

Students build Solar Suitcases during hands-on We Share Solar, Wells Fargo STEM workshop at AISES National Conference

Solar Suitcases to provide mobile emergency backup power for tribal lands



MILWAUKEE – (Oct. 16, 2019) – Attendees at the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) 2019 National Conference experienced a unique We Share Solar® STEM workshop funded by the Wells Fargo Foundation. We Share Solar is a national program that empowers students to be global changemakers by combining solar energy and engineering education with real-world application. Thanks to this collaboration, high school students from tribal lands built 10 portable 12-volt DC We Share Solar® Suitcases that will bring mobile electricity to schools and colleges in their home communities.

"Around the world, the challenges of energy access are significant. We've found that it can be particularly useful for communities on tribal lands to have a source of emergency backup power. Solar Suitcases are mobile solar power systems that provide clean, renewable electricity that can enhance emergency preparedness and community resilience in the event of a power outage," says Wendy Cross, We Share Solar program director. "We're thrilled that the Wells Fargo Foundation enabled us to offer this workshop to students at the AISES National Conference. We hope these young science and engineering students will see themselves as part of a renewable energy future."

"As the sponsor of We Share Solar's first workshop specifically for American Indian youth on a STEM career track, we are honored to open new doors for students at the AISES National Conference," said Cora Gaane, senior vice president & national tribal philanthropy leader at Wells Fargo. "By championing an unforgettable learning experience including basics of electricity for solar and engineering, we hope to inspire Native students through the impact of building these Solar Suitcases to benefit Native communities."

During the three-hour workshop, students learned about solar electricity and energy access, and they built 10 portable 12-volt DC We Share Solar Suitcases, which were distributed to select AISES educators following the workshop. The suitcases are intended to provide backup lighting and emergency device charging power for schools and colleges on tribal lands. They are also optimized for education as a demonstration tool to teach STEM students about the simplicity of stand-alone solar electric systems.

Launched in 2013, We Share Solar is the educational program from We Care Solar, a 501(c)(3) organization located in Berkeley, California, that is dedicated to bringing light and power to maternal health clinics and education facilities in the developing world through the deployment of Solar Suitcases. Since 2016, We Share Solar has worked to bring its STEM program and Solar Suitcases to more tribal lands through partnerships with Native-focused organizations, such as Trees, Water & People.

The Annual AISES National Conference is a unique, three-day event focused on educational, professional and workforce development for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) students and

professionals from tribal lands. Attendees at the 2019 conference in Milwaukee included American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and First Nation high school and college students, as well as educators, professionals, tribal nations and tribal enterprises, universities, corporations and government agencies.

In 2017, Wells Fargo & Company initiated a five-year, \$50 million commitment to help address the unique economic, social and environmental needs of American Indian and Alaska Native communities. The We Share Solar workshop at the 2019 AISES National Conference is the result of one such grant award.

About We Share Solar

We Share Solar is the educational program of We Care Solar, a Berkeley, California-based nonprofit dedicated to bringing light and power to the developing world. Since 2013, We Share Solar has deployed more than 730 Solar Suitcases benefiting 217,000 students, teachers and community members with access to light and power. Over 22,700 students have participated in We Share Solar programs.

We Share Solar has partnered with Native serving organizations and institutions to share its STEM curriculum and Solar Suitcase equipment in communities such as: Pine Ridge Reservation, Hoopa Valley Tribe, Rosebud Reservation, and the Navajo Nation. We Share Solar Suitcases have been used for emergency preparedness and disaster relief in places such as: The Philippines, Puerto Rico, California, North Carolina, and Pine Ridge Reservation. To learn more about We Share Solar, please visit wesharesolar.org or call (510) 766-0206.

About Wells Fargo

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Wells Fargo has committed to work throughout its value chain – products and services, operations and culture, and strategic philanthropy – to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy. In 2018 the company committed to provide \$200 billion in financing to sustainable businesses and projects by 2030 with more than 50 percent focused on renewable energy, clean technology and green-building transactions that directly support the transition to a low-carbon future. Additional news, insights and perspectives are available at www.wellsfargo.com/environment and [Wells Fargo Stories](#).

About AISES

The American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) is a national, nonprofit organization focused on substantially increasing the representation of American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, First Nations, and other Indigenous peoples of North America in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) studies and careers. www.aises.org

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High resolution photos from We Share Solar's workshop at the AISES National Conference in Milwaukee can be [downloaded via Google Drive](#). Photo credit: We Share Solar / The Bokeh Effect