

The Tribal Leaders Survey 2017-18: American Indian and Alaska Native Governance in Comparative Perspective ¹

Florian G. Kern
University of Essex
fkern@essex.ac.uk

Kristian Skrede Gleditsch
University of Essex
ksg@essex.ac.uk

Rebecca Cordell
Arizona State University
Rebecca.Cordell@asu.edu

Abstract

In a recent Perspectives on Politics symposium, Ferguson (2016) and others argue that political science has long neglected political issues concerning Native Americans, and they lament a lack of comparative research on governance in American Indian and Alaska Native areas (AIAN). One of the factors that have impeded comparative investigations of AIAN politics is the limited availability of systematic and comprehensive data. This lack of data is unfortunate, as comparing AIAN polities promises a unique opportunity to study how variation in governance across units can shape various policy outcomes. Moreover, better comparative data on institutions could also help provide crucial insights about how governance may affect endemic problems such as crime and human security in AIAN communities. However, the data available is severely constrained and it is difficult to know to what extent the availability is associated with other factors affecting violent crime. To overcome the problems of data on AIAN institutions, we have launched the Tribal Leaders Survey (TLS). This online Qualtrics survey asks the leadership of AIAN communities to record their views on the demand and supply of governance and cooperation with other authorities. We include questions on the background of individual respondents, tribal features (including political institutions and governance), relations with other authorities and key challenges facing their tribal community. In the tribal features section of the survey, we ask respondents descriptive questions about their unit, tribal constitutions, the executive of the AIAN community, the administration, legislative institutions, judiciary institutions, and the law enforcement agency.

¹This project is generously funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation. Our colleagues Traci Morris and Brian Howard at the American Indian Policy Institute (AIPI) at Arizona State University have served as technical advisors on the survey questions. Rob Johns, Katariina Mustasilta, Adam Peresman and Fabian Neuner provided invaluable feedback. We would also like to thank Laura Saavedra-Lux for her assistance with the survey.