



Caption: Wildfire Facilitation Team zoom pandemic-adjustment meeting

## Welcome to our 2020/2021 Annual Report!

*We release annual reports in the summertime so that we can offer both a reflection on the previous year, as well as a mid-year update about the current moment. This report was released in August 2021, nearly a year and a half into the Covid 19 pandemic.*

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“Wildfire has helped our organization to look deeper and strengthen our relationships. Throughout the process we were encouraged to lean into discomfort and see each other in ways that go beyond co-worker, ally and colleagues but as partners in movements. Wildfire not only facilitates space to nurture relationships but creates a starting point for bringing teams together to build vision and community.“

-Eriel Tchekwie Deranger, Executive Director, Indigenous Climate Action

## Wildfire

Healthy groups form the core of successful movements. The Wildfire Project strengthens social movements across sector by supporting grassroots groups to transform and spread a thriving culture: groups resilient in the face of changing terrain, who know how to strategize, are grounded in history and their vision, have a connection to a “north star” bigger than themselves, have healthy internal practices, know how to build across identity, can lean into generative conflict, are rooted in compassion and gratitude, can navigate contradiction, and are prepared to grow and win material gains toward freedom.

## Why?

The systems that support life on this planet are in free-fall or collapse.

Many of the challenges we face are outside of our control, but there are key obstacles that are within our power to overcome. One of the core challenges activist groups face today is a dominant culture in our movements that is a barrier to effectively building power, growing, and winning. It keeps Left from being accessible and compelling. This 'toxic movement culture' manifests in activists staying stuck in a self-marginalizing stance, unproductive/unskilled orientation to conflict, burnout, lack of vision, the circular firing squads of "call-out culture", and reductive approaches to identity. This is the water that many activist groups swim in, even when they themselves feel called to practice other values that reflect their highest selves. Ultimately, this culture shrinks the terrain of politics down to a level of individualism: the *interpersonal policing* of each other's behaviors and language based on moral abstractions. Instead, Wildfire works to foster a pro-solidarity orientation to collective struggle for the sake of changing the material systems that have brought our world to the brink.

We know *groups* are the fundamental building block of movements – they're what keep individuals in action, what keep movement moments going, how we transform, where we learn, what we use to hold each other accountable as we build networks.

We are in a historic moment of both incredible challenge and enormous possibility: the rules of the game keep changing, and contradictions are heightening. If we don't get more powerful soon, the rising tide of scarcity and fascism may engulf us all; if we do, true liberatory transformation of this world is on the table. Ultimately, in order for our movement to become what we need it to be, we need to shift its culture, toward one of powerful groups that can win in real terms.

In this regard, Wildfire is supporting the practice of the spiritual and cultural dimensions of a Just Transition.

## Movement-building strategy

We live in a collapsing civilization, and social movements are our best hope. Because we believe in groups, Wildfire's strategy is to work with grassroots organizations at the leading edge of a range of movement sectors, primarily those on the frontlines. We offer a special focus on groups that have emerged out of crisis moments. These are the groups that are most responsive to shifting context, adaptation, learning, and have the insight necessary to innovate solutions based on their social location. They offer the leadership that filters across movements and into our society at large. By assisting fundamental transformation in these groups, and then linking them together across issue areas, Wildfire contributes to a resurgence of a healing Left that can take on new challenges in a changing world. Our commitment to cadre and leadership development also transcends any particular group. We invest in the development of individual grassroots leaders within and beyond our partner groups because we know that by building their commitment to the long-haul, they will continue to assist our movements transformation long after our programs end.

## How We Move

The Wildfire Project is committed to keeping the real big picture in mind, drawing on deeper sources of resiliency bigger than ourselves, sitting in contradiction, honoring multiple truths, practicing gratitude, feeling visions of Freedom in our bodies, honoring land, and weaving the relations of material interdependence.

## Our Programs

Our work is relational. Our core programs are year-long Partnerships that take grassroots movement groups through creative, experiential, multi-part processes that help them shift their own group cultures through cycles of practice. This includes moving through generative conflict; grounding the work in study, history, and political education; navigating power, rank, and leadership; breaking past the self-limiting barriers that emerge from trauma and repression; building concrete strategy and organizing skills; finding balance between purpose & belonging; assisting interpersonal transformation, and building cultures of curiosity & learning.

We also offer group facilitation on a shorter-term basis, including coalition meetings, retreats, fellowships, convenings, trainings and more. Additionally, we run long-term leadership development programs to advance the facilitation skills of grassroots change-agents.

Our programs prepare these groups, and individuals within them, to lead grassroots social movements toward their own potential – to help us all become become big, bold, visionary, and strategic enough to build the world we all deserve.

We use experiential, democratic tools to elicit the wisdom already present in the groups, and pair that with decades of expertise to support groups and individuals to become their most powerful selves.



**Caption: Native Movement program, Aug 2021**

Native Movement is an alliance of Alaska Native groups, dedicated to building power power, rooted in an Indigenized worldview, toward healthy, sustainable & just communities for all.

# Program Areas

The Wildfire Project works to spread the relational skills\* required to build the strategic, thriving organizations needed to develop a mass-based, power-building Left big and powerful enough to govern and reshape society.

\*Building these skills includes practices, tools, and theory (embodied competency) on:

- Joining & differentiation
- Accountability & feedback
- Boundaries & requests
- Pace
- Purpose & belonging
- Building power & relationships across difference (incl. mainstreams/margins)
- Rank
- Generative conflict
- Identifying and transforming self-limiting beliefs
- And other connective practices such as: developing & incorporating ritual, increasing capacity to sit in contradiction, cultivating the capacity to surrender, keeping the real big picture in mind, drawing on untapped resources and sources of resilience, feeling visions of freedom, practicing gratitude, and increasing sense of interdependence

## **Types of Programs To Achieve our Purpose**

### **1. Group Facilitation**

- Support existing organizations to build the relational skills\* required to successfully make the impact they're positioned to make as part of a broader power-building movement ecology, through long-term partnerships that include a series of group retreats, personalized coaching, and practice plans. .

### **2. Leadership Development**

- Train organizers *and* facilitators to build and maintain strong group cultures, and further a relationally grounded approach to power-building in their work through Fellowships and Training for Trainers.
- Support the Wildfire Project Flame Network through ongoing skill development and political education.

### **3. Public Programming**

- Communications, narrative, and facilitated programming accessible to individuals at a lighter touch, with the goal of promoting the concepts, skills, tools and practices to help both organized and unorganized people prioritize, maintain, and participate in healthy and effective groups, and understand healthy group culture as fundamental to building power



## Who We Work With:

Wildfire works with groups that are committed to at least one of the following:

- Bringing mass numbers of people into fighting organizations to win collective power (e.g. base-building campaign organizations, tenants unions, workers centers, labor unions, mass organizations)
- Building working class/oppressed people's control over resources (i.e. land, money, infrastructure), labor, and/or the decisions that affect our lives at scale.
- Building the power and leverage of the broader mass-based, power-building Left, beyond specific sector (e.g. electoral work that increases the Left's influence over policy, a popular podcast bringing mass numbers of people to identify as part of the Left, a coalition-building effort, groups that serve their communities in tandem with others doing other roles in an ecosystem)

We prioritize groups that:

- See themselves as playing—or want to play—a role in building a broader Left, mass-based, power-building movement ecology.
- Are open to transformation: challenging their own habits and beliefs, taking risks for the sake of growth, receiving potentially difficult feedback/assessments and integrating them accordingly
- Are taking the reality of climate collapse and corresponding social/economic/political crises seriously in terms of their strategy and vision

## Program Outcomes

After going through our programs, depending on the particular group's goals, they and their members:

- More effectively build power and grow
- Be more willing and able to defy “purity politics” by navigating contradiction, holding nuance, nurturing creativity, and taking risks
- Have the tools and skills to make strategic cultural interventions
- See themselves as creators/shapers/agents of culture
- Be able to identify and transform self-marginalizing group behavior
- Break past fear of conflict, and engage in healthy practices to surface agreements and disagreements
- Heal from organizational wounds that have lived under the surface and hindered their work
- See and transform the “ghosts” of unhealthy or unresolved past conflicts
- Know how to facilitate their wider base through comparable processes



**“At a time of serial economic and ecological crises, Wildfire is giving our movements crucial tools and structures to protect themselves — to not only fight back disaster capitalism but to put forward real solutions that reduce inequality and make us all safer in the future. I don’t know of anything else out there like it.”**

- Naomi Klein, Author, Wildfire Project Advisory Board Member

# Six Elements of Thriving Movement Culture

Wildfire's methodology was developed through years of letting the work teach us through praxis. We've found patterns that hold groups back, and an approach to assist organizations in shifting the culture they practice. We design custom programs from scratch to serve the needs of grassroots groups, using experiential, directly-democratic, participant-centered pedagogy. There are six elements that inform our methodology:

## 1. Thriving Groups

- a. Enter into generative conflict. Balance purpose and belonging. Navigate rank. Practice direct feedback and accountability. Balance joining and differentiating. Build group containers that hold risk. Navigate mainstreams and margins.

## 2. Compelling Visions of Freedom

- a. Find a North Star. Deepen collective vision. Engage in visionary political education. Assess strategies, impacts, and interpersonal dynamics.

## 3. Building Power Across Difference

- a. Re-negotiate mainstreams and margins. Hold complexity, fierceness, and compassion. Deepen solidarity through political education.

## 4. Study and Practice

- a. Historically ground the work. Deepen analysis of power. Concretize vision. Draw on strategic wisdom. Integrate political education.

## 5. Transformative Strategies & Skills to Strategize

- a. Face and transcend self-limiting beliefs. Create a culture of assessment. Identify the impact you're best suited to make. Build strategies to make that impact. Develop the skills that the work requires.

## 6. Cultivating Spirit and Faith

- a. Develop and incorporate ritual. Increase capacity to sit in contradiction. Cultivate capacity to surrender. Keep the real big picture in mind. Draw on untapped resources and sources of resilience. Feel visions of freedom. Practice Gratitude. Increase a sense of interdependence.

# What's Special about Wildfire

Wildfire is an intervention on the dominant *culture* of activism in our society. We make this intervention with a team of facilitators who have the legitimacy, cultural competency, reputation, and stake to holistically engage across many movement sectors and challenge norms that activists take for granted. We believe that culture - **collective practices that express collective values** - sits underneath and shapes the structure, work, and impact of organizations.

## Whole Group Centered

There are many training organizations that host workshops for individuals. That model can train people in skills or new perspectives, but they often go back to organizations that are not able to integrate the skills or sustain the change. This leads to burnout and lost potential. We work with whole groups both as a core



strategy for movement-wide culture shift, and also because its how to make the change stick. We insist that our Partners have full participation at all levels of leadership, for a cohesive impact.

## Practice-Oriented Accompaniment

Many workshops can create a feeling of breakthrough and catharsis in the training room, but that's the easy part. Real change happens in the day-do-day, which is why Wildfire focuses on daily practice, which can only be tracked and supported through long-term accompaniment. That's why our Partner programs follow the course of a year, rather than just a weekend.

## Experiential Methodology

Our pedagogy elicits the group's own wisdom and direction - there are many trainings where experts communicate their expertise, but this style often does not bring about transformation or retention. We work experientially so that groups can sustain their growth without needing Wildfire, creating self-replicating patterns of behavior that can spread throughout our movements as a whole. The life of the group itself becomes the material of our facilitation, which is why all of our programs are custom-built to suit specific needs. We apply a range of tools through a refined methodology, rather than a cookie-cutter curriculum.

## Holistic integration

Most existing training infrastructure in the Left either sits in the realm of depoliticized skill building (i.e. without context), or conversely, focuses on political education and a liberatory politic that isn't connected to building the capacity needed to carry it out. Wildfire is a holistic integration that blends these approaches - organizing, healing, strategy, education - underpinned by deep emotional work that focuses on recovering individual and collective agency. We do this by surfacing the dynamics that live under the surface in an organization.

## Multi-sectoral

Wildfire has praxis integrated into our DNA - our facilitators are always in the field, working in Ecological & Climate Justice, Black Liberation, Racial & Economic Justice, Immigrant Rights, Housing, and GLBTQI rights. We are students of the groups and sectors we serve, and therefore get to blend learning from the leading edge of frontline grassroots groups across these sectors. We believe movements need to break past issue silos to build strategies of deep alignment and cohesive platforms, which is why we internally have a cadre model where our facilitators are themselves practitioners in these different arenas.

## Shifting Culture Through Conflict

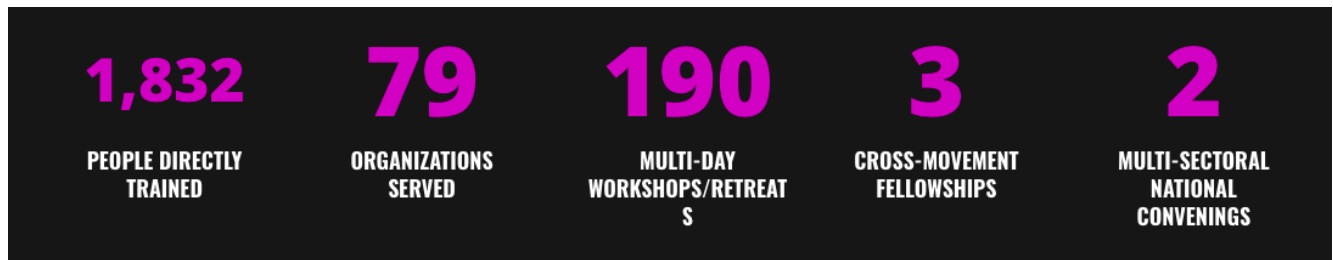
We've learned through practice that culture shift requires focusing on where the spoken and unspoken **tension** is - eliciting conflict to work through it in a generative way. For example, the barriers to good strategy are often not a lack of a planning rubric, but the micro-misalignment that manifests in practices that can be invisible to a group because it's the water they swim in. Without dealing with self-marginalizing group tendencies, a group can't grow. Without dealing intentionally with issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality, they'll never have enough unity to overcome external challenges. Many groups try to shift their structure, but without a culture to support that shift, the old patterns to persist. To win, we will need to shift the way we organize, *the way we behave*.

We believe the engine of this kind of shift is *healthy conflict*. Movement groups are often accustomed to the kinds of polarizing conflict that they practice externally with their adversaries; when they apply these practices to navigate internal disagreements among allies, it can fracture the group and become toxic -

which is why many groups opt instead for passive-aggressive or conflict-averse internal dynamics. We believe that increasing the *conflict literacy* of groups is key for them to recover their power and grow.

Ultimately, that's what Wildfire is here for: To support individuals and groups to find their **agency**, so they can overcome their barriers to power and create the kind of culture that will help our movements grow and succeed, so we can win the world we all deserve.

## Wildfire's Track Record



The groups we've trained have won ballot measures to re-enfranchise hundreds of thousands of voters, gotten progressive candidates elected, escalated bold actions at the United Nations Climate Negotiations, shut down police precincts, saved homeowners from eviction, extracted millions of dollars from slumlords for low-income tenants, sued the federal government over climate change, won \$15/hr minimum wage in Minnesota, forced universities to divest hundreds of millions of dollars from fossil fuels and put it back in communities, defended the rights of Muslims and Jews, and organized thousands of people into power-building organizations. We don't claim responsibility for all of that. But we know we've helped individuals become better leaders, supported groups to meet their potential, and built relationships across geographies, identities, and issues that have manifested themselves in real action and tangible victories.

The groups we serve are changing the world.

We're so grateful to accompany and learn from them.

## The Wildfire Project Facilitation Team



Wildfire has a team of 17 experienced facilitators, all of whom are leaders in a wide range of movement sectors and issue areas. They include Executive Directors of organizations like the Dream Defenders, are Campaign Managers for Congressional leaders like Ilhan Omar, are Political Directors for groups like OutFront! Minnesota. Many of these practitioner-facilitators emerged from the organizations we've partnered with, and now make up our Leadership Team - which is one way that Wildfire is led by its grassroots base. This team keeps us rooted in many different movement arenas, allowing us to cross-pollinate cutting edge innovation and insights from different social change efforts across the country. We are proud that our team is active in the movements they serve on the ground, and distilling these insights allows us to be uniquely multi-sectoral.

# 2020 Accomplishments

## Pivoting Online

Once the pandemic hit the United States, Wildfire quickly realized we would not be able to hold in-person gatherings, well before the formal lockdowns were put in place. At first we were skeptical that we would be able to move our programming online, because it's so experiential. We immediately put our group gatherings on hold for a couple of months, to retrain our team in digital facilitation.

From April to June, we were able to translate many of our tools to be used effectively in a zoom setting, and were able to deliver high quality programming to our frontline partners, and grew as facilitators in the process. We found that we can do deep emotional work, generative conflict, and more despite being stuck behind computer screens. While we are eager to get back to in-person-training since nothing can replace it, we were pleasantly surprised by how well some of our content could be moved online. One takeaway is that we think in the future, we will be able to deliver some of our programming publicly online in a way that is more accessible.



**“After one of our retreats with Wildfire, I had this feeling in my body of absolute openness, clarity about who we were, and confidence in the possibility of who we could become. It felt a little bit like magic. I think that magic Wildfire brought actually helped our organization survive difficult times – but beyond surviving, to do important, powerful work – like this past semester, when we organized actions in 30 college campuses around the country, turning out more than 2,000 students, taking 60 arrests, and winning tangible victories for divestment from fossil fuels and reinvestment in a just transition. I strongly believe that Wildfire is a lot of what made that possible.”**

**- Varshini Prakash, co-Founder, Sunrise Movement**

## Group Facilitation

We measure the impact of our work through developing a criteria of culture-shift on a case-by-case basis with each of our groups, and over the course of the year evaluate the progress of an organization's ability to meet its own goals through the practices they develop in our programming. We get feedback from our partners every 3-6 months, and then annually after the program ends.

## **In 2020 we worked with groups that included:**

### **Indigenous Climate Action**

- The only Indigenous climate justice organization in Canada.

### **Miami Workers' Center**

- A frontline strategy and action center working to organize, mobilize and build the power of oppressed and disenfranchised communities, particularly low-income Black and Latina women in south Florida.

### **CAAV: Organizing Asian-American Communities**

- Builds grassroots community power across diverse poor and working class Asian immigrant and refugee communities in New York City.

### **The Worker Agency**

- A strategic advocacy collective that supports movement campaigns.

### **OPAL: Environmental Justice**

- A grassroots EJ organization aiming to build bases, fortify movements, and activate leaders in BIPOC and low-income communities.

### **APIENC**

- APIENC is powered by queer and trans Asian and Pacific Islander people, building power, uplifting our histories, and supporting transformation and political home to our people.

### **Dream Defenders**

- Organizing Black and Brown youth to build power in our communities to advance a vision of safety and security—away from prisons, deportation, and war—and towards healthcare, housing, jobs and movement for all.

### **Power U Center for Social Change**

- Organizing and developing the leadership of Black and Brown youth and Black women in South Florida so that they may help lead the struggle to liberate all oppressed people.

### **Rainforest Action Network**

- An Environmental campaigning organization.

## **Greenthumb NYC**

- Providing programming, workshops—from gardening basics to community organizing—and material support to over 550 community gardens in New York City.

## **Peace Poets**

- A collective of artists that celebrate, examine and advocate for life through music and poetry.

## **SustainUS**

- A youth-led organization advancing justice and sustainability by empowering young people to engage in advocacy.

## **Nuns & Nones**

- An alliance of spiritually diverse millennials, women religious, and key partners working to create a more just, equitable and loving world.

## **Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative**

- A community-led effort to build an equitable, sustainable, and democratic local economy that creates wealth and ownership for low-income people of color in the Bronx, NYC.

## **Black Mountain Circle**

- Cultivating resilience, community, and earth stewardship through a growing program of inspiring events and insightful conversations in Point Reyes, California.

## **Bay Area Sunrise Movement**

- Bay Area chapter of Sunrise Movement, a youth movement to stop climate change and create millions of good jobs in the process.

## **The 2020 Election**

Another little celebration: While The Wildfire Project is a 501c3 and does not engage directly in the electoral arena, our facilitation team went hard hard in our personal capacities working with organizations like Dream Defenders, Mijente, Choose Democracy, Seed The Vote, People's Action, Ilhan Omar's campaign, Peace Poets, Ruckus Society, BlackOUT Collective, and MN Democracy Defense. I'm so inspired by our team engaging in so many aspects of the moment last Autumn – from community organizing, to voter turnout in AZ, FL, and GA, to re-electing Congresswoman Omar, to defending/protecting the vote, to preventing/preparing to avert a potential coup attempt.

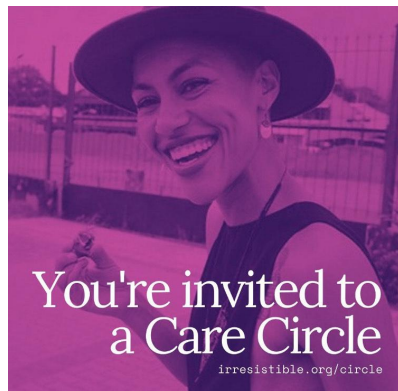
## Public Tools and Gatherings

Finally, Covid-19 also pushed us to start creating more tools for public use by other facilitators, which you can find on the [Articles & Tools section of our website here](#)<sup>1</sup>.

Our Executive Director spoke frequently on podcasts and talk shows, reaching hundreds of thousands of people. These shows included **The Michael Brooks Show & The Nomiki Show**, and has appeared on **The Young Turks, Jacobin Weekends, The Majority Report, The Bitchuation Room, Woke Bros, The Katie Halper Show, For The Wild, Staying Home, Loam Listen, Give Them An Argument,**



as well as other new media outlets where he shared Wildfire's perspective on mobilization, spirituality, the mechanics of social movements, group facilitation, and organizing for change. His new podcast mini-series on **Revolutionary Left Radio** is called **Dialectics & Psychedelics: Transformation and Social Struggles** and also shares lessons from Wildfire's praxis.



Another opportunity that the pandemic presented us was getting to deepen with our ecosystem by hosting **Restoration Circles** to ground us during the chaos. We held space for our larger community (over zoom) to process the political moment and deepen our relationships.

“The Wildfire team supported members of our Council of Elders to tap into their agency and enhance their awareness of what motivates them to perform and act in accordance with our North Star. Their experience with facilitating diverse groups of people meant that collectively they had an intuitive understanding to tailor their facilitation, encouraging each of us to tap into our individual and collective agency. The team operates from a place of truth and respect, which supported our ability to trust them and their ability to influence meaningful positive change in our group culture. I believe their investment in preparation made them effective in meeting new challenges, engaging the group in courageous conversations and supporting us with robust decision making. They were able to understand our diversity, range of complex ideas and stories, and synthesize these into constructive outcomes, focused discussions, and next steps. Their willingness to genuinely invest in and support the council of elders was such a gift and have strengthened the resolve of this group of people by building their capacity, and mutual understanding of each other.”



- Fenton Lutunatabua, Coordinator, Pacific Climate Warriors

<sup>1</sup> If the hyperlink does not work in the PDF document, you can see this section of our website at <http://wildfireproject.org/resources/#articlestools>

# 2021 Programming

We hit the ground running in 2021.

## Group Facilitation

Many of the groups we were supporting in 2020 extended their programming with us into this year, and some will continue into 2022. They include:

### **Indigenous Climate Action**

- The only Indigenous climate justice organization in Canada.

### **The Worker Agency**

- A strategic advocacy collective that supports movement campaigns.

### **APIENC**

- APIENC is powered by queer and trans Asian and Pacific Islander people, building power, uplifting our histories, and supporting transformation and political home to our people.

### **Nuns & Nones**

- An alliance of spiritually diverse millennials, women religious, and key partners working to create a more just, equitable and loving world.

### **Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative**

- A community-led effort to build an equitable, sustainable, and democratic local economy that creates wealth and ownership for low-income people of color in the Bronx, NYC.

In addition to these groups, in 2021 we began working with:

### **Native Movement**

- An Indigenous organization based in Alaska, working on climate change and treaty rights, dedicated to building people power, rooted in an Indigenized worldview, toward healthy, sustainable, & just communities for all.



## Virginia Civic Engagement Table

- A convening and coordinating table building long-term, progressive political power toward a multiracial and just democracy in Virginia

## 18 Million Rising

- An unprecedented Asian American Pacific Islander online organizing and civic engagement organization that leverages the power of technology and social media to advocate for justice for our communities and allies

## Audre Lorde Project

- A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Trans and Gender Non Conforming People of Color center for community organizing in New York City, working for community wellness and social and economic justice

## Tipping Point UK

- A UK-based Climate Justice organization

## Los Angeles Sunrise Movement

- The LA hub for the youth climate action group Sunrise Movement

## Rainforest Action Network

- An Environmental campaigning organization.





“The Wildfire Project changed my life. It is part of the reason I have been able to step into action and continue to grow. Wildfire opened my heart and mind to my power.”

-Lena Gardner, Black Lives Matter

## Public Tools and Gatherings

We will continue to expand our public tools, including a new article on the leading strategy-for-movement-builders website **Organizing Upgrade** titled “[Healthy Group Accountability: Learning How To Learn](#).” In it, we distill lessons for groups working to build an internal culture of followthrough, and share tools for building a culture of collective responsibility for the sake of strategy.

We will continue to share our learnings and tools on podcasts, and by the end of the year intend on releasing our own 3 episode series on Conflict in Social Movements. Each episode will feature a deep conversation with one of our partners about the transformation that occurred using Wildfire tools, and how they see their work now. We are excited about making this contribution to the discourse about how to build healthy social movements. We will also continue our Restoration Circles for activists.

## Fellowship

Our biggest section of entirely new programming is an upcoming **Wildfire Fellowship**. While our classes will not begin until 2022, we have already begun working on building out this major piece of our work.

We will convene two fellowship cohorts of movement leaders to deepen, practice, and spread our methodology and approach to group work. Each cohort will be made up of 15 leaders (30 total).

One cohort will be for **advanced facilitators** - our peers who are already skilled in facilitation, but who want to learn Wildfire’s pedagogy. They will shape social movements by holding group space for others.

The other track will be for **advanced organizers** - people who want to practice Wildfire’s approach to group work as participants within their own groups (rather than holding space externally).

Both cohorts will go through a series of three 16-hour workshops, spread over 6-12 months, with practice and integration in between. In these workshops, fellows will deepen their capacity to build and maintain healthy, dynamic, and resilient groups through:

- Generative conflict work
- Building deep relationships across difference

- Renegotiating power along lines of identity, power, and privilege
- Healthy feedback and accountability practices



Fellows will be chosen based on available opportunities in their work and lives to practice these skills in service to movement. Most will be representing the organizations they are part of. In those cases, we will work with organizational leadership to create space for fellows' application and integration of acquired Wildfire skills.

Wildfire's previous fellowship programming provided successful opportunities to gather assessments of group dynamics trends across multiple sectors; experiment with new tools and approaches; build deep relationships across location, sector, and identity; and refine and adapt our methodology together. Our collaborative approach positions facilitators and fellows as co-learners, and the material we cover will emerge directly from fellows' work and lived experiences.

Our last fellowship was nearly 6 years ago. This programming took a majority young women of color cohort of movement leaders arising from the groups we facilitated through 3 years of political, pedagogical, and personal development. Those former fellows came from an array of movement sectors, all emerging from crisis, and now make up half of our standing facilitation team. Through that fellowship, they developed their facilitation skills, led political education and transformational group work in their organizations and communities, built deep relationships, and facilitated key pieces of two cross-movement gatherings with hundreds of movement leaders from across North America. We are going to be working in a similar model - and may invite graduates from this fellowship to join our team, just like last time. The key difference is that we are expanding our fellowship to include organizers, not just facilitators.

The idea for the fellowship project in this proposal emerged from the former fellows' desire to apply the lessons learned in their own leadership development—from both successes and failures—with new cohorts of organizers. Six years since the start of their fellowship, as our commitment to this work deepens while we raise families, build careers, and move through life transitions, the former fellows' ongoing interest in developing leaders as they were developed is evidence of a well-practiced and embodied dedication to the kind of investment that builds leaders who are in it for the long-haul. These former fellows will be key facilitators in the fellowship.



**“Wildfire is a blessing for activists, organizations and movements! One of the best decisions we’ve made is to work with Wildfire over the last year. They created a sacred space for us to speak our truths and listen to one another, which strengthened our internal and external communication and work in the world. And recently, when we were overwhelmed responding to the fires in the Amazon, they held much-needed space for us to come together as a team to respond with big vision for the immediate and long-term. In a few hours we gained clarity for what we needed to do. For that, we are so grateful!”**

**- Leila Salazar-López, Executive Director, Amazon Watch**

## **Team Leadership Development**

We held a digital weekend team gathering in July, but we are *really* looking forward to October, when we will be able to gather our Facilitation in a Flame Network in person for the first time in over 18 months!

## **Strategy Process:**

In 2020 we began an ongoing strategic refinement process to assess the shifting political terrain in the US and our role within it. We continued this assessment into June of 2021. This internal rigor is ongoing and produced a few outcomes: the more specific group criteria described on pages 5 & 6, as well as the new public programming and fellowship plans. We also deepened our commitment to direct political education with the groups that we serve.

## **Hiring**

With a tiny 3-person staff, coordinating an 18-person team, we are stretched thin and over capacity. We would like to hire both a Development Associate by the end of 2021 and a full-time Program Director in early 2022. This will depend on meeting our fundraising goals for the year. We had hoped to hire a Program/Education Director last year, but put this position on hold during the pandemic since there was so much going on.

# Finances

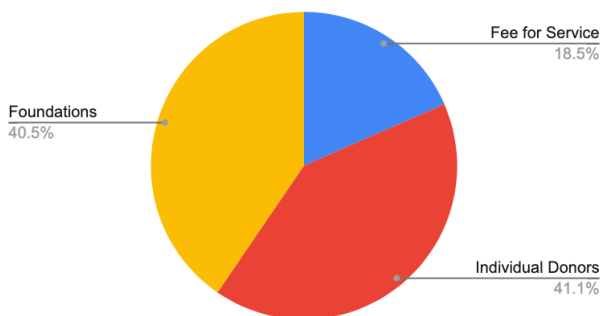
We are not alone in saying that 2020 was a huge year of learning, grief, constant adjustment and reckoning. We set out with big plans for 2020, most of which came to fruition albeit in ways we never thought would happen, like kicking off our 2020 partner program cohort fully online or growing our public tools and trying out new public programs, virtually! As unpredictable as 2020 was, we were able to financially weather through all these shifts.

We had spent prior years building our reserve so we had some savings set aside. We also worked hard to diversify our revenue streams among our individual donor base from 305 individual sustaining donors, our fee-for service, and our foundation giving. See charts below on where we get our money.

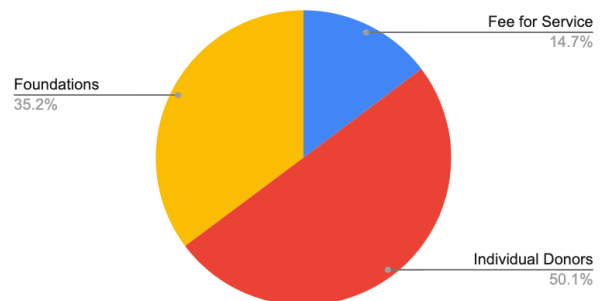
Having a reserve during the pandemic helped to relieve us of a scarcity mindset and focus on serving our partners which meant adapting and pivoting our programs online in a timely way. We trained up all our facilitation team members for online facilitation and our programs continued pretty seamlessly online. We were also able to increase pay for our facilitators.

We transitioned away from major funders during 2020, one as a direct impact of covid, the other of their shifting priorities. The near future feels unsure as the country slowly climbs out of this economic crisis. While we lost a few funding sources we were able to make it up with a few new funders, along with a few of our major donors increasing their giving amount. The demand for partner programs and group facilitation continues to grow. We are stable, and building. Our aspirational budget for 2021 is **\$500,000** with hopes of hiring by the end of the year, but we need to make-up a gap of \$45K to meet our ambition of hiring a 4th staff person. We would be grateful if you'd help us cross the finish line by become a sustaining donor at [www.wildfireproject.org/donate](http://www.wildfireproject.org/donate)

2019 Income



2020 Income



# Gratitude

**Thank you to all our 305 recurring grassroots and major individual donors.**

Thank you to our 2020 foundation funders:

Overbrook Foundation

Bertha Foundation

Chorus Foundation

Lush Charity Pot

Solidaire Foundation

Compton Foundation

We appreciate your support!

