

## **HERS Mission statement**

The HERS Center is dedicated to the development and application of technologies grounded on the holistic and healing foundation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, an approach which provides the philosophical basis for center efforts in environmental education, technology transfer, research, and community service. HERS promotes activities that reduce negative environmental impacts of economic development in Native communities, provide for environmental restoration, and promote environmental health, for the advancement of tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

## **HERS PROGRAMS**

### **Technical Outreach Services for Native American Communities (TOSNAC)**

National Outreach to Tribes dealing with hazardous substance issues, with focus on tribal cultural risk assessment and management, Environmental Justice Issues. See <http://www.tosnac.org>.

### **Great Basin Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit**

Coordination with Nevada Tribes that are Cooperators in the Program, with focus on sustainability and mine waste concerns. See <http://www.gbcesu.usu.edu/gbcesu/> to learn about mission and projects related to Haskell Indian Nations University partnership with Host, University of Nevada, Reno.

### **National Science Foundation Planning Grant**

Building Evaluation Capacity Among Native American Indians Influence by Design: Culture-Based ABC's of Evaluation to Impact Public Policy

Traditionally Native Americans have been categorized and defined under Western standards that do not account for differences in cultural ethics, practices, and beliefs. As a result, Native Americans are often disadvantaged in schools and in public policy arenas. The purpose of this planning grant is to provide support for Kansas State University (KSU) and Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU) to build evaluation capacity in the Native American culture.

### **Altai Project**

In 1999, Gorno-Altai State University (GASU), Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU), Kansas State University (KSU), and the University of Kansas (KU) joined together to create a partnership to address water quality issues common to both the Russian Federation and the U.S.

See <http://www.engg.ksu.edu/HSRC/international/>.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Scientific Cooperative Exchange Program. Assessing the impact of traditional grazing techniques on drinking water quality: A cooperative program between Haskell Indian Nations University and Gorno-Altai State University, Russia.

Extends the existing cooperative project focused on drinking water quality to include a survey documenting the re-emergence of traditional practices of herd management among indigenous Altaians since the collapse of the Soviet government. These materials will form the basis for a comparative program between indigenous Altaian (Siberian) practices and traditional practices used on selected tribal lands in the U.S.



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## **What is TOSNAC?**

The Technical Outreach Services for Native American Communities (TOSNAC) program provides technical assistance to Native Americans dealing with hazardous substance issues. This program is national in scope and coordinated through the Haskell Environmental Research Studies Center at Haskell Indian Nations University. It provides first contact, needs assessment, initial support, and long-term technical support arrangements by regional TOSC programs and other resources, as necessary.

## **How does TOSNAC work with Tribes and other stakeholders?**

Brenda Brandon, TOSNAC Program Coordinator, and student assistants receive requests for technical support from tribal groups or from referrals from EPA and other officials. Brenda determines if TOSNAC and TOSC can help, and then:

*Provides relatively quick support using TOSNAC staff, performs assessment work that may lead to long-term support by regional TOSC programs and/or TOSNAC, or refers them to other resources that can help.*

## **Why is it needed?**

In any community involvement situation, the diverse backgrounds and interests of stakeholders may complicate public participation in the environmental decision-making process. This is also true when Native American communities are involved, where added levels of cultural, social, and historical differences exist.

In addition, tribal communities consider a much broader range of environmental effects and risks when dealing with environmental concerns. While human health is one factor, certain other living and physical resources in the surrounding environment are also critically important. An evolving process that considers this broader range of factors is called "Cultural Risk Assessment."

## **Technical Outreach Services for Native American Communities**

A major part of the TOSNAC effort involves assisting tribes to develop Cultural Risk Assessment processes meeting specific cultural values/beliefs, in terms that both tribes and other stakeholders (such as EPA, DoD, and states) can understand. This requires co-learning among the tribal, TOSNAC, and other stakeholders. The end result, if successful, is a consensus approach to detecting, assessing, and addressing impacts to important tribal cultural resources.



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