

Policy Research Center Portfolio

Agenda and Advisory Council

In October 2006, the Center worked with tribal leaders to develop a comprehensive tribal research agenda. Available on our website at www.ncaiprc.org, this tribally-driven research agenda guides the Center's work. It is not the Center's intention to address every issue on this agenda ourselves. Rather we hope that it will serve as an important guide and resource to the many organizations and scholars that are striving to address the research questions of Indian Country. In addition, the Center will make contributions in various areas of this agenda depending on the priorities highlighted by tribal leaders, strategic opportunities to proactively address policy, the Center's expertise and capacity, and availability of partners and resources to do the work.

The Center's national advisory council is made up of tribal leaders, Native scholars, tribal organization heads, regional Indian policy center directors, private sector researchers, and state policymakers. This diverse advisory council provides direction on Center partners and work.

Partners

The Policy Research Center works collaboratively with a variety of tribes, organizations, and academic institutions to support, conduct, and utilize research in Native communities. The Center strategically partners with organizations and individual scholars already conducting work in key areas to leverage resources, avoid duplication of work, and convene networks of people with similar research interests. The goal of the Center is to add value to the work of its partners through increased opportunity for input and feedback from tribal communities and elected tribal leaders, new forums for the presentation and publication of research work, and new methods of communication and dissemination of work to other researchers, Native communities, and policymakers.

Projects

At any given point in time Center staff and partners are working on numerous projects that are guided by the tribally-driven research agenda. Current projects range from: "BIA Land Title Recordation Office Study," a partnership with First Nations Development Institute to examine a range of options for tribes to expedite processing of title information and "A Study of the Administration of Justice in Indian Country," a research project conducted in collaboration with scholars from the University of California, Los Angeles and the University of Minnesota to investigate how to improve criminal justice and detention conditions in Indian Country, to "Native Youth Suicide Prevention," a tribal policy summit convened in partnership with the National Indian Child Welfare Association and Georgetown University National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health. For an overview of all of the Center's current projects, visit our website at www.ncaiprc.org.

Funders

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**Supporting Indian Country
in Shaping its own Future**

Visit the National Congress of American Indian
Policy Research Center website at www.ncaiprc.org

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*A tribally-driven consortium
of research organizations
and scholars*

To provide tribal leaders with the best available knowledge to make strategically proactive policy decisions in a framework of Native wisdom that positively impact the future of Native peoples.



In Winter 2003, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) established a national tribal policy research center that would focus solely on issues facing tribal communities. This Center is creating a forum for forward-thinking, deliberate, proactive Indian policy discussions and the development of policy alternatives.

Tribal leaders govern sophisticated self-determining governments. With Supreme Court decisions demonstrating a void in understanding of tribal laws and cuts to federal appropriations central to the fulfillment of the U.S. trust responsibility to tribes, **tribal communities are operating in a complex political landscape.**

In a policymaking and appropriations world that is increasingly data-driven, **tribal leaders have not had access to, or control of, policy research data** that is nationally-focused, relevant, credible, and timely. This reality has made it difficult for leaders to anticipate and address policy issues on the horizon and advance tribal discussion about policy options and future scenarios when making policy decisions. Tribal leaders need mechanisms to share conditions, trends, tribally-collected data, and research priorities with researchers and other Native communities and policymakers. Researchers and policymakers also need a coordinated forum to discuss their research findings, key gaps in knowledge, and to share policy implications with tribal leaders.

Given these needs, the **NCAI Policy Research Center strategically convenes think tank forums** on significant policy issues, shares available data, facilitates tribal discussion, and develops policy options while honoring tribal ownership of data and the role of community of research.

When tribal leaders have time-sensitive and relevant data at their fingertips, they are better able to **educate** the public, Congress, the Administration, academics, and other tribes about their realities and advocate for strategically pro-active policy decisions.

IMPETUS FOR OUR WORK

In 2005, the NCAI Policy Research Center Advisory Council identified four primary functions of the Center.

- **Clearinghouse:** Serve as an information clearinghouse to make data, research, and critical policy analyses available in one place for tribal leaders, tribal organizations, and research partners;
- **Research Support:** Provide research support to tribes, tribal organizations, and Native students as well as university-based research centers, mainstream think tanks, and scholars with an interest in working with tribal communities;
- **Capacity Building:** Build the capacity of tribes, tribal organizations, and Native students to determine local research agendas, collect and analyze data, and develop research expertise; and
- **Think Tank:** Forecast emerging policy issues and convene critical conversations of informed stakeholders about policy issues with the potential to dramatically impact tribal communities. Develop policy scenarios and assess the impact of various policy options.

FOUR AREAS OF WORK

This tribally-driven consortium of existing research organizations and scholars are equipped to gather and assess data on conditions and trends in Indian Country, and will serve to inform and support the policy development efforts of tribal leaders, tribal organizations, and state and federal government. The Center can provide tools necessary to inform public policy debates and assist in shifting Native policy from a problem-focused approach to truly proactive, future-thinking strategy development.

The think tank component will provide a safe environment for critical thinking, internal policy discussions, and scenario development for the future of Indian Country. The NCAI Policy Research Center will facilitate this think tank process by collaborating with tribal communities to anticipate the issues on the horizon of public policymaking, convening forums to scope and define issues, and developing an array of alternative policy solutions for discussion and debate. Through this process, potential consequences of policy decisions are examined in detail. Long-term tribal interests are pursued and maximized.

Impacting the future of Native communities with relevant data sources and proactive policy strategies