All Washingtonians aspire to the same basic things: safe communities, excellent schools, decent jobs, clean air and water, good health and roads and transit that make travel easy. We want our kids to have more opportunities than were given to us. And we value a culture where neighbors help neighbors.

Washington’s tribal government leaders are making investments to help their tribal citizens realize their aspirations and to benefit their broader communities.

There are 29 federally-recognized Native American tribes in Washington state. Each tribe has an elected body that oversees its governmental programs. Most tribal governments offer services including health care, education, housing, public safety, courts, transportation, natural resources, environment, culture and economic development.

Gaming revenue is a major source of funding to help pay for the services provided by tribal governments, especially as federal and state support for tribes—and local governments—continues to decline.

Tribal government enterprises employ more than 30,000 people statewide and pay more than $1.5 billion annually in wages and benefits. Capital spending, and the purchase of goods and services from private companies, adds billions more dollars to the state’s economy each year. Tribal economic activities also generate millions of dollars in federal, state and local taxes.
Tribes In Washington

Create Jobs – They directly employ at least 30,715 Washingtonians, making tribes the 8th largest employer in the state. At least 55,662 jobs in Washington are traceable to the economic activity of tribal governments.

Stimulate the Economy – Tribes purchased more than $3 billion in goods and services and spent $1.5 billion in employee compensation in 2017.

Create Benefits for All – Tribal economic activity yields more than $5.3 billion in gross state product which produces $722 million in state and local government revenue.
Thriving tribal communities, arts and culture are critically important to Washington tribes. Native American culture has flourished in our region for thousands of years. By investing in tribal community-building organizations, museums, art and cultural centers, school programs, song and dance, language, carving and the annual Canoe Journey; Washington tribes are working to ensure native culture continues to be an integral part of our regional identity, for Indians and non-Indians alike.

“Language is like water for their roots.”

- Ted Moomaw, Colville Tribe, Waterfalls Immersion School
Health and Wellness

Caring for all members of the community, young and old, sick and well, is a high priority for Washington tribes. Tribes are building health clinics and supporting wellness activities.

Education

Tribes place the highest priority on education. Tribal governments are building and operating early learning centers, schools, libraries and youth activity facilities throughout Washington. Most tribes provide substantial financial support to college students. The investment is paying off: high school graduation rates are climbing and the number of tribal members attending college is increasing.

Charitable Giving

Under an agreement with the State of Washington, tribal governments that operate Class III gaming facilities make contributions to support charitable organizations, local governments, smoking cessation and problem gambling programs.

In 2015, according to the latest report from the state Gambling Commission which verifies the data, the amount given to charitable organizations in Washington State totaled $9.9 million. Thousands of organizations throughout the state—from school districts to food banks to youth groups to religious organizations to performing arts—receive financial aid from the tribes. Local governments received $4.2 million in 2015 to offset the impacts of tribal gaming facilities. Most of the money goes to first responder agencies including police, fire and emergency medical aid agencies. Another $2.29 million was given to smoking cessation programs and $2.58 million to problem gambling programs.
Tribal environmental planning and natural resource programs play a critical role in efforts to restore and protect important cultural and natural resources. Tribes conduct activities across Washington’s watersheds and strive to solve problems at the ecosystem level. Their work includes watershed planning, water quality programs, environmental education, environmental assessments, salmon recovery programs and more.

Tribal natural resource programs play an important role in balancing the sustainable harvest of salmon, game, timber and other resources with environmental restoration and the protection of sensitive species and habitats.

Washington’s rich natural resources provide thousands of jobs for tribal members and non-tribal members alike. Our state’s Native American tribes are committed to making investments in smart natural resource management practices so that our resources can be productive for many generations to come.
Economic Development

Tribal governments across Washington are investing in new non-gaming enterprises to sustain economies for the future. Hundreds of millions of dollars from tribal gaming are being invested in hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues, tourist attractions, retail, forest products, fisheries, agriculture, ranching, real estate development, manufacturing, aquaculture and more.

Public Safety

Washington tribes invest in public safety and emergency services to protect all citizens, property and natural resources. Tribal governments pay for critical services like police, courts, emergency medical response and fire departments. Some tribes provide direct services, others provide financial support to neighboring jurisdictions.

Transportation/Utilities

Washington tribes, especially those located in rural areas, are investing in road projects to make travel safer. They often collaborate with local governments to jointly finance improvements that are mutually beneficial. Tribes also provide direct transit services and contract with local transit agencies to provide additional service to their communities. Tribes are investing in wastewater treatment facilities to allow for new housing projects and to protect groundwater, nearby rivers and Puget Sound.

Housing

Providing adequate housing, especially for low-income families and the elderly, is a priority for Washington tribes. Throughout Washington state, tribes are constructing new homes and apartments—but the need remains very high.
All Tribes Benefit

Under an agreement with the state, each tribe is allocated the same number of gaming machines—currently 1,075. That means even the smallest tribes in the most isolated areas of the state benefit from gaming.

The tribes can deploy the machines in their own gaming facilities, or lease the machines to other tribes.

Responsible Gambling

Tribes provide support services that encourage healthy lifestyles and address problem gambling. Since 2008, tribes have contributed more than $19 million to support a wide range of solutions such as education, prevention, treatment and wellness programs.

Regulation Ensures Fair Play

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act established a statutory framework for regulation.

The National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) is the federal agency responsible for regulation of gaming on Indian lands.


Each tribe has a tribal gaming commission/agency to regulate its gaming operations. Tribal gaming agencies are responsible for enforcement of NIGC’s rules, Tribal-State Compact provisions and all tribal ordinances and regulations.

Learn more about the Washington Tribes by visiting us on Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube.

info@washingtontribes.org
There are 29 federally recognized Native American tribes located on reservations throughout Washington state. Each tribe has a body of elected officials that oversee its governmental programs. They provide services including health care, education, housing, public safety, counter-terrorism, natural resources, environment, culture, and economic development.

Gaming revenue is a major source of funding for tribal government services. Tribes are innovating in new initiatives to diversify their economic base. Enterprises range from hotels to golf courses to shopping centers.

Tribes employ more than 30,000 people statewide and pay more than $1.5 billion annually in wages and benefits. Capital spending, and the purchase of goods and services from private companies, adds billions more dollars to the state’s economy each year. Tribal economic activities also generate millions of dollars in federal, state, and local taxes.