ABSTRACT

TITLE:	The Political Ecology of Cultural Revitalization: A Tribal Economic Policy Analysis for Outdoor Recreation & Ecological Restoration
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PRESENTED AT:	2014 Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities Symposium, Fort Lewis College

ABSTRACT: Native Americans are the original land stewards of North America. Historical devastation brought on by colonization had major impacts on indigenous communities, creating issues which linger to this day. Attempts were made to disconnect tribes from their traditional homelands, restricting them to reservations and subjecting them to assimilation policies meant to eliminate their language, culture, and traditional economies. Actively recreating connections to landscapes, through language and culture, by developing analog modern economies provides opportunities for resolution. Structural hindrances exist in chronic underfunding of both BIA and tribal programs. This complex situation inhibits the ability for governing structures to adapt innovative approaches to address social, ecological, or economic issues. I propose that to achieve the goal of cultural revitalization, we develop a Southern Ute tribal (or Tri-Ute intertribal) demonstration project for outdoor recreation and environmental restoration based on the human-in-ecosystem approach to socio-ecological resilience under 25 U.S. Code § 4305 - Intertribal tourism demonstration projects. The path to economic stability, social equity, and dignity depends on the recognition of human interdependence with the ecological community. A new generation educated in the sciences, natural resource management, and cooperative business skills will relate their traditional teachings, language, and values to landscape stewardship strategies. This will facilitate cultural revitalization and economic rejuvenation complimenting oil and gas development and gaming in current economic development strategies. Combining cultural knowledge with skills for natural resource management, tribes can collaborate with private and federal land management agencies. Federal mitigation policies now use a landscape-scale approach in management decisions. Synergizing the indigenous human-in-ecosystem approach to socio-economic development with the landscape-scale approach to land management will encourage ecological and cultural resiliency. This benefits tribes by helping to address climate change challenges in the ecological community while providing benefits to the broader American society.