



Better Way
FOUNDATION



Better Way Foundation

2021 Annual Report



Mission

A family foundation, rooted in catholic social values, Better Way Foundation invests in systemic, holistic and evidence-based approaches that support the positive development of all children.

Vision

Through local partnerships, we are finding a better way to build a future where child well-being contributes to strong families and communities.

Early education and positive child development play a vital role in society. Better Way Foundation supports leaders and organizations who work to create a healthy and culturally grounded learning environment to help children reach their fullest potential. Our focused commitment to Early Childhood Development in Indian Country and in Tanzania helps build a foundation for educational achievement, lifelong health, and the success of the next generation.

**EVERY DAY, OUR PARTNERS ARE
FINDING A BETTER WAY.**

Letter from our Board Chair

The continuing pandemic made 2021 a year of tremendous challenges for children, families, and communities across the globe. Nevertheless, our partners adapted to overcome the many challenges and make it an exceptional year. Through all the uncertainty and loss, they kept sight of the end goal and continued to offer quality and culturally rooted learning and development to build a better future.

We took inspiration from their work while our board completed and launched a new five-year strategic plan. Over the coming years, we will work to further fulfill the foundation's mission to improve the lives of children through pursuit of three strategic goals.

- | To be an exemplary philanthropic organization
- | To grow and strengthen a diverse network of community-driven partnerships in Indian Country and Tanzania
- | To drive social change through values-based impact investing as we steward the BWF endowment

It is our hope that focused energy on these initiatives will help deepen our impact through advocacy, expand our networks and enhance our partnerships. It is only through a powerful exchange of ideas, locally driven solutions, and shared stories of success that we are able to advance our mission and help children and communities thrive.

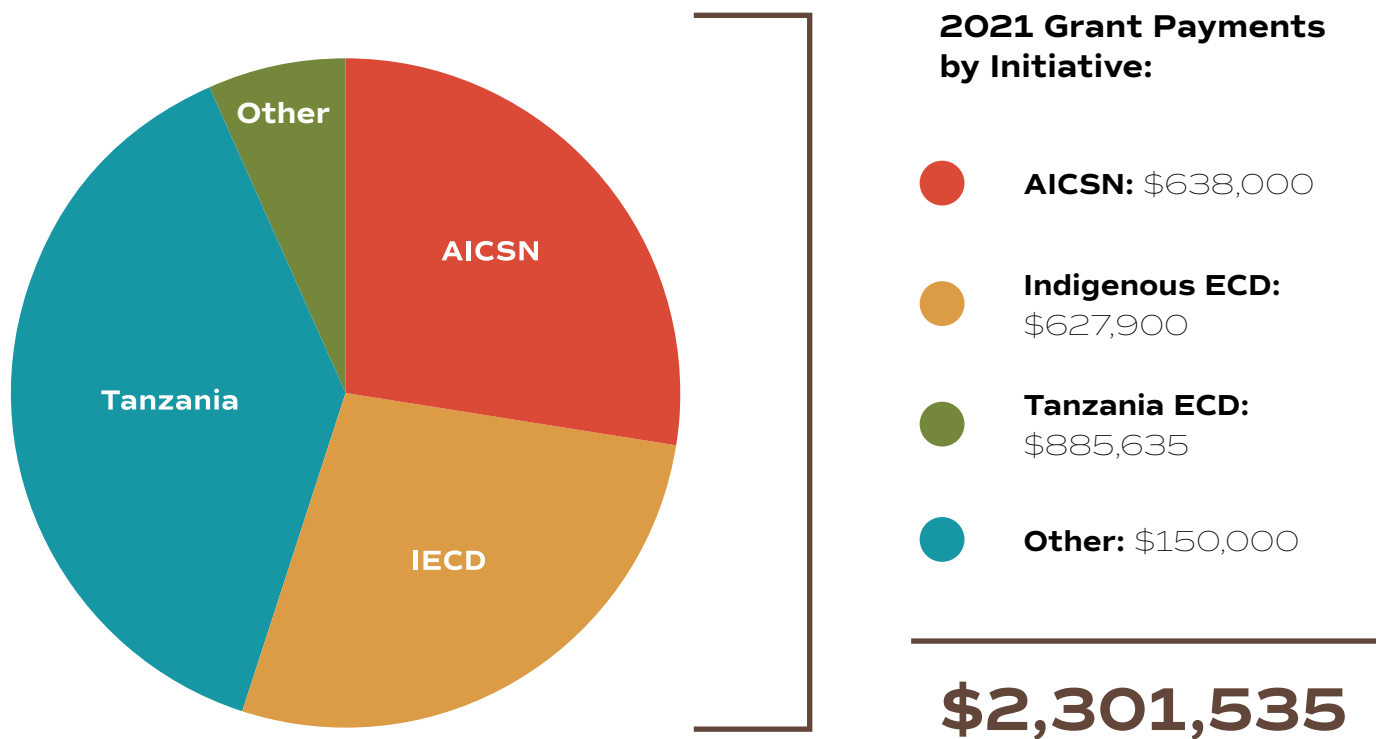
**SINCERELY,
GIA RAUENHORST**

BOARD CHAIR

Partnerships for Impact

We partner with organizations in Indian Country and Tanzania that are working towards systemic change through holistic, evidence-based approaches in early childhood education for children ages 3-5.

We help our partners improve the lives and futures of the children, families and communities they serve through knowledge sharing, program development, capacity building, advocacy, and resource development.



We invest in local organizations and leaders to develop culturally grounded programs and help build strategic connections to broader networks of impact. Our efforts to build organizational capacity are centered in:

Development of networks & collaborations - our partners work together to catalyze innovation and change.

Leadership development - strong leaders can oversee direct service delivery to ensure that more children have access to early childhood education.

Evaluation & learning - ongoing measurement allows partners to understand, analyze, and deepen their impact.



INITIATIVE:

Tanzania

Early Childhood Development

Better Way Foundation has supported early childhood development in Tanzania since 2009. We dedicate an average of 35% of our annual grants budget to supporting this work. In order to maximize our local impact and sustain deep relationships, we concentrate our efforts on the shores of Lake Victoria in the Mwanza and Kagera regions.

Our partners work collaboratively with public sector institutions and government to develop and implement sustainable, long-term programs that deliver lasting change. They are well-connected among national early childhood organizations, advocates, researchers, and policymakers.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Foundation grants to **Children in Crossfire Tanzania** led to the revitalization of the **Tanzania Early Childhood Development Network (TECDEN)**, whose national advocacy for ECD achieved several major breakthroughs in 2021:

- The creation of an Early Childhood Development Parliamentary Group, an indicator of significant progress in TECDEN's advocacy for greater national investment in ECD
- The launch of Tanzania's first National Multi-Sectoral ECD Program, which is designed to strengthen opportunities and respond to gaps in the "provision of comprehensive ECD services to all children (aged 0-8 years) in Tanzania"

TAHEA-Mwanza trained 26 ECD center facilitators from 12 centers on facilitating play-based learning for children aged 3-4 years. Through focused training, regular mentorship, and active coaching at their work places, the facilitators are now delivering quality early childhood learning to more than 1,012 children.

Through **Amani Girls Home's** community mobilization, public education, and teacher training programs, access to early childhood learning among children in the rural Sengerema and Buchosa districts has grown substantially, with 6,782 children enrolled in 36 recently opened pre-primary classrooms and 5 community-owned ECD centers.

Tumaini Letu delivered pre-school education to 1,983 children enrolled in their 20 ECD centers in Muleba district, Kagera region.

PARTNER SNAPSHOT

Mama's Hope Organization for Legal Assistance

Mama's Hope Organization for Legal Assistance (MHOLA) works to strengthen local networks at ward, district, and regional levels involving all matters of child protection. The organization aims to increase coordination among those addressing child issues, leading to better utilization of scarce resources for the benefit of vulnerable children and families.

178 children are enrolled directly in the MHOLA day care center/preschool.

MHOLA has supplied 250 children with uniforms and school kits, easing their transitions to primary school .

MHOLA has assisted 4,540 children and mothers in child rights cases, including 439 that were taken to court.



INITIATIVE:

Indigenous Early Childhood Development

We are working toward a future in which all Indigenous children are given the opportunity to experience high-quality, culturally rooted early learning and development. Since launching this initiative in 2016, we have developed a strategy that is guided by the conviction that this vision is best pursued through support to partner organizations that are Indigenous-led, Indigenous-owned, and deeply rooted in their communities.

Holistic and culturally grounded Indigenous ECD programs provide a promising avenue for addressing health disparities, promoting healing from intergenerational trauma, and advancing the beauty, strength, and power of Indigenous children to build a better future. They offer quality learning experiences that aid in the development of literacy and numeracy skills, healthy attitudes towards learning, identity formation, self-esteem and self-worth, as well as a child's physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. They recognize and elevate Indigenous resilience and brilliance.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Better Way Foundation launched three new Indigenous ECD partnerships in 2021, with initial grants to the Comanche Language and Preservation Committee, Little Earth Residents Association, and Tohono O'odham Community College.

The Indigenous Montessori Institute, a project of Keres Children's Learning Center, emerged as a major force for Indigenous Education in New Mexico, providing training to 230 staff members of the New Mexico Early Childhood and Care Department.

Like all schools, COVID-19 forced our Indigenous ECD partners to pivot between in-person learning and supporting children and families with at-home and distance-learning resources. Creative leadership meant that we still saw great things happening - the team at Çansayapi Waḡanyeža Owayawa Oṭi (Lower Sioux Early Head Start & Head Start) increased the time staff spent on Dakota language learning, which will help the program along the path to full Dakota immersion education.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation

Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation works to create systemic change on the Pine Ridge Reservation. With Better Way Foundation support, Thunder Valley has transformed its Lakota childcare center into a fully fledged Lakota Montessori school, taking the Montessori pedagogy and applying it to the development of the whole Lakota child.

Transformed what was once a basic childcare facility into a Lakota Montessori school

Provides 35 enrolled children with a high-quality learning environment.

Offers 100% Lakota-speaking childcare and learning



INITIATIVE:

American Indian Catholic Schools Network

American Indian Catholic education honors and promotes the cultural identity of Native students. It gives students a unique perspective on the world which is focused on prayerful connection to all creation.

The American Indian Catholic Schools Network consists of seven reservation schools across six states in partnership with the University of Notre Dame's Alliance for Catholic Education. Better Way Foundation funds the network of schools to help ensure access to high-quality education and give children a strong steppingstone toward happy, healthy, and successful lives as Native people. The Foundation's efforts enhance networks, strengthen teaching practices and improve student success, with programs that strive to be rooted in both the local Indigenous context and excellent Catholic education.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

A 2020 partnership with Red Cloud Indian School created the first Director of Truth & Healing position in the American Indian Catholic Schools Network.

Nearly 100 teachers and leaders participated in professional development opportunities to exchange ideas, share best practices and be inspired by others. Some visits and events included:

- Notre Dame for Summer Institutes
- Holy Cross College AICSN Fellows
- Play Like a Champion Conference
- Middle School Pilgrimage

Presentations by the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition and Red Cloud Indian School's director of truth & healing at the fall 2021 FADICA (a Catholic donor group) retreat, part of our joint effort to elevate the need for meaningful efforts to advance truth, healing, and justice related to boarding school trauma.

Four Network leaders and staff enrolled in the Mary Ann Remick Leadership Program (M.A. in Educational Leadership).

A five-year strategic plan (2019-2024) was developed to identify program objectives and focus efforts.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Red Cloud Indian School

We acknowledge the horrific history of Indian boarding schools - institutions set up in the 1800s and in used well into the 20th century as tools of assimilation, seeking to eliminate Indigenous languages, culture, and spiritual practices. Catholic schools were among the perpetrators, and as such the AICSN network has committed to advancing processes of truth & healing in the communities its members serve.

Starting with a BWF grant in 2020, Red Cloud Indian School began openly addressing its tragic past. They are embarking on a healing journey by uncovering the past and unearthing stories of survivors. Through the Truth & Healing process, they are committed to digitizing archives and making them fully accessible; ensuring today's curriculum offers students a clear understanding of the school's history; supporting the work of Secretary Deb Haaland and the U.S. Department of the Interior to reveal the history of U.S. Indian boarding schools; and moving toward full transparency and accountability, sharing the realities of its own past.



Impact Investing

In 2018, the Better Way Foundation Board of Directors made an initial commitment to allocating 5 percent of the Foundation's assets to socially responsible investments that are aligned with our mission. This move allows for investment opportunities which support the development and well-being of communities that will indirectly benefit young children.

WE INTERPRET AND IDENTIFY THESE INVESTMENTS THROUGH OUR '4-E LENS':

1. **Educational opportunity:** Investments that strengthen the educational foundation for children.
2. **Economic opportunity:** Investments that create or expand jobs, strengthen access to housing, or otherwise produce economic benefits to families and their communities.
3. **Environment:** Investments that improve the environment in which families and children live.
4. **Equity:** Investments that advance racial equity by redressing structural inequities such as access to loan capital.

OUR IMPACT INVESTING PROGRAM SEEKS TO GENERATE SOCIAL RETURNS IN PRIORITIZED GEOGRAPHIC AREAS:

1. Communities we serve as a grantmaker – Tanzania and Indigenous communities within the United States.
2. Cross-regional impact investment that go beyond our specific grantmaking geographies but offer a strong and compelling social and financial investment in the positive development of all children.

In 2021, our Board committed \$1.3 million to new program-related investments in Indian Country. We disbursed \$1 million in loans to three Native Community Development Finance Institutions - Four Bands Community Fund, Lakota Funds, and NACDC Financial Services - and approved a \$300,000 loan to the Rosebud Economic Development Corporation (REDCO), in support of its Wolakota Regenerative Buffalo Range.



Partners

AMERICAN INDIAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS NETWORK INITIATIVE

De La Salle Blackfeet School
*Teacher Professional
Development & Support*

**National Native Boarding
School Healing Coalition**
Core Support

Red Cloud Indian School, Inc.
Truth & Healing Project

St. Augustine
Blended Learning Initiative

St. Charles School
*Teach Them Apache
Language Program*

St. Joseph Mission School
Kindergarten & STEM Support

St. Mary's Mission
*Montessori Pre-K Teacher
Training*

St. Michael Indian School
*Navajo Nation Junior
Achievement Program*

**University of Notre Dame/
AICSN**
AICSN Support 2020-2024

IMPACT INVESTMENTS

Oweesta Corporation

Tiwa Lending Services

NACDC Financial Services, Inc.

Four Bands Community Fund

Lakota Funds

Rosebud Economic Development Corporation

INDIGENOUS ECD INITIATIVE

Keres Children's Learning Center (KCLC)

*Core Support & Indigenous Montessori Network
Indigenous Montessori Institute*

Lower Sioux Indian Community

*Core Support - Čansayapi
Waḡanyeža Owayawa Oṭi*

Montessori American Indian Childcare Center

Core Support

Oglala Lakota College

Nagi Teca

Pueblo of Jemez

Core Support

Sicangu CDC

*Sicangu Lakota Immersion & Wolakota
Camp Support (PRI co-grant)*

Thunder Valley CDC

*Owáyawa Cík'ala - Lakota Immersion
Montessori Project*

Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee

Indigenous ECD Support Program

Little Earth Residents Association

*Trauma-Informed Professional
Development & Training*

Tohono O'odham Community College

IECD Practitioner Symposium

TANZANIA ECD INITIATIVE

Amani Girls Home

Mapema Education Scheme (MES)

Children in Crossfire

*Continued support for TECDEN ECD
Coordination and Advocacy*

Mama's Hope Organization for Legal Assistance

*Stand and Speak for the Rights of Children
in Kagera - Phase II*

Results for Development Institute, Inc.

*Continued M&E Capacity Development Support
for the BWF and its TZ-based partners*

Tanzania Home Economics Association

*Expanding ECD Services Through Community
Based Organizations*

Tumaini Letu

*Wekeza Kwa Mtoto Mdogo - Invest in
Young Children*

*Wekeza Kwa Mtoto Mdogo - Invest in
Young Children Phase II*



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