

A Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) is “a private contract between a land use developer and a coalition of community-based organizations, regarding a proposed development project”[4] Negotiated community benefits have been initiated in a variety of different forms including, but not limited to, mutual benefits-sharing agreements, Impact and Benefit Agreements, community workforce agreements, project labor agreements, Native American tribal agreements, and good neighbor agreements [5].[6]

So, what does this emerging and expanding phenomenon mean for the practice of economic development and economic developers? *Business attraction and deal-making may no longer be sufficient skill sets for successful economic development professionals!* A 21st century publicly supported economic developer will be expected to be able to negotiate BOTH an economic development agreement with a private business AND support a community engagement process that helps the community they serve develop and negotiate an effective and enforceable community benefit agreement. Greater public accountability of the investment and increasingly limited public resources in support of private business development for some of the economic development community will be a welcome addition to their professional roles, for others this may be more difficult. *Evolution or revolution* - the profession is in transition and must continue to evolve if it is to survive and thrive in response to growing community expectations and demands in the 21st century.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEW NATIVE AMERICAN INSTITUTE DIRECTOR

Kevin Leonard, Ph.D., Director of the Native American Institute

Kevin Leonard, Ph.D., who has helped renew relationships with Michigan’s Tribal communities as interim director of MSU’s Native American Institute (NAI), has been named the Institute’s permanent director effective August 1, 2024. He was appointed interim director in October of 2022 by then MSU Provost Teresa Woodruff, who recognized his background, expertise, and forward-thinking commitment as integral to the success of NAI.

As interim director, Leonard led NAI’s transition from the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources to the Office of University Outreach and Engagement, where he began conducting listening sessions with Michigan’s 12 federally recognized Tribes and partners across the state. As a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Leonard’s extensive knowledge has contributed to better understanding Native communities and what they want from NAI and MSU as a partner.



[4]United States Department of Energy. (2022, June 27). Community Benefits Agreements (CBA) 101. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Njg-YWjpnkE>
https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/Community_Benefits_Plan_Webinar.pdf

[5] Ibid

[6] For a more complete review of community benefits refer to the soon to be released “Community Benefit Planning and Agreements A Summary Overview” Fall 2024 at <https://ced.msu.edu/>