



# NCAI Policy Research Center

## Core Values and Guiding Principles

*The work of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Policy Research Center is guided by core values and guiding principles that were developed by its Advisory Council.*

### Core Values

At early meetings of the NCAI Policy Research Center advisory council, members identified the following core values:

- We believe that the work of the NCAI Policy Research Center is to facilitate policy research that has direct implications for tribal communities and opportunities for improving the quality of life of Native people. As such, tribal communities should drive the research agenda and all aspects of the policy research work conducted by the Center. The Center invites Native community representatives to the table so that "nothing about us is decided without us." We support policy research and policymaking for Indian Country by Indian Country.
- We believe that knowledge should be in service to wisdom and not for knowledge's sake.
- We believe that policy research should honor the government-to-government relationship and the sovereignty of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments. Policy research should facilitate the improved exercise of tribal self-determination. The goal of the Center's work is to develop information that allows tribal communities to make more informed decisions about their own futures.
- We respect the sovereignty of tribal governments and believe that tribes own their data.
- We believe that the perspective of Native people and communities is important. Cultural understanding is essential for moving forward in exploring policy issues, research, and scenario development for policy solutions. Indigenous knowledge is as valid as academic knowledge. As Native researchers and policy analysts, we need to go back to who we are as Native people in order to be stronger in the future. Our work should be holistic and spiritually-rooted.

- We believe that research must preserve culture or it does not add value.
- We believe that policy research should honor Native values of sharing and respect. Research should respect the differences between and within tribal communities.
- We believe that policy research should focus, not on blame or bad choices, but on solutions. Policy research should be a paradigm shift that focuses away from reacting to the policy agendas of others outside of Indian Country to proactively developing a Native-driven policy agenda.
- We believe that the Center's work should be in collaboration with existing policy research organizations and scholars. The Center welcomes others doing similar work and serves a coordinating and leveraging function. The resultant partnerships will add value to the Center as well as to all of the collaborating organizations.
- We believe that the Center's work will build capacity at the local level in tribal governments, tribal organizations, and Native people.
- We believe that the Center's work must be supportive of its national focus. Issues facing mission-critical subgroups may be addressed as such issues inform national policymaking.
- We believe that research must protect human subjects.
- We believe that Indian issues are nonpartisan issues.

## **Guiding Principles**

The work of the NCAI Policy Research Center operates under the following guiding principles to be:

- Nationally focused;
- Resulting in improved quality of life for Native people;
- Timely, relevant and proactive, anticipating and addressing policy issues on the horizon;
- Advancing tribal discussion about policy options and future scenarios;
- Tightly aligned with Indian Country (e.g., information should flow from Indian Country to guide and inform the work of the Center, and information produced within the Center

should flow back to Indian Country for use in local decision-making and national policy development);

- Honoring tribal ownership of data and the role of the community in research;
- From a Native perspective (e.g., tribally-driven);
- Credible (e.g., valid, reliable, using sound scientific standards, raising the standards for quality research in Indian Country);
- Building the capacity of tribal communities and Native scholars to determine local research agendas, collect and analyze data, and develop research expertise; and
- Leveraging partnerships and collaboration (e.g., rather than developing and relying solely on our own expertise, the Center collaborates in various ways with diverse partners to create networks of experts, leverage scarce resources, strengthen the feedback loop of new information to Indian Country, and add value to existing work).

For more information on the NCAI Policy Research Center's work, visit the website at <http://www.ncai.org/prc> or email the PRC staff at [research@ncai.org](mailto:research@ncai.org).