

Resource Guide for Indigenous Solidarity Funding Projects: Honor Taxes & Real Rent Projects

Compiled by the Indigenous Solidarity Network and representatives from the Sogorea Te' Land Trust/Shuumi Land Tax, Real Rent Duwamish, and the Manna-hatta Fund.

"We find our cultural resilience in the medicine of the land."

Elder Leroy Little Bear (Blackfeet), in an article by Melissa Nelson and Maya Harjo, "From Soil to Sky: Mending the Circle of our Native Food Systems." In Cultural Survival Quarterly Magazine. bit.ly/mendingthecircle

Hello and thank you for reading.

This guide offers lessons and guidelines to support non-Native groups and people who seek to move resources to Indigenous Peoples through solidarity funding projects that directly support Indigenous sovereignty. Please let us know if you have feedback, questions, or gratitudes and be in touch by email if you're creating a solidarity funding effort. (See *Get in touch* at the end of this document).

We've highlighted stories and wisdom gathered from three major funding projects: the Manna-hatta Fund and their partner, the American Indian Community House, in Lenape territory [New York City, NY]; Real Rent Duwamish and the Duwamish Tribal Council in Duwamish territory [Seattle, WA]; and the Sogorea Te' Land Trust/Shuumi Land Tax in Lisjan Ohlone territory [Oakland, CA]; (find more info about each further in this document). Each of these projects was developed in direct collaboration with Indigenous leaders in their local area, and each functions differently given the specific histories and current needs of those Indigenous peoples. This locally-oriented, relationship-focused approach is essential.

If you are interested in building similar initiatives elsewhere, it will be important to create a project that is uniquely appropriate to the lands where you live and the peoples of those lands.

We see these funding projects as one part of a range of

decolonization efforts called for by Indigenous peoples, from direct action to policy advocacy to supporting repatriation and #LandBack. Doing this work calls us into our deepest commitments to a better world and to the relationships that we need to build to make that world possible.

BEST PRACTICES

If you are interested in starting a solidarity funding project to raise money for Indigenous Nations, peoples, or organizations, there are some high-level best practices to consider:

Relationships are the basis of this work and need care, tending, transparency, and accountability.

Go slow and be intentional.

Prioritize building trust and commit to long-term relationships.

This locally-oriented, relationship-focused approach is essential.

WHO TO PARTNER WITH?

One of the questions you will grapple with is which Indigenous Peoples you will partner with in creating this fund. Your Indigenous partner might be an Indigenous Nation or specific tribal entity that is Indigenous to that land, or an inter-tribal community organization, or some combination of both, whether they have "federal recognition," "state recognition," or neither.

Some of the guiding questions to consider

Who is Indigenous to where you live?

What Indigenous communities currently reside there?

Who has strong relationships and a good reputation within local Indigenous communities?

Who is well placed to use the resources to benefit local Indigenous communities?

Who do you have strong relationships with?

*Who is interested in partnering with you?
(Not everybody will want to.)*

Who has the capacity to maintain a relationship with your group, including whatever shared administration of the fund is required?

Remember that influxes of outside money to one group can cause tension and divisions within communities, and so use caution, and trust well respected local Indigenous leaders to make those kinds of decisions.

Make few assumptions. Be humble. Expect to be transformed in this process. Learn (and keep learning) the histories, stories, and current day realities of Indigenous people in the area. This kind of project is place-based and is not just a matter of repeating or “scaling up” other similar funds elsewhere. Try doing this decolonization homework from Catalyst Project as a start (see *resources* at the end of this document).

BEYOND MONEY

Make bold, inspiring asks for people to contribute financially, and also invite people to contribute in ways beyond money. For example, a publishing company in Lisjan Ohlone land [Oakland] includes a flier about the Shuumi Land Tax with every book order they mail out, and a local landscaping company gives a percentage of each of their contracts to Shuumi.

Mannahatta Fund's other ways to contribute mannahattafund.org/decolonization

Institutional ways to donate sogoreate-landtrust.org/institutional-shuumi/

Other ways to engage from Sogorea Te' sogoreate-landtrust.org/other-ways-to-engage/

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF YOUR EFFORTS

Prioritize sustainability of the project in personal and structural contexts. This includes:

Leadership development

How are you sharing skills, contacts, and networks, both within your group and with your Indigenous partners?

Accountability structures for your group

How does your group ensure that you are following the

leadership of the Indigenous leaders? Would it help to create community agreements for how your team works together?

Space for self-reflection

Is your group all or mostly white? How might white supremacy culture be showing up within your own group? How can you shift it? *The Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture* by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun is a place to start (see *resources*).

Assessing your capacity

Be diligent in assessing your capacity and honest about what you can and cannot commit to. When you commit, follow through. Building trust is essential.

Building group structures

Build structures to help the whole group maintain accountability to their commitments. This can include to do lists that are regularly reviewed, buddies or small groups that support each other to complete tasks, appreciation structures for when people follow through so that accountability isn't only punitive.

Less involved volunteers

If short-term volunteers are part of your work, this is especially important. Informal or short-term volunteers can be difficult to hold accountable, but they will be representing your group. If they don't show up or practice humility and respect, that breaks trust.

Give with no strings attached

It is crucial that your Indigenous partners have full decision-making power over the use of the donations and gifts. Ideally this includes directing donations into a bank account that is controlled by the Indigenous partner.

**Make few assumptions.
Be humble. Expect to
be transformed in
this process.**

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

There's a lot of administrative labor involved in these projects. It has to be clear who is going to do this: bookkeeping, accounting,

tracking, website design. What methods will you offer for donations (cash, PayPal, credit card, check, etc.)? How will you set up and maintain the infrastructure for each of these?

This work takes A LOT of time. There is both the administrative labor and ongoing relational work. Sometimes these feel in tension or hard to do at once, but they are both essential.

Consider how folks will decide how much to donate. For example, Sogorea Te' Land Trust in Lisjan Ohlone territory [Oakland] uses the Shuumi Land Tax, which calculates suggested contributions based on whether folks rent or own land and at what rate. The progressive tax structure ensures class is considered and recognizes that some people can and should give more.

Consider the implications of 501c3 status and how you might frame donations to donors. Some projects

shared that it felt important to them and their Indigenous partners that donations are framed as a gift and/or a move towards reparations rather than charity, which is often what 501c3 donations imply.

The status can be helpful for financial reasons and sometimes will attract new donors to their funds, but folks cautioned against presenting the fund in a way that emphasizes the tax deductibility or as charity. Also, if you're wanting your fund to be linked to an existing organization, tribal government fund, etc., know that many of these groups will not have 501c3 status.

How will you make decisions? Remember that this is about supporting existing work that Indigenous folks have been doing for a long time. For people of European-descent, this work has been ongoing since long before you or your people were on this land. It is not only about how big of an impact you believe you can make. Make a big impact, yes! But remember that your role is not to shape the direction of this work but rather to help it continue.

SUMMARY OF MECHANICS TO CONSIDER

Legal Issues, Fiscal sponsors, 501c3 status, etc.

When you move money through an individual person's accounts they hold personal tax liability, so you'll need to figure out how to move money to an organization's bank account. What kind of organization? Any kind, but there you'll need to check about the reporting and tax implications of each so you can be clear about that with your donors and the Indigenous partner.

Money Mechanics

How does the money get handled? What infrastructure needs to exist? Who will do bookkeeping? Who administers the bank account?

Donor Logistics

Who will be sending donor tax receipts and donation acknowledgment letters? Who will follow up with donors or conduct outreach? How will you gather and track donor data?

Communications

Websites, social media, narratives, web badges, etc.

OVERVIEW AND HISTORY OF THREE PROJECTS

Manna-hatta Fund

This fund came out of conversations within a family around how to fund Indigenous work in Lenape territory [New York City]. The family then connected with the American Indian Community House (AICH), "a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit that serves the needs of Native Americans residing in New York City," which started in 1969 and, given the tribal diversity in New York, serves members of

more than 72 nations (mission statement language and facts taken from AICH's website aich.org/) and the largest urban population of Native American people in the so-called United States. Members of the Lenape Nation have been part of AICH since its founding.

The project publicly launched in 2019, about a year and a half after the funders first connected with AICH, after the two groups had begun to build a relationship and to discuss what was needed and what was possible to move forward with together.

A team of white settlers manages a website and online donation platform: mannahattafund.org. The settlers also conduct an annual fundraising campaign from Indigenous Peoples' Day (Columbus Day) to Day of Mourning (Thanksgiving) when Native people and topics are typically in the media spotlight. The group also sends out a quarterly newsletter to Fund supporters with links to news, calls to action, and AICH events.

Donations of any amount are welcome, but the suggestion is to give \$24/month in recognition of the settler myth that colonizing Europeans paid \$24 to the Canarsie tribe in exchange for the island of "Manhattan." Indigenous people did not practice private land ownership, however, and the "sale" was in fact a deliberate theft (Source: mannahattafund.org). The settlers organized a major donor circle as part of the 2019 launch, with the goal of raising \$50k

to honor AICH's 50th anniversary, and offered donors additional educational events such as workshops, an outing to view a Native exhibit at a museum, and a kick-off webinar with AICH leaders.

Real Rent Duwamish

Real Rent Duwamish came from a 10 year relationship between Duwamish leaders and the Duwamish Solidarity Group, a formerly all white settler group that worked within the Coalition of Anti-Racist Whites in Duwamish territory [Seattle]. *The group has since transitioned to a multi-racial organizing body.*

Real Rent Duwamish calls on people who live or work in Duwamish territory [Seattle] to acknowledge the Duwamish tribe by paying rent. The suggestion is that folks shift funds monthly, offering ways to think about how to calculate the amount, such as \$54/month to honor the 54,000 acres of homeland that the Duwamish were forced to sign over to white settlers in 1855; or to calculate based on a percentage of your rent, mortgage, or income. *Although the Duwamish didn't engage in capitalist practices like rent, making monthly payments to the tribe explicitly calls on residents to address inequities through shifting much needed resources to the original people, while helping to provide predictable income beyond one time fund raisers.*

Doing this work calls us into our deepest commitments to a better world and to the relationships that we need to build to make that world possible.

The tribe has had complete control over funds raised since launch. Tribal leaders use funds in many ways including to maintain the Duwamish Longhouse and Cultural Center, the first longhouse in the area since 1904. They've also provided solidarity funds to other nearby tribes who also lack federal status.

Real Rent Duwamish launched on Indigenous Peoples' Day [Columbus Day], 2017. As of October 2020, there are 7732 Real Renters.

Source: realrentduwamish.org/determine-rent.html

Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Shuumi Land Tax

Sogorea Te' Land Trust was founded in 2012 by Corrina Gould (Confederated Villages of Lisjan, Ohlone) and Johnella LaRose (Shoshone Bannock) to rematriate land in the San Francisco Bay Area, returning land to the care of Indigenous women. Drawing on over two decades of grassroots activism and their experience leading a 109 day occupation of an Ohlone Shellmound and village site called Sogorea Te' to protect it from desecration, Corrina and Johnella created the first urban Indigenous women-led land trust in the country. Sogorea Te' "calls on native and non-native peoples to heal and transform the legacies of colonization, genocide, and patriarchy and to do the work our ancestors and future generations are calling us to do." Source: sogoreate-landtrust.org/purpose-and-vision

Corrina and Johnella worked with a small circle of non-Indigenous folks, whom they had been collaborating with for years, to develop the Shuumi Land Tax, a grassroots reparations model to fund the Land Trust. The Shuumi Land Tax launched with Sogorea Te's website in 2015. Shuumi means "gift" in Chochenyo, the Ohlone language spoken in Huchiun [Oakland and surrounding area]. The Shuumi Land Tax was inspired in part by the Honor Tax established by the Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples and the Wiyot Tribe in what is now called Humboldt, CA. Shuumi is an invitation to non-

Indigenous people who live on unceded Lisjan Ohlone land to pay an annual voluntary tax as "a small way to acknowledge the history of genocide and land theft and contribute to its healing, to support the self determination and sovereignty of the local Indigenous community." Sogorea Te' provides a calculator on their website to calculate a recommended Shuumi contribution based on a percentage of folks rent and/or the size of their owned home. There is also a separate calculator for institutions based on the kind of business and its annual budget.

GET IN TOUCH!

Please reach out to us via email if you are starting an Indigenous solidarity funding project. We can connect you with people who have done these projects and offer support around other mechanics and technical questions. anticolonialsolidarity@gmail.com

RESOURCES

Solidarity Funding for Indigenous Sovereignty This panel includes representatives of solidarity funding projects bit.ly/solidarityfunding

Catalyst Project's Decolonization homework
bit.ly/anti-colonial-homework

Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture
By Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun
bit.ly/CWSculture

Sogorea Te' Land Trust and the Shuumi Land Tax
sogoreate-landtrust.org

Manna-hatta Fund mannahattafund.org

Real Rent Duwamish realrentduwamish.org

Quote from Elder Leroy Little Bear (Blackfeet), in an article "From Soil to Sky: Mending the Circle of our Native Food Systems." By Melissa Nelson and Maya Harjo, in *Cultural Survival Quarterly Magazine*.
bit.ly/mendingthecircle

