



*The National Center*  
for American Indian Enterprise Development

# *Beyond* Boundaries

2025  
ANNUAL  
REPORT



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The content of the 2025 annual report encompasses The National Center's fiscal year: July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025.

# Building a *Strong* Foundation for the *Future*

The National Center reached new heights in fiscal year 2025. We started a new tourism program, focused on helping tribes and tribally owned businesses reach their potential in a rapidly growing field. The 2025 Reservation Economic Summit was perhaps our best yet, with a record 4,800-plus in attendance for Indian Country's premier business gathering. Our work beyond national borders continued to grow, with these efforts starting to bear fruit. We strengthened our relationships with sister organizations. We expanded our communications platforms. And net revenues improved by more than \$900,000.

Our work over the last year bolstered my resolve and belief that The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development serves an invaluable role in our community, as it has for the last six decades. We forge connections between Native-owned businesses and corporate America. We open new doors and push boundaries to create economic opportunity for Indian Country. And The National Center quickly responds when challenges arise.

Adaptation will be even more important in the years ahead. The National Center was among the countless organizations that lost federal funding after the new administration took office. Losing funding means fewer services and programming for our clients and the communities we serve, limiting their economic development potential. It also forced us to make the tough decision to reduce our staff. Though I am disappointed in the short-sighted decision by our federal partners, I remain incredibly proud of the work we did and continue to perform.

Of course, with every challenge comes opportunity. And while our organization may look different in the future, I have no doubt we will be just as strong. Because if there's been one constant to our organization over the years, it is adaptability. We've risen to the occasion to deliver the services and programs that Indian Country needs. Indeed, when I first took over The National Center in 2017, our only client-facing program was our APEX Accelerator (then-PTAC). It's a reminder that things can and will change – and change quickly.

We are already developing the vision for what The National Center will look like in the coming years. I am excited about where this path will lead us – and even excited about the boundaries we'll need to cross to get there. Thank you for being a part of the journey.

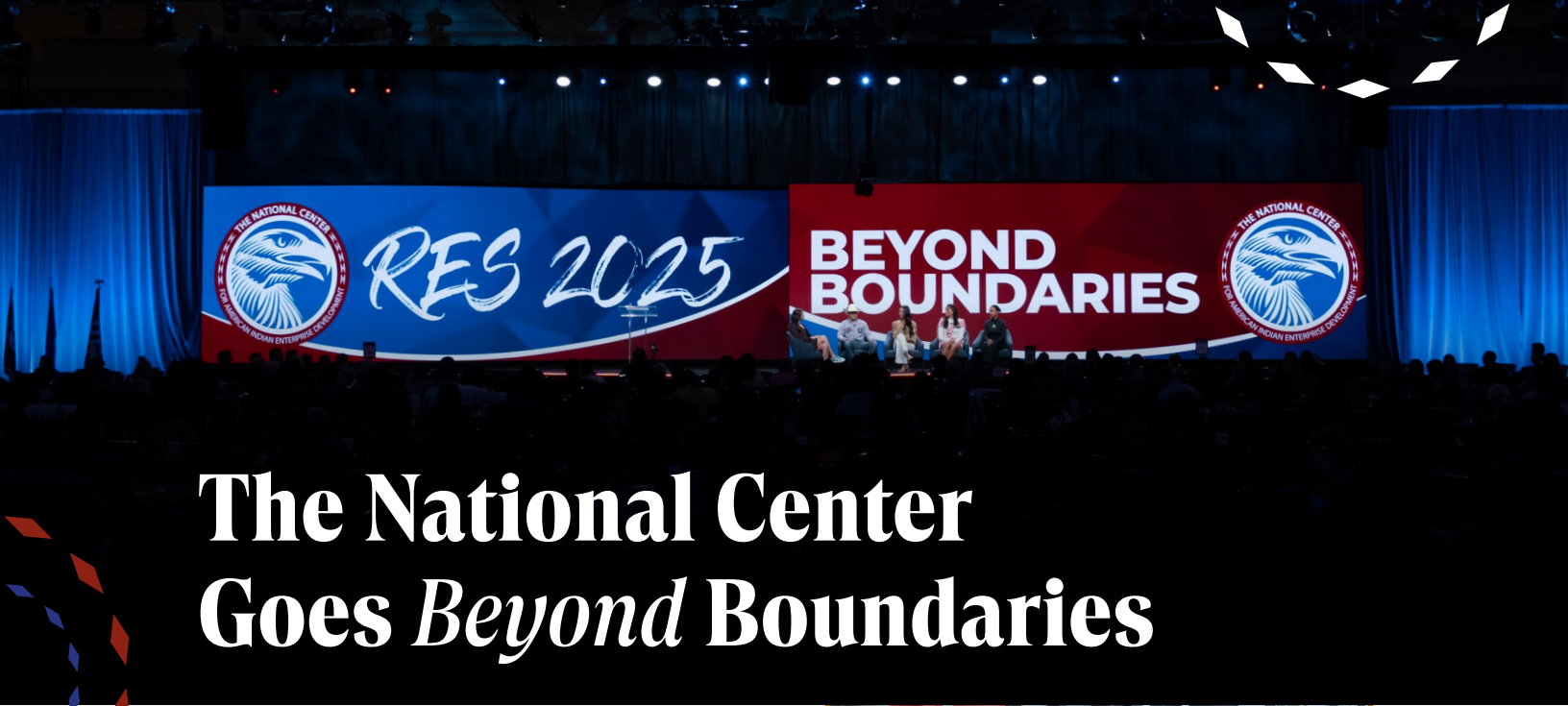
**Chris James**  
*President and CEO*



**“NAFOA and The National Center are natural partners in strengthening Tribal economies. While we focus on building Tribal financial capacity and governance, The National Center champions the entrepreneurs who drive economic growth in our communities. Together, we’re creating a comprehensive support system that empowers Tribes and Native businesses to build lasting prosperity. We’re proud to work alongside The National Center in this shared mission.”**

**— Cory Blankenship, Executive Director, NAFOA**





# The National Center Goes *Beyond* Boundaries

“Beyond Boundaries” was the theme for the 2025 Reservation Economic Summit, and it could have been our mantra for the entire year. Yet even as The National Center pushed limits, we stayed grounded in the three pillars that guide our work.

**Helping Native-Owned Businesses Grow.**  
In addition to the programming that has been instrumental to the success of countless Native-owned businesses, we started new programs that tap into emerging markets, such as tourism.

**Serving as a Powerful Voice in Washington.**  
In response to unprecedented change and uncertainty in the nation’s capital, The National Center led the effort to secure Indian Country’s position in the new administration and work with sister organizations to advocate for our shared interests.

**Expanding Markets at Home and Abroad.**  
While others have turned inwards, The National Center expanded international partnerships, particularly with our Māori cousins in New Zealand. That relationship laid the groundwork for a National Center-led trade mission in August of 2025, and continues to grow with promising opportunities ahead.

The National Center will continue to stay true to who we are while pushing boundaries to generate economic opportunity across Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities.



## A Year of Accomplishment

\$855 million in contracts awarded to clients

4,800+ attendees at RES 2025

2,689 client or businesses/ individuals trained

90 unique trainings or events

26 states + 3 countries traveled

26 employees



“Our longstanding relationship with The National Center, spanning over 15 years, has been instrumental in advancing our business objectives. Their ability to connect us with key federal buyers and provide targeted training ensures we remain competitive and well-informed in the Federal marketplace.”

— Monica Jojola, President & CEO, Montech Inc.







# Serving Indian Country's Businesses & Entrepreneurs

## The National Center Apex Accelerator

The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development APEX Accelerator and its team of experts continue to provide invaluable technical assistance to Indigenous-owned businesses in 33 states and 61 tribal communities.

In 2025, we said farewell to Cris Pierce, whose four decades of award-winning technical assistance served countless clients across Indian Country. Prior to her retirement, Cris received the Becky Peterson Human Impact Award from the National APEX Accelerator Alliance, a testament to her lifetime of service to her clients and Indian Country.



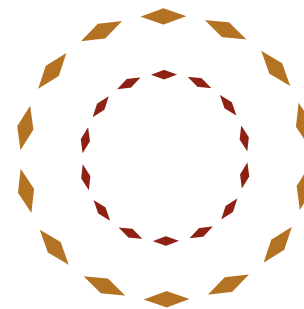
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\$448 million in contracts awarded to clients

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365 total active clients

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## Native Edge Institutes

Native Edge Institutes (NEIs) are still going strong after eight years. In fact, we averaged one NEI per month over the course of the fiscal year. These one-day business trainings bring the power of The National Center's team, programming, and subject-matter experts to all corners of the country. NEIs are free of charge to attendees and also broadcast virtually; cost or distance are not barriers to benefit from NEIs.

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1,018 businesses or clients trained

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12 NEIs held in communities across the United States

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## Native Edge Tourism

In FY 2025, The National Center embarked on one of our most ambitious endeavors to date, when we entered into a cooperative agreement with the Office of Indian Economic Development at the Department of Interior to establish a tourism technical assistance program for tribes and tribal enterprises. The Native Edge Tourism and Technical Assistance Center (NETTAC) operated in five regions across the country and exceeded every established metric to help tribes hone their tourism expertise. Despite its initial success, the future of NETTAC is in doubt due to the changing priorities of the new administration.

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177 clients

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22 events hosted across five regions

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## Arizona MBDA Export Center

For The National Center, going beyond boundaries quite literally means crossing international borders. The Arizona MBDA Export Center, which boasted nearly 400 clients, helped businesses start or grow their export business, helping them tap into markets far beyond the reservation or their home community. Though the current administration has effectively ended the Minority Business Development Agency and the services it provides, our work to promote international trade will go on.

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\$407 million in contracts won by clients

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1,129 total businesses or clients trained

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"The National Center has been a valuable support system. Whether it's through information, encouragement, or creating opportunities to connect with others on the same path, it's helped make the process feel less overwhelming. It's reassuring to know that organizations like this exist to guide Native-owned businesses forward, especially as we navigate government contracting and long-term growth."

— Leta Patrick, CEO of M & L Fabrications, LLC (M & L Works)





# Beyond Boundaries – and Beyond Borders

In 2025, The National Center strengthened relationships with representatives from both the governments and Indigenous peoples of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. Chris James attended the Navigate 2024 Summit in Auckland, New Zealand, and the Connect 2024 Knowledge Forum in Brisbane, Australia, to further cross-border Indigenous trade. We were excited to extend the same hospitality when representatives from the Australian Consulate in Los Angeles visited our Mesa headquarters in August of 2024.

Our friends from Canada had a huge presence at RES 2025 and were a major sponsor of the event. The Arizona MBDA Export Center hosted four international trade break-out sessions with the Canadian Consulate, 22 Canadian First Nations tribal-member owned businesses, and five First Nations tribal Chiefs.

Our international work is just beginning and will continue to go beyond boundaries.

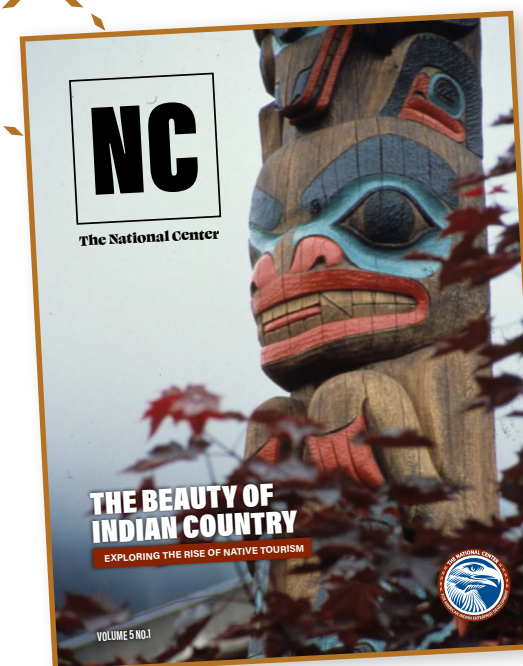
## New Ways of Communicating

The Native Edge podcast launched in 2024. Now well into its second season, the podcast features Chris James and co-host Yvette Fielder, along with guest hosts from The National Center's staff, interviewing a diverse lineup of guests from our community and beyond. Topics cover acting to agriculture and nearly everything in between. The podcast is growing in popularity and audience, becoming a "must-listen" for Indian Country.



"The Native Edge podcast consistently brings in a strong network of Native American entrepreneurs and business leaders who share insights that I've been able to apply across my ventures. As a guest on the podcast, the team's thoughtful questions even helped me reflect more deeply on my own journey. Sharing my episode on social media was a highlight, hearing positive feedback from my grandmother to my business clients made me especially grateful for the experience."

— Hud Oberly (Osage, Caddo, Comanche),  
Founder & Head of Accounts – Strategic Marketing for Indigenous-Led Entities, S.M.I.L.E.



For the first time, The National Center released two editions of NC Magazine in a single fiscal year. The Native American 40 Under 40 program celebrated 15 years of excellence. To honor their achievements, The National Center dedicated a special edition of NC Magazine to the program and alumni. NC Magazine is a valuable asset for The National Center – both as a revenue generator and a platform to share the good news happening across the Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities.



Check it out our latest episodes!  
[www.buzzsprout.com/2356794/episodes](http://www.buzzsprout.com/2356794/episodes)



# Nearly 5,000 People at RES 2025

We hosted the annual Reservation Economic Summit in March. The 2025 iteration of RES solidified its standing as the preeminent economic development event for anyone doing business in Indian Country. Nearly 5,000 people joined The National Center in Las Vegas for four days of fantastic speakers, informative sessions, unparalleled networking opportunities, a massive trade show, and a can't-miss fashion show. We even welcomed NBA legend Julius "Dr. J" Irving to the mainstage. RES 2025 went "Beyond Boundaries," with attendees hailing from Canada and as far away as New Zealand.

RES is The National Center's signature event for a reason. The entire team puts in a tremendous amount of work to ensure it goes off without a hitch. Planning for RES 2026 is well underway, so join us at Caesars Palace from March 23-26, 2026!

**"When you grow alongside others - being a business owner, for example - I know I wouldn't have my business without support from other Indigenous business communities and different organizations. We all rise together so we can thrive, and that's what RES is all about."**

**— Crystal Wahpepah, Owner of Wahpepah's Kitchen**







# Leaders of Today & Tomorrow: *The Native American 40 Under 40 Awards*

The 2025 class of the Native American 40 Under 40 Awards exemplifies the excellence that has come to be associated with the program. Whether it's tribal leaders, fashion designers, educators, attorneys, or athletes, 2025 40 Under 40 recipients are already making a difference in their communities – and the country.

As it has been the case for the last 16 years, it is our honor to recognize and celebrate these incredible Indigenous leaders.



“I’m incredibly honored to receive this recognition and to be included among so many inspiring young leaders across Indian Country. The work we do isn’t just about today—it’s about building a stronger future for the next generations.”

— Sean Lawrence, 2025 Native American 40 Under 40 Awardee



## List of 2025 *40 Under 40* awardees

<b>Stephen Bell,</b> <i>Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina; Greensboro, NC</i>	<b>Steven Estrada,</b> <i>Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Indians; San Jacinto, CA</i>	<b>Dustin Harjo,</b> <i>Seminole Nation of Oklahoma; Muskogee, OK</i>	<b>Rose Petoskey,</b> <i>Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians; Washington, DC</i>	<b>Jude Schimmel,</b> <i>Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; Pendleton, OR</i>
<b>Jackie Boyd,</b> <i>Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma; Durant, OK</i>	<b>Meghan Francis,</b> <i>Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; Nespelem, WA</i>	<b>Chelsea Healy,</b> <i>Kainai (Blood Tribe) First Nation; Santa Monica, CA</i>	<b>Adrian Standing-Elk Pinnecoose,</b> <i>Navajo Nation/Southern Ute; Albuquerque, NM</i>	<b>Jeremy Takala,</b> <i>Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation; Toppenish, WA</i>
<b>Colin Bradley,</b> <i>Navajo Nation; Phoenix, AZ</i>	<b>Christopher Franklin,</b> <i>Miwok; Elk Grove, CA</i>	<b>Steven Hollabaugh,</b> <i>Cherokee Nation; Broken Arrow, OK</i>	<b>Ryan Pulvermacher,</b> <i>Ho-Chunk Nation; Madison, WI</i>	<b>Tyler Thomas,</b> <i>Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina; Pembroke, NC</i>
<b>Patrick Burt,</b> <i>Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California; Gardnerville, NV</i>	<b>Candace French,</b> <i>Wichita and Affiliated Tribes/Navajo Nation; Scottsdale, AZ</i>	<b>Sean Lawrence,</b> <i>Lummi Nation; Bellingham, WA</i>	<b>Taryn Reynolds,</b> <i>Osage Nation; Pawhuska, OK</i>	<b>Brian Wadsworth,</b> <i>Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe; Nixon, NV</i>
<b>Allen Cadreau,</b> <i>Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians; Anaheim Hills, CA</i>	<b>Bryce Fugate,</b> <i>Osage Nation; Denver, CO</i>	<b>Jacob Marcellay,</b> <i>Spokane Tribe of Indians; Wellpinit, WA</i>	<b>Joshua Riley,</b> <i>Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma; Durant, OK</i>	<b>Madeline Walker,</b> <i>Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation; Orlando, FL</i>
<b>Jacob Crane,</b> <i>Tsuut’ina Nation; Midvale, UT</i>	<b>Vivian Garcia,</b> <i>Cherokee Nation; Los Angeles, CA</i>	<b>John Morseau,</b> <i>Pokagon Band of Potawatomi; Minneapolis, MN</i>	<b>Jessica Roberts,</b> <i>Cherokee Nation; Seattle, WA</i>	<b>Lawrence Wheeler,</b> <i>Cherokee Nation; Marlow, OK</i>
<b>Lindsey Dollman,</b> <i>Pechanga Band of Indians; Temecula, CA</i>	<b>Sabrina Grubitz,</b> <i>Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska; Juneau, AK</i>	<b>Travis Owens,</b> <i>Cherokee Nation; Catoosa, OK</i>	<b>Kameron Runnels,</b> <i>Santee Sioux Nation; Niobrara, NE</i>	<b>Sarah White,</b> <i>Oglala Lakota; Black Hawk, SD</i>
<b>Jarred-Michael Erickson,</b> <i>Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; Nespelem, WA</i>	<b>Zechariah Harjo,</b> <i>Muscogee (Creek) Nation; Norman, OK</i>	<b>Alena Pastores,</b> <i>Fort Yuma Quechan Indian Tribe; Riverside, CA</i>	<b>Savana Saubel,</b> <i>Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians; Palm Springs, CA</i>	<b>Nicholas Woodruff,</b> <i>Cherokee Nation; Houston, TX</i>



# Recognizing *Friends and Allies*

Every year we honor the people, organizations, and businesses that are shaping Indian Country's economy through the American Indian Business Awards. In 2025, we recognized one of our longtime corporate partners, a former National Center President and CEO who is on the cutting edge of artificial intelligence, an emerging female entrepreneur from Canada, a longtime friend and advocate from one of the most recognizable brands in the world, and a visionary tribal leader.

## Corporate Advocate of the Year

KeyBank

## American Indian Business of the Year

aLocal Solutions/Dr. Eric S. Trevan

## Native Woman Business Owner of the Year Award

Chelsee Pettit, aaniin

## Tim Wapato Public Advocate of the Year Award

Sam McCracken, Nike N7

## American Indian Leadership Award

Serrell Smokey, Chairman and CEO of the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California



"I founded and continue to operate aaniin as a way to reclaim the Indigenous economy through fashion and retail. It was truly an honor for my work to be recognized at an international gathering that promotes economic self-sovereignty, fosters Indigenous entrepreneurial collaboration, and supports our communities."

— Chelsee Pettit, Founder and Owner, aaniin



# Your Advocate in Washington

Amid unprecedented changes in the federal government, our guiding pillar, "Serving as a Powerful Voice in Washington," took on new importance. Following the election, The National Center led the effort to create economic policy briefs for both the incoming Trump administration and Congress, detailing opportunities and areas for collaboration to grow Indian Country's economy.

Our advocacy work continues through our partnerships with allied organizations to stand up for tribal sovereignty and demand the federal government uphold its trust and treaty responsibility. We provided a tangible glimpse into to how administration policies are affecting Indian Country through a Tribal Impact Survey taken by leaders across our community.

Though there is a long way to go, The National Center and partners in the Coalition for Tribal Sovereignty have made real progress to change the narrative – and change policy in DC. But the fight will continue in the years ahead.



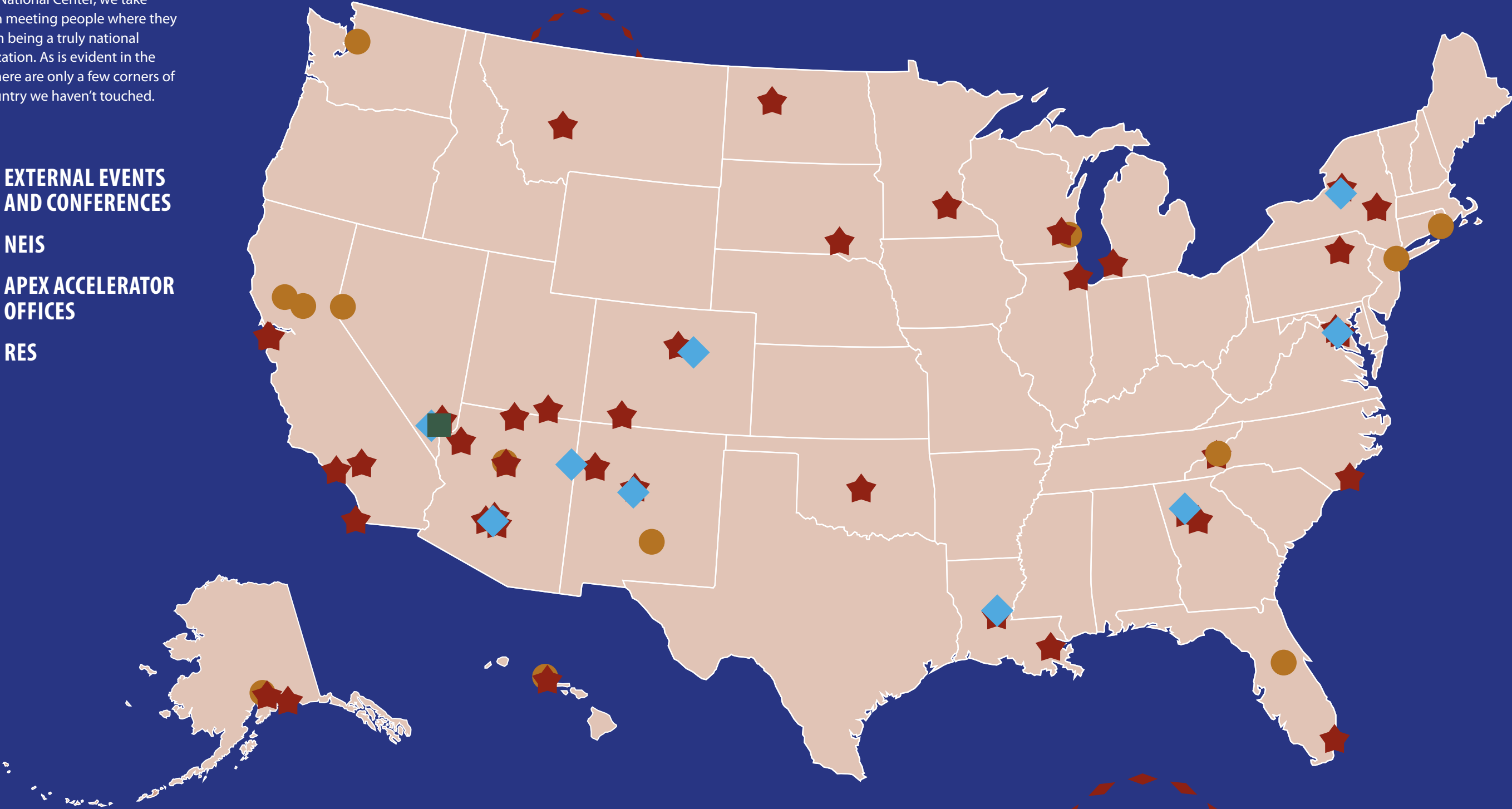


# On the Ground in Your Community

At The National Center, we take pride in meeting people where they are – on being a truly national organization. As is evident in the map, there are only a few corners of the country we haven't touched.

- ★ EXTERNAL EVENTS AND CONFERENCES
- NEIS
- ◆ APEX ACCELERATOR OFFICES
- RES

- External Events and Conferences not shown on the map:
- Toronto, Canada
  - Saskatoon, SK, Canada
  - Brisbane, Australia
  - Auckland, New Zealand





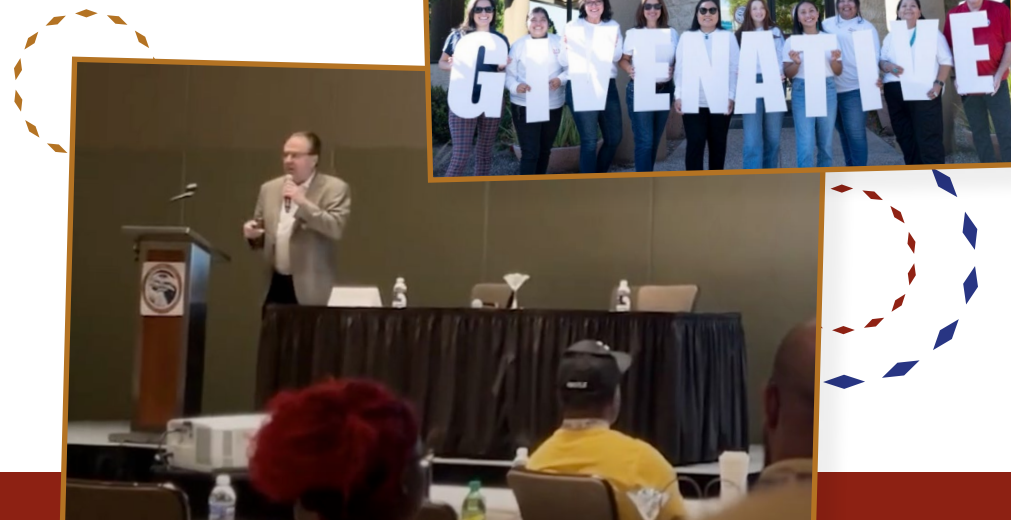


# A Strong Financial Year

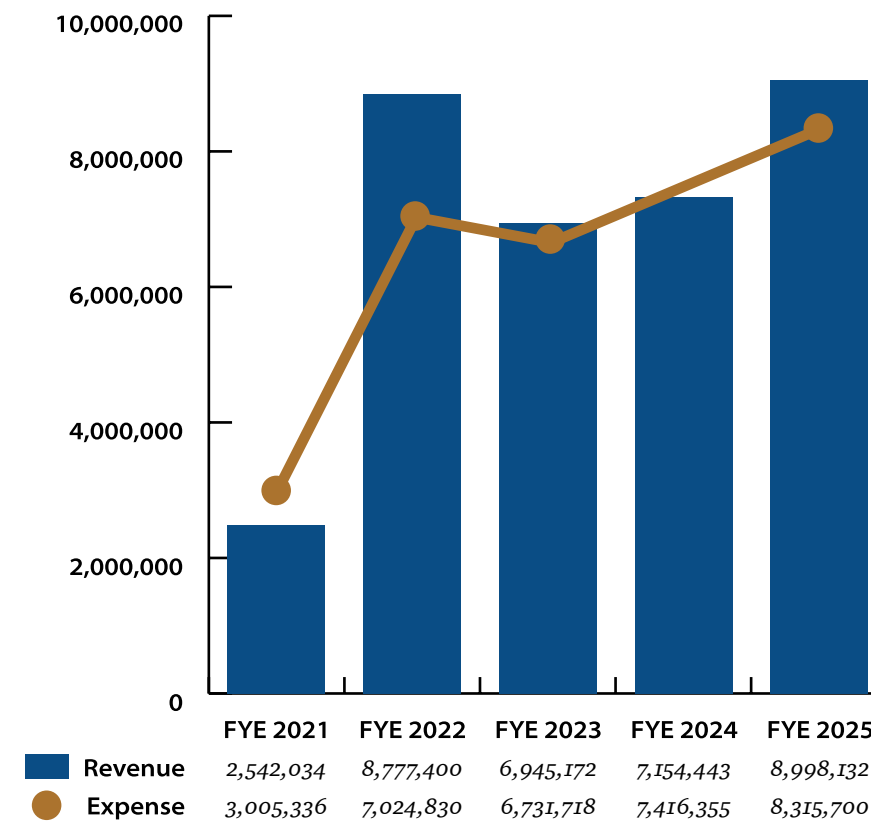
After a challenging FY 2024 fueled by inflation and rising costs, The National Center rebounded in 2025, ending the fiscal year more than \$680,000 in the black. Our financial stability stems from sound fiscal management, successful external fundraising and revenue generation, and a record-setting RES. Keeping our financial house in order means The National Center can deliver unmatched services and programming to clients and the people we serve – and why we receive the highest ratings from Candid and Charity Navigator.



Though there will be challenges ahead resulting from the loss of federal funding streams, The National Center's financial reserves and ability to pivot will set us up for future success and position us to take advantage of future opportunities.



## NCAIED 5 Year Revenue Over Expense



## FYE 2025 Balance Sheet

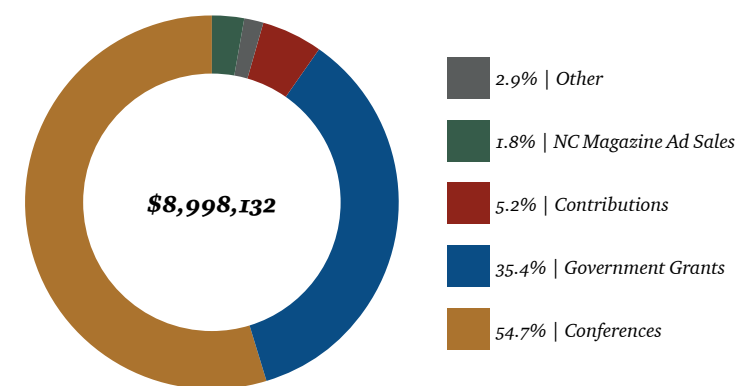
### Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents	3,163,571
Grants and Contributions Receivable	435,748
Prepaid Expenses	292,223
Fixed Assets	231,226
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>4,122,768</b>

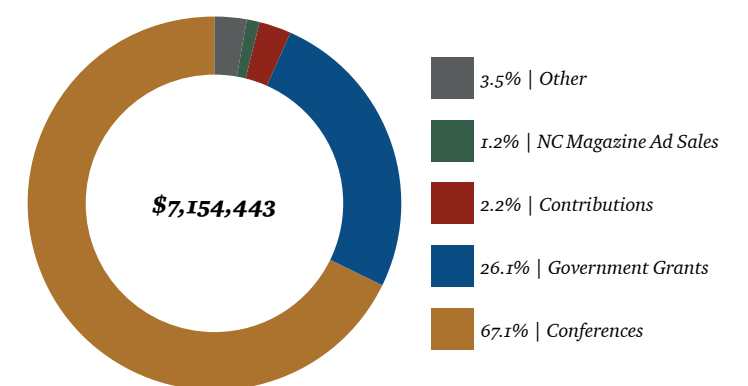
### Liabilities & Equity

Current Liabilities	836,516
Net Assets	3,286,252
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>4,122,768</b>

## FYE 2025



## FYE 2024





# A Veteran Team



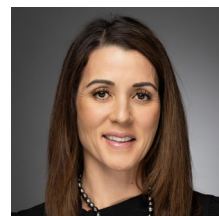
**E. Skye Byrd**  
Director of Strategic Partnerships



**Charmayne Charley**  
Administrative Specialist



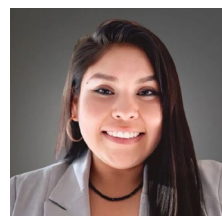
**Christopher Crazy Bull**  
Procurement Specialist



**U'ilani Corr-Yorkman**  
Technical Assistance Specialist



**Yvette Fielder**  
Program Director



**Haley Garcia**  
Technical Assistance Specialist



**Mikaela Garcia**  
Digital Media Coordinator



**Carla Ghafari**  
Multimedia Assistant



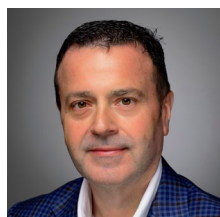
**Skye Gilham**  
Technical Assistance Specialist



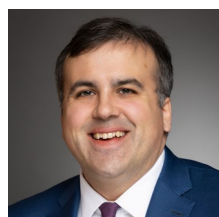
**Tricia Grossman**  
Senior Staff Accountant



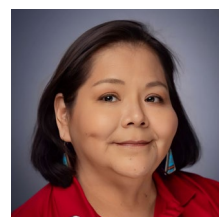
**Kyia Jackson**  
Business Development Specialist



**Chris Jeanson, Jr.**  
APEX Accelerator Procurement Specialist, Louisiana Satellite Office



**Lewis Lowe**  
Director of Communications and Senior Advisor



**JoAn Begay Notah**  
Project Director



**Crystal Pierce**  
APEX Accelerator Senior Procurement Specialist



**Yvonne Phillips**  
Technical Assistance Specialist — Alaska Region



**Lauryn Riggs**  
Junior Staff Accountant



**Stan Sams**  
APEX Accelerator Procurement Specialist, Colorado & New Mexico Satellite Office



**Jessamyn Tracy**  
Director of Special Projects



**Mabel Tsosie**  
APEX Accelerator Procurement Specialist, Navajo Nation Satellite Office



**Nicole Watson**  
Technical Assistance Specialist



**Kathleen Weeks**  
APEX Accelerator Senior Office Manager, Georgia Main Office



**George Williams**  
APEX Accelerator Program Manager, Georgia Main Office



**Rich Yehling**  
Chief Financial Officer



**Chris James**  
President and CEO



**Erin Abrahamson**  
Chief of Staff

# A Visionary Board



**Derrick Watchman**  
Chairman



**Lillian Sparks Robinson**  
Vice Chair



**Helvi Sandvik**  
Treasurer



**Kip Ritchie**  
Secretary



**John Echohawk**  
Director



**Charlie Galbraith**  
Director



**Margo Gray**  
Director



**William D. Lowe**  
Director



**Lynn Dee Rapp**  
Director



**Ronald J. Solimon**  
Director



**Ernie Stevens, Jr.**  
Director



**Joan Timeche**  
Director



**Jana Turvey**  
Director

Staff and Board pictured reflect the end of the fiscal year - June 30, 2025.

Staff and Board pictured reflect the end of the fiscal year - June 30, 2025.



# Our Network of Support

The National Center is supported by a diverse array of businesses, nonprofits, federal agencies, and individuals who support our mission and believe in our work. We also welcome the support and guidance of our Corporate Advisory Council (CAC) comprised of representatives from Fortune 1000 companies or their trade associations willing to donate their time and expertise to the organization. 2025 CAC members are bolded.

- ACTwireless
- Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
- Alaska Airlines**
- Alaska Native Chamber
- Albuquerque Hispano Chamber of Commerce
- Alliance for Tribal Clean Energy
- Amazon**
- American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)
- American Petroleum Institute**
- Amerind Risk Management
- Animikii
- Bank of America**
- Calista Corporation
- Caesars Entertainment**
- Carollo
- Coleman Conner
- Jennifer Cooper
- Coushatta Chairman’s Cup Foundation
- CTIA Wireless**
- Defense Logistics Agency
- Diné Development Corporation
- Christina Dixon
- Drummond Woodsum
- Eighth Generation Company
- John Echohawk
- Enbridge
- Gila River Indian Community
- Google**
- Great Plains Tribal Leaders’ Health Board
- Ho-Chunk, Inc.
- Holland & Knight
- Hozhonigo Institute
- Huntington National Bank**
- Indian Energy, LLC
- Indian Gaming Association
- Indigenous Endeavors, LLC
- Indigenous Idaho Alliance
- Indigenous Workplace Solutions, LLC
- Rob Cameron Jacobs
- Johnson Scholarship Foundation
- JPMorgan Chase & Company**
- KeyBank**
- KRBR Consulting
- April Lamb
- Eric Levenson
- Lockheed Martin Corporation**
- William Lowe
- Marathon Petroleum**
- MEC Services
- MGM Resorts International**
- Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center
- Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)
- Mission Navigator Foundation
- Moss Adams
- NACDC Financial Services Incorporated
- National Indian Gaming Commission
- Native American Agricultural Fund
- Native American Bank
- Native American Pathway Program at Mayo Clinic
- Native Forward Scholars Fund
- Native Women Lead
- Natural Allies



- Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development
- Nike/Nike N7**
- Office of Indian Economic Development (OIED)
- Palm Mortuary
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe – Sacred Path
- Phoenix Indian Center
- Potawatomi Ventures
- Stuart Owen
- Rich Davis and Tylynn Gordon Charitable Fund
- Kip Ritchie
- River Bend Economic Development Company
- Salt River Project
- San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
- Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt
- SEE Renewal
- Sky Bear Media
- Small Business Administration (SBA)
- Ron Solimon
- South32
- Sovereign Bank
- Square/Block, Inc.**
- Strategic Growth Partners
- Sun Singer Consulting
- Tarbell Management Group
- Three Affiliated Tribes
- Tribal Tech, LLC
- Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana
- Jana Turvey
- United American Indian Involvement, Incorporated
- United Technologies Corporation
- Walmart**
- Ware River Consulting
- Derrick Watchman





# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

## The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development

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