happens to be a Native type, great, and if it doesn't that's okay too. It's still my work."

Before becoming an art star, Sanderson sampled a kaleidoscope of careers, including work as a nuclear propulsion specialist for the military, bartender, and car salesman.

The job that opened his mind to a career in jewelry design was his gig as a traveling jewelry salesman for M.M. Rogers, an Albuquerque-based company offering fine sterling silver and 14K gold jewelry.

"My territory was the whole country. I was always traveling," he said. "I hit all four corners of the lower 48."

His grueling schedule had him hustling to open accounts in multiple cities and states over very concentrated periods. Eventually, he started to see the items he was selling from a designer's perspective.

"When I would see all this other jewelry, I would look at it and say, 'Hey, if I made that, I would change it to this type of metal or I would make it in gold, or this would lend itself to silver more than brass or copper.'"

Eventually, the travel became too taxing for Sanderson. The 38-year-old salesman was missing milestone moments in his kids' lives and wanted to be there for them.

"I really, really physically missed them. And it was really difficult for me to always be away from them," he said. "I just hated that. So I decided to quit my job and my boss didn't believe I was going to quit because I was making decent money. I still had to pay for rent, lights, everything. And I had four kids and a wife and myself to feed.

"I hit the ground running. It was a do-or-die type of situation."

Sanderson ended up building a solid business and developing the symbols, spikes and studs that evolved into his signature pieces. Although the designs appear to emulate the tough stuff of biker tattoos and motorcycle culture, Sanderson doesn't get his inspiration from Harley Davidson, nor does he have a big client base of bikers. His ideas spring from a much more universal and powerful source.

"There are a lot of spikes and edgy stuff coming through in nature, whether it's a cactus or a sea urchin. Even some caterpillars have spikes. It's amazing," he said.

"A lot of people say, 'Oh, this looks like something a Harley biker would wear,' but if bikers see a bracelet that's 2,000 or 3,000 bucks, they do not want to spend that kind of money on jewelry. They want to spend it on their bike. That's a brand new exhaust system or new rotors."

Instead of burly bikers, Sanderson's top clients are women aged 55 to 85.

"They have the money. They've also gotten to a point in their life where they don't give a rat's ass who the hell sees them or how they look or what they do," Sanderson said. "They buy to please themselves, not to worry about anybody else."

There's no doubt that it takes a certain sense of swagger and confidence to pull off Sanderson's most daring and dangerous pieces.

Consider Sanderson's gruesomely gorgeous character Chief Kill Hater, a wickedly symbolic and somewhat intimidating silver skull with a sprawling headdress of arrows and a wide mouth that seems to be screaming. The Chief piece, Sanderson says, is "not for the meek."

"I think it's too much for a lot of people, especially wearing it as a ring," he said. "I don't even have one of the rings right now. But then again, if I do have one, I end up selling it off my hand."

The Chief isn't just an ultra-cool and eye-popping accessory to die for, it's also a statement on jealousy and resilience.

"With any success that you have, there are always people who will just bring you down and just try to belittle you, or question your success at what you have or even how fast you might have come up," he said. "I always say appreciate and embrace your haters because without them, you're not going to be (motivated.) They keep you in the limelight, too." ■

Navigating the Native Entertainment Boom

A surge in contemporary Native storylines and Indigenous entertainment is creating new business opportunities for Indigenous creatives in film, television, publishing and broadcast. It's also creating new opportunities for Tribes, their enterprises, and Native businesses that provide a range of services—from onsite catering and logistics, to production, marketing and more.

Breakout hit television shows like Reservation Dogs (previous page) and Rutherford Falls (above) are creating a wave of opportunities for Indigenous creatives, as well as Tribes, tribal enterprises and Native businesses. (Photos: Reservation Dogs/FXonHulu; Rutherford Falls/Peacock, NBC/Universal)

After a decades-long career in Hollywood, Sonny Skyhawk has countless, mostly fond recollections of his time on the sets of legendary productions like *Little House on the Prairie* and *Young Guns*.

But his long history as an actor and producer also includes some bad memories, including one scorching-hot day on the set of a late-'70s western.

On that particular 110-degree day, a group of Native people were working as extras, running from one end of the location to the other under the sweltering sun, Skyhawk recalls. There was little drinking water and limited access to bathrooms. Skyhawk, who was an established actor by this point, watched as Native talent was mistreated.

"We broke for lunch and all of the 'cowboys' were asked to line up for food," Skyhawk recalled. "It was a buffet setup. The cowboys were given first choice. Our Native people were not in shade, not given water and had to eat after everyone else."

Skyhawk, a citizen of the Rosebud Sioux Nation, went to the film's director to protest and was told "that's just the way it's done in Hollywood."

Skyhawk's response: "Well, that's not the way my people are going to be treated any longer. I will take my people off the set and we'll see what happens. If you (don't) change the way they're being treated, they won't be working tomorrow."

Alarming, on-set instances like this motivated Skyhawk to not only speak up for his people, but also to launch American Indians in Film and Television and his newest endeavor: Native Spectrum, a production company he co-founded. Both were formed to empower Native voices and help push the entertainment industry to gradually — and finally — realize that representation, inclusion and fairness matter.

While the cultural shift took decades, it's finally started to happen. The past two years have been something of a watershed moment for Indigenous people breaking through to the mainstream with new shows, movies, books, podcasts and more. The list is long and growing, including critically acclaimed television shows like *Reservation Dogs* and *Rutherford Falls*, best-selling (and award-winning) books like *The Night Watchman* and *Firekeeper's Daughter*, and an increasing number of Native podcasts, broadcasts and development deals for Native creators such Sterlin Harjo, Sydney Freeland, Sierra Teller Ornelas and author Angeline Boulley.

This sizable uptick in contemporary Native storylines that ditch antiquated stereotypes is creating new business opportunities for Indigenous creatives in film, television, publishing and broadcast. It's also creating new opportunities for Tribes, their enterprises, and Native businesses that provide a range of services—from onsite catering and logistics, to production and marketing.

Diverse content

"Every piece of data we find generally shows that people across the board are seeking out and wanting diverse content," said Leah Salgado, chief impact officer at IllumiNative, a women-led racial and social justice nonprofit.

Moviegoers and TV viewers are expecting accurate character portrayals, she told *NC Magazine*, and

Leah Salgado, chief impact officer of IllumiNative. (Courtesy photo)

"don't just want token stereotypes" anymore.

"Audiences are getting really savvy with understanding that the quality of representation matters. It's not just about doing right by Native people in an industry that has typically only shown us in stereotypical ways; audiences want authentic and quality representation of diverse people because that is the world that exists around them."

And, today, there are finally some choices getting plenty of national attention thanks to streaming platforms like Netflix, HULU and Peacock, to name a few. This exposure has introduced fresh Native stories to millions of people from all walks of life.

"At the end of the day, *Reservation Dogs* is a coming-of-age story," Salgado said. "A lot of audiences can understand and connect with it. It's also an example of a show that centers on Native people. but also gets critical acclaim. It shows that Native shows are not just for Native audiences."

To make these programs as authentic and accurate as possible, Native people are being hired by non-Native production teams as consultants. Acting as a conduit between Natives and Hollywood producers, IllumiNative is in constant talks with a variety of movers and shakers in the biz.

Native Authors Rising to the Top of the Book Business

Critically acclaimed television shows *Reservation Dogs* and *Rutherford Falls* thrust Native American storytelling talent into the entertainment spotlight in 2021, creating new opportunities for Indigenous producers, directors and actors.

Rising interest in Native storytelling wasn't just limited to movies and TV, though. A growing number of Indigenous authors found their way to the top of the best-seller lists and the most prestigious book awards in 2020-21.

Firekeeper's Daughter, the debut novel by Angeline Boulley (Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians), hit number one on *The New York Times* young adult charts and earned her a development deal with President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama's production company, Higher Ground, to bring the book to Netflix as an original series.

Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians) won a Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2021 for her novel *The Night Watchman*, which is based on the life of her grandfather and his fight for Native rights during the termination era of the 1950s.

Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle (Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians) made her debut in 2020 with *Even As We Breathe*, which was a finalist for the Weatherford Award and named one of NPR's Best Books of 2020. In 2021, it received the Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Award.

Illustrator Michaela Goade (Tlingit, Haida) won the Caldecott Medal for the children's book *We Are Water Protectors*, becoming the first non-White winner ever of the prestigious award.

Kevin Noble Maillard (Seminole Nation) won the Sibert Informational Book Medal for his 2020 book *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story*.

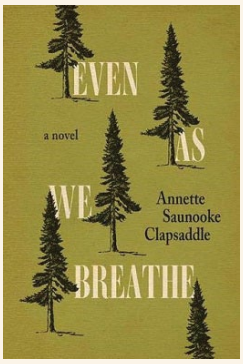
Eric Gansworth (Onondaga Nation) took home the Printz Honor Medal in 2021 for his book *Apple: Skin to the Core*, which was named to the longlist for the National Book Award.

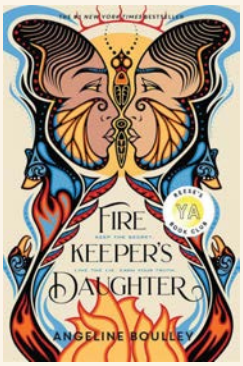
Chef Freddie Bitsoie (Navajo), the former executive chef at Mitsitam Native Foods Café at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, won widespread acclaim for his 2021 cookbook, *New Native Kitchen: Celebrating Modern Recipes of the American Indian*, a celebration of Indigenous cuisine.

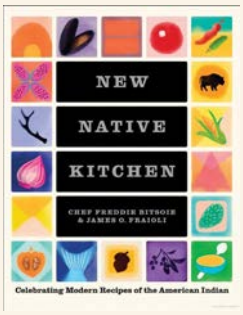
The success of these authors and books has sparked interest among major publishers, including Harper Collins LLC. The New York-based publisher launched Heartdrum, a children's book imprint dedicated to fostering Native talent and led by Cynthia Leitich Smith, a Muscogee Nation member.

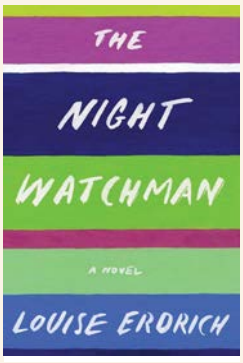
This isn't the first time there's been surging interest in Native American authors, but some industry experts say this time it feels different.

"This is very different from what we have seen in the past," blogger Debbie Reese (Nambe Pueblo) told the publication *Tribal Business News*. "This is a big wave — we are seeing so many milestones for Indigenous writers who have been traditionally shut out of the major publishing houses. There's a lot of stuff going on behind this big wave." ■









Jennifer Loren, director of the Cherokee Film Office (Courtesy photo)

"It's really transformative. Having a film come to your community means you're going to have the economic impact of a conference that stays in town not for a few days, but for a minimum of two weeks—possibly nine months. They're staying in your hotels, eating at your restaurants, they're hiring your local people—your florists, caterers, drivers, construction crews, carpenters, accountants and lawyers. It's a multi-billion-dollar industry, so it can really be a game changer."

— Jennifer Loren, Cherokee Film Office

"We're providing resources and training — not just to companies, but also to specific projects and to industry leaders and executives," Salgado said. Last fall, Illuminative published an industry guide to help people understand Native representation and educate them how to work with Native communities and Native creatives.

In an effort to bolster emerging talent, IllumiNative recently partnered with Netflix to launch the IllumiNative Producers Program, a year-long program that supports a batch of seven "early and mid-career" Indigenous producers.

With this sort of work happening across the country, it's a good time for Tribes to consider entering this burgeoning business, Salgado said. From promoting Native talent to leasing Tribal land and casinos for filming locations, a lot is happening that viewers don't see.

"There are Tribes like Pechanga in California who use casinos for filming," Salgado added. "The Cherokee Film Office does a lot of work, as well. I see Native communities, and Tribes in particular, starting to invest in (these types of) opportunities. There is a lot of Native buying power."

Ringing phones, tax incentives

Since 2018, the Cherokee Film Office has been busy working on all sorts of entertainment deals—the office even built its own sound stage. While the film office is still fairly new, their phones are always ringing, according to Director Jennifer Loren.

"The mission is to increase the presence of Native Americans in every level of the film and TV industry while creating opportunities for economic development and jobs in the Cherokee Nation," Loren said. "It's a two-fold mission, but they go hand-in-hand."

Loren is quick to add that the film office's programming "is not just for Cherokee Nation citizens, it's inclusive for all Tribes."

Among other services, the film office has an online directory where production companies can scout for talent and filming locations. For example, producers can find Native actors, or a barn located on Tribal land to shoot a scene at, as well as other industry needs. The directory is also an online landing spot for Native American actors, writers and crew members looking for film gigs.

Of course, another facet of this boom is healthy state tax incentives — some being upwards of 25-35 percent. With these encouraging perks, states like New Mexico and Oklahoma, among others, are ushering big productions onto Tribal lands to shoot film and TV projects.

Incentives are what gets film crews out of Los Angeles and New York and heading to places like Oklahoma. But once they arrive, they often don't want to leave, Loren said.

"Films are not going to come to Oklahoma from elsewhere unless there's a rebate or incentive of some sort, but then they get here and the people are so kind, the locations are diverse," Loren said. "In the western parts we have deserts, we have salt flats, and then on the eastern side in the Cherokee nation we have waterfalls and the foothills of the Ozarks and Bison ranges. We have rolling, tall-grass prairies, so people just love it here."

Earlier this year, the Cherokee Nation Film Office began accepting applications for a new cash rebate incentive fund offering up to $1 million annually for production expenses occurring within the boundaries of the Cherokee Nation. The rebate is intended to cover expenses for both "production expenses and wages."

Such incentives are designed to attract productions that will create an economic ripple effect for the Cherokee Nation.

"It's really transformative," she said. "What we like to say is, having a film come to your community means you're going to have the economic impact of a conference that stays in town not for a few days, but for a minimum of two weeks—possibly nine months. They're staying in your hotels, eating at your restaurants, they're hiring your local people—your florists, caterers, drivers, construction crews, carpenters, accountants and lawyers. It's a multi-billion-dollar industry, so it can really be a game changer."

The economic impact of the film incentives will be "tracked to the penny," Loren said. "Of course, the cultural impact is priceless. We think the cultural impact is just as important as the economic impact as far as getting Natives into the mainstream media."

Like many others working in the Native film world, Loren suggests other interested Tribes should start planning their entry

Saving you money and keeping Tribal dollars right here in Indian Country

AMERIND delivers products at a reduced cost due to our lower expense ratio and when you do business with us you keep money invested in Indian Country. We are dedicated to supporting our people with insurance products that are culturally sensitive, affordable and reliable, but we do so much more to serve Indian Country. We are building a better world and brighter future with educational scholarships, charitable giving, and community outreach to strengthen and empower the lives of our Tribal clients. **We are your 100% Tribally owned and trusted insurance partner today and in the future.**

To learn more, visit AMERIND.com

AMERIND
Insure Confidently

Property | Liability | Workers' Compensation | Commercial Auto | Cyber

A.M. BEST
#020751 A- Excellent

into the booming industry sooner than later.

"My advice to other Tribes is: the time is now if you want to take your story into your own hands," she said. "The film industry is really excited about diversifying content right now, so it's a great time to figure out how you want to enter the film industry. It's just going to continue to grow rapidly, and the more that Tribes show an interest, they'll quickly learn there is a lot of potential for job creation.

"At the very least, every Tribe could have a consultant for film and television so they're prepared when they get those calls from screenwriters, and have a designated person to answer those calls."

Pictured (l-r): Adam Piron, Sundance Institute; Joanelle Romero, Red Nation Celebration Institute. (Courtesy photos)

Carrying the torch

While Illuminative and Cherokee Film Office are relative newcomers, there are organizations that have been carrying this very same torch for many years, including The American Indian Film Institute and The National Museum of the American Indian. Both have tirelessly promoted and screened Native and Indigenous filmmaking. That noble mission is also shared with the Sundance Institute's Indigenous Program, a long-running support system that bolsters the next generation of Indigenous American storytellers through fellowships and international exposure.

Their alumni includes some notable names, including Harjo, Freeland, Taika Waititi, Blackhorse Lowe, Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers, Sky Hopinka, Caroline Monnet and Shaandiin Tome, among others.

Back in March, Adam Piron, a longtime staff member of Sundance, was named the director of the Indigenous Program, a spot previously held by industry veteran Bird Runningwater, who left the program last year after signing a promising deal with Amazon Studios. Piron said he feels deals like the one his predecessor cut are one more step in the right direction.

In the last half decade, there's been an increased awareness of Indigenous people "existing," Piron said. "A lot of that can be traced back to Standing Rock. When you look at this, historically, about every 20 years something happens and then all of the sudden, the entertainment industry is like, 'Oh yeah, there's still Indigenous people here.'"

Standing Rock made people much more aware of Indigenous people in the country in a modern context, Piron said. "A lot of the work that's been happening in the last half decade has been in a more contemporary context. An everyday context. We're not all the way there, but it's light years ahead of where it was a couple decades ago."

Thanks to programs like the Native Filmmakers Lab, which is just one facet of Sundance's Indigenous Program, Piron said the Institute is continuously championing emerging, groundbreaking artists.

"Our program has supported four generations of Indigenous filmmakers," Piron said. "We're still working with the fourth and starting to look for the fifth, a bit. We look more toward the developing artist side, or people who are working toward the next level of their creative path."

Another long-term fixture is the Red Nation Celebration Institute (RNCI), the longest standing Native women-led, Indigenous media arts cultural nonprofit. Based in Los Angeles and led by Founder, President and CEO Joanelle Romero, the organization remains on an upswing.

"In August, Red Nation Celebration Institute will be 27, and we have not stopped," Romero said. "We keep growing, and all odds are against us. If this wasn't meant to be, we would've crashed a long time ago."

Romero's longevity goes back even further. In 1977, as a teenager, she broke down a barrier when she landed her first lead role on a CBS TV movie, *The Girl Called Hatter Fox*.

"It was the first contemporary Native woman story ever produced in the industry," Romero said. "It was also the first time a Native actress carried a leading role in a contemporary story. It was really big news."

After that, Romero landed a laundry list of roles, and by 1995, she decided to found Red Nation.

Since then, she has established The Red Nation International Film Festival and the RNCI Red Nation Awards, among various other high-profile initiatives — including the Red Nation Television Network, a streaming platform dedicated to distributing the Native narrative. To date, there are more than 1,000 titles in the library, and that number is growing thanks to a swelling list of partnerships with Native filmmakers and distributors.

"When we first launched the television network, nobody was streaming," Romero recalled of her earliest days running the television division of her organization. "No one even thought about streaming, the only company was YouTube and they didn't have original content back then. We predated Netflix, everyone, but because we're Native and Indigenous content, it's taken us a while. We just did our seventh facelift on our network last year, and it's so gorgeous."

With a growing number of projects to concentrate on, Romero said one problem Red Nation is currently spotlighting is the lack of representation on the four major broadcast networks.

"What we're focused on is prime time television," she said. "Where are we on episodic television?"

She draws a direct connection from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women epidemic and the lack of Native women in film and television. Representation, or lack thereof, makes a difference about how people think about Native Americans.

"If we are not seen and heard, who cares?" ■

Resourceful. Innovative. Visionary.
Uniquely entrepreneurial.

Mutual of America is committed to Native American economic development. We know firsthand how the skill and resourcefulness of tribal businesses drive the development of new ideas, products and services.

We help with comprehensive retirement plan services that can attract and retain top talent, while providing employees with smart ways to prepare for their financial future.

Mutual of America Financial Group is proud to sponsor the 2022 Reservation Economic Summit.

To see how we can help your business, visit mutualofamerica.com.

Mutual of America Financial Group℠

Retirement Services • Investments

More Than RES: How The National Center Meets its Mission Year-round

The National Center's work extends far beyond the week in Las Vegas for the Reservation Economic Summit (RES).

From direct training and technical assistance for emerging businesses, to connecting entrepreneurs with the capital needed to make their dreams a reality, to opening new international markets for indigenous goods and services, and recognizing and grooming the next generation of Native leaders, the National Center spends 365 days a year living up to its mission.

With more than 50 years of assisting American Indian Tribes and Tribal people with business and economic development, the National Center has evolved into the largest national Native specific business organization in the nation. Here are just a few examples of how the organization meets its mission year-round.

(Photo: The National Center)

American Indian PTAC

The National Center's American Indian Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) provides consulting services and technical assistance to Native American-owned businesses interested in marketing and selling their products and services to federal, state, local, and Tribal governments. The National Center's PTAC assists business owners in marketing and networking, identifying bid opportunities, SBA, 8(a), HUBZone and other certifications, determining suitability for contract, and more.

Throughout the pandemic, the PTAC has stuck to its mission of providing new opportunities for Native businesses, including business and governments battling COVID-19. The National Center's PTAC adjusted its programming and outreach to reflect a new COVID-19 reality, while continuing its critical work to support contractors that work in a wide variety of fields.

Native Edge Finance

Providing opportunities for Tribal and Native-owned businesses to access needed capital has long been one of The National Center's most important functions. In 2020, The National Center announced the development of its own Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), known as Native Edge Finance.

Native Edge Finance's goal is to provide economic opportunities for Native American communities and businesses by providing products and financial services to support business growth and development. The National Center is currently in the process of capitalizing Native Edge Finance.

Global Indigenous Trade

An increasingly global world means that Native-owned businesses must expand their horizons and seek new markets to do business. That's why The National Center is working to connect its American Indian and Alaska Native clients with international companies, broader global Indigenous communities, and even the governments of some of our closest allies.

Over the past year, The National Center partnered with the Consulate General of Canada in Chicago to identify and produce a report on cross-border trade opportunities between Canadian First Nations and American Indian Tribes in Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin. In November 2021, Chris James traveled to Dubai for Expo 2020, which was delayed by a year due to COVID-19, with the specific goal of fostering new cross-indigenous trade opportunities.

Grooming and Recognizing the Next Generation of Leaders

The National Center continues to recognize emerging leaders across Indian Country through the Native American 40 Under 40 awards program.

Now in its second decade, there are more than 500 members of this exclusive and increasingly close-knit fraternity. The National Center continues to honor the entrepreneurs, businesses and leaders, and leaders that are leading Native communities forward through our annual American Indian Business Awards.

To foster the next generation of these leaders, The National Center partners with organizations like First Nations Development Institute to host a Business Plan Competition for Youth. The National Center truly means business for Indian Country—from the early beginnings through sustained success. ■

Financing Land Recovery & Economic Development in Indian Country

INDIAN LAND
CAPITAL COMPANY

www.ilcc.net

Beyond our Border

National Center Goes Global with MBDA Export Center

New program aims to help Native-owned businesses conduct business outside the U.S.

The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development has gone global and is bringing new exporting resources to Native businesses throughout Indian Country.

Opened last July, the new Arizona MBDA Export Center is operated by The National Center and funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency. Based in Mesa, Ariz., the export center provides one-on-one counseling, trade market analysis, finance resources, market guides and other technical assistance for minority-owned business enterprises (MBEs) with annual revenues of $500,000 or more.

The export center serves companies owned and operated by Native Americans — including American Indians, Alaska Natives, Alaska Native Corporations, Tribal entities and Native Hawaiians — as well as businesses owned and operated by African Americans, Asian Indian Americans, Hasidic Jews, Hispanic Americans, and Asian and Pacific Islanders.

"The Arizona MBDA Export Center represents a unique opportunity to expand The National Center's mission and help Native-owned businesses and other MBEs conduct business beyond our nation's borders," National Center President and CEO Chris James said. "The Arizona MBDA Export Center works closely with its clients to identify opportunities, navigate the export process, and enter new markets that will contribute to Indian Country's economic rise."

Minority-owned Business Enterprises (MBE) are fast-growing, innovative, and represented in every industry sector in the United States. Minority-owned firms directly contribute to the U.S. economy and account for the creation of millions of U.S. jobs.

"We serve all minority business enterprises and we're focusing on the underserved communities that can benefit from the technical assistance and guidance we can offer them," said JoAn Begay Notah, The National Center's project director for the new Arizona MBDA Export Center.

Notah has been on the job at the Export Center since mid-February, but she's no stranger to business development or The National Center. Prior to starting with the export center, she served as senior procurement specialist for The National Center's American Indian Procurement Technical Assistance Center (AIPTAC).

Before that, she was the project director for the AZ Native American Business Enterprise Center funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Minority Business Development Agency. She has over 25 years of experience in business development, grant management and federal procurement.

"Even though world affairs make export look a bit risky right now, this too shall pass and we'll be back in the export friendly market in the future. So it's a good time for companies to prepare and work on strategic plans that will allow them to expand their markets when the time is right."

—JoAn Begay Notah, Arizona MBDA Export Center

Notah's background with the AIPTAC is a natural fit for working with companies that are working with the Export Center. The new MBDA Export Center offers an additional market opportunity for Tribal enterprises and Native businesses that are already working with The National Center through the AIPTAC, which helps them access contracts through the federal Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) administered by the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) of the U.S. Department of Defense.

Exporting their goods and services may be a natural next step for companies that are already supplying products or services to the federal government through the PTAC or the SBA's 8(a) business development program, Notah said. For example, if a company is already approved to supply a federal agency that also happens to contract outside of the United States for their products and services, the Export Center can help them navigate the process.

For Native enterprises and other MBEs, the Export Center can also help them break into the export business by providing access to new markets, contract opportunities and even capital.

"There are great opportunities in export, but there are risks involved," Notah said. "We help clients become educated about the risks involved with doing business overseas or beyond our borders so they can expand into new markets."

JoAn Begay Notah, project director, Arizona MBDA Export Center (Photo: The National Center)

With all the disruption in supply chains over the past few years due to COVID-19 and political turmoil overseas, the thought of expanding into the export business might give some Native business owners pause.

Put bluntly: With all the craziness going on in the world right now, there is a risk doing export.

"That's true," Notah said. "But now is the time to plan for the future. Even though world affairs make export look a bit risky right now, this too shall pass and we'll be back in the export friendly market in the future. So it's a good time for companies to prepare and work on strategic plans that will allow them to expand their markets when the time is right." ■

MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
EXPORTCENTER
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Heat Mapping project provides customized, long-term economic development consulting to Tribes

Velda Shelby was less than a year into her position as the director of economic development for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes when the COVID-19 pandemic sent the Tribal economy spinning on its head.

Carefully crafted work plans and economic strategies evaporated overnight as Shelby and other Tribal leaders shifted into crisis-management mode. Her economic development office turned into a triage center dedicated to protecting the tribe from the worst of the pandemic. Shelby's staff helped administer approximately $2.5 million in business stabilization grants to Tribal business members, develop land-use strategies to house the homeless and manage federal funds to protect vulnerable populations throughout the pandemic.

At one point, they assisted in renovating a local motel for people requiring reentry and substance-abuse services.

While all this was happening, Shelby received an email from The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development asking her to participate in a "Heat Mapping" project. The grant-funded project provided Tribes with economic development consulting, customized to meet their individual needs.

For Shelby, the invitation from The National Center could not have come at a better time.

"The consultants they sent me, Ashley Hemmers and Raina Thiele, absolutely exceeded my expectations," Shelby said. "Their expertise is unparalleled. They went above and beyond and brought me a lot of valuable knowledge and all of these success models. More importantly, they were my sounding board."

Pictured (l-r): Velda Shelby, Alexandra Rumbaugh, Ashley Hemmers (Photos: Courtesy of The National Center)

Throughout the early days of the project, Hemmers and Thiele helped Shelby secure and administer funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Not only did the Heat Mapping project help her navigate through the immediate impacts of the pandemic, it also gave Shelby hope for what post-pandemic life could look like for her tribe.

"Most importantly, they were my sounding board through the most tumultuous times of the pandemic," Shelby said. "They gave me something to look forward to. They were such a wealth of knowledge ... (and) exceeded my expectations because they were so versed in federal legislation and financial expertise."

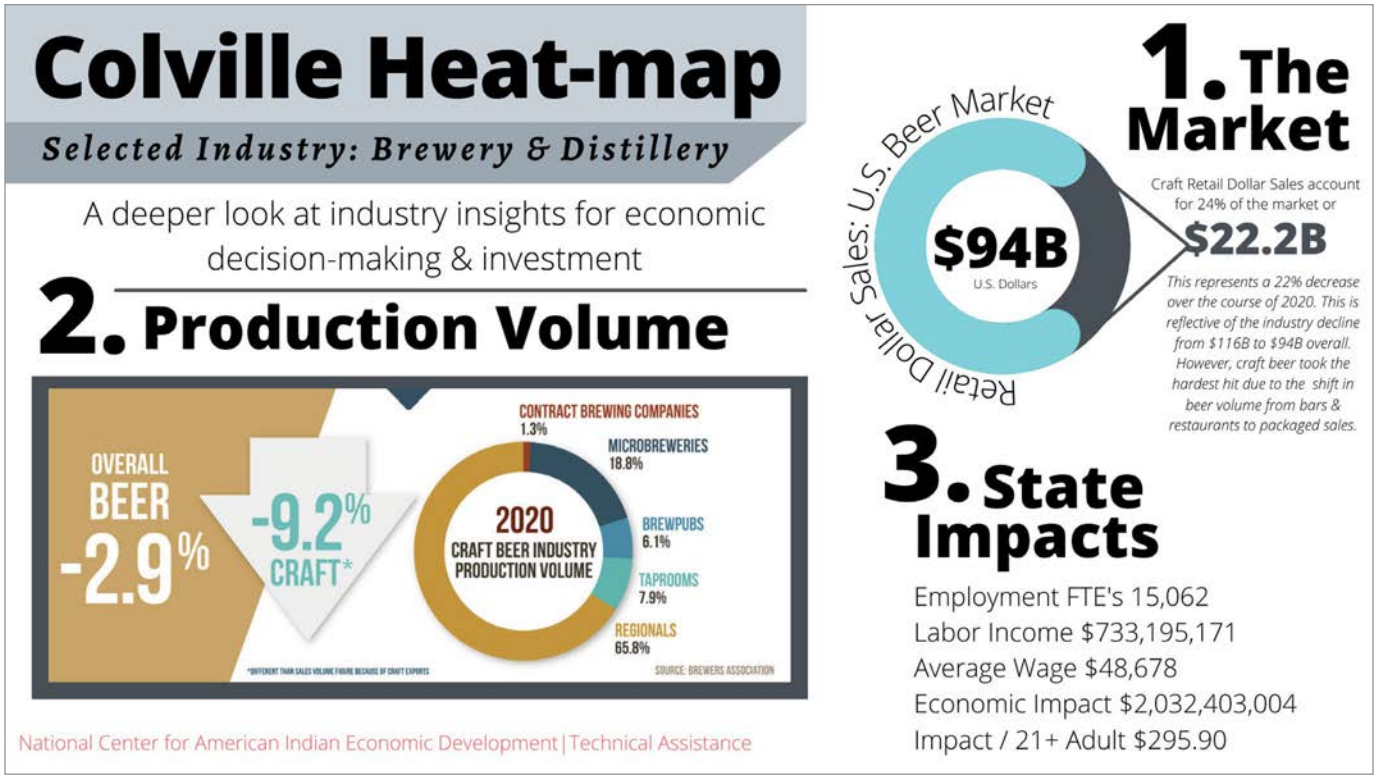
The Heat Mapping project involved three Tribes over a nine-month span, with each tribe meeting monthly with The National Center consultants. Ultimately, the goal of the project was to help Tribes identify and analyze areas of economic opportunity they were interested in, but lacked the capacity to research and explore further.

"We provided them an overview and economic landscape of what the positionality was in their state and region," said Hemmers, a Tribal administrator with The National Center who served as a consultant and researcher on the project. "Then we looked at industry indicators and gave them examples of how other Tribes were doing it and what they were doing with it. We presented them with different heatmaps and went through all the information with them."

Customized Consulting

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes targeted three main areas of economic development for the project: environmental tourism, convenience marketing and cannabis. Hemmers and her colleagues from The National Center provided data and research on each of those areas.

"We provided them examples of how other Tribes across the nation have gotten into those



Over a nine-month span, The National Center worked with three Tribes to help them identify and analyze areas of economic opportunity they were interested in, but lacked the capacity to research and explore further. One of those opportunities included brewing, an industry the Colville Tribe was considering expanding into. (Graphic courtesy of The National Center)

industries, what those benchmarks would be, if they were positioned well for that type of market, and gave them another listening arm to determine if this is a good idea," Hemmers said of the process.

In terms of tourism, The National Center provided Shelby with low-impact models to redevelop an aging bathhouse in Hot Springs, Montana. During the 1950s, the bathhouse generated a substantial amount of revenue for the tribe, but eventually fell into disrepair as the Tribal economy shifted, Shelby said. The Salish and Kootenai Tribes created plans to redevelop the bathhouse with a portion of the funds from a $1.9 billion settlement agreement with the U.S. Department of the Interior regarding water rights.

"Ultimately, this was something we were interested in as a regenerative industry for our people," Shelby said.

The National Center consultants also helped the tribe identify and develop models for bison range management. In the summer of 2021, the Department of the Interior transferred nearly 19,000 acres of land comprising the National Bison Range to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Now, Shelby and the tribe's economic development office are exploring ways to leverage those lands to increase access to food, expand tourism and open new opportunities for the confederation.

The heat mapping project also assisted the Salish and Kootenai in rethinking their convenience marketing industry through a process called economic stacking. According to Hemmers, more people were traveling to national parks on the Salish and Kootenai Tribal land; however, the Tribe lacked some of the infrastructure to properly capture these dollars. The consultants provided Shelby with data showing the benefits of adding restaurants, breweries, convenience stores and other facilities to capture a larger share of tourist dollars while they visited the area.

For Shelby, the research also identified ways of improving a food desert in the northwestern portion of their Tribal lands through increased tourism, an unexpected benefit of the process, she said. Shelby noted her office recently completed a feasibility study on addressing the food desert as a result of the research.

"They were willing to customize a lot of our plans and strategies based on where we were and what we needed in terms of social impact," Shelby said. "They brought me a model that could help us go about community engagement while making sure we are sensitive and respectful to meeting our people where they're at. I wasn't expecting that."

"They were my sounding board through the most tumultuous times of the pandemic. They gave me something to look forward to. They were such a wealth of knowledge (and) exceeded my expectations because they were so versed in federal legislation and financial expertise."

—Velda Shelby, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

In addition, the Heat Mapping project helped the tribe plan for the future. Montana approved the sale and consumption of recreational marijuana in a number of counties throughout the state, effective January 2022. However, since marijuana remains illegal under federal law, Tribes are barred from capitalizing on the industry, despite it surrounding their lands.

The Confederation of Salish and Kootenai Tribes targeted three main areas of economic development for the project: environmental tourism, convenience marketing and cannabis. (Graphic courtesy of The National Center)

The Heat Mapping project provided several case studies and models for the Salish and Kootenai Tribes to build their own cannabis industry, should recreational use be granted by the federal government.

"I think the case studies were instrumental to this project," said Alexandra Rumbaugh, a program manager at The National Center who oversaw the Heat Mapping project. "You were able to see the steps that someone else had already taken and learn from their failures and especially their successes."

Identifying New Opportunities

The Heat Mapping project also included the Colville Tribe, which used the research to develop long-term economic development strategies for their community. One of those opportunities included brewing, an industry the Colville Tribe was considering expanding into.

Hemmers and her colleagues mapped out existing breweries and discovered that, while the Colville Tribal homelands were surrounded by breweries, a large void existed across their entire reservation.

"We were really trying to have a conversation with them about how to understand data in their area and how to make sure that if there is an economic industry, they at least know about it," Hemmers said.

Through its research, The National Center was able to connect the Colville Tribe with an established brewery owned by another tribe to share best practices and advice. The relationship ultimately resulted in a formal partnership between the parties, Hemmers said.

During the Heat Mapping process, The National Center made it a point to only provide the data to inform Tribes, rather than pushing for any strategy in particular.

"Through this project we wanted to present unbiased data to tribes so that they could make an informed decision regarding their future economic endeavors," Rumbaugh said. "We are always here to support tribes and tribal enterprises."

Empowerment Through Data

Ultimately, The National Center attempted to instill a sense of comfort for creating business and economic development strategies through data. Throughout the process, the consultants focused on the information available and how the specific Tribes could leverage that data to engage with the markets in their areas. In one case, they were able to show how one tribe's market was actually more locally driven than it had previously thought.

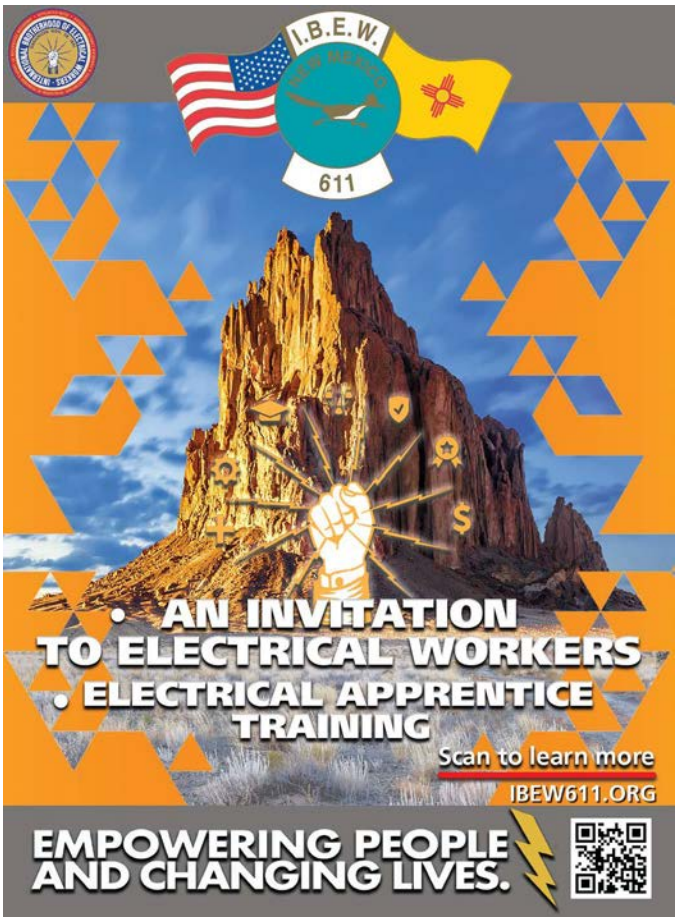
"We were able to locate where their customers were coming from and show how other Tribes develop a locally driven market, so that if they wanted to create a strategy then they had an idea of a model to use," Hemmers said.

Additionally, Hemmers and her colleagues made it a point to pull the research from public sources, including state, federal and Tribal data, rather than proprietary or subscription databases. This allowed Tribes to go back and examine the data on their own. It also helped inform the Tribes about the trove of public resources available to them. Through the process, Hemmers showed the Tribes how to build relationships with the departments in the federal government responsible for sharing economic data with Tribal nations.

"The Tribes really came out more empowered," Hemmers said.

The Heat Mapping project has concluded, but The National Center may consider writing a similar program into a future grant, Rumbaugh said. In the meantime, Hemmers and Rumbaugh hope the seeds of economic possibility they helped plant with the Tribes will blossom in the years ahead. It's a sentiment shared by the Tribes they've worked with.

"In retrospect, I believe that monthly access to these geniuses was possibly the best thing that came out of the pandemic for me," CSKT's Shelby said. "While everything seemed to spin out of control, I could count on (them) to keep me focused on the economic possibilities for our tribe." ■



YOU BELONG HERE

Women Transforming Indian Country

When Prairie Bighorn, a member of the Fort Peck Sioux Tribe, heard that the American Indigenous Business Leaders (AIBL) nonprofit would shut down in 2014, she didn't think twice.

"I'll do it," she said. "I'll run it."

For Bighorn, who has an MBA from the University of Montana and worked in American Indian economic development, AIBL was pivotal in her education and career.

"When I found AIBL, I felt I had found my people," she said. "I found people who supported where I wanted to go in my life. I didn't have that anywhere else — it made me believe that I could do it because I had this whole organization behind me."

Across Indian Country, Indigenous women like Bighorn are leading organizations that stand behind individuals and communities to transform Indian Country through leadership, education and economic development.

"Over the past years we've seen Native women rise to some of the highest levels of U.S. and Tribal Governments, produce and star in popular mainstream television shows, take the helm of established businesses and nonprofits, open and develop new businesses in all industries, and even win a national TV cooking competition," National Center President and CEO Chris James said. "Everywhere they go, Native women are proving their leadership, creativity, and entrepreneurial skills, without forgetting their heritage and culture and for the benefit of Indian Country."

This issue of *NC Magazine* features some of these women who are transforming Indian Country.

Mary Kim Titla

Executive Director
United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY)

On Leading: *"When adults do invest their time and energy in a young person, young people can feel it, and they know you care, and good things start to happen. They start to trust you, and believe in themselves and have hope."*

A member of the San Carlos Apache tribe, Mary Kim Titla leads United National Indian Tribal Youth, a nonprofit fostering the holistic development of American Indian and Alaska Native youth.

For Titla, leading UNITY is something of a homecoming.

As a teenager, she saw a UNITY newsletter in a Tribal office in her home state of Arizona. She attended her first UNITY conference in 1979.

"UNITY inspires hope and changes lives," Titla said. "That is our slogan, and it did that for me when I was young."

After earning a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Arizona, Titla spent nearly 15 years in broadcast journalism. Then, she ran for Arizona's 2nd Congressional District in 2008, coming in second with 33 percent of the vote.

All the while, she stayed connected to UNITY by serving on the organization's board of trustees. In 2013, she finally "answered the call" and devoted her life to empowering Native Youth as executive director of UNITY.

Under Titla's leadership, UNITY has grown 137 percent since 2013. UNITY's programming remained virtual in 2021, providing more than three dozen virtual webinars and activities that reached more than 2,000 participants across Indian Country.

"It's been an incredible journey," she said. "I have seen incredible young people come in and out of the organization who can say that UNITY changed their life."

This February, the organization held a successful in-person mid-year conference, with speakers including *America's Got Talent* finalist Brooke Simpson (Haliwa-Saponi) and actor D'Pharaoh Woon-A-Tai (Oji-Cree) from Hulu's award-winning television show, *Reservation Dogs*.

"When adults do invest their time and energy in a young person, young people can feel it, and they know you care, and good things start to happen," Titla said. "They start to trust you, and believe in themselves and have hope."

Pictured (l-r): Mary Kim Titla, Chrystel Cornelius (Courtesy photos)

Chrystel Cornelius

Chief Executive Officer
Oweesta Corporation

On Leading: *"Find your inner bravery and strength. Know that your voice is representing your people, and you deserve to be at that table and to be heard. Take strength from your ancestors."*

Before Chrystel Cornelius became the president and CEO of Oweesta Corporation, a Native CDFI intermediary, she worked as a planner for the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, where she's a member.

Cornelius, who's also an enrolled member of the Oneida Nation, was accustomed to finding solutions for whatever needs her community faced, assisting in developing nursing homes, childcare centers, natural resource grants and more. However, when Tribal members came to her looking for help with asset-building or lending, she didn't know where to send them.

"We didn't have the resources to help with that," she said. "So I started researching what kind of opportunities there are for marginalized communities."

In 2006, with support from her tribe, Oweesta and the Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) Native Initiatives Fund, Cornelius started the first nonprofit on her reservation: the Turtle Mountain CDFI. She emphasizes that her community was mainly operating in a cash economy.

"People didn't have checking or savings accounts," she said. "And I had certainly never been a lender. Oweesta helped create our first lending policies and procedures," she said. "They were incredibly instrumental in our success. And now, I am leading Oweesta."

Oweesta was founded in 1999 to provide tools and capital support to help Indigenous communities establish financial institutions with a range of asset-building products and services. Cornelius joined the organization in 2011 as director of lending, contracts and quality control. In 2013, she became Oweesta's president and CEO.

Oweesta serves 70 registered CDFIs across Indian Country. Cornelius stated that in the early days of Oweesta, the organization helped communities transition from cash-centric economics.

"Oweesta wasn't heavily lending at first," she said. "Our communities were still building the capacity to be good borrowers, start bank accounts and look at entrepreneurship as a reality. It has changed the economic landscape of our communities."

When COVID-19 hit in March 2020, Native CDFIs became financial first responders, deploying emergency funds to small businesses. Oweesta leapt into action, launching webinars, virtual training and ensuring that Native CDFIs and their clients had access to the unprecedented amount of federal funds injected into the small business sector. In 2020 alone, Oweesta deployed $38.2 million in loans that funded 306 existing businesses and helped start 54 new companies.

"I have never seen our industry be so innovative," she said. "I am so proud of the tenacity and the faith and preservation of our Native CDFIs. When you live in the community, your CDFI is helping, you see your loan clients every day, and you directly witness the need and the impact of the work."

Pictured (l-r): Sarah Echohawk, Prairie Bighorn (Courtesy photos)

When asked what advice she would give to young Native women with aspirations for leadership, Cornelius says, "Find your inner bravery and strength. Know that your voice is representing your people, and you deserve to be at that table and to be heard. Take strength from your ancestors."

Sarah Echohawk

Chief Executive Officer
American Indian Science and Engineering Society

On Leading: *"One of the themes within my family was humble leadership. That is really what was reflected to me and (how) I came to understand leadership as valuing people through service and support."*

Sarah Echohawk comes from a family of Native American leaders. Her father, attorney John Echohawk, co-founded the Native American Rights Fund in 1970.

"In our family, it was stressed that education is the great equalizer," said Sarah Ecohawk, member of the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma and CEO of American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), said.

AISES works to advance Indigenous people in the so-called STEM disciplines: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. AISES offers scholarships, internships, professional development, career resources, conferences, leadership summits and more. As of 2020, the organization has awarded $13 million in academic scholarships to Indigenous students.

Before joining AISES, Echohawk knew she wanted to lead a Native American nonprofit organization. So she took it upon herself to ask questions and learn from her peers and leaders.

"I wanted to learn every aspect about nonprofit work," she said. "I wanted to know my craft, not because I wanted to do all of those jobs, but because I wanted to be a good leader by understanding all of the aspects of a nonprofit."

Echohawk says that she sees herself as less of a "boss" and more as a support system for her staff in leadership.

"One of the themes within my family was humble leadership," she said. "That is really what was reflected to me and (how) I came to understand leadership as valuing people through service and support."

AISES retained all of its staff throughout 2020, and even grew in 2021. Echohawk credits this to the whole organization's commitment to being nimble as they took on the pandemic day by day.

Echohawk acknowledges that as a Native woman in leadership, she carries more than just her role at AISES.

"I feel the pressure because you want to represent women's leadership in Indian Country," she said. "As a Native woman leader, you can't just focus on your job— there is always the bigger picture that you have to pay attention to, too."

Prairie Bighorn

Executive Director
American Indian Business Leaders (AIBL)

On Leading: *"If you aren't doing well in your personal life, you can't lead well. Our students are from Indian Country, and to help them become the most effective business leaders they can be, we have to give them the tools to deal with the things they have gone through."*

When Prairie Bighorn stepped in to lead AIBL in 2014, the organization didn't have the funds to pay her.

"AIBL gave me what I needed to get to where I wanted to go," she said. "I am thankful every day that I jumped in and decided to figure it out and keep it going."

Native American students have an 11 percent college completion rate. Through targeted programming, AIBL supports Indigenous business students to improve graduation rates and equip them with skills to create prosperous careers.

"It brings me joy to work with our students," she said. "They have so much energy, and when you are around them, you like we really can change Indian Country."

When COVID-19 shut down colleges across the country, Indigenous students who relied on on-campus housing became homeless.

"We had AIBL students who were living in their cars and still completing their school work," Bighorn said.

Bighorn secured emergency funds from Synchrony Financial, an online bank, to offer support for students, whether it meant paying for hotel rooms, plane tickets, and even food.

"I wasn't going to focus on the reality of the uncertainty," she recalled. "Instead, I decided to focus on the students who had nowhere to live and nothing to eat and be the leader they needed at that moment."

In response to the trauma students experienced, AIBL launched a new mentorship program that includes personal development and emotional wellbeing.

"If you aren't doing well in your personal life, you can't lead well," Bighorn said. "Our students are from Indian Country, and to help them become the most effective business leaders they can be, we have to give them the tools to deal with the things they have gone through."

Bighorn speaks with great pride and emotion when talking about AIBL students.

"They already are leaders," she said. "A lot of them struggle with feeling like they don't belong... and I tell them, 'You belong here. You belong in these rooms and these tables. Your ancestors were gifted the stewardship of these lands and of everyone, you belong here.'" ■

Cedar Band Holdings Makes a Splash in the Wine Industry

When the economic development arm of the Cedar Band of Paiutes decided to get into the wine business, they didn't let a lack of experience stop them.

CBC BevCo. was started in 2013 when the Cedar Band Holding Corporation, which the Tribe wholly owns, sought to expand its portfolio. The corporation operates nine businesses in technology, telecommunications, mortgage services, staffing services, aerospace engineering, commercial trading posts and now, wine.

"We didn't know wine," Paul Terry, president and CEO of Cedar Band Holding, told *NC Magazine*. "We had no experience in it, but that hadn't stopped us before."

In its search for the right partner, Cedar Band Holding received 80 proposals from wineries across the country.

"I always look for the human touch," Terry said. "When companies partner with us on a new idea, we are looking at building something for seven generations, not just the here and now."

The band inked a partnership with the Acampo, Calif.-based LangeTwins Family Winery and Vineyard, a legacy winemaker with a five-generation family history of its own.

"We needed a partner that would treat us as an equal, not another customer," Terry said. "We felt that they would take us by the hand down this virgin path that we had never been down before."

The band also brought on Bill Tudor, an industry expert with 40 years of experience, as executive vice president.

Both Tudor and Terry emphasize how important their partnership with LangeTwins was in the early days of the business finding its footing.

"There were some difficult times in the beginning," Terry expressed. "We kept holding hands and even when we got to the end of our fingertips, they never let go, and now I am sure they are glad they hung on."

Today, the company produces and sells seven varietals — four reds and three whites — under the Twisted Cedar Wines brand. The grapes are grown on 8,000 acres of certified sustainable farmland. Their wine is carried by YellowStone National Park, five Smithsonian Museums — including the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian — the Utah Department of State and Beverage Control, and the Army Airforce Exchange Services.

The Cedar Band of Paiutes didn't let a lack of experience stop it from getting into the wine business, hiring industry expert Paul Tudor (left) to work with Paul Terry (right), president and CEO of Cedar Band Holding. (Photo: Courtesy of CBC BevCo/Twisted Cedar Wines)

Before COVID 19, Twisted Cedar Wine was largely carried in restaurants and Tribal casinos. With the shutdown, the CBC Bev Co. was facing losing 75 percent of its business.

"We didn't slow down," Terry said. "That is when our team looked harder at new accounts."

The company focused on selling to retail stores and also landed accounts with the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board and Walmart. They also invested in their digital presence to drive online sales.

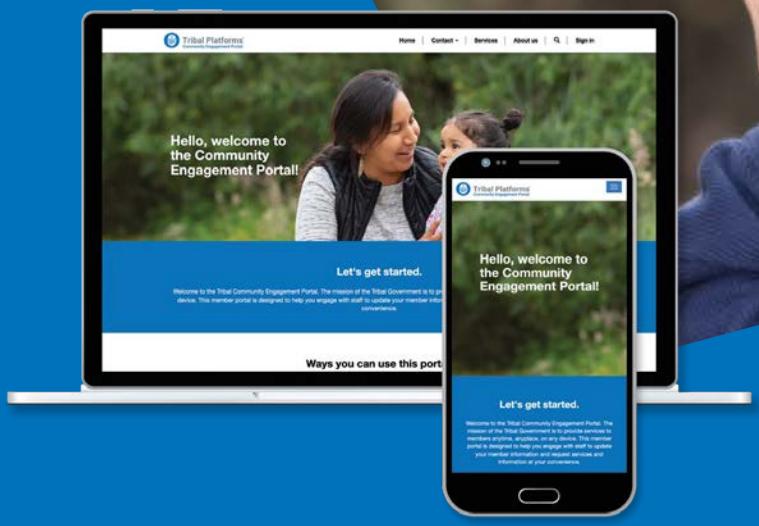
"It was scary, but no one missed a paycheck at CBC BevCo during COVID," Terry said. "We encourage our employees to spread the wealth."

For Terry, integrity is the secret ingredient in Twisted Cedar Wines, all of which have won a slew of industry awards. Each varietal has been awarded silver or gold medals in national and international wine competitions. Most recently, the Zinfandel won a gold medal and best in show at the 2021 London Wine Competition, where Twisted Cedar was the only North American winery in the top 10.

"We continue to get affirmations that our wine is top-notch," Terry said. "That is what makes me most proud about CVC BevCo. We could have done a host of different things, but we stuck with what we knew and believed was good and right for the corporation and ultimately for the band."

The winery fits into the overall economic development strategy of building for the future, Terry said.

"We build legacy companies. We build them to stand up, manage them with integrity, and now we are doing things we never could have imagined." ■



Enable Member Engagement Anytime, on Any Device

The **Member Portal** for Tribal Platforms® enhances tribal member engagement by

1) Providing members **secure, 24-hour access** to their personal information

2) Enabling tribal members to **apply for tribal programs remotely**

Our Tribal Platforms software is trusted by tribal nations across America to manage over 500,000 member records.

ARCTIC IT
Tenacious Ingenuity®

Ready to elevate and simplify?
844.461.9500 | connect@arcticit.com

Mad River Brewing CEO Linda Cooley (Photo: Courtesy of Mad River Brewing)

Mad River Brewing Secures History-Making Partnership and Bright Horizons

After nearly two years of weathering the pandemic and finding its footing, Yurok Tribe-owned Mad River Brewing is looking at a bright horizon.

"We are using our beers as a movement for what we are fighting for," according to Linda Cooley, the brewing company's CEO and a member of the Yurok Tribe.

When the Tribe acquired the Blue Lake, Calif.-based brewery in October 2019, it took over a business with three decades of success, a loyal following and award-winning brews. Cooley was ready for growth with a plan to kick off profitable partnerships with Tribal casinos across the state of California.

> ***"We are using our beers as a movement for what we are fighting for. We wanted to talk about our story not historically and culturally, but what we are fighting for right now."***
>
> **—Linda Cooley, CEO of Mad River Brewing and a member of the Yurok Tribe**

"Then, COVID happened," Cooley said. "It felt like a huge kick in the stomach. Our original plan of working with Indian Country came to an end because (casinos) were the first to shut down."

As industries across the country came to a halt, Cooley and her team dug deep into a rebranding centered around utilizing product labels to tell the story of the Yurok Tribe beyond the reservation.

"We wanted to talk about our story not historically and culturally, but what we are fighting for right now," Cooley said.

Last year, Mad River Brewing released Undammed Hard Hop Seltzer, commemorating the Yurok people's 20-year fight to remove four PacifiCorp dams that have obstructed salmon and steelhead migration for more than a century. Part of the proceeds from sales of the seltzer will go toward the undamming.

Another brew, the Historic State Park IPA, brings awareness to the Yurok's partnership with California State Parks to cooperatively manage Stone Lagoon Visitor Center at Humboldt Lagoons State Park.

Additionally, the tribe established Yurok County Certification, a set of environmental and social responsibility standards for brands.

"We are our own authenticators," Cooley told *NC Magazine*. "One day, our membership will be able to create things and become Yurok County Certified. The overall hope and vision are that we can create an Indigenous category, which is extremely long overdue."

In February, the brewery announced it had inked a deal with the San Francisco Giants professional baseball team, which will serve the brewery's craft beers at Oracle Park for the 2022 season. During negotiations for the deal, Cooley said she felt truly listened to.

"Anyone can have a statue or a sign, but the Giants are letting us grow and are helping with our sovereignty by having a product with our own label in a professional sports stadium," she expressed. "We needed to get to the next step, and they gave us that."

Cooley beams with emotion when reflecting on the past two years and looking ahead.

"My dreams are coming true," she said. "Not just my dreams, but everyone who came before me. The fact that my tribe purchased this and I get to be a part of it is unbelievable."

She emphasizes the more significant implications of Mad River Brewing's visibility and success.

"I am from the rez, a place where people might be afraid to go to, but that's where I grew up," she said. "To say to any little girl or boy on the rez that has this dream, that anything is possible and to show that if you work super hard, dreams happen...that means a lot to me." ■

(Courtesy illustration)

Red Planet Books and Comics:

An expression and celebration of resistance and resilience

As Dr. Lee Francis, member of the Laguna Pueblo, describes earning his Ph.D. in education from the University of Texas, he laughs.

"The running joke is that I got my Ph.D. to open a comic book store," he said.

Francis opened Red Planet Books and Comics in Albuquerque in 2017 to engage young people with fresh and authentic representations of Native people. The store sells original titles created by Francis' publishing house, Native Realities Press, as well as comics, books, games, toys and collectibles "for the Indigenous crowd."

Before opening Red Planet, Frances founded the Indigenous Comic-Con, the first large-scale convention dedicated to Indigenous comics. For Francis, comics allow for the examination of contemporary Native life, and he notes the visual aspect of the medium is crucial.

"I wanted to focus on ways young people could get engaged with a medium that focused on how they looked in comic books and graphic novels," he said. "For Native folks, we have existed in pop culture as an identity marker for 400 years. The first representations of Indigenous people were visual: 'the noble savage.'

"It's distressing to watch that. It's distressing that in pop culture, we have never controlled our identity."

While the COVID-19 pandemic forced Francis to halt Indigenous Comic-Con — he hopes to bring it back in 2023 — he hired artists to produce public awareness material for Native communities focused on handwashing and caring for elders as a means of preserving population and culture. He also used the time to reflect and move toward growth opportunities.

"I thought creatively about what I wanted to be putting out into the world," Francis said. "Everything we want to produce is a response to the ways we have been portrayed in popular culture, and also an expression and celebration of resistance and resilience."

For Francis, that meant expanding his vision of Native representation to other media. He acquired A Tribe Called Geek, an established digital media platform elevating indigenous pop culture, STEM and "Indigenerdity for the Geeks at the Powwow."

Through the platform, Francis will release five original podcasts this year. The first show will premiere at the 2022 Reservation Economic Summit.

"This will be my first year at RES, and I am really excited to be there and launch the podcast," Francis said. "We are inviting some of our artists to join us. We are excited to bring our group out for it."

"I wanted to focus on ways young people could get engaged with a medium that focused on how they looked in comic books and graphic novels."

—Dr. Lee Francis, Red Planet Books and Comics

This summer, Francis and his team are filming a pilot in New York City for a show called "Land Acknowledgement" that will explore the past, present and future of American cities from a Native lens.

While Francis is blazing trails in Native representation on pop culture, he frequently adds that he is proud to carry on the legacy of those who came before him,

"I am proud to carry this work forward," Francis said." I stand on the shoulders of giants. There are amazing Native artists and illustrators that did this work long before me and paved the way. I am really proud to be able to create this kind of media." ■

Q&A

Michelle Kauhane
Hawai'i Community Foundation

(Courtesy photo)

Kuleana is a word that describes a unique Hawaiian value and practice that loosely translates to mean "responsibility." More specifically, kuleana refers to the reciprocal relationship between a person who is responsible, and the thing they are responsible for.

It's a guiding principle for many Hawaiians and has a place in the business community, says Michelle Kauhane is the Senior Vice President of Community Grants and Initiatives at the Hawai'i Community Foundation. Previously, Kauhane served as the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement CEO.

Kauhane spoke to NC Magazine about the evolution of small businesses in Hawaii and how individual Kuleana — a unique Native Hawaiian word that loosely translates as responsibility — impacts the collective success of Hawaiian economic development.

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

NC Magazine: How has Hawaii's economic landscape changed over the last 20 years?

Michelle Kauhane: When I was in middle school, the biggest thing that was happening in our life at the time was that we were getting Windward Mall. Where Windward Mall exists today was a field where we would pick flowers to make lei. The mall came, and like any evolution, new opportunities for small businesses came about.

The biggest growth and change I have seen in the last 20 years is that small businesses are tapping into Native innovation by taking cultural practices and creating businesses that are tied to our people and this place.

How have Hawaiian small businesses been impacted by these changes?

While we make up about 20 percent of the state's population, our Native people represent less than 10 percent of our small businesses. However, small businesses in general that have had opportunities to thrive here in the islands largely depend on tourism.

During COVID, we have seen many businesses shutting their doors. A lot of financial help required businesses to have a storefront, which hurt a lot of our native crafters. Folks that work out of their homes and sell at fairs throughout the year took the hardest impact.

What is the Hawai'i Community Foundation doing to support native Hawaiian small businesses?

The community foundation is investing in the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement, a nonprofit focused on helping native businesses. Following COVID, they launched Pop-Up Mākeke (Mākeke means marketplace).

Mākeke started when Mary Monarch, a large hula festival that many of our local artisans and crafters would rely on most of their annual income, was canceled. What started as a popup is now a virtual hub with meaningful partnerships, not just here in Hawaii but globally. It brought Native small businesses to a marketplace that they may not have been open to prior to COVID.

Aside from tourism, what industries offer the most opportunity for Native Hawaiians?

Hawaii is unique in so many aspects. We are a beautiful island state in the middle of the Pacific. There have been efforts to encourage the film industry to think of Hawaii as a filming destination — it creates jobs and has a direct impact on our economy in many ways, and we also get to share the beauty of our island state with the world.

We are very careful because, often, Native culture is exploited to look like something it is not. An advantage to having the film industry here is that we get to be the authors of our own stories ... there are so many parts of our culture that we can tap into outside of the images of hula girls and melodic singing. I would love to see the industry open that up to the world.

What does the future of Hawaiian economic development look like?

At the community foundation, we started a $7 million grant program for 194 nonprofits across the state in our CHANGE framework, which we are hyper-focused around. Every letter stands for a sector in our community: Community & Economy, Health & Wellness, Arts & Culture, Natural Environment, Government & Civics, and Education.

We know we are all interconnected, as our people were, as our way of life was. We are digging deep into data and making decisions about where we direct resources based on where we see the deepest inequities and highest needs across the state.

Do small businesses have a role to play in restoring a healthy Hawaii?

No matter what size your business is, whether you are in the film industry, you're a cultural practitioner, or you're in IT, we all have a role to play. We all have significance; that is who we are.

We are about communal success. When we understand what our own respective kuleana is, big or small, it impacts the collective well-being of all of our people. ■

High school students Isabel WhiteEagle (left) and Kiara Pekah (right) took first place in the high school division of the 2021 Native Business Plan Competition at RES. (Photo: The National Center)

Native Youth Business Competition Winner:

"If you have an idea, just go with it."

One of the highlights of RES 2021 was a business plan competition featuring up-and-coming entrepreneurs from across Indian Country.

The 2021 Native Business Plan Competition was hosted by The National Center in partnership with American Indigenous Business Leaders (AIBL) and First Nations Development Institute.

"The National Center is committed to today's Native entrepreneurs and businesses, but also those of tomorrow," National Center President and CEO Chris James said. "Our Native youth are entering a more connected world that promises to open new doors to entrepreneurship both inside and outside of Indian Country. We're thinking seven generations ahead by fostering and developing the future leaders of Native entrepreneurs, including through our annual Native Youth Business Competition at RES and American Indian Scholarship Fund."

The competition divided participants into three categories — high school division, Tribal college division and university division — as they went through a simulation of seeking funds for a start-up idea.

After submitting an initial business plan for review, semi-finalists were flown to Las Vegas and coached by Indian Country business experts to prepare their final pitch at RES 2021.

Semi-finalists made their pitches to a panel of expert judges, who evaluated their plans on viability, market outlook, and the likelihood they'd invest.

Spurred by an anonymous donation of $10,000, the Youth Business Plan competition awarded a total of $23,400 to the top three teams in each category.

In the high school division, a two-person team of Cheyenne/Arapaho students from Oklahoma City's Sovereign Community School took first place with their pitch for Fresh Fix, a restaurant that utilizes Indigenous ingredients and storytelling to bring healthy food and cultural connection to the community. Team members Isabel WhiteEagle and Kiara Pekah made the winning pitch in Las Vegas.

Pekah, 17, spoke with *NC Magazine* about the whirlwind experience of winning the competition and her plans to help foster entrepreneurship at her school.

(Photo: The National Center)

How did you prepare for the competition?

My teammate and I had just heard of the competition a month before it started. We spent the whole month in and out of public libraries, booking study rooms to prepare. We had a little bit of experience from another business plan competition that we were in.

Tell us about Fresh Fix and how you identified the need for it.

It was initially my teammate Isabel's idea. With just a month of preparation, we talked it over and decided to go with a restaurant based in the Oklahoma City metro. We thought of ways the restaurant could bring strength and unity into all of the Indigenous communities in Oklahoma. We wanted to target concepts like food sovereignty and supporting other Indigenous-owned businesses. That was the groundwork for Fresh Fix.

There are a few health-based restaurants in Oklahoma City, but they are pricey and not walkable. The location we looked at was a high foot traffic area, and we saw that as an opportunity.

What do you think made Fresh Fix stand out to the judges?

With the short time limit, we didn't have time to switch ideas. We committed to it and stuck with it. We were able to strengthen it as much as we could. Each dish at Fresh Fix would have a story with it, so we made a brochure with sample dishes and stories and handed them out to the judges. One of the dishes was Isabel's grandma's corn soup and the story behind it. I think that really made us stand out.

What did it feel like when you won?

We knew we had done the work. We knew the information best, and we just relayed it. In a way, we prepped ourselves extremely well for it. We only had a month to plan for it, and all of those days in the study rooms really paid off. When we did win, it was an oh-my gosh moment.

"There are not a lot of Indigenous-owned businesses, but there is a lot of opportunity there and many routes you could take. If you do have an idea, just go with it. The work you put into it will show."

—Kiara Pekah, winner of the high school division of the 2021 Native Youth Business Plan Competition

Would you like to continue developing Fresh Fix?

Personally, yes, I can see continuing to develop it. I can't speak for my teammate. One of the ways I have decided to continue this business venture is through starting an American Indigenous Business Leaders chapter at my school. The AIBL has scholarships and is focused on creating pitch competitions in the student community. So I can see us continuing to develop Fresh Fix through that.

What advice would you give other indigenous high school students who might be interested in starting a business?

There are not a lot of Indigenous-owned businesses, but there is a lot of opportunity there and many routes you could take. If you do have an idea, just go with it. The work you put into it will show. ■

Jodi Archambault accepts the Tim Wapato Public Advocate of the Year Award from CEO Chris James of The National Center at RES 2021. (Photo: The National Center)

National Center 2021 Advocate of the Year: Jodi Archambault

To say that Jodi Archambault is a force in Native advocacy may be an understatement.

A citizen of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Archambault is the director of Indigenous Peoples Initiatives for Wend Collective and a strategic advisor for the Bush Foundation. Previously, she worked as a policy advisor at the Washington, D.C.-based law firm Sonosky, Chambers, Sachse, Endreson & Perry LLP, which specializes in Native American rights.

From 2009-2015, she served as the Special Assistant to the President for Native American Affairs on the White House Domestic Policy Council, Deputy Assistant Secretary to the Assistant-Secretary Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior, and as the White House Associate Director of Intergovernmental Affairs.

The National Center named Archambault the 2021 Advocate of the Year.

"Jodi Archambault has been an advocate for Indian Country long before her current role as Director of the Indigenous Peoples Initiative at the Wend Collective," National Center President and CEO Chris James said. "Jodi served both in the White House and at the Department of the Interior working on Native issues and helping to bring the voices and needs of Indian Country to the leadership of the U.S. Government. She is an incredibly deserving recipient of the Advocate of the Year award."

NC Magazine spoke with Archambault about her upbringing on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, her advice for Native youth pursuing advocacy, and what she is working on now.

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity and space.

NC Magazine: How did your upbringing inspire your path?

Jodi Archambault: My dad always looked to the wonderful things about being Native. I grew up in Pine Ridge. It would seem to be a tough place to grow up by American standards and media accounts, but that's not how I understood my childhood to be. We were in the aftermath of Wounded Knee, and the pride of being Lakota was high. My community had gotten control of their (Bureau of Indian Education) school through self-determination legislation. They made sure our values and culture reflected back to us in the curriculum and the building design. We had our values spoken to us. A lot of my classmates were fluent in our language. I thought everybody was Lakota, and it was an amazing way to grow up.

What are you most proud of during your time at the White House?

The reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act that included the restoration of Tribal jurisdiction was incredible. It was not my work alone. Many people worked on that for decades, and I am proud of being a part of that.

What are some other highlights of your career?

I've been able to contribute in a team atmosphere, and I think that has been some of the biggest highlights of my career so far. I worked with a host of individuals on increasing the budgets for Native youth in 2014-2015. That was primarily due to young people in Standing Rock speaking their truth to the President and First Lady in 2014. I worked with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, advising them on strategy. We reversed some pretty solid decisions in support of the pipeline. Every soul who passionately stood in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe changed history. There are a lot of companies that think twice and do a lot more diligence with affected Tribes than they ever had. It wasn't a total victory because there is oil flowing under that pipeline, but it amplified a lot of advocacy that was always there. I didn't do that; we all did that.

Right now, I'm working with Tribes in the Great Plains and the Great Sioux Nation. The Black Hills are sacred to us, but there's a lot of land in the Dakotas, Minnesota, Montana, and Wyoming that need protection.

I've been working with the group of people to help start the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Land Trust, which came from people dreaming and saying, "What if?"

The best part of being Lakota is in front of us, it's in the future, and we have to keep putting our energy into that dream and vision.

What advice would you give to Native youth who want to create a career out of advocacy?

Whatever you're doing, make sure you can explain it to your grandmothers. If you can't stand in front of your grandmother and tell her what you're doing, you probably shouldn't be doing it.

That is amazing advice. What else?

Always do your very best, even if the circumstances aren't what you would want them to be, and that means helping out in your community when you're called upon. It's so important to bring in the people that are closest to the issue that you're trying to solve. If you don't do that, if you think you can come up with solutions yourself, you're missing the whole point of advocacy.

Activism and policy are not mutually exclusive. Young people navigate that really well — way better than my generation did. They're way more in their power, and I am really excited about it. ■

Retirement for All

Mutual of America Financial Group offers flexible retirement products and services to Tribes' underserved members

For many Tribal businesses and community members, finding a retirement plan services provider who understands the practical issues Tribal enterprises face, as well as the unique structure under which they operate, can be challenging. And, many solutions in the marketplace can be prohibitively expensive for Tribes to adopt and administer.

Mutual of America Financial Group can help Tribes overcome these challenges through its commitment to working directly with Tribal governments and enterprises to understand their financial concerns, tailoring its comprehensive and competitively priced retirement savings solutions to meet their needs.

The New York-based financial services firm, which has offices nationwide, is one of this year's sponsors for the 2022 Reservation Economic Summit (RES), hosted by The National Center. For Tyler Anderson, vice president of Tribal markets at Mutual of America, RES offers the opportunity to meet with a variety of Tribal businesses, many of whom have been traditionally underserved by the retirement and financial service industries, to discuss their retirement plan options.

"At Mutual of America, we are trusted by more than 100 Tribes and Tribal-related enterprises including Tribal governments, enterprises and organizations, Native American nonprofit organizations, and Native American small businesses, to provide quality retirement plans and comprehensive services to their employees," Anderson said. "We provide a wide array of retirement plan services for Tribal communities and enterprises nationwide. And, we deliver these services through a dedicated team that will offer consultation and guidance to help Tribal plan sponsors evaluate their existing plan or design a new one."

Mutual of America has dedicated staff, such as Anderson, and resources specifically for Tribal business. In the past, Anderson has participated in RES as an attendee, and this year the company is sponsoring the event. That decision came about largely due to conversations between Anderson and Chris James, president and CEO of The National Center.

Tyler Anderson, vice president of Tribal Markets, Mutual of America (Courtesy Photo)

"Our conversation focused on how to best serve the employees and members of Tribes, to help them build and preserve assets for a secure and dignified retirement," Anderson said. "We help employees do that through our network of salaried employees, who do not earn commissions on the products we sell and the services we deliver. This allows us to keep our focus on our clients and their employees."

According to Anderson, he and James discussed leveraging Mutual of America's resources to create programming and a regular education series that takes place outside the RES conference. To that end, Mutual of America offers in-person and virtual financial education meetings highlighting not only retirement savings topics but also other financial topics that include practical examples, helpful tips and relevant issues. Topics include a retirement reality review, managing student loan debt, financing a vehicle, understanding credit scores, debt management and more.

Customized Options

Mutual of America specializes in providing small and mid-sized organizations and companies with pension- and retirement-related services. Importantly, Tribal plan sponsors have the power to choose the type of retirement plan that best suits their organization and employees, including non-ERISA, governmental and multiple employer plan arrangements.

"We like to meet with the Tribes and look at all their partners and their employee demographics. The retirement benefits we can then provide are easy to administer, offer choice and flexibility, and are tailored to each Tribe's unique workforce," Anderson said.

Mutual of America is proud of the long-standing relationships it has with many organizations, such as Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI), ADDP, ANCOR, the Arc, Community Action Partnership and National Legal Aid & Defender Association. Each of these recognizes Mutual of America as a preferred provider of retirement plan services to its members. The company also has similar relationships with many state and regional organizations – including Oregon Native American Chamber (ONAC) – and is a proud supporter of NAFOA, NCAI, NNAHRA and many other Tribal-related associations.

Mutual of America also works with Tribal employers to help educate their workers on the importance of establishing a retirement account as early as possible. "We understand that retirement savings plans succeed to the extent employees participate in the plans and that the level of participation largely depends upon employees' understanding of retirement savings concepts.

"We have extensive experience developing retirement savings communication and education programs that are clear, concise and engaging and can provide those to employees in-person and virtually," Anderson said.

Overall, Anderson and Mutual America can show Tribal businesses and communities, regardless of the organization's size, solutions and investment options designed to enhance plan operation, participation and compliance.

Finally, Mutual of America and Tribal organizations share many of the same core values, such as integrity, prudence, reliability and loyalty. The firm is proud of its long-standing support of Tribal communities. "We partner with multiple, well-known National and Regional Tribal associations to further their causes and support the great Tribes of this nation." ■

KeyBank continues investment, involvement in Tribal businesses through renewed support of RES

Mike Lettig, national executive and founder of KeyBank's Native American business unit. (Courtesy photos)

Access to capital remains one of the largest challenges in Indian Country, particularly for Native businesses outside the gaming sector.

When searching for capital, businesses owned by Tribes and their citizens need partners that understand the nuances of the Tribal structure, and are willing to invest where other institutions might not be as experienced.

Enter KeyBank. The Cleveland-based financial institution created its Native American business unit in 2005 with the express mission of bridging funding gaps for businesses in Indian Country.

"Indian Country deserves a better way to access capital from a group that understands the fundamentals, sovereignty, opportunities and challenges Tribes face when accessing capital and developing private sector relationships," said Mike Lettig, national executive and founder of KeyBank's Native American business unit.

KeyBank works closely with Tribes to understand their pain points and aspirations, before creating financial solutions that meet their needs. However, KeyBank's involvement with Indian Country stretches beyond financing. Company representatives are frequent participants at various conferences where they present on economic development topics ranging from asset management and raising capital, to investing in a volatile economy.

Lettig sees KeyBank's work with Tribal businesses as a strategy to open doors with the wider private sector by showing those companies that Indian Country is a safe and rewarding place to conduct business.

"Even though we didn't start our Native America Financial Services as a specific discipline until 2005, our history in doing business in Indian Country goes back almost 70 years," Lettig said. "In those 70 years, we've learned Indian Country is a very safe place to do business with a significant amount of integrity. There are challenges that are easy to address and challenges that are more difficult to address, but when you find a solution for those difficult challenges, those are the most rewarding."

According to Chris James, president and CEO of The National Center, working with KeyBank gives Tribal businesses access to a "laser-focused" team that is steeped in the nuances of Indian Country.

"Having a Native American team of folks who know Native American communities is extremely important," James said. "They do a lot of financing and the reason they do it is because they have relationships with the community."

KeyBank is a longtime supporter of The National Center and is continuing that commitment as a sponsor for this year's Reservation Economic Summit (RES). For Lettig, RES is the perfect example of the magnitude of business being conducted in Indian Country.

"The National Center's RES conference is the single-largest attended conference dealing with economic issues in Indian Country," Lettig said. "They bring best-in-class presenters from all varieties of the private sector and Indian Country to discuss the current state of affairs. For a good reason, it has a great reputation and high attendance."

Continued Support

In addition to sponsoring RES, KeyBank recently provided The National Center with a $300,000 grant to expand its Native Edge Institute (NEI) training events.

The grant aims to provide the requisite funding to issue 20 small business loans to small Tribal businesses in eight states. Outside of these loans, NEI plans to leverage the grant to continue offering technical assistance and training events to small businesses across Indian Country.

"This Native Edge Institute support is really acknowledging the effectiveness of the program and how they've implemented it," Lettig said. "That's what motivates support for our company. We have similar values, similar efforts, and are both accomplished in bringing financial solutions to the underserved and Native America is somewhere we want to focus on."

The National Center launched NEI in 2018, largely due to an initial investment by KeyBank which allowed the program to pursue follow-up funding, James said.

"They really believe in our mission, believe in the work we do and they've been a good partner by providing support," James said.

Ultimately, Lettig and KeyBank view their support of The National Center and RES as one piece in the larger puzzle of encouraging further private sector investment and involvement in Indian Country.

"The financial community has really embraced the willingness to do business in the vertical that Indian Country has carved out," Lettig said. "The financial community and the private sector are starting to understand that meeting the needs of Tribal governments and other non-gaming businesses are important and safe. It's a great, risk-appropriate way to look at doing business in Native America. ■

Dedicated to making a difference in Native American communities.

We're proud to support the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development.

Key's objective is to help Tribes access and develop financial resources to support their goals and promote the growth of Tribal economies.

To learn how we can help your Nation succeed, visit key.com/nativeamerican.

KeyBank Opens Doors.℠

Healing Through Healing

Mayo Clinic's reconciliation project supports Native opportunities

Mayo Clinic doesn't shy away from its history — like Mayo's connection to the 1862 hanging of the "Dakota 38 + 2," the largest mass execution in U.S. history.

After the execution and burial, William Worrall Mayo, M.D., whose sons later founded the clinic, is said to have dissected the body of a Dakota warrior, Marpiya te najin, and used the skeleton to teach human anatomy.

The moment is a wound in Mayo Clinic's history that it hopes to heal, according to Jonathan Baines, M.D., Ph.D. To do that, Mayo Clinic started reconciliation efforts aimed at forging new relationships with Native American Tribes.

"Our founders had a vision for the clinic to heal anyone, regardless of race, income and any demographic," said Dr. Baines, an Alaska Native (Tlingit and Tsimshian) who practices family medicine and teaches in the Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine and the Family Practice residency at Mayo Clinic.

"Mayo Clinic is learning to work with Native communities. This includes acknowledging all of our history. Mayo has learned the power of listening, relationships, respecting sovereignty and being there for the long term, but knows that we have more to learn. This is a journey of growth and healing."

Since its inception in 2017, the reconciliation project has awarded multiple full scholarships to Native American medical students. The scholarships are awarded to up to two Native medical students per year.

In addition, the clinic offers Ernest Wabasha and Amos Owen scholarships for qualified students enrolled in Mayo Clinic School of Health Sciences programs.

Jeff Bolton, then chief administrative officer of Mayo Clinic, went out to the Santee Sioux Reservation and formally apologized to the tribe, and also asked their permission to name the scholarship after Marpiya te najin, Dr. Baines told *NC Magazine*.

According to Dr. Baines, Mayo Clinic has invested millions of dollars in Native-related causes and projects.

"One of the things we've learned is that we need to be in it for the long haul; we can't just do window dressing," Dr. Baines said. "As we listen and learn from Native communities, we better understand how we can use our resources to help."

Jonathan Baines, M.D., Ph.D., (left) practices family medicine and teaches in the Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine and the Family Practice residency at Mayo Clinic. (Courtesy photo)

That's a message echoed by Bolton, who, in 2017, said history binds Native Americans to Mayo Clinic.

"We acknowledge and commit to mending the division between the Dakota people and Mayo Clinic that exists because of our shared history," he said. "We are two groups committed to healing."

Closing health disparity gap

Mayo Clinic became an executive sponsor for the Reservation Economic Summit in 2021. At RES 2022 on May 23–26 in Las Vegas, Dr. Baines will discuss ways Native communities can address health care through economic development.

"We think it's time to reimagine Native health care, and that The National Center is a key partner and RES is the right venue to do it," Dr. Baines says. "We hope to find new partnerships and deepen current relationships to address Native American health disparities."

Mayo Clinic focuses on three health-care pillars — practice, education and research — and different Native spaces, like funding the Healthy Nations Advisory Board, hiring Native patient navigators, and providing COVID-19 tests to some Tribes during the pandemic.

Still, Dr. Baines says there's work to be done, especially with only 4,000 Native physicians in the U.S. A book series centered around Native physicians for Native children aims to change that trend, he says.

"If we are going to reach parity, we don't need 4,000 Native physicians — we need 24,000 Native physicians," Dr. Baines says. "To do this, we need something revolutionary. We need something completely different. If we keep doing the same thing, we're not going to get to that 24,000. The book will hopefully help with that."

Dr. Baines likens it to throwing tadpoles in a river and expecting more frogs. Nothing will change unless Native children are exposed to more Native physicians, he says.

"They need to see themselves in the profession, and they need that support early on," Dr. Baines says. "That's where education comes into the picture." ■

Q&A

Casey Lozar

Vice President of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and Director of the Center for Indian Country Development

It's well known that there is a dearth of data when it comes to Indian Country. That fact extends across important Native American issues ranging from health and education to economic development and the Tribal economy in the post-pandemic era.

In early 2022, the Center for Indian Country Development (CICD) at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis moved to fill that gap with the launch of a long-term initiative to provide Tribal governments and federal policymakers with data they need to make better decisions. The expansion calls for CICD to add several positions that will mark "considerable" growth for the organization and for Indian Country, according to Casey Lozar, director of CICD.

It's a new opportunity for Lozar and his team, following a busy two years helping Tribes, policymakers and the federal government understand the pandemic and its effects on Tribal nations. In November 2021, Lozar was honored for his work with the Janet L. Yellen Award for Excellence in Community Development, named for the current Treasury Secretary and the first woman to chair the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

NC Magazine spoke with Lozar, an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, about CICD's expansion, the Yellen award, taxation and working with The National Center. The conversation has been edited for clarity and length.

NC MAGAZINE: First of all, congratulations on the Yellen Award. Tell us a bit about the award and what it means to you.

Casey Lozar: It's certainly an honor to have been selected as this year's award winner, and I'm truly humbled by being put in the cast of characters that have received the award in prior years.

As relates to the award itself, there were a number of reasons why they felt that I was a good choice, especially in terms of my work during the early part of the pandemic trying to capture real-time impacts of Covid-19 on Tribal government and Tribal enterprises, as well as the work I did developing and distributing $20 billion for Tribal governments through the ARPA funds.

The thing I would underscore is that I'm just one player on a team of very, very passionate and motivated individuals who care deeply about the health and economic well-being of Indian Country. It's also a symbol of the Fed's commitment to Indian Country and making sure that we're doing what we can to ensure that economic self-determination is real and that through partnerships, we can support Tribes' ability to reach their full economic potential.

Your team is growing. Tell me a little bit about the expansion of the Center for Indian Country Development.

We're very excited about our ability to expand our capacity and create additional value by deepening the understanding of Tribal economies — both the barriers that exist and ways to break through those barriers with economic policymaking.

We're expanding our ability to collect and harmonize data, as well as developing our own surveys on key questions that really are important to Tribal economies and to understanding the lived experience in the Indian Country. That means developing surveys that really matter to Tribal leaders, to Tribal entrepreneurs, and to Tribal businesses so that we can get collectively a good sense of where opportunities exist to help, diversify, stabilize and grow Tribal businesses and economies.

I think the key thing for the Center and for the Fed is to make sure that we're doing this with Indian Country and in partnership with Tribal leaders and Tribal organizations so we can ensure all of our efforts have the type of utility Tribal leaders need to help them inform their decisions, as well as (the information) policy makers need to inform economic policy that impacts Indian economies.

What are some of the challenges you're expecting in terms of working collaboratively with the Tribal leaders? It's a broad coalition, to say the least.

There is considerable diversity among the 574 federally recognized Tribes and all of the state recognized Tribes. And certainly there are different experiences in terms of using, utilizing and collecting their own data. Everyone's at a different place as it relates to the connection between data analysis at the local level and policy making.

It is really important for us to make sure that we are engaging consistently with Tribal leaders and seeking their input on the types of data that they think will be helpful in both determining economic strategy at the local level, but also collectively understanding the types of questions and data that will help articulate the experiences across Indian Country that might inform economic policy.

At the same time, it's very important that we make sure that data privacy is truly realized and data sovereignty is truly realized. That's one of the balance points that will be critical for us as we grow our ability to collect data, utilize data, leverage data, and do it in a way that finds that balance between adding value with new data sets while at the same time protecting Tribal data.

This won't be a sprint, right? This will be a long, ongoing process to achieve.

This is not a short-lived effort. This is the Federal Reserve committing capacity, time, energy, and partnership to addressing these long-standing data issues and really being a resource to help address the invisibility that American Indian and Alaska Native people — as well as Tribes and Tribal businesses — face when it comes to data. That can't be accomplished in a matter of months.

Can we talk about taxes for a minute? I know CICD recently hosted a virtual two-day event on the topic. What role do you think Tribal taxation will play in the future?

Taxation is a critical revenue tool for government units. If you look at non-Tribal governments, tax receipts are the lion's share of their treasuries. We don't know to what degree taxation and Tribal tax receipts play in the overall makeup of their treasuries or their budgets to support their community members and their cultural efforts, etc. There needs to be some research done to understand the current context of taxation in Indian Country to identify ways in which it can be a more useful tool for Tribes to generate a more predictable set of revenues. I think that's really important when you look at the types of long-term investment that is needed in infrastructure projects, for example, in Indian Country.

In August 2020, CICD worked with The National Center on a survey about how the pandemic was affecting Tribal businesses. Are there any plans to work with The National Center on future surveys or research?

Absolutely. We've had some early discussions with Chris James at The National Center to identify the vision around another survey.

The Center for Indian Country Development has the technical capacity to do a lot of the data analysis and has some relationships in Indian Country, and The National Center is really the hub of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Indian Country. So, having a partnership and continuing to find ways that we can collectively do surveys or collectively learn more about the needs and opportunities that Tribal businesses face makes a lot of sense. ■

CAPABILITY STATEMENT
TITAN FACILITY SERVICES, LLC

David Beaver, CEO
dbeaver@titanfs.org
Phone: (480) 993-0405

NAICS: 561720, 561210, 541513, 541511
DUNS: 968383120
CAGE CODE: 6FBK5

OFFICE LOCATION:

953 E. Juanita Ave.
Suite "B"
Mesa, Arizona 85204
Phone: (480) 993-0405
Website:
www.Titanfs.org

CERTIFICATIONS:

SBA 8(a)
SBA Small Business
CIMS ISSA-With Honors
American Indian Owned

TEAMING CAPABILITIES/ADVANTAGES:

Titan Facility Services, LLC is an industry-leading provider of Custodial/ Housekeeping Services and Base Facility Services to U.S. Government departments/agencies and DOD. Titan has "Special Rights" under 8(a) and SBA Small Business Owned Program pertaining to **Sole Sourcing**.

WHO WE ARE:

Titan Facility Services, LLC is 100% Native American Owned SBA Certified 8(a), Limited Liability Company. The venture is qualified and authorized to bid on, and win, U.S. Government contracts in Various NAICS codes. Titan has more than nine years of experience in Custodial Services Contracting and in the past eight years has successfully participated as a Healthcare Aseptic Management Services (HAMS) Prime Contractor in over 21 Department of Defense Contracts throughout the United States. Titan has built a solid reputation of integrity, honesty, and reliability.

Since 2013 Titan has been a member in good standing with the International Sanitary Supply Associations (ISSA) and is Certified with Honors to the ISSA Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) and is also Certified with Honors to the CIMS Green Building Criteria.

FEDERAL CUSTODIAL CONTRACTS (* Current):

HAMS II - 17 U.S. Airforce MTFs/Hospitals:

- Little Rock AFB, AR*
- Barksdale AFB, LA*
- Keesler AFB, MS*
- Columbus AFB, MS*
- Eglin AFB, FL*
- Hurlburt Field, FL*
- MacDill AFB, FL*
- Tyndall AFB, FL*
- Patrick AFB, FL*
- Charleston AFB, SC*
- Shaw AFB, SC*
- Moody AFB, GA*
- Robins AFB, GA*
- Altus AFB, OK*
- Tinker AFB, OK*
- Vance AFB, OK*
- Arnold AFB, TN*

HAMS I - 5 U.S. Airforce MTFs/Hospitals:

- Cannon AFB, NM
- Ellsworth AFB, SD
- Minot AFB, ND
- Sheppard AFB, TX
- Tinker AFB, OK*

Other Federal Contracts:

- Naval Station Norfolk, VA*
- Naval Medical Center, CA*
- JB McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, NJ*
- Sherman Indian School (IHS), CA*
- DMA Riverside, CA*
- NSA Crane Glendora Test Facility, IN*
- Wright Patterson AFB, OH*
- Maxwell AFB, AL*

PROUDLY SERVING INDIAN COUNTRY

Clearinghouse CDFI

For 25 years, our loans have created jobs & services that help people work, live, dream, grow, and thrive in healthy communities.

$86.24 Million

in Financing for Native American Projects

PICTURED:

Borrower: Pueblo of Laguna

Loan Amount: $14 Million of NMTC Allocation

Location: Laguna, NM

Purpose: Development of water-related infrastructure, including sewage, filtration, & piping on Pueblo of Laguna reservation land

Get details about borrowing or investing:

(800) 445-2142 www.ccdfi.com