Synopsis of research being undertaken by Dr Manley Begay and Dr Ian Record for the Foundation of Research Science and Technology grant “Determinants of Innovation and Growth in the Seafood Sector”

June 2004

In conjunction with the New Zealand Seafood Industry Innovation Project, the Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management, and Policy (NNI) at The University of Arizona is researching the roots of innovations among Native fisheries in the United States and First Nations’ fisheries in Canada with an eye towards their potential implications for further seafood sector innovation and growth by the Māori, who are major stakeholders in New Zealand’s seafood industry.

In its preliminary qualitative analysis, NNI (under the auspices of Dr. Ian Record and Dr. Manley Begay) has conducted thorough investigations of ten cases widely regarded as exceptional examples of indigenous-led fisheries innovation. U.S. examples include: the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission (Washington State), the Umatilla Basin Salmon Recovery Project (Oregon), the Wampanoag Aquinnah Shellfish Hatchery (Aquaculture) (Massachusetts), the Tulalip Tribes and the Snohomish Basin Biogas Project (Washington State), the Gila River Indian Community’s O’odham Oidak Demonstration Fish and Prawn Farm (Arizona), and the Yakama Nation’s Cle Elum Supplementation Hatchery and Research Facility (Washington State). Canadian examples
include the Huu-ay-aht First Nation’s Hishuk Tsawak Habitat Restoration Program (British Columbia) and the Nisga’a Fisheries Program (British Columbia).

NNI’s initial findings reveal that innovations—whether political, scientific or commercial—by indigenous nations in the area of fisheries begin with the effective exercise of practical self-rule by indigenous nations and are supported by capable, culturally appropriate governing institutions dedicated to implementing their nations’ strategic plans through the comprehensive building of technical and human resource capacity. Across the board, innovative indigenous nations in the area of fisheries are successful because they innovate institutionally as well as scientifically. Their innovations are sustainable as much because of their commitments to the building of effective governing institutions and policies and technical capacity as they are for their science. They provide irrefutable evidence of the fact that the only viable route to sustainability is through locally tailored, culturally reliant solutions built from the ground up by indigenous peoples themselves. NNI’s findings reiterate a number of the overarching findings coming out of Hui Taumata 2005, namely: the importance of seizing opportunities for collaboration and new partnerships to drive economic advancement, urgently increasing human capital, building upon indigenous identity and knowledge as an inimitable source of innovation, and reinforcing excellent leadership and governance that shares good practice and works cooperatively.
In part two of its research, NNI will conduct an extensive, quantitatively-based survey of the extent and variety of fisheries innovations among indigenous nations in the United States and Canada in order to identify trends in innovation and what is driving them.