

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



ROMERO  
INSTITUTE



Lakota People's  
LAW PROJECT

LET'S  
GREEN  
CA!



# Message from our Executive Director



Dear Romero Institute family,

In 2021, thanks to your generous support, the Romero Institute — home to the Lakota People's Law Project, Let's Green CA!, and now the RICO legal project — made great strides in our fight for Indigenous rights and a livable planet for future generations.

In the midst of ongoing pandemic challenges, you made sure the intrepid teams at the Romero Institute could press forward and accomplish exciting breakthroughs for the Lakota people, for environmental justice, and for a deep dive into Big Oil's criminal history.

With your help, we ran a get-out-the-vote campaign in the Native communities in Georgia, where a pair of important Senate races went down to the wire. Your support in that moment played a key role in protecting the issues we champion in Lakota Country and nationwide. Your assistance throughout the year also meant we could fight shoulder to shoulder with our partners at Camp Migizi in Minnesota against the dangerous Line 3 pipeline.

With support from you and our entire community of generous Lakota Law members, we also launched a much-welcomed teen center at the Standing Rock Nation in partnership with Hoksila White Mountain, who is committed to traditional Lakota cultural practice and healthy afterschool activities for young people.

On the West Coast, our Let's Green CA! team charged ahead with commitment, introducing progressive climate solutions to achieve carbon-zero as soon as humanly possible. We engaged with the environmental justice community, organized labor, traditional environmental groups, and many others in designing solutions that will rein in the transportation emissions comprising 40 percent of California's carbon footprint. Your contributions are helping us form key alliances and co-create solutions that will be a win for us all.

Knowing that our fossil fuel opponents have deep pockets and won't go away quietly, we also assembled a legal team to drill down on the 60-year history of Big Oil's racketeering crimes against humanity, with a special focus on the major oil companies operating in California, their CEOs, chief stockholders, security departments, and financiers.

In this annual report, you will discover more highlights of our 2021 program work and gain insights into our impacts, financials, and goals moving forward — all of which is empowered by your generous support. Thank you for walking by our side on this sacred journey!

In deep appreciation for all that you do,

*Sara Nelson*  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR







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ROMERO  
INSTITUTE





# ROMERO INSTITUTE

*Founded 1981*

Named for the Salvadoran priest Archbishop Óscar Romero, the **Romero Institute** is an interfaith, nonprofit law and policy center based in Santa Cruz, CA. Descended from the Christic Institute and home of the Lakota People's Law Project and Let's Green CA, we defend Indigenous communities and the Earth. For more than 50 years, our leaders have been guardians and advocates for the people. Through public education, grassroots organizing, leadership development, research, investigation, impact litigation, and forward-thinking public policy, we take action where our objectives have the potential for large-scale impact. We embrace new ways of thinking that promote a consciousness of unity and cooperation.

**Mission:** The Romero Institute strategically exposes systemic injustice and implements lasting solutions. We defend Indigenous rights and fight to end the climate emergency. We protect constitutional rights, treaty rights, human rights, and the environment. We champion equity and advocate for the people.



## Daniel Sheehan, Esq.

A Harvard-trained constitutional law attorney, Daniel Sheehan, Esq. serves as the Romero Institute's president, chief counsel, architect of public policy, and primary spokesperson. Daniel has led or participated in some of the most important public interest cases of the last 50 years, including the Watergate and Iran-Contra Scandals, the Pentagon Papers, and the killing of Karen Silkwood.



[www.RomeroInstitute.org](http://www.RomeroInstitute.org)

Located at 210 High Street 2nd Floor, Santa Cruz, CA 95060



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## RICO Suit

In 2021, the Romero Institute added two more legal experts to join attorney Daniel Sheehan, and they began drafting a 300-page Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organization Act (RICO) complaint against the six major oil companies presently doing business in California. It's designed to stimulate filings by state attorneys general and U.S. Attorneys against corporations, their CEOs, management officials, principal shareholders and financiers, and the American Petroleum Institute, which conspired with the oil leaders to lie to the American public about the known dangers of fossil fuel emissions causing climate change. RICO is normally used to criminally prosecute the Mob, and addresses violations including conspiracy to commit mail fraud, assassination programs, bribery, witness intimidation, kidnapping, blackmail and other criminal activity.

The Romero Institute team is the only nonprofit group who has ever filed such a civil RICO suit, against the 29 people who were working with Oliver North in the Iran-Contra scandal. Our RICO complaint against Big Oil will be given to the proper officials in California to seat a Grand Jury to review criminal charges.



“The Romero Institute has a proven track record of winning strategic victories for people and the planet, especially in issues that are critical to the public interest. Their courage, commitment, and moral leadership are needed now more than ever in the movement for a green, just, and sustainable future in our state, in our country, and our world.” - *Dolores Huerta*

## Special Media Project

In 2021 the Romero's Strategic Investigations Division prepared the investigative memorandum supporting preparation of a twenty four-episode audio podcast and an eight-episode documentary film series setting forth the information that was blocked from being presented to a jury during the Reagan and Bush Administrations. This information reveals a widespread criminal racketeering operation supervised by George H. W. Bush's handpicked director of CIA worldwide covert operations. Crimes include massive heroine and cocaine smuggling, provision of illegal weapons and explosives to fascist organizations around the world, and a planetwide political assassination program, all in support of global dominance of the Earth's resources.

Learn More &  
**TAKE ACTION**  
*in our brand new website*  
**[www.RomeroInstitute.org](http://www.RomeroInstitute.org)**





A vibrant field of orange California poppies (Eschscholium californicum) in full bloom. The flowers are bright orange with delicate, papery petals. They are growing in a field of dry grass and other low-lying vegetation. In the background, a rolling hill is visible under a deep blue sky filled with soft, white, wispy clouds. The overall scene is bright and sunny, capturing the essence of a beautiful spring day in California.

**LET'S  
GREEN  
CA!**



# Introducing... LET'S GREEN CA!

## We have a moral obligation to end the climate crisis.

As the fifth largest economy in the world and a historic environmental leader, we believe California is uniquely positioned to create a model of equitable climate action that can be replicated worldwide.

## Mission:

Let's Green CA! partners with vulnerable communities and working families throughout California to build bottom-up solutions to the climate crisis. At Let's Green CA!, we put equity first, jobs and workers first, and frontline communities first.

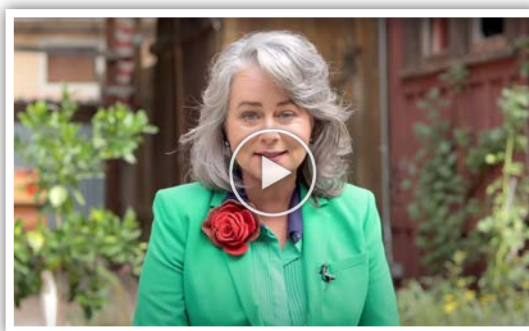
In 2021, the Romero Institute's Greenpower program became Let's Green CA! and our team hit the ground running. Check out this recap of our first year:

<https://greencal.org/2021recap>



## Introducing Heidi Harmon:

Let's Green CA! began the year with just three dedicated staff members; the team has quickly doubled in size. Heidi Harmon, the former mayor of San Luis Obispo, joined our team as Senior Public Affairs Director.



Watch the video to meet Heidi:  
<https://greencal.org/meetheidi>



Join the movement to win climate justice for Californians  
**greencal.org**



# Year One of Let's Green CA!

## Electrify CA! A High Road to Clean Transportation

In 2021, the Let's Green CA! team authored a policy framework to equitably electrify California, create good-paying green jobs, and get the Golden State back on track to achieving its 2030 climate goals. We cemented a partnership with legendary organizer Dolores Huerta and the Dolores Huerta Foundation to make our Electrify CA! vision a reality.



DOLORES HUERTA



LET'S  
GREEN  
CA!



Let's Green CA! and the Dolores Huerta Foundation during a joint work session in Bakersfield



"Instead of top-down, Let's Green CA! will build solutions to the climate crisis from the ground up. When the California Legislature convenes in 2022, we expect to introduce legislation to electrify California's homes and personal transportation infrastructure over the next decade, remedy historic environmental injustice and ensure good-paying union jobs for the professionals who will build California out of the climate crisis. We're envisioning a future in which we remove toxic fossil fuels from our day to day lives; a future in which our homes and cars are all fossil fuel-free within the next decade."

Heidi Harmon in CalMatters

[READ MORE](#)

## Let's Green CA! works with regional partners to ensure justice for frontline communities and support workers in building careers in the green economy.

As Greenpower, we led the charge to form a community-owned renewable energy agency: Central Coast Community Energy. Today, our Let's Green CA! team is working in close partnership with the SLO Climate Coalition to ensure renewable energy development supports working families, treats workers with dignity, and respects the rights of frontline communities.



Ultimately, we aim to codify strong workforce and environmental justice standards at community-owned energy agencies across the state of California.



## Let's Green CA!

contributed to a public education and outreach campaign in low-income communities to help residents take advantage of state incentive funds and get in clean cars. Watch Danny's story. [greencal.org/danny](https://greencal.org/danny)



Join the movement  
[greencal.org](https://greencal.org)





**Lakota People's**  
LAW PROJECT





## Lakota People's LAW PROJECT

### Lakota Peoples Law Project

was born in 2004, when a group of Lakota grandmothers asked the Romero Institute to help prevent South Dakota's Department of Social Services from systematically removing Native children from their families and tribal communities. LPLP's focus expanded in 2016, when the Dakota Access pipeline threatened the Sioux Nation's sacred lands and water. By 2020, we had developed close ties with tribal nations and nonprofit allies, working together to amplify Indigenous voices, replace fossil fuels with renewable solutions, protect the voting rights of Native people, and provide on-the-ground support when and where it's most needed.

**Mission:** A coalition of Native and non-Native activists and legal professionals, the Lakota People's Law Project (LPLP) partners with Lakota communities, creating systemic change that supports the sovereignty of the *Oceti Sakowin oyate* — the People of the Seven Council Fires. We combine public education, advocacy, on-the-ground organizing, and high-impact legal support to help win justice and secure the Sioux Nation's inherent rights to autonomy and self-determination.

Thank you for continuing to support our mission for Native and environmental justice! Watch: our co-director and lead counsel, Chase Iron Eyes, addressing a crowd in Washington, D.C. in one of our most watched videos of 2021.  
<https://lakota.law/chaseindc>



### Our Journey Together in 2021

Successfully advocated for Deb Haaland's selection as the first Native Cabinet secretary in U.S. history

Urged President Biden to end the Dakota Access, Keystone XL and Line 3 pipelines; he shut down KXL in June

Raised awareness about the legal attack on the Indian Child Welfare Act, now headed to the Supreme Court

Partnered with Standing Rock to get out the Native and environmental vote for the Georgia Run-off elections

Helped to open a new teen center for Standing Rock youth

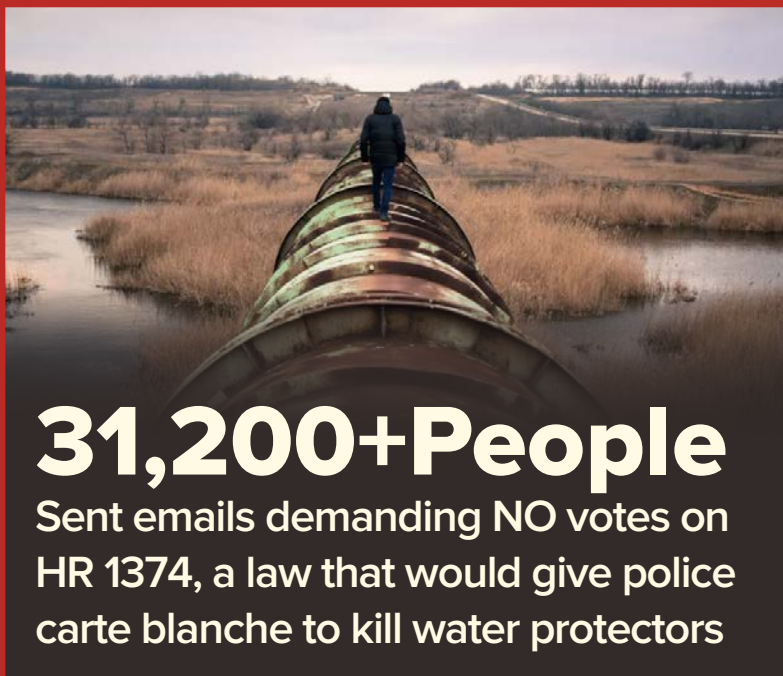
## We accomplished so much together!





# 13,000+ People

Sent emails supporting Deb Haaland's appointment as U.S. Secretary of the Interior



# 31,200+ People

Sent emails demanding NO votes on HR 1374, a law that would give police carte blanche to kill water protectors



# 31 episodes

Produced of "Cut to the Chase," a weekly video cast on Native issues that collected more than 100,000 views



# 4,000+ People

Signed the petition for a U.S. Truth and Healing Commission concerning American Indian boarding schools.

## MAKING HISTORY

### The New York Times

"BIDEN PICKS DEB HAALAND TO LEAD INTERIOR DEPARTMENT"

"And the Lakota People's Law Action Center launched a petition...backing her."

[\(READ MORE\)](#)

# Instagram

# 100K+ People

Now follow LPLP Instagram



# 2X Web Sessions

among 18-25 years





# TAKE ME TO THE GATHERING!



## 20 Native Nations

Represented at our first annual Wopila Gathering

**10% increase**  
in new visitors to the website

### PROTECTING PEOPLE

## Atmos Atmos.Earth

### "A PIPELINE OF ABUSE"

Chase Iron Eyes, the lead counsel for [Lakota People's Law Project](#), an Indigenous-led legal group, has seen the workforce himself in the hotel where he was staying during his recent visit to the camps. There's still time for President Joe Biden to interfere and cancel the pipeline. "For President Biden to act like he can sit there and ignore this is irresponsible," Iron Eyes said.

[\(READ MORE\)](#)

**58 educational videos**  
produced to amplify Native voices



## 5 Delegations

Sent to the Line 3 pipeline



**Learn More  
& Take Action**

[action.LakotaLaw.org](https://action.LakotaLaw.org)

547 South 7th Street #149 Bismarck, ND 58504

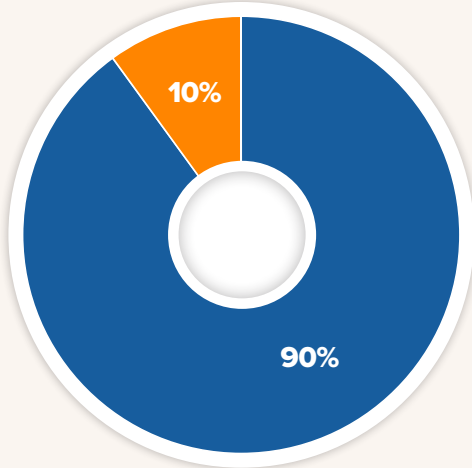




# Financials & the Future...



# 2021 Financial Overview



## Support & Revenue

Individual Contributions  
\$3,550,000 (90%)

Foundations and Trust Grants  
\$390,000 (10%)

Other  
\$9,000 (0%)

Total Revenue  
**\$3,949,000\***

\* THIS NUMBER REFLECTS A \$1.8 MILLION CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TO FUND OUR CALIFORNIA-BASED WORK.

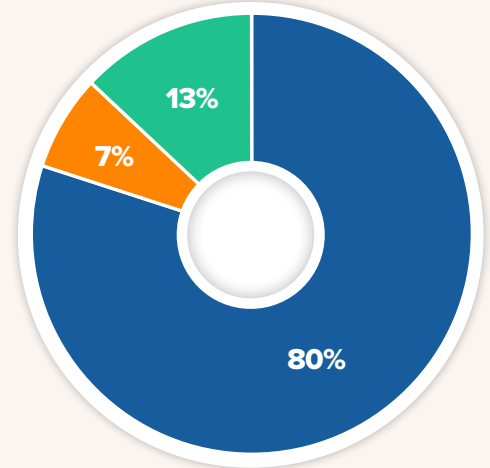
## YOUR COMMITMENT

to the Romero Institute in 2021 provided increased stability, empowering our ability to plan strategically for the future of environmental and Indigenous justice. Thank you for your dedicated support!

Romero Institute's EIN is:  
**95-3527131**

[Click here for a copy of our financials.](#)

[romeroinstitute.org/financials](http://romeroinstitute.org/financials)



## Operating Expenses

Program Expenses  
\$2,181,000 (80%)

Fundraising Expenses  
\$197,000 (7%)

Administrative Expenses  
\$357,000 (13%)

Total Expenses  
**\$2,735,000**

**1.32 million**  
dollars more raised  
in 2021 than 2020

**2,131**  
sustaining Lakota  
Law members in 2021

**9%YOY**  
increase in online  
contributions

**\$12**  
increase in average  
contribution amount

## Shine a Light for Justice

Become a foundational supporter of the Romero Institute — home of Lakota People's Law Project and Let's Green CA! As a Romero member, you'll have an avenue to realize the values you hold dear and illuminate the path to a healthy and just future for us all.

[Become a Member](#)



**Romero Institute launched a membership program!**

[RomeroInstitute.org/membership](http://RomeroInstitute.org/membership)



## 2021 ROMERO INSTITUTE BOARD MEMBERS

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SECRETARY TREASURER

**Chase Iron Eyes**

**Eric Thiermann**

**Dr. Faye Crosby**

**Gwendolyn Grace**

**Markell Brooks**

**Pearl Daniel-Means**

## KEY FOUNDATION SUPPORT

(\$100,000+)

■ METABOLIC STUDIO

(\$50,000+)

■ ANONYMOUS

(\$10,000+)

■ ANONYMOUS

■ FIRE MONKEY FUND

■ L.P. BROWN FOUNDATION

■ MAINE COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION

■ MCNAIR FAMILY FUND

## ROMERO INSTITUTE MEMBERS

OMEGA OF RESISTANCE  
MEMBERS (\$10,000+)

■ CARL TAPLIN

■ CAROL HALL

FLAME OF HOPE MEMBERS  
(\$25,000+)

■ ANONYMOUS

LUMINARY COUNCIL  
(\$100,000+)

■ GWENDOLYN GRACE

■ MARKELL BROOKS

■ MARK SIMS

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE VISION  
CIRCLE MEMBERS OF LAKOTA  
PEOPLE'S LAW PROJECT WHO  
CONTRIBUTE \$5,000+ ANNUALLY!





# LOOKING FORWARD

Thank you for reading along and supporting us in this journey! We accomplished a lot together in 2021, and with you on our side, we'll continue winning justice for people and the planet in 2022.

In the new year, the Romero Institute will continue our work with the RICO suit and our special media project. Our legal team will present the RICO complaint against the six oil companies in California to the California Attorney General and the United States Attorney for presentation to their respective Grand Juries. Our special media project will work with TV and podcast specialists to craft a plan for a dozen or more media productions exposing the criminal enterprise that prevents the human family from entering into a positive and peaceful future. With truth, we can develop real solutions.

Let's Green CA! has big plans for 2022. At the state level, we've partnered with California State Senator Monique Limón to pass a bill inspired by our Electrify CA! framework into law. On the Central Coast, we're working to codify workforce and environmental justice standards at the community-owned renewable energy agency we helped bring into existence: Central Coast Community Energy. Midyear we will begin drafting the next legislative framework to empower California to reach carbon zero in ten years.

The Lakota People's Law Project will keep assisting frontline communities to end extraction, prevent pipelines, safeguard tribal sovereignty, provide kinship care for Lakota children, and amplify Indigenous voices. Our legal team will submit a Supreme Court *Amicus Curiae* brief on behalf of former South Dakota U.S. Senator James Abourezk, the principal author of ICWA, challenging the Federal District Court ruling declaring ICWA unconstitutional. In collaboration with Indigenous populations, we'll register Native voters and increase democratic participation throughout Lakota Country.

Our logo represents the flame of truth, love, and hope in these turbulent times. Your giving spirit is the air that feeds that flame. Together, we can bring light into dark places and learn to live again in balance with nature and one another. It is up to each one of us, right now, to create a welcoming world for the generations to come. As Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said, "The future of the Earth is in our hands."

**Please act now to secure justice for Indigenous people,  
our Earth's greatest protectors, and our planet.**

Donate: [Romero.gift](https://romero.gift)

[info@romeroinstitute.org](mailto:info@romeroinstitute.org) 831-459-6135