



WESTERN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Tribal Engagement Committee

January 2026

ENHANCING RESILIENCE TO
AVOID CASCADING DISASTER



WESTERN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Today's Agenda



- **Welcome and Introductions**
- **Featured Presentations:**
 - **Update by the National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (NATHPO)** by Dr. Valerie J. Grussing, Executive Director for Legislative Affairs and Strategic Partnerships, National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers; and Executive Director for Indigenous Diplomacy and Federal Relations, National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers
 - **Good Data, Stronger Tribes (Overcoming Native American data challenges in Southern California)** by Robert Maxim, Fellow, Brookings Metro
- **Next Steps and Actions**
- **Around the Phone Updates**





Valerie J. Grussing, Ph.D.

*Executive Director for Legislative
Affairs and Strategic Partnerships*
National Association of Tribal
Historic Preservation Officers



- **Executive Director for Legislative Affairs and Strategic Partnerships, National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers**
 - Committed to protecting Native places through support, guidance, advocacy, and strengthening partnerships among Tribal Historic Preservation Officers
 - Passionate about advocating for and elevating Native interests and voices in revitalizing Native cultures and reclaiming places
- **Previously:**
 - Cultural Resources Coordinator, National Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Center, NOAA
 - Archaeological Technician, Queen Anne's Revenge Conservation Lab
- **Education:**
 - Ph.D. (Coastal Resources Management), East Carolina University
 - M.A. (Anthropology), University of Iowa
 - B.A. (History), North Carolina State University
- Based in Silver Spring, MD, she enjoys making jewelry, chalk art, and calligraphy, and spending time with her husband, young son, and daughter.



Ira L. Mat

*Executive Director for Indigenous
Diplomacy and Federal Relations*
National Association of Tribal
Historic Preservation Officers



- **Executive Director for Indigenous Diplomacy and Federal Relations, National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers**
 - ❑ Committed to strengthening federal-Tribal collaboration, amplifying Indigenous leadership, and embedding Indigenous Knowledge in preservation and governance systems
 - ❑ Serves as NATHPO's principal liaison to the Executive Office of the President, federal agencies, and Tribal governments on matters of consultation, preservation policy, and Indigenous governance
- **Previously:**
 - ❑ Inaugural Assistant Director, Indigenous Engagement and Native American Affairs, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy
 - ❑ Director, Office of Tribal and Indigenous Peoples, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP)
 - ❑ Federal Preservation Officer, USDA
 - ❑ Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
 - ❑ Tribal Archaeologist
 - ❑ Wildland Firefighter
- **Education:**
 - ❑ M.J. (Indian Law), University of Tulsa College of Law
 - ❑ M.A. (Anthropology), University of Montana
 - ❑ B.A. (Anthropology), University of Montana
- Citizen of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT)



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF TRIBAL HISTORIC
PRESERVATION OFFICERS**

Balancing Progress and Preservation: The Role of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers in Energy Development Projects

THPOs: What They Are

- National Historic Preservation Act
- With approved NPS application, assume state duties on Tribal land
- Sovereignty & self-determination
- Historic Preservation Fund
- NPS manages program & grants



THPOs: What They Do

- Sacred & foundational work
- Wear many hats:
 - **Review federal projects**
 - **National Register of Historic Places**
 - **Inventories of Tribal cultural resources & places**
 - Repatriation & NAGPRA duties
 - Revitalize cultural traditions & languages
 - Natural resources & ecosystem conservation
 - Tribal museums, cultural centers, oral history programs



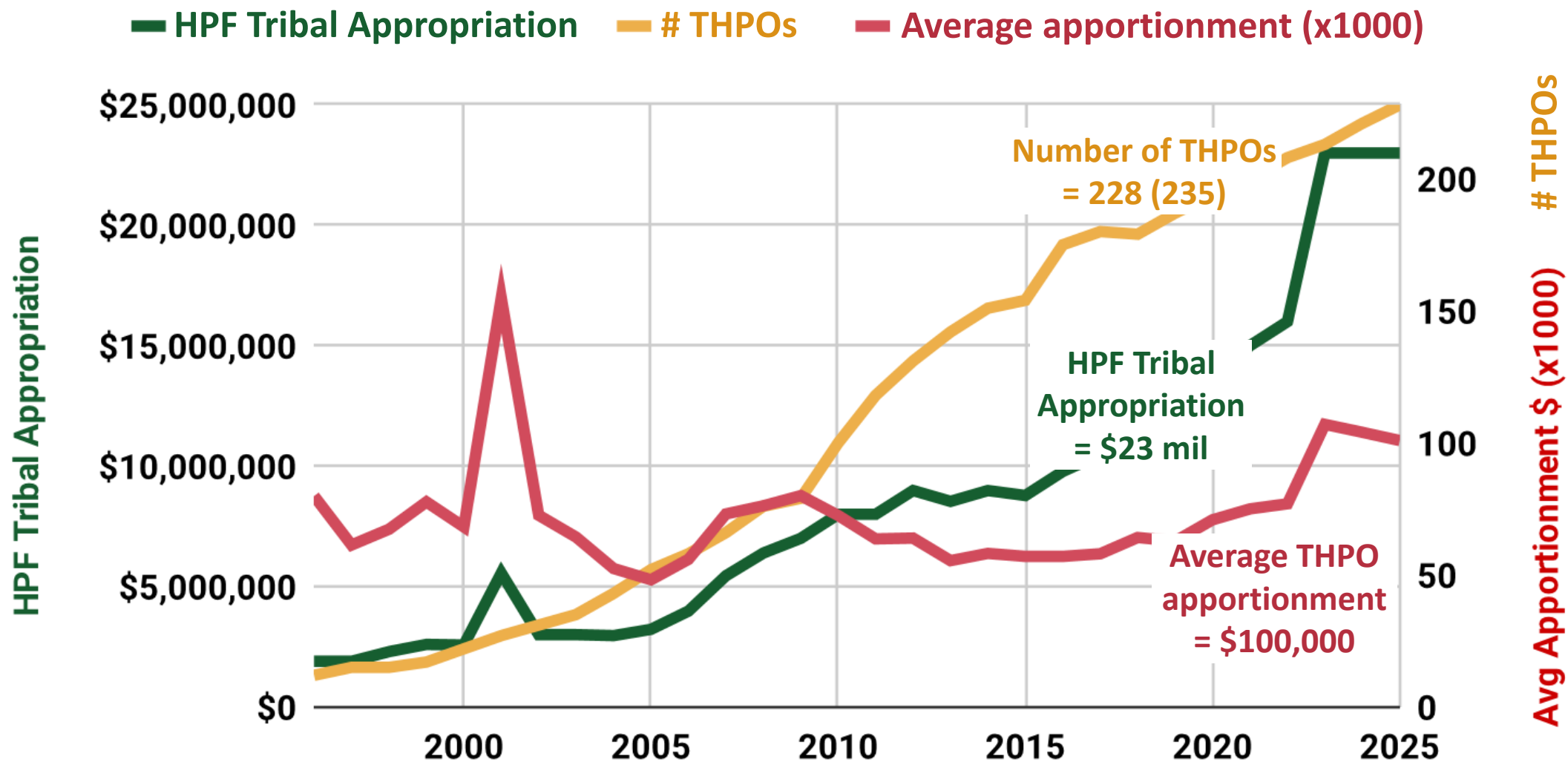
**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF TRIBAL HISTORIC
PRESERVATION OFFICERS**



What are some of the main Tribal cultural resource management issues you face?



Historic Preservation Fund Appropriations for Tribes



The **number of THPOs** increases each year. For the **average apportionment per THPO** to actually increase, the **HPF Tribal appropriation** must begin to keep pace.

Tribal Consultation

- Requirements vs best practices & good faith
 - Procedural vs substantive law
 - 2 sides of the equation (Tribal capacity)
 - Infrastructure, energy, broadband reviews
 - LAND Directory (Tribal areas of interest)
- Indigenous knowledge, methodologies, archaeology
 - Rebuilding foundations of culture
 - Healing, power balance & consent



Deregulation & Global Context

- US policies & actions under any Administration
 - This administration's priorities
 - Energy emergency
 - Sovereign status of Tribal Nations
- UNDRIP & FPIC
 - FAIR + CARE Principles (data governance)
 - Equator Principles (financial institutions)



NATHPO

- Nationwide Tribal NGO est. 1998
- Voting member: Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
- Advocacy in Washington, DC
- Consultation guidance & funding vehicle
- Coordination & communication
- Tools, information & resources
- Community & partnership building, annual conference
- Protecting Native Places grants to members!
- Follow us on FB, X, & LinkedIn and subscribe to email





Robert Maxim

Fellow

Brookings Metro

BROOKINGS

- ***Fellow, Brookings Metro***
 - Leads Brookings Metro's research around Native American communities
 - Research has focused on the exclusion of Native Americans in U.S. federal government datasets, as well as how federal data misrepresents Native American identity
 - Also conducts research and designs policy proposals exploring how technological change and other economic trends affect people and places
- **Previously:**
 - Senior Knowledge Analyst, Boston Consulting Group
 - Research Associate, Council on Foreign Relations
- **Education:**
 - M.A., International Trade and Investment Policy, George Washington University
 - B.A., Economics, International Affairs, George Washington University
- Enrolled citizen of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe



Good data, stronger Tribes: Understanding data shortcomings for Native Americans

Robert Maxim
Brookings Metro

Western Regional Partnership
January 2026

1

Personal background

2

Findings from Brookings-SCAG Tribal data needs project

3

Ideas for action from Brookings-SCAG Tribal data needs project

1

Personal background

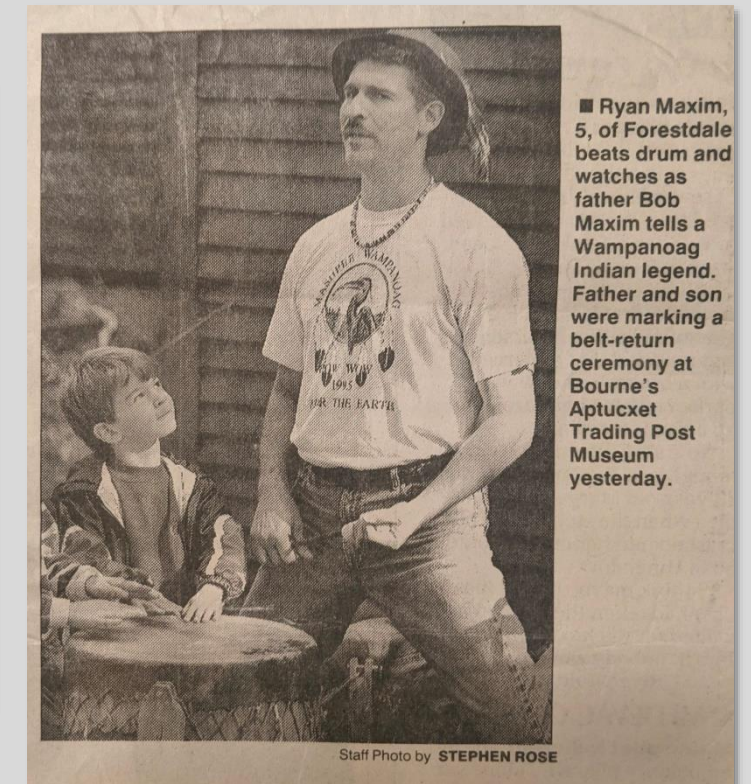
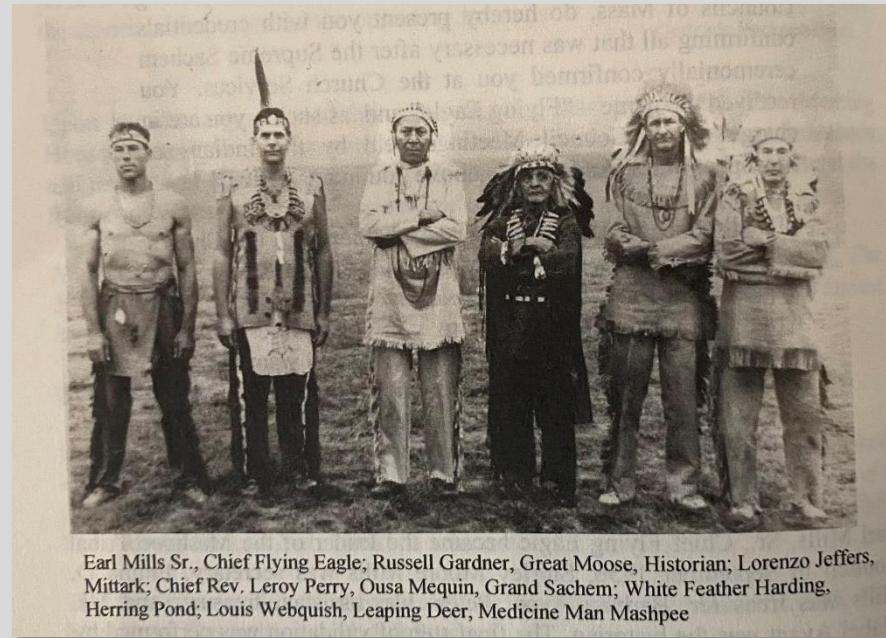
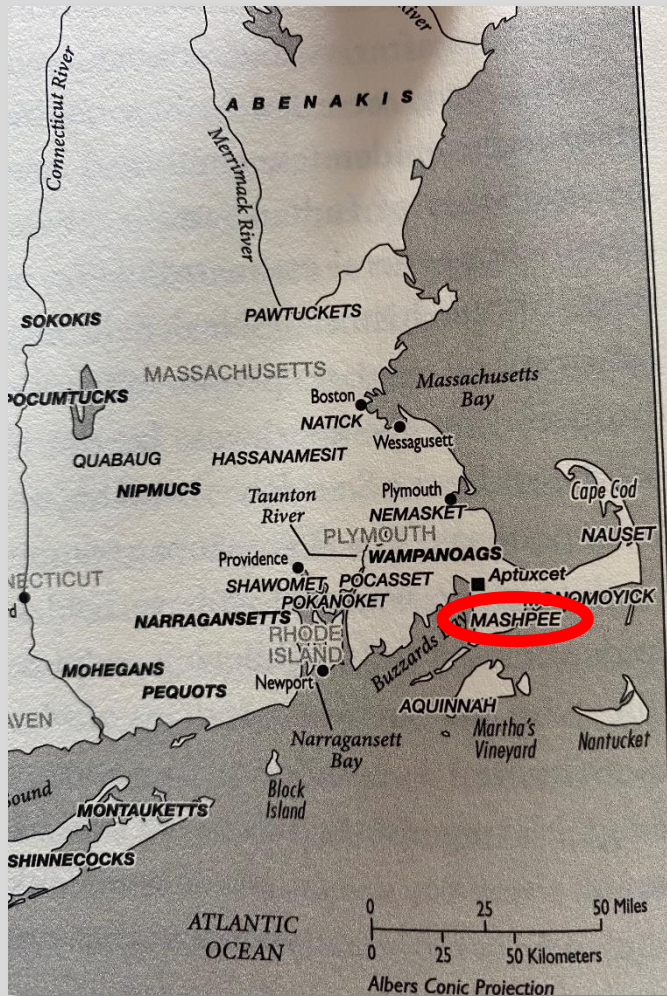
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Findings from Brookings-SCAG Tribal data needs project

3

Ideas for action from Brookings-SCAG Tribal data needs project

My background



Sources: David J. Silverman, *This Land Is Their Land: The Wampanoag Indians, Plymouth Colony, and the Troubled History of Thanksgiving*; Earl H. Mills Sr., *Talking with the Elders of Mashpee*; Cape Cod Times

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Our work in Southern California

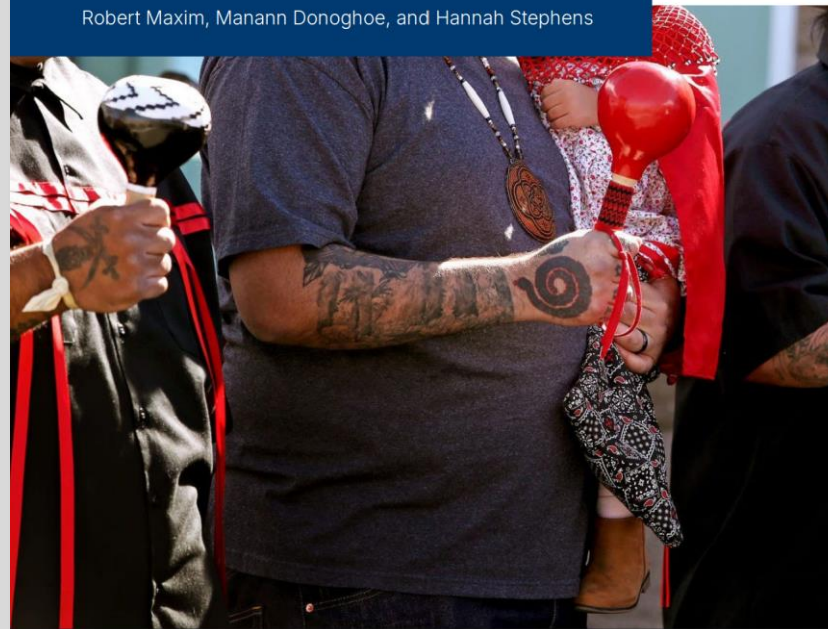
B | Brookings Metro



AUGUST 2025

GOOD DATA, STRONGER TRIBES: OVERCOMING NATIVE AMERICAN DATA CHALLENGES IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Robert Maxim, Manann Donoghoe, and Hannah Stephens



About the partnership

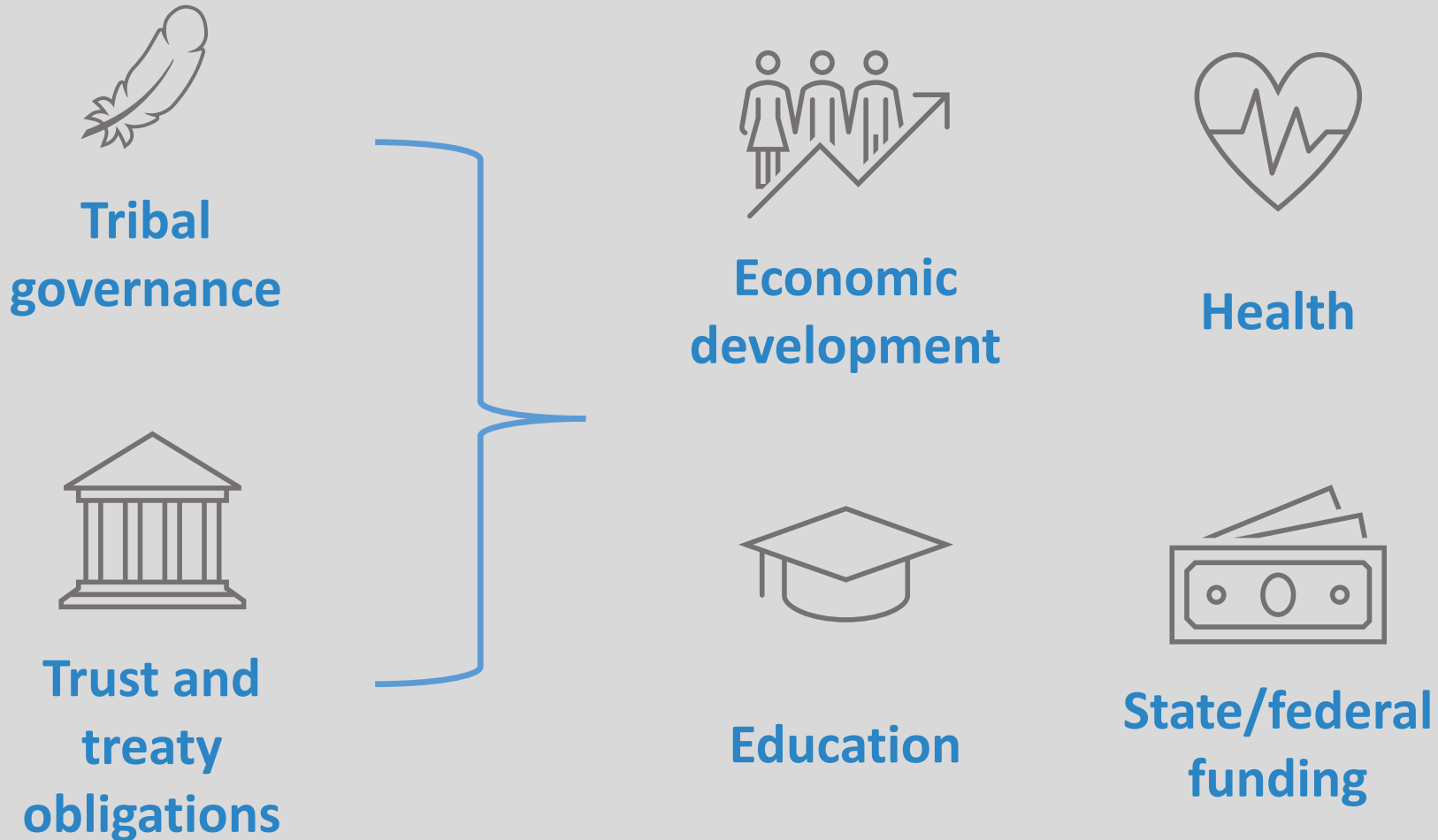


- **Largest MPO in the U.S.:** 6 Southern California counties (Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura) and 191 cities
- **16** federally recognized Tribal Governments + **many more Tribal communities**
- **37,000 people** living on tribal lands, and **500,000 residents** identifying as American Indian/Native American
- **7** voting policy committee seats representing Tribal governments
- Premier **place-based think tank** in the United States
- Extensive experience with **data product development** focused on underinvested communities, e.g. landmark Black Progress Index
- Significant federal, state, and regional **research and policy development** capacity
- **Existing understanding** of misrepresentation of Native Americans in federal and other datasets

Project goals

- 1 Identify data needs** in federal and state data for Tribes and Native Americans in the Southern California region
- 2** Explore how states and regions can better engage with Tribes and Tribal leaders to help **fill those gaps**
- 3 Advance new approaches** for data collection and ownership that center Tribes and Tribal sovereignty

Context: Why good data matters



However, Native Americans face more significant data challenges than other groups



Small sample sizes



Remote and non-contiguous Tribal geographies



Misperception of Native Americans as just a racial group

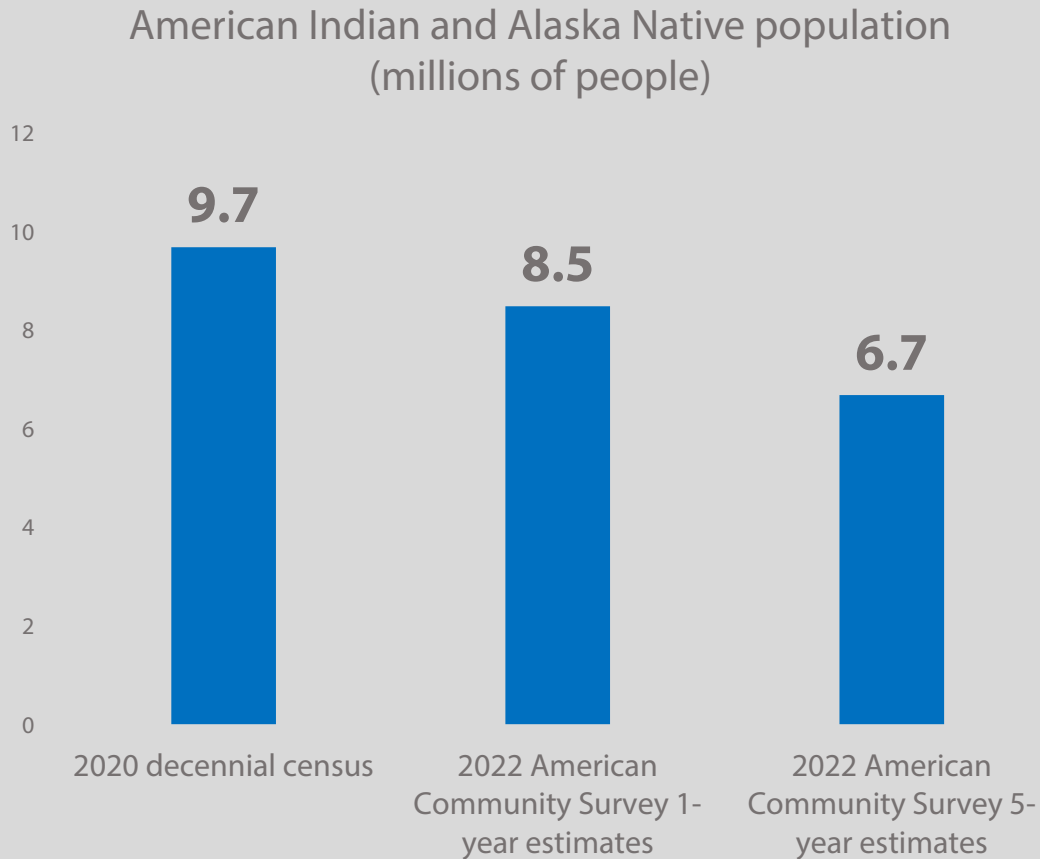


Data sets frequently designed without Tribal input



Some data remains inaccessible to Tribes

Sample sizes for Native Americans are often too small, affecting the quality of many data sets

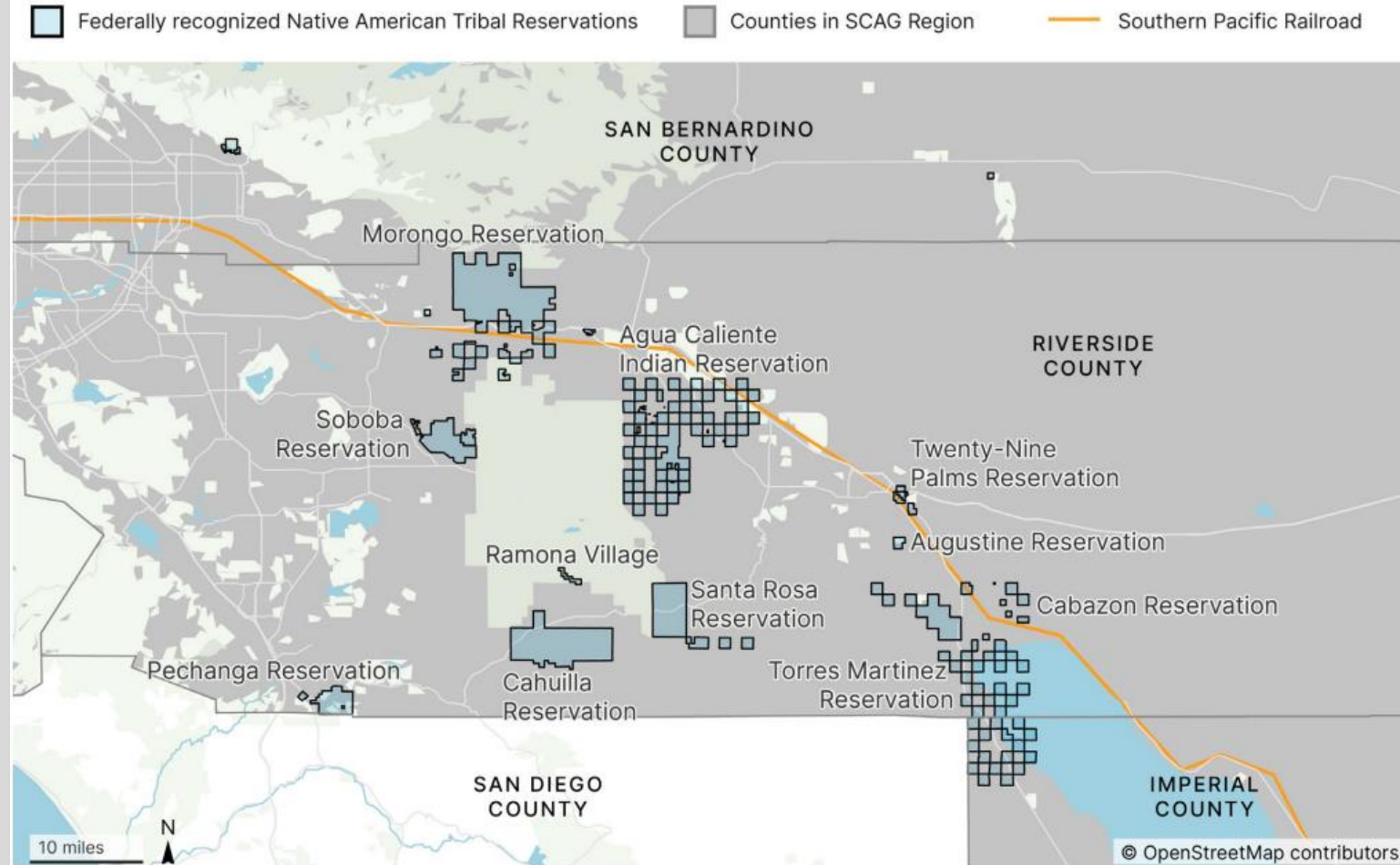


Across **16** federally recognized reservations in the SCAG region:

- 0** have 1-year ACS data available
- 3** have margins of error that exceed the population count entirely
- 2** have no population data at all

Remote and non-contiguous reservation geography makes data collection and aggregation more difficult

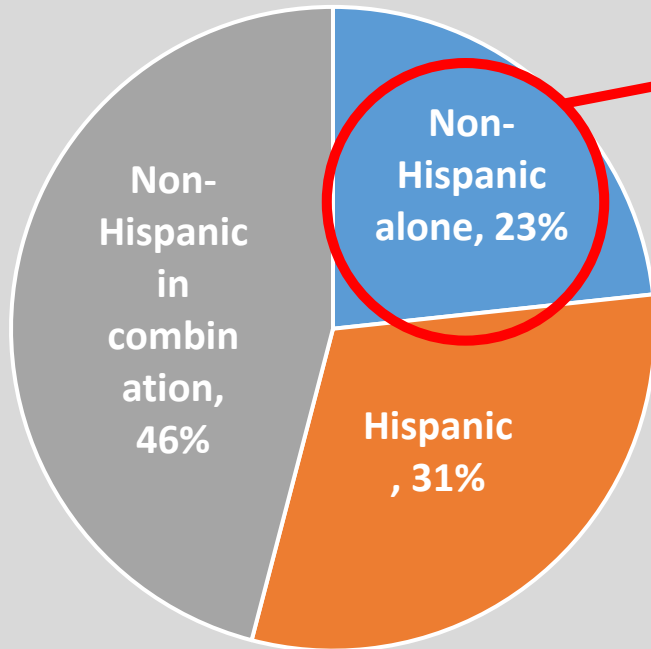
Railroad expansion contributed to noncontiguous Tribal reservations in the SCAG region



Many data sets treat Native Americans as just a race, misunderstanding of Native identity and tribal governance

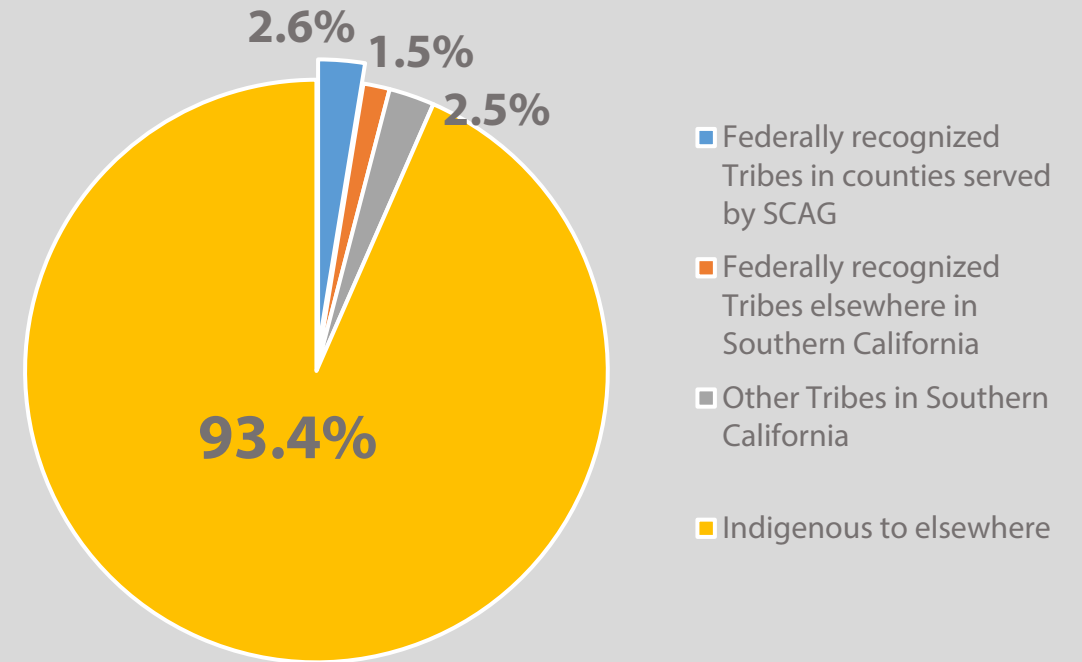
American Indian and Alaska
Native population by race and
ethnicity

2020 decennial Census



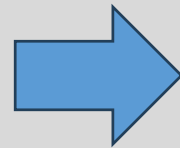
Only group
represented in
some
government
data sets

Native American population in SCAG
region by community of origin



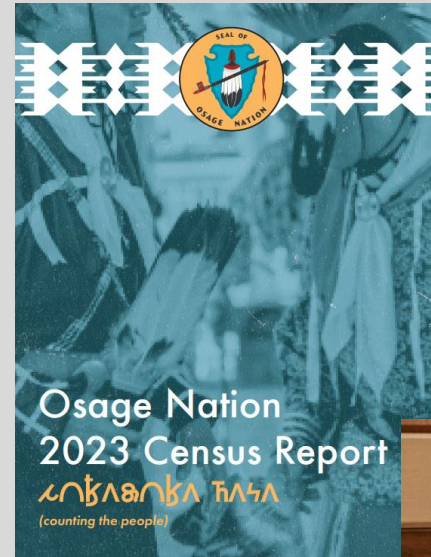
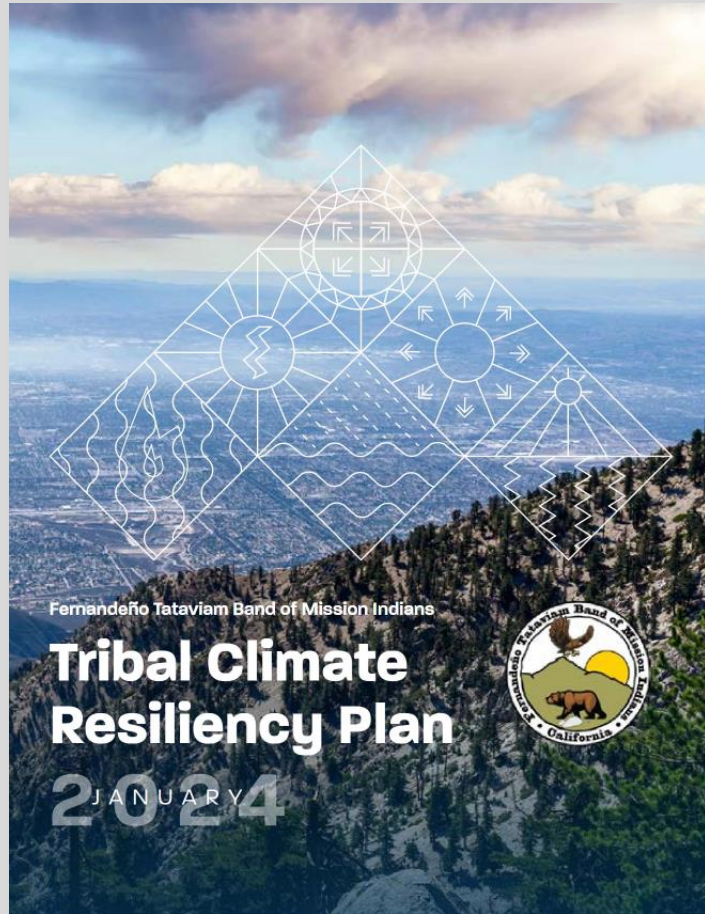
The U.S. government definition of American Indian and Alaska Native does not align with what most people imagine

Individuals with origins in **any of the original peoples of North, Central, and South America**, including, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation of Montana, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, Aztec, and Maya.



Makes data work on Native Americans and Tribal communities more difficult

Data sets are often designed without tribal input, and data sets don't always reflect tribal needs or interests



Some federal, state, and local data remains inaccessible to tribes

IMPORTANT NOTICE: TEMPORARY PAUSE ON THE IRS STATISTICS OF INCOME DATA ACCESS APPLICATIONS

THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (IRS) STATISTICS OF INCOME (SOI) IS CURRENTLY POSTPONING THE 2025 JOINT STATISTICAL RESEARCH PROGRAM (JSRP) APPLICATION WINDOW AND IS NOT ACCEPTING NEW PROPOSALS AT THIS TIME, WITH A RE-EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM'S STATUS TO OCCUR AT A DATE TO BE DETERMINED.

NOTE: THIS ACTION DOES NOT IMPACT REQUESTS TO ACCESS COMMINGLED FEDERAL TAX INFORMATION THROUGH THE FEDERAL STATISTICAL RESEARCH DATA CENTERS.



IMPORTANT NOTICE: TEMPORARY PAUSE ON THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS (NCES) AND SAMHSA CENTER FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH STATISTICS AND QUALITY (CBHSQ) DATA ACCESS APPLICATIONS

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS (NCES) AND SAMHSA CENTER FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH STATISTICS AND QUALITY (CBHSQ) ARE CURRENTLY NOT ACCEPTING NEW APPLICATIONS FOR ACCESS TO DATA THROUGH THE STANDARD APPLICATION PROCESS. REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS FOR ACCESS TO DATA FROM NCES AND CBHSQ ARE ALSO PAUSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

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Tribal leaders shared insights on their priorities regarding data

- 1 Tribal leaders have a strong interest in data that **more accurately measures** their populations and lands
- 2 Tribes see data as key for accessing federal, state, and regional **funding**
- 3 Lack of understanding of **tribal sovereignty** contributes to misunderstandings about tribes as government entities

Tribal leaders shared insights on their priorities regarding data (cont.)

- 4 Sample size limitations, Tribal boundaries, and other challenges inhibit the development of **new data products** by and for Native American communities
- 5 Tribes vary significantly in their **data capacity** and desire for autonomy
- 6 Many current government processes and structures **struggle to support** Tribal data capacity

1

Personal background

2

Findings from Brookings-SCAG Tribal data needs project

3

Ideas for action from Brookings-SCAG Tribal data needs project

We've developed a four-part agenda of ideas for action

Robust Indigenous data ecosystem

```
graph TD; A[Robust Indigenous data ecosystem] --- B[Implement data strategies for interacting with tribes and tribal data]; A --- C[Invest in tribal data capacity]; A --- D[Support tribal sovereignty and self-determination]; A --- E[Make government data more accurate and relevant to Indigenous Peoples];
```

Implement data strategies for interacting with tribes and tribal data

Invest in tribal data capacity

Support tribal sovereignty and self-determination

Make government data more accurate and relevant to Indigenous Peoples

Idea for action: Implement data strategies for interacting with tribes and tribal data

Regional ideas for action

1. Develop a regional Indigenous data strategy
2. Formalize government relationships with tribes in MoUs

State and federal ideas for action

1. **Create state Indigenous data strategies**
2. Convene Tribes and regional orgs to share data best practices

Idea for action: Invest in Tribal data capacity

Regional ideas for action

1. **Develop new data programs and tools in partnership with tribes**
2. Communicate tribal data needs to local, state, and federal counterparts
3. Engage with and fund local Indigenous-led data coalitions
4. Expand internships and data-focused skill development for tribal and non-tribal youth

State and federal ideas for action

1. Fund tribes and regional organizations to enhance data capacity
2. **Provide technical backbones and expertise to support development of new data tools**

Idea for action: Support tribal sovereignty and self-determination

Regional ideas for action

1. **Allow Tribes to provide their own data to access grants and funding**

State and federal ideas for action

1. Explore alternatives to blanket sovereign immunity waivers for state- and federal-funded projects.
2. Give agencies more flexibility to waive grant requirements, including data requirements, for tribes
3. Increase tribal access to public agency data about their citizens
4. **Develop secure online portals for tribal governments to more easily access data about tribal lands and citizens held by state and federal agencies**

Idea for action: Make government data more representative of and relevant to Indigenous Peoples (1/2)

Regional ideas for action

1. Make regional data about Native American populations more comprehensive and accessible
- 2. Update data policies to more accurately identify Native American people**
3. Develop and distribute model data policies for Native American-related data
4. Develop trainings and other supportive resources for local government agencies
5. Foster relationships between tribes and other governments in their regions

Idea for action: Make government data more representative of and relevant to Indigenous Peoples (2/2)

State and federal ideas for action

1. Fund efforts to make existing state and federal datasets more relevant for tribes and Native American groups
2. **Provide tribes with a bigger role in surveying their own residents for relevant data sets**
3. Change data aggregation practices to address undercounts of Native American people
4. Increase the representation of American Indians and Alaska Natives in agencies that engage in data work

Kutâputunumuw (Thank you)

Robert Maxim
Fellow

Brookings Metro

rmaxim@brookings.edu



WRP TEC Next Steps

WRP Tribal Engagement Committee Co-Chairs



Will Micklin

- CEO, Ewiiapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians

LeRoy Shingoitewa

- Hopi Tribal Council Representative

Floyd W Velasquez Sr.

- Emergency Services Administrator, Morongo Band of Mission Indians



Roll up of Action Items



- **Please sign up for a WRP account – wrpinfo.org**
 - Invite/Encourage other Tribal members/liaisons to be part of TEC
- **Please provide input on Tribal Leadership Excel document**
- **Seeking additional TEC Co-Chair**
- **Interest in being part of a WRP Deep-Dive:**
 - Water Security/resilience
 - Wildland Fire (response/ prevention)
 - Aviation/ Airspace Needs
- **Please indicate if you:**
 - Are interested in being part of the Outreach Subcommittee
 - Have recommendations on future agenda topics
 - Have additional resources like a study/funding for the good of the team



WRP TEC Calls



Feb 27	▪ Picuris Community Solar Phase II by Wayne Yazza Jr., Director of Utilities, Pueblos of Picuris (former Governor for the Pueblo of Picuris) and Celestino Yazza, Utilities Technician, Pueblo of Picuris ▪ Nevada Native Seed Partnership by Mervin Wright Jr., Nevada Restoration Tribal Liaison, The Nature Conservancy
March 27	
April 24	▪ Update by Traci L Morris, Ph.D. (Chickasaw Nation), Executive Director & Research Professor, American Indian Policy Institute, Center for Tribal Digital Sovereignty
May 29*	▪ Making Interactive Media for Indigenous Communities - It's as easy as writing a blog by Dr. AnnMaria De Mars, President, 7 Generation Games
June 26	
July 31	

Discussion items/future items:

- Tribes' land management policies with federal agencies
- How tribes are dealing with removal of tribal historical information from federal buildings



Around The Phone



Thank you!

