With Liberty & Justice for All:
The Benefits of Tribal Sovereignty for all Americans

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“Political Power, Policy and Health Equity”
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www.ncai.org
A Unified Voice For Indian Country

National Congress of American Indians

- Founded in 1944 to serve the broad interests of tribal governments and communities
- A representative congress of American Indian and Alaska Native tribes
- United to protect and enhance sovereign and treaty rights while securing our traditional laws, cultures, and ways of life for our descendants
- Advance a common understanding of the rightful place of tribes in the family of American governments
Timeline of Federal Indian Policy

Pre-Columbian Period: 1492

Colonial Period: 1492-1828

Removal, Reservation and Treaty Period: 1828-1887

Allotment Period: 1887-1934

Indian Reorganization Period: 1934-1945

Termination Period: 1945-1965

Self Determination Period: 1965-2000

Nation-to-Nation Period: 2000-Present

INDIAN COUNTRY 1492

INDIAN COUNTRY TODAY
Indigenous Peoples & the American Nation

• Federal Trust Responsibility
  ✓ First Peoples with Political Status based largely on treaties

• Emergence of the “American Nation” built on erasure and displacement
  ✓ Forced removal and relocation (LAND)
  ✓ Blood quantum (IDENTITY & CULTURE)
  ✓ Assimilationist schooling practices & forced sterilization (SYSTEMS)

• Exclusion from civic participation
Erasure

NON-WHITE BABIES NOW OUTNUMBER WHITE BABIES IN AMERICA FOR THE FIRST TIME.

SECOND.

* =

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Research Sovereignty

Proposed Principles for Research Sovereignty

1. Indigenous knowledge is valid and should be valued.
2. Research is not culturally neutral.
3. Responsible stewardship includes the task of learning how to interpret and understand data and research.
4. Tribes must exercise sovereignty when conducting research and managing data.
5. Research must benefit Native people.
Regulation vs. Stewardship

Harm to Humans

INNOVATION

Researcher Burden
Value of Health Sovereignty

- NUKA System of Care
- Dental Health Aide Therapists
- Chickasaw Nation Diabetes Care Center
What Sovereignty Looks Like

• Generating Native-to-Native Comparisons
  – Leveraging strengths
  – Building partnerships

• Building Local Capacity and System Accountability

• Valuing Cultural Processes & Concepts

• Improved Health Outcomes
American Indians and Alaska Natives as a Share of the Total Population, by State, 2009-2011

Total: 2.5 million = 1% of U.S. Population

American Indian and Alaska Native includes people of Hispanic origin.
SOURCE: KCMU analysis of 2009 - 2011 ACS.
Figure 2

Age Distribution, AIAN compared to Total US

- American Indian/Alaska Native Alone
  - Under 5: 8.3%
  - 5 to 9: 8.3%
  - 10 to 14: 8.4%
  - 15 to 19: 9.0%
  - 20 to 24: 7.6%
  - 25 to 29: 6.9%
  - 30 to 34: 6.7%
  - 35 to 39: 6.6%
  - 40 to 44: 6.6%
  - 45 to 49: 7.1%
  - 50 to 54: 6.5%
  - 55 to 59: 5.3%
  - 60 to 64: 4.0%
  - 65 to 69: 2.7%
  - 70 to 74: 1.8%
  - 75 to 79: 1.2%
  - 80 to 84: 0.7%
  - 85 and over: 0.6%

- Total Population
  - Under 5: 6.5%
  - 5 to 9: 6.6%
  - 10 to 14: 6.7%
  - 15 to 19: 7.1%
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  - 65 to 69: 4.0%
  - 70 to 74: 3.0%
  - 75 to 79: 2.4%
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  - 85 and over: 1.8%
Figure 3
Age Distribution, South Dakota

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>American Indian/Alaska Native Alone</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5</td>
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<td>5 to 9</td>
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American Indian/Alaska Native Alone

Total Population
[A] new Washington Post poll shows how few ordinary Indians have been persuaded by a national movement to change the football team’s moniker.
The Importance of Place

Top 10 States with the Highest Populations of Voting-Age Natives

The power of the Native Vote has been significant in state races and important national races.

Every Native Vote Counts

In 2006, Senator John Tester (D-MT) won his election by 3,542 votes, over 17,000 voters cast ballots on Indian reservations.

Senator Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) won the 2012 election by a 1% margin. Heitkamp noted that her only road to Washington, DC was through Indian Country.

Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD) was re-elected by 500 votes in 2002, with the final votes counted coming from the Pine Ridge Reservation.

With endorsements from 12 tribes, Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) was narrowly elected in 2000, creating a 50-50 tie in the US Senate.

Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) credits her victory in the 2010 election to the significant power of the Alaska Native vote. With over 100,000 write-in votes, she was the only one of two successful US Senate write-in candidates.
Gap Comparisons

Dropout Rates for SY2001 to SY 2006, Grades 7-12

Source: Alaska DEED
Statewide, seven percent of non-Natives were living in poverty in 1999.
Native-to-Native Comparisons

High School Graduation Rates for SY2004, by Ethnicity and ANCSA Region

Source: First Alaskans Institute, 2005
## System Accountability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILD HEALTH &amp; WELLNESS</th>
<th>Alaska</th>
<th>Montana</th>
<th>New Mexico</th>
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<td>Low Birthweight, 2011-2013</td>
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<td>Infant Mortality, 2011-2013</td>
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<td>Death Rate, 2011-2013</td>
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<td>Suicide Rate, 2011</td>
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<td>Homicide Rate, 2011</td>
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<td>Youth Obesity, 2011</td>
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<td>Youth Smoking, 2011</td>
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<td>Youth Physical Activity, 2011</td>
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<td>Youth Nutrition, 2011</td>
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<td>Youth Binge Drinking, 2011</td>
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<td>Youth Marijuana Use, 2011</td>
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<td>Youth Seat Belt Use, 2011</td>
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<td>Unintentional Injury Death Rate, 2004-2010</td>
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Importance of Storylines

Overweight & High Rates of Diabetes

High Rates of School Dropout

High Rates of Substance Abuse

High Rates of Suicide

Food Sovereignty

School-/Foster Care-to-Prison Pipeline

Systemic Disregard for Native Culture

Need for Investments in Healing and Mental Health
Value of Language & Culture

10/10 Native youth want to learn their language

3/10 Native youth are taking the initiative to learn

What are you doing about it?
Opposition to Sovereignty

• Status Quo in “Expert” Networks & Systems

• A Commitment to Self-Determination Allows Diminished Investments in Growing Local Capacity

• Scarcity Paradigm

Much Hinges on Our Narratives/Terminology & Ability to Future Together
Take-Aways

• Investing in sovereignty and self-governance can benefit all communities.

• Sovereignty requires an awareness that political power and equity involves a focus on land, people, culture, and systems.

• Equity requires policies that support individual, community, and systemic transformation.
“I will tell you something about stories...They aren’t just entertainment. Don’t be fooled. They are all we have, you see, all we have to fight off illness and death.”

~Leslie Marmon Silko
Thank You

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