INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S FLOW FUND

2021 - 2022 Storytelling
This is the story of Year 2 of the Kindle Project Indigenous Women’s Flow Fund. We invite you into this journey of sharing power, uplifting Indigenous women’s wisdom, and giving beyond what we dreamed possible. This story reflects the voices of everybody in the IWFF ecosystem.
The **INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S FLOW FUND (IWFF)** is an Indigenous-led grantmaking program that nourishes community-sourced initiatives that are actively transforming systems.

Grounded in trust-based and participatory philanthropic approaches, IWFF brings together five Indigenous women from across the United States to be decision-makers over grantmaking dollars and shape a program according to their vision. This program is supported by a special group of donors who are engaging in their own learning cohort.
PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING
Empowers individuals and groups outside of typical philanthropic institutions with funds they recommend to organizations of their choice. Participatory grantmaking seeks to break open predictable patterns of philanthropic decision-making and democratizes funding decisions. The IWFF cohort not only identifies groups to support but also shapes the themes of the program.

OUR APPROACH

PROVIDING CAPACITY
As an intermediary, Kindle Project provides the scaffolding of staffing, infrastructure, administration, due diligence, fundraising, and education to the communities and donors we work with. This allows both donors and community-based decision-makers to focus their time and energy on moving money in powerful ways and creating alternative pathways of grantmaking for systemic change, while Kindle Project handles the details.

EMERGENT DESIGN
Creativity, flexibility, connection, and nimbleness are core to Kindle Project's work. This allows us to be responsive to emergent needs, opportunities, and learnings as they unfold. We provide structures and facilitated spaces for real-time explorations. We architect our programming to collaborate with our partners. We co-create and facilitate spaces for both the Women's Cohort and Donor Cohort members as communities of practice.
OUR ECOSYSTEM

Donor Cohort

Indigenous Women's Cohort

Kindle Team

Grantees
The **INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S COHORT**

The Women's Cohort* is a multi-generational circle of women representing Ho-Chunk, Diné/Tsétsêhéstâhese, Santee Sioux, Raramuri, and Northern Arapaho. They are artists, seed-savers, community advocates, poets, organizers, mothers, daughters, and grandmothers. Each brings their wisdom and intuition to the cohort. We believe that women leaders who are based in their communities know best where money should flow.

*The Women's Cohort has chosen to be anonymous to the public.

"I loved hearing the sisters share and the way we come together with mindfulness and ceremony. I loved building the relationship with my sisters and learning about how we can help communities."  
~ Women's Cohort Member

"IWF completely changed my perspective on funding... I have begun to find more creative solutions to fixing things."  
~ Women's Cohort Member

"There are many organizations on the ground that are not as visible but need this support, as they are the foundation of our land and people."
~ Women's Cohort Member
The IWFF DONORS & DONOR COHORT

Much more than a transactional source of funding, IWFF donors are an integral part of the ecosystem that brings this program to life.

Sharing power is as much a journey as it is a skill that can be developed. Some donors find their power-sharing path by donating to the program. Others engage in further exploration by participating in the Donor Cohort, a community of practice for participants to connect more deeply. This Kindle-facilitated, peer-learning community has supported the donors to reflect upon and evolve their role more broadly. The culture of mutual caring and support that has grown contributes to the success of IWFF as a whole.
In its second cycle of grantmaking, we added many new grantees and awards to individuals into our ecosystem. This year, the Women’s Cohort made 39 grants and awards to Indigenous-led grantees and/or individuals. These Flow Funding decisions were made as a result of the women’s depth of connection to their communities and to organizations that are often unseen by traditional philanthropy. These groups and individuals are located across 12 states in the United States. The cohort is actively reaching out to Indigenous communities in underrepresented states as well.
KINDLE PROJECT TEAM COHORT

As we complete our second cycle of this program, it has become clear that Kindle Project team members are an important part of this shared ecosystem. We serve not only as facilitators, advisors, administrators, and organizers of this project, but we have been engaging in a deep cohort and peer-learning process ourselves. Being present in both the Women’s Cohort and the Donor Cohort, we have the privilege of experiencing this program in a multitude of ways. As a team we are unpacking our own assumptions, challenging our edges, and stretching our perspectives and grantmaking based on the experiences of being part of this program.

These three cohorts are linked in curiosity, learning and moving through the limitations of existing patterns to find a new relationship to sharing power through giving.
Kindle Project is a women-founded, women of color-led, grassroots philanthropic organization working intersectionally to build bridges, flip power, and support community-driven philanthropy.

We are invested in democratized, collaborative, and strategic grantmaking that aligns donors and projects for meaningful impact.

We ignite creative ideas for moving money, elevating trust-based and people-powered giving models as well as participatory decision-making practices.
PROJECT TEAM

PEARL GOTTSCHALK (LUJAN)
IWFF Advisor

JAIME GLOSAY
IWFF Facilitator
White Mountain Apache, Navajo, and Kiowa Nations

ADAM RUBEL
IWFF Advisor

SADAF RASSOUL CAMERON
Kindle Project Executive Director

ARIANNE SHAFFER
Kindle Project Director of Participatory Grantmaking
HOW THE WOMEN’S COHORT GUIDED THEIR PROCESS

The natural elements were key to the guidance of the Indigenous Women’s Cohort as they made decisions about their giving in alignment with the moon, plants, seeds, and seasons.

They decided to host their meetings on the new moon according to the Lunar calendar, and to consider phases of rest, rebirth, renewal and regeneration much like the seasons and a seed’s cycle of life in a garden.

"It has been amazing to witness the heartfelt way the Indigenous women have honored all of life in their giving process. Even in a virtual setting they have managed to bring in their medicines, ceremonies, traditional teachings and plants."

- Pearl Gottschalk (Lujan)
  IWFF Advisor
Holding space for this cohort has been incredibly uplifting. The amount of love, trust, and support woven in this circle has provided a container, rather a basket, of offerings to flow to Indigenous communities. Centering Indigenous women to make decisions as individuals and as a collective honors their inherent power and agency.

IWFF has been a space of healing, reconnection, and truth. Here, we speak of the needs, concerns, efforts, and work that is being done in Indigenous communities. We learn more about the community leaders and advocates who are trying to address issues in their communities. We honor and see these changemakers as the experts and those closest to the solutions. Here, we get to be inspired and moved by our people.

The opportunity to seed and cede power is here. By supporting Indigenous women to decide where resources flow, communities are cared for in a deeper way—through empathy, trust, knowing, and hope. The wisdom and guidance of our ancestors, community, and planet are ultimately what move us toward action and impact.

Thank you to those who acknowledge, respect, and empower this critical effort and initiative.

~ Jaime Gloshay, IWFF Facilitator
FLOW FUND GRANTS TO ORGANIZATIONS

Flow Funds empower individuals to recommend grants to organizations of their choice. The method uplifts the wisdom of individuals and celebrates their agency to move resources. In this cycle, each cohort member had a budget of $30,000. The cohort members moved $140,000 to 13 Indigenous-led groups.

COLLECTIVE FUND

The Collective Fund empowers group decision-making to nominate organizations for a grant. The method prioritizes the wisdom of the group and celebrates consensus building. The Women's Cohort moved $265,000 to 13 Indigenous-led groups with grants ranging from $10,000 - $40,000.

AWARDS TO INDIVIDUALS

This year, a generous member of our Donor Cohort trusted the Women's Cohort with $10,000 each to give as awards to individuals of their choosing. The response from the cohort was tremendous and they reflected that this gifting process allowed them to recognize and honor the unseen and invisibilized people that philanthropy often misses. The 13 recipients of these gifts were Indigenous individuals who cultivate health and well-being in their communities.
FLOW FUND GRANTS TO ORGANIZATIONS

Of the 13 total grant recipients from each of the Women’s Individual Flow Funds, 6 were new grantees and 7 were returning grantees.

BRAVEHEART SOCIETY
FLOWERING TREE PERMACULTURE INSTITUTE
GENOA US INDIAN SCHOOL FOUNDATION
HEARTS GATHERED
Honor Our Pueblo Existence
Keres Children’s Learning Center
MIGIZI COMMUNICATIONS
Sitting Bull College Lakȟól’iyapi Wahóhp / Wičhákiní Owáyawa (Immersion Nest)
Suŋkawakaŋ Ta Wounŋpe: Teachings from the Horse Nation
Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation
UKWAKHWA OUR FOODS
White Buffalo Recovery
Anonymous
THE IWFF COLLECTIVE FUND

In a collaborative, creative, facilitated process, the Women's Cohort identified the themes that shaped the Collective Fund. The 2022 IWFF Collective Fund supports work that contributes to restoring healthy, vibrant Indigenous communities, which includes...

- Language and Cultural Revitalization and Transmission, Rematriation and Community Capacity Building
- Arts, Culture, Media
- Food Sovereignty, Cultivating and Sharing Seeds, Access to Traditional Local Foods, Land Stewardship, Restoration, and Sovereignty
- Nourishment and Protection for all Women, Children, Youth, and Two-Spirit Relatives
- Intergenerational Care: From Birth to Ancestral Communal Support
Beginning on the new moon in March, 2022, the Indigenous women gathered weekly to dive into discussions on organizations that are doing work that deeply reflects their collective theme. Decisions were made based on consensus, talking circles, and a deep sense of trust and respect for each other. Some organizations chose to remain anonymous. Of the 13 recipients, 7 were returning grantees.

**COLLECTIVE FUND GRANTEES**

BREATH OF MY HEART BIRTHPLACE
CENTER FOR INDIGENOUS MIDWIFERY
DAKHOTA IAPI OKODAKICIYE
DREAM OF WILD HEALTH
GROW OUR OWN
HERRING PROTECTORS
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES TASK FORCE
MENDING THE SACRED HOOP
NATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER
SAHNISH SCOUTS
WICONI WAWOKIYA, INC
YELLOW BIRD LIFE WAYS
AWARDS TO INDIVIDUALS

The Women’s Cohort gave 13 awards to individuals in this last cycle. Some chose to remain anonymous.

NATE ETSITTY
MIKE HENRY
APRIL HOLDER
SILAS KITTO JR.

GARRETT NIMMO
JULIE RICHARDS
ALLISON SAGE
KAYLANAH SHENDO

“We help in places that nobody else cares about, or can reach, or can see. We make investments where, without our help, some wonderful change would not have occurred.”

~ Women’s Cohort Member
The following pages are a compilation of explorations, learnings, and creative expressions from both the Women's Cohort and the Donor Cohort. We hope that these offerings will inspire you as well.
ACTIVATING REMATRIATION

Rematriation in the context of philanthropy emerged as a significant theme identified by the Women's Cohort. Rematriation places significant emphasis on honoring women’s traditional roles as gifters, caregivers and ceremony keepers in their community. By uplifting Indigenous women’s voices in philanthropy, this traditional role is honored in the modern context of giving.

"I enjoyed unlearning philanthropy… taking the 'rules' and un-applying them to how we come to the table to make decisions on money flowing into our communities.”

~ Women's Cohort Member

PUSHING BEYOND COLONIAL CONSTRUCTS

This year the cohort members have wrestled with how to “unlearn” modern philanthropic processes while simultaneously uplifting their ancestral giving practices that honor their Indigenous values and wisdom.

Flow Funding is built on concepts of trust, connection, and relationship at every level of the grantmaking process. The Women’s Cohort recognizes that the act of donors giving Indigenous women the power to move their resources is inherently an act of decolonization.

CYCLE 2 THEMES

This past cycle, two themes emerged in the Women’s Cohort that they chose to explore and focus on:
This poem is a collection of direct quotes from the Women’s Cohort members during our calls. It expresses the ways in which the women bring their culture, prayers and spirits into this work together. One of our cohort members made this poem into this collection of beads.

**She Imagines** we all sit together in her garden, praying with the seeds, planting a piece of our culture in the soil for the future generations

**She Offers** to bring the chanupa on the new moon to pray for our circle

**She Invites** us into her sweat lodge to burn sweetgrass for healing

**She Envisions** herself picking sagebrush with us, shoulder to shoulder with ribbon skirts, feeling our earthness, our role as givers, the prayer beads that connect us

**She Prays** in a different paradigm, as she puts seeds in the basket, each one our names and tribes, our belonging

**She Says** there is good in this world, learning from nature is a way of decolonizing ourselves

**She Dreams** of trees that network underground with deep roots and become friends

Mixing together different species and learning to grow together
Give each other space to grow

in the meantime she offers tobacco and juniper bringing each in their own way into the circle offering water, tobacco and food to spirits to come and help
COHORT SHARING

THE WOMEN’S COHORT...
...gathers and makes decisions on a lunar, cyclical giving process that honors the rhythms of the natural world, seasons, and the life of plants and seeds.

...makes decisions with trust in greater guidance, intuition, knowledge, and makes them together as a circle and in a mutually supportive community.

...explores what decolonizing philanthropic practices look like in action.

THE DONOR COHORT IS...
...redefining the role of a donor in relation to truly sharing power with a community.

...reimagining how the story of success is received and told, and reimagining community-driven impact.

...exploring peer wisdom and how to be in partnership with emerging communities.

THE KINDLE TEAM IS...
...exploring ways to continuously evolve the spaces Kindle holds for IWFF to thrive.
...processing learnings that arise from across the IWFF ecosystem.
...creatively pushing the edges of what power-sharing in philanthropy can be.
New Moon Prayer

During the new moon, my ancient grandmothers and your ancient grandmothers spin threads together. They are weaving fabric to warm the future generations.

~ Donor Cohort Member

Click here to listen to a Gaelic new moon prayer
When I think of the gatherings we have as a circle of sisters within Kindle Project, I consider the tiospaye concept. In discussing this worldview, Christopher Pexa, author of *Translating Nation: Rewriting the Dakhota Oyate*, expands on the hunkadowanpi—the process of engaging others as relatives. He states, "...thinking with our heart encompasses the ethical considerations that must be forefront of any endeavor." When we engage others as relatives, we "confer obligations on both the adoptee and the new family member." This heart, in my mind, encompasses my sister circle, our adopted ally (Kindle), our relatives we seek to help—human, four winds, the Above, and the Earth (Ina Maka). Within this structure there is a "founding of good," that which we as Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota seek to attain as we walk our life’s journey.

~ Women's Cohort Member
Indigenous Women
a poem by a Women’s Cohort Member

Proud,
Resilient,
Cycle breakers of abuse, addiction,
Breakers of intergenerational trauma through healing
Fierce Warrior.

Mothers,
Grandmothers,
Aunties, sisters, baby girl.
Storytellers,
Healers,
Teachers,
Keepers of traditional knowledge.
Elders.

Matriarch,
Responsible,
Strong,
Committed to her people
Loves with wisdom and without condition.
Respected.
THANK YOU TO EVERYBODY IN THE IWFF ECOSYSTEM FOR ANOTHER POWERFUL CYCLE

Hahou
Axhé'héé'
Pidamaya ye
Pidaụŋyapi ye
Pinagigi
Wainiginapsana

Donor Cohort Member drawing
To join as a donor, contact Arianne.

Read the 2020-21 IWFF Storytelling Report here.