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# Final Report

## Summary

For the past year, Washington Census Alliance has orchestrated a wide-ranging effort to encourage self-response to the 2020 Census. We diligently constructed a diverse coalition of 93 tribes and organizations. All coalition members are led by and actively working in historically undercounted communities, especially working-class communities of color in Washington State.

We organized our coalition into 3 key portfolios each led by community foundations that served as subcontractors to our lead Fiscal Agent, Seattle Foundation: Washington Progress Fund, Latino Community Fund, and Na’ah Illahee Fund.

## Washington Progress Fund (WPF)

WPF served as a general-purpose container for immigrant organizations, African American-led organizations, organizations with North African and Middle East constituencies, Asian American and Pacific Islander-led organizations, LGBTQ-led organizations, as well as a number of others. In total, we had 32 member organizations in this portfolio.

The constituencies for the organizations in this portfolio were most concerned with the security of their information, lingering concerns from the unsuccessful attempt to institute a Citizenship question, and confusion about limited gender, ethnic and racial categories that did not reflect the way they might identify in a colloquial context.

In the “challenges” section of this report we go into further detail about these challenges and recommendations of structural changes that could be made to address them. But over the course of the past year, the 32 organizations in this portfolio did a great deal to encourage self-response nonetheless.

We found that organizations in this portfolio leveraged to great effect their relationships with faith communities from Khmer Buddhist Temples in Puget Sound to the Black Churches in Spokane to the Mosques in East King County. These institutions were able to amplify, highlight and validate the work of Trusted Messengers who diligently conducted one-on-one conversations focused on alleviating confusion, passing on trusted information, and by doing so turning the person they had just engaged into an additional trusted source for census information in the community and on social media.

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## Latino Community Fund (LCF)

LCF served as our lead portfolio and primary container for organizations rooted in Washington's diverse Latino community, as well as a number of others where it was intuitive from a logistical standpoint. Altogether, there were 34 WCA member organizations in this portfolio.

The communities they served were predominantly Latino and many of the national challenges Latinos faced in the Census count were reflected in Washington State locally. For example, the impact of the Citizenship question dispute, despite being resolved, frequently came up. But more broadly, an emphasis on counting children under five years of age, language barriers, and geographic distribution in areas that were rural and had less broadband coverage were additional challenges that organizations in this portfolio faced. While Latinos are 12% of the population in Washington State and about 16% of the population nationally, about 1 in every 4 children under 5 years of age in America today are Hispanic or Latino (Table S0201." U.S. Census Bureau Retrieved 2017). Approximately, 31%, according to the Census Bureau, say they don't speak English "very well" and by the Census Bureau's own administration in reports, census tracts with lower English proficiency tend to be undercounted (*DSSD Census Coverage Measurement Memorandum Series #2010-G-01: 2010*). Finally, organizations in this portfolio were tasked with working against the grain of Latino communities in rural and underserved areas where it was difficult to take the census online.

This last point highlights a key disparity and challenge that was perhaps best captured in our work in Franklin County, one of Washington State's few majority nonwhite counties with 53% of residents identifying as Hispanic or Latino. A tale of two Census tracts came into focus.

- Census Tract 206.08: A population of 9,854 people where 60% identified as White, 32% identified as Hispanic or Latino and more than 94% had access to the internet. Today, 68% have responded to the 2020 Census, in line with the state average and above the National average response rate.
- Census Tract 208.02: A population of 9,956 where 39% identified as White, 53% identified as Hispanic or Latino, but more than 1 in 3 households lack access to the internet. Today, just 48% have responded to the 2020 Census.

While these two census tracts neighbor one another, differences and disparities are brought into stark relief by the self-response rates that cut along racial lines as a result of structural and systemic bias compounded by the federal administrations missteps with rural, Update Leave areas.

Still, Latino leaders of our member organizations, such as LULAC-Tri Cities, tackled these challenges head on. They found great success in partnering with local schools and libraries as well as each other. Outside of Franklin County, other member organizations such as Raiz of Planned Parenthood and CAFE based in Wenatchee co-hosted events handing out masks and providing information about the 2020 Census, emphasizing how federal funding depends on their participation and could impact how healthcare resources are distributed in the future.

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## Na'ah Illahee Fund (NIF)

NIF is a Native-led nonprofit organization that works with Tribes across the Northwest region. Our Decennial Census 2020 work launched in October 2019 with special trainings, tablings, and presentations at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians's (ATNI) trimester conference hosted by the Suquamish Tribe. For 50 years, ATNI has been bringing elected leaders of 55 Northwest Tribes together to discuss and resolve issues impacting Indian Country. As Tribal Governments dealing with important collective issues, this is the best place to reach everyone for a project as important as the United States Census. In total, we had 27 members: 27 Tribal governments, Native nonprofits, Canoe Families, and more that we regranted to and supported.

Na'ah Illahee Fund followed up with full participation at the Winter Conference in Portland in January, just before everything shut down due to COVID-19. NIF worked closely with federal census Tribal associates especially at ATNI and continued to build a strong partnership over the course of the next eight months.

It proved to be equally important to reach grassroots communities, families, and those living in urban areas away from Tribal governments and off-reservations. For this purpose, NIF provided trainings and presentations to Native nonprofits, such as the Northwest Native American Basketweavers Association whose annual conference draws 1000 participants, who are primarily family units. Others who benefited from NIF's work were groups associated with the Daybreak Star Center in Seattle and the Native Project in Spokane. Because our work was funded by the State of Washington, NIF focused entirely on groups and events within State boundaries, including the 29 federally recognized Tribes. Not every Tribe responded to our invitation to work together, but the outreach was offered.

NIF adopted the Trusted Messenger model, to which we applied the term Tribal Census Community Leaders, TCCL'S or Trusted Messengers. Working with Pyramid Communications, NIF prepared promotional and training materials to get Messengers prepared quickly. The trainings were conducted in person at tribal offices and Messengers were given certificates of completion to demonstrate their understanding of the census. Funding was structured to provide a certain number of Messengers, plus events and their own promotional materials, plus a matching amount to the Tribe or organization to support census work. Population and geographic data guided the decisions of the NIF team. A small Tribe with a small reservation could use one or two Messengers, while the larger Tribes (Colville and Yakama) needed many more and to be able to stage several events over longer distances. See attached numbers charts.

When COVID-19 shut down all operations everywhere, our work went entirely online. This included the training, certification and technical assistance where possible, but some tribes couldn't even hire their Trusted Messengers or hold events. In fact, several smaller Tribes closed their borders to protect their members in the pandemic. NIF got creative and contracted with smaller groups, such as canoe families and smaller arts organizations, even a few individuals who could make personal connections to the largest audiences via social media,

radio, and telephone. Instead of events, prizes and gift cards were given to those who provided completion receipts from Census 2020. This proved to be the most effective. One of our groups, an extended canoe family, worked with four Tribes on the Olympic Peninsula because certain individuals from each of those Tribes lived within their respective reservations (whose borders were closed). It was so effective that the Makah Tribe copied the model and hired the one Trusted Messenger who had 100 people complete the census to continue her work for them when the NIF contract was complete. Tribes will continue their work until the official census closing date.

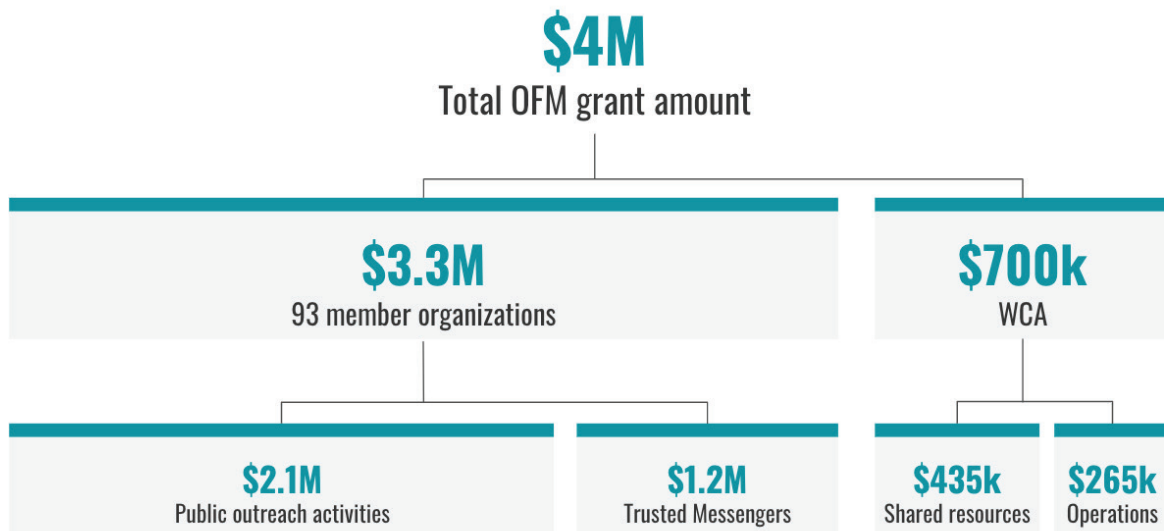
Delivering census materials has proven a challenge that we, and our Trusted Messenger groups, met in creative ways. The Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe delivered promotional materials with pies. The Native Non-profit Unkitawa, located in Des Moines, delivered bouquets for Mother’s Day with census promotions included. NIF delivered essential food boxes to families across the State as they responded to our online announcement of availability. In this way, NIF was able to provide relief to families in need, which is one of our core values, and promote the census, which is currently an important and critical community service.

## Outcomes

### Investments & Return on Outreach

As compared to the 2010 Census, we strongly believe the investments in Washington Census Alliance contributed to a measurable improvement in self-response rates. At the time of this writing, Washington State is ranked 6th among states with the highest self-response rates, when just 10 years prior we were among the bottom half of states with the lowest census response rates. This is a trend that is also reflected in the counties where our 93 member organizations, 700 Trusted Messengers, and more than 22,000 Households engaged are located. The area that drives home the impact of the Washington Census Alliance is perhaps with Na’ah Illahee Fund’s grantees who organized in Washington’s Indian Country where we can now see at least 18 Tribes have surpassed their 2010 Tribal Area Self Response Rate. The investments made in 2019 have yielded conclusive returns to the State of Washington in the form of higher rates of self-response to the 2020 Census.

Of the Washington Census Alliance's total \$4M grant from OFM, a summary of the final fiscal allocation is shown below:



- Public outreach activities (\$2.1M)** - Our member organizations put together organized outreach efforts, including in-person events (before COVID-19), social media ad campaigns, customized social content (e.g. in-language Q&A videos), COVID-19 care/food kits with census materials, radio and newspaper features, and more. This also covered 2 dedicated employees at the portfolio lead organizations who ran some of the organization administration. A detailed report of outreach activities (with examples) can be seen in the [Public and Complementary Activities](#) folder, and activities specific to rapid response in low count areas can be seen in the [Rapid Response Plan](#) folder. Copies of organization grant contracts can be found in the [Grant Making Documents](#) folder.
- Trusted Messengers (\$1.2M)** - Trusted Messengers were trusted community members recruited by member organizations to personally reach out to at least 20 households in their community (the average Trusted Messenger reached over 30 households). WCA created a curriculum and trained Trusted Messengers in effective census conversations, and they received a stipend of \$1600 each for their time. Our member organizations ultimately **hired about 700 Trusted Messengers**, and **reached about 22,000 households**. A detailed report of Trusted Messenger outreach - including maps showing Trusted Messenger and household distribution - can be found in the [Trusted Messengers and Households Engaged](#) folder.
- Shared resources (\$435k)** - Resources managed by the WCA team were chosen to maximize the effectiveness of organization and Trusted Messenger outreach. These included the Trusted Messenger training curriculum, the creation of an app to track Trusted Messenger progress, statewide convenings for all member organizations, peer-to-peer texting tools that reached 65,000 people in low-response areas, and custom social media content for organizations. A detailed report of shared resources that were used for public outreach can be found in the [Outreach Materials](#) folder.

- **WCA operations (\$265k)** - This funded the WCA core team staff (2 full time employees and several contractors), as well as operational expenses (office space, transportation and lodging, etc.). Employees administered the shared resources and ran operations, including supporting organizations and Trusted Messengers. A report of WCA technical support for Trusted Messengers can be found in the [Technical Support](#) folder.

## Challenges

Below are a number of challenges our Trusted Messengers, staff, organizational leaders, and others identified as barriers to self-response in the 2020 Census.

- **Unaddressed historic injustices:** One fact that was not lost among communities of color and in Washington's Indian Country was the fact that not everyone was counted at the founding of our country. More to the point, the Census clause was the *only* place in the Constitution that acknowledged the prevalent practice of slavery ("Three Fifths of Other Persons") and the genocide of Native Americans ("Indians not taxed"). Many representatives of Census Bureau and other officials and leaders encouraging self-response in the 2020 Census were not equipped to address those original injustices, much less other injustices from the westward expansion of the United States into what was then Mexico, to the abuse of the Census during Japanese internment, or (unsuccessful) attempts to use Census data following the Islamophobic backlash of the early 2000s. This inability to speak honestly about our country's historic injustices contributed to the suspicion that some indigenous communities and Black and Brown Washingtonians were right to be skeptical of the merits of completing the census.
- **Sex Question:** The failure to properly represent gender options on the 2020 Census not only undermined trust in the process, it made it significantly more difficult for LGBTQ leaders to be trusted messengers. Restricting gender options beyond the two boxes on the Sex question discouraged and prevented Two Spirit or LGBTQ+ community members from completing their census. Leaders of Washington State's LGBTQ community were then put in the difficult position of explaining why it was still important to complete every question on the census, despite the fact that the options were not reflective of the diversity in the sexual orientation and gender identity many in the LGBTQ community felt as authentic to them.
- **COVID19:** As was the case in many areas of work around the country, the COVID19 outbreak created the largest challenge for our work. The timing made it worse as the outbreak began early in King County and quickly spread around Census Day and what was to be the start of our rapid response campaigns. Our first priority was to adhere to CDC and local public health guidelines. Unfortunately, this meant there was a lack of in-person outreach. Groups and organizations on the ground scrambled to switch outreach events to virtual settings or come up with new events altogether. Organizations were not prepared to mobilize digital resources and their social media platforms to adjust to the new normal. Less tech-savvy trusted messengers struggled to do outreach virtually as visiting and oral communication are important to conveying important messages. Many Tribal Nation offices were either shut down completely or were on very limited staffing,

essentially pausing their outreach efforts. Critically, and perhaps most importantly, the self-quarantine period meant that keeping the trusted messengers engaged with a sense of comradery proved difficult as teams could no longer meet regularly to plan and discuss outreach as well as celebrate each other's progress.

- **National & local xenophobic political environment:** In the lead up and following the launch of our self-response efforts, national, state, and local politicians stoked racial and xenophobic sentiments which fueled confusion and fear around the 2020 Census and who was eligible to be counted.
- **Lack of communication within the Census Bureau:** Our organizational leaders sometimes found communication, particularly about the status of operational changes, between partnership specialists at odds with regional or national Census Bureau staff. This generated confusion among community leaders that delayed or otherwise hindered outreach.
- **Update Leave:** The timeline pushback negatively affected many reservations in Washington State a significant amount of which were designated as Update Leave areas. But this did not just affect Tribes and Native communities. In the example provided in the LCF section above comparing two census tracts: one predominantly White and the other predominantly Hispanic or Latino in Franklin County, it's important to note that the predominantly White census tract did not have any areas designated as Update Leave and is currently responding at the state average rate of 68%. Meanwhile, the predominantly Latino census tract has the majority of its geography designated as Update Leave and is far behind at a response rate of just 48%.
- **Lack of broadband in reservations and rural areas:** This was the first year where Washingtonians could respond to the census online. Unfortunately, the lack of broadband access in Washington's Indian Country in particular, and rural communities more broadly created enormous challenges. This barrier was made worse by the missteps in Update Leave operations, and later exacerbated further by the COVID19 pandemic. In-person outreach was restricted and a number of Tribes instituted quarantine policies preventing nonmembers from conducting census engagement as a precautionary measure given the disproportionate way in which the virus was affecting Native Americans.

## Lessons & Recommendations

- **Create a Census form that reflects the diversity of America:** We recommend the next Census feature a questionnaire that reflects the gender and racial diversity of everyone in our country. Prior to 2018, there were recommendations to clarify the ethnicity and racial questions as well as to add gender diverse categories. We recommend allowing people to list multiple Tribal affiliations, and add Latino as a race option as many non-Black Latino people do not identify as white or any other race, but as Latino. Additionally, the census should include questions and categories that are inclusive with respect to gender identity and sexual orientation (SOGI). Below is an

example of the pre-2018 recommendations on the race and ethnicity question as an example.

**8. What is Person 1's race or ethnicity?**  
 Mark all boxes that apply AND print ethnicities in the spaces below.  
 Note, you may report more than one group.

**WHITE** – Provide details below.

German     Irish     English  
 Italian     Polish     French

*Print, for example, Scottish, Norwegian, Dutch, etc.*

**HISPANIC, LATINO, OR SPANISH** – Provide details below.

Mexican or Mexican American     Puerto Rican     Cuban  
 Salvadoran     Dominican     Colombian

*Print, for example, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc.*

**BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN** – Provide details below.

African American     Jamaican     Haitian  
 Nigerian     Ethiopian     Somali

*Print, for example, Ghanaian, South African, Barbadian, etc.*

**ASIAN** – Provide details below.

Chinese     Filipino     Asian Indian  
 Vietnamese     Korean     Japanese

*Print, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.*

**AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE** – Print, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Tlingit, etc.

**MIDDLE EASTERN OR NORTH AFRICAN** – Provide details below.

Lebanese     Iranian     Egyptian  
 Syrian     Moroccan     Israeli

*Print, for example, Algerian, Iraqi, Kurdish, etc.*

**NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER** – Provide details below.

Native Hawaiian     Samoan     Chamorro  
 Tongan     Fijian     Marshallese

*Print, for example, Palauan, Tahitian, Chuukese, etc.*

**SOME OTHER RACE OR ETHNICITY** – Print details.

→ If more people were counted in Question 1 on the front page, continue with Person 2 on the next page.

- **Using effective funding structures:** A clear point of success this year was the ability to subcontract and regrant funding for census outreach. We recommend continuing to find ways to institute low-barrier RFPs, encourage deep investments in coalitions, find small,



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locally trusted community-based organizations, and provide direct compensation to Trusted Messengers through those community-based organizations.

- **Language accessibility:** Another successful practice we found was frequent translation of materials, especially to small communities that often do not have access to formal translation services. We recommend creating outreach content for community groups ahead of time, especially those who speak languages such as Urdu, Q'anjob'al, Mixteco, Purepecha as they tend to be undercounted (keeping in mind that many of these groups cannot read, so they rely on visual and audio media like video advertisements to obtain information). In areas where professionalized translations are not possible, we recommend procuring services from trusted community leaders who are well-versed in census outreach, to perform those translations.
- **Starting granting and funding sooner:** We recommend beginning the RFP process at least 18 months before Census day to allow for communities who are new to applying for grants or conducting standardized outreach to prepare.
- **Prioritize direct texting tools using voter files and other public databases:** We found both the cost and labor to be low for this activity, and had a response rate of 10% for 65,000 messages sent to census tracts with low self-response rates during our rapid response period. We were able to access state voter files via a VAN (Voter Access Network) subscription, which allowed us to conduct peer-to-peer texting (in which each message is manually sent by a Trusted Messengers or staff member). With more planning and collaboration, it would be possible to directly use state voter files to robotext more recipients, and automate responses: this approach would enable even greater outreach.