

SF Indigenous community braces for cuts, orders, and harmful policies under Trump administration

SAN FRANCISCO – Tucked away in the heart of San Francisco’s Mission District is a vibrant community that is often overlooked and unheard. Despite making up [less than 1% of the city's population](#), many urban Indigenous people call this neighborhood home and have established their own identity here.

Murals, an American Indian Cultural District, nonprofits, and community centers—All created to serve the small but proud Indigenous population of San Francisco. However, recent policies and executive orders issued by President Donald Trump and his administration have stirred historically familiar feelings of fear and uncertainty.

“Erasure is such a big thing for us,” said Angel Fabian, Executive Director of Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits ([BAAITS](#)), a non-profit organization dedicated to harboring LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit individuals. Fabian is of Ben’Zaa or Zapotec descent, the Indigenous people of Oaxaca, Mexico. “For Indigenous urban communities, we have to show up for each other.”

BAAITs opened its first dedicated community center and office last year. The organization, which recently celebrated its 25th anniversary, hosts the most prominent and oldest LGBTQ+ powwow in the world, attracting approximately 5,000 attendees annually. The intersection of Indigenous song and dance with an LGBTQ+-friendly environment draws visitors from both sides of the border.

However, at this year's celebration in early February, the political climate put the event organizers on edge. They issued a travel advisory for trans and gender nonconforming attendees in response to the executive order, "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government." This order mandates that [the State Department no longer issue passports](#) with an 'X' gender marker, limiting them to "M" or "F" based on their biological sex at birth.

"We wanted to make sure that folks did not get stopped at the border, and if they did get stopped, that they had access to resources and local organizations to help them navigate those," Fabian said.

Fabian and organizers also implemented an emergency response system during the powwow due to the concerns about [ICE raids that have been taking place locally](#). Fortunately, the powwow went as smoothly as possible.

"You see what they're capable of now and how bold they're becoming," Fabian said. "We work with indigequeer folks from the Global South; we also know that ICE raids were going to deeply impact those community members, especially if they were undocumented."

While BAAITS doesn't rely on federal funding, it's feeling the ripple effects of another [executive order](#): "Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing." Fabian says foundations have stepped up, but resources are limited.

“DEI has a potential of hitting us because we are intertribal,” Fabian said. “The suggestion that is being put out there to nonprofit leaders is that applying for federal funds, don’t include any DEI language. ... The kicker is there are not really many opportunities; funding has been cut for anything that we would consider applying for.”

Fears spread to other Indigenous organizations

[The Friendship House Association of American Indians](#), located near BAAITS, is a facility that provides Indigenous-centered rehabilitation services and frequently collaborates with BAAITS. Clayton Dumont, chief operating officer and a member of the Klamath tribes, says they too are struggling with uncertainties.

“Not really open to going into the specifics on some of it, but what I'll say is it's created a lot of fear and concerns,” Dumont said. “There's so much unknown. ... Something crazy could happen tomorrow, and all of a sudden we may have to let go of some people, and we really don't know. That uncertainty has affected our morale here.”

Dumont, a graduate of the Friendship House program in 2016, says staff employed at the center are also at risk of losing their jobs due to Trump's [proposed budget cuts for the Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS), including the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

“I have a lot of staff that work on a SAMHSA grant, and they said, ‘What if he cuts my SAMHSA grant? Am I going to be out of a job?’ And the honest answer is, I really don’t know,” Dumont said. “I’d like to say I have the funding that can cover everybody no matter what, but that’s just not the reality.”

The Friendship House is also working on a new six-story building called ‘[The Village SF](#),’ an extension of their facility in the area. It’s scheduled for completion in 2026, but its future also remains uncertain.

“Some of the contracts we had applied for went into the award phase... But before we got to contracting, we heard the Trump administration wasn't following through with the money anymore,” Dumont said. “ I guess we spent months working towards that application that doesn't exist anymore. ... Contracts don't mean anything. We don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. It's an expensive building,”

Dumont fears that further cuts to behavioral health services will worsen homelessness and drug abuse in the Mission District — [an already growing problem](#).

“I'd say to look at the long-term implications. They might save a dollar today, but that's two dollars we'll have to spend tomorrow. What funding they put in now in prevention is going to save them money in the long run.”

Community response

While they are two distinct entities, there is unity in their goal of helping the urban Indigenous people of San Francisco — regardless of a federal government that refuses to support them.

While much of the rhetoric and policies coming out of the White House undercut the progress made for underrepresented groups in this country, the urban Indigenous people of San Francisco will remain resilient.

“I have a lot of hope. I’m not giving up,” Fabian said. “That orange man doesn’t scare me or us. ... We’re still planning, we’re still organizing, we’re still looking out for one another because, hopefully, this too will pass.”