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DDCF Announces \$1.1 Million Grant to IllumiNative

The grant will fund efforts aimed at understanding the priorities and needs of Indigenous individuals and communities in the U.S. and developing media trainings for Native youth and leaders to amplify their voices and improve their representation in the media.

New York, Nov. 24, 2020 – The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF) today announced a \$1.1 million grant to IllumiNative. This grant will support the advancement of the Native-led organization’s work to amplify the voices and authentic representation of Native nations and peoples, and spread effective advocacy efforts for their equitable inclusion in American policies and society. This investment is part of DDCF’s ongoing commitment to supporting the health, vibrancy and overall well-being of Native communities throughout the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii.

“IllumiNative is an undisputed leader in effective, data-driven advocacy for Native peoples, and we could not be prouder to make this investment to intensify their efforts,” said Lola Adedokun, program director for child well-being at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. “We strongly believe in the power of IllumiNative’s work to spotlight the continuing contributions and realities of a tremendously diverse range of Native communities across the country, to elucidate their values and concerns, and to engage the broader American public in accelerating change to repair a long history of harm to Native communities.”

“We are excited and grateful for our partnership with the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation,” said Crystal Echo Hawk (Pawnee), founder and executive director of IllumiNative. “With the investment made through this funding, we can begin expanding and building on our work and continue to build power for Native peoples. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and national reckonings on race and police violence, our work feels more urgent and more important than ever. We look forward to the work ahead.”

The need for IllumiNative’s work is clear. The 2018 [Reclaiming Native Truth Project](#), co-designed and co-led by IllumiNative founder Crystal Echo Hawk, revealed that 77% of survey participants feel the average American thinks there are no “real” Native Americans left. Yet, the study also revealed that 78% of Americans are interested in learning more about Native cultures and support increased representation and inclusion of Native peoples in entertainment.

With this context in place, IllumiNative will use the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation grant to support national initiatives that galvanize support for and build visibility, power and equity for Native peoples and communities. Funded efforts include the annual [Indigenous Futures Survey](#), the first-ever study conducted for Indigenous peoples and led by Indigenous peoples aimed at understanding the priorities and needs of Indigenous individuals and communities in the U.S. The 2020 survey, which was answered by 6,460 Indigenous people representing 401 tribes, villages and Indigenous communities, found a majority of participants agreed the most urgent issues to address were those related to undoing the negative effects of policies and practices that sought to destroy Indigenous communities.

[Research](#) has revealed that the dominant, antiquated, stereotypical and negative depictions of Native peoples that permeate mainstream U.S. culture can harm the self-esteem and aspirations of Native Americans — especially children. The rich, community-driven data of priorities distilled from the Indigenous

Futures Survey will inform the development of concrete resources for Native leaders, youth, organizations and tribes to advance more positive, inspiring and accurate narrative about Native peoples and Native communities.

Additionally, this funding will support IllumiNative in developing and evaluating strategic communications plans and partnering with Native artists, storytellers, designers and youth to create multimedia content that illustrates the survey results. IllumiNative will also host annual virtual media trainings for Native youth and leaders to scale communications capacity in Indian Country. The annual Media Training Institute will develop, anchor and activate a Native Speakers Bureau – a cohort of diverse Native content experts and community leaders who will serve as spokespeople for Indian Country to ensure Native voices are front and center in national conversations and media coverage of the consequential issues impacting their communities.

About the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

The mission of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is to improve the quality of people’s lives through grants supporting the performing arts, environmental conservation, child well-being and medical research, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke’s properties. DDCF’s continuing dedication to supporting Native communities in the U.S. expands the legacy of the foundation’s namesake. Prior to her passing in 1993, Doris Duke, who endowed the foundation, developed deep relationships with Native leaders and culture bearers around the country that dated back to the 1930s. Through these connections, Duke recognized the critical importance of capturing the rich culture and lived experience of Native Americans. In 1966, she launched the Doris Duke Native American Oral History Project to develop robust archival collections that describe the diversity of lived experiences and cultural traditions of Native Americans, and return these stories to the tribes and communities who agreed to share them. To learn more, visit www.ddcf.org.

About IllumiNative

IllumiNative is a national, Native-led racial justice organization founded in 2018. Our mission is to amplify contemporary Native voices, stories and issues to build power for Native peoples and advance justice, equity and self-determination. IllumiNative uses research, narrative and cultural strategy, and advocacy to disrupt and interrupt the invisibility and toxic misconceptions about Native peoples present in mainstream society. By working in the areas of pop culture, media, and K-12 education, we seek to educate and disrupt the systems that have institutionalized the erasure of Native people and create a world where Native peoples shape, author and control their own narrative. To learn more about our work, visit www.IllumiNatives.org.