

**What It Means to be a Land Grant Tribal College
The AIHEC Plan**

Dr. Gipp's Keynote Speech for 1994 Land Grant Meeting ~ February 6, 2002

Introduction

On April 29, 1994, at a historic meeting with the leaders of federally recognized Indian tribes at the White House, President Clinton said, "So much of who we are today comes from who you have been for a long time." President Clinton's statement applies to American Indian farmers and their beneficial effect on the European settlers in the continental United States, as well as people around the world.

As we look toward the future, it is instructive to look to the past as well, and to identify historical highlights of American Indian agriculture and the contributions that American Indian farmers have made to the United States and the world. These highlights provide an important context for our workshop here.

Indians were the first farmers in North America, and agriculture has been a mainstay of the American Indian culture and economy for thousands of years. In fact, the Indians of Central America and Mexico, or Mesoamerica, were engaged in agriculture 7,000 years before Europeans settled in the present-day United States.

Archaeological evidence indicates American Indians began farming in what later became the continental United States by 5000 B.C. utilizing indigenous agricultural practices as well as practices learned from Mexican and Central American cultures. By A.D. 1000, American Indian farmers had developed a productive and complex agricultural system based on corn, beans, and squash, which have been commonly referred to as the "three sisters." These American Indian farmers were primarily women; the men hunted and fished.

There has been variety in American Indian agriculture and economy. Before contact with the European civilization, American Indians in the northern United States cultivated the river valleys and flood plains with bone and wooden hoes and digging sticks.

American Indian women raised the traditional crops of beans, squash, and many varieties of corn—the most important crop. In the upper Great Lakes, the Ojibwa (Chippewa) and the Assiniboin sowed, harvested, dried, threshed, and stored wild rice. Some Northern tribes also tapped sugar maple trees and made sugar. Over time, American Indian farmers in the southern United States cultivated squash and bottle gourds, and then traded agricultural products in market centers. Southern farmers raised a significant amount of their own food as well as a surplus for lean times, and for trade with each other and later with the European settlers.

American Indians used highly developed agricultural methods and practices. The Southwest Indian farmers developed a new type of corn, which provided the subsistence basis for southwestern Indian civilization.

They cultivated several varieties of squash and beans; grew cotton; developed water-conservation practices; and used several methods of irrigation.

From A.D. 800 to 1400, the Hohokam Indians in the Southwest, called the "canal builders," constructed major systems of irrigation canals that were 150 miles long or more.

Although the Plains Indians relied mainly on hunting and gathering, by 1000 A.D. the Indians of the central Plains practiced well- developed agriculture with corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, and tobacco being the important crops.

R. Douglas Hurt, writing on "The Native American Experience" in American Agriculture: A Brief History wrote:

In retrospect, the history of Indian agriculture is the story of supreme achievement. Nearly three millennia before the arrival of white settlers, Native American farmers learned to cultivate plants of local and Mesoamerican origins. They discovered how to select the seeds that would yield maximum harvests in local soil and climatic conditions. By so doing, they made great strides toward farming in harmony with nature.

When Hernando DeSoto's expedition landed on the coast of Florida in 1539, his food supply was nearly depleted. American Indian agriculture was so bountiful that the Spaniards appropriated a three-month supply of corn from the fields, enabling the expedition to continue.

Later, the American Indian farmers showed European settlers which plants to cultivate, particularly corn, beans, pumpkins, and tobacco, and how to make maple sugar and prepare hominy.

American Indian agriculture has had a significant effect on worldwide agriculture and economy. Jack Weatherford, in his book Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World, pointed out that Indians cultivated over 300 food crops, and contributed to the world three- fifths of the crops now in cultivation.

The Indian farmers of North and South America gave the world:

**Corn
Potatoes,
Sweet potatoes
Tomatoes
Beans
Pumpkins
Squash**

**Chocolate
Pecans
Chilies
Hickory nuts
Peanuts
Sunflower seeds
Maple syrup**

American Indian agricultural crops have spread from American farmers to farmers in other parts of the world. Today farmers grow corn over a larger area of the world than any other cultivated food. The white potato spread from Bolivia and Peru to Ireland across Europe to Russia, and provided more calories and nutrition per acre than any grain.

Clearly, American Indians' historic agricultural achievements made important contributions to the United States and the world. These accomplishments provide an instructive perspective as we begin to articulate our Land-Grant strategies.

As we move into the early years of the United States, Thomas Jefferson became one of the most influential figures in articulating the political ideas embodied in the Bill of Rights. Jefferson envisioned the United States as a nation of small farmer-landowners, each economically and politically independent, and he believed that agriculture would be the heart and soul of American democracy.

On July 2, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed into law what is generally referred to as the Land Grant Act. The new piece of legislation introduced by U.S. Representative Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont granted to each state 30,000 acres of public land for each Senator and Representative under apportionment based on the 1860 census.

Proceeds from the sale of these lands were to be invested in a perpetual endowment fund that would provide support for colleges of agriculture and mechanical arts in each of the states.

Speculators bought much of the land and the large supply meant that most states received very little for their land. Kentucky received only fifty cents per acre. For example, in 1863, the Pennsylvania legislature designated Penn State the Commonwealth's sole land-grant institution. Pennsylvania received 780,000 acres of land, which were sold for a total of \$439,000, about 56 cents per acre. Some states were able to hold their allotment for several years and sell at a much higher price (the land allotted to Cornell University was eventually sold for over \$5.50 per acre).

Over the years, additional funds became available to these original Land-Grant institutions, commonly known as the "1862 Land-Grant Institutions." In 1890, the Second Morrill Act authorized 17 additional Land-Grant institutions that served predominately African-American communities. These are known as the "1890 Land-Grant Institutions."

The 1994 Land-Grant Act authorized the 30 tribal colleges and universities in existence at that time to received support in the agricultural and mechanical sciences. In lieu of a land endowment, an endowment fund was established by the US Treasury, whereby the interest would be distributed to the 1994 Land-Grant Institutions.

Since 1994, additional funds have become available for education, through the Equity grant; for extension, through the Tribal College Extension grant; and most recently for research, through a Tribal College Research grant.

In October of 1996, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13021, mandating that all Federal agencies recognize Tribal Colleges and Universities and, whenever possible, promote their access to existing agency programs and implement new programs to build their capacity and to promote quality education.

In 1997, USDA published a report entitled, "Civil Rights at the Department of Agriculture." This report recommended that the Department of Agriculture "thoroughly examine funding for the 1994 Institutions, adjust its budget recommendations, and consider other statutory or regulatory changes required to eliminate any disparate funding of land-grant institutions."

In February 1998, then Secretary of Agriculture, Dan Glickman, signed a Memorandum of Agreement with AIHEC. The focus of the MOA is to integrate the 1994 Land-Grant Institutions into the land-grant system, to build the capacity and technical expertise of the tribal colleges in land-grant programs, and to promote greater access to USDA's programs and services.

The MOA further established a USDA/AIHEC Leadership Group to serve as an advisory body for all partnership initiatives. This Leadership Group would consist of an equal number of members from USDA and from AIHEC member institutions. The USDA/AIHEC Leadership Group first met in Santa Fe, NM on October 7, 1999. Since then, the group has conducted two additional meetings and several conference calls.

The USDA/AIHEC Leadership Group has created a 30-point action list called the Action Agenda. This document serves as a road map in our partnership. In a moment, I will overview that Action Agenda for you. But first, I want to regress a little and talk about the governance structure of AIHEC, and its advisory bodies. This will set the context for a discussion of the USDA/AIHEC Action Agenda.

As many of you are aware, many traditional tribal governance structures recognized the people as the leaders. Chiefs or councils represented the people only as long as the people felt that they were doing a good job representing their interests.

If you think of an upside-down triangle, you would see the people at the top, and the leaders at the bottom. This was true democracy. And this is quite different from today's modern top-down corporate structure.

AIHEC, likewise, is a member (or people) driven organization. As a member-driven institution, the individual tribal colleges dictate AIHEC's operation. AIHEC's

Board of Directors is made up of each of the college's Presidents. Today, we have 33 Board Members who represent the cultural and ecological diversity of their individual tribes. So then, developing any single, comprehensive strategic plan will require lengthy deliberation and consensus-building so that all the tribal colleges needs are addressed.

As an advisory body on AIHEC Land-Grant matters, the USDA/AIHEC Leadership Group faces a similar challenge.

- ❖ **How do they fairly represent the diverse interests, strengths, and needs of all the 30 1994 Land-Grant Institutions?**
- ❖ **Is there one comprehensive Land-Grant strategy that fits all of the tribal colleges?**
- ❖ **These are tough questions that each of use should be thinking about as we proceed throughout the next 2 days.**

The USDA/AIHEC Leadership Group has decided to pursue a needs-based approach. In other words, we may not have a single, overarching Land-Grant vision yet, but we know what our needs are. So right now, let's identify our needs and look for ways to address them. And that's what the Action Agenda is all about.

The USDA/AIHEC Leadership Group has identified six Challenge Areas. These areas are: Administrative Practices, Faculty & Curriculum Development, Student Programs, Facilities & Equipment, Community Sustainability, and Image Enhancement.

As I summarize these action items, you will notice that some items are being currently addressed and others have yet to be. Remember, this is a working document—items can be added or modified or deleted, as needed. *It does not represent a destination, but a journey.*

Challenge 1: Administrative Practices

- **Conduct workshops to help TCUs undertake strategic planning.**
- **Hire permanent USDA liaison and aggressively work to expand and create a team of USDA-1994 liaisons each year over the next five years.**
- **TCUs will be a part of all the funding missions of USDA, i.e. Rural Development, Farm Services Agency & Natural Resource Conservation Services.**
- **Launch projects and site visits to enhance TCU's financial and business systems.**
- **Secure feedback from TCUs on effectiveness of partnering with other institutions and use results to strengthen future initiatives.**
- **Provide resources to strengthen faculty project management competencies.**

Challenge 2: Faculty & Curriculum Development

- **Develop courses and degree programs in agriculture, forestry and natural resources, veterinary science, and family and consumer science.**
- **Help students develop entrepreneurial skills.**
- **Provide leadership development experiences for faculty and students.**
- **Assist faculty and tribal community members in increasing their memberships, committee appointments and officer roles in key professional associations.**
- **Provide training to help faculty understand and develop essential skills and national priorities for succeeding in extension outreach and technology transfer roles.**
- **Annually provide a forum for an exchange of ideas and resources among all land-grant institutions to advance the development of culturally relevant extension and education curricula.**
- **Encourage and sponsor faculty exchanges with 1862 and 1890 institutions as well as with USDA agencies.**
- **Develop a new format for extension to include five-year grants.**
- **Assist TCUs to develop linkages with private industry.**

Challenge 3: Student Programs

- **Develop pre-collegiate programming for Indian communities that include parents and elders.**
- **Encourage young people to enroll in TCUs and to prepare for professional careers that support the nation's food, agricultural, and natural resource systems.**
- **Recruit and hire graduates for USDA scientific and professional positions in tribal and adjacent communities.**
- **Provide experiential learning opportunities, internships, practicums, mentoring, etc.**

Challenge 4: Facilities and Equipment

- **Provide equity and land-grant funding for renovation and construction of facilities for teaching, research, and extension, particularly via increasing the endowment fund and direct appropriations.**
- **Create a clearinghouse and provide training and assistance in obtaining government surplus property.**
- **Help the TCUs achieve state of the art advanced technological capacity, beginning with widespread access to the Internet, distance education, and telemedicine.**

Challenge 5: Community Sustainability

- **Support TCU's research on priority community issues, environmental issues, including diet and health, substance abuse, farm and ranch management, enhancing economic opportunities.**
- **Target extension programs to meet high priority needs of Native American communities, particularly enhancement of entrepreneurial skills, family and youth development, community development and sustainability, nutrition, and health.**
- **Support TCUs in their efforts to expand their effectiveness as engaged institutions serving not only their own tribal communities, but other tribal communities.**

Challenge 6: Image Enhancement

- **Discuss, advocate and recommend TCU capabilities and needs with the USDA Research, Education, and Economics Advisory Board.**
- **Capitalize on TCUs strong community linkages that can enable them to assume the major leadership role in partnering with other universities on teaching, research, and extension initiatives.**
- **Promote awareness of TCUs' expertise in working with indigenous populations to heighten demand for their involvement in international agricultural and natural resource projects.**
- **Provide input on TCU priorities to the executive branch (particularly OMB & OSTP) and to the Congress.**
- **Highlight tribal college programs' outcomes and accomplishments in agency reports and communications (subject to review with input from AIHEC central office).**

Conclusion:

Just as our ancestors, Thomas Jefferson could not have visualized the present-day realities of America's single-crop; government subsidized, and heavily regulated agricultural system. Today, the 1994 Land-Grant Institutions are in a unique position to re-focus the Land-Grant system toward the ideals of our forefathers.

During the next two days, you will continue to discuss the Land-Grant vision and who are the partners that can help you reach that vision.

You should be asking yourself, What does it mean for your college, for your people, to be a Land-Grant institution?