TEMPE (Dec. 4, 2012) American Indians experienced their own civil rights movement during the 1970s and 80s as national legislation was passed that gave tribes the rights to determine their own destinies as sovereign nations.

Groundbreaking acts that were passed during this era addressed American Indian healthcare, child welfare, education, environmental management and self-determination.

 It was almost a perfect storm in a positive way where things came together through the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act, said Eddie Brown, professor and executive director of the American Indian Policy Institute in the ASU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. In the past, cities and counties would barely consider dealing with Indian tribes as governments.

This era of innovation is the topic of an upcoming panel discussion, The Legacy of the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona Innovations in Tribal-Federal--State Relations, that will explore government relationships, the ongoing significance of the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act and the role of the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona in coordinating united tribal government action. The event takes place at 5 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 6, at Arizona State University s Sandra Day O Connor College of Law-Armstrong Hall, Room 114, followed by a reception.

Arizona was at the forefront of tribal-state relations in the country at the time. One reason was because of Governor Bruce Babbitt who worked to move relationships with tribes out of courts of law and into legislative bodies where questions of rights and sovereign powers could be dealt with and negotiated, Brown said.

 It created an awakening of ways to rethink how states and tribes could work together for the betterment of Arizona, he added. It seemed like one challenge after another that was met in innovative ways. Tribes, the state and the federal government came together and really pushed Arizona into the forefront of tribal-state relations.

Brown was active in the movement during this time as former director of the Arizona Department of Economic Security and Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs in the Department of the Interior. He worked to ensure that health and social services were effectively administered and delivered to tribes and he was a liaison between tribes and state governments working through the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona.

Also participating in the panel discussion is Veronica L. Homer, former vice chairman of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, who was active in the early development of the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona. She was the first female president of the National Congress of American Indians and she was superintendent for the Salt River Pima Maricopa Agency from 1994-2004.

 The Inter Tribal Council of Arizona is very much like the Western Governors Association where tribes come together and address issues to move them to policy development. ITCA

does not speak for any specific tribe, but it enables tribes to come together and work collectively, Brown said.

John R. Lewis is also on the panel. As the long-standing executive director of the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, he guided the organization during the period of dramatic expansion of governmental programs and provided key leadership in support of tribal self-determination.

The panel will be moderated by Donald L. Fixico, ASU distinguished foundation professor of history. He is a policy and ethno historian who has published numerous books and participated in more than 20 documentaries about American Indians.

The panel discussion is sponsored by the Arizona Humanities Council, the, American Indian Policy Institute at ASU and the Labriola National American Indian Data Center. Co-sponsors include the ASU Office of the Special Advisor to the President on American Indian Affairs and American Indian Studies. For information, contact (480) 965-1055 or aipi@asu.edu.