



# VOICES

Indigenous

## REACH, REPRESENTATION AND RESPECT:

Recommendations to improve relations between  
Indigenous communities and local news in Colorado

*Presented by The Voices Initiative: Indigenous Working Group*

Cover photo: Maddie Fernandez and her son Víctor of Seven Falls Indian Dancers  
Photo by Tara McLain Manthey for Seven Falls Dancers

**COLAB**  
COLORADO NEWS  
COLLABORATIVE

**COLORADO  
MEDIA  
PROJECT**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The lands that are now called Colorado are home to tens of thousands of Indigenous people from hundreds of sovereign nations across North American and nearby lands. Two federally recognized tribes sit within Colorado borders and many other nations have significant and unbreakable connections to these lands. Relative to the non-Indigenous population, these communities often feel ignored — and often harmed — by local news coverage.**



**Carrie Howell of Seven Falls Indian Dancers in Colorado Springs in 2019**

Photo by Tara McLain Manthey for Seven Falls Dancers

This harm takes two forms: Invisibility and stereotypes. Daily news coverage either omits coverage of Indigenous people and communities or advances stereotypes by overly focusing on bad actors and traumatic experiences. Local news organizations often miss opportunities to make deeper connections with Indigenous communities that result in more nuanced and comprehensive stories.

Despite this history of exclusion, some Indigenous community leaders and journalists deeply value the role of media and storytellers in American life. They want to see better interactions and relationships between their communities and local news outlets so that the full and complex stories of Indigenous communities is more widely understood by all Coloradans. This visibility is the foundation to greater community building as elected officials, philanthropies, businesses and other leaders deepen their understanding of Indigenous cultures, histories and context.

These reflections on how local news and Indigenous communities interact were among many that surfaced during a series of community conversations in 2022. The Colorado News Collaborative (COLab) and Colorado Media Project (CMP) brought together Indigenous organizational leaders, journalists and community members as part of the Voices Initiative, which seeks to improve the relationship between local newsrooms and communities of color.

Similar conversations were held in 2021 and earlier in 2022 with Coloradans from the Black, Latinx, and Asian, South Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities.

Six groups of Indigenous people convened in spring and late fall 2022. The first group met virtually and included leaders of Indigenous-run community organizations located across the Front Range, including Denver and Colorado Springs. The second group included Indigenous journalists from across the state who met virtually. In the fall, smaller groups of both Indigenous journalists and community members convened in person in southwest Colorado in Ignacio and Durango.

The participants met in the context of current events that are widely discussed among Indigenous peoples but rarely break through to widespread audiences. These include ongoing, proactive campaigns to raise awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives as well as the “Land Back” movement to return lands to the control of Indigenous peoples. In Colorado, activists have pushed for the return of a former Hughes Stadium parcel to the people pushed out of the area to create Colorado State University.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Also top of mind is the latest threat to the sovereignty of nearly 600 American Indian nations: A case before the U.S. Supreme Court, Holland v. Brackeen. At stake is the fate of a 1978 federal law, the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which protects American Indian and Alaska Native families from the unnecessary removal of their children by local governments. A decision in this case puts not only ICWA at risk, but the foundation of the government-to-government relationship between the U.S. and tribes. Coverage of the case outside of Indigenous-led news outlets tends to gloss over this to focus on the white families at the center of a settled custody dispute.

Like most communities of color, tribes and urban Indigenous communities were disproportionately impacted by sickness and death during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. This news was widely shared, but lesser known was the resilience of tribes as they expressed their sovereignty in the form of taking care of their people through early and aggressive vaccination efforts.

These topics and many others can be traumatic to consider, discuss and carry. COLab and CMP extend their deep gratitude to all who participated in exploring the interactions of local news and Indigenous communities and how they can be improved.



Indigenous community members and journalists in Ignacio in the fall of 2022  
Photo by Crystal Ashike

## Reflections, Challenges and Solutions

The groups discussed a range of topics, including experiences with or within local media, the role of news media in their communities, and what an ideal relationship with news media should look like. Among them:

- What local news media need to know about Indigenous people in Colorado
- Where and how Indigenous communities get news
- Experiences with news media
- Harms to Indigenous communities by news media
- Ideal relationships with news media
- Indigenous people working within news media
- Opportunities for funders

## Summary of Recommendations

For the Indigenous folks involved in these discussions, the most frequent response was an urgent need to counter invisibility with representation, transparency, trust and respect. They offered actionable solutions to change policies, practices and structures. The recommendations fall into three broad categories:

### Respect:

Understand Indigenous communities' unique histories, cultures and contexts — from our point of view — to ensure accurate and respectful coverage.

### Representation:

Combat invisibility and stereotypes by increasing nuanced coverage of Indigenous communities and hiring Indigenous journalists and storytellers.

### Reach:

Build and strengthen long-term relationships with Indigenous Coloradans across geographies, demographics and professions.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Members of the Indigenous Voices working group



1. Amoneta Beckstein (Tsalagi), assistant professor of psychology, Fort Lewis College
2. Chelsie Begood (Diné), community programs associate, Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center
3. Crystal Ashike (Diné), digital content editor, KSUT Tribal Radio
4. Desiree Kane (Miwok), freelance multimedia journalist
5. Dyllon Mills (Ute Mountain Ute), community health programs associate, Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center
6. Ethan Goatson (Diné), Fort Lewis College student
7. Imo Succo (Diné), programs manager, Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center
8. Jamie Opalenik (Diné), director of multimedia sales, *The Durango Herald* and *Cortez Journal*
9. Jennifer Wolf (Ponca/Ojibwe/Santee), owner, Project Mosaic LLC
10. Lani-Elaine Castruita (Mvskoke Creek), independent writing and editing professional
11. Marsha Whiting (Chippewa Cree and Sicangu Lakota), associate director of programs, First Nations Development Institute
12. Marshall Watts (Southern Ute), community member
13. Montoya Whiteman (Southern Cheyenne), senior director of marketing, American Indian Science and Engineering Society
14. Monycka Snowbird (Anishinaabe), program director, Haseya Advocate Program
15. Olga Gonzalez (Yaqui/Otomi), executive director, Cultivando
16. Ouray Watts (Southern Ute), community member
17. Renata Hill (Mvskoke Creek), journalist and publisher, *MoodFuel News*
18. Renee Redshirt (Diné), freelance journalist and consultant
19. Rick Waters (Kiowa/Cherokee), co-executive director, Denver Indian Center, Inc.
20. Richard Williams (Oglala Lakota), executive director, People of the Sacred Land
21. Robert Ortiz (Taos Pueblo citizen and Southern Ute descendent), journalist, Southern Ute Drum
22. Shawna Maher (Sans Arc Lakota), Native American research and program specialist, Lifespan Local
23. Sheila Nanaeto (Southern Ute), station manager, KSUT Public Radio
24. Shelby King (Karuk), journalist, *Shelterforce*
25. Tami Graham, executive director, KSUT Public Radio
26. Theresa Halsey (Hunkpapa Lakota), producer, KGNU Community Radio

#### Not pictured

- Alx Lee, (Diné), Fort Lewis College student and editor of *The Independent*
- Colten Ashley (Diné), Tribal Media Center coordinator, KSUT Public Radio
- Jen Olguin (Southern Ute), community member
- Kia Whiteskunk (Ute Mountain Ute), director, Ute Mountain Recreation Center
- Kirbie Bennett (Diné), freelance journalist
- Mia McCormick (Diné), Fort Lewis College student
- Mikayla Sarracino (Pueblo of Acoma), Fort Lewis College student
- Shelly Solopow (Little Shell Chippewa), tribal liaison, Behavioral Health Administration, State of Colorado
- Tyla Frost (Southern Ute), community member

## INTRODUCTION

**The Bill of Rights, with its guarantees of freedom of speech and of the press, did not apply to all Indigenous people until 1924 when Congress passed the Indian Citizenship Act. Nearly a century later, many Indigenous people still feel that the free press, so vital to democracy, continues to exclude the first people of this land. The daily churn of news across the U.S. and here in Colorado mostly ignores Indigenous peoples and our contributions to this nation. When there is coverage, it often advances stereotypes or overly focuses on bad actors and traumatic experiences. This invisibility and shallow coverage have significant impacts on Indigenous peoples and our communities, livelihoods and futures.**

Local news organizations that fall into this pattern are missing an opportunity for audiences to better understand Indigenous communities, our unbreakable connection to these lands and our unique experiences as citizens of sovereign nations within the U.S. **When editors and producers fail to include Indigenous people in their news and newsrooms, they fail to cover the full breadth and diversity of their communities.**

These reflections on how local news and Indigenous communities interact were among many that surfaced during the 2022 Indigenous Voices working group discussions. COLab and CMP convened Indigenous organizational leaders, journalists and community as part of the Voices Initiative. Working group members explored questions like: What will it take to ensure that local news coverage informs and illuminates the lives of our state's communities of color? What actions must newsrooms, community members and funders take to create a future in which Indigenous Coloradans share and shape the power of local news media to tell stories about their communities?

Indigenous folks involved in these discussions offered solutions to change policies, practices and structures. The discussions were as diverse as the participants, who represented different sovereign tribal nations, geographies, demographics, politics — and much more. It is difficult to encapsulate all their reflections into a simple narrative. This report summarizes the experiences and reflections of the people who participated in six separate discussions in spring and late fall of 2022 and is not meant to be a quantitative or comprehensive summary.



**Indigenous community members and journalists meet in Durango to talk about the role of the media in the fall of 2022.**

Photo by Crystal Ashike

Storytelling is a valued and important part of Indigenous tradition. Many participants — with or without formal journalism training — deeply understand the role of storytelling in the function of communities and the continuation of culture. Many participants acknowledged the power and potential of storytelling and were passionate about improving the relationships between Indigenous communities and local news organizations.



## REFLECTIONS, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Across the sessions, discussions of experiences with news media and recommendations for improving interactions fell into a few broad categories.

### What local news media need to know about Indigenous people in Colorado

Many participants' most pressing request is that journalists — and all Coloradans — understand what makes Indigenous people in Colorado unique. The strengths and everyday life of Indigenous communities should be covered routinely and not just during Native American Heritage Month, Indigenous Peoples Day, Thanksgiving or when topics like mascots, place names and holidays are in the public eye.

Indigenous people in Colorado face many issues that other communities do not due to our unique political status, history with this land, being separated from our tribal communities and more. These are complex issues and worthy of news coverage to help others understand our identities. Critical issues include Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives, the Indian Child Welfare Act, U.S. boarding/assimilation schools, federal urban relocation, access to health and education services guaranteed under treaties, language and culture, land and ecosystem stewardship.



**Ouray and Marshall Watts in Ignacio**

Photo by Tara McLain Manthey

Indigenous people in Colorado are extremely diverse. We come from hundreds of different nations in North, Central and South America. We include all races, genders, abilities, religions — and many other identities. It is important to incorporate Indigenous perspectives when covering the diversity of Coloradans.

Nearly 75,000 Coloradans identified as American Indian or Alaska Native alone on the 2020 Census. That includes more than 35,000 in the Denver metro area. There are tens of thousands more who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native and another race or ethnicity.

Two federally recognized tribes are based on reserved lands in Colorado: the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe. Dozens more nations have historical and current ties to lands within Colorado, including the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Diné (Navajo), Apache, and Oceti Sakowin (Lakota, Dakota, Nakota nations). These nations are often referred to in the past tense or in a historical context but it is important to understand that their spiritual and physical connections to these lands are ongoing and unbreakable, whether or not they currently have land held in trust by the federal government within the Colorado borders.

# 75,000

**Coloradans identified  
as American Indian or  
Alaska Native alone  
on the 2020 Census**

The Oceti Sakowin (Lakota, Dakota, Nakota) people are the largest group of tribal people in Colorado, with Diné (Navajo) people the fastest growing, according to the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs.

Indigenous issues are tied to land and to the long line of past events that happened here (or on other ancestral lands). To many Indigenous people, events from the 18th, 19th and 20th Centuries are current events because they are still impacting Indigenous people in our communities in unique ways.

## REFLECTIONS, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

*“Working with the media is very frustrating and it’s a very necessary part of my job. That is one of my least favorite parts of my job. And part of that is because to even get to the issue that we’re talking about, we have to catch them up on 500 years of all of the other issues that lead up to this. And so you have to do a very condensed history lesson before you can even talk about the issue at hand. And there’s so many intersectional issues that the media just doesn’t find to be important to their story.”*

— COLORADO SPRINGS PARTICIPANT

Enrollment or membership in a federally or state-recognized tribe is a political status, similar to holding dual citizenship in another country. It is different from — but woven together with — cultural, ethnic or racial heritage as Indigenous peoples. This is due to the government-to-government relationship tribes have with the United States. That political recognition is the basis for all federal Indian<sup>1</sup> law — as well as the programs, grants and services provided by the federal government to tribes as part of its trust responsibility. The Indian Child Welfare Act, Indian hiring preference and many support programs for American Indian people on- and off-reservation are based on this political identity and not a racial identity.

Tribal reservations are lands reserved by the federal government on behalf of a tribal nation as part of its trust responsibility. These lands were not given to tribes — they were often within their traditional territories (except for nations removed from the East Coast). Tribes were not “put” on these lands by the federal government — the people of these tribes were excluded from all their other lands except for these by the U.S. government. Most reservations include land held by the federal government in trust by the tribe but are checkerboarded by plots of land owned by private individuals, both tribal members and non-members.

**The Ute tribes are not “our” tribes, or “Colorado tribes” just because their reservations are within the state’s borders. The Utes do not “belong” to Colorado.** At the same time, many other nations have the same unbreakable bond to lands within this state’s borders, but their reserved lands are located in other states due to the political decisions and violent actions of settlers and federal officials in the past. Like the Utes, they belong to this land and this land belongs to them — for all time.

“I’ve heard different news media and documentaries talking about there are no tribes that live in Colorado, because no one wants to recognize the little checkerboard tribe (Ute tribes) that we have down here,” said one Ignacio participant. “And then when we do get represented, it’s like we’re the only tribe that has ever existed here. But that’s not true at all, there is a much richer history to it. But I don’t want it to be shown in a way of history either — current people who are still around are here but just aren’t being represented in Colorado because no one wants to talk about your dirty history of how that happened.”

<sup>1</sup> The term “Indian” is defined in federal law and is used here as a legal term.



## REFLECTIONS, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

### Where and how Indigenous communities get news

Indigenous communities in Colorado have a range of sources for news and it varies by geography.

Some Indigenous communities in Colorado, especially in Front Range cities, have no local news media that reflects their identity — either in coverage or representation. Many rely on community connections, nonprofits, informal networks and social media to share information. That lack of local news coverage by and of the Indigenous community in all areas, but especially in Front Range cities, is a significant contributor to the invisibility of Indigenous peoples among the general public.

In Denver, a once tight-knit community has been buffeted by displacement, gentrification and other issues and the result has fractured a word-of-mouth network that shared news and information. This news and information desert limits community organizing, a sense of shared identity within a broader community and visibility within all social systems.

In Southwest Colorado, several participants noted that they also felt ignored by media based in the Front Range and saw little coverage of their communities. However, in this area the tribes operate or support their own media, including newspapers, online news, closed-circuit television and public radio to share news and information with their citizens and surrounding Indigenous communities. Like many rural areas, accessing tribal media in Southwest Colorado has its limitations. Communities are less likely to have high-speed internet service, the rising cost of printing (paper and labor) has meant cutting back printed editions of newspapers and the vast geography of the area means it is expensive to provide far-reaching radio signals.

*“I think people miss the monthly newspaper. I know they used to get it printed through Cortez but now it comes from Durango and they can only do it quarterly.”*

— TOWAOC PARTICIPANT

Across Colorado, many Indigenous people access reliable information about Indigenous issues from a few local Indigenous journalists, digital newsletters, government commissions and local radio programs like KGNU’s Indian Voices program hosted by Theresa Halsey. There are also many national outlets such as *Indian Country Today (ICT)*, *High Country News*, *Native News Online*, *Illuminatives*, *Native America Calling*, the *Gallup Independent* and many tribal news organizations.

## REFLECTIONS, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

### Experiences with news media

Some participants shared stories of occasional success working with local non-Indigenous news organizations, but most shared negative experiences.

There are strong examples of helpful and respectful coverage by non-Indigenous news outlets in Colorado. Leaders and journalists cited some coverage from 9News (Next with Kyle Clark) highlighting the work of local Indigenous-run nonprofits, *The Colorado Sun* and Colorado Public Radio with ongoing coverage of several Indigenous issues, *High Country News* with its Indigenous Affairs desk and a collaboration between KSUT Public Radio and Rocky Mountain PBS to share mini-documentaries created by Indigenous storytellers.

Organizations led by and serving Indigenous people are historically and currently under-resourced and may not have media relations capacity or expertise on staff. This has multiple impacts, including a lack of ability to reach out to media and lack of capacity to receive and respond to media requests on short timelines. Many times when leaders send out media releases on issues that are very important to their organizations or community there is no response from local news outlets.

*“We had a bill going through the legislature that if it would’ve gone through it possibly could have been creating \$24 million a year permanently for our Indian community nonprofits. Nobody heard anything about it. There was no press whatsoever. And I think that’s the kind of thing that we’ve become accustomed to, that we really don’t have a voice or there’s nobody that we can go to.”*

— DENVER PARTICIPANT

At the same time, some leaders want to reach new Indigenous audiences but are reluctant to share events with local news media because they might be overrun by non-Indigenous people, which stretches tight budgets and makes it difficult to build community.

Some leaders feel conflicted because they would prefer to connect news media directly to community members but don’t want to put community members in uncomfortable or possibly traumatic situations with strangers. They would prefer to have trusted relationships with reporters they know will be respectful. They recommend that media outlets pay community members to write columns, contribute frequent guest opinions and co-create or tell stories in partnership.

**Indigenous organizational leaders are reluctant to respond to media requests if representatives of the outlets have in the past been rude, transactional, untrustworthy or misrepresented the issues or voices in their coverage.** This is a significant barrier to rebuilding trust.

## REFLECTIONS, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Participants want news media to know, respect and use the preferred terms, capitalization of, and descriptions of Indigenous peoples. The Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) has a useful guide for members of the media. Most importantly, news media should ask people what they want to be called, how to spell it, how to characterize it and how to capitalize it.

However, an Indigenous digital journalist noted that the word “Indigenous” has been tagged by some social media platforms as controversial (likely associated with grassroots political actions like the Standing Rock protests) and is sometimes suppressed or blocked by algorithms when used in hashtags or search engine optimization. Social media managers have also tried to use specific tribal names to avoid this, but many of these words have been co-opted by brands and swamp search results or hashtags.

“We were meant to be erased,” an Ignacio participant said. “That’s why you have Jeep Grand Cherokee and Apache helicopters (in the search results). These things that are supposed to be Indigenous-led are completely erased because of the structure that we are already in. We were set up to be struggling with this from the get-go because they don’t want (us to have) that representation.”

### Harms to Indigenous communities by news media

Experiences with local news media went beyond frustration. Many participants noted the role news media play in building stereotypes about Indigenous people or furthering erasure and invisibility through lack of coverage.

*“Non-Natives need to be hearing Native news. As long as that is not happening, it just perpetuates that really long history of exploitation, of tokenizing, of certain issues that occur once a year (like) Indigenous People’s Day or some kind of awareness issue.”*

— DENVER PARTICIPANT

Many noted the limited local news coverage of Indigenous communities is often of community troubles, bad actors or crimes, political controversies, holidays/heritage month or other novel coverage based on stereotypes or misrepresentations. There has been little coverage of the community outside these topics, which perpetuates misperceptions of Indigenous people.



## REFLECTIONS, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

**One of the most mentioned harms was the invisibility of Indigenous people in regular coverage.** It is harmful to the community when there is no inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, experiences and history in day-to-day news coverage. Even when Indigenous people or tribes are mentioned, they are often referred to in the past tense — as if they are no longer present.

“I mean, there’s nothing — there’s nothing said about Natives. Not even the president or the people that are running for governor,” an Ignacio participant said. “Natives are not even brought up at all. They should be. We were here first so they should kind of respect that but you don’t get that from them.” There are tens of thousands of Coloradans who identify as Indigenous and yet the news media call and quote just a few leaders and usually only on controversial topics or holidays.

In Southwestern Colorado tribal communities in particular, non-Indigenous news coverage is too often focused on poverty and historical trauma and rarely balanced with coverage of strengths and resilience.

*“You shouldn’t have to keep people interested just by covering trauma and poverty porn — it should be more uplifting than that. ... I don’t want just negative storylines to be the reason to get people interested in Indigenous nations. We have so much more than that.”*

— IGNACIO PARTICIPANT

When Indigenous issues are prominent in news coverage, news media often relay the government explanation of the issue or the perspective of organizations that “serve” Indigenous communities but aren’t led by them. Examples include recent legislation addressing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives and mascots in schools.

With controversial topics like mascots, racist place names and Columbus Day, there are varied and nuanced perspectives among Indigenous community members on these issues that are rarely explored in depth.

Erasure of Indigenous communities is also seen in reporting on data and studies. Disaggregated data collected by nonprofits, universities and governments often excludes Indigenous people because of small sample sizes and the news media do not question these missing data before sharing the larger findings in reporting.

Some media outlets allow racism and anti-Indigenous comments to be posted in their social media and website comment sections, or have a poor understanding of what is offensive to Indigenous people. There is no accountability to the community or Indigenous journalists for allowing the perpetuation of this harm.

## REFLECTIONS, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

### Ideal relationships with news media

Despite these experiences, many participants were hopeful for a better relationship with the news media because they understand and respect the powerful role of storytelling in all societies. Many participants offered a range of solutions to this critical issue.



**Durango participants workshop recommendations to build trust in media.**  
Photo by Crystal Ashike

Indigenous organizational leaders welcome respectful relationships with local news media that are built on trust and mutual benefit. Local news media are an important way to reach local Indigenous people with critical information about public health, education and social services.

Ideal coverage of Indigenous communities reflects the diversity and strengths of all facets of Indigenous life. It recognizes and illuminates culture, language, land connections and other strengths as resilience.

Indigenous communities in Colorado care about many of the same issues other communities care about, including health, education, housing, immigration, employment, infrastructure, mental health, voting, disabilities, LGBTQIA+ (Two Spirit), and climate. When covering these issues, news media should seek out Indigenous perspectives as part of routine coverage.

“It is important that Indigenous voices be heard in Colorado on whatever level, whatever topic,” a participant in Denver said. “We are here.”

Organizational leaders find relationships with media outlets work best when there is a consistent and responsive contact and reporters have experience and/or interest in respectful coverage and building relationships. Some leaders put in a lot of time to educate journalists and have to do so over and over due to turnover.

*“As soon as we get a local journalist kind of trained and up to par and they know what to do, and they know how to talk about it, they move, they leave to go to another station or to another state. And we have to start all over again.”*

— COLORADO SPRINGS PARTICIPANT

Coverage that uses the appropriate language and seeks permission to share photos of cultural dress and activities before publishing is very important to building trust with Indigenous community members.

## REFLECTIONS, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

In Southwest Colorado, collaborations between tribal and Indigenous-led media and mainstream media have resulted in stronger coverage of the community. These intentional projects have helped build relationships between communities via their media outlets. Rocky Mountain PBS and KSUT Tribal Radio collaborate on the “[Native Lens](#)” project to create a space for Indigenous people to share their own mini-documentaries with audiences of both organizations. ICT (formerly Indian Country Today) in 2022 collaborated with mainstream and tribal media across the nation to explore the [state of the economy in Indian Country](#).



KSUT Public Radio building in Ignacio  
Photo by Tami Graham

News media should factor in additional time when reaching out to both tribes and Indigenous-run organizations for comment or collaboration due to the very limited capacity they have in handling media requests.

Reporters should be aware that talking about traumatic experiences can open up old wounds for Indigenous community members. Moving beyond a transactional relationship to one centered in humility is better for both the community and the journalist as they re-experience traumatic topics, or as reporters experience that

*“For journalists, you can’t just open up the wound and walk away. A good journalist — a good person — will be there to walk with them a little bit or get connected to resources. Or maybe just check in and say can we get a coffee? I think journalism should be about community and friendship in a way — even though it’s not totally a real friendship. But it needs to have that humanity when we are talking about something painful.”*

— DURANGO PARTICIPANT

News media should take time to understand the unique history of Indigenous communities in Colorado and the federal, state and local policies that have directly impacted us, especially treaties between tribes and the federal government. This should include understanding the historical and ongoing trauma that many of these political and historical actions have caused.

There was not a consensus on how to hold news media accountable, or whether that was possible. If this is something news media want from the community it must be part of the work of building relationships with community members. Some felt only other members of the media would be successful in holding other media accountable.

Reporters should be more proactive in holding all elected leaders accountable for their ignorance of the Indigenous communities they represent. Asking “what about Indigenous people?” when reporting most stories would be a major step toward representation.



## REFLECTIONS, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

### Indigenous people working within news media

A robust group of Indigenous journalists and storytellers works in Colorado in a range of capacities, including mainstream newspapers, tribally run media organizations, community radio, specialty national publications, freelance, nonprofits, self-publishing and more.

**Many Indigenous journalists who've worked in mainstream media felt isolated as the only Indigenous person on staff.**

Some felt a duty to cover Indigenous issues because no other reporters were interested or capable of covering Indigenous issues with respect. Some weren't allowed to cover the community or issues as frequently as needed or desired due to supervisors' perception of conflicts of interest.

When supported by editors, some Indigenous journalists working in mainstream news media were able to form strong relationships with local tribal leaders, Indigenous community leaders and other community members.



**Indigenous community members and journalists meet in Durango in the fall of 2022.**

Photo by Tara McClain Manthey

Covering the racism against, poverty in, and oppression of, Indigenous communities can be traumatic for Indigenous journalists. Some female Indigenous journalists shared that they felt unsafe covering violence toward, or oppression of, Indigenous communities.

Some Indigenous journalists felt unsupported by news organizations when they faced backlash online for covering oppression of Indigenous communities, in particular for covering politicized issues like climate change, violence and other topics important to Indigenous communities.

***"A lot of times people — either orgs or media outlets — want to be inclusive of Indigenous people. And they want to send us out into the front lines to say that Indigenous message but then watch us get blasted, watch us get torn apart. That's how it feels. And so you don't want to be there."***

— FORT COLLINS PARTICIPANT

News organizations should support Indigenous journalists on staff to not only develop professional skills but also support their advancement into management positions.

## REFLECTIONS, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

## Opportunities for funders

Many of the potential solutions offered to news media are low-cost recommendations that can be implemented internally. However, many participants suggested that local and regional philanthropic organizations should support larger, structural solutions.

Ideally, an Indigenous-led news organization or service for Indigenous audiences would be uniquely positioned to cover the diverse Indigenous communities and issues in Colorado. This would allow Indigenous people to reshape or retake narratives and perceptions as well as combat invisibility of Indigenous peoples. This service could work in partnership with other media to share content.

*“We do not have the money to build capacity to promote ourselves and our work in a way that allows us to tell our story. Underrepresented means underfunded with no regular voice. In many ways it is media genocide. We have the natural intellect and talent spread across the Front Range to make a difference. I wish we had the resources to support one or two people dedicated to sharing our news, stories and jokes on a weekly basis. The moccasin telegraph may work within our circles but we need to find ways to increase that capacity.”*

— DENVER PARTICIPANT

Community organizations need help building capacity in media relations, specifically funding communications efforts and staff within organizations to combat the invisibility of Indigenous people in Colorado. Federal and state grants typically do not fund communications positions unless they are directly related to communications efforts as in public health. **These leaders need help pooling or sharing contact lists for reliable reporters and producers statewide.** They would also like to organize a speaker's bureau or database of folks who are knowledgeable on specific topics and willing to talk to news media on short notice.

Indigenous journalists and communicators in Colorado need financial support to network and build community with each other. This could be in partnership with COLab, NAJA or by creating a separate fellowship organization.

“If you go to a (NAJA) conference, you feel empowered, and you are with your people — and then you leave, and you're like, I'm alone,” a participant in Durango said. “... So, I think that to have chapters would show strength in numbers and show all the different areas where we are seen and thrive. That would definitely be beneficial.”

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1

**Respect: Understand Indigenous communities' unique histories, cultures and contexts — from our points of view — to ensure accurate and respectful coverage.**

### WHAT NEWSROOMS CAN DO

- ✓ Understand Indigenous communities' unique histories, cultures and contexts — from our points of view — to ensure accurate and respectful coverage.
- ✓ Know, respect and use preferred terms and labels by asking people what they prefer to be called. In addition to asking what tribe or nation they are, ask if they prefer to use terms like “member,” “citizen,” “descendent” or other descriptions of their relationship with their nation(s). Use appropriate language and seek permission to share photos of cultural dress and activities before publishing. Use [NAJA guides](#) on reporting on Indigenous peoples.
- ✓ Whenever possible, use the present tense when writing about tribes and Indigenous people. This often works even when talking about historical events. For example: “The Cheyenne, Arapaho and Ute tribes are the first caretakers of the lands in Colorado.” They are still here, and defaulting to past tense implies to the reader that they aren't.

### WHAT FUNDERS CAN DO

- ✓ Co-host community conversations that explore Indigenous representation in news media to gather more perspectives and reveal deeper nuance about experiences with the prevailing depictions of Indigenous people in American culture.

### WHAT COMMUNITIES CAN DO

- ✓ Indigenous journalists and storytellers should network and build community with each other, in partnership with COLab and NAJA or as a separate fellowship organization. They could offer paid consulting or training services to local newsrooms on improving relations with local Indigenous communities.



## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### 2

#### Representation: Combat invisibility and stereotypes by increasing nuanced coverage of Indigenous communities and hiring Indigenous journalists and storytellers.

##### WHAT NEWSROOMS CAN DO

- ✓ Incorporate Indigenous people into news as sources and topics of coverage when the topic is not related to their identity as an Indigenous person. Whatever the subject is, there is an Indigenous person with expertise in it. To this end, COLab, with support from CMP, is creating [Amplify Colorado](#), an online diverse source guide that will include experts and people with lived experience from Colorado's communities of color as well as newsroom contacts.
- ✓ Pay Indigenous community members a professional rate to write columns, contribute frequent guest opinions and co-create or tell stories. Establish pathways for Indigenous people — those with lived experience — to do grassroots reporting in their neighborhoods/communities, regardless of their education level or journalistic training.
- ✓ Lead with the Indigenous perspective when covering “controversial” issues about Indigenous communities, such as school mascots, Thanksgiving narratives and U.S. boarding schools. Avoid centering the subject on the white reaction to these issues with the Indigenous perspective at the end as “balance.” Don’t use government or other “official” voices to undermine or discredit the experiences and positions of Indigenous people, intentionally or not. This is a false balance.
- ✓ Ensure equity and anti-racist training includes learning about Indigenous peoples to counter invisibility and protect the safety of Indigenous people (especially women, children and two-spirit) by considering unintended effects of coverage, staffing and community interactions. Require training on colonialism, white supremacy and other factors of oppression. Offer training on physical safety for all news staff, especially for Indigenous women and two-spirit reporters who’ll be sent to dangerous areas or communities.
- ✓ When reviewing studies and data sets with demographic information, ask if they include Indigenous people and why not. At the same time, news organizations should not require quantitative data from Indigenous communities in order to “verify” a problem or issue facing the community.
- ✓ Hold elected leaders accountable for their ignorance of the Indigenous communities and people they represent.
- ✓ Employ and support Indigenous journalists to form strong relationships with local tribal leaders, Indigenous community leaders and other community members.
- ✓ Support professional development of Indigenous journalists and encourage their promotion into positions of power in local, state and national media.
- ✓ Hire freelance Indigenous journalists/reporters working in their own communities.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2

**Representation: Combat invisibility and stereotypes by increasing nuanced coverage of Indigenous communities and hiring Indigenous journalists and storytellers.**

### WHAT NEWSROOMS CAN DO

- ✓ Support or sponsor the creation of state or local chapters of NAJA.
- ✓ Understand that Indigenous journalists are not experts on — or may not even be familiar with — the hundreds of different Indigenous nations within the U.S., Canada, Mexico and nearby lands (also called Turtle Island by Indigenous peoples).

### WHAT FUNDERS CAN DO

- ✓ Invest in Indigenous-led news efforts as well as non-news storytelling projects that also combat invisibility, such as documentaries, student projects, murals, podcasts, performances, etc.
- ✓ Fund the development and maintenance of contact lists for reliable reporters and producers statewide.

### WHAT COMMUNITIES CAN DO

- ✓ Create an Indigenous-led news organization providing news for Indigenous audiences.
- ✓ Contribute expertise, insight and lived experience by becoming a source — or suggesting community sources — for [Amplify Colorado](#).

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### 3

### Reach: Build and strengthen long-term relationships between news media and Indigenous Coloradans across geographies, demographics and professions.

#### WHAT NEWSROOMS CAN DO

- ✓ Practice consistent and responsive contact with Indigenous leaders and community members.
- ✓ Make hearing from Indigenous voices an editorial priority. If the community organization, activist, or organizer can't move on your timeline, shift your timeline instead of doing the story without them.
- ✓ Build long-term relationships between communities and news organizations so that trust is built and connections last despite staff turn-over.
- ✓ Host free "Media 101" training in cooperation with organizations like NAJA and Indigenous-led nonprofit organizations to build community awareness about the role of local news organizations and share a meal at this event to deepen connections and relationships.
- ✓ Strengthen relationships with in-depth training on how to work with news media for community leaders and community members.

#### WHAT FUNDERS CAN DO

- ✓ Build capacity in media relations within tribes and nonprofits by supporting staffing costs and technical assistance for media training, strategic communications, graphic design, social media management, email list management, constituent relationships management systems, copy writing and copy editing, etc.
- ✓ Support or sponsor the creation of state or local chapters of NAJA.

#### WHAT COMMUNITIES CAN DO

- ✓ Continue to speak up and advocate for respectful inclusion in local news coverage.



## MOVING FORWARD



**Denver March Powwow**  
Photo by Tara McLain Manthey

The process of engaging the voices of Indigenous communities across Colorado has lifted the curtain on ways in which storytelling, an important element of Indigenous culture, can gain power and influence for and with members of these communities. The history and traditions belonging to natives of Colorado lands and Indigenous individuals residing in this state must be recognized and elevated as an integral part of it. There is also harm to be addressed and respect owed to generations for curtailed representation. Members of Indigenous communities want to be seen and acknowledged and there is much that Colorado newsrooms can do to begin repairing the damage. The content of this report can serve as a compass to point the way forward.

### CALL TO ACTION

Each day, journalists depict the diversity of Coloradans in words, pictures, sounds and videos with fidelity to their craft. Each day, philanthropies and communities come together to address critical needs with tenacity and compassion. We encourage members of the media, foundation partners and community leaders to bring that same vigor to implementing the thoughtful recommendations made in this report by members of the Indigenous communities of Colorado. Before pitching a story about Indigenous Coloradans, ask yourself if it furthers Indigenous respect, representation and reach. Before finalizing a grant cycle or community endeavor, ask yourself if it advances Indigenous priorities. Taking these logical and practical steps will build trust with our communities and raise the visibility of Indigenous peoples among all Coloradans. COLab and CMP will continue to support newsrooms using this report as a starting point for that change, searching for — and finding — new ways to better serve all Coloradans.

## APPENDIX A: PEOPLE

### Members of the Indigenous Voices working group

**Alex Lee** (Diné) is a Fort Lewis College student and editor of *The Independent*.

**Amoneeta Beckstein** (Tsalagi) is an assistant professor of psychology at Fort Lewis College.

**Chelsie Begood** (Diné) is a community programs associate for Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center.

**Colten Ashley** (Diné) is a filmmaker from the Four Corners and is currently the Tribal Media Center coordinator for KSUT Public Radio. He has worked in the motion picture industry for a decade and has mentored college and high school students interested in working in film and TV. He loves physical media, talking about movies, excursions into the desert, and traveling with his spouse.

**Crystal Ashike** (Diné) is a digital content editor with KSUT Tribal Radio.

**Desiree Kane** (Miwok) is a multimedia journalist and a live-media event producer with over a decade in journalism. They spent the last 2 years building Indigenized metaverses (and events within them) for Native professionals and youth, building Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) toolkits for Native families of missing people, and working on an investigative photojournalism book.

**Dyllon Mills** (Ute Mountain Ute) is a community health programs associate with Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center. Dyllon graduated from Fort Lewis College and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Health. He hails from the lands of Ute Mountain Utes and is the vice-chair of the Board for Kwi-yagat Community Academy, a charter school in Towaoc. Dyllon has supported the school's educational efforts, which include teaching Ute Mountain Ute culture and language, from its start-up phase in 2021 to the present.

**Ethan Goatson** (Diné) is a student at Fort Lewis College.

**Imo Succo** (Diné) is the program manager and regional health connector for the Indigenous Wellbriety Program (IWP) with Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center. Imo's clans are Water Flows Together, born for Bitter Water Clan; her maternal grandfather's clan is Mountain Cove and paternal grandfather's clan is Mexican Clan. Imo facilitates Wellbriety Talking Circles, mentors the peer recovery coaches for IWP, and oversees the operations of the IWP program in Cortez, Colorado. Imo also shares her insights on equitable access to healthcare and delivers her Native American perspective with education and experience to community organizations, health care and public health organizations. Imo is a mother of four older children and a proud grandmother to three grandchildren.

**Jamie Opalenik** (Diné) is the director of multimedia sales for *The Durango Herald* and *Cortez Journal*. Jamie has been in the media industry since 2000 as a journalist, marketer and sales director. She has worked in print, television and radio. As a member of NAJA, she tries to find ways to connect mainstream media with tribal news.

**Jan Olguin** (Southern Ute) is a community member.

**Jennifer Wolf** (Ponca/Ojibwe/Santee) is the owner of Project Mosaic LLC, and has worked with dozens of nonprofit organizations to define their needs and next steps. She is on the Racial Equity Board for the City and County of Denver and the Denver Foundation's Advisory Committee for Community Impact. Her cornerstone clients include First Nations Development Institute and Johns Hopkins University Center for Indigenous Health. Jennifer has also worked with Johnson Scholarship Foundation, Denver American Indian Commission, Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs COVID-19 Committee, National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, Denver Indian Health and Family Services, Common Counsel, Buffalo Nations Grasslands Alliance, Native Movement, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Center, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, IllumiNatives, and other tribal and educational entities. She has also served as the Director of Partnership and Business Development for Joining Vision and Action. Jennifer is working on her Ph.D. in Indigenous Health at the University of North Dakota.

**Kia Whiteskunk** (Ute Mountain Ute) is an enrolled Ute Mountain tribal member living on the reservation. She is the recreation director for the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, a mother and a Native American woman veteran.

**Kirbie Bennett** (Diné) is a freelance journalist. He grew up on the Navajo Nation in Shiprock, New Mexico, and currently lives in Durango, Colorado where he is launching a local history podcast viewing the region through the lens of race and class. He is also sometimes a bookseller.

**Lani-Elaine Castruita** (Mvskoke Creek) is an independent writing and editing professional. A proud Mvskoke Nation citizen born into the Wind Clan, she divides her life between the red mesas of the Southwest and her ancestors' chosen allotment land in McIntosh County, Oklahoma. A writer always seeking to broaden her horizons and educational goals, she never tires of following breadcrumbs down rabbit holes on various topics, including current events involving ICWA and MMIW. She enjoys living in the Colorado Rockies with her family, where she conducts genealogical research as a hobby.

## APPENDIX A: PEOPLE

**Marsha Whiting** (Chippewa Cree and Sicangu Lakota), has almost 20 years of experience working in Native nonprofits serving both urban and reservation communities. Marsha serves as Associate Director of Grantmaking at First Nations Development Institute, where she has been on staff for 11 years. She previously served as Director of Operations and Board Chair at the Denver Indian Family Resource Center. She was born and raised in Denver, Colorado, and has been an active member of the Denver Indian community, where she has volunteered extensively.

**Marshall Watts** (Southern Ute) is a community member.

**Mia McCormick** (Diné) is a student at Fort Lewis College.

**Mikayla Sarracino** (Pueblo of Acoma) is a student at Fort Lewis College.

**Montoya Whiteman** (Southern Cheyenne) is the managing director of editorial and special projects for the American Indian Science and Engineering Society. She uses her voice to help others. At AISES she brings awareness to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) as life changing opportunities for Indigenous people and their communities. She is a member of the Indigenous Community Advisory Council at the Denver Art Museum; a board member for the Indigenous Media Freedom Alliance; and a consultant with the Longmont Museum. Montoya received her B.S. in Business Administration from Regis University and is an award-winning photojournalist whose stories and images have appeared in print and video materials of local and national nonprofits, museums, television, and print and online media.

**Monycka Snowbird** (Anishinaabe) is the program director for the Haseya Advocate Program. She is a domestic violence treatment advocate, a certified domestic violence tribal advocate and a sexual assault tribal advocate through the National Tribal Training Institute. Monycka sits on the Colorado Springs All Advocacy Steering Committee, the Advisory Team of the Sexual Violence Prevention Taskforce for the State of Colorado, is a co-chair for the Health & Wellness Committee for the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, is on the Native Advisory Council, is a parent liaison with the Title VI Indian Education Program and is on the board of directors for Food to Power. She is a founding member of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Task Force of Colorado and of the Pikes Peak Indigenous Women's Alliance. She was recently honored by the City and County of Denver and received recognition for her work related to violence against Indigenous women.

**Olga Gonzalez** (Yaqui/Otomi) has been a nonprofit professional and community organizer for the past 29 years. She is the executive director of Cultivando, a Latinx-serving organization that focuses on developing the leadership, advocacy and capacity of the Spanish-speaking community. Olga is also the CEO of O.G.Consulting Services where she provides equity, justice and healing facilitation and coaching services to businesses and nonprofits nationally. She was a featured TedXMileHigh Speaker where she shared her insights on the importance of promotoras in community-led, transformational work. She was also recently named one of the "Top 25 Most Powerful Women in Business" by the Colorado Women's Chamber of Commerce. She is a graduate of the Transformative Leadership for Change fellowship, the Executive Directors of Color program at the Denver Foundation, and she is currently a Bonfils Stanton Foundation Livingston Fellow, a Piton Fellow, and an IRISE (Interdisciplinary Research Institute for the Study of (in)Equality) Visiting Scholar at the University of Denver. Olga holds a dual Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and Chicano Studies from Scripps College and earned a Master's Degree in Nonprofit Management from Regis University as a Colorado Trust Fellow. Olga is the proud mother of three amazing children and, together with her husband, Malik Robinson, is raising them to become the next generation of courageous and visionary social justice warriors.

**Ouray Watts** (Southern Ute) is a community member.

**Renata Hill** (Mvskoke Creek) has worked as a tech writer, Associated Press elections reporter and social justice journalist. Now, she publishes *Moodfuel News* to increase mental health equity and access to care in Colorado. She is mixed-Indigenous on her mother's side and lives with neurodivergence and mental illness. Supporting people in recovery from trauma and suicidal intensity is her Why.

**Renee Redshirt** (Diné) is a communications and policy strategist, writer, and filmmaker dedicated to activating narrative change and advancing justice, equity, and self-determination for Indigenous peoples and the planet. She has 10 years of public health experience including grant management, policy analysis, campaign development, substance abuse research and prevention, and digital storytelling. Her previous roles as a tribal liaison and as a health communications and policy lead at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have led to her current work as a consultant, including projects and stories that focus on health and human rights, land stewardship, conservation, decolonization, policy, and environmental issues. Renee holds a B.A. in Native American Studies from Dartmouth College and an MPH from the Colorado School of Public Health. She's also a member of NAJA, and the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives organization.



## APPENDIX A: PEOPLE

**Rick Waters** (Kiowa/Cherokee) has lived in Colorado since 1984, and has served as co-executive director of the Denver Indian Center since December of 2017. Prior to joining the Denver Indian Center, Rick worked in Indian Country for 40+ years including positions as the national director of tribal relations with the University of Phoenix, senior director of corporate and foundation relations with the American Indian College Fund, assistant director of admissions at the University of Colorado-Boulder, and community liaison with the Dallas Independent School District Indian Education Program. Originally from Oklahoma, Rick is married with two daughters and four grandchildren.

**Richard Williams** (Oglala Lakota/Cheyenne) is the founder and executive director of the People of the Sacred Land, a nonprofit located in Colorado that is currently preparing a Truth Restoration and Education Commission (TREC) to study the truth of what happened to Indian people in Colorado. He has served as the president and CEO of the American Indian College Fund, director of the Student Academic Service Center and Minority Student Affairs at the University of Colorado, and director of American Indian Upward Bound, a program designed to provide educational opportunities to Indian youth. He received an M.A. in Education Administration (Summa Cum Laude) from the University of Wyoming in 1987. In 1975, he became the first American Indian student to graduate with a B.A. (Magna Cum Laude) from the University of Nebraska - Lincoln. In 1999, the University of Nebraska honored him with the Alumni Achievement Award and Distinguished Alumni Award. Rick was selected as the National Indian Education Association Educator of the Year in 2005, and honored with an honorary PhD. from Roger Williams University in 2007. Rick loves doing historical research, is an advocate for Native Language Immersion programs, and is committed to becoming a fluent Lakota speaker.

**Robert Ortiz** (Taos Pueblo citizen and Southern Ute descendent) is a journalist with the *Southern Ute Drum*.

**Shawna Maher** (Sans Arc Lakota) is a Native American research and program specialist for Lifespan Local. She is a motivated and passionate social work professional. A graduate of Colorado State University Ft. Collins' Social Work program, she is dedicated to delivering quality service. With over 10 years experience working with diverse populations, she has the ability to work in highly stressful environments while maintaining positive organizational health.

**Sheila Nanaeto** (Southern Ute) was born and raised on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation. Starting at KSUT Tribal Radio as a volunteer in 2000, she used radio as an outreach tool for community engagement in Indian Country. In 2010 she was hired as the full-time station manager for KSUT Tribal Radio.

**Shelby King** (Karuk) is a journalist with *Shelterforce*.

**Shelly Solopow** (Little Shell Chippewa) is a tribal liaison for the Behavioral Health Administration of the State of Colorado. She was born and raised in Montana and graduated from UC Davis in 2001 and University of Denver in 2005 (MA). She worked for many years in the mental health and substance use disorder therapy and treatment fields and is currently focused on intergenerational trauma and systemic issues. She is working to improve health equity and overall behavioral health access and quality in Colorado for Indigenous Peoples.

**Tami Graham** has been the executive director of KSUT since 2016, overseeing a \$2.5M capital campaign and development of a 5,000 sq. ft. multimedia facility, which KSUT began broadcasting from in 2020. She was born and raised in Denver and has lived in southwest Colorado since 1984. She has a background in restorative justice, nonprofit consulting, professional mediation and facilitation. She currently resides in Mancos, Colorado.

**Theresa Halsey** (Hunkpapa Lakota of Standing Rock) has been a mental health researcher, a K-12 educator, college counselor, and long-time radio producer at KGNU, where she has produced and hosted "Indian Voices" since 1983. She is also adviser to the Oyate Indigenous Student Group and Native American Law Students at CU-Boulder. She is a climate justice leader, member of the Native American Healing Board School Project, NAJA and tri-executive of the American Indian Alumni Association.

**Tyla Frost** (Southern Ute) is a community member.



## APPENDIX B: PROCESS

### Phase 1

In 2022, COLab with support from CMP wanted to explore how local news coverage reflects, respects and reaches the diverse urban Indigenous communities of the Denver Metro area. COLab contracted with Tara McLain Manthey (Osage Nation) to provide facilitation support for a series of focus groups consisting of community leaders, elders, journalists, influencers, consumers and others. Information from these sessions informed recommended improvements to local news coverage of, and access to media by, local Indigenous communities. The goal of these sessions was to ensure Indigenous voices are lifted, considered and included in actionable recommendations for funders and news organizations to improve coverage.

The first virtual session was held June 13, 2022 for leaders of organizations serving and run by Indigenous Coloradans. The leaders were invited to participate because of their deep understanding of the experiences of Indigenous Coloradans as well as their frequent interaction with local news media. In this session, the leaders responded to questions including:

- What issues are most important to the community you serve?
- How do you get information about those issues? How could that information be more accessible and valuable to you?
- What information do you wish you had about those issues, but you don't?
- On a day-to-day or weekly basis, where do you get your news or information from?
- Do you have favorite media sources that reflect your identity or the identity of those in your community?
- What does an ideal relationship between local news and your community look like?
- What kind of communication does your community have with local news and vice versa?
- How is trust built in this relationship? What is that trust built upon?
- What role does media play in your community?
- How does the media hold people in the community accountable?
- How do people in the community hold the media accountable?

In the second session held June 24, 2022, Indigenous journalists and storytellers based in Colorado were invited to reflect on many of the same questions as the community leaders, as well as their experiences as Indigenous people working within local news organizations. They explored questions including:

- What have been your experiences as a Native person working in news media/communications/storytelling? Share which type of field that you generally work in.
- What barriers or opportunities have you faced in getting into your career? Has your identity been a factor?
- Are you able to report on or tell stories about your indigenous community as part of your job? Is it easy or hard to get that coverage into the news?

A third virtual session held on June 29, 2022 brought together participants from the first two discussions to review themes, discuss solutions and prioritize recommendations.

## APPENDIX B: PROCESS

### Phase 2

A second phase of the project started in fall 2022 to focus on the Southwest region and include perspectives from the two federally recognized tribes in Colorado. This phase was again supported by COLab and CMP and new support came from the Mountain West News Bureau, a regional collaborative of local news stations including KSUT Public Radio in Ignacio. For this phase, an advisory committee was formed to solidify the project goals and to identify and invite local participants. The committee included:

- Tara McLain Manthey, facilitator
- Tina Griego and Laura Frank of COLab
- Dave Rosenthal of Mountain West News Bureau
- Tami Graham, Sheila Nanaeto, Crystal Ashike and Colten Ashley of KSUT Public Radio

The first in-person community discussion was held Nov. 14, 2022 at KSUT in Ignacio (home of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe) and included local community members and KSUT journalists. A second session, held that evening at Fort Lewis College in Durango, included community members and journalists from Durango and Cortez, as well as journalism students from Fort Lewis College. A third session was held by phone for members of the Towaoc (home of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe) community.

In all sessions, participants were asked to review and reflect on the themes and draft recommendations that were developed in Phase 1 and then discuss how the reflections did and didn't apply to their experiences as residents of Southwest Colorado.

## APPENDIX C: RESOURCES

[United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) - Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007

[Who Are Indigenous Peoples?](#) - Quick guide from the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

[Reclaiming Native Truth project](#) - Report from First Nations Development Fund (based in Colorado) to dispel myths and misperceptions of Indigenous Peoples in the U.S.

[Native American Journalists Association reporting guides](#) - Guidance on best practices in style, language and consideration when writing about Indigenous Peoples in the U.S. and Canada

[Native Land Digital](#) - Search by geography to see traditional territories, languages, treaties and statutes governing peoples of those lands.

[America's Original Sin Continues: The Fight Over Native Children](#) by Se-ah-dom Edmo for HuffPost - Background and context on Indian Child Welfare Act and the current case before the Supreme Court of the United States, *Brackeen v. Haaland*.

["Murder in Big Horn"](#) - Documentary to be released in 2023 on the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW).

### Indigenous-led media and advocates in the U.S. to follow on social media to broaden knowledge and perspectives:

- [ICT \(formerly \*Indian Country Today\*\)](#)
- [National Native News](#)
- [KSUT Tribal Radio](#)
- [Navajo Times](#)
- [Native America Calling](#)
- [Indianz.com](#)
- [Buffalo's Fire](#)
- [IllumiNative](#)
- [NDN Collective](#)
- [WeRNative](#)
- [Lakota People's Law Project](#)
- [Native American Rights Fund](#)
- [National Congress of American Indians](#)
- [Project Mosaic](#)

## APPENDIX D: CONTRIBUTORS

**Tara McLain Manthey** (Osage Nation) of Returning Light Consulting, LLC, facilitated all meetings, analyzed qualitative data and wrote this report. Tara is a consultant with diverse experiences in nonprofit leadership, public policy advocacy and direct services. In previous roles, she served as the Executive Director of Denver Indian Family Resource Center, as Senior Vice President of Advocacy, Communications and Development for the [Colorado Children's Campaign](#) and as a reporter at several daily newspapers for a decade. She holds a Master of Legal Studies in Indigenous Peoples Law from the University of Oklahoma College of Law, as well as bachelors degrees in journalism and music (trumpet) from the University of Colorado at Boulder. She is a citizen of the Osage Nation and serves on the Editorial Board of the independent [Osage News](#).

COLab's **Silvia Solis** supported the project's strategy, **Tina Griego** edited and **Erin Autrey**, owner of 3 Story Design & Causeworthy, designed the final report.

**Colorado News Collaborative (COLab)** is a first-of-its-kind nonprofit that supports journalists and communities statewide to bring "Better News for All Coloradans." We do so in three ways: Better news. More trust. Faster evolution. We help the 175+ outlets who've signed up as COLab partners to produce better news — that is, higher-quality journalism that makes an impact in their communities — through collaboration, coaching and training. We help partners build more trust through community engagement. And we help partners achieve faster evolution through innovating new business models, products and practices. Together, we increase the quantity and quality of civic news — holding power to account and helping Coloradans participate in healthy communities and a responsive democracy. To learn more about our work and how you can get involved, please visit our [website](#) or reach out to us directly at [info@colabnews.co](mailto:info@colabnews.co).

**Colorado Media Project (CMP)** is a community-driven, multi-funder initiative housed at the Rose Community Foundation. We support people, projects and organizations working to build a healthier civic news and information ecosystem for all Coloradans. We envision a future where all Coloradans can make well-informed decisions about important issues facing their families, local communities, and the state, with access to high-quality local news and information that they trust and inclusive opportunities to participate in a healthy, robust public square. [Learn more](#) about how you can support a healthy news ecosystem in Colorado.

The **Mountain West News Bureau** is a regional collaboration of National Public Radio stations. It includes a number of Colorado stations: KUNC/Greeley, KSUT/Ignacio, Aspen Public Radio, KVNF/Paonia, KDNK/Carbondale. Through reporting and community engagement, the bureau focuses on issues relevant to the Mountain West, including tribal affairs. The Bureau has won a number of awards from NAJA. Its investigation of tribal jails won awards from NAJA, the Public Media Journalists Association and the Radio Television Digital News Association. It provided financial support for this report. The bureau receives funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

**KSUT Public Radio** is an independent, nonprofit organization that broadcasts from Ignacio, Colorado. It offers Native American programming through Southern Ute Tribal Radio at 91.3 FM in Southwest Colorado, and at 89.7 FM in Northwest New Mexico. It also offers public radio programming via Four Corners Public Radio serving 14 communities including Durango, Silverton, Cortez, Mancos, and Pagosa Springs, Colorado; Aztec, Bloomfield and Farmington, New Mexico; and parts of northeast Arizona and southeast Utah. KSUT staff participated in several community discussions and the station hosted the Ignacio meeting.

### Get Involved

To receive more information about the Voices Initiative, please send us an email at [info@colabnews.co](mailto:info@colabnews.co).

### Take Action Now

Amplify Colorado is an online diverse source guide to help newsrooms tap into the wealth of expertise, insight and experience among Coloradans who identify as a person of color or as part of other marginalized communities. Amplify also seeks to help those same communities more easily find and connect with local reporters and editors. The guide is a direct response to calls from AANHPI, Black, Latinx and Indigenous community members and journalists who participated in the Voices Initiative, a program led by COLab and CMP. To add your name or suggest someone else for inclusion, please visit [bit.ly/AmplifyColorado](https://bit.ly/AmplifyColorado) or follow this QR code:

