

**Northern Arizona University, Economic Policy Institute
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Tribal Development Panel Biographies



N. Levi Esquerra

N. Levi Esquerra (Chemehuevi) is the first UA first Senior Vice President for Native American Advancement and Tribal Engagement. In this position, he coordinates University-wide efforts to advance Native American programs and tribal engagement in consonance with the strategic plan. He serves as a point of contact for Native issues and as a liaison between the University and tribal governments and regional and national tribal organizations.

Esquerra has nearly three decades of experience facilitating and promoting Native American advancement and economic development for Native Nations, including two years as Chairman of the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe and three additional terms on the Tribal Council. Most recently, he served as Director of the Center for American Indian Economic Development and the Rural Policy Institute, both in the Alliance Bank Economic Policy Institute, which is part of Northern Arizona University's W.A. Franke College of Business Administration. His experience also includes several other community and economic development roles with the state of Arizona, St. Louis Community Development Agency and American Indian Center of Mid-America, as well as work to address the needs of indigenous tribes in Argentina while representing the U.S. Department of State. His expertise also led to the Canadian Consulate inviting him to participate in the annual Canadian Indigenous Conference where he shared best practices with First Nations communities. As an elected leader, Esquerra helped shape the Nuwuvi Economic Development Corporation, which creates, manages, and develops tribal enterprises to promote economic self-sufficiency through business development, job creation and revenue production.



Maria Dadgar

Maria Dadgar is an enrolled member of the Piscataway Tribe of Accokeek, Maryland. Maria has worked in the fields of Higher Education, Non-Profit Executive Management and Tribal Economic Development for more than 18 years. Throughout her career, Maria has been involved in advocating for public policies and legislation on behalf of tribal nations regarding Economic Development, Health Policy and American Indian Education. Currently, Maria holds the position as Executive Director of the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona which serves 21 member tribal nations by leveraging state and federal resources on their behalf.

Previous positions include: Program Manager for American Indian Studies at Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ; Executive Director of Atlatl National Native Arts Network, Phoenix, AZ; National Program Manager for the Kaiser Family Foundation American Indian Health Policy Fellowship at First Nations Development Institute; and Acting President/CEO of the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development in Mesa, AZ.

Maria launched her career in non-profit management as Co-Founder/National Program Coordinator of Washington Internships for Native Students (WINS) at American University in Washington, D.C. During the 1990s and under Maria's direction, WINS was selected as one of

“America’s Best Practices,” by President Clinton’s Race Relations Commission for outstanding educational/work experience opportunity for American Indian college students. In addition to working at American University, Maria volunteered with the Clinton/Gore Re-election Team in the Office of Public Liaison, the Native American Desk at the DNC, Native Vote 96 as well as, the 1996 Presidential Inaugural Committee.

Maria holds an Associate’s Degree in Journalism/Mass Communications from Prince George’s Community College in Largo, MD, a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree from American University in Washington, D.C., and a MBA from Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, Arizona.

Among several organizations, Maria serves as Secretary of the Board of Directors for the Miracle House Foundation at Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community, appointed by Governor Doug Ducey to serve on the Governor’s Water Augmentation Council, and is an active member of the Delta Mu Delta International Honor Society in Business, Grand Canyon University Chapter.



Kevin Davidson

Mr. Davidson's education began with an associate arts degree in architectural drafting and design from the Phoenix Institute of Technology (1982). After several years working as an architectural draftsman, Mr. Davidson returned to college where he received a B.S. in Urban and Regional Planning at Cal-Poly, Pomona (1990) with the honor of magna cum laude. In 1992 Mr. Davidson completed his thesis at UCLA and obtained a M.A. in Urban Planning.

After a brief venture in GIS and statistical analysis consulting, Mr. Davidson moved to Kingman, Arizona in 1995 and began employment with the Mohave County Planning and Zoning Department as a long-range planner. Over 17 years, Mr. Davidson helped the county with several Growing Smarter updates to the General Plan, the creation of half a dozen area plans and regulatory review of numerous plan and permit applications, including three utility-scale renewable energy projects.

Since 2012, Mr. Davidson has been employed by the Hualapai Tribe as the Director of the Planning and Economic Development Department. Responsibilities include the supervision of consultants managing Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Energy and Economic Development grant-funded feasibility studies, overseeing staff assigned to the Housing Improvement Program (BIA funded), the Tribal Environmental Review Commission, the bi-weekly newsletter and the Youth Recreation Program. Additional duties include serving as the contracting officer on various home construction projects generated by BIA/HIP and managing the environmental review to acquire right-of-way to construct a 35-mile power line to Grand Canyon West.

Mr. Davidson has been a member of the Arizona Planning Association since 1996 and was granted American Institute of Certified Planners membership in 2000.



Kodee J. Goseyun

Kodee J. Goseyun is the Economic Development Specialist of the San Carlos Apache Tribe, providing technical assistance to local small businesses. Kodee sits on the Advisory Panel for the Native American Intellectual Property Enterprise Council, a nation-wide organization assisting Native American inventors. She graduated from Arizona State University with a degree in Speech Pathology & Audiology



Richard L. Grijalva

Richard is Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Economic Development Authority of the Tohono O’ odham Nation (EDA) and has been with the EDA since 2006. As CEO, Richard has assisted the EDA in establishing a commercial real estate portfolio; in addition to offering assistance to the Nation, Districts and Tribal members on economic matters. The EDA is organized as a chapter by the Nation’s Constitution, as one means to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Richard received his business degree from the University of Arizona, Eller School of Business.

Prior to joining the EDA Richard was president/owner of a small business and before owning his business was Southern Arizona Area Vice-President for the National Economic Development Association (NEDA) based in Washington D.C.

Outside of the EDA, Richard is an Arizona Certified Mediator and 4th generation Tucsonan. He was also an Adjunct Professor in the Business/Management Department of Pima Community College.



Cindi Ptak

Cindi is Arizona’s new Economic Development Representative. She’s joining EDA after a successful career at the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) where over the past decade, she directed multi-million-dollar programs to build transportation infrastructure and economic capacity in tribal communities. As Managing Director for FHWA’s Office of Innovative Program Delivery, she advised the agency’s Chief Innovation Officer on a broad range of transportation policy and programmatic issues, such as advancing innovative technologies to help tribes, states and local communities with infrastructure investments; tribal training and technical assistance; workforce development to align with tribal, state and local economic development strategies; and marketing and communications.

Cindi is a subject matter expert on federal/tribal diplomacy and engagement. For six years, she managed the Office of Tribal Transportation in FHWA’s Office of Federal Lands Highway where she

directed program funds to federally recognized Indian tribal governments and the Bureau of Indian Affairs for transportation infrastructure investments. She also ran several discretionary grant programs, including the National Scenic Byways Program, the Public Lands Highway and the Forest Highways Program and was appointed to the Presidential Task Force for Travel and Economic Competitiveness for her national expertise in transportation and tourism infrastructure development.

Before coming to FHWA, Cindi built a career in state government as an urban planner and became the Communications + Legislative Affairs Director for the Maryland Department of Planning. She has a BA in Urban Studies from the University of Baltimore.