

Nation Building

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THE HARVARD PROJECT ON AMERICAN INDIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development

A revolution is underway among the Indigenous nations of the world. It is a quiet revolution, largely unnoticed in society at large. But it is profoundly important. Native peoples are reclaiming their rights to govern themselves. Challenging more than a century of colonial controls, they are creating new governance structures, building sustainable economies, developing new relationships with non-Native governments, and reinvigorating Indigenous cultures. They are shaping their futures in their own ways.



- **Sovereignty Matters.** When Native nations make their own decisions about what development approaches to take, they consistently out-perform external decision
- **Institutions Matter.** For development to take hold, assertions of sovereignty must be backed by capable institutions of governance
- **Culture Matters.** Successful nations stand on the shoulders of legitimate, culturally grounded institutions of self-government
- **Leadership Matters.** Nation building requires leaders who introduce new knowledge and experiences, challenge assumptions, and propose change



Images and Realities

- The Images
 - Mired in Poverty or Rolling in Dough?
 - Dependent Ethnic Enclaves or Little Economic Powerhouses?
 - Stressed and Vanishing Cultures or Isolated Islands of Tradition?
- The Realities



Dimensions of Intertribal Diversity

- Size – Geography and Population
- Location – Urban v. Rural
- History
- Social & Economic Conditions
 - Gaming v. Non-Gaming
 - Agriculture, Tourism, Manufacturing, Subsistence
- Culture – Historic and Contemporary
 - Language
 - Religion and Ceremony
 - Arts
 - Social Relations
- Governmental Form



The Basics of Native America Today

- 4.1 million AI/AN; 2.5 million AI/AN (single race)
- 400,000 Native Hawaiians; 120,000 Alaska Natives
- 560+ federally recognized tribes; ~300 reservations;
- 56 million acres in trust; 44 million acres held by Alaska Native corporations
- Tribes are sovereigns
- Diversity of governments, cultures & conditions



Economic Development

- Long history of policy failures
- 1970s: Self-Determination
- So...is it working?



Economic Conditions

The Bad News

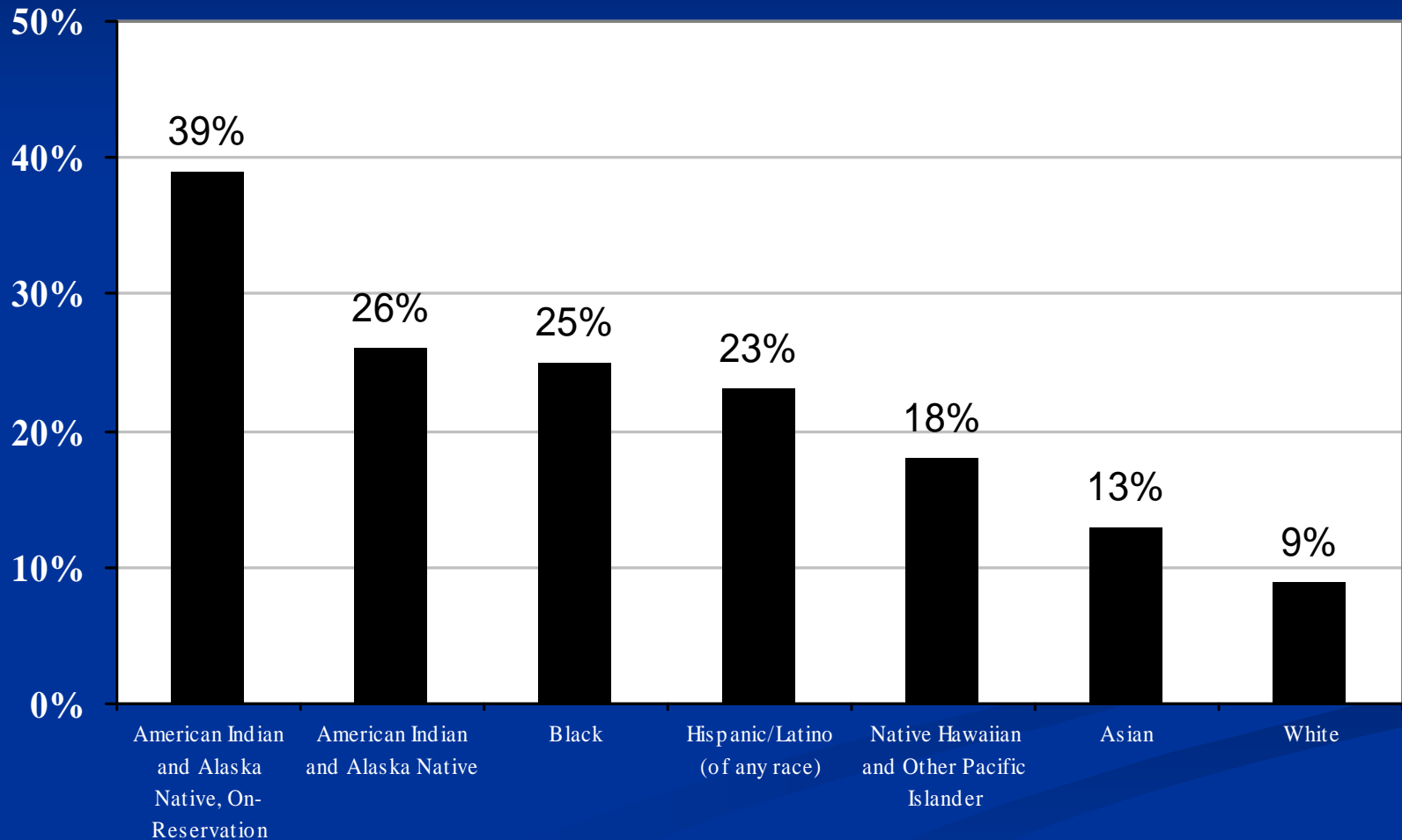
- Low starting points & high poverty rates
- Small # tribes with lucrative casinos

The Good News

- Per capita income growth
- Growth for gaming *and* non-gaming tribes

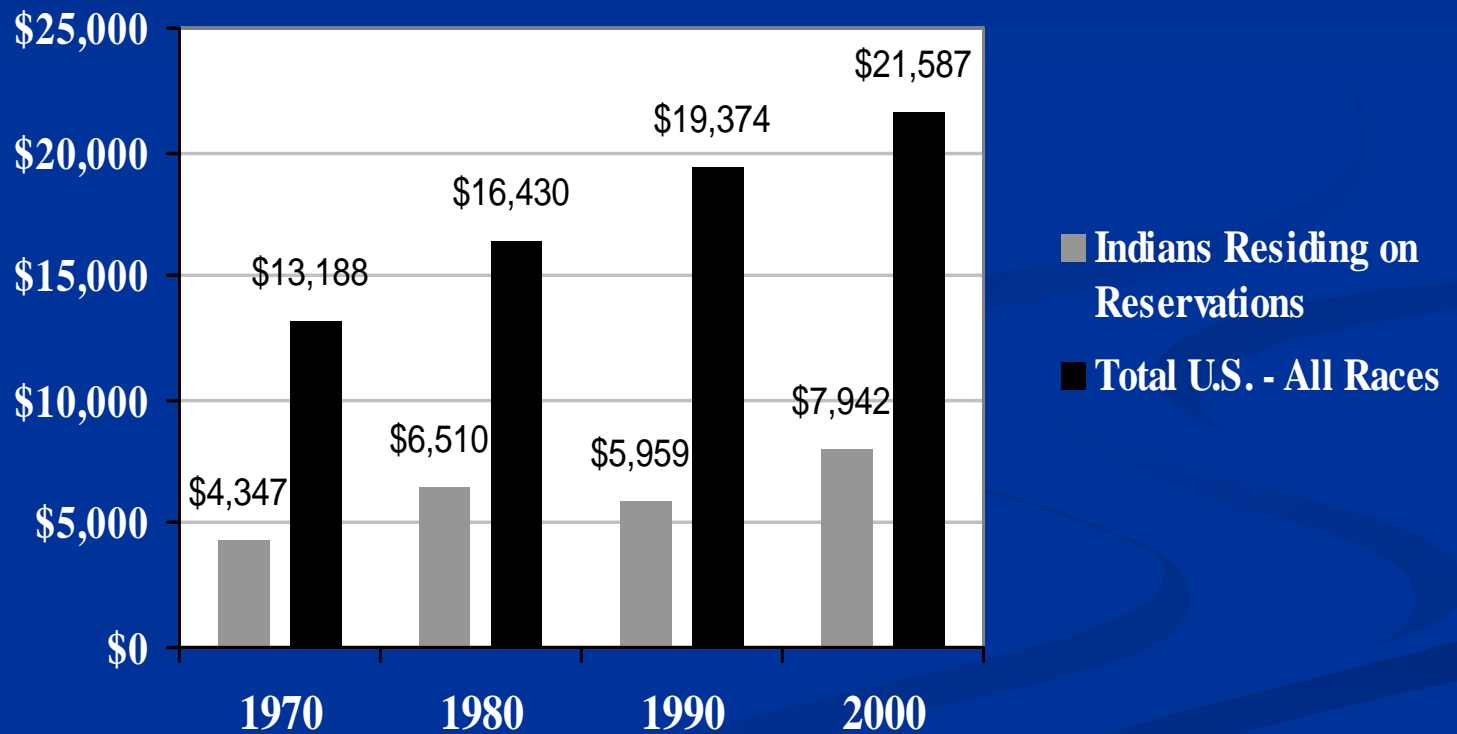


Poverty Rates by Race/Ethnicity



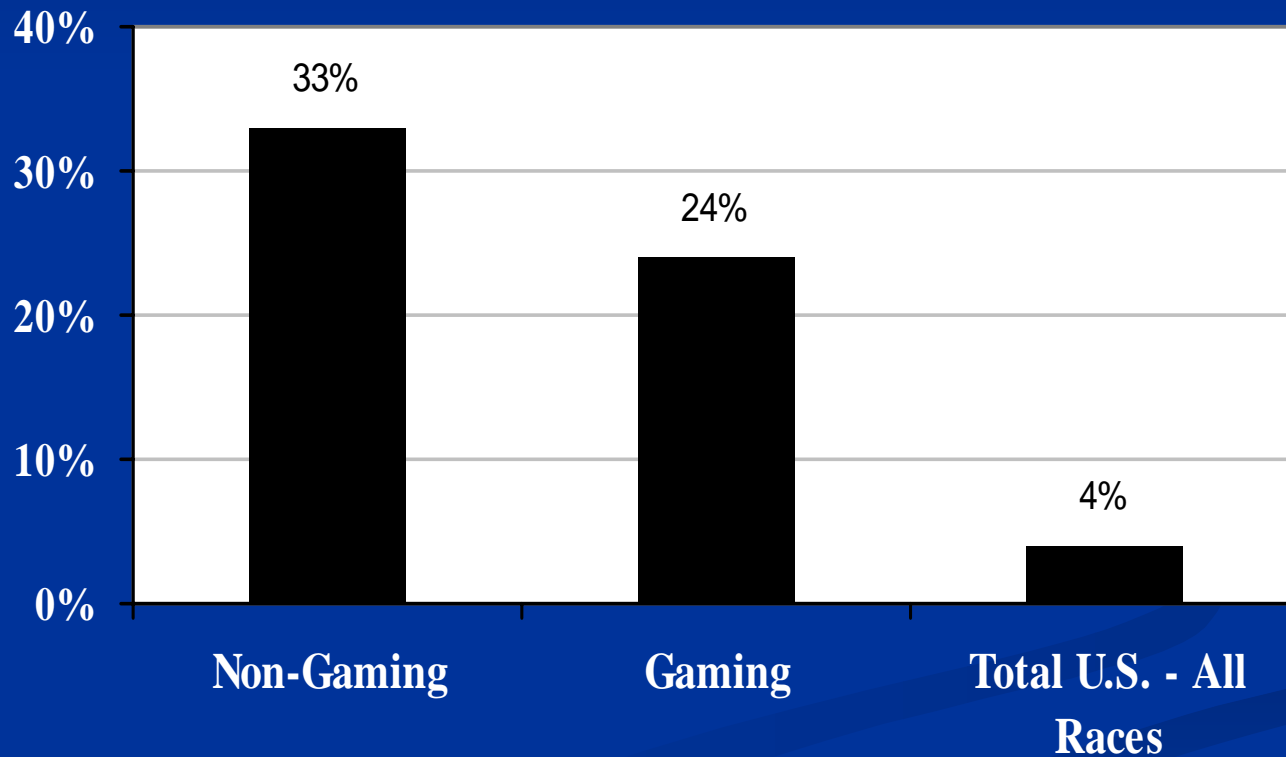
Income Change on Reservations

Real Per Capita Income: 1979-2000



Income Growth in Native America: 1990-2000

Percent Change in Real Median Household Income



Two Important Trends

- Exercises of sovereignty
- Diversification



Education

The Bad News

- Sad history
- Lasting legacy

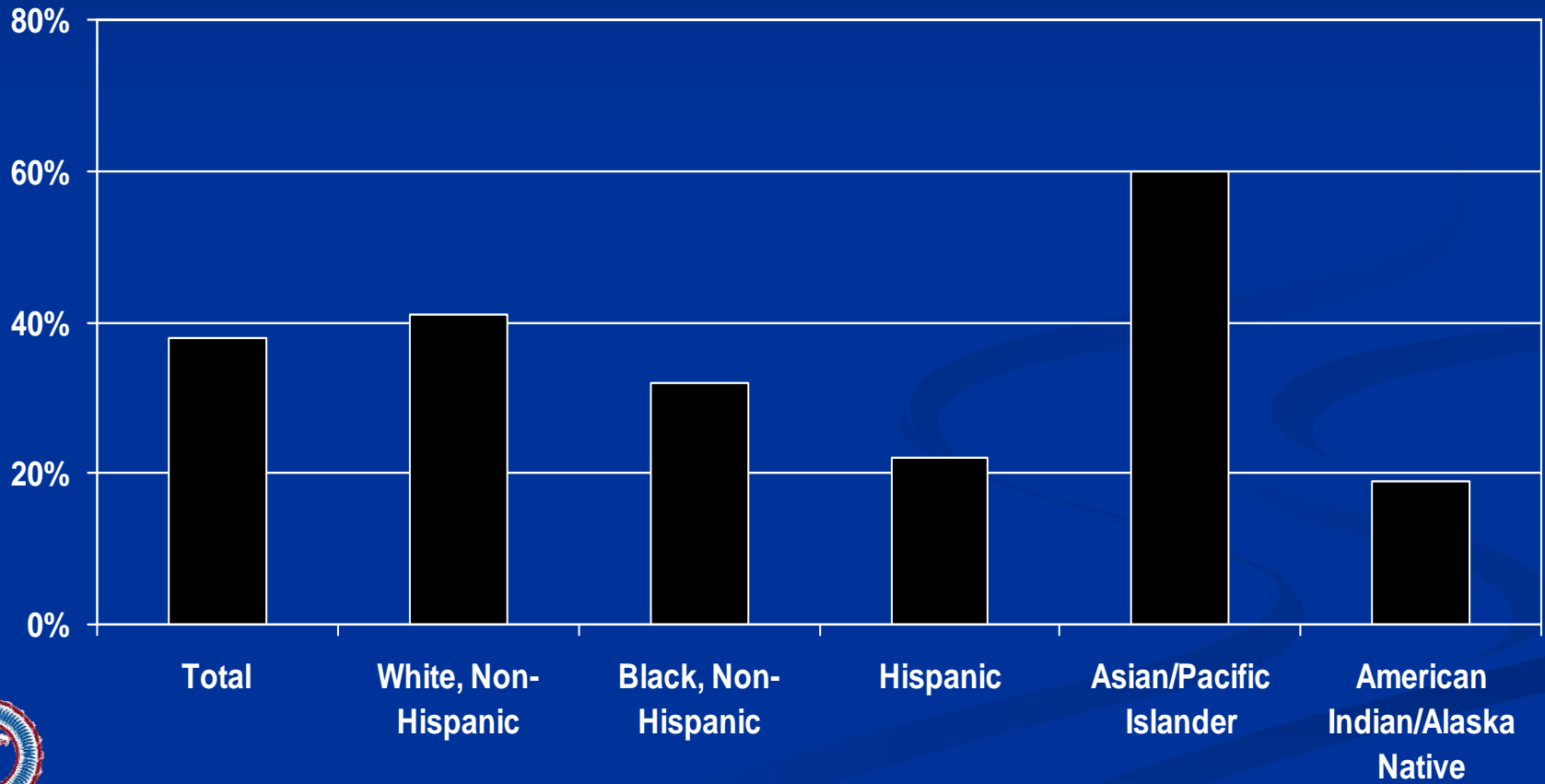
The Good News

- College enrollment
- Tribal colleges
- Tribal control



Higher Education Enrollment

Percentage of 18 to 24-year-olds



Realities of Indian Country

- An Overall Economic Boom
- The Haves and Have-Nots
- The Drive for Economic, Political, and Social Self-Determination
- The Struggle for Political Self-Rule



Common Challenges

- Political Self-Determination
 - Defending and Expanding Sovereignty
 - Exercising Powers of Self-Rule
- Social and Cultural Self-Determination
 - Continuity of Shared Identity
 - Collective Commitment to the Nation
- Economic Well-Being
 - Reversing the Centuries of Deficits
 - “A Place Where People Can and Want to Live”

The Challenge is *Nation Building*



The Two Approaches

- The Standard Approach
- The Nation Building Approach



The Standard Approach

- Short-term, non-strategic
- Economic development is an economic problem
- Looks for “home runs”
- Development agenda is driven by others
- Indigenous culture is perceived as an obstacle



Typical Standard Approach Results

- Failed enterprises
- Brain drain
- Outside perceptions of incompetence that undermine the defense of sovereignty
- Inside perceptions of incompetence
- Continuing poverty



The Nation Building Approach

- Sovereignty in Practice
- Capable Governing Institutions
- Cultural Match
- Strategic Orientation
- Leadership



Honoring Nations

Examples of Excellence in
Tribal Governance



Honoring Nations Innovations

Little River Band's Migizi Business Camp



Honoring Nations Innovations

Cherokee Language Revitalization Program



Honoring Nations Innovations

Akwesasne Freedom School



Honoring Nations Innovations

Hopi Child Care Program and Hopi Education
Endowment Fund



Thank You

For more information, please visit the
Harvard Project's website:

www.ksg.harvard.edu/hpaied

