Supporting the Indigenous Finance System on the Mountain Plains

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) made a $5MM PRI loan to Four Bands Community Fund Inc. ("Four Bands") which will leverage collective knowledge, skills, assets, and partnerships to build equitable lending platforms that support thriving Native economies in the tribal nations of the Great Plains region, spanning ND, SD, MT, and WY.

Native community development financial institutions (CDFIs) are well suited to serve Native American communities' distinct needs but remain undercapitalized as banks and corporations underestimate the scale of opportunity within Indigenous markets and uphold the misperception of Native CDFI lending as risky—due to the differences of lending on tribal lands—limiting their ability to grow and scale.

The Coalition combines the traditional indigenous values of unified action and collective strength with strategic financial counsel to create a robust private sector designed to establish economic sustainability and resilience in Indigenous communities. This enables the Coalition to finance businesses and community development projects, expanding job opportunities, offering personalized support to their clients, advocating for policy change, and educating Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Native CDFIs have been instrumental in providing Native American communities with loans, financial education, and credit coaching to facilitate change by allowing tribal residents to buy a home, start a business, or improve financial capacity. This loan will support the community's efforts to shift the paradigm of community development finance by creating equitable systems of capital and resource allocation and building resilient economies.

Ruth Gao, In House Counsel, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation