



Inspiring Hope. Changing Lives.



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2020
Annual
Report
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This has been a difficult year in many ways. To everyone who found themselves in difficult circumstances because of this pandemic, I empathize with you. To everyone who suffered the loss of a loved one due to

COVID-19, I send heartfelt condolences.

The unprecedented pandemic affected non-profit organizations like UNITY as well. In this report, you'll read how we navigated through challenges like the cancellation of our 2020 national conference in Washington, DC, instead hosting what turned out to be a meaningful virtual event. You'll also read about impactful youth-led projects, the resiliency of our existing tribal youth councils, and how new groups organized, bringing our total to 325 in 36 states.

These affiliates remained active, meeting virtually, organizing food drives and figuring out ways to help their communities.

The question is, where do we go from here?

UNITY is developing a new strategic plan to answer that question. We remain committed to UNITY's mission "to foster the spiritual, mental, physical, and social development of American Indian and Alaska Native youth, and to help build a strong, unified, and self-reliant Native America through greater youth involvement," especially as we plan for an exciting future.

I'd like to personally thank youth leaders, trainers/support crew, and staff for an outstanding job planning and executing all of UNITY's amazing events. We're also truly grateful for the commitment and compassion of our partner agencies, financial supporters, and volunteers who assisted us during this time.

Loretta Tuell
Chairman, Council of Trustees

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



2019-2020 was a unique, but exciting year for UNITY. Unique due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but exciting to watch the organization – and the youth we serve – rise to the occasion.

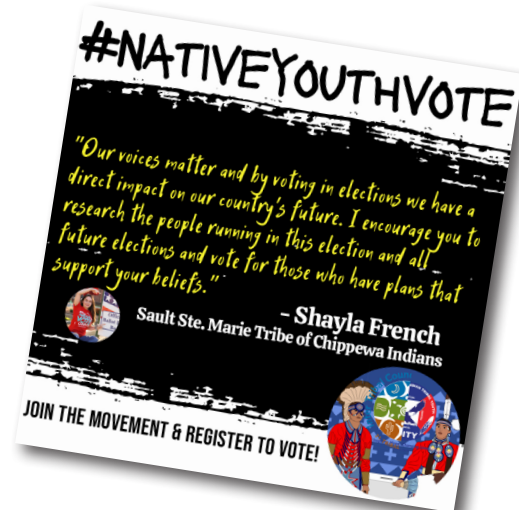
As I celebrate my seventh year as part of an amazing team, I reflect back to 2013 when I was asked by founder and former executive director J. R. Cook to take the helm of the organization. I think of every person who makes UNITY such an awe-inspiring organization with a remarkable mission, and I am filled with pride!

This report reflects the tireless efforts of our youth leaders, staff, trustees, support team, and others who continue to successfully serve Native youth through programs like the National UNITY Council and its executive committee, 25 Under 25 Leaders, Healing Indigenous Lives Initiative and its peer guides, the Earth Ambassadors, and UNITY News.

These pages are full of excitement and success stories, which would not be possible without our wonderful supporters, community partners, and volunteers. Thanks to this support, UNITY is able to empower Native youth leaders to address their identified top ten issues, highlighted in this report.

I'm very proud of where this organization has been, where it is now, and where it's headed. At our most basic level, we strive to do meaningful work for the betterment of our tribal communities. We help facilitate positive change in the lives of Native youth; find thoughtful, effective, and innovative ways to support them; and provide tools to help them reach their goals.

Mary Kim Tittle
Executive Director





The heart of UNITY is its affiliated youth councils, which are sponsored by tribes, Alaska Native villages, high schools, colleges, urban centers, and others. Youth councils engage in annual projects in four areas – cultural preservation, environmental awareness, healthy lifestyles, and community service. UNITY has a growing number of affiliated youth councils, which currently stands at 325 in 36 states. UNITY is the only organization to have a formal network of youth councils.

Members of each UNITY-affiliated youth council appoint two individuals (one young woman, one young man) to serve as representatives on the National UNITY Council (NUC). Native youth throughout the United States, who are UNITY affiliates, elect individuals to serve as Area Representatives on the National UNITY Council Executive Committee. The ten geographical areas are: Great Plains, Midwest, Northeast, Northwest, Pacific, Rocky Mountain, Southeast, Southern Plains, Southwest, and Western. Two youth (one young man, one young woman) are elected by the NUC membership each year to serve as National UNITY Council Co-Presidents.

TOP 10 ISSUES FACING NATIVE YOUTH IN 2020

Each year during the National UNITY Conference, the NUC gathers to vote on the top ten issues facing Native youth across the country. Youth Representatives from the 325 youth councils who make up the national network meet to discuss regional priorities.

The collective impact on youth-led national campaigns reaches far beyond that of the UNITY membership. With each youth council working together across the Nation, youth are empowered knowing they are not facing these issues alone.

The NUC voted on these issues at the Virtual National Conference for youth councils to address locally during 2020-2021:

1. Drug/Alcohol Abuse
2. Suicide/Self-Harm
3. School Dropout/Education Disparities
4. Cultural Identity/Blood Quantum/
Creating Belonging
5. Bullying/Lateral Violence
6. Unhealthy Home Environment/
Relationships
7. Human Trafficking/Missing and
Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
8. Lack of Positive Role Models
9. Poverty/Unemployment/
Lack of Resources
10. Juvenile/Adult Incarceration/
Generational Impacts of Imprisonment





UNITY's strength is found within youth driven national campaigns. Whenever a resolution is passed, the youth councils within the UNITY network are encouraged to host local community service projects addressing these topics during that calendar year. Each of the resolutions are designed to address one of the top ten issues facing Native youth in Indian Country.

Three resolutions were voted upon at UNITY's Midyear Conference this year by members in good standing. The 2019-2020 Executive Committee presented a resolution outlining their 2020 "Healing Starts Here" initiative addressing how youth can strengthen Native youth identity and sense of belonging within their communities.

A second resolution, sponsored by the UNITY Earth Ambassadors, recognizes Native people as the first earth protectors and caretakers. The resolution encouraged all UNITY youth to revitalize cultural environmental teachings by collectively celebrating the 50th anniversary of National Earth Day.

The third resolution was presented by the UNITY Peer Guides calling on the network to support their new "Healing Indigenous Lives Initiative." This is the first time UNITY youth have designed a training specifically targeting at-risk youth who may need additional support. The NUC passed the resolution agreeing to participate in listening sessions to collect solutions to address youth incarceration, drop-out rates and other community challenges.

CONGRESSIONAL FORUM - NATIVE YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON MENTAL HEALTH AND HEALING

On July 16, 2020, UNITY youth leaders were invited to participate in a congressional forum led by Congressman Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz.), chair of the Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States. Marco Ovando (Shoshone Paiute), Leticia Gonzales (Bishop Paiute), Cheyenne Kippenberger (Seminole Tribe of Florida), and Robert Scottie Miller (Swinomish), testified about the mental health issues facing Native youth, the need for more education and safety, and ideas on how policy can reduce trauma and promote healing.

Kippenberger and other panelists advocated for more mental healthcare services, improved access to those services in addition to broader research and collection of data regarding mental health among Native people. "Mental health care should not be a privilege. Our youth are suffering from depression, anxiety, PTSD, physical health problems and educational disparities, and it is leading to some of the lowest high school graduation rates and the highest suicide rates of any other ethnic group in the U.S. If these intergenerational traumas continue to go unnoticed, or unresolved, they will turn into more severe issues leading into adulthood, including alcohol and drug dependencies, high incarceration rates, domestic violence and unhealthy lifestyles," said Kippenberger.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, American Indian and Alaska Native children and adolescents have the highest rates of lifetime major depressive episodes, substance use disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, intergenerational trauma, suicide, and attachment disorders. This disproportionate harmful impact has been compounded by the physical and mental effects of the pandemic.

In addition to Congressman Gallego, Congresswoman Debra Haaland (D-NM) and the Congressional At-Large Delegate Michael San Nicolas (D-Guam) also participated in the hearing.

In December 2020, Congressman Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) successfully pushed for inclusion of the Native American Suicide Prevention Act as a key provision in the \$900 billion COVID-19 relief package passed by Congress. According to Congressman Grijalva's office, the hearing played a major role in the development of the act.



UNITY "We Have Hope" Webinar Series

As our country and world faced unprecedented times, it was important to focus on promoting UNITY's mission of inspiring hope and changing lives. This led to the launch of the We Have Hope live webinar series on Instagram. In this first-of-its-kind series, using social media, we highlighted Native youth across Indian Country who were doing great things in the midst of national uncertainty. UNITY's social media guru Jared Ivins-Massey moderated the Q&As, facilitating great conversations with the following Native youth creators and influencers:

Evynn Richardson from the Haliwa-Saponi Tribe of North Carolina; Robert IronShell of The Grounded Athlete, LLC.; 2020 High School Golf National Invitation qualifier Lane Christensen Jr. of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation; Ms. and Mr. Indigenous Arizona State University, Tashoni Morales, Tachi-Yokut/Te-Moak W. Shoshone and Lance Sanchez, Tohono O'odham; and Navajo jewelry artist Jaron Yazzie.

Recognizing Indian Country's 2020 Graduating Class

Last May, through social media graphic spotlights, UNITY recognized Indian Country's 2020 graduates. This was our third year recognizing graduating seniors, but this year, many of these tributes came in place of traditional graduation ceremonies. Due to the unprecedented circumstances faced by the class of 2020, we received an overwhelming number of photos, stories, and requests for recognition from families across Indian Country.

Get Out the Native Youth Vote

In partnership with the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, UNITY initiated an aggressive nonpartisan social media campaign to encourage Native youth to vote in the presidential election, using the hashtag #NativeYouthVote. Through this campaign, UNITY hosted voter registration drives at the UNITY headquarters and on the San Carlos Apache reservation. Other initiatives included Instagram Q&As, and voter training with the Indian Legal Program at Arizona State University. On election day, on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation in Arizona, UNITY distributed more than 500 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits at the polls.

Earth Ambassadors

The Earth Ambassadors Leadership program began in the 1990s, and was re-established in 2015. Last year, 10 Native youth from across the country were selected to participate in this environmental stewardship program. The cohort of ambassadors participated in informational workshops to increase their knowledge and awareness of issues affecting environmental quality on Native lands. The Earth Ambassadors attended the 2020 Midyear conference to facilitate environmental speed workshops, submit their Earth Day resolution to the NUC, orientate UNITY advisors about the Earth Ambassador program and facilitate an interactive presentation about environmental awareness and Earth Day projects. In April 2020, the UNITY Earth Ambassadors hosted a webinar, Celebrate Mother Earth Day, to provide inspiration to Native youth on how to carry out Earth Day projects while social distancing. They shared thoughts on how Mother Earth cares for us, and challenged the audience to make individual efforts.

"Our ancestors understood the intricate relationship with all living beings and how to only take what is needed and nothing more. I want to follow that example and tradition by only using what I truly need and nothing more to help eliminate excess waste that pollutes and harms our mother even more."

- Marco Ovando, 20 (Shoshone Paiute)

25 Under 25



This year, UNITY announced the fourth class of its "25 under 25 Native Youth Leaders" national recognition program, honoring Native American and Alaskan Native youth. The program launched in 2014, and celebrates the achievements of 25 outstanding Native youth leaders under the age 25,

every other year. These Native youth leaders exemplify UNITY's core mission and exude a balanced life by developing their spiritual, mental, physical and social well-being. Honorees were recognized at UNITY's first-ever virtual conference in July 2020.



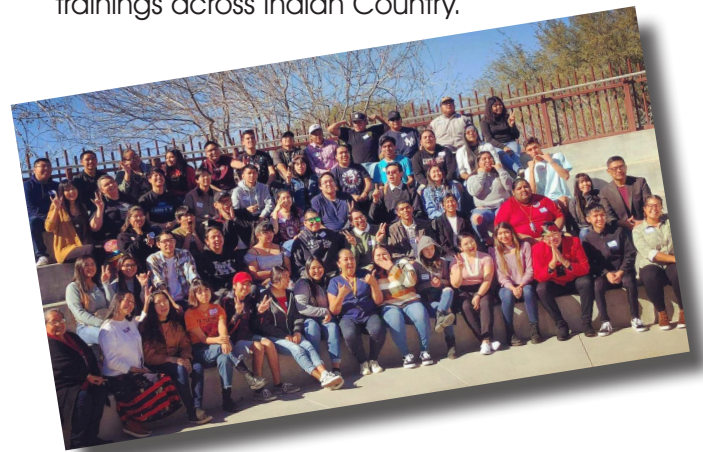
The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and UNITY: Working Together to Create Safe Communities

The Healing Indigenous Lives Initiative (HILI), a partnership between UNITY and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), seeks to increase engagement with Native youth, and raise awareness about public safety issues in Indian country. Thirteen young people have been named to UNITY's OJJDP Peer Guide Cohort. They will provide peer-to-peer mentorship and trainings, develop tools and training resources for Native youth to address some of the worst challenges facing our communities. The initiative supports and enhances Native youth engagement, coordination, and action related to community support systems and cultural approaches to restorative justice, with a focus on juvenile justice and delinquency prevention in Indian Country. Together, through UNITY's network of youth councils, the peer guides aim to create healing by empowering Native youth to enhance public safety and increase accountability. This initiative is supported by a cooperative agreement (2018-TY-FX-K002) between UNITY, Inc. and the US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

In 2020, the UNITY Peer Guides offered training, virtually and in person, to more than 5,000 Native youth. Young people received training on strategies to increase public-safety awareness and creatively prevent and address juvenile delinquency. Regional youth leadership development training will continue, enabling Native youth and their adult advisors to develop and carryout projects, programs, education, awareness campaigns, and other efforts within their communities. The projects will benefit communities while providing valuable real world leadership experiences that better prepare youth to succeed in their leadership roles.

Innovative Trainings Developed for Native Youth by Native Youth

The Healing Indigenous Lives Initiative (HILI) kicked off 2020 early in the year with a listening session in the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, in partnership with the Young River Peoples Youth Council. The listening session brought together more than 100 Native youth from 16 Arizona communities with the goal of curriculum development. The focus-group training provided a space for Native youth to share their voice and vision for the program, and resulted in the development of a HILI workbook. This initiative allows Native youth to be involved in every aspect of program development, effectively maximizing community impact. The feedback collected during the focus-group training continues to shape future regional trainings across Indian Country.



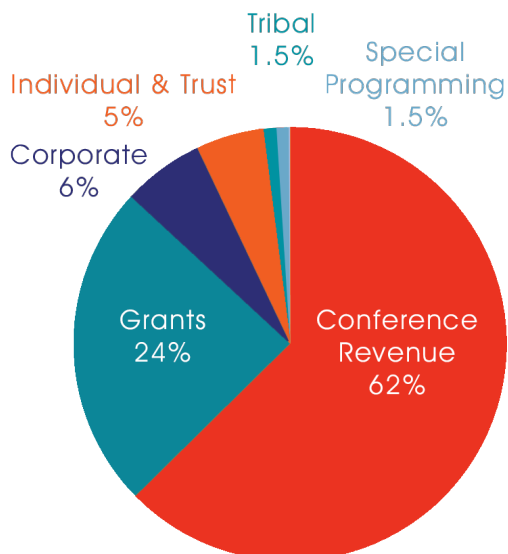
National Native Youth Tribal Consultation through Youth Led Town Halls

Throughout UNITY's history, and especially in the last year, we have seen the power of Native youth advocacy and voice in leading transformational change. With this in mind, UNITY's peer guides hosted four virtual national Town Halls involving as many as 400 youth who have been impacted by crime, trauma or the juvenile justice system, to share how they have overcome their challenges. In partnership with the OJJDP, UNITY peer guides will create a national report addressing what made Native youth feel safe, and what regional resources were helpful to those impacted by crime.

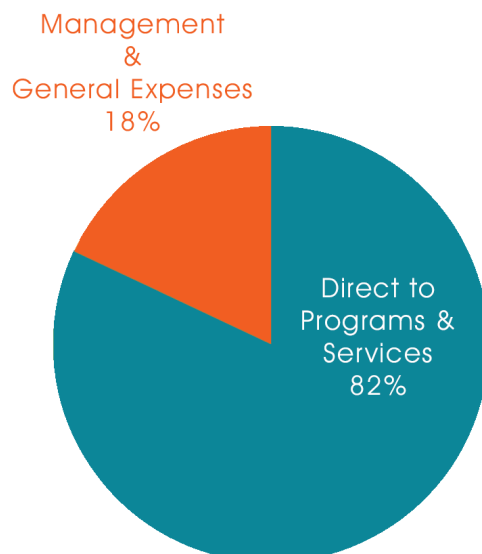


Financial Overview

2020 Revenue

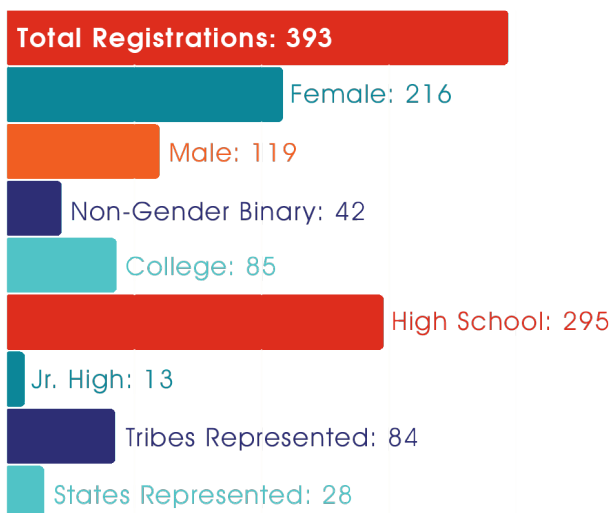


2020 Expenditures

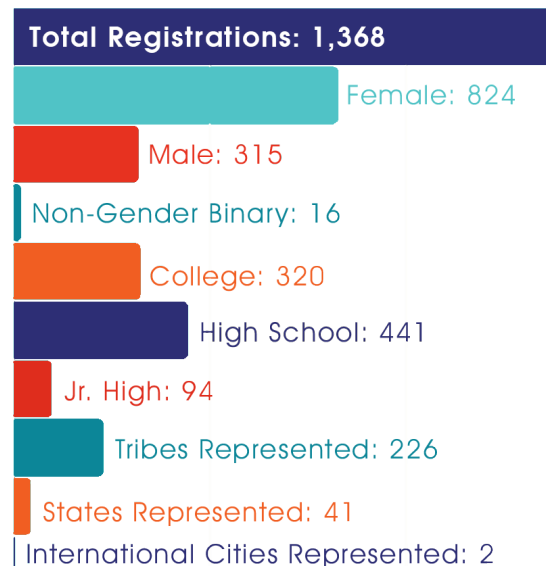


Annual Signature Events

2020 Midyear Conference - Phoenix, AZ



2020 National UNITY Virtual Conference



Social Media Engagement

FOLLOWERS & LIKES



Facebook

21,220
Up 29%



Instagram

4,001
Up 82%



Twitter

4,007
Up 36%



UNITY STAFF

COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES

Mary Kim Tittle (San Carlos Apache)
Executive Director

Greg Mendoza (Akimel O'odham/
Tohono O'odham/Yaqui)
Youth Programs Director

LorenAshley Buford (Yamassee)
Project Manager - OJJDP Program

Tami Patterson
Office Manager/Project Coordinator

Joshua Tso (Navajo)
Youth Programs Coordinator

Jared Massey (White Mountain Apache/Navajo)
Social Media Specialist/Project Support Assistant

Loretta Tuell, J.D. (Nez Perce)
Chairman

Tyler English-Rush (Muscogee Creek Tribe)
Secretary/Treasurer

Henry Lozano (Apache)
Member

Kyle Doney (Seminole Tribe of Florida)
Member

Lori Winfree (Lumbee)
Member

Robert Scottie Miller (Swinomish)
Youth Member

Kiera Toya (Jemez Pueblo)
Youth Member

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Chickasaw Nation

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Common Counsel Foundation

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National Center for American Indian
Enterprise Development

National Education Association

National Indian Health Board

Pascua Yaqui Tribe

Phoenix Suns Charities

Poarch Band of Creek Indians

San Carlos Apache Tribe

San Manuel Band of Mission Indians

Seminole Tribe of Florida

Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community

Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians

Titan Facility Services

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Justice and Delinquency Prevention

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