



December 31, 2023

Five years ago this spring, we created the Indigenous Peoples' Initiative (IPI) to focus on our commitment to creating pathways forward for future generations of Indigenous people. As Native people we have endured immeasurable loss and change yet have always adapted. As our communities, ways of governance, and ways of life have changed, they have required us as Native leaders to find 21st-century solutions to 21st-century issues. Indian country faces an amalgam of issues that continue to affect Indigenous communities from our Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiians, and Native American populations. While there is much more work to be done, I am proud of the significant strides that have been made in improving Indian country for a better future for generations to come.

2023 can be defined as a year of growth for the IPI. As leaders, we are tasked with thinking at the intersection of two axes; the first between the past and the future, and the second between the abiding values and aspirations of those we lead. Early on in the year, the board of Trustees convened and decided to restructure the organization. Upon the board deciding to restructure, we had the pleasure of appointing **Ms. Sohpie Schwartz** as the *Chief Executive Officer* and **Juan Quintana Lopera** as *Chief Operating Officer*.

Sophie is a citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and currently resides in Washington D.C. where she works as an Analyst for Emerson Collectives's Political and Campaigns team. Sophie has worked extensively on GOTV efforts within Indian Country as well as human trafficking prevention in South Dakota. Since **Juan** has been a part of IPI, they have strengthened IPI's relationship with the United Nations (UN) and the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC). We have seen the extraordinary work that they have been doing in Colombia. Juan started Bonda, an organization dedicated to safeguarding the future of traditional artisanship and of those who keep it alive.

The work IPI has been able to accomplish would not have been possible if it weren't for the diligent efforts of Sophie and Juan. I am confident that as we move forward Sophie and Juan will create a movement of engaged citizens who will work to support Indigenous people to change their communities, nations, and ultimately, their world.

There has not been a generation confronted by such an inscrutable sense of chaos than youth within the past 75 years. Young people were born in the aftermath of a post-9/11 world—have witnessed fire drills become lockdown and active shooter drills. Saw their friends and families lose their homes and quality of life during the Great Recession. Experienced a pandemic that shook the foundations of our nation's

healthcare systems and took countless lives prematurely. The losses we have endured are immeasurable, and the pain has struck a deep and solemn note that has resounded far and wide within our generation. As part of looking toward the future and ensuring that the IPI continues to involve youth within our programming, I am excited to welcome **Anagali Duncan** as the *Director of Youth Engagement*. Anagali was born and raised on the Cherokee reservation in Oklahoma. Currently, Anagali is a student at Stanford University, pursuing a double major in Environmental Science and Indigenous Studies. As an environmental activist, he passionately advocates for the recognition and respect of indigenous knowledge within Western academia and policy decisions. Through his studies and activism, he aspires to create a sustainable and inclusive future where both nature and Indigenous communities can thrive harmoniously.

This year, the board of Trustees approved the Indigenous Advisory Committee to facilitate and enhance dialogue between different Indigenous leaders and activists, to create more robust bases of information on how to best approach and resolve issues impacting Indigenous communities, and for this information to be made available and applicable to respective Indigenous communities. As the inaugural *Chairman* of the Committee, the Trustees were excited to welcome **President Jonathan Nez**. President Nez is a transformational leader who answered one of the highest callings to public service and helped to bring the Navajo People, Indigenous people across the great state of Arizona, and Indigenous communities across the United States to reach from where they were to where they have never been, and sometimes could scarcely imagine going. We are excited to announce some of the work of the committee in the new year.

In partnership with the **Native BioData Consortium** and the **National Congress of the American Indian** (NCAI), IPI held a convening on data and its intersection with civic engagement in Indian Country. The way data is collected, owned, managed, leveraged, shared, and used has a significant impact on our communities' ability to civically participate and the programs and services offered to our relatives. IPI looks forward to continuing to listen, learn, and collaborate with individuals and or organizations to build lasting coalitions that will protect and secure our data for the good of our communities.

This year, IPI worked with Sen. Martin Heinrich and Rep. Norma Torres to work on the federal recognition of Indigenous Peoples' Day. In our announcement, **Rep. Torres** said, "Our country has long failed to recognize and acknowledge its dark history of erasure and harm brought upon the first inhabitants of the Americas." **Senator Heinrich** then said, "Federally designating Indigenous Peoples' Day honors the strength and resilience of Tribal Nations while we continue our efforts to uplift Tribal communities and support Tribal sovereignty." To this date, the legislation currently has 84 cosponsors in the House and 13 in the Senate. This is the largest amassment of cosponsors to date. In addition to working on federal legislation, The IPI had the pleasure of working with Governor Katie Hobbs and President Joe Biden on the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' Day. IPI will continue to work diligently to ensure that Indigenous Peoples' Day is federally recognized and that we continue to honor the perseverance and courage of Indigenous peoples, show our gratitude for the myriad contributions we have made to our world, and renew our commitment to respect Tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

One of the objectives unique to the IPI is our non-partisan political stance. Indigenous politics, livelihoods, languages, and cultures are not a monolith. As an organization, we believe that inspiring change will require more than just speaking out – it will require listening as well. It will require listening to those with whom you disagree and being prepared to compromise. With this in mind, we hope to be an

effective force within the landscape of Indigenous politics and communities. To accomplish our mission we were able to establish a partnership with one of the most distinguished consulting firms in the world Booz|Allen|Hamilton (BAH). With this partnership, we think that we can utilize the resources of BAH to impact policy that will benefit Indigenous communities.

While there are a plethora of challenges that face Indigenous communities in the United States and across the globe, we remain optimistic and willing to face the challenges ahead. I believe that optimism requires us to see the world as it is, but we must believe and behave in a way that creates a better future for generations to come. As a society, we weaken our greatness when we hide behind walls, rather than tear them down; when we doubt the power of our ideals, rather than trust them to be the force for change they have always been. We look forward with a vision of the world as it is, but more importantly, as we want it to be going into this new year.

Thank you for helping grow IPI. We wish you a Happy New Year.

Most respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dylan O. Baca', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'D' and 'B'.

Dylan O. Baca
Chairman
Indigenous Peoples' Initiative