

# Strategic Framework

2022-2026

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

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# I. 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 three goals in place: 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.

Since the start of this process, we have collectively learned several lessons through internal and external inquiry, group discussions, deep listening, adaptation, and analysis. Building the Strategic Plan parallel to our proactive response to the needs of Indigenous Peoples during the pandemic has not been an easy task. However, what we have learned has been valuable and has navigated us to move towards a new chapter of our journey. Firstly, we did not have to switch to remote working as we already had pre-existing processes and structures in place: virtual team and staff meetings, personal check-ins, strategy sessions, and so on are easily conducted via platforms such as Gotomeeting, Zoom, Skype, Whatsapp, etc. Secondly, our cross-functional teams have evolved to become highly agile and adaptable, which has proven to be one of our unique strengths as an institution. Thirdly, we have been explicit about steadily moving towards our holistic rights-based approach, which allows for a higher degree of efficiency across all of our program and administrative teams. Some examples of how we work with communities holistically to provide wrap-around support and resources include: awarding a community radio station an Indigenous Community Media Fund grant and providing training for women who volunteer at that station, co-creating a joint campaign,, supporting a youth fellow from the community, engaging in joint advocacy at the UN on a topic of importance to their community, providing a grant from the Keepers of the Earth Fund, writing a feature article in our *Cultural Survival Quarterly* magazine and website, inviting community leaders to participate in a webinar, and so on.

Furthermore, the team is becoming increasingly decentralized geographically while still holding a strong commitment to and sense of ownership over our shared vision. Each of our team members are tapped into their local and regional networks and manage diverse stakeholders who operate as points of information sharing, networking, and feedback for our work. Moreover, our emphasis on using local data, our connections across different networks, and our linkages from the local community to the global community are proving to be one of the main factors for our success. When we use this holistic model, we are investing in built-in capacity and cross-programmatic functionality, which saves significant financial resources and staff time.

Over the past year, several team members have applied their leadership within our strategic planning working groups. Our team members were empowered and entrusted to carry out



this important work collaboratively. The working groups created opportunities to strengthen communication and a space for team members to co-create a vision of Cultural Survival to strive towards in the years to come. Additionally, we held healing and decolonization spaces throughout 2020 and 2021, which helped us navigate the ongoing pandemic, build trust and mutual support for each other, and better understand our diverse cultures, experiences, and goals. These sessions enabled staff to feel more connected, understood, and valued, and they were able to bring their traditional ceremonies, songs, poetry, prayers, and full selves into these virtual spaces.

While we were collectively working to build our strategy and decolonize our work, some changes were already being implemented. For example, we proposed changes to our Personnel policy based on ongoing feedback and an internal survey regarding our current Personnel policies. These changes included separating our Family Leave and Parental Leave policies, expanding the definition of family to be aligned with the range of traditional definitions of family in Indigenous communities, introducing options for pooling vacation time to help staff members in need, and using gender neutral language to support inclusivity. In terms of our organizational structure, in the past year we have expanded our leadership to include a Director of Strategic Partnerships and Communications, a Director of Programs, and a Director of Advocacy and Policy, expanding our leadership team to five Director positions, in addition to several other hires across the organization. The purpose of this senior leadership expansion is to share responsibility amongst people of diverse perspectives and to build a more collective approach to our decision making at Cultural Survival.

We believe that this framework serves as a guide for our work, but as an organization that works to support Indigenous communities, we keep our finger on the pulse and continue to respond to the most pressing needs of the communities we serve, ready to pivot to meet those needs on the ground. We don't intend for this strategic plan to be static; rather, it functions as a living document that reflects the ever-changing reality and conditions of Indigenous Peoples, the global Indigenous Peoples' Movement, and Cultural Survival as an organization.

## **Cultural Survival Staff and Board**



# II. About Cultural Survival

## Our Mission:

Cultural Survival advocates for Indigenous Peoples' rights and supports Indigenous communities' self-determination, cultures and political resilience since 1972.

## Our Vision:

Cultural Survival envisions a future that respects and honors Indigenous Peoples' inherent rights and dynamic cultures, deeply and richly interwoven in lands, languages, spiritual traditions, and artistic expression, rooted in self-determination and self-governance.

## Our Work:

Cultural Survival is an Indigenous-led, Indigenous rights NGO and U.S. registered non-profit. For almost 50 years, Cultural Survival has partnered with Indigenous communities to advance Indigenous Peoples' rights and cultures worldwide. The core of our efforts rests on the principles of supporting, amplifying efforts, and raising awareness for Indigenous communities' right to self-determination.

Cultural Survival engages with a robust network of partnerships with Indigenous communities that spans over 70 countries on 6 continents. Headquartered in Cambridge, MA, we have 28 staff located across 10 countries; our staff is majority women, and both staff and board are majority Indigenous - we are a true reflection of the communities we serve. Our work is predicated on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), on the basis of which we work to empower our own and other Indigenous Peoples' communities as we strive to assert our rights to self-determination and sustain our lands, cultures, and vital ecosystems. These tenets are essential to the health of our planet and all living things. Additionally, Cultural Survival has important connections and influence across movements, sectors, governmental agencies, and international mechanisms such as the United Nations, where we have held consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 2005. We support grassroots Indigenous solutions to protect, respect, and fulfill the rights of Indigenous communities, and our approach centers traditional knowledge to restore balance in the natural world.

# III. Values and Principles

At Cultural Survival, our staff and board came together over a series of months to build and manifest what we believe are the core values of our organization, as we act both internally with members of our team and externally with our wider kin, partner organizations, donors, members, and stakeholders. Developing this list of values and principles has been a multi-stage process that has engaged Cultural Survival's full staff, leadership, and Board of Directors over a period of several months.

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***These values already existed within the Cultural Survival community, they were just not explicit. Collectively discussing, debating, and writing them down was an important exercise for us, to take a moment to step back and really articulate together what it is we are striving for and what should guide our actions and relationships. Articulating this also allows those outside of our circle to understand what we are about as an organization,***”  
explains Galina Angarova (Buryat), Executive Director.

The process began with the establishment of an internal working group on values and principles. This group mapped a process of consultation; a first step included surveying staff and board to identify key values upheld in their professional, community, and personal lives. For our staff and board Zoom discussions, we presented a total of 53 concepts that came forward as a result of gathering and systemizing the survey responses. In breakout groups, we discussed which values most spoke to us and what they meant in our lives and at work. The working group coalesced the leading values into a short list( combining some concepts) and established an operational difference between the core values we hold and the principles we put into action to realize those core values.

Part of this process included rich discussions on the importance of language in determining meaning. We recognized that some concepts simply do not exist equally in different languages, especially given the wide diversity of our staff and board: among us, we speak 23 different languages, hail from 16 different countries, and represent 20 different Indigenous cultures, not to mention the many cultures and communities where we have worked, lived, and built relationships with our partners. Given this diversity, we did our best to approximate and convey meaning through context and be flexible in our own interpretations.

We drafted explanations of how we understand each value in the context of Cultural Survival based on our personal experiences, notes from staff and board dialogues, and survey responses. After a few rounds of edits, the final version was reviewed and adopted in our May 2021 board meeting.

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***At CS, we have worked with our Indigenous communities and staff to develop a set of Values and Principles that will guide our work in a “pono” or proper way that honors the diversity of Indigenous ways of knowing and being and helps to guide our actions to be sure we work in support of Indigenous Peoples in a way that is acceptable to and welcomed by them.***”  
-Kaimana Barcarse (Kanaka Hawaii), Board Chair

## AS THE CULTURAL SURVIVAL COMMUNITY, THESE ARE THE VALUES WE UPHOLD:

### *Self-determination*

We center, value, and promote the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples to freely determine their political conditions and pursue their own forms of economic, social, and cultural development, especially with regard to their own ways of life, their cosmovisions, and the integrity of their lands and territories. Towards the realization of self-determination, we advocate for the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples to be upheld in all decisions that affect them.

### *Indigenous cosmovisions*

At Cultural Survival, we work towards a vision that centers, promotes, and values the cosmovisions of Indigenous Peoples as a core tenet of our work. We understand Indigenous cosmovisions as diverse ways of thinking, living, and being in a relationship with and knowing the world. These cosmovisions are as diverse as there are Indigenous Peoples on the planet, and they operate on systems of ideas and practices that define each community's beliefs, values, and customs, as well as their relationships with Mother Earth.

### *Trust*

Trust is a value that allows us to operate in reciprocal relationships with those around us, in which trust is an antecedent to action. Cultural Survival places trust in our community partners, in our funders and donors, in our team members, and in our leaderships.

### *Humility*

Humility is a value that allows us to understand that there are greater forces outside of our organization and outside of ourselves as individuals. We allow ourselves to be guided by the wisdom of our ancestors and those who have laid the groundwork before us. We acknowledge our limitations and our weaknesses while always working towards improvement.

### *Interculturalism*

Indigenous Peoples across the globe are extremely diverse. Amongst our partners, within our team, and within individuals, we represent an array of diverse cultures and ways of understanding the world. We respect and acknowledge the diversity of Indigenous Peoples, geography, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, ability, language, religion, spirituality, age, experiences, viewpoints, and cosmovisions.

### *Community*

We consider community, collectivity, and collaboration to be fundamental ways of life. This extends to our vision of land stewardship, our relationship with life on earth, and our interdependence. We value and respect collective rights as defined by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in addition to individual human rights.



**BASED ON AND INCORPORATING THESE CORE VALUES, WE OPERATE ACCORDING TO THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:**

***Respect***

We respect the feelings, wishes, rights, identities, and traditions of others, with particular consideration and recognition of the self-determination of the communities we work with and their unique processes of decision-making. Respect is an essential aspect in every interaction we engage in.

***Equity***

We believe in the inherent dignity of all human beings and lifeforms. However, we recognize that the reality we live in has not been equal for all. We condemn racism, misogyny, and all forms of violence and oppression, and seek equity for all. We inform our idea of equity through Indigenous cosmovisions. We recognize that external forces have disrupted the balances of community relations, gender relations, relations with nature, and cultural relations, and our programs seek to support work that heals this balance in alignment with Indigenous cosmovisions.

***Accountability***

We are accountable for our words and our actions. We are accountable to our communities, our elders, and our youth, to generations in the future and to our ancestors of the past. We believe that honesty, consistency, and communication are core to accountability.

***Solidarity***

Informed by our sense of community and trust, we harness empathy and value acting in solidarity with others. Solidarity is an opportunity for collaboration, sharing, reciprocity, and working in collective towards a common objective. At the same time, it helps us build good relationships with others in the long term. It is a service towards a common interest or movement based on knowledge and empathy for a cause.

# IV. Gender Balance Approach



***In order to coexist, we have to relearn nature, balance, and complementarity, so we can continue to live in balance in all spaces and ways of living: thus, the importance of building mechanisms that help us find common ground and acknowledge our differences. A gender policy is born from the need to heal our relationships and look towards a more just and dignified horizon in the face of an increasingly decadent humanity,”***

- Sócrates Vásquez (Ayuujk Jáäy, Pueblo Ayuujk), Journalist and Community Media Program Manager.

At Cultural Survival, we recognize that, as a result of colonization, we currently live in a world where gender relationships are out of balance, and these imbalances of power, voice, and respect exist across the gender spectrum. We also acknowledge that Indigenous Peoples' views and understandings of gender are just as diverse as their cultures, and these views are fundamentally different from those of Western societies. While Western societies glorify the individual, Indigenous Peoples prioritize the communal. Given both this fundamental difference and Cultural Survival's mission, this policy was built in alignment with Indigenous cosmovisions.

In May 2020, Cultural Survival established a working group with the purpose of building a Gender Balance Policy that would encompass our values, principles, and aspirations. Many staff members participated in the drafting, review, and discussion of this policy. For over a year, staff generously invested time, emotional labor, vulnerability, and humility to create a policy that would guide our work. As an Indigenous-led organization, consensus, inclusion, and equal representation are in our DNA, and we believe that this policy is an important step towards achieving gender equity in our organization and in our relationships with those with whom we may engage. However, it is worth noting that Cultural Survival's attention to gender does not begin with this policy. For many years, Cultural Survival's programs have prioritized projects that centered women and engaged womens' and girls' leadership. At the time of this policy's drafting, 17 of our 25 total staff members and 8 of our 13 board members were women. The empowerment and leadership of Indigenous women is fundamental to our work. This policy is also explicit about our commitment to equity for people of all genders to participate and takes steps to achieve this.

This policy seeks to work towards balance and equilibrium in all social and community relations, including gender relations, relations with nature, and spiritual relations in all aspects of our work. External forces have disrupted the balance of these relationships, and our programs, communications, and internal policies seek to support work that heals these relationships in alignment with Indigenous cosmovisions. We are aware of the complex ways in which outside forces have imposed harmful ideologies on Indigenous communities and the concepts, practices, and consequences of inequality, discrimination, and violence that exist as a result. Violence (including physical violence, psychological violence, and violence in the form of exclusion and marginalization) takes place against Indigenous Peoples in general, and in communities there is also violence against more vulnerable groups such as women, transgender people, non-binary people, and people of other genders; people with disabilities; elders; and children. Throughout the policy, we refer to "people of all genders." In all cases, this includes women, men, Two-Spirit people, non-binary people, trans people, and people who have other culturally specific gender identities.

The policy is comprised of two main sections: an introduction (or philosophy) in which we reflect on the organization's understanding of gender as it relates to the diversity of Indigenous Peoples and the varying dynamics of equity and justice; and a policy section, in which we lay out concrete objectives and action steps for the organization's programs, institutional practices, communications, and evaluation.

Cultural Survival's Gender Policy was approved and adopted by our Board of Directors in May 2021. In the coming months, we will continue working with our staff to help us through the implementation and execution process of this policy at all levels of the organization.

You can read Cultural Survival's Gender Policy [here](#).

# V. 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. Although these four areas are a pre-existing part of Cultural Survival's work towards achieving its mission, this is the first time these four strategies have been identified and communicated explicitly as working in tandem. With this strategic framework, we are communicating to our allies, donors, partners, and community that we see these four strategies as interrelated. Thus, we create the synergy 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.



## What is holistic wrap-around support?

Within a community that we have established a long term partnership with, Cultural Survival supports that community through each of our four-pronged strategies in a holistic way that engages all of our programs. For example, Cultural Survival may provide grants to a local community radio station to strengthen its infrastructure or equipment through our Indigenous Community Media Fund. We invite members of the radio station to participate in training sessions on the production of radio programming about human rights topics. We invite women at the station to engage in personalized capacity building on healing and Indigenous women's leadership. A local radio station may be denied an opportunity to use an officially licensed radio frequency, and will then join a lawsuit organized by Cultural Survival against the government for violating Indigenous Peoples' freedom of expression. In a village nearby the radio station, a transnational company may violate the community's right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent by initiating construction on a hydroelectric dam, and so, Cultural Survival initiates a campaign to denounce these violations nationally and internationally, drawing the attention of UN human rights mechanisms. Through our Keepers of the Earth Fund, we may make a grant to a local women's organization that is working to educate the community about their land rights. We invite Indigenous women involved in this work to a training session on the defense of human rights, and later they can join a CS delegation to participate at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York, where they can network with other activists and organizations. A local artists cooperative from the community could be invited to market their traditional weavings at the Cultural Survival Bazaar, generating income for many families in the community. Two local youths could be supported by a fellowship with Cultural Survival to document stories of their elders in short documentary films and produce public health radio programming in the community's local Indigenous language in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.





## GRANTMAKING:

Our grantmaking is in its 5th year of operation and is implemented through a long term vision focused on resourcing the global Indigenous Peoples Movement, ensuring 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. Since 2017, the Keepers of the Earth Fund has supported over 175 projects in 35 countries through small grants and technical assistance totalling \$763,172. Our Indigenous Community Media Fund provides opportunities for international Indigenous radio stations to strengthen their broadcast infrastructure and systems while also providing training opportunities in journalism, broadcasting, audio editing, technical skills, and more to Indigenous community radio journalists around the world. Since 2017, the Indigenous Community Media Fund (formerly known as the Community Media Grants Project) has awarded 169 grants to 130 community radio stations in 19 countries, totalling \$1,225,907. We build relationships with our partners in the long term through site visits, mentoring and technical support.

## CAPACITY BUILDING:

As part of our wrap-around services to our partners, 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 youths in their efforts to build their radio journalism and radio broadcasting skills through training, community radio visits and exchanges, radio production, and conference attendance. Since 2018, we have awarded a total of \$76,000 to 24 youth fellows (including support for 16 young Indigenous women). In recent years, CS workshops have provided training for our Indigenous partners (especially Indigenous women) on topics such as 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 support Indigenous youth fellowships and capacity building for Indigenous women and expand the topics to climate change, land rights and livelihoods, and cultural and language revitalization.

## ADVOCACY:

As Indigenous communities work to implement their rights and self-determination, they often encounter external challenges. Our advocacy program works with our partners through local, regional, and international mechanisms to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and denounce and bring visibility to situations in which these rights are violated. 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 against governments 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.

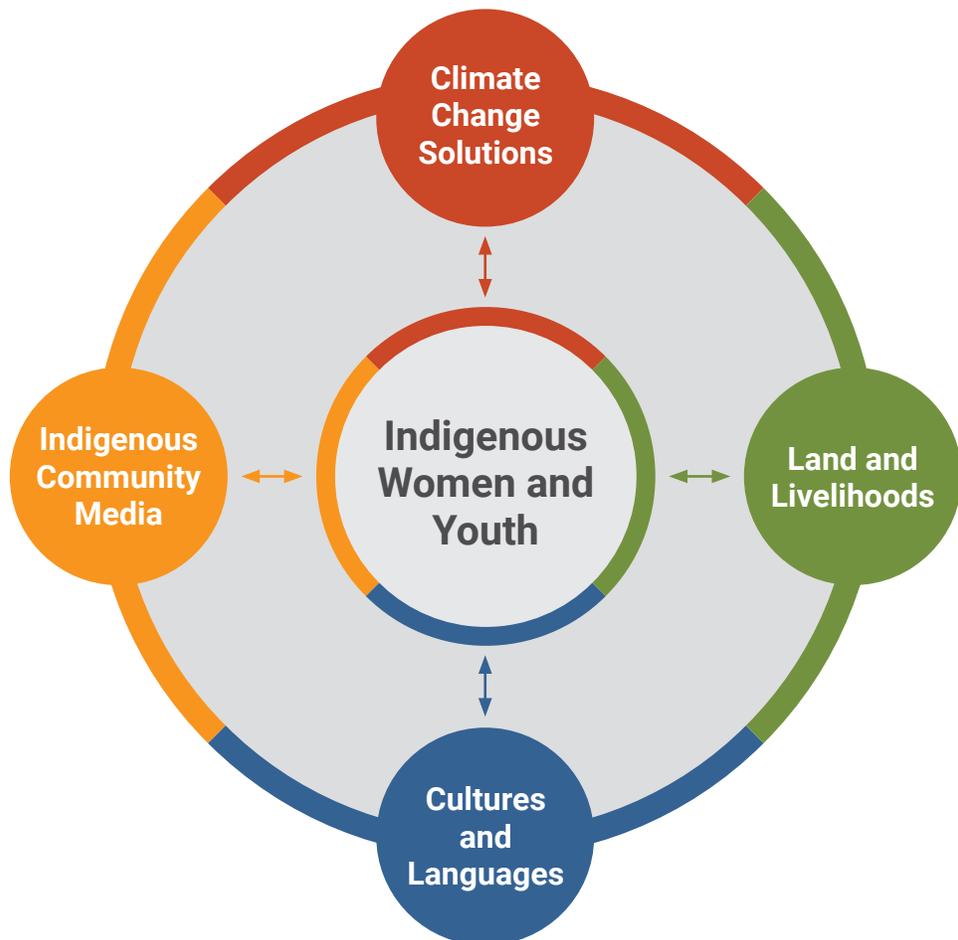
## COMMUNICATIONS:

The fourth approach to Cultural Survival's emerging strategy is communications, and strives 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. Through our communications we work towards building awareness, reclaiming the narrative, and shifting paradigms, consciousness, and agency. With over 49 years of experience working with Indigenous Peoples and building a robust global network, we recognize firsthand the importance of Indigenous media and communications. Indigenous-produced programming strengthens Indigenous Peoples' capacity to claim their rights and enables access to essential information and broadcasting in Indigenous languages, which ensure widespread understanding and cultural continuity. Cultural Survival's communications has been a stronghold for many years, and as we move into our next chapter, communications is an essential and explicit focus that enables us to work collaboratively and threads together all other facets of our work, including the three other components of the four-pronged approach. Cultural Survival's communications connect peoples, movements, organizations, and others through storytelling across landscapes, waterways, and issue areas both locally and globally. Our communications is the public, external, visual, and audio vehicle that represents the organization and the core vessel that articulates our work with our community, donors and the general public. Our website and its resources serves as a digital resource hub and advocacy platform for the global Indigenous Peoples movement and Indigenous Peoples globally.



## b. Thematic Areas

Our work on thematic areas was carried out by the programmatic priorities working group, which met and deliberated from August 2020 to April 2021 in order to reach a set of recommendations for programmatic priorities that build off of historical, existing, and emerging work at Cultural Survival. In addition to the conclusions drawn from key documents and reports, we gained insights from surveys of staff and external stakeholders that included funders, Indigenous-led leaders and organizations, international experts, partner radio stations, and grantee partners from our Indigenous Community Media Fund and the Keepers of the Earth Fund. The notes covering our review total more than a hundred and thirty pages, including the minutes for weekly meetings and discussions on the design, application, and analysis of both surveys. Based on numerous consultations and recommendations, as well as our 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.** Our plan is to not stop any of the current programs, but rather to evolve and incorporate them into this framework and build on our ongoing work through the application of the four-pronged approach outlined above. Every thread in this new direction is interrelated and interdependent, with Indigenous women and youth being the main protagonists of the change we collectively aspire to work towards.



## Cross-cutting Theme: Indigenous Women and Youth



***Indigenous women need more support to reach their potential. They want to reestablish their harmony with men [equality]. We need harmony within our species in order to restore harmony with the Earth, animals, plants, and water.*** -Avexnim Cojti (Maya K'iche'), Director of Programs

Indigenous women have long been marginalized and continue to face multiple forms of discrimination based on their ethnic origin, gender, economic, political, or societal status or class, disability, and location. However, Indigenous women are the ones who carry millenia-old traditional knowledge about the land and biodiversity that is embedded in their cultures and languages. It is the knowledge that has been passed down from one generation to the next that makes Indigenous women the original storytellers, the keepers of their traditions and oral history, natural community leaders, and the best experts of their own landscapes. Indigenous women are also leaders in the global Indigenous Peoples' movement and the women's movement. For many years, Cultural Survival has prioritized projects that center women and engage women's and girls' leadership, and we will continue working to uplift Indigenous women according to Indigenous values and protocols self-determined by Indigenous communities. We strive to support Indigenous women in being the decision-makers and protagonists of their own stories and taking the leadership and participation roles that they choose and deserve to take.

Young people hold the power to shift the dynamics of the world. If we want change, we must provide support to Indigenous youth leaders to make that change possible. Indigenous youth in particular continue to face racism, discrimination, and marginalization, and lack access to opportunities, networks, and resources. However, when they have a sense of belonging, a sense of empowerment to change the conditions that affect them, and a strong cultural identity, they become resilient, powerful individuals for their communities. The participation of our Indigenous youth is crucial in strengthening self-governance, protecting land rights, fighting climate change, containing the loss of biodiversity, restoring ecosystems, and stewarding our cultural heritage. Cultural Survival is uniquely positioned to provide the necessary support for Indigenous youth to successfully carry out this work.

Indigenous women and youth are powerful changemakers capable of strengthening healthy families, communities, and the planet. Currently, the global agenda is at an inflection point where policymakers, foundations, and other stakeholders recognize the key roles that women and youth play in addressing climate change, the loss of biodiversity, the achievement of food sovereignty, and the SDGs, among others. As the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Beijing Declaration are being implemented after their adoptions, Cultural Survival is well positioned to advocate for Indigenous women and youth in local, regional, and international spaces. Cultural Survival comes to this work in an authentic way through the work we do, the method by which we do our work, and the people who make up our staff and board. Indigenous women on our staff and board have created and implemented programs at Cultural Survival alongside our male and LGTBQIA+ colleagues (Indigenous and non Indigenous alike) and Indigenous-allied staff and board. Some concrete examples of our commitment to Indigenous women and youth include the fact that our team is majority women and majority Indigenous, the fact that our grants' reviewing and management teams are led by Indigenous women, and our emerging strategies on climate change and land justice, which are also led and advised by Indigenous women on the team.

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 previously-outlined four-pronged strategy of advocacy, capacity building, communications, and grantmaking. 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. Indigenous Peoples and their lands are inseparable: our cultures, languages, cosmovisions, and ways of life are connected to the lands we are from. Indigenous Peoples and their landscapes co-evolve together, and it is this interdependent relationship that creates such a richness of biodiversity and culture. Highly biodiverse areas (such as the U.S. Pacific Northwest, for example) have been found to be a direct result of Indigenous stewardship.<sup>1</sup> The health of Indigenous lands, including the forests and rivers therein, is also integral to Indigenous livelihoods. The ability of Indigenous Peoples to maintain their 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 their land; hence, we include livelihoods in our land approach.

Unfortunately, the modern world's thirst for expansion and development threatens the integrity of Indigenous lands and livelihoods. There is a growing number of assaults, attacks, and displacements of Indigenous Peoples from their lands by governments, mining companies, agricultural companies, and even conservation groups. Globally, Indigenous Peoples 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. This thematic thread will also be closely tied to the emerging theme of climate change solutions, as we believe that Indigenous Peoples' management of traditional lands and territories provides climate and conservation benefits for all.

The theme of Lands and Livelihoods will cut across our programs and strategies. Our advocacy work will support Indigenous stewardship of lands and territories by elevating local struggles to international spaces. Providing training on land rights and tenure will be a key component for our capacity building strategy. We hope to secure additional funding for our Keepers of the Earth Fund to support community-led work related to this theme. Our current Bazaar program would fall under this thematic thread, as it provides an opportunity for traditional artistic/economic occupations to survive and thrive within their homelands. Finally, we will deploy our Communications to fully support Land and Livelihoods through content development and strategies in order 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.

We view Indigenous Community Media work both as a goal in and of itself to support the right to freedom of expression and as a vehicle to achieve the larger goal of self-determination as prescribed by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2021/04/pacific-northwest-s-forest-gardens-were-deliberately-planted-indigenous-people>

Cultural Survival supports Indigenous Community Media through various means: by advocating for Indigenous Peoples' freedom of expression and their right to access their own forms of media; by resourcing communities' media and communications work through small grants; by providing training in media and content production, offering technical support to radio stations, promoting the use of technology, advocating for a gender balance, and more; by highlighting the work of Indigenous media through CS communications on our website, social media, and CSQ; and providing news, culture, and human rights related radio content to our radio network via our platform Indigenous Rights Radio.

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, audiovisual materials, print media, and new technologies for communication and connectivity for Indigenous communities such as wifi and broadband. We have already started the production of podcasts in Spanish. We intend to invest more into podcast production in English, Spanish, and Indigenous languages. One of the recommendations that came as a result of the survey is to increase the use of Indigenous languages in all our communications and radio productions, which we will be emphasizing in our future developments in this thematic area.

### ***Cultures and Languages***

Cultural Survival's work to promote cultures and languages has been a historical priority since its founding and is directly connected to our work on community media, our radio programs, our magazine, our Bazaar, and our communications work in general. Supporting cultural and language diversity and revitalization also directly supports biological diversity and conservation. Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge is key to continuing protecting the land we've inhabited for millennia. 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 in our advocacy work by engaging with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and further 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. CS will focus its communications work (including our magazine and website podcasts) to uplift stories of Indigenous artists, culture bearers, and language leaders to further advocate for cultural and language revitalization. Our capacity building component will support artists through our Indigenous Artist Institute, and our grantmaking will support arts and culture through grants for our partner communities. Our current Bazaar program and other emerging strategies will fall under this thematic thread to create Cultural Survival artists residencies and to support creative forms of self expression such as performance arts, painting, sculpture, dance, poetry, etc. Finally, as part of this theme, CS will continue its healing and decolonization work from our diverse Indigenous perspectives.

### ***Climate Change Solutions***

Climate change came up as one of the top issues of concern for Indigenous Peoples, and it is directly connected with the issue of land rights. Climate change is becoming the number one risk for Indigenous Peoples globally, as Indigenous communities are disproportionately affected by its impacts and are among the first to face the direct consequences. In the Arctic, communities are suffering from the receding ice, melting permafrost, changing weather patterns, and increased storms, as well as changes in species and animal behavior that

impact their access to their subsistence resources. In the high altitudes of the Himalayas, people depend on the seasonal flow of water from glaciers. Unprecedented melting is creating more water in the short term, but less will be available in the long term. Communities across the globe, from Siberia to the Amazon, are affected by the ongoing raging fires.

Meanwhile, an abundance of research has demonstrated that Indigenous Peoples hold solutions to climate change. Although Indigenous Peoples around the globe represent just 6.2 percent of the population, they manage or hold tenure over 25 percent of the world's land surface, support about 80 percent of the global biodiversity<sup>2</sup>, and manage at least 24 percent (54,546 MtC) of the total carbon stored above ground in the world's tropical forests<sup>3</sup>, a sum greater than 250 times the amount of carbon dioxide emitted by global air travel in 2015.<sup>4</sup> Areas titled to Indigenous communities have been shown to store 36% more carbon per hectare than public conservation land.<sup>5</sup> According to an analysis by the World Resources Institute, by securing Indigenous land rights in Bolivia, Brazil, and Colombia alone, we could avoid the release of up to 59 megatons of carbon emissions every year – the equivalent of taking 9 to 12 million passenger vehicles off the road.<sup>6</sup> The 2019 IPBES report found that between 65 to 75% of the earth's surface has been significantly altered by human actions. However, on average, these trends have been less severe or are avoided entirely in areas held or managed by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.<sup>7</sup> Leading climate researchers have concluded that “[there is] an urgent need to make collective tenure security a critical part of emission reduction strategies. Empowering forest peoples to continue their historical role as stewards of the environment is essential for stabilizing Earth's climate.”<sup>8</sup> When Indigenous Peoples have rights to their lands, they are able to steward these 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. The gap between recognized and unrecognized land rights points to significant opportunities to scale-up the protection of Indigenous lands.

The science is clear—Indigenous communities are critical in reversing the climate crisis. Indigenous Peoples have long been viewed as victims of the effects of climate change, but in reality they are agents of climate solutions and environmental conservation. The consequences of climate change in Latin America may differ from those in Africa or Asia, but one thing remains true: local resilience requires local traditional knowledge. 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 climate change mitigation our world desperately needs. 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 millenia and continue to do so up to this day.

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<sup>2</sup> ***A spatial overview of the global importance of Indigenous lands for conservation***

<sup>3</sup> ***Toward a Global Baseline of Carbon Storage in Collective Lands***

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.atag.org/facts-and-figures.html>.

<sup>5</sup> ***Stevens, Caleb, Robert Winterbottom, Katie Reytar, and Jenny Springer. Securing Rights, Combating Climate Change: How Strengthening Community Forest Rights Mitigates Climate Change. Report. 2014.***

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/Climate\\_Benefits\\_Tenure\\_Costs.pdf](http://www.wri.org/sites/default/files/Climate_Benefits_Tenure_Costs.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*

# VI. Next Steps

1

We will further streamline an equitable gender balance approach within CS by prioritizing projects that center marginalized groups and working to uplift Indigenous women and youth according to Indigenous values and protocols self-determined by Indigenous communities. Some of the next steps include: implementation of the recommendations outlined in the gender balance policy including developing a review process for all personnel-related policies through the gender balance and equity lens; hiring an HR manager; elaborating a detailed grievance mechanism; creating a transgender employment policy; further developing internal and external instruments addressing sexual harassment; and developing a language for contracts with partners and general communications that embraces gender inclusion and safer spaces for all. We reject all acts of harassment and violence based on gender, culture, and other identities within the communities, organizations, and projects with which we collaborate.

2

For Advocacy work, we will continue to advocate for Indigenous Peoples' rights at the UN level and in other international fora while adding additional relevant spaces to newly articulated thematic areas. For example, we have identified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) negotiations and meetings as key spaces to advocate for Indigenous Peoples' climate change solutions, land rights, and Indigenous-led conservation efforts. We plan to actively participate in the upcoming COP26 in November 2021 and the UN Biodiversity Conference in April 2022. We will also increase our work in the area of corporate engagement, especially within the supply chain of the rapidly expanding EV sector.

3

For Capacity Building work, we will expand our curricula for our Indigenous women women workshops to include human and Indigenous rights advocacy, climate solutions, and land rights in addition to the media and communications modules. Other areas of expansion may include modules on traditional livelihoods, food sovereignty, and Indigenous-led conservation. We also 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 facilitating cross-cultural exchanges on the topics of grassroots climate solutions and languages' revitalization as well as creating CS artists residencies and supporting creative forms of self expression such as performance and visual arts. Finally, CS will also continue its healing and decolonization work from our diverse Indigenous perspectives both within and outside the organization.





4

For Grantmaking, our aspiration is to provide ongoing, long term financial support for both our Keepers of the Earth Fund and our Indigenous Community Media Fund in order to provide resources to grassroots Indigenous organizations, Indigenous governments, and Indigenous radio stations. This support will be instrumental in building a global Indigenous Movement. Our grantmaking decisions will take into account the CS gender policy. We will collaborate with others to increase and diversify the resources going to Indigenous Peoples, and we will continue to prioritize groups led by Indigenous women and youths that focus on issues of land, traditional livelihoods, climate solutions, cultures, languages, and freedom of expression and media.

5

For Communications, some of our goals and future plans include communicating an effective advocacy agenda that supports and mainstream the rights of Indigenous Peoples to the wider public, highlighting 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; building on effective communication strategies and vehicles (website, social media, and media outreach) currently with emerging trends and platforms for raising awareness about Indigenous Peoples' rights, solutions, and struggles; 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 their advocacy needs; and communicating to linguistically diverse audiences to increase Cultural Survival's global reach.