



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

ABOUT ILTF

The Indian Land Tenure Foundation is a national, community-based organization serving American Indian nations and people in the recovery and control of their rightful homelands.

Strategies

Economic Opportunities

Increase economic assets of Indian landowners by gaining control of Indian lands and creating financial models that convert land into leverage for Indian landowners.

Legal Reform

Reform the Legal mechanisms related to recapturing the physical, cultural and economic assets for Indian people and strengthening sovereignty of Indian land.

Education

Educate every Indian landowner about Indian land management, ownership and transference issues so that knowledge becomes power when decisions about land assets are made.

Cultural Awareness

Use Indian land to help Indian people discover and maintain their culture.

Our Mission

Lands within the original boundaries of every reservation and other areas of high significance where tribes retain aboriginal interest are in Indian ownership and management.

Board of Directors

Linnea Jackson, *Chair*

Russel Zephier, *Vice Chair*

Lea Zeise, *Secretary/Treasurer*

Randall Emm

Electa Hare

Philomena Kebec

Tobi Maracle

Amanda Montoya

John Sirois

Samantha Skenandore

Gabriel Sneezy

Investment Committee

Randall Emm

Hans-Dieter Klose

Diana Schutter

Jason Hoffman

*** left foundation in 2023**

Staff

D'Arcy Bordeaux
Accountant/Human Resources Director

Gabriela Campos
Accounting Assistant

Nichlas Emmons*
Program/Development Officer

David Garelick
Development Officer

Alexandra Henrich
Communications Associate

Samantha Manz
Program Officer

Grant McGinnis
Communications Officer

Josh Meisel
Project Director

Nicole Olson
Executive Admin. Support/Grants Admin.

Caitlin Spence
Program Officer

Cris Stainbrook
President

Bryan Van Stippen
*Program Director for
National Indian Carbon Coalition*

Jim Wabindato*
Program/Development Officer

Susan Waukon
Program Manager

As a national, community-based organization supporting American Indian nations and people in the recovery and control of their rightful homelands, the mission of the Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF) is to ensure that the land within the original boundaries of every reservation, and other areas of high significance where tribes retain aboriginal interest, are in Indian ownership and management. The impact of ILTF's efforts hit home once again in 2023. That's when the significance of the largest land return

in ILTF history took root in Northern Minnesota: The recovery of 28,089 acres of their traditional lands by the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa. This historic land acquisition came together through a unique partnership between ILTF, its for-profit subsidiary Indian Land Capital Company, The Conservation Fund, and ILTF's National Indian Carbon Coalition project. As we reflect on the Foundation's accomplishments in 2023, we'd like to share the story of how Bois Forte recovered its land.

LAND

STEP 1



TRIBE

STEP 2



LOAN

STEP 3



CARBON

STEP 4



RETURN

STEP 5





Governed by its elected Tribal Council, the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa is a federally recognized Indian tribe with more than 3,600 enrolled members. Among the Council's duties are ongoing efforts to identify opportunities to restore the Band's historic land base lost to federal allotment policies. The goal is to ensure proper stewardship of those lands, expand economic opportunities, and exercise greater control over the Band's territory. When the opportunity arose in 2021 to recover a significant portion of that land, Bois Forte was all ears.

The land in question was owned by the nonprofit, The Conservation Fund, part of 72,000 acres of forestland it had acquired in 2020 from PotlatchDeltic Corporation. A significant portion of the acreage was allotted reservation land, including more than 21 percent of the Band's lost homeland, which would forever secure what should have been secured more than 150 years ago. ILTF was asked to help facilitate this complex endeavor.

A 15-year quest to buy back the land

"When we began discussions with the Tribal Council and the Tribal chair Cathy Chavers, we learned that the Band had been trying to buy the land from the timber company for more than 15 years," said ILTF president Cris Stainbrook. "The problem was there was no way they could afford to make the purchase at the price PotlatchDeltic was asking. So with that in mind, we started looking at how the Foundation and its subsidiary Indian Land Capital Company could work out a deal where we could finance the purchase of this land in a way that was realistic for the Band."

LAND

STEP 1

The Bois Forte Reservation includes three sectors: Nett Lake, Deer Creek, and Vermilion, which are located in parts of Minnesota’s Koochiching, Saint Louis and Itasca counties. The Nett Lake sector is known for its prolific production of high-quality, hand-harvested wild rice, which is of vital traditional, cultural, and economic importance to the Band and its members. The Band has always demonstrated a passion for land conservation and a commitment to do what’s best for the forest. That commitment dates back more than 150 years to the time when the Band first sought to safeguard their land by entering into treaties with the United States in 1854 and 1866 to establish a permanent and undisturbed homeland.

The 1854 treaty set aside a region around Lake Vermilion as a reservation later defined through an Executive Order in 1881. The 1866 treaty reserved two additional sectors at Nett Lake and Deer Creek to serve as its permanent homeland. Just 20 years later, the federal government reneged on its obligations as it divided the Reservation land and sold it to timber companies and homesteaders under the General Allotment and Nelson Acts.

While some land was restored to the Band in 1938 under the Indian Reorganization Act, control of significant swaths of land within boundaries of the Nett Lake and Deer Creek sectors remained out of Band ownership. Much of it had come under the control of PotlatchDeltic, which then sold most of its land in Minnesota to The Conservation Fund in 2020.

“The federal government reneged on its obligations as it divided the Reservation.”



Indian Land Tenure
FOUNDATION.

The Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF) is a national, community-based organization supporting American Indian nations and people in the recovery and control of their rightful homelands. ILTF works to promote education, increase cultural awareness, create economic opportunity, and reform the legal and administrative systems that prevent Indian people from owning and controlling reservation lands. Its four primary strategies: Education, Cultural Awareness, Economic Opportunity and Legal Reform.

“We try and work quietly,” said Foundation president Cris Stainbrook. “If you get out there and start beating the drum, it draws an immediate reaction from those who don’t like Indian people and don’t want to see the land returned. If you work quietly, you have the deal done before the opposition figures it out and the tribe has the land back in their possession.”

TRIBE

STEP 2

INDIAN | LAND CAPITAL COMPANY

The Indian Land Capital Company (ILCC) is a Certified Native Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) providing alternative loan options to Native Nations for tribal land acquisition projects. Owned by the non-profit Indian Land Tenure Foundation, ILCC understands the specific needs of Native Nations. ILCC creates customized, flexible loan packages that suit the specific needs of the tribe and the unique circumstances of the purchase.

The company lends to tribes on a “full faith and credit” basis, a unique approach that recognizes the tribes’ sovereign status and business acumen. This enables tribes to process land purchases more quickly and efficiently and avoid costly legal fees while ensuring that the land remains in the hands of the tribe in perpetuity.

For more information, visit www.ilcc.net.

The Band’s purchase was financed by ILTF’s for-profit subsidiary – the Indian Land Capital Company. ILCC is a Certified Native Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) providing alternative loan options to Native Nations for tribal land acquisition projects. ILCC has financed numerous land return projects across Indian Country, but the Bois Forte land return was the largest since the organization’s founding in 2005. It was never going to be an easy transaction. “It was a complicated deal from the beginning,” said ILTF president and ILCC board chair, Cris Stainbrook. “The complexity was driven by the question of how we could work out a loan that the Band could handle and still have it be a financially responsible arrangement for Indian Land Capital Company.”

Although they were willing to take on some risk, the Bois Forte Tribal Council was not going to gamble on any transaction that might put its financial health in jeopardy. “Much of the land had already been enrolled in the State of Minnesota’s Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI),” Stainbrook explained. “Because it had been a commercial forest, and because the Band wanted to preserve it as conservation land, we began exploring how ILTF’s National Indian Carbon Coalition (NICC) could help the Band generate carbon credits that could fund the transaction.” Although it took a great deal of innovative thinking over several months, the tactic worked. “It turned out,” said Stainbrook, “that not only did the Band not have to pay anything out of their own pocket for the land but they could also earn income during the financing period.” That’s what you call a successful transaction.

“The Bois Forte land return was the largest transaction in ILCC’s history.”

LOAN

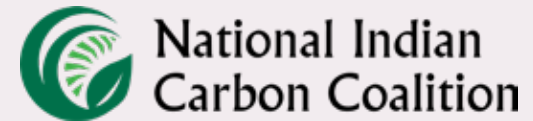
STEP 3

From the first time the idea of funding the Bois Forte land purchase through the sale of carbon credits was discussed, it seemed highly likely that a viable carbon project could be developed on the reservation. To know for certain, however, a project feasibility assessment needed to be done to determine what type of carbon sequestration would be possible on the land, to establish the capacity of the land to assimilate carbon, and to determine the economic viability of a potential project. This is standard procedure for every carbon project involving the National Indian Carbon Coalition (NICC).

NICC is not a project developer. Its role is to be an independent, trusted resource that tribal nations can rely on when exploring the possibilities of doing a carbon project on their land. NICC looks out for tribal interests and provides realistic projections and scientific data to help with the decision-making process.

Every project involving the National Indian Carbon Coalition has to meet internationally recognized standards. In the case of Bois Forte, NICC is using the Verra VM0045 dynamics baseline methodology and will do the Verra CCB (Climate, Community and Biodiversity) certification protocols, a highly sophisticated approach that requires every project to undergo audits by qualified, independent third parties to ensure that standards are met and methodologies are applied properly. This is what responsible corporate buyers of carbon credits are mandating to ensure that a given project is delivering tangible climate, community and biodiversity benefits. It's the right thing to do.

"NICC's role is to be a trusted resource that tribal nations can rely on."



As climate change increasingly threatens our environment and way of life, governments, corporations and individuals are seeking viable solutions to reduce carbon in the atmosphere. One such solution is the emerging carbon sequestration market, which requires vast areas of open space and undeveloped land to capture carbon emissions. Indian Country contains some of the largest tracts of undeveloped or underdeveloped land in the nation.

Formed by ILTF and the Intertribal Agriculture Council, the National Indian Carbon Coalition (NICC) assists tribes and individual Indian landowners in understanding carbon credits, sequestration processes and the carbon markets. NICC is helping Indian people maintain control of their assets and use carbon credit profits to empower their families and communities while preserving the environment.

For more information, visit indiancarbon.org.

CARBON

STEP 4



On June 7, 2022, Bois Forte Tribal chair Cathy Chavers, ILTF president Cris Stainbrook, and Larry Selzer, CEO and president of The Conservation Fund, and other dignitaries, stood in front of a large gathering of Band members and news media to announce completion of the land transaction. After more than a year of pulling the deal together, the impact of the return was immediately apparent.

“This is an historic day for the Bois Forte Band,” Chavers said. “This acquisition represents the largest restoration of land to our Reservation since our ancestors secured what was to be our permanent and undisturbed homeland. This acquisition rights a historic wrong and returns lush forests to the Band to foster and protect in homage to our ancestors and as an inheritance to our future generations.”

The first step was to build trust

The transaction was not without hurdles that needed to be crossed. The deal was unique and complicated. Skepticism was a natural reaction to an opportunity that seemed too good to be true. The first step was to build trust between all parties involved. “People can be leery when someone walks in and says they are going to help them finance a deal, and they should be,” Stainbrook said.

Every land-back transaction seems to draw opposition from non-Indian individuals and local governments. In some cases, funds have been raised to purchase land out from under the tribes involved. “In this case there were two counties involved, and they had concerns about losing the tax revenue,” Stainbrook said. “There was also concern about public access, but that will stay in place as long as the land is enrolled in the Sustainable Forest Initiative. The whole thing went more smoothly than just about any other transaction we’ve done.”

RETURN

STEP 5

The Bois Forte Band land return represents one specific example of how the Indian Land Tenure Foundation fulfills its mission. For ILTF president Cris Stainbrook, it serves as a model for how other tribes across Indian Country can go about reacquiring their lands.

“This was the holy grail for me because it brought together Indian Land Capital Company, the Foundation and the National Indian Carbon Coalition program,” Stainbrook said. “I wish we could do this every week. The people of Bois Forte were so happy. It makes the difficult days seem like it’s all worth it in the end.”

Meeting ILTF’s mission in ways that make sense

It was clear from the outset that the deal was going to be complicated, but the opportunity to recover more than 28,000 acres of land was too good to walk past. Stainbrook believed it was possible to forge a successful transaction. “I thought we could figure it out,” he said, while acknowledging the doubters who thought ILTF should steer clear of such a complex endeavor. “It’s hard to quantify risk, but taking a risk on something like this meets our mission and the need.”

Following the founding of ILTF in 2001, it soon became clear that the Foundation would not be able to fund large-scale land transactions on its own. That led to the creation of Indian Land Capital Company to serve as a more effective mechanism specifically created to finance land purchases.

“In the end what will determine if our work is successful or not is whether Indian people are able to practice their culture on these lands,” Stainbrook said. “That’s what it really comes down to.”

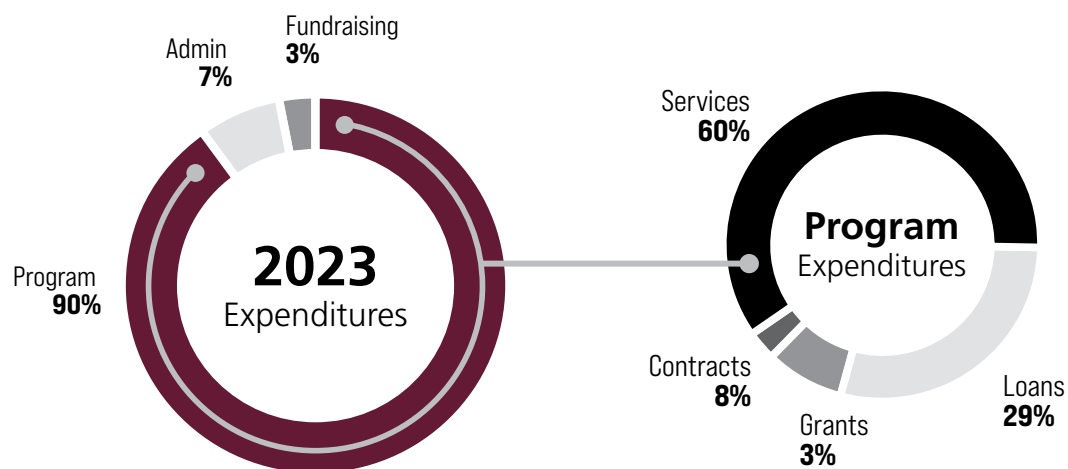


Statement of Activities - 2023	Unrestricted	Restricted	Totals
Support			
Contributions	\$6,296,567	\$1,354,992	\$7,651,559
Government Grants	\$2,513,990	-	\$2,513,990
Total Support	\$8,810,557	\$1,354,992	\$10,165,549
Revenue			
Program Fees	\$852,879	-	\$852,879
Interest on Program-Related Loans	\$2,844,632	-	\$2,844,632
Origination Fees on Program-Related Loans	\$61,441	-	\$61,441
Investment Income (loss)	\$2,901,692	\$20,370	\$2,922,062
Sales carbon credits	\$2,087,088	-	\$2,087,088
Other	\$820,685	-	\$820,685
Special Events	\$92,700	-	\$92,700
In-kind Donations	\$110,548	-	\$110,548
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	\$2,284,766	(\$2,284,766)	-
Total Revenue	\$12,056,431	(\$2,264,396)	\$9,792,035
TOTAL REVENUES AND SUPPORT	\$20,866,988	(\$909,404)	\$19,957,584
Expenses			
Program Services	\$7,474,831	-	\$7,474,831
Management and General	\$3,346,173	-	\$3,346,173
Fundraising	\$234,106	-	\$234,106
Total Expenses	\$11,055,110	-	\$11,055,110
Change in Net Assets	\$9,811,878	(\$909,404)	\$8,902,474
Net Assets (Beginning of Year)	\$28,973,097	\$9,678,115	\$38,651,212
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	\$35,874,975	\$8,768,711	\$47,553,686

Statement of Financial Position - 2023

Assets	2023
Current Assets:	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$9,477,348
Investments	\$27,542,107
Accounts Receivable	\$ 193,409
Grants & Contracts Receivable	\$6,151,694
Notes receivable, current portion	\$1,449,653
Interest Receivable	\$640,378
Prepaid Expenses and Other Assets	\$38,568
Inventory	\$915,092
Total Current Assets	\$46,408,249
Notes receivable, noncurrent portion net of allowance for credit losses of \$2,295,623 and \$3,599,554, respectively	\$28,976,982
Property and Equipment, Net	\$328,654
TOTAL ASSETS	\$75,713,795

Liabilities and Net Assets	2023
Current Liabilities:	
Accounts Payable Accrued Expenses	\$318,889
Grants Payable	\$188,685
Deferred Revenue	\$3,823,701
Funds Held For Others	\$6,026,251
Notes Payable, Current Portion	\$6,636,692
Total Current Liabilities:	\$16,994,218
Notes Payable, Noncurrent Portion	\$11,165,891
Total Liabilities	\$28,160,109
Net Assets	
Without donor restrictions	\$38,784,975
With donor restrictions	\$8,768,711
Total Net Assets	\$47,553,686
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$75,713,795





The Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF) is a national, community-based organization focused on American Indian land recovery and management. ILTF's primary aim is to ensure that all reservation and important off-reservation lands are owned and managed by Indian people and Indian nations.

As a community foundation, ILTF relies on funding from private foundations and donations from Indian nations, corporations and individuals to support its programming in Indian Country. Please consider making a donation to the Indian Land Tenure Foundation today.

To learn more about our work and programs, and to make a donation, visit our website at: www.iltf.org.

Indian Land Tenure Foundation

151 East County Road B2
Little Canada, MN, 55117-1523
651-766-8999
www.iltf.org