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Native Power & Visibility In A Changing America

NCAI Annual Convention & Marketplace | November 2025

OUR LOVE LETTER TO INDIAN COUNTRY

$1.2 million of research

Purpose

- Gather critical insights into the priorities of Native peoples today and the perceptions non-Native peoples have about us, our cultures, and more.

- **Key themes explored**
  - Affordability & the Economy
  - Culture & Sovereignty
  - Connection & Isolation
  - Values & the Direction of the Country
  - Native Visibility & Media
  - Election Priorities
  - Media Consumption

Evan Benally Atwood (Diné)

METHODOLOGY

LRP LAKE RESEARCH PARTNERS

- Findings from focus groups (8) and the Indigenous Futures Survey
- Indigenous registered voters
- Diverse representation:
  - 2,728 survey responses
  - 243 unique Tribal affiliations represented

INDIGENOUS FUTURES SURVEY

Nielsen

- Reset the Algorithm: The opportunity for authentic Native content, cultures, and digital storytelling—on *our* terms, for all.
- Non-Native; age 18+, US general population
- Online survey with 5,813 responses

KEY FINDINGS:
Native Peoples' Priorities, Values, & Perspectives

LRP LAKE RESEARCH PARTNERS

AFFORDABILITY & THE ECONOMY

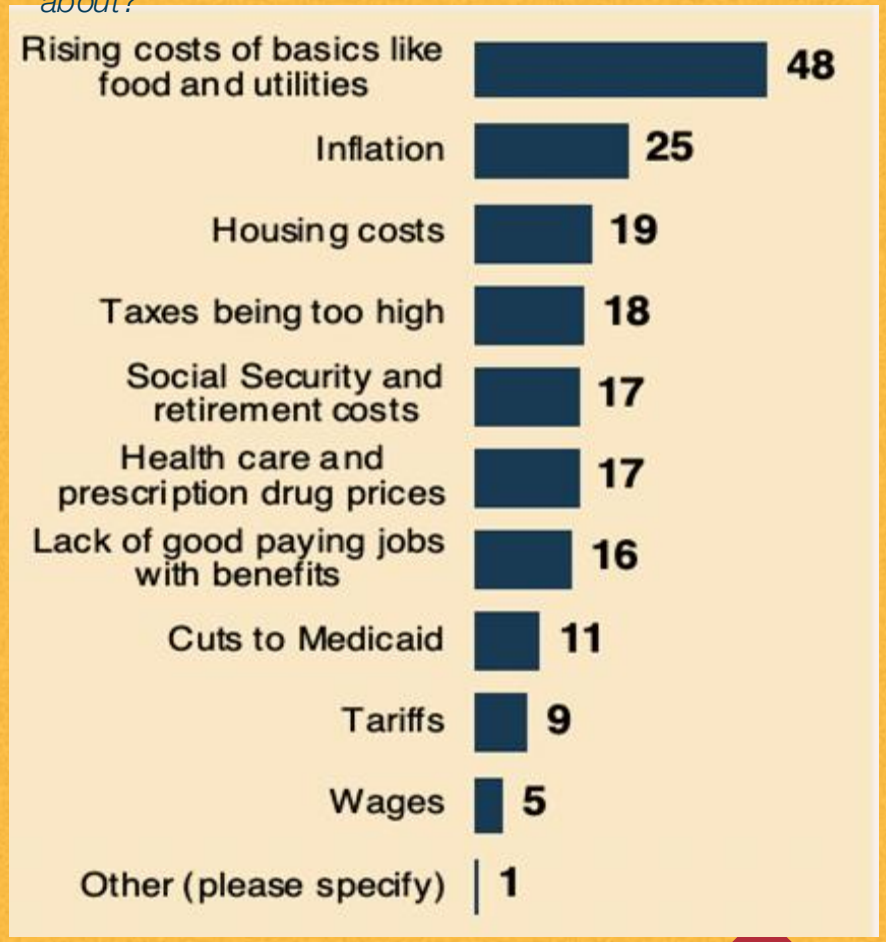
Economic Hardship Prevalence

> 50% Native families described their economic situation as "just fair" or "poor," highlighting widespread financial struggles.

The economic concern most identified by respondents is the **rising costs of basics like food and utilities.**

of respondents say that **a policy to reduce the cost of living** (housing, groceries, gas, etc.) is important to them personally.

Q: *And still thinking about the economy specifically, which one or two of the following issues are you most concerned about?*



CULTURE & SOVEREIGNTY

Cultural Preservation

>90% emphasize the **importance of preserving traditions and Indigenous languages** to maintain cultural identity

Protecting Sovereignty

6 in 10 rated safeguarding tribal sovereignty and treaty obligations as **extremely important** for community autonomy

Sovereignty & Elected Officials

6 in 10 think it is **extremely important** to protect and uphold tribal sovereignty and trust and treaty obligations

Ideal Future

The ideal future for focus group participants includes being self-sustainable, less reliance on the federal government, keeping traditions alive, opportunities for communities to come together, preserving culture, having total control over their land, more career opportunities and resources to Native communities, and showing non-Native people that Native people are powerful, deserve equality, and are alive and well.

Self-Sustainability

Focus groups highlight the need for Indigenous-owned businesses and clinics to **reduce reliance on external budgets**.

> "We need to be self-sustaining; the fear about budget cuts and all of this stuff, if we were self-sustaining, if we owned our own businesses, if we were running our own lives, we wouldn't worry about any of that stuff. [If] these knuckleheads in Washington want to do something dumb with Medicaid, that [wouldn't] affect us because we['d] have our own clinics, and we[d] fund them ourselves. And I realize that's not always possible, but that's what I'd love to see."
>
> — Native man over 40

CONNECTION & ISOLATION

Tailyr Irvine (Salish and Kootenai)

Strong Tribal Connection

86%

indicate **feeling either somewhat or very connected** to their community, Tribe, or nation.

Experience of Isolation

46%

have felt **somewhat or strongly isolated** from their community, Tribe, or nation.

Urban Residency Impact

32%

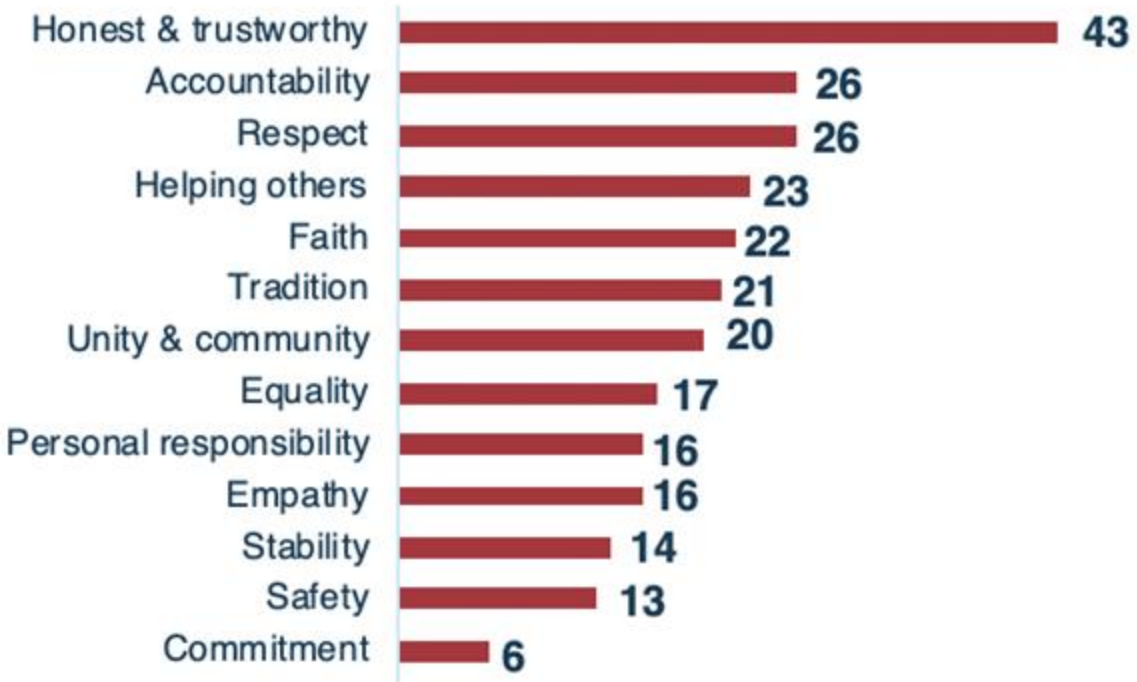
of urban Native residents rarely visit tribal reservations, intensifying feelings of disconnection.

Identity Conflict

Mixed-race and “Americanized” experiences cause self-identity crises within Native communities.

VALUES & THE DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY

Shared Core Values



Generational Emphasis

Gen Z	Millennial	Gen X	Boomer
36	41	44	51
18	26	30	27
25	29	27	25
26	24	19	26
25	19	20	26
17	21	22	22
22	19	18	21
19	15	18	17
12	14	19	20
24	17	17	9
14	17	14	13
13	15	13	9

Optimism and Challenges

73%
feel optimistic about **their future**

71%
feel optimistic about **the future of their Tribe**

48%
feel optimistic about **the future of the country**

NATIVE VISIBILITY & MEDIA

Improved Media Representation

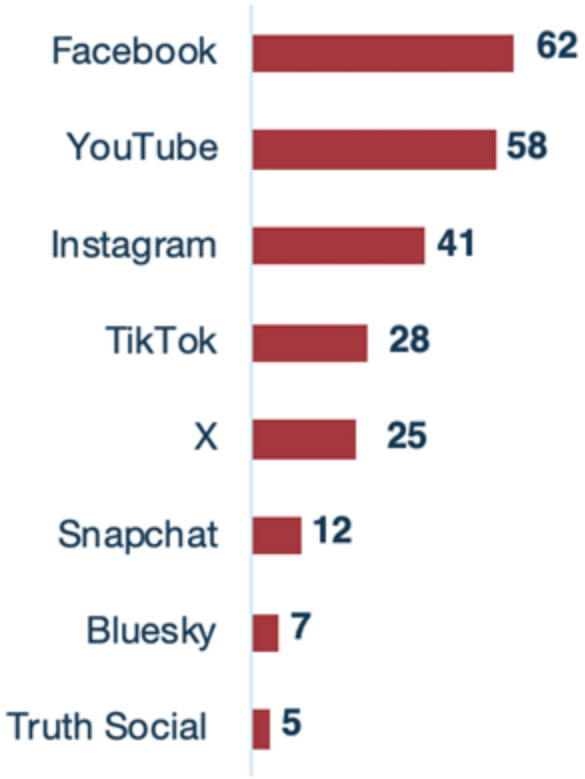
73%

perceive better media representation of Native people and culture over the past decade, though concerns about accuracy remain.

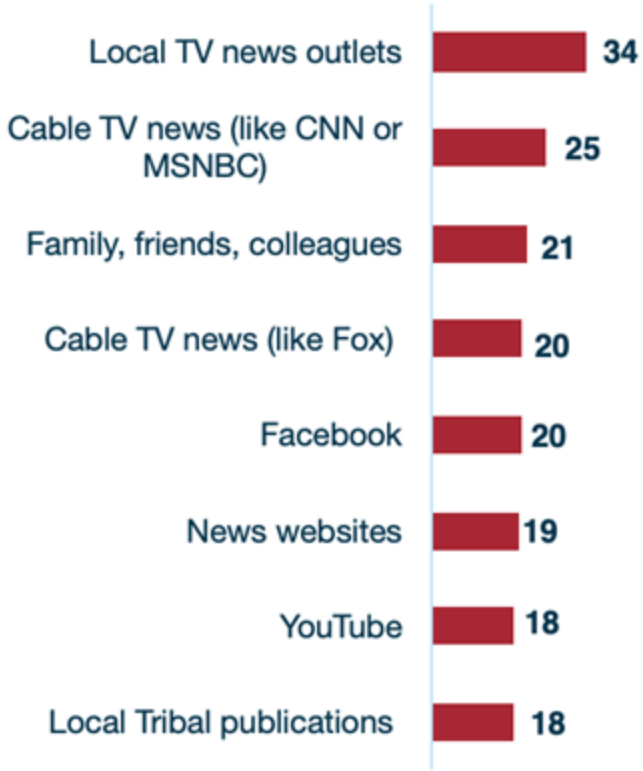
Cultural Understanding

A majority believe social media helps foster understanding of different communities and cultural identities.

Social Media usage



News & Media Consumption

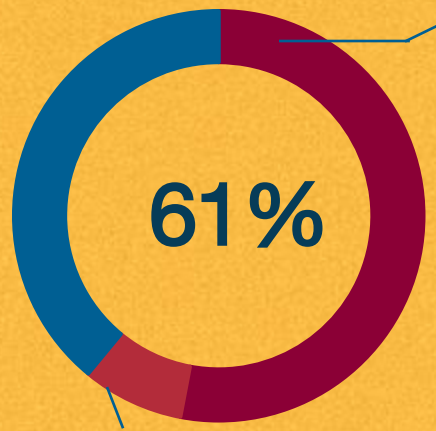


ELECTION PRIORITIES

2024 Election

51%
of respondents voted for Kamala Harris

33%
of respondents voted for Donald Trump



53%
have a *very unfavorable* impression

have an unfavorable impression of President Trump

8%
have a *somewhat unfavorable* impression

2026 Voter Engagement

89%
say they are likely to vote in the 2026 midterm elections

Which party will do a better job on Native issues?

Democrats in Congress	Republicans in Congress	Neither
46%	27%	23%

Key Voting Issues

- Housing
- Jobs
- Education
- Tribal sovereignty

KEY FINDINGS: Reset the Algorithm

The opportunity for authentic Native content, cultures, and digital storytelling—on *our* terms, for all.

Nielsen

HIGH-LEVEL FINDINGS: Education & Knowledge

Non-Native perceptions of Native Americans:

77%
perceive Native Americans to be committed to preserving their culture

74%
perceive Native Americans to be committed to family and community

45%
seek out information about Native Americans **often or sometimes**

43%
disagree that the **education they received** about Native Americans was accurate

76%
agree that Native Americans face discrimination

36%
are **somewhat or very informed** about Native Americans

Nearly half of Americans are seeking out information on Native peoples

AND WHAT THEY FIND VARIES

63%

rarely or never see Native peoples in content online, on social media, in TV, or in film

47%

agree when they do see Native peoples represented, it often depicts *negative stereotypes*

HIGH-LEVEL FINDINGS: Sports & Mascots

28%

agree that sports team names referencing Native Americans are culturally insensitive

24%

agree that sports teams that use Native American culture or stereotypes as their mascots should change their names and imagery

HIGH-LEVEL FINDINGS: Media & Entertainment

Seeing Native American representation in media makes me want to:

62%
learn more about Native culture

60%
learn more about Native issues

59%
feel it is important to feature more stories about Native Americans in media

47%
agree that negative stereotypes surrounding Native communities are often depicted in media

70%
would be interested in seeing more content by Native American directors, writers, or producers

HIGH-LEVEL FINDINGS: TV and Film Viewership

23%

23%

18%

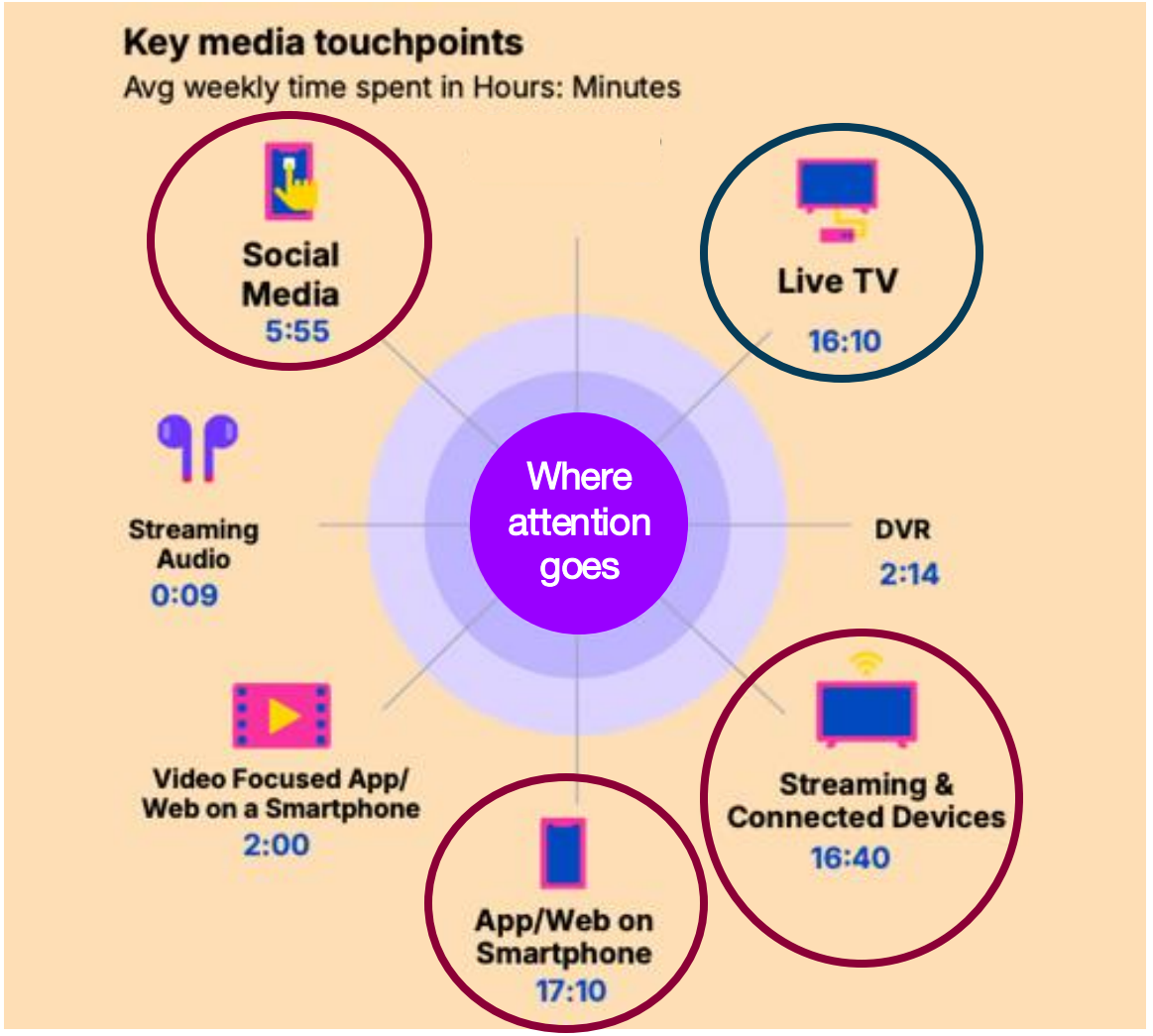
17%

So *WHO* is telling our story?

WE'RE MISSING WHERE IT MATTERS

65%

want *more content* that centers authentic Native stories and experiences



WE'RE MISSING WHERE IT MATTERS

45%

searched for a specific topic to *discover new* **creators or channels on YouTube**

52%

had *not* recently seen content from Native people on **social media**

33%

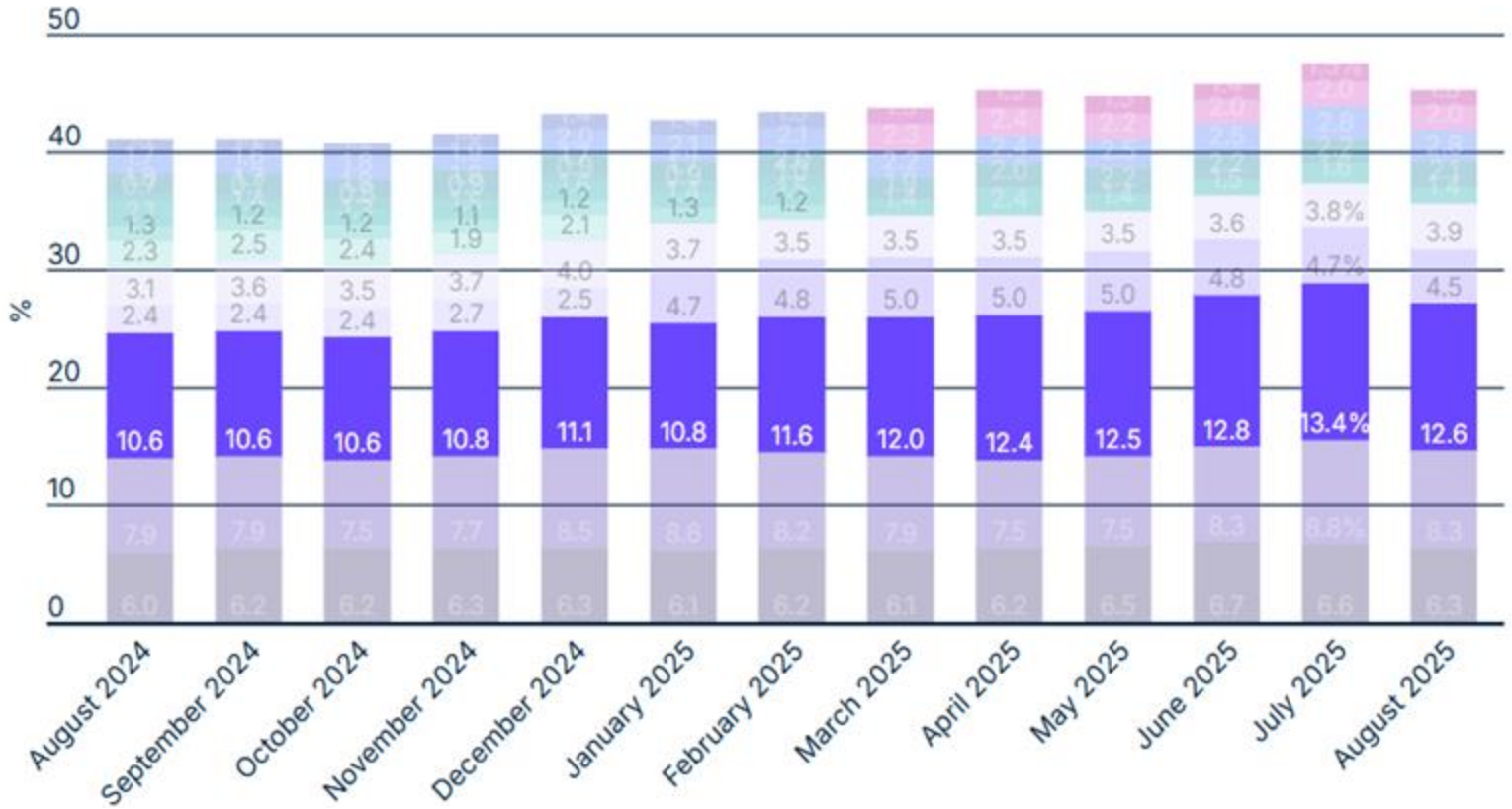
felt that since they do not often encounter Natives represented in media, the **population must be declining**

AND IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE STORYTELLERS

How and *where* our stories get told matters more than ever.

How much of TV viewing is streaming?

% Share of YouTube streaming over time



YouTube's share of TV viewing

Source: Nielsen's The Gauge, Sept 2025

We’re missing. And the algorithm is filling in the blanks.

WHAT'S OUT THERE ISN'T ENOUGH TO BREAKTHROUGH

58%

want to be an ally **but don't know how**

62%

agree seeing Native representation makes them want to **learn more about Native cultures** *(68% in 2023)*

60%

agree that seeing Native representation makes them want to **learn more about Native issues** *(66% in 2023)*

HOW ARE NON-NATIVES FEELING ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY?

Economy

15%
believe the direction of the US economy is **somewhat positive to positive**

67%
believe it is **somewhat negative to negative**

Politics

14%
believe the direction of the US politics is **somewhat positive to positive**

68%
believe it is **somewhat negative to negative**

Culture

12%
believe the direction of the US culture is **somewhat positive to positive**

68%
believe it is **somewhat negative to negative**

AND WE'RE FEELING THE REALITIES OF THIS MOMENT

40%

want to **tune out** politics and focus on other things

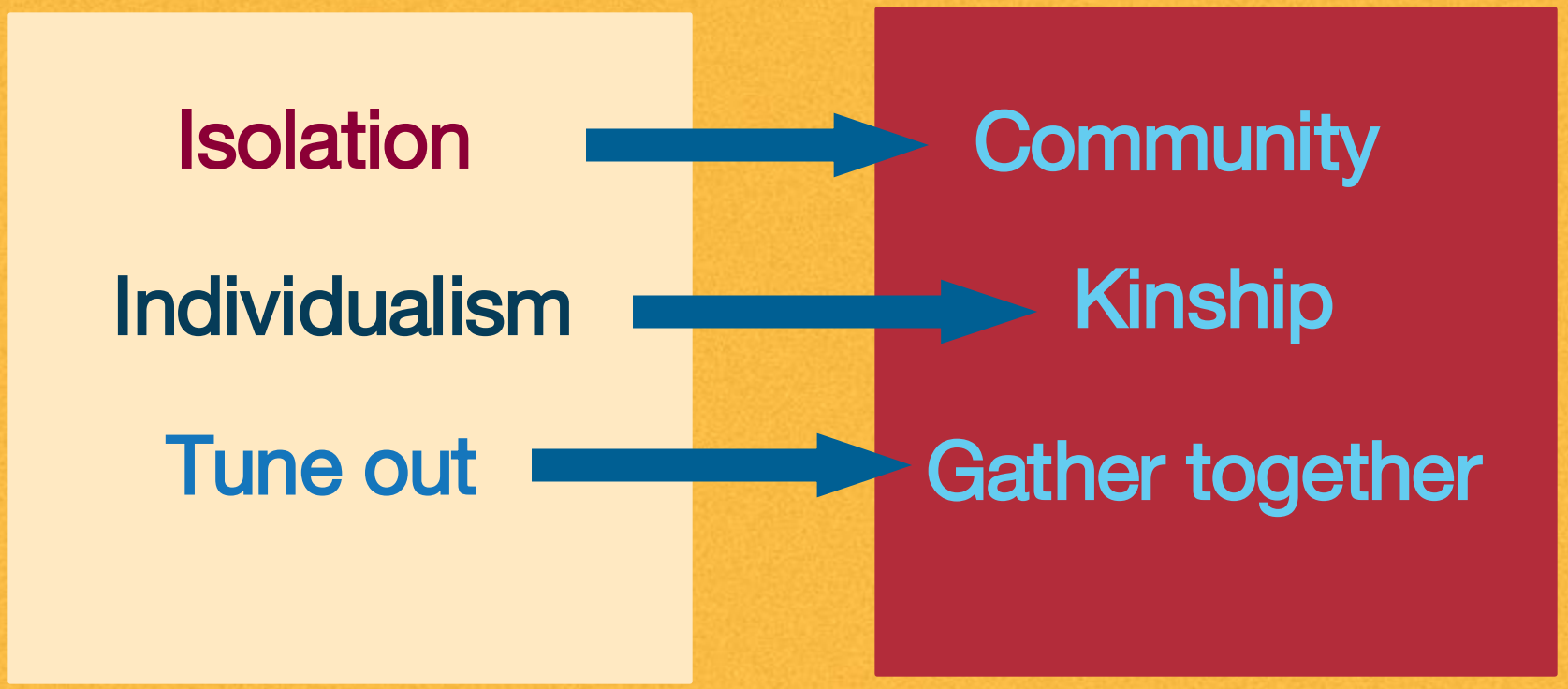
67%

felt **the economy** in the US was headed in a *negative direction*

49%

felt **day-to-day life** in the US was headed in a *negative direction*

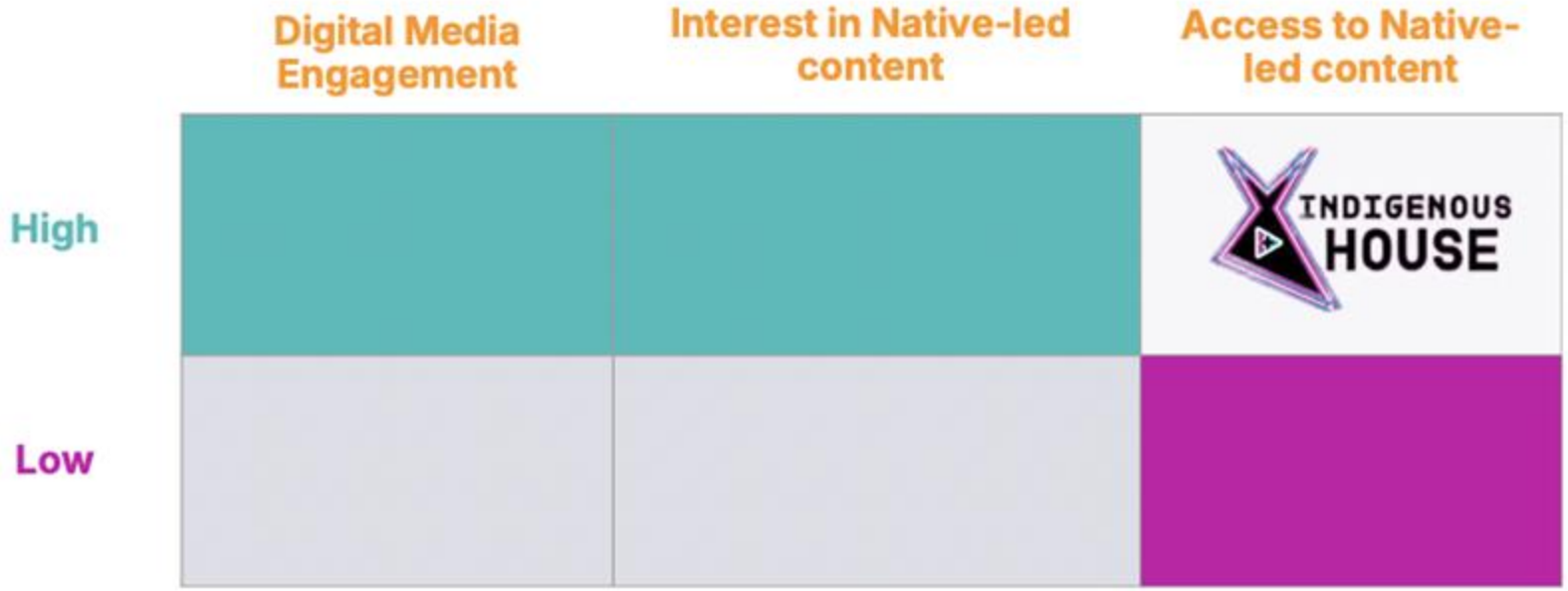
WE KNOW THE ANSWER IS COMMUNITY



They came to tune out.
We're there to pull them in.

MEETING THE MOMENT

There are clear opportunities for us to deliver what key audiences say they want, but are getting elsewhere—or not at all.



One house. Many rooms. Infinite stories.

INDIGENOUS HOUSE

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