

Partnership With Native Americans
GuideStar Nonprofit Profile: Charting Impact Report



Partnership With Native Americans
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Mission: Partnership With Native Americans (PWNA) is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit committed to championing hope for a brighter future for Native Americans living on remote, isolated and often impoverished reservations. Collaborating with our tribal partners, we provide immediate relief and support long-term solutions for strong, self-sufficient Native American communities. PWNA is a BBB-accredited charity, a GuideStar Platinum Exchange member, a Top-Rated Nonprofit, and a CFC-approved (Combined Federal Campaign) charity. PWNA provides consistent aid and services for Native Americans with the highest needs in the U.S. We care about quality of life and support self-determined goals of the tribes, providing critical supplies, supporting education and community investment, building capacity of local leaders, and connecting outside resources directly to the reservations through our distribution network. PWNA provides aid for 250,000 Native Americans annually, yet there is more to do.

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Five powerful questions that require reflection about what really matters - results.

1. What is the organization aiming to accomplish?

PWNA focuses on remote, geographically-isolated and often impoverished Native American communities with limited employment opportunities or access to basic necessities. Our partnerships with reservation programs in hundreds of tribal communities across the Southwest and Northern Plains regions of the U.S. support positive change, enhance tribal programs and develop local leaders who can drive social change. This is the primary goal behind our vision, whether a reservation partner is focusing on immediate needs (such as nutrition, education or healthcare) or championing long-term, grassroots solutions.

OUR APPROACH:

PWNA recognizes that poverty is a social problem with a social solution. We are also aware of the difficult history of oppressive federal policies that have shaped many of the current difficult living conditions in remote reservation communities. This knowledge informs our programmatic approach, which is building upon assets within the communities we serve, bringing together individuals, programs, training, outside resources and encouragement to address challenges and support positive change.

Our community-driven model leverages the social capital of a larger network mobilizing toward a common solution. Local participation and engagement are known to lead to sustainable gains and social change for the communities and people involved. Whether we approach this through our Material Services or Long-Term Solutions, the key is developing and supporting momentum with many future leaders across many reservations and maintaining it over the long run. Collaborating with reservation partners, PWNA believes this approach will lead us toward our vision of strong, self-sufficient Native American communities. We look forward to the time when the communities with whom we work no longer require PWNA's support because they are accessing other resources, most of which come from within their communities.

HOW CHANGE HAPPENS:

Examples of how change happens at a community level as a result of our work with partners include situations such as:

- A student who receives our scholarship earns a college degree and is better equipped to serve their community.
- A thriving food bank that was needed and planned, but not yet established, received a start-up grant.
- *A tribal community works with PWNA on emergency preparedness planning and training to better respond when disaster strikes.
- *Professional cooks in tribal communities train with PWNA on healthy cooking and ancestral foods, and pass on the knowledge to others.

Over the next three to five years, PWNA's work entails training and empowering more tribal employees that are change agents and leaders in their communities, continuing to support higher education for American Indian students who are motivated to make a difference for their tribes, and continuing to identify and support high-impact efforts that lead to long-term solutions for the people we serve.

2. What are the organization's key strategies for making this happen?

Each reservation PWNA serves has different goals and needs. PWNA employs four service strategies to ensure relevant and meaningful support for each community:

- **MATERIAL SERVICES:** Our Material Services address immediate needs for Northern Plains reservations, Southwest reservations, education and animal welfare. PWNA provides essential supplies and seasonal services that our Native community partners need to enhance their service to the

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community, for example, food that enables soup kitchens to provide more or better meals or enables food pantries to serve more people. Some of our community partners also use our goods as incentives to motivate participation, volunteerism, and retention in their programs, such as diapers and baby wipes (needed items) that encourage women to participate in prenatal care.

- **HIGHER EDUCATION SERVICES:** The purpose of Higher Education Services is to increase college access and support retention of Native American students in school. These services are one of our Long-Term Solutions for strong, self-sufficient Native American communities.
- **CAPACITY BUILDING:** The purpose of our Capacity Building services is to better equip reservation partners that want to make a greater contribution to their communities. We do this through: Four Directions (4D) leadership training of emerging leaders, mentoring and organized networking; Train-the-Trainer (T3) nutrition education to ensure professional cooks prepare healthy meals and can teach others to do the same; and Emergency Preparedness planning with tribal communities to ensure an effective localized response when disaster strikes. Capacity Building helps motivated professionals at our partner agencies be more effective at work and have more impact on the people they serve.
- **COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROJECTS:** These projects aim to positively impact the lives of tribal members and to deliver a sustainable gain for Native communities — thus the name “Community Investment Projects” (CIPs). PWNA supports and convenes community networks to address long-term concerns such as food sovereignty, nutrition-related health issues or youth development. We help bring together reservation needs and community-identified solutions with off-reservation resources. We also support community members leading grassroots projects in catalyzing local residents around the issues they want to address. The end goal is identifying, resourcing and implementing long-term, sustainable solutions in reservation communities. One example is supporting a food sovereignty initiative that started with garden tilling to help a reservation partner motivate local gardening and ultimately generate interest in fresh produce, canning, a greenhouse and a farmer's market.

All these approaches support community leaders and change makers, while meeting immediate needs or supporting long-term solutions. We also raise awareness about challenging disparities and solutions in need of funding.

3. What are the organization's capabilities for doing this?

- **CULTURAL COMPETENCY:** PWNA has been working on the reservations for nearly 30 years. This has equipped us with extensive knowledge of the history, cultures and concerns of the Native American tribes and communities we serve.
- **A STRONG NETWORK ON THE RESERVATIONS:** Hundreds of reservation agencies partner with PWNA and keep us informed about needs and changes in Indian country. These are the people we must influence for our work to be successful, as they are the catalysts for change in reservation communities.
- **THE PWNA WAY:** At the core of our work, what distinguishes PWNA from other Native-serving charities is supporting the self-determined goals of our reservation partners. These partners identify the needs and solutions in their communities, and we involve them and local volunteers in the delivery of the service. This is a respectful way of working with Native communities.
- **PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL & FEEDBACK LOOP:** Partnership With Native Americans has a program model based on sound logic, partner input and monitored results. Our services involve specific guidelines and indicators that help us know we are delivering the right type of service to the right communities at the right time.
- **COMMUNICATION TOOLS:** Communication is an important part of moving our vision forward. In isolated reservation communities, communication is often a challenge due to limited infrastructure or access to Internet, stable phone lines and sometimes post offices. PWNA has a variety of ways to stay in touch with our partner agencies, ranging from focus groups, talking circles, town hall meetings, and site visits to newsletters, a resource site, a networking site, phoning, faxing and email messaging.
- **INDUSTRY & PROFESSIONAL NETWORK:** PWNA collaborates with other organizations such as the

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American Red Cross, FEMA, VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster), and food banks. By working together, we can do more and have more impact.

- **DIVERSE & CONCERNED DONORS:** Material donors such as Mathew 25, International Aid, and Feeding America give quality products such as school supplies, hygiene items, and winter coats, hats, and gloves that are used in PWNA services. We also receive monetary donations from foundations and about half a million individual donors concerned about conditions on the reservations.
- **DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS:** Strategically located distribution centers in SD and AZ give us affordable reach to hundreds of reservation communities, which otherwise have limited access to the goods and services we provide. Each distribution facility stocks an inventory of more than 700 types of products.
- **HUMAN CAPITAL:** Our staff is passionate about our mission, and all of our program staff has direct experience working in Indian country. Being knowledgeable of the issues, lands, culture, history, and tribal programs and processes supports strong partnerships and maximum impact for the communities we serve.

4. How will they know if they are making progress?

PWNA has a strong feedback loop that is tied our Vision through a Program Logic Model (available on our website). This model illustrates the change for our reservation partners, showing that as partners become more effective, they are more likely to create positive impact for their communities. This moves us toward our vision of strong, self-sufficient Native American communities, and it underscores the need for PWNA to maintain long-term relationships, high customer satisfaction and continuous feedback from our partners. The logic model includes key indicators to show we are on track. The key indicators reflect critical aspects of community participation and engagement, improved skills, improved networking and resources, and stages of evolvment along our logic model. PWNA regularly monitors the established indicators and reports them out monthly, quarterly, and annually to key stakeholders.

For more than five years, PWNA has collected a baseline of quantitative outcomes data through annual partner agency surveys, which show that on average 90% of our reservation partners report being more effective with PWNA's support. PWNA also understands the importance of spending a great deal of time in the communities we serve, interacting with partners and participants first-hand so that we can see first-hand the issues and impact of our projects. We also hold focus groups with partners to obtain customer feedback, and we track direct services data. One example is that 90-95% of the students who receive a scholarship from PWNA complete the freshman year for which they are awarded – freshman year is the toughest. Another example is that 90% of participants from our leadership development cohorts have used a new skills within 3 months of training and 80% improved a reservation program because of their training.

In addition, PWNA sets annual targets for key service indicators based on past performance and input from reservation partners. When our reported results are significantly different from our intended targets, PWNA researches the reasons for the disparity and plans for adjustments. Our indicators, as well as our feedback loop with partner agencies and Native advisors, enable us to do this. PWNA is able to monitor our results monthly and determine which adjustments affect our results. The monitoring and the partner agency feedback lead us to the best combination of approaches to achieve results ongoing.

Any adjustments PWNA makes ensure that our services effectively support our partner agencies that are the catalysts for positive change on the reservations. Recently, for instance, we adjusted the indicators for some of our long-term services, and we will continue to tweak them for optimal measurement as our work proceeds.

5. What have they accomplished so far and what's next?

PWNA has been serving Indian Country for 30 years and evolved to a level of cultural competency and programming that allows us to impact hundreds of tribal communities year-round. Together with our tribal

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partners, we are improving quality of life for a quarter of a million Native Americans a year.

OUR MOST CRITICAL ACCOMPLISHMENT:

PWNA is empowering and developing community leaders who are in the best position to create long-term change and advocate for policy change for Indian country. PWNA cannot bring about the legal, government, healthcare, and tribal policy change required for our long-term vision, so we focus on the people who can – our reservation partners. Our effectiveness depends on their effectiveness and, on average, 90% of them report being better able to serve due to working with PWNA. That's a lot more local leaders who are better at creating change. This moves us toward our vision of strong, self-sufficient Native American communities.

OTHER THINGS PWNA IS DOING RIGHT:

- Involving the people we serve in the delivery of the service
- Challenging dependency and poverty through involvement
- Treating our community partners as customers, and listening to them to strengthen service and outcomes
- Ensuring the right infrastructure and gift-in-kind network to support our work
- Looking to industry experts for input about moving toward our vision

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR NATIVE PEOPLES TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE:

PWNA effectively supports tribal communities by:

- Responding to the need for new services, such as launching a formal capacity building program for personal and professional development of Native partners and emerging leaders, launching a nutrition train-the-trainer service to support a return to healthy, Indigenous diets, and launching an emergency preparedness service to help tribes better prepare for disasters.
- Providing a range of support for long-term solutions related to food sovereignty, nutrition-related health issues and youth development via community members and collaborators tackling pressing problems.
- Providing diverse education services to support learning, motivation and retention of K-12 students and postsecondary students, including scholarships, school supplies and literacy, and incentives for after-school and early childhood learning.
 - Providing reservation partners with materials they can use to enhance their programs. PWNA transports about 5 million pounds of goods annually for nutrition, health, education, holiday, animal welfare and emergency relief. These supplies help our partners boost participation in diabetes screenings, nutrition education, parenting classes, community projects and other critical services.

OUR NEXT STEP: In moving toward our vision, PWNA is continuing to empower reservation change agents and leaders by strengthening existing services, efficiencies and public education. Learn more about Partnership With Native Americans at www.nativepartnership.org.