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Contact: Doug Gavel (617) 495-1115  
Kennedy School Communications

## ***The State of the Native Nations Chronicles Native American Resurgence*** ***New book from Harvard University scholars examines progress, challenges***

**Cambridge, MA** – After decades of grinding poverty and social distress, the 500+ federally-recognized American Indian tribes in the U.S. are in the midst of a remarkable resurgence. This unprecedented movement is chronicled in a new book by the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, *The State of the Native Nations: Conditions under U.S. Policies of Self-Determination*.

Borne out of substantial success in asserting rights of local self-governance and three decades of federal policies of self-determination, the revitalization of Indian Country is being directed by Native peoples, themselves. They are rebuilding their governments, their economies, and their communities. “The tribes had to start this process from positions of shocking poverty, denials of their rights, and social stress. We’re finding that, while the proverbial glass is still only half full, at last, it is filling,” says Joseph P. Kalt, professor of international political economy at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government and the study’s principal investigator.

Kalt points to some of the key findings of *The State of the Native Nations*:

- While Indian citizens on reservations are still four times more likely to live in poverty than the average American, both those tribes whose governments have undertaken gaming operations since the late 1980s *and* those that have eschewed gaming have been growing economically at about three times the rate of the U.S. economy as a whole.
- Despite rates of college enrollment that are only half that of the general U.S. population, the number of Native students enrolled in degree-granting institutions of higher learning has more than doubled in the last twenty years.
- Although indicators of poor health and health care such as rates of infant mortality, tuberculosis, and maternal mortality remain much higher than U.S. averages, they have been coming down steadily in the Self-Determination Era.
- Like indigenous languages the world over, American Indian languages struggle to survive; but on many reservations, Native language use remains at over 50%, and some tribes with the economic wherewithal to invest in cultural strengthening show signs of increasing Native language fluency among their children.

“What the statistics don’t show,” comments Andrew Lee, one of the study’s principal co-authors, “is the strengthening of Native identities and bonds of community. We’re breaking cycles of dependence; taking control; and setting new standards of performance, accountability, and conceptions of what’s possible.” Indeed, the story of Indian Country today is one of taking the reins. American Indian tribes are rewriting their constitutions and building their own judicial systems, passing their own environmental codes and running their own businesses, and taking over federal schools and pursuing their own arts and science curriculums.

*The State of the Native Nations* uniquely combines in-depth research and extensive data with real-life case studies and the distinctive voices of Native leaders. First-person essays by fourteen Native leaders cover topics ranging from the endeavors of Indian artists to the importance of healthy intergovernmental relations with non-Indian counterparts. More information on *The State of the Native Nations* can be found at [http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/virtualbooktour/kalt\\_spring\\_07.htm](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/virtualbooktour/kalt_spring_07.htm). It is published by Oxford University Press, <http://www.oup.com/us/he>.

For twenty years, the **Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development** has been engaged in cooperative relationships with Native communities, seeking to discover, document, and disseminate research and curriculum on the conditions under which social, cultural, economic, and political health can be achieved and sustained by self-governing nations. For more information, visit <http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/hpaied>.

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