



The Economic & Community Impact of Tribes in Washington





Tribal Investments, Statewide Benefits

Tribal governments in Washington generate \$7.4 billion in economic activity, create tens of thousands of jobs and reinvest every dollar back into the community.

From funding schools and healthcare clinics to supporting public safety and environmental initiatives, tribal investments improve the lives of all Washingtonians, Indian and non-Indian alike.





Improving Lives

Washington state is home to 29 federally recognized Indian tribes that are making significant investments in the state's quality of life. They are large employers, fiscally independent governments and contributors to the public good.

Growing tribal economies fund schools, housing programs, health clinics, environmental rehabilitation, infrastructure development, law enforcement, firefighting and other public services for all Washingtonians.



"Washington has substantially benefited from the economic resurgence in Indian Country. Tribal enterprises enable us to invest in schools, healthcare, and public services that benefit all of Washington."

*– W. Ron Allen
Chairman, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe*



**\$1 OUT OF EVERY
\$100**

*in Washington's
economy is from
tribal activity.*



Strong Tribal Economies Benefit All Washingtonians

In contrast to the first half of the 20th century, when Indian tribes were often an economic afterthought, today Indian tribes rank among the Washington economy's biggest influences. Tribes employ tens of thousands of Washingtonians and generate billions in revenue every year.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY*

\$7.4 billion gross state product

\$3.9 billion wages and benefits

\$1.5 billion annual state and local taxes

* The economic and jobs numbers in this report are conservative estimates. Actual numbers likely exceed what is reported here.

JOBS

29,421 employees (61% non-Indian)

52,333 jobs in Washington

\$1.9 billion in annual
employee compensation

TRIBES ARE TOP WASHINGTON EMPLOYERS

Together, Washington tribes rank eighth in the state for number of employees, according to the Puget Sound Business Journal's ranking of employers.



Tribal Government Revenue: Invested in Washington, Rooted in Community

Tribes are sovereign governments. Like other governments, they make and enforce their own laws, have elected officials, and run departments that offer critical services.

Many tribal governments in Washington operate business enterprises that generate revenue to support essential public services and strengthen communities, Indian and non-Indian alike.

Unlike corporations that may relocate or shift operations, tribes and tribal enterprises are firmly rooted in the lands and waters of Washington. They will never threaten to take operations or profits out of the state.

Tribes Are Supporting Communities

Not only are Washington tribes economic drivers, they're valued community partners. As part of their gaming compacts with the state, tribes contribute to local fire, police, and other government bureaus that may bear the impact costs of casinos. Tribes also make significant contributions to nonprofit and charitable organizations, and coordinate with state and local governments to tackle problems and help those who need it.



TRIBAL PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation provides increasingly critical wildfire management services on and surrounding the Colville Reservation in Omak. Approximately 60 seasonal and non-seasonal employees protect communities in the region. The tribes coordinate fire suppression with state and federal agencies such that most fires are suppressed within the first 24 hours. In addition, Colville Fire Management employs proactive measures like prescribed burns.



TRIBAL CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES

In 2023, the Cowlitz Indian Tribe donated \$6.6 million to charitable organizations. Recipients included the Council for Homelessness, a long-standing nonprofit working to prevent and end homelessness in Clark County, and GoodRoots Northwest's Fresh Lockers, an innovative approach to addressing food insecurity in rural and underserved areas. Since 2016, the tribe has awarded \$28 million to nonprofits across the state.



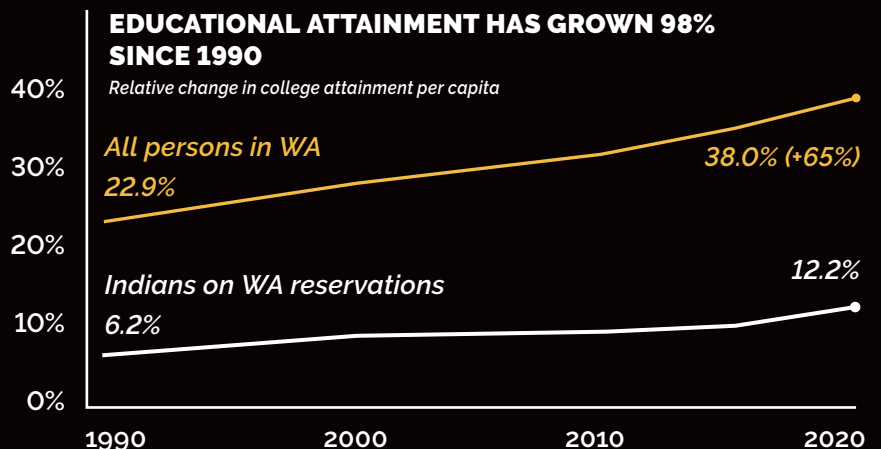
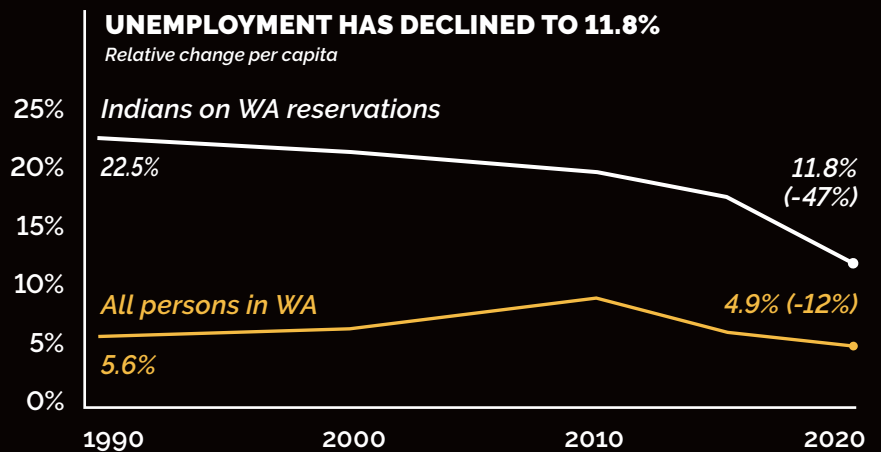


Indian Needs Remain Acute

Over the last 30 years, economic and social outcomes for Indians on reservations in Washington have improved significantly. Income and educational attainment have risen and unemployment is down.

Yet, despite these gains, challenges remain. High unemployment, inadequate housing and educational disparities continue to impact Native communities.

Most critically, the federal government has not fully honored its treaty obligations, leaving essential programs and services chronically underfunded.



Tribes Are Stepping Into the Breach

With federal program funding commitments remaining unfulfilled, tribal governments are stepping in to improve reservation economies, schools, environments, clinics, housing and infrastructure. Tribal programs benefit non-Native communities as well. For example, many tribes provide healthcare services to both Native and non-Native Washingtonians.



Providing Critical Community Services

Multiple deaths in the Skagit County region and the ongoing opioid epidemic motivated the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community to open its Didgwálic Wellness Center in 2017. Since then, the Center has become a national model for opioid addiction treatment and support.

Didgwálic is open to all community members—Native and non-native alike. It provides around 500 clients with services ranging from mental health counseling to medication management. The Center strives to eliminate as many barriers as possible to accessing services, including offering childcare and transportation, and covering the cost of treatment for those who can't afford it.

Tribes in Washington are proving that self-governance and economic self-sufficiency benefit everyone. Their investments in jobs, healthcare, education and public services are making a meaningful difference in people's lives. As tribes continue to drive economic growth and social progress, Washington stands to benefit for generations to come.

Learn more about tribes in Washington at
WashingtonTribes.org

This piece is based on an economic study funded by the Washington Indian Gaming Association and conducted by Jonathan Taylor, President of the Taylor Policy Group. Read the full report at washingtontribes.org/resources.



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