

***Common Roots, Common Futures:
Indigenous Pathways to Self-Determination***

An International Conversation

**The University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona
February 20-22, 2012**

This event is
A HARVARD UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIAN STUDIES INITIATIVE

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The Conference Workshop

In terms of Indigenous issues, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States form a distinctive set of countries. While they are different in critical ways, they also share key commonalities. Among them are these:

- Fundamentally similar and largely English legal and political heritages
- Histories of the displacement of Indigenous populations by European invasion, with catastrophic results
- Surviving but largely impoverished Indigenous populations, including communities still located on remnant Indigenous lands
- 20th-century government policies focusing, for the most part, on social welfare, unilateral intervention, and assimilation
- Contemporary movements among Indigenous populations to regain control of their lands, communities, and affairs—that is, for real, substantive, self-determination

- In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, a growing Indigenous focus on governance and economic development.

This workshop/conversation will bring together a small group of individuals—about thirty in total, including community leaders, academics, and practitioners from each of the four countries—to discuss three topics and the relationships among them: *Indigenous self-determination, governance, and economic development*.

Our core questions are these:

- What is happening that is new, innovative, promising, or productive in these three topic areas in each country?
- How can Indigenous governance and economic development best support Indigenous self-determination?
- Can Indigenous nations and organizations in each country learn something of value from what's happening in the other countries?
- If so, how can we continue and expand a cross-country conversation that has practical value to Indigenous nations or communities?

Key Terms

There are numerous possible ways to define the central terms of this conversation. For purposes of this discussion, we define our three key terms in the following way:

Self-determination refers to Indigenous peoples' assumption of real decision-making power and responsibility for what happens on their lands, in their affairs, in their governing systems, and in their development strategies. It is not self-administration or self-management of programs or processes controlled by outsiders. As genuine decision-making power and attendant responsibility move from external authorities into the hands of Indigenous peoples, self-determination grows.

Governance refers to the principles and mechanisms by which the will of the nation, clan, or community is translated into sustained, organized action. It includes such things as law-making and enforcement, the organization of economic activity, dispute resolution, and building relationships with other governments. It is about governing: the ability of Indigenous nations to make and implement decisions about their own futures.

Economic development refers to the ability of Indigenous communities to support themselves: to sustain governmental operations and to provide their citizens with the opportunity to live productive, satisfying lives. Development can take a variety of forms, from growth in traditional subsistence activities to increased participation in market economies, from citizen entrepreneurship to joint ventures with non-Indigenous corporations. We make no assumptions that development has to take any particular form or emulate mainstream patterns.

Overview of Program

This workshop conversation will last three days. Attendees are expected to arrive in Tucson on Sunday, February 19. There will be an early evening reception.

Day One (Monday) will include an agenda-setting opening session followed by four 90-minute sessions, one for each country. These will include presentations by delegates from each country followed by open discussion, with a focus on key developments or innovations—particularly those being made by Indigenous communities themselves—that are advancing Indigenous self-determination, self-governance, and sustained development. The day will end with a dinner for all attendees.

Day Two (Tuesday) will be a day-long trip to the Tohono O’odham Nation, southwest of Tucson, to visit the nation’s capital of Sells and its cultural center in Topawa. Departure in the morning; return mid-to-late afternoon.

Day Three (Wednesday) will be a workshop and include a series of open-ended conversations focused on four questions:

(1) Do we see commonalities in Indigenous innovation and progress in maximizing self-determination, self-governance and sustained development across these four countries?

(2) Is there an action agenda emerging from this discussion having to do with supporting Indigenous communities struggling for self-determination?

(3) Is there a research agenda emerging from this discussion that could yield practical benefits and usable lessons for Indigenous communities?

(4) Is there a communications agenda emerging from this discussion—a sufficient purpose and method of continuing this four-country conversation, and if so, how might that be accomplished?