



American Indian Institute

Report 2014



Above All, Respect

The American Indian Institute and Traditional Circle of Indian Elders and Youth continue along a wisdom guided journey into mutual respect; following the Elders' counsel that above all else, respect for self, respect for others and respect for Mother Earth must guide our lives.

Mission

The mission of the American Indian Institute is to perpetuate the ancient wisdom and cultural heritage of North America's Native peoples, and to promote a greater understanding of that wisdom among all peoples. The Institute achieves its mission by serving as the administrative agency and support source for the Traditional Circle of Indian Elders and Youth, a coalition of grassroots spiritual leaders from Indian nations throughout North America.

Vision

The American Indian Institute recognizes the ancient spiritual knowledge indigenous to this Hemisphere as an endangered human resource that is relevant to today's world and that holds keys to our common survival. Looking seven generations into the future, we see a world in which the values and traditions of indigenous people are respected for the wisdom they hold for the Earth and all its peoples.

We pursue this vision by supporting the Traditional Circle of Indian Elders and Youth as it teaches, motivates, and celebrates traditional Indian peoples today. We act as facilitators of gatherings of traditional peoples, promoters of healing of Indian communities, and supporters of efforts to educate non-Indians about the wisdom and harmony inherent in the traditional indigenous worldview.



Report from the Chair

Thank you for your interest in the work of traditional Indian peoples. It is my privilege to report to you about the expanding work in 2014 by the Two Circles – the American Indian Institute and our sister group, the Traditional Circle of Indian Elders & Youth.

In each of the program areas touched on in this report we see traditional Elders turning around their negative history by reclaiming stories, visions, and core values that once effectively guided the healthy and beautiful peoples on this continent. By looking at traditional family structure, spirituality, language, and values, they are building sustaining visions for the future. We are proud to be standing with them in this effort.

We are particularly proud of the “Runners” project last year that revealed so much about the value and unique nature of our network of traditional leaders. This cultural communication among the traditional leaders of tribes from across Indian country revealed the strength of the Traditional Circle’s network. There was a special energy generated from the Haudenosaunee through their runners which was returned to Akwesasne when so many Elders from the Four Directions honored their invitation by attending the annual Council gathering. The runners’ epic journey dramatically strengthened the gathering at Akwesasne, giving all attendees a larger vision. In future councils, we hope to carry forward that momentum with similar runners programs.

In the pages that follow we are pleased to report on the 3rd annual *Weaving Webs of Women’s Wisdom* gathering that was held at an encampment at the center of the Diné (Navajo) Nation. We also highlight our various community-based projects with Elders and youth through our Traditional Youth Leadership Initiative. Finally, we pay tribute to a few dear Elders who walked on in 2014 to begin the next stage of their journey.

Our patient, 40-year history of relationship building between the Two Circles has been preparing us for the more focused, expanded and imperative work that now lies ahead. The roadmap forward shows that our mandate is to continue to help move traditional knowledge and insight of the Elders into action for the generations to come, both Indian and non-Indian.

Please understand that the mission of the Two Circles cannot be achieved without the support given to us by the many individuals and organizations that are recognized in this report. We thank them again for their generous support, and we welcome your continuing support in the future.

Steve Browning, Chair
American Indian Institute Board of Trustees
Tucson, Arizona



37th Annual International Elders & Youth Council Kaniekehaka Mohawk Nation, Akwesasne, New York August 20 – 24, 2014

The longest running annual program of the American Indian Institute is the International Elders & Youth Council, held each year in a different location in Indian country since 1977. Each year traditional Elders, leaders and youth from the Four Directions gather in council and ceremony for four days to re-energize in the name of cultural survival, and to share ancient knowledge of living in harmony with each other and all of creation.

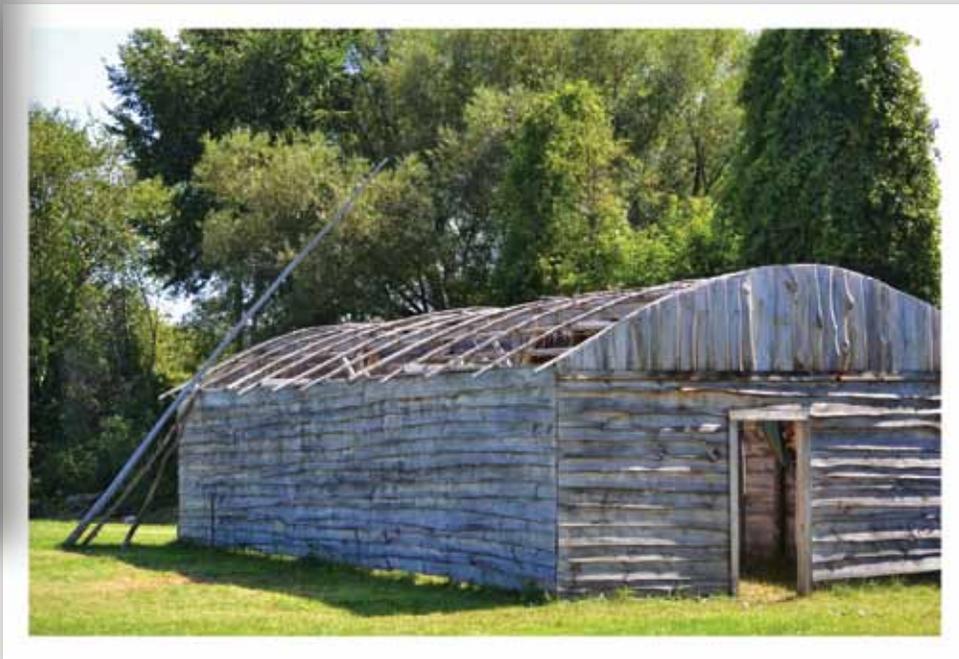
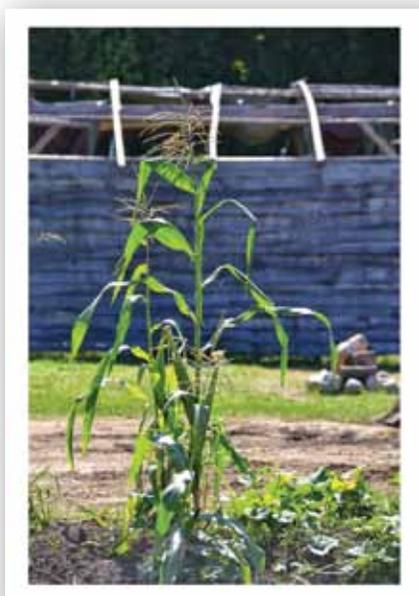
The Chiefs, Clan Mothers, Faithkeepers, Elders, and the community of the Mohawk Nation Longhouse hosted the Elders & Youth Council at the Tsionkwantio Heritage Grounds within the Kaniekehaka Mohawk Territory at Akwesasne, August 20-24, 2014. It was one of our strongest Councils in many years measured by the formality, protocols and discipline the proceedings followed, by the caliber of speakers, and by the numbers of youth and Elders from the Four Directions in attendance.

Each morning after tobacco burning and breakfast, a different Haudenosaunee leader honored the people by speaking of one of the important elements of their ways – the Creation Story, the clans and ceremonies, the Great Law, and the Kariwio. Late mornings were open for the host leaders to select Elders

or youth to speak at the fire. Afternoons began with delegates from the different directions having the opportunity to speak; the northern nations spoke on the first day, then western and southern on the second and third days. Late afternoons were open for “cultural exchange” among traditional leaders.

During the gathering some of the Elders shared their most personal dreams, visions and prayers; one Mohawk Elder shared in great detail a dream he had that showed that despite the odds, today’s young people would be seven times more powerful than their grandfathers. The young people heard the sincerity of these words and were inspired.

There were so many things the host community did to make everyone feel at home: they fed the people three nourishing and bountiful meals each day, much of it grown in their own gardens; they had a bus available to take delegates back and forth from the Syracuse airport, a four hour drive; they provided housing for many of the Elders, in the comfortable homes of community members; they built a beautiful, spacious, and comfortable new arbor to serve as the meeting space; they provided security for the grounds, putting the Elders and youth at ease; and last but not least, they were so very kind, treating the visitors like family – showing the warmth of the Mohawk ways.



“Even if all these young people aren’t part of the spiritual way of living every day or ceremonial way now, they will remember this Elders gathering and the inspiration from it.”

- Sakokweni6nkwas, Tom Porter, Mohawk, Council Host

Runners to the Four Directions Carried an Invitation to Council

In advance of the 2014 International Council gathering, the chiefs and clan mothers of the Haudenosaunee called for runners to go out with invitations enlisting one of the Wampums of The Great Law. The runners took loving greetings to the people in the four directions. They carried a message that the ceremonies and spiritual ways continue to reinforce the spiritual strength of Indian people is to remain steadfast, honoring those they reach with an invitation to council in their territory. The runners lit a spark for young people to begin to find their way back home – back to the spiritual way of life.

Fourteen Haudenosaunee young men, all of whom speak their language and sing their songs, played a critical role in the success of the 2014 Elders and Youth Council as runners (messengers) in the weeks prior to the gathering at Akwesasne. These men of integrity, were ceremonially “bundled” in four groups from different longhouses within the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. They were sent out on behalf of the Mohawk Nation Longhouse to travel throughout Indian country with a greeting, a message, and an invitation for traditional leaders from the Four Directions to gather in council at Akwesasne.

Leaders of the Mohawk Nation Longhouse at Akwesasne instructed the runners to convey three messages:

- The formal greeting of the Onkwehón:we given with the wampum strings from the people of the Longhouses;
- A three-part message about global climate change, issues concerning the spirituality of Indian people (and the importance of maintaining the ceremonial ways), and the importance of prophecies at this time to help guide and aid Indian people; and
- An invitation to come to Mohawk Territory to meet in council (at the Elders and Youth Council) to discuss the messages.

In June four groups of runners were assembled and sent to four large areas of Indian country:

- A group consisting of two young Seneca men and two Tuscarora men went to Washington, Oregon, and Northern California to meet with the Nisqually, Tulalip, Yakama, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla at Pendleton, the Wasco and Paiute at Warm Springs, the Yuroks at Klamath, the Hupa at Hoopa Valley, and finally at Round Valley with Pomo and Wailacki.
- A group of three young Mohawk men from Akwesasne traveled to New Mexico and Arizona and visited with the people of Santa Clara Pueblo, Taytsugeh Owingeh, Taos Pueblo, Jicarilla Apache Nation, Diné Nation (at Chinle to the east and near Kayenta on the west side), Hopi Nation, Hualapai, Havasupai, and the O’Otham at Gila River.
- A group of two Six Nations Mohawks, one Onondaga, and one Oneida young man traveled to Montana, Idaho, and Eastern Washington delivering their message to members of the Crow Nation, Northern Cheyenne, Sioux and Assiniboine at Ft. Peck, Assiniboine and Gros Ventre at Ft. Belknap, Chippewa/Cree at Rocky Boy’s, the Blackfeet Nation, Salish and Kootenai at Flathead, Kalispel people near Usk, and finally the Nez Perce Tribe.
- A group of three young Onondaga runners traveled to Wisconsin, Minnesota, and North and South Dakota to visit their Oneida family members, Chippewa/Ojibwa from Flambeau, Bad River, Turtle Mountain and Leech Lake; Dakota from Spirit Lake and Crow Creek, and Lakota from Standing Rock, Cheyenne River, Pine Ridge and Rosebud; Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara from Fort Berthold, and finally the Ho-Chunk of Wisconsin.



Traditional Youth Leadership Initiative

The American Indian Institute's community-based Traditional Youth Leadership Initiative builds and strengthens the foundations of traditional cultural heritage for the youth. The essential ingredients of the initiative are traditional Elders with traditional knowledge working breath-to-breath with youth in a spiritual setting.

There is an awakening amongst Native young people hungry for the old teachings, the spiritual ways of knowing having sat with Elders and listened to their teachings over and over again. Teachings that in the past went into hiding and were kept in the minds and hearts of the Old Ones for the times to come when the young people would reach out for their return. The Elders say that the ceremonies are still here, that everything we need is still here; we just need to humble ourselves in order to get back to these things. Our Youth Initiative is an attempt to help the Elders and youth return to their teachings - for the benefit of the generations of all races of people yet to come.

Current programs are under way in the Four Directions in the following Native communities.

- *Bitterroot Salish, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai (Flathead Reservation, Montana)*
- *Northern Cheyenne Nation, Montana*
- *Akimel O'otham, Gila River Reservation, Arizona*

- *Haudenosaunee Territory, the Six Nations of New York & Canada*
- *Teton Lakota, Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota*

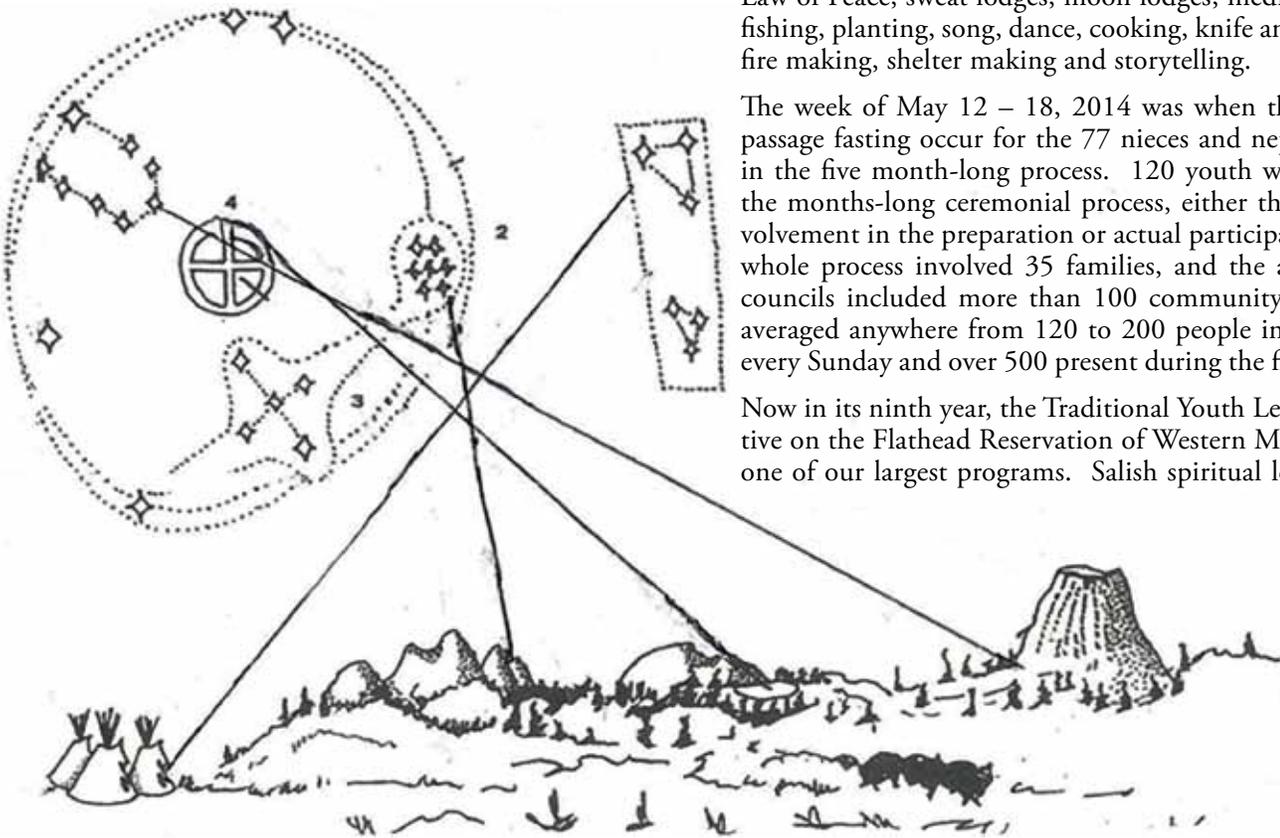
For three years now the Institute has been working with traditional Lakota leaders from the Pine Ridge village of Oglala in work to educate the youth about the Lakota way of thinking, knowing, and speaking. In 2014 the Institute supported a series of gatherings during each of the four New Moons in a program called *Wakan Waste Un Wicomni*, an ancestral journey to four Lakota sacred sites seeking the sacred way of life. It's a powerful "curriculum" that we hope will become an annual program for Lakota youth.

In 2014 our Traditional Youth Leadership Initiative provided major administrative and financial support for the Akwesasne Mohawk Rites of Passage program called *Ohero:kon*, a Mohawk phrase meaning "Under the husk". This program is a ceremonial process to ensure that the needs within the stages of development of Mohawk adolescent youth are being met. Throughout the winter and spring of 2014, both boys and girls met every week at the longhouse and were instructed by a clan mother and other helpers to prepare them for their coming of age ceremony. This program is our model program for youth coming-of-age work.

The ritual aspects incorporate many cultural teachings and experiences including the creation story of the people, the Great Law of Peace, sweat lodges, moon lodges, medicines, hunting, fishing, planting, song, dance, cooking, knife and bow making, fire making, shelter making and storytelling.

The week of May 12 - 18, 2014 was when the final rites of passage fasting occur for the 77 nieces and nephews involved in the five month-long process. 120 youth were involved in the months-long ceremonial process, either through their involvement in the preparation or actual participation in it. The whole process involved 35 families, and the aunt and uncle councils included more than 100 community people. They averaged anywhere from 120 to 200 people in the longhouse every Sunday and over 500 present during the final fasting day.

Now in its ninth year, the Traditional Youth Leadership Initiative on the Flathead Reservation of Western Montana remains one of our largest programs. Salish spiritual leaders and Tra-



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MEANING
"SACRED POWER SITES WITHIN AND WHERE SACRED PRAYER WILL HAPPEN"

ditional Circle members and fellow Elders and a group of dozens of helpers continue to work with boys and girls ages 6-25 to increase communication between young people and Elders with an emphasis on transmission of traditional cultural and spiritual values and worldviews.

Our program at the Flathead uses seasonal camps that are specialized, such as the annual fall hunting camp where boys learn respect for animals and the natural world as well as the ceremonial way of approaching and treating the kill, and girls learn about preparing and caring for the meat. In seasons when camping is not feasible activities are carried on in community

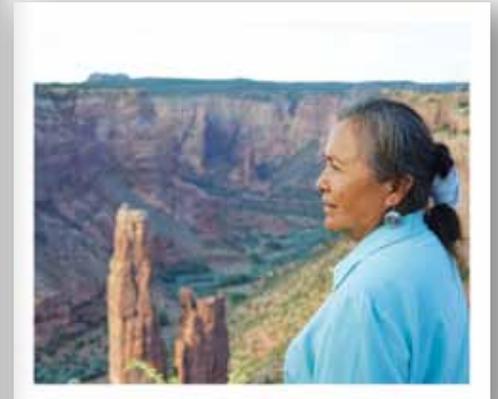
Weaving Webs of Women's Wisdom Gathering Diné (Navajo) Nation June 9-12, 2014

Powerful Indigenous women from the Four Directions met for four days in ceremony and council at an encampment at the center of the Diné (Navajo) Nation near the sacred home of Spider Woman for the 3rd annual *Weaving Webs of Women's Wisdom* gathering. Women Elders and traditional leaders were hosted by Diné women during the full moon time to acknowledge the women creators and ancestors and to draw knowledge and strength from their stories of creation in preparation for hard times to come.

buildings or longhouses and adjusted accordingly, but the outdoors is used whenever possible.

The Fall Youth Leadership Hunting Camp was held September 24-27, 2014 at an area of the reservation called "the sinkholes" on the banks of the Flathead River. It was well attended as usual with 60 youth (30 boys and 30 girls) and many of their families, about 35 adults. One of the honored guests was a visiting Elder from Diné, Navajo Nation, who spoke each day to the young people. There was also visiting youth and chaperones from Tulalip Tribe in attendance.

During the gathering, extreme heat, wind, and blowing dust challenged the women in their sleeping tents, but the ceremonial Hogan inside of which they met sheltered them and kept them cool. Beginning with a Blessing Way Ceremony conducted by a Navajo medicine man at sunrise on the first day, and ending with a Moon Lodge Ceremony the final night, the 2014 *Weaving Webs* gathering achieved a level of intimacy, healing, and unity among the women that are necessary steps for Native women reclaiming their voice and authority.



"There was undeniable strength, in prayer, within that circle of women who sat inside that sacred Hogan. New things developed, old knowledge and ceremonies were brought back to life and shared, and new women stood up and took their rightful place."

- Weaving Webs Participant

"It was wonderful to be in the spiritual way with women of wisdom...and to continue to build upon the core values of Natural Laws and what was before colonization - healing the soul wounds of our ancestors so they might come to help us in our times of need."

- Weaving Webs Participant

"We must learn to heal our women young, elder, unborn; it is within the women that our future will come; we must restore Mother Law so we can once again stand in natural balance, then and only then can our Mother the Earth truly be healed as we are her children!"

- Weaving Webs Participant

Remembrance of Members who were taken from the Elders Circle in 2014



Betty Laverdure, one of the foundational members, stepped to the other side at age 84. Betty, lifetime pipe carrier, served her people well and was a strong member of the Traditional Circle of Indian Elders and Youth. We remember her in gratitude as the gracious host of two Circle gatherings at Turtle Mountain in North Dakota, the first in 1993 when she was joined in hosting by Francis Cree, the second in 2004 with her family as hosts. Both were memorable events filled with the spiritual strength of the Anishnabe people and their welcoming hospitality. Betty's service to her people was through appointment as chief judge and acting appeals court judge. Later in work with the BIA she also trained judges and court staff. These are her words: "We are lucky to have each other and to be still able to gather up and do our ceremonies. As long as we are still lighting our sacred fires, as long as we are lighting our sacred pipes, the Great Mystery can hear and feel our respect for life and the universe"



Pauline Whitesinger, sister of the late Roberta Blackgoat, and Danny Blackgoat's aunt, was one of the strongest women in the Navajo Nation which is noted for its strong women. Her tireless resistance to displacement of traditional Navajo people in the Big Mountain area is well known. She was one of the last holding on to her ancestral land and caring for her herd of sheep and goats. Her calm and dignified presence, together with her deep commitment to the traditions and values of her people, along with her iron resolve in standing up for those people, personified the best in her culture. We are grateful to her for hosting the Elders Circle council near her home in 2009 deep in the Navajo Big Mountain area. My best memory of her is spending a day some years ago visiting with her at her home and with her tending her flock of sheep and goats. I treasure it.

The Traditional Circle of Indian Elders and Youth is diminished by the loss of gifted and strong people but their impact and their memory remains and will continue to sustain us. We say good bye with love and with gratitude.

Bob Staffanson
President Emeritus

In Gratitude to All Our 2014 Financial Supporters

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Statement of Financial Position

As of December 31, 2014

ASSETS

Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
General Account	174,959.96
Checking	799.07
Investments	<u>118,913.61</u>
Total Checking/Savings	294,672.64
Accounts Receivable	
Endowment Earnings due from MT	
Community Fdn Agency Endowment (MCF)	<u>45,387.71</u>
Total Accounts Receivable	45,387.71
Total Current Assets	340,060.35
Fixed Assets	
Furniture & Fixtures	22,381.56
Library	6,820.01
Program Equipment	55,595.73
502 Mendenhall - Real Property	508,986.32
502 Mendenhall - Land	68,827.80
LESS Accumulated Amortization	-45.78
LESS Accumulated Depreciation	-113,311.13
Leasehold Improvements	<u>9,023.83</u>
Total Fixed Assets	558,278.34
Other Assets	
Plantagon International Share	152.56
MCF Agency Endowment	993,958.08
Restricted Fund	716,974.50
Art Investments	<u>61,845.50</u>
Total Other Assets	1,772,930.64
TOTAL ASSETS	2,671,269.33
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Equity	
Temporarily Restricted Funds	
Restricted Fund	716,974.50
Temporarily Restricted	
Program Funds	<u>175,096.00</u>
Total Temporarily Restricted Funds	892,070.50
Unrestricted Funds	764,166.78
Permanently Restricted Funds -	
MCF Agency Endowment	993,958.08
Net Income/Loss	<u>21,073.97</u>
Total Equity	2,671,269.33
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	2,671,269.33

Statement of Activities

January through December 2014

Ordinary Income/Expense

Income	
Corporate & Foundation Grants	
Foundation Grants	405,404.74
Corporate Grants/ In-Kind Donations	31,887.12
Individual Donors	90,722.18
Change in Value of Investments	41,233.24
Dividends & Interest	62,773.24
Program Revenue & Sales	770.00
Royalty Income	<u>4,243.62</u>
Total Income	637,034.14
Expenses	
Direct Program Expenses	442,787.54
General Operations Expenses	
Bank/Financial Advisor Charge	18,052.20
Commercial Building Expenses	3,795.61
Consultants	12,000.00
Fund Development	3,460.77
Insurance	3,931.00
Office Supplies	1,322.80
Postage and Freight	1,167.51
Printing & Publications	2,075.29
Professional Fees	6,062.00
Public Relations/Marketing	1,392.29
Rent	1,060.00
Taxes & Licenses	5,280.51
Salaries, Wages & Benefits	222,936.13
Telecommunications	3,422.30
Vehicle Expense	<u>2,662.64</u>
Total General Operations	
Expenses before program allocations	<u>288,621.05</u>
Less indirect costs allocated to programs	-115,448.42
Total General Operations Expenses	173,172.63
Total Expense	615,960.17
Net Income/Loss	21,073.97

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