

American Indian Family Empowerment Program Fund (AIFEP):1996-2016

20 Years of Generosity

A Study Conducted by
Rainbow Research and Wilder Research
Commissioned by Tiwahe Foundation
August 2017



Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our most sincere gratitude to the many people and organizations that contributed to this project. Your insight has allowed our team to gain a wealth of understanding about the Tiwahe Foundation's American Indian Family Empowerment Program. Thank you to:

Advisory Committee

Richard Chase
David Cournoyer
Jackie Dionne
LeMoine LaPointe
Julie Nielsen
Barbara Schillo

Tiwahe Foundation staff, Kelly Drummer, Deanna StandingCloud, and Laura Durden, for their generous time and skills of connecting with the community.

In Progress Studios, Kristine Sorenson and Tiana LaPointe, for using their skills to help tell the story of the Tiwahe grantees, and providing a beautiful space to conduct interviews.

All My Relations Gallery for providing space to host a series of grantee interviews.

AIFEP grantees who shared their experience as survey respondents and/or interviewees. An additional thank you to pilot participants who took the time to review our survey questions and interview protocol.

AIFEP Study Team

Rainbow Research

Mary A. McEathron
Misty Blue
Selam Tilahun
Maryan GaaFaa

Wilder Research

Nicole MartinRogers
Stephanie R. K. Peterson
Jose Diaz

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
INTRODUCTION	6
AIFEP PROGRAM MODEL	6
LANDSCAPE	7
OVERVIEW OF AIFEP GRANT-MAKING	8
INTENDED USES OF THE GRANT	9
GRANTEES	9
IMPACT OF AIFEP	11
GRANTEE REPORTED USE OF FUNDS	11
Connecting to Culture	11
Educational Attainment	11
Economic Sufficiency and Development	11
AIFEP IMPACTS ON INDIVIDUAL, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES	13
EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES	13
EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY OUTCOME	15
HEALTH AND WELLBEING OUTCOMES	16
ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY IMPACTS	16
GRANTEES' VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE	17
Heal	17
Protect	17
Resist	17
AIFEP: CULTURE AND CONNECTION AS FOUNDATION FOR ACTION	18

American Indian Family Empowerment Program Fund (AIFEP): 1996-2016

20 Years of Generosity

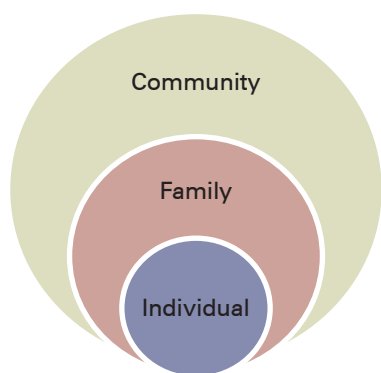
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Study Conducted by
Rainbow Research and Wilder Research
Commissioned by Tiwahe Foundation
August 2017



Introduction

Since its inception, the American Indian Family Empowerment Fund (AIFEP) has made over 800 grants totaling more than \$1.5 million to individual grantees in the American Indian community. Originally launched in 1993 by the Marbrook Foundation, it operated as a donor-designated fund with monies from a collaborative of the Marbrook, Westcliff, and Grotto Foundations. In 2009, AIFEP transformed into an independent community foundation, the Tiwahe Foundation. The AIFEP program remains an important part of an ongoing commitment to strengthen the potential and wellbeing of American Indian individuals, families, and communities.



This study, conducted by a collaborative evaluation team from Rainbow Research and Wilder Research, was the first time Tiwahe Foundation commissioned a formal evaluation to learn about the experiences of grantees and the impact of the micro-grants over the past 20 years.

AIFEP Program Model

The AIFEP model of giving is guided by a set of core values that reflect Tiwahe Foundation's mission and vision by supporting grantees' self-determined leadership, resiliency, and reciprocity; these values are reflected in every aspect of the AIFEP grant process. AIFEP is based on a mutually supportive, sustainable circle of giving and receiving among grantees, Tiwahe Foundation and American Indian communities in Minnesota.

AIFEP Approach and Strategies

Build on Strengths-based American Indian Culture
Micro Grants to Individuals in Three Goal Areas:

- Connecting to Our Culture
- Educational Attainment
- Economic Sufficiency and Development

Inclusive Process

Ongoing Opportunities to Engage

Build Trust

Honoring Ceremony

Reciprocal Relationships among Grantees and Tiwahe
Grants Committee 100% American Indian/Formal Grantee

AIFEP focuses on strengths but also acknowledges and addresses the contextual factors that affect American Indian leadership and success of American Indian people in the Twin Cities. For example, Tiwahe Foundation recognizes that historical trauma and ongoing systemic inequities and racism affect how American Indian people

function in mainstream society. Tiwahe Foundation also sees how the mainstream culture's lack of understanding of sovereignty and the complexities of Indigenous spaces create and uphold barriers to self-determination and effective problem-solving among American Indian communities today. However, by centering AIFEP on the strength and resilience of the American Indian community, Tiwahe does not support or continue a narrative of deficit.

Overview of AIFEP Grant-Making

AIFEP gives about 35-40 grants a year to individuals. They have given more than 800 grants over the course of the past 20 years, ranging from \$500 to \$2500. Grants are currently given in three categories that match the goals of the foundation: connecting to culture, educational attainment, and economic self-sufficiency.

Number and Dollar Amount of Awards
by Grant Category

Grant Category	Number of Grantees	Total Dollar Amount
Connecting to Culture	155	\$292,166
Educational Attainment	366	\$719,418
Economic Sufficiency and Development	418	\$753,972
Improved Self (discontinued in 2008)	48	\$88,446

Source: Information for grants awarded 1996-2016 in Tiwahe database

Impact of AIFEP

When asked what they are doing now that they are excited about, AIFEP grantees shared a wide range of answers including working, learning, and parenting. One common thread through all the answers was that respondents specifically mentioned ways that they are excited to be working in their community and connecting deeply within and through their culture.

“I am now fully working in the arts and my writing. I’m serving the Native community with the best version of myself.”

The following are based on survey responses and an analysis that estimated the economic impact of the AIFEP grants as well as other grantee outcomes.

- All survey respondents shared that the AIFEP grant had a positive effect on them individually; almost all believe the grant had a positive effect on their families (98%) and communities (92%).

Educational Outcomes

- Overall, 8 of 10 respondents (115 grantees) indicated that the AIFEP grant helped to increase their learning, skills, or educational credentials. Eighty respondents (62%) specifically shared that the grant helped them to obtain a degree, certificate, or other credential.

“AIFEP helped me pursue and complete an education at the BA level. This in turn allowed me to develop critical thinking and research skills and to understand how intergenerational historical trauma has impacted me, my family, and my community. This has allowed me to go on to graduate school and in turn widen my career and job scope.”

Prior economic studies of similar outcomes and benefits of higher education can help to determine the potential economic return for society for an individual who uses the AIFEP grant to obtain a higher educational degree or certification. Based on these calculations, when Tiwahe Foundation invests in an individual's higher education degree through the AIFEP grants, the overall potential economic return to society is an estimated \$4.70 for every dollar invested. **In other words, the \$719,000 that AIFEP has granted in the education attainment category over the past 20 years has over a \$3 million dollar potential economic return to society.**

Employment and Economic Self-Sufficiency Outcome

- Seventy-nine percent of respondents (113 respondents in total) shared that the AIFEP grant helped them to grow professionally; in addition, 59%



of respondents (87 respondents total) indicated that the grant helped them to get another job or boost their earnings. Another 14 respondents shared that the AIFEP grant helped them to avoid eviction, homelessness, or otherwise helped them to stabilize their housing.

“Becoming an RN has increased my earning potential tenfold. I now own my own home and provide a higher quality of life for my children.”

When families use their AIFEP grants to pay for child care, family members can work and increase their earnings. These additional earnings associated with the time their children are in child care amount to an estimated \$6,688. This is a conservative estimate based on prevailing minimum wage rates; some family members are likely to earn higher wage rates.

Some grantees reported that the AIFEP grants were a key factor in gaining employment. Assuming that these individuals were unemployed at the time of receiving the grant, the additional annual earnings of grantees who find jobs with the help of the grant could average nearly \$37,000 per employed individual.

Health and Wellbeing Outcomes

- Many survey respondents also noted ways that the AIFEP grant helped improve their health or wellbeing. Overall, 91 respondents (63%) indicated that the AIFEP grant helped them maintain or improve their health or wellbeing in some way, and 53 respondents (37%) indicated that the grant helped them grow spiritually. In addition, 14 respondents indicated that the grant helped them gain or maintain sobriety.

Alcohol abuse has been shown to decrease earnings by about 5% per year. Participants who regain sobriety with the help of the grant could increase their earnings up to \$1,880 per year. Therefore, a \$2,500 grant could provide a 100% return to society if the grantee attributes their sobriety to the grant and remains sober for about 16 months.

Grantees’ Visions for the Future

At the end of each interview, grantees were asked to articulate their vision for the future for Indian Country, and the role Tiwahe Foundation could play in that vision. Grantees emphasized three strategies for Natives in their communities: to heal from past traumas, including historical trauma; to protect vulnerable individuals from experiencing any new traumas; and to continue to resist

ongoing oppression and injustice. All of the interviewees shared that they felt Tiwahe Foundation's AIFEP grant is one mechanism to do this.

Our ancestors gave us the resilience and the compassion and the love for us to carry on, that we wouldn’t give up and so I stay apprised of my communities and I keep those cultural connections and really honor those relationships in a sacred way. I love them and with that you have the trust of your elders and you have the love. When you have the love from your elders, you’re fully supported.”

Grant Years	Number of Grants	Dollar Amount Granted	
1996	10	\$19,072	
1997	74	\$114,957	
1998	21	\$41,477	
1999	37	\$52,585	
2000	7	\$10,300	
2001	64	\$89,450	
2002	60	\$82,785	
2003	32	\$56,600	
2004	50	\$103,950	
2005	45	\$103,774	
2006	49	\$103,285	
2007	39	\$91,349	
2008	42	\$92,677	
2009 ^a	46	\$94,120	
2010	40	\$73,662	
2011	42	\$81,578	
2012	34	\$81,243	
2013	32	\$71,528	
2014	40	\$66,122	
2015	37	\$74,176	
2016 ^b	3	\$4,000	
Total	804	\$1,508,690	

Source:

Information for grants awarded 1996-2016 in Tiwahe database

^a Tiwahe Foundation was incorporated as an independent nonprofit in 2009.

^b Data for 2016 does not represent a full year as a cutoff point was established to begin surveying grantees.



Introduction

Since its inception, the American Indian Family Empowerment Fund (AIFEP) has made over 800 grants totaling more than \$1.5 million to individual grantees in the American Indian community. Originally launched in 1993 by the Marbrook Foundation, it operated as a donor-designated fund with monies from a collaborative of the Marbrook, Westcliff, and Grotto Foundations. In 2009, AIFEP transformed into a new entity, the Tiwahe Foundation. While Tiwahe Foundation is an independent community foundation with its own board of directors, the original AIFEP program remains an important part of an ongoing commitment to strengthen the potential and wellbeing of American Indian individuals, families, and communities. It continues to be one of the few programs that provides grants directly to individuals.

This study, conducted by a collaborative evaluation team from Rainbow Research and Wilder Research, was commissioned by Tiwahe Foundation to learn about the experiences of grantees and the impact of the micro-grants over the past 20 years. The knowledge gained through this study not only informs the continued progress of the AIFEP program and the field of grant-making and philanthropy through a deeper understanding of this unique program.

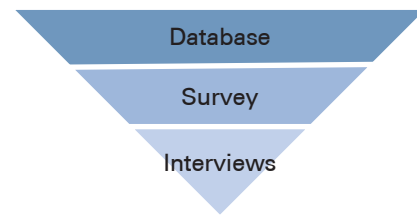
The study team was guided by an advisory committee comprised of people familiar with the program and with the American Indian community of the Twin Cities. The over-arching goals of the study were to:

1. Gain a deeper understanding of AIFEP's unique micro-granting program model and document it visually so that it can be shared with others;
2. Identify program impacts on three interconnected levels: individual, family, and community;
3. Capture the depth and breadth of grantee experiences;
4. Explore the potential economic impact of the micro-granting AIFEP program.

To address these goals, the study team utilized three main sources of information, focusing on grants awarded between September 1996 and June 2016:

1. Tiwahe Foundation's grantee database
2. An online survey sent to all grantees¹
3. In-depth interviews with 17 grantees²

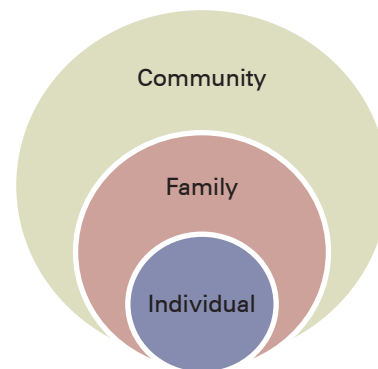
The database provided a comprehensive review



with records of all grantees including grant amounts, categories, and grantee characteristics. The survey and interviews provided sequentially deeper insights and data for assessing the impact of the grants. We begin this report with a description of the AIFEP model and its unique fit within the landscape of American Indian experiences followed by an overview of the grant-making activity over 20 years and, lastly, how AIFEP has affected individuals, families, and communities.

AIFEP Program Model

Through AIFEP's micro-granting program, Tiwahe Foundation strives to support and strengthen American Indian individuals, families, and communities; it is understood that these three are deeply interconnected.



AIFEP is based on a mutually supportive, sustainable circle of giving and receiving. The AIFEP model of giving is guided by a set of core values that reflect Tiwahe Foundation's mission and vision by supporting self-determined leadership, resiliency, and reciprocity; these values are reflected in every aspect of the AIFEP grant process.

Tiwahe Foundation recognizes that each person has a gift to give their community. Accordingly, AIFEP uses a strengths-based approach: its grant-making is based on the anticipated value of the project to the individual, family, and community, not on the needs or deficits of an applicant.

¹ Of the 702 individuals in the database who received a grant in the time period of the study, 634 had usable contact information. These grantees were sent a personalized link to an online survey in May 2017. 138 completed the survey from start to finish. Another 18 finished part of the survey.

² Interviews, some of which were recorded with permission, were conducted in June 2017.

AIFEP Core Values

Circle of Giving & Receiving
Each person has gift to give to community
Grant-making based on value not need
Leadership
Self-Determination
Sovereignty

Tiwahe Foundation focuses on building trust and strengthening American Indian leadership in the community with every AIFEP grant that is given. Tiwahe Foundation also honors self-determination and sovereignty. Because of these values, the AIFEP grants committee that makes funding decisions is 100% American Indian and includes former grantees.

Finally, Tiwahe Foundation recognizes the critical role that cultural practices and Indigenous languages play in American Indians' happiness, health, and success. This includes leadership practices and approaches, teaching and learning styles, beliefs about other people and the world around us, and traditions and medicines that help Native people stay healthy and spiritually whole. The AIFEP supports and honors these practices. As a result of the AIFEP grants and related efforts to facilitate a network of current and former grantees, Tiwahe Foundation hopes to increase empowered leadership, economic stability, access to financial capital, and cultural practices in the American Indian community in the Twin Cities.

AIFEP Approach and Strategies

Build on Strengths-based American Indian Culture
Micro Grants to Individuals in Three Goal Areas:

- **Connecting to Our Culture**
- **Educational Attainment**
- **Economic Sufficiency and Development**

Inclusive Process

Ongoing Opportunities to Engage

Build Trust

Honoring Ceremony

Reciprocal Relationships among Grantees and Tiwahe

Grants Committee 100% American Indian/Formal Grantee

Landscape

AIFEP focuses on strengths but also acknowledges and addresses the contextual factors that affect American Indian leadership and success of American Indian people in the Twin Cities. Tiwahe Foundation recognizes that historical trauma is a root cause of inequities experienced by American Indians in Minnesota as well as throughout the nation. Additionally, the foundation acknowledges how ongoing systemic racism affects American Indians' function in mainstream society and their ability to identify and implement solutions to their problems. Finally, Tiwahe Foundation sees how the mainstream culture's lack of understanding of sovereignty and the complexities of Indigenous spaces (politically, within reservation and non-reservation contexts, identity and tribal enrollment, and so on) create barriers to self-determination and effective problem-solving among American Indian communities today. The following paragraphs outline some of these inequities to more fully understand the context that American Indians experience in Minnesota.

In Minnesota, it is estimated that there are roughly 60,000 individuals who identify as American Indian, Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian; approximately 18,000 of them reside in the Twin Cities.ⁱ There are seven Anishinaabe (Chippewa, Ojibwe) reservations and four Dakota (Sioux) communities that share geography with the state of Minnesota. Statewide, there are documented inequities that negatively impact communities of color. Some areas where we see inequities are in educational attainment, income, employment, and health.^{ii, iii, iv} American Indian communities in Minnesota are some of the most strongly affected by these disparities.^v

Extreme disparities in education exist for American Indian students in Minnesota. In 2016, American Indians students in Minnesota had the lowest high school graduation rate of all racial/ethnic groups: 51% for American Indians, compared to 87% for White, 84% Asian and Asian American, and 65% for Black or African American students.^{vi} These inequities carry through to higher education, where American Indian public high school graduates have much lower rates of college enrollment compared to graduates from other racial/ethnic groups,^{vii} and just 13% of American Indian students in Minnesota have a bachelor's degree or higher by age 25 compared to 36% of White students.^{viii}

Disparities are also present when it comes to employment opportunities. An employment rate of 53% for American Indian adults is the lowest, compared to 63% for African American adults, 70% for Asian adults, and 80% for White adults.^{ix} As a result, American Indians have one of the

highest percentages of households below the poverty level (18%), and one of the lowest median annual incomes (\$39,000).^x

Health is another area that inequities are present. Lower insurance rates and higher rates of chronic health conditions present in the American Indian population are among some of the health-related disparities.^{xi,xii}

Interviews with grantees provided time and space for grantees to speak in-depth about the challenges they faced. Similar to the literature cited above, grantees relayed experiences about family trauma and disintegration in many forms: foster care, adoption to non-Native families, and incarceration of themselves or loved ones. These circumstances often created disconnection from their family or culture. Due to these situations, grantees sometimes reported lacking the skills and guidance they needed to achieve their goals. Additionally, many grantees shared that their experience within this challenging context often resulted in increased motivation to contribute more to their families and community.

Rather than focusing on these disparities created and sustained by ongoing systemic racism, Tiwahe Foundation has made a deliberate decision to support strengths and gifts, the skills, resources, resilience, and traditions that American Indian families and individuals possess that allow them to contribute to the cultural and social wellbeing of their community

Overview of AIFEP Grant-Making

AIFEP gives about 35-40 grants a year to individuals. They have given more than 800 grants over the course of the past 20 years, ranging from \$500 to \$2500. About 100 grantees have received more than one grant, and some families have multiple recipients across generations.

The number of grants and the total amount granted reflects the evolution of AIFEP. As noted in the introduction, it was a program launched by the Marbrook Foundation, giving out its first grants in September 1996. Staff shared that there were so many applications that a number were deferred until the following year. In 2001, AIFEP became a program within the Grotto Foundation, leading to another shift in the number of grants given. Then, in 2009, the Tiwahe Foundation was incorporated as a nonprofit, community foundation with AIFEP as a cornerstone of its continued work in the American Indian community. Table 1 shows the number of grants and dollar amount of awards by year.

Table 1. Number and Dollar Amount of Awards by Year

<i>Grant Years</i>	<i>Number of Grants</i>	<i>Dollar Amount Granted</i>	
1996	10	\$19,072	
1997	74	\$114,957	
1998	21	\$41,477	
1999	37	\$52,585	
2000	7	\$10,300	
2001	64	\$89,450	
2002	60	\$82,785	
2003	32	\$56,600	
2004	50	\$103,950	
2005	45	\$103,774	
2006	49	\$103,285	
2007	39	\$91,349	
2008	42	\$92,677	
2009 ^a	46	\$94,120	
2010	40	\$73,662	
2011	42	\$81,578	
2012	34	\$81,243	
2013	32	\$71,528	
2014	40	\$66,122	
2015	37	\$74,176	
2016 ^b	3	\$4,000	
Total	804	\$1,508,690	

Source:
Information for grants awarded 1996-2016 in Tiwahe database

^a Tiwahe Foundation was incorporated as an independent nonprofit in 2009.

^b Data for 2016 does not represent a full year as a cutoff point was established to begin surveying grantees.

Grants are currently given in three categories that match the goals of the foundation: connecting to culture, educational attainment, and economic self-sufficiency. A fourth grant category, self-improvement, was discontinued in 2008. Table 2 shows the number and dollar amount of awards by grant category.

Table 2. Awards by Grant Category

<i>Grant Category</i>	<i>Number of Grantees</i>	<i>Total Dollar Amount</i>
Connecting to Culture Learning traditional traditional/cultural practices and native languages	155	\$292,166
Educational Attainment Expenses related to college degrees, certificates, vocational training and GED	366	\$719,418
Economic Sufficiency and Development Employment business entrepreneurship opportunities, and home ownership	418	\$753,972
Improved Self (discontinued in 2008)	48	\$ 88,446

Source: Information for grants awarded 1996-2016 in Tiwahe database

Intended Uses of the Grant

Grantees applied to use the AIFEP grant to fund a variety of activities within these broader categories. Based on the data in the Tiwahe AIFEP database, grantees most commonly indicated plans for transportation, such as buying vehicles and purchasing airline tickets to see family and place of birth (140 grantees), business expenses (127 grantees), and housing related expenses such as paying rent and other bills (118 grantees). Other intended uses included paying for child care, buying equipment such as computers and printers, and tuition.

Historically, the American Indian community has not had access to capital. In requesting funds, grantees often indicated planned uses that included transportation support, business expenses and housing-related expenses as shown in Table 3. While seemingly ordinary, many grantees shared that using funds in these targeted ways could have a striking impact on achieving their overall goals. These impacts are explored in greater detail in the following sections.

Figure 1. Geographic Distribution of AIFEP Grantees

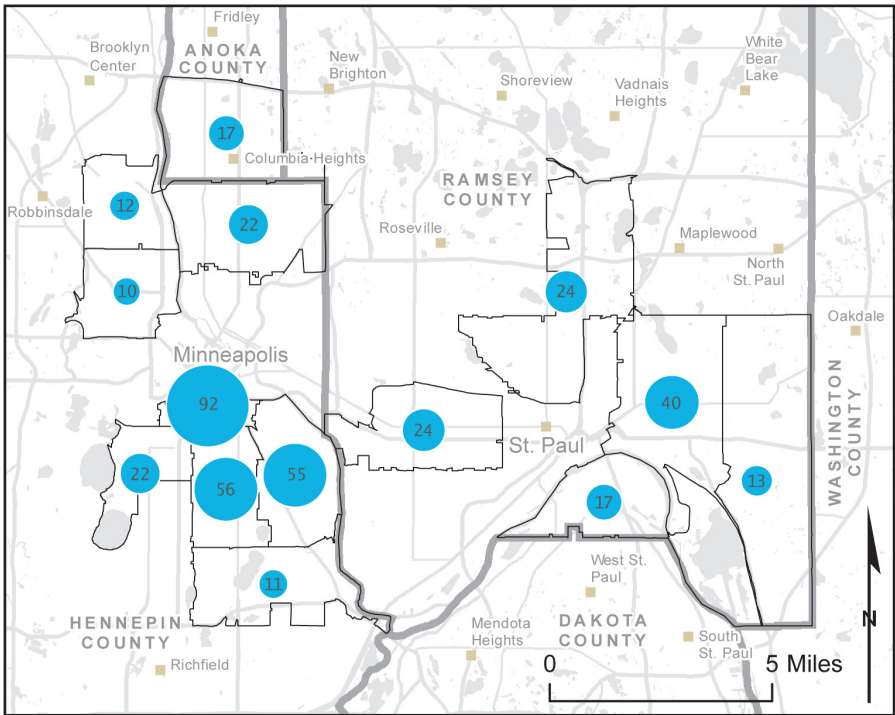
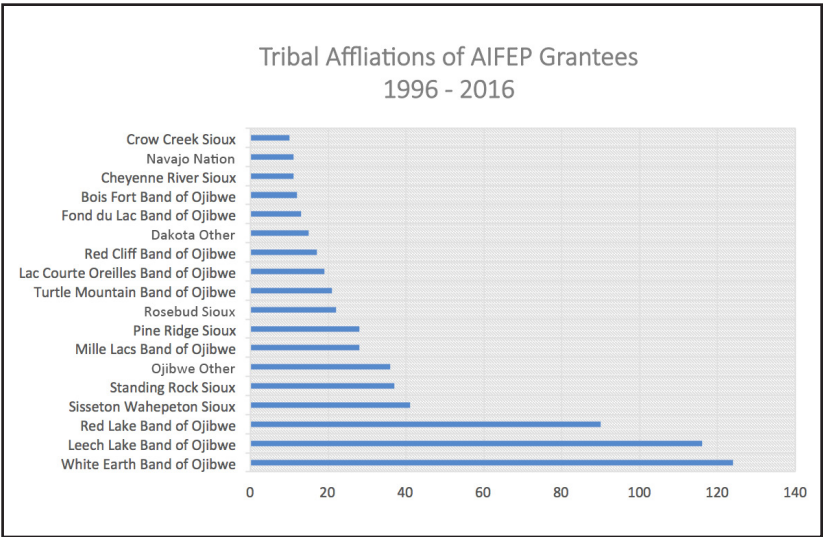


Table 3. Specific Intended Uses of Grant Funds

<i>Intended Uses</i>	<i>Number</i>
Transportation	140
Business Expenses	127
Housing	118
Bills	66
Child care	41
Equipment	22
Tuition	21
Culture	6

Source: Information for grants awarded 1996-2016 in Tiwahe database

Figure 2. Tribal Affiliation of AIFEP Grantees



Note: Ojibwe Other include Chippewa Tribe Mississippi Band, Chippewa Tribe Mississippi Band, Lake Superior Chippewa and more. Dakota Other includes Sioux Valley Dakota, Yankton Sioux, Yankton Sioux Tribe, Marty SD and more.

Grantees

In this section of the report, we share what we learned about the grantees, beginning first with the database and then reporting on the responses from the survey and interviews. Tiwahe Foundation awards grants to American Indians³ who live in the 7-county Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area (including Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington counties). Figures 1 and 2 show the geographic distribution and the tribal affiliations of grantees based on information in the database.

³ Applicants must be a member of a federally or state recognized tribe, and must provide proof of tribal lineage - this includes a copy of tribal identification, enrollment, or lineage documentation.

By and large, grants are being awarded to individuals with families. When asked to describe their family composition, 550 grantees described having either children (under age 18) or grandchildren living with them. Thirty-one of those grantees described themselves as single parents.

The survey asked respondents to indicate their age and gender. Table 4 shows the calculated age of survey respondents at the time they received their first AIFEP grant based on respondent age at the time of the survey; the mean age reported on the survey was 41 years old.

Most of the survey respondents identified as female (103 respondents, or 74%). In addition, 4% identified as gender non-conforming, transgender, or two-spirit⁴ (see Figure 3).

⁴ The term “two spirit” is a sacred identity of those in the American Indian community. They have both a feminine and masculine spirit that they carry. They are highly respected and cherished as an important member of the community.

Table 4. Age of Grantees When Receiving First AIFEP Grant

<i>Age Range</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
20 or younger	9	7%
21-30	47	38%
31-40	40	32%
41-50	16	13%
51-60	11	9%
61 or older	1	1%

Source:
Information for grants awarded 1996-2016 in Tiwahe database

Table 5. Grantees’ Gender Identification

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Female	103	74%
Male	31	22%
Two-spirit	3	2%
Transgender	1	1%
Gender non-conforming	1	1%

Source:
Information from grantee survey responses



Impact of AIFEP

When asked what they are doing now that they are excited about, AIFEP grantees shared a wide range of answers including working, learning, and parenting. One common thread through all the answers was that respondents specifically mentioned ways that they are excited to be working in their community and connecting deeply within and through their culture.

“I have taken a position with Indian Health Service after I graduate and plan to continue volunteering at Children’s Hospital as an American Indian Volunteer. I feel this is what I was meant to do, and I am happy that this is the path that has been made for me.”

“I am now fully working in the arts and my writing. I’m serving the Native community with the best version of myself.”

“I facilitate support groups, educate, and train community members in self-care. I work in Indian Country. I share my experience of healing and a life experience that has brought me home to my center. The work is well-received.”

In this section we examine the full circle of how the AIFEP program has affected individuals, families, and communities over the past 20 years. These findings are based on survey and interview responses. First, we present how grantees reported using their funds, followed by the reported impact of these grants.

Grantee Reported Use of Funds

As noted above, grants were awarded in three main categories: connecting to culture, educational attainment, and economic self-sufficiency. Survey respondents shared further details of how the grants were used in one or more of those categories.

Connecting to Culture

Overall, of the 138 survey respondents, half shared that they used the AIFEP grant to connect to culture in some way. The most common way that respondents reported using the funds was building relationships with elders or others in the community, followed by purchasing language classes or materials, paying expenses to participate in cultural activities, or procuring transportation to cultural activities (see Table 6).

Educational Attainment

Approximately 7 of 10 survey respondents (73%) reported using the AIFEP grant to pursue education of some kind.

Table 6. Connecting to Culture Use of Funds

	Number	Percentage
Building relationships with elders/others in community	28	24%
Language classes or materials	23	20%
Expenses for participation in cultural activities	15	13%
Transportation to cultural activities	15	13%
Traditional arts and crafts	11	9%
Traditional activities	9	8%
Making regalia	6	5%
Something else ^a	24	21%

^a Responses for “Something else” included engaging in spiritual activities with immediate family, gathering stories from others in community, legal work, and facilitating cultural activities.

Within this category, most respondents shared that they used the AIFEP grant to buy books or other school supplies, pay tuition, or purchase a computer for school (see Table 7).

Economic Sufficiency and Development

Just over half (54%) of survey respondents indicated that they used their AIFEP grant to increase their economic self-sufficiency. Most often, respondents shared that they used the grant to further their business pursuits: either to buy a computer or other technology for their business, or to buy tools or other equipment. Respondents also shared that they used the grant to make rent or mortgage

Table 7. Educational Use of Funds

	Number	Percentage
Books or other school supplies	62	51%
Tuition	49	40%
Computer for school	34	28%
Transportation to and from school	28	23%
Application fees for post-secondary training or education	27	22%
Exam fees	13	11%
Child care while at school	13	11%
Something else ^a	12	10%

^a Responses for “something else” most commonly included living expenses while in school or paying conference fees.

payments for their home or to cover unexpected or emergency expenses for them or their family (see Table 8).

Survey respondents also shared how the AIFEP grant helped them to engage in activities that crossed all of

Table 8. Economic Sufficiency Use of Funds

	Number	Percentage
Computer, phone, or other technology expense for business	34	37%
Tools or equipment for business	17	18%
Rent or mortgage payments	14	15%
Unexpected or emergency expenses for self/family	11	12%
Child care while you worked	7	8%
Buying a car	5	5%
Car insurance or repair	5	5%
Down payment on a home or deposit on rental unit	3	3%
Something else ^a	20	22%

^a Responses for “something else” included home repairs, living expenses (e.g., while starting a business), and medical expenses.

these categories. As the stories below share, grantees’ goals in education, economic self-sufficiency, and cultural connections were often intertwined.

“My children have witnessed me pursuing my dream of writing full-time; of writing about and for Native people. And they have seen my successes with that. All of that supports our economic stability, our ability to dream of what is possible and make those dreams possible. And my writing preserves history and documents cultural practices.”

“Because I was able to complete the Naadaamadiwin tribal [education] cohort, my current employer was able to see the specialized level of education qualified me to earn a higher wage in my current job. Because I was able to stay in my current job, my relationships with my students and colleagues have been strengthened. I feel I have had the ability to meet my students’ educational and cultural needs by being an advocate for them within the public school system. Being able to participate in this college program has allowed me to pursue my vocational goals to the benefit of our Native students within the Twin Cities.”



AIFEP Impacts on Individual, Families, and Communities

The following are based on survey responses, interview responses, and an analysis that estimated the economic impact of the AIFEP grants as well as other grantee outcomes. The potential economic impacts of AIFEP were estimated using a combination of information on grantees' outcomes from the grantee survey and a review of published research to estimate the economic impact of those outcomes.

All survey respondents shared that the AIFEP grant had a positive effect on them individually; almost all believe the grant had a positive effect on their families (98%) and communities (92%).

These impacts take a variety of forms. At the individual level, most respondents shared that the grant helped them to increase their education, professional development, or leadership in their community. For family impacts, respondents indicated that the grant helped to support their economic or family stability, intergenerational connections, and family cultural practices. For community impacts, respondents most often shared that it increased connections between community members and supported community stability.

In addition to the impacts at these three levels, the study also examined changes within the three grant categories of education, economic self-sufficiency, and connecting to culture.

Educational Outcomes

Overall, 8 of 10 respondents (115 grantees) indicated that the AIFEP grant helped to increase their learning, skills, or educational credentials. Eighty respondents (62%) specifically shared that the grant helped them to obtain a degree, certificate, or other credential.

Survey respondents shared a number of stories about how the AIFEP grant impacted their educational trajectory, often leading to greater opportunities for further education, self-sufficiency, and connections to culture. For these respondents, these individual impacts also had ripple effects for their families and their communities as well.

"I started college when my twin daughters were 6 months old and my son was 4. No one can know how hard that was. By being able to care for them solely this assistance built in support that helped me succeed in getting my education."

"AIFEP helped me pursue and complete an education at the BA level. This in turn allowed me to

Table 9. AIFEP Impacts on Individuals

<i>Individual Impacts</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Increased learning, skill, or education level	115	80%
Helped professional growth	113	78%
Increased leadership in community	75	52%
Built/nurtured relationships	66	46%
Helped spiritual growth	12	8%
Something else ^a	12	8%
Child care while at school	13	11%
Something else ^a	12	10%

^a Responses for "something else" included increasing knowledge of community and other non-academic areas and empowering self to help others.

Table 10. AIFEP Impacts on Families

<i>Family Impacts</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Supported economic or family stability	101	72%
Helped support children	61	43%
Supported intergenerational connections	55	39%
Supported family cultural practices	54	38%
Preserved family histories	44	31%
Something else ^a	11	8%

^a Responses for "something else" included fostering family growth through education and enhancing familial connections to land.

Table 11. AIFEP Impacts on Community

<i>Community Impacts</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Increased connections between community members	94	73%
Supported community stability	63	49%
Supported community events	49	38%
Something else ^a	23	18%

^a Responses for "something else" included revitalizing language, documenting community teachings, and increasing awareness of Native individuals within specific professions, industries, and geographies.

develop critical thinking and research skills and to understand how intergenerational historical trauma has impacted me, my family, and my community. This has allowed me to go on to graduate school and in turn widen my career and job scope.”

“The first grant provided support while I completed graduate school. I was able to complete my degree, a Master’s of Public Policy. I have since used my skills, knowledge, and confidence to engage in the legislative process affecting the American Indian community. The second grant I received allowed our family to explore postsecondary options with our daughter. She has since graduated from college with a Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience and Anthropology and has started her graduate program to complete her Master’s degree in Education. She has continued to stay connected to her urban Indian community, volunteering and working on behalf of children.”

Interviewees also shared stories about how the grant filled resource gaps, such as computer equipment, that could mean the difference between struggling and success.

“I remember actually the first day in the summer, moving into dorms. And me and my best friend had a dorm room together. I had this moment of realizing that lack of support clearly, because I had my best friend who was moving all her things in, and she had her parents there, and they’re helping her move. They saved up and got her a laptop computer so that she could be ready and prepared to take on this big, scary world of college. And I thought, ‘That’s so awesome.’ Then I was like, ‘Oh man, that would be cool to have a computer.’ I just had this moment of, okay, I worked a couple jobs, and I’m like, ‘How can I figure this out? I don’t make enough to buy a computer.’ But I also quickly realized, too, that it was an access issue. There are libraries on campus but they’re busy. And there are only so many computers. Then there’s a computer lab, and it’s the same thing. So I just realized right away, ‘Okay I have to figure out a way to get a computer.’”

Similarly, interviewees also shared stories of educational attainment supported in part by the AIFEP grant.

“I received the AIFEP grant in 2015. I was a senior at the University of St. Thomas... by getting the grant, I was able to complete my degree. I was the first one in my family to get

a degree, the first one in my generation of cousins and then also in my immediate family. Neither of my parents have gotten 4 year degrees. So I was the first one to get my 4 year degree and it’s something that my family had worked really hard to do. My family has invested a lot in my education and so for me to be able to complete my 4 year degree was just the first step in my life educational goals. It was really special. They allowed me to be able to focus on school without having to get another job. I had two jobs so I didn’t have to get a third job because I got the grant and I was able to really focus on completing my studies...”

Estimates of the Economic Impact of Educational Attainment for AIFEP Grantees

Prior economic studies of similar outcomes and benefits of higher education can help to determine the potential economic return for society for an individual who uses the AIFEP grant to obtain a higher educational degree or certification. Based on these calculations, when Tiwahe Foundation invests in an individual's higher education degree through the AIFEP grants, the overall potential economic return to society is an estimated \$4.70 for every dollar invested. In other words, the \$719,000 that AIFEP has granted in the education attainment category over the past 20 years has over a \$3 million dollar potential economic return to society.



Employment and Economic Self-Sufficiency Outcome

Survey respondents also shared a range of impacts of the AIFEP grant they received on their employment and economic self-sufficiency. Seventy-nine percent of respondents (113 respondents in total) shared that the AIFEP grant helped them to grow professionally; in addition, 59% of respondents (87 respondents total) indicated that the grant helped them to get another job or boost their earnings. Another 14 respondents shared that the AIFEP grant helped them to avoid eviction, homelessness, or otherwise helped them to stabilize their housing.

Survey respondents shared various ways that the grant helped them to secure their own employment and work in the community to help others, including their family members.

“The grant helped my children see the importance of a higher education to strive towards and meeting personal goals. The end result was a higher paying job, providing comfortably for my family as a first generation college graduate.”

“The grant I received was used to make improvements to the house I owned.... As a single parent, raising two children and working full-time, we lived paycheck to paycheck and had no extra money for repairs. The AIFEP grant provided that extra support, allowing my children to continue living in their home.”

“Becoming an RN has increased my earning potential tenfold. I now own my own home and provide a higher quality of life for my children.”

Grantees who participated in the interviews also shared similar experiences.

“I utilized the grant for start-up costs for my real estate company. I had been involved with real estate, but I had let some of my licenses lapse because of my illness, and there’s quite a bit of licensing fees that are required before you get back in the mortgage and real estate and contracting business. So, the funds that I received from Tiwahe were extremely necessary in order to get my business up off the ground.”

“After receiving the grant from Tiwahe, part of my mission was to employ as many American Indians as I could. That is one of the things I was most proud of, that I was able to help fathers support their kids, families be able to own their own home, and if I can spread more of that around, I will.”

Estimates of the Economic Impact of Employment for AIFEP Grantees

When families use their AIFEP grants to pay for child care, family members can work and increase their earnings. These additional earnings associated with the time their children are in child care amount to an estimated \$6,688. This is a conservative estimate based on prevailing minimum wage rates; some family members are likely to earn higher wage rates.

Some grantees reported that the AIFEP grants were a key factor in gaining employment. Assuming that these individuals were unemployed at the time of receiving the grant, the additional annual earnings of grantees who find jobs with the help of the grant could average nearly \$37,000 per employed individual.



Health and Wellbeing Outcomes

Many survey respondents also noted ways that the AIFEP grant helped improve their health or wellbeing. Overall, 91 respondents (63%) indicated that the AIFEP grant helped them maintain or improve their health or wellbeing in some way, and 53 respondents (37%) indicated that the grant helped them grow spiritually. In addition, 14 respondents indicated that the grant helped them gain or maintain sobriety. An interview participant shared the following example.

“[Getting the AIFEP grant] helped me a lot because of the giving to the circle. [...] Attending these ceremonies has helped me think healthy, to live healthy, and to heal. Attending these ceremonies has really impacted my life for good because it opened my heart and my eyes to learning and things I love. I use the event as a positive, to help other people, and they hear me or when I talk or just attend. Now I’m attending and [I sing] a couple songs, but I’m not a singer [laughs]. I really like it because this is a path where I belong as a Native woman.”

Estimates of the Economic Impact of Health and Wellbeing for AIFEP Grantees

Alcohol abuse has been shown to decrease earnings by about 5% per year. Participants who regain sobriety with the help of the grant could increase their earnings up to \$1,880 per year. Therefore, a \$2,500 grant could provide a 100% return to society if the grantee attributes their sobriety to the grant and remains sober for about 16 months.

“Having two parents that struggled with addiction my whole life, and have seen them lose everything, and lost a parent to it. And seeing my mom still struggle today. Finding that sobriety is important.”

Additional Community Impacts

In addition to the broad community impacts described above, grantees who were interviewed shared additional examples of how they saw the AIFEP micro-grants having a ripple effect on their communities. One grantee shared how she even incorporated Tiwahe Foundation into a recent play that she wrote.

“I wrote this play called 2012: The Musical, and my character I wrote was a grant writer. She’s a Native, the grant writer. And she was listening to this elder, and I guess this was probably my idea of what Tiwahe is, but there was this elder in the play, and she had this really, crazy, funny story, like this life experience, and my character says to her, ‘Wow, grandma. Have you ever thought of applying for a Tiwahe grant?’ So I think that’s sort of the spirit of it, I feel like. Like because so many Native people in our community have so many fascinating experiences and things that happened in their lives and things they’re going to do, things they’re thinking about, and they don’t have a way to record it. And so it seems to me like it’s really accessible for someone like that character who’s like an elder.”



Grantees' Vision for the Future

At the end of each interview, grantees were asked to articulate their vision for the future for Indian Country, and the role Tiwahe Foundation could play in that vision. Grantees emphasized three strategies for Natives in their communities: to heal from past traumas, including historical trauma; to protect vulnerable individuals from experiencing any new traumas; and to continue to resist ongoing oppression and injustice. All of the interviewees shared that they felt Tiwahe Foundation's AIFEP grant is one mechanism to do this.

Heal

Across the board, grantees acknowledged that there is still a lot of collective healing to be done, and communal challenges to overcome. One interviewee observed, "I think this generation has a lot of healing to do first." For many of the interviewees, this meant (re)turning to cultural practices and traditional teachings. This can help to alleviate current stressors that grantees face (as described in the landscape section of this report). Grantees that were interviewed specifically named finances, transphobia, and homophobia as challenges that they currently face.

During the interviews, some grantees also highlighted the interconnectedness of the goals. Returning to cultural practices supported healing and positive action in other areas of their lives. Grantees also shared that attaining a goal in education or economic self-sufficiency could also support healing. One interviewee suggested that getting her education kept her away from unhealthy behaviors.

"First, just thinking about what the challenges are in our Native country, all across the board, can really exhaust someone's spirit. Also, you have to know what people are doing positively. What are they doing in healing? How are they educating their children?... Our ancestors gave us the resilience and the compassion and the love for us to carry on, that we wouldn't give up and so I stay apprised of my communities and I keep those cultural connections and really honor those relationships in a sacred way. I love them and with that you have the trust of your elders and you have the love. When you have the love from your elders, you're fully supported."

"Seeing a lot of that hurt and pain had really pushed me to try to fix the issues that were going on in our community. But it always starts with education and awareness. That's why I said, we still have much more work to do in our communities. But

my thing also was to connect our people to culture and spirituality, because two spirit people were treated with the utmost respect and honor before colonization, and colonization changed our way of thinking and how we view two spirit people."

"I think being here today, being healthy, being stable, sober, is keeping me out of trouble...I think there are many things that contribute to that, but being able to get an education [was important] ... Before I got to college, I was in a tough place, and I was a rough teen. Trying to avoid jail and avoid addiction, and fighting that off even to this day with family members, and trying to support family members through their struggles. [I value] my education, what I've learned through my educational experience, not just from the books and the academic part of it, but the experience, and the students, and the professors."

Protect

Grantees talked about how it is important to not forget about those needing support right now, those who might be particularly vulnerable. Children were of great importance to interviewees. Topics discussed included devoting resources to early education, paying attention to American Indian children being adopted by non-Native families, and supporting children with learning or physical disabilities.

"I think that the youth of our people who are born on Native land, or within Native communities, need to be taught that it's important for them to learn and expand their knowledge and experience of the...world, to go out and learn how to improve communities through education in things like STEM education and then to bring that back to the Native communities from where they came, to help improve those communities."

Resist

Grantees emphasized the need to become economically self-sufficient as individuals and as a community, either through pursuing education or by creating businesses. Educational areas such as STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) were named as particularly important investment areas. This self-sufficiency, coupled with knowledge about Native treaties, history, rights, and governance was viewed as a form of power. Many grantees also stressed the importance of tribal sovereignty and sustainable futures. They saw the need and potential of building bridges with each other and with other tribes.

"I mean there's all of this talk about historical trauma and the trauma gets passed on

generationally, which is true. But I also think that as a people we are incredibly resilient, and we have incredible strength, and that gets passed on, too. ...My vision for our community would be for us to really recognize our resiliency, our strength, and return to today's way of being powerful that are fully human within that tribal context. And not let our minds get bought into that idea that, 'Oh, it's all trauma.' I think that when we create, and when we build, and when we give, we grow and we become bigger and better as people, and as a community."

AIFEP: Culture and Connection as Foundation for Action

As demonstrated throughout this report, AIFEP supports the wellbeing of American Indian people in Minnesota, providing avenues to reconnect or deepen cultural practices and traditional teachings for healing and

strength. AIFEP is strength-based and holistic, attending to the individual, family, and community. It is from this place of strength that individuals and the community can take positive, empowered action for the future.

"My ultimate vision for our community is a group of relatives who live with Zaagi'idiwin, with love for one another, with compassion, with Debwewin, with truth, with Gwayakwaadiziwin, with virtue, righteousness, with honesty, with Manaaji'idiwin, with respect for one another, with Zoongide'ewin, with great strong hearts, with courage, with bravery, with Nibwaakaawin, with intelligence, with wisdom, [And with Dabasendizowin, with humility]."

Ultimately, I think that if our communities could live with those seven grandfather teachings, with that sacred law, that they would have Mino-bimaadiziwin, that they would be able to heal from what has been up to now rather a traumatic relationship with colonizing governments. That's my ultimate vision is that we Ji-mino-bimaadiziyang, that we all lead a good life."



References

- ⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program. Data for 2000-2009 are intercensal estimates.
- ⁱⁱ Minnesota Office of Higher Education. (2015). Minnesota measures 2015: A report on higher education performance. Retrieved from <http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/pdf/minnesotameasures2015.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Minnesota Department of Health. (2014). Advancing health equity in Minnesota: Report to the Legislature. Retrieved from http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/healthequity/ahe_leg_report_020414.pdf
- ^{iv} Minnesota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. (2013). Unemployment disparity in Minnesota. Retrieved from http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/MNSAC_Unemployment_Final_3.pdf
- ^v Minnesota GO. (n.d.). Racial disparities and equity. Retrieved from http://minnesotago.org/application/files/7214/5825/5846/Racial_Inequality_Public_Final.pdf
- ^{vi} Minnesota Compass. (n.d.). High school students graduating on time by racial and ethnic group, Twin Cities 7-county region, 2016. Retrieved July 20, 2017, from <http://www.mncompass.org/education/high-school-graduation#7-6107-g>
- ^{vii} Minnesota Office of Higher Education. (2016). Educational disparities. Retrieved from http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/pdf/EdDisparities_3pglInfographic.pdf
- ^{viii} Minnesota Compass. (n.d.). Percent (age 25+) with a bachelor's degree or higher, by racial and ethnic group, Minnesota, 2015. Retrieved July 28, 2017, from <http://www.mncompass.org/workforce/educational-attainment#1-10628-g>
- ^{ix} Minnesota Compass. (n.d.). Proportion of adults (age 16-64) working by racial and ethnic group, Twin Cities 7-county region, 2011-2015. Retrieved July 20, 2017, from <http://www.mncompass.org/workforce/proportion-of-adults-working#7-6022-g>
- ^x Minnesota Compass. (n.d.). Median household income by racial and ethnic group of the householder, Twin Cities 7-county region, 2011-2015. Retrieved July 20, 2017, from <http://www.mncompass.org/economy/median-income#7-5017-g>
- ^{xi} Minnesota Department of Health. (2014). Advancing health equity in Minnesota: Report to the Legislature. Retrieved from http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/healthequity/ahe_leg_report_020414.pdf
- ^{xii} MartinRogers, N. (2012). Health care needs assessment: White Earth Nation members and other American Indians in the Twin Cities. Retrieved from the Minnesota Department of Health website: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/orhpc/pubs/legislative/whiteearthneedsassmt.pdf>