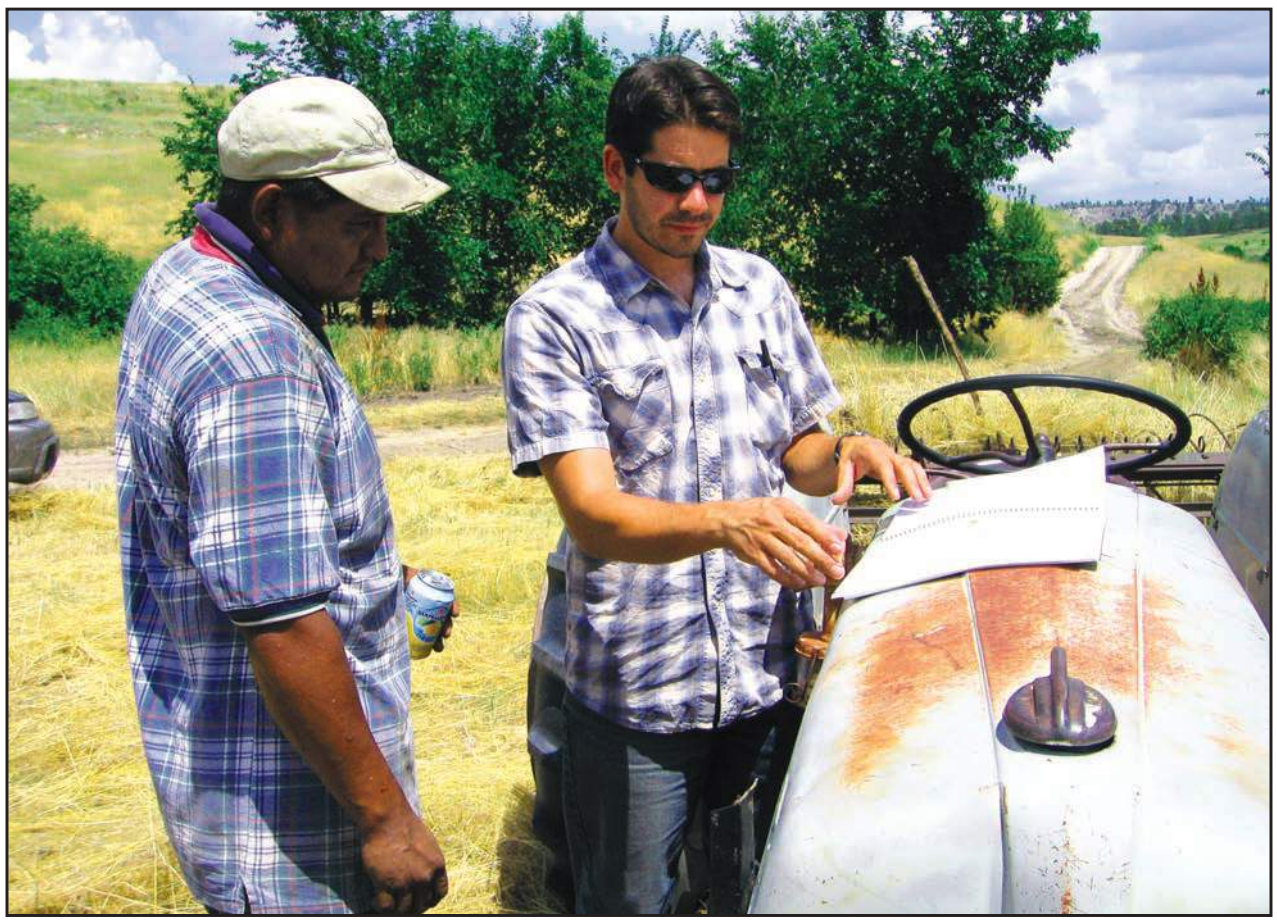
Indian Land Tenure FOUNDATION

THE Message Runner

Volume 7

Now hiring! Exploring career opportunities in tribal land

Land is a fundamental component of American Indian culture, and the Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF) exists to help Native Nations and their citizens regain ownership and control of their traditional homelands. Today, tribal members and their governments are taking proactive steps to reacquire their land, but it's a slow process that requires the knowledge and efforts of countless individuals. The need for talented people to work in land-related careers in Indian Country is growing quickly and there are not enough qualified people to meet the demand. In this issue of the *Message Runner*, ILTF explores career opportunities in Indian land.



Natives are returning home to work for their tribes in large numbers, and there are excellent land-related career opportunities available for surveyors, GIS technicians, realty managers and more.

Motivated young professionals

For a very long time, non-Indian people have carried out most of the day-to-day management activities on Indian land. That trend has begun to shift in recent years, and Indian people are now managing land, natural resources, cultural preservation, economic development and other land-related activities. However, many of today's leaders in tribal land professions are in the home stretch of their careers and will eventually retire. Who will take their place?

Currently, there is a desperate shortage of land appraisers. There are opportunities for GIS technicians and surveyors as well as openings in tribal realty, housing, agriculture professions and more. This issue of the *Message Runner* offers an overview of these career paths — not just the nuts and bolts of education, training and qualifications but also the stories of real people doing real work.

You will read about Chiarpah Matheson (Coeur d'Alene), Nathan Piengkham (Kalispel), and Andrew Orosco, Jr. (San Pasqual descendant), three motivated young professionals with diverse backgrounds who are making their mark in tribal land professions. You'll meet an evangelist for Indian agriculture, a leader in tribal economic development, and a pair of veteran appraisers — Jerry Hulm (Cheyenne River Sioux) and Dave Baker — who worry about the future of their profession.

Mid-career opportunities

There are 562 federally recognized tribes and thousands of tribal employees. Natives are returning home to work for their tribes in large numbers and there are excellent land-related career opportunities available. The key to entering these professions is education, which can mean many different things.

Education can be schooling that is specific to one profession — the soil sciences or wildlife biology, for example — or more general studies in business or finance that can lead to careers in planning, realty or economic development. It is important to note that these opportunities are not only available to young people. Men and women of all ages are leveraging their work experience to move into tribal land careers, either through on-the-job training or additional education. The individuals profiled here have worked in law enforcement, social work, financial services and more.

Although careers in tribal land are open to non-Indians, there are many benefits when key positions are held by Native people. Natives are more likely to understand the culture, look out for the best interests of their own people and grasp the importance of Indian land. Even the economy of Indian Country benefits because Native professionals are likely to live on or near the reservation and spend their money where they live. Having more Native professionals in the community can create a positive impact in other ways, too. They get involved in community affairs and youth activities, for example, and often bring their knowledge and experience to elected positions on tribal council or other positions of influence.

Much work to be done

The return of Indian lands to Indian hands is a long process. Generations of American Indians have witnessed the loss of their homelands, and generations will be involved in their recovery. There is much work to be done and many opportunities for those who want to do it. We hope this edition of the *Message Runner* will inform and inspire individuals to pursue careers in tribal land where they can have a positive long-term impact for Indian people.

Chiarpah Matheson describes the opportunity this way: "There is much more to this work than the technicalities of land titles and rights-of-way. That sounds pretty dry and boring," he said. "This job is about something that is much bigger than ourselves. It's a cause, a fight to defend our borders, expand our territory and preserve our sovereignty. We need to use the tools available to us to carry on the legacy of our ancestors and fulfill the duties of our generation. That is why I do what I do."

Cris Stainbrook , President
Indian Land Tenure Foundation

Land, realty managers are buying back Indian Country

It was, he admits, a bit unnerving listening to the sophisticated business people introduce themselves, each telling why they were in the executive education program at Harvard University. When it was his turn, the young man from Northern Idaho got right to the point: "Hello, my name is Chiarpah Matheson," he said. "I am a member of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and I am here to buy back Indian Country."

The others in the room were movers and shakers from the world of international real estate. Most had never met an American Indian before and they were not quite sure what to make of the former tribal police officer and social worker. "It was intimidating," said Matheson, who was the Tribe's realty manager at the time. "But about halfway through the program I realized that I knew what I was talking about and that really boosted my confidence."

After completing the program at Harvard, Matheson returned home to the reservation and put his higher education to work.

Chiarpah Matheson (Coeur d'Alene) is a motivated, passionate young leader who put his higher education to work managing realty on behalf of his Tribe.

Not business as usual

The job description of a tribal land or realty manager varies but usually involves negotiating agricultural, forestry, and mineral leases, along with right-of-way agreements when utilities, highway departments, and others want to cross reservation land for business or government purposes. They file fee-to-trust applications on behalf of the tribe, maintain land records, direct land acquisition and disposal, and oversee probate services, appraisals, and land use planning.

When Matheson took the job, his knowledge of real estate was pretty limited but he soon discovered the type of challenges many tribal land managers face. "Most of the staff had been there a long time and were pretty resistant to change," Matheson said. "They were still conducting business using index cards and notepads, and they didn't really understand the principals of real estate. We changed that."

What also changed was how the Tribe does business with local farmers. Matheson believes the Coeur d'Alenes had been getting a bad deal for generations, and he was determined to renegotiate its agricultural leases. "The farmers have always looked down on us and assumed that we were not very smart," Matheson said. "There's kind of a 'good old boy' network and they have used it against us for a very long time."

Those business relationships are evolving — as they are for many Native Nations — due to the Tribe's growing economic strength. For Matheson, the turning point occurred during an encounter with one particularly hostile farmer whose dislike for Natives was well known. "I could hear this guy down the hall calling my staff 'dumb Indians' and using profanity," Matheson recalled. "When he came into my office, he sat down on top of my desk and was looking around the room at all of the diplomas and certificates on the walls. When he got to the one from Harvard, he got really, really quiet. Right then and there I could see the power of education. It was a small step towards equality and mutual respect."

According to Matheson, the Tribe is now using sound financial and real estate principles to do deals that are fair to both parties. Land office staff is more knowledgeable and the Tribe's bottom line is improving. At times, there has been internal opposition to the new methods which are designed to maximize long-term value, not short-term profit. "The math speaks for itself," he said. "Now when the farmers come in to negotiate leases, they know the Tribe means business."

It's all about the land

Matheson left Idaho in 2016 to take on a new challenge as executive director of the Puyallup Nation Housing Authority in Washington state. Although his job description has changed, what drives him has not. Matheson believes young Natives should get excited about careers in Indian land because of what the work means to tribal sovereignty and the future of Indian people.

"What makes us different from everyone else in the world is our land, and we need to fight like our ancestors did to defend our borders, expand our territory and carry on the legacy of our elders," Matheson said. "My drive is to show up and be accounted for. I want the world to know that Indian Country is at the table."

*"I want the world to **know** that Indian Country is at the **table**."*

Land and realty managers file fee-to-trust applications, maintain land records, direct land acquisition, manage tribal farms, and negotiate agricultural leases.

Managing today's projects, planning for tomorrow's needs

Nathan Piengkham has a deep-rooted interest in the land belonging to the Kalispel Tribe of Indians in Usk, Washington. He grew up on the reservation 50 miles north of Spokane, left for college, and returned home to work for the Tribe. "I have a really big family on the reservation so everything that happens here affects us," he said.

In 2015, after holding several tribal jobs, the 28-year-old became an associate planner whose work includes realty, the fee-to-trust process, probate and wills, and other land-related issues. "Even before I worked for the Tribe I was involved in planning what should be built, how things should be built, and what our philosophy toward development should be," Piengkham said. "It was really quite similar to what I do now."

The goal of the Tribe's Department of Planning and Public Works is to improve the community's quality of life and capitalize on economic opportunity. Its responsibilities include long-range planning, housing, transportation and utilities. "It's a lot to learn!" Piengkham admits. "I'm reading everything I can, attending a lot of trainings and relying on my wits to get me through the day."

The Tribe has developed many important community projects including public safety facilities, a health and wellness center, tribal housing, and upgrades to the water and wastewater plant. More projects are planned with fee-to-trust applications under way for economic development, natural resources, and cultural preservation.

Nathan Piengkham (Kalispel) worked for his Tribe in behavioral health, chemical dependency and public relations before taking on the role of associate planner. (Photo by Katie Hartwig)

New skills equal new opportunities

Piengkham did not set out to be a planner. He earned a two-year Associate's degree in Business at Haskell Indian Nations University in Kansas. He has worked in behavioral health and chemical dependency, youth programming and public relations. He has volunteered at a women's shelter and worked in a crisis call center — roles that prepared Piengkham for his current position which requires constant juggling of tasks and responsibilities under pressure.

"Working in the crisis center helped me develop good organizational skills and pay attention to the details," he said. "People were depending on us and we had to get it right. Working in public relations taught me to be a good communicator, how to conduct meetings and communicate with people about projects and reports and so on."

His second career helps, too. Piengkham is a professional Mixed Martial Arts fighter who competes with many of the top combatants in the Pacific Northwest. Piengkham is accustomed to performing under pressure and maintains a disciplined training regimen, skills that come in handy at work. Fortunately, tribal planners rarely require ice bags and bandages!

Planners wear many hats

The planner's role can vary greatly depending on a tribe's specific needs and opportunities. Generally planners ensure that tribal lands are effectively preserved and managed. They usually develop and oversee a comprehensive land use plan which addresses such issues as acquisition, consolidation, environmental stewardship, resource management, and land records management. Planners often research and apply for grants to fund projects, and manage contracts, budgets and schedules. Planners write reports, present to the tribal council and communicate with tribal members. They must also work well with professionals from other jurisdictions (e.g., local counties, cities or planning commissions) to ensure that the tribe's voice is heard and its treaty rights and land interests are protected.

Tribal planners take a variety of different paths to the job. Some are hired for specific roles in the land office — as surveyors or GIS technicians, for example — and end up taking on more responsibilities as the tribe's needs and their personal skills evolve.

Others, like Piengkham, have work and educational experience that is not directly related to planning but were offered the opportunity to learn on the job. "Having a degree is what really landed me this job in the first place," he said. "I would like to go back to school once I have more experience, but working for my Tribe is very fulfilling. The work we do is important because we're preserving our land and resources for the future."

Tribal planners work on a variety of projects, including health and wellness facilities.

Responsibilities of a land planner

Tribal planners work on a variety of projects with areas of responsibility varying greatly from tribe to tribe. These can include:

- Economic development
- Utility management
- Long-range planning
- Grounds maintenance
- Grant writing & administration
- Project & construction management
- Building permits
- Transportation
- Housing
- Realty

*"We're preserving our **land** and resources for the **future**."*

Economic development is serious business for most tribes

Bill Tovey (above right) leads the economic development team at Umatilla. Among the Tribes' business ventures is the Coyote Business Park. (Photo by Walters Photographers of Pendleton, Oregon)

Bill Tovey didn't grow up on the reservation, but he remembers carefree summer vacations spent there, and how important the land was to his grandparents. As members of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation near Pendleton, Oregon, they had grown up in an era when families relied on each other, owned livestock, and operated small businesses.

"It was all about the land," Tovey said. "They were connected to their food, they were not connected to money, and they did pretty well. After World War II, things began to change."

Fast forward a few decades and life is very different for the Tribes. Casino gaming brought prosperity in the 1990s which led to other economic opportunities and a much brighter future for the Umatilla. As the Tribes' Director of Economic and Community Development, Tovey is committed to helping the tribal economy grow. In addition to education, health and wellness, and job opportunities for its members, profits generated by tribal businesses are used to buy back land that was once theirs.

Pursuing a 50-year vision

When Tovey graduated from the University of Idaho with a degree in finance, he set out for Seattle and a career in financial services. After the stock market crash of 1987, Tovey's brother David convinced him to take a job on the Umatilla reservation where he went to work as a short order cook. The Tribes employed less than 100 people at the time and had one 640-acre parcel of land. The rest of the reservation was fee property and allotments owned by tribal members and other Natives.

There are now 1,600 employees at Umatilla and Tovey has risen to the top land and economic development staff position. The Umatilla have acquired an additional 46,000 acres — about 15,000 acres off the reservation including 11,000 across the border in Washington. About 10,000 acres has been purchased through the Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations. "The long-term goal is to buy back the reservation," Tovey said. "In 1990, the Tribes did a 50-year vision statement which spoke in detail about reacquiring land, farm and timber practices, and the people side of things — health, education, and so on."

Some 25 years later, the Umatilla are doing well. The Tribes' biggest development — Wildhorse Resort and Casino — has become the economic engine that fuels land acquisition. Tovey's team also operates the Coyote Business Park, which offers tenants typical corporate amenities plus tax advantages not available off the reservation. The park houses Cayuse Technologies, an application development, digital marketing, and business process firm formed as a joint venture between the Tribes and Accenture. It employs nearly 300 people. In addition, they own the Arrowhead Travel Plaza on Interstate 84 which includes three fast-food restaurants and a truck repair facility.

Modern economy, traditional values

Umatilla's economic development department is focused on promoting the interests of the Tribes and tribal members by creating jobs, increasing revenue, and contributing to a diversified economic base. There is a strong focus on carefully managing growth and ensuring that traditional values are upheld. In the past, the Tribes carefully managed natural resources for future generations. Today the Tribes uses their economic power to do the same thing while enhancing tribal sovereignty in the process.

"Sometimes it seems amazing when we look at how far we have come," Tovey said. "If you go back 30 years, our unemployment rate was probably 40 to 60 percent. Today it's about 5 percent."

Diversification is crucial for all tribes to reduce their heavy reliance on gaming income. Umatilla's focus, in addition to improving its members' standard of living, has been on acquiring land that can itself be a sustaining force. That, Tovey believes, is one reason young people should consider a career related to tribal land.

"The proper management of our land is all about protecting tribal assets," he said. "We're involved in the development of our new health facility, the development of education facilities, housing, and economic development and all of these things help the community. But the most important thing is the land."

There's more than one way to build a tribal land office

There is no "right" way to structure a tribal land office. Most have evolved into their current structure based on the original need and available staff. At the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the land office is part of the economic development department.

"It's definitely not the norm," said director Bill Tovey. "Many tribal land programs are in the natural resources department. Yes, land is a natural resource but we have always looked at land as an asset that has value. That ties into our tribal farm enterprises and economic development."

Umatilla's land management staff is led by Mae "Koko" Hufford. There are four individuals involved in the land program. Another six are part of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) land program, appraisal services and other realty functions such as leasing, acquisition and disposal. All are tribal members who came to the job with a unique background and skill set. There are realty specialists in leasing and conveyances in addition to a land acquisition coordinator and a coordinator of the Land Buy-Back Program. "We have pretty much trained everyone on the job," Tovey said. "We have four people with 120 years of experience between them. We have hired two younger people now but others will retire and we'll have positions to fill."

The key for young Natives wanting to work in tribal land careers is education, even if it is not specific in nature. "A two-year degree is very helpful if you want to work in the land office. Definitely a four-year degree is needed to get started in economic development," Tovey said. "Right now, most of our young graduates are going into natural resources, health, or education — not land careers. We need to let them know that this is a career worth pursuing."

Umatilla's Arrowhead Travel Plaza on Interstate 84 in Pendleton, Oregon includes a convenience store, fast-food restaurants and a truck repair center. (Photo by Walters Photographers of Pendleton, Oregon)

Natural resources staff manage land, water, wildlife

The cultures, traditions, lifestyles, foods and economies of American Indians have always been closely tied to the land and the ability of tribes to effectively manage and sustain their natural resources. Today, Native Nations are working to restore the ecological balance that was damaged by colonization and are retaking control of those resources. This has created a variety of career opportunities relating to tribal land, and the need for qualified Native professionals is growing.

These are examples of natural resources careers:

- Agronomist
- Air quality technician
- Botanist
- Conservation officer
- Ecologist
- Environmental program manager
- Environmental outreach staff
- Fire management
- Fisheries biologist
- Fish hatchery technician
- Forester
- Water quality technician
- Wildlife biologist

Career opportunities in natural resources include positions in fisheries, forestry, water quality, wildlife management and more depending on the tribe's location.

Natural resources staff work on such efforts as monitoring and improving water quality; maintaining healthy treaty rights; subsistence and sport fisheries; restoring native fish and wildlife habitat; and restoring cultural and economic practices to protect that habitat.

While many native ecosystems have been irreversibly altered, tribes are focused on protecting and enhancing the ecosystems that remain. Much of the work is done in cooperation with outside entities such as federal, state, and local governments, environmental protection agencies, conservation groups, and hunting and fishing organizations.

There are many ways to enter a natural resources career on tribal land, even without an advanced degree. Tribes employ a variety of environmental technicians who work in water quality, fisheries or forestry. With a two-year degree in natural resources management or environmental sciences, for example, graduates can get jobs doing laboratory and field tests and monitoring water quality.

Career opportunities in natural resources vary greatly depending on the tribe's geographic location and the specific natural resource issues that are most important in that particular region. For example, tribes in the Pacific Northwest may place more emphasis on fisheries and forestry, which are also vitally important in northern Minnesota and Wisconsin. In the Dakotas, sustainable agriculture and water supply are higher priorities while tribes in the Southwest have to manage the significant environmental impacts of mining and water-related issues.

*"The **need** for quality **people** is growing."*

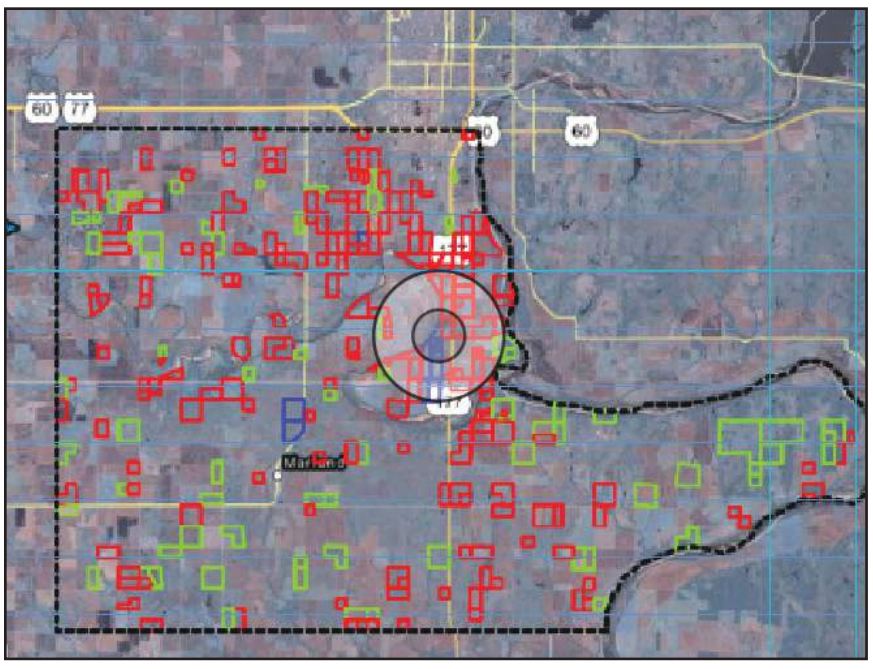
GIS technicians make detailed maps and manipulate data

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are used to combine layers of information and data onto geographic maps to tell a broader, more complete story about the area. This technology plays an important role in Indian Country as an essential tool for land administration, cultural preservation, economic development, and water resources management. As a result, there are job opportunities for GIS technicians.

Technicians make maps and customized applications. They read and interpret maps, manipulate and interpret digital land and other data, and manage the data in a GIS database. For example, a tribal natural resources department could better understand potential sources of water pollution by mapping the location of grazing permits that are adjacent to waterways. The map might also include water quality data in stream reaches in the same area. The tribal utility department may also be interested in mapping precipitation and water usage across the reservation.

There are GIS opportunities for new college graduates with bachelor's degree in fields such as geography, computer science or engineering. Experienced professionals can also move into the field by taking courses in GIS technology which are available through tribal colleges or specialized training courses.

What skills and attributes does a GIS technician need? An aptitude for working with large data sets on computer programs for long periods of time. Attention to detail is a must along with solid written and verbal communication skills for creating and presenting reports and training others to use the technology.



GIS technicians make maps to tell a more complete story about an area, such as this land adjacent to the Osage Reservation in Oklahoma.

Tribal Land Careers

PLANNER

The tribal planner's role varies greatly by need. Responsibilities usually include developing and managing long-range strategic land use plans, and managing current projects, permitting and regulation.
Activities: Research, write, and administer grants to fund projects. Manage construction and development projects, budgets and schedules. Write reports and present to tribal council and community members.
Skills: Ability to juggle multiple tasks. Solid written and oral communication skills.

GIS TECHNICIAN

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technicians make maps and customized applications, and manipulate land-related data for a variety of purposes.
Activities: Read and interpret maps and land data, manage GIS databases.
Education: Usually a bachelor's degree in geography, computer science, or engineering. Many tribal colleges offer GIS courses.
Skills: Attention to detail, good written and verbal communications skills for writing and presenting reports and training others.

SURVEYOR

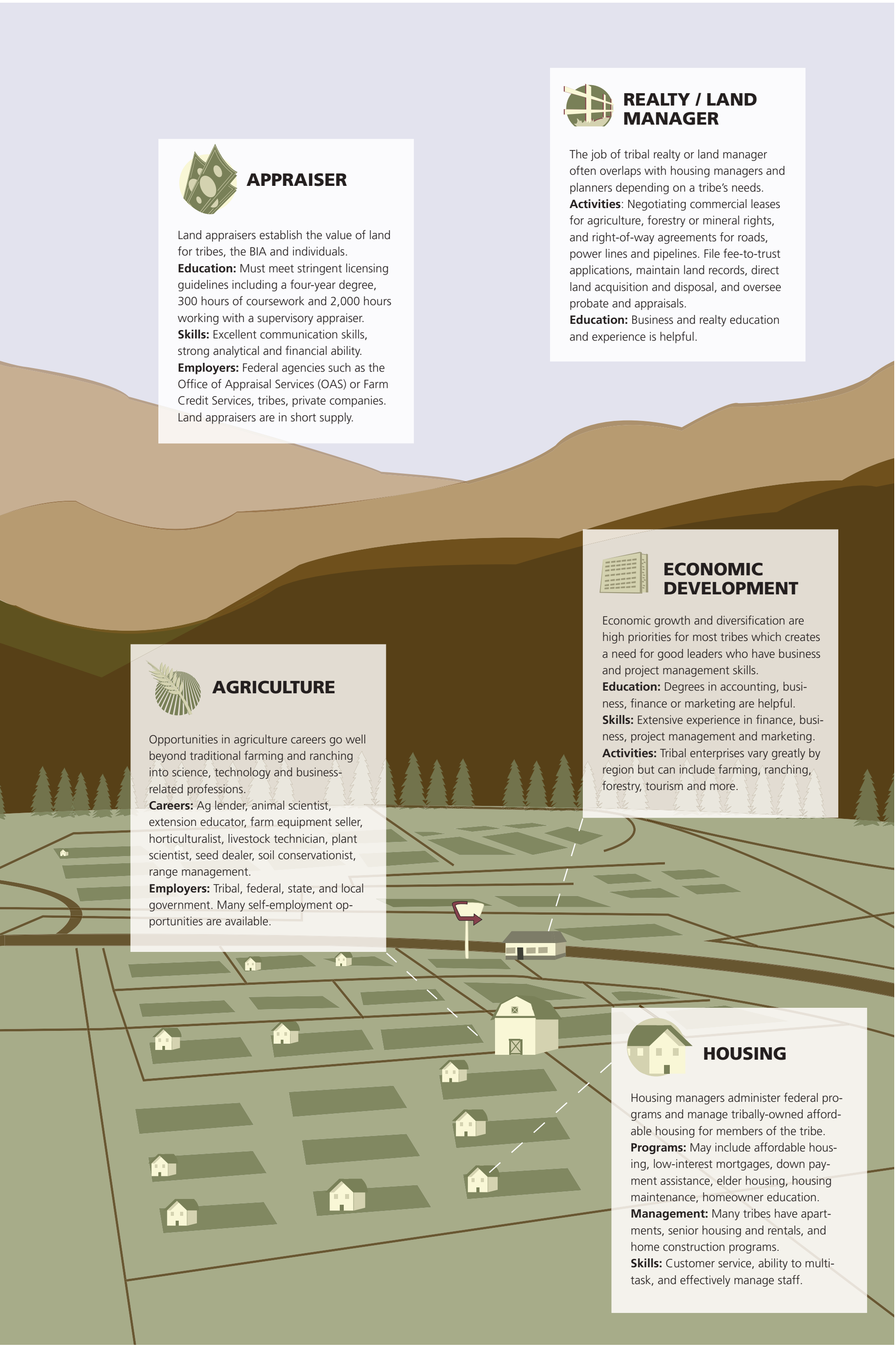
Surveyors use sophisticated instruments to measure and establish legal boundaries. Data is used to make maps and develop construction and engineering plans.
Education: Most states require a bachelor's degree and specific training courses before taking a licensing exam.
Skills: Attention to detail, good communication skills and high ethical standards.
Certification: Indian land surveying requires specialized knowledge gained via the Certified Federal Surveyors (CFeds) Program.

CULTURAL PRESERVATION

Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) identify, protect and preserve a tribe's culturally significant places, traditions and cultural resources.
Activities: Operate museums, interpretive centers and historic sites. Conduct education, language instruction and oral history programs. Work with outside law enforcement and government agencies.
Careers: Archeologist, anthropologist, language teacher, librarian, museum curator, researcher, tourism worker and more.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resource managers restore, manage and protect tribal land, water and wildlife resources using traditional and contemporary knowledge and methods.
Areas of responsibility: Air and water quality, environmental protection, fire protection, fisheries, forestry, soil conservation, wildlife management.
Career opportunities: Conservation officer, environmental program manager, fisheries technician, forester, water quality technician, wildlife biologist and more.



APPRAISER

Land appraisers establish the value of land for tribes, the BIA and individuals.
Education: Must meet stringent licensing guidelines including a four-year degree, 300 hours of coursework and 2,000 hours working with a supervisory appraiser.
Skills: Excellent communication skills, strong analytical and financial ability.
Employers: Federal agencies such as the Office of Appraisal Services (OAS) or Farm Credit Services, tribes, private companies. Land appraisers are in short supply.

REALTY / LAND MANAGER

The job of tribal realty or land manager often overlaps with housing managers and planners depending on a tribe's needs.
Activities: Negotiating commercial leases for agriculture, forestry or mineral rights, and right-of-way agreements for roads, power lines and pipelines. File fee-to-trust applications, maintain land records, direct land acquisition and disposal, and oversee probate and appraisals.
Education: Business and realty education and experience is helpful.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth and diversification are high priorities for most tribes which creates a need for good leaders who have business and project management skills.
Education: Degrees in accounting, business, finance or marketing are helpful.
Skills: Extensive experience in finance, business, project management and marketing.
Activities: Tribal enterprises vary greatly by region but can include farming, ranching, forestry, tourism and more.

AGRICULTURE

Opportunities in agriculture careers go well beyond traditional farming and ranching into science, technology and business-related professions.
Careers: Ag lender, animal scientist, extension educator, farm equipment seller, horticulturalist, livestock technician, plant scientist, seed dealer, soil conservationist, range management.
Employers: Tribal, federal, state, and local government. Many self-employment opportunities are available.

HOUSING

Housing managers administer federal programs and manage tribally-owned affordable housing for members of the tribe.
Programs: May include affordable housing, low-interest mortgages, down payment assistance, elder housing, housing maintenance, homeowner education.
Management: Many tribes have apartments, senior housing and rentals, and home construction programs.
Skills: Customer service, ability to multitask, and effectively manage staff.

Preserving sovereignty by measuring, mapping tribal land

Andrew Orosco, Jr., (above and left) is a certified land surveyor and director of planning for the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians in Southern California. He joined a union apprenticeship program shortly after graduating high school. (Photos by Erica Cullwell)

Ask the average person what surveyors do and the response is likely to include the description of a guy with a tripod who is up to his ankles in dirt. That's only part of it. "I certainly do more than stand by the road in a hard hat!" said Andrew Orosco, Jr., a professional land surveyor for the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians in Valley Center, Calif. "When someone asks me what I do it can take a half hour to explain it."

In fact, the skill set and technology required is quite complex. In the field, surveyors use Global Positioning Systems (GPS), theodolites (rotating telescopes that measure horizontal and vertical angles), and aerial and terrestrial scanners to map an area, make computations, and take photos. In the office, surveyors use sophisticated software to draft plans and map measurements.

The profession dates back nearly 3,000 years to Egypt and played a major role when Europeans appropriated Native American land. Back then, surveyors used rudimentary tools, including chains and steel bands, which made measurements difficult to record and often required the use of logarithmic tables and slide rules. Today, it is much more sophisticated.

Certified Federal Surveyor (CFedS)

Orosco's introduction to the profession came early since his father owned a small land surveying company near Los Angeles. "I remember on weekends going out into the field with him when I was very young," he said. "I didn't really understand what we were doing but enjoyed hiking and being outdoors."

After finishing high school, Orosco chose surveying over college and joined the local union apprenticeship program. He learned the trade from the ground up, hiking rugged terrain to walking structural steel on commercial projects throughout Southern California with his father for 10 years. When the economy soured, he spent a year in the restaurant business but jumped at the chance to return to surveying at San Pasqual.

Orosco is a tribal descendent and had worked extensively on the reservation as a contractor. The Tribe holds roughly 3,000 acres of which approximately 2,000 is held in trust. Orosco was hired on a short-term contract to handle a few specific boundary issues. One project led to another and eventually a much broader role as director of planning.

Orosco is a CFedS — a Certified Federal Surveyor — as designated by the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Co-administered by BLM and the National Society of Professional Surveyors, the CFedS program provides extensive training on surveying on or near federal interest lands and is a vital designation for surveyors in Indian Country. Established in 2007, the program requires applicants to complete 160 hours of training to prepare for a 6.5-hour certification exam. Surveyors must also complete annual continuing education. "The course was really eye opening for me," said Orosco. "As a state licensed surveyor it's required that you have a basic understanding of the public lands system, but this is the only program I know of that really dives into the history and complexity."

Although the methods surveyors use on or off reservation are the same, the challenges are quite different. Native lands have unique surveying issues and many essential records are found only within the Land Title and Records Office (LTRO) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Special procedures have often been used for surveys on Indian lands and there are cultural and jurisdictional considerations.

CFedS can provide crucial information in the fee-to-trust process, probate cases, and perform services such as land description reviews, Chain of Surveys, Certificate of Inspection and Possession, Boundary Assurance Certificates, resource management and the survey of federal interest lands. "The public lands survey system serves as the foundation for land records for all states within the public domain," Orosco said.

Importance of surveying Indian land

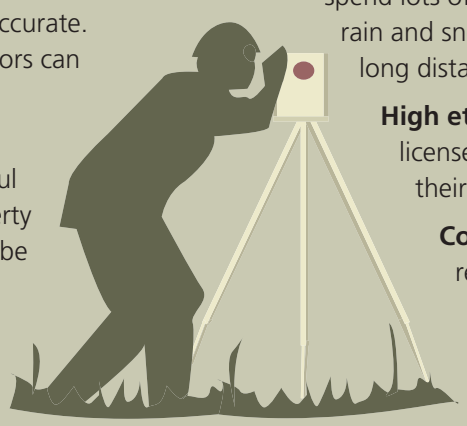
Although he can still be found under the hot sun with his tripod, Orosco's scope of work now extends from land use and zoning to infrastructure and facilities planning. In the end it is still about the land, a fact Orosco is reminded of during his daily commute through the Pechanga, Pauma, Pala and Rincon reservations, and on the job where he works with maps dating to 1875. These documents retrace the steps of earlier surveyors who played a significant role in taking land from Indian people.

"Land is one of our most precious resources," Orosco said. "Father Sky and Mother Earth provide us with everything we need to sustain life, so all land is sacred," he added. "What I do here is going to be on record forever. It's going to represent not only myself but our people and all that we have done here on this land."

What makes a good surveyor?

Attention to detail — Survey maps and reports are legal documents that must be accurate. Every detail counts and errors can be expensive.

Communication skills — Surveyors need to be tactful when speaking with property owners. "It's important to be personable," said surveyor Andrew Orosco. "I like to let property owners know what we're doing."



Enjoyment of the outdoors — Surveyors spend lots of time outside in the heat, cold, rain and snow, and carry heavy equipment long distances.

High ethical standards — "As a state-licensed land surveyor, the public has their trust in you," Orosco said.

College education — Most states require a four-year degree. A few colleges offer surveying-specific programs including New Mexico State, Cal State-Fresno and the University of Wyoming.

Modern agriculture is much more than cows and plows

From agricultural engineer to veterinarian, there are countless career possibilities in agriculture. For typical teens, however, farming and ranching do not sound very exciting and 'agribusiness' is an afterthought. Ross Racine is out to change that. "Young people need to recognize that agriculture is much more than just cows and plows," said Racine, Executive Director of the Intertribal Agriculture Council in Billings, Montana. "People think of Bubba in his John Deere cap and overalls, but agriculture today is so much more than that."

According to Racine, the biggest needs in tribal agriculture are in the basic geologic sciences — soil conservationists and range managers who can take care of reservation land in a sustainable way. Their numbers have dwindled. "Way more students are going into environmental studies than the soils and range sciences," he said. "I guess you could say these jobs don't sound very sexy."

Racine's organization is changing perceptions about careers in agriculture. IAC has a scholarship program that provides financial support for Native students pursuing ag-related degrees. It also hosts the Native Youth in Food and Agriculture Summer Leadership Summit (open to enrolled tribal youth and tribal descendants ages 15 to 18); holds an annual essay contest for high school students; and hosts a youth conclave at the annual membership meeting where 50 to 100 high school students learn about leadership and careers in agriculture.

Capturing the interest of Indian youth is challenging, but so is convincing tribal leaders and school counselors that resource management matters. "They keep steering kids into education and healthcare," Racine said. "Those things are important but sustainable agriculture is equally important."

As an example, he cites the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana where Indian ranchers graze about 24,000 cattle. Another 18,000 non-Indian owned cattle graze that land, too, earning the Blackfeet Tribe and Indian land owners millions of dollars. That income will disappear if poor land management leads to reduced stocking capacity.

Racine believes there is nothing more important to Indian people than land and he wants to see qualified Natives managing it. "We have subsisted because of the land," he said. "It is not our skin color or genealogy that is truly recognized but the piece of land that is our identity."

Modern Indian agriculture offers a wide variety of excellent career possibilities, from farming and ranching to the geologic sciences and veterinary medicine. (Photo by Les Cramer)

Indian ag leader is still a cowboy at heart

Ross Racine (Blackfeet Nation) grew up on a ranch in northern Montana, but he knew he wouldn't be a rancher forever. "There were 11 of us kids," he said, "so I knew some of us would have to do something else or we wouldn't have much to eat."

So Racine joined the U.S. Marine Corps for a stint before returning to Montana to work for non-Indian ranchers. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Agriculture and Animal Science before joining the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) as a soil conservationist working with Indian livestock producers. "The ranchers I had worked for were pretty progressive," he said. "By the time I went home again, I had been exposed to new ideas and programs in animal management that most ranchers on the Blackfeet Reservation were not familiar with."

Ross Racine

He put that knowledge to good use before taking a BIA transfer to work with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon. Six months later, the Tribes asked Racine to oversee their BIA and tribal land programs. He led the development of an innovative integrated resources management plan that that caught the attention of Greg Smitman, director of the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) in Billings, Montana. "He offered me the job of Natural Resources Director at IAC," Racine recalled, "and the plan I did at Warm Springs eventually became a model for tribal land use planning."

Evangelist for Indian agriculture

At IAC, Racine works tirelessly to identify and remove barriers to Indian agriculture that were created by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior. Since 2001, he has been executive director of IAC, which was founded in 1987 by order of Congress to pursue and promote the conservation, development and use of Indian agricultural resources for the betterment of Native people.

"Land-based agricultural resources are vital to the economic and social welfare of tribes," Racine said. "The harmonies of man, soil, water, air, vegetation and wildlife that collectively make up the American agricultural community influence our emotional and spiritual well-being to a great degree."

Racine has become an evangelist for improving Indian agriculture, serving on countless boards and advisory groups, including the Indian Land Tenure Foundation. He was a technical advisor on agriculture for the Obama administration transition team and was honored at the White House as a 'Champion of Change.' "Prior to 1987, nobody outside of the reservation had heard about American Indian agriculture. Now they know," he said. "One of the things I recognized early on was that we could be doing so much more for the benefit of Indians. That's what I have tried to do my whole career, but I'm still a cowboy at heart."

Careers in agriculture

There are many careers in agriculture and agribusiness, including:

- Ag business
- Agricultural educator
- Agricultural lender
- Diesel mechanic
- Environmental scientist
- Fisheries biologist
- Farmer's market seller
- Graphic designer
- Information Technology
- Land use manager
- Marketing specialist
- Nutritionist (animals)
- Nutritionist (humans)
- Plant scientist
- Producer or grower
- Ranch manager
- Range manager
- Seed dealer
- Soil scientist
- Veterinarian
- Extension educator

Accidental appraiser enjoys solving complex land puzzles

The year was 1973, and Dave Baker was working for the federal government in North Dakota. Budgets were being cut and he was offered a choice: transfer to a job he had no interest in or get laid off. "I had a wife and a child and I needed to make a living so it wasn't much of a choice," he said. "I didn't know the first thing about doing appraisals so of course I was completely lost. But I stuck with it and eventually grew to like it. Most appraisers you talk to got into the business by accident."

Baker is a private appraiser in South Dakota specializing in the appraisal of Indian trust property for value, rent and easement. He worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in Rapid City for 18 years, including a decade as chief appraiser, where he coordinated all BIA appraisal activity on 14 Indian reservations. Today about 75 percent of Baker's workload is on tribal land. Among his clients are individual land owners who want to determine the market value of their land, as well as companies that want to know the value of an easement or right-of-way they are seeking in order to build a road, power line, pipeline or oil well pad on reservation land.

Land appraisers in Indian Country are in short supply. Very few young people are joining the profession due to rigorous licensing requirements.

An easement is the right to use the property for a specific purpose. The landowner maintains ownership of the land but receives compensation from the company. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has the sole authority to issue right-of-way easements across trust lands or otherwise restricted land under BIA jurisdiction. BIA and the Office of Appraisal Services (OAS) have to approve all appraisals but the Tribe or allottee must consent to the easement. The appraiser determines the value of the land being crossed and essentially calculates the cost to the land owner who is losing use of the land. Once the appraisal is complete and has been approved by OAS, the company goes to each landowner and makes them an offer for the right of way. It can be a lengthy process.

Dave Baker

"I am currently working on a road project that is only two or three miles long but there are probably 20 appraisals involved because each allotment has to have its own appraisal," Baker explained. "We show what the value of that right-of-way is, and how much it impacts the landowner, who can either accept it or ask for more money."

> *"I didn't **know** the first thing about doing **appraisals**."*

No shortage of work in Indian Country

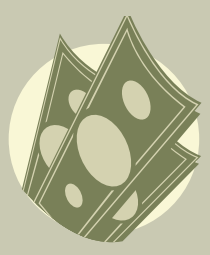
Working as an appraiser on Indian land means dealing with a complex web of rules, regulations, and road blocks that present a unique set of challenges. "A lot of appraisers are afraid to work on the reservation. They don't want anything to do with it," Baker said. "Off the reservation, a property usually has one owner and it's pretty straightforward. On the reservation, it's not uncommon to have 400 owners on a single property, and getting legal access to the property can be a problem. Most appraisers don't know how to handle it and they don't want the hassle."

For Baker, that's what is interesting about the job. He likens it to assembling the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. It's a challenge determining why one piece of land is worth $5,000 when a similar property nearby might be worth 25 percent more. Baker says it takes an analytical mind, along with sound logic and attention to detail, to figure out how it all fits together. "Even a seemingly simple residential appraisal can be complicated," he said. "Two properties might look the same but they may have different values for some very minute reason. I put all of my analysis in the appraisal so whoever reads it will know exactly how I arrived at that value."

Baker tries to work within 200 miles of Rapid City. One day he might be an hour's drive from home appraising a piece of land on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The next day, he may have to travel 350 miles to the Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota to appraise land for oil well pad installations.

"There's a real shortage of appraisers in Indian Country and I'm booked four months out. We desperately need more appraisers but the regulations make it difficult to attract good people," he said. "The banks are pushing to have the licensing requirements relaxed because they don't want to wait three months for an appraisal. Hopefully we can get more good people into the profession soon."

What makes a good land appraiser?



Communication skills

Appraisers spend a lot of time talking and listening, much of it on the telephone. "One minute I may be talking with the president of a corporation and an hour later I'm in the middle of a muddy feedlot with a rancher," Dave Baker said. "You have to be personable."

Attention to detail

Appraiser Jerry Hulm says there is a knack to seeing the nuances between two properties. "It's like that cartoon 'Hocus Focus' in the Sunday comics," he said. "There are two pictures that look almost identical and you have to pick out a few subtle differences. You either have the aptitude to pick that up or you don't."

Analytical ability

Appraisers deal with reams of information and plenty of numbers and they have to be able to sort it all out. "A lot of what we do is math-related and you need to have an analytical mind," Baker said. "I think people who understand economics and statistics would do well," Hulm added.

High ethical standards

Appraisers are ethically bound to give an honest, unbiased opinion and avoid potential conflict-of-interest issues. "I need to set aside my personal feelings about a piece of property and stick to the facts," Hulm said. "On the reservation, my relatives might be involved and I'll ask someone else to do the appraisal."

Appraisers of Indian land are in short supply

Few people outside of Indian Country understand the complexities of reservation land, but of the approximately 100,000 licensed real estate appraisers in the United States just a handful are Native American. It's an exclusive club of which Jerry Hulm (Cheyenne River Sioux) is a proud member. Hulm has been appraising land in the Dakotas for more than 30 years but very few people — Native or non-Native — are entering the field. There's an appraiser shortage looming and he is concerned. "I'm 63 and I am one of the younger appraisers out here," Hulm said. "I believe we are five to 10 years away from a crisis."

Jerry Hulm

Why so few new appraisers? The answer is simple: it is too difficult to enter the profession. After earning a four-year degree, would-be appraisers must do a multi-year apprenticeship with an experienced professional, take an additional 300 hours of coursework and pass a rigorous licensing exam. "Jerry and I have talked with plenty of Native people who are very capable of being good appraisers but when they find out the requirements they don't do it," said appraiser Dave Baker, who works extensively in Indian Country. "It's impossible if you have a family and need to make a living right now."

Potential long-term solutions

It wasn't always so difficult. When Baker and Hulm entered the profession the standards were much less rigorous. "The exam now is probably 10 to 15 times harder than it was back then and I don't have a college degree," Hulm said with a chuckle. "I think it's a mistake to make the requirements so difficult that people can't get into the profession."

The alternative is to start out working for a federal government agency — e.g., Farm Credit Services or the Office of Appraisal Services (OAS) – which can provide a reasonable salary and the required supervisory appraiser. Long term, Baker believes the best solution is for tribes to hire individuals who are interested in becoming appraisers and contract with government to provide the training. "The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) did it at the Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana," he said. "The BIA provided the training and mentorship and the Tribes paid the person's salary. It worked very well and it's a model that can be used to train Natives for a variety of professions."

*"I believe we are **5 to 10** years away from a **crisis**."*

Nearly 170 Indian tribes have a Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) who helps to preserve culture, language and history for future generations. (Photo by Les Cramer)

THPOs protect, preserve, perpetuate

As Native Nations seek to recover their rightful homelands and preserve their culture, one of the more important roles is that of the Tribal Historic Preservation Office(r) or THPO. The THPO is tasked with protecting, preserving and perpetuating a tribe's culturally significant places and resources. Although tribal leaders have long sought to preserve their culture, the THPO's role was created in 1990 with the establishment of the National Park Service Tribal Preservation Program. Only 12 federally recognized tribes had a THPO in 1996 but two decades later there are 167.

In the past, non-Indians made most of the decisions on how American Indian cultural resources were managed. The creation of Tribal Historic Preservation Offices has given Natives significant control over these important assets and led to many career opportunities. Some tribes have just one person dedicated to the role while others have many distinct positions.

These include:

- Archeologists and archeology technicians
- Cultural anthropologists
- Language teachers
- Librarians
- Museum curators
- Project managers
- Researchers
- Tourism workers

Multiple responsibilities

The role of the THPO varies. Many tribes operate museums and cultural centers, develop language education and training programs, and have oral history initiatives. THPOs educate tribal citizens and others on traditions and cultural practices, and enlist tribal elders, spiritual leaders, and preservation professionals to provide vital knowledge. Other roles include:

- Protecting culturally important places including archeological sites and artifacts
- Helping federal agencies comply with the National Historic Preservation Act
- Working with law enforcement to protect sacred sites and objects
- Preserving and restoring historic structures
- Establishing opportunities for cultural and heritage tourism
- Preserving significant natural resources

Money for cultural and historic preservation positions comes from a variety of sources, including Tribal Historic Preservation Fund grants. Recent grants have funded surveys of nearly 200,000 acres of tribal land resulting in more than 7,000 archeological sites and 1,300 historical properties being added to tribal inventories. In 2015, for example, grants were made to the Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma to document its culture, history and traditions; to the Quinault Indian Nation to produce a cultural resource plan and tribal historic preservation ordinances; and to the Otoe-Missouria to do a historical tribal land survey.

While there are dozens of museums, historic sites, and cultural centers on reservations, tribes are also incorporating culture and history into tourism and gaming facilities creating additional career opportunities. At the Coeur d'Alene Casino Resort Hotel in Idaho, for example, the architectural design is based on traditional longhouse structures, there is an impressive interpretive center, and tribal culture is evident everywhere from the championship golf course to traditional foods served in its restaurants. "The Coeur d'Alene Tribe is known for its hospitality," said cultural affairs director Quanah Matheson. "We are welcoming people into our home and helping them learn about our culture and traditions."

Helping tribal members have a place to call home

Housing managers are responsible for federal housing programs and tribal housing initiatives involving land and land-use planning.

Most Indian reservations lack enough quality affordable housing for tribal members, which can make the position of tribal housing manager a challenging one. The housing manager is usually responsible for the development, implementation and oversight of all housing-related issues for the tribe.

These duties include overseeing the leasing and maintenance of tribal housing units and administering a variety of federal programs intended to provide tribal members with safe, clean, affordable housing. At the core of this work is land and land use planning.

Native nations often have several programs for affordable housing, low-interest mortgages, elder housing, housing maintenance assistance, homeowner education, and programs to help with down payments and closing costs. Tribes may own apartments, senior housing, and rental homes, and may operate home construction programs on the reservation.

As sovereign nations, tribes are direct recipients of funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Each tribe designates an entity to administer its housing programs — generally an independent tribal housing authority with its own board of commissioners.

Under the Indian Housing Block Grant program, tribes determine the plan, design, construction and maintenance of affordable housing on Indian reservations and in Native communities. Housing managers direct additional federal programs, including the Indian Home Loan Guarantee Program, Title VI Loan Guarantee Program, the Rural Housing Program (U.S. Department of Agriculture) and others.

Most housing managers are trained on the job. The demands on their time can be extreme and the role requires constant juggling of tasks. Housing managers need excellent people management and customer service skills to balance the needs and wants of tribal members and the tribal council with the housing authority's resources and limitations.


MessageRunner

Message from the ILTF President

Restoring Indian lands: a long process

ILTF first published the *Message Runner* in 2002 to provide Indian people and others with much-needed information about Indian land tenure issues. Previous volumes include:

Vol. 1 – Major issues surrounding Indian land tenure along with solutions and strategies.

Vol. 2 – A primer on Indian estate planning and probate, including the 2004 American Indian Probate Reform Act (AIPRA).

Vol. 3 – History of rights-of-way in Indian Country, including a helpful how-to section for landowners and tribes.

Vol. 4 – "From Removal to Recovery: Land Ownership in Indian Country," an historical account of Indian land ownership from pre-contact to today.

Vol. 5 – "Cutting through the Red Tape: An Indian Landowner's Guide to Reading and Processing Federal Forms."

To learn more about the *Message Runner*, visit **www.iltf.org /resources/publications**. To order copies, email **info@iltf.org** or call (651)766-8999.

Resources

AGRICULTURE

Intertribal Agriculture Council
Promotes conservation, development and use of Indian agricultural resources for the benefit of Indian producers and tribes. Offers educational and scholarship opportunities for Native youth.
indianaglink.com

APPRAISAL

The Appraisal Foundation
Authorized by Congress as the source of appraisal standards and appraiser qualifications. Offers career information and resources.
appraisalfoundation.org

CULTURAL & HISTORIC PRESERVATION

National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers
Supports the preservation, maintenance and revitalization of Native culture and traditions.
nathpo.org

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development
Helps tribes with business and economic development. Offers scholarships, training and resources for Native entrepreneurs, including the Reservation Economic Summit (RES).
ncaied.org

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

ESRI
International supplier of GIS software, webGIS and geodatabase management applications. ESRI provides extensive GIS training opportunities in Indian Country.
esri.com

URISA
The Urban and Regional Information Systems Association is a multi-disciplinary geospatial organization that provides GIS education, training and resources.
urisa.org

TRIBAL HOUSING

National American Indian Housing Council
Represents the interests of Native people living in Indian communities, and provides education, training and support to Native housing professionals.
naihc.net

LAND, REALTY, PLANNING

National Tribal Land Association
Helps tribal land and natural resources staff expand their knowledge, skills, and professional network. Hosts the annual Tribal Land Staff National Conference and provides land management courses leading to certification.
ntla.info

NATURAL RESOURCES

Native American Fish and Wildlife Society
Assists tribes with conservation, protection, and enhancement of fish and wildlife resources and habitats. Offers educational and career resources. **nafws.org**

SURVEYING

Certified Federal Surveyors Program (CFedS)
Provides extensive training for land surveyors in dealing with federal surveying processes, including those used on Indian lands.
cfeds.org

National Society of Professional Surveyors
Association for professional surveyors offering education and career information.
nsps.us.com

Indian Land Tenure FOUNDATION

The Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF) is a national, community-based organization focused on American Indian land recovery and management. ILTF's primary aim is to ensure that all reservation and important off-reservation lands are owned and managed by Indian people and Indian nations.

As a community foundation, ILTF relies on funding from private foundations and donations from Indian nations, corporations and individuals to support its programming in Indian Country. Please consider making a donation to the Indian Land Tenure Foundation today.

To learn more about our work and programs, and to make a donation, visit our website at: www.iltf.org.

Indian Land Tenure Foundation

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