



State Screening Webinar on Tribal Sovereignty March 15, 2022

Format

Opening Blessing (Wayne Nelson, Pala Tribe & CA Native American Heritage Commission)

General Info on CA Tribal Populations (Dr. Susan Ducore, Indian Health Services)

Panel Discussion on the Complexity of Tribal Sovereignty & Tribal Decision- Making Processes; Positive Strategies for Building Relationships between Tribes and Funders (Season Goodpasture, LMFT, from the California Tribal Families Coalition, led the discussion and facilitated the conversation among panelists)

Other Panel Members: Sara Dutschke, Chairwoman of Ione Band of Miwok Indian; CA Native American Heritage Commission; Jesus Tarango, Chairman of Wilton Rancheria

Questions & Answers

Closing Blessing (Jesus Tarango)

Highlights of Panel Discussion

Tribal sovereignty

- Sovereignty is complex with many components
- Tribes have always been sovereign; it is their inherent right to self-govern. Formally recognized 200 years ago in a legal sense. US acts as a trustee with Indian nations.
- Tribes enjoy a direct gov't to gov't relationship with US.
- Tribes are not subject to US constitution nor regulations of the states in which they sit. There are some exemptions, particularly in CA.
- Exercise of sovereign authority is different from tribe to tribe. Each tribe has its own constitution and operates differently. If you want to work with any tribe, you must understand its uniqueness. Best way to learn about tribes is by making phone calls and talking to people in-person. To many tribal members, it matters that they speak with you in-person and help to educate you about their culture.

Key Challenges

- Lack of resources and funding is a massive obstacle. Councils have the responsibility to serve their citizens regardless of what their funding looks like and what their capacity to serve programs is. It's hard sometimes to expand beyond what they are already doing; feels overwhelming. Location can also make it very difficult.
- Tribes need multiple funding streams to develop programs and provide proper services for their people.

Tribal Leadership

- Each tribe has different capacities, and it is important to get feedback and input from the tribal communities.
 - Reach out and listen to what the community has to say.
- Tribal leaders are usually tasked to oversee the preservation of cultures, language, traditions, and to take care of elders. Also, Tribes run many for-profit businesses to fund their programs through economic development ventures. Those businesses fund the tribal government.
 - Tribal leaders work hard, frequently taking on multiple responsibilities and working across multiple projects; some are full time tribal leaders and others are volunteers.

Suggestions For Building Positive and Meaningful Government to Government Relationships

- There are very robust tribal organizations throughout CA. Some revolve around gaming, most do not. There are many opportunities to do presentations on the programs that you are running or challenges you are facing in working in Indian country. Great opportunities to create needed relationships and meet key people in tribal organizations. Remember that tribal members view relationships as critically important, just as providers of infant and early childhood services do!
- Tribal members respond better to phone calls and in-person meetings than emails. Communication is important.
- There are blogs (e.g., "Turtle Talk" --The leading blog on legal issues in Indian Country)
- Four state Tribal Chair Associations in California; one is statewide and the other three are regional: northern, central, and southern. They are more government and service focused.
 - Opportunity to speak at meetings about your funding opportunities and services—good opportunity to talk to several tribal leaders at one time
- California Tribal Families Coalition is a great organization to learn about tribes and engage with tribal leadership to understand their priorities.

- California Statewide ICWA Conference (sponsored by California Tribal Families Coalition) will be held hybrid style June 13 & 14 at Sycuan Casino Resort (5469 Casino Way), in El Cajon. Hosted by Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation. Tickets are available for \$55 <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2022-california-statewide-icwa-conference-registration-275283188427?aff=erelexpmlt>
- California Indian Day is June 24 in Sacramento. It is a celebration in the capital the 4th weekend in September; lots of tribes from around the nation attend. Great opportunity to visit booths, get to know people, and talk with those you are working with.

Constraints Tribes Face in Funding

- Small number of people with lots of other responsibilities are usually tasked with working on grants (either writing or running and reporting on them); Staff are overwhelmed
- Tribes are often running several grants at one time (maybe 20-30 at once) along with structures and reporting by one or two people overseeing everything. That makes it difficult to explore more funding opportunities, despite high need.
- Important for funders and state and local organizations to reach out to establish personal relationships with tribes
- CA Tribal Families Coalition is willing to work to connect those interested with tribes and leaders. Contact Season Goodpasture: season@acorns2oak.com