

TEWA WOMEN UNITED

Community Strengths & Needs Assessment



Conducted by Ampersand LLC
Submitted April 2022

DEDICATION



Ms. Laura Escalanti

Ms. Laura Escalanti, from the Pueblo of San Ildefonso, died on November 21, 2020 of complications from COVID-19. Ms. Laura taught Tewa and Spanish at the Pojoaque Valley School District. Beloved as a passionate advocate for youth who always "kept it real," Ms. Laura is deeply missed.

WELCOME

This assessment is an effort to understand, in broad strokes, **how the pandemic has affected the communities Tewa Women United serves**. What needs and new opportunities have arisen? What community strengths exist? What do we know now, at this moment in time? How might this information help guide the organization, moving forward?

Nineteen people generously shared their thoughts during in-depth interviews. Eighty-two community members, aged 13 to 82, responded to a lengthy survey. **The voices of community members, as well as those of leaders of seven trusted partner organizations, are quoted in this summary report.** Additional resources provide context. An asset mapping process, begun as part of this project, may deepen and expand in coming months.

We are grateful for the wisdom and the profound stories shared with us. Each story is valid, valuable and cherished. For the team who explored the data in depth, one overarching story came through most clearly. We offer this story in the pages that follow, with respect and with openness to many different ways of understanding.

That story's essence is sketched in the table of findings. More detail follows in this summary report and its appendix. The original datasets, redacted to preserve confidentiality, reside with Tewa Women United.

Welcome to this collaboration. **Your presence and attention are so appreciated.** We invite your feedback and reflections, and we hope you find this useful.

TABLE OF FINDINGS

01

This **strong community**,

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facing **wicked challenges**,

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deserves **great care** so people may thrive.

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We must **heal from racial injustice**,

05

navigate the new demands of a **virtual world**,

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and **work locally and beyond** to create positive change.

STRONG COMMUNITY

Shining at the center of this assessment is the **strength of community**. Collectively, people in the communities TWU serves were steadfast and resourceful in the face of tremendous adversity and profound losses to the pandemic. They pulled together and were generous with each other. Powered by love and connection, they were lifted by spirit and by faith in one another.

This same strength and resilience is reflected in Tewa Women United's partner organizations who know, care for, and serve community. Organizations were determined that the people they serve "were not going to be left behind again." **The web, or ecosystem, of nonprofit provider organizations weathered this challenging time, and continues to be a vital asset to the region.**

We heard sobering reflections on the loneliness, isolation, shunning, and, for some, lingering toll of having COVID. People spoke of the challenges of lockdown, and of limited access to basic resources and essential services. But we also heard of the **deep appreciation people feel for the help and support they received—from tribes, from mutual aid efforts, and from one another.**

We saw, too, that community—at every scale—is complex, with a complexity that invites respect, engagement and reflection. Revisiting values, customs, and beliefs can help organizations and individuals remain responsive to change.



"We reach in and pull out, you know? We reach in to the wisdom of the ancestors."

WHAT MAKES THIS COMMUNITY STRONG?

Rooted in spiritual practice and ceremony, reliant on relationships, and connected to the web of support from local organizations, many people TWU serves are finding their way forward. But don't underestimate the amount of love, effort, and resources of every kind this requires. From family to providers and beyond, the cost of responding to overwhelming need is itself overwhelming. Self care, and the conditions and resources to practice it, is essential to restore wellness.



01 — Collective Care

Care for one another can take many forms. Neighbors delivered food, relatives stepped in to raise children, mutual aid societies distributed necessities, and more. But simpler ways count, too: spending time together and sharing stories is a way to sustain through difficult times.



02 — Strength of Spirit

Prayer and connection to spiritual practice was vital for many. Despite obstacles to gathering for ceremony and support, people drew on cultural tradition and the power of the ancestors to help them through. We found this true across age, gender and ethnicity.



03 — Nonprofit Ecosystem

Tewa Women United, its partnering organizations, and support agencies across sectors play an important role in strengthening and sustaining the community. TWU and others are able to create waves of impact and generate patterns of influence that communicate information, provide services, and open opportunities.

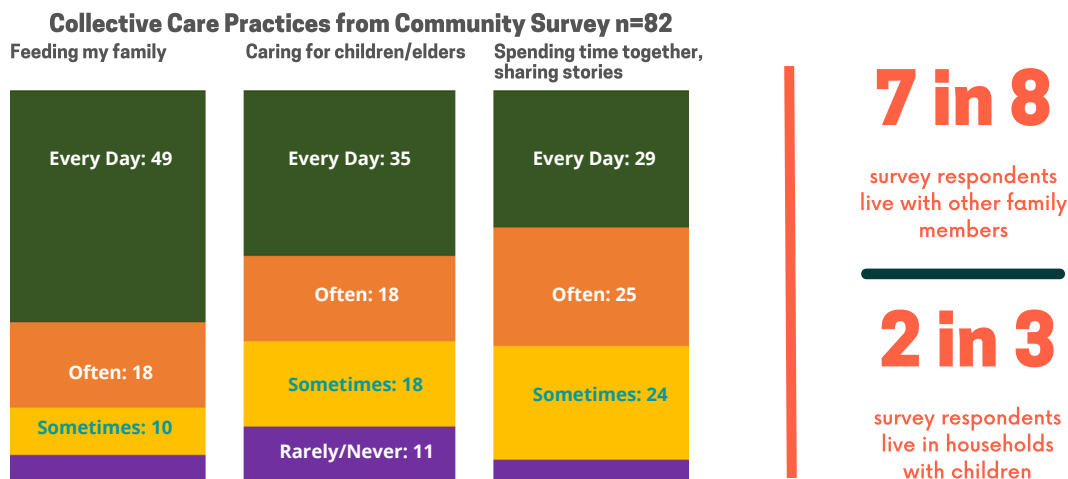
**“We have kinship responsibilities, but
it comes at a cost.”**

strong community: collective care

In the face of pandemic pressures, community members were quick to help in whatever ways they could. This kind of collective care, exemplified in the rise of mutual aid efforts and in caregiving within extended families, may grow from the tight bonds survey respondents feel with relatives ("kinship responsibilities") and toward other members of their community. Interview data confirmed what we learned from the community survey.

THE VALUE OF FAMILY SUPPORT

Centering children and elders, providing for family, and spending time together were important ways people navigated pandemic challenges



Living in harmony with natural systems is part of self/collective care for most.

- 73% say they "protect and support the earth" every day or often
- 65% say they "support healthy, affordable food systems" every day or often
- 78% report "being outside in nature" as an every day or often self care practice

But, while people are eager to help others, asking for help can be difficult.

- Only 34% say they "ask for help when I need it" every day or often; 18% say they rarely or never do

66%

of the 82 respondents to the intergenerational community survey identify as Native American. Ages range from 13 to 82 years. 79% are female.

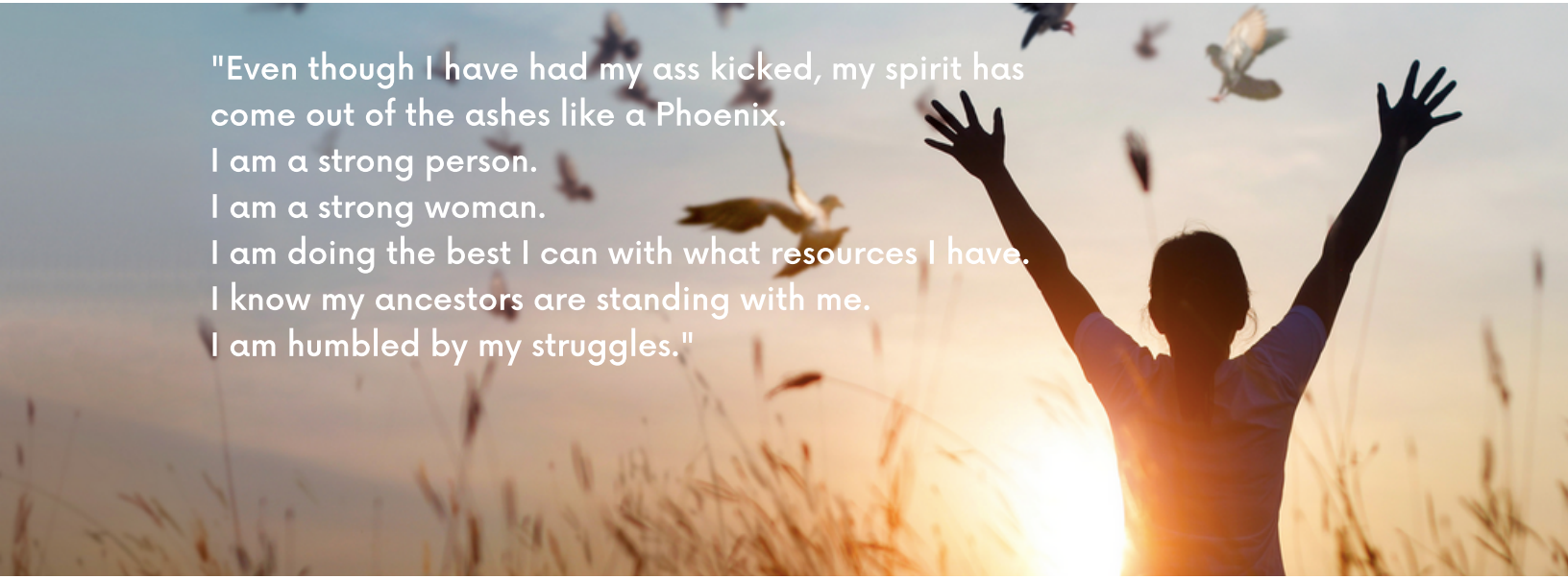
strong community: strength of spirit

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the well being of those we surveyed. Compared to their status pre-pandemic, we found that few felt their mental, physical, or emotional health had improved--and most felt worse off in those domains. Spiritually, however, we saw a different trend.

Using TWU's Mind-Heart-Body-Spirit framework, we asked community members if they felt better, worse, or about the same as they had, pre-pandemic:

Domain	Better	Worse	About the same
Mind (mental health)	11	36	34
Heart (emotional health)	11	32	39
Body (physical health)	13	26	43
Spirit (spiritual connection)	19	20	43

Despite pandemic restrictions on gathering, **72% of respondents said that they engage in "prayer, ceremony or spiritual practice" every day or often.**



"Even though I have had my ass kicked, my spirit has come out of the ashes like a Phoenix.
I am a strong person.
I am a strong woman.
I am doing the best I can with what resources I have.
I know my ancestors are standing with me.
I am humbled by my struggles."

A spiritual connection strengthens some of the partner organizations, as well. One partner shared her belief that "before our ancestors were gone, they sent out prayers. And, you know, those prayers are out there still, they don't go away. And then as a mother, you know, we send up our prayers. And together, the prayers out there, you know, we're in this space with the healing that is provided to be resilient, maybe?"

strong community: nonprofit ecosystem

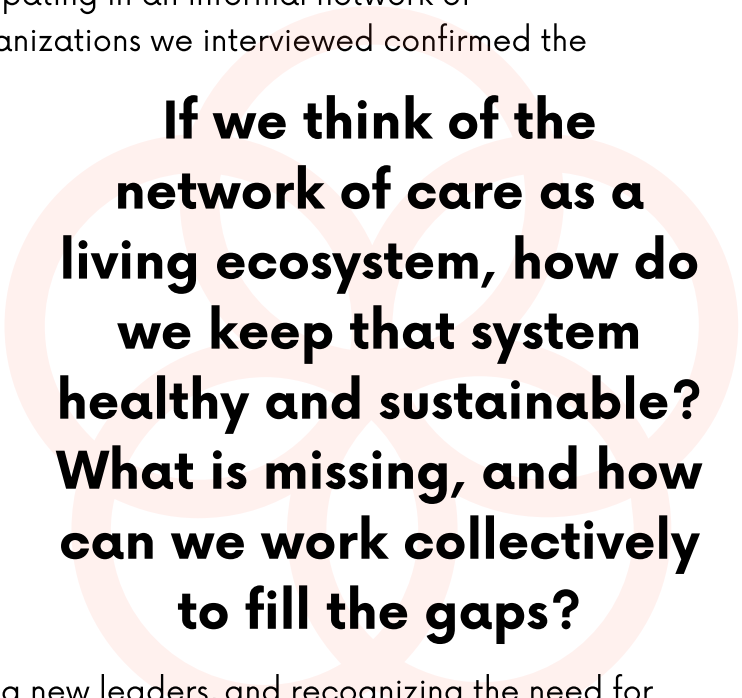
Data from the community survey and from interviews with community members emphasized the **value of services and resources people received from local nonprofits and agencies**. Tribal members, in particular, appreciated the efforts their tribes made throughout the pandemic to ensuring their well being through **food distribution programs, cash assistance, vaccination clinics** and more. **Parental supports, talking circles for those experiencing grief, and recreational opportunities for youth** were among the many services mentioned as helpful.

We saw ample evidence, too, of **the role Tewa Women United plays as an anchor organization serving needs across the age spectrum**. "TWU has become a mentor for my community," we heard. "They have open arms and are paving the way of healing our communities." From the direct positive impact YVK doulas have on positive birth experiences, to the youth guidance and mentorship of the A'Gin Project, to the support and encouragement of the Sayain (Grandmothers' Circle), to the environmental advocacy of the Espanola Healing Foods Oasis and beyond, we learned how TWU has touched lives in myriad ways.

TWU's impact reaches beyond individual community members and families to influence and be amplified by participating in an informal network of organizations. The seven partner organizations we interviewed confirmed the **value of collaborating with Tewa Women United staff and leadership**.

Collectively, these eight organizations painted a picture of intense change and redoubled commitment—and a shadow epidemic of burnout and staff attrition. While many shifted all or part of their programming to virtual, they continued to provide services and create ways to meet emergent needs. Partners identified nurturing authentic relationships among

organizations, fostering growth among new leaders, and recognizing the need for self-care within the field as elements critical to pandemic recovery and beyond.



If we think of the network of care as a living ecosystem, how do we keep that system healthy and sustainable? What is missing, and how can we work collectively to fill the gaps?

WICKED CHALLENGES

The data reveal how deeply disruptive the pandemic has been. Too many lives were lost to the virus; too many families grieved separately. Symptoms of long COVID persisted. Jobs disappeared. School shifted to virtual, and families with limited internet or technology issues found themselves struggling to keep up.

For some of our most vulnerable neighbors, lacking access to in-person services meant facing critical, life-threatening gaps in their most basic needs. "Not having access to housing counseling, not having access to detox, not having access to therapy. Not having access to a bathroom. Not being able to go and sit down anywhere, and being outside all the time. ... If you didn't have internet at home, you couldn't go to the library, you couldn't go to McDonald's and use Wi Fi. ...I had several people die from basically not havin access to services."

The chart below points to the degree and types of disruption experienced by survey respondents. More comprehensive examples are found in the appendix.

DOMAIN	EXAMPLES OF DISRUPTION	NEEDS EXPRESSED
Living/Caregiving: 45% experienced pandemic disruption	Loss of housing; moving to care for elders; taking in relatives' children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help for caregivers• Help paying for housing• Home repair and utilities support
Work/Study: 62% experienced pandemic disruption	Loss of employment; unsupported virtual schooling; erratic work schedules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexible hours• Tech support and provide computers• Better internet & cell service• Help for caregivers
Health: 44% experienced decline in mental health due to pandemic	Impact of long COVID; effects of isolation; relapse from sobriety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial support• Counseling/therapy• Help for caregivers• Support circles• Behavioral health care

wicked challenges

The pandemic made existing inequities more acute and more obvious. But the challenges communities face are not new. **Persistent disparities stemming from limited access to resources, historical trauma and more, yield challenges that are intergenerational, recurrent, and intersectional.**

"For Native American communities across the United States, long-standing health and economic inequalities have made them particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 infection and spread," a recent report confirms (Foxworth 2021). The chart below shows the devastating impact of those inequalities for New Mexico.

Even within partner organizations, we learned of disparities in pandemic impact. "This time has had this huge revealing around the way that systemic privileges are buffering us from our environments. ... The folks who are able to keep engaging and have a baseline level of safety, that allows them to continue to access the bigger benefits of the work that we're all doing."

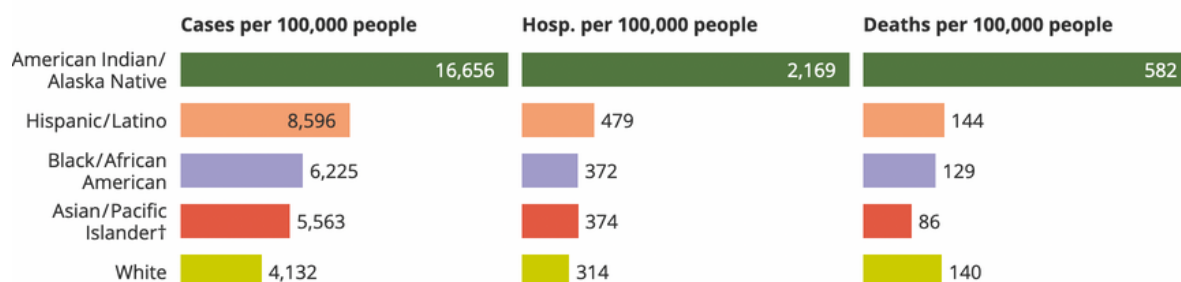
In evaluation, a "wicked" problem is one that is complex, hard to articulate, and solution-resistant. **Wicked challenges require transformative healing.**

Racism, the history of colonization, toxic patriarchy and other systemic pressures compound the challenges facing communities of color recovering from pandemic losses.

"We can't go back," we heard from so many of you. "I don't know if there's ever a returning to what was normal beforehand. And I think it's important for us as an organization, for our staff, for the way we operate, how we show up—I think it's going to be a whole different way of how we view work, and how we view organizing, and how we view response to crisis."

Native American populations in New Mexico suffered COVID-19 rates many times over those of other groups.

Source: <https://covidtracking.com/data/state/new-mexico/race-ethnicity>



TRANSFORMATIVE HEALING

We need to address and heal from the systemic oppression at the root of these issues. Community care must grapple with the legacy of these historical and ongoing injustices. And healing, we learned from you, happens most effectively when it is intergenerational, continuous, and holistic.

01 — Intergenerational

The challenges facing the communities served by Tewa Women United have been carried—like the "trauma rocks" San Ildefonso elder Kathy Sanchez describes—by one generation after another, and they affect families from the youngest to the eldest. Solutions that are intergenerational and build on the strengths, ancestral and contemporary, of the people they serve will be most effective. Supporting solutions that strengthen generational ties can build on the "kinship responsibilities" already present.

02 — Continuous

"One-stop" solutions may be helpful in the short term, but are not sufficient in themselves. Needs and challenges recur throughout an individual's lifetime, and require regular revisiting and care. Programming is more effective when it acknowledges the influence of environment, both physical and social. Building in time for reflection on values and perspective can help both individuals and organizations respond to changing situations.

03 — Holistic

We're all subject to different, intersecting pressures, and our intersecting identities make us differentially vulnerable to oppressive systems. Recognizing that each of us is a whole person in relationality with others means taking a holistic approach—mind, heart, body, spirit—to needs at every level.

"A lot of healing needs to take place with so many generations... What is that root cause?"

GREAT CARE

Over and over we heard the need for more local, accessible resources to serve children with special needs, families addressing addiction challenges, and more. Services that focus on isolated supports, ignoring broader social and environmental aspects, or those that reduce people to parts or problems, just don't work.

People talked a lot about the need for a “big tent,” a “facility that’s treating all of it, every aspect of wellness and health and stress.” Such a place would make available wraparound services for all who need them in a healing space without stigma. “We just need a place where we would all be equal, and we could get that [holistic] wraparound that we needed.”

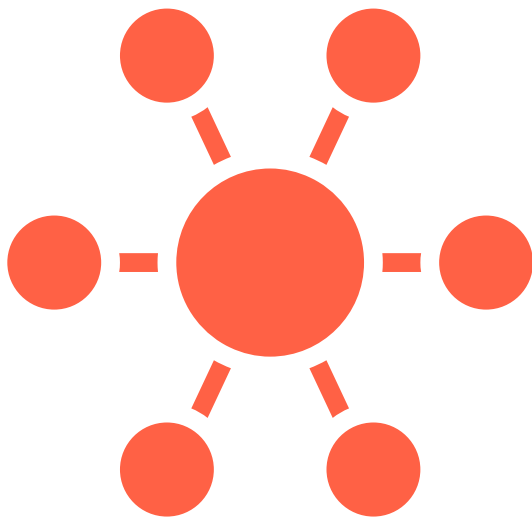


"I feel that if we could have a tent, and it doesn't have to be anything fancy, just a place where an individual could come and get the wraparound support that they need, whether it was a glass of water, a place to just rest their weary bones... or a place where a grandparent could come and share their worst fears; or a place where they could come and then mourn and cry and not be embarrassed of how their loved one had passed away."

great care

Maybe the “big tent” is already underway. No one knows better than local folks what the needs are, and organizations on the ground are working hard to address them. But no single organization can do it all. There’s a need to continuously monitor the landscape of resources, and to work—and advocate—collaboratively to fill the gaps. **The network of service providers needs to be supported and grown, with more resources, enhanced communication, and time to build and sustain authentic relationships.**

As part of this assessment, we began an asset mapping process to identify existing resources and understand where gaps exist. This ongoing, editable resource can help TWU and partners survey the landscape and develop strategies for change.



We also heard the **need to elevate and address self and collective care for those who work in community-facing organizations.** The pandemic response and the pressures of COVID made extreme demands on providers and care organizations. What does sustainability mean in this context?

What do people think would help most?

The responses from the community survey and the process of creating the asset map has created an opportunity to learn about needs, gaps and interests. Below is a summary of the key findings of what participants asked for and where current gaps exist.

Learning + Development

- Opportunities for mentorship, skillshares and mutual aid
- Opportunities to learn more about the arts and creative practices
- Opportunities to learn about self care practices

Collective Care Practices

- Develop an understanding of what collective care means and how to engage
- Community led listening circles
- Support for caregivers

Wellness

- Elder care and child care
- Affordable/accessible mental and behavioral health care
- Exercise + healthy, sustainable food systems

More detail available in Appendix A

GREAT CARE The Nonprofit Ecosystem

The ecosystem is a framework to understand the relationships, patterns, resources and creative possibilities within a community. Cultivating mutually interdependent relationships allows for resources to flow, for learning to flourish, and for positive growth to address the needs of a community. In the Rio Arriba/Espanola Valley nonprofit ecosystem, we gained an important understanding of what works—and of the pressures, and need for additional resources, that exist.

1

Shared culture, history and experience strengthen an organization's commitment and strategies.

2

The wisdom of the ancestors, of lived experience, and of spiritual connection is strong and sustaining for many providers, and central to their effectiveness.

3

There is a need to elevate and address self and collective care for those who work in community-facing organizations.

"For Espanola as a whole, how do organizations work together to fill those gaps? And how is there this community wide conversation of, like, how do we support each other and fill those gaps for each other?"

HEAL FROM RACIAL INJUSTICE

While multiple systems of oppression affect those centered in this assessment, the harm inflicted by racism, its far-reaching impacts and its many corollary effects, was addressed directly by the partners. “We didn’t lose momentum because of the pandemic,” we heard. “We lost momentum because how of how regenerative white supremacy is. So that’s what we’re dealing with now, how quickly it regenerates, and how well.”

We learned, too, that oppression of Indigenous and Black people within people of color spaces is real. Anti-Blackness within Indigenous communities is real.

But there is evidence of and potential for fruitful solidarity, collaboration, and racial healing. We need to continue these conversations and invest in honest reflection, acknowledgement of what makes each culture unique, and collective action against racism.

One partner suggested we might begin by “developing our shared vision, enhancing our relationship through trust, love, care, and reliability. Honoring our differences and righting any wrongs that may be ancestral or collective, as opposed to individual. Just loving on each other is really helpful. I think that shared framework is the way home.”



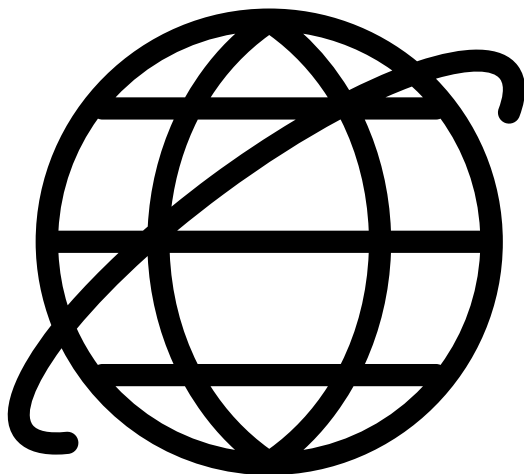
“How do we recognize the multiplicities of everybody? and continue to be strong advocates for one another?”

A VIRTUAL WORLD

Technology: ooof. The issues are multi-faceted, complex, and constantly changing. The pandemic required most organizations to engage, at least partially, in virtual programming and communications. It's been a delicate balance. Organizations have tried hard to protect staff and community, but It hasn't always been clear when and how to return to in-person programming.

Some community members found themselves isolated without access to internet or devices. "Unfortunately, 22.3 percent of Americans in rural areas and 27.7 percent of Americans in Tribal lands lack coverage from fixed terrestrial broadband, as compared to only 1.5 percent of Americans in urban areas," the USDA reports. Even for those with internet access, it wasn't an easy transition—especially when bandwidth, human and internet, was split between adults working from home and children attending online classes, often using the same computer.

As restrictions ease, a hybrid world is inevitable. And that's not entirely bad. Some noted expanded reach. The future will require **more equitable access** and **creative ways to engage those less familiar with technology** so all may benefit.



"We have been able to reach a lot of youth that typically can't come to our Center for our in person programming. It's been much more accessible for them to call in and join our services that we have online."

LOCAL AND BEYOND

The data is full of examples of people helping one another in the pandemic. People prepared meals, delivered groceries, checked on elders, made masks for essential workers, took care of one another's children, doubled up on housing so relatives would have a safe place to live.

Organized volunteer efforts took root. "There's been more attention paid to mutual aid programs and services in the pandemic," we heard. "We're seeing that these kinds of things are possible, community members taking care of community members. ... Mutual aid showed us that it is possible to feed people and to get food to people who have challenges to mobility and transportation."

Some local organizations launched similar "proof of concept" programs, connecting farmers to food banks, facilitating seed exchanges, and connecting community members with vital resources.

Working through local connections can mean individuals don't fall through the gaps. But Tewa Women United and many of the partner organizations noted the importance of working toward policy and systems change as well. Collaborations and networks sprung up to advocate for birth equity, environmental justice and more. Organizing cross-sector and with resonant efforts nationwide is part of a broader mandate to create lasting change.

"Either give communities more resources to make it happen, because communities CAN make it happen, or the government needs to get it together so that they can actually enact some of these policies. Because they work. And we've seen them work."

MOVING FORWARD

This effort offers both a snapshot in time—two years into the COVID-19 pandemic—and a landscape view of the persistent challenges and sustaining strengths that characterize the communities Tewa Women United serves. We hope these findings will be helpful in raising questions and guiding strategies as the organization moves forward. We close with three fundamental recommendations.



01 — Support community care

Findings point to the ongoing need to resource grassroots, community-based and community-driven programming. This can mean supporting relative care and mutual aid efforts, providing responsive organizational programming, advocating for policy change to benefit community-identified needs—or all three.



02 — Address root causes

Healing from complex challenges requires getting to the root of systemic and institutional inequity. Those most impacted by injustice are best positioned to identify the changes that need to occur. Shifts in power and increased access to resources can empower community to make those changes.



03 — Nurture relationships

The pandemic laid bare power and resource differentials at the core of our relationships. Acknowledging and addressing these, while making time for authentic and courageous communication, will foster stronger and more effective working partnerships.

**This strong community,
facing wicked challenges,
deserves great care so
people may thrive.**

**We must heal from
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From the initial vision to design, data collection, analysis, and meaning-making, this strengths and needs assessment has been a deep collaboration between Tewa Women United and Ampersand LLC. At Tewa Women United, much gratitude to Dr. Corrine Sanchez, Nathana Bird, Sierra Mondragon, Celina Hokeah, Jessica Lujan, and Victoria Parrill. Kathy Namba and Summer Wood (Ampersand LLC) were ably assisted by Amanda Cacavio-Flores of Florezca LLC, who conducted the asset mapping process and explored the nonprofit ecosystem.

We are deeply grateful to the seven partner organizations who gave generously of their time and thoughts. Much appreciation to the following:

- AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE NM - Sayrah Namaste
- BARRIOS UNIDOS - Lupe Salazar
- BLACK HEALTH NEW MEXICO - Sunshine Muse
- BREATH OF MY HEART BIRTHPLACE - Jessica Frechette-Gutfreund
- LAS CUMBRES COMMUNITY SERVICES - Jeanette Ortiz
- NMGSA at THE MOUNTAIN CENTER - Karen Dugas and Hendrix Olson
- NORTHERN YOUTH PROJECT - Lupita Salazar

To the 87 community members who completed the survey and/or participated in an interview: this is for you. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

We are saddened by the loss of Ms. Laura Escalanti, who championed Pueblo youth and contributed so generously to previous evaluation and assessment efforts. Rest in peace and power, Ms. Laura.—S.W.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A (Unrestricted access)

- Charts and Tables on following pages
- [TWU Asset Map 2022 overview](#)
- [Methodology](#)
- [TWU Local Resources printable table](#)
- Community survey infographic

APPENDIX B (Tewa Women United and participating partners)

- Findings presentation with questions for further collaboration

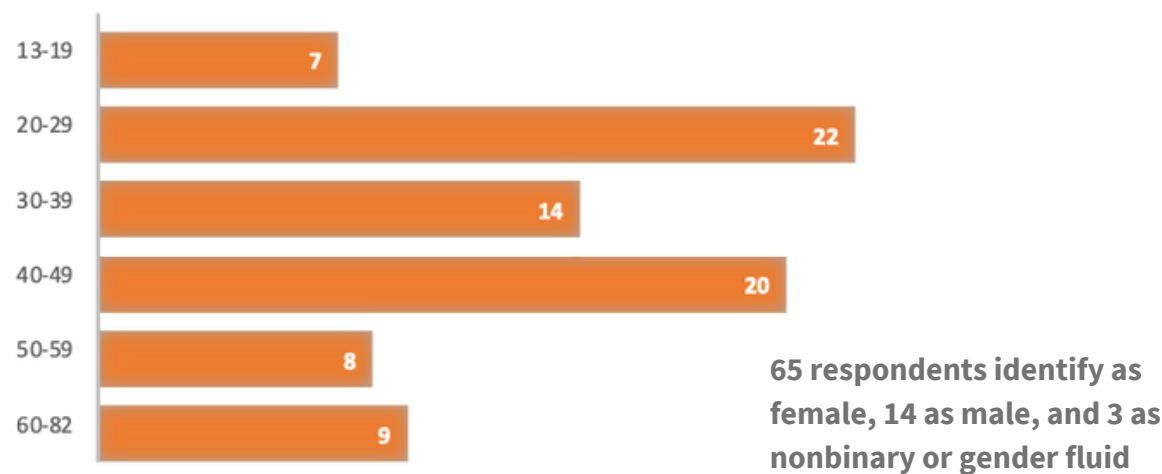
APPENDIX C ([Tewa Women United only](#))

- Live asset map, editable spreadsheet of resources, and tips for future use
- Community survey data - de-identified
- Approved transcripts from interviews with partners
- De-identified community interview notes and transcripts
- Analysis of community and partner responses to TWU role & impact

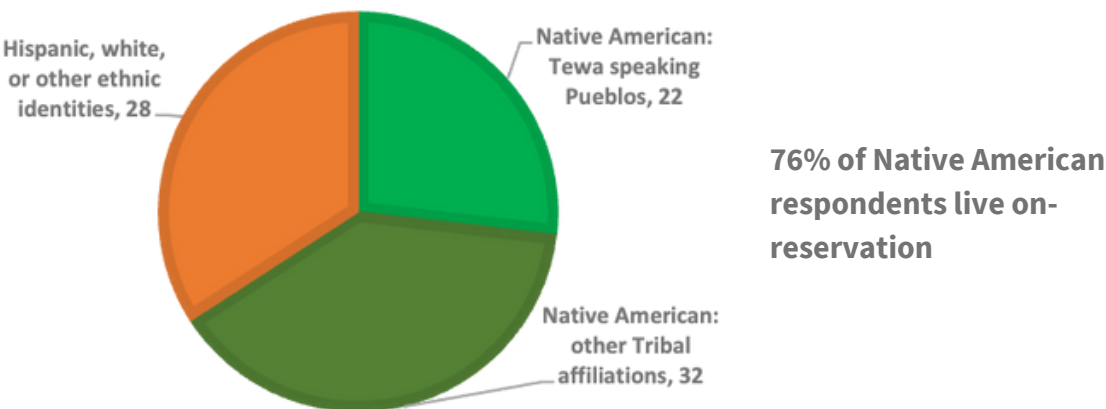
CHARTS & TABLES

COMMUNITY SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS N=82

AGE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



54 OF 82 RESPONDENTS ARE NATIVE AMERICAN



7 IN 8 RESPONDENTS LIVE WITH FAMILY



68% OF RESPONDENTS LIVE WITH CHILDREN <18

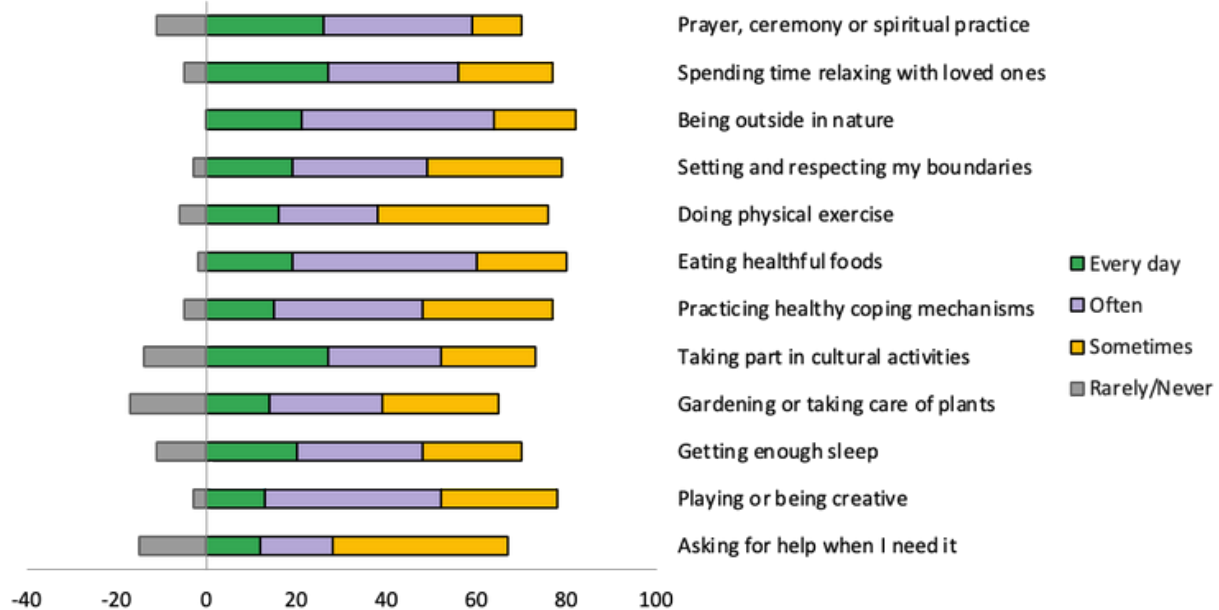
32% OF RESPONDENTS ARE PRIMARY CAREGIVERS FOR CHILDREN UNDER 5

WORK AND STUDY STATUS

QUESTION	Yes	No	NA
Is your primary work usually within your home caring for your family (for example, homemaking or raising your children)?	25	54	3
Do you usually work from home for an outside employer (or self-employment)?	32	48	2
Do you usually leave your home to go to your primary work?	43	34	5
Do you work within your tribal community?	12	26	3
If you were going out to work before the pandemic, were you able to switch to working remotely (working from home) during the pandemic?	37	37	7
Are you currently unemployed?	30	52	0
Are you a student?	9-FT 11-PT	60	2
Has your work or study situation changed during or because of the pandemic? Please describe (optional): 35 responses	49	30	3

SELF AND COLLECTIVE CARE DURING THE PANDEMIC

Self Care Practice During the Pandemic (N=82)



Collective Care Practices During the Pandemic (N=82)

