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Partnership With Native Americans advocates for social equity in Indian Country

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PRESS POOL

(Photo: courtesy Partnership With Native Americans)

News Release

Partnership With Native Americans

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, Native American families faced a maze of social inequities that complicated their life — including food insecurity, inadequate healthcare, transportation restrictions and a lack of job opportunities. Many Native Americans have had to navigate these realities their entire lives, often wondering why it felt as though they didn't matter.

Those realities hit close to home for millions of Americans who, for the first time ever, experienced food insecurity and indefinite joblessness in 2020, amid a global health crisis. As COVID-19 rapidly devastated reservation communities, many people became attuned to the untenable extremes Native Americans have endured for decades. In the wake of a social movement that mobilized marginalized communities to confront systemic racism, a new era of hope was ushered in for Indian Country.

We saw positive strides in the fight against missing and murdered American Indian women, efforts to address the appropriation of Native culture in sports and the lack of Native

representation in the entertainment industry, the upholding of age-old government treaties, new rulings for water and mineral rights, and funding to reduce the digital divide that often leaves Tribal communities behind. And, national news media paid more attention than ever to the tribes, helping to support positive change.

Over the past 30 years, Partnership With Native Americans (PWNA) has worked with underserved tribes to support positive change. It focused on improving food security, education opportunities and community-led solutions that yield long-term results. The organization was founded in 1990 and first operated a trading post on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota that offered wares of local Native artisans.

Its name has evolved over the years, as has the organization — from a small startup to a high-impact nonprofit that serves more than 250,000 Native Americans each year. Partnership With Native Americans is driven by its mission to improve the lives of Native Americans, led by a Native American CEO who is a role model for youth, along with an all-Native board of directors and a dedicated leadership team with more than 45 years of experience working in Indian Country and 70 years in nonprofit experience, collectively.

In recent years, Partnership With Native Americans has worked to make non-Natives more NativeAware© than ever before. Most Americans are unfamiliar with an accurate history of Native Americans and the disparities they face every day. Nor do they realize how colonization, broken treaties and continuing oppressive policies impact Tribal communities today.

In addition to advocating and raising awareness, Partnership With Native Americans has provided nearly \$430 million in aid to help foster social equity within underserved reservation communities. With the support of Tribal partners, donors, collaborators, team members and board members, Partnership With Native Americans has been able to:

- Distribute year-round shipments of vital supplies like food, water, school supplies and more
- Award seed funding for community investment projects (CIPs), stewarded by grassroots leaders to develop a sustainable resource, preserve culture, promote public safety or address systemic issues such as food security
- Award scholarships for Native students attending Tribal colleges or universities across the U.S. and conduct professional development training for emerging leaders
- Establish the organization as an essential service and first responder for emergency relief and emergency preparedness in Native communities

“It wasn’t always smooth sailing, but the challenges helped strengthen our organization,” said Josh Arce, president and CEO of Partnership With Native Americans. “There were lean years characterized by budget cutbacks, lessons learned, outdated policies and technologies that hindered performance, internal restructuring and external pressures to drive organizational change, but we ultimately grew through it to better serve our communities.”

Today, Partnership With Native Americans is a BBB-accredited organization with an expanded board of directors and a financial committee for oversight, a revamped mission that encompasses both the immediate relief and long-term solutions in play, digital and donor-centric fundraising efforts, grant partnerships with major funders (e.g. Walmart Foundation, Newman's Own Foundation, LDS Charities and the Center for Disaster Philanthropy) and in-kind partnerships with recognized brands (e.g. Feed The Children, TOMS, Bombas and Baby2Baby). In the past five years, they were entrusted with stewardship of more than \$6 million in bequests, honoring donors' wishes to meet the highest needs in tribal communities

Through this evolution, Partnership With Native Americans developed specific programs to address four core areas: including the American Indian Education Fund (AIEF), Northern Plains Reservation Aid (NPRA), Southwest Reservation Aid (SWRA) and Reservation Animal Rescue (RAR).

Like the communities it serves, Partnership With Native Americans has proven to be a resilient and trusted resource for Tribal communities and remains true to its goal of raising awareness and supporting brighter futures. Partnership With Native Americans is poised to continue delivering culturally relevant and socially responsible solutions and advocating for the social equity of underserved Tribal communities.

About Partnership With Native Americans

Partnership With Native Americans is a Native-led nonprofit committed to championing hope for a brighter future for Native Americans living on remote, geographically isolated and impoverished reservations. Established in 1990, Partnership With Native Americans collaborates with reservation programs to serve immediate needs and support long-term solutions for strong, self-sufficient Native American communities, improving the lives of 250,000 Native Americans annually. Follow Partnership With Native Americans on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#) or visit www.nativepartnership.org.



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