Tribal Sovereignty, Economic Development and Cultural Production:

A Research and Policy Agenda for the Center for California Native Nations at UC-Riverside
What Role Can the University Play in Indian Affairs in California?

- Produce policy oriented research
- Engage with tribal, state and federal policy makers to define research agenda
- Promote research findings in ways that support tribal sovereignty and self determination
- Apply research results in service to Indian Country, including best practices models and advisory services
What would policy-oriented research look like in California?

- Various federal policies (e.g. P.L. 280 and IGRA) have increased the interaction between tribal governments and state and local governments.

- Policy makers need a systematic assessment of federal policy impacts at the state, local and tribal level.

- Tribal governments need their experiences with federal and state policies contextualized and articulated in social science terms in order to supplement tribal testimony.

- The University could collaborate with interested parties (state, local and tribal officials) with regard to producing a long-term and responsive research agenda.
An example of policy oriented research in California: compact re-negotiation

- Governor Davis has expressed an interest in securing $1.5 billion from Indian gaming in order to help balance the state budget.
- University could produce an analysis of this proposal, including:
  1. A report on IGRA’s provisions with regard to revenue sharing, including the BIA’s policy on exclusivity.
  2. A report on tribal investment of gaming revenues, including the impact of diverting $1.5 billion from tribal governments to state.
  3. A historical and political overview of tribal-state relations in California, contextualizing the state’s request in terms of a long history of tribal government budget deficits.
How can academic research findings support tribal sovereignty and self determination?

- Case study research combined with policy analysis can be presented in ways that support the policy foundations that tribal governments need to thrive (self-determination).

- Contemporary political issues can be contextualized historically and culturally in order to emphasize the unique political status of tribes as governments, not ethnic or special interest groups.

- Researchers can periodically present findings, best practices and policy analyses to public audiences through media, legislative briefings, research symposia and publications.
How can research results be applied in Indian Country?

- Create a liaison position (Sovereignty Studies Coordinator) between the University and Tribal governments in order to determine internal and external policy needs.

- Document best practices in tribal government and business, then showcase them in public forums.

- Produce research articulating the relationship between tribal sovereignty, economic development and cultural production.

- Play an advisory role with regard to implementing research results at the tribal level.

- Encourage tribal governments to use the University as a resource for nation-building.
First Step: Document and Promote What California Tribes Are Already Doing Well

- Document how tribal governments in California are transforming tribal sovereignty from an inherent right into an economic development tool.

- Maximize the unique position of Southern California tribes, where innovative and progressive tribal governments are creating and strengthening tribal institutions.

- Articulate the critical role of self determination policy in sustaining conditions necessary for tribal governments to achieve self sufficiency.

- Promote an understanding of the relationship between tribal sovereignty, economic development and cultural integrity to a public audience in order to counter media misrepresentation.
Additional Research Ideas:

- Evaluate problem gambling programs to maximize impact of tribal investment through state revenue share.

- Document the range of per capita incentive plans in order to provide tribal governments with a range of available options.

- Analyze the structure and effectiveness of new governmental institutions created to support gaming, such as tribal gaming commissions and development corporations.

- Produce a report on tribal economic diversification of gaming revenues, including an overview of the on-going obstacles to and opportunities for economic development in Indian Country.