

# BLM Bridgeport Land Sale Mediation

June 2006-February 2007

**Location:** Bridgeport, California

## Background

Since 1995, the Bridgeport Indian Colony had been interested in purchasing about 40 acres adjacent to the reservation from the Bureau of Land Management (“BLM”). But concerns of town residents regarding the tribe’s commercial development plans and the potential impact on traffic, local businesses, taxes, and the environment blocked the sale, which ended up in a federal appeal process. In June 2006, the Department of Interior’s Board of Land Appeals asked the U.S. Institute to conduct an assessment to see if some type of negotiated settlement might be possible. Based on the findings, the Institute conducted a three-day mediation in February 2007, and the parties entered a written settlement, ending the appeals and allowing the sale to move forward.



## Highlights/Innovation

- The mediator got the parties to “*think outside the box, which resulted in an innovative solution to the conflict.*”
- Before the mediation, there was almost no trust or ability to work together among the parties. After the mediation, the parties agreed they could and would work collaboratively to resolve any future issues.

## Results and Accomplishments

- Years of dispute and mistrust were resolved with the investment of three days and \$19,000 in mediation.
- In addition to resolving the specific land dispute, the mediation resulted in better relations between the tribe, town and BLM.
- All of the respondents felt that the mediation process helped them gain a more complete understanding of the issues.

## Credits

### Partners

Elena Gonzalez, Director  
Office of Collaborative Action and Dispute  
Resolution, U.S. Dept. of Interior

Sara Greenburg, ADR Specialist  
Office of Hearings and Appeals, Interior  
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### U.S. Institute Project Lead

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