



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF TRIBAL HISTORIC
PRESERVATION OFFICERS

ANNUAL REVIEW 2025



A YEAR OF GROWTH AND
ACHIEVEMENT

NATHPO.ORG

CHAIR'S STATEMENT

Dear NATHPO,

2025 was a tumultuous one for THPOs. We began on a somber note when we lost Lance Foster, a longtime NATHPO Board Member who served as THPO for the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska since 2013 and a friend and mentor to so many on Team NATHPO and throughout the THPO community, me included. Many of us also experienced stress and crisis as Washington delayed our funding for several months, but I was proud to see so many THPOs raising their voices and advocating for themselves and their fellow THPOs until we finally received our grants. NATHPO has not let up, and we remain hopeful 2026 will be smoother.

On a brighter note, 8 new THPOs were established and approved by the Park Service in 2025. Every time a Tribal Nation asserts their sovereignty by standing up a THPO office is an occasion to celebrate, and we were proud to celebrate with Pueblo de Cochiti, Upper Mattaponi Tribe, Metlakatla Indian Community, Tejon Indian Tribe, Iipay Nation of Santa Ysabel, Pauma Band of Luiseno Mission Indians, Sac & Fox Nation, and Puyallup Tribe of the Puyallup Reservation.

At NATHPO, we entered the year committed to growing the organization and, more importantly, expanding our positive impact on the THPO community, and I am proud to say our Staff and Board rose to that challenge on every front.

We were excited to appoint Ira L. Matt (Séliš) as Executive Director for Indigenous Diplomacy and Federal Relations to serve and lead this organization alongside Valerie Grussing, Executive Director for Legislative Affairs and Strategic Partnerships. We also brought on Geospatial Director John Swigart and launched our LAND (Location And Name Directory) Initiative to develop an interactive geographic database to help ensure all the right Tribal Nations – and their THPOs – can be contacted on activities within their areas of interest. This builds on last year's organizational growth when we brought on Stacy Laravie (Ponca) as our Indigenization Director and Amy Garcia as our Finance Director.

2025 was also a big year for NATHPO's Protecting Native Places program. Thanks to a grant from the Mellon Foundation, we were able to vastly expand the size and scope of the program, increasing the grant size to \$40,000 and increasing the number of recipients to 25. NATHPO members should stay tuned for information in the new year about applying for 2026 Protecting Native Places grants.

Finally, we can't talk about the year without mentioning our Annual Conference & Sacred Places Summit. 2025's conference was another massive success, thanks in no small part to our host Tribe, the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, and their fantastic THPO, Michon Eben. I hope to see as many of you as possible in Albuquerque this year as Pueblo of Acoma hosts NATHPO's 2026 Conference.

Thank you all for the trust you have placed in me to serve as your Board Chair. It is an honor to serve alongside so many fantastic THPOs on our Board and to represent you and the Tribal Nations you serve in my capacity. As I look back on my first full year as your Board Chair, I am thrilled about all we have done and excited about what is yet to come.



Wéwéné,

Lakota Hobia

Lakota Hobia (Citizen Band Potawatomi)

NATHPO Chair

Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi THPO

STAFF

Valerie J. Grussing, PhD
Executive Director of Legislative Affairs and Strategic Partnerships

Ira L. Matt (Séliš)
Executive Director of Indigenous Diplomacy and Federal Relations

Melissa Madrigal
Chief of Staff/Operations Director

Stacy Laravie (Ponca)
Indigenization Director

Amy Garcia
Finance Director

John Swigart
Geospatial Director

Ted Monoson
Government Affairs

Matt Fuehrmeyer
Communications Advisor

Timothy McKeown
Repatriation Advisor

Frank Martinez
Administrative Assistant



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF TRIBAL HISTORIC
PRESERVATION OFFICERS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MIDWEST

Lakota Hobia (Citizen Potawatomi Nation)
NATHPO Chair
Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of
Pottawatomi Indians THPO

PACIFIC

Buffy McQuillen
NATHPO Vice Chair
Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria THPO

EASTERN OKLAHOMA

Billie Burtrum
Secretary/Treasurer
Quapaw Nation THPO

EASTERN

Michael Kickingbear Johnson
Mashantucket Western Pequot Tribal Nation
THPO

GREAT PLAINS

Allan Demaray
Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa &
Arikara Nation) THPO

NAVAJO

Richard Begay
Navajo Nation THPO

NORTHWEST/ ALASKA

Nicholas Kager
Coeur d'Alene Tribe Deputy THPO

ROCKY MOUNTAIN

Crystal C' Bearing
Northern Arapaho Tribe THPO

SOUTHERN PLAINS

Raphael Wahwassuck
Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation
THPO

SOUTHWEST

Kathy Felipe
Pueblo of Acoma THPO

WESTERN

Warren Graham
Duckwater Shoshone Tribe of the
Duckwater Reservation, Nevada
THPO

WHO WE ARE

The National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (NATHPO) is a non-profit membership organization of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) that supports and encourages Tribal historic preservation programs. We provide guidance to preservation officials, elected representatives, and the public about national historic preservation legislation, policies, and regulations. We promote Tribal sovereignty, develop partnerships, and advocate for Tribes in governmental activities on preservation and funding issues. We empower Tribal preservation leaders to protect culturally important places that perpetuate Native identity, resilience, and cultural endurance. Connections to cultural heritage sustain the health and vitality of Native peoples.



THPOs in DC to urge Congress to provide THPOs with the funding they need to protect cultural resources and sacred places.

TOP: Fort Belknap Indian Community THPO Michael Black Wolf and Congressman Troy Downing (R-MT).

LEFT: Fort Belknap Indian Community THPO Michael Black Wolf, Northern Cheyenne THPO Teanna Limpy, Northern Arapaho THPO Crystal C' Bearing, and John Bockmier, Senior Advisor, Congressman Ryan Zinke (R-MT).

JOINT CO-ED TRANSITION STATEMENT

In 2025, NATHPO began a deliberate transition to a Co-Executive Director leadership structure to meet the moment and build on the organization's strong foundation of service to Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and Tribal governments. The purpose of the Co-ED model is straightforward: distribute leadership across complementary strengths, expand NATHPO's federal and intergovernmental reach, and strengthen member services, program delivery, and policy outcomes without losing continuity or accountability. A central intent of this transition is to more fully infuse Indigenous perspective and lived experience into NATHPO's top leadership,

so our strategy, advocacy, and organizational decisions remain grounded in the realities Tribes and THPOs navigate every day.

As part of this transition, NATHPO welcomed Ira L. Matt as Executive Director for Indigenous Diplomacy and Federal Relations, joining Valerie J. Grussing, Executive Director of Legislative Affairs and Strategic Partnerships. Together, the Co-EDs provide shared leadership for organizational direction, staff and Board coordination, external representation, fundraising and partnerships, and strong, consistent advocacy that reflects the priorities of our membership.

This structure positions NATHPO to be more responsive and more durable. It creates clearer lanes for decision making, strengthens relationships on Capitol Hill and across federal agencies, and expands NATHPO's capacity to advance Tribal sovereignty and cultural heritage protection in national and international forums. The transition plan puts the membership's needs at the center of how NATHPO operates. It formalizes a consistent rhythm for shared leadership, staff direction, and Board oversight so NATHPO can respond faster to emerging issues, deliver more reliable support to THPOs, and sustain long-term initiatives without losing momentum as the policy environment shifts.



NATHPO Co-EDs Valerie Grussing and Ira L. Matt



LEFT: Northern Cheyenne THPO Teanna Limpy, Fort Belknap Indian Community THPO Michael Black Wolf, and Northern Arapaho THPO Crystal C'Bearing (not pictured) met with DOI officials Scott Davis and Kennis Bellmard in DC to discuss the importance of THPOs' work and some challenges of the federal THPO framework.



RIGHT: Members of team NATHPO visited Porch Band of Creek Indians THPO April 2, 2025. Pictured Left to Right: Clayton Coon, NAGPRA Technician; Sehoj Thrower, Special Project Specialist; William (Billy) Bailey, THPO; Stacy Laravie (Ponca), NATHPO Indigenization Director; Brandy Chunn, Tribal Historic Preservation Specialist.

CO-ED STATEMENTS

VALERIE J. GRUSSING

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS & STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

For seven years now, I have been entrusted with the sacred duty of leading NATHPO. I remain humbled and honored every day to be blessed with this opportunity. As a white person having come to this work through anthropology and archaeology, I am beyond grateful to every single Native person who has served as a teacher to me along my journey.

I love my job! From the people I get to meet, the places I get to go, the range of things I get to figure out and experience, and more. At the same time, the challenges have been daunting – from building financial stability to growing a team and building bridges nationwide, all while growing my family and navigating a global pandemic and a particularly intense and uncertain political climate.

I am passionately driven by the mission of Tribal historic preservation and serving our membership in their daily work of doing it. In support of that, it has been my vision from day one to bring the organization back to Native leadership. I feel so incredibly fortunate that our newly

all-Native Board of Directors agreed that leading NATHPO in a sustainable and appropriate way is more than a one-person job.

Also, since day one, Ira has been a trusted partner, advisor, teacher, and friend to me. I couldn't be more excited to have him step beside me in leadership now. He tells a funny story about how timing is everything, which was as true for me seven years ago as it is for us now. This transition has been a natural progression and fit, and I'm confident our complementary strengths and shared vision will make magic happen!



With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Valerie J. Grussing".

Valerie J. Grussing

IRA L. MATT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INDIGENOUS DIPLOMACY & FEDERAL RELATIONS

Relatives,

I want to take a moment to introduce myself and share what I intend to bring to NATHPO in this role. I am grateful for the trust you have placed in me as NATHPO's Executive Director of Indigenous Diplomacy and Federal Relations, and I step into this responsibility with humility and a clear sense of purpose.

I come to this work as a Séliš citizen of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, grounded in the teachings and obligations that come with being a Tribal person. For me, protecting cultural places is not an abstract policy goal. It is a responsibility to our ancestors, to our communities today, and to future generations. It also means learning from, carrying forward, and advancing the wisdom of our Elders, our knowledge keepers, and the teachings passed down through our families and communities.

I also come to you as a former THPO. I know the day-to-day reality of the work: being held accountable at home while navigating federal timelines, agency turnover, project pressure, and limited capacity.

That lived experience is not something I set aside when I walk into leadership. It is the lens I will use to guide NATHPO's direction, to keep our priorities practical, and to make sure our advocacy reflects what THPOs actually face on the ground.

Going forward, my intent is to keep NATHPO on a clear Indigenous path: grounded in sovereignty, centered on Tribal needs, and focused on practical support that helps THPOs protect what matters. If you have guidance to offer, lessons to share, or concerns you want me to understand, I invite you to reach out. Teach me what you want NATHPO to carry forward, and know that I am here to listen, to learn, and to serve you.



LemImtš,

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Ira Matt".

Ira L. Matt

LOOK AHEAD TO 2026

Relatives, we are heading into 2026 with a lot to look forward to!

There is real momentum across our membership, and we are seeing it in the day-to-day work, the partnerships coming together, and the growing expectations for what NATHPO can deliver. The transition to a co-executive director model has also provided NATHPO with an experienced leader to help expand and bolster our mission and vision in ways that only a former THPO and Tribal member can.

At the core of our work this year is protecting and pushing to expand Tribal authority within NHPA, including Section 106 and its implementing regulations that shape federal practice. The statutory and regulatory landscape is regularly tested, reinterpreted, and sometimes treated as optional when project timelines and political priorities take over. We are not new to that challenge, and in 2026 we will keep showing up where decisions get made, backing up our members with practical support, and keeping the integrity of the law and Tribal roles front and center.

A big part of that is NATHPO's statutorily mandated seat on the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP), the body that provides policy direction and oversight for ACHP and advises the President and Congress. We will use that seat to help shape national preservation policy, reinforce government-to-government expectations, and ensure Tribal priorities are consistently centered. When needed, we will also continue direct engagement with senior agency leadership and elected officials, not

for noise, but for outcomes that protect our interests and strengthen Tribal authority in practice.

We will also launch a new initiative with the Bureau of Indian Affairs focused on developing practical tools to strengthen Tribal decision-making on Tribal lands, reduce duplication, and bring more clarity and consistency to how Section 106 work is carried out. This is newer work for NATHPO, and we will be intentional about making it useful to members and grounded in the realities Tribes face during federal reviews.

And yes, we are excited to bring everyone together in Albuquerque for NATHPO's 26th Annual Conference and Sacred Places Summit. This year's theme, *Living Cultures, Living Landscapes*, reflects exactly what our work is about, living communities, living responsibilities, and the places that carry our identities forward. By popular demand, we are also bringing back workshops at the Summit so members can leave with practical tools, strategies, and shared approaches they can use right away. We are also excited to announce the Protecting Native Places regrant program will continue in 2026, getting resources directly to Tribes for on-the-ground protection of culturally significant places, because that is where impact is immediate and visible.

We are grateful to do this work alongside you, and we are looking forward to a strong year together and to seeing many of you in Albuquerque!



2025 Conference Participants at Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge which has been central to life and culture for the Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe for generations.

ADVOCACY

EDUCATING, LOBBYING, AND SUPPORTING & PROMOTING POLICIES FOR PROTECTING NATIVE PLACES

In 2025 NATHPO worked with THPOs to make sure lawmakers, administration officials and their staff understood the importance of protecting and preserving Tribal Nations' cultural resources and sacred places. The NATHPO team regularly met with lawmakers and staff and set up meetings for THPOs when they were in Washington, D.C. and facilitated communication between congressional staff and THPOs. As much as possible, meetings were scheduled with administration staff, such as Scott Davis, but that has been challenging because of the slow pace at which staff have been brought onboard. The NATHPO team also maintained strong relationships with Tribal organizations, companies, conservation organizations, and SHPOs who support THPOs' work.

One of the biggest challenges for NATHPO and THPOs in 2025 was the more than one-hundred-day delay in the release of Fiscal Year 2025 THPO funding. NATHPO staff and consultants played an important role in the broader effort to successfully get the money released. NATHPO also worked with the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to make sure a THPO had the opportunity to testify to potential changes to the NHPA and then supported Pueblo of Acoma THPO Steven Concho when he testified before the Committee. NATHPO advocated for the reintroduction of the Historic Preservation Enhancement Act (H.R. 5914), which would require that each year a minimum of 20 percent of the Historic Preservation Fund be directed to THPOs. The bill also aims to address the fact that THPO funding is not keeping pace with the increase in the number of THPOs.



Fort Belknap Indian Community THPO Michael Black Wolf stopped for photos in front of the Capitol between meetings with Congressman Troy Downing, R-MT and Senator Steve Daines, R-MT.



UPPER LEFT: Suquamish Tribe Chairman Leonard Forsman caught up with NATHPO ED Valerie Grussing while they were both on Capitol Hill reminding lawmakers of the importance of Tribal sovereignty and protecting Tribal Nations' cultural resources.



UPPER RIGHT: Acoma Pueblo THPO Steven Concho with Sen. Heinrich D-NM, Ranking Member of Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. He came to testify before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to tell committee members that early and meaningful engagement is vital for the protection of Tribal Nations' cultural resources and to make sure important projects are not delayed.

Mark Zientek, aide for Congresswoman Leger Fernandez with Lakota Hobia (Citizen Band Potawatomi), NATHPO Chair and Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi THPO, and NATHPO ED Valerie Grussing. Rep. Leger Fernandez D-NM has introduced legislation, which NATHPO supports, to increase funding for THPOs and ensure funding keeps pace with the ever-increasing number of Park Service-approved THPOs.



Northern Cheyenne THPO Teanna Limpy stopped for photos in front of the Capitol between meetings with Congressman Troy Downing, R-MT and Senator Steve Daines, R-MT.

THPO ENGAGEMENT

ENGAGING IN MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS, DIRECT THPO INTERACTIONS, OUTREACH, RESOURCES, AND TOOLS.

NATHPO entered the year committed to dedicating more staff time and resources to visiting THPOs, listening to their stories, shining a light on their work, and communicating their needs to policymakers in Washington, DC, and beyond. Those visits brought NATHPO staff to, among other places, California, Minnesota, Louisiana, Alabama, South Carolina, and New Mexico. NATHPO will continue to prioritize THPO visits in 2026 and beyond. In addition to supporting Pueblo of Acoma THPO Steven Concho when he came to Washington to testify, we joined and supported several THPOs and Groups of THPOs when they came to Washington to meet with Congressional members and staff and officials within the Administration.

We were also excited to begin the progress of developing our LAND Initiative, a process that has involved connecting NATHPO Geospatial Director John Swigart with THPOs across the country, sending him to conferences and coordinating individual and group meetings with THPOs from every region in the country.



Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer Art Krupicz (right) at the 2025 NATHPO Conference with NATHPO ED Valerie Grussing (left) and Reno-Sparks Indian Colony THPO Michon Eben (middle).

RIGHT: Mooretown Rancheria THPO Matthew Hatcher and NATHPO ED Valerie Grussing at the 2025 California THPO Summit.



FAR RIGHT: NATHPO's 2025 Protecting Native Places Grant recipients at NATHPO 2025! The grants this year would not have been possible without the support of The Mellon Foundation, and we're proud to be able to provide direct support for so many THPOs as they perform their sacred work around the country.



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MEMBERSHIP FROM 2019 TO TODAY HAS INCREASED BY
106%



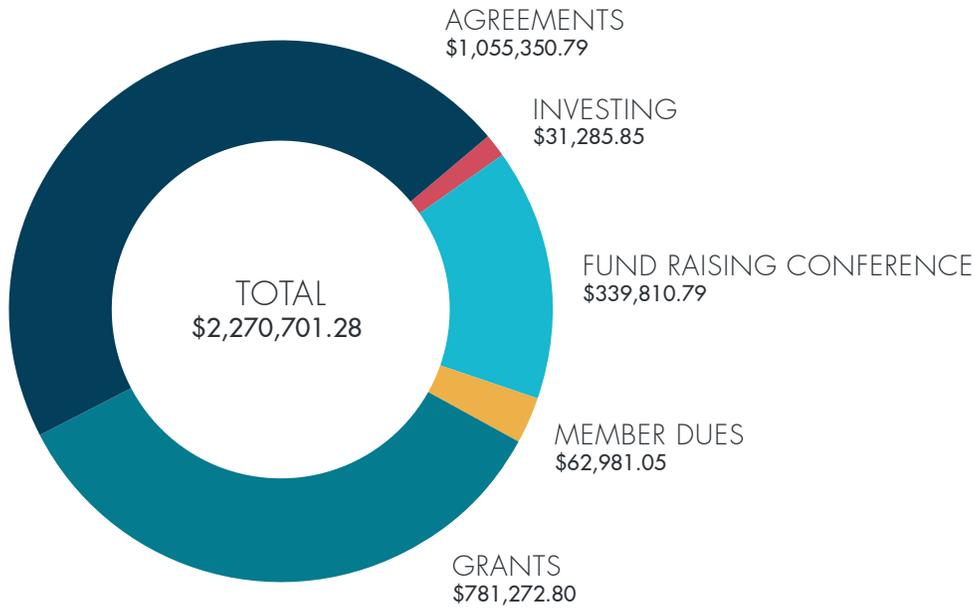
LEFT: Reno-Sparks Indian Colony THPO Michon Eben receives the award for Excellence in Tribal Historic Preservation at NATHPO 2025 from Reno Keoni Franklin (Tribal Chairman Emeritus of the Kasha Band of Pomo Indians, THPO for the Enterprise Rancheria of Maidu Indians and former NATHPO Board Chair) and Steven Concho (THPO for the Pueblo of Acoma and NATHPO Board Member).

LEFT: Members of team NATHPO visited the Catawba Indian Nation THPO office on March 31st, 2025. Pictured left to right: Tiffany Moore, Executive Director of Community Development; Caitlin Rogers, Cultural Division Program Manager (THPO office); Wenonah Haire, Cultural Division Director (THPO office); and Stacy Laravie (Ponca), NATHPO Indigenization Director.

RIGHT: THPO Dr. Gregorio Gonzales, Pueblo de Cochiti's first permanent THPO.

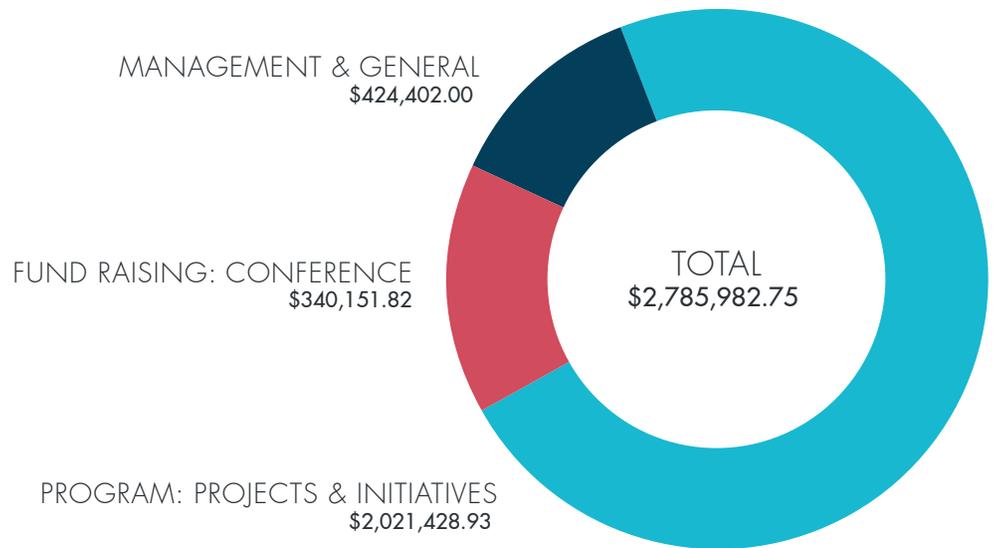


FUNDING & FINANCIALS



2025 FUNDING SOURCES

2025 FUNCTIONAL EXPENDITURES



ABOVE: Members of team NATHPO visited Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana THPO April 4, 2025. Left to right: Kimberly S. Walden, M.Ed., Cultural Director and THPO; Stacy Laravie, NATHPO Indigenization Director; Sherry H. Pinell, Natural Resources Intern

BELOW: Graton Rancheria THPO Buffy McQuillen, Jamul Indian Village THPO Lisa Cumper, NATHPO ED Valerie Grussing, and Karuk Tribe THPO Alex Watts-Tobin at the 2025 California THPO Summit.

