

Building Relationships Between the University and Local Native American Tribes

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Introduction

Over the years the University has been interested in fund raising from the local Gaming Tribes. These tribes are constantly bombarded with requests. They have been very generous, but are likely to ask the University "What have you done for us?" Sadly, the truth is very little. These efforts will be far more successful if we build strong relationships with these communities.



A history of Forging Relationships with the tribes

Over the last 20 years my colleague Roger LaJeunesse and I have forged relationships with local tribes. This has been through a combination of doing archeological consulting exclusively for the tribes, participating in Native American Monitoring workshops and the strong presence and participation of Native Americans in our archeological field school at Granddad. The Field school is held on land that is owned by a Southern Sierra Miwok family and they invited us to excavate their site. It has provided a rich learning experience for the Native Americans and my students. Native Americans have been able to get first-hand experience in archeological field techniques and my students have become exposed to Native American perspectives and values. I have always felt that I have learned way more from these experiences than I can ever have taught the Native Americans. This work has been very rewarding and has gone a long way to developing partnerships and trust.

Listening to the tribes

Over the last summer and fall I spent considerable time traveling throughout Indian Country going from Powwow to Gathering, talking with people, but mostly doing lots of listening. Rather than saying what we would do for these communities, I asked what can we do for you.

Where do we go from here?

What was apparent from my time listening was they expressed the following needs: Education, Health and Human Services, Language Preservation, and Cultural Resources. We need to continue and strengthen our efforts to do outreach to increase the number of Native American students from these communities, and once they are here we need to make sure they graduate. We need to train these students with the skills desperately needed in these communities, so they can go back and serve them. The University is making admirable attempts at reaching these goals, but it often seems that these efforts are disjointed and not terribly well coordinated. Just as important, the University needs to gather input from the communities we wish to serve