

# Strategic Framework

2022-2026



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our Vision of a Self-Determined Future  
through Advocacy, Capacity Building,  
Grantmaking, and Communications



# Introduction

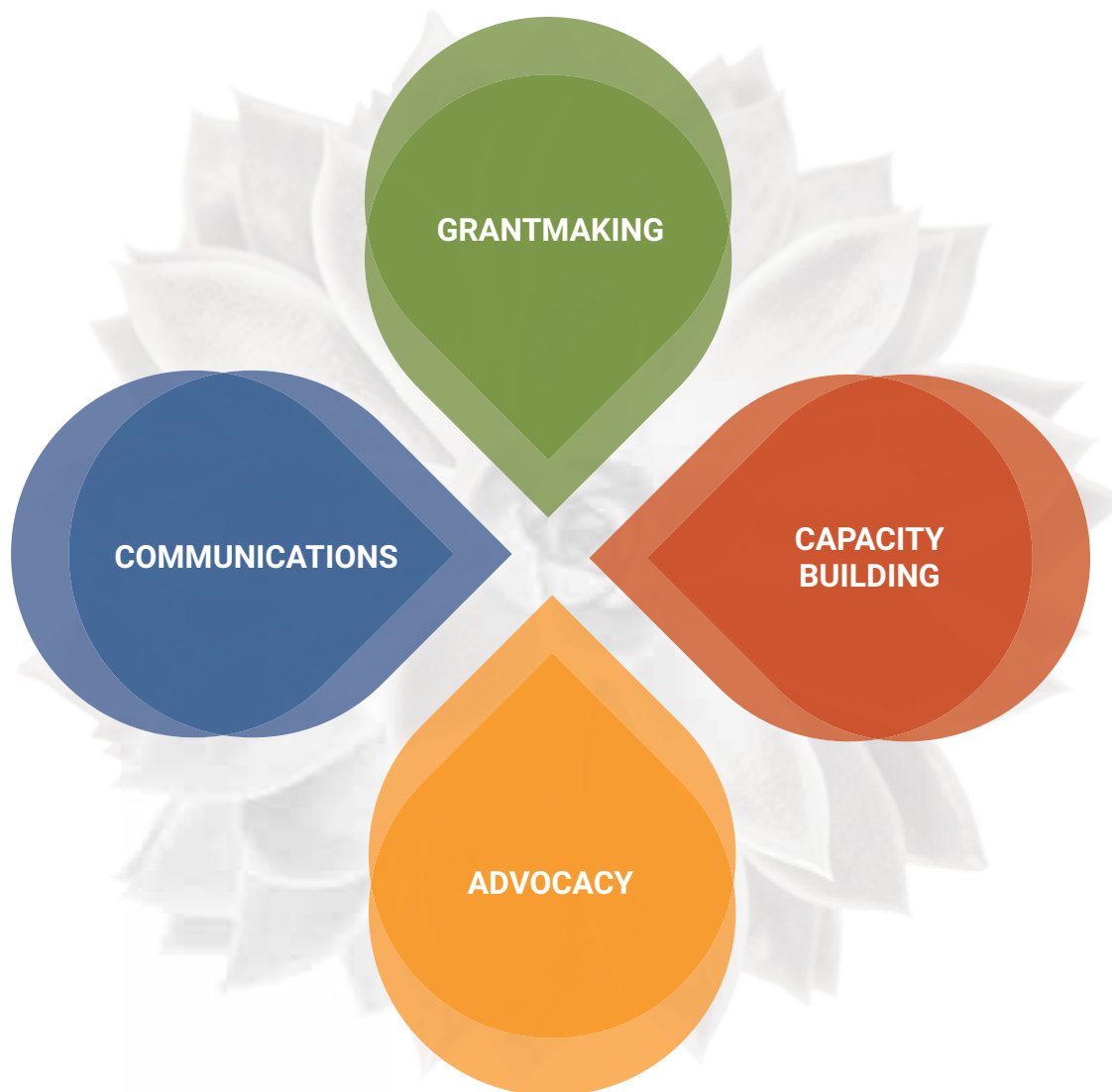
In early 2020, our staff and board embarked on a journey to collectively dream, envision, and build a new strategic framework that will guide our work over the next five years and beyond. As an organization that upholds and honors the power of the community and the collective, we strive to build our organization through a staff-led strategic planning process. To begin this work, we set to work on three goals: articulate our shared **values and principles**, establish a policy on **gender balance across our work**, and reassess our **programmatic priorities**. Our process started with a series of joint virtual sessions where we learned about the history of Cultural Survival starting from its inception and leading up to the present day. We deepened our understanding about each of our programs, conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, and gathered our collective aspirations. Moving forward, we have created four working groups: a values and principles working group, a gender balance policy working group, a programmatic priorities working group, and a board governance working group. Each of these groups was tasked with contributing pieces to the new Strategic Framework, the results of which you will see below. A full version of our Strategic Framework is available upon request.



# Programmatic Approach

## a. Four Pronged-strategy:

To fulfill our mission of supporting and advocating for Indigenous communities' self-determination, cultures and political resilience, Cultural Survival employs a four-pronged strategy of **grantmaking, capacity building, advocacy, and communications** to carry out our work. This strategy describes **how** we work to achieve lasting change in a way that honors and supports Indigenous Peoples' self-determination and collective rights. We see these four strategies as interrelated, creating a synergy that is at the heart of our theory of change: We combine advocacy, capacity building, grantmaking, and communications to provide holistic, wrap-around support to Indigenous communities towards realizing and asserting their rights and self-determination.







## GRANTMAKING:

Our grantmaking is implemented through a long-term vision focused on resourcing grassroots Indigenous organizations, Indigenous governments, Indigenous radio stations, and the global Indigenous Peoples Movement as a whole. This vision ensures the right to self-determination, and the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples. This vision is carried out through our Keepers of the Earth Fund and our Indigenous Community Media Fund. Our Keepers of the Earth Fund is a small grants fund designed to support Indigenous Peoples' community advocacy and development projects. Our Indigenous Community Media Fund provides opportunities for Indigenous radio stations to strengthen their broadcast infrastructure while also providing training in journalism, broadcasting, audio editing, and technical skills to Indigenous community radio journalists around the world. Our aspiration is to build ongoing, long term financial support for both funds, to increase and diversify the resources going to Indigenous Peoples, especially groups led by women and youths that focus on issues of land, traditional livelihoods, climate solutions, cultures, languages, and freedom of expression and media.

## CAPACITY BUILDING:

Cultural Survival provides capacity building opportunities through workshops, youth fellowships, community exchanges, networking, international travel, and one-on-one mentoring. CS Youth Fellowships support individuals and groups of youth in their efforts to build their radio journalism and radio broadcasting skills. In recent years, CS workshops have provided training for our Indigenous partners (especially Indigenous women) on women's empowerment, the defense of human rights, Indigenous philosophies of communication, the strengthening of technical capacities in radio production, and more. Our plan is to increase funding sources to expand our curricula for Indigenous women workshops to include human and Indigenous rights advocacy, climate solutions, food sovereignty, land rights and other modules. We plan to increase funding sources to expand youth fellowships to develop their leadership in the areas of climate change, land rights and livelihoods, and cultures and languages' revitalization. Our emerging strategies will also include the facilitation of cross-cultural exchanges on the topics of grassroots climate solutions and language revitalization as well as the creation of CS artist residencies that support creative forms of self expression (such as performance and the visual arts). Finally, CS will continue its healing and decolonization work from our diverse Indigenous perspectives, both inside and outside of the organization.



## ADVOCACY:

Our advocacy strategy has included six main areas of work: 1) Providing technical support to grantee partners at their request; 2) participating in international human rights mechanisms including the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples Issues, the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review, UN Treaty bodies such as the Commission for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the office of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; 3) engaging in strategic litigation when Indigenous rights are violated; 4) participating in shareholder advocacy and directly engaging with companies whose operations affect Indigenous Peoples and their lands; 5) tracking, investigating, and denouncing violence and criminalization against Indigenous Human Rights Defenders; and 6) organizing local advocacy at the request of Indigenous partners on the Native lands of our headquarters in the greater Boston–Cambridge, Massachusetts area. Moving forward, we have identified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as key spaces to advocate for Indigenous Peoples' climate change solutions, land rights, and Indigenous-led conservation. We will also increase our work in the area of corporate engagement, especially within the supply chain of the rapidly expanding EV sector.

## COMMUNICATIONS:

Cultural Survival's communications is an essential and explicit area of our work that threads together all other facets of our work. Through our communications we work towards building awareness, reclaiming the narrative, and shifting paradigms, consciousness, and agency. We strive to directly uplift and amplify Indigenous Peoples' voices through the following media platforms: our award-winning Cultural Survival Quarterly magazine; website and database of articles; webinars; social media; Indigenous Rights Radio; podcasts; and more. Some of our future plans include communicating an effective advocacy agenda that supports and mainstreams the rights of Indigenous Peoples to the wider public, highlighting the self-determined agency of Indigenous Peoples, and the important role Indigenous knowledge plays in solving today's problems; strengthening communication with the general public, donors, and supporters of Cultural Survival; increasing the visibility of Cultural Survival and promoting the organizational mission and work in the mainstream and Indigenous media; serving as a knowledge base and a digital hub of resources for Indigenous Peoples; and communicating to linguistically diverse audiences to increase Cultural Survival's global reach.


## b. Thematic Areas

Based on numerous consultations, recommendations and building off 49 years of experience and work in the field of Indigenous Peoples' rights, Cultural Survival will embark upon **a new holistic, thematic, rights-based direction that works on the nexus of themes that we have identified as the most burning issues for Indigenous Peoples today: land and livelihoods, climate change solutions, cultures and languages, Indigenous community media, and the leadership of Indigenous women and youth as a cross-thematic thread.**



### ***Cross-cutting Theme: Indigenous Women and Youth***

Indigenous women carry millennia-old traditional knowledge about the land and biodiversity that is embedded in our cultures and languages. Our women are also leaders in the global Indigenous Peoples' movement and the women's movement. Our youth, when they have a sense of belonging, a sense of empowerment to change the conditions that affect them, and a strong cultural identity, become resilient, powerful individuals for their communities. The participation of Indigenous women and youth is crucial in strengthening self-governance, protecting land rights, fighting climate change, containing the loss of biodiversity, restoring ecosystems, and stewarding our linguistic and cultural heritage. Cultural Survival is uniquely positioned to provide the necessary support for Indigenous women and youth to successfully carry out this work. Moving forward, Cultural Survival will provide more holistic programming



by deepening our focus on Indigenous women and youth as a cross-cutting theme through our four-pronged strategy outlined above; continuing our advocacy at CEDAW and other spaces; increasing and diversifying the resources for our grantmaking, which gives priority to Indigenous women and youth-led groups; providing training, fellowships and hosting convenings, and exchanges that support our capacity-building strategy; and utilizing our communications to elevate the stories of Indigenous women and youth. By developing a comprehensive gender policy and Indigenous Peoples' principles and policies, Cultural Survival can not only enhance our own processes and decision making but also affect our institutional relationships with partner organizations, partner-grantees, civil society groups, movements, NGOs, philanthropic institutions, and government agencies.

## ***Land and Livelihoods***

The importance of Land and Livelihoods came up as one of the top issues for Indigenous Peoples as a result of both internal and external reviews. We, Indigenous Peoples, and our lands are inseparable as we co-evolve together, and it is this interdependent relationship that creates such richness of biodiversity and culture. The health of Indigenous lands, including the forests and rivers therein, is also integral to Indigenous livelihoods. Our ability to maintain our traditional livelihoods and economies, harvest foods, fish, hunt, keep bees, herd animals, and gather materials for housing, crafts, clothing, and ceremony are all dependent on uninterrupted access to our land; hence, we include livelihoods to our land approach. Globally, our communities feel unprecedented pressure on their lands and ways of life. We envision this work as strengthening Indigenous Peoples' self-determination, sovereignty, land defense, land titling, their traditional ways of managing natural resources, biodiversity conservation, and the proliferation of traditional economies and livelihoods. We will make this vision a reality by advocating and elevating local struggles to international spaces; providing training on land rights, land tenure, and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent; and providing continuous funding through the Keepers of the Earth Fund for community-led land defense, land titling, and traditional livelihoods and economies. Our communications will fully support the theme of land and livelihoods through content development and strategies to widely disseminate stories that uplift this work.

## ***Indigenous Community Media***

Our Indigenous Community Media has been the stronghold and identity of Cultural Survival's work for almost two decades, with more than 130 Indigenous radio partners across Latin America, in Southern and Eastern Africa, and in Nepal, India, and Bangladesh. Our Indigenous Rights Radio program is also part of our Indigenous Community Media work, with a network that includes 1200+ radio stations and broadcasts to an estimated audience of between 11 to 50 million listeners, most of whom are Indigenous and live in rural areas where community radio is often the main (or only) source of information. The thematic area of Indigenous Community Media will include our current programs and strategies: Community Media, Indigenous Rights Radio, and Communications (social media, Cultural Survival Quarterly magazine, and our website). Possible areas of expansion include online radio and other community media such as TV, podcasts, audiovisual materials, printed media, and new technologies for communication and connectivity for Indigenous communities such as wifi and broadband.



## ***Cultures and Languages***

Cultural Survival's work to promote cultures and languages has been a historical priority since its founding. Supporting cultural and language diversity and revitalization also directly supports biological diversity and conservation. Our languages are essential for maintaining and transmitting our traditional knowledge to future generations. We believe in the sacred and interdependent relationship between the land, its peoples, and their cultures; the erosion of culture leads to the erosion of biodiversity, land, and soil. Cultural Survival will continue to emphasize the importance of culture and languages by advocating for and resourcing a cultural pillar in addition to the economic, environmental, and social pillars of sustainable development at the UN level and in other spaces. We will focus our communications work to uplift stories of Indigenous artists, culture bearers, and language leaders. As part of our capacity building strategy, we will support artists through our Indigenous Artist Institute, expand our Youth Fellowships to include the topics of arts and culture, continue hosting languages' revitalization convenings, and organize community-to-community exchanges. Our Keepers of the Earth Fund will support arts and culture through grants for our partner communities. Our current Bazaar program, as well as emerging strategies to create artists residencies, will fall under this thematic thread.

## ***Climate Change Solutions***

Climate change came up as one of the top issues of concern for Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples have long been viewed as victims of the effects of climate change, but in reality we are agents of climate solutions and environmental conservation. We cannot address a global crisis without focusing on local, place-based solutions. Supporting Indigenous communities at the local level supports and enriches the ecosystem in that region, and the health of that regional ecosystem impacts that of surrounding ecosystems. This strengthens the interconnected and interdependent web of ecosystems (or web of life), and Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge is the catalyst for the necessary climate change mitigation our world desperately needs. When Indigenous Peoples have rights to their lands, we are able to steward our lands in ways that prevent fossil fuel extraction, maintain carbon-capturing forests, ensure soil regeneration and carbon capture through traditional agriculture and agroecology, and protect biodiversity. From traditional Indigenous home design to traditional fire management, from agro-pastoralists to agroecology and agroforestry methods, Indigenous Peoples have lived in reciprocal balance with their environments for millennia and continue to do so up to this day. We will persist in advocating for Indigenous-led climate solutions internationally, nationally, regionally, and locally; continue providing grants to support Indigenous climate change solutions; incorporate climate work into our capacity building modules; raise funding for climate Youth Fellowships and community-to-community exchanges focused on local, place-based solutions; and uplift the voices of Indigenous leaders in our publications, website, and social media.