



National  
Congress of  
American  
Indians

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# SECURING OUR FUTURES

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**"This is the task at hand, to move together toward a more perfect union...  
And when we do, we'll always be able to say, the the State of Indian Nations is  
strong, and the future prosperity of America is secure."**

- Jefferson Keel, NCAI President, State of Indian Nations Address 2013

NCAI is releasing a *Securing Our Futures* report in conjunction with the 2013 State of Indian Nations. This report shows areas where tribes are exercising their sovereignty right now, diversifying their revenue base, and bringing economic success to their nations and surrounding communities. The path to securing our future – from education to food security, climate change to workforce development – is illuminated by the proven success of tribal nations. While the circumstances of each tribal nation are unique, the promising practices contained in the report offer a way forward to secure tribal economies and sustain prosperity for future generations.

Throughout the report, you will note quotes and themes from the 2013 and past State of Indian Nations speeches.

In the new era of nation-to-nation engagement between tribes and the federal government, tribal nations are increasingly pursuing strategies that enhance economic security and build prosperity for their communities. The economic impact of tribes is increasingly measured in the millions (even billions) and many communities rely on tribes as major employers for Native and non-Native citizens. What distinguishes these successes from previous economic development strategies is that these strategies are pursued without dependence on the federal government.

This document outlines an array of promising practices where tribes are taking control of their own future. From education to food security, renewable energy to workforce development, tribes are determining their own futures and building sustainable prosperity. As President Keel says, tribes that were once managing poverty are now managing resources.

These exciting developments should not obscure the work that remains undone. Unemployment and poverty in Indian Country are still unacceptably high. Improving basic infrastructure is a prerequisite to lasting economic success. Native people need equal (and universal) access to reliable, affordable broadband.

However, it is important to balance the stark inequities faced by Native people with the promising future that is indicated by other data. Education outcomes are improving for the growing number of Native young people (42 percent of Native people are under the age of 25). Native-owned businesses (both those owned by tribes and Native citizens) are growing and generating more revenue, creating jobs at home, throughout the nation, and around the world.

Policy developments of the past few years have created a federal policy environment that is more conducive to tribal economic success. Landmark legislation to improve health outcomes and advance public safety was passed. Historic settlements were reached. Tribes were included in national policy to support economic recovery and financial security. New policy and legislation was implemented to streamline leasing and business development.

On the threshold of sustained prosperity, tribes also face significant risks as the nation continues to consider the appropriate role and size of the federal government. While tribes must continue to urge the federal government to meet the obligations of the trust responsibility, relying on the federal government to build a strong economic future for tribal nations is a strategy that carries immense risk.

The path forward is illuminated by the proven success of tribal nations. While the circumstances of every tribal nation are unique, the promising practices contained in this document offer a path forward to secure tribal economies and sustain prosperity for future generations.

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“This is the task at hand, to move together toward a more perfect union. To strengthen our trust relationship with the United States....Tribal nations have worked with the United States to uphold this promise. That trust, ultimately, is the principle that must guide us—all of us—as we go forward and do right by all of our children and grandchildren. And when we do, we’ll always be able to say, the the State of Indian Nations is strong, and the future prosperity of America is secure.”

- Jefferson Keel, State of Indian Nations 2013

# Challenges and Opportunities for Securing Our Futures

*“Today, more tribes are managing resources instead of managing poverty programs.”*

## ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IMPROVE IN INDIAN COUNTRY

Over the last 30 years, Indian Country has experienced significant economic growth as measured by average individual and tribal incomes. The growth is substantial. Although poverty for tribal citizens on reservation and trust land is more than two-and-a-half times higher than for the total population, poverty declined from 2000 to the 2006-2010 period by almost three percentage points on reservations, while increasing for the entire nation. Similarly, unemployment, as measured by the Census, decreased on reservations over the same time period; but, with 18.8 percent of the Native civilian labor force still unemployed on reservations, the rate remains more than two times as high as the unemployment rate for the total population.

Meanwhile, tribal citizens have witnessed progress in addressing some of the most basic infrastructure disparities since 2000. In Alaska, 38 percent of tribal households in Native Village Statistical Areas lacked complete plumbing, 33 percent had an incomplete kitchen, and 34 percent were overcrowded in 2000. By the 2006-2010 period estimate, incomplete plumbing dropped by a third to 25 percent, complete kitchens increased by 13 percentage points, and the number of homes lacking a telephone was cut nearly in half. Similar advances in infrastructure occurred on reservation lands, but in every Census housing indicator, considerable gaps persist. For example, the percentage of reservation homes lacking complete plumbing is 17 times the national percentage.

Many factors give cause for hope in Indian Country for creating economic security and prosperity. The number of American Indian- and Alaska Native-owned businesses increased 17.9 percent from 2002 to 2007; total receipts of these businesses were \$34.5 billion, up 28.3 percent from 2002. Tribal enterprises and Native individual-owned businesses were included in the 2002 data but tribal enterprises were not included in the most recent study in 2007. This raises the question of significantly undercounting the growth of American Indian and Alaska Native businesses.

Tribal economies still have a long way to go. But the overall trend is positive and substantial.

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FISCAL CHALLENGES IMPACT TRIBAL NATIONS

Federal spending on Indian programs – far and away the dominant source of outside support for reservations – has been flat or falling since the late 1970s (Walke 2000). And given the current fiscal challenges confronting the United States with federal budget deficits projected to grow, federal spending on tribal programs, as investments in the domestic discretionary portion of the budget, is slated for deep cuts.

Congress is considering ways to address the remaining FY 2013 spending bills, sequestration, and the FY 2014 budget, and NCAI urges policymakers to protect investments for tribal nations while Congress looks to reduce the deficit. The approach to deficit reduction has so far been unbalanced. Discretionary programs have contributed \$1.5 trillion in spending cuts from the Fiscal Year 2011 Continuing Resolution, the bipartisan Budget Control Act, and the bipartisan American Taxpayer Relief Act, while revenues have contributed just \$600 billion. Additional cuts in discretionary programs would put the health, education, safety, and security of all Americans at risk.

Already working to recover from decades of unmet investment requirements and facing persistent shortfalls, the [Indian Country Budget Request for FY 2014](#) highlights funding required to uphold the federal government's responsibility to tribal nations. Tribes would experience unsustainable cuts under the proposed sequestration. Tribal programs, as part of the discretionary budget, have already done their part to reduce the deficit through the bipartisan Budget Control Act. Continued cuts will have severe consequences for every tribal citizen. Tribes urge the President and Congress to uphold the solemn promises of the trust responsibility throughout the federal budget in FY 2013 and future years.

As the nation continues to debate the appropriate role and size of the federal government and how best to foster a stronger American economy, Indian Country remains committed to the work of rebuilding and shoring up tribal societies, bolstered with the tools of self-determination and self-government.

## Policy Gains Lay a New Foundation

“We will continue working with the Congress and our federal partners to fix these policies so that the economies of Indian Country grow, and become a source of strength in our family of nations.”

Tribes have transformed over the past 40 years in part as a result of federal policies that support self-determination and self-governance. Over the past 5 years tribal nations' successful advocacy efforts continue to result in policies that take self-determination and self-governance to another level. The sampling of recent laws, regulations and policy reforms described below provide tribal nations with tremendous potential to promote economic security and prosperity. While adequate appropriations to support the full implementation of the legislation mentioned below may be under threat, tribal governments are able to take advantage of provisions in the laws, regulations and policy reform to move their nations forward.

### AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) provided nearly \$3.0 billion of wide-ranging investments in Indian Country to develop and maintain infrastructure in Indian Country's schools, homes, tribal government buildings, roads and bridges, water and waste water facilities, public safety buildings, health facilities, emergency and broadband networks, natural resource development and energy independence. In addition to the \$3.0 billion, tribes were eligible for some general funding allocations. The Recovery Act also included changes to various provisions in existing law for tribes to be treated as other governments.

The Recovery Act consisted of an unprecedented one-time investment in Indian Country, albeit not coming close to the \$50 billion unmet need for infrastructure on reservations. This investment has not yet reaped its full potential to stimulate and be a foundation for longer term economic activity but has built an important foundation.

## TRIBAL LAW AND ORDER ACT

The Tribal Law and Order Act (TLOA) was signed into law in 2010 after years of effort by a broad representation of tribal leaders. The Act offers a great opportunity to improve the justice systems in Indian country, but implementation will require significant coordination among federal agencies and all components of tribal justice systems. Highly-functioning law enforcement and basic police protection are fundamental priorities of any government; tribal governments are no different. Tribes have some of the most valuable resources in the nation – natural and human—and tribal lands are prime locations for new business ventures and economic development. Yet, issues of perceived safety on the reservation continue to hinder successful growth of tribal economies.

As a result of the TLOA, plans are now taking shape for some tribes to work closely with federal partners to prosecute crimes in Indian country, where crime rates are more than double the national average -- and up to 20 times the national average on some reservations. And still other tribes are adopting new criminal codes according to TLOA standards. Although federal investment is critical, low-cost or no cost efforts are already being implemented by tribes to address public safety and promote economic security on the reservation.

## HEARTH ACT AND LEASING REFORM

Two significant policy successes that will provide substantial opportunities to secure the future of tribal nations were enacted in 2012. The passage in July 2012 of the Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Homeownership or HEARTH Act promotes greater tribal self-determination and will help create jobs in Indian Country. And in November 2012, the Department of the Interior announced final regulations that will streamline the leasing approval process on tribal lands, spurring increased homeownership, and expediting business and commercial development, including renewable energy projects.

Under the HEARTH Act, federally recognized tribes can develop and implement their own regulations governing certain leasing on tribal lands. Upon Secretarial approval of these tribal regulations, tribes will have the authority to process land leases without Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) approval. This new authority has the potential to significantly reduce the time it takes to approve leases for homes and small businesses in Indian Country. By allowing tribes to more quickly and easily lease their lands, the bill promotes investment in tribal communities and more broadly facilitates economic development.

The leasing regulations finalized in November 2012, complement and help to implement the HEARTH Act, which allows federally recognized tribes to assume greater control of leasing on tribal lands. The new regulations will fundamentally change the way the BIA does business, in many ways by minimizing BIA's role and restoring greater control to tribal governments. Tribal governments have only just begun to capitalize on these new policies that offer immense potential to stimulate economic activity.

## INDIAN HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT – AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) was passed in 2009 and puts into place comprehensive health insurance reforms that will hold insurance companies more accountable, lower health care costs, guarantee more health care choices, and enhance the quality of health care for all Americans.

This law included permanent reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCA), which brought the entire Indian Health Service (IHS) system, including tribal and urban programs and clinics, into the new system of health care delivery. Successful and seamless implementation of the ACA will increase health care access for American Indians and Alaska Natives, support the IHS system of care, broaden services provided in rural communities, and strengthen an integral network of providers. In addition, the Administration has proposed and supported improvements in tribal prevention. These programs are designed to be tribally driven, culturally sensitive, and locally provided.

Although much of the ACA will not be implemented until 2014, proactive tribes are already working to increase their public insurance enrollment under the Children’s Health Insurance Program and Medicaid, streamline the billing and business processes, and consider their obligations for health insurance as employers.

## TRIBAL TRUST SETTLEMENTS

In April 2012, the federal government settled trust claims with more than 40 tribes for \$1.023 billion. These settlements resolve claims dating back more than 100 years and bring to an end protracted litigation that has burdened both the plaintiffs and the United States. Ending these long-running disputes about the United States’ management of trust funds and non-monetary trust resources will allow the United States and the tribes to move beyond the distrust exacerbated by years of litigation. These settlement agreements represent a significant milestone in the improvement of the United States’ relationship with Indian tribes. There are an estimated 60 tribal trust claims cases in the pipeline that may be settled in the near future. Proceeds from these settlements are being used by the tribes for a variety of investments to promote economic prosperity including purchases of land, construction of tribal buildings, financial investments, and per capita payments to tribal citizens.

## TRIBAL AMENDMENTS TO THE STAFFORD ACT

The Stafford Disaster Assistance Act was amended in 2013 allowing tribal nations direct access to federal disaster relief. This legislative change to the Stafford Act will provide federally recognized tribal governments the option to choose whether to make a request directly to the President for an emergency or major disaster declaration, or to receive assistance, as they do presently, through a declaration for a state. This amendment to the Stafford Act strengthens the government-to-government relationship between Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and federally recognized tribes, and will enhance the way FEMA supports tribal communities before, during, and after disasters.

Fully implementing this historic provision will require consultation with tribes and other stakeholders, particularly as FEMA develops the administrative and programmatic requirements and procedures necessary to execute the law. The provision will allow tribes to receive much needed federal assistance in the event of disasters.

# Promising Developments

“And as we are revitalizing our own economies, tribes are becoming key players in America’s economic recovery.”

## TRIBES ARE A MAJOR ECONOMIC FORCE

Over the past two decades tribal economic systems have changed dramatically – becoming more diverse and less dependent on federal dollars. As tribes have exercised self-determination and self-governance, tribal economies have seen increases in tribally-owned enterprises and individual citizen-owned enterprises, both serving local and off-reservation markets. As tribal economies grow and become more diverse, they are also diverging from each other. No longer reliant on federal resources only, tribes are developing their own revenue sources based on their own unique assets and opportunities.

The increasing contributions of tribes demonstrate that in many locations tribal nations are a major economic force. In four recent statewide economic impact studies, tribes in Oklahoma, Washington, Idaho, and Minnesota demonstrate the magnitude and growing diversity in tribal economies.

- ❖ The 38 tribal nations in Oklahoma have a \$10.8 billion impact on the state every year, supporting an estimated 87,000 jobs, or five percent of all jobs in the state.
- ❖ In Washington state, the 29 tribal nations employ more than 27,300 in tribal government, pay more than \$1.3 billion annually in employee wages and benefits, buy more than \$2.4 billion annually in goods and services from private companies, and generate more than \$255 million annually in state and local taxes. Finally, \$3.5 billion of the total gross state product can be attributed to the activity on American Indian reservations.
- ❖ The five tribal nations in Idaho support more than 10,600 jobs, generate sales in excess of \$870 million annually in from tribal economic activity, and raised state gross product by \$493 million, or one percent.
- ❖ In Minnesota, spending by the 11 tribal nations was responsible for \$2.75 billion in economic activity statewide, supporting 41,700 jobs and \$1.35 billion in household income, representing 1.1 percent of the state’s economic output.

An economic transformation is underway in Indian Country – a shift away from transfer economies (economies largely dependent on transfers of funds from federal and other sources) to productive economies (economies built on productive economic activity and the revenues it produces). Although the influx of federal dollars to reservation communities has always resulted in significant economic benefit to the surrounding local and regional economies, as tribes generate even more revenue through their growing productive enterprises, the economic impact is broader and deeper within the states. With federal budget decisions caught in a Congressional quagmire and significant cuts almost assured, tribal nations that use federal funding to leverage other investments, partnerships, and innovation are more protected from the negative impact of federal budget cuts.

# TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS LEAD THE WAY TO STRONG TRIBAL ECONOMIES

Tribal governments exist to protect and preserve their unique cultures, identities, and natural environments for posterity. Overcoming poverty, while honoring tribal traditions and strengthening culture, is achievable but *securing tribal economic security and prosperity will require a sustained commitment.*

Strong, capable tribal governments build a legal/political infrastructure of appropriate laws and policies that keep politics in its place and encourage both citizens and outsiders to invest time and energy in the nation's future. Respect for the responsibility of tribes as governments is essential for Native people to contribute their distinct American and tribal perspectives to future generations. Prosperity in Indian Country requires that tribal citizens are able to practice their cultural and religious traditions while enjoying economic opportunities— their families flourishing, with access to quality foods, housing, and financial security. Where tribes exercise self-determination, success stories abound; and they all include the themes of improved responsiveness and increased accountability. The exercise of tribal control invokes the pride and fortitude of tribal people that can contribute to and sustain effective government administration.

Fulfillment of the trust responsibility also represents necessary elements for a strong economic foundation in Indian Country to afford Native children and future generations the opportunity to fulfill their potential. Investments in tribal infrastructure must continue to address the inadequate roads, housing, and broadband systems that are all essential to commerce. Education is fundamental to long-term economic opportunities. Bolstering public safety is also a prerequisite for long-term economic development. Support for energy and natural resources must be ramped up—although tribal lands contain a vast amount of the nation's conventional and renewable energy resources, tribal governments face an array of challenges in developing those energy resources.

Across the United States, tribal nations are taking their rightful place in the American family of governments and providing the support and nurturing environment for their citizens and surrounding communities to flourish.

“Tribal sovereignty is how we can secure our communities. It's how we can secure our nations. And it is how we will secure our future. This is our greatest challenge.”

## STUDIES FOCUS ON VISION OF PROSPEROUS FUTURE

Two recent reports on tribal economies outline themes and recommendations to support economic security and prosperity in Indian Country. The first, “[Native American Economic Policy Report: Developing Tribal Economies to Create Healthy, Sustainable, and Culturally Vibrant Communities](#)” is the result of the National Native American Economic Policy Summit held in 2007. Tribal leaders were encouraged to envision the future they would like to see for Indian Country and asked to recommend innovative and progressive solutions to move toward that vision. The result was a vision that encompassed nine overarching themes and 100 policy recommendations. The policy recommendations have been integrated into a national policy agenda for Indian Country.

The overarching themes that constitute the vision are:

- ❖ Strengthen Sovereignty and Tribal Governance
- ❖ Tribal Self-Sufficiency and Treaty Rights
- ❖ Cultural Relevancy and Community Involvement
- ❖ Community Planning
- ❖ Human Development
- ❖ Partnerships: Between Tribes and Beyond
- ❖ Communication: Sharing Best Practices
- ❖ Strong Intergovernmental Relationships
- ❖ Public and Policy-Maker Education

The second report, “[Growing Economies in Indian Country: Taking Stock of Progress and Partnerships](#)” provides “A Summary of Challenges, Recommendations, and Promising Efforts.” The report, issued in 2012 by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, is the result of a year-long series of workshops in Indian Country sponsored by a number of Federal Reserve Banks and federal agencies. The identified challenges fall into eight broad categories:

- 1.) insufficient access to capital;
- 2.) capacity and capital constraints of small business resource providers;
- 3.) insufficient workforce development;
- 4.) tribal government constraints;
- 5.) regulatory constraints on land held in trust and land designated as restricted use;
- 6.) underdeveloped physical infrastructure;
- 7.) insufficient research and data; and
- 8) lack of regional collaboration.

The report provides recommendations for tribal governments, federal agencies, state governments, small business resource providers, and financial institutions along with many examples of promising efforts.

The full report can be found at: <http://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/conferences/indian-country-publication.htm>

“And when tribes can develop their own priorities and make the right investments, they don’t just survive – they thrive.”

# Promising Practices for Strong Tribal Economies

“We’ll continue doing our part to be proactive stewards of our own future. Rather than simply react to the federal government’s actions, tribes are thinking and planning ahead...making decisions that allow us to withstand economic uncertainty. And it’s paying off.”

## SECURING FINANCIAL SUCCESS

### FINANCIAL EDUCATION

Building strong tribal economies requires tribal citizens with increased financial skills, education and capability to be more productive and engaged members of tribal society. With such a young tribal population, tribal leaders recognize that they need a workforce with the skills, including financial, to manage their own and the tribes’ financial resources and prepare the next generation of leaders. With increased revenues and trust fund settlements, payments of per capita and growing minor’s trust accounts necessitate that tribes offer financial education training. More and more tribes are themselves offering financial education programs for tribal citizens and/or partnering with Native nonprofits to conduct these programs.

The Qualla Financial Freedom program of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians provides a financial literacy program for tribal youth and families – and received national recognition as the Financial Literacy Program of the Year in 2011 from the Native American Finance Officers Association. The program teaches youth how to wisely manage their finances and withdrawals from their Minors Trust Fund.

The Four Bands Community Fund of the Cheyenne River Tribe in South Dakota offers a number of financial education programs. For youth, Four Bands offers the “Building for the Seventh Generation” program with local school to implement management and entrepreneurship training. The Fund also offers financial education to tribal government staff in partnership with the tribal council. Four Bands is a Native Community Development Financial Institution serving the reservation community.

### ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Challenges with access to capital paint an even more troubling picture. Over 40 percent of Native people have limited or no access to mainstream financial services (one of the highest rates in the nation), a full 26.8 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native households are underbanked (have a bank account but use alternative financial services), and an additional 14.5 percent are completely unbanked. In 2001, the *Native American Lending Study* reported that 86 percent of Native communities lacked access to a single financial institution (with a broad definition that included a simple ATM) and 15 percent of Native community members needed to travel over 100

miles to access a financial institution. Given those stark statistics, it is not surprising that the unmet capital need was estimated in 2001 at more than \$44 billion.

Since 2000, there has been a significant increase in alternative financial institutions in Indian Country called Native Community Development Financial Institutions (NCDIFs). The NCDIFs are designed to overcome identified barriers to financial services in Indian Country and increase access to capital, credit and other financial services. Native CDFIs focus primarily on housing and small business lending but also provide a range of asset-building services including financial education, Individual Development Accounts, and Earned Income Tax Credit services. In 2012 there were more than 70 certified Native CDFIs serving primarily Native communities, many working in partnership with tribes. For more information, go to [http://www.cdfifund.gov/what we do/programs\\_id.asp?programid=3](http://www.cdfifund.gov/what_we_do/programs_id.asp?programid=3)

## DEVELOPING AND PROTECTING OUR 7<sup>TH</sup> GENERATION WORKFORCE

### EDUCATION

Even during this time of constrained budgets at the tribal, federal, and state levels, Indian Country cannot afford to lose sight of our most important long-term investment: Native youth and their education. Providing Native youth with a quality education is critical not only to the future economic success of tribes, but also to overall community welfare. After all, there is no more vital resource to the continued existence and integrity of tribal nations than Native children. While the current fiscal environment makes it largely unfeasible to pursue new resources to improve Native education, tribes are taking action right now to expand educational opportunities.

Through the Department of Education's new State Tribal Education Partnership (STEP) pilot project, five tribes (the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, the Chickasaw Nation, the Navajo Nation, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation) are forming groundbreaking new partnerships with their states and local school districts to transfer to the tribes some state administered education functions for federal formula grant programs. However, tribes do not need to wait for new federal money to begin forming these types of partnerships. They can take action now by approaching their states and schools districts to emphasize how tribal collaboration in education would be mutually beneficial.

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Tribal citizens with high quality education and skills development are a critical ingredient to build strong tribal economies. Workforce development opportunities are particularly important because Indian Country has one of the youngest populations in the nation, with 42 percent of Native people under the age of 25. As tribal economies grow, tribes need a ready supply of homegrown applicants with the appropriate education and skills to move into newly created jobs. Tribes are developing strategic plans for meeting employment needs, such as the Spokane Tribe's TANF program that caters to job preparation. Other tribes are ensuring that job openings are being properly advertised to tribal members such as the online Employment Center database to assist tribal members seeking jobs maintained by the Chickasaw Nation.

Many tribes encourage academic achievement and work experience. The Hopi Nation created the Hopi Education Endowment Fund which has provided more than \$8.0 million in grants and funding for various education programs including scholarships to Hopi students of all ages. In addition to regular scholarships, the Navajo Nation offers the Chief Manuelito scholarship for high-achieving students.

Recognizing that work experience is a critical complement to education, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde offers a Summer Youth Employment Program for high school students. The Coquille Nation has a Summer Intern Program for College Students that is designed to bring tribal students back to the community to learn about tribal administration, participate in cultural events and mentor the youth.

Partnering with academic institutions, business and nonprofit sectors, and government entities offer many opportunities for job creation and workforce training. For example, the Navajo Nation has partnered with the Native American Law Student Association – an organization with approximately 50 student chapters throughout the United States – to develop the Navajo Nation Alternative Spring Break program. This program places a group of law students throughout the Nation’s government offices to provide pro bono legal services to the tribe, while also educating young law students about federal Indian law.

## EMPLOYMENT LAW

The very good news is that tribal nations are creating thousands of new jobs. With that comes increased governmental responsibility to exercise and protect tribal sovereignty by enacting laws regulating labor and employment relations. Tribal nations are affirmatively exercising authority over labor and employment relations in Indian Country as a means to protect tribal self-determination and sovereignty. Tribes have significant opportunities to enact and implement their own laws to govern labor and employment relations in their territories, consistent with their particular values and policy priorities. A few examples of tribes that have successfully enacted their own laws include Poarch Band of Creek Indians in Alabama, Little River Band of Ottawa Indians in Michigan, and Mohegan Tribe in Connecticut. Further examples of tribal efforts and labor and employee relations laws can be found <http://www.narf.org/pubs/misc/labor.htm>

## ENHANCING OUR SECURITY

### FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Around the country tribes are securing their economic futures by taking control of their food systems. Controlling tribal food systems enables tribes to support better nutrition, health and well-being as well as community and economic development and culture and traditions. Tribal agricultural enterprises also provide jobs for tribal citizens and surrounding communities while putting traditional foods into the marketplace.

Native Americans own nearly 100 million acres in the United States, collectively making them the largest private owner of agricultural land in the United States. However, with most of this land held in trust and managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, tribal governments and their citizens have little ability to manage or farm this land, with the result of loss of tribal experience managing agricultural assets. Along with recapturing fractionated land into useable assets, Native control of Native land is the most important way tribes can assert sovereignty over the use of their land, their agriculture, their natural resources and their economic and community development.

One example of a tribe reclaiming their land and putting it into production is the Colusa Indian Community in California. The Colusa Indian Community in California began purchasing land in 1993, starting with 180 acres. The current land holdings now exceed 400 acres on which the Colusa Indian Community Council farms tree, grain and field crops, with the majority planted in rice. The tribe has a shared interest with local farms in a rice dryer that enables them to process their rice in bulk, and adding value, and move it to market. Tribal members participate on

local agriculture boards and committees to ensure they have access to all local agricultural management planning and land use discussions.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) began acquiring lands on and off their Reservation in 1996. The CTUIR natural resource management mission is based on the protection, restoration and enhancement of Indigenous foods served at ritualistic tribal meals together with CTUIR recognition of their treaty rights and cultural heritage. The CTUIR Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2010, measures success a number of ways, all reflecting the treaty-reserved rights to fishing, hunting gathering, livestock pasturing and associated water rights. As a result, in addition to restoring and enhancing the tribes' First Food (including salmon, elk, bighorn sheep, camas and berries), the CTUIR maintains a large commercial agricultural production operation that provides products to the tribes and the surrounding community. As of 2010, CTUIR had acquired over 36,000 acres on the reservation and 12,000 acres off the reservation, and CTUIR land assets today total over 172,000 acres. The tribes also set and met goals of reducing fractionated land interests. With both Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribal program management, the CTUIR retains sovereign authority to regulate all lands on the Umatilla Indian Reservation through its Land Development Code.

## HOUSING

Affordable housing for tribal citizens is crucially important to enhance the security of our communities. Tribes have and must continue to find ways to make housing more accessible and affordable as tribes combat high homelessness rates and high rates of persons per household. With home building incentive programs and more affordable housing, tribes help families find homes, create jobs, stimulate local economic development, and help families establish wealth through homeownership.

Ho-Chunk, Inc.'s non-profit Ho-Chunk Community Development Corporation and the Winnebago Tribe have developed a Housing Down Payment Assistance Program to provide new homeowners a special education course and help by paying a significant portion of their down payments. Furthermore, Ho-Chunk, Inc. and the Winnebago Tribe created a \$1 million Housing Stimulus Program which combines a portion of Ho-Chunk, Inc. dividends and other tribal tax revenues to provide down payment assistance to up to 20 new homeowners that build a house on the Winnebago reservation.

Several tribes have utilized the Federal Home Loan Bank's Affordable Housing Program, the largest private source of grant funds for affordable housing in the United States. With the programs ability to be used with Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), tribes have leveraged this program to provide significant dollars to their LIHTC projects.

# MANAGING OUR RESOURCES

## NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

American Indian and Alaska Native resources are fundamental to the Indian Country economy – and the American economy. With the right policy framework and sustained investments, tribes can power economic recovery in Indian Country and create jobs for Native and non-Native people in their regions. Over the past two decades more tribal nations have taken control of the management of their vast natural resources throughout the nearly 100 million acres of tribal lands in the United States.

Tribal lands provide vital habitat for more than 525 federally listed plants and animals, many of which are both ecologically and culturally significant to tribes. There are 18 million acres of tribal forestlands on 287 reservations, 5.7 million acres of commercial timberland and 3.5 million acres of commercial woodland. There are 41 tribes with significant forest resources and another 42 tribes have forests with some commercial return – in 22 states. Tribal forests in the Northwest account for more than 70 percent of the timber volume and more than 85 percent of the revenue generated from harvests on all Indian forests. Tribes operate approximately 114 fish hatcheries, with many producing threatened or endangered fish species. Tribal lands include more than 997,000 lakes, 13,000 miles of rivers.

The vitality and sustainability of these natural resources is integral to the health of American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, peoples, communities, cultures, and economies. Funding for natural resources has declined incrementally over decades more precipitously than other Department of the Interior programs and tribes remain ineligible for dozens of natural resource programs across other agencies that are otherwise available to states, local governments and other entities. There are, however, examples of tribal control and effectiveness in managing tribal natural resources, regardless of resource constraints.

Endowed with sweeping prairies, abundant wildlife, and a vibrant history, the Lower Brulé Sioux Tribe has begun to reap the benefits of a culture devoted to the wise use of their land and economic resources. Recovery Act funds helped to preserve Lower Brulé's culture and enhanced its ongoing educational outreach to the nation and beyond. The Tribe sees its traditional belief in the interrelationship between nature and culture as one of its best economic assets. The Recovery Act provided funding for several cultural preservation and educational projects that help to fuel cultural tourism on the reservation.

Salmon have always been an important part of the economies of Northwest tribes. Today these tribes are leaders in the effort to restore salmon habitat – and these efforts also create natural resource jobs. The Nisqually Tribe employs tribal members to help restore the salmon habitat by planting trees and shrubs which directly impacts the natural salmon productivity of the watershed. Nisqually and 19 other Northwest treaty tribes are part of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC). NWIFC's purpose is to assist member tribes in their role as natural resources co-managers to achieve an economy of scale that makes more efficient use of limited federal funding.

## ENERGY

Indian Country's potential to be a player in the emerging new energy economy, and the sustainable development of energy infrastructure, are integral to tribal efforts to generate jobs and secure the economic future of their nations. In addition to the vast natural resources referenced above, tribal lands also contain uranium ore, coal, natural gas, oil, geothermal energy, oil shale, biomass, and significant potential for wind and solar energy. Tribes will contribute to America's energy independence.

Ute Energy, LLC, a company majority owned by the Ute Indian Tribe along with affiliates of Quantum Energy Partners, has entered into an agreement with the tribe to explore, develop and market oil and gas from approximately 21,000 acres on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation.

The Moapa Band of Paiute Indian Nation in the southern Nevada desert will soon be capturing the desert rays to power over 118,000 Los Angeles homes. When it goes online in 2016, it will be the largest solar power plant on tribal land. The Los Angeles City Council recently approved a 25-year, \$1.5 billion project to buy solar power produced at the Moapa Band's reservation. In addition to the plant itself, over 900,000 solar panels will be built on the reservation... creating more jobs—and industries—of tomorrow.

# INSPIRING INNOVATION

## NEW IDEAS IN MANAGEMENT

Where tribes exercise self-determination, success stories abound; and they all include the themes of improved responsiveness and increased accountability. The exercise of tribal control invokes the pride and fortitude of tribal people that can contribute to and sustain effective government administration.

Doing more with less may continue to be the case in many tribal communities, especially given the current federal fiscal crises and potential cutbacks in federal funding. However, some tribal programs are integrating new approaches to management, such as “lean management,” to create more value and delivering more service for the same dollar level. This is the story with Chugachmuit Native Corporation in Alaska. The focus is on streamlining processes and reviewing systems to eliminate waste and create more efficiencies and value. Chugachmuit freed up \$2.5 million from a \$10.5 million budget, funds that can be used to add other services. Sealaska Native Corporation has also begun to implement lean management principles in their manufacturing businesses.

In another case in Alaska, the Southcentral Foundation has garnered national attention for its Nuka System of Care, which is responsive to the needs and values of the Native community. In 2011, the Alaska Native-owned, non-profit health care organization serving nearly 60,000 Alaska Native and American Indian people living in Anchorage and 60 rural villages, received the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, which recognizes the country’s most innovative organizations. Nuka is a Native word for strong living things.

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

The Digital Divide on tribal lands has been constantly referenced over the past decade. Initially this disparity reflected the lack of telephone service and the challenges associated with connecting tribal lands. Over the years this issue has transitioned to include the lack of Internet access in its many forms including wireless, satellite, fiber optics, cable, digital service line (DSL), and even dial-up. However, successful use of these technologies cannot be fully realized until tribes make substantial commitments to digital literacy trainings and human capital investments dedicated to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education.

Indian country is young with 42 percent of the total American Indian and Alaska Native population under the age of 25. These high percentages of youth in our communities provide tribes with the opportunity to shape a large segment of our population, molding them into the leaders of tomorrow. Embracing opportunities to teach our youth of the benefits, challenges, and even the dangers of technology should be paramount to advancing our goals of self-determination and self-sufficiency.

The Pauma Band of Luiseno Indians, in partnership with California State University’s San Marcos’ California Indian Culture and Sovereignty Center, has created Nintendo DS game cartridges programmed to teach Luiseno vocabulary through a combination of writing, pictures, and spoken words.

The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma has extensively used technology to promote language fluency, including iPod/iPad apps, and having schoolchildren chat online in Cherokee with peers from the Eastern Band of Cherokee in North Carolina.

# GROWING BUSINESSES

## TRIBAL ENTERPRISES AND NATIVE BUSINESSES

Tribal nations striving for self-determination seek increased economic development, improved financial capacity, better workforce development, more job creation, and the beneficial use of tribal land and natural resources. Facing chronic underfunding of federal government programs that serve basic tribal needs, tribes are turning to their own productive activities to fund programs and services for their citizens.

Today tribes and tribal entrepreneurs are jump-starting economies on their lands, creating jobs, and create opportunities for their communities and their families. With federal spending and deficit reduction efforts underway, tribes and tribal citizens have taken the responsibility for developing their economies with tribal enterprises and individual businesses, providing jobs for their people and business management education programs for their youth.

The Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma created Chickasaw Nation Industries for the purpose of promoting the economic development of the Chickasaw Nation of Southeast Oklahoma. The company was ranked in Washington Technologies Top 100 Government Contractors for 2012. Along with multiple other business operations, the Chickasaw Nation also hosts its own Small Business Development Center to provide Chickasaw business owners and aspiring Chickasaw entrepreneurs access to education, operational, marketing and financial resources.

Native American Natural Foods, LLC on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation focuses on creating innovative food products based on traditional Native American values. The company seeks to create a family of nationally branded food products that are delicious and promote a Native American way of wellness that feeds mind, body, and spirit. Following years of success supporting economic, environmental and educational development on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota and around Indian Country, the company's founders, Karlene Hunter, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and business partner Mark Tilsen, launched the company's first product, the Tanka Bar buffalo and cranberry snack in 2008. As the family of Tanka products has grown over the years, the company has succeeded in entering new markets, and in 2012 succeeded in having its product picked up by national grocery chain Whole Foods Markets.

ONABEN, a Native nonprofit organization created by Northwest tribes, works to increase the success of private businesses owned by Native entrepreneurs through training and other services. They are working with six nonprofit organizations to increase the number and strength of reservation-based Native businesses. The six nonprofits in the ONABEN cohort include:

- ❖ Hunkpati Investments, Inc. in Fort Thompson, South Dakota, to help spur economic growth on the Crow Creek Sioux Indian reservation;
- ❖ the Northwest Native Development Fund in Nespelam, Washington, to implement its Growing Into Our Footprint project to expand business training, outreach, tax preparation assistance, and access to loans; and
- ❖ the Four Bands Community Fund in Eagle Butte, South Dakota, to create a green business development curriculum that includes green business training and entrepreneurship outreach services.

## INTERTRIBAL BUSINESS

Intertribal business relationships are important as tribal nations strive to become more self-sufficient and economically secure. Tribes have worked together and conducted trade among themselves for centuries, serving a vital role in the sustainability and health of their communities. The formation of intertribal trade agreements may be an important approach toward helping tribal nations spur economic development from within, and we have begun to see tribes form groups and craft treaties with the purpose of driving more intertribal trade.

Furthermore, intertribal business partnerships can prove beneficial by spreading risk, reducing costs, and bringing in together different strengths, thus allowing for more productive businesses. The Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians, San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, and Forest County Potawatomi Community incorporated this model into their overall economic development plans as they teamed together to form Four Fires LLC, and with their first project, collectively building a \$43 million hotel in Washington, DC.

“Buying Indian” is an important component to the economic self-sufficiency of Indian Country, and who better than tribes to lead the way. Establishing tribal partnerships to advance mutual economic interests is important for the wellbeing and economic security of tribal nations as we honor our past and re-establish this kinship through commerce.

## INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

According to the United States Small Business Administration (SBA), 97 percent of all exporters are small businesses and 95 percent of consumers live outside the United States. The SBA notes that small business exporters are currently selling billions of dollars of goods and services overseas every year. This presents a significant opportunity for tribes to explore expanding business overseas, form important international relationships, and strengthen their economies.

Tribes in the Puget Sound area who have tapped into the Asian market for geoducks – a clam that is a delicacy in China – is one example of tribes diversifying their revenues and strengthening their economic security through exporting. In fact, for tribes like the Suquamish and Squaxin, the geoduck business brings in around \$6 million a year. Furthermore, tribes interested in selling food products overseas can utilize the American Indian Foods program, a successful export assistance program administered by the Intertribal Agricultural Council (IAC), which has helped numerous tribes and Native-owned businesses penetrate global markets where American Indian foods can demand a premium price. According to the IAC, some companies have export sales that exceed \$2 million.

By building the necessary capacity to enter foreign markets and leveraging financial and non-financial assistance made available through financing and technical assistance organizations and government programs, tribes have begun to establish a more significant footprint in markets overseas.

For further information on entering international markets, NCAI has prepared a guide which can be found online at: [http://www.ncai.org/resources/policy\\_papers/international-markets-tribal-enterprises-a-guide-to-entering-the-international-market](http://www.ncai.org/resources/policy_papers/international-markets-tribal-enterprises-a-guide-to-entering-the-international-market)



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