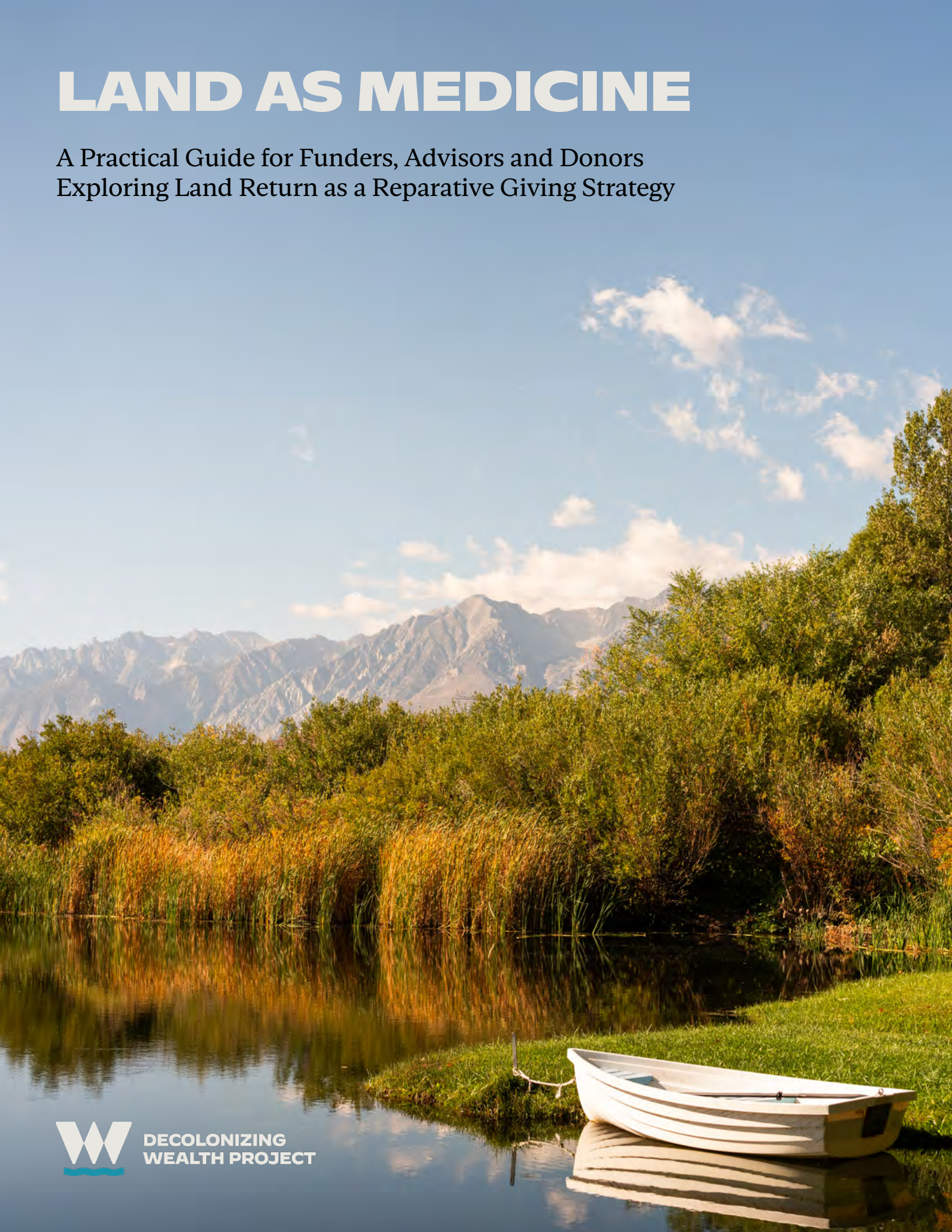
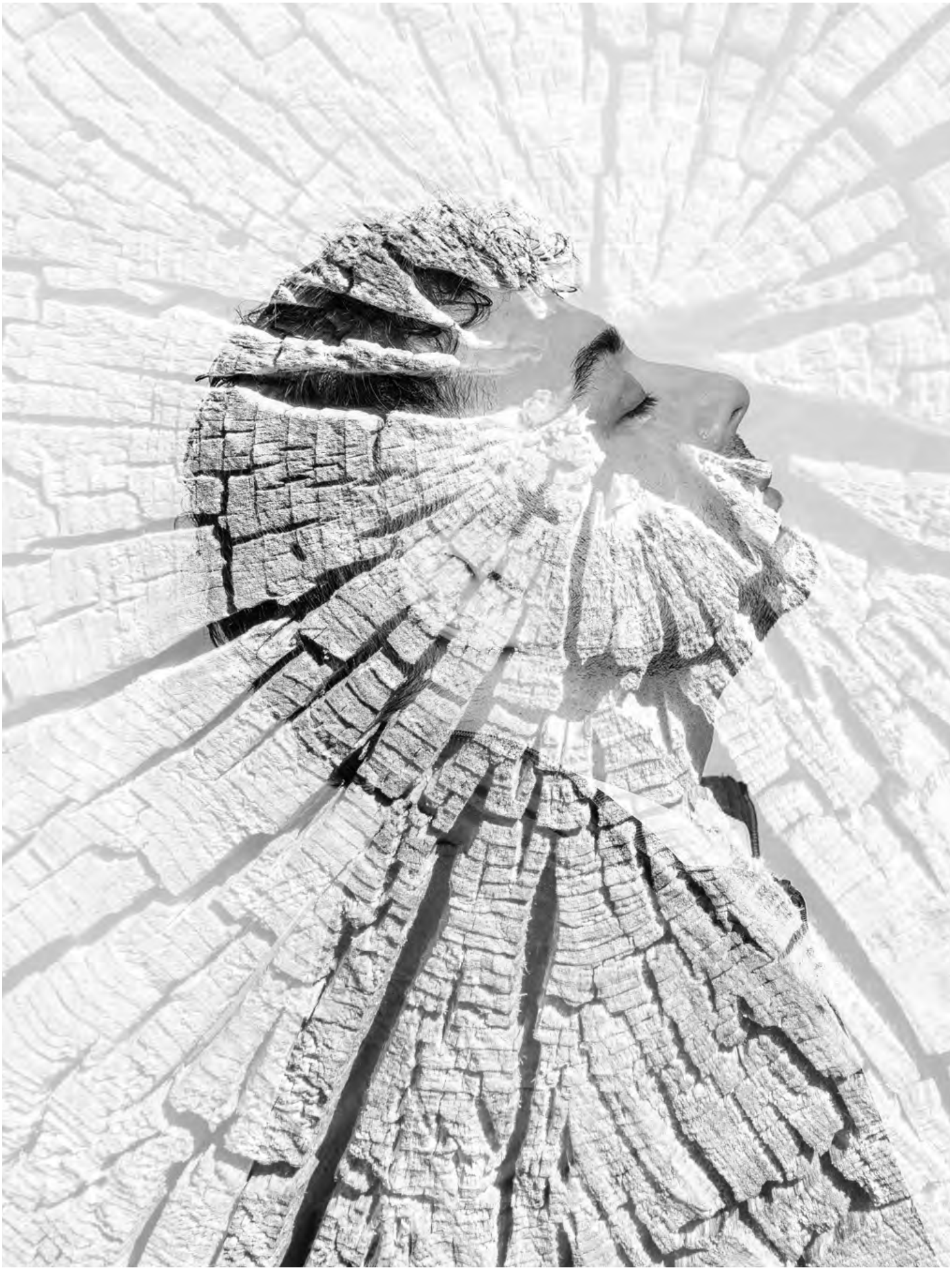
LAND AS MEDICINE

A Practical Guide for Funders, Advisors and Donors
Exploring Land Return as a Reparative Giving Strategy



DECOLONIZING
WEALTH PROJECT



A LETTER FROM THE CEO

I want to tell you why this guide exists.

I am an enrolled member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina. Our name comes from the Lumber River, which winds through Robeson County, North Carolina, the historic and cultural center of the Tribe. My people are sometimes called" People of the Dark Water" as the river is a dark blackwater stream because of decaying vegetation along its swampy banks. We've been on this land a long, long time. As European colonization forced Indigenous Peoples off their lands, some Lumbee sought sanctuary and made their permanent home in the dark, murky, protective wetlands surrounding the river. For countless generations, we have known this place as an important area of our ancestral land, and yet, we do not own it. That was until December 2025, when my Tribe won federal recognition, a dream and victory generations in the making. Without federal recognition, our Tribal community remained cut off from establishing a reservation or having our ancestral territory protected under federal trust status. There is no line on any map anywhere that says this ground belongs to the Lumbee people. We are all that exists. Generations of us concentrated on our homeland without title to an acre of it.

I grew up as an urban Native American. "Urban" refers to Natives who didn't grow up on a reservation or in their traditional Tribal land. The city is where my mother and I ended up, the way it went for a lot (about 70%) of Native people of my generation. As a child, my mother would put me on a Greyhound bus to spend summers with my family back on the land. I picked cucumbers in fields as a boy. Rows of crops my family did not own, on ground we had been on for generations. Nobody sat me down and explained the arrangement. I understood it the way children understand things - we were of that place, and the place was not ours. Yet, it still felt like it belonged to me, that was home. In fact, we still call it "down home".

Now, when I make the drive down home, I can feel the land speaking to me as soon as I take the exit off Interstate 95: Welcome home! This is your land. You belong here. Your ancestors are here. My body remembers a spiritual connection to this place long before I was born.

For most of my life in philanthropy, "land back" has felt like something people said, not something people did. It started as a decentralized campaign among Indigenous Peoples worldwide who seek to establish Indigenous nationhood and sovereignty, with political and economic control of their ancestral lands and water. In the 2010s it became a hashtag abroad and ten years later started trending in the United States. It showed up in television scripts. It was spoken out loud at the start of conference sessions, in rooms where nobody in the room was going to do anything about it afterward.

Then I actually got to do it, not just advocate for it. My organization, Decolonizing Wealth Project

(DWP), got to move real money to Tribal Nations and watch traditional homelands return home. I will be honest with you about how that started. We were not experts. Nobody at DWP had closed a land deal. We did not know what an appraisal contingency was, or what a Tribe needs in the months (or even years) between an opportunity and a closing, or how much of this work is property tax and fencing and water testing, rather than ceremony.

What we had was relationships, a willingness to ask, and a decision not to wait until we felt qualified. **We learned it by funding it.** That is not a caveat I am embarrassed to put in writing - it is the whole invitation. If waiting to become an expert were the requirement, we would still be waiting.

What I can tell you now is what happens when the land comes back. Children learn to harvest what their great-grandparents harvested. Elders walk the ground they were told they would never stand on again. Languages get spoken again in places where they originated and are meant to be spoken. Tribal leaders are able to stand in their sovereignty and make decisions about the community's cultural, economic, and political future. The land itself emotes joy, feeling returned to its rightful stewards.

Dr. Dana Arviso, DWP's Director of Indigenous Programs, describes being cut off from land as a wound, and reconnection as putting the heart back into the body. I have not found a better way to say it. But I want to tell you something else. The healing here is not only for Tribal communities. There is healing available to you in this work too.

If you are reading this, you likely steward wealth or help others steward theirs. Wealth in this country has a history: land was taken, resources were extracted, labor was forced and stolen, and fortunes were built. That history is not your fault. But it is your inheritance.

And sadly, extraction is not something that is finished. It is a business model that is still running. Foundation endowments and family investments still profit from mining, water extraction and industrial agriculture. Land within the traditional territories of Tribal Nations is still being bought, drilled, dammed, logged, developed, and damaged by corporations that will never ask permission. Philanthropy is not a bystander to that economy. It is invested in it, which means the same institutions and wealthy families holding the harm are holding the capacity for repair. This is not an indictment. Instead, it is an opportunity most donors have never been told they have.

This guide is not an indictment. It is an invitation.

All we ask is that you are willing to start. We and many others will walk the rest of it with you. You simply have to answer the call.

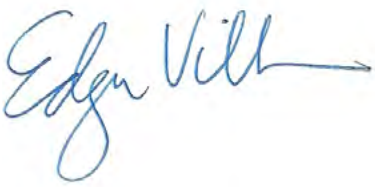
You will notice a significant amount of references and the stories in these pages to California because California is where we have done this work most closely over the past few years. But this is not exclusively a California story. Tribal Nations are recovering homelands in Minnesota, Maine, Wisconsin, Hawai'i, Washington, in places where the nearest foundation has not yet been engaged

or donors may be unaware. What we learned in California travels. We are offering it as a working example, not a regional case, and we are hoping it helps contribute to this growing movement. We acknowledge histories, laws, Tribes, and even funders vary by state, but much of our learning is transferable. We're also here to be a resource and partner, you are not on your own.

We deliver this guide at a moment of urgency. Public funding is contracting at exactly the moment Tribal capacity to do this work is expanding. Our Tribal sovereignty, our language and cultures, and our actual ways of life currently face serious threats in the current political environment. Be clear, these threats impact all of us.

So, come with us, there is room at the table for all in this work of healing.

To healing!
Edgar Villanueva (Lumbee)
Founder & CEO, Decolonizing Wealth Project



"Taken literally, decolonization means that the land that was stolen is returned, and sovereignty over not only the land and its resources, but also over social structures and traditions, is granted back to those from whom it was all stolen."

- Decolonizing Wealth (Villanueva 2018, 2021)

DECOLONIZING WEALTH PROJECT

Land holds memory, possibility, and pain. When we are separated from the land, we are separated from essential parts of ourselves. Sacred landscapes, tended for millennia, carry names, songs, cultural knowledge, and lifeways tied to those places and to no other, so when access ends, the knowledge and ways languish. Languages carry vocabulary for species, seasons, landforms, Indigenous laws, and our ways of life that a speaker learns by living in community with these beings, processes, and places. Tending, harvesting, and countless other cultural practices are taught by doing, on the ground where they have taken place over æons. None of this can be transferred, stored, or rebuilt from a written record. It is the reason land return cannot be substituted with a cultural program, a museum, or a grant for language software - and the reason donors who care about Indigenous lifeways and native species eventually arrive at land return as the most impactful way to revitalize and protect culture and nature.

Special thanks to Indígena for the stunning portrait and event photography featured throughout this Guide. The images were captured at Three Creeks during DWP's 2025 California Tribal Land Return Initiative cohort convening, co-hosted by the Owens Valley Indian Water Commission.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LAND AS MEDICINE: A FUNDER GUIDE TO SUPPORTING TRIBAL LAND RETURN

This Guide frames land return as a love story: a forced separation, and communities finding their way back to the land they belong to. The land that has been waiting for their return.

Those acres carry cultural practices that require specific plant medicines, access to ancestral burial grounds, ecological management practices that benefit everyone downstream of them, ceremonial traditions thousands of years old, and a future that only the Indigenous people building it can imagine.

Returning land to its original stewards functions, at once, as a climate strategy, an economic development strategy, a food sovereignty strategy, a youth and education strategy, a mental health strategy, and a cultural strategy. We have not found another investment in our own giving that reaches that many portfolios at once.

If you fund climate, this guide is for you. If you fund economic mobility, food security, youth development, mental health, or the arts, this guide is for you too. You do not have to leave your issue area to fund land return. You have to recognize that it is very likely already inside it.

Public funding buys the largest share of the land that gets returned, and that funding is decreasing. In our experience, unrestricted philanthropic funding is the piece that makes public money functional: it meets required matches, covers what government

grants are not permitted to cover, and pays for the staff time between an opportunity and an escrow date. Public money often buys the parcel. In our experience, flexible grant dollars serve as the vital link that brings transactions across the finish line.

That is also why we ask you to bring a different lens to this work. Funding the return of stolen land is not a benevolent act toward a community in need. It is repair: returning what was taken to the people it was taken from.

> **A charitable frame asks what impact we will get for the money. A reparative frame asks whether the amount is adequate to the harm. The second question is harder, and it is the right one.**

This country's wealth was built substantially on land, and Native Nations lost 98.9 percent of their land to policy. In this Guide, we'll explore what that looks like to hold that fact at the center of your grant decision making.

Expect real questions rather than tidy answers by the end: what a reparative frame changes about how you or your board evaluate a grant, where land return already lives inside the issues you fund, what a Tribe in your own region needs from a funder willing to move first, and what your own institution's wealth story has to do with any of this.

After reading, we hope you will have the following:

1. An understanding of land return as reunion and repair, and the critical role that philanthropy plays in this process.

2. An intersectional view of the work that fits across funding priorities.

3. One specific next step for you or your own institution, sized to what you can move, toward returning land to the people it was taken from.

We are not asking you to become a land return expert. We are asking you to be curious and courageous - and reach out with your questions. It's very likely we've had the same questions or know someone who can answer them. **Info@decolonizingwealth.com.**

LAND AS MEDICINE CONTENTS

A Letter From Our CEO
Executive Summary
Land as Medicine Contents
Part I — Why Now, and Why Philanthropy
§1 · Why Tribal Land Return, and Why Now
Five Conditions Are Currently Making the Investment in Land Return More Urgent
§2 · Philanthropic Failure
§3 · Grieving the Losses
A Brief History Lesson
§4 The Role of Government
The Reckoning We're Waiting For
California's Truth and Healing
Part II — What We Mean When We Say Land Return
§5 · The Many Names of Tribal Land Return
Other Terms Worth Knowing
§6 · The Land Return Spectrum
Part III — Land is Everything
§7 · Land Return's Intersectional Healing
Land is...Conservation
Land is...Climate
Land is...Economic Development
Land is...Food Sovereignty
Land is...Mental Health & Wellbeing
Land is...Youth and Education
Land is...Arts and Culture
Part IV — Key Considerations for Using Money as Medicine
§8 · The Path to Healing is Reparative Philanthropy
The Seven Steps to Healing
Why Land Return is a Perfect Expression of Reparative Giving
The Opportunity
The Cycle Does Not Stop at the Origin

§9 · Key Considerations

Respect Tribal Sovereignty

Ownership of Land

Use of Land

Center Relationships

Start Local

Do Your Homework

Community Tensions

Technical Assistance

General Operating Support

§10 · Let's Get Technical

A Reminder About Tribal Classifications

§11 · How Other Funders Are Showing Up

Part V — Land as Medicine in California

§12 · DWP's California Tribal Land Return Initiative

Five Choices

The Nonlinear Journey

§13 · Learning Through Story

Amah Mutsun Land Trust - 50 Acres

Tamien Nation - 235 Acres

Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of Stewarts Point Rancheria - 305 Acres

Tule River Indian Tribe of California - 17,023 Acres

Yurok Tribe — 47,097 Acres, Blue Creek & Klamath River

Reflection Questions

Part VI — Getting Started

§14 · What to Do Next

§15 · You Are Not Alone

As We Close, Remember

Part VII — Terminology & Resources

§16 · Terminology

§17 · Helpful Resources for Your Land Return Journey

Sources Cited

PART I — WHY NOW, AND WHY PHILANTHROPY

§1
WHY TRIBAL LAND RETURN, AND WHY NOW

Payahuunadü means "the land of flowing water". Payahuunadü also refers to a place known as the Owens Valley, nestled in the dry eastern side of the Sierra Nevada mountain range in California. Despite the high mountain desert terrain, the valley once had abundant water from the mountain snowpack, lakes, and rivers. Beginning in 1913, vast quantities of water in Owens Valley have been systematically diverted to Los Angeles through a 233-mile aqueduct built after a series of secret acquisitions of land and water rights, which has resulted in environmental damage, economic collapse, and ongoing extraction of water. As of 2026, the Sierra Nevada mountain range supplies about 47% of Los Angeles' water.

An organization called the Owens Valley Indian Water Commission (OVIWC) has been working hard for decades to bring the water back to the land. OVIWC is a Tribal consortium representing three member Tribes: the Bishop Paiute Tribe, the Big Pine Paiute Tribe, and the Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Tribe. OVIWC was formed in 1991 for the purpose of negotiating Tribal water rights with the federal government and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power on behalf of its member Tribes.

In 2023, OVIWC returned five acres of land to Native ownership and stewardship by acquiring the property called Three Creeks. They do not have a lease for this land or an access agreement that someone else can revoke. They hold the title in hand.

That five acres became much more than a private oasis. It has become a space for collaboration and healing in community. In the Spring and early Summer, people gather for sunrise meditation on this land. Over the course of a year, Three Creeks

(*Pahidu Payahuupü* "three flowing waters") holds talking circles, monthly *Wellbriety* meetings, beading classes, oral storytelling, handgame campouts, language classes, and many other community events. Young people have come out through the Bishop Juvenile Justice Court for a program called We Are Living Arts. Youth from other Tribes come for crosscultural exchanges through the Bishop Education Center, among other organizations. On volunteer days, the community shows up to work, and in working, learns again how to care for a place that their ancestors have tended to since time immemorial.

One acre of the land is a rose nettle garden called *Tsiabu tu'nunu'vua*, which provides food and medicine. In order to clear more land to expand the garden, the stewardship team returned to ancestral practices of burning. Many Tribes traditionally used fire, in the right place and at the right time, which is the practice of cultural burning that state and federal policy spent most of a century suppressing, despite it being a practice that can mitigate wild fire risks. Cultural burning is now being taught again through the Bishop Paiute Environmental Management Office. There are over 60 abundant fruit trees that the stewards are cultivating, so that the trees outlive them. A solar dehydrator preserves the food that grows there to give back out to families in the community and provides gifts of gratitude to supporters of the work.

Over the past few years, OVIWC has been working towards securing an additional five acres. This land was secured in August 2026 and part of an initiative called *Growing Panatü*, which means to grow the "place by the waters". This new parcel of land is adjacent to Three Creeks and comes with water rights, which is significant as it marks a new era where Tribes can return to stewarding their water resources in ways similar to the many generations before them.
Carrying most of this, day to day, is a team of

Native women. In 2025, they graciously hosted the Decolonizing Wealth Project team and a group of about 30 Native leaders who were members of our California Tribal Land Return cohort. As we walked the land, you could hear the trickle of the water coming from a tiny stream. An elder on the tour shouted out to the group, "*do you all hear that*? The land is so happy you are here!" That trickle was a sound of healing and hope.

None of these outcomes were listed as deliverables in a proposal. The impact grew because the community was asked what it wanted from the land and then answered. And because funding was flexible enough to let the answer change what got built.

That is what land return looks like from the inside. It is not a transaction with a ceremony attached. It is a place where a community gathers, heals, and provides for itself. Youth are reconnected to culture, people recover from addiction, learn skills, families reunite, rights are restored, and land is healed.

And here's where *you* come in.

This guide is written for the people who can do something about Tribal land return. Somebody has to buy the land. Somebody has to cover the appraisal, the fence, the water test, the property taxes, and the staff time in the long months between an opportunity and a closing.

The medicine is real. It also has a price tag.

It's an exciting time to invest in land return to Tribal communities. Across Decolonizing Wealth Project (DWP) funding initiatives we have supported various projects designed to protect and acquire Indigenous land. Our **Indigenous Earth Fund**, launched in 2021, has invested more than $5.3 million in 57 Indigenous-led climate and conservation efforts. Although land return was not the explicit focus of the fund, a few key grantee partners (e.g. The Yurok Tribe) experienced large-scale successes with land, with more than 300,000 acres being rematriated over the life of the fund. Those successes made us want to explicitly double down on our support of Tribal land return.

After a deep planning process, we launched a new program to focus expressly on land return, the **California Tribal Land Return Initiative (CTLRI)**, to provide both capital and technical assistance to California Tribes working to acquire land.

In our first year of implementation, 2025-2026, we granted $2.35M in unrestricted funds to a cohort of eleven partners representing thirty-one Tribes. In its first year, the initiative has already supported the return of 17,643 acres of ancestral homeland, against a cohort goal of 25,000 acres. The cohort's locations span the entire length of California and represented a diversity of Tribes and Tribal organizations, leaders and land return approaches.
Moving resources to support land return taught us a lot, and this effort has been some of the most rewarding work we've ever led. This guide captures those learnings along our journey in hopes that it will help you along yours.
For additional details about our land return initiative, see Section 12.

The Urgency of Now

Supporting Tribal land return has been possible for a long time. We are not the first, nor should we be the last. Other funders have supported various approaches to land return that we will highlight later. What has changed is that Tribal land return is now happening at scale, in public,

and with philanthropy's growing investment.

Five Conditions are Currently Making the Investment in Land Return More Urgent:

1. **Philanthropy is needed to unlock public money.** Some states have been appropriating real dollars for ancestral land return. For example, California Natural Resources Agency's TNBS (Tribal Nature Based Solutions) program alone has awarded roughly $108 million across 33 projects, supporting the return of nearly 39,000 acres. But public money rarely closes a deal by itself. Often public funding arrives on a government timeline, and is restricted, so it may not cover the appraisal, the bridge financing, the property taxes, or the staff time between an opportunity and an escrow date.

   Philanthropic dollars are quite often what make public dollars usable. In our experience, a modest unrestricted grant has repeatedly been the difference between a Tribe watching a parcel sell to someone else and a Tribe closing on it. Philanthropic capital may never be the largest part of the pie, but support from donors can be the most critical for reaching the finish line by unlocking other funds and using its voice to speak to the importance of this work.

2. **The federal government is moving the other direction.** Tribal Nations hold a government-to-government or Nation-to-Nation relationship with the United States, and that relationship has been the foundation for having land put into federal trust. For federally recognized Tribes, this process of creating "reservations" has historically been considered the strongest legal pathway to land. Reservations is a common name for land that is largely held in trust by the United States federal government for the benefit of Native American Tribes or individual Tribal members. However, those pathways to land return with the federal government are narrowing, and recent federal action has reduced protections even on land Tribes were co-managing.

3. **We now have proof of concept.** Land return was once a category most foundations or donors filed under "too complex, too legal, too slow, or too risky." That justification has expired. In the first year of our California Tribal Land Return Initiative, we provided $2.35 million in unrestricted funding to eleven partners representing thirty-one Tribes that supported the return of 17,643 acres of ancestral homeland. The deals close. The models work. The risk that once justified waiting has been absorbed by the funders and the Tribes who went first.

> **Given how the federal government has not kept their agreements, philanthropic support is not just about land, it's about protecting Tribal sovereignty.**

4. **Land return addresses more than one crisis at once.** It is unusual for a single investment to reach across multiple portfolios or issues areas, yet Tribal land return does. Returning land to its original stewards is a climate strategy, an economic development strategy, a food sovereignty strategy, a youth and education strategy, a mental health strategy, a culture/religious strategy, and more. For far too long philanthropy has funded in silos that do not mirror the realities of everyday life. Impactful giving shatters

the siloed approach and responds in ways that are real because for the communities involved, those have never been separate things. A funder does not have to leave their issue area to fund this work. They have to recognize that it is already inside it.

5. **It is long overdue.** Philanthropy has an opportunity here to do right by Native American communities in meaningful ways. Beyond putting out statements or other actions that can appear performative, investing in land return is a real act that demonstrates true solidarity and responsiveness to what communities are actually asking for. This is a moment to address the gross historical marginalization and underfunding of Native communities by philanthropy and to put real resources behind significant opportunities like land return. In doing so, philanthropy can begin to demonstrate what truth, healing, and repair look like. That is the invitation of this guide. The next section will go into more details

about this timely opportunity.

Reflection Questions

1. Where are you starting on your donor journey to support land return?

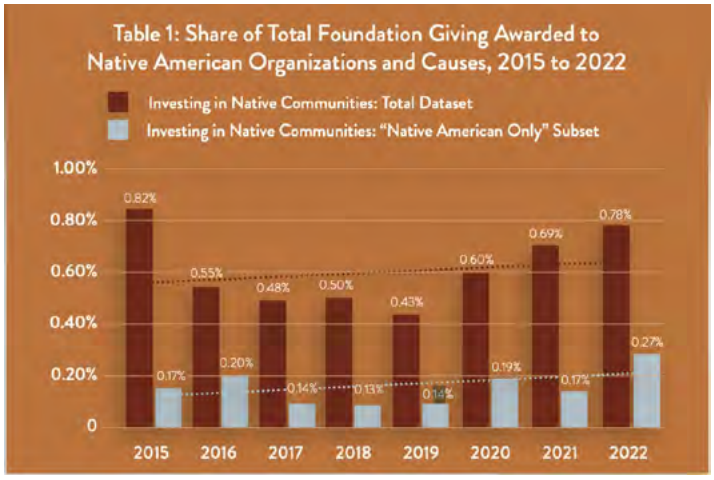
2. This section names five conditions making land return urgent right now. Which one is most likely to persuade the people you make decisions with?

3. The Owens Valley land return produced outcomes that were not listed in a proposal as deliverables. What would you have to change about your reporting expectations to fund results no one can name in advance?

§2
PHILANTHROPIC FAILURE

Unfortunately, Native American communities have been accustomed to receiving minuscule support from philanthropy, and governments breaking treaties. According to a report from First Nations Development Institute, **less than one percent of total private philanthropic foundation funding goes to support Native American organizations and causes.**[1]

In the last decade, the share of total foundation giving to Native American communities has ranged from a high of 0.82% in 2015 to a low of 0.43% in 2019, but giving has never exceeded 1%.[2] In 2021 and 2022, Native-led organizations received 77% and 70% of the giving to Native American organizations and causes, respectively.[3] While it is encouraging to see a large percentage go to Native-led organizations, we must remember that we're talking about 77% or 70% of the less than 1% total philanthropic giving. Research also indicates that only one in five large foundations gives to Native causes, most of those have made one or two grants, and only 15% of the dollars arrive as general operating support.[4]



Source: First Nations Development Institute, "On the Matter of Foundation Giving: Examining the Inequity of Private Philanthropy's Investment in Native Communities," 2024

In addition to historical and systemic inequalities that have significantly contributed to misconceptions about Native communities, there are several specific challenges in philanthropy that have impacted this funding gap. Among the challenges, two specifically seem pervasive: 1) the lack of representation of Indigenous staff and board members in the sector ; and 2) a lack of knowledge of the ecosystem of Tribes and Native-led nonprofit organizations and issues, like land return.

The lack of representation in the sector is a real factor. Native people hold 1.7% of board seats at the largest foundations in states with significant Native populations. Eighty-four percent of those foundations have no Native board members at all.[5] First Nations Development Institute names the link between these numbers directly: board diversity shapes which priorities a foundation funds, and connects an institution to the communities it says it wants to serve.[6]

Native Americans in Philanthropy's 2024 Indigenous Philanthropic Professionals report reveals that "3.4% of people in philanthropy identified as Indigenous, either solely or in combination with another racial or ethnic identity. Staff who solely identify as Indigenous accounted for approximately 0.9% of the total."[7]

Without Native staff or board members, many foundations lack the internal knowledge and relationships and capacity to align existing portfolios or design and launch initiatives.

Navigating the ecosystem of Indigenous organizations and lacking expertise on Indigenous issues may feel daunting for donors. There are currently 575 federally recognized Tribal Nations,[8] and roughly 400 more Tribes the federal government does not recognize,[9] in addition to a wide network of Native-led

nonprofits and Tribal organizations. Research prepared by the Bridgespan Group and Native Americans in Philanthropy finds that many funders are interested in Tribal land return and uncertain how to make the case internally or where to begin.[10] It's our hope that this publication removes that barrier.

When a system leaves out groups of people, the people often create their own system. In Native communities, mutual aid and care is cultural. Over the years, Native American leaders have created intermediaries and Native-led funds to partner with philanthropy and donors to move capital to Native communities.

These Native-led intermediaries and funds are organized by issue area, by geography, etc. Like DWP, a few of these organizations support land return, though the support may look different across a spectrum of approaches. See Appendices- Helpful Resources for a non-exhaustive list of *Native-led intermediaries.*

Partnering with Native-led intermediaries is a strategic solution. They are best positioned to receive and re-distribute funds given their lived experience and cultural understanding, trusted relationships, and knowledge of the ecosystem. In fact, it's likely that foundations and donors fall short of their impact and equity goals when they go at it alone. This circumstance is especially true for land return work. If you are not in a position to work directly with a Tribe in your community or you want to test the waters, pooling resources through a Native-led fund is highly recommended for three key reasons: One: You are investing through a partner with experience and expertise in working with Tribes and Tribal organizations throughout Indian Country; Two: Your money is leveraged to garner additional funding; and Three: many Native-led funds offer ongoing learning and resources for foundations and donors.

DWP's offerings include learning pathways for Tribes, individuals, institutions and advisors to better understand land return efforts. **Liberated Capital®**, our multiracial, intergenerational, crosswealth giving community hosts fund-specific conversations throughout the year, while our Donor Advisor Network and additional sector transformation experiences provide those with significant wealth (individuals or institutions) both bespoke and pre-designed engagements for front row learning.

While it's obvious that land return benefits Tribal communities, this guide will highlight how returning land to its original stewards can be a powerful economic, ecological, health, and cultural investment that benefits everyone. At DWP, we promote and practice reparative giving. This approach is all about reciprocity. Supporting Tribal land return is not transactional, it's spiritual. It facilitates healing and repair for all involved and for generations to come. It also meets multiple goals donors may have, creating impact across diverse "focus areas" or "programs".

The remainder of this guide is designed to help you learn how to move money as medicine, helping to repair historical harms, and heal relationships between people and the planet. It's about restoring balance. Land is medicine.

Reflection Questions

1. What percentage of your grantmaking last year reached Native-led organizations or Tribes? What can you do to increase giving?
2. Which Tribal Nations are working on land return efforts in your city and inside your current geographic focus areas?

3. What opportunities do you see to build or repair relationships with Tribes or Native organizations by supporting land return?

§3
GRIEVING THE LOSSES

How did we get here? Land did not drift away from Native Nations. It did not get lost. It was stolen outright from many Tribes, as well as taken through "legal" means sanctioned by the federal and state governments sponsoring the treaties and other agreements - and often illegally or in direct violation of those agreements.

DWP founder and CEO, Edgar Villanueva (Lumbee), describes poverty as the product of public policy and theft, facilitated by white supremacy. Land loss is no different. It's the result of public policy and theft by people proclaiming to possess "God-given" superiority[11].

"Land loss is the origin of poverty for Native people. We lost access to the abundant natural resources that provided for us."

- Dr. Dana Arviso (Diné), Decolonizing Wealth Project,

This guide cannot respectfully outline the full history of the genocide that happened to Native Americans during colonization and western expansion in the United States. We offer the below as a topline of the policies and practices that informed the environment we find ourselves in today.

We encourage you to continue learning about history, especially in the areas where you live and work. There is an Appendix with key resources at the end of this guide that offers a few places to start. History is our best teacher - and on its own makes a clear case for supporting land return.

A Brief History Lesson

Since European colonization began in the United States, fueled by the Doctrine of Discovery, there have been violent seizing of Indigenous land, made possible by displacement and removal policies and theft.

Between 1492 and the population's low point around 1900, the Indigenous population fell sharply from millions due to a combination of disease, forced displacement, warfare, and state-sponsored massacres.[12] Native people were systemically dehumanized, making the violence, forced cultural assimilation, and land theft possible. Historian Russell Thornton estimated that the Indigenous population within the present-day United States fell from well over 5 million people before European colonization to roughly 250,000 by the end of the nineteenth century.[13]

In addition to national historic atrocities, there are local and regional ones that have implications for Tribes whose traditional territories encompass those areas. For example, The Spanish Mission system, Euro-American invasion, and the Gold Rush eras dramatically

decreased the Native population in California and disrupted Native peoples' cultural lifeways and stewardship of California's lands and waters for generations.[14]

Specifically in California, Historian Benjamin Madley documented state and local militias being supplied with bounties and weapons by the U.S. Army, killing at least 6,460 California Indians between 1846 and 1873. Madley also found the U.S. Army soldiers killed at least 1,600 more.[15] He estimates that California's Native population fell from as many as 150,000 people to around 30,000 during this period, a genocide that state and federal governments funded with more than $1.7 million in campaigns against California Indians.[16]

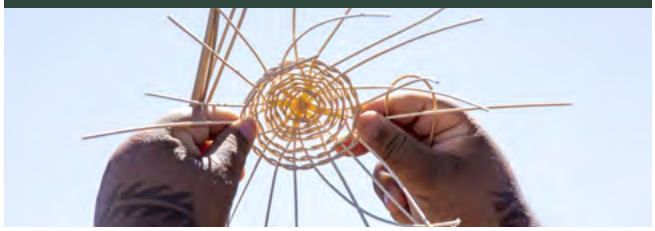
For donors who feel called to support land return work, there are four key takeaways to understand from history about how the land was lost.

1. The dispossession was documented.

Treaty-making and forced relocation moved entire Nations off their homelands, most intensively between the 1830s and the 1870s. In context of Indigenous Peoples' millennia-long presence in their homelands, this timeframe is extremely recent. The United States Senate ratified 370 treaties with Native Nations between 1778 and 1871, and left at least 45 more negotiated but unratified.[17] Much of the dispossession was contractual and documented through treaties, which were not honored for the most part, which is why dispossession can be tracked. Many Tribes never signed away legal ownership of their land, and instead maintained relationships to actively illegally occupied land.

In California, between 1851 and 1852, a total of eighteen treaties were negotiated between the federal government and regional Tribal groups that collectively totaled over one hundred twenty-five individual Tribes.[18] California Senators and state officials actively lobbied against ratification of the treaties in Washington, D.C. — very likely because they understood the commercial value of lands that the treaties would formally designate as Tribal reservations. Consequently, the U.S. Senate never ratified the 18 treaties. As a direct result, California Tribes ultimately lost tens of millions of acres of their traditional territorial lands.[19] The Tribes were never notified of the treaties' non-ratification. The truth was hidden for half a century and finally in the early 1900s when researchers found the unratified treaties in Washington archives. Erica Costa (Pomo/Wailacki) is a Senior Associate attorney at Berkey Williams LLP, a law firm with 85+ years' experience in representing only Tribes and Tribal organizations. Costa co-authored the 2023 law review article ***Revitalizing Stewardship and Use of Traditional Territories: Options for Improving California Policy and Law in State-Managed Lands and Waters***. In the article's discussion of the 18 unratified treaties, Costa and her fellow authors conclude that "Much of the land owned by the State of California today was likely acquired through the deceitful mechanism of unratified federal treaties."

You may have heard the phrase "honor the treaties". That saying exists because while 370 were ratified, most have not been upheld. Tribal rights and sovereignty have been dishonored as a government practice.



A seven-year study published in Science found that Indigenous Nations have lost 98.9% of their historical land base within the current United States, and that present-day tribal lands average just 2.6% the size of their historical territories.[46]

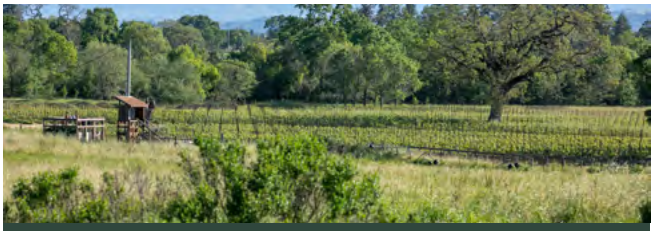
2. Allotment created individual ownership.

The Dawes Act of 1887 broke up Tribal land holdings into individual allotments and opened the remainder to non-Native settlement. Tribal land holdings fell from 138 million acres in 1887 to 48 million acres by 1934, a loss of roughly 90 million acres.[20] Allotment is why land acquisition is so legally expensive today. It created checkerboarded ownership and fractionated titles, some parcels with dozens or even hundreds of heirs.

90 million acres — roughly the size of the entire state of Montana, or nearly all of California's 100 million acres of land — taken from Native Nations under the Dawes Act between 1887 and 1934.[45]

3. Termination erased legal standing.

Federal termination policy dissolved the federal status of more than 100 Tribes between 1953 and 1970.[21] The National Archives documents that Congress initiated 60 separate termination proceedings during this period, relinquishing more than three million acres of Tribal trust land.[22] This process is one of several reasons why many Tribes are unrecognized today, particularly in the state of California.[23]



Federal recognition status for Tribes is downstream of policy and distinctly different from how Indigenous a Tribe is.

A Tribe whose relationship with the United States has been expressly terminated by Congress may not use the Federal Acknowledgment Process. Only Congress can restore federal recognition to a "terminated" Tribe.[44]

4. Land theft continues.

As an example of the continued theft through legal means, in 1980, the U.S. Supreme Court found that Congress violated the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 when it seized the Black Hills from the Sioux Nation without the consent of three-fourths of the Sioux Nation's adult male population, as the treaty required.

The Sioux Nation were awarded monetary compensation instead of the land legally recognized as theirs. The Sioux Nation has refused the resulting compensation, now valued at more than $1 billion, and continues to seek the return of the land itself.[24]

Note: the film Lakota Nation vs. the United States beautifully tells this story.

Another recent example of land theft is Bears Ears National Monument. On July 13, 2026, President Trump issued a proclamation to reduce the Bears Ears National Monument by 91% and dissolve the Bears Ears Commission, a body composed of official representatives from the Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, and Zuni Tribe that was developed to formalize the Tribes' respective roles in collaboratively managing the land with the Bureau of Land Management and US Forest Service. The proclamation took effect September 11, 2026, and faces ongoing legal challenges. This proclamation has resulted in a significant loss of protected and collaboratively managed land, reducing the Bears Ears National Monument from 1.36 million acres to 121,096 acres.[25]

The Monument is experiencing its second reduction within the past 10 years. It was originally created by President Obama in 2016 and became a landmark in collaborative management models for Tribes. It was initially reduced under the first Trump Administration in January 2018, and subsequently restored under the Biden Administration in October 2021. Learn more at https://www.bearsearscoalition.org/.

Even when land is returned or collaboratively managed, there may be mechanisms deployed that can pull land back from a Tribe to a government authority, fueling the urgency for philanthropic funding to acquire land and to support advocacy efforts to prevent Tribes from losing land.[26]

When we talk about land return, we are not just talking about acreage. We are talking about the return of cultural practices that require specific plant medicines, access to ancient and ancestral burial grounds, ecological management practices we all benefit from, honoring religious and ceremonial traditions that are millenia old, and the creation of a future that generations of Indigenous Peoples have only dreamed of and only they can build.

Check out Rebecca Nagle's podcast, *This Land*, for an in-depth exploration of the history of Native land in the U.S.

Reflection Questions

1. This section documents dispossession that happened on paper, in law, and by name. What would it take for your institution to learn the specific history for the place where it sits? To help you get started, we've included a resource list at the end of this Guide.

2. Termination dissolved the federal status of more than 100 Tribes, and recognition remains a government determination rather than a measure of Indigeneity. Does your grantmaking require federal recognition, and if so, why the limitation?

3. Grieving is the first of the Seven Steps to Healing first introduced in the book, Decolonizing Wealth. The Steps are the foundation of **DWP's Reparative Philanthropy™ Framework**. When did your board, staff, or your family last make room to sit with a history before deciding what to fund?

§4
THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Land loss for Tribal communities has largely been a government project. In the previous section, we outlined the fact that the U.S. Congress passed the disposition policies, state and federal agencies administered them, and courts upheld them.

The culpability of the federal government and states is clear. Because the government took the land, the government must play a key role in the land return. Yet, land return is less likely to happen without the support of individual donors and institutional funders.

Tribal Sovereignty

As noted earlier, 575 federally recognized Tribal Nations currently hold government-to-government relationships with the United States by virtue of their **Tribal sovereignty and inherent right to govern themselves, their people, and their lands.** The government-to-government relationship is the foundation for the most widely used and strongest legal pathways to land, including the land-into-trust process and the Land Buy-Back Program. These are federal administrative processes available only to federally recognized Tribes, not those that are non-federally recognized.

Further, federally recognized Tribes often exercise their option of holding fee title (i.e., private ownership) to certain lands they have acquired through purchase or donation, rather than placing them into trust with the Department of Interior/Bureau of Indian Affairs. Tribal governments sometimes also establish non-profit Tribal land trusts or other types of organizations charged with holding land on behalf of the Tribe (or multiple Tribes). Land can be placed into trust only by a Tribal government representing a federally recognized Tribe. Therefore, lands owned by Tribal organizations (formed by either federally recognized or non-federally recognized Tribes) must be held in fee title. For non-federally recognized Tribes (e.g., those recognized by a state but not the federal government), the only available land ownership arrangement is fee title.

Funders should respect Tribal sovereignty around Tribes' chosen paths to land return.

Federal funding for Tribes is a lot more limited and challenging to acquire than most funders may assume. The majority of federal funding for land acquisition flows through the U.S. National

Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, agencies whose mandates are focused on conservation and public land rather than Tribal land return. A Tribe can sometimes work inside those programs, but those limitations can be real since those programs were not designed for broader land return goals.

Currently, federal support is contracting. As previously mentioned, the Bears Ears National Monument, a collaboratively managed land return example, was reduced by 91 percent and the commission was dissolved in June 2026. This result shows the risk Tribes assume in co-management models that depend on a government administration's preferences. Co-management is only as durable as the government on the other side of it.

Tribes have always suffered at the expense of the government's broken promises. This is one reason many Tribes have turned to acquisition through purchase as a means to protect their sovereignty over land.

The Reckoning We're Waiting For

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted in September 2007, sets international standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous Peoples worldwide. While not legally binding as a General Assembly resolution, many of its principles reflect customary international law and specifically call out rights around land, such as Article 26, which says that states must recognize and protect Indigenous lands, territories, and resources, giving legal recognition to these lands with due respect to Indigenous customs and traditions.[27] Article 27 says, "States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open and transparent process, giving due recognition to indigenous peoples' laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used..." The Declaration's preamble as well as Articles 25 and 29 also contain salient language regarding Indigenous land rights, including the right for Indigenous Peoples to protect nature.

In 2014, the California Legislature unanimously adopted Assembly Joint Resolution 42 expressing endorsement for the principles of the UN Declaration and noting "the measure would, among other things, also call for increased awareness, sensitivity, and respect for issues of [Tribal] sovereignty..." But nearly two decades following its adoption, a wide gap still exists throughout the U.S. and elsewhere between the Declaration and government compliance. Across the globe, governments frequently strip Indigenous lands of resources or encroach on territories without true consent.

In addressing the historical atrocities experienced by Indigenous Peoples, several countries have held truth and reconciliation processes for atrocities committed against people. South Africa's commission is the model most people picture when they hear the phrase. Canada also ran a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) from 2008 to 2015 and issued 94 Calls to Action on behalf of First Nations people.[28]

However, the United States has never held a

national truth and reconciliation process to atone for what has happened to Indigenous peoples (or Black people for that matter). There was not even an apology until recently.

In December 2009, an apology to Native peoples was signed into law by President Obama on behalf of the people of the United States for the many instances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect inflicted on Native Peoples by citizens of the United States. It was a provision inside a defense appropriations bill, signed without a public statement, without any notice to Tribal Nations, and with a disclaimer attached specifying that nothing in it authorized any legal claim. **The moment has been widely described by Indigenous authors, activists, and legal scholars as a "silent apology".**[29]

Since then, significant advocacy efforts have led to starts and stops towards a federal Native TRC process in the United States, primarily focused on the history and harm for Indian Boarding Schools. The Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative produced two volumes of stories and data, the first in May 2022[30] and the second volume in July 2024. The Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative was the first time the federal government has investigated its own conduct related to the systematic mistreatment of Native Americans at that scale.

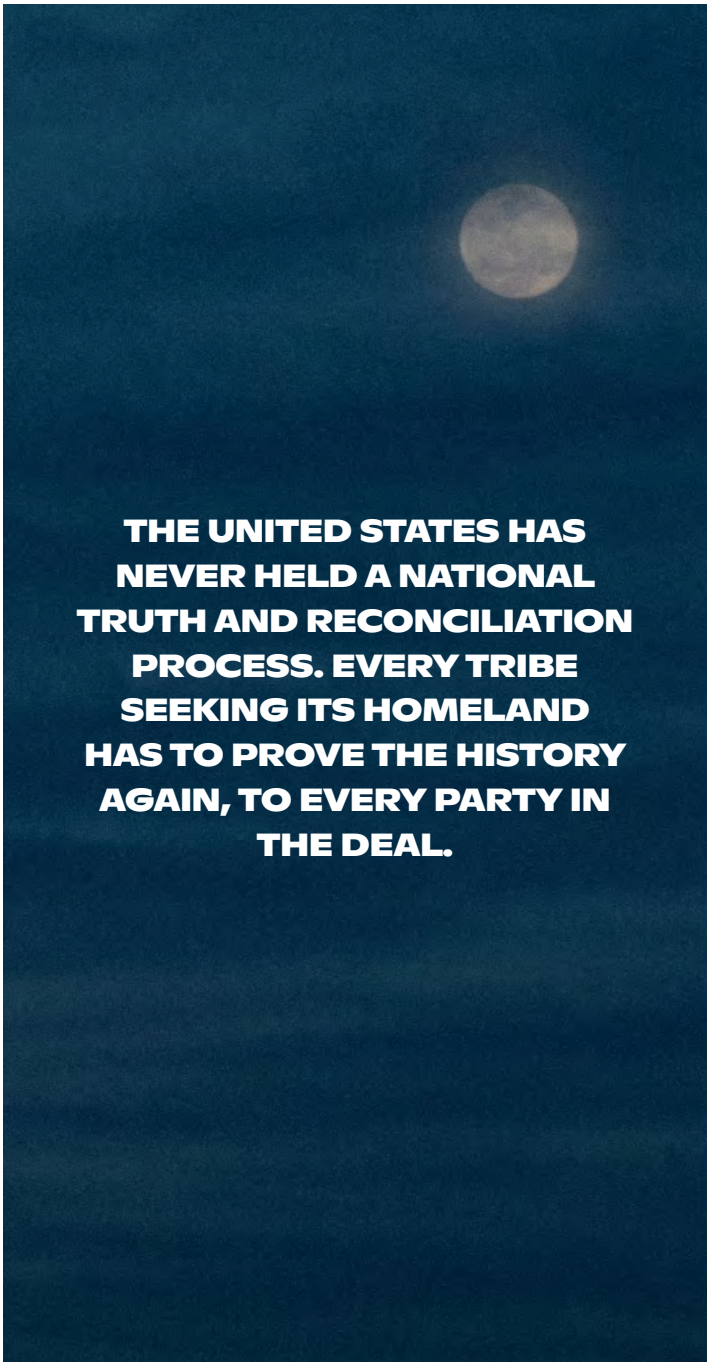
On October 25, 2024, at the Gila River Indian Community in Arizona, President Biden delivered the first formal presidential apology for the federal government's role in Indian boarding schools, including the policies, the harm, and the documented deaths of thousands of Native children.[31] We see that apology as a step in the right direction. It is not, however, a truth and reconciliation commission.

A bill to create one, the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act, has been introduced across three consecutive sessions of Congress since 2022, including a version that passed the full U.S. Senate in December 2024 before dying without a House vote.[32] The current Senate version, S. 761, passed the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs unanimously in March 2025.[33] Its House companion, H.R. 7325, was introduced in February 2026 and remains in committee.[34] Neither has become law.

The only completed truth and reconciliation commission in the United States focused on Native peoples ran at the state level, in Maine, from 2013 to 2015. It examined the treatment of Wabanaki children in the state's child welfare system.[35]

Watch the documentary film *Dawnland* for an inside look at the Maine Truth and Reconciliation process.

This background and context about truth and reconciliation matters in regards to land return. Truth processes are how a country establishes an agreed factual record of history and helps make repair politically possible. Without one, every single Tribe seeking the return of its homeland has to prove the history, over and over, to every landowner, every agency, every county assessor, and every foundation board. The absence of a national truth and reconciliation process is not just an absence of moral clarity. It is a recurring cost for Tribes.



Philanthropy has been quietly covering some of that cost for years. When a funder pays for a Tribe's historical research, its archival work, its legal history, its oral history recording, its mapping, etc., it is funding the evidentiary work that a truth commission would have produced. Most funders do not think of their funding that way.

They should, because it changes what the money is for. Funding truth, healing and cultural reclamation efforts helps position a Tribe for investment when an opportunity arises.

California's Truth and Healing

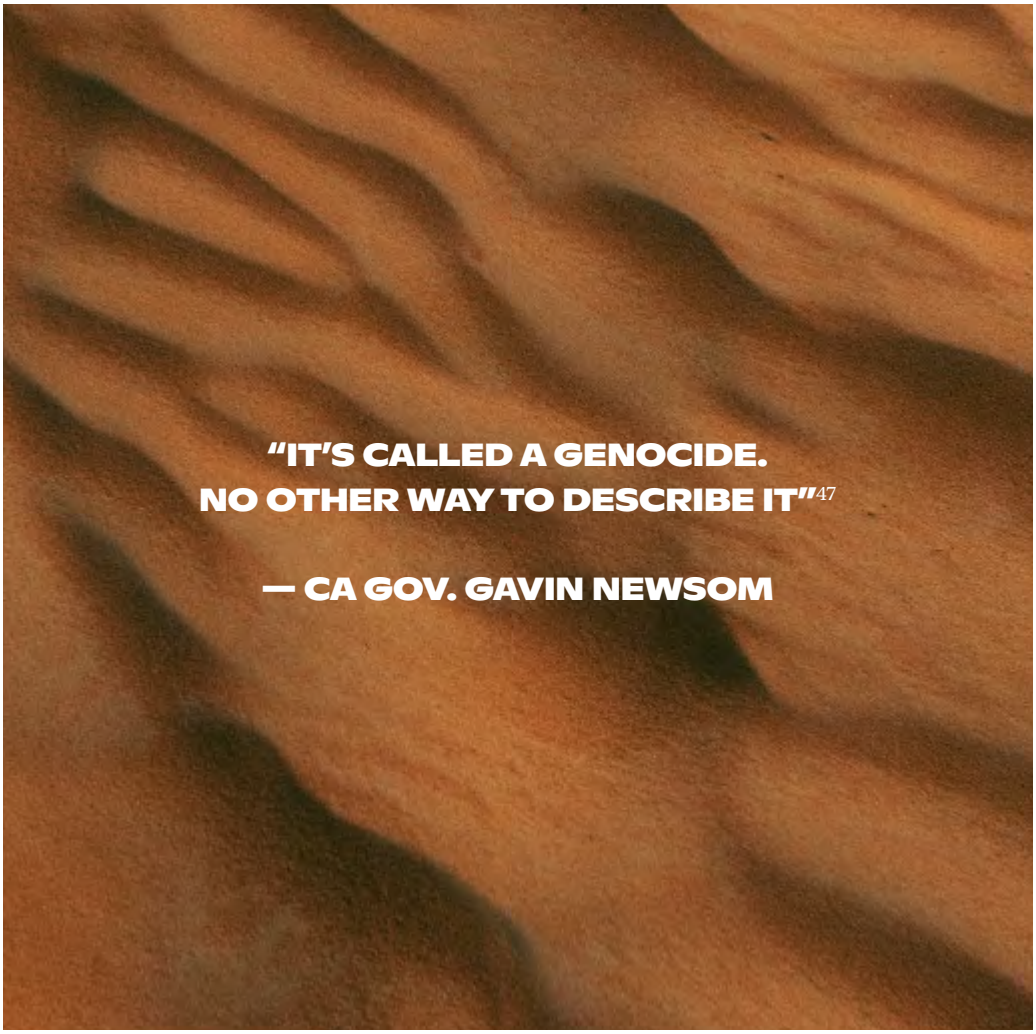
California is the first state to begin a more comprehensive truth and healing process. On June 18, 2019, standing at the site of the future California Indian Heritage Center, Governor Gavin Newsom named California's history as a genocide, and apologized on behalf of the state for its role in harming Native Americans. He then signed Executive Order N-15-19 establishing the California Truth and Healing Council, directing it to bear witness to and record the historical relationship between the state and its Native peoples.[36]

Then came the part that is always harder than the apology. A truth process needs money, staff, researchers, hearings across an enormous state, and time. The state process was not adequately funded and staffed, and as a result, many didn't even know it was happening. If Native Americans were not in the room, how could they participate in healing? Similarly, how could non-Native Californians, who are directly and indirectly impacted by the State's history of violence (whether they were benefitted or harmed), participate so that all of California

could heal? This historic moment was threatened to not fully benefit the community, without outside intervention.[37]

California's state budget totals roughly $291 billion for 2026–27.[38] Its economy alone is the fourth largest in the world, behind only the United States, China, and Germany.[39] Even with a budget of that size, we believe philanthropic intervention was still needed to turn that acknowledgment into action on the ground. In 2021, DWP launched the **California Truth and Healing Fund (CATHF)** to pool philanthropic resources and organize donors to support community engagement in the state's Truth and Healing process and to be ready to act on the recommendations in its report, scheduled for release in late 2026 or early 2027.
DWP was inspired by The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada who helped create the Declaration of Action, presented at the TRC's closing session in 2015. The Declaration is a formal commitment by Canada's philanthropic sector to learn from history and act on it through their giving.[40]

Our experience running CATHF strategically positioned us to support Tribal land return in CA. Inherently, supporting truth and healing is not separate from our work to support land return, in fact some of our CATHF grantees engage in land return efforts. For example, Amah Mutsun Land Trust, one of the California Tribal Land Return Initiative (CTLRI) partners featured in this guide, rebuilt its Native Stewardship Corps with support from our California Truth and Healing Fund. The Yurok Tribe, whose 47,097 acre return is the largest in California history, has been a consistent grantee of our CATHF.



Truth and healing work and land return are often the same work at different stages.

The kind of documentation that happens during a truth and healing process establishes what happened to the Native people and their culture, opening the door for land return opportunities from governments and from donors who are on reparative journeys.

Advocacy and Community Power

Without constant advocacy, many governments fail to act on their own findings and recommendations. This is the case with Tribal land return. In addition to supporting truth and reconciliation work, which creates political will for land return, funders can also give to support Native-led advocacy, storytelling and community power building. These efforts create demand, awareness, and budget to support land return. California's Public funding allocations for land return is largely due to the advocacy of Tribes. Because of advocacy efforts, the California Tribal Nature-Based Solutions program is the first-in-the-nation program of its kind, awarding $107.7 million across 33 projects and supporting the return of nearly 39,000 acres to California Tribes.[41]

While this public investment is impressive, public money also comes with strings attached that Tribes have to navigate. Some of DWP's grantee partners were thrilled to receive state funds, the significant restrictions and laborious reporting requirements of the funding were arduous.

We heard reflections such as the need to be "more deliberate about protecting Tribal sovereignty in how they take state money going forward" and that "state grants are harder to manage than they are to win, because of the financial reporting." To their credit, the California Natural Resources Agency was receptive to feedback from Tribes and made changes to its Tribal Nature-Based Solutions application.

While public funding is so critical and comprises the largest share of resources to purchase land, unrestricted philanthropic funding may be the most critical portion. Philanthropic dollars often are leveraged,to help to meet required matches, and flexible to cover an array of expenses often prohibited by government grants. **Public money may buy the parcel of land; however, philanthropic support makes the public money functional.**

As we've shared above, federal funding is declining, and unfortunately state funds may be in jeopardy as well. In California, there is no budget allocation for California's Nature-Based Solutions program beyond 2026 and given that it's an election year, the future of the program is uncertain. Public funding happens and is sustained by advocacy. Funding a Tribe's or a coalition's advocacy capacity for a budget process can protect a funding stream that supports land return for a decade. DWP has expanded its work to support community power building and is providing advocacy training. Land return does not happen without a fight.

And when we fight, we win. Recently, advocacy efforts led to the passage of AB1485 in California. Introduced within the California Legislature in 2025, AB 1485 was signed by Governor Newsom and enacted in February 2026.[42] It exempts qualifying Tribal land return transactions from documentary transfer taxes through January 1, 2031, and it expands the state's welfare exemption so federally recognized Tribes and their wholly owned subsidiaries can hold property for natural resource preservation and open space without the property tax exposure, through fiscal year 2031-2032.[43]

The impact of this policy win is significant. Property taxes after purchase were the single most common post-acquisition problem our grantee partners named.

A California law now addresses part of the issue. We've seen firsthand that advocacy and community power building are a critical, high-impact area for philanthropic investment — one

funders should not overlook.

Reflection Questions

1. Does your institution fund advocacy or community power building in Native communities? Why or why not?

2. How could you use your own resources and influence to protect or expand public funding for Tribal land return?

3. The United States has never held a national truth and reconciliation process, so Tribes pay for their own historical research. Would your institution fund that documentation or other truth and healing efforts?

FUNDING A TRIBE'S OR A COALITION'S ADVOCACY CAPACITY FOR A BUDGET PROCESS CAN PROTECT A FUNDING STREAM THAT SUPPORTS LAND RETURN FOR A DECADE. DWP HAS EXPANDED ITS WORK TO SUPPORT POWER BUILDING AND IS PROVIDING ADVOCACY TRAINING. LAND RETURN DOES NOT HAPPEN WITHOUT A FIGHT.

PART II — WHAT WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY LAND RETURN

§5
THE MANY NAMES OF TRIBAL LAND RETURN

You have almost certainly seen #LANDBACK online or in the news in recent years. It's even been mentioned in television shows. This section shares some terms and approaches to land return that reflects our experience working with Tribal leaders and Indigenous advocates who have been on the frontlines of this movement. Each term carries a different emphasis and Tribal leaders may have their own frame. As always, our recommendation is to follow their lead and approach.

Land Return is the umbrella term covering the return of Tribal lands to Tribal hands through any mechanism, and it is the term this guide uses most. It spans restoring a Tribe's control of, or access to, its traditional/ancestral land, from a ceremonial access agreement through a full transfer of title, to federal trust status.

At DWP, we define land return as the reunion of land and its original stewards. A reunion presumes a relationship that existed before the paperwork and outlasts it, which is why we describe this work as healing rather than acquisition. You may also see it called *ancestral or traditional land return.*

Land Back, or #LANDBACK, names the political movement. **The LANDBACK Manifesto**,[48] published by NDN Collective, describes it as "the reclamation of everything stolen from the original Peoples," and centers embodied sovereignty as its aim. NDN Collective says, "LANDBACK is about exercising sovereignty and self-determination to become the people who the land wants and needs."[49]

Land Rematriation - if land return is a noun, land rematriation is a verb. The Sogorea Te' Land Trust, an Indigenous-led urban land trust in the San Francisco Bay Area, defines the verb as "to restore a people to their rightful place in sacred relationship with their ancestral land."[50] The word is a deliberate substitution. *Repatriation* is built on the Latin word for father and implies returning something to a nation-state or a jurisdiction. Land rematriation returns land to its caretakers, and carries the matrilineal traditions governing land relationships across many Tribal Nations. Land rematriation is not a softer demand than sovereignty. It names what sovereignty is in service of. Rematriation also can be used to describe other things being returned, such as seeds. Seed rematriation is the return of ancestral seed varieties to the communities they came from. The through-line is the same. Land goes back to the original stewards.

Land Repatriation is the term to use most carefully, because in federal law it already means something specific and it is not land. Under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA), repatriation is the return of Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony to lineal descendants, Native Tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations. You will hear "land repatriation" used casually as a synonym for land return, and you will see it in the titles of good resources. It is not wrong in ordinary speech. But in a grant agreement, a

board memo, or a conversation with counsel, repatriation may be read as NAGPRA.

DWP DEFINES LAND RETURN AS THE REUNION OF LAND AND ITS ORIGINAL STEWARDS. A REUNION PRESUMES A RELATIONSHIP THAT EXISTED BEFORE THE PAPERWORK AND OUTLASTS IT, WHICH IS WHY WE DESCRIBE THIS WORK AS HEALING RATHER THAN ACQUISITION.

Land rematriation is a verb. It's something to do, and it's happening.

— Carlos Rojas Alvarez, Decolonizing Wealth Project

Other Terms Worth Knowing

You do not need to master this vocabulary to fund this work. They are helpful to recognize when a Tribe uses them, because these words relate to very different levels of sovereignty and have various implications. *Note: relevant terminology is included as an appendix at the end of this guide.*

Land reparations. Used at times by very progressive donors and activists who may be thinking about land return in reparative terms - Resource Generation's Land Reparations & Indigenous Solidarity Toolkit is the best-known example. This term places land return inside a broader reparations frame alongside Black reparations.

Land tax, or rematriation tax. A voluntary, recurring contribution from people and institutions living or operating on a Tribe's ancestral homeland. The Shuumi Land Tax, run by Sogorea Te' Land Trust, is the model some funders have encountered. Calling it a "tax" rather than a donation is a deliberate sovereignty assertion, not a description of tax law.

Cultural respect easement. The Native Land Conservancy's (NLC) signature instrument: "a legal agreement that guarantees Indigenous people cultural access to land in perpetuity" for ceremonies, seasonal celebrations, camping, and other traditional and spiritual moments. NLC describes it as "the closest expression of land reparation to Indigenous people achieved without an actual transfer of deed." A funder can pay for one, if a landowner is willing to sell one. It is recorded, durable, and does not require the landowner to sell.

Conservation easement. A permanent recorded restriction on how land may be used,

held by a third party. It protects land from development, and runs with the land title in perpetuity. It does not transfer ownership of the underlying primary fee title, and it could constrain what a Tribe is later able to do with land it acquires.

Co-stewardship and co-management. Shared decision-making over land that a Tribe does not own, usually with a federal or state agency, usually through an MOU or MOA. This approach has value, but can be contested. The conservation field tends to treat it as a destination, while sovereignty advocates often read it as a ceiling. It is also only as durable as the government on the other side of it, which we highlighted previously in the 2026 land reduction of Bears Ears .

Fee simple. Outright ownership with full title, bought on the open market like any other property. Fee simple also applies to situations where land is donated to a Tribe or Tribal organization. Most of the successes in DWP's 2025-2026 CTLRI cohort use this method. Land held in fee simple is subject to state and local jurisdiction and, historically, property tax, though in California, AB 1485 changed part of that picture temporarily in 2026 as a result of community advocacy efforts. See above.

Land into trust, or fee-to-trust. The federal process by which land a Tribe owns becomes trust land, restoring Tribal jurisdiction and removing most state and local jurisdiction. Available only to federally recognized Tribes. Historically this path was seen as the fullest legal expression of land return due to Tribal Sovereignty. However, given the uncertainty of federal commitments and how bureaucratic this process can be, some Tribes are opting to keep newly purchased or donated land in fee simple status.

Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations. A federal program created out of the Cobell settlement to buy fractionated allotment interests from willing sellers and restore them to Tribal trust ownership. By its conclusion it had, per the Department of the Interior, consolidated and restored nearly 3 million acres across 15 states in partnership with more than 50 Tribes, paying $1.69 billion to more than 123,000 individual landowners. The program ended in November 2022, after being the largest land return mechanism the federal government has run. There is currently nothing replacing it.

Reflection Questions

1. When a Tribe names its own work —land return, rematriation, land back, a cultural respect easement — does your application language let them describe it their way, or must it be translated into yours?

2. If you fund work related to land, how do you honor Tribal Sovereignty in your giving?

3. The Land Buy-Back Program ended in 2022 with nothing replacing it. Which of the mechanisms named here is your institution positioned to help finance in its absence?

§6
THE LAND RETURN SPECTRUM

Funders can support work across the spectrum of approaches towards land return. We encourage engagement with these aspects and hope that you will push yourself to move beyond statements to action, understanding that approaches that acknowledge Tribal sovereignty and complete stewardship of land are the most impactful.

We found the Land Trust Alliance, Native Land Conservancy, and Tahoma Peak Solutions's report, *Partnerships for Indigenous Land Access and Return* (2025), invaluable during the research phase of our California Tribal Land Return Initiative. Their report maps a spectrum of legal mechanisms for Indigenous land access and return, from cultural respect easements to fee-

simple and trust-status distinctions. Also of help was The Indian Land Tenure Foundation's database of land-back transfers, which documents as many land return examples as possible to help facilitate more transactions in the future. We synthesized these sources into the nine-rung spectrum below, adding a Tribal Point of View and Funder Guidance at each rung.

Nine Aspects of Land Returns[51]

	RUNG	TRIBAL POV	WHAT A FUNDER CAN DO
1	**Land Acknowledgment**	A public statement naming whose homeland an institution occupies. This has no legal effect and is often perceived as a performative gesture when not paired with meaningful actions.	Pair the acknowledgment with a dollar commitment and a relationship.
2	**Consultation / Advisory**	A Tribe advises on land return strategy without holding decision rights. Procedural.	Fund the Tribe's capacity to participate: staff time, travel, preparation.
3	**Access & Harvest Rights**	Gathering, hunting, fishing, or ceremonial access on land owned by another party. Revocable.	Fund the legal agreements, the Tribe's stewardship costs, and general operating support.
4	**Cultural Respect Easement**	A binding, recorded right of ceremonial and spiritual access. The Native Land Conservancy developed this instrument as described above.	Fund drafting, recording, and long-term stewardship.
5a	**Co-Stewardship**	A general term for various agreements between Tribes and the federal government.	Fund the Tribe's co-management capacity and operations.
5b	**Co-Management**	An agreement that provides greater Tribal sovereignty and decision-making power.	Fund the Tribe's capacity and operations.
6	**Conservation Easement with Indigenous Management**	A perpetual restriction on land use, with the Tribe holding a management role. Difficult to modify once recorded, and may complicate placing land into federal trust.	Fund management and monitoring costs.
7	**Co-Ownership / Joint Title**	Tribe and often non-Native partner, e.g. non-Native land trust, share fee-simple title.	Fund the acquisition and the legal structuring.
8	**Fee-Simple Return**	The Tribe owns the land outright, with full exposure to state and local property tax and jurisdiction.	Fund the purchase, closing and bridge costs, property taxes, and stewardship. This is the key focus approach of DWP's work, and the majority of how our 2025-2026 cohort had land returned.
9	**Return with Restored Sovereignty**	Land taken into federal trust; Tribal jurisdiction restored, and state and local property tax exposure removed. There are tensions with federal trust with the current administration.	Fund the legal and administrative path to trust status.

A few considerations about the rungs:

- **All rungs can be catalytic. But some are more transformative.** A rung that fits a Tribe's strategy is the right rung. Funders should be flexible to support the Tribe's strategy, not your preference.

- **Rungs 5 and 6 can become ceilings.** Co-stewardship and conservation easements provide Tribes with access to the land for cultural use or stewarding the land and plants but it doesn't translate to Tribal decision-making or transfer the land's ownership over to Tribes.

- **Rung 9 is the horizon.** Most fee-simple returns aren't yet in federal trust. Funders should ask Tribes whether trust status is a goal and whether they can fund the path there. None of our 2025 grant partners land returns were achieved through federal trust mechanisms.

Reflection Questions

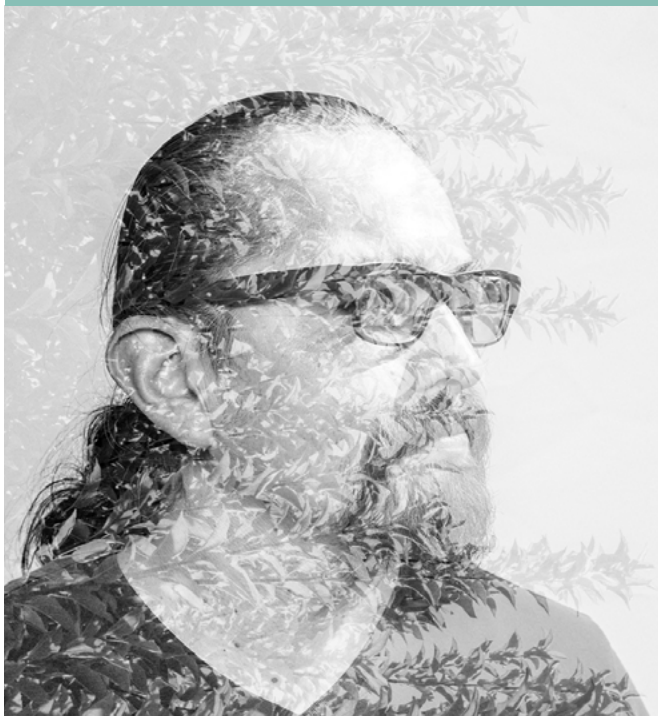
1. Which rungs does your current giving touch, even if you have never described it as land return?

2. This section warns that rungs five and six can become ceilings. Have you funded an easement or co-stewardship agreement that may have limited a Tribe's path to ownership?

PART III — LAND IS EVERYTHING

"When people are talking about getting the land back, it's more than that. It's about getting our culture back, as well."

— Anthony Macias, (Kashia) Kashia Band of Pomo Indians



§7
LAND RETURN'S INTERSECTIONAL HEALING

Our worldview is one of inseparable unity with the Earth; we are not merely from the land; we are the land. These places embody our existence, our stories, and our sacred responsibilities. They are integral to our spirit, language, religion, and culture.

- Tamien Nation Conservancy, and DWP California Tribal Land Return grantee partner.

"Land return and coastal stewardship are fundamental for Tribes to be able to advance their own sovereignty... to reach our north star."

— Marley Williams (Lumbee), The James Irvine Foundation

Most foundations are organized into siloed program areas. Health, climate, education, arts and culture, economic development, each with its own program officer, budget, strategy, and set of metrics. That structure is efficient for foundation operations. It is not efficient for the community, and it is a significant reason Tribal land return goes unfunded.

Siloed funding fails here because of the narrow definitions assigned to each program and the specific outcomes each one is built to measure. Tribes engaged in land return are not running five programs. They are trying to get a tract of land back so they can accomplish many things at once, across education, culture, economic development, conservation, and wellbeing. When funders define community outcomes without community consultation, giving becomes rigid and impact suffers.

Land return may not fit neatly inside your current portfolio. It will still help you reach the outcomes your organization is after, because the outcomes it produces are unusually broad.

Bridgespan and Native Americans in Philanthropy found that whatever a funder's issue focus, whether education, climate,

democracy or something else, Native institutions and Native leaders are already doing critical work inside it. The report names land return specifically as a next-level opportunity for systemic investment.[52]

If you fund climate, food security, mental health, language, youth development, arts and culture, economic justice, or children and families, Tribal land return reaches all of it at once. **These were never separate problems. They are separate line items in foundation budgets.**

What to do about the silos in your foundation

You do not need to reorganize your foundation or build a new portfolio. In our experience, three moves are usually enough to get a grant approved inside an institution.

1. **Name an owner.** Someone has to be able to say yes, and be willing to act as the internal quarterback. A cross-cutting opportunity with no home stays an opportunity.

2. **Fund the project from more than one budget.** Co-funding across two program areas costs the same money and does something a single-program grant cannot. It tells your own institution that this work counts in both places, and it reflects how issues actually show up in people's lives

3. **Keep the proposal process simple.** Do not ask a Tribe to write several proposals to satisfy your internal categories. If your structure requires a community to translate one piece of land into five funding languages, that is your problem to solve rather than theirs to absorb.

Adjust your giving lens to a reparative framework

There is another reason land return does not slot neatly into a portfolio. It is not charity.

Funding the return of stolen land is not a benevolent act toward a community in need. It is repair, the return of something taken to the people it was taken from. That changes the question a board asks.

A charitable frame tends to ask what impact we will get for the money. A reparative frame asks whether the amount is adequate to the harm. The second question is harder, and it is the right one.

> **New to DWP's Reparative Philanthropy Framework? We'll share more about reparative philanthropy in the next section.**

The loss of land has affected Indigenous communities across nearly every measure of individual and collective wellbeing, with lasting economic, spiritual, psychological, health, ecological and cultural consequences.

What follows shows how land return reaches the issues funders already prioritize. Use it as a casemaking tool if your giving is limited to a single program area. **Land is everything.**

Land is...Conservation

Recognition of Indigenous stewardship over lands and waterways is growing across conservation movements and among the funders who support them. Indigenous peoples have cared for land and water for generations,

developing methods that protect ecosystems, ensure their abundance, and reduce climate impacts. Tribes in the United States manage more land than the National Park Service, and multiple studies have found Indigenous-managed lands hold higher biodiversity than other conservation lands.[53]

Indigenous peoples have tended land through fire, harvest cycles, and species management for thousands of years. State and federal fire suppression policies interrupted those practices throughout the twentieth century, with damaging effects on species and ecosystems.

The importance of Indigenous stewardship over lands and waterways is growing in recognition and understanding among conservation movements and funders. Indigenous peoples have stewarded land and water for generations, developing caretaking methods that preserve ecosystems and mitigate climate impacts...[54]

DWP grantee partner Tule River Indian Tribe offers a direct illustration. Chairman Neil Peyron described what Tribal land management meant during a fire:

In 2021, we had the Windy Fire, which burned over 90,000 acres [of the Tule River reservation and Sequoia National Forest] and pretty much decimated the area surrounding the reservation. But our management practices pretty much saved a lot of our forested areas, including those giant sequoias. So acquiring this land enables us to apply our traditional and customary land management practices to that land to prevent those devastating fires and to manage the wildlife there.

- Chairman Neil Peyron, Tule River Indian Tribe

When land is returned to its original stewards, all of us benefit from their care of it.

Land is...Climate

Settlers pushed Native people onto the land they considered least valuable. A 2021 study in Science found that present-day Tribal lands face more extreme heat and less precipitation than the lands Tribes were forced from, and that nearly half of the Tribes studied face heightened wildfire exposure as a result. The same study found present-day Tribal lands are 24% less likely to sit above valuable subsurface oil and gas deposits than the lands Tribes originally held. The authors argue that this exclusion cost Tribes a foothold in the energy economy built on their former territory.[55]

Dispossession did more than sever stewardship from the land. It concentrated Native Nations on ground more exposed to climate hazards than the ground they were forced from.

In California, the loss of Indigenous stewardship has produced severe ecological consequences, driven by fire suppression policies the state and federal governments imposed throughout the twentieth century. Those policies caused a rapid decline in cultural burning, the fires Native peoples have long used to tend the land, with cascading effects on species and cultures.[56]

In our language the name of our people, our tribe, is also the name of the land. We are the same. The desert dust is made of our ancestors. The land is everything to us. The land is sacred, and if we don't protect it, no one will."

— Eva Brander Blackhawk (Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone), Decolonizing Wealth Project

Land is...Economic Development

In the United States, wealth is built on land. Land is the asset people borrow against and it's often the collateral behind business loans. Every conversation about the racial wealth gap eventually arrives at who was allowed to own property and when.

As we've shared above, Native Nations lost 98.9% of their land base. This was not a community that failed to build wealth. It was a community removed from the asset that builds it. For Tribes, having a land base is a precondition for economic opportunity. Indigenous People thrived off the renewable resources on their land for thousands of years. Land is required for jurisdiction, regulatory authority, the ability to create an enterprise, house a workforce, etc. A Tribe without a land base is not necessarily a Tribe with a weak economy, it lacks the foundation to build an economy.

Land acquisition stimulates the local economy. For example, land may allow Tribes to build food forests, seed banks, and ranching operations that circulate money locally by selling produce, employing Tribal members, and lowering the cost of food in communities where food is expensive.[57] Tribal land guardian programs and eco-tourism enterprises can provide valuable ecosystem services focused on caring for nature while addressing critical economic needs through employment of Tribal members. Most Tribal guardian and eco-tourism endeavors also have built-in cultural education components that produce greater appreciation and support for Tribes.

Land return is the only intervention that gives the asset back.

Because land itself is a core asset, it is unique from almost everything else philanthropy funds in economic development. Investments in workforce programs builds skills. Grants and loans can fund a new venture. Financial literacy programs teach families to better manage the money they have. While these types of programs are useful, none of them are actually returning the underlying asset. Land return does, and everything below follows from that one fact.

Most economic development strategies help communities do more with its assets. Land return is the only one that gives the actual asset back.

Land is collateral, and trust land is not

On trust land, legal title is held by the federal government, and the land cannot be conveyed or sold without federal consent. That protection exists for good reason. It is also why trust land cannot function as ordinary collateral, since a lender secures a loan against something it can take and sell.

None of this is an argument against trust status. Trust restores jurisdiction and removes property tax exposure, and for many Tribes it is the goal. A funder should still understand the tradeoff a Tribe is weighing, because it is a real one. Fee simple land can be borrowed against directly. Trust land cannot, and financing it takes more

Marley Williams (Lumbee) of the The James Irvine Foundation describes land return as an economic opportunity given the downstream impacts that it creates within a community such as new land stewardship job opportunities.

structure, more time, and more expertise.

Land is...Food Sovereignty

The Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance frames land return as a practical precondition for food sovereignty rather than a symbolic one.[58]

Tamien Nation's 2025 acquisition of 235 acres in East San José's Coyote Creek Watershed marked the first time in over 200 years the Tribe regained control of ancestral lands. Tamien Nation named strengthening food sovereignty among its goals for the property, alongside growing culturally significant plants and sharing Indigenous foods and medicines.

Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance frames land return as a practical precondition for food sovereignty, not a symbolic one.[59]

"Our vision is to acquire lands within our Aboriginal territory to live our lifeways with dignity, peace, and prosperity," Tamien Nation said.

Kashia Band of Pomo Indians' 2025 acquisition of 305 acres in the Sonoma County foothills, known as Big Dream Ranch, came with orchards, gardens, and an industrial kitchen already on the land. The Tribe named enhancing food security and growing traditional foods among its goals for the property.

Land is...Mental Health & Wellbeing

Indigenous people's deep connection with land often means the loss of land has ongoing negative impacts on mental health and wellbeing.

Land dispossession is documented as a driver of poor mental health outcomes among Indigenous communities globally.[60]

Land loss appears as one of twelve items on the Historical Losses Scale,[61] a tool researchers use to study how the losses of the colonial era register in the present. The instrument was built from focus groups with Indigenous elders, and it places land alongside loss of language, loss of culture, loss of spirituality, and loss of community members to early death. Land sits among them as a measurable component of grief.

The most comprehensive recent synthesis is a systematic review published in The Lancet *Planetary Health* in 2023, which examined twenty-nine studies of Indigenous communities across settler-colonial states. The review looked at dispossession caused by mining, hydroelectric, petroleum, and agricultural development rather than treaty-era removal. Even so, it found predominantly negative mental health effects: grief and depression, chronic stress and anxiety, anger, hopelessness and powerlessness, substance use, and suicidal ideation.

Those effects ran through the threat dispossession posed to identity, language, tradition, spirituality, and ways of life, rather than

Dr. Dana Arviso (Diné), Decolonizing Wealth Project: "Being disconnected from our land is like a wound, and the opportunity to restore that connection, to heal that relationship, it's like putting our heart back into our bodies."

through material loss alone.[62]

The taking of land is experienced as the taking of self. Native people and nations are inherently linked to the land.

These consequences are severe, and there is a second half to the finding. Land-based and place-based healing programs show measurable improvement in Indigenous mental and physical health. Programs that put people back on the land to harvest, hunt, hold ceremony, and teach. If dispossession is a mechanism of harm, return is a mechanism of repair.

A 2022 study of a land reclamation camp in Biigtigong Nishnaabeg territory, in what is now Ontario, found that the experience strengthened participants' social relationships, supported the sharing of Anishinaabe knowledge, and reinforced their Anishinaabe identity.[63]

Land as medicine means treating the wound of disconnection.

Two of our grantee partners described what having their own place would mean for their communities.

In speaking about the importance of land, one DWP grantee partner offered profound reflections on how land and having their own place can support mental health and collective wellbeing.

"It's our grocery store, it's our pharmacy, it's our education room... a place for our people to gain back their identity and a place where they can heal. And not only heal as far as... the terrible things that happen to us that we're... generational[ly] traumatized from, but also heal in forgiveness and heal in rehabilitation. As far as addiction...it can heal us from addiction. It can help with our sobriety, and it can help our folks that come out of incarceration." - Vernon Wilson (Cahto), Cahto Tribe

"There are a lot of things that are happening in our community with our young people. A lot of them have despaired. There's a lot of drugs that are happening on the reservations... we have... a certain number of suicides, and to know that this place is here and it can help them... they have that opportunity to be a part of something, something greater than themselves... this Healing." - Joyce White (OVIWC)

Land is...Youth and Education

Native America has a relatively young age structure. In the 2020 Census, about 27% of people identifying as American Indian and Alaska Native alone were under age 18, compared with 18.9% of non-Hispanic white people. By comparison, people age 65 and older made up 16.8% of the U.S. population overall.[64] When a Tribe rematriates land, it is doing so for a community with a comparatively large proportion of children and young people.

Our Tribal partners understood their land return work in exactly those terms. Almost every one of them spoke about the next generation before they spoke about anything else, and about wanting to teach their children and grandchildren the language and the ways of being that belong to their own lands and waterways.

"For the land, you know, to have us back on it, I know that the land misses us as well. And being an infant learner in my language, I know that land and language go hand in hand... I hope that our future youth get to see the natural spawning of the salmon." - Kendra Campbell (Cahto)

Land is a Protective Factor[65]

The National Indian Child Welfare Association's research concludes that positive mental health outcomes for Indigenous youth are consistently related to feelings of being connected to culture. That conclusion rests on a body of work including Mohatt and colleagues on connectedness as a culturally based protective factor for Alaska Native youth,[66] and Snowshoe and colleagues, who built a cultural connectedness scale for First Nations youth and tied it to mental wellness.[67]

Land return matters here because it supplies the conditions for connectedness rather than producing connectedness on its own. A Tribe cannot run a harvest camp without a place to harvest. It cannot hold ceremony on ground it has to ask permission to enter. It cannot teach a child where the medicine grows if the medicine is behind a fence.

Land is a Classroom

A 2025 scoping review of 153 land-based programs for Indigenous youth in the United States and Canada found that Elders and other cultural experts who transmit traditional ecological knowledge to youth through these programs support positive youth development and intergenerational connectedness.[68]

On the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Reservation in Wisconsin, young immersion students learn Ojibwe vocabulary and grammar through direct interaction with an Elder on reservation forestland, using the land itself as a language-learning partner.[69]

Anthony Macias (Kashia Band of Pomo Indians) shared, "When we're out there harvesting abalone, we're also teaching our kids. We're teaching them the songs. We're teaching them how to pluck them off the rocks. We're teaching them how to cook them. When people are talking about getting the land back, it's more than that. It's about getting our culture back, as well."

> **My hope would be to... teach my grandkids, my nieces and my nephews to teach them how to hunt and how to fish and how to gather and how to do it in a respectful, compassionate, meaningful way... if I can just plant that seed in a youth... I know what my inherited responsibility is, and that is to be the best teacher I can, the best educator to my youth that I can."**
>
> **— Vernon Wilson (Cahto), Cahto Tribe**

> **"We had a day called the Elder Day when we got the land back. When we went there, all the elders came out, they got to spend time on this land... The land that we got back is really close to one of our old, original villages... You're letting the elders get back on the land that they have not been able to access for their whole life. So, they're 80, 90 years old coming onto this land, and they're like, wow... they're talking, stories, they're telling us other stuff there, how it's connected to who we are."**
>
> **— Anthony Macias (Kashia), Kashia Band of Pomo Indians**

Land is...Arts and Culture

Cultural practice needs somewhere to happen. Sacred landscapes carry ceremonial names and songs that belong to no other place. The plants for food, weaving, and medicine grow on particular ground in traditional homelands. A dance meant to be performed outdoors needs an outdoors a Tribe controls.

Once the Owens Valley Indian Water Commission acquired the property, Rosanna Marujo picked up a drum. "I got the drum and I sang as loud and as hard as I could, from my heart to like say: this is ours now," she said. Rosanna turned to beading next: "The first thing that I wanted to do was beading and real cultural things."

Tule River Indian Tribe marked its 17,023-acre return with a ribbon-cutting and dance. "We still have a lot of families that practice our traditional dances that you don't see," said Neil Peyron of the Tule River Tribal Council. "They were there, and they performed ceremony there, and that really made it special." Tule River's land use plan now includes gathering rights for medicine and basket weaving, Peyron said.

Alexii Sigona of the Amah Mutsun Land Trust ties land title directly to cultural planning: "We can think about tending to our basketry plants. We can think about having a plan for cultural burning in the long term."
Each sacred site carries their own unique ceremonial names and songs, a 2024 scoping review found.[70] We believe protecting sacred sites is inseparable from protecting the traditional Indigenous knowledge they hold.

Reflection Questions

1. Where can you see land return fitting into your current focus areas? Is there a Native-led organization that you can partner with or fund to help you get started?

2. If you fund conservation, have you asked whether an easement you support affects a Tribe's path to land ownership or federal trust status?

3. If your economic development portfolio funds skills, ventures, and financial capability, what would it mean to fund the asset instead?

PART IV — KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR USING MONEY AS MEDICINE

§8
The Path to Healing is Reparative Philanthropy

Everything up to this point has made a case for land return through an exploration of history. History explains what was broken and lost through land dispossession. This section is about what you, as a funder, can do about it.

Philanthropy was not built for repair. It was built for wealth accumulation. In the U.S., the institutional wealth that supports philanthropy largely comes from wealth accumulated through colonization, extractive labor and supply chain practices, and systemic racism. These business tools caused generational harm to Black, Indigenous, and other communities in the United States for hundreds of years, and the harm continues today in both similar and different forms.

Decolonizing Wealth Project (DWP) was founded on a single conviction: money can be medicine.

And the institutions and families that hold wealth have a responsibility to use it as medicine. Reparative philanthropy is the practice that gets them there.

Reparative philanthropy as a term and giving framework was first introduced by DWP founder/CEO Edgar Villanueva in 2018.

DWP defines reparative philanthropy as, "the redistribution of resources in a manner that acknowledges the extractive origins of philanthropic wealth – whether family or institutional – and how colonization, slavery, and other forms of oppression facilitated the accumulation of the wealth that philanthropy protects, grows, and distributes." It seeks to foster reconciliation and collective healing through acts of giving.

DWP's Reparative Philanthropy™ Framework offers foundations and donors a path to acknowledge the harmful origins of wealth, build authentic relationships with the communities most harmed, and move resources toward healing the harm that was caused. The framework is grounded in ancestral Indigenous wisdom, trauma-informed practice, and spirituality. It is an invitation - to donors, families, and institutions - to do the inner work that transforms how we relate to money, to one another, and to the world.

Through direct consultations and coaching, our framework has helped unlock more than $1 billion in new

reparative giving toward issues like economic solidarity, Indigenous land return, Black wealth-building, climate justice, youth mental health, and other movements driving systemic change that moves us closer to collective wellbeing.

The Seven Steps to Healing

DWP's Reparative Philanthropy™ Framework is rooted in the Seven Steps to Healing, outlined in Decolonizing Wealth (2018, 2021).

1. **Grieve.** Stop and feel the hurts we have endured.

2. **Apologize.** Apologize for the hurts we have caused.

3. **Listen.** Acknowledge the wisdom of those excluded and exploited by the system, who hold exactly the perspective needed to fix it.

4. **Relate.** Share our whole selves with each other, and understand that we do not have to agree in order to respect one another.

5. **Represent.** Build whole new decision-making tables, rather than setting token places at the colonial ones.

6. **Invest.** Put all our money where our values are.

7. **Repair.** Use money to heal where people are hurting, and to stop more hurt from happening.

The Seven Steps are non-linear by design. An individual or an institution can enter at any point and move through them organically, so long as the intention and the commitment extend to all seven.

The Framework also names plainly the harm it seeks to repair the extraction of wealth, labor, land, and power from Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities. In doing so it fills a gap left by more traditional models of philanthropy, which rarely reckon with the legacy, or the continuation, of the harm the sector is built on.

Why Land Return is a Perfect Expression of Reparative Giving

Of every way an institution can practice reparative philanthropy, Tribal land return is the most literal.

Most reparative giving moves money as a proxy for something that was taken. Land return moves the thing itself. And the first step of the framework , acknowledging the harmful origins of wealth, lands differently here than it does anywhere else, because for many American fortunes those origins are,specifically and documentably, Indigenous land. There are details of the historical harm - what parcels were taken, which broken treaties facilitated the theft, and when it all happened.

That specificity is a gift to a funder, even though it does not feel like one. It means the acknowledgment can be researched rather than asserted, and it means the repair has an address.

The Origins of Wealth

The wealth held by foundations and donors are most often sourced from businesses or endowments that can often trace wealth accumulation to land, extraction, and industry tied to dispossession.

The Northwest Area Foundation traces its endowment to the fortune James J. Hill built through the Great Northern Railway. In the 1880s Hill lobbied federal officials to pass laws breaking up Tribal land, opening the same territory his railway served to white settlement. The foundation's service region — Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. The foundation notes that this geography is shared with 76 Native Nations.[71]

In 2012 the foundation committed to invest 40 percent of its annual grant dollars in Native-led organizations.[72] Between 2012 and 2024 it invested more than $95 million in Native-led organizations — 45.3 percent of the $210 million it awarded over that period. It has met, and often exceeded, its own commitment.[73]

In 2026, the Northwest Area Foundation published a public wealth acknowledgment statement connecting the origins of its endowment, linked to the Hill family's Great Northern Railway fortune, with the dispossession and harm experienced by Native communities.[74] In a July 22, 2026 article, the Foundation explained that the statement emerged from years of examining its history and that a conventional land acknowledgment no longer felt sufficient.[75]

You don't have to wait to have everything perfect. The Northwest Area Foundation moved money for twelve years before sharing their wealth acknowledgment. Funders who feel they are not yet ready to say something about their wealth should not let that stop them from impactful grantmaking in the interim.

Repair as a Transfer, Not a Grant.

In March 2024, the Kataly Foundation made a $20 million Shuumi Land Tax contribution to the Sogorea Te' Land Trust, described by

both organizations as the single largest known cash gift to a Native land trust in history. The money supports urban Indigenous land care, restoration, and reclamation on Lisjan Ohlone land. Kataly's CEO, Nwamaka Agbo, framed it not as generosity but as obligation: one step toward repair, and the responsibility of a foundation that exists on Ohlone land.[76]

The Opportunity

If your foundation's wealth, or your family's, traces to the acquisition or extraction of Indigenous land, you are not merely a sympathetic outsider to this work. You are a party to it, and that gives you standing a stranger does not have. Returning land under those circumstances is not benevolence toward a community in need. It is repair - the return of something taken, to the people it was taken from.

Land return expands who benefits. The opportunity for healing is also available to the people who move the resources. To the landowner who chooses the Tribe over the higher bidder, the trustee who stops asking about return on investment and starts asking what else they can do, to the program officer who removes the grant restrictions and lets a community decide how to use the funding. These shifts in perspective and action take those in positions of power from head decisions, to ones from the heart. This change is what we mean when we say money can be medicine. It is not a metaphor about generosity. It is a statement of fact. When you give from the spirit of wanting to see a harm repair and a community healed - you'll get much of the same back. Reciprocity and abundance are inevitable in reparative giving.

The Cycle Does Not Stop at the Origin

In 2014, The Rockefeller Brothers Fund announced its divestment from fossil fuels. Since then, other climate funders have begun divesting from fossil fuels, while others have faced growing pressure to examine whether their endowments reinforce the harms their grantmaking seeks to address.[77]

Fossil fuel extraction, oil pipelines, mining, and resource development sit in direct opposition to the climate protection and ecological repair that returning land to Tribal stewardship makes possible. The contradiction does not stop at the investment portfolio either. It shows up in grantmaking, in projects that touch sacred sites and ancestral land without the people connected to that land at the table.

IT IS MORALLY CONTRADICTORY TO BE A LEADER IN PHILANTHROPIC EFFORTS TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND TO BE CONTINUING TO INVEST IN THE FOSSIL FUELS THAT ARE CAUSING IT.

— STEPHEN HEINTZ, PRESIDENT, THE ROCKEFELLER BROTHERS FUND[84]

When the origins of a fortune trace to the acquisition or extraction of Indigenous land, a donor has a distinct opportunity to support land return as repair. This kind of giving goes past charity and past benevolence. Working through DWP's Reparative Philanthropy™ journey also lets donors examine the other ways their wealth may still be harming people and the planet, and find the places where those cycles can be stopped. It is one of the surest ways we know to get into the right relationship with community.

DWP's Reparative Philanthropy™ is defined as "the redistribution of resources in a manner that acknowledges the extractive origins of philanthropic wealth — whether family or institutional — and how colonization, slavery, and other forms of oppression facilitated the accumulation of wealth that philanthropy protects, grows, and distributes."

Reflection Questions

1. How was the wealth of your institution or your family created, and who was harmed in building it?

2. The Northwest Area Foundation moved money for twelve years and recently published its wealth acknowledgment reflecting on the history of the foundation and the work it has done. They are a great example of going through the reparative philanthropy journey at a pace that makes sense for their organization and sharing their learnings as they go. What would it take for you to share your organization's wealth story?

3. If your endowment is invested in extraction, what would it take to acknowledge that publicly like the The Rockefeller Brothers Fund did and create a plan to divest?

§9 KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Supporting Tribal land return may feel daunting, but it's easier than you think. This section outlines some key considerations and recommendations drawn from our own experience at DWP that will support you on your way.

Remember as you go that you do not have to be an expert. The expertise lives in Tribal communities, and we are here to help you along the way. The most important steps are to say yes to the call, and then to give with your heart and an open spirit. Get out of your head. Land return is sacred, and there is joy and healing available in this work. Do not miss it.

Respect Tribal Sovereignty

Across every part of this work, donor goals can differ from Tribal goals. Donors and foundations have power and often the community bends towards their expectations in order to get funding. Be mindful to not impose your worldview, strategy, outcomes, etc. on Tribes. You are a guest in their land and should exercise cultural humility. Don't ask Tribes to assimilate to your process.

Ownership of Land

The return of Tribal land requires a methodical inquiry that respects the fact we are working within a Western construct of land ownership that may not directly correlate to the Tribal perspectives. **Indigenous worldview sees land**

as a relative not an asset. Land is a relative, not a real-estate asset. Indigenous worldviews see people and land as interdependent.

Some insights shared by the Grand Canyon Trust state that "owning land is a foreign concept for [many] Native peoples. The land is sentient. It encompasses many life forms and spaces. It holds immense energy." From a Native perspective one cannot "own" land, yet one may **live with the land** in a regenerative relationship based on generations of deep interconnectedness that have been taught through their cosmologies, ceremonies, and languages."

Use of Land

The agenda of a conservation donor can sometimes conflict with a Tribe's goals for the land. In land return endeavors, Tribes are primarily interested in reestablishing active relationships with their traditional lands and waters. This includes cultural activities (including certain aligned economic activities) that often are not part of a typical land conservation scenario. If you fund conservation, you are likely better prepared for this work than almost anyone. You already are familiar with the history of the conservation movement, and the steps needed to close a land deal. You already pay for appraisals, title work, and long-term stewardship. You know what a stewardship endowment fund is, and might even have helped establish one or more. You may already fund an organization that could hold ground for a Tribe tomorrow, or understand exactly what a Tribe would need in order to start its own land trust.

American conservation was built on the premise that land is healthiest when people are kept off it, a premise enforced in places like Yosemite and Yellowstone by removing the Native people who had tended those lands for millennia—with disastrous and lingering ecological and social consequences. That history continues to live inside the tools of today's conservation movement. A conservation easement dictates what may and may not be done on a piece of land in order for it to retain certain functions, attributes and values. Sovereignty mandates the exercise of decision-making by Tribal Nations in order to fulfill intergenerational responsibilities for the land, humans and other species. Those two dynamics address distinctly different worldviews and goals, meaning a Tribe can end up in situations where land is protected but is still not held or even actively stewarded by the Tribe.

American conservation was also built on the premise that land is healthiest when people are kept off it, a premise enforced in places like Yosemite and Yellowstone by removing the Native people who had tended those lands for millennia. That history lives inside the tools. A conservation easement asks what may be done on a piece of land. Sovereignty asks who decides. Those are different questions, and a Tribe can end up with land that is protected and still not its own.

Center Relationships

Build exploratory relationships with Tribal officials and who can help convene Tribal community members in a process aimed at building trust. Be transparent about your intentions and process. Some Tribes have very little experience with philanthropy and donors, so don't be patronizing and don't over promise. Be willing to be flexible, prioritizing the community's approach before your own agenda.

Start Local

Regardless of your foundation's geographical restrictions, there is a place for you in this work. Start your path towards repair where your foundation is located or where your foundation's wealth originated, especially if you're a local funder.

It may take some time to identify whose land you're on and develop a relationship with that Tribe. Take the time to do your research and acknowledge that there may be multiple Tribes that claim traditional territory over the land. In rare instances where there is no local Tribe, that doesn't necessarily mean there's no relationship opportunities at a regional or national level. Bend the restrictions, remember Tribes are situated where they are largely because of removal policies.

Do Your Homework

Before investing in a land return project, there's some basic information to collect to inform the viability of a land deal, including assessing their readiness. Consider these questions:

1. Has the Tribe identified a tract of land?
2. Is there a willing donor or seller?
3. What are the Tribe's key goals for acquisition?
4. Does the Tribe have viable plans for acquisition? Financing? Consider the mix of public and private funds, matching opportunities, and date of available funds. Will a loan be required?
5. What other funders are supporting?
6. Post acquisition - what are the Tribe's plans for the land? Do they have the resources to care for it?

Some Tribes have land staff, a conservancy, and a five-year acquisition strategy; others have a volunteer committee and an intention. Every stage of land return is important and DWP has funded Tribes in dramatically different positions. As a funder, it's important to do your homework so you can help right-size the community's expectations.

Community Tensions

Conflicts between Tribes can arise. For example, more than one Tribe may claim traditional territory over the land in question. Tension can also come from the historical complexities created by colonization and the federal government. If this happens, do a little research. Consult Native leaders inside and outside the community for advice. Push through to support where you can, and avoid getting caught in the middle. Learn when it's appropriate to gracefully walk away.

Technical Assistance

Is technical assistance something you can offer, or fund? Only a small number of attorneys and practitioners nationally do this work fluently. Your investment goes further and faster when communities have the resources to engage legal, financial, and real estate expertise. These supports are expensive. At a minimum, don't restrict your grant because Tribes will need to pay for these necessary supports.

General Operating Support

As we have said throughout this Guide, land return is complex.

General operating support gives a community the flexibility to meet the needs that arise during the acquisition process and after it. Property taxes after the purchase, a fence, a water test, a caretaker, an appraisal, an environmental site assessment, and the months of staff time between an opportunity and a closing are all costs that restricted funds tend not to cover. Preparation, execution, and everything that follows a transfer invite complications both anticipated and not. General operating support protects the process end to end.

Three ways to fund this work.

Give directly to a federally recognized Tribe as the sovereign government it is. Grant to a 501(c)(3) Tribal or Native-led organization. Move money through a Native-led intermediary.

Reflection Questions

1. Whose ancestral homelands does your institution occupy and work within?

2. This section lists the basic questions to ask about a land deal's viability. Which does your current due diligence already answer, and which would it never think to ask?

3. General operating support and technical assistance are named here as what Tribes need most. What share of your giving to Native communities last year was unrestricted?

§10
LET'S GET TECHNICAL

Now to the operational side of funding land return. If any of this feels uncertain, engage your legal and accounting teams, and possibly a real estate advisor, to help with the decisions ahead. There are essentially three types of Native-led organizations you can support for land return that are permissible for charitable deductions.

1. **Federally recognized Tribes.** A federally recognized Tribe is a sovereign government and can receive funding directly. Under 26 U.S.C. § 7871, Congress treats Tribal governments similarly to states for certain federal tax purposes, including the

deductibility of contributions. Your team will need to learn the due diligence process for grantmaking to a Tribal government.

2. **501(c)(3) Tribal or Native-led Organization.** Here ordinary grantmaking applies, usually with no special mechanism. Tribes that are not federally recognized, whether state recognized or federally unrecognized, are most often supported this way, as are many federally recognized Tribes that have a supporting nonprofit, a Tribal nonprofit, or a Native-led land trust holding charitable status. While DWP has prioritized Tribes directly in our land return program, support can also go to Native-led nonprofits, including consortia of Tribes, land trusts, and Community Development Financial Institutions that work closely with Tribes.

3. **A Native-led intermediary.** These community-led funds regrant, provide technical assistance, and carry trust. Intermediaries like DWP are well positioned to move resources to Tribes and to Tribal 501(c)(3)s, and many operate cohort programs. They have usually worked with Tribes and Tribal organizations already, know the funding landscape, hold relationships with trusted partners, and can move resources efficiently. They also tend to offer donors ongoing education and relationship building.

A reminder About Tribal Classifications

Federally recognized, state-recognized, and unrecognized Tribes differ in which federal programs and land-into-trust options apply to them.

Federal recognition is a determination made by the United States government. It is not a measure of Indigeneity, continuity, or legitimacy. There are 575 federally recognized Nations and at least 400 more that are not recognized, according to a 2012 federal estimate that remains the most recent count available, since no agency maintains a live registry of unrecognized groups.[78] DWP funds both.

In general, a donor who does not need the deduction can give to any Tribe regardless of recognition status. Recognition determines which federal mechanisms apply. It does not determine who a donor may support. Your accounting and legal teams are likely best positioned to advise on your specific situation.

§11
HOW OTHER FUNDERS ARE SHOWING UP

Funders come to this work from different directions.

Join a pooled collaborative. Multiple funders can help share the cost, the risk, and the learning curve of an initiative none of them would launch alone. A pooled structure lets a smaller funder participate in transactions beyond its own grant size, and no single institution has to build the expertise from scratch. This is the model behind DWP's California Tribal Land Return Initiative, described in the next section. It centers Tribal leadership and preferences and interests, while providing technical assistance to the cohort and ongoing learning for the funders who contribute.

Adopt a redistribution lens. Some funders approach land return as a reparative act or a form of reparations, returning stolen value rather than making a grant. In these situations, it is imperative that the interests and expectations of both the land trust and the Tribe are sufficiently aligned. In practice this changes little about the paperwork and a great deal about the internal conversation, since a board evaluating a transfer as repair asks about adequacy rather than impact metrics. Again, Kataly CEO Nwamaka Agbo called their tax payment "one step towards repair," tying it to the foundation's own location on Ohlone land.

Pay a land tax. A land tax is a voluntary payment made by people and institutions occupying a Tribe's ancestral homeland, calculated by the Tribe or its land trust and

MARLEY WILLIAMS (LUMBEE), THE JAMES IRVINE FOUNDATION):

"EVEN THAT MORE MODEST AMOUNT OF REGRANTING ENDED UP BEING VERY CATALYTIC FOR SOME PRETTY CRITICAL THINGS, WHETHER IT WAS AN ANALYSIS OF THE LAND VALUE, BEING ABLE TO BRING IN A CONSULTANT TO WRITE THE GRANT TO THE STATE, OR WHATEVER IT WAS... THE MORE THAT TRIBES HAVE ACCESS TO UNRESTRICTED FUNDS, THE MORE THEY CAN ALSO LEVERAGE STATE FUNDS OR GOVERNMENT FUNDS THAT ARE VERY RESTRICTIVE."

FYI: Something you may see as part of the land return process is a land trust as holding partner. In this situation, a conservation organization acquires land and holds it, sometimes for years, until a Tribe is positioned to take title. Western Rivers Conservancy did this along the Klamath River, assembling 47,097 acres over a 23-year partnership and transferring the final parcel to the Yurok Tribe in 2025. More land trusts could play this role, though a Tribe has to ask for that kind of partnership and the trust has to run both ways.

framed as an obligation of occupancy rather than a donation. Sogorea Te' Land Trust administers the Shuumi Land Tax[79] mentioned above. Ho'āhu Kaua'i Land Tax is another, a Kaua'i-specific voluntary land tax run by Kīpuka Kuleana, a Native Hawaiian land stewardship organization. Ho'āhu is framed around historical injustice and the idea that anyone living on Hawaiian land shares a kuleana, a responsibility, to help protect it.[80]

Create a Dedicated Commitment. Some foundations have made Native Nations or Indigenous communities part of their overall giving through sustained, central commitments.

For example, in 2008, the Bush Foundation elevated their commitment to Native people with a focus on supporting stronger Tribal governance in the 23 Native Nations in the geographic region they serve, culminating in the creation of the Native Governance Center. They have specifically supported land return as well. Bush awarded a $2.6 million Community Innovation grant to Owámniyomni Okhódayapi to support Dakota-led land reclamation work at the site, with representatives from the four Dakota Nations in Mni Sota shaping a vision centered on cultural and environmental restoration. The grant is specifically intended to help move the project from concept through critical milestones — including transferring land ownership.[81]

The Bush Foundation also provides general operating support to the Indian Land Tenure Foundation, a national organization focused on land reclamation as central to tribal sovereignty, which works with Tribes on projects to expand land ownership and conducts data and policy work related to Tribal land stewardship.[82]

In June 2025, the MacArthur Foundation announced its **Native Self-Determination Program.** Although its specific focus areas had not yet been announced, MacArthur said the program would increase financial support for Native communities, deepen relationships with Indigenous leaders, incorporate Indigenous perspectives into its work, and build relationships with other funders to share lessons and learn from their experiences.

Divest land you already hold. Many foundations and individual donors hold real property: campuses, retreat centers, ranches, inherited acreage, land held as investment. Some foundations and donors have explored mechanisms to divest of their real estate assets and return land to Indigenous communities. We cannot overstate the importance of Tribal consultation here, to understand a Tribe's own interest and needs before any transfer of stewardship. For example, in 2024, the Weinberg Foundation transferred ownership of nearly 250 acres on the western coast of O'ahu to MA'O Organic Farms — its first-ever land grant in Hawai'i. A Native Hawaiian nonprofit, MA'O operates a 281-acre farm in the rural community of Wai'anae and provides programs to enable youth to connect with 'āina (land), participate in a flourishing agricultural business, and prepare for postsecondary education and careers.[83]

Reflection Questions

1. Which of the approaches above could your institution use this fiscal year, without having to launch a full-scale strategic planning process?

2. What land or real property does your institution or your family hold, and has anyone ever considered returning it?

3. The Kataly Foundation moved $20 million as a land tax rather than a grant. What

would change inside your institution if a transfer were not processed as grantmaking?

PART V – LAND AS MEDICINE IN CALIFORNIA

DWP is a national organization, yet this initiative was deliberately local. We chose California because we could get to the ground quickly, because the Tribal leadership here was already moving, and because the state had money available that Tribes were struggling to reach. We did not know how to close a land deal when we started. We're sharing the full spectrum of our experience with the California Tribal Land Return Initiative. Not as a model, but as a working example of how you can get started with land return and iterate as needed. We stayed willing to learn as we went, and were flexible enough to change our approach mid-project when our Tribal partners in the cohort told us what they actually wanted and needed.

§12
DWP'S CALIFORNIA TRIBAL LAND RETURN INITIATIVE

As previously mentioned, DWP had been operating the CA Truth and Healing Fund which had deeply expanded our relationship with CA Tribal leaders, philanthropic institutions, and California State government leaders.

There was momentum in California building around land return. Tribal leaders statewide were moving on land return initiatives and the state had available money to support Tribes. DWP felt that we could mobilize philanthropy to pool its resources to support Tribes who were on their way, but needed a boost.

What we got right is here as well as lessons we've had to learn along the way.
DWP began developing the California Tribal Land Return Initiative in 2023. DWP partnered with Indigenous Justice to conduct an assessment, which surveyed more than 65 organizations and leaders across California, then engaged ten Tribal leaders already doing land return work to help shape the Initiative.

These leaders become our advisory committee and data from the assessment plus wisdom from our advisors largely created the foundations of the ensuing work. While we have Native staff at DWP, including our Founder and CEO, we had no one on staff who was from a Tribe in California. Therefore, we wanted to be sure to center the voices, perspectives, and wisdom of California Native and Tribal leaders in this work.

The Tribal leaders we convened named three consistent needs: 1) flexible grants they could direct as they judged best, 2) wraparound technical assistance for the specific obstacles in front of them, and 3) expert support to build their own capacity rather than dependence on DWP's.

In January 2025, with investment from The California Endowment and The James Irvine Foundation, we granted $1.65M to eleven partners representing 31 Tribes and Tribal organizations.

After continued engagement with the cohort over 2025, it became clear an additional grant round could help our partners maintain their momentum or act as matching or leveraging funds for other opportunities in play. In January 2026, we granted an additional $700,000 for a total Initiative investment to date of $2,350,000.

Five Choices

We made five key choices in this work that are informative as you consider investment in land return work:

1. **Unrestricted/General Operating Support Only.** Each partner received funds they could direct as they saw fit. No questions asked. We were also flexible on the terms. We planned a twelve-month cycle; several partners' projects extended into 2026 and later, with some partners still fundraising toward purchase prices and others moving into stewardship and management planning. In response to the diverse positions our partners were in, DWP launched a second round of grants in January 2026 to provide continued capacity-building support.

Vernon Vera of the Tule River Tribe said,

"I think foundation funding in particular can sometimes have fewer restrictions than state funding... our grant wasn't the biggest one... but it could be used on any aspect of the project, because it was general operations funding. I'm trying to advocate for other funders to put as few restrictions on this money as possible."

"Even that more modest amount of regranting ended up being very catalytic for some pretty critical things, whether it was an analysis of the land value, being able to bring in a consultant to write the grant to the state, or whatever it was... The more that Tribes have access to unrestricted funds, the more they can also leverage state funds or government funds that are very restrictive."

- Marley Williams (Lumbee), The James Irvine Foundation

2. **A community of practice, not just a grant round.** We convened two in-person gatherings and three virtual sessions across 2025, built around four areas the grantees named as their priorities: finances and fundraising, legal, sustainable development, and collaboration and partnerships. Outside experts brought in included Save the Redwoods League, Center for Ethical Land Transition, Indian Land Tenure Foundation, NDN Collective Fund, Resources Legacy Fund, and Colorado Plateau Foundation, as well as attorneys from various firms that specialize in Indian law.

Grantees reported gains in financial literacy, understanding of CDFI and foundation lending, culturally relevant memoranda of agreement, the land-into-trust process, and the mechanics of a land deal.

Dr. Dana Arviso, DWP's Director of Indigenous Programs, described the goal as providing enough education to demystify the process. By the fall 2025 convening, cohort members were reaching out to each other for advice outside the sessions entirely, which was not a success measure designed for, but nevertheless surfaced as one of the favored resources by our cohort.

3. **Kept Funders Engaged.** DWP pulled its core funders together for a conversation of their own — sharing what we were learning, passing along updates from our Tribal partners, and giving funders a chance to hear from each other, not just from us. Danielle Levoit of the Doris Duke Foundation pointed to the strength of the advisory team DWP built around the cohort, and said the model kept funders genuinely connected to work still in progress, not just briefed on it after the fact.

4. **We funded while we learned.** We were not experts at the beginning of this work and we are still learning. We decided to hire an external evaluation firm to document our learnings along the way since this is a relatively new area of focus for donors.

5. **We drew a deliberate funding boundary.** We chose to fund only Tribal governments and nonprofits tied to specific Tribes, not Native-adjacent organizations or allied land trusts working on Tribes' behalf. We also were careful to select Tribal funding partners who had already initiated (or were about to initiate) a land return project they had clearly identified as being of high priority to them. In talking to various Native leaders, Judith LeBlanc of Native Organizer's Alliance, said to our CEO - 'when we are talking about LandBack, Tribes have got to be at the table." If the United States were giving land back to Mexico, they would give it to the Mexican

government, not to a Mexican nonprofit. This is not to say that it's a bad move to support Native nonprofit organizations with capital and land acquisitions. It just serves a different purpose.

The Nonlinear Journey

Our model, in five parts.

1. Two years of listening before designing
2. Unrestricted and flexible funding.
3. A community of practice for peer learning.
4. Funder engagement and education.
5. Document learning, adapt, and make changes along the way.

DWP has worked closely with all eleven Tribal partners who have all seen significant progress on their land return efforts in our first year. We expect to see additional outcomes in 2026-2027 and are actively exploring how we might expand this work. If you are interested in supporting this work and continuing your learning journey by giving, please reach out to our team at **info@decolonizingwealth.com.**

Reflection Questions

1. What would "funding while you learn" look like for your foundation or as an individual donor?
2. DWP made five choices: two years of listening, unrestricted funding, a community of practice, funder education, and a deliberate funding boundary. Which would be hardest for you or your institution, and why?
3. DWP convened its own funders to learn together. Is peer learning an interesting option for you and would you pay for the education?

§13
LEARNING THROUGH STORY

We could have written this section as case studies. We chose stories, because a table of acquisitions would tell you what happened without telling you what it cost, who carried it, or what it made possible.
Read these once for what they are - the stories of five Nations and Native-led organizations who brought land home.

Then read them again as a funder.
In each of these stories there was a moment when money arrived in the right form at the right time - and moments when it didn't. Those moments are the curriculum. You'll find discussion questions after each story and a closing set for the section as a whole. Use them on your own if you must, but they work better out loud, with the people you make decisions alongside about money - : your board, your program team, your family, your giving circle, your peer funders. The stories are the medicine. The questions are how you take it.

In this set of stories, we also wanted to emphasize the nonlinear path that each journey took: state funding restrictions and reporting requirements, the urgency of landowner's real estate timelines, the energy around revitalization of cultural relationships with land, potential federal funding freezes, and developing relationships with land conservation organizations who could hold land until purchases and financing could be finalized.

Among the many lessons we learned in this work is: how to be patient and supportive, and recognize that land return is more than just a complex real estate transaction. We learned to be the kind of funder that can weather the ups and downs with our partners by providing unrestricted funding and offering encouragement and assistance at every turn.

Amah Mutsun Land Trust - 50 Acres

A Historic Return

Amah Mutsun Land Trust (AMLT), a Native-led nonprofit, is evaluating and pursuing over 2,300 acres of cultural importance to the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band. A member of AMLT said, "The most fulfilling part of this journey is to find our identity as a mixed people, working with cultural Tribal elders to prioritize the needs of the land trust and what pieces of land to go after, and carrying on a culture that needs to be revitalized."

While the Tribe has temporary partnership agreements to access 150,000 acres of their sacred sites, the successful 50-acre acquisition of the tooromakma hinse nii (Bobcats Wander Here) property is the first time the Tribe has regained control of a portion of their ancestral lands. The Tribe can now return to the path of traditional ecological knowledge, conserving cultural and natural resources, restoring Indigenous sovereignty, and fostering cultural connections and identity.

Land Return in California

AMLT partnered with Trust for Public Land to create their land acquisition documents and successfully apply for a $2.1 million Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation grant. They were also awarded a grant through DWP's California Truth and Healing Fund to rebuild their Native Stewardship Corps, which will assess the land, plants, and wildlife to inform land management decisions. AMLT noted that they find it more difficult to manage state grants than apply for them due to the financial reporting requirements.

Partnering with DWP

With their California Tribal Land Return Initiative (CTLRI) funding, AMLT hired a land acquisition specialist and support part of their General Counsel's salary and administrative needs. With the CTLRI, AMLT created their land acquisition strategy, developed a joint fundraising plan with Trust for Public Land, and built their capacity for Tribal land acquisition and stewardship. Through the Community of Practice (CoP), they were inspired to look into California's Proposition 4 funding, learned how to tell their story, and gained colleagues whose work they can point to as examples of what can be done.

Partners: Decolonizing Wealth Project, Community Foundation Santa Cruz County, Trust for Public Land, State of California, California Council of Land Trusts, California Strategic Growth Council

Funder Discussion Questions:

1. AMLT told us state grants are harder to manage than to win. DWP money paid for a land acquisition specialist, part of a General Counsel's salary, and administration. Would your institution fund those three line items? If not, who do you expect to pay for them?

2. AMLT's $2.1 million state grant came through a partnership with Trust for Public Land. What would it take for you to fund the year of capacity-building that happens *before* a Tribe could apply for a large grant - and when there will be no acquisition at the end of it.

Tamien Nation
- 235 Acres

A Historic Return

Tamien Nation's 235-acre land return marks the first time the Tribe has been able to regain control of some of their ancestral lands. The land falls within the Coyote Creek Watershed, the largest watershed in the Santa Clara Basin- a short distance south of San Francisco. This success supports the Tribe's goals of reconnecting with their heritage, strengthening their community, and advancing traditional ecological stewardship. In managing this land, the Tribe will grow and share their traditional foods and medicines, restore and protect the land's ecosystems and biodiversity, and help their people heal from historical injustices by reconnecting them to the land.

Land Return in California

Tamien Nation is still in the early stages of their land return work, having only started land conservancy efforts in 2024. Tamien Nation received substantial funding support from California Natural Resources Agency's Tribal Nature-Based Solutions grant program. This program supports the statewide initiative of conserving 30% of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030 while also returning ancestral lands to Tribes in the state. While grateful to be recipients of the Tribal Nature-Based Solutions grant, the funding came with a lot of restrictions. In the future, they intend to be more mindful of protecting their Tribal sovereignty when determining how to move forward.

Partnering with DWP

Tamien Nation used funding through our California Tribal Land Return Initiative (CTLRI) to hire a full-time director for Tamien Nation Land Conservancy. With the CTLRI Community of Practice, they have been building

their capacity and expertise for effective site assessments, planning, and management.

Funder Discussion Questions:

1. Tamien received major state funding, and it came with enough restrictions that they now intend to be more mindful of protecting their sovereignty going forward. When your own grant agreements set conditions, what do those conditions cost a grantee that you never see?

2. DWP funding here paid for a full-time director. What is the equivalent single hire in a community you already fund, and what has stopped you from funding it?

Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of Stewarts Point Rancheria - 305 Acres

A step toward healing and cultural revitalization

"They call it land return, but the land was not taken from us. We were taken from the land." — Anthony Macias, Director of Cultural Resources, Kashia Band of Pomo Indians.

The Kashia Band of Pomo Indians' historically vast homelands along California's central coast were cut down to a 41.5-acre reservation by 1915. The federally recognized Tribe has since gained back over 1,000 acres.

A Historic Return

The Kashia Band of Pomo Indians' successful acquisition of 305 acres — known as Big Dream Ranch, or Bahthe Qha?adi-du, in the Sonoma County Foothills — represents a step toward healing and cultural revitalization. The Tribe celebrated their successful return with Elder Day. The land is close to one of the Tribe's original villages, and the Tribe's elders are now able to return to land they have been unable to access their entire lives. The community also has space where they can carry out their traditions, walk the land together, hold events, and support the betterment of their people.

"The Creator put us on the land to care for it, and we will care for this land the way we always have. We will restore the balance." — Anthony Macias

Land Return in California

The Kashia Band of Pomo Indians' project started with heartbreak. The Tribe originally had an agreement with the owners to gain back a 1,200-acre piece of land, but someone outbid them. Their community was discouraged, and they were expecting similar disappointment when the Tribe began pursuing the 305-acre parcel. But this time, the landowner worked with the Tribe, the community rallied, and they

successfully acquired Big Dream Ranch. It comes with orchards and gardens and several buildings, including a house, industrial kitchen, and barn stocked with tools and equipment. The Tribe plans to steward the land, grow and harvest traditional foods, hold cultural workshops, and host community events.

Partnering with DWP

Kashia Band of Pomo Indians emphasized the importance of funding to support costs following land purchase. While a grant from the California Natural Resources Agency supported the initial purchase, it was not designed to cover the ensuing property taxes, building maintenance, land management, and agriculture activity costs. DWP designed the CTLRI to let the Tribe use the funds as they saw fit.

DWP also created a space for the Tribes in the cohort to network with each other, share their knowledge, and work together to move their projects forward. Technical assistance topics of particular interest to Kashia Band include integrating agricultural land use with conservation and recreation, and best practices to minimize impact to the land while maximizing output. Trust served as the foundation of the CTLRI Community of Practice. Anthony Macias said, "You earned our trust — it wasn't given — and we earned yours." He said DWP fostered trusting relationships by backing honest, respectful communication with earnest action.

Partners: Decolonizing Wealth Project, California Natural Resources Agency

Funder Discussion Questions:

1. Kashia was outbid on 1,200 acres before its 305-acre project succeeded, and the community initially expected the same disappointment again. Most philanthropy funds outcomes. Could your institution fund a land deal that falls through — and then fund the same Tribe's next attempt? What does it take for a Tribe to really trust you?

2. State money covered the purchase but not the property taxes, maintenance, land management, or agriculture that followed. If you funded an acquisition tomorrow, who at your institution would be responsible for asking about year two?

Tule River Indian Tribe of California - 17,023 Acres

Securing the largest ancestral land return in California's Sierra Nevada Foothills

"This land return demonstrates the very essence of tribal land restoration." — Leister "Shine" Nieto Jr., Chairman, Tule River Tribal Council

Tule River Indian Tribe of California is a federally recognized Tribe. Their reservation once spanned over 91,000 acres. They have been able to return to more than 60,000 acres of forest and rangeland.

A Historic Return

Tule River Indian Tribe of California's 17,023-acre land return — comprising the 14,673-acre Hershey Ranch and the 2,357-acre Carothers Ranch in the Yowlumne Hills — marks the largest ancestral land return in the Sierra Nevada foothills and the Central Valley[85]. The Tribe celebrated by immediately reintroducing tule elk to the land. Through a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Forest Service and in collaboration with neighboring Tribes, Tule River Indian Tribe manages this land with a focus on reforestation, watershed restoration, species management, and the reintroduction of indigenous species.

Land Return in California

The Tribe goes after diverse funding sources to support their projects and safeguard them from potential budgetary challenges, such as a federal funding freeze. Their successful 2025 land repatriation project was supported by DWP, the California Wildlife Conservation Board, California Natural Resources Agency, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, The Conservation Fund, and other private philanthropic partners.

Partnering with DWP

The Tribe was able to use CTLRI funding to hire a land use manager and finalize their land use plan. They expressed appreciation for the flexibility DWP built into the CTLRI, which provided the time needed to secure approvals from their Tribal council. They were also able to easily revise their grant budget to accommodate changing costs for things like fencing materials and water quality testing. Through the Community of Practice, the Tribe sought technical assistance on biological and vegetation surveys, grant writing and donor appeal letters, budget assistance, and digital storytelling.

Partners: Decolonizing Wealth Project, California Natural Resources Agency, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Wildlife Conservation Board, The Conservation Fund, other private and philanthropic partners.

Funder Discussion Questions:

1. Tule River deliberately diversified funding sources to protect the project against a federal freeze. Think of your largest current grantee - if their biggest funder disappeared in ninety days, would your grant help them absorb that or make it harder?

2. The Tribe revised its budget as fencing and water-testing costs shifted, and used DWP's timeline flexibility to secure Tribal council

Yurok Tribe — 47,097 acres, Blue Creek & Klamath River

approval. Pull up your own grant agreement template — would it have allowed either of those without a formal amendment?

This story is not a part of our CTLRI impacts; however, it is the largest land-back deal in California history at the time of writing this guide and exemplifies the potential of public/private partnerships. While DWP did not provide funding for this project, we have consistently funded the Yurok Tribe through our California Truth & Healing Fund and Indigenous Earth Fund.

Western Rivers Conservancy spent 23 years acquiring and transferring 47,097 acres along the lower Klamath River and Blue Creek watershed to the Yurok Tribe, completing the final conveyance of 14,968 acres on May 30, 2025, at a total transaction value of $56 million.[86] The California Wildlife Conservation Board and the California State Coastal Conservancy funded the transfer alongside Western Rivers Conservancy.

"To pay for the project, WRC pieced together an innovative funding strategy that brought together $56 million in private capital, low interest loans, tax credits and carbon credit sales. Of that, only $8 million was through direct public grants. The private funding included traditional sources, such as gifts from private foundations, corporations and philanthropic individuals, as well as nontraditional sources like the sale of carbon credits, which will continue to support the project, and capital generated through the New Markets Tax Credit program of the U.S. Department of the Treasury."[87]

The land is now managed by the Yurok Tribe as the Blue Creek Salmon Sanctuary and the Yurok Tribal Community Forest, and the conveyance more than doubled the Tribe's land holdings.

Blue Creek is a cold-water tributary functioning as a thermal refuge for salmon moving up the Klamath. Yurok Tribal Chairman Joseph L. James thanked Western Rivers Conservancy for what he called a longtime partnership and commitment to returning a major part of the Tribe's homeland.78 This return was made possible by a conservation organization that

The Yurok Blue Creek project is a stellar example of public-private partnership. The full list of partners is found at www.yuroktribe.org/post/largest-ever-land-back-conservation-deal-in-california-now-complete

acquired the land and held it for over two decades until the Yurok Tribe could take title. The willingness to do so reflects the deep partnership, trust, and service required.

Funder Discussion Questions:

1. Western Rivers Conservancy held this land for 23 years — longer than most foundation strategic plans, most program officers' tenure, and most donors' giving horizons. What is the longest commitment your institution has ever made, and what made it possible?

2. Yurok's press releases cite roughly $8 million of the $56 million as direct public grants, with the rest assembled from private gifts, low-interest loans, New Markets Tax Credits, and carbon credit sales. Which of those tools does

your institution already have access to and has never used for land return?

Reflection Questions

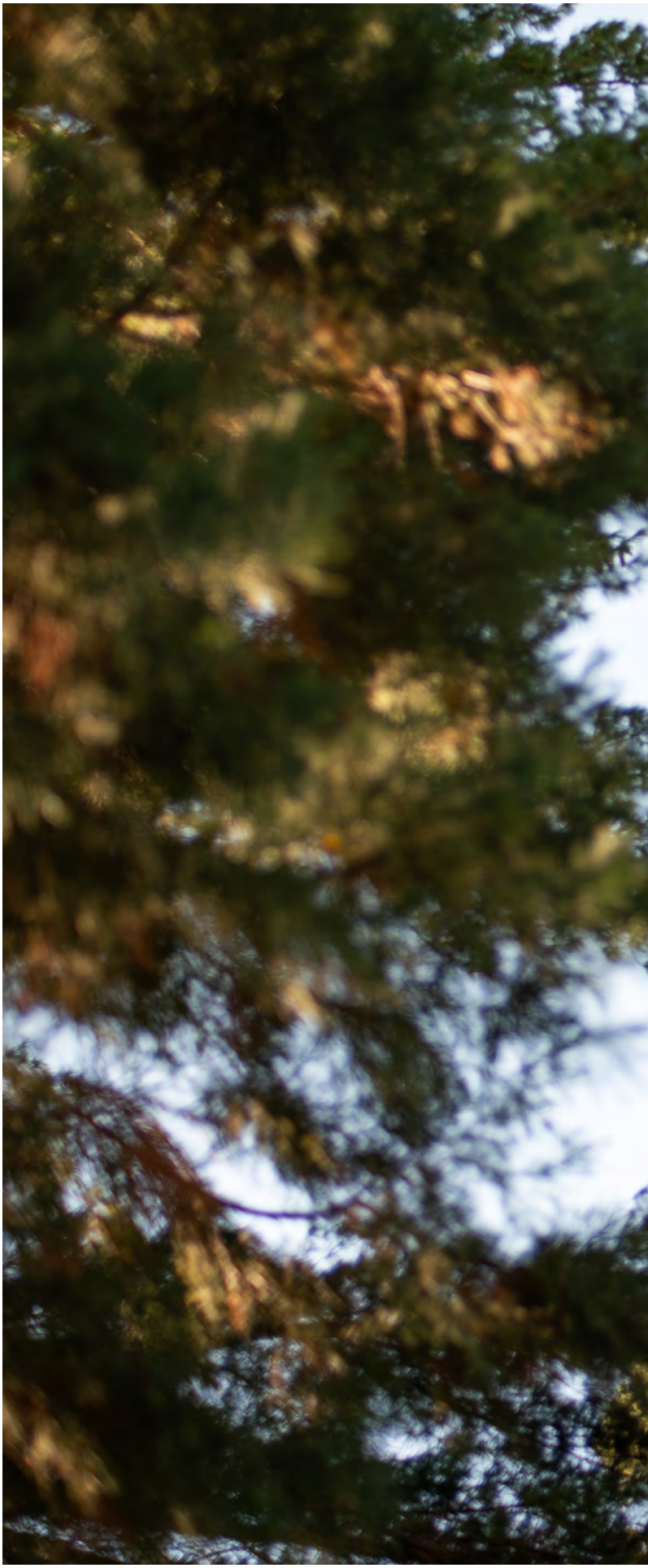
1. Across all five stories, philanthropy rarely bought the land. It paid for the person, the plan, the lawyer, the year after closing, and the time to say yes. Which of those is easiest for you to fund in the next twelve months?

2. Every one of these journeys was nonlinear — a lost bid, a restricted grant, a seller's timeline, a federal threat. What in your current process punishes a grantee for exactly those things?

3. Could you imagine yourself or your institution being a key partner in a story like these? If not, what's the barrier, and is it a policy, a person, or a habit?

4. Which Tribes and Native-led organizations hold ancestral territory where your institution owns property, invests, or grants? Who in your organization or office has that list? And if no one does, who builds it? By when?

5. What is the smallest amount you could move this year that would be genuinely unrestricted and multi-year? Say the number out loud before you move on.



PART VI — GETTING STARTED

§14
WHAT TO DO NEXT

1. **Move past acknowledgment into relationship.** A land acknowledgment recognizes whose land it is. That is all. Yes, these can be performative. No, not every land acknowledgment is. But we do need to ask ourselves if the land acknowledgment has created an absolution of the duty to care and act to support full Tribal sovereignty and land stewardship. As Reid Walker (Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation) wrote in The New York Times, institutions tend to "stop exactly where the cost to them would begin."[88]

2. **Educate yourself, board and staff, assess current funding and set achievable goals for future funding.** Read this guide together, honestly assess your current giving to Native communities, and set specific goals. We focus on what we measure.

3. **Fund Native-led intermediaries first.** An intermediary already carries what takes a foundation years to build: relationships across many Tribes, geographic reach beyond a single grantmaking footprint, and technical assistance on retainer — the attorneys, appraisers, and land practitioners a Tribe needs and a foundation cannot supply directly. An intermediary can also move money to a Tribe with no development staff, no grant writer, and no 501(c)(3), which describes a large share of the Tribes doing this work and which most funders' due diligence processes cannot reach directly. Finally, investing in Native-led intermediates builds community-led philanthropic infrastructure and capacity for the long haul, to move resources to community and continue to engage and educate funders. DWP's California Tribal Land Return Initiative brought The California Endowment, the Irvine Foundation, and the Doris Duke Foundation into the same conversation and built a model that can inspire work in any region.

4. **Give another way.** Are there other paths to support Native land work that you should also explore, such as paying a land tax, or returning real property your institution already holds.

5. **Talk to us.** The next section offers actionable steps for your Tribal land return journey and how DWP can support you and your team.

"THE MONEY IS NOT AN INSURMOUNTABLE BARRIER. I THINK THAT'S THE MENTALITY WE NEED TO ADOPT."

— DR. DANA ARVISO (DINÉ), DECOLONIZING WEALTH PROJECT

§15
YOU ARE NOT ALONE

We believe there are three impactful ways to move from intention to action; none of which requires you to become a Tribal land return expert.

1. Our grantmaking can move new dollars to Native-led land return without a foundation or donor having to build anything from the group up. We already hold the relationships and fund the work that makes land return possible: expertise and wraparound technical assistance, narrative and culture work, and community power-building. All chronically underfunded.

2. We run peer learning for donors and foundation staff — convenings, land visits, and funder education, built so a funder is not working this out alone.

3. We provide training and consulting to donors, foundations and social impact organizations that want to shift towards reparative giving.

HOW WE CAN HELP: Give through our fund. Learn with other funders. Change how your institution gives. Fund the infrastructure. One conversation starts any of them.

Reflection Questions

1. Of the three ways DWP works with funders — moving dollars through our fund, peer learning, and changing institutional practice — which support do you want to learn more about?

2. What do you believe you need for casemaking with your organization or family, and how can DWP support you?

3. Who else in your institution or your family needs to read this guide before you can act, and when will you give it to them?

AS WE CLOSE, REMEMBER

Land return is a love story. It's a reunion after a forced separation. We all know the feeling of watching two people reconnecting at the airport - the hugs, kisses, it's pure unadulterated joy. It's healing to watch. For us, funding Land Return has been healing to do.

And, like most love stories, there are conflicts and challenges. We encountered them, and chose to continue funding land return despite them.

Our hope and intention is that you now feel better prepared to start (or continue) your land return funding endeavors. That you understand some of the history, the opportunities, difficulties, and resources available to you as you navigate conversations with Tribes, your board, the family office, or your clients.

Most of all, we hope you leave feeling inspired to use your money as medicine. It's not often grantmaking can touch so many different parts of a community, it's even more rare that the benefits go well beyond the community and impact the greater 'we' so tangibly.

We're here to help you on your journey to transform wealth into collective wellbeing.

PART VII - TERMINOLOGY & RESOURCES

§16 TERMINOLOGY

26 U.S.C. § 7871 — the provision under which federally recognized Tribes are treated similarly to states for certain federal tax purposes, including deductibility of contributions.

Acquisition — The purchase of land by a Tribe or Tribal organization, or the donation of land to such an entity. One of several strategies used to expand Indigenous land holdings. Also known as "fee simple".

Braided Capital — An Indigenized approach to the "capital stack," combining multiple funding types (grants, loans, power-building resources) to minimize risk and increase project resilience.

Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) — A mission-driven lender certified by the U.S. Treasury to serve underserved communities. Native CDFIs are focused on providing flexible, culturally aligned financial tools for Tribal Nations and citizens.

Capital Continuum — The strategic sequencing of capital sources, starting with grants, then moving to technical assistance, loans, and eventually self-sustaining revenue.

Collateralization — Using land or property as security for a loan. Some Native financial institutions do not collateralize land out of respect for Tribal sovereignty and land's sacred status.

Community ofPpractice (CoP) — A group of people who share a concern, passion, or goal and deepen their knowledge and practice by learning together over time.

Conservation Easement — A legal agreement that permanently restricts land use to protect conservation values. Can accompany land return projects but must be Tribally directed.

Conservation Trust — A type of land trust focused specifically on protecting natural resources, ecosystems, and biodiversity. Such organizations often place legal conservation easements on land to restrict certain types of development in perpetuity. In Tribal contexts, they can both support and complicate land return, depending on their structure and flexibility.

Decolonization — work to "undo" the harms of colonization. As stated in Decolonizing Wealth, "taken literally, decolonization means that the land that was stolen from indigenous communities is given back. Sovereignty, not only over the land, but of resources. All of that is granted back to those from whom it was stolen. It also means that the autonomy of every individual Native person must be re-instated." Because completely undoing colonization is impossible, we can work to address the resulting trauma through healing. So, decolonization in DWP's perspective, is about stopping the cycles of abuse, healing ourselves and helping others heal.

Doctrine of Discovery — a religious and legal concept from the 15th century that gave Christian explorers the right to claim and govern lands

they found that were owned by non-Christians.

Entropic Design/Entropy (metaphor) — Describes how Indigenous organizations, like baskets, require ongoing tending and intention to maintain their shape and purpose.

Ethical land Transition — The intentional and respectful process of transferring land ownership or stewardship back to Indigenous Peoples or communities in ways that uphold sovereignty, rights, and relation to the land. This occurs within recognition of equity, cultural continuity, consent, and long-term viability.

Federally Recognized / State-Recognized / Unrecognized — categories of government determination, not measures of Indigeneity.

Fee Simple — A form of land ownership where the title is held outright, with no restrictions. May still be accompanied by exceptions to title in the form of easements or land-use agreements.

Fixed Income — Low-risk investments (e.g., bonds, treasury notes) that provide steady returns over time.

General Obligation Loan — A loan backed by a Tribal government's general credit rather than specific collateral.

Integrated Resource Management Plan (IRMP) — A comprehensive plan often used by Tribes to manage natural, cultural, and infrastructure resources across a particular ecosystem or landscape.

Land Back — A broad movement advocating for the return of land to Indigenous Peoples through various strategies.

Land Return — An umbrella term encompassing all strategies to restore Tribal control over land.

Land Rematriation — Emphasizes returning land to its caretakers, often rooted in feminine or matrilineal frameworks.

Land Trusts — Nonprofit organizations that work to conserve land by acquiring fee title or conservation easements, or by assisting with land transactions. Land trusts often hold the title to land, monitor its use in alignment with conservation, and ensure alignment with cultural and community values.

Similar to: **Community Land Trust** (CLT) | A related but distinct model: instead of acquiring land for conservation, a CLT holds land in trust for a community's long-term benefit — historically to guarantee housing affordability, not habitat protection. Tribes and Tribal organizations are increasingly adapting the CLT structure for cultural stewardship and land return.

Mission-Related Investment (MRI) — A foundation investment made from its endowment, chosen to align with the organization's mission while still seeking a market-rate (or near-market) financial return. Unlike a PRI (see below), an MRI does not count toward the foundation's required annual payout.

Native vs. Indigenous — for the purpose of this Guide, these terms are interchangeable and a matter of personal preference, referring to Native Americans or original peoples to Turtle Island (or the land now known as the United States). Note: Indigenous often is a global in use, referring to Indigenous communities around the globe.

Program-Related Investment (PRI) — A foundation investment made primarily to advance the foundation's charitable purpose

rather than to earn a financial return. PRIs typically take the form of below-market loans or equity, and they count toward a foundation's required annual charitable payout. See https://www.cdfifund.gov/system/files/documents/(19)-faqs-about-program-related-investments.pdf

Reparative Philanthropy — A term first introduced by Edgar Villanueva in 2018, DWP defines reparative philanthropy as "the redistribution of resources in a manner that acknowledges the extractive origins of philanthropic wealth — whether family or institutional — and how colonization, slavery, and other forms of oppression facilitated the accumulation of wealth that philanthropy protects, grows, and distributes. Also known as DWP's Reparative Philanthropy™ Framework.

Reparative Spatial Justice — A framework that recognizes land and place as central to justice and equity. This approach emphasizes correcting historical and ongoing spatial inequities. In Indigenous contexts, this involves land return, rematriation, and restoring cultural and ecological relationships, typically through community-led planning, stewardship, and governance.

Reservations —Land set aside under federal law or treaty for the use and occupancy of a Tribe or Tribal Nation, generally held in trust by the federal government rather than owned outright by the Tribe. Reservations vary widely in size and origin, and many represent only a small remnant of a Tribe's original ancestral territory. Source: https://www.bia.gov/faqs/what-federal-indian-reservation

Self-Determination — The collective right to govern internal affairs and participate meaningfully in decisions that affect Tribes' lives and communities. Tribal sovereignty helps ensure this right.

Spatial Inequities — The unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, services, and environmental conditions. These are rooted in systems of power, race, and colonization. These inequities are not random as they are the result of historical policies (e.g., redlining, forced relocation, land dispossession, underinvestment, zoning restrictions, environmental extraction, and environmental racism) that continue to shape who benefits from land and place.

Tribal Sovereignty — The inherent authority of Indigenous Nations to govern themselves and make land-use and other critical decisions on behalf of their citizens.

Tribal Consortium — A collaborative structure where multiple Tribes pool resources or share responsibility for projects.

Urban Native American — "Urban" refers to Natives who didn't grow up on a reservation or in their traditional Tribal land.

§17 HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR YOUR LAND RETURN JOURNEY

Land Trust Alliance, Native Land Conservancy & Tahoma Peak Solutions, Partnerships for Indigenous Land Access and Return. The most practical guide in the field on legal mechanisms and real partnerships.[89]

NDN Collective LandBack Manifesto

Sogorea Te' Land Trust, Shuumi Land Tax. The clearest working example of a voluntary land tax.[90]

Native Americans in Philanthropy & Candid, Investing in Native Communities, with the Bridgespan companion report. The field's data on the funding gap.[91]

First Nations Development Institute, Reclaiming Native Truth and On the Matter of Foundation Giving.

First Nations webinar series

- Conservation Easements https://www.firstnations.org/resources/easements/
- Co-Stewardship & Co-Management series https://www.firstnations.org/resources/co-stewardship-and-co-management-webinar-series/

Indian Land Tenure Foundation and Indian Land Capital Company. Land recovery work and the CDFI capital that finances it.

Native American Rights Fund, Land Co-Management Repository
The repository is designed to consolidate resources for those interested in sovereign-to-sovereign cooperative land management agreements and their practical applications.

Resource Legacy Fund — A nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing conservation and environmental justice by building partnerships and mobilizing resources. Its focus is on protecting natural resources, promoting climate resilience, and ensuring equitable access to nature.

Save the Redwoods League — A nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect and restore coast redwood and giant sequoia trees through the preemptive purchase of development rights of notable areas with such forests.

Dawnland — is the untold story of Indigenous child removal in the US through the nation's first-ever government-endorsed truth and reconciliation commission, which investigated the devastating impact of Maine's child welfare practices on the Wabanaki people.

Lakota v. United States — a 2022 documentary film which explores the 1876 Seizure of the Black Hills and the Indigenous Lakota people's fight to reclaim control of them.

This Land — A podcast hosted by Rebecca Nagle

List of Native-led Funds & Intermediaries
Funds listed may not be working on land return efforts

ANPO
CIRI Foundation
Colorado Plateau Foundation
Decolonizing Wealth Project
First Nations Development Institute
First Peoples Fund
Hawai'i Peoples Fund
Hopi Foundation
Indian Land Tenure Foundation
Ishkode Fund
Na'ah Illahee Fund
Native Americans in Philanthropy
Native Arts & Cultures Foundation
Native Voices Rising
NDN Collective
Potlatch Fund
Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples
Tamalpais Trust
Tiwahe Foundation

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