



From Consultation to Collaboration

Strategies for Building Effective Local Government – Tribal Nation Partnerships in Emergency Management



Land Acknowledgement

“We acknowledge that Ruidoso, New Mexico, is situated on the ancestral homelands of the Mescalero Apache Tribe. We recognize and honor the enduring connection of the Mescalero Apache people to this land, their traditions, languages, and culture.

We also recognize the historical and ongoing contributions of all Indigenous peoples to this region, including the Jicarilla Apache, Navajo Nation, and Pueblo communities.

We pay our respects to the elders, past and present, as well as to the future generations who will continue to steward and protect this land. May we strive for understanding, reconciliation, and partnership with Indigenous peoples as we work toward healing and respect for all who call this land home.”



Introduction and Background



Kymmie Scott, CEM

Project Manager and Tribal
Relations Specialist –
Resilience, Mitigation, and Policy
– Tidal Basin Group



- Grew up in New Mexico and back after two decades away
- 15+ years in emergency services / emergency management
- Career has included work as an emergency manager for both county and tribal governments, with additional experience as a first responder, instructor, policymaker, program manager, analyst, public information officer, and now consultant
- Alumna of the Heritage Emergency and Response Training (HEART) program that is offered as a joint venture by the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative, FEMA's Office of Environmental Planning, and the Heritage Emergency National Task Force. She is also a graduate of FEMA's first tribally hosted National Emergency Management Advanced Academy (NEMAA)
- Vocal advocate for incorporating cultural and heritage considerations in emergency preparedness and a strong supporter of strengthening emergency management capacity in underserved communities
- Current role with Tidal Basin Group includes doing EM work with government agencies & CIKR organizations



Purpose

To build skills, comfort, and relationships to support local government–tribal nation partnerships regarding emergency management efforts.



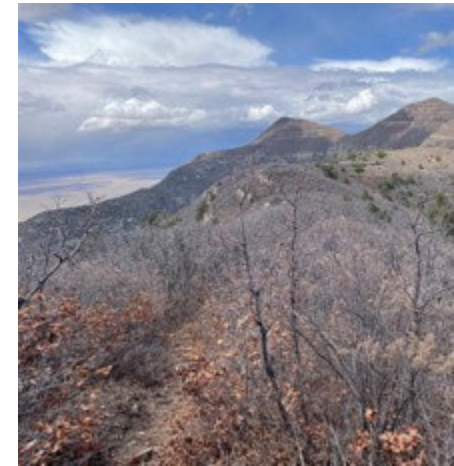
A landscape photograph of a wetland area. In the foreground, there are several tall, thin stalks of dried, brown flowers or plants. The middle ground shows a body of water, possibly a pond or a marsh, with some reeds and other vegetation. In the background, there are more trees and a clear blue sky. A large, bright yellow circle is overlaid in the center of the image, containing the text "Survey Time" in white, bold, sans-serif font.

**Survey
Time**



What and Who

Defining the Relationship



Tribal Consultation



- A process in which government agencies or other entities engage in meaningful dialogue and collaboration with Native American tribes or indigenous communities.
- This process is typically mandated by law or policy and aims to respect the sovereignty of tribes and their right to self-governance.
- Involves discussing proposed actions, policies, or projects that may affect tribal lands, resources, or rights, and seeking input, feedback, and consent from tribal leaders or representatives.
- Goal is to ensure that the concerns, perspectives, and interests of indigenous peoples are considered and incorporated into decision-making processes that impact their communities.

Emergency Management Collaboration



- Refers to the coordinated efforts of multiple organizations, agencies, stakeholders, and communities to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the impacts of disasters and emergencies.
- Involves sharing resources, information, expertise, and responsibilities to enhance overall preparedness and effectiveness in addressing emergencies.
- Key aspects include multiagency coordination, interdisciplinary cooperation, information sharing and communication, joint planning and exercise, resource sharing and mutual aid, and community engagement and partnerships.

Operating Environment



Tribal Nations

- 23 federally recognized tribes in New Mexico.
- Additionally, there may be state-recognized tribes and non-recognized tribes.
- The number and status of tribes may change over time due to various factors, such as federal recognition processes and tribal sovereignty issues.

Local Government Entities

- 33 counties and over 100 municipalities in New Mexico.
- Exact number may fluctuate due to changes in incorporation status, annexations, or other administrative factors.

Operating Environment

(continued)

- All communities vary in size, population, and governance structure, with some being small rural communities and others larger urban centers.
- Each local government and tribal nation is overseen by a policy body responsible for providing essential services and managing local affairs.
- Tribal nations possess sovereign status and may embrace that status, employing various levels of autonomy, independence, and self-determination within the framework of the United States' federal system.



Why

Reasons for Engagement



Benefits of Local–Tribal Partnerships

Because it's the right thing to do (moral obligation)

Because legislation and guidance mandate or recommend it (legal obligation)

Relationship strengthening and reciprocity

Expanded worldview

Strengthen broader community capacity, capability, and resilience

Value of Indigenous Knowledge in emergency management

About Indigenous Knowledge (IK)

- Neither attempts to masquerade as science, nor sees itself in opposition to science
- Tied to a unique place by the people who have lived there through multiple generations
 - imbibes the knowledge with regionally-specific wisdom
 - gives awareness to events that pre-date recorded history
- Can often reveal previously unrecognized relationships between systems, including those that reside in physical, social, and epochal settings

IK Systems Important to EM

- **Architecture:** The style in which homes and other buildings have been constructed, as well as the siting for important structures or the communities themselves, can convey information about hazards and risk exposure
- **Ceremony:** Ceremonies can be difficult to decipher as they “may have multiple levels of meaning, rather than describe a single set of historic events” and often convey a deeper meaning about the way in which events are perceived and not just a documentation of their occurrence
- **Oral storytelling and song:** It has been observed that “the non-formal means of disseminating indigenous knowledge can serve as a model for [disaster risk reduction] education”

IK Systems Important to EM (continued)

- **Skill instruction:** While many skills, including the so-called “bush skills,” are essential to day-to-day living, there are competencies specific to disaster management and risk reduction that the emergency management professional should pursue. Skills often hold information that can be useful in forming the common operating picture during a response effort, or in providing response and recovery efforts
- **Taboos:** Taboos can serve as protection mechanisms for resources important to response and recovery, or even as protections of individuals during periods of vulnerability

Caution Areas for Use

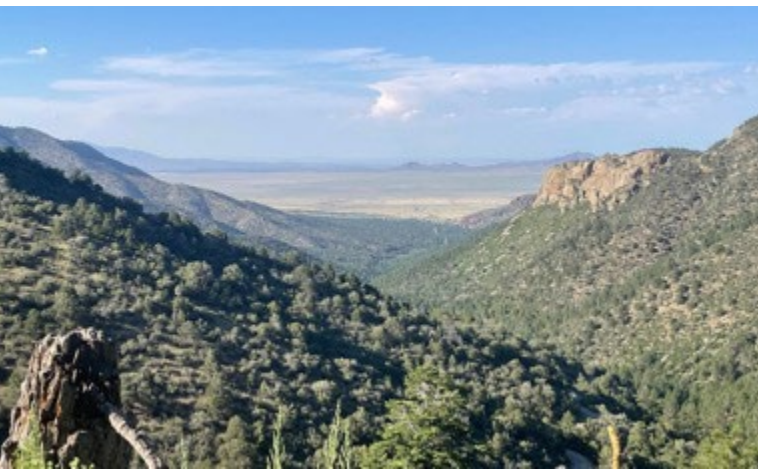
- The very nature of IK dictates that what one learns from one community may or may not be applicable in others
- The perspective of indigenous cultures in relation to time and social connectivity differs significantly from mainstream Western thought, thereby making it difficult to translate concepts in such a way that they maintain their precise meaning and structure (information lost or misrepresented “in translation”)
- IK is often considered the intellectual property of the community. Emergency managers must ensure that this knowledge is used ethically, with proper acknowledgment and respect for intellectual property rights. This includes recognizing that some knowledge may be sacred or restricted and not appropriate for public dissemination or use in EM.

Caution Areas for Non-Use

- Brevity of documented history
- Inconsistencies with “known” knowledge
- Approaches that are too broad or too narrow

How

Best Practices for Engagement



Recognize Sovereignty

- Tribal sovereignty refers to the inherent authority of indigenous tribes to govern themselves within their own territories, free from external interference. This concept is rooted in the unique status of indigenous peoples as distinct political entities with pre-existing cultures, governments, and land rights.
- Key elements include self-governance, territorial control, government-to-government relationship, limited jurisdiction, sovereign immunity, and economic development.
- **#1 MOST IMPORTANT TAKEAWAY**

Educate Yourself

- There are many resources out there, and there is no reason not to get educated, including resources specific to EM/PHEP work.
- Nothing beats real-world engagement and experience.
- Display cultural humility.
- Be curious.
- Listen more than you speak.
- Learn about historical trauma, including disease, extermination, assimilation, distrust, and misinterpretation.

Discourage the Zero-Sum Mindset

The zero-sum mindset is based on the fixed pie fallacy, which erroneously assumes that the total amount of resources or wealth in a given situation remains constant and cannot be expanded. In reality, many situations are not zero-sum, and opportunities for growth, innovation, and cooperation can lead to expanded benefits for all involved.

Engage Early, Often, and Equitably

- Response is never the time to engage partners. Reach out during preparedness efforts such as planning, training, and exercise.
- “One and done” accomplishes nothing of value. Partners should communicate often to provide and receive feedback and collaboration.
- Each tribe is unique. Engaging one tribe in your jurisdiction if there are three with trust, fee, or ancestral lands there does not equate to equitable engagement.

Engage the Right Representative

Key decision-making bodies within tribal governments may include:

- **Tribal Council:** The tribal council typically functions as the primary legislative and policy-making body within the tribal government, with authority to enact laws, adopt budgets, and set policies and priorities for the tribe.
- **Tribal Leadership:** Tribal leadership often includes elected or appointed officials, such as tribal chairpersons, presidents, or chiefs, who may serve as the executive heads of the tribal government.
- **Traditional Governance Structures:** Some tribal nations maintain traditional governance structures and leadership systems that predate the establishment of formal tribal governments. These may include tribal councils of elders, traditional chiefs or leaders, and ceremonial or advisory bodies with roles in decision-making, conflict resolution, and preserving cultural traditions and values.
- **Other personnel:** It is likely that you will interact primarily with the emergency manager or equivalent as your primary POC, and they will engage other decision-makers.

Meet People Where They Are

- Recognize that engagement approaches may vary among tribal nations and communities based on cultural norms, communication preferences, and community dynamics. Tailor engagement strategies to fit the specific context and needs of each tribal community, taking into account factors such as language, cultural protocols, and historical sensitivities.
- This may mean allocating additional time (remember slow is fast), viewing EM in a different way, and understanding that perceived values-at-risk may differ between communities.

Slow is Fast. Fast is Slow.

- Prioritize quality, thoroughness, and strategic thinking over the desire for immediate results or shortcuts, recognizing that investing time and effort upfront can ultimately lead to faster and more successful outcomes in the end.
- You likely already use this approach for emergency response and crisis management, project management, problem-solving, and training and skill development. It's also the right approach for building relationships and capacity.

Seek and Build Upon Successful Examples

- **The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Oregon** have entered into mutual aid agreements with neighboring counties to facilitate the sharing of emergency response resources, such as personnel, equipment, and supplies, during disasters.
- **The City of Seattle and the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe in Washington** have partnered to assess the potential impacts of natural hazards, such as earthquakes and tsunamis, on their respective communities.
- **The County of Del Norte, California and four federally recognized tribes** partnered (along with other cultural and heritage stewards) to develop the Natural and Cultural Resource Protection and Preservation (NCRP3) Disaster Plan (provided as a case study).

Questions?



Feedback Survey

Please take a few minutes to complete the feedback survey. Results will not be displayed publicly, but I will use your feedback to strengthen future deliveries of this course.

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