



## **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE A “SOVEREIGNTY FRAME” AT ARC?**

As a first step, please read this overview of sovereignty.

From the U.S Bureau of Indian Affairs:

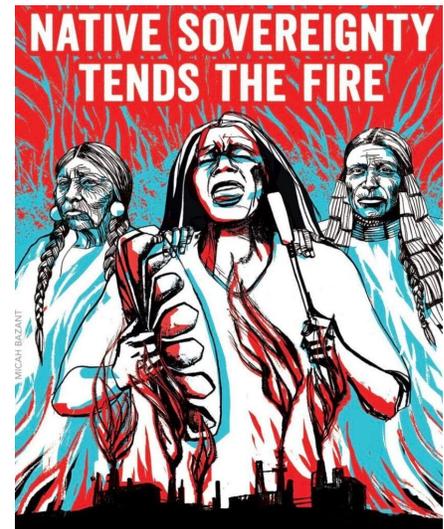
### **→ What is the legal status of American Indian and Alaska Native tribes?**

*Article 1, Section 8 of the United States Constitution vests Congress, and by extension the Executive and Judicial branches of our government, with the authority to engage in relations with the tribes, thereby firmly placing tribes within the constitutional fabric of our nation.*

When the governmental authority of tribes was first challenged in the 1830's, U. S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall articulated the fundamental principle that has guided the evolution of federal Indian law to the present: *That tribes possess a nationhood status and retain inherent powers of self-government.*

### **→ What is the federal Indian trust responsibility?**

*The federal Indian trust responsibility is a legal obligation under which the United States “has charged itself with moral obligations of the highest responsibility and trust” toward Indian tribes (Seminole Nation v. United States, 1942). This obligation was first discussed by Chief Justice John Marshall in Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831). Over the years, the trust doctrine has been at the center of numerous other Supreme Court cases, thus making it one of the most important principles in federal Indian law.*



**The federal Indian trust responsibility is also a legally enforceable fiduciary obligation on the part of the United States to protect tribal treaty rights, lands, assets, and resources, as well as a duty to carry out the mandates of federal law with respect to American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages.** In several cases discussing the trust responsibility, the Supreme Court has used language suggesting that it entails legal duties, moral obligations, and



the fulfillment of understandings and expectations that have arisen over the entire course of the relationship between the United States and the federally recognized tribes.

## From the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI):

---

**There are 574 federally recognized Indian Nations (variously called tribes, nations, bands, pueblos, communities and native villages) in the United States.** Approximately 229 of these ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse nations are located in Alaska; the other federally recognized tribes are located in 35 other states. **Additionally, there are state recognized tribes located throughout the United States recognized by their respective state governments.**

### A Culture of Tribal Governance

American Indians and Alaska Natives are members of the original Indigenous peoples of North America. Tribal nations have been recognized as sovereign since their first interaction with European settlers. ***The United States continues to recognize this unique political status and relationship.***

### A Political Relationship

Native peoples and governments have inherent rights and a political relationship with the U.S. government ***that does not derive from race or ethnicity.***

Tribal members are citizens of three sovereigns: their tribe, the United States, and the state in which they reside. They are also individuals in an international context with the rights afforded to any other individual.

### Tribes as Nations

**The governmental status of tribal nations is at the heart of nearly every issue that touches Indian Country.** Self-government is essential if tribal communities are to continue to protect their unique cultures and identities. **Tribes have the inherent power to govern all matters involving their members, as well as a range of issues in Indian Country.**

---





## **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PRACTITIONERS (ADMIN, FACULTY, STAFF) AT ARC?**

Tribal citizens have typically been placed into a race framework at ARC. The shift to a sovereignty frame implies that we start to ask new questions and look at issues with a new lens system-wide.

The list below provides examples and a starting point for how our thinking can shift:

- “How is our financial aid department serving citizens of tribal nations specifically?”
- “Does our financial aid office have relationships and connections with local Native nations to provide continuity of support?”
- “Should we have a tribal financial aid specialist to bridge students to resources offered by their respective tribes, the Federal government, tribe-specific scholarships, and foundations?”
- “How can we develop tribal pathway programs for citizens of local Native nations?”
- “How can we do collaborative data gathering with Native nations (local and beyond) so that research is participatory, culturally informed, and culturally appropriate?”
- “How can we start to look at tribal citizens as proportionally significant relative to their tribes and not as a ‘small number’ to be excluded from most reports?”
- “How can we better serve tribal citizens by disaggregating data by tribe since Native Americans are not a race?”
- “What are the tribal values that inform the lives of students of a given Native nation? How can ARC reinforce those values and also infuse those values into classrooms and systems so that tribal citizens are not experiencing alienation?”



**Since citizens of tribal nations do not exist without consideration of their tribes (even if not formally enrolled in their tribe), tribal history informs the present-day lived experience of our tribal students.**

Again, more questions:

- “How does my course reinforce or negate the historical narratives, oral histories, and lived accounts of tribal citizens?”
- “Does my course or administrative style make tribal sovereignty invisible?”



**Relationship with the tribe is part of the relationship with the student. This will look different in various campus roles.**

Questions:

- “As an instructor at ARC, am I aware of how my historical identity informs my relationship with tribal citizens in my classes?”
- “How can I cultivate a foundation of knowledge about tribal histories that will help me understand my students?”
- “As classified staff, how does my historical identity inform how I am being perceived by the tribal citizen across the counter?”
- “How am I connecting campus programs and services to local K-12 Indian Education programs at our feeder schools?”
- “As administration, what relationships do I have with colleagues in tribal administration in local and non-local Native nations?”
- “What is the relationship between the physical plant of ARC and tribal nations? (landscaping, Native gardens, heritage displays, sacred sites, environmental preservation and sustainability, conversation with tribal heritage departments, construction planning, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), building names, tribal flag displays, village sites, etc.)
- “How are we considering the impacts of the unique legal frameworks that inform the lives of tribal citizens (Indian Child Welfare Act, Federal Indian law, Title VI of Ed. Code, The Indian Arts and Crafts Act, The American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, fishing and hunting rights, water rights, tribal courts and justice systems, etc.)



**At a system level, the establishment of the ARC Office of Tribal Relations is intended to build and maintain relationships with local Native nations as well as the nations of all tribal citizens on our campus. These relationships will inform and guide all of the above in the context of the sovereignty frame.**

---

**What are some general best practices to support tribal citizens in the classroom?**

1. **Cultivate an awareness** of the facts of Native sovereignty and be unafraid to voice the awareness.
2. **Give space to authentic tribal voices.** Use texts, books, movies, posts, videos, and accounts from American Indians themselves. Be skeptical of colonial and



anthropological accounts and accounts (fiction and non-fiction) written by others “about” American Indians or involving Native themes.

3. **Realize that the voices of tribal citizens are not monolithic**; also realize that no single American Indian individual speaks for the whole group. The exchange of perspectives and ideas within any given tribe is dynamic.
4. **Use the ARC land acknowledgment statement** at the start of the term; please include it in syllabi.



### **ARC Indigenous Land Acknowledgement Statement**

*We acknowledge the land which we occupy at American River College as the traditional home of the Nisenan, Maidu, and Miwok tribal nations. These sovereign people have been the caretakers of this land since time immemorial. Despite centuries of genocide and occupation the Nisenan, Maidu, and Miwok continue as vibrant and resilient tribes and bands, both Federally recognized and unrecognized. We take this opportunity to acknowledge the generations that have gone before as well as the present-day Nisenan, Maidu, and Miwok people.*

#### **What is this and why is it important?**

<https://usdac.us/nativeland>

[https://diversity.sdsu.edu/resources/\\_pdfs/land-acknowledgement.pdf](https://diversity.sdsu.edu/resources/_pdfs/land-acknowledgement.pdf)

Use this interactive map to view indigenous national territories:

<https://native-land.ca/>

5. **Support campus initiatives** built upon the sovereignty frame.
6. If you have **students who are tribal citizens**, let them know that you recognize them as such. For instance, **include in your syllabi the following statement** and QR direct link:

“This instructor supports the uniqueness of American Indian tribal citizens in tribal sovereignty. If you are Native American (enrolled or non-enrolled in your tribe) and would like to connect with further support, resource referral, scholarship information, and community, please visit the ARC Native American Resource Center, Davies Hall 229E. Distance mode: email Prof. Jesus Valle, [vallej@arc.losrios.edu](mailto:vallej@arc.losrios.edu). Video tour: <https://youtu.be/IKyD5mqhHNA>





7. **Become familiar with what the ARC Native American Resource Center offers.** Watch the video tour provided above. You can also schedule a conversation with the Center staff to talk about how to support your tribal students.
8. **Show tribal citizens that you really care about their reality and their hardships.** Native Americans are subjected to dramatic racism every single day through comments, mascotting, racist names and logos, stereotypes, outright hatred, and national political rhetoric. **Develop a personal plan of development that focuses on understanding how your personal identity impacts your understanding of anti-racism and anti-tribalism.**
9. **Familiarize yourself with local Native support organizations** and be ready to offer these resources to tribal citizens:
  - ★ **Sacramento Native American Health Center:** <https://www.snahc.org/>
  - ★ **Northern Valley Indian Health:** <https://www.nvih.org/>
  - ★ **Chapa-De Indian Health:** <https://chapa-de.org/>

10. **Avoid objectifying American Indian tribal citizens.** Don't single out tribal citizens to speak in front of the class or for "their people." Tribal citizens may not want to be identified to the class. You will not be able to identify tribal citizens by looking at them, and *the realities of Native identity will probably clash with your internalized ideas* (from movies, media, K-12 education) of what Indians "are supposed" to look like or act like or values you think that they "should" hold.

**The following scenario may be appropriate:** highlight again the syllabus statement at the end of class during the first week or two and say that you will hang around for a few extra minutes if anyone has



questions or wants to talk about the statement. You can then ask the tribal citizens who choose to come forward after class if you can **walk them over** to connect with the ARC Native American Resource Center. (via distance, create an intro email that includes you, the student, and me, [vallej@arc.losrios.edu](mailto:vallej@arc.losrios.edu)).

11. **Avoid starting interactions and conversations with American Indians in ways that put your experiences first or are intrusive or judgemental:**
  - "I read this book once..."
  - "I saw this movie, very tragic..."



- “I used to work with a guy who was Indian.....”
- “What’s your tribe? I used to live down in Arizona....”
- “I used to date an Indian person.....”
- “I went to a pow wow once.....”
- “How much Indian are you?”
- “You don’t look Indian....”
- “I just love the jewelry....”

**DO USE forms of this:**

*“I noticed that you mentioned that you were a tribal citizen. Thanks for sharing that. If it is OK with you, I’d like to connect you with campus resources and support for Native American students.”*

12. **Not all American Indian students will want or need additional support.** They may also choose not to be part of our campus Native community. We respect this. If you have offered resources a couple of times and the student shows no interest, please let it go and respect the individual in their path.