

Rebuilding First Nations and First Nation Economies

Stephen Cornell

Native Nations Institute, University of Arizona
and Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development

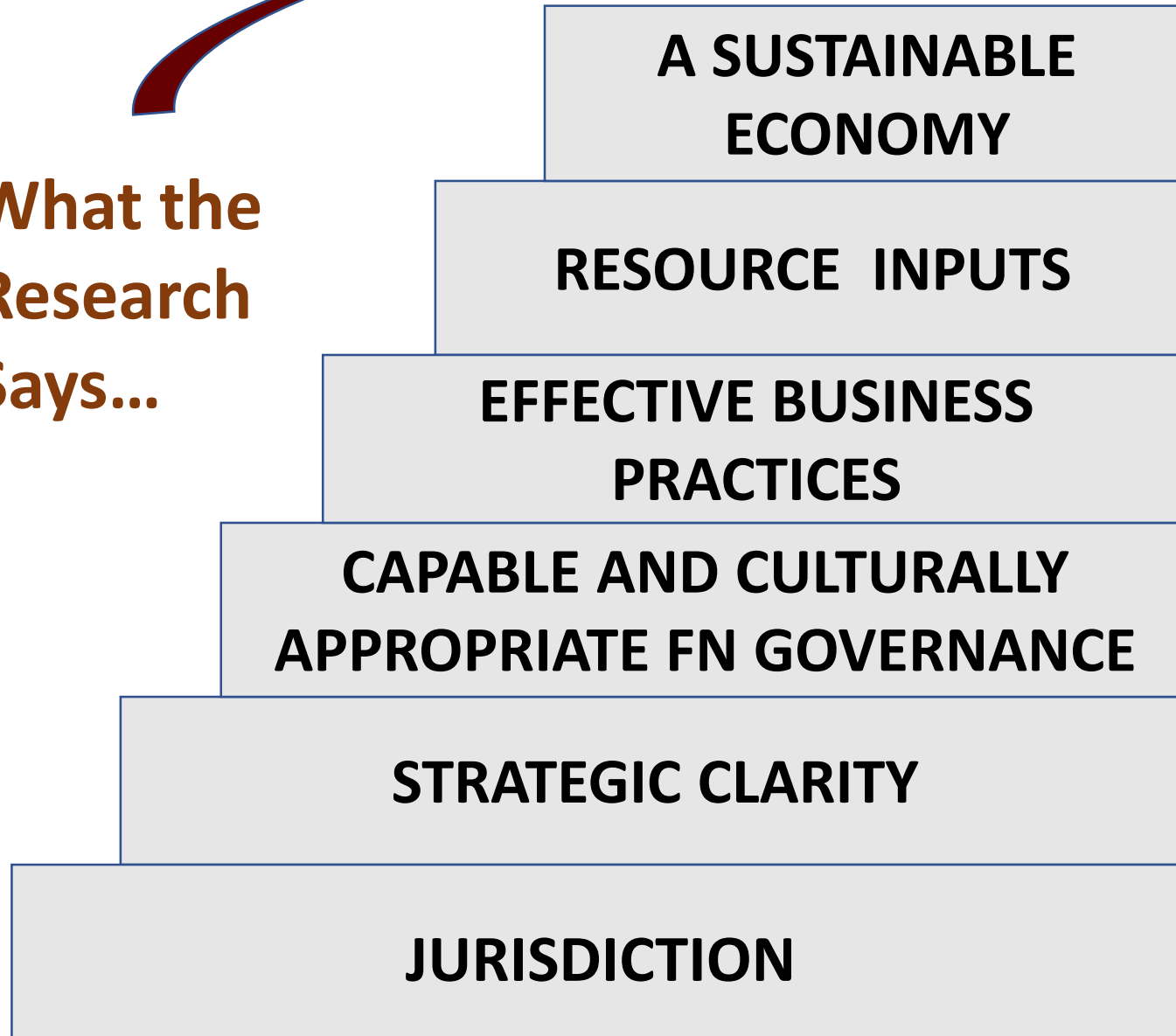
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Key factors in rebuilding Native nations: what the research says...

1. **Practical self-rule** (the nation calls the shots)
2. **Strategic clarity** (know your purpose)
3. **Capable government** (back up authority with institutions that can serve that long-term purpose)
4. **Cultural match** (governing institutions match community beliefs about how to organize and exercise authority)
5. **Public-spirited leadership** (instead of politics as boxing ring where factions or families fight to control the goodies)

**What the
Research
Says...**



**Success
here...**

**...is more
likely with
success
here...**

**...which is
more likely
with success
here**

What do we mean by strategic clarity?

Why pursue economic development?

- The community well-being task
- The public finance task
- The intergenerational task

“Until we come to terms with the question of what we want to be as a people there is... no need for any strategic direction beyond making cash and distributing it more or less efficiently and more or less equitably...”



“...If that’s all the membership of an Indigenous culture amounts to, then why bother?”

Sir Tipene O’Regan
Ngai Tahu, 2014

What you want to know...

- Twenty-five years from now (or ten years, or fifty years, or seven generations), what kind of nation, community, people do you want to be?
- What do you hope will be different?
- What do you hope will stay the same?



What one set of American Indian high school students said they want for their children:

- “I want my children to be able to take part in our ceremonies the way I do, and to understand them.”
- “I want them to speak our language.”
- “I love the fact that I can enter any house in our village and feel safe. When I have a daughter who’s 17 years old, I want her to feel that way, too.”
- “I hope the Rio Grande still flows for them.”

More from Sir Tipene O'Regan:

“Do we just want to be rich *pakehas* [white people] with a sun tan?”

Or is our purpose “*the intergenerational transmission of identity and heritage?*”



But as you become more strategic, you also come up against a critical question:

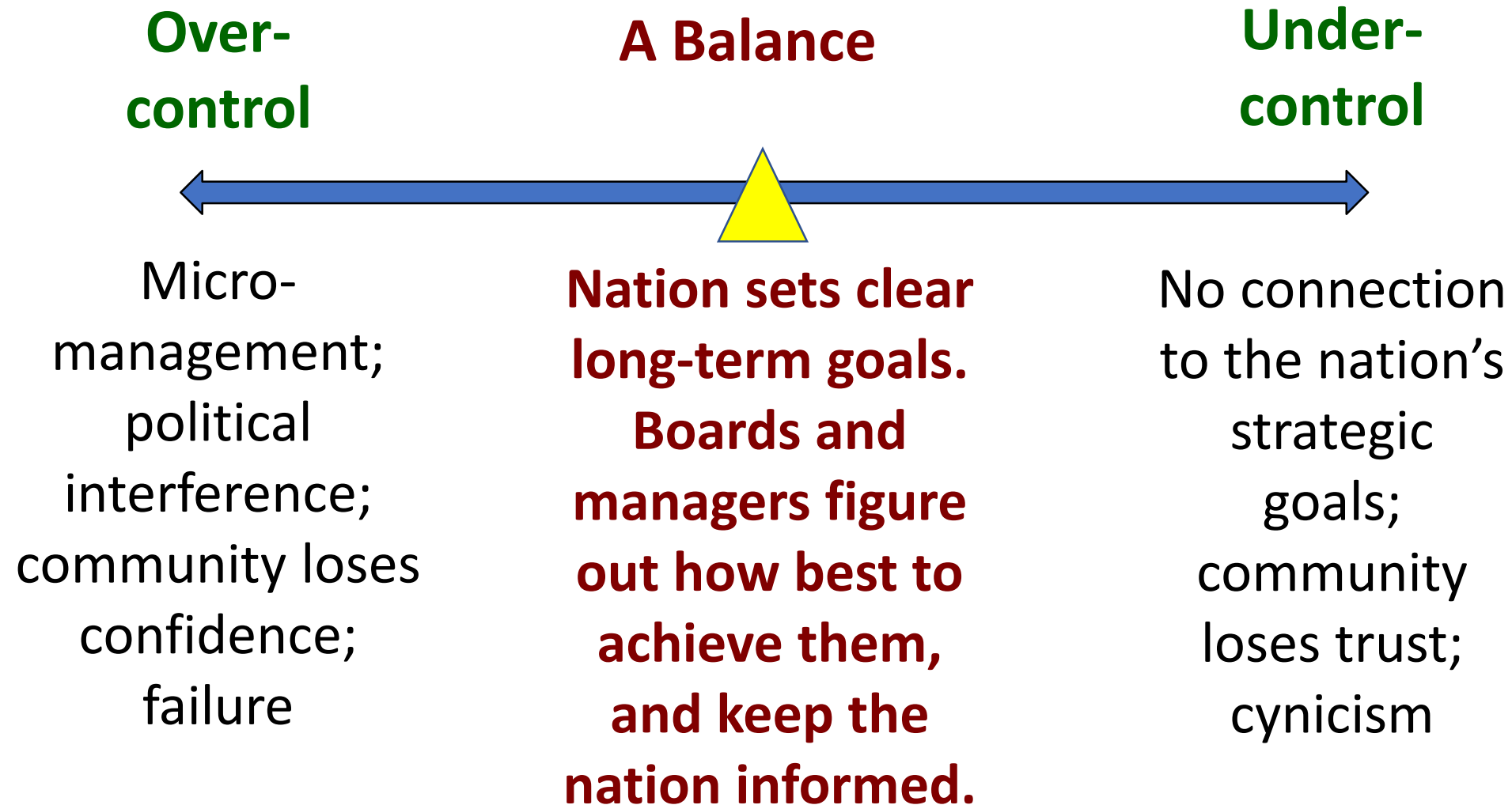
Do you have the governing tools you need to make your vision come alive?

What do we mean by capable and culturally appropriate governing institutions?

The Institutional Agenda

- Careful management of the business/politics connection

The Business-Politics Balance



The Institutional Agenda

- Careful management of the business/politics connection
- Stable transitions of leadership

The Election Aftermath...

“My job is to be sure there’s a smooth transition and that the new chairman is up to speed on where things stand...”



Frank Ettawageshik
Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa

Building Leaders...

“I take them with me wherever I go.”



Sophie Pierre,
Ktunaxa Nation



The Institutional Agenda

- Careful management of the business/politics connection
- Stable transitions of leadership
- Ability to make sensible law and regulation—and enforce both for everyone

Walking the Walk...



“Of course I paid it. That was Mohawk law.”

Mike Mitchell,
Mohawk
Council of
Akwesasne

The Institutional Agenda

- Careful management of the business/politics connection
- Stable transitions of leadership
- Ability to make sensible law and regulation—and enforce both for everyone
- Ability to get things done

Merit-based capacity building

“I’m sorry. We don’t do business that way anymore...”



Brian Cladoosby
Swinomish Indian Tribal Community

The Institutional Agenda

- Careful management of the business/politics connection
- Stable transitions of leadership
- Ability to make sensible law and regulation—and enforce both for everyone
- Ability to get things done
- Non-politicized resolution of disputes

An Independent Dispute Resolution Mechanism



“I’ve had two cases in front of our court, and I lost ‘em both.”



Rocky Barrett
Citizen Potawatomi Nation

Three Tests of “Capable Governing Institutions”

- Managerial Effectiveness
- Preventing Political Piracy
- Legitimacy with those being governed
(cultural match)

So the key questions are these:

- *Do you know what you want to be? What are you trying to protect, change, create? (strategic clarity)*
- *Do you have the governing tools you need to make that vision come alive? (a capable governing system that reflects your culture and can get the job done)*

These are economic development questions

Careful what you wish for...

Some of the challenges of successful development:

- It's seductive, and you can lose sight of your purpose
- It usually changes the community conversation
- It attracts pirates and shysters
- It's often more fragile than it appears

Some strategies for sustainability:

- Have a plan for success—and for the money—before success or money show up
- Keep the vision front and center
- Be skeptical
- Be smart
- Be a community of law
- Invest in future leadership
- And finally...



“Let’s remember:
a hundred years from
now, **we** will be the
ancestors. What will the
people of that time say
about **us**?”