

# REPORT 2025



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NATIVE SUN  
COMMUNITY  
**POWER**  
DEVELOPMENT





Rhonda Conn and Robert Blake



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Photo by talented, Nedahness Rose Greene

Dear Friends and Partners,

2025 brought major federal policy changes that directly affected Tribal energy and transportation work.

Native Sun lost approximately \$3 million in awarded federal contracts that were active and under implementation. Tribal Nations receiving technical assistance through us lost an estimated \$20 million in planned infrastructure funding.

Tribal partners had already completed site selection, engineering coordination, community engagement, and readiness planning. Vehicles, charging locations, and supporting infrastructure had been identified and prepared. Federal decisions stopped implementation midstream.

Native Sun’s work in 2025 focused on three priorities:

- Keeping existing systems operating
- Preserving project readiness where funding was pulled
- Continuing workforce, planning, and technical assistance work that Tribes had already invested in

In 2025, staff worked with Tribal programs and community members to place new electric vehicles into service, install additional charging stations, support workforce training and job placement, and engage community members through hands-on outreach and education. Technical assistance supported implementation as well as the planning, permitting, utility coordination, and site readiness needed to move projects forward after federal infrastructure funding was withdrawn.

During the year, Native Sun also merged with 8th Fire Solar, aligning manufacturing, installation, and deployment under one organization. Agrivoltaics planning expanded to connect energy infrastructure with food systems and land use. Solar Cub advanced into funded curriculum development. Data systems were strengthened to track outcomes and accountability more clearly.

Miigwech for your continued partnership and trust.

In partnership,

*Robert Blake*  
Executive Director

*Rhonda Conn*  
Associate Director

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Featured photography mostly by talented, [Nedahness Rose Greene](#). Graphics and artwork by Sarah Miskwaa-ens Migiziwigwan, [LittleRedfeather Design](#). Cover photo by [E. Jourdain Jr., Photography](#).

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# Our Mission & Vision

Native Sun Community Power Development is a Native-led nonprofit advancing energy sovereignty, climate resilience, and economic justice for Tribal Nations and rural communities.

**Our mission** is to support Tribes in building and owning clean energy, transportation, food, and workforce systems that reflect their values, priorities, and long-term goals.

**Our vision** is a future where Tribal Nations control their own energy and infrastructure, where clean transportation and renewable power strengthen community health and food systems, and where decisions are made with responsibility to the next seven generations.

We believe Tribal communities are not only impacted by climate change. They are leaders in creating solutions rooted in culture, land, and self-determination

# Our Impact

Photo by Sarah Miskwaa-ens Migiziwigwan

In 2025, Native Sun supported Tribal Nations and communities across the Upper Midwest through clean transportation, workforce development, youth education, agrivoltaics, and policy advocacy. Our work translated funding into real, on-the-ground impact: chargers installed, vehicles deployed, people trained, food delivered, and systems strengthened.

Across all programs, Native Sun helped communities reduce reliance on fossil fuels, improve access to essential services, expand workforce opportunities, and build infrastructure that will serve families, elders, and youth for years to come. Our impact is measured not only in dollars invested but in healthier air, stronger food systems, safer transportation, and growing Tribal leadership in the clean energy transition.

In 2025, Native Sun directed more than **\$2+ million** in infrastructure into Tribal and community-led clean energy, transportation, workforce, and food system initiatives.

These funds supported:

- EV charging infrastructure on Tribal land
- Electric fleet vehicles for health, agriculture, education, and social services
- Workforce training, credentials, and job placement
- Youth education and culturally grounded STEM learning
- Agrivoltaics planning and food sovereignty efforts
- Community engagement, outreach, and policy advocacy

Every dollar invested supported Tribal-owned assets, community capacity, and long-term sovereignty.

# Program Highlights



Photo by Jaida Grey Eagle - Article for the New York Times

## Electric Nation

Electric Nation responds to a persistent reality in Tribal communities: when transportation fails, essential services are disrupted. Food distribution slows. Transit routes are reduced. People miss work, school, and medical appointments. Repairs take longer in rural areas, parts are difficult to source, and fuel costs strain already limited budgets.

**In 2025**, Electric Nation focused on keeping Tribal systems moving by placing electric vehicles and charging infrastructure directly into daily operations. This work supported agriculture, fisheries, public transit, education, youth services, health care, and Tribal enterprises across multiple states. Vehicles were deployed to replace aging or unreliable gas and diesel fleets, and charging infrastructure was installed where people already live, work, and travel so vehicles could remain in service year-round.

Deployments included electric pickups, vans, school buses, transit vehicles, utility vehicles, and

medium-duty box trucks. Charging infrastructure was installed at community centers, schools, casinos, transit hubs, government buildings, and service facilities, allowing vehicles to be charged and maintained locally rather than relying on distant infrastructure.

**By the end of the year**, Electric Nation invested **28** electric vehicles and more than **50** charging stations across **12+** Tribal Nations, including White Earth, Red Lake, Leech Lake, Prairie Island, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Bois Forte, Turtle Mountain, Bay Mills Indian Community of Ste. Marie, Pine Ridge, Cheyenne River, Fort Yates, and Fort Berthold of Standing Rock and United Tribes Technical College. These vehicles and chargers are in daily use supporting food distribution, public transit, education, health care, youth services, agriculture, fisheries, and Tribal enterprises.







Photo by talented, Nedahness Rose Greene



Photo by talented, Nedahness Rose Greene



Photo by E. Jourdain Jr., Photography

Electric Nation investments created multiple connected electric vehicle travel corridors across Tribal communities. Together, fast-charging sites and community Level 2 chargers support more than 1,500 miles of drivable Tribal and intertribal travel routes, connecting White Earth, Red Lake, Leech Lake, Prairie Island, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Bois Forte, Turtle Mountain, Bay Mills Indian Community, Pine Ridge, Cheyenne River, Fort Yates, Standing Rock, Fort Berthold and United Tribes Technical College.

Fast-charging infrastructure supports long-distance and regional travel, making it possible for electric vehicle drivers to reach Tribal casinos, community centers, cultural destinations, government facilities, and local businesses without extended delays.

Level 2 charging expands overnight, workplace, and fleet charging access, supporting employees, residents, and visitors who spend more time in the community.

This infrastructure improves travel reliability in rural areas, strengthens intertribal and regional connectivity, and reduces transportation barriers for workforce participation, enterprise operations, and tourism.

By placing charging infrastructure in visible, accessible locations, Electric Nation enables Tribal communities to capture economic activity associated

with increased electric vehicle travel while reducing reliance on fossil fuels and supporting long-term community and economic resilience.

**Red Lake Nation**

On the Red Lake Nation, Electric Nation investments are supporting daily community services tied to food systems, health access, youth services, and Tribal economic activity.

Red Lake Family and Children Services uses electric Volkswagen ID. 4 vehicles to transport community members to medical appointments and deliver food to elders. These vehicles are used regularly for short and mid-distance trips throughout the week, improving reliability for families and elders who otherwise face transportation barriers. Reduced fuel costs and easier maintenance support continued use while lowering operating expenses.

At the Red Lake Youth Shelter, staff use a Volkswagen ID. Buzz to transport youth for shopping, appointments, and daily activities.

The youth named the vehicle “**the Mystery Machine.**” It has become part of the shelter’s routine and supports consistent transportation for young people experiencing housing insecurity, contributing to stability and access to basic needs.

Red Lake Agriculture expanded its electric fleet to support food production and distribution. Two electric box trucks, including one refrigerated truck, are being used to move food from the buffalo farm and gardens, share products with fisheries, and support local food access.

These vehicles strengthen food sovereignty by improving the Tribe’s ability to store, transport, and distribute locally produced food while reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

Red Lake Fisheries uses electric Ford F-150 Lightning trucks to transport walleye as part of daily operations. These vehicles support ongoing commercial and community food activities tied directly to Tribal economic activity and food systems. When gas and diesel vehicles were unavailable due to extended maintenance delays, electric vehicles allowed operations to continue without interruption.

Across these uses, Electric Nation vehicles are supporting health access, food distribution, youth services, and economic activity. Lower operating and maintenance costs allow programs to direct more resources toward services rather than fuel and repairs, while reduced emissions contribute to improved air quality and align with broader community health goals.

**Standing Rock Sioux Tribe**

At the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Electric Nation investments support transportation needs across

public transit, education, workforce, and Tribal enterprise operations.

Electric vehicles were placed into service with Standing Rock Public Transit, SAGE, Sitting Bull College, Prairie Knights Casino, and Grand River Casino. These deployments include Ford F-150 Lightning trucks and a Ford E-Transit van used for employee transportation, transit services, and daily operations across a large rural service area.

Standing Rock Public Transit uses electric vehicles to support routes for medical appointments, education, employment, and essential travel. These vehicles contribute to more predictable service while reducing fuel and maintenance costs in a system where operating budgets are limited and distances are long.

Charging infrastructure was coordinated to support these deployments and align with existing routes and schedules, allowing vehicles to be integrated into daily operations throughout the year. This planning supports reliable use in rural conditions and reduces downtime associated with fueling and maintenance.

Electric Nation investments at Standing Rock also contribute to broader intertribal travel and charging access, supporting regional mobility between Tribal communities and strengthening transportation systems people rely on for work, education, and essential services.





# Agrivoltaics



Native Sun introduced agrivoltaics to our approach in integrating renewable energy development with food systems, education, and community priorities. The goal is to ensure that solar infrastructure supports how communities grow food, teach youth, and sustain cultural and economic practices, rather than separating energy projects from everyday community life.

Native Sun is working with Red Lake on the integration of food production into a 3-megawatt solar array scheduled for construction beginning in 2026. This work builds directly on earlier investments through Electric Nation. As transportation and food distribution systems became more resilient through electric vehicles and charging infrastructure, agrivoltaics extends that work upstream to food production. Together, these efforts support a connected system that links growing, harvesting, storage, and delivery.

The community garden will be located beneath the solar panels so the same land can support both clean energy generation and agriculture. The garden will be an active space for food production and education. Local schools can use the site as a hands-on learning environment where students can learn about agriculture, traditional food systems, land stewardship, and renewable energy, connecting classroom learning to real-world practice and intergenerational knowledge around food, land, and energy.

The solar garden will support local food access while generating clean energy. Food grown beneath the array will be distributed using electric vehicles already in service with Red Lake Agriculture, including electric medium-duty box trucks and refrigerated transport. This links food production, storage, and delivery within a locally controlled system.

Together, this work strengthens food sovereignty by increasing community control over how food is grown and shared. It supports health equity by improving access to locally grown food and creating education and work opportunities tied to traditional food systems and land-based practices. At the same time, it reduces reliance on fossil fuels, supports climate resilience by stabilizing food resources over the long-term, and contributes to local economic development connected to food production and renewable energy operations.



# Solar Cub



Photo by talented, Nedahness Rose Greene

Solar Cub is Native Sun's youth-focused education initiative designed to build early understanding of climate science, renewable energy, and environmental stewardship through culturally grounded learning. The program is being developed to support Tribal and Native-serving schools, with an emphasis on creating long-term pathways into clean energy, environmental science, and related fields.

Solar Cub integrates Anishinaabe language, Ojibwe teachings, and community history with climate science and practical strategies for change. The curriculum is designed to grow with students over time, beginning in elementary and middle school and expanding into high school-level learning as students progress.

## 2025 Impact and Highlights

In 2025, Native Sun moved Solar Cub from concept into active curriculum development through formal partnerships and funded collaboration.

### Key highlights include:

- A curriculum development partnership established with the University of Wisconsin and NOAA-funded CY Labs to co-develop Solar Cub learning modules aligned with STEM standards and Indigenous knowledge systems
- Middle school STEM curriculum under development, with structured feedback from educators, cultural advisors, and community partners
- Elementary-level curriculum planning initiated through a co-creation process involving Native educators, artists, elders, and curriculum experts
- A clear pathway has been identified for future expansion into the high school curriculum, pending additional funding

Solar Cub curriculum development follows an intentional co-creation process to ensure cultural integrity, educational rigor, and classroom usability. Partners include Native Sun staff, Native and public school teachers, cultural consultants and elders, Native artists, and academic collaborators.

## Curriculum Design

The Solar Cub curriculum is built around three integrated components:

Culture-Anishinaabe language, Ojibwe teachings, and community history. Climate science and policy, with a focus on impacts experienced by Indigenous communities. Change-making

Renewable energy, climate mitigation strategies, and climate justice

Through storytelling, experiential learning, and age-appropriate STEM instruction, Solar Cub introduces students to renewable energy concepts while reinforcing cultural identity and responsibility to future generations.

## Where the Work Is Headed

Initial implementation is focused on Tribal schools and Anishinaabe lands. Longer-term plans include adapting the curriculum for broader public school audiences and multi-ethnic learning environments, while maintaining the program's cultural foundation.

Solar Cub is designed as a long-term investment in workforce readiness, community leadership, and fighting climate change by engaging youth early and consistently over time.





Photo by talented, Nedahness Rose Greene

# ELECTRIC NATION 2025 AT A GLANCE

- 🏠 28 Electric Vehicles placed into service 🏠
- 🏠 50+ Charging Stations installed or supported 🏠
- 🏠 12+ Tribal Nations served across the region 🏠

Fast-charging and Level 2 infrastructure supporting more than 1,500 miles of connected Tribal and intertribal travel routes. Vehicles and charging infrastructure supporting agriculture, fisheries, transit, education, youth services, health care, Tribal enterprises, food sovereignty, health equity, and reduced reliance on fossil fuels.







# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**In 2025, Native Sun’s workforce development work connected community members to living-wage careers in clean energy. Staff worked directly with participants to support recruitment, credential attainment, and placement into full-time jobs tied to active infrastructure projects already underway.**

Through the Transformative Career Pathway (TCP) program, Native Sun supported 21 active participants by mid-year. Seven participants earned industry-recognized credentials, including OSHA 10 and First Aid, and seven secured full-time employment, earning at or above \$16.00 per hour. Interest in the program was strong, with more than 70 people expressing interest over the course of the year.

The Workforce Development Coordinator built and maintained partnerships with the Lake and Chicago Workforce Center in Minneapolis, Takoda AIOIC, and the Tribal Embassies of the Red Lake, Leech Lake, White Earth, and Mille Lacs Nation Bands. Recruitment happened in person through referrals, community presence, and direct coordination rather than through remote or passive outreach.

Transportation remained the largest barrier to participation and long-term retention. Many clean energy jobs, including manufacturing positions with Heliene in Rogers, Minnesota, are located beyond public transit access. The bus line ends in Maple Grove, leaving participants to figure out the final

stretch on their own. Staff addressed this reality by screening transportation needs early, helping with gas and insurance costs when possible, and coordinating shared rides from a central pick-up point at the American Indian Center so participants could get to work and stay employed.

One participant, nearing retirement age, entered the program unsure whether anyone would hire him again at a living wage. After completing training and receiving placement support, he secured full-time employment and continues to work in that role.

Another participant entered through a re-entry pathway after being repeatedly turned away from jobs because of a past conviction. With support around interview preparation, workplace expectations, and credentialing, he secured full-time employment and began rebuilding financial stability.

Workforce development is connected directly to the Electric Nation infrastructure. EVSE training was delivered alongside real charging deployments rather than as stand-alone instruction.



Red Lake High School students participated in an EV charging station course using equipment installed in their own community. At Sitting Bull College, participants engaged directly with campus charging infrastructure installation. These experiences tied learning to systems already in use and maintained locally.

Workforce planning is also aligned with agrivoltaics and food sovereignty work. As Native Sun worked with the Red Lake Nation to plan a 3-megawatt solar array with integrated food production, staff began mapping future roles connected to land stewardship, agriculture, and clean energy operations. These roles support local food systems, reduce operating costs for Tribal programs, and keep economic activity within the community.

Workforce and job pathway efforts were reinforced through public-facing events and convening where participants, partners, and community members could see clean energy careers in action.

Native Sun staff and partners participated in community EV events, workforce panels, campus lectures, and regional conferences throughout the year.



These events supported recruitment, strengthened employer relationships, and helped normalize clean energy jobs as viable local career options. Workforce conversations were often paired with demonstrations of electric vehicles, charging infrastructure, and manufacturing pathways, allowing participants to connect training opportunities with real-world applications and employers.

Together, workforce, infrastructure, and food systems work to support economic development, environmental justice, and health equity. Stable employment allows participants to remain in their communities. Reduced transportation and energy costs strengthen household stability.

Clean energy jobs tied to local infrastructure reduce reliance on fossil fuels while improving access to food distribution, health care, and education.

Looking ahead, Native Sun is implementing Client Track, a database designed to strengthen how workforce support is tracked and delivered.

This tool will help staff identify participant barriers, service needs, and outcomes as the program scales in 2026, while keeping the focus on people building long-term stability in their communities.





# 8TH FIRE SOLAR



**In 2025, Native Sun and 8th Fire Solar merged based on shared values and a shared commitment to accessible, community-serving energy solutions to address one of the most significant drivers of energy poverty in northern communities: the cost of heat, where high heating costs force households to choose between heat and other basic needs.**

8th Fire Solar is an advanced solar thermal manufacturing and installation operation based in Osage, MN surrounded by the White Earth Nation, led by an all-Native crew. Its team manufactures solar thermal panels, sells, and installs systems.

These systems are going into homes and community buildings, delivering reliable heating support that lowers reliance on propane and other fossil fuels.

No-cost solar thermal installations are planned in 2026 for 30-elder homes, reducing heating expenses for residents living on fixed incomes and improving comfort and safety during extreme cold.

These installations provided immediate relief from energy burdens in homes where heating costs represent a disproportionate share of household income.

These installations provided immediate relief from energy burdens in homes where heating costs represent a disproportionate share of household income.

We completed a solar thermal installation in the Lower Sioux community, paired with a hempcrete-insulated home through the Tribe's Hemp Program.

In Flandreau, South Dakota, the team designed and installed an eight-panel solar thermal system at a former tribal office building being converted into a community resilience center.

Near Osage, we supported a resilience project at the Pine Point School, White Earth Reservation, in Ponsford, Minnesota, providing on-the-ground coordination for battery energy storage system (BESS) power that allows the school to serve as a community gathering and support site during outages and extreme weather.

In partnership with White Earth Tribal College, the 8th Fire solar team participated in a photovoltaic training program.

Two team members passed the NABCEP Associate exam, strengthening local technical capacity and supporting long-term employment in renewable energy manufacturing and installation.

## 8th Fire Solar | 2025 at a Glance

Location: Osage, White Earth Nation

Workforce: All-Native manufacturing and installation team

Core work: Advanced manufacturing of solar thermal panels; system sales and installations

### Energy poverty addressed:

- Reduced heating costs in homes and community buildings
- No-cost solar thermal installations for elder homes to lower the energy burden for residents on fixed incomes

### Community projects completed in 2025:

- Lower Sioux Community: Solar thermal installation funded through CERTs, paired with a hempcrete-insulated home through the Tribe's Hemp Program
- Flandreau, SD: Eight-panel solar thermal system with four independent loops installed in a former tribal office building being converted into a community resilience center
- Pine Point School (Ponsford, MN): Resilience project support and on-the-ground coordination for battery-backed power during outages

### Pipeline:

- Planning underway for 30 additional tribal home solar thermal installations in 2026
- Workforce development
- Team members participated in photovoltaic training through White Earth Tribal College
- Two NABCEP Associate certifications earned, strengthening long-term local renewable energy employment

### Operations:

- An Electric Ford F-150 Lightning and a charging station were added to support daily work, reduce fuel costs, and lower emissions

[WWW.8THFIRESOLAR.ORG](http://WWW.8THFIRESOLAR.ORG)





# Our Policy & Advocacy Work



Native Sun’s policy and advocacy work in 2025 ensured Tribal priorities shaped energy, climate, and workforce decisions at every level. This work happened alongside program delivery, not separate from it. The focus was simple: policies, funding decisions, and implementation strategies must reflect the realities Tribal Nations face on the ground.

Throughout the year, Native Sun represented Tribal perspectives in more than 25 state, regional, and national policy and advisory spaces. These roles allowed priorities around energy sovereignty, clean transportation, workforce access, and environmental justice to directly inform planning, funding, and program design.

## Policy Leadership and Advisory Engagement

Native Sun leadership participated in advisory roles across government, utilities, nonprofits, academic institutions, and industry. Engagements included

clean energy policy tables, workforce boards, climate advisory groups, and transportation electrification initiatives. This presence helped ensure Tribal Nations were treated as decision-makers and partners shaping long-term systems, not pilot sites or afterthoughts.



## Tribal Advocacy Council on Energy and G2G Climate Forum

A major milestone in 2025 was the co-planning and execution of the Tribal Advocacy Council on Energy (TACE) Tribal Energy Forum and the 5th Annual Government-to-Government Climate Forum, held September 18–19 at Grand Casino Mille Lacs in Onamia, Minnesota.

Native Sun served as fiscal sponsor and planning partner, working closely with Tribal leadership, state agencies, utilities, and energy partners to support a gathering designed by and for Tribal Nations.

The forum brought together Tribal governments, state agencies, clean energy developers, workforce partners, and community leaders for direct dialogue and problem-solving.

- The forum included:**
- Government-to-Government climate sessions between Tribal and state leadership
  - Breakout sessions on Tribal energy planning, operations, and workforce development
  - Showcases of Tribal energy projects, including solar, transportation electrification, and manufacturing
  - Panels focused on job pathways, energy sovereignty, and economic development
  - Cultural openings and space for relationship-building across sectors
- Participating Tribal Nations included Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Red Lake, White Earth, Leech Lake, Prairie Island, and Bois Forte, among others. State partners included the Minnesota Department of Commerce and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

Forum evaluations reflected strong participation, relevant content, and clear demand for continued Tribal-led convening focused on real-world application of sustainable energy strategies.







### Community Workshops and Education

### Our Technical Assistance to Tribes



### Community Engagement and Public Presence

Policy engagement in 2025 also included direct community outreach tied to Electric Nation and transportation planning.

Native Sun implemented a Community Engagement Plan across Red Lake communities, including Red Lake, Little Rock, Redby, Ponemah, and at the Red Lake Nation Embassy in Minneapolis to gather input on electric vehicle needs, charging infrastructure, and participation in the Minnesota Department of Transportation’s Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Needs Assessment.

Throughout the year, Native Sun leadership participated in public events, panels, lectures, and community gatherings that elevated Tribal priorities in clean energy, transportation electrification, and workforce development.

These engagements connected policy conversations directly to infrastructure already in use.

**Key engagements included:**

- Electric Vehicle Social at Red Lake Casino and Event Center
- Guest speaking at the Pleasant Point Passamaquoddy renewable energy event
- Panel participation at the Siting and Permitting Conference in Seattle
- Lectures at the University of Minnesota and St. John’s University
- Panels at the Saint Paul Climate Forum and Better Buildings: Better Business Conference
- Community discussions at Sabathani Community Center
- The Executive Director was selected for the EV Advocate Award by Plug In America’s Drive Electric Awards

These appearances strengthened relationships with policymakers, utilities, manufacturers, educators, and community leaders, while ensuring Tribal Nations were represented by practitioners actively doing the work.

In addition to formal policy engagement, Native Sun participated in community workshops and education efforts focused on the practical benefits of clean energy and climate solutions. These sessions were designed to meet people where they are and address everyday concerns, including household energy costs, health impacts, and access to employment.

**Workshops and community education activities covered topics such as:**

- Green career pathways and clean energy jobs
- Home weatherization and energy efficiency
- Energy savings and cost reduction strategies
- Health equity connections to energy, housing quality, and transportation
- Environmental justice impacts experienced by Tribal and low-income communities

These sessions were delivered in community centers, schools, and public forums, often alongside Electric Nation events, workforce outreach, or policy discussions. By pairing education with real infrastructure already in use, Native Sun helped community members connect policy conversations to tangible outcomes like lower utility bills, improved indoor comfort, reduced emissions, and access to stable employment.

Community education also supported longer-term workforce and leadership development by helping residents understand how clean energy investments affect household health, economic stability, and community resilience.

In 2025, Native Sun provided hands-on technical assistance to Tribal Nations advancing clean transportation, energy planning, and climate resilience. This work focused on helping Tribes move from interest and opportunity into informed decision-making, funding readiness, and implementation planning, even when external funding conditions shifted.

Technical assistance was delivered in direct partnership with Tribal governments, departments, schools, and community organizations. Support was tailored to each community’s priorities, capacity, and timelines, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach.

**Services Provided**

- Native Sun’s technical assistance in 2025 included:
- Electric vehicle and charging infrastructure feasibility assessments
  - Site evaluation and preliminary design for Level 2 and fast-charging infrastructure
  - Load analysis, utility coordination, and early interconnection planning
  - Grant writing and application support for federal, state, and philanthropic funding
  - Budget development, cost estimates, and project scoping
  - Support with procurement planning and vendor coordination
  - Policy and regulatory navigation related to transportation electrification and climate programs
  - Community engagement planning to support informed participation and local decision-making

This assistance often occurred alongside Electric Nation, EN2, and workforce activities, allowing Tribes to build internal capacity while projects were being shaped.





# Electric Vehicle Infrastructure and Planning and Readiness Support

In 2025, Native Sun provided an extensive technical assistance initiative to support Tribal EV infrastructure planning, even in cases where charging stations were not ultimately installed due to the loss of federal funding.

Native Sun worked with Tribal partners to complete planning and readiness activities that remain valuable and actionable. This included site selection, technical assessments, coordination with utilities, cost modeling, and alignment with Tribal transportation and economic development priorities. Although charging infrastructure funds were later rescinded at the federal level, the planning work was completed in good faith and positioned participating Tribes to move quickly when new funding became available.

Communities now have identified sites, scoped projects, clearer cost estimates, and documented needs that can be leveraged for future applications and implementation.



## Successes

Technical assistance supported Tribal partners in advancing projects that are now in use, underway, or positioned for future deployment.

In several communities, Native Sun supported planning and grant applications that resulted in electric vehicles and charging infrastructure being deployed for daily operations, including transportation for elders, youth services, food distribution, and Tribal programs. In other cases, technical assistance focused on helping Tribal departments assess whether proposed EV infrastructure projects made sense financially, operationally, and culturally before pursuing installation.

Tribal partners gained clarity around infrastructure needs, utility coordination requirements, and long-term operating considerations, strengthening internal decision-making even when installations did not proceed.

## Geographic Reach

In 2025, Native Sun provided technical assistance to Tribal Nations and Tribal-serving organizations across Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

### This work supported Tribes and organizations including:

- Red Lake Nation
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
- White Earth Nation
- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- Prairie Island Indian Community
- Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
- Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa
- Fort Berthold
- Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate
- Flandreau Santee Sioux
- Fond du Lac
- Lac Courte Oreilles
- Sault St. Marie
- Forrest County Potawatomi
- Keweenaw Bay Indian Community
- St. Croix Chippewa
- Ho Chunk Nation
- Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
- Grand Portage
- Additional Tribal schools, departments, and community organizations

In 2025, Native Sun offered technical assistance to 20+ Tribal Nations and various communities throughout Turtle Island, spanning from the Great Lakes to the Dakhótas.



## Impact

Technical assistance strengthened Tribal capacity to pursue clean transportation and energy solutions on their own terms. It helped Tribes avoid costly missteps, prepare competitive funding applications, and design projects aligned with community priorities and long-term sustainability.

EN2 planning work ensured that Tribal partners are not starting from zero when funding returns. Instead, they are prepared, informed, and positioned to act.

By pairing technical assistance with policy engagement, workforce development, and infrastructure deployment, Native Sun reinforced Tribal leadership and control over energy and transportation decisions, even in a shifting federal funding landscape.







# NATIVE SUN COMMUNITY 2025 AT A GLANCE

**20+ Tribal Nations and various communities throughout Turtle Island, spanning from the Great Lakes to the Dakotas.**

**\$2M+ in infrastructure into Tribal and community-led clean energy, transportation, workforce, food system initiatives.**

This brings us to our future generations. By investing in clean energy and education today, we lay the foundation for a sustainable and prosperous future. Native Sun's initiatives empower our children with the skills they need to lead and innovate, ensuring their well-being and the health of our planet. Together, we are creating a legacy of resilience and sovereignty for generations to come.



# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



**Summary of Financials:** The financial information presented below reflects management-prepared, unaudited figures for the fiscal year. These figures are based on internal accounting records and grant reporting and are subject to final audit adjustments.

## SUMMARY OF FINANCIALS (UNAUDITED)



**Total Revenue:**  
\$4,139,309.21



Revenue reflects federal, state, philanthropic, and program income supporting clean transportation, energy infrastructure, workforce development, youth education, food sovereignty, and community engagement.

### Funding Sources

Funding in 2025 came from a diversified mix of sources, with the majority supporting federally funded clean energy and transportation initiatives.

### Primary sources included:

- Federal grants supporting clean transportation, infrastructure, and technical assistance
- State workforce and energy programs
- Philanthropic foundations
- Program and earned income
- Individual and corporate contributions

This diversified funding structure supports organizational stability while allowing Native Sun to respond to community priorities and changing funding environments.

# Looking Ahead 2026 Goals

**In 2026, Native Sun will build on this year's momentum with a clear focus on long-term systems change, Tribal leadership, and community ownership.**

### Key goals include:

- Expanding Electric Nation to additional Tribal Nations and rural communities.
- Advancing agrivoltaics projects that strengthen Tribal food systems and climate resilience.
- Scaling youth education through Solar Cub and school partnerships.
- Strengthening workforce pathways through employer partnerships and Tribal colleges.
- Continuing policy advocacy that centers Tribal sovereignty and equity in clean energy.

### Ways to Get Involved:

Native Sun's work is grounded in collaboration and community relationships. We welcome individuals, organizations, and partners who want to support Tribal-led clean energy, food sovereignty, and workforce development.

### There are several ways to get involved:

- Support the work financially through a tax-deductible donation, or recommend a grant through your donor-advised fund. Our EIN is 84-4052420.
- Partner with us on clean energy, workforce, food systems, or education projects.
- Collaborate on policy and advocacy efforts that advance Tribal sovereignty and equity.
- Engage as a volunteer or advisor when opportunities align with community needs and capacity.

To learn more or start a conversation, visit [nativesun.org](https://nativesun.org) or contact our team directly at [info@nativesun.org](mailto:info@nativesun.org).





# Meet Our Team

Native Sun Community Power Development is led by a dedicated team working across clean transportation, workforce development, youth education, and community-based energy projects.



Peter Chipman

### Robert Blake, Executive Director

Provides organizational vision, strategic leadership, and policy advocacy at the state and national levels. Leads partnerships advancing Tribal energy sovereignty and clean transportation.

### Rhonda Conn, Associate Director

Oversees operations, finance, grant management, and program implementation. Ensures strong systems, accountability, and coordination across all programs.

### Peter Chipman, Director of Sustainable Transportation

Leads Electric Nation and clean transportation initiatives, including EV infrastructure planning, fleet electrification, and Tribal partnerships.

### Joan Kauppi, Administrative Director

Manages administrative systems, internal operations, and organizational support functions.

### Nick Lopez, Workforce Development Coordinator

Coordinates workforce training, participant support, employer partnerships, and career pathways in clean energy and related fields.

### Sarah Lavalle, Youth Coordinator

Leads youth education and engagement efforts, including Solar Cub programming and school-based partnerships.

### Gwe Gasco, 8th Fire Solar Manager

Oversees solar project development and implementation through 8th Fire Solar, supporting Tribal and community-led renewable energy projects.

### 8th Fire Solar Crew, Jon, Nick, and Will

Support on-the-ground solar installation, training, and project delivery.



Nick Lopez



Gwe Gasco and Will Sayers



Eric Pasi of Enterprise Energy with Bob Blake.

# Our Partners & Supporters

*We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to our remarkable partners and supporters, whose dedication and commitment have been instrumental in driving our mission forward. Your unwavering support has enabled us to make significant strides in our initiatives, and we are deeply appreciative of each organization's contributions.*

*Together, we are working towards a sustainable future, and we couldn't achieve our goals without your collaboration and trust. Thank you for believing in our vision and standing with us every step of the way.*

## Empowering Collective Power

- US Energy Foundation
- Climate Ride Inc
- U of M
- Headwaters Foundation for Justice
- Minneapolis Foundation
- St Paul and Minnesota Foundation
- McKnight Foundation
- Andersen Corporate Foundation
- First Nations Development Institute
- NDN Collective
- MN DOT
- Enterprise Energy
- University of Wisconsin
- Minnetonka Moccasins
- DEED
- Amalgamated Charities
- Hammond Climate Solutions
- Hunt Electric
- OATI
- Minnesota Power
- Excel Energy
- E Formative Options
- Windustry



ENTERPRISE ENERGY



CLEAN CITIES COALITIONS IN MN, ND, WI AND MI





## 2025 Annual Report

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