



**NATIVE SUN  
COMMUNITY  
POWER  
DEVELOPMENT**

**2024**

# **Annual Report**



## Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As I reflect on 2024, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for the progress we have made together. This year has been transformative for Native Sun Community Power Development as we continued to empower Tribal communities through renewable energy, electric transportation initiatives, workforce development, and meaningful partnerships. Together, we have proven that energy sovereignty and sustainability are not just ideals but achievable realities.

From deploying electric vehicles (EVs) to advancing the Electric Nation project, our work has not only expanded access to clean transportation but has also created economic opportunities and strengthened community resilience. As we celebrate these milestones, we remain steadfast in our mission to build a cleaner, more equitable future for all.

Thank you for your unwavering support as we continue to lead in innovation and advocacy for Tribal communities.



Miigwech,

**Robert Blake**

Executive Director, Native Sun Community Power Development

## Mission and Vision

Native Sun is dedicated to creating a sustainable future for Tribal communities by promoting clean energy and transportation solutions and fostering economic growth.

**Our Mission:** To promote energy efficiency, renewable energy, clean transportation, and an equitable transition through education, workforce training, and community-led initiatives.

**Our Vision:** A world where energy sovereignty is realized, and Tribal communities thrive through sustainable practices and clean energy solutions.

## 2024 Highlights and Accomplishments

In 2024, Native Sun achieved remarkable milestones in clean energy and transportation, education, and community engagement, significantly advancing energy sovereignty for Tribal nations. What we have accomplished in 2024 has set the bar high for a seminal year in 2025, as we take the steps along the path that leads us to a healthy Turtle Island.

### Key Metrics:

9

EVs deployed to  
Tribal  
communities

120

EV charging stations  
planned across MN,  
ND, and SD

52

Community  
outreach events  
hosted

2

Workforce training  
programs launched

\$13.4M

secured for the  
Electric Nation  
project

## Milestone Achievements:

- 1. Electric Nation EV Deployment:** Delivered Ford F-150 Lightnings and Volkswagen ID.4s to Standing Rock and Red Lake Nation, testing EV performance in cold climates
- 2. Red Lake Solar Training Lab:** Donated by General Motors Foundation, this initiative trained high school students and community members in solar energy.
- 3. Workforce Graduation:** Celebrated graduates of the Xcel Energy Power Up Program in partnership with Building Strong Communities.
- 4. Grant Successes:** Helped secure transformative funding for multiple Tribal Nations, including a **\$19 million Community Change Grant** for the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe and a **\$595,000 E-Bike Smart Grid and Demonstration Grant** for the Red Lake Nation.



## Programs and Initiatives: Building Energy Sovereignty

### Electric Nation – Inter-Tribal EV Community

#### Charging Network

A groundbreaking initiative connecting Tribal lands through sustainable EV infrastructure and fostering energy sovereignty.

Native Sun's flagship initiative, the Electric Nation Project, is creating a clean transportation infrastructure across Tribal lands. With funding from the U.S. Department of Energy and key partnerships, this program ensures equitable access to EV technology while promoting energy sovereignty.

Through the Electric Nation Project, Native Sun is weaving a network of connectivity and opportunity, fostering new relationships to counter the isolation and sense of economic and environmental decline that can challenge Tribal nations. One can see this in that the deployment of EVs and electric mini-school buses is more than just an infrastructure update; it's a transformative leap toward cleaner air, reduced energy costs, community engagement, and a sustainable future for Tribal communities. The inclusion of innovative elements like cold-weather EV testing and dedicated support facilities underscores our commitment to long-term success of these transformations.



### Red Lake Nation E-Bike Smart Grid and Demonstration

A model for more affordable and healthy electric transportation in Tribal communities, the Red Lake Nation E-Bike Smart Grid and Demonstration will help establish a smart network of connected e-bike charging stations in Red Lake Nation along with a demonstration of two solar and battery back-up charging stations with safety lighting, four e-bikes and a lighted pathway between the two charging stations.

This initiative follows the intent of Electric Nation by making EVs as accessible to Tribal communities as possible by adding a broadened diversity and affordability of EV options. The smart grid will help ensure that e-bike riders will know what charging stations are available at any given time, and that the stations are maintained and tracked for usage. Additionally, the innovative pathway lighting and charging station features will provide a sense of safe riding and charging.

The overall system will form the basis for a transportation system that promotes health, affordable transport, and connects the youth and elder populations that might normally be isolated.

## Electric Nation 2024 Achievements:

- **Deployment:** Delivered 9 EVs to Tribal communities, including the Red Lake and Standing Rock Nations.
- **Infrastructure:** Installed new charging stations at Sitting Bull College, with plans for additional locations.
- **Collaboration:** Partnered with the American Lung Association, SAGE Development Authority, and Minnesota Clean Cities Coalition to raise \$13.4 million in funding.
- **Mini Buses for Red Lake Nation:** Delivered four electric mini school buses to the Red Lake Immersion School (Endazhi-Nitaawiging Charter School). These buses are expected to improve student health by reducing fossil fuel emissions, which studies show can lead to an 8% drop in absentee rates and better test scores. A dedicated garage was built just before the winter snowfall to house the buses, ensuring long-term use and better maintenance.
- **Plug-In Vehicles:** Expanded EV access to Tribal governments, schools, and community businesses, reducing transportation costs, promoting cleaner air, and fostering inter-Tribal connections with EV infrastructure.



## Technical Assistance to Tribal Nations

Empowering Tribal Nations with grant writing and technical expertise to unlock transformative funding.

Native Sun staff provided grant writing assistance to multiple Tribal Nations and organizations in 2024, helping them secure transformative funding to advance renewable energy, clean transportation, and community-focused initiatives. These grants are more than just financial support—they are lifelines for communities to achieve their visions of growth, sustainability, and resilience. Native Sun's technical assistance is a cornerstone of our mission to uplift and empower Tribal Nations.

### Key Outcomes:



- **Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa:** Supported clean energy proposals that laid the groundwork for future development initiatives, and supported electrification of Heavy Duty vehicles that could significantly improve air quality and reduce costs for the Nation.



- **Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe:** Secured the **Community Change Grant** of \$19 million, enabling large-scale development projects to enhance economic growth and sustainability within the Tribe.



- **Red Lake Nation:** Secured a **US DOT E-Bike Smart Grid and Demonstration Grant** of \$595,000 to promote sustainable transportation and healthy living within the community, and supported electrification of Heavy Duty vehicles that could significantly improve air quality and reduce costs for the Nation.



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



**CLIMATE  
POLLUTION  
REDUCTION  
GRANTS**

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



## Red Lake Solar Training Lab

Hands-on solar energy education inspiring the next generation of clean energy leaders.

A week-long solar training program brought hands-on education to Red Lake Nation, utilizing a portable solar training lab donated by General Motors Foundation and facilitated by the Midwest Renewable Energy Association.

The Red Lake Solar Training Lab embodies the power of education to transform lives. By equipping participants with real-world skills, we are fostering a workforce ready to lead the clean energy transition in their communities.



### **Impact:**

- High school students and community members gained skills in renewable energy.
- Empowered the next generation of clean energy leaders through technical knowledge and career development opportunities.

## Workforce Development: Expanding Career Pathways

Building sustainable, transformative career pathways through innovative workforce programs.

Native Sun's commitment to workforce development extends beyond the Xcel Energy Power Up Program. Through the **Transformative Career Pathways (TCP)** initiative, we have provided participants with the skills and support needed to excel in clean energy and related industries. This effort, supported by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), prioritizes underrepresented communities, including Tribal members, veterans, and women, in accessing life-changing opportunities.

The Transformative Career Pathways initiative reflects Native Sun's holistic approach to workforce development. By addressing systemic barriers and equipping individuals with cutting-edge skills, we are not only transforming lives but also building a stronger, more diverse clean energy workforce.

### **Highlights:**

- **Technical Certifications:** Provided OSHA certifications, energy auditing training, and specialized renewable energy skills courses to over 30 participants.
- **Career Placements:** Partnered with local businesses and clean energy employers to secure placements for program graduates.
- **Support Services:** Offered wraparound services, including transportation support, housing assistance, and mentorship, ensuring participants could focus on their training and career growth.

### **Achievements:**

- **Successful Cohorts:** Three cohorts graduated in 2024, representing over 45 individuals entering the clean energy workforce.
- **Economic Impact:** Participants reported an average 35% increase in income after completing training and securing employment.

## Community Engagement

Connecting with communities to build trust, awareness, and momentum for clean energy adoption. Community engagement is at the heart of Native Sun's mission. By connecting with Tribal leaders, educators, and residents, we create spaces for meaningful dialogue and shared learning. Whether it's showcasing cutting-edge EVs at a powwow or leading a panel discussion on energy sovereignty, each event strengthens the bonds between Native Sun and the communities we serve. Together, we're building a movement for sustainable change that uplifts every voice.

### Outreach Highlights:

- **January 13, 2024:** Hosted a booth at the Science Museum of Minnesota's Science is All of Us Celebration: Native Americans in STEM Day
- **March 12, 2024:** Participated in the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, inspiring future clean energy leaders.
- **April 22, 2024:** Delivered the Earth Day Keynote at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University, emphasizing the role of renewable energy in sustainability.
- **July 3, 2024:** Partnered with Xcel Energy and Sabathani Community Center to host an energy education event in Minneapolis.
- **Red Lake Nation Powwow:** Showcased the Mustang Mach-E EV to demonstrate clean transportation solutions.
- **May 16, 2024:** Hosted a workshop on climate adaptation and energy resilience at the National Adaptation Forum.
- **August 1, 2024:** Engaged attendees at the African Leadership Conference to discuss renewable energy opportunities for underserved communities.
- **November 7, 2024:** Presented at the Eco U Symposium, emphasizing the importance of clean transportation in addressing environmental justice issues.



## Media Highlights

Through national and regional media, Native Sun's transformative work is reaching audiences far and wide. Each feature reinforces the power of renewable energy to empower Tribal communities, showcasing the organization's leadership and commitment to sustainability.



### Summary:

Amplifying Native Sun's voice through national media coverage.

### Key Features:

**MPR News:** "Native EV Initiative Distributes Millions of Dollars Worth of Vehicles to Tribal Communities." This feature highlighted Native Sun's leadership in deploying electric vehicles (EVs) and expanding EV infrastructure to Tribal communities, showcasing the environmental and economic impacts.

**Lakeland PBS:** Highlighted the transformative impact of the Electric Nation project on the Red Lake Nation by introducing EVs and building sustainable infrastructure.

**MotorWeek Green Motoring Feature:** [Electric Nation](#) spotlighted Native Sun's efforts to lead a regional transition to clean transportation. The segment emphasized the project's success in deploying EVs, expanding EV charging networks, and conducting cold-weather EV testing.

**Marketplace Podcast:** Focused on the role of the Inflation Reduction Act in advancing energy sovereignty for Tribal communities. Bob Blake shared insights on how federal funding is driving renewable energy adoption.

**Yale Climate Connections:** Covered Robert Blake's vision for renewable energy as a transformative tool for Tribal communities, underscoring Native Sun's mission of sustainability and energy sovereignty.

**Native News Online:** Highlighted the broader **Electric Nation Project** and its impact on energy accessibility and environmental justice in Tribal areas across the Upper Midwest.



## Financial Overview

**Join Us in Building a Sustainable Future!** Native Sun Community Power Development is grateful for the support of our partners, donors, and community members. Together, we can continue to empower Tribal nations and lead the way in renewable energy innovation.

### Grants Received in 2024:



Headwaters Foundation for Justice:  
\$50,000



Peoples Solar Energy Fund:  
\$8,000

MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

McKnight Foundation: \$300,000

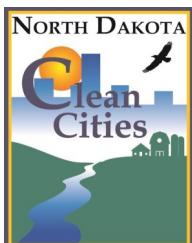


US Energy Foundation: \$60,000

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EMPLOYMENT AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

DEED: Transformative Career Pathways:  
\$350,000

## Our Partners:



Michigan  
Technological  
University

