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# NATIONAL CENTER FOR AMERICAN INDIAN ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

## ANNUAL REPORT



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“The National Center has provided leads, procurement education, and emotional support. The support has been particularly helpful in helping us navigate the federal buying process which, as many of you know, can be quite complex.

Raymond Greer,  
Managing Member,  
Sun Turtle Office Furniture



## The Challenges of 2020 Strengthened Our Resolve

As was the case for nearly every organization, 2020 was a challenging year for the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development. Many of the shutdowns and social distancing measures went into effect just as our annual Reservation Economic Summit (RES) concluded in March. Few could imagine the tough months ahead after concluding such a successful gathering in Las Vegas—one that put on full display everything the Native American and Alaska Native economy has to offer.

It would be easy to focus on the negatives of the last half of the fiscal year; indeed, we cannot and will not forget about the tribal communities devastated by the pandemic in nearly every corner of the country. Their struggles are what drive us each and every day. I am, however, incredibly proud of how the National Center and our staff have stepped up to deliver and expand the services and support we offer. The last nine months have refocused the National Center’s purpose and mission, and made me even prouder to lead this five-decade-old organization.

Our annual report details the highlights of fiscal year 2020 and provides a vision for how we continue our critical mission into 2021 and beyond. Whether it was quickly transitioning to a work-from-home mentality, shifting the Native Edge Institutes to a virtual setting, or

developing a fact sheet and guide for tribes and tribally-owned businesses to use when obtaining personal protective equipment (PPE), we have shown we can be nimble and adapt to meet any challenge. Furthermore, it speaks volumes that few outside the organization would notice a change in how we do business. We continue to offer our regular top-notch programming to the businesses and entrepreneurs that are looking to take the next step in their journeys—to build the bridges of opportunity needed for success.

Amid the chaos, there are some signs of a return to normalcy. We are in full planning mode for RES 2021, which we hope will include an in-person component to go along with expanded virtual offers. We are preparing to work with the administration and Congress on what we hope will be a strong agenda for Indian Country.

Whatever 2021 holds, 2020 has shown the National Center is ready for any challenge. Thank you for your support of this incredible organization.

Chris James  
President and CEO



# We Mean Business for Indian Country

The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development is a more than 50-year-old organization serving American Indian and Alaska Native businesses and entrepreneurs. We are the only organization uniquely focused on business and economic development for tribes, tribally-owned businesses, and Native-owned businesses and entrepreneurs. From the halls of Congress to the boardrooms of major companies domestic and abroad, we are the voice of Native business.

Though our mission has remained constant, our organization has changed over the years. We have grown from a small group that hosted an annual luncheon to a national force with offices in six states, 15 staff, over 20 consultants and contractors, the host of the largest economic development gathering in Indian Country, a robust advocacy organization, and the go-to resource for business training for the entrepreneurs who need it most. We have enabled billions in contracts and deals and created thousands of jobs for Native and non-Native employees alike.

**But that’s only part of the National Center’s story.**

One of our primary roles is a connector—a bridge builder. We connect Native-owned businesses to the supply chains of major companies and government agencies. We ensure businesses and entrepreneurs in need of startup capital have access to banks and financial institutions. We provide training and technical assistance to those looking to take the next step in their entrepreneurial development. And we create networking and matchmaking opportunities that forge lasting relationships.

In Washington, DC, the National Center advocates for smart policy and regulation that helps tribes, Alaska Native Villages and Corporations, and Native-owned businesses

thrive. We provide the perspectives needed to move our agenda forward. While we don’t always see success immediately, there is no doubt we are moving the needle. In 2020, one of our key pieces of legislation—the Native American Business Incubators Program Act—became law. We will build on this success in 2021.

Finally, we share Indian Country’s story—our positive story. We have documented the leaders pushing our economic agenda forward in every corner of the country. We highlight future leaders through our 40 Under 40 program and Native business scholarships. We are changing the way the world sees our community.

**We may be over 50, but  
we’re just getting started.**



# The National Center is Focused on Three Unique Pillars

“The National Center opened our eyes to thriving Native-owned companies across the country and industry leaders who provide support to Native-owned businesses. Through participation in various events like RES, we’ve learned of the true potential for a Native-owned business and the support that was available to help these businesses thrive.

Jade Blankenship and Jensen Peone,  
Co-Founders, Indigenous Boutique & Spa

## Business Development

We pride ourselves on helping Native American and tribally-owned businesses obtain financing and gain critical access to federal business development programs and contracts. We do this by:

**Providing** professional business consulting services and technical assistance at no cost to our clients.

**Delivering** more than 5,000 contracts over 18 years, resulting in nearly \$4 billion in contracts and more than 65,000 jobs.

**Increasing** the number of American Indian/Alaska Native-owned businesses, including helping Fortune 1000 companies use more Native businesses in their supply chains.

**Fostering** a new generation of American Indian/Alaska Native entrepreneurs and inspiring our youth to pursue business education and obtain practical experience.

**Leveraging** the new digital economy to help Native businesses expand their reach and potential.

## Advocacy

We serve as the voice for Native business in the Halls of Congress and with federal agencies. Our accomplishments are significant and still growing, including:

**Securing** the 5% Indian Incentive Program and helping our businesses gain access to the Small Business Administration’s 8(a) and other federal programs.

**Leading** the effort to pass the Native American Business Incubators Program Act, which was signed into law in 2020.

**Advocating** for tribes, tribally-owned businesses, and Native American and Alaska Native entrepreneurs through the CARES Act and ensuring access to PPP loans and other small business assistance.

**Elevating** the voices and concerns of our community, regardless of which party is in power.

## Access to Capital

We understand access to capital is one of the biggest challenges Indian Country faces. We help businesses get the financing they need to reach their business dreams by developing networks and training as well as a robust lender referral service, including:

**Launching** Native Edge Finance, Inc., (NEF) a Native Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). Native Edge Finance’s goal is to provide economic opportunities for Native American communities and businesses by providing products and financial services to support business growth and development. NEF will begin lending summer of 2021.

**Connecting** businesses directly with financial institutions capable of funding their dreams at events like RES and our Native Edge Institutes (NEIs).



# How the National Center Builds Bridges of Opportunity

The theme for RES 2020 was “Building Bridges of Opportunity.” From connecting qualified Native-owned businesses to Fortune 1000 companies, to nurturing the next generation of Native entrepreneurs, everything the National Center does focuses on building bridges.

Building bridges proved to be even more important in the months following RES. The COVID-19 pandemic confirmed that we are all in this together and that we all need bridges to help us in our journey, in both good times and bad. The National Center did its part to continue building bridges. Our virtual NEIs gave access to resources that helped them weather the storm. The PPE Guide was essential for tribes entering uncharted waters during the pandemic. We partnered with the Center for Indian Country Development at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis to better understand the economic challenges Indian Country businesses are facing.

**We will continue building bridges in 2021 and beyond.**





# Robust Programming for Native Businesses



Throughout the year, the National Center hosted events and programs that supported Native-owned businesses and entrepreneurs. While forced to reconfigure many of these events for virtual settings due to COVID-19, the National Center held more NEIs and webinars than previously scheduled, 10 in total. The National Center offered this programming free of charge to all who registered, ensuring business development expertise was available to all Native entrepreneurs. Our staff rose to the occasion to meet our mission in unprecedented times.

## Native Edge Institutes

2020 was a year full of Native Edge Institutes that took place across the country. NEIs are one-day, virtual, or in-person training events that provide both established and aspiring business owners critical business training covering a wide range of traditional business topics. This year, the National Center responded to COVID-19 by featuring a new summer series of NEIs titled “Building Economically Resilient Businesses” and “How to Maneuver and Build your Business During an Economic Downturn.” These NEIs were attended virtually by businesses nationwide seeking advice on how to access federal funds, emergency capital loans, and on protecting businesses from unforeseen disasters. NEIs this year took place virtually in Alaska, Arizona, Washington, Alabama, Connecticut, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. NEIs connect participants with existing resources available in their region to go along with one-on-one business counseling/coaching, matchmaking services, and access to the National Center’s N2N (Native to Native) business network.

## National Center PTAC

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

Throughout 2020, the PTAC has stuck to their mission of providing new opportunities for Native businesses, especially during COVID-19. As new contract opportunities arose reflecting the needs of business and governments battling COVID-19, the PTAC quickly pivoted to provide more resources and education on federal contracting and procurement during the pandemic.

## Partnerships with Allied Organizations

Alongside our Native Edge Institutes, the National Center routinely partners with outside organizations and businesses to provide webinars focused on specific business initiatives and issues. In May, we teamed up with Arctic IT for Cloud 101: Technology for a Modern Tribal Business which featured Arctic IT President and General Manager Dave Bailey teaching the basics of how to utilize the cloud for non-technical business owners. In order to help Native businesses gain clarity and understanding on the CARES Act and PPP loans, we partnered with Live Oak Bank for a training answering questions about what the funds could be used for, who was eligible, what the loan process was, and more. (Based on the survey results of another partnership with the Center for Indian Country Development at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, 22% of Native-owned businesses relied on a PPP loan.) And finally, we partnered with Square to provide small businesses with webinar training to better leverage technology.

## Preparing Future Leaders

The National Center provides business scholarships to deserving Native American and Alaska Native students who are in college and majoring in a business-related field. In 2020, we expect to award a total of \$20,000. The program is funded by our annual golf tournament at RES and the generosity of sponsors like Wild Horse Pass Development Authority, Lockheed Martin, and Southwest Airlines. These students are our future, and the National Center is doing its part to help them succeed.





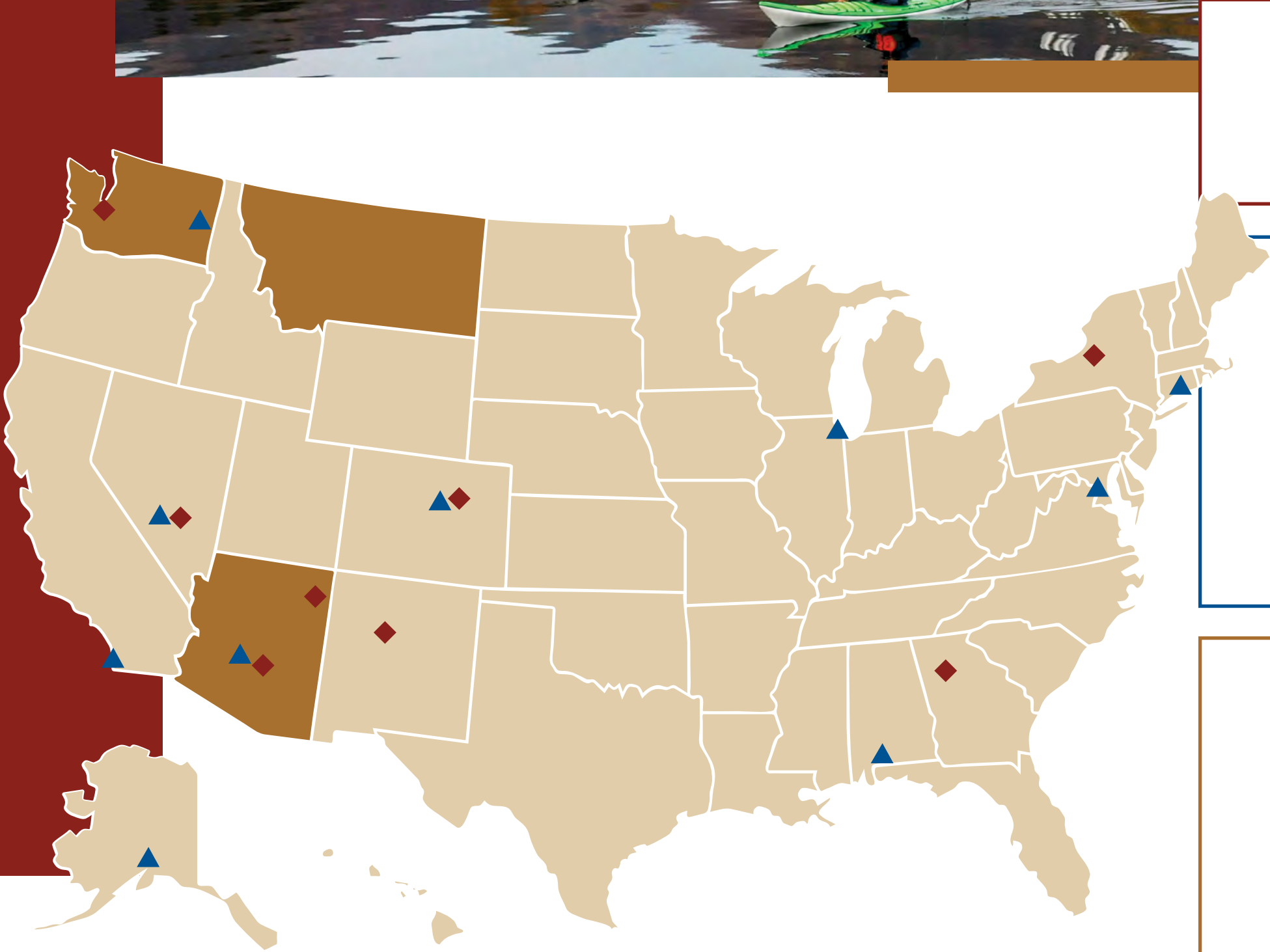
# Where We Operate



The National Center is a truly national organization, and operates in nearly every corner of the country. In 2020, our services expanded even more, hosting Native Edge Institutes in new states and regions, visiting tribes and tribally-owned enterprises, and working closely with tribes on our PPE project.

In addition, the National Center conducted economic development heat mapping in four communities to help identify areas of business and opportunity within the community. These economic heat mapping studies will empower federally recognized tribal entities and tribal businesses to make informed decisions regarding their economic futures—specifically on infrastructure, workforce, opportunity zones, economy, broadband, and other incentives that may assist businesses (tribal and non-tribal). The direct result of the studies would encourage investments, including Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), to the identified community.

See all the places we’ve been.



## Heat Map Locations

San Carlos Apache Tribe: AZ  
Salish Kootenai Tribe: MT  
Colville Tribe: WA

## NCAIED Offices

Headquarters:  
Mesa, AZ  
Las Vegas, NV  
Tacoma, WA

PTAC Offices:  
Marietta, GA  
Liverpool, NY  
Albuquerque, NM  
Window Rock, AZ  
Denver, CO

## NCAIED Event Locations

San Diego, CA  
Denver, CO  
Atmore, AL  
Las Vegas, NV  
Spokane, WA  
Connecticut  
Chicago, IL  
Anchorage, AK  
Phoenix, AZ  
Washington, D.C.





# The Proof: How We're Helping Native-owned Businesses

## JMB Consulting Group

The National Center's PTAC has helped multiple businesses obtain HUBZone certifications from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). One such company is JMB Consulting Group, LLC., a Native American and woman-owned business. After attending and speaking at the National Center's Native Edge Institute, JMB Consulting Group owner Juliana M. Berde, CISSP, was in regular contact with PTAC Procurement Specialist Cris Pierce as she navigated the HUBZone certification process. "The certification shows that as a business owner, I am not only looking to build a successful business, but also improve economic development efforts within the HUBZone to bridge the economic gap," said Juliana.

JMB had to meet a wide range of criteria to receive certification, including being located in a HUBZone area with 35% of employees residing in a HUBZone area. Federal agencies strive to set aside 3% of all contracts for certified HUBZone businesses and seek certificated HUBZone businesses for subcontractors.

## Tipping Point Solutions

Tipping Points Solutions (TPS) has been a client of the National Center's American Indian PTAC since 2011. A service-disabled, veteran-owned, and SBA 8(a)-certified disadvantaged business based in Denver, Colorado, TPS specializes in immersive, interactive video products. Rick Schmidt—founder of TPS and a former 20-year navy officer and member of the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians—has worked with the PTAC since forming the company in 2011 and credits the National Center for helping the company stay up-to-date on contracting rules and opportunities. The business has won numerous awards, including the 2020 Small Business Award from the Denver Business Journal. Founder Rick Schmidt was awarded the 2019 State Small Businessperson of the Year from Colorado by the SBA.

## Tocabe: An American Indian Eatery

As the only American Indian owned restaurant in the Denver, Colorado area, Tocabe has truly claimed its role as a leader in Native cuisine. Named the 2018 American Indian Business of the Year by the National Center, Tocabe has helped establish Native cuisine as an essential pillar of the Native economy.

"Being able to have a partnership with the National Center and having its support and recognition that we do make a positive impact in the business world was a huge step not only for Tocabe, but for the indigenous food movement," said Tocabe co-founder Ben Jacobs. "Tocabe has the support and partnerships in terms of food producers and the food community, but knowing that you have the backing of people ingrained in the business world, who help you excel through mentorship, sharing your message, and broadening your reach has had a huge impact both personally and professionally for Tocabe."

## Corporate Advisory Council

While the National Center's Board of Directors sets overall policy and direction for the organization, our Corporate Advisory Council members provide invaluable guidance and insight into how we can best meet our goals. Members are comprised of representatives of Fortune 1000 companies, Alaska Native Corporations, and tribally-owned enterprises that support our mission through a long-term and strategic commitment to promote business opportunities for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. Members of the Corporate Advisory Council commit time and resources to further develop our community's private sector. Corporate partners include but are not limited to: Lockheed Martin; Home Depot; Square, Inc.; IBM; API; Salt River Project; American Water Association; California Water Association; Walmart; Nike; Alaska Air; Google; Boeing; and many more.

## The Native American 40 Under 40 Award Program

For over a decade, the National Center has recognized emerging Native American and Alaska Native leaders through our Native American 40 Under 40 awards program. Each year, we honor 40 deserving honorees under the age of 40 who have made significant contributions to their communities. Winners have included tribal and political leaders, doctors, attorneys, journalists, academics, musicians, artists, actors, and many others. We foster their growth as leaders through events and networking opportunities for an increasing community of winners, both at RES and other National Center events.



# The National Center is in a Strong Financial Position

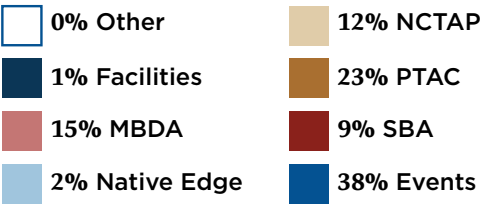
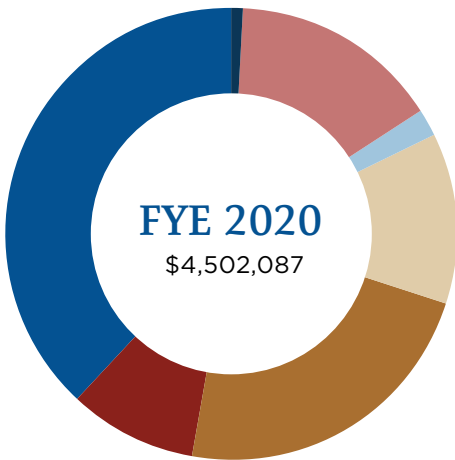
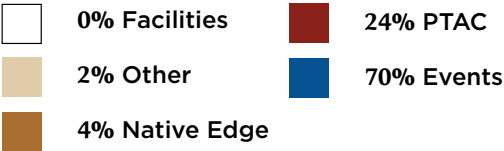
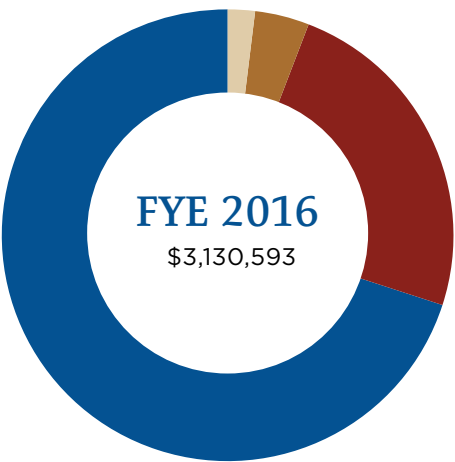
Over the past four years, the National Center has increased both the size and diversity of its revenue. We've grown our budget by over \$1.2 million. Even during the tough fiscal times of a pandemic, the National Center has continued to have financial success.

In 2016, 70% of our revenue came from events, and most of this comes from RES. In 2020, we both increased our event revenue dollar for dollar and decreased our dependence on events to under 50%. The shift in sources gives us greater flexibility to deliver our services to our clients and the businesses that need our support while also enabling us to weather future challenges.

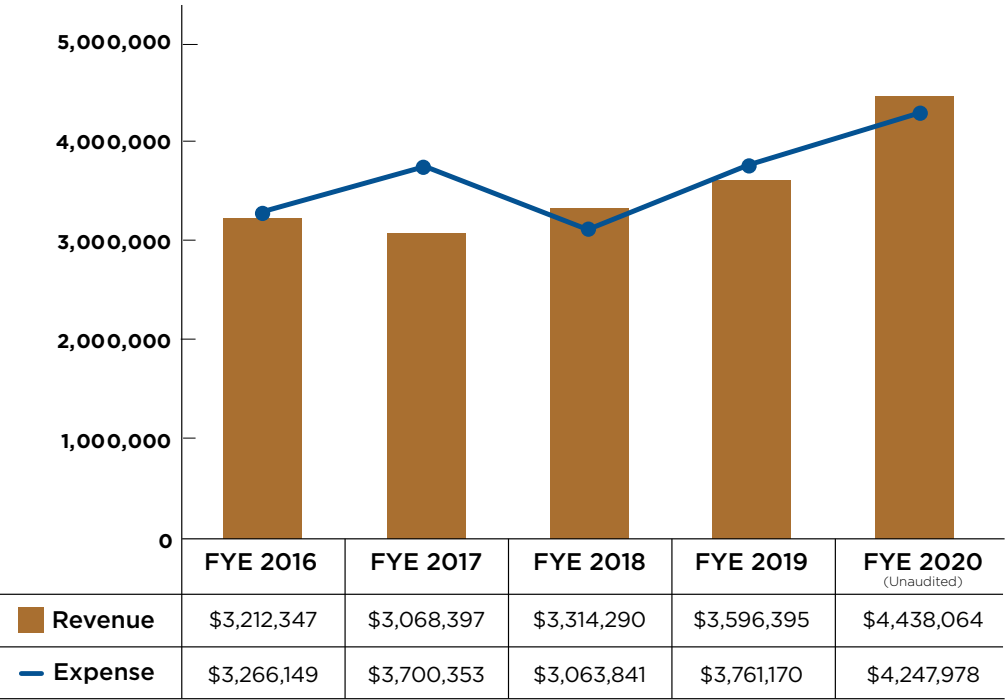
Our finances are strong because of generous support from corporate America, tribes and tribally-owned businesses, federal agencies, and the thousands of people who attend our events every year.

Thank you for your continued support.

## Program Services Diversification by Revenue



## 5-Year Revenue Over Expense



## Balance Sheet FYE 2020

ASSETS	
Checking/Savings	\$806,651
Accounts Receivable	\$1,189,348
Other Current Assets	\$27,352
Fixed Assets	\$360,821
Total Current Assets	\$2,384,172

LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Current Liabilities	\$792,165
Long Term Liabilities	\$448,026
Equity	\$1,143,981
Total Liabilities & Equity	\$2,384,172



# Responding to COVID-19

*The American Indian Graduate Center contributed \$10,000 to create care packages for tribal elders with American Indigenous Business Leaders.*

*Through our PPE Project NCAIED has worked with 19 Native American owned businesses that supply PPE to become vetted suppliers through Project N95.*

**NCAIED clients and sponsors have shifted their everyday operations to better serve the need for PPE supplies, such as Muskogee Technology, which started producing hospital gowns, and Heritage Distilling Company, Inc., which started making hand sanitizer.**

Some of the areas hit hardest by COVID-19 were in Indian Country. With members of our community suffering with no end in sight, we had to help.

In June, we developed a guide for tribes, tribally-owned businesses, and others that were suddenly in need of personal protective equipment (PPE). We partnered with the national organization, Project N95, to ensure Indian Country had access to their vetted list of vendors while developing a guide of best practices and the up-to-date information needed to keep their members and employees safe.

**Our work can be found at [ncaiedppeguide.org](https://ncaiedppeguide.org)**

We also reached out directly to tribes and tribally-owned businesses, including those who quickly shifted to make their own PPE and other health-related equipment. In some cases, we told their stories to a broader audience, like Muskogee Technology in Alabama which shifted its operations to produce hospital gowns desperately needed along the Gulf Coast. Across the country, businesses in our communities stepped up when they were needed.

While the PPE guide began because of COVID-19, we know this will likely not be the last time the country and the world must mobilize to fight a fast-spreading virus. We will keep the guide updated so we are all prepared for whatever comes in the future.



## Building Bridges of Opportunity at Reservation Economic Summit 2020

The National Center's Reservation Economic Summit (RES) is the largest and longest-running American Indian business conference and trade show in the nation, bringing together nearly 2,500 Native entrepreneurs and business owners for a week dedicated to building bridges of opportunity inside and outside of Indian Country. RES 2020 convened in Las Vegas, Nevada in March 2020. With keynote speakers ranging from SBA Administrator Jovita Carranza to Actor and Producer Martin Sensmeier, there truly is something for everyone at every RES.

RES 2020 included more than 100 training, academic bootcamp, and business development sessions that followed tracks such as Agriculture, Procurement, Business and Economic Development, Technology, and more. Every year, artists and craftsmen from around the country sell their work at the American Indian Artisan Market, where attendees can support the artists and creators that continue to drive Native culture. 200+ exhibitors featured at this year's Native American business trade show and were able to build relationships with new suppliers, buyers, and business partners. The Buy

Native Procurement Matchmaking Expo gave attendees the chance to meet one-on-one with representatives from large corporations, including Fortune 1000 companies. RES brings together current Native entrepreneurs and business owners, yet an important facet of the summit has always been supporting and inspiring a new generation of Native entrepreneurs. This year marked the National Center's 32nd Annual Scholarship Golf Tournament, where we raised \$20,000 for scholarships that go directly to Native American business students. The National Center also partnered with First Nations Development Institute for a Native Youth Business Plan Competition. Five high school and five college teams were flown to RES in order to present their business plans in front of a panel of established Native business leaders, simulating the real-world process of seeking capital for a startup. In the end, two teams took home \$7,500 each that they will use to help bring their concept to reality.

RES 2021 will certainly look a little different than in years past, but it will always have the great programming needed for businesses to take their dreams to the next level.





# NEIs Go Virtual in 2020

In 2020, the National Center grew and expanded our signature Native Edge Institutes, or NEIs. These one-day training programs provide attendees with top-flight training and updates in procurement, contracting, business best practices, and specific subject matter expertise. These are done through partnerships with government agencies such as the Small Business Administration and Minority Business Development Agency, as well as through private sector support from businesses like Wells Fargo and Key Bank.

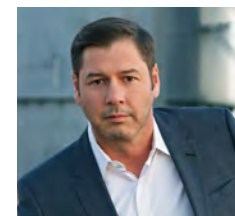
In fiscal year 2020, we hosted 10 NEIs with a total of 849 physical and virtual attendees. We also had over 10,000 Facebook views for the NEI sessions. These NEIs took on a new focus after the onset of COVID-19, with many businesses struggling to stay afloat during the pandemic. Our NEIs shifted to virtual events, available at no cost to anyone wishing to attend. They also featured specific programming on how businesses

can make ends meet during these times and what resources are available to them. The archive version of these NEIs remain available on the National Center's website.

As with our other programming in 2020, our quick change in approach to NEIs proved that no challenge is too great for our organization. NEIs were created out of a desire to continue our programming year-round and to expand it to all corners of the country. The National Center understands that no two businesses are alike and, similarly, that no two tribes are exactly the same. That's why we take the effort to go into new regions and change the focus of our NEIs to ensure our programming is catered to the needs of all of Indian Country—from Alaska to Florida, New York to California.

We don't know what's in store for 2021, but we look forward to the evolution and growth of our NEIs so we can fulfill our mission to mean business for Indian Country.

## Board of Directors



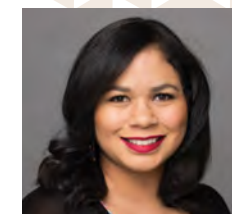
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Eastern Band of Cherokee



**DERRICK WATCHMAN**  
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Muscogee Creek

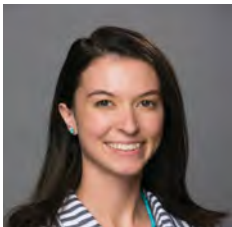


# The National Center Staff

Our work would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors.



**ADOLFO VASQUEZ**  
Procurement Specialist



**ALEXANDRA RUMBAUGH**  
Program Coordinator



**AMBER CHILDS**  
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