



American Indians, Indian Tribes, and State Government



About this Publication

This guidebook discusses major issues involved in the relationship between Indian tribes, American Indians, and state government, including criminal and civil jurisdiction, employment, control of natural resources, gaming and liquor regulation, taxation, health and human services, child welfare, education, and civic engagement.

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Contributors

American Indians, Indian Tribes, and State Government is a cooperative project by legislative analysts in the Research Department of the Minnesota House of Representatives. This publication introduces Minnesota legislators to the major legal issues involved in the relationship between American Indians, Indian tribes, and state government.

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Contents

Overview	2
American Indians in Minnesota	3
Part One: Terms and Concepts	7
Definition of “Indian”	8
Definition of “Indian Tribe”	11
Indian Lands and Territories	14
Tribal Sovereignty: Limits on State Power	18
Public Law 280.....	22
Special Rules for Interpreting Indian Law	24
American Indian State Government Liaisons.....	26
Part Two: Specific Issues by Topic.....	27
Criminal Jurisdiction in Indian Country	28
Civil Jurisdiction in Indian Country: State Courts and State Laws; Tribal Courts and Tribal Codes.....	39
Labor and Employment Law in Indian Country.....	44
Gaming Regulation in Indian Country	48
Liquor Regulation in Indian Country	55
Control of Natural Resources in Indian Country	57
Environmental Regulation in Indian Country.....	61
Taxation in Indian Country.....	70
Health and Human Services for Indians	91
Indian Child Welfare Laws.....	96
Education Laws Affecting Indian Students.....	104
Elections, Voting Rights, and Civic Engagement	120
Appendices.....	123
Appendix I: Population of American Indian and Alaska Native Persons.....	124
Appendix II: Demographic and Other Information about Minnesota’s Indian Reservations.....	127
Appendix III: Secretary of the Interior’s Authority to Acquire Land in Trust for Indian Tribes.....	154
Appendix IV: Tribal Courts in Minnesota	157

Overview

This publication introduces Minnesota legislators to the major legal issues involved in the relationship between Indian* tribes, American Indians, and state government. It is not intended to be a comprehensive or in-depth treatment of the subject.

The publication begins with some basic data on American Indians in Minnesota today. Map 1 shows the locations of tribal reservations. Map 2, Figure 1, and Appendix I present population information from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey five-year estimates for 2013 to 2017. Appendix II presents demographic and other information for each reservation in Minnesota.

Part One defines terms and explains concepts that are necessary for understanding the basic nature of state and federal power relative to American Indians and Indian tribes.

Part Two contains a series of papers on specific legal issues relevant to policymakers. The topics are:

- Criminal Jurisdiction in Indian Country
- Civil Jurisdiction in Indian Country
- Labor and Employment Law in Indian Country
- Gaming Regulation in Indian Country
- Liquor Regulation in Indian Country
- Control of Natural Resources in Indian Country
- Environmental Regulation in Indian Country
- Taxation in Indian Country
- Health and Human Services for Indians
- Indian Child Welfare Laws
- Education Laws Affecting Indian Students
- Elections, Voting Rights, and Civic Engagement

Appendix III explains the ability of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs to acquire land in trust for tribes.

Appendix IV lists the 11 tribal courts in Minnesota and the court and court of appeals for the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe is a federally recognized tribal government that provides unified leadership and services to the six member tribes: Bois Forte, Fond du Lac, Grand Portage, Leech Lake, Mille Lacs, and White Earth.

A Note on Terminology

*The term “Indian” was given to the indigenous people of North America by the European explorers when they first encountered the New World, mistakenly thinking they had reached the Indies. Individuals have different preferences for the term used to describe indigenous people in the United States, including American Indian, Native American, or by the names they call themselves in their own languages. The main groups of Indians in Minnesota are the Dakota and the Chippewa, also referred to as Ojibwe or Anishinaabe. This publication uses the term “American Indian” to collectively refer to indigenous people of North America and Minnesota. This publication also follows the convention used in nearly all federal and state laws, referring collectively to all the indigenous people of North America and Minnesota as “Indians” when describing statutory or legal identification. In certain instances the term “American Indian” in conjunction with Alaskan Natives is used as that is the term used in some state laws and the U.S. Census for indigenous people to identify themselves.

American Indians in Minnesota

Population of American Indians in Minnesota

Minnesota has 11 federally recognized Indian reservations and an additional tribal government, the Minnesota Chippewa tribe, which is a federally recognized tribal government for six member tribes: Bois Forte, Fond du Lac, Grand Portage, Leech Lake, Mille Lacs, and White Earth.

Anishinaabe Bands (Chippewa/Ojibwe)

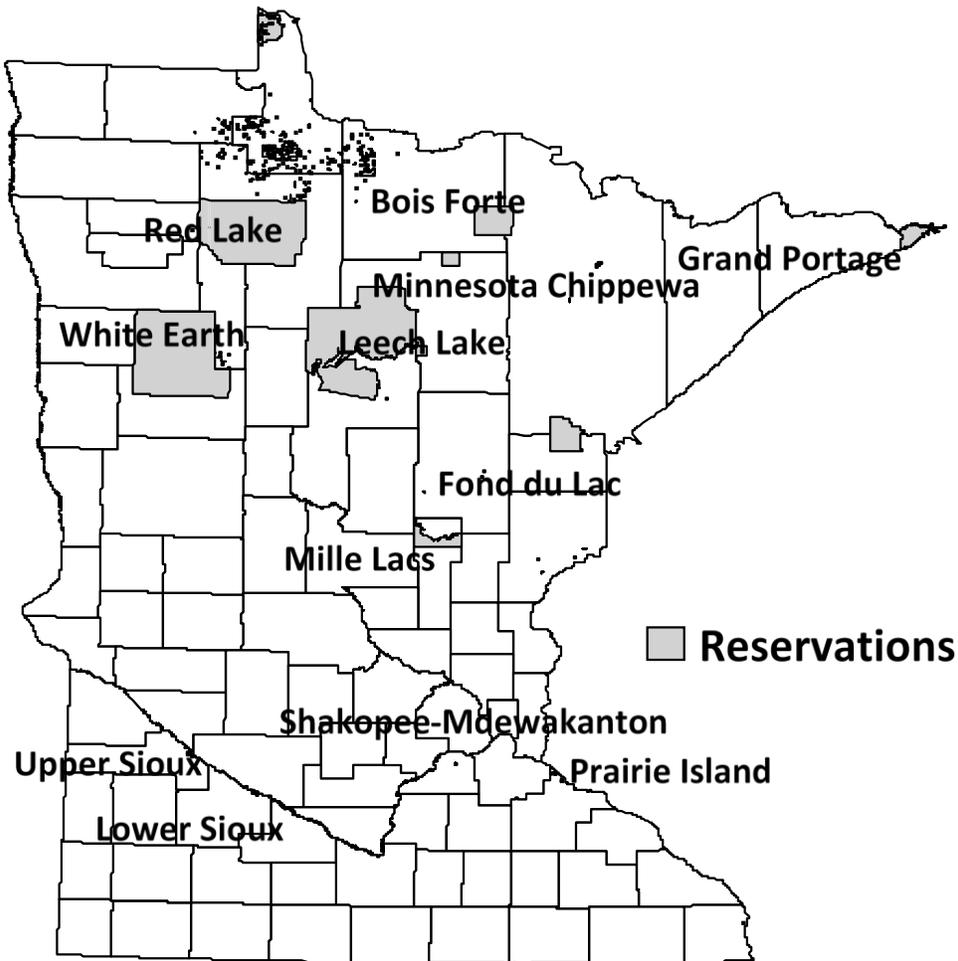
- Bois Forte (Nett Lake)
- Fond du Lac
- Grand Portage
- Leech Lake
- Mille Lacs
- Red Lake
- White Earth

Dakota Communities (Sioux)¹

- Lower Sioux
- Prairie Island
- Shakopee-Mdewakanton
- Upper Sioux

Map 1 shows the location of these reservations.

Map 1: Minnesota Indian Reservations

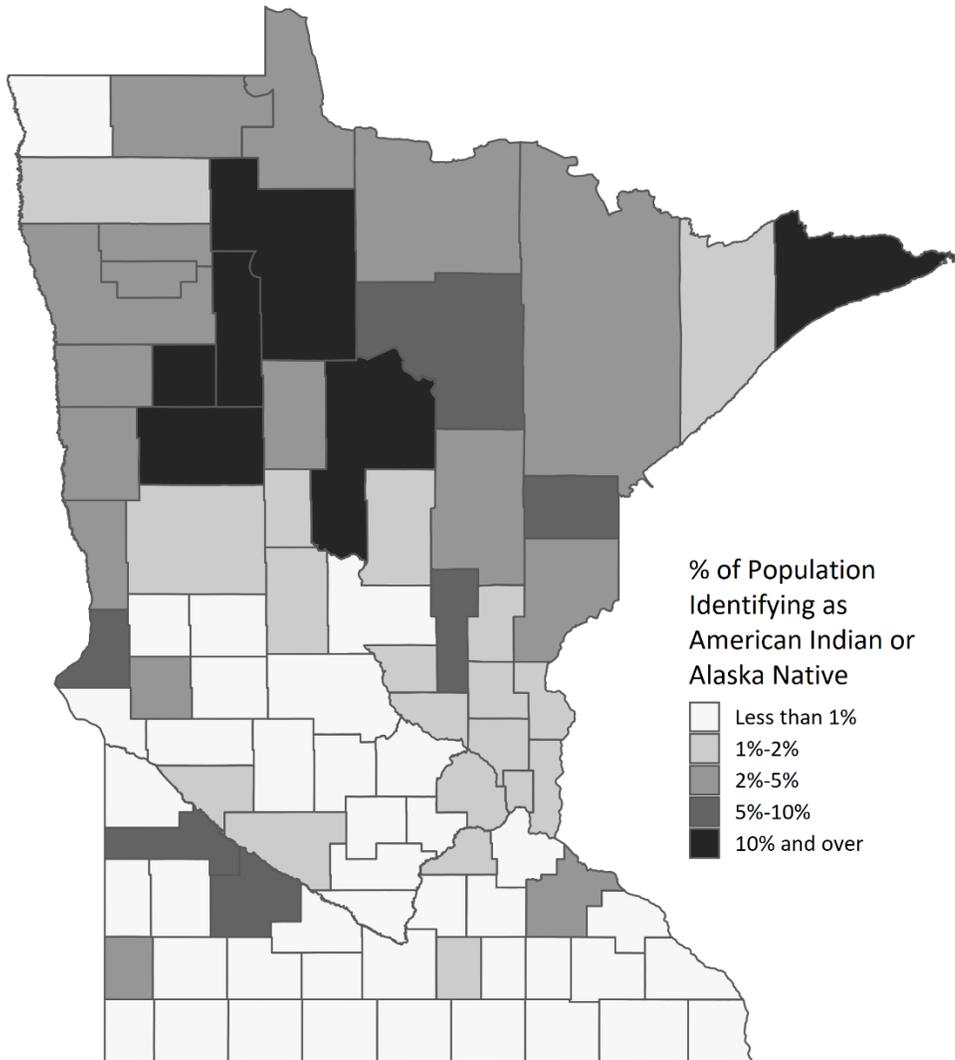


This map shows the 12 federally recognized tribes in Minnesota, including the location of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe government offices.

The Census Bureau’s American Community Survey estimated there were 105,477 individuals in Minnesota identifying as “American Indian and Alaska Native persons”² in part or in combination with another race in 2013 to 2017. These individuals represented approximately 1.9 percent of the state’s population.

Map 2: American Indians as a Percent of County Population

Map 2 shows what percentage of each county's population identifies as American Indian or Alaska Native (alone or in combination). The table in Appendix I details American Indian population by county (see page 124).



Map by House Research.
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017.

Figure 1: Where the Minnesota American Indian Population Lives



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017.

House Research Department

Figure 1 shows where individuals identifying as American Indian in Minnesota lived in 2013 to 2017. About 20 percent of the Minnesota Indian population lived on reservations. About 25 percent of the population lived in a county adjacent to a reservation.³ About 28 percent of the Minnesota Indian population lived in Hennepin or Ramsey County. Finally, approximately 27 percent of the Minnesota Indian population lived elsewhere in the state.

Appendix II (see page 127) provides information specific to each reservation, including information regarding tribal enrollment, land, casinos, tribal colleges, and demographic information from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey from 2013 to 2017.

Endnotes

¹ The Dakota reservations in Minnesota call themselves communities, which stems from the original Dakota Community, established in 1851. The current locations were established by federal congressional action in 1886. See the Indian Affairs Council website for more information, <https://mn.gov/indianaffairs/tribes.html>.

² The census enumeration combines these two ethnic groups and, using census data, the authors are unable to separate them. However, it is safe to conclude that in Minnesota nearly all of these persons are American Indians.

³ For the purposes of this analysis, counties considered adjacent to reservations include Aitkin, Becker, Beltrami, Carlton, Cass, Chippewa, Clearwater, Cook, Crow Wing, Goodhue, Hubbard, Itasca, Kanabec, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods, Mahnomon, Marshall, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Pennington, Pine, Polk, Redwood, Renville, Roseau, Scott, St. Louis, and Yellow Medicine.

Part One: Terms and Concepts

Definition of “Indian”

Federal law defines “Indian” in a variety of ways for different purposes and programs. The U.S. Census counts individuals as American Indians who identify themselves as “American Indian or Alaskan Native.”

There are differences between tribal membership, legal definitions of Indian, and Indian ancestry.

A crucial distinction is the differences among (1) tribal membership, (2) federal legal definitions, and (3) ethnological status or Indian ancestry.

An individual may qualify under ethnological standards as an American Indian because that person has American Indian ancestry, but may not be a recognized member of a tribe or may not be recognized as an Indian for various federal legal purposes.

As a general rule, an American Indian is a person who meets two qualifications: (1) has some American Indian blood; and (2) is recognized as an Indian by members of his or her tribe or community.¹

To have Indian blood, some of the individual’s ancestors must have lived in North America before its discovery by Europeans. Many statutory and common law references to “Indian” refer to an individual’s status as a member of an Indian tribe, although not every legal definition of “Indian” requires membership in a tribe.

Tribes have the power to determine their membership.

Court decisions have held that determining tribal membership is a fundamental and basic power of tribes.² This includes the power to set rules to determine membership and to remove individuals from membership rolls. While a tribe has the ability to determine its own membership, federal benefits and the application of state and federal laws do not always require a tribe’s recognition. Minnesota tribes have different rules for determining their membership.

Individual tribes have varying blood requirements for enrollment, with the result that the general requirement of “some” blood may be substantially increased for persons seeking to establish status as members of certain tribes. Certain federal statutes require some degree of ancestry as well. Some tribes require one-fourth tribal blood, while some require as much as five-eighths.

The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (MCT), which is recognized as a tribe but acts as a governing entity for six of the 11 federally recognized tribes in Minnesota, requires that a member: (1) is at least one-fourth MCT blood; (2) is an American citizen; (3) applies for enrollment within a year of birth; (4) has a parent who is a member of the tribe; and (5) is not a member of another tribe. The governing body of the MCT makes the determination, and there is an appeal process through the Bureau of Indian Affairs.³

Formal enrollment is a relatively recent concept in Indian law. Some American Indian tribes historically treated all participating members of their community as tribal members and were therefore willing to incorporate into the tribal community non-Indians who married tribal members. The requirement of formal tribal rolls can be traced to the allotment policy—the process of allotting tribal lands to individual tribal members.

Coexisting with this concept of tribal membership is an actual tribal community composed of persons who are not all enrolled tribal members, but who nevertheless fully participate in the social, religious, and cultural life of the tribe if not its political and economic processes. Formal rolls have a limited purpose so many tribes have informal rolls. Although some statutes provide benefits to formally enrolled members of federally recognized tribes, many of the benefits accorded American Indians under various statutes are available to Indians more broadly defined.⁴ However, an American Indian who is a member of a terminated tribe will not be considered an Indian under most federal laws, but may still receive benefits that are provided by the federal government to all American Indians.⁵

The modern congressional trend is to define the term “Indian” broadly to include both formal and informal membership, as well as requiring a certain degree of Indian blood. Federal courts have generally deferred to congressional determinations of who is an Indian in recognition of Congress’s broad power to regulate Indian affairs, which includes the power to determine which entities and people come within the scope of that power.⁶

In 1924, Congress conferred citizenship upon all Indians born within the United States.⁷

American Indians were granted citizenship in the 1924 Citizenship Act,⁸ but this did not include American Indians born before 1924 or outside the country until the Nationality Act of 1940⁹ was passed. Prior to this, some Indians were considered citizens under the Dawes Act of 1887¹⁰ if they were considered civilized, generally meaning assimilated into an Anglo-European culture. This status as citizens of the United States and of the individual states in which they reside does not affect the special relationship between the tribes and the federal government.¹¹

Endnotes

¹ *Cohen’s Handbook of Federal Indian Law*, § 3.03[1], at 171 (Nell Jessup Newton ed., 2012).

² *Santa Clara Pueblo v. Martinez*, 436 U.S. 49, 72 fn. 32 (1978). Furthermore, a person regarded as a member by the tribe may not be so regarded by the Secretary of the Interior, who claims the authority to determine membership for purposes of distributing property rights. See BIA Manual, Release 83-4, Part 8, *Enrollment*, § 8.2 (1959), <http://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/xraca/documents/text/idc010108.pdf>. The Department of the Interior has requested that this portion of the BIA Manual be updated to the new Indian Affairs Manual but that has not yet been completed. The Bureau of Indian Affairs Manual currently has the 1959 BIA Manual chapter 8 listed as being reissued in 1984. Congress has the power to determine tribal membership, at least when tribal rolls are to be prepared for the purpose of determining rights to tribal property, and federal statutory membership provisions can be reviewed by federal courts.

³ Revised Constitution of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, Article II, http://www.mnchippewatribe.org/pdf/constitution_revised.pdf.

⁴ As a result, the Bureau of Indian Affairs often relies on informal rolls to determine which Indians are entitled to receive federal services, as opposed to those entitled to receive distributions. See BIA Manual, Release 83-4, Part 8, *Enrollment*, § 8.5 (1959). Indians not organized as a tribe have struggled to gain benefits when they were unable to organize as a tribe or unrepresented by a tribe in the litigation. See *Wolfchild v. United States*, 731 F.3d 1280 (Fed. Cir. 2013), *Osage Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma v. U.S.*, 85 Fed.Cl. 162 (2008).

⁵ *Cohen*, § 3.03[1], at 172 (Nell Jessup Newton ed., 2012).

⁶ *Cohen*, § 3.03[5], at 183 (Nell Jessup Newton ed., 2012).

⁷ Citizen Act of 1924, ch. 233, 43 Stat. 253, codified at 8 U.S.C. § 1401(b). Several treaties and earlier statutes, such as the General Allotment Act, had already conferred citizenship on many Indians.

⁸ Pub. L. No. 68-175 (1924).

⁹ Pub. L. No. 76-853 (1940).

¹⁰ 25 U.S.C.A. § 331 (1887), also known as the General Allotment Act, provided citizenship to Indians who accepted allotted land and were considered to be civilized, generally having abandoned traditional Indian culture and lived separate from their tribe.

¹¹ *Winton v. Amos*, 255 U.S. 373 (1921); *United States v. Nice*, 241 U.S. 591 (1916).

Definition of “Indian Tribe”

Recognition under federal and state law provides tribes and the members of those tribes certain benefits and services. Recognition has come from congressional or executive action that, for example, created a reservation for the tribe, negotiated a treaty with the tribe, or established a political relationship with the tribe, such as providing services through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

As with the definition of “Indian,” the legal status of tribes must be distinguished from ethnological definitions.

Federal recognition of tribes does not necessarily follow ethnological divisions. For example, the federal government has combined separate ethnological tribes into one “legal” tribe or divided one ethnological tribe into separate legal tribes.

In general, the Indian Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution authorizes Congress¹ to determine which groups of American Indians will have recognized tribal status.

Federal statutes before 1934 rarely defined the term “Indian tribe.” The recent congressional trend is to define the term “tribe” in particular statutes. Enrolled membership in a tribe is considered a political status, not a racial or ethnic determination.²

The courts generally will not question congressional or executive action in recognizing a tribe. Courts, however, will order the executive to honor tribal status for a particular purpose where it has been judged to have been the intent of Congress.³ Courts will also not allow the federal government to confer tribal status arbitrarily on a group that has never displayed the characteristics of a distinctly Indian community.⁴

Department of the Interior regulations provide an administrative procedure for tribes seeking recognition.⁵ This rule was substantially revised in 2015. The revision increased public access to the process, making petitions for recognition public and providing notice of applications to local governments. The revision also provides an expedited rejection process, clarification on the documentation needed to meet the criteria, an administrative hearing on the proposed findings, and for judicial review of the assistant secretary’s final decision. The revised rule does not allow a proposed tribe to reapply. The Department of the Interior has also indicated it will only allow tribes to be recognized consistent with the process in Code of Federal Regulations, title 25, section 83.⁶

Petitioners must be acknowledged as a tribe if they meet all of the following criteria:

- a) The petitioner has been identified as an American Indian entity on a substantially continuous basis since 1900
- b) A predominant portion of the petitioning group comprises a distinct community and has existed as a community from 1900 until the present

- c) The petitioner has maintained political influence or authority over its members as an autonomous entity from 1900 until the present
- d) The group must provide a copy of its present governing documents and membership criteria
- e) The petitioner's membership consists of individuals who descend from a historical Indian tribe or tribes, which combined and functioned as a single, autonomous political entity
- f) The membership of the petitioning group is composed principally of persons who are not members of any acknowledged North American Indian tribe
- g) Neither the petitioner nor its members are the subject of congressional legislation that has expressly terminated or forbidden recognition⁷

Congress can also terminate federal supervision of a tribe.

When Congress terminates a tribe's federal status, this eliminates the tribe's special relationship with the federal government. The terminated tribe retains its sovereignty to the extent consistent with the act terminating its status. No recognized tribes in Minnesota have been terminated.

Federal recognition provides certain benefits to Indian tribes.

The federal trust responsibility for Indian land and many of the federal services and benefits are gained through federal recognition of an Indian tribe, and the termination of federal status generally removes many benefits and protection to tribes. The BIA identifies 566 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages.⁸ Some tribes can receive benefits as a state-recognized tribe or nonprofit, and some federal programs provide benefits to individual American Indians, the definition of which changes depending on the program and statute.⁹

In September 2016, the Department of the Interior approved a rule that would allow Native Hawaiians to establish formal government-to-government relations with the federal government.¹⁰

Endnotes

¹ U.S. Const. art. I, § 8. Congress has occasionally delegated the power to recognize tribal status to the executive branch.

² *Cohen's Handbook of Federal Indian Law*, at 181.

³ *Joint Tribal Council of Passamaquoddy Tribe v. Morton*, 528 F.2d 370 (1st Cir. 1975).

⁴ *United States v. Sandoval*, 231 U.S. 28, 46 (1913).

⁵ 25 C.F.R. § 83 (Revised 2015).

⁶ Revisions to Regulations on Federal Acknowledgement of Indian Tribes (25 C.F.R. § 83). ⁷ 25 C.F.R. § 83.7 (Revised 2015).

⁸ U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, <http://www.bia.gov/FAQs/>.

⁹ The U.S. Government Accountability Office has found that of approximately 400 nonfederally recognized tribes, 26 tribes received funding from 24 government funds. This is mostly based on their status as either a state-recognized tribe or as a nonprofit entity. GAO, "Indian Issues: Federal Funding for Non-Federally Recognized Tribes," April 1, 2012, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/600/590102.pdf>.

¹⁰ 43 C.F.R., part 50 (2016), Procedures for Reestablishing a Formal Government-to-Government Relationship with the Native Hawaiian Community.

Indian Lands and Territories

Indian land is generally considered “Indian country”—the area in which the tribe’s power of self-government applies and state powers are restricted. The land tenure—the ownership status of land within Indian country—is an issue that greatly affects the use, sale, and taxation of Indian lands. For information on criminal and civil jurisdiction, see the “civil jurisdiction” and “criminal jurisdiction” sections in Part Two starting on page 27.

Indian country is a crucial concept of Indian law.

Whether or not an area is considered tribal land will determine if the tribe, the state, or the federal government has jurisdiction for different purposes. It is generally within these areas that tribal sovereignty applies and state power is limited.¹ “Indian country” can include reservations, fee lands within the reservation, easements within reservations, any land held in trust for a tribe or individual Indian, and lands statutory designed by the federal government to be included in Indian country.²

Federal law generally³ defines Indian country as consisting of three components:

- Indian reservations
- Dependent Indian communities⁴
- Indian allotments⁵

Only Congress may decide to abandon the status of lands considered Indian country. Settlement by non-Indians does not withdraw land from Indian country status. Even land owned in fee simple by non-Indians, as well as towns incorporated by non-Indians, are still within Indian country if they are within the boundaries of a reservation or a dependent Indian community.⁶

Indian country is legally established by congressional action, treaty provisions, or executive action.

In some instances Congress defined the boundaries of reservations by legislation, while in others Congress authorized the executive branch to do so. In 1934, Congress delegated broad responsibility to the Secretary of the Interior to establish new reservations or add area to existing reservations. Land outside of a reservation that is purchased in trust for a tribe must be proclaimed a reservation by the Secretary of the Interior to acquire Indian country status.⁷

As will be discussed within individual sections in Part Two, Indian country status is important to determine criminal and civil jurisdiction, the power to impose state taxes, and to exercise other state powers. The definition of Indian country is important for land ownership and tenure considerations as well.

Land tenure or landownership in Indian country falls in several basic categories:

- Tribal trust lands
- Allotted trust lands
- Fee lands

Tribal trust lands are held in trust by the federal government for a tribe's use. The federal government, as the trustee of the tribal lands, has a fiduciary duty to manage the land for the benefit of the tribe.

This is the largest category of Indian land. Tribally owned trust land is held communally by the tribe in undivided interest, and individual members simply share in the enjoyment of the entire property with no claim to a particular piece of land. The tribe is treated as a single entity that owns the undivided beneficial interest. The tribe cannot convey or sell the land without the consent of the federal government.

The Secretary of the Interior must approve conveyance of tribal lands to the United States in trust for the tribe. Federal regulations require publication of notice of pending transfers in trust, at least 30 days before the transfers take effect. This regulation was promulgated in response to the decision in *South Dakota v. United States Department of Interior*⁸ to provide a procedure for judicial review of the secretary's decision to accept a transfer of land in trust. For a discussion of the issue and the criteria accepting trust transfers see Appendix III on page 154.

Allotted trust lands are held in trust for the use of an individual American Indian (or his or her heirs). The federal government holds the legal title and the individual (or his or her heirs) holds the beneficial interest. Status as trust land—both tribal and allotted—confers exemption from state and local property taxation.

In 1887, Congress enacted the General Allotment Act,⁹ which divided up some Indian reservations and allotted the partitioned land to individual Indians. The land was to be held in trust by the federal government for a period of years (originally 25 years), until the beneficial owner could show that he was competent to own the land in fee. In Minnesota, the Nelson Act of 1889 implemented the allotment process.¹⁰ Many of the allotments passed out of trust status and are now no longer owned by American Indians. Although some land passed legitimately at the expiration of the "trial period" to American Indian ownership, most passed out of trust status and out of American Indian ownership through fraud and tax sales.¹¹ In 1934, with the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), the trust status of the remaining allotments was extended indefinitely.¹² The IRA also allowed no more Indian land to be allotted. As a result, a significant amount of allotted land remains in trust today.

Fee lands are held by an owner, who may be a tribal member or non-Indian, in fee simple absolute. Fee land within Indian country owned by non-Indians generally does not enjoy the sovereign immunity protection enjoyed by trust land, such as exemption from taxation.¹³

Other lands are held in Indian country by federal, state, and local (nontribal) governments. The federal government holds some land in fee simple absolute with no obligation toward American Indians regarding the land. These include, for example, national forest lands, which are wholly owned by the federal government but may be located within Indian country. The state or local

governments similarly may own lands such as state parks, state natural and scenic areas, state forest land, and county parks located within Indian country.

Land owned by American Indians from the allotment period has been the source of litigation and congressional action.

In 2004, Congress passed the American Indian Probate Reform Act (AIPRA).¹⁴ This law was intended to curb the fractionation of Indian allotments caused by the General Allotment Act of 1884. Prior to AIPRA the land was divided up between the owner's heirs, but the interest was undivided so eventually many tracts of land had hundreds of owners as tenants in common, and the land continues to be divided between each owner's heirs in federal BIA probate cases.¹⁵ AIPRA attempts to curb some of the fractionation by encouraging trust land owners to write a will and also devising new inheritance laws when a decedent does not have a will.

For many years the Department of the Interior was accused of mismanaging Indian trust land and assets. A large class action suit, *Cobell v. Salavar*,¹⁶ was filed against the federal government to address the mismanagement of Indian trust land. The resulting settlement in 2009 provided American Indians throughout the country a settlement award as owners and heirs to trust land or Individual Indian Money Accounts.¹⁷ The settlement also requires funding for trust land reform, purchase and consolidation of fractionated Indian lands, and an Indian Education Scholarship Fund.

Endnotes

¹ Certain tribal powers—for example, the ability to take game and fish, or harvest native crops “off-reservation”—may apply outside of the area of Indian country under specific treaties or statutes.

² “Indian country” is the term that has been used consistently since 1948 (see 18 U.S.C. § 1151) codifying the definition of Indian country based on previous case law. *Cf. Mustang Production Co. v. Harrison*, 94 F.3d 1382 (10th Cir. 1996) *cert. den.* 520 U.S. 1139 (1997) (tribal power to impose severance tax applies to allotments, even though the reservation was disestablished).

³ 18 U.S.C. § 1151. Section 1151 defines Indian country for purposes of criminal jurisdiction as including these three components, and in certain federal court decisions, extended to civil jurisdiction. See *DeCoteau v. Dist. County Court*, 420 U.S. 425 (1975); *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians*, 480 U.S. 202 (1987).

⁴ In order to qualify as a dependent Indian community, lands that are neither reservations nor allotments must meet two qualifications: (1) they must be set aside by the federal government for use by Indians as Indian lands; and (2) they must be under federal superintendence. *Alaska v. Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government*, 522 U.S. 520, 527 (1998) (holding lands on a disestablished reservation were not part of a dependent Indian community, preventing the tribe from imposing tribal taxes).

⁵ *United States v. Pelican*, 232 U.S. 442 (1914) (lands created out of diminished reservations and held in trust by federal government, including allotted land, were Indian country).

⁶ See *Lower Brule Sioux Tribe v. State of South Dakota*, 711 F.2d 809 (9th Cir. 1983).

⁷ 25 U.S.C. § 5110.

⁸ 69 F.3d 878 (8th Cir. 1995) *vacated* 117 S. Ct. 286 (1996). In this case, the Court of Appeals held the underlying federal statute authorizing transfer of lands to the federal government was an unconstitutional delegation of legislative power. The Secretary of the Interior responded by promulgating a regulation requiring notice of proposed transfers in trust, thereby allowing judicial review of decisions to accept transfers in trust. The

Supreme Court granted certiorari and vacated the lower court judgment with instructions to remand the matter to the Secretary of the Interior. The Eighth Circuit later reversed its decision, *South Dakota v. U.S. Dept. of Interior*, 423 F.3d 790 (8th Cir. 2005), and other federal courts have supported the position that the delegation of the power to take land into trust is a constitutional delegation of power.

⁹ 25 U.S.C. §§ 331 et seq. This is commonly referred to as the Dawes Act.

¹⁰ 25 Stat. § 642. No allotment occurred on the Red Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota, and thus the reservation land is held entirely by the tribe.

¹¹ For example, only about 6 percent of the original acreage of the White Earth Reservation remains in Indian control. E. Peterson, *That So-Called Warranty Deed: Clouded Land Titles on the White Earth Indian Reservation in Minnesota*, 59 N.D.L. Rev. 159, 163 (1983).

¹² 25 U.S.C. § 5102.

¹³ See *County of Yakima v. Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakima Indian Nation*, 502 U.S. 251 (1992) and discussion on taxation, page 66.

¹⁴ 25 U.S.C. §§ 2201-2221. AIPRA is an amendment to the Indian Land Consolidation Act.

¹⁵ The Indian Land Tenure Foundation website has many useful resources on fractionation and AIPRA, <http://www.iltf.org/land-issues/fractionated-ownership>.

¹⁶ 573 F.3d 808 (D.C. Ct. App. 2009).

¹⁷ The Indian Trust Settlement website provides information on the *Cobell* settlement, <http://www.indiantrust.com/faq>.

Tribal Sovereignty: Limits on State Power

Indian tribes have a special legal status derived from their status as sovereign nations under the U.S. Constitution and federal law. When the United States was founded, the tribes were self-governing, sovereign nations. Their powers of self-government and sovereign status were not fully extinguished. While the establishment of the United States subjected the tribes to federal power, it did not eliminate their internal sovereignty or subordinate them to the power of state governments.¹ The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that tribes lost their “external sovereignty,” that is, they were no longer able to deal with foreign nations. However, they still retain their sovereignty within their tribal territories.² The tribes retain the powers of self-government over their lands and members.

An important tenet of federal policy has been to protect the self-government rights and sovereignty of tribes.

Chief Justice Marshall characterized the federal-tribal relationship as one of “domestic dependent nations” to whom the federal government had essentially a fiduciary relationship.³ One element of this fiduciary relationship has been to preserve tribes’ status as self-governing entities within their territories, including protection from state interference.⁴ For example, Chief Justice Marshall described the situation as follows:

The Cherokee nation * * * is a distinct community * * * in which the laws of Georgia can have no force * * * but with the assent of the Cherokees themselves, or in conformity with treaties, and with the acts of Congress.⁵

As Congress has inconsistently accorded importance to sovereignty and tribal self-government, federal Indian affairs policy has varied significantly over the years. Assimilation policies at times downplayed the importance of tribal sovereignty. However, tribal sovereignty has been, and continues to be, an important theme of federal policy.

Under the Indian Commerce Clause, Congress has plenary authority over Indian affairs and tribes.

The Constitution gives Congress complete authority over Indian tribes, including the powers to repeal treaties, eliminate reservations, and grant states jurisdiction over particular tribes. The role of the Indian Commerce Clause and the scope of federal powers is widely debated and often litigated.⁶

Tribal sovereignty and tribes’ right of self-government are the important touchstones that affect tribal relations with state government.

The U.S. Supreme Court has stated variously that Indian relations are the exclusive concern of Congress⁷ and also provided that state’s rights do not end at the border of a reservation.⁸ In

any case, state power over tribal territory is limited to those powers that Congress has delegated to it, or which have not been preempted by the exercise of federal or tribal law.

Sovereign Immunity

As an adjunct of tribal sovereignty, the courts have held that tribes and tribal organizations are protected by the doctrine of sovereign immunity.

The English common law doctrine of sovereign immunity prohibits a plaintiff from bringing a lawsuit against the “sovereign” (i.e., the government). In America, the doctrine was traditionally applied to foreign nations and the states, although more recent cases and legislation have curtailed its scope.

Since the 1940s, the courts have held that Indian tribes and tribe-owned commercial enterprises are immune from lawsuits under the doctrine.⁹ Application of the doctrine reflects both the special sovereign status of tribes and the goal of protecting tribal resources. Certain federal laws have partially abrogated the sovereign immunity of tribes including the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, Indian Civil Rights Act, Indian Depredation Act, Indian Self-Determination Act, and the Bankruptcy Code.¹⁰

Unless it is waived, sovereign immunity prevents assertion of contract, employment, tort, and other legal claims against tribes and tribal businesses.

The Supreme Court has construed the sovereign immunity of Indian tribes and organizations broadly. Sovereign immunity:

- applies to tribal government and extends to tribal business organizations, including for-profit business entities;
- applies to off-reservation activities;
- applies when damages or declaratory relief is sought; and
- applies unless it is expressly waived.¹¹

Under sovereign immunity, patrons of tribal businesses who are injured (e.g., a gambler at a tribal casino who slips and falls) will be unable to sue the business to recover for the injuries unless the tribe has waived sovereign immunity for such a cause of action. Similarly, contractors also will be unable to recover unless the tribe has consented to the suit. The doctrine can extend to tribal officials and employees.¹²

The Supreme Court has explained that the doctrine of tribal sovereign immunity “developed almost by accident.”¹³ The doctrine has been retained by the Court on the theory that Congress wanted to promote tribal self-sufficiency and economic development. The Court has recognized arguments against sovereign immunity for tribes, nevertheless, the Court has indicated it defers to Congress to make changes in the doctrine since “Congress is in a position to weigh and accommodate the competing policy concerns and reliance interests.”¹⁴

Tribal sovereign immunity can be waived by an act of Congress or by a clear action taken by the tribe. The Supreme Court has ruled that Congress may set aside tribal immunity if it

“unequivocally” expresses that purpose.¹⁵ If Congress does not subject a tribe to suit, the tribe itself can agree to be sued by clearly waiving its sovereign immunity.¹⁶ The Supreme Court has indicated that while a waiver must be unambiguous, it need not use the words “sovereign immunity.”¹⁷ For example, a contract containing an agreement to arbitrate is a waiver of immunity from suit in state court for purposes of judicial enforcement of the award.¹⁸

The 11th Amendment prevents tribes from being sued for damages in federal courts and prevents tribes from suing states in federal court.

The 11th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution has been construed by the U.S. Supreme Court to bar suits by tribes against the states based on sovereign immunity.¹⁹ On the one hand, the Court has ruled that the 11th Amendment prevents a state from suing an Indian tribe in federal court unless the tribe expressly consents or Congress abrogates the tribe’s sovereign immunity.²⁰ On the other hand, the Supreme Court has ruled that Congress lacks the power under the Indian Commerce Clause to eliminate a state’s 11th Amendment immunity from being sued by a tribe in federal court.²¹ A state may, of course, waive this immunity. It must do so by “the most express language or by such overwhelming implication from the text as will leave no room for any other reasonable construction.”²²

The Court’s reasoning in these cases is that tribes could not have agreed to surrender their sovereign immunity because they were not parties to the Constitutional Convention that drafted the 11th Amendment; for the same reason, the states would not have given up their immunity to being sued by tribes.²³

Endnotes

¹ The special status of Indian tribes is recognized in the language of the Constitution. For example, Congress was given authority “[t]o regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes.” U.S. Const. art. I § 8 (emphasis added). This provision is commonly called the “Indian Commerce Clause.” The Indian Commerce Clause has generally been held to vest power over Indian affairs exclusively in the federal government. See, e.g., *County of Oneida v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York State*, 470 U.S. 226 (1985).

² These basic principles of Indian law were established initially in *Worcester v. Georgia*, 31 U.S. 515 (1832).

³ *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 30 U.S. 1 (1831); see generally the discussion in *Cohen’s Handbook of Federal Indian Law*, § 4.01[1], at 206-211.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Worcester v. Georgia*, 31 U.S. 515, 561 (1832).

⁶ See discussion in *Cohen’s*, § 4.01[1][a], at 209 and *Id.*, footnote 25.

⁷ *County of Oneida v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York State*, 470 U.S. 226, 234 (1985).

⁸ *Nevada v. Hicks*, 533 U.S. 353, 361 (2001).

⁹ *United States v. U.S. Fidelity & Guaranty Co.*, 309 U.S. 506 (1940) is the first Supreme Court case on the issue of tribal sovereign immunity.

¹⁰ *Cohen’s*, §7.05[1][b], at 640-643

¹¹ *Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma v. Manufacturing Technologies, Inc.*, 523 U.S. 751 (1998), *Imperial Granite Co. v. Pala Band of Mission Indians*, 940 F.2d1269 (9th Cir. 1991). This contrasts with the general trend to limit the sovereign

immunity of foreign nations and states. It has been observed by both courts and commentators that applications of the sovereign immunity of tribes would not similarly extend to states. See, e.g., *In re Greene*, 980 F.2d 590, 598-600 (9th Cir. 1992), cert. denied *Richardson v. Mount Adams Furniture*, 510 U.S. 1039 (1994) (Rymer, J., concurring); Thomas McLish, Note, *Tribal Sovereign Immunity: Searching for Sensible Limits*, 88 Colum. L. Rev. 173, 179-80 (1988).

¹² See *Cohen's*, 7.05[1][a], at 638-629. See also *Young v. Duenas*, 272 P.3d 8513 (2012), cert denied *Young v. Fitzpatrick*, Docket No. 11-1485 (2013). The circuit court found that law enforcement authorities acted within the scope of authority of the tribe and were protected by sovereign immunity even where they were trained and cross deputized with state and other law enforcement; *Michigan v. Bay Mills Indian Community*, 134 S. Ct. 2024 (2014), tribal officials may be responsible for illegal conduct.

¹³ *Kiowa Tribe*, supra note 11, 523 U.S. at 756.

¹⁴ *Id.*, 523 U.S. at 759; upheld by *Michigan v. Bay Mills Indian Community*, 134 S. Ct. 2024 (2014), when the Supreme Court refused to overturn the *Kiowa* decision and ruled that it is “fundamentally Congress’s job to determine whether or how to limit tribal immunity.”

¹⁵ *C & L Enterprises, Inc. v. Citizen Band Potawatomi Indian Tribe of Oklahoma*, 532 U.S. 411, 418 (2001) (citation omitted).

¹⁶ *C & L Enterprises, Inc.*, supra note 15, 532 U.S. at 418 (citation omitted).

¹⁷ *Id.*, 532 U.S. at 420 (citation omitted).

¹⁸ *Id.*, 532 U.S. at 422. The Minnesota courts have held that express language, such as a “sue or be sued” clause, is sufficient to waive immunity. See, e.g., *Duluth Lumber and Plywood Co. v. Delta Development, Inc.*, 281 N.W.2d 377 (1979) (included in tribal ordinance). The federal circuit courts have split on the issues around tribal sovereign immunity, specifically whether “sue and be sued” clauses waive immunity and whether or not sovereign immunity extends to tribal employees in certain circumstances. See, e.g., *Ramey Construction Co. v. Apache Tribe*, 673 F.2d 315 (10th Cir. 1982); *Parker Drilling Co. v. Metlakatla Indian Community*, 451 F. Supp. 1127 (D. Alaska, 1978); *Comstock Oil & Gas Inc. v. Alabama and Coushatta Indian Tribes of Texas*, 261 F.3d 567 (5th Cir. 2001); *Cook v. Avi Casino Enterprise, Inc.*, 548 F.3d 718 (9th Cir. 2008).

¹⁹ *Blatchford v. Native Village of Noatak*, 501 U.S. 775, 779 (1991).

²⁰ *Oklahoma Tax Commission v. Citizen Band of Potawatomi Indian Tribe*, 498 U.S. 505, 509-510 (1991).

²¹ *Seminole Tribe of Florida v. State of Florida*, 517 U.S. 44 (1996).

²² *Santee Sioux Tribe of Nebraska v. State of Nebraska*, 121 F.3d 427, 430 (8th Cir. 1997) citing *Atascadero State Hospital v. Scanlon*, 473 U.S. 234, 241 (1985).

²³ *Blatchford*, supra note 19, 501 U.S. at 782.

Public Law 280

In 1953, Congress enacted a law, commonly referred to as Public Law 280, which created criminal and adjudicatory civil jurisdiction in certain states over acts committed in Indian country. Although the scope of Public Law 280 has since been narrowed by congressional amendment and case law, its enactment remains a major event in the evolution of federal policy regarding Indian tribes and their relationship with state governments, particularly in Minnesota.

The federal law, as originally enacted, granted to the states of Wisconsin, Oregon, California, Minnesota, and Nebraska criminal and civil jurisdiction over individual Indians in most Indian lands¹ located within state boundaries.

Under a 1958 amendment, Alaska was granted similar criminal and civil jurisdiction. In addition, Public Law 280 originally contained a mechanism under which certain other states could choose to assert full or partial civil or criminal jurisdiction over American Indian lands without the consent of the affected American Indians or their tribes. This mechanism was changed in 1968 when Congress amended the law prospectively to prohibit additional states from asserting jurisdiction over American Indians without their consent. The 1968 amendments also permitted states to “retrocede” or grant back jurisdiction acquired under Public Law 280 to an Indian tribe; however, retrocession had to be initiated by the state and approved by the federal government.² Public Law 280 has been considered controversial both by the affected states and tribes. Tribes felt that tribal sovereignty required their approval of the grant of jurisdiction to states and states felt that the requirement that they assume jurisdiction was unfair given the federal government provided no funding to the states.

Public Law 280 provided that certain aspects of civil jurisdiction are not provided to states and subsequent case law has further specified which areas are excluded from the state’s jurisdiction.

Public Law 280 grants civil jurisdiction over individual American Indians, not tribes, and allows civil causes of action between American Indians that arise in Indian country to be tried in state courts.³ Additionally, Public Law 280’s grant of civil jurisdiction applies only to state laws of “general application.” This means that a law of local or limited application, such as a zoning ordinance, may not be applied to Indian country under Public Law 280. Not all property rights are covered by Public Law 280’s grant of criminal or civil jurisdiction. For example, the law does not affect trust or restricted real or personal property, including water rights. Moreover, Public Law 280 does not affect the supremacy of the federal-tribe relationship with regard to treaties, agreements, or federal statutes. Some of the important rights preserved by the law are preexisting tribal rights with respect to hunting, trapping, and fishing.

The scope of jurisdiction granted by Public Law 280 has been limited by several Supreme Court decisions. First, in *Bryan v. Itasca County*,⁴ the Court ruled that states could not tax an American Indian’s property located on federal trust lands, saying that if Congress had intended

Public Law 280 to give the states general civil regulatory power, including the power of taxation, over reservation Indians, it would have expressly said so.

In *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians*,⁵ the Court ruled that California could not enforce its gambling laws in Indian country because these laws were regulatory in nature, not criminal. If the state generally prohibits a type of conduct, it falls within Public Law 280's grant of criminal jurisdiction; however, if the state generally permits the conduct at issue, subject to regulation, it is a civil/regulatory law and Public Law 280 does not authorize its enforcement on an Indian reservation. The application of these two cases has produced some divergent results as different jurisdictions have interpreted civil regulatory and criminal prohibitions differently.

Public Law 280 did not end concurrent tribal jurisdiction over civil and criminal cases.

Public Law 280 did not end the tribe's inherent civil and criminal jurisdiction. The tribe can have civil jurisdiction over tort and contract cases, civil regulatory jurisdiction, and criminal jurisdiction even when the state also has jurisdiction. The Indian Civil Rights Act⁶ does not prevent a criminal from being prosecuted twice when a person is tried by two separate sovereigns, and this has been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.⁷ Public Law 280 ultimately ended federal criminal jurisdiction in those states, however the 2010 Tribal Law and Order Act⁸ allows the tribe to request federal jurisdiction be reinstated in order to improve law enforcement and decrease crime in Indian country. (Page 28 of this guidebook discusses criminal jurisdiction in Indian country).

The Tribal Law and Order Act has expanded federal criminal jurisdiction for some Minnesota tribes.

Two Minnesota tribes have had federal jurisdiction extended to crimes on their reservations under the Tribal Law and Order Act.⁹ On the White Earth Reservation and the Mille Lacs Reservation, the tribes, state, and federal government all have jurisdiction over crime.

Endnote

¹ The Red Lake Reservation was excluded from this grant of jurisdiction in Minnesota.

² In 1973, the state of Minnesota retroceded its criminal jurisdiction over the Bois Forte Reservation.

³ 28 U.S.C. § 1360(a) (1953).

⁴ 426 U.S. 373 (1976).

⁵ 480 U.S. 202 (1987).

⁶ 25 U.S.C. § 1302(a)(3).

⁷ *United States v. Wheeler*, 435 U.S. 313 (1978), and *United States v. Lara*, 124 S. Ct. 1628 (2004).

⁸ Pub. L. No. 111-211, The Tribal Law and Order Act, amended sections of the Indian Civil Rights Act and Public Law 280.

⁹ See the House Research publication [The Tribal Law and Order Act and Minnesota, January 2017](#).

Special Rules for Interpreting Indian Law

The Supreme Court, in a series of decisions dating from the early 19th century, has held that the federal government has a special trust responsibility with the Indian tribes.¹

These trust principles have developed in several ways. One important result is that the Court has developed a special set of rules or “**canons of construction**” for construing treaties, statutes, and executive orders affecting Indian tribes and peoples. These rules of construction or interpretation are important in shaping the development of the law and, in particular, in establishing and protecting the rights of the tribes and their members.

The canons of construction initially grew out of rules for construing treaties with tribes.

They represent, in part, an acknowledgment of the unequal bargaining positions of the federal government and the tribes in negotiating these treaties. More importantly, the canons reflect the view, arising from the fundamental trust relationship, that the actions of Congress are presumed to be for the benefit and protection of the tribes and Indian peoples. Therefore, the canons assume that Congress—absent a “clear purpose” or an “explicit statement”—intended to preserve or maintain the tribal rights.²

The canons are expressed in various ways.

In general, they provide that treaties, statutes, executive orders, and agreements are to be construed liberally in favor of establishing or protecting Indian rights and that ambiguities are to be resolved in favor of Indians.³ For example, unless Congress clearly indicated, or an agreement or treaty specifically stated otherwise, it is presumed that tribal hunting, fishing, and water rights are retained.⁴ As another example, it is presumed that Congress did not intend to abrogate tribal tax immunities, unless it “manifested a clear purpose” to do so.⁵ Another formulation is that treaties are to be construed as Indians understood them.⁶

Recent U.S. Supreme Court cases may suggest reduced importance for the canons.

Although the canons of construction have long been a key element of Indian law,⁷ in some recent cases the Supreme Court has retreated from using the canons to protect the interests of Indians.⁸ The Supreme Court stated in *Chickasaw Nation v. the United States*, that canons are not mandatory rules and that canons favoring tribes may be offset by canons promoting other values.⁹ Cases such as these suggest some movement away from the strict adherence to the canons as a cornerstone of the Indian law protection for Indian interests.

Endnotes

¹ See, e.g., *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 30 U.S. 1 (1831); *Worcester v. Georgia*, 31 U.S. 515 (1832).

² *Minnesota v. Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians*, 526 U.S. 172, 202 (1999).

³ See generally *Cohen's Handbook of Federal Indian Law*, §2.02[1], at 113-114.

⁴ See, e.g., *Menominee Tribe v. United States*, 391 U.S. 404 (1968).

⁵ See, e.g., *Bryan v. Itasca County* 426 U.S. 373, 392-93 (1976).

⁶ *Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians v. Minnesota*, 526 U.S. 172, 196 (1999).

⁷ See Philip P. Frickey, *(Native) American Exceptionalism in Federal Public Law* 119 Harv. L. Rev. 431, 445- 46 (2005) (describing the role the canons play, including allowing the Court “to defang” statutes to protect Indian interests).

⁸ See, e.g., *Alaska v. Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government*, 522 U.S. 520, 527 (1998) (ignoring canons in construing Alaskan Native Settlement Act); *Hagen v. Utah*, 510 U.S. 399 (1994) (clear statement requirement apparently ignored in diminishing the boundaries of a reservation); *Montana v. United States*, 450 U.S. 544 (1981) (Indian treaty rights to a river bed granted title to the state using water law doctrine instead of Indian law canons of construction).

⁹ *Chickasaw Nation v. United States*, 534 U.S. 84, 93 - 94 (2001) (“Moreover the canon that assumes Congress intends its statutes to benefit the tribes is offset by the canon that warns us against interpreting federal statutes as providing tax exemptions unless those exemptions are clearly expressed.”); see Graydon Dean Luthey, Jr., *Chickasaw Nation v. United States: The Beginning of the End of the Indian-Law Canons in Statutory Cases and The Start of the Judicial Assault on the Trust Relationship?* 27 Am. Indian L. Rev. 553 (2003).

American Indian State Government Liaisons

Minnesota Indian Affairs Council

The Indian Affairs Council is created by statute to make recommendations on legislation that is important to tribal governments and Indian organizations and improve services between the state and Indian communities.¹ It operates to advise the legislature and the executive branch on policies and services relating to American Indians. It also serves as a liaison between national, state, and local units of government and the Indian population in Minnesota. The council also operates programs to enhance economic opportunities for American Indians and protect cultural resources.² The Indian Affairs Council is made up of the 11 tribal chairs or their designees and the following nonvoting members: two members of the House of Representatives, two members of the Senate, a member of the governor's official staff, the Commissioners of Education, Human Services, Natural Resources, Human Rights, Employment and Economic Development, Corrections, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, Iron Range Resource and Rehabilitation Board, Health, Transportation, Veterans Affairs, and Administration, or their designees.

Ombudsperson for American Indians

There is an ombudsperson for American Indian families who is part of a separate state agency.³ The ombudsperson works on issues related to American Indians in the child protection system (see page 93 for more details).

¹ [Minn. Stat. § 3.922](#).

² For more information on what the Indian Affairs Council does see the website, <http://mn.gov/indianaffairs/aboutus.html>.

³ See Ombudsperson for Families, [Minn. Stat. §§ 257.0755 to 257.0769](#).

Part Two: Specific Issues by Topic

Criminal Jurisdiction in Indian Country

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“Indian country” is the term used in federal law for the jurisdictional territory of tribal governments. See 18 U.S.C. §1151. Federal law defines it as Indian reservations, dependent Indian communities, and Indian allotments. Status as Indian country does not depend upon the trust status or ownership of land. See the discussion under “Indian Lands” in Part One on page 14.

Criminal jurisdiction in Indian country is a complex issue.

Federal, state, and tribal government all have a role—sometimes exercising exclusive authority and sometimes having concurrent criminal law authority. Determining the entity that has jurisdiction depends on a number of factors including where the incident took place, what type of law was violated, and whether either the perpetrator or the victim was a member of an Indian tribe.

Constitutional basis for determining jurisdiction.

The fundamental legal basis for determining which level of government has jurisdiction over crimes committed in Indian country is located in article I, section 8, of the U.S. Constitution. According to this constitutional provision, Congress has the power to regulate commerce with foreign nations, among the states, and with Indian tribes. Based on this language, the Supreme Court declared that Indian tribes are domestic dependent nations subject to the plenary power of Congress and that Congress, therefore, has the power to determine, through law and treaty, who has criminal jurisdiction over crimes committed in Indian country.¹

Pursuant to its plenary constitutional power, Congress has enacted a number of statutes defining and redefining criminal jurisdiction in Indian country. Historical changes in the relationship between the federal government and the Indian tribes prompted some of these laws; others were enacted in response to Supreme Court rulings on jurisdictional issues.

Federal Criminal Jurisdiction

The federal government has jurisdiction over federal crimes of nationwide application no matter where the incident occurred. Federal authority to investigate federal crimes relating to drug trafficking or terrorism, for example, is the same in Indian country as it is everywhere else in the state.

The Federal Enclaves Act. This act is also known as the General Crimes Act or the Indian Country Crimes Act and applies specific federal criminal laws to lands owned by the federal government. These areas are known as “federal enclaves” and include places like military installations and national parks. In 1816, Congress enacted a jurisdictional law² providing that,

with certain exceptions, federal criminal laws apply in Indian country to the same extent that they apply in other federal enclaves.

Assimilative Crimes Act. In 1825, Congress enacted a second jurisdictional statute known as the Assimilative Crimes Act. This act incorporates state criminal laws not otherwise included in the federal criminal code into federal law, meaning that the state laws and criminal penalties apply in federal enclaves.³ Many years later, the Supreme Court ruled that this law applies in Indian country.⁴ Thus, the criminal laws applicable to Indian country and subject to federal jurisdiction include both federal enclave crimes as well as state crimes not otherwise included in the federal criminal code.

However, two statutory exceptions and one judicially created exception sharply limit the scope of these jurisdictional statutes. First, the statutes exempt offenses committed by one Indian against the person or property of another Indian.⁵ Second, the statutes exempt offenses over which criminal jurisdiction has been conferred on a particular tribe by treaty. Third, according to Supreme Court cases, the statutes do not apply to crimes committed in Indian country by a non-Indian against another non-Indian. Instead, state court is the proper forum for prosecuting such a crime.⁶

In short, federal jurisdiction under the Enclaves Act and Assimilative Crimes Act extends only to crimes in which an Indian is involved either as a defendant or as a victim.

Major Crimes Act. Federal criminal jurisdiction over intra-Indian crimes began in 1885 by the passage of the Major Crimes Act.⁷ According to this federal law, the federal government has jurisdiction to prosecute certain enumerated crimes⁸ when committed on Indian land by an Indian. Unlike the Enclave and Assimilative Crime Acts, federal jurisdiction under the Major Crimes Act does not depend on the race of the victim; rather, it covers major crimes committed in Indian country by an Indian against the person or property of another Indian or other person. Today, the Major Crimes Act is the primary federal jurisdictional statute for major offenses committed by Indians on Indian lands.⁹

Federal jurisdiction in Minnesota. Minnesota is one of six states subject to Public Law 280. In general, Public Law 280 gives covered states criminal jurisdiction over conduct that occurs on Indian land that is within the state's boundaries. There are a number of exceptions to this rule in Minnesota. Jurisdiction over crimes committed on the Red Lake or Bois Forte (Nett Lake) Reservations generally resides with the federal government, although the tribal government has concurrent jurisdiction. Another exception to this rule relates to offenses committed by Indians in Indian country that, while technically crimes, have a civil or regulatory nature or purpose (a more detailed explanation of this exception is given below). Finally the White Earth Band and Mille Lacs Band have requested, and been granted, federal jurisdiction consistent with the Major Crimes Act pursuant to the Tribal Law and Order Act.¹⁰

The following charts illustrate the level of government that has criminal jurisdiction over various types of offenses committed in Indian country in Minnesota. Where two jurisdictions have concurrent jurisdiction, the Supreme Court has ruled that when tried by separate sovereigns, double jeopardy does not apply.¹¹

Criminal Jurisdiction on MN Reservations OTHER THAN Red Lake, Bois Forte, White Earth, and Mille Lacs

Victim	Indian Offender	Non-Indian Offender
Indian	State and Tribe ¹²	State*
Non-Indian	State and Tribe ¹³	State*
Other: License Offenses; Status Offenses; Government Victim	State or Tribe	State

*The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) exceptions, which allow tribes to prosecute domestic violence crimes, are explained in the tribal jurisdiction section below.

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Criminal Jurisdiction on Red Lake and Bois Forte Reservation

Victim	Indian Offender	Non-Indian Offender
Indian	Federal (major crimes only) or Tribe (major and minor crimes)	Federal
Non-Indian	Federal (major crimes only) or Tribe (major and minor crimes)	State
Other: License Offenses; Status Offenses; Government Victim	Tribe	State

House Research Department

Criminal Jurisdiction on White Earth and Mille Lacs Band Reservation

Victim	Indian Offender	Non-Indian Offender
Indian	State, Federal, and Tribe	State and Federal
Non-Indian	State, Federal, and Tribe	State and Federal
Other: License Offenses; Status Offenses; Government Victim	State or Tribe	State

House Research Department

State Criminal Jurisdiction

Non-Indian offenses. As mentioned earlier, the Supreme Court ruled in a series of cases beginning in the late 19th century that all states have criminal jurisdiction over crimes committed on Indian lands where both the perpetrator and the victim are non-Indians.¹⁴ The Court reached this conclusion based on two primary factors. First, it reasoned that states have inherent power over Indian lands within their borders as a consequence of their admission into the union without an express disclaimer of jurisdiction. Second, it determined that the laws addressing the jurisdiction of the federal government address the treatment of Indians, not the treatment of non-Indians, for conduct that happened to take place on Indian lands.

Public Law 280. While the federal government has criminal jurisdiction on the Red Lake and Bois Forte Reservations, and on many Indian reservations throughout the nation, it is the exception within the state of Minnesota. During the 1950s, Congress enacted changes in Indian policy that required Minnesota and five other states to assume complete criminal jurisdiction and limited civil jurisdiction over most Indian reservations located within their boundaries.¹⁵ Under Public Law 280, Minnesota’s criminal jurisdiction extends to all Indian reservations within the state except the Red Lake Reservation.

Public Law 280 also permitted states to “retrocede” or give up all or part of the criminal jurisdiction over Indian lands that they assumed under the law.¹⁶ In 1973, at the request of the Nett Lake (Bois Forte) band of Ojibwe, the Minnesota Legislature retroceded its criminal jurisdiction over the Bois Forte Reservation, thereby returning the reservation to federal criminal jurisdiction.¹⁷

Tribal Law and Order Act. A federal law enacted in 2010 permits a tribe subject to Public Law 280 to request the U.S. Department of Justice to reassume federal criminal jurisdiction over the tribe’s lands. The Mille Lacs Band and the White Earth Reservation both requested concurrent jurisdiction, and the Department of Justice agreed to reassume jurisdiction. Federal jurisdiction over these two reservations is concurrent to the state and tribal jurisdiction. The state’s and tribe’s jurisdiction are not altered by the presence of federal jurisdiction on these reservations.¹⁸

In sum, federal jurisdiction does not apply to Indian reservations in Minnesota except for crimes committed on the White Earth, Mille Lacs, Red Lake, or Bois Forte Reservations, unless the crime is one of general applicability as indicated on page 29. The state has jurisdiction over the majority of crimes in Indian country in Minnesota.

As discussed below, the authority granted to the state of Minnesota under Public Law 280 is not comprehensive. Under that law, Minnesota does not have the authority to prosecute offenses that are “civil/regulatory” in nature or purpose.¹⁹

Public Law 280: The Criminal/Prohibitory and Civil/Regulatory Distinction

The breadth of criminal jurisdiction conferred on states by Public Law 280 is limited by the Supreme Court’s ruling in *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians*.²⁰ This case limited the authority of California to enforce certain gambling laws in Indian country. The Supreme Court ruled that the state could not do so because these gambling laws were regulatory in nature, not criminal. In its decision, the Court outlined the following test for determining whether a law was criminal/prohibitory or civil/regulatory:

[I]f the intent of a state law is generally to prohibit certain conduct, it falls within Pub. L. 280’s grant of criminal jurisdiction, but if the state law generally permits the conduct at issue, subject to regulation, it must be classified as civil/regulatory and Pub. L. 280 does not authorize its enforcement on an Indian reservation. The shorthand test is whether the conduct at issue violates the State’s public policy.²¹

Thus, Public Law 280's grant of criminal jurisdiction over Indian land to states like Minnesota is limited to conduct that violates the general criminal laws of the state and does not include laws that merely regulate conduct, even if violations of such regulatory laws are subject to criminal penalties.²²

In December 1997, the Minnesota Supreme Court articulated a two-step test for applying the *Cabazon* test to determine whether a particular Minnesota law is civil/regulatory or criminal/prohibitory.²³

Step one. The first step of this state test relates to the question of whether the scope of the conduct at issue is to be defined broadly (e.g., driving) or narrowly (e.g., drinking and driving). The answer to this question is important because it often will determine whether the conduct generally is prohibited by state law or is merely regulated by it. The Minnesota Supreme Court stated that the reviewing court must focus on the broad conduct unless the narrow conduct presents substantially different or heightened public policy concerns. If the latter is the case, then the court must focus on the narrow conduct.

Step two. The second step of the state test applies the *Cabazon* test to the conduct at issue, as it is defined under step one. This step requires the reviewing court to decide whether state law generally permits the conduct or not; that is, whether the conduct violates the state's public criminal policy. If the answer to this question is clearly yes, meaning that state law generally permits the conduct, then the law is civil/regulatory. If the answer is clearly no, the law is criminal/prohibitory. If the answer is unclear, the court must look to the following factors in deciding the issue:

- The extent to which the activity directly threatens physical harm to persons or property, or invades the rights of others
- The extent to which the law allows for exceptions and exemptions
- The blameworthiness of the actor
- The nature and severity of the potential penalties for a violation of the law²⁴

Using this test, the Minnesota Supreme Court ruled that the state law prohibiting the consumption of alcohol by individuals under the age of 21 is criminal/prohibitory and, therefore, the state has jurisdiction to enforce it on Indian land.²⁵ The Minnesota Supreme Court also indicated, in *dicta*, that the laws prohibiting drunk driving and careless or reckless driving are likewise criminal/prohibitory.²⁶

In contrast, the Minnesota Supreme Court also used its two-part test to rule that the state lacks jurisdiction to enforce many traffic-related violations against Indians on Indian land.²⁷

The following table highlights criminal and civil offenses as deemed by Minnesota courts.

Criminal/Prohibitory	Civil/Regulatory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Marijuana possession²⁸ ▪ Obstruction of legal process²⁹ ▪ Driving after cancellation as inimical to public safety (cancelled due to multiple DWI offenses)³⁰ ▪ Driving after revocation (revoked because of DWI)³¹ ▪ Fifth-degree assault³² ▪ Disorderly conduct³³ ▪ Underage drinking³⁴ ▪ Predatory offender registration³⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Driving after suspension (suspended for failure to pay child support)³⁶ ▪ No proof of insurance/No insurance³⁷ ▪ Driving after revocation (revoked for failure to provide proof of insurance)³⁸ ▪ Expired registration³⁹ ▪ No driver's license/Expired driver's license⁴⁰ ▪ Speeding (petty misdemeanor)⁴¹ ▪ Failure to wear seatbelt⁴² ▪ No child restraint seat⁴³ ▪ Failure to yield to an emergency vehicle⁴⁴

Civil commitment of American Indian sex offenders. The Minnesota Supreme Court has ruled that Indians can be civilly committed as sexually dangerous persons under state statute.⁴⁵ The court's ruling in *In re Johnson* would appear to violate Public Law 280 because Minnesota courts have consistently ruled that civil commitment is a civil, and not a criminal, matter.⁴⁶ However, the court relied on a provision in Public Law 280 that grants states "jurisdiction over civil causes of action between Indians or to which Indians are parties which arise in the areas of Indian country..." Under this provision, "civil laws that are of general application to private persons...shall have the same force and effect within such Indian country as they have elsewhere within the State." Relying on this language, the court concluded that the state's sex offender civil commitment law creates "civil causes of action" that are subject to Public Law 280's express grant of civil jurisdiction to the state.

Tribal Jurisdiction

Tribes retain concurrent criminal jurisdiction. The tribe retains jurisdiction over any crime not covered under the Major Crimes Act or through Public Law 280. There are a number of exceptions to this depending on whether or not the perpetrator and the victim are members of the tribe or nonmember Indians. If an Indian band has a criminal code of its own and its provisions do not overlap the state or federal criminal code, the band may enforce that code against tribal members on lands over which the band has jurisdiction. The perpetrator need not be a member of the tribe that is asserting jurisdiction; as long as both the parties are Indians, the tribe may assert jurisdiction over crimes committed on the tribe's lands.⁴⁷ Second, the Indian Civil Rights Act⁴⁸ limits the punishment these tribes may impose to a maximum of one-year imprisonment and/or a maximum \$5,000 fine. As a practical matter, this often means that the tribes only prosecute minor crimes (misdemeanors and gross misdemeanors) committed on their lands. The Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 allowed tribes to request

greater sentencing abilities.⁴⁹ To date, no Minnesota tribes have these enhanced sentencing capabilities.

Tribal jurisdiction over nonmember Indians. It was a long-held belief that an Indian tribe retained sovereign powers unless specifically removed by federal statute or relinquished by treaty. However, in 1978 in the *Oliphant* case the Supreme Court further limited tribal powers and ruled that, absent congressional authority, tribes may not exercise criminal jurisdiction over crimes committed against Indians on Indian land by non-Indians.⁵⁰ The effect of this ruling is that jurisdiction over such crimes resides with the federal government or, if Public Law 280 applies, with the state government. Tribes do have jurisdiction over nonmember Indians through an update to the Indian Civil Rights Act.⁵¹

The Violence Against Women Act and tribal jurisdiction over crimes of domestic violence. As part of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Congress gave Indian tribes the option of exercising criminal jurisdiction over Indian or non-Indian perpetrators for acts of domestic violence, dating violence, and protection order violations that occur on the tribe's land. This special jurisdiction is concurrent with federal and state jurisdiction.

The tribe may not exercise special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction over an offense that occurs outside the tribe's land or if neither the perpetrator nor victim is an American Indian. Furthermore, the participating tribe's jurisdiction over non-Indian perpetrators is limited to those with sufficient ties to the tribe—defined as a defendant residing or working on the tribe's land or in a relationship with a tribe member or American Indian residing on the tribe's land.⁵²

Tribes were able to begin prosecuting under this authority starting on March 7, 2015, unless they requested and were granted an earlier start date by the U.S. Attorney General.⁵³

Law enforcement authority. The Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs funds and administers the tribal law enforcement agencies on the Red Lake and Bois Forte Reservations. Tribal police officers are professional officers trained at the Indian Police Academy in Utah.⁵⁴

Minnesota law grants law enforcement authority to all tribes in Minnesota allowing tribal police officers to operate in the community in coordination with local state law enforcement.⁵⁵ A law passed in 1991 granted certain law enforcement powers to the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians.⁵⁶ Although the state did not retrocede its criminal jurisdiction over land located within the Mille Lacs Reservation or trust lands, it did grant to the band concurrent law enforcement jurisdiction, with the Mille Lacs County sheriff's department, over the following:

- All persons in the geographical boundaries of the band's or tribe's trust lands
- All tribal members within the boundaries of the reservation
- All persons within the boundaries of the reservation who commit or attempt to commit a crime in the presence of a band peace officer

The sheriff of the county in which the violation occurred is responsible for receiving persons arrested by the band's peace officers, and the Mille Lacs County attorney is responsible for prosecuting such violators.⁵⁷

In June 2016, Mille Lacs County ended the law enforcement agreement that had been in place for 25 years. Without the county’s agreement, the provisions of [Minnesota Statutes, section 626.90](#) were not met and the Mille Lacs Band tribal police could not be connected to centralize law enforcement databases or 911 dispatch through Mille Lacs County.⁵⁸ In September 2018, the county and tribe announced that they had readied a new agreement.⁵⁹

The Minnesota Legislature granted similar law enforcement authority to the Lower Sioux Indian Community (in Redwood County) in 1997 and the Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in 1998.⁶⁰ The state extended law enforcement authority to all other qualifying tribal peace officers in 1999.⁶¹ In 2019, the legislature granted the Prairie Island Indian Community of the Mdewakanton Dakota Tribe an exception to the requirement that a cooperative agreement with the local sheriff be in place in order for the tribe to exercise law enforcement authority so long as all other requirements are met.⁶²

Endnotes

¹ See *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 30 U.S. 1 (1831); *Johnson v. McIntosh*, 21 U.S. 543 (1823); see also the discussion in Part One, pages 23 to 24.

² 18 U.S.C. § 1152.

³ 18 U.S.C. § 13.

⁴ *Williams v. United States*, 327 U.S. 711 (1946).

⁵ This policy was changed with respect to certain major crimes with enactment of the Major Crimes Act in 1885.

⁶ *United States v. McBratney*, 104 U.S. 621 (1881); *Draper v. United States*, 164 U.S. 240 (1896); *New York ex rel. Ray v. Martin*, 326 U.S. 496 (1946).

⁷ 18 U.S.C. § 1153. This law was passed in response to a Supreme Court ruling that the federal courts lack jurisdiction to prosecute an Indian who had already been punished by his tribe for killing another Indian. *Ex Parte Crow Dog*, 109 U.S. 556 (1883). The punishment meted out by the tribe—restitution to the victim’s family—was viewed by many non-Indians as an insufficient punishment for the crime of murder and Congress responded by granting the federal courts jurisdiction over violent crimes committed on Indian reservations.

⁸ 18 U.S.C. § 1153. Offenses committed within Indian country: “(a) Any Indian who commits against the person or property of another Indian or other person any of the following offenses, namely, murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, maiming, a felony under chapter 109A, incest, a felony assault under section 113, an assault against an individual who has not attained the age of 16 years, felony child abuse or neglect, arson, burglary, robbery, and a felony under section 661 of this title within the Indian country, shall be subject to the same law and penalties as all other persons committing any of the above offenses, within the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States.”

⁹ Insofar as the Major Crimes Act covers offenses committed by an Indian against the person or property of a non-Indian, it overlaps the jurisdiction conferred on the federal courts by the Enclave and Assimilative Crimes Acts. This overlap has created some legal confusion and uncertainty, particularly with respect to the applicability of the Assimilative Crimes Act to Major Crimes Act prosecutions. For a discussion of this issue, see Clinton, *Criminal Jurisdiction Over Indian Lands: A Journey Through a Jurisdictional Maze*, 18 Ariz. L. Rev. 503, 520-52 (1976).

¹⁰ Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 (Pub. L. No. 111-211). See the House Research publication *The Tribal Law and Order Act and Minnesota*, January 2017.

¹¹ *United States v. Lara*, 541 U.S. 193 (2004).

¹² In 2000 the U.S. Department of Justice issued a memorandum to clarify whether or not tribes retain concurrent criminal jurisdiction in Public Law 280 states. See “Concurrent Tribal Authority Under Public Law 83-280” Office of Tribal Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, November 9, 2000. Based on previous court decisions and current practices by tribes, the DOJ determined that tribes do retain criminal jurisdiction in Public Law 280 states. It does appear that the restrictions of the Major Crimes Act to the criminal jurisdiction of tribes also apply to tribes in Public Law 280 states.

¹³ See note 9.

¹⁴ *United States v. McBratney*, 104 U.S. 621 (1881); *Draper v. United States*, 164 U.S. 240 (1896); *New York ex rel. Ray v. Martin*, 326 U.S. 496 (1946).

¹⁵ 18 U.S.C. § 1162. In addition to Minnesota, Public Law 280 required Alaska, California, Nebraska, Oregon, and Wisconsin to assume criminal jurisdiction over Indian reservations within their boundaries. Public Law 280 also authorized other states to assume criminal jurisdiction over Indian lands at their discretion. While the original law did not require the consent of Indian tribes to such state assumptions of jurisdiction, the law was amended in 1968 to require tribal consent to any future state decisions to assume jurisdiction. See also the discussion in Part One, pages 21 to 22.

¹⁶ For a discussion of Public Law 280, retrocession, and the law’s applicability to cooperative police agreements between local and tribal authorities under [Minnesota Statutes, section 626.93](#), see *State v. Many Penny*, 682 N.W.2d 143 (Minn. 2004).

¹⁷ [Laws 1973, ch. 625](#).

¹⁸ Pub. L. No. 111-211 (Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 - 25 U.S.C. § 2801, et seq.).

¹⁹ *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians*, 480 U.S. 202 (1987).

²⁰ 480 U.S. 202 (1987).

²¹ 480 U.S. at 209 (1987). This case ultimately led to Congress’s enactment in 1988 of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, which provides a federal regulatory scheme to govern various forms of gambling on Indian reservations. 25 U.S.C. §§ 2701-2721.

²² 480 U.S. at 211 (1987).

²³ *State v. Stone*, 572 N.W.2d 725 (Minn. 1997); see also *State v. Robinson*, 572 N.W.2d 720 (Minn. 1997).

²⁴ The list is not exhaustive, meaning courts may consider other, similar factors. In addition, no single factor is dispositive.

²⁵ *State v. Robinson*, 572 N.W.2d 720 (Minn. 1997).

²⁶ *State v. Stone*, 572 N.W.2d 725 (Minn. 1997).

²⁷ See, e.g., *State v. Johnson*, 598 N.W.2d 680 (Minn.1999).

²⁸ *State v. LaRose*, 673 N.W.2d 157 at 164 (Minn. App. 2003).

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *State v. Busse*, 644 N.W.2d 79 (Minn. 2002).

³¹ *State vs. Losh*, 755 N.W.2d 736 (Minn. 2008).

³² *State v. Judkins* C8-98-1038, C2-98-1069 (Minn. App. May 4, 1999), 1999 WL 261694, *unpublished opinion*.

³³ *State v. Reese*, No. CX-97-984 (Minn. App. March 3, 1998), 1998 WL 113982, *unpublished opinion*.

³⁴ *State v. Robinson*, 572 N.W.2d 720, 724 (Minn. 1997).

³⁵ *State v. Jones*, 729 N.W.2d 1 (Minn. 2007).

³⁶ *State v. Aune*, No. C2-99-143 (Minn. App. August 31, 1999), 1999 WL 672678, *unpublished opinion*.

³⁷ *State v. Stone*, 572 N.W.2d 725 (Minn. 1997); but see *State v. Davis*, 773 N.W.2d 66 (Minn. 2009) (exception to general rule that state traffic laws are not enforceable on reservations against Indians).

³⁸ *State v. Johnson*, 598 N.W.2d 680 (Minn. 1999).

³⁹ *State v. Stone*, 572 N.W.2d 725 (Minn. 1997); but see *State v. Davis*, 773 N.W.2d 66 (Minn. 2009) (exception to general rule that state traffic laws are not enforceable on reservations against Indians).

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ *State v. Robinson*, 572 N.W.2d 720 (Minn. 1997).

⁴⁵ *In re Johnson*, 800 N.W.2d 134 (Minn. 2011).

⁴⁶ See *In re Linehan IV*, 594 N.W.2d 867, 870-72 (Minn. 1999).

⁴⁷ Congress has affirmed tribal authority over crimes committed against Indians by nonmember Indians. Congress did so in response to the Supreme Court's ruling in *Duro v. Reina*, 495 U.S. 676 (1990), that tribes lack the power to prosecute such cases. Pursuant to its plenary power over the Indian tribes under the Constitution, Congress amended the Indian Civil Rights Act to affirm the inherent right of tribes to assert criminal jurisdiction over this and other types of intra-Indian offenses. 25 U.S.C. § 1301.

⁴⁸ 25 U.S.C. § 1302(7)(B) (2012).

⁴⁹ Tribal Law and Order Act, Pub. L. No. 111-211 (2010). A number of tribes have or are beginning to use enhanced sentencing, see a list at <http://tloa.ncai.org/tribesexercisingtloa.cfm>.

⁵⁰ *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe*, 435 U.S. 191 (1978). After passage of 25 U.S.C. 1301, which recognized the "inherent powers" of Indian tribes to exercise jurisdiction over members of other tribes, *Oliphant* was called into question by *United States v. Lara*, 541 U.S. 193 (2004). The court did not find *Oliphant* controlling in that case, which dealt with the issue of whether trying an Indian defendant in federal court for assaulting a police officer, after he had already been tried in a tribal court for the same offense, constituted double jeopardy. The Court held that it did not, because, after 25 U.S.C. 1301, the authority of the tribe and the federal government to prosecute the offense came from two "separate sovereigns."

This holding was found to be consistent with *Oliphant*, although *Oliphant* had held that the tribe's authority to prosecute nonmembers was part of the tribal sovereignty that was divested by treaties and by Congress; *Lara* held that, after 25 U.S.C. 1301, this authority was inherent in the tribe. The Court found the two cases consistent because 25 U.S.C. 1301 had modified the tribe's status, which Congress was constitutionally permitted to do.

⁵¹ See Indian Civil Rights Act, 25 U.S.C. 1301, Public Law 102-137, this was Congress' response to a Supreme Court decision, *Duro v. Reina*, 495 U.S. 676 (1990), which ruled that tribal courts did not have jurisdiction over nonmember Indians who committed crimes on the reservation.

⁵² 25 U.S.C. § 1304 (2013).

⁵³ Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4, § 908, 127 Stat. 54, 125-26.

⁵⁴ Ebbott, Elizabeth. *Indians in Minnesota*. 4th ed., ed. Judith Rosenblatt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.

⁵⁵ [Minn. Stat. §§ 629.90 to 629.93](#).

⁵⁶ [Laws 1991, ch. 189](#).

⁵⁷ [Minn. Stat. § 626.90](#).

⁵⁸ *Dissecting the Revocation of the Law Enforcement Agreement*, Vivian LaMoore, Mille Lacs Messenger, July 6, 2016.

⁵⁹ *Mille Lacs County, Band of Ojibwe Settle Dispute Over Policing*, Kristi Marohn, MPR News, September 19, 2018.

⁶⁰ [Minn. Stat. §§ 626.92; 626.91](#).

⁶¹ [Minn. Stat. § 626.93](#).

⁶² [Minn. Stat. § 626.93](#), subd. 7.

Civil Jurisdiction in Indian Country: State Courts and State Laws; Tribal Courts and Tribal Codes

by Mary Mullen (651-296-9253)

“Indian country” is the term used in federal law for the jurisdictional territory of tribal governments. See 18 U.S.C. §1151. Federal law defines it as Indian reservations, dependent Indian communities, and Indian allotments. Status as Indian country does not depend upon the trust status or ownership of land. See the discussion under “Indian Lands” in Part One on page 14.

Tribal courts and state courts in Minnesota have concurrent jurisdiction over civil matters.¹

Federal Public Law 280 granted specific states, including Minnesota, civil jurisdiction over individuals on Indian lands, with certain exceptions. By the express terms of Public Law 280, Minnesota state civil jurisdiction does not apply to the Red Lake Reservation.² In 1968, the act was amended to allow states with civil jurisdiction over Indian country to retrocede (give back) that jurisdiction to the federal government. Minnesota retroceded jurisdiction over the Bois Forte Reservation.³

It is important to note that Public Law 280 specifically addresses state court jurisdiction over actions involving Indians, not Indian tribes. Case law discussed on page 18 of this publication reviews the sovereign immunity of tribes and tribal organizations from state and federal court actions.

The grant of jurisdiction has certain exceptions.

Public Law 280 provides that state civil laws of general application apply to causes of action between American Indians, or to which American Indians are parties, and which arise in Indian country; except as those laws affect trust or restricted real or personal property including probate matters and water rights. There has been litigation under Public Law 280 to clarify what constitutes a civil law of general application for purposes of allowing the state to have jurisdiction over actions involving individuals in Indian country. Courts have held that state civil regulatory laws are not included in the grant of state jurisdiction over Indian lands. For example, a state traffic regulation that is civil rather than criminal in nature has been held not applicable to Indian country.⁴ *Bryan v. Itasca County*⁵ determined that the Public Law 280 gave states concurrent jurisdiction where there had previously been none but did not provide for state taxation and state civil regulation over the tribes.

Because Public Law 280 requires a state law to be of statewide application in order to apply in Indian country, no local ordinance applies in Indian country.⁶

Congress authorized the creation of tribal courts when it passed the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934,⁷ which recognized the right of Indian tribes to adopt their own code of laws. When Public Law 280 was enacted in 1953, it had the effect of slowing tribal court development. This occurred when the BIA concluded it no longer needed to fund tribal courts in Minnesota and

the other Public Law 280 states. Tribal court development accelerated after Congress passed the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1978 because the act gave tribal courts jurisdiction over disputes involving Indian children both within and outside Indian country.

However, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe was not able to develop its own courts until 1994. Before that time, the Department of the Interior took the position that the tribal constitution did not allow the bands to create their own courts. The current 12 tribal courts in Minnesota are listed in Appendix IV.

Tribal courts blend traditional tribal dispute resolution approaches with many due process elements taken from the federal Constitution. Although the Supreme Court has held that the Bill of Rights and the 14th Amendment do not apply to tribal powers of local self-government,⁸ the federal Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968⁹ requires tribes to include various due process provisions. In addition, as tribal operations have greater impact on non-Indians, tribal courts have adopted more elements of American due process in part so that their decisions will be recognized by state and federal court systems.

There is extensive case law on whether a tribal court or state court has jurisdiction over particular cases.

The Supreme Court has explained that tribal courts are not courts of general jurisdiction because tribal court authority does not exceed a tribe's legislative authority.¹⁰ A tribe's inherent power does not exceed what is needed to protect self-government or to control internal relations. Thus, "Indian tribes retain their inherent power [to punish tribal offenders,] to determine tribal membership, to regulate domestic relations among members, and to prescribe rules of inheritance for members..."¹¹ Tribal courts also have "considerable control over nonmember conduct on tribal land."¹² However, tribal land ownership alone is not enough to support jurisdiction over nonmembers when a considerable off-reservation state interest is balanced against a minimal interference with tribal self-government.¹³

Unless a treaty, federal statute, or administrative decision provides otherwise, Indian tribes and tribal courts have only limited authority over activities of nontribal members on non-Indian fee lands within Indian country.¹⁴ In *Montana v. United States*, the Supreme Court recognized exceptions that give a tribal court sole jurisdiction in such a dispute if it involves (1) non-Indians in "consensual relationships with [a] tribe or its members through commercial dealing, contracts, leases, or other arrangements,"¹⁵ or (2) "conduct that threatens or has some direct effect on the political integrity, the economic security, or the health or welfare of the tribe."¹⁶ The Supreme Court has upheld the *Montana* exceptions, and recently affirmed that non-Indians who enter consensual relationships with Indian tribes can be subject to the civil jurisdiction of the reservation's courts.¹⁷

State court jurisdiction must be available to an Indian to invoke against a non-Indian, even if the dispute arises in Indian country.¹⁸ State courts may take jurisdiction of civil actions arising in Indian country and involving only tribal members if there is no tribal court,¹⁹ if the tribal court lacks jurisdiction of the subject matter under its tribal law,²⁰ or if an Indian party is found to have voluntarily submitted to state court jurisdiction by filing a petition there.²¹ If the state

court has concurrent jurisdiction with a tribal court over a dispute, the state court may decide to hear the case if a combination of factors are present²² or may decline jurisdiction for public policy reasons.²³

Many states are addressing the issue of full faith and credit for tribal court and state court decisions.

The full faith and credit clause of the federal Constitution requires each state to recognize the acts, records, and judicial proceedings of other states.²⁴ The clause is necessary to allow a federal system to function, so that litigation does not go on endlessly. It does not apply to tribal courts either by its express terms or by case law or federal legislation. However, the concept has become an issue for state court systems as tribal courts have been established around the country. Since tribal courts have increased in sophistication and are handling larger numbers of cases, many state court systems want to formalize their relationships. States have varied in whether the legislative or judicial branch has taken the lead in addressing the matter.

In states where the issue of giving effect to tribal court decisions has been addressed by statute, full faith and credit may be granted to all tribal court judgments,²⁵ only judgments in certain kinds of cases,²⁶ or only judgments where specified conditions are met.²⁷

Some state courts have ruled that giving full faith and credit to tribal court decisions is within the court's inherent judicial authority under the doctrine of comity.²⁸ Comity is a judicial concept that grows out of the respect one court has for another court's authority and jurisdiction. It also seeks to promote efficiency by preventing multiple proceedings on the same matter. Finally, the most common way states have dealt with full faith and credit for tribal court decisions is by court rule. For example, North Dakota adopted a rule drafted by the State Court Committee on Tribal and State Court Affairs.

The Minnesota Supreme Court has adopted rules on state court recognition of tribal court orders. The rules were updated and amended in 2018. Recognition of a tribal court order is mandatory if required by federal or state statute, for example the federal Violence Against Women Act requires recognition of an order for protection that is issued by a tribal court.²⁹ There is also a rule that provides specific procedures for tribal court civil commitment order to be enforced by a state district court.³⁰ Finally, in all other cases, the court can schedule a hearing, and generally shall enforce orders unless the order is invalid, the court lacks jurisdiction, the parties were not given due process, the order was obtained by fraud, or the tribal court doesn't enforce state court orders.³¹

Endnotes

¹ 28 U.S.C. § 1360.

² 28 U.S.C. § 1360.

³ 40 Fed. Reg. 4026 (1975).

- ⁴ *Confederated Tribes of Colville Reservation v. State of Washington*, 938 F.2d 146 (9th Cir. 1991), *cert. denied* 503 U.S. 997, 112 S. Ct. 1704 (1992). See also the discussion of *State v. Robinson*, 572 N.W.2d 720 (Minn. 1997), in the section on Criminal Jurisdiction in Indian Country, pages 27 to 36.
- ⁵ 426 U.S. 373 (1976).
- ⁶ *Segundo v. City of Rancho Mirage*, 813 F.2d 1387 (9th Cir. 1987) (after remand on another issue), 873 F.2d 1277 (9th Cir. 1989).
- ⁷ 25 U.S.C. §§ 5101.
- ⁸ *Santa Clara Pueblo v. Martinez*, 436 U.S. 49, 56, 98 S.Ct. 1670, 1676 (1978).
- ⁹ 25 U.S.C. §§ 1301-1303.
- ¹⁰ *Nevada v. Hicks*, 533 U.S. 353, 367-68, 121 S. Ct. 2304, 2314 (2001).
- ¹¹ *Strate v. A-1 Contractors*, 520 U.S. 438, 459, 117 S. Ct. 1404, 1416 (1997).
- ¹² *Ibid*, 520 U.S. at 454, 117 S. Ct. at 1413.
- ¹³ *Nevada v. Hicks*, 533 U.S. 353, 362-65, 121 S. Ct. 2304, 2311-13 (2001).
- ¹⁴ *Strate*, *supra* note 11, following *Montana v. United States*, 450 U.S. 544, 565 101 S. Ct. 1245 (1981).
- ¹⁵ *Montana v. United States*, 450 U.S. 544, 565 101 S. Ct. 1245, 1258 (1981). See, *Cohen v. Little Six, Inc.*, 543 N.W.2d 376 (Minn. App. 1996), affirmed without opinion 561 N.W.2d 889 (Minn. 1997), *cert. denied* 524 U.S. 903, 118 S.Ct. 2059 (1998).
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*, 450 U.S. at 566.
- ¹⁷ *Dollar General v. Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians*, 579 U.S. _____ (2016).
- ¹⁸ *Three Affiliated Tribes v. Wold Engineering*, 467 U.S. 138 (1984) (*Wold I*), 476 U.S. 877 (*Wold II*). But see *Neadeau v. American Family Mutual Insurance Company*, 1993 WL 302127 (Minn. App. unpublished opinion) *pet. for rev. denied* (Minn. September 21, 1993) (affirmed state court decision that it lacked jurisdiction over action by tribe member against corporation).
- ¹⁹ *Becker County Welfare Department v. Bellcourt*, 453 N.W.2d 543 (Minn. App. 1990) *pet. for review denied*, May 23, 1990.
- ²⁰ *Desjarlait v. Desjarlait*, 379 N.W.2d 139 (Minn. App. 1985), *pet. for rev. denied* (Minn. Jan. 31, 1986).
- ²¹ *Ibid*.
- ²² *Granite Valley Hotel Limited Partnership v. Jackpot Junction Bingo and Casino*, 559 N.W.2d 135 (Minn. App. 1997) (contract between tribe and nontribal business was performed off reservation, tribe explicitly waived sovereign immunity and consented to state court jurisdiction, and court did not need to interpret tribal documents to resolve the issues). Cf. *Klammer v. Lower Sioux Convenience Store*, 535 N.W.2d 379 (Minn. App. 1995) (dispute arose on Indian reservation and tribe did not explicitly waive sovereign immunity or consent to state court jurisdiction).
- ²³ *In re Custody of K.K.S.*, 508 N.W.2d 813, 816-817 (Minn. App. 1993), *pet. for rev. denied* (Minn. January 27, 1994) (state court declined jurisdiction to avoid possible conflicting custody decrees when it was not inconsistent with federal law).
- ²⁴ U.S. Const. art. IV, § 1, cl. 1.
- ²⁵ Wis. Stat. Ann. § 806.245.
- ²⁶ Ark. Code Ann. 9-15-302 (tribal court orders for protection order).
- ²⁷ Okla. Stat. tit. 12, § 728 (recognizing tribal court judgments if tribal court reciprocates on state court judgments); Wyo. Stat. Ann. § 5-1-111.
- ²⁸ *Jim v. CIT Financial Services Corp.*, 87 N. M. 362, 533 P.2d 751 (1975); *Mexican v. Circle Bear*, 370 N.W. 2d 737 (S.D. 1985) (superseded by statute in SDCL 1-1-25).

²⁹ [General Rules of Practice for the District Courts, Rule 10.01.](#)

³⁰ [General Rules of Practice for the District Court, Rule 10.02.](#)

³¹ [General Rules of Practice for the District Court, Rule 10.03.](#)

Labor and Employment Law in Indian Country

by Mary Mullen (651-296-9253)

“Indian country” is the term used in federal law for the jurisdictional territory of tribal governments. See 18 U.S.C. §1151. Federal law defines it as Indian reservations, dependent Indian communities, and Indian allotments. Status as Indian country does not depend upon the trust status or ownership of land. See the discussion under “Indian Lands” in Part One on page 14.

Federal Employment Law

The application of federal employment laws to Indian tribes and to employers on Indian reservations has been widely litigated. While some federal statutes specifically exempt Indian tribes as employers, a number of federal statutes do not, and in those cases there is often confusion as to when and how to apply those laws to tribal employers. In some cases the decision to apply the laws depends on whether the tribe is running a business and is an employer through a commercial enterprise, or whether the tribe is a government employer. Lawsuits have also arisen to determine the application of employment and labor laws to businesses owned by tribal members who operate businesses on Indian lands. The application of certain employment and labor laws continues to be a source of some confusion, as different federal district courts and circuit courts, as well as various federal agencies, disagree on the application of these laws in Indian country.

Some federal statutes specifically exempt tribes, and other federal statutes are silent on their application to tribal governments and businesses owned by the tribe.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964¹ prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. This widely used anti-discrimination law expressly exempts Indian tribes from the term “employer.”² However, Indian-owned businesses that are not run by the tribe have been required to comply with the provisions of Title VII.³

The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSHA) requires certain standards to protect the health and safety of workers in the private sector. OSHA is silent as to whether or not tribes are considered employers, but the courts have held that OSHA does not apply to tribes as government employers.⁴

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1976 (ADEA)⁵ prohibits employers from discriminating based on age. The ADEA does not specifically exempt tribes, but courts have held that the law does not apply to tribes in the Eighth Circuit, which includes Minnesota.⁶

The Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) is a federal law that establishes standards and regulations for pension plans. The law applies to the private sector and has an exemption for governments. ERISA does not apply to the tribe as a government employer, consistent with the act’s exemption for state and federal employers.⁷

However, ERISA may apply to tribes as commercial employers when they choose to have employee benefit plans that would otherwise be covered by ERISA.⁸ This is an area where the distinction between the tribe as a government employer (employing individuals to do government functions) and the tribe as a commercial employer (employing employees to run a business) are distinct for the purposes of applying federal laws. A 2006 law, the Pension Protection Act, updated the application of ERISA and limited the exemption to situations where all of the employees are performing an “essential government function.”⁹

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA), similar to the distinction made for the application of ERISA, has also been found to apply to tribal commercial enterprises, but not to tribal government employers. COBRA requires medical insurance to be available after an employee has left his or her job.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)¹⁰ prohibits discrimination by employers against employees based on physical or mental disabilities. Title I of the ADA, which prohibits discriminations based on disability, expressly exempts tribes from the definition of employer. Other portions of the ADA do not specifically exempt tribes from the application of this law, but because tribes have not waived their sovereign immunity to these lawsuits, a lawsuit against a tribe under those provisions would be barred by the tribe’s sovereign immunity.¹¹

The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)¹² is silent as to whether it applies to Indian tribes. Tribes may choose to provide FMLA leave to employees, and Indian-owned businesses could be required to provide FMLA leave in areas outside of Indian country; however, it is likely that tribal sovereign immunity would bar a lawsuit against the tribe for failing to comply with FMLA, on or off the reservation.

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)¹³ establishes the federal minimum wage and overtime laws; it also prohibits sexual discrimination in compensation and provides rules for the employment of youth under 18. The FLSA applies to private employers, as well as the state and federal governments, and it does not specifically exempt Indian tribes or employers on Indian reservations. Because there is no clear direction in the FLSA, the issue has been litigated around the country, and a federal circuit court split means that certain tribes are subject to the provisions of the act, while others are not.¹⁴ Some courts have held that the FLSA does not apply to tribal government employees.¹⁵

Employers on or near a reservation and the Bureau of Indian Affairs may exercise an Indian hiring preference.

The federal government has recognized a hiring preference for Indian tribes as well as for the BIA.¹⁶ The hiring preferences create an exception to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and allow employers on and near a reservation to have a preference for hiring Indian applicants.¹⁷ The law has been upheld in a number of cases because the hiring preference is considered a political preference, and not a race-based preference.¹⁸ It is unclear if a tribe can implement a hiring preference for its own members over another Indian tribe’s members.¹⁹

State labor and employment laws do not generally apply to tribes, however most tribes have their own employment laws and policies.

Generally, state employment and labor laws do not apply to Indian tribes.²⁰ For instance, state antidiscrimination laws and required leave acts do not apply to tribal employers on the reservation but unemployment compensation is available to employees of tribes as required by federal and state law.²¹ The Minnesota Supreme Court has ruled that the Minnesota Workers' Compensation Act is a civil regulatory law that would not apply to an Indian tribe, and also found that tribes in those cases have not waived their sovereign immunity from suit.²² Other state courts have applied workers' compensation laws to nontribally owned businesses operating in Indian country.²³

Most tribes have their own employment laws and employment manuals. Many of these manuals have policies that mirror state or federal discrimination and leave policies. The tribe may or may not choose to waive their sovereign immunity with regard to those laws and policies, which may affect the ability of an employee or applicant to sue under those provisions.

Endnotes

¹ 42 U.S.C. § 2000e.

² 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000e to 2000e-17 (2000)(e)(b); *Wardle v. Ute Tribe*, 623 F.2d 670 (10th Cir. 1980).

³ *Myrick v. Devils Lake Sioux Manufacturing Corp.*, 718 F.Supp. 753 (D.N.D. 1989).

⁴ *Donovan v. Coeur d' Alene Tribal Farm*, 751 F.2d 1113 (9th Cir. 1985); *Donovan v. Navajo Forest Products Indus.*, 692 F.2d 709 (10th Cir. 1982). See also *Secretary of Labor v. Red Lake Nation Fisheries, Inc.*, Docket No. 18-0934 (2019).

⁵ 29 U.S.C. §§ 621 to 634.

⁶ *EEOC v. Fond du Lac Heavy Equipment and Constr. Co.*, 986 F.2d 246 (8th Cir. 1993). However, the Ninth and Seventh Circuit Federal District Courts have held that OSHA applies to tribes in certain circumstances and that the FLSA applies to tribes as well.

⁷ Pension Protection Act of 2006, 29 U.S.C. § 1002(32).

⁸ Pension Protection Act of 2006, 29 U.S.C. § 1002(32).

⁹ Pension Protection Act P.L. 109-280; *Cohen's Handbook of Federal Indian Law*, § 21.02[5](c), 1341 (2012).

¹⁰ 42 U.S.C. §§ 12101-12213.

¹¹ *Florida Paraplegic Assoc., Inc. v. Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida*, 166 F.3d 1126 (11th Cir. 1999).

¹² 29 U.S.C. §§ 2601 to 2654 (2000).

¹³ 29 U.S.C. §§ 201 to 219 (2000).

¹⁴ The Tenth Circuit has found in favor of the tribes in *Nat'l. Labor Relations Bd. v. Pueblo of San Juan*, 276 F.3d 1187 (10th Cir. 2002) (holding that "Congress did not intend by its NLRA provisions to preempt tribal sovereign authority to enact its right-to-work ordinance"). In recent years, the D.C. Circuit and the Sixth Circuit Courts have found that the NLRA applies to tribes. See *San Manuel Indian Bingo and Casino v. N.L.R.B.*, 475 F.3d 1306 (D.C. Cir. Feb. 2007), *reh'g en banc denied* (D.C. Cir. June 8, 2007) (holding that the NLRB could apply the NLRA to the tribe's casino); *N.L.R.B. v. Litter River Band of Ottawa Indians Tribal Government*, 788 F.3d 537 (6th Cir. 2015) (cert. denied, 136 S. Ct. 2508 (2016)) (upholding the National Labor Relations Board determination that the NLRA applies to the tribe); *Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort*, 791 F.3d 648 (6th Cir. 2016) (holding that the NLRA was

applicable to the casino, and the NLRB could regulate the casino's employment practices). The Ninth Circuit Court recently held in *Casino Pauma v. National Labor Relations Board*, 888 F.3d 1066 (9th Cir. 2018), that the National Labor Relations Board is a generally applicable law and applies to tribes.

¹⁵ *Snyder v. Navajo Nation*, 371 F.3d 658 (9th Cir. 2004); *Reich v. Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission*, 4 F.3d 490 (7th Cir. 1993).

¹⁶ 25 U.S.C. §§ 5116.

¹⁷ 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2(i); EEOC has indicated up to 60 miles for a reservation is considered "near" the reservation for the purposes of this section.

¹⁸ *Morton v. Mancari*, 417 U.S. 535 (1974); *Preston v. Heckler*, 734 F.2d 1359 (9th Cir. 1984); *Am. Fed'n. of Gov't. Employees v. United States*, 330 F.3d 513 (D.C. Cir. 2003) (upholding Indian preference in federal government appropriations bill as being a political distinction and not a race-based preference).

¹⁹ *Dawavendewa v. Salt River Project Agricultural Improvement and Power District*, 276 F.3d 1150 (9th Cir. 2002) (finding that sovereign immunity barred the lawsuit, leaving the question of whether or not the hiring preference for Navajos over other Indians was consistent with the exceptions to Title VII unanswered).

²⁰ *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians*, 480 U.S. 202 (1987).

²¹ See, e.g., [Minn. Stat. § 268.0525](#).

²² *Tibbetts v. Leech Lake Reservation Business Committee*, 397 N.W.2d 883 (Minn. 1986).

²³ *State of North Dakota ex rel. Workforce Safety & Insurance v. JFK Raingutters, a Limited Liability Company*, 733 N.W.2d 248 (2007).

Gaming Regulation in Indian Country

by Ben Johnson (651-296-8957)

“Indian country” is the term used in federal law for the jurisdictional territory of tribal governments. See 18 U.S.C. §1151. Federal law defines it as Indian reservations, dependent Indian communities, and Indian allotments. Status as Indian country does not depend upon the trust status or ownership of land. See the discussion under “Indian Lands” in Part One on page 14.

Indian Gaming Regulatory Act allows Indian tribes to own and operate casinos.

In 1987, Indian tribes successfully argued that they had the right to own and operate casinos outside of state regulation.¹ Congress passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) one year later. The 1988 law sought to balance the interests of the states, tribes, and federal government. Courts sought to balance those concerns and the federal law replaced tests from a series of federal court decisions in the 1970s and 1980s with standards that permit different levels of state involvement in different classes of games.

IGRA:

- allows states to prohibit types of gambling by all people in a state, including tribes;
- allows tribes to offer some types of gambling outside of state regulation when a state permits or regulates that type of gambling in any way;
- directs states and tribes to negotiate an agreement permitting some other types of gambling; and
- requires federal approval for any ordinance or resolution a tribe adopts to authorize gambling.

As a result, the tribal right to conduct gambling applies only on Indian land and tribes must be aware of state law before knowing what types of gambling they can offer.

Under the federal law, gambling can be conducted on “Indian land.” Federal law defines Indian land as land that is either:

- part of a federally recognized Indian reservation; or
- off a reservation but held in trust for an Indian tribe by the federal government, or under the jurisdiction of an Indian governing body.

As this definition points out, it is not necessary for land to be actually part of a reservation for gambling to be conducted on it. In theory, an Indian tribe could buy land anywhere in a state and operate a casino on it by transferring it to the Secretary of the Interior in trust for the tribe. However, such a designation of Indian trust land for gambling purposes also requires the concurrence of the state governor. In recent years, Congress has considered proposals to further limit the lands eligible for gaming, but none of the proposed legislation has passed thus far.

Federal law provides for three distinct types of gambling on Indian land and provides separate regulatory mechanisms for each.²

Class I gambling, which includes traditional Indian ceremonial games, is under the exclusive control of the tribes.

Class II gambling consists of bingo, keno, pull-tabs, punchboards, and nonbanking card games (games where players play against each other rather than against the house) as long as those games are authorized or not prohibited by state law. Class II gambling is governed by a tribal ordinance that must meet federal guidelines and be approved by the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC).

Class III gambling consists of all games that are not class I or class II, including common casino games such as roulette, craps, chemin de fer, baccarat, and banking card games such as blackjack. The term also includes all mechanical or electronic gambling machines such as slot machines and video poker devices. Class III gambling is conducted under a compact that each tribe negotiates with the government of the state in which it is located. Compacts can specify which party has civil and criminal jurisdiction over gambling enforcement and can apply any state laws to class III gambling that each party believes necessary for regulation.

An Indian tribe does not have complete authority to conduct any type of gambling it wishes. By dividing gambling into three classes, the federal law permits increasing levels of state involvement and control over the actions of tribes. While tribes have complete control over class I gambling, they may only conduct and regulate class II gambling if the state “permits such gaming for any purpose by any person, organization or entity.”³ The right to conduct class III gambling depends on both the state permitting that type of gambling by any person, organization, or entity and on the state and tribe entering into a compact memorializing the terms of their agreement.⁴ There have been significant disputes regarding the role of states in prohibiting and regulating Indian gambling, and the responsibility of states to engage in negotiations to establish tribal-state compacts.

States’ Roles

States have limited rights to regulate or prohibit Indian gambling.

Under IGRA, a state cannot *prohibit* Indian gambling if it is a type of gambling that the state allows or regulates in any way. The states’ right to *control* Indian gambling is also sharply limited under federal law.

States have the ability to prohibit some class II gambling, but only if the state does not permit that type of gambling by any person or entity in the state. A state can permit a type of gambling without it being commercial or profit-making; gambling by nonprofit organizations for charitable purposes, or even private social betting, can provide a basis for American Indians to claim the right to conduct comparable forms of gambling. As a result, a state can only prohibit class II gaming if the state completely prohibits those activities.⁵ If a state permits, regulates, or tolerates bingo and other class II games, then the state has no role in regulating those games on

Indian land and tribes can conduct that type of gambling without complying with state regulation.

States have more control over class III gambling because tribes can only conduct that type of gambling if the tribe and state enter into a compact. As drafted, federal law required a state to negotiate a compact with an Indian tribe requesting negotiations if a state permitted class III games by any person in the state.⁶ Under the federal law, a state's refusal to negotiate gave the tribe the right to go to federal court to seek a court order requiring further negotiations. If further negotiations failed to result in a compact, each side would submit a proposal to a court-appointed mediator who selected the proposal that was the more consistent with the federal law. A state that objected to the mediator's decision could appeal to the Secretary of the Interior. At that point the secretary prescribed the compact, taking into consideration the mediator's decision, state law, and federal law. Thus, a state's refusal to negotiate in good faith did not prevent a compact from being written, but could result in the state's being eliminated from the process of writing the compact. Those enforcement provisions remain part of the federal law but tribes cannot rely on them.

In 1996, the Supreme Court invalidated the provisions of the IGRA that allow tribes to sue states that are not negotiating in good faith towards a tribal-state compact, reasoning that the provisions violate states' sovereign immunity under the 11th Amendment.⁷ As a result, a tribe cannot conduct class III gambling without a compact "and cannot sue to enforce a State's duty to negotiate a compact in good faith."⁸ For more information on sovereign immunity see "Sovereign Immunity" page 19.

In response to *Seminole Tribe*, the Secretary of the Interior promulgated procedures that gave administrative effect to the law,⁹ but in a challenge to those procedures by the state of Texas, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals invalidated them.¹⁰ In a similar case arising out of New Mexico, the Tenth Circuit reached the same conclusion.¹¹ While the Supreme Court has not addressed the question, it is unlikely that a tribe can successfully enforce the good-faith negotiation provision in IGRA absent a state's waiver of sovereign immunity.

States cannot tax Indian gambling.

Federal law specifically prohibits states from imposing taxes or fees on Indian gambling, except for fees agreed to by the tribe. These fees are intended to compensate the state for its costs in performing inspections and other regulation under the tribal-state compact. In other words, states cannot raise general revenue by taxing Indian gambling. This does not prohibit states from requiring tribes to pay a share of gambling proceeds to the state in return for a state concession, such as a guarantee of tribal monopoly on some forms of gambling. Several states have such revenue-sharing arrangements with tribes within their borders. Case law has implicitly placed barriers on the ability of governments to charge certain fees to tribes seeking to operate gambling facilities. IGRA requires that the tribe have "sole proprietary interest" in the gaming such that any large payment to the government may be closely scrutinized by the NIGC.¹²

Income earned by employees at Indian casinos is taxable if the employee is a non-Indian. Income earned at an Indian casino by tribal members is nontaxable by the state.

Minnesota’s tribal-state compacts allow blackjack and slot machines.

Compacts between the state and Indian tribes located within Minnesota permit class III games in the form of blackjack and video games of chance. The compacts provide for: inspection and approval of machines by the state Department of Public Safety; licensing of casino employees; standards for employees such as prohibiting employment of individuals with felony convictions; machine payout percentages; and regulation of the play of blackjack. In addition, the legislature authorized simulcast transmissions of horse racing to locations on tribal land where the tribe has entered into a tribal-state compact.¹³

The compacts governing blackjack obligate Minnesota Indian tribes to pay the state a total of approximately \$150,000 each year to assist in administering the compacts. However, they do not require tribes to pay a share of gambling proceeds to the state.

These compacts are in effect until renegotiation.

Both types of compacts (video games and blackjack) provide that they remain in effect until the two parties renegotiate them. Either party can request a renegotiation at any time.

There is no agreement on the outcome of Indian gambling if Minnesota were to prohibit gambling.

The federal law says that if a state allows a form of gambling by any person for any purpose, Indians in that state have the right to conduct that form of gambling. It makes no mention of what happens if a state repeals that authorization after a compact is negotiated.

The Minnesota Legislature repealed the law on which the video game compact was based. The law legalized and licensed “video games of chance” without allowing betting on them. At the time the law was repealed, the legislature also said that the repeal was not intended to affect the validity of tribal-state compacts that authorized video machines.¹⁴

Casino Revenues

It is difficult to know how much money Minnesota’s Indian casinos take in.

Indian casinos report revenue to the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) and the NIGC reports the total revenue by region. Minnesota is part of the St. Paul region which also includes Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Nebraska, and Wisconsin. In 2018, the region reported gaming revenue of approximately \$4.8 billion.¹⁵ Net gaming revenue at Minnesota Indian gaming facilities amounted to nearly \$1.5 billion in 2014.¹⁶

Casino revenues have been the source of litigation in Minnesota. A decade-long dispute over an agreement between the city of Duluth and the Fond du Lac Tribe was resolved in 2016. The casino, which opened in 1986 and prior to the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act in 1988, included an agreement for the tribe to pay the city a large sum of revenue for rent. After

years of litigation that began in 2009, the tribe and city of Duluth reached an agreement to make the terms of the rent more consistent with the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act and allow the casino to continue operating (see page 77 for more on the agreement between the Fond du Lac Band and Duluth).¹⁷

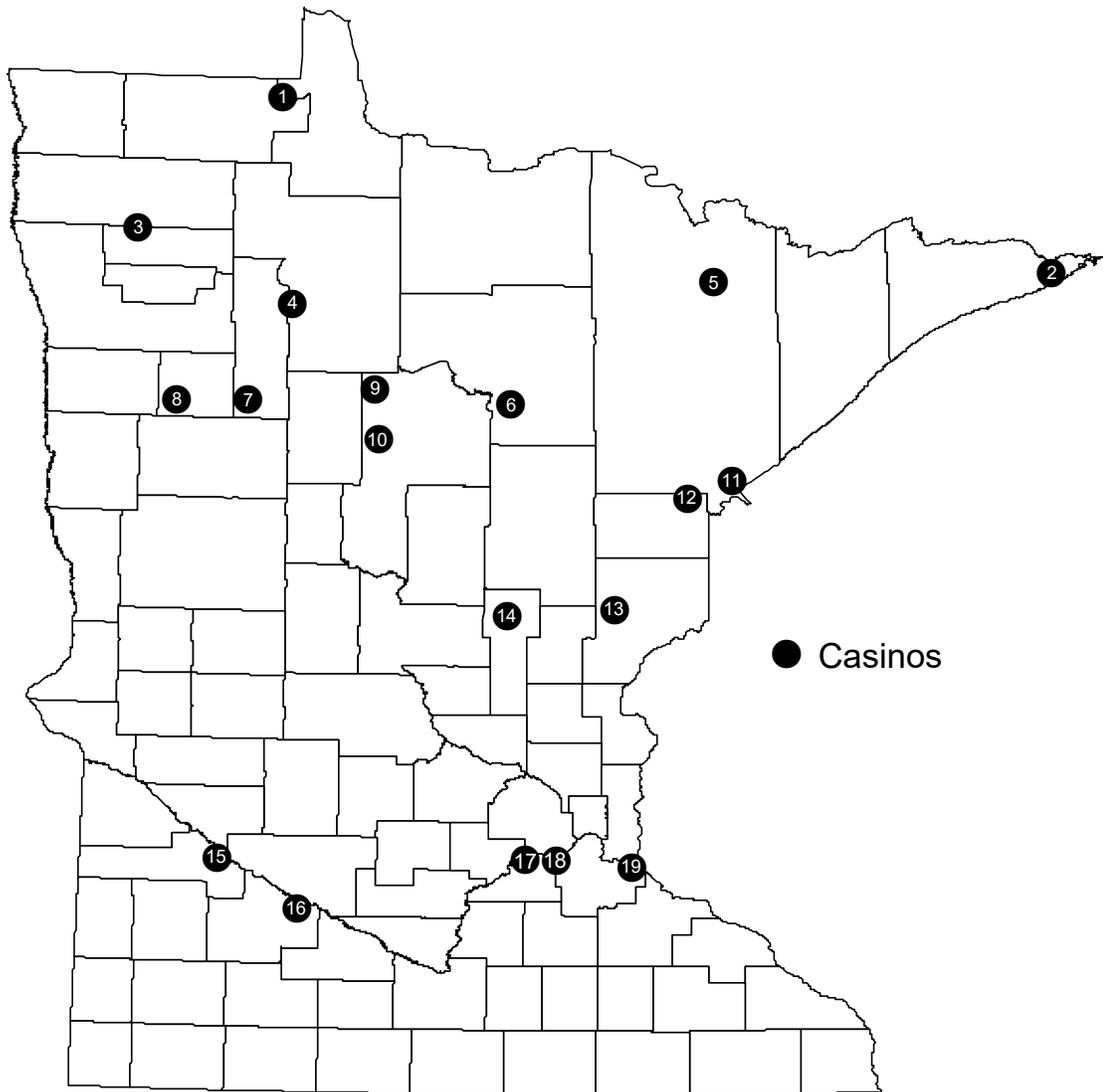
Casinos in Minnesota

Minnesota currently has 11 tribes operating 19 casinos.

Initially, this was more tribal casinos than in any other state. There are several reasons for this:

- Minnesota tribes were involved in legal gambling under federal court decisions upholding Indian sovereignty for several years before the passage of the 1988 federal act. Although these operations were on a much smaller scale than today's casinos, they laid an economic base for rapid expansion after passage of the federal act.
- Several Indian tribes have benefited from their reservations being located close to the metropolitan area, close to the Canadian border, or in prime tourism areas. According to the Minnesota Indian Gaming Association, an estimated 71 percent of casino patrons come from outside Minnesota or the local area.
- Minnesota was far ahead of other state governments in beginning and completing the compact negotiation process.
- Minnesotans have demonstrated an enthusiasm for legal gambling, as the state's billion-dollar charitable gambling industry indicates. This created a ready market for casino gambling and gave tribes the confidence to take risks in opening and expanding casinos.

Map 3: Location of Casinos



Casinos

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Seven Clans Warroad Casino | 11. Fond-du-Luth Casino |
| 2. Grand Portage Lodge and Casino | 12. Black Bear Casino |
| 3. Seven Clans Thief River Falls Casino | 13. Grand Casino Hinckley |
| 4. Seven Clans Red Lake Casino and Bingo | 14. Grand Casino Mille Lacs |
| 5. Fortune Bay Resort Casino | 15. Prairie's Edge Casino Resort |
| 6. White Oak Casino | 16. Jackpot Junction Casino Hotel |
| 7. Shooting Star Casino, Bagley | 17 & 18. Little Six Casino &
Mystic Lake Casino Hotel |
| 8. Shooting Star Casino Hotel, Mahnommen | 19. Treasure Island Resort and Casino |
| 9. Palace Casino Hotel | |
| 10. Northern Lights Casino | |

Endnotes

¹ *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians*, 480 U.S. 202 (1987).

² 25 U.S.C. §§ 2703(6) - (8), 2710. ³

25 U.S.C. § 2710(b)(1)(A).

⁴ 25 U.S.C. § 2710(d)(1).

⁵ *Gaming Corp. of Am. v. Dorsey & Whitney*, 88 F.3d 536, 546 (8th Cir. 1996).

⁶ Federal appellate courts have reached different conclusions regarding the appropriate test to determine whether a state permits a particular game. Under the Wisconsin or categorical test, if the state permits any form of class III gaming, compact negotiations can encompass all types of class III gaming. In contrast, the Florida or game-specific test permits a state to prohibit a specific game even if it permits other games in the same class. See, *Northern Arapaho Tribe v. State of Wyoming*, 389 F.3d 1308 (10th Cir. 2004).

⁷ *Seminole Tribe of Florida v. Florida*, 517 U.S. 44 (1996).

⁸ *Michigan v. Bay Mills Indian Community*, 572 U.S. 782, 797 (2014).

⁹ 25 C.F.R. §§ 291.1 to 291.15.

¹⁰ *Texas v. United States*, 497 F.3d 491 (5th Cir. 2007).

¹¹ *New Mexico v. Department of Interior*, 854 F.3d 1207 (10th Cir. 2017).

¹² *City of Duluth v. Fond du Lac Band*, 702 F.3d 1147 (8th Cir. 2013).

¹³ [Laws 2012, ch. 279](#); [Minn. Stat. § 240.13](#), subd. 9.

¹⁴ [Laws 1990, ch. 590](#), art. 1, § 48.

¹⁵ National Indian Gaming Commission Tribal Gaming Revenues (in Thousands) by Region, Fiscal Year 2018 and 2017.

¹⁶ Alan Meister, Casino City's Indian Gaming Industry Report (2016).

¹⁷ *Duluth, Minnesota v. Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa*, 785 F.3d 1207 (8th Cir. 2015).

Liquor Regulation in Indian Country

by Christopher Kleman (651-296-8959)

“Indian country” is the term used in federal law for the jurisdictional territory of tribal governments. See 18 U.S.C. §1151. Federal law defines it as Indian reservations, dependent Indian communities, and Indian allotments. Status as Indian country does not depend upon the trust status or ownership of land. See the discussion under “Indian Lands” in Part One on page 14.

Federal law prohibits the possession of alcoholic beverages in and introduction of alcoholic beverages into Indian country. However, it also makes an important exception to this prohibition. Sale and possession of alcoholic beverages in Indian country is legal if it conforms with both state law and Indian tribal ordinance. This means that an establishment can sell alcoholic beverages within a reservation only if both state and tribal law allow it.

State Law on Alcoholic Beverages

The present Minnesota law on alcoholic beverages in Indian country represents a “live and let live” approach. In order to avoid disputes between local governments and Indian tribes that might otherwise have conflicting jurisdiction over the same establishments, state law provides for mutual recognition of authority that at the same time avoids duplication of regulatory effort.

Prior to 1985, liquor establishments in Indian country were in the same situation as liquor establishments elsewhere in the state: in order to legally sell alcoholic beverages, it was necessary to obtain a retail license from the city or county in which the establishment was located. In 1985, the legislature enacted a special provision¹ that dealt specifically with licenses in Indian country. This law is intended to adopt a system of “dual recognition,” whereby the state recognizes licenses issued in Indian country by an Indian tribe if the tribe recognizes licenses in Indian country issued by cities or counties.

Tribal licenses. The state law recognizes the validity of licenses issued by an Indian tribe to a tribal member or tribal entity for establishments located in Indian country. A tribal government issuing a tribal license must notify the state Department of Public Safety. On receipt of the notification, the department must issue the licensee a retailer’s identification card, also called a “buyer’s card.” All retailers must have this card in order to purchase alcoholic beverages from Minnesota-licensed beer and liquor wholesalers.

An establishment that is owned by a tribal member or tribal entity and has a tribal license is not required to obtain a retail license from the city or county in which it is located.

City and county licenses. Cities and counties may issue retail alcoholic beverage licenses to establishments that are in Indian country and also within the city or county. Under the “effective date” section of the 1985 state law, these licenses must be recognized by the Indian tribe that has jurisdiction over the territory, in order for that same tribe to have its own licenses recognized under state law. These licenses are intended to be issued to non-Indians who do

business on reservations; Indian tribal members who own liquor establishments on reservations could apply for a city or county license if they wish, but they do not have to if they already have a tribal license.

State liquor laws. Minnesota liquor laws, such as the laws prohibiting sales to minors and prescribing days and hours of sale, are criminal laws and may therefore be enforced on Indian reservations. However, neither the state nor a local unit of government has the authority to suspend or revoke a tribal license for a violation of any law or regulation. Licenses issued by cities or counties in Indian country may be revoked or suspended by the issuing authority and, in some cases, by the state.

Liquor liability. The state “dram shop” law, which makes liquor sellers liable for damages if they cause intoxication that later leads to an injury, is a civil law that applies in Indian country as a result of the federal government’s Public Law 280. However, its only application would be to individuals, American Indian or non-Indian, who operate liquor establishments. Tribal government entities that have licenses (whether issued by tribes or by local governments) are generally immune from lawsuits under the doctrine of tribal sovereign immunity, which has been upheld on several occasions by Minnesota and federal courts.²

Endnotes

¹ [Minn. Stat. § 340A.4055](#) (1992).

² See discussion in Part One, pages 18 to 20.

Control of Natural Resources in Indian Country

by Janelle Taylor (651-296-5039)

“Indian country” is the term used in federal law for the jurisdictional territory of tribal governments. See 18 U.S.C. §1151. Federal law defines it as Indian reservations, dependent Indian communities, and Indian allotments. Status as Indian country does not depend upon the trust status or ownership of land. See the discussion under “Indian Lands” in Part One on page14.

The U.S. Supreme Court and the Minnesota Supreme Court have consistently upheld Indians’ rights to hunt and fish free of state regulation on Indian reservations.

These rights were implicitly included in reservation grants because of the important role these activities play in Indian life and culture. The rights can only be eliminated by very specific treaty language or congressional action expressing an intent to do so.

Three significant agreements have been ratified by statute, and a fourth agreement was reached as a separate federal land settlement act involving the state and certain Chippewa bands. The first ratification occurred in 1973 with the agreement between the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and the state Department of Natural Resources.¹ The original agreement exempted band members from state law on hunting, fishing, trapping, bait-taking, and wild rice gathering on the Leech Lake Reservation. It also included the creation of special licenses and fees for hunting, fishing, trapping, or bait-taking by non-Chippewas on the reservation. This latter provision was amended to provide that the Leech Lake band receive a payment equal to 5 percent of all revenue from licenses sold in the state for fishing, hunting, trapping, and bait-taking. This amendment eliminated the special license fee.

Authority for a similar agreement between the state and the White Earth Band of Ojibwe was passed in 1980.² The White Earth band would have received 2.5 percent of all revenue from licenses sold in the state for fishing, hunting, trapping, and bait-taking. The legislature authorized an agreement with White Earth in 1980, but it never has been completed.³

A separate state law was enacted in 1984 in an effort by the state to work with Congress to reach a settlement over disputed lands within the White Earth Reservation. The Department of Interior had proclaimed that landowners’ titles to 100,000 acres on the reservation were not valid and that those lands belonged to Indian allottees or their heirs.

In response, Congress passed the White Earth Land Settlement Act of 1986 (WELSA), Pub. Law No. 99-264. The state agreed to transfer 10,000 acres to the United States to be held in trust for the band. The state also agreed to provide an increased land base to the White Earth band in return for having the titles cleared. A list of lands covered by WELSA was published in the Federal Register. The state also agreed to provide technical assistance needed by the Department of the Interior to administer the settlement.

In 1988, the so-called 1854 Treaty Area Agreement was ratified in statute over natural resource rights with the Grand Portage, Bois Forte, and Fond du Lac bands of Chippewa.⁴ The Fond du Lac band voted to opt out of the state agreement in 1989. Each year since then, the remaining two bands received approximately \$1.6 million each to forego some of their treaty rights. The Fond du Lac band entered into litigation with the state over its rights under the 1854 treaty and has litigated the extent of its rights under an 1837 treaty; those claims were consolidated with the Mille Lacs case discussed below.

1837 Treaty and Mille Lacs Band Lawsuit

The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe filed a lawsuit in 1990 to assert its hunting, fishing, and gathering rights in the 1837 treaty-ceded territory, which includes most of Mille Lacs Lake. The state responded by proposing an out-of-court settlement in which the Mille Lacs band would agree to prohibit commercial fishing in Mille Lacs Lake in exchange for a single payment of \$10 million and several thousand acres of land. The settlement was taken to the legislature for ratification, but was rejected.

A trial took place in 1994 and Judge Murphy found that the band retained rights to hunt, fish, and gather under the 1837 treaty in the 1837-ceded territory.⁵ The court also ruled that the band has the right to commercially harvest natural resources, except timber, and to adopt its own conservation code to regulate its members. Finally, harvest of natural resources by the band under the 1837 treaty may only be regulated by the state for conservation, public safety, and public health concerns. The Fond du Lac band and six Wisconsin bands of Chippewa were allowed to join the lawsuit in 1995.⁶

Judge Davis issued a final decision in a second phase of this trial in January 1997.⁷ This decision made the case ready for appeal. The extent of state regulation and allocation of the natural resources in the ceded territory affected by the 1837 treaty were determined in this phase. Key elements of this decision were:

- Band members may harvest game and fish resources pursuant to their band code. A court-approved stipulation includes a detailed conservation code for band members outlining the regulations for fish and game harvest; an order that protects threatened and endangered species; regulations prohibiting harvest in state parks and scientific areas; band fisheries and wildlife harvest plans for the years 1997 to 2001; and a provision authorizing Department of Natural Resources (DNR) conservation officers to enforce the band code.
- Band members may only exercise treaty harvest rights on public lands and a very few acres of other lands open to public hunting by law. State trespass law applies to private lands within the ceded territory.
- Treaty harvest begins as soon as a band has adopted the regulations in the stipulation and deputized state conservation officers to enforce the code. It may be regulated by the state only for conservation, public safety, or public health concerns.

- The court made no allocation of the resources between the bands and the state.⁸ The court affirmed the bands' five-year harvest management plan, which limited the amount of harvest each year. Some examples of the 1997 limit are 40,000 pounds of walleye on Mille Lacs Lake (out of an average 450,000 pounds) and 900 deer. In 2002, the walleye limit for band members rose to 353,000 pounds; for nonband members it was 370,000 pounds.

The phase-two decision in the Mille Lacs lawsuit was appealed by the state, nine counties, and several landowners in the Mille Lacs area. The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the lower court rulings in all respects.

The case was then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, and in 1999, the Court ruled that the 1837 treaty rights continue to exist. In a closely divided opinion of five to four, the Supreme Court affirmed the lower court rulings. The majority opinion rejected the state's arguments that the 1837 rights had been revoked by Executive Order in 1850 and that a later treaty in 1855 sought to extinguish the rights previously granted.⁹

Court decisions in other states have recognized the existence of Indian rights in similar cases.

In Wisconsin, under previous litigation, the federal court ruled that Chippewa bands there retained their rights under the same 1837 treaty. The court determined in that case that the Wisconsin bands were entitled to 50 percent of the annual harvestable surplus of game and fish in a large geographical area of the state.

Late in 2002, in order to avoid a possible court dispute between the Ojibwe bands and the state, a mediated agreement on fishing was reached. The agreement began in 2003 and included a new five-year walleye management plan for Mille Lacs Lake including less restrictive fishing regulations for nonband anglers, penalties for the state and anglers for exceeding the safe walleye harvest level in 2002, and a cap on future walleye limits. Harvest levels continue to be established by the 1837 Ceded Territory Fisheries committee, which includes tribal and state biologists. Safe walleye harvest levels have fluctuated in recent years due to concerns over decreasing walleye populations. For 2015 and 2016, the agreed upon safe walleye harvest level was reduced to 40,000 pounds (11,400 pounds for band members and 28,600 for state-licensed anglers). In recent years, the levels have increased. The safe walleye harvest level for 2019 was 150,000 pounds (62,200 pounds for band members and 87,800 pounds for state-licensed anglers).

Endnotes

¹ [Minn. Stat. §§ 97A.151, 97A.155.](#)

² [Minn. Stat. § 97A.161.](#)

³ See [Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.161](#). On reservations, i.e., Leech and White Earth, harvest rights are implicit unless clear language in federal law says they are not. The sections below addressing the 1837 and 1854 treaties pertain to ceded territories; i.e., Indian lands ceded to the federal government pursuant to a treaty. In ceded territories, bands retain no harvest rights, or anything else, unless explicitly stated. Ceded territories are not

Indian country. In Minnesota, only the 1837 and 1854 treaties have language reserving harvest rights in the respective ceded territories. Harvest rights in ceded territories are unrelated to harvest rights on reservations. The White Earth land claims issues do not deal with harvest rights.

⁴ [Minn. Stat. § 97A.157](#).

⁵ *Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians v. Minnesota*, 861 F.Supp. 784 (D.Minn. 1994).

⁶ Both the 1837 and 1854 treaty lawsuits were litigated in two phases. Phase I dealt with the question of whether the treaty harvest rights are valid, and Phase II dealt with defining those rights, i.e., who harvests what, when, where, and how. It was Phase I of the Mille Lacs case (1837 treaty) that was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Phase II was resolved partially by stipulated settlement. In the Fond du Lac case (1854 treaty), the federal district court found the treaty harvest right valid (Phase I).

⁷ *Mille Lacs Band v. Minnesota*, 952 F.Supp. 1362 (D.Minn. 1997).

⁸ Initial harvest allocations were agreed to by the parties as part of a separate Phase II stipulation.

⁹ *Minnesota v. Mille Lacs Band*, 524 U.S. 915, 118 S.Ct. 2295 (1998) (certiorari granted); *Minnesota v. Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians*, 526 U.S. 172, 119 S.Ct. 1187 (1999) (judgment affirmed).

Environmental Regulation in Indian Country

by Bob Eleff (651-296-8961)

“Indian country” is the term used in federal law for the jurisdictional territory of tribal governments. See 18 U.S.C. §1151. Federal law defines it as Indian reservations, dependent Indian communities, and Indian allotments. Status as Indian country does not depend upon the trust status or ownership of land. See the discussion under “Indian Lands” in Part One on page 14.

In the century following the establishment of the reservation system after the Civil War, environmental regulation of tribal members in Indian country was meager. Federal and state environmental statutes were few. What little regulation that occurred emanated from tribal law or from the application of state laws governing public nuisance, refuse disposal, and the like. During the past 40 years, as the federal government and the states enacted many of the environmental statutes operating today, the issue of which laws—state, federal, or tribal—apply in Indian country and which governing body administers them has been clarified by a series of court decisions.

Federal and tribal environmental regulatory laws apply to tribal members in Indian country; the jurisdiction of state laws is limited. Federal environmental statutes apply in Indian country, but federal policy is to cede regulatory authority to tribes that wish to administer these laws on tribal lands, provided the tribes meet certain criteria. This tribal authority may only be applied to those provisions of environmental laws expressly designated by Congress. Tribes retain authority to enact and administer their own environmental laws in the absence of corresponding federal laws, provided they are at least as stringent as any corresponding federal laws. Tribes are treated similar to states in these respects. Tribal jurisdiction extends to non-Indians under certain conditions.

The authority of state environmental laws over tribal members in Indian country is quite narrow, being restricted to statutes that prohibit certain acts, such as the sale or use of specific pesticides or chemicals in packaging or products. State statutes that are regulatory in nature—that permit certain actions but govern how they are to be carried out—are not applicable to tribal members in Indian country, but are applicable to non-Indians in certain circumstances.

Federal Environmental Regulations and Indian Lands

Courts have ruled for many years that federal laws apply to American Indians, although this was not the case earlier.

Federal primacy with respect to Indian lands derives from the constitutional powers granted to Congress to regulate commerce with Indian tribes and to enter into treaties with them.¹ This is not to say that all federal laws automatically governed in Indian country. In fact, in an 1894 decision, the Supreme Court said, “Under the Constitution of the United States, as originally established...General Acts of Congress did not apply to Indians, unless so expressed as to clearly manifest an intention to include them.”² However, by 1960, the Court declared that “it is now

well settled by many decisions of this Court that a general statute in terms applying to all persons includes Indians and their property interests.”³

The trend toward greater tribal self-government on environmental matters began in the 1970s.

In 1970, President Nixon announced a national policy aimed at tribal self-determination, a principle eventually embodied in the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act passed by Congress in 1975. In 1983, President Reagan gave further impetus to this trend in a statement on Indian policy, noting that despite passage of the act:

major tribal governmental functions[, including]...developing and managing tribal resources . . . [,] are frequently carried on by federal employees. The federal government must move away from this surrogate role which undermines the concept of self-government. This Administration intends to restore tribal governments to their rightful place among the governments of this nation and to enable tribal governments...to resume control over their own affairs.⁴

The following year, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) articulated its policy regarding the operation of federal environmental programs on Indian lands.

EPA recognizes Tribal Governments as sovereign entities with primary authority and responsibility for the reservation populace. Accordingly, EPA will work directly with Tribal Governments as the independent authority for reservation affairs, and not as political subdivisions of states or other governmental units...[T]he agency will assist interested Tribal Governments in developing programs and preparing to assume regulatory and program management responsibilities for reservation lands.⁵

Federal Delegation of Authority to Indian Tribes

Tribes may administer certain federal environmental programs.

Many of the core environmental laws enacted during the 1970s and 1980s expressly provided that EPA could delegate authority to qualified states to administer regulatory programs, such as inspecting facilities, issuing permits, determining compliance, and enforcing against violators. Between 1986 and 1995, Congress amended those laws to allow a similar delegation to Indian tribes, but only with respect to certain authorities, as reflected in the partial list below:⁶

- **Clean Water Act:** Planning and receiving federal funding for the construction of wastewater treatment plants; establishing water quality standards; monitoring and inspecting facilities for compliance; issuing and enforcing permits containing pollution limits; controlling pollution from “nonpoint” sources
- **Safe Drinking Water Act:** Establishing and enforcing drinking water standards; protecting water wellhead areas from contamination; regulating the injection of fluids into the ground (e.g., from nonresidential septic systems)

- **Clean Air Act:** Issuing and enforcing permits limiting emissions; designating air quality areas
- **Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act:** Removing hazardous wastes from contaminated lands or pursuing agreements with others to do so; submitting priorities for cleanups to EPA; consulting with the EPA on cleanup methods
- **Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act:** Cooperating with the EPA to train and certify pesticide applicators and to enforce the act

Tribes seeking delegation of authority must meet certain conditions.

In reviewing a tribe's application for delegation of authority under these laws, the EPA must ensure that a tribe satisfies criteria established by Congress. For example, the Safe Drinking Water Act requires that: (1) the tribe has a governing body possessing substantial governmental powers and performing substantial duties; (2) the functions to be exercised are within the tribe's jurisdiction;⁷ and (3) the tribe is reasonably expected to be capable of carrying out those functions in a manner consistent with the purposes of the act.⁸

Tribes are also eligible to receive federal financial and technical assistance to help carry out their environmental responsibilities. The purposes of the Indian Environmental and General Assistance Program Act of 1992 are to "provide general assistance grants to Indian tribal governments...to build capacity to administer environmental regulatory programs that may be delegated by the Environmental Protection Agency," and to "provide technical assistance in the development of multimedia programs..."⁹

While this process is referred to as a delegation of federal authority, it may more properly be termed a recognition of a tribe's inherent sovereignty. In *City of Albuquerque v. Browner*, the Tenth Circuit decision stated: "Congress's authorization for the EPA to treat Indian tribes as states *preserves* the right of tribes to govern their water resources. . . ." ¹⁰ Referring to section 1370 of the Clean Water Act, which allows states to impose water quality standards more stringent than those of the federal government, the court held that "Indian tribes have residual sovereign powers that already guarantee the powers enumerated in section 1370, absent an express statutory elimination of those powers."¹¹ One commentator has made the more general statement that "[i]n almost every instance where a statute has more or less explicitly treated 'Tribes as States,' either the statute or an attendant Supreme Court opinion clarified that the tribe itself, and not the statute, provided the source of the tribe's sovereignty."¹²

Some Minnesota tribes have been granted “treatment as state” status by the EPA, authorizing the tribes to administer the federal programs listed in the table below.

Minnesota Tribes With EPA Treatment as State (TAS) Status

Tribes	Clean Water Act			Clean Air Act		Toxic Substances Control Act
	Sec. 106 ^a	Sec. 319 ^b	Sec. 303 ^c	Sec. 105 ^d	Sec. 505a(2) ^e	Sec. 402 ^f
Bois Forte Band	√					√
Fond du Lac Band	√	√	√	√	√	
Grand Portage Band	√	√	√	√	√	
Leech Lake Tribe	√	Pending		√	√	
Lower Sioux Indian Community	√					√
Mille Lacs Band	√			√	√	
Minnesota Chippewa Tribe	√					
Prairie Island Community	√	√				
Red Lake Band	√	√		√	√	
Shakopee Mdewankanton Sioux Community	√	√				
Upper Sioux Indian Community	√					√
White Earth Band	√					

^a Section 106 provides funding to help tribes understand, assess, and preserve water resources. Funds are used to develop water quality monitoring programs, conduct water quality assessments, purchase equipment, train personnel, and develop tribal water quality ordinances.

^b Section 319 authority pertains to the control of pollution from nonpoint sources by such means as monitoring and assessing water quality, developing water quality standards, and ensuring compliance with those standards.

^c Section 303 grants authority to tribes to develop and implement water quality standards for specific waterbodies.

^d Section 105 provides grants to plan, develop, and implement air pollution control programs.

^e Section 505(a)(2) requires that tribes located within 50 miles of a facility that is seeking an air quality permit from the federal or state government be notified of such permits, so they may participate in the permitting process.

^f Section 402 grants authority to train workers to properly remove paint containing lead and to certify such training programs.

Sources: Columns 2 to 6: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5, Tribal and International Affairs Office, October 30, 2019.

Column 7: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “TAS Approvals to Operate Regulatory Programs and Perform Administrative Functions – by Tribe,” <https://www.epa.gov/tribal/tribes-approved-treatment-state-tas>.

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There are formal mechanisms of cooperation between tribes and the EPA other than TAS status:¹³

- The Upper and Lower Sioux Communities have signed a memorandum of understanding with EPA and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency directing the tribes to enforce EPA's work practice standards developed under the Toxic Substances Control Act that insure proper removal of lead paint from buildings.
- The Grand Portage Band has signed a memorandum of understanding with PCA and EPA that allows both the tribe and the agency to set water quality standards for the shore waters of Lake Superior, while ensuring that those standards are identical.

Under a Direct Implementation Tribal Cooperative Agreement (DITCA) between the EPA and the Bois Forte Band, the tribe is compensated for conducting education and outreach activities under the federal lead removal program. A similar arrangement provides compensation to the Fond du Lac and Mille Lacs Bands for inspecting certain facilities under construction to insure compliance with EPA's storm water standards.

Tribal Environmental Regulations in Indian Country

Like states, Indian tribes may enact and enforce their own environmental regulations in subject areas where no federal law exists or if their laws are at least as stringent as corresponding federal laws. Indian tribes have inherent sovereign authority to regulate tribal members on the reservation,¹⁴ although these powers may be limited, modified, or eliminated by Congress.¹⁵

A tribe may also regulate the activities of non-Indians on the reservation.

A 1981 Supreme Court decision recognized that tribes have authority to enforce their civil regulations against non-Indians within the reservation if expressly authorized by federal law or treaty. The decision also stated that a tribe has inherent power to exercise civil authority over nonmembers who enter consensual relationships with the tribe or its members, through commercial dealing, contracts, leases, or other arrangements. A tribe may also retain inherent power to exercise civil authority over the conduct of non-Indians on fee lands within its reservation when that conduct threatens or has some direct effect on the political integrity, the economic security, or the health or welfare of the tribe.¹⁶

State Environmental Regulations in Indian Country

State jurisdiction over tribal members in Indian country with respect to environmental law has been limited by Congress and the courts. Minnesota's role in applying its environmental laws to tribal members in Indian country is governed by Public Law 280, enacted by Congress in 1953, which transferred federal criminal jurisdiction in Indian country to six states, including Minnesota, and allowed other states discretion to assume such authority.¹⁷ However, many of Minnesota's environmental laws are not criminal; they are civil laws that permit certain actions, but establish procedures, limits, and conditions governing them. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that Public Law 280 does not apply to such civil/regulatory laws, but only to criminal/prohibitory laws.¹⁸ The test it established to distinguish between these two categories is whether the law

intends to prohibit conduct that violates a state’s public policy or to regulate conduct otherwise permitted. As one publication declared, “This distinction eludes clear definition and has generated considerable litigation.”¹⁹ For more on Public Law 280, see pages 22 and 23.

In general, state environmental laws that flatly prohibit certain actions and impose civil or criminal penalties on violators are more likely to be judged to be applicable on Indian lands. Among such laws enacted in Minnesota are the following:

Prohibitions on sales, distribution, or use of certain types of products or products containing certain chemicals or materials	
Material	Minnesota Statute
Pesticides containing chlordane, heptachlor, or more than 1 part per million TCDD	§§ 18B.11; 18B.115
Packaging materials containing intentionally introduced lead, cadmium, mercury, or hexavalent chromium	§ 115A.965
Products placed on a “prohibited” list by the Listed Metals Advisory Committee that contain lead, cadmium, mercury, or hexavalent chromium	§ 115A.9651
Coal tar sealants used on asphalt paving	§ 116.202
Mercury thermometers	§ 116.92
Toys, games, and apparel containing mercury	§ 116.92
Mercury manometers used on dairy farms	§ 116.92
Sanitizing or hand and body cleaning products containing triclosan	§ 145.945
Beverages in a plastic and metal can	§ 325E.042
Beverages or motor oil containers held together by connected rings made of nondegradable plastic	§ 325E.042
Devices impairing operation of a motor vehicle emissions control system	§ 325E.0951
Alkaline manganese batteries containing more than .025% mercury by weight	§ 325E.125
Button cell nonrechargeable batteries containing more than 25 mg of mercury	§ 325E.125
Dry cell batteries containing a mercuric oxide electrode	§ 325E.125
Certain products containing CFCs	§ 325E.38
Sweeping compounds containing petroleum oil	§ 325E.40
Tents and sleeping bags that are not durably flame resistant	§ 325F.04
Children’s products or upholstered residential furniture containing more than 1,000 parts per million of any of four specific flame-retardant chemicals	§ 325F.071
Children’s toys or articles posing a toxic hazard	§ 325F.08
Unsafe infant cribs	§ 325F.171
Bottles or cups containing bisphenol-A used to dispense food to a child	§ 325F.173
Containers containing bisphenol-A that store formula or food intended to be consumed by a child	§ 325F.174
Children’s products containing formaldehyde	§ 325F.177

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Prohibition of activities that may pollute water

Activity	Minnesota Statute
Discharging a marine toilet into waters of the state	§ 86B.325
Constructing/operating a depository for hazardous/nuclear waste that may pollute potable water	§ 115.065

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Prohibitions on placing certain items in solid waste, in a solid waste processing or disposal facility

Item	Minnesota Statute
Waste tires	§ 115A.904
Lead acid batteries	§ 115A.915
Certain dry cell batteries	§ 115A.9155
Rechargeable battery, battery-pack, or product containing them	§ 115A.9157
Motor vehicle fluids or filters	§ 115A.916
Yard wastes, except for reuse, composting, or co-composting	§ 115A.931
Mercury or instruments containing mercury	§ 115A.932
Fluorescent or high-intensity discharge lamps	§ 115A.932
Telephone directories	§ 115A.951
Major appliances	§ 115A.9561
Electronic products containing a cathode-ray tube	§ 115A.9565

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Prohibition of miscellaneous activities

Activity	Minnesota Statute
Selling/distributing an adulterated or misbranded pesticide	§§ 18B.12; 18B.13
Certain fertilizer-handling activities	§ 18C.201
Selling/distributing a misbranded or adulterated fertilizer, plant amendment or soil amendment	§§ 18C.225; 18C.231
Operating a motorboat in excess of noise limits	§ 86B.321
Delivering unprocessed mixed municipal solid waste to a substandard disposal facility	§ 115A.415
Littering on public or private lands or waters	§§ 115A.99; 609.68
Sending/accepting residential lead-paint waste for incineration in a mixed municipal solid waste incinerator	§ 116.88
Throwing solid waste from a motor vehicle	§ 169.421
Operating a motor vehicle emitting visible air contaminants	Minn. Rules part 7023.0105

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With respect to non-Indians, states have authority to regulate their activities on an Indian reservation unless preempted by federal law. In a 1983 decision, the Supreme Court expanded the concept of federal preemption of state authority on reservations, stating: “State jurisdiction is preempted by the operation of federal law if it interferes or is incompatible with federal and tribal interests reflected in federal law, unless the State interests at stake are sufficient to justify the assertion of State authority.”²⁰

Federal regulatory environmental statutes apply on Indian lands.

Tribal law applies in the absence of federal statutes, or where tribal law is more stringent than corresponding federal law. Qualified tribes may administer several federal environmental programs designated by Congress or the EPA, and are eligible to receive federal financial and technical assistance for that purpose. The federal government retains authority to implement and enforce federal laws in Indian country where a tribe is not delegated to do so.

State laws that prohibit certain polluting activities and that impose civil or criminal penalties for violations are likely to apply in Indian country to the same extent as in the rest of the state. State regulatory environmental statutes do not apply on Indian lands. The distinction between these two categories is not, however, a settled area of law.

Endnotes

¹ U.S. Const., art. I, § 8, cl. 3, and art. II, § 2, cl. 2, respectively.

² *Elk v. Wilkins*, 112 U.S. 94 (1894), at 99-100.

³ *Federal Power Commission v. Tuscorora Indian Nation*, 362 U.S. 99 (1960), at 116.

⁴ “American Indian Policy,” January 24, 1983, pp. 2, 4, <http://epa.gov/Indian/pdfs/reagan83.pdf#search%22reagan%20indian%20policy%201983%22>.

⁵ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *EPA policy for the administration of environmental programs on Indian reservations*, November 8, 1984, p. 2, <http://www.epa.gov/region6/6pd/pd-u-sw/reser.htm>.

⁶ In the case of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1377(e)), the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA, the Superfund law governing hazardous waste cleanup, 42 U.S.C. § 9626), and the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA, 7 U.S.C. § 136u), Congress specified which authorities could be delegated to tribes. With respect to the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. §§ 300h-1(e) and 300j-11) and the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. § 7601(d)), Congress authorized the EPA to make that determination.

⁷ Although courts have held that tribal authority does not extend to nonmembers in all cases, the Supreme Court ruled in 1981 that “A tribe may regulate . . . the activities of nonmembers who enter consensual relationships with the tribe or its members, through commercial dealing, contracts, leases, or other arrangements. A tribe may also retain inherent power to exercise civil authority over the conduct of non-Indians on fee lands within its reservation when that conduct threatens or has some direct effect on the political integrity, the economic security, or the health or welfare of the tribe.” [Citations omitted] *Montana v. United States*, 450 U.S. 544 (1981), at 565-566.

⁸ 42 U.S.C. § 300j-11(b).

⁹ 42 U.S.C. § 4368b(b).

¹⁰ *City of Albuquerque v. Browner*, 97 F.3d, 415, at 418 (10th Cir. 1996).

¹¹ *Id.*, at 423.

¹² Richard A. Monette, "Treating Tribes as States Under Federal Statutes in the Environmental Arena: Where Laws of Nature and Natural Law Collide," *Vermont Law Review*, vol. 21 (1996), p. 130.

¹³ Interview with Luke Jones, Director, Indian Environmental Office, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region V, October 3, 2006.

¹⁴ *Santa Clara Pueblo v. Martinez*, 436 U.S. 49 (1978).

¹⁵ *Merrion v. Jicarilla Apache Tribe*, 455 U.S. 130 (1982), at 141.

¹⁶ *Montana v. United States*, 450 U.S. 544 (1981) at 557, 565-566.

¹⁷ Public Law 280 excluded the Red Lake Reservation from its provisions. President Eisenhower expressed "grave doubts" about signing this legislation without a provision requiring tribal consent for states to assume such authority. In 1968, an amendment to that effect was enacted. No tribe has since given such consent. Carole Goldberg and Duane Champagne, "Is Public Law 280 fit for the twenty-first century? Some data at last," *Connecticut Law Review*, vol. 38, no. 4 (Spring 2006), pp. 697-729, at 707, www.connecticutlawreview.org/archive/vol38/spring2/Goldberg.pdf.

¹⁸ *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians*, 480 U.S. 202 (1987), at 209-10.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, *Public Law 280 and law enforcement in Indian country – research priorities*, December 2005, p. 6, www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/209839.pdf.

²⁰ *New Mexico v. Mescalero Apache Tribe*, 462 U.S. 324 (1983), at 334.

Taxation in Indian Country

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“Indian country” is the term used in federal law for the jurisdictional territory of tribal governments. See 18 U.S.C. §1151. Federal law defines it as Indian reservations, dependent Indian communities, and Indian allotments. Status as Indian country does not depend upon the trust status or ownership of land. See the discussion under “Indian Lands” in Part One on page 14.

This section discusses (1) state tax immunities that arise from the special status of Indian tribes and territory, and (2) tribal governments’ power to impose taxes. The principal focus is on tax immunities. Tax immunities affect the state’s ability to tax income, property located in, and transactions occurring in tribal territories. However, the tribal power to tax is also important, because it can result in a double tax burden if both state and tribal taxes apply to the same property, income, or transaction. In addition, imposition of tribal taxes may preempt state taxes.

Two general principles apply:

- 1) The federal laws establishing Indian country and their twofold purposes—preserving tribal sovereignty and providing economic support for Indian communities—preempt the state’s ability to tax tribal members, lands, and some activities within Indian country.
- 2) The tribes as sovereign governments, conversely, have the power to tax property, individuals, and transactions within their territories.

These two general principles become less clear when applying state or tribal taxes to specific situations that involve non-Indians, commercial activities between tribes or tribal members and non-Indians, and properties owned by non-Indians or fee properties on reservations. A further complication arises from the way some state taxes are collected. Some taxes are imposed at the distributor or wholesaler level (e.g., excise taxes on cigarettes, tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, and highway fuels). These individuals or entities are typically non-Indian businesses located outside of Indian territory. However, part or all of the economic burden of the tax may fall on tribes or American Indians who are immune from state tax.

Tribal immunity may make it practically impossible for the state to collect taxes on transactions in Indian country.

The converse situation arises where the tax burden falls on non-Indians, who are not immune from the state tax, but the collection obligation falls on a tribal business. In this situation, the legal immunity of the tribal business may make it practically impossible to collect the tax obligation. For example, the Supreme Court has held that purchases by non-Indians from tribal businesses in Indian country are subject to sales tax.¹ However, the tribe is immune from

lawsuits and most of the standard legal collection mechanisms used by the state to collect its taxes.²

Congress may authorize states to impose taxes within Indian country.

In some instances, federal law specifically authorizes state taxation of property or activities within Indian country.³ These grants are read narrowly under the general principle that Indian laws and treaties are to be construed liberally and ambiguities are to be resolved in the favor of Indians. Indian tax immunities are generally only lifted when Congress has indicated “a clear purpose” to do so.⁴

Numerous Supreme Court cases have established a complex set of rules governing state and tribal authority to tax Indians and activities in Indian country. The authority to impose state taxes in Indian country has been frequently litigated. Given the multiplicity of types of taxes and ways in which they are collected, the issues and rules can be complex and confusing. To provide a simplified guide to these rules, the tables in this chapter display the legal authority to apply state or tribal taxes to tribal members, to Indians who are not tribal members, to non-Indians, and to property in Indian country. The “yes-no” answers given in the tables, in many instances, oversimplify complex constitutional or statutory issues. Therefore, these entries should be viewed with caution. The notes to the tables provide case authority for the rules outlined in the tables and give some flavor of the complexity involved.

Income Taxation

States, in general, may not tax the income of tribes or income of an enrolled member that is derived from Indian country⁵ sources. States, however, may tax the income of enrolled members from sources outside of Indian country or the income of other Indians. States also may tax the reservation income of Indians who are not members of the tribe. Although tribal governments generally do not do so, they have the authority to impose income taxes on reservation income of tribal members. Tribal governments may also, in some limited circumstances, be able to tax reservation source income of nonmembers. These income tax rules are listed in Table 1 and its notes. References in the table to “Indian country” refer to the tribe’s reservation, allotments, and dependent community; in other words, it is specific to the applicable tribe, not all of Indian country. References in Table 1 to individuals who are “in” or “outside” of Indian country refer to the place of their residency.

Table 1
Authority to Impose Income Taxes

Subject of Tax	Governmental Unit Imposing Tax		
	Federal	State	Tribal ⁶
Tribe			
Indian country source income	Waived ⁷	No	N.A.
Non-Indian country income	Waived ⁸	Yes ⁹	N.A.
Passive income	Waived ¹⁰	No	N.A.
Tribal member¹¹ in Indian country			
Indian country source income	Yes ¹²	No ¹³	Yes
Non-Indian country income	Yes	Unclear ¹⁴	Probably yes ¹⁵
Passive income	Yes	Unclear ¹⁶	Probably yes ¹⁷
Tribal member outside Indian country			
Indian country source income	Yes	Yes ¹⁸	Probably yes ¹⁹
Non-Indian country income	Yes	Yes	Probably yes ²⁰
Passive income	Yes	Yes	Probably yes ²¹
Nonmember Indian in Indian country			
Indian country source income	Yes	Probably yes ²²	Unclear ²³
Non-Indian country income	Yes	Yes	No ²⁴
Passive income	Yes	Yes	No ²⁵
Nonmember Indian outside Indian country			
Indian country source income	Yes	Yes ²⁶	No ²⁷
Non-Indian country income	Yes	Yes	No
Passive income	Yes	Yes	No
Non-Indian in Indian country			
Indian country source income	Yes	Yes	Unclear ²⁸
Non-Indian country income	Yes	Yes	No ²⁹
Passive income	Yes	Yes	No ³⁰
Non-Indian outside Indian country			
Indian country source income	Yes	Yes	No ³¹
Non-Indian country income	Yes	Yes	No
Passive income	Yes	Yes	No

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Sales and Excise Taxes

States may not impose sales and excise taxes on sales or use of goods among tribes, tribal businesses, and tribal members in Indian country; but Indian country sales between tribes or tribal members and nonmembers are subject to state tax. States may tax sales transactions involving nonmembers in Indian country, and tribes have an obligation to collect these taxes on behalf of the states. But the doctrine of sovereign immunity prevents states from using the courts to enforce this obligation on tribes, tribal businesses, and tribal members. Tribal governments may, and occasionally do, impose sales and excise taxes on general sales or specific goods, such as cigarettes or alcoholic beverages. These rules are summarized in Table 2. Most tribes have entered into taxing agreements with the state for collection of sales and excise taxes. These agreements are discussed beginning on page 78.

Table 2
Authority to Impose Sales & Excise Taxes on
Transactions in Indian Country

Tax/Transaction	Entity Legally Subject to Tax		
	Tribe	Indian ³²	Non-Indian ³³
State Taxation			
Cigarette excise tax	No ³⁴	No ³⁵	Yes ³⁶
Severance tax on minerals			
Leases under pre-1938 law ³⁷	Yes	Yes	Yes
Leases under post-1938 law ³⁸	No	No	Yes ³⁹
General sales tax	No ⁴⁰	No ⁴¹	Yes ⁴²
Motor vehicle license	No	No	No ⁴³
Gross receipts of contractor with tribe	N.A.	No	Maybe ⁴⁴
Alcohol excise ⁴⁵	No	No	Yes
Motor fuel sales to Indian retailer in Indian country	N.A.	N.A.	No ⁴⁶
Motor fuel sales to non-Indian distributor for ultimate sale in Indian country	Yes ⁴⁷	Yes ⁴⁸	Yes ⁴⁹
Tribal Taxation			
Cigarette excise	N.A.	Yes ⁵⁰	Yes ⁵¹
Alcohol excise	N.A.	Yes ⁵²	Yes ⁵³
General sales	N.A.	Yes ⁵⁴	No ⁵⁵
Oil and gas severance	N.A.	Yes ⁵⁶	Yes ⁵⁷

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Property Taxation

Indian trust lands, whether held in trust for the tribe or allotted for individual tribal members, are exempt from ad valorem property taxation. By contrast, fee lands, whether owned by the tribe or an individual member, are generally taxable.

Indian lands generally can be divided into trust lands and allotted or fee lands. Trust lands are held by the federal government “in trust” either for the tribe or an individual Indian. They are exempt from state and local taxation, based on their status as federal government property. Fee lands are owned directly by the tribe or individual Indians who can sell or transfer them. The property taxation of fee lands, held by tribal governments or individual Indians within reservations, was not always clear. Before 1992 in Minnesota, tribally owned lands were generally treated as exempt from taxation. In 1992, the U.S. Supreme Court held in *County of Yakima v. Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakima Indian Nation*⁵⁸ that fee lands allotted to individual Indians were subject to state and local ad valorem property taxes. After this decision, the Minnesota Department of Revenue advised counties that fee lands were generally taxable. As a result, most counties began taxing fee lands. However, questions remained as to whether the tax status depended upon the specific terms of the allotment act and whether it authorized state taxation. These questions were largely resolved by a 1998 decision in *Cass County v. Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians*. The Supreme Court held that the alienability of the lands was of “central significance.”⁵⁹ The decision, thus, makes it clear that essentially all fee lands in Minnesota are subject to property tax. Tribes will need to have their land transferred in trust to the federal government to be exempt from property taxes.⁶⁰

The Minnesota property tax applies to very little personal property, other than certain utility property and manufactured homes. Other states, however, extend their property taxes to more personal property, particularly business property such as equipment and inventory. In early cases, the Supreme Court upheld the power of states to tax the personal property of non-Indians located in Indian country, even when the property was used under leases granted by the Indians.⁶¹ (Personal property owned by tribes or individual members and held on the reservation is exempt.⁶²) Since the early cases decided around the turn of the 20th century, the Supreme Court has not decided a personal property case. The lower courts, following Supreme Court cases on nonproperty taxes, have used a preemption analysis.⁶³ The issue typically is whether the state personal property tax is preempted by a specific federal statute, such as the Indian Trader Statutes, the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, or Indian Reorganization Act, or whether it is preempted under general preemption issues under a sort of balancing test that compares state and local interests with tribal interests. Treaties and laws enacted by specific tribes may also be relevant to whether state and local property taxation is preempted or not. Lower federal court decisions vary in their results.⁶⁴ A 2013 administrative rule adopted by the BIA may increase the likelihood of preemption.⁶⁵

Although most tribal governments do not impose property taxes on properties, they do have this authority.

Table 3 outlines the rules governing real property taxation.

Table 3
Real Property Taxation

Type of Property	Entity Imposing Tax	
	State ⁶⁶	Tribal
Trust land		
Tribal	No ⁶⁷	N.A.
Allotted to individual Indian	No ⁶⁸	Yes ⁶⁹
Fee land – on reservation		
Tribally owned	Yes ⁷⁰	N.A.
Owned by enrolled Indian	Yes ⁷¹	Yes ⁷²
Owned by nonenrolled Indian	Yes	No ⁷³
Owned by nonIndian	Yes	No ⁷⁴
Tribal fee land – off reservation	Yes ⁷⁵	N.A.

House Research Department

Table 4 displays the amount of tax-exempt Indian trust lands by county for the three most recent tax-exempt abstracts (2004, 2010, and 2016). The table shows the dollar amounts of exempt market value and the percentage that this value makes up of taxable market value for each county. The total value of exempt Indian land has increased over this period, growing from \$1.12 billion in 2004 to \$1.98 billion in 2016. However, the amount of this value relative to the taxable values has declined from 1.9 percent in 2004 to 1.2 percent in 2016.

Scott County has the highest amount of tax-exempt value (\$397 million) with Carlton County second (\$309 million). Scott County is home to the Mystic Lake Casino, the largest tribal casino in Minnesota. However, the \$397 million amount is still less than 3 percent of Scott County's taxable market value. Indian trust lands are relatively the highest in Mahnommen County (14.8 percent), reflecting the county's low tax base and the fact that Indian lands make up a large portion of the county. Carlton County (at 10.2 percent) is the only other county where Indian lands exceed 10 percent of taxable market value.

Table 4
Tax-Exempt Indian Trust Land Relative to
Taxable Market Value (TMV) by County
2004, 2010, and 2016

County	2004 Value	% of TMV	2010 Value	% of TMV	2016 Value	% of TMV
Aitkin	\$3,221,100	0.2	\$7,742,800	0.2	\$8,977,400	0.3
Becker	37,388,600	1.5	68,924,700	1.5	76,812,400	1.2
Beltrami	17,991,700	1.0	30,468,300	1.0	27,796,600	0.8
Carlton	96,025,100	5.6	307,209,200	12.0	309,302,100	10.2
Cass	241,144,100	6.3	232,393,700	3.5	234,474,700	2.9
Clearwater	8,502,300	1.8	18,789,200	2.4	23,750,000	2.2
Cook	66,654,000	6.8	97,068,600	5.4	101,982,000	4.8
Crow Wing	82,700	0.0	261,500	0.0	206,900	0.0
Dakota	-	0.0	1,100	0.0	1,100	0.0
Goodhue	33,197,800	0.8	44,471,300	0.8	69,529,400	1.0
Houston	566,700	0.0	1,001,100	0.1	851,700	0.0
Itasca	8,370,500	0.2	35,785,100	0.6	32,476,800	0.5
Koochiching	32,200	0.0	32,200	0.0	32,200	0.0
Lake of the Woods	31,550,200	11.3	39,190,200	7.9	41,515,500	6.3
Mahnomen	46,355,400	17.5	103,326,200	20.4	108,436,000	14.8
Mille Lacs	75,526,600	5.0	175,430,100	8.3	175,083,700	7.7
Pennington	10,191,200	2.0	17,409,800	2.1	20,020,700	1.3
Pine	64,441,600	3.3	128,817,900	4.3	108,101,500	3.8
Pipestone	16,700	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
Redwood	62,472,200	4.4	74,949,600	2.8	99,957,800	2.0
Roseau	2,435,000	0.4	4,993,800	0.5	28,457,300	2.0
St. Louis	47,048,200	0.4	97,127,000	0.6	92,685,900	0.5
Scott	249,354,900	2.4	368,283,400	2.7	396,680,900	2.3
Yellow Medicine	21,825,400	2.4	22,582,100	1.2	23,392,000	0.7
TOTAL	\$1,124,444,000	1.9%	\$1,877,060,700	1.4%	\$1,980,524,600	1.2%

Source: Department of Revenue, 2004, 2010, and 2016 exempt abstracts

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Local governments have expressed concern about the potential loss of property tax base as profits from Indian gaming enterprises are used to acquire lands that are then transferred into trust and exempted from property tax.

Large-scale Minnesota tribal gaming enterprises have been in operation for more than three decades.⁷⁶ By most accounts, these enterprises have proven to be financially successful. An independent consultant estimated the total gaming revenues of Minnesota tribes to be \$1.4 billion in 2010.⁷⁷ The success of Indian casinos has provided some tribes with resources to begin repurchasing lands on reservations that passed from Indian ownership under the allotment policy of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some tribes have made reacquiring these lands a priority.

Local government officials from areas that include reservations have expressed concerns about this practice.⁷⁸ Since trust lands are exempt from property taxation, transfers into trust status could significantly reduce local tax bases. Many of the areas of the state containing Indian reservations already have relatively low property tax bases. So far, significant numbers of transfers have not shown up in property tax data. However, the number of acres of exempt Indian lands has been increasing. There was an increase of less than 1 percent between 2004 and 2010 in exempt abstracts. But the number of exempt acres (as opposed to the value of the land and improvements) increased by nearly 10 percent between 2010 and 2016. Even though the number of exempt acres has increased for most counties, these exempt lands made up a smaller share of the total taxable market value in 2016 than in 2010. (See Table 4) This is likely due to increases in the value of nonexempt property, which means exempt lands now make up a smaller portion of those counties' overall tax bases.

In-lieu Payments

Some tribal governments make in-lieu payments to help pay for local services.

Although trust lands are exempt from taxation, some tribal governments make in-lieu payments to cities and counties to offset the cost of providing local services.

Based on a survey of local governments conducted by House Research in 2006, these in-lieu payments totaled a little more than \$6 million in 2005. However, that total included a \$5 million payment by the Fond du Lac Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa to the city of Duluth under an agreement related to its casino in Duluth. Under that agreement, the band paid the city 19 percent of the gambling revenues from the casino.⁷⁹ In effect, these payments were more in the nature of revenue sharing or compensation of an investment partner. In 2009, the band ceased making payments to the city on the grounds that the underlying agreement violated federal law (even though it had been approved by the federal court). The National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC), the federal entity that regulates Indian gaming, determined in 2011 that this agreement violated federal law. The federal courts held that the NIGC determination effectively invalidated the agreement and eliminated the requirement for the band to pay a share of casino profits to the city. The federal courts ultimately determined that the band was not required to pay any revenues after it stopped paying in 2009 (nor was it entitled to refunds of payments made before then).⁸⁰ The city and band reached an agreement

in June 2016 providing for annual payment by the band of \$150,000 to the city as reimbursement for services, ending seven years of litigation in state and federal court.⁸¹ During the period the agreement was in effect (1994-2009), the band paid the city approximately \$75 million.⁸²

Tax Agreements with Tribes

Minnesota and some other states have entered into tax agreements with tribes to provide for collection of state taxes and distribution of the revenues. The twin difficulties outlined at the beginning of this chapter—(1) the impracticality of the state collecting state tax legally owed by non-Indians for transactions in Indian country, and (2) the potential for illegally imposing state tax on immune tribal members or businesses—has led to agreements between tribal governments and the state. These agreements attempt to preserve the tribes' and tribal members' immunities, while collecting the state tax legally owed by nontribal members and dividing these revenues between the state and the tribes.

The Minnesota Department of Revenue has entered agreements with ten of the 11 Minnesota tribal governments. (No agreement applies to Prairie Island.) The agreements cover the following taxes:

- Sales and use taxes
- Cigarette and tobacco products taxes
- Alcoholic beverage excise taxes (i.e., the taxes on liquor, wine, and beer)
- Motor fuels taxes (e.g., the gas tax)

These agreements all follow a similar pattern. The taxes are paid at the regular state rate to the Department of Revenue. The department, in turn, refunds part of the taxes to the tribal government. These refunds have two basic components:

- A **per capita payment** intended to refund the tax paid by members living on (or adjacent to) the reservation. Under federal law, these transactions are exempt from tax.
- A **revenue-sharing payment** dividing the tax paid by nonmembers on the reservation equally between the tribal government and the state. The agreements also refund half of the sales tax paid by members on their off-reservation purchases.

Table 5 lists the per capita amounts by tax type for each tribal government. Table 6 describes the formulas used to calculate revenue-sharing agreements by tax types. These formulas are generally the same for all of the tribal governments.

In 2001, the legislature authorized the Department of Revenue to enter into agreements with tribes to collect state fees for on-reservation activities and to provide for refund or sharing of the proceeds of the fees.⁸³ Under this authority, the department has entered agreements with nine of the 11 Minnesota tribes (except Leech Lake and Prairie Island, which also does not have a tax agreement) to reimburse the tribes for the fees that the state imposes on cigarettes—the health impact fee and the fee imposed on nonsettlement cigarettes. For calendar year 2012, when agreements with six of the nine tribes were in effect, the per capita amount was \$54.89.

The health impact fee was repealed by the 2013 Legislature as a part of an increase in the cigarette tax.⁸⁴ The nonsettlement fee remains in place and was increased by the 2013 Legislature to 50 cents per pack; the fee remains subject to the agreements and results in small payments. Cigarette and tobacco amounts in Table 5 reflect the combined excise tax and the nonsettlement fee amounts.

The 2013 Legislature increased the cigarette excise tax by \$1.60 per pack of 20 and added an inflation adjustment, which was later repealed in 2017. The cigarette excise tax presently stands at \$3.04 per pack. This has significantly increased payments for cigarette and tobacco taxes under the agreements. Since tribal governments are, in effect, both cigarette vendors and recipients of the agreement payments based on their cigarette sales, they can set their retail cigarette prices to absorb some of the state tax and to increase their market share. That strategy could increase their revenues, if holding down the price of the cigarettes they sell increases their total sales by enough to offset the state's retention of one-half of the tax.

Table 5
Per Capita Distributions to
Tribal Governments Under State Tax Agreements
Effective for payment in Calendar Year 2018

Tribal Government	Sales & Use	Cigarette & Tobacco ⁸⁵	Alcoholic Beverage	Motor Fuels ⁸⁶
Bois Forte Band	\$79.85	\$112.30	\$16.71	\$85.63
Fond du Lac Band	75.85	112.30	16.71	85.63
Grand Portage Band	77.05	112.30	16.71	61.60
Leech Lake Reservation Tribal Council	138.96	112.30	16.71	85.63
Lower Sioux Indian Community	36.64	112.30	16.71	61.65
Mille Lacs Band	71.05	112.30	16.71	60.78
Prairie Island Community	No tax agreement			
Red Lake Band	0	112.30	8.37	0
Shakopee Mdewakanton Indian Community	24.29	112.30	16.71	61.60
Upper Sioux Indian Community	46.58	112.30	16.71	61.65
White Earth	133.13	112.30	16.71	85.63

Source: Minnesota Department of Revenue

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Table 6
Revenue Sharing Under State-Tribal Tax Agreement
Formulas to Calculate Tribal Governments' Share
Calendar Year 2018

Tax Type	Formula
Sales & Use	(Sales tax paid for on-reservation sales + tax paid off-reservation by members - per capita refund) ÷ 2
Cigarette & Tobacco	(Cigarette excise tax for on-reservation sales - per capita refund) ÷ 2
Alcoholic Beverage	(Alcoholic beverage excise tax for on-reservation sales - per capita refund) ÷ 2
Motor Fuels	(Tax paid for on-reservation sales - per capita refund - tax paid by tribal government) ÷ 2
Source: Minnesota Department of Revenue	

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Table 7 lists the amount of payments made to the ten tribal governments for calendar year 2018 collections by tax type.

Table 7
Payments to Tribal Governments Under State Tax Agreements
Calendar Year 2018

Tribal Government	Sales & Use	Cigarette & Tobacco Tax	Alcoholic Beverage	Motor Fuels	Total
Bois Forte Band	\$852,783	\$388,400	\$58,362	\$311,624	\$1,611,169
Fond du Lac Band	1,358,118	929,660	66,373	386,768	2,740,919
Grand Portage Band	281,677	142,671	7,853	175,943	608,144
Leech Lake Reservation Tribal Council	3,595,943	3,107,351	168,971	1,188,981	8,061,246
Lower Sioux Indian Community	604,428	440,716	17,989	210,702	1,273,835
Mille Lacs Band	1,743,992	935,763	49,899	212,270	2,941,925
Red Lake Band	1,505,056	1,310,204	94,632	521,214	3,431,106
Shakopee Mdewakanton Indian Community	3,174,283	1,209,261	69,267	497,474	4,950,285
Upper Sioux Indian Community	325,598	180,094	8,149	85,561	599,402
White Earth	3,133,393	1,239,431	165,945	1,249,322	5,788,091
Total	\$16,575,272	\$9,883,551	\$707,440	\$4,839,859	\$32,006,122
Source: Minnesota Department of Revenue					

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State Aid to Casino Counties

The state pays aid to most counties with Indian gaming casinos.

Under this aid program, the state pays 10 percent of its share of the taxes paid under the agreement to the county government. If the tribe has casinos in two counties, the payments are divided equally between the two counties. The Mille Lacs Band has casinos in both Mille Lacs and Pine counties. As a result, each county receives 5-percent shares (one-half of the otherwise applicable 10 percent). This aid program was enacted in 1997; the legislature has made several changes in the program since it was enacted, in particular expanding the counties that qualified for aid.⁸⁷ In 2003, the legislature modified the aid program to allow counties with casinos not subject to tax agreements (Goodhue) to receive 5 percent of the excise tax revenues generated from activities located in the county.⁸⁸

Table 8 below shows the amount of aid paid in fiscal years 2017 to 2019 by county. Total aid in 2019 equaled \$1,597,206, with the largest payment, \$422,258, being made to Scott County.

Table 8
State Aid to Counties with Casinos
Fiscal Years 2017-19

County	Tribe	County Payment		
		FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019
Beltrami	Red Lake	\$5,845	\$3,668	\$2,532
Carlton	Fond du Lac	55,053	53,132	53,012
Cass	Leech Lake	215,419	223,504	224,834
Clearwater	White Earth	NA	75,689	78,563
Cook	Grand Portage	44,398	40,738	42,568
Goodhue	Prairie Island	117,512	112,523	106,846
Itasca	Leech Lake	215,419	223,504	224,834
Mahnomen	White Earth	132,007	75,689	78,563
Mille Lacs	Mille Lacs	88,666	78,016	85,762
Pennington	Red Lake	5,845	3,668	2,532
Pine	Mille Lacs	88,666	78,016	85,762
Redwood	Lower Sioux	95,797	89,637	91,929
Roseau	Red Lake	5,845	3,668	2,532
St. Louis	Fond du Lac	55,053	53,132	53,012
Scott	Shakopee	407,540	386,585	422,258
Yellow Medicine	Upper Sioux	42,918	41,417	41,667
Total		\$1,575,983	\$1,542,586	\$1,597,206

Source: Minnesota Department of Revenue

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Endnotes

¹ *Washington v. Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation*, 447 U.S. 134 (1980).

² See *Oklahoma Tax Commission v. Citizen Band Potawatomi Indian Tribe of Oklahoma*, 498 U.S. 505 (1991). In *Potawatomi Indian Tribe* the court stated that the tribe had an obligation to collect the state cigarette excise tax for on-reservation sales to nonmembers. However, if it failed to do so, the tribe was immune from suit by the state to enforce this obligation to collect. In response to the state's complaint that it had a "right without a remedy," the Court suggested three options for the state to enforce its tax collection obligation: (1) seizing untaxed cigarettes off the reservation, (2) assessing wholesalers who sell unstamped cigarettes to Indian tribes, or (3) entering agreements with the tribe for collection of the tax.

Another option for cigarette excise taxes may be to use the federal Contraband Cigarette Trafficking Act. 18 U.S.C. §§ 2341 to 2346. Under this law, the federal government can seize cigarettes that do not bear state tax stamps. Unlike state government entities, federal agencies can enter on Indian lands to enforce legal process. See *Grey Poplars Inc. v. One Million Three Hundred Seventy-One Thousand One Hundred Assorted Brands of Cigarettes*, 282 F.3d 1175 (9th Cir. 2002) (holding the federal government can use the Contraband Cigarette Trafficking Act to seize cigarettes in Indian country for the failure to have state tax stamps on cigarettes for sale to nonmembers).

³ See, e.g., *County of Yakima v. Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakima Indian Nation*, 502 U.S. 251 (1992) (Burke Act, one of several "allotment" acts, provided that allotted lands would be free from restrictions on taxation) and federal law authorizing state taxation of mineral production described in note 37.

⁴ See, e.g., *Bryan v. Itasca County*, 426 U.S. 373 (1976), and the discussion in Part One, page 23. However, as with any canon of construction, it may be honored as much in the breach as in the observance. See, e.g., *Chickasaw Nation v. United States*, 534 U.S. 84 (2001) where the court stated, "Nonetheless, these canons do not determine how to read this statute. For one thing, canons are not mandatory rules. * * * And other circumstances evidencing congressional intent can overcome their force." The court concluded based on legislative history and other reasons to construe the statute against the interests of the Indian tribe.

⁵ See the discussion in Part One, page 14, of what constitutes Indian country. In Minnesota, Indian country so far appears to be limited to the territory of the reservation and trust lands. However, it could extend to dependent Indian communities and Indian allotments, as defined under federal law. *Dark-Eyes v. Commissioner of Revenue Services*, 887 A.2d 848 (Conn. 2006) (rejecting a tribal member's claim for an income tax exemption on the grounds that her home, located outside of the formal reservation, was not within a dependent Indian community).

⁶ There is no good source of data on the number or types of taxes imposed by tribes, either in Minnesota or nationally. The conventional wisdom is that tribes exercise the power to tax in very few circumstances. References to tribal taxes in the case law seem to be becoming more common. See *Wagon v. Prairie Potawatomi Nation*, 546 U.S. 95 (2005); *Oklahoma Tax Commission v. Sac and Fox Nation*, 508 U.S. 114, 118, *rehearing denied* 509 U.S. 933 (1993) (opinion notes tribe imposed tribal earnings or income tax on members and a motor vehicle excise tax); *Thompson v. Crow Tribe of Indians*, 962 P.2d 577 (Mont. 1998) (suit by non-Indian business to extinguish tribal tax liens barred by tribe's sovereign immunity); and cases cited and discussed in note 23.

⁷ See Indian Tribal Governmental Tax Status Act of 1982, Pub. L. No. 97-473, 96 Stat. 2608, codified as amended at 26 U.S.C. § 7871 and scattered sections of 26 U.S.C. This act treats Indian tribes like states and local governments for certain federal tax purposes, including tribal issuance of tax-exempt bonds to finance governmental projects. Under the act, tribal income, including commercial or business revenues of a tribe, is not subject to federal taxation.

⁸ See note 7.

⁹ If an Indian tribe undertakes to operate a business outside of Indian country, it may be subject to state taxation. See *Mescalero Apache Tribe v. Jones*, 411 U.S. 145 (1973) (gross receipts tax on off-reservation Indian-owned ski resort valid).

¹⁰ See note 7.

- ¹¹ The “tribal member” is used through the tables to refer to natural individuals. Corporations with members as shareholders raise separate issues that are not addressed. Corporations generally are not allowed to be members of most tribes. However, some tribal governments provide for chartering of tribal corporations. Some courts have held that corporations, even though exclusively owned by tribal members, do not qualify for the tax immunities that would be available if the natural individuals who own the corporation carried on the activities. Other courts have extended the immunity to corporations that are exclusively owned by tribal members. *Compare Baraga Products, Inc. v. Commissioner of Revenue*, 971 F. Supp. 294 (D. Mich. 1997), *aff’d* 156 F.3d 1228 (6th Cir. 1998) (immunities do not apply to corporation) *with Flat Center Farms, Inc. v. State*, 49 P.3d 578 (Mont. 2002) (corporation wholly owned by tribal members and operating exclusively on reservation exempt from business license tax). It may make a difference if the tribe chartered the corporation. *Id.* at 586 (basis for concurring opinion).
- ¹² Under a 2014 federal law, the Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act of 2014, Congress clarified that certain payments made by tribal governments to their members (including spouses and dependents) are exempt under the general welfare exclusion. Pub. L. No. 113-168, codified as I.R.C. § 139E. This law effectively codified an I.R.S. revenue procedure. See 113 Cong. Rec. S5686-87 (colloquy confirming that the intent of the act is to provide an exemption “no less favorable” than Revenue Procedure 2014-35). The act provides that payments made by a tribal government under specified guidelines are exempt from federal taxation, if they are (1) available to any tribal member who meets the guidelines, (2) for the promotion of general welfare, (3) not lavish or extravagant, and (4) not compensation for services. This exemption does not apply, for example, to per capita or similar distributions of income from gaming. See, e.g., *U.S. v. Sally Jim*, case no. 14-22441-civ (S.D.Fla. 2016) (court concluded gaming proceeds distributions did not qualify and there was no reasonable cause for the failure to pay, justifying the imposition of sanctions).
- ¹³ See *Oklahoma Tax Commission v. Sac and Fox Nation*, 508 U.S. 114, *rehearing denied* 509 U.S. 933 (1993) (state income tax may not be applied to earnings of tribal members who live in and earn the income in Indian country); *McClanahan v. Arizona Tax Commission*, 411 U.S. 164 (1973) (states lack power to tax income of tribal members earned on the tribe’s reservation); *Bryan v. Itasca County*, 426 U.S. 373 (1976) (Pub. L. No. 280 is not a grant of regulatory or taxing jurisdiction over Indian reservations).
- ¹⁴ States may assume jurisdiction over individual Indians once off the reservation. See *Mescalero Apache Tribe v. Jones*, 411 U.S. 145 (1973) (absent express federal law to the contrary, Indians going beyond reservation boundaries have generally been held subject to nondiscriminatory state law otherwise applicable to all citizens of the state); *Littlewolf v. Girard*, 607 N.W. 2d 464 (2000) (income from winning lottery ticket purchased on-reservation, but cashed off reservation held taxable). Traditionally, it has been assumed that the state’s ability to tax this income was based on jurisdictional sourcing concepts. That is, if the income was earned for work in the state, it would be taxable because the activity (work) was in-state. However, if the state did not have jurisdiction over the income-generating activity (e.g., the performance of services), it could not tax income. *Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians v. Zeuske*, 145 F. Supp. 2d 969 (D. Wis 2000) (income earned from personal service performed in another state not taxable) is consistent with that premise. A recent case in which the Eighth Circuit allowed Minnesota to impose its income tax on the pension of a reservation Indian that was earned outside of Minnesota (in Ohio) and otherwise had no connection with Minnesota casts doubt on that premise. *Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa v. Frans*, 649 F.3d 849 (8th Cir. 2011). The court held that Minnesota’s taxing authority was based on residency principles. There is no direct support for this conclusion in the Supreme Court cases and final resolution will depend upon the Supreme Court resolving the issue. (The taxpayer did not petition for certiorari.) This also becomes important for reservation Indians with income from intangibles and from tangible property located outside of the state. The theory of the court in *Fond du Lac Band* suggest the state of residency could tax that income, contrary to conventional wisdom.
- ¹⁵ Tribes have always been assumed to have power to tax their own members. The court, for example, recognized this in *Washington v. Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation*, 447 U.S. 134, 152-53 (1980) (cigarette excise tax).
- ¹⁶ The usual basis for state authority to tax this income is residency. See 2 Hellerstein & Hellerstein, *State Taxation* § 20.03 for a general discussion. Traditionally it was assumed that the state could not make this assertion for a tribal member who is a resident of the reservation. See *Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians v. Zeuske*, 145 F. Supp. 969 (D. Wis 2000) where the state sought to tax a member who was a resident of the

reservation on earnings from another state. The court held that the state could not tax this income: “Congress has never authorized the states to tax tribal members living on reservations solely because of their residence within the taxing state; without such authorization, Wisconsin has no legal right to tax Jackson or any other tribal member similarly situated.” *Id.* at 977. As discussed in note 14, the decision in *Fond du Lac Band* is contrary and suggests that states may rely on residency as a basis for taxation. This principle would seem to apply with equal force to an effort to tax income from intangibles. The direct issue regarding intangibles has apparently never been litigated. See H. Duncan, *Federation of Tax Administrators: Issues in State-Tribal Taxation* (report prepared for NCSL, State-Tribal Tax Issues Conference, Washington, D.C., Oct. 23, 1991). By contrast, passive income earned from real or tangible property located outside of the reservation likely could be taxed by the state in which the property is located under standard sourcing principles. Whether it could also be taxable by the state of residency will depend upon how the Supreme Court resolves the conflict between the *Lac du Flambeau Band* and *Fond du Lac Band*.

¹⁷ The court has held generally that tribal governments have taxing powers as sovereigns. See, e.g., *Merrion v. Jicarilla Apache Tribe*, 455 U.S. 130 (1982) (severance tax on oil and gas) (“The power to tax is an essential attribute of Indian sovereignty because it is a necessary instrument of self-government and territorial management. * * * [I]t derives from the tribe’s general authority, as sovereign, to control economic activity within its jurisdiction, and to defray the cost of providing governmental services by requiring contributions from persons or enterprises engaged in economic activities within that jurisdiction,” at 137). As discussed in note 23, this broad language has been called into question by *Atkinson Trading Co. v. Shirley*, 532 U.S. 645 (2001), regarding the authority to tax non-Indians in some contexts.

¹⁸ *Oklahoma Tax Commission v. Chickasaw Nation*, 515 U.S. 450 (1995) (earnings of tribal members living outside of Indian country held subject to state taxation, even though employer was tribe). Specific treaties or federal laws may, however, provide exemptions. Cf. *Oklahoma Tax Commission v. Sac and Fox Nation*, 508 U.S. 114, *rehearing denied* 509 U.S. 933 (1993). *Brun v. Commissioner of Revenue*, 549 N.W.2d 91 (Minn. 1996), upheld the imposition of the Minnesota state income tax on on-reservation earnings of tribal members who lived off the reservation. Cf. *Jefferson v. Commissioner of Revenue*, 631 N.W. 2d 391 (Minn. 2001), *cert. denied* 535 U.S. 930, *rehearing denied* 535 U.S. 1071 (2002) (Indian Gaming Regulatory Act did not preempt state’s power to tax per capita payments made from gaming operations to a member living outside of Indian country). Note that Minnesota would not tax tribal payments that are exempt as Indian general welfare benefits under the federal income tax for tribal members living outside of Indian country, because Minnesota uses federal adjusted gross income as its tax base. I.R.C. § 139E. See the discussion in note 12 of this exclusion. It is likely, however, that most of these benefits are provided to members living on the reservation.

¹⁹ See note 17.

²⁰ See note 17.

²¹ See note 17.

²² The U.S. Supreme Court has not addressed this issue, but it has been litigated in several state courts. In *Topash v. Commissioner of Revenue*, 291 N.W.2d 679 (Minn. 1980), the Minnesota Supreme Court held that an enrolled member of another tribe living on the reservation was exempt from state income tax on the income earned on the reservation. The court reserved the question whether this rule applied to an Indian who is not an enrolled member of any tribe. The continued validity of *Topash* is called into question by the decision in *Washington v. Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation*, 447 U.S. 134 (1980). In *Colville* the Court held, in the context of sales, cigarette excise, and personal property taxes, that immunity from state taxes extended only to members of the tribe and that other Indians were subject to taxes to the same extent as non-Indians. This rule may apply in the context of individual income taxation, but it is not completely clear. The Minnesota Supreme Court has stated: “Our reasoning in *Topash* is specifically refuted by the Supreme Court’s decision in *Colville* where the Court reached the opposite result. See *Colville*, 447 U.S. at 161. Because Supreme Court cases conflict with part of our decision in *Topash* we conclude that *Topash* is no longer controlling on this issue [the distinction between member and nonmember Indians].” *State v. RMH*, 617 N.W. 2d 55, 64 (2000). *RMH* involved enforcement of traffic laws under Public Law 280, but the reasoning of the case certainly calls into serious question the continued validity of *Topash* as applied to income taxes. The Wisconsin and New Mexico Supreme Courts have both concluded that the state may impose income taxes on nonmember Indians living on the

reservation. See *New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Dept. v. Greaves* 864 P.2d 324 (1993); *LaRock v. Wisconsin Department of Revenue*, 621 N.W.2d 907 (2001).

²³ This specific question has not been addressed as it applies to income taxation. Although the courts have generally upheld tribes' power to tax, it seems unlikely in light of recent decisions that there are many circumstances in which a tribe could impose income taxes on nonmembers. The Supreme Court has stated that the inherent sovereignty of tribes (and hence their power to tax) is limited to "their members and their territory." *Atkinson Trading Co. v. Shirley*, 532 U.S. 645, 651 (2001). In *Atkinson Trading Co.* the Court held that a tribal hotel occupancy tax could not be applied to a hotel within the borders of the reservation, but owned by a nonmember and located on non-Indian fee land. The tribe could extend its taxing power beyond its "territory and members" only if either of two conditions were met: (1) The nonmember had entered a consensual relationship with the tribe, such as commercial dealings, contracts, and so forth; or (2) the conduct "threatens or has some direct effect on the political integrity, the economic security, or health or welfare of the tribe." *Id.* at 651, citing *Montana v. United States*, 450 U.S. 544 (1981) (tribe had no jurisdiction over non-Indian hunting and fishing on non-Indian lands within the reservation when no significant tribal interest was shown). Prior decisions upholding tribal taxes on nonmembers appear to fit into these exceptions. *Washington v. Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation*, (1980), upheld the imposition of a tribal cigarette tax on nontribal purchasers, indicating that federal courts had long acknowledged the power of tribes to tax non-Indians entering the reservation to engage in economic activity. The purchasers had consensual dealings with the tribe or tribal businesses. In *Merrion v. Jicarilla Apache Tribe*, 455 U.S. 130 (1982), the Court held that the power of exclusion was sufficiently broad to support a tribal severance tax applied to a non-Indian lessee who mined oil and gas on the reservation. Given this, it seems unlikely that the Court would uphold an income tax on nonmembers unless they at least lived on trust or tribal land. Moreover, it may also be necessary to have a "consensual relationship" with the tribe or a tribal business (e.g., work for the tribe or have a commercial relationship with the tribe or a tribal business). Since none of the Minnesota tribes impose income taxes, this is largely an academic issue.

²⁴ See note 23.

²⁵ See note 23.

²⁶ See note 18.

²⁷ See note 23.

²⁸ See note 23.

²⁹ See note 23.

³⁰ See note 23.

³¹ See note 23.

³² Refers to enrolled members of the tribe, since the Supreme Court generally has treated Indians who are not enrolled members of the governing tribe as non-Indians for tax immunity purposes. See *Washington v. Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation*, 447 U.S. 134 (1980). As discussed in note 11, the table entries are limited to describing the rules applicable to natural individuals. Corporations, whether organized under state law or tribal law, may raise special issues.

³³ This includes Indians who are not enrolled members of the tribe governing the reservation in which the transaction occurs. See note 32.

³⁴ "If the legal incidence of an excise tax rests on a tribe or tribal members for sales made inside Indian country, the tax cannot be enforced absent clear congressional authorization." *Oklahoma Tax Commission v. Chickasaw Nation*, 515 U.S. 450, 458 (1995) (legal incidence of motor fuels tax on tribe and members living in Indian country invalid); *Oklahoma Tax Commission v. Sac & Fox Nation*, 508 U.S. 114, rehearing denied 509 U.S. 933 (1993) (same for motor vehicle excise tax); *Moe v. Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes*, 425 U.S. 463 (1976) (same for cigarette excise tax).

³⁵ See note 34.

³⁶ See *Washington v. Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation*, 447 U.S. 134 (1980) (state may not collect sales and cigarette taxes from Indian retailers located on reservation land who sell to tribal members).

However, state may collect taxes on sales to non-Indians and nonmember Indians residing on the reservation); *Oklahoma Tax Commission v. Citizen Band Potawatomi Indian Tribe of Oklahoma*, 498 U.S. 505 (1991) (immunity precluded the state from taxing sales of goods to tribal members, but the state was free to collect taxes on sales to nonmembers); *Oklahoma Tax Commission v. City Vending of Muskogee, Inc.*, 835 P.2d 97 (Okla. 1992) (state may validly collect cigarette tax from wholesaler who sold cigarettes to Indian retail outlets located on reservation land that resold the cigarettes to nontribal members as well as). In *Judybill Osceola v. Florida Dept. of Revenue*, 893 F.2d 1231 (11th Cir. 1990), *cert. denied*, 498 U.S. 1025 (1991) plaintiff Indian brought a class action suit seeking refunds of sales and franchise taxes collected by the state for goods and services purchased off the reservation but delivered or taken to her residence on the reservation. The court found that the state's law provided a "plain, speedy, and efficient remedy for any alleged constitutional violations," and the Tax Injunction Act barred the plaintiff from challenging the state tax in federal court. The court further declined to extend the act's instrumentality exception (which permits Indian tribes or tribal governing bodies to bring suit in federal court for unlawful state exactions) to individual Indians.

³⁷ Two federal laws, passed by Congress in 1924 and 1927, specifically consent to state taxation of certain mineral production on Indian reservation lands. See Act of May 29, 1924, ch. 210, 43 Stat. 244, codified at 25 U.S.C. § 398; Act of Mar. 3, 1927, ch. 299 § 3, 44 Stat. 1347, codified at 25 U.S.C. § 398c. These laws were, in effect, superseded by a 1938 mineral leasing act. Act of May 11, 1938, ch. 198, 52 Stat. 347, codified at 25 U.S.C. §§ 396a-396g. The Interior Department makes leases under the new law and interprets the earlier tax consents to be inapplicable. See, generally, *Cohen's Handbook of Federal Indian Law*, 700-01, 1123-5 (2012) for a discussion of these issues.

³⁸ *Montana v. Blackfeet Tribe*, 471 U.S. 759 (1985) (in the absence of an explicit provision, a state may not tax royalties from mineral leases on trust land, and since the 1939 Indian Mineral Leasing Act contained no such authorization, the royalties after 1938 are not taxable by a state).

³⁹ *Cotton Petroleum Corp. v. New Mexico*, 490 U.S. 163 (1989) (state may impose severance tax on non-Indian severance of oil and gas from reservation trust land). The Court concluded that the federal statute authorizing the leases did not preempt state taxation, nor did application of general preemption doctrine because the effects of the tax were "too indirect and too insubstantial[.]" *Ibid.* 185.

⁴⁰ See note 34. Typical state sales taxes, including Minnesota's, impose the legal incidence of the tax on the consumer (purchaser). The retailer or seller is the collector of the tax. See, e.g., *Minn. Stat. § 297A.77*.

⁴¹ See note 34.

⁴² *Washington v. Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation*, 447 U.S. 134 (1980). See discussion in note 36.

⁴³ See *White Mountain Apache Tribe v. Bracker*, 448 U.S. 136 (1980) (federal government's regulation of the harvesting of timber for tribal lands is comprehensive and sufficiently pervasive to preclude state taxes on non-Indian logging company). The court also noted that the state's interest in raising revenue was weak because it provided no service benefiting the tribal roads, and the roads at issue were built, maintained, and policed exclusively by the federal government, the tribe, and its contractors.

⁴⁴ See *Ramah Navajo School Board v. Bureau of Revenue*, 458 U.S. 832 (1982) (federal law preempts state tax on gross receipts of a non-Indian contractor hired by a tribe to build a school on the reservation, where the construction was federally funded, regulated, and subject to approval of the BIA). Compare *Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe v. Haeder*, 938 F.3d 941 (2019) In *Haeder*, the 8th circuit held that South Dakota's 2 percent gross receipts tax on contractor services performed by a nonmember construction company on tribal casino property was not preempted by the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). (The legal incidence of the tax fell on contractor.) Under *Bracker* balancing, the court found that the tax did not implicate any relevant tribal and federal interests under the IGRA, and the state had a significant interest in raising revenue to provide services for residents such as the contractor and imposing its tax on a statewide basis.

⁴⁵ Although the authors found no cases specifically dealing with alcohol excise taxes, the rules applicable to cigarette excise taxes should apply as well. See the table entries above and notes 34 and 36.

⁴⁶ *Oklahoma Tax Commission v. Chickasaw Nation*, 515 U.S. 450 (1995) (motor fuel tax where legal incidence on tribe is invalid). There has been extensive litigation over the taxation of motor fuels. The court in *Chickasaw*

Nation explicitly declined to decide whether the Hayden-Cartwright Act authorized state taxation of motor fuels, because the issue had not been briefed and argued in the lower courts. Two state courts and one federal court have decided that the act does not authorize state motor fuel taxation of Indian retailers in Indian country. *Coeur D'Alene Tribe of Idaho v. Hammond*, 384 F.3d 674 (9th Cir. 2004), *cert. denied* 543 U.S. 1187 (2005); *Pourier v. South Dakota Dept. of Revenue*, 658 N.W.2d 395 (2003), *vacated in part* 674 N.W.2d 314, *cert. denied* 541 U.S. 1064 (2004); *Goodman Oil Co. of Lewiston v. Idaho State Tax Commission*, 28 P.3d 996 (Id. 2001), *cert. denied* 122 S. Ct. 1068 (2002). The state of Kansas has been involved in protracted litigation over its taxation of motor fuels sold on Indian reservations. The state initially lost under a holding, following *Chickasaw Nation*, that the legal incidence of its tax was on the retailer (i.e., the tribal business) and was therefore invalid. *Kaul v. State*, 970 P.2d 60 (Kan. 1998), *cert. denied* 528 U.S. 812 (1998). The Kansas Legislature amended the statute to shift the legal incidence of the tax to the distributor. The revised tax was upheld against a challenge by tribes. *Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri v. Pierce*, 213 F.3d 566 (10th Cir. 2000), *cert. denied* 531 U.S. 1144 (2001). However, efforts to enforce the revised Kansas tax against tribal businesses have been enjoined in federal court. *Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska v. Stovall*, 341 F.3d 1202 (D. Kan. 2002) (upholding preliminary injunction to enjoin jeopardy assessments, seizure of tribal distributor's property, and so forth). See also the discussion in note 47.

⁴⁷ *Wagon v. Prairie Potawatomi Nation*, 546 U.S. 95, 126 S. Ct. 676 (2005) upheld a Kansas motor fuel tax with legal incidence on the non-Indian distributor with ultimate sale to an Indian retailer located in Indian country. *Potawatomi Nation* held that the interest balancing test (weighing the state's versus the tribe's interest) applied only "to on-reservation transactions between a nontribal entity and a tribe or tribal member * * *." *Id.*, 126 S. Ct. at 687. The Court reached this result despite the fact that the Kansas law allowed distributors to deduct sales made to the United States and retailers located in other states (that would be subject to those state's motor fuel taxes). Note that the result is the opposite, if the legal incidence of the tax is on the retailer. *Coeur D'Alene Tribe of Idaho v. Hammond*, 384 F.3d 674 (9th Cir. 2004), *cert. denied* 543 U.S. 1187 (2005) and discussion in note 46.

⁴⁸ See note 47.

⁴⁹ See note 47.

⁵⁰ See note 15.

⁵¹ See *Washington v. Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation*, 447 U.S. 134 (1980) (upholding imposition of a tribal cigarette tax on nontribal purchasers).

⁵² See note 15.

⁵³ This result follows from the reasoning of *Washington v. Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation*, 447 U.S. 134 (1980).

⁵⁴ See note 15.

⁵⁵ Table entry assumes non-Indian retailer is not located on trust land. See the discussion of *Atkinson Trading Co. v. Shirley*, 532 U.S. 645, 651 (2001) in note 23. For retail sales in Indian country, the answer would be yes. This result follows from the reasoning of *Washington v. Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation*, 447 U.S. 134 (1980).

⁵⁶ See note 15.

⁵⁷ *Cotton Petroleum Corp. v. New Mexico*, 490 U.S. 163 (1989) (tribe may impose severance tax on non-Indian severance of oil and gas from reservation trust land; tribal and state taxing jurisdiction is concurrent); *Mustang Production Co. v. Harrison*, 94 F.3d 1382 (10th Cir. 1996), *cert. denied* 117 S. Ct. 1288 (1997) (tribal taxing authority extends to allotted, nontrust lands in Indian country).

⁵⁸ 502 U.S. 251 (1992).

⁵⁹ *Cass County v. Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians*, 524 U.S. 103, 113 (1998). In the wake of *Cass County*, there has been litigation in both Montana and Michigan to determine whether contrary final decisions by lower courts rendered before *Cass County* continued to bind the local governments (granting property tax exemptions for tribal and individual Indian fee lands) under principles of *res judicata* or other theories. Both courts concluded these earlier decisions did not bind the state taxing authorities for future taxes. *Baraga County v. State Tax Commission*, 645 N.W.2d 13 (Mich. 2002); *Jefferson v. Big Horn County*, 4 P.3d 26 (Mont. 2000).

⁶⁰ The Minnesota Supreme Court has also held that the congressional grant of power to tax fee land includes the authority to define what constitutes real property, rather than personal property. *Cogger v. County of Becker*, 690 N.W.2d 739 (Minn. 2005). This issue arose in the context of a mobile home on fee land owned by a tribal member. The court cited no federal authority for this, reaching its conclusion that the power to tax was implicit in the state's sovereign power.

⁶¹ See, e.g., *Thomas v. Gay*, 169 U.S. 264 (1898) (personal property tax on cattle grazing on Indian lands under lease with tribe).

⁶² See note 67.

⁶³ The leading case is generally considered to be *White Mountain Apache Tribe v. Bracker*, 448 U.S. 136 (1980). *Bracker* involved motor vehicle license and fuel use taxes imposed on a contractor doing business with the tribe on the reservation.

⁶⁴ Compare *Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation v. Thurston County Board of Equalization*, 724 F.3d 1153 (9th Cir. 2013) (property tax on permanent improvements owned by private corporation with majority ownership by tribe preempted by federal statute) with *Mashantucket Pequot Tribe v. Town of Ledyard*, 722 F.3d 457 (2nd Cir. 2013) (personal property tax on gaming machines leased by tribe, which was responsible for paying tax under lease, not preempted).

⁶⁵ 25 C.F.R. § 162.017. This rule applies to personal property that consists of “permanent improvements on the leased land” or to “activities under a lease conducted on the leased premises” and exempts them from “any fee, tax, assessment, levy or other charge” imposed by a state or local government. However, these provisions are subject to a proviso that they are “Subject only to applicable federal law,” which creates some ambiguity as to what effect this will have on preemption analysis either under specific federal statutes or under the general Indian law principles. *Seminole Tribe of Florida v. Stranburg*, 7999 F.3d 1324, cert. denied 2016 W.L. 3221581 (2016) held that the BIA's administrative rule was not entitled to *Chevron* deference on preemption because *Bracker* required a “particularized, case-specific balancing of federal, tribal, and state interests” that the court concluded could not be done as a general matter under an administrative rule. *Ibid.* 1338-42.

⁶⁶ This column lists the authority of either the state or its political subdivisions to impose property taxes within Indian country or on tribal property outside of Indian country. In Minnesota, the state tax applies only to commercial-industrial, public utility, and seasonal-recreational properties.

⁶⁷ *The New York Indians*, 72 U.S. 761 (1866); *The Kansas Indians*, 72 U.S. 737 (1866) (Indians are immune from state taxation, whether their land is held tribally or in allotments). The federal trust status of these lands also prevents state taxation.

⁶⁸ See note 67.

⁶⁹ This power flows from the tribe's authority to tax its own members. See note 15. Because ownership of trust land is in the federal government, the tax would need to be imposed on the members' beneficial interest in the allotted trust land. The tribe would be unable to enforce the tax by imposing a lien on the real property. The tax would be similar to the property tax that Minnesota imposes on private leasehold interests on federal lands. See, e.g., [Minn. Stat. §§ 272.01](#), subd. 2; [273.19](#) (2018).

⁷⁰ *Cass County v. Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians*, 524 U.S. 103 (1998), held that fee lands, whether owned by the tribe or individual members, are generally subject to state ad valorem property taxes. Minnesota law contains a statutory exemption for Indian lands. This issue was not raised or litigated in *Cass County*. [Minn. Stat. § 272.01](#), subd. 1, provides that “All real and personal property in this state * * * is taxable, except Indian lands * * *.” The exact scope of this statutory exemption is not clear; the most plausible interpretation is that it means tribal and individual allotments of trust lands. It is possible that individual treaties or federal laws may provide property tax exemptions for fee land that is alienable, however.

⁷¹ See note 70.

⁷² A tribe can likely tax fee land within the boundaries of its reservation, if a tribal member owns the land and jurisdiction to tax can, thus, be based on tribal membership.

⁷³ Although there is no definitive U.S. Supreme Court case, it seems unlikely that a tribe can tax fee lands owned by a nonmember. Recent Supreme Court cases clearly imply that the authority to tax nonmembers on fee land is limited. Two nontax cases state that tribes' civil authority (e.g., to regulate or adjudicate) over nonmember conduct on non-Indian fee land "exists only in limited circumstances." *Strate v. A-1 Contractors*, 520 U.S. 438, 445 (1997) (tribal court had no jurisdiction to adjudicate tort suit arising out of incident involving two nonmembers on a public highway that the Court concluded was fee land because an easement had been granted by the tribe to the state); *Montana v. United States*, 450 U.S. 544 (1981) (tribe did not have authority to regulate hunting and fishing by nonmembers on non-Indian fee land). In 2001, the Supreme Court extended this principle to limit the authority to impose sales tax on nonmembers on fee lands within the boundaries of the reservation. *Atkinson Trading Co. v. Shirley*, 532 U.S. 645, 651 (2001). The Court described the tribe's power to tax nonmembers as "sharply circumscribed." *Id.* at 650. At least one lower federal court has applied this principle to proscribe a tribal property tax on fee lands owned by nonmembers. *Big Horn County Electric Coop., Inc. v. Adams*, 219 F.3d 944 (9th Cir. 2000) (public utility property tax, easements granted over trust land to utility held to be fee lands, following *Strate* rule). Under *Montana* and *Atkinson Trading Co.*, the Court has held that taxation may be justified if one of two conditions is met: (1) the nonmember has a consensual relationship with the tribe or its member or (2) when the conduct threatens or has some direct effect upon "the political integrity, the economic security, or the health or welfare of the tribe." *Atkinson Trading Co. v. Shirley*, 532 U.S. at 651. Neither of these exceptions seems likely to have much application to property taxation of fee lands, given the narrow way in which the Court has described them. The Court has said the consensual relationship must have some nexus to the tax itself. *Id.* at 656. The hotel's status as an Indian trader in *Atkinson Trading Co.* did not satisfy the criterion. Nor did it matter in *Big Horn Electric* that half of the public utility's customers were tribal members or that the tribe had granted the easement for the power lines. *Big Horn County Electric Coop., Inc. v. Adams*, 219 F.3d at 948, 951. With regard to the second exemption, it is not clear how it will be applied in the context of taxation. In *Atkinson Trading Co.* it did not matter that the hotel and trading operation was a very large part of the reservation economy (employing 100 tribal members). The Court was concerned that allowing an exception for taxation because it is "necessary" to self-government would, in effect, allow the exception to swallow the general rule. *Atkinson Trading Co. v. Shirley*, 532 U.S. at 657, note 12. The *Big Horn County Electric* court was unpersuaded by the claim that eliminating the tax would "irreparably" harm the tribe's treasury and ability to provide services. It felt the tribe was free to enact a different tax that complied with *Montana*. *Big Horn County Electric Coop., Inc. v. Adams*, 219 F.3d at 951. It seems likely that circumstances in which a tribal property tax can be applied to fee lands owned by nonmembers are very limited, perhaps nonexistent.

⁷⁴ See note 73.

⁷⁵ See note 73.

⁷⁶ The federal law formally authorizing these operations was adopted in 1988. Minnesota compacts were negotiated in 1989 and 1991.

⁷⁷ This estimate was prepared by Alan Meister as reported in Minnesota State Lottery, *Gambling in Minnesota*, p. 16 (January 2013). This was the last year this publication was released.

⁷⁸ Some local governments have opposed or attempted to delay transfers in trust either administratively (in the BIA processes) or judicially. Two cases involve the White Earth Band's transfer of the Shooting Star casino into trust in Mahanomen and the Fond du Lac Band's plan to transfer property next to its casino in Duluth in trust. *White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians v. County of Mahanomen*, 605 F. Supp.2d 1034 (D. Minn. 2009) (detailing administrative efforts by county and state); *City of Duluth v. Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa*, 843 N.W.2d 577 (Minn. 2014) (court concluded that the federal court had exclusive jurisdiction to construe agreement between city and tribe and whether city approval of trust transfers was required).

⁷⁹ The payments under this agreement were qualitatively different than the typical in-lieu payments made by other tribes. The agreement and the payment under it were more in the nature of a revenue-sharing arrangement that was entered into originally (before passage of the federal law authorizing Indian gaming) as a way to provide expanded revenues to the tribal government and economic development in the city of Duluth. It was this revenue-sharing element (or joint business venture aspect) of the agreement that ultimately led to its termination by the NIGC as inconsistent with the federal law requirement that tribal governments have the "sole

proprietary interest” in gaming operations. See note 80. The typical in-lieu payment, by contrast, stems from a decision by a tribal government to compensate a city or county for the services it provides to tribal operations.

⁸⁰ The band began withholding payments to the city in 2009 and requested the determination by NIGC. The city, in turn, sued the band for breach of contract. Both the federal district court and the court of appeals held that the NIGC action invalidated the contract and effectively ended (prospectively) the requirement of the band to make contractual payments to the city. *City of Duluth v. Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa*, 702 F.3d 1147 (8th Cir. 2013). The NIGC’s action was ultimately upheld by the district court of the District of Columbia. *City of Duluth v. Nat’l Indian Gaming Comm’n*, 89 F. Supp. 3d 56 (D. DC 2015). Whether the city was entitled to all or part of the payments the band withheld between 2009 (when the band started withholding payments) and 2011 (when NIGC invalidated the agreement) required three court decisions (two by the federal district court for Minnesota and one by the Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit) to ultimately determine that the band was not required to pay the city. See *City of Duluth v. Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa*, 2015 WL 4545302, fn 1(2015) for the citations to all of the cases.

⁸¹ Pam Louwagie, “Duluth, Fond du Lac Band reach agreement over casino revenue” *StarTribune* (June 11, 2016), available at <http://www.startribune.com/duluth-fond-du-lac-band-reach-agreement-over-casino-revenue/382583401/> (last accessed November 20, 2019).

⁸² *City of Duluth v. Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa*, 785 F.3d 1207, 1208 (8th Cir, 2015) (citing \$75 million amount).

⁸³ [Laws 2001, 1st spec. sess. ch. 5](#), art. 7, § 5, codified at [Minn. Stat. § 270.60](#), subd. 5 (2001 Suppl.).

⁸⁴ [Laws 2013, ch. 143](#), art. 5, §§ 10, 11, and 28.

⁸⁵ Amounts include payments for fee paid by nonparticipating manufacturers (\$0.66 for each participating tribe).

⁸⁶ In addition, tax paid by tribal government on its purchases is refunded.

⁸⁷ The original aid program was limited to “qualified counties.” A county qualified if it had below-average personal income (80 percent or less than the state average) or if an above-average share of the property in the county (more than 30 percent) was exempt from taxation. Four counties with casinos—Goodhue, Redwood, Scott, and St. Louis—did not meet these criteria. The 1998 Legislature repealed the restriction to qualified counties, allowing payments to be made to any county. [Laws 1998, ch. 389](#), art. 16, § 11. The qualification rules were retained to allocate payments, if the aid payments exceeded the \$1.1 million limit on the aid appropriation. In 2002, the legislature completely repealed the limit on the appropriation.

⁸⁸ [Laws 2003, 1st spec. sess. ch. 21](#), art. 9, § 3, now codified as [Minn. Stat. § 270C.19](#), subd. 4, para. (a), cl. (2).

Health and Human Services for Indians

by Randall Chun (651-296-8639)

Substance Use Disorder Treatment

The state Department of Human Services may enter into agreements with federally recognized tribal units to pay for substance use disorder (SUD) treatment services and provide prevention, education, training, and community awareness programs.¹ An American Indian Advisory Council assists the agency in formulating policies and procedures relating to SUD and substance misuse by American Indians.²

Civil Commitment

Commitment by Tribal Court. A special provision in Minnesota's Civil Commitment Act authorizes contracts between the Commissioner of Human Services and the federal Indian Health Service, so that members of a federally recognized Indian tribe within the state committed as mentally ill, developmentally disabled, or chemically dependent by a tribal court can be admitted to regional treatment centers for treatment. This provision also allows a tribe to contract directly with the commissioner for treatment of tribal members who have been committed. The act guarantees individuals all of the patient rights under [Minnesota Statutes, section 253B.03](#). In addition, the law requires that the commitment procedure utilized by the tribal court provide due process protections for proposed patients, similar to those under the state's civil commitment laws.³

Minnesota Sex Offender Program. Courts have jurisdiction to civilly commit tribal members for treatment as a sexually dangerous person or as having a sexual psychopathic personality.⁴ The legal decisions that surround civil commitment of American Indians in Minnesota are discussed on page 33.

Health Grants

Health Care Programs. American Indians are eligible for the Medical Assistance (MA) and MinnesotaCare programs, if they meet income, asset, and other eligibility requirements. State law governing these programs contains several provisions specific to the delivery of health care services to American Indians.

- **Child and teen checkups.** The Department of Human Services is allowed to contract with federally recognized Indian tribes to provide child and teen checkup administrative services under MA.⁵
- **Facility reimbursement.** Indian Health Service facilities and health care facilities operated by a tribe or tribal organization funded under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (Pub. L. No. 93-638) are reimbursed for inpatient hospital services at rates set by the Indian Health Service, rather than at the MA rate. These facilities have the option of being reimbursed at the Indian Health Service rate, rather than the MA rate, for outpatient health care services.⁶

- **Prepaid health care.** American Indians enrolled in the Prepaid Medical Assistance Program (PMAP) or county-based purchasing are allowed to receive services on a fee-for-service basis from Indian Health Service facilities and health care facilities operated by a tribe or tribal organization.⁷
- **Provider participation.** Health care professionals credentialed by a federally recognized Indian tribe to provide health care services to its members within a Minnesota reservation are classified as vendors of medical care for purposes of participating in the MA program.⁸
- **Premium and cost-sharing protection.** American Indians receiving services under MA as employed persons with disabilities are exempt from paying premiums. American Indians are also exempt from paying premiums and cost-sharing under the MinnesotaCare program. In addition, American Indians are exempt from paying cost-sharing for MA services received from the Indian Health Service, tribal programs, or urban Indian programs, or from another health care provider through referral under contract health services. MA payment to these providers cannot be reduced by the amount of any cost-sharing.⁹ These provisions are required by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 (Pub. L. No. 111-5).
- **Exemption of certain property from assets.** Certain Indian-specific property is excluded from assets when determining MA eligibility for American Indians, as required under the ARRA. This property includes that which is connected to the political relationship between the tribes and federal government, and property with unique religious, spiritual, traditional, or cultural significance.¹⁰
- **Exemption from estate recovery.** Certain income, resources, and property are exempted from MA estate recovery from American Indians. These include, but are not limited to, ownership interests in trust or nontrust property located on or near reservations, and ownership interests or usage rights that have unique religious, spiritual, traditional, or cultural significance.¹¹

Grants to Eliminate Health Disparities. The Department of Health administers a grant program to reduce health disparities between American Indians and populations of color, as compared with whites. Some grant funding must be awarded to American Indian tribal governments for community interventions to reduce disparities in certain priority areas including immunization rates for adults and children; infant mortality rates; and morbidity and mortality rates from breast and cervical cancers, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, diabetes, and accidental injuries and violence. In addition, the commissioner must consult with the Indian Affairs Council and tribal governments in developing and implementing a plan to reduce health disparities in the targeted areas, and in determining the effectiveness of the program in reducing health disparities.¹²

Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development Grants. The Department of Health administers a grant program to improve child development outcomes for children of color and American Indian children, reduce racial disparities in children's health and development, and promote racial and geographic equity. A Community Solutions Advisory Council, which includes representatives of the American Indian community, advises the commissioner on selecting grant recipients. The commissioner must give priority for proposals from specified

organizations, including organizations led by and serving American Indians. This grant program is funded through fiscal year 2023.¹³

Indian Health Grants. The Department of Health is authorized to provide grants to community health boards to establish, operate, or subsidize health clinics and services, in order to provide health care services to Indians residing off of reservations.¹⁴

Affordable Care Act. The Affordable Care Act (Pub. L. No. 111-148 and related amendments) contains a number of provisions that specifically affect American Indians. These include, but are not limited to:

- 1) for American Indians purchasing individual health coverage through an exchange with incomes that do not exceed 300 percent of the federal poverty guidelines (FPG), a general exemption from cost-sharing;¹⁵ and
- 2) for American Indians purchasing individual health coverage through an exchange, regardless of income, an exemption from cost-sharing for services provided by the Indian Health Service, tribal programs, or urban Indian programs, or from another health care provider through referral under contract health services.¹⁶

Local Public Health Grants. An amount specified in statute is available to tribal governments for certain public health activities, including maternal and child health programs and emergency preparedness.¹⁷

Health-Related Occupations: Licensing Exceptions

State law exempts members of certain health-related occupations from specified state licensure requirements if they practice according to standards established by tribes and penalties under tribal jurisdiction. Alcohol and drug counselors who are licensed to practice alcohol and drug counseling according to standards established by federally recognized tribes and are practicing under tribal jurisdiction are exempt from state licensing requirements, but they are afforded the same rights and responsibilities as counselors licensed by the state.¹⁸ Licensure is voluntary for social workers who are employed by federally recognized tribes.¹⁹ Licensure is also voluntary for marriage and family therapists who are employed by federally recognized tribes.²⁰

Indian Elders

The Minnesota Board on Aging maintains an Indian elder position for the purpose of coordinating efforts with the National Indian Council on Aging and working toward development of a comprehensive statewide service system for Indian elders.²¹

Ombudsperson for Families

Legislation passed in 1991 established an ombudsperson's office to operate independently from, but in collaboration with, the Indian Affairs Council. The ombudsperson for families is specifically charged with the duty of monitoring state and local agency compliance with all laws governing child protection and placement, as they affect children from families of color.²²

Welfare Reform

Federal. Federal welfare reform legislation enacted in 1996 (Pub. L. No. 104-193) replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with a block grant program for states called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Under this legislation, federally recognized Indian tribes are eligible to apply to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to create and administer welfare programs under the TANF block grant. If a tribal plan is approved, tribes receive federal funds out of the state's federal TANF block grant allocation to implement separate tribal TANF programs. In structuring a separate TANF program, tribes have the flexibility to establish their own work participation rates and time limits for receipt of benefits, which may differ from the federal requirements with which states must comply.

State. In 1997, Minnesota enacted welfare reform legislation to implement the TANF requirements. Minnesota's program is the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). One provision of the MFIP legislation requires county governments to cooperate with tribal governments in implementing MFIP.²³ Another provision of the legislation authorizes the Commissioner of Human Services to enter into agreements with tribal governments to provide employment services.²⁴ Two Minnesota tribes, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, applied for and received federal approval to operate separate tribal TANF programs. The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe program began operating January 1, 1999, in a six-county area covering Aitkin, Crow Wing, Morrison, Benton, Mille Lacs, and Pine counties. It serves TANF-eligible families where one or more of the eligible adults is a member of the band. In 2005 the Mille Lacs Band expanded the tribal TANF program to enrolled members of the Minnesota Chippewa tribes who reside in Hennepin, Ramsey, and Anoka counties. The Tribal TANF program has different income guidelines for participants than the county programs.

The Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians program began operating on January 1, 2015, in a two-county area covering Beltrami and Clearwater Counties. Some of the features of the Red Lake Band's program are different from MFIP, including the sanctions imposed for noncompliance.

Endnotes

¹ [Minn. Stat. §§ 254A.031; 254B.09](#), subd. 2.

² [Minn. Stat. § 254A.035](#).

³ [Minn. Stat. § 253B.212](#).

⁴ *Beaulieu v. Minnesota Dep't of Human Services*, 825 N.W.2d 716 (Minn. 2013); *In re Civil Commitment of Johnson*, 800 N.W.2d 134 (Minn. 2011).

⁵ These services are also known as early and periodic screening, diagnosis, and treatment services (EPSDT). [Minn. Stat. § 256B.04](#), subd. 1b.

⁶ [Minn. Stat. §§ 256.969](#), subd. 16; [256B.0625](#), subd. 34.

⁷ [Minn. Stat. § 256B.69](#), subd. 26.

⁸ [Minn. Stat. § 256B.02](#), subd. 7.

⁹ [Minn. Stat. §§ 256B.057](#), subd. 9; [256L.15](#), subd. 1.

¹⁰ See CMS, memo to state Medicaid directors, “ARRA Protections for Indians in Medicaid and CHIP,” January 22, 2010.

¹¹ See CMS, memo to state Medicaid directors, “ARRA Protections for Indians in Medicaid and CHIP,” January 22, 2010.

¹² [Minn. Stat. § 145.928](#).

¹³ [Laws 2019, 1st Spec. Sess. ch. 9](#), art. 11, § 107.

¹⁴ [Minn. Stat. § 145A.14](#), subd. 2.

¹⁵ 42 U.S.C. § 1402(d).

¹⁶ 42 U.S.C. § 1402(d).

¹⁷ [Minn. Stat. § 145A.14](#), subd. 2a.

¹⁸ [Minn. Stat. § 148F.11](#), subd. 3.

¹⁹ [Minn. Stat. § 148E.065](#), subd 5a.

²⁰ [Minn. Stat. § 148B.38](#), subd. 3.

²¹ [Minn. Stat. § 256.975](#), subd. 6.

²² [Minn. Stat. §§ 257.0755 to 257.0769](#).

²³ [Minn. Stat. § 256J.315](#).

²⁴ [Minn. Stat. § 256J.645](#).

Indian Child Welfare Laws

by Mary Mullen (651-296-9253)

There are numerous federal, state, and tribal laws that affect American Indian children's welfare. Many of these laws are aimed at addressing the disproportionate rate of American Indian children and families in the child protection system. These laws create a complex relationship in the application of federal, state, and tribal laws that impact the participants in these cases and create specific requirements for social service agencies. These laws also intersect with funding streams, such as grant programs and foster care payments.

Federal Laws on Indian Child Welfare

The Federal Indian Child Welfare Act creates federal requirements for the placement of American Indian children in custody cases.

In 1978, Congress passed the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).¹ The statute creates federal requirements that state courts must follow in the placement of Indian children in nonparental custody cases, whether the placement is voluntary or involuntary on the part of the parents. The act covers foster care placement, termination of parental rights, pre-adoptive placement, the adoption of Indian children by non-Indians, and status offenses in juvenile delinquency cases. The intent of the act is to preserve the cultural identity of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families. The act does not apply to custody disputes between parents, such as in a divorce, though it has been held to apply to intra-family custody disputes between parent and grandparent when all parties are enrolled members of a tribe.² The act does not apply to placements for juvenile delinquency where the delinquent act would be a crime if committed by an adult.

The act requires notice to tribes and Indian custodians of an involuntary, covered out-of-home placement of an Indian child. If the child's tribe has a tribal court, the court may take jurisdiction in the matter.³ If there is a tribal court and the child lives on the reservation, the matter must be transferred to tribal court. The act also allows the tribe to intervene in a matter being conducted in state court.

The BIA updated the federal guidelines on the implementation of the ICWA in February 2015.⁴ These new guidelines give states and tribes specific information about meeting the requirements of ICWA. In 2016, the BIA issued the first agency rules on the implementation of the ICWA since it was passed in 1979.⁵ These federal regulations provide the specific requirements courts must follow to comply with the provisions of ICWA and were effective on December 12, 2016.⁶ The rules clarify a number of provisions of the law that were previously considered ambiguous and applied in an inconsistent manner around the country, including definitions for terms and applicable standards of evidence to prove a case.⁷

The types of cases ICWA apply to. ICWA applies to children who are enrolled members of an Indian tribe, or eligible for enrollment and have a parent who is enrolled in a federally recognized tribe.⁸ The state courts must ask the participants on the record whether or not the children in the case are American Indians.⁹ The new federal regulations provide that ICWA

applies in a number of different types of court cases.¹⁰ The regulations also identify specific situations where ICWA does not apply: an initial emergency proceeding or placement¹¹ and a placement based on an act, which if committed as an adult would be deemed a crime. Divorce and custody proceedings between parents are also generally exempt from ICWA by definition. ICWA applies in:

- foster care placements;
- placements with a guardian or conservator where the parent or Indian custodian cannot have the child returned upon demand, but where parental rights have not been terminated;
- termination of parental rights cases;
- pre-adoptive placement; and
- adoptive placement.

Notice of an ICWA proceeding. The new regulations clarify that the party seeking an involuntary out-of-home placement or termination of a parent's rights is required to provide notice when an American Indian child or an ICWA-eligible child (a child eligible for enrollment in an Indian tribe and who has an Indian parent) is the subject of the proceeding. The rules identify what information has to be provided in the notice, including a copy of the petition for the action. The notice of the proceedings must be provided to the Indian parents, Indian custodians, and the child's tribe, and copies must be provided to the Secretary of the Interior and the appropriate regional director of the BIA.¹² The notice to the parents must include information about the right to court-appointed counsel. The proceedings cannot occur less than ten days after the notice has been received, and the parents can request an additional 20 days to prepare.¹³

Court-appointed attorneys in ICWA cases. ICWA requires that parents be appointed an attorney.¹⁴ In Minnesota, if a parent, guardian, or child is indigent in a child protection case, he or she is appointed an attorney.¹⁵

Transfer of cases to tribal court. If the child is already a ward of the tribal court or if the child is domiciled on a reservation that has exclusive jurisdiction over child custody proceedings, then the state court must dismiss the state court action, notify the tribal court, and send it the court records of the case.¹⁶ In any other case, the parent, the Indian custodian, or a child's tribe can request the case be transferred to the child's tribe. The request can be made orally on the record in court or in writing at any stage of the case.¹⁷ Once a state court has received a transfer petition, the court must transfer the case unless one of the parents of the child has objected to the transfer, the tribal court has declined the case, or a good cause exists to deny the transfer.¹⁸ Good cause cannot include a failure to transfer past child protection cases related to the child, a child's lack of connection to the tribe, or how the transfer will affect the current placement of the child.¹⁹

"Active efforts." Whether the placement is voluntary or involuntary, the court must find that "active efforts" have been made to keep the child with a parent. This is higher than the "reasonable efforts" standard that applies under Minnesota law to cases involving placement of non-Indian children. "Active efforts" have been interpreted to mean a rigorous and concerted

level of casework that requires local social service agencies to request the tribal participation at the earliest time possible, to actively solicit the tribe's participation throughout the case, use the tribe's prevailing social and cultural values to preserve the Indian child's family and prevent out-of-home placement, and to return the child to the Indian child's family at the earliest possible time if out-of-home placement has occurred. The term "active efforts" is now defined in the federal regulations, and examples of how to comply with this requirement are also provided in the 2015 update to the BIA ICWA guidelines.²⁰

"Qualified expert witness." If a child placement is involuntary, a witness expert in Indian child placement issues must be consulted on the question of possible serious emotional or physical damage to the child from the existing or proposed placement.²¹ The burden of proof for involuntary foster care is clear and convincing evidence. The standard of proof for involuntary parental rights termination is "beyond a reasonable doubt," the criminal law standard, which is higher than the standard applied in terminating the parental rights of non-Indians.²²

A qualified expert witness can be a person identified by the Indian child's tribe or, if the court or a party cannot find someone through the tribe, the BIA office serving that child's Indian tribe can assist in locating a person to testify, but the social worker who is working on the case cannot be the qualified expert witness.²³

Out-of-home placement of an American Indian child. For a foster care placement or a pre-adoptive placement, the court must follow the placement preferences in ICWA or follow the placement preferences of the child's tribe. The preferences provide a tier structure with members of the child's extended family being most preferable followed by a foster home licensed by the tribe, an Indian foster home, or an institution approved by the tribe or operated by an Indian organization.²⁴ For adoption placements, ICWA contains a preference for placing the child with extended family members, other members of the child's tribe, or other American Indian families.²⁵ Voluntary proceedings for placement of an Indian child, even with the parent's consent, must also follow the placement preferences.²⁶

The Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act requires that the ICWA placement preferences be followed and outlines specific requirements when deviation from the preferences are contemplated that are generally consistent with the 2015 BIA ICWA guidelines.²⁷ The federal regulations also elaborate on what constitutes "good cause" to deviate from the placement preferences, which can include the wishes of either parent, the wishes of the child, or the extraordinary physical, mental, or emotional needs of the child.²⁸

The Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Prevention Act addresses child abuse and neglect.²⁹

This federal law requires reporting and investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect on tribal lands and the completion of background checks on foster families, adoptive families, and other individuals who have contact with Indian children. It also authorizes funding for tribal child abuse prevention and treatment programs.

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act deals with foster care, adoption, and kinship assistance.³⁰

Passed in 2008, this federal law gives tribes the ability to directly access IV-E funds for foster care, adoption assistance, and kinship care assistance programs. (See page 101 for a description of IV-E agreements.) It requires state IV-E agencies to work with any tribe that wants to negotiate an agreement with the state agency to administer all or part of its own IV-E program. Currently the Leech Lake, Mille Lacs, Red Lake, and White Earth Bands of Ojibwe have elected to enter into Title IV-E agreements with the State of Minnesota.

Minnesota Laws on Indian Child Welfare

The State Indian Family Preservation Act

In 1985, Minnesota adopted a state version of the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, which is known as the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA).³¹ The state law was intended to call the controlling federal law to the attention of state courts and professionals in child placement proceedings.

The MIFPA was amended in 2015 and incorporated numerous changes to the existing state law.³² The changes addressed ambiguities in case law, but also tied definitions to federal definitions and made aspects of the state law more consistent with the BIA ICWA guidelines. Some of the notable changes include the following:

- Changing the definition of “relative” to be consistent with the federal ICWA
- Providing that a “parent” includes a father as it is defined by tribal custom or tribal law and that paternity is acknowledged when an unmarried father takes any action to hold himself out as the biological father³³
- Adding a new definition for the term “Qualified Expert Witness” (QEW) and providing specific criteria for finding and using a QEW
- Requiring all social service agencies or private child-placing agencies to inquire of known parties about the child’s lineage to determine if a child is potentially an Indian child
- Requiring notice to the tribe from the social service agency, including available information about the child and parents, within seven days of the beginning of family assessment or investigation
- Requiring the court to notify a tribe if the tribe of the child is known when there is an emergency hearing for out-of-home placement
- Requiring the social service agency to involve the child’s tribe at the earliest possible time in the case, but provides that the tribe may choose to participate at any point in the case
- Providing criteria for deviation from the placement preferences under ICWA and specifically requiring that good cause to deviate from the placement preferences must be determined at each stage of the proceeding

- Creating a statutory definition of the term “active efforts” and providing specific criteria that the social service agency must meet in order for the court to order an Indian child into an out-of-home-placement³⁴
- Creating a statutory definition of the term “best interest of an Indian child”
- Requiring a social services agency to avoid out-of-home placement by working with the tribe at the earliest possible time and looking for alternatives to out-of-home placements
- Providing that good cause to deny a transfer to tribal court cannot include an assessment of the tribal court or social service agency who would accept the case, but the court may find good cause not to transfer a case if there is no tribal court to send the case to or if there is an undue hardship to the parties to transfer the case that goes beyond geographic distance alone³⁵

The state law provides many specific requirements for local social service agencies who may be doing an assessment or investigation. The law is specifically triggered in any instance where an Indian child may be put into out-of-home-placement. MIFPA does not allow the courts to determine the applicability of this chapter based on whether an Indian child is part of an existing Indian family or based on the level of contact the child has with the child’s Indian tribe, reservation, or Indian community.³⁶

The federal ICWA law and the regulations enacted by the Department of the Interior are controlling in these cases; however, where MIFPA and other state laws provide greater protections to American Indian families, courts in Minnesota will need to comply with the state laws.³⁷

Tribal/State Indian Child Welfare Agreement

Negotiated between all of the tribes in Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Human Services, this agreement identifies the roles and responsibilities of the tribes and the department in the provision of child welfare services to American Indian children and their families. The stated purpose of the agreement is to strengthen implementation of the ICWA and the MIFPA, thereby protecting the interests of American Indian children and their families and maintaining the integrity of the child’s family and the child’s tribal relationship. The agreement applies to all Indian children in Minnesota, whether or not the child’s tribe executed the agreement. The agreement was developed to maximize the participation of tribes in decisions regarding American Indian children, address barriers to implementing services in child protection matters, and prevent foster placement and non-Indian adoptions. This agreement was signed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the tribal governments in 1999, and was amended in 2007.

American Indian Child Welfare Programs³⁸

In 2008, a program called the American Indian Child Welfare Initiative reformed the county-based delivery of child welfare services into a tribal delivery system for American Indian children and their families who live on the Leech Lake and White Earth reservations.³⁹ The tribal programs exceed federal child welfare performance standards for measures related to

placement stability, timeliness to adoption, and rate of relative care. Tribal programs provide child welfare services including child abuse prevention, family preservation, child protection services, foster care, foster care licensing, children’s mental health screening, reunification, and customary adoption services.

Tribal/State IV-E Agreements

Title IV-E is a federal entitlement program that provides financial support to states and tribes to prove the quality of foster care and adoption programs. Four Minnesota tribes have negotiated tribal IV-E agreements with the Minnesota Department of Human Services: Leech Lake, White Earth, Mille Lacs, and Red Lake Bands of Ojibwe. These agreements replace the individual county and tribal out-of-home placement supervision agreements and apply statewide. The Title IV-E agreement must be in effect before tribes and counties can access federal reimbursement for costs associated with managing a foster care program for children who are in the custody of the tribal social services agency. Eligible costs include administrative costs, training, and out-of-home placement costs.

Indian Child Welfare Grants⁴⁰

The Commissioner of Human Services has statutory authority to provide grants to tribal social service agencies and other organizations to support tribal child welfare programs, including prevention, reunification, and legal services. Services provided through these grants have included: child welfare and mental health services for families; early intervention and family engagement; foster home and adoptive placement resource development; family reunification services; and court advocacy.

Native American Equity Project

The Department of Human Services (DHS) began a pilot project in 2017 to address the disproportionate number of Indian children in out-of-home placements. The department is partnering with the University of Minnesota-Duluth, St. Louis County, and tribes to study the underlying causes of the child welfare disparities, prepare a report, and develop a training curriculum for county and tribal social service agencies. The pilot project is expected to conclude in 2020.

Endnotes

¹ 25 U.S.C. §§ 1901 to 1963.

² *In re Custody of A.K.H.*, 502 N.W.2d 790 (Minn. App. 1993), *rev. denied* (1993). See also 25 CFR 23.2, definition of “Foster Care Placement.”

³ *Nebraska v. Elise M.*, no. 12-1278 was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court and the petition for a writ of certiorari was denied. The Nebraska Supreme Court ruled that foster care placement and termination of parental rights can be considered distinct proceedings, termination of parental rights proceedings are not necessarily an advanced stage of the case, and the best interest of the child is not a factor in determining whether or not there is good cause to deny a motion to transfer a case to tribal court.

- ⁴ “Guidelines for State Courts and Agencies in Indian Child Custody Proceedings,” Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, published in the Federal Register, vol. 80, no. 37, Feb. 25, 2015.
- ⁵ 25 C.F.R. Part 23, Indian Child Welfare Act proceedings, published on June 14, 2016, effective December 12, 2016.
- ⁶ The new federal regulations affect cases that are initiated after December 12, 2016.
- ⁷ 25 C.F.R. §§ 23.02 (definitions) and 23.121 (applicable standards of evidence).
- ⁸ 25 U.S.C. § 1903; 25 C.F.R. § 23.108 provides that state courts must rely on a tribe’s determination of eligibility for enrollment.
- ⁹ 25 C.F.R. § 23.107.
- ¹⁰ 25 C.F.R. § 23.2.
- ¹¹ 25 C.F.R. § 23.113; emergency proceedings have specific requirements provided for in the federal regulations and should last no longer than 30 days.
- ¹² 25 C.F.R. § 23.11.
- ¹³ 25 C.F.R. § 23.112.
- ¹⁴ 25 C.F.R. § 23.13, 25 U.S.C. 1912(b). ICWA requires a parent get a court-appointed attorney. ¹⁵ [Minn. Stat. § 260C.163](#), subd. 3.
- ¹⁶ 23 C.F.R. § 23.110.
- ¹⁷ 25 C.F.R. § 23.115.
- ¹⁸ 25 C.F.R. § 23.117.
- ¹⁹ 25 C.F.R. § 23.118.
- ²⁰ 25 C.F.R. § 23.2, “Active Efforts” definition; see also “Guidelines for State Courts and Agencies in Indian Child Custody Proceedings,” Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, published in the Federal Register, vol. 80, no. 37, Feb. 25, 2015.
- ²¹ The qualified expert witness testimony must support the court’s determination that continued custody with a parent will result in serious harm. See *In the Matter of the Welfare of the Children of S.R.K. and O.A.K.*, 911 N.W.2d 821 (Minn. 2018).
- ²² 25 C.F.R. § 23.121.
- ²³ 25 C.F.R. § 23.122.
- ²⁴ 25 U.S.C. § 1915, 25 C.F.R. §§ 23.130 and 23.131.
- ²⁵ *Id.*
- ²⁶ 25 C.F.R. § 23.124.
- ²⁷ [Minn. Stat. § 260.771](#), subd. 7.
- ²⁸ 25 C.F.R. § 23.132.
- ²⁹ 25 U.S.C. § 3202.
- ³⁰ Pub. L. No. 110-351 (2008).
- ³¹ [Minn. Stat. §§ 260.751](#) to 260.835.
- ³² [Laws 2015, ch. 78](#), art. 1, §§ 1 to 36.
- ³³ [Minn. Stat. § 260.755](#), subd. 14.
- ³⁴ [Minn. Stat. § 260.762](#).
- ³⁵ [Minn. Stat. § 260.771](#), subd. 3a.

³⁶ [Minn. Stat. § 260.771](#), subd. 2.

³⁷ 25 U.S.C. § 1921.

³⁸ [Minn. Stat. § 256.01](#), subd. 14b.

³⁹ The Red Lake Band and Mille Lacs Band are working with DHS to provide delivery of child welfare services. The programs for the tribes are expected to be operating in 2021.

⁴⁰ [Minn. Stat. § 260.785](#).

Education Laws Affecting Indian Students

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K-12 American Indian Education School Options

American Indian students attend public schools, private schools, schools operated by the federal Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), and tribal contract schools.

Most American Indian students in Minnesota attend public schools operated by Minnesota's school districts and charter schools. There are two primary counts of students by race in Minnesota. The "legacy" count, which is used for the state's American Indian Program aid, identifies 22,511 public school students as American Indians.¹ The federally required annual school census numbers reported 14,839 prekindergarten, kindergarten, elementary, and secondary students identifying as American Indian students, or 1.7 percent of the total student population, enrolled in Minnesota's K-12 public schools in the 2018-2019 school year. One-third of these American Indian students attend public school in the seven-county metropolitan area and two-thirds of the students attend public school in Greater Minnesota. American Indian students also attend federally funded tribal schools located on the Fond du Lac, Mille Lacs, White Earth, and Leech Lake reservations and nonpublic schools.

School Districts

In the 2018-2019 school year, there were 331 independent, common, and special school districts in Minnesota. School districts are governed by elected school boards, and operate traditional elementary and secondary schools, as well as area learning centers and other alternative programs, within their geographic boundaries. All of Minnesota's reservation land is within public district borders.

School Districts with the Highest Concentration of American Indian Students 2018-2019 School Year

Rank	School District Name	Total American Indian Students	Total Students	Percent American Indian	% of Total Public American Indian Student Population
1	Pine Point	59	59	100	0.4
2	Nett Lake	57	57	100	0.4
3	Red Lake	1,493	1,497	99.7%	9.5%
4	Cass Lake-Bena	990	1,211	81.8	6.3
5	Waubun-Ogema-White Earth	430	697	61.7	2.7
6	Mahnomen	392	642	61.1	2.5
7	Browns Valley	98	173	56.6	0.6
8	Kelliher	138	285	48.4	0.9
9	Onamia	296	645	45.8	1.9
10	Northland Community Schools	138	360	38.3	0.9
	State Totals	14,839	890,121	1.7%	

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

House Research Department

Some school districts with large American Indian populations have developed programs with a particular focus on American Indian culture and language. Three such programs are noted below.

St. Paul School District. St Paul serves 2.6 percent of Minnesota’s American Indian students. The American Indian Magnet School serves students in a prekindergarten program, and in grades kindergarten through 8. The school was founded with a goal of providing an American Indian perspective and to welcome students of all backgrounds to a diverse school community. Students in grades six to eight are required to study either the Lakota or Ojibwe language.

Minneapolis School District. The Minneapolis School District serves 6.8 percent of Minnesota’s American Indian students and operates one American Indian-centered school site, Anishinabe Academy, and contracts with two alternative programs that are run by community agencies. Anishinabe Academy offers an all-day prekindergarten program and kindergarten through 8th grade instruction. Instruction includes the Ojibwe and Dakota languages, as well as American Indian culture classes, circles, and drum groups. The two contract alternative programs are: American OIC’s Takoda Prep, serving students in grades 9 to 12, and Nawayee Center School, serving students in grades 7 through 12. Students in contract alternative programs must qualify for the graduation incentives program,² and continue to be Minneapolis public school students while enrolled at the contract alternative schools.

Duluth School District. The Duluth school district serves 2.1 percent of Minnesota’s American Indian students. Students in grades kindergarten to 4 at Lowell Elementary may participate in the Misaabekong Ojibwe Language Immersion program. The program supports academic and linguistic development in English and Ojibwe.

Pine Point School. The Minnesota Legislature statutorily granted the White Earth Reservation Tribal Council control of the Pine Point public school, kindergarten through grade 8, and funds the school on a per pupil basis through state aid payments. The school is also eligible to receive federal aids and grants, as well as the same aids, revenues, and grants that local school districts receive.³ The school provides American Indian children with a supportive educational environment that integrates Ojibwe culture and history into the school’s curriculum and teaching practices. The tribal council has the same powers and duties as a school board (other than the power to levy a property tax). It may cooperate with other school districts to purchase or share education-related services. The school is subject to the same standards for instruction as other public schools.

Charter Schools

A charter school is a public school established under a contract between a charter school board of directors and an authorizer. A charter school must comply with some state requirements as though it were a district, but is exempt from school district requirements that are not explicitly applicable to charter schools. Charter schools cannot limit admissions based on race, ethnicity, or membership in an American Indian tribal nation, but they can adopt a mission that affirms or integrates particular cultural beliefs.

Charter Schools with the Highest Concentration of American Indian Students 2018-2019 School Year

Rank	District	Geographic School District	American Indian Students	Total Students	% of American Indian Students
1	Minisinaakwaang Leadership	Aitkin	21	21	100%
2	Naytahwaush Community School	Mahnomen	119	121	98.3
3	Oshki Ogimaag Charter School	Cook County	17	20	85.0
4	Bdote Learning Center	Minneapolis	82	101	81.2
5	Voyageurs Expeditionary	Bemidji	66	104	63.5
6	Treknorth High School	Bemidji	91	252	36.1
7	Jennings Community Learning Center	St. Paul	25	87	28.7
8	Augsburg Fairview Academy	Minneapolis	25	100	25.0
9	Vermillion Country School	St. Louis County	10	40	25.0
10	Echo Charter School	Yellow Medicine East	12	68	17.6

Source: Minnesota Department of Education

House Research Department

Other School Options

American Indian students can also, like other students, meet compulsory instruction requirements by attending nonpublic schools, including homeschools. American Indian students may also attend tribal contract schools, described later in this chapter.

Percent American Indian Students by Type of School

	American Indian Students	All Students	Percent American Indian Students	Percent of total American Indian Students
District	13,999	829,822	2%	89%
Charter	840	59,482	1%	5%
Tribal Contract	817	817	100%	5%
State Total	15,656	890,121	2%	100%

House Research Department

Federal Laws and Programs Affecting Indian Education

The Bureau of Indian Education

The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) was established in 2006 and operates within the Department of the Interior. The BIE was previously known as the Office of Indian Education Programs, and was part of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The BIE’s mission is to “provide quality education opportunities from early childhood through life in accordance with the tribe’s needs for cultural and economic well-being in keeping with the wide diversity of Indian tribes and Alaska native villages as distinct cultural and governmental entities.”⁴ The BIE must also “manifest consideration of the whole person, taking into account the spiritual, mental, physical, and cultural aspects of the person within family and Tribal or Alaska native village contexts.”⁵

The BIE school system includes 183 elementary and secondary schools, and dormitories in 23 states. Students who attend BIE schools must be members of federally recognized tribes or their descendants and reside on or near federal Indian reservations. Schools funded by the BIE are operated by the BIE or by tribes under contracts or grants. BIE-operated schools are federally funded by a weighted funding formula designed to provide additional services to eligible students and annual formula grants from the U.S. Department of Education.

BIE Tribal Contract Schools

The federal government began establishing Indian schools in the 1870s,⁶ implementing a federal policy of acculturating and assimilating Indian people through a system of BIA-run boarding schools.⁷ In the 1960s, tribes started contracting with the federal government to manage the BIA-funded schools, and in 1975, Congress passed the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act,⁸ which encouraged more Indian tribes to contract with the government to control BIA schools. In 1988, Congress passed the Tribally Controlled Schools Act.⁹ Under the act, the federal government provides schools grants to “assure maximum

Indian participation in the direction of educational services” and make the services “more responsive to the needs and desires of Indian communities.”¹⁰

Today, 130 of the 183 BIE-funded schools are tribally controlled and known as “tribal contract” or “contract” schools. The remaining 53 are directly operated by the BIE.¹¹ In Minnesota, Indian tribes have contracted with BIE to manage schools on the Leech Lake, White Earth, Fond du Lac, and Mille Lacs Indian Reservations. These schools are designed to provide Indian students with educational services that are more responsive to the needs and desires of the Indian communities. Under the Public Health and Welfare Act,¹² the federal government assists tribal contract schools with public health services.

The curriculum and educational accountability requirements in BIE-operated schools are the same as those of the state where the BIE schools are located and include requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Minnesota’s Tribal Contract Schools; 2018-19 School Year

School No.	School (Reservation)	American Indian Students	Total Students	Percent American Indian	% of Total Am Ind Pop
1115-34	Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig (Leech Lake)	182	182	100.0%	1.2%
1094-34	Fond Du Lac Ojibwe (Fond du Lac)	186	186	100.0%	1.2%
1435-34	Circle of Life (White Earth)	215	215	100.0%	1.4%
1480-34	Nay Ah Shing (Mille Lacs)	234	234	100.0%	1.5%
	Total BIE Students	817	817	100.0%	5.2%

House Research Department

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)¹³ was signed by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965, and was part of President Johnson’s War on Poverty. The ESEA has been periodically reauthorized since then. The two most recent reauthorizations were known as No Child Left Behind, signed in 2002, and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed in 2015. ESSA requires states to submit plans to the U.S. Department of Education, explaining how they will meet the minimum criteria of the law. Within ESSA, Title I is the single largest source of federal education funding, providing financial assistance to districts with high numbers or concentrations of students from low-income families. Title I also has a number of substantive requirements relating to assessments, accountability, and school support and improvement. Other parts of the law relate to instruction, English learners, American Indian students, and homeless children and youths, among others. A summary of the provisions most relevant to American Indian students follows.

Meaningful Consultation. ESSA requires states and school districts to consult with Indian tribes when implementing ESSA. States must consult with representatives of Indian tribes when they develop their state plans. In addition, a district that receives more than \$40,000 under Title VI

or has at least 50 percent American Indian enrollment, must consult with tribes when developing a plan or application for a program under ESSA. The consultation requirement also applies to individual schools with at least 50 percent American Indian enrollment. Consultation must provide enough opportunity for officials from Indian tribes or tribal organizations to meaningfully and substantively contribute to the plan.¹⁴

Title VI. ESSA authorizes formula grants to local education agencies that enroll at least ten Indian students or whose enrollment is at least 25 percent American Indian, to Indian tribes or organizations, and to schools operated or funded by the BIE. The Indian education formula grants are intended to fund programs that meet the culturally related academic needs of Indian children. In addition, Title VI authorizes competitive grants to improve educational opportunities and achievement of American Indian children and youth, and to support professional development for Indian teachers and education professionals. Title VI funds may be used to fund native language immersion programs.

Title VII. The Impact Aid program¹⁵ under Title VII authorizes funding for general operating expenditures and school construction costs through the U.S. Department of Education to compensate local school districts for large amounts of nontaxable federal Indian land located within the district. Impact aid recipients must ensure that Indian tribes and parents participate in planning and operating district education programs. The program includes a grievance process that allows American Indian tribes and parents to try to ensure they participate as intended.

State Revenue Streams and Programs

Beginning in the 1970s, Minnesota funded several grant programs, including the Postsecondary Preparation Program and the American Indian Language and Culture Program, to support American Indian students enrolled in public schools and in federal BIE-funded schools. In 2000, a newly combined state-funded Success for the Future program provided annual competitive grants to a limited number of school districts and schools eligible to receive the same grant amount, regardless of district size or number of enrolled American Indian students.

American Indian Education Aid

In 2015, the legislature replaced the Success for the Future grants with the American Indian Education Formula Aid program. The aid program is directed to all school districts, charter schools, and tribal contract schools operating an American Indian education program and serving more than 20 American Indian students.¹⁶ While the Success for the Future grants were funded at \$2.1 million, the current aid program is funded at more than \$9 million per year.

To qualify for the aid, the qualifying school must develop and submit a plan to the Indian education director at the Minnesota Department of Education. The program helps educators meet the needs of American Indian students and provides new and continuing programs, services, and activities to American Indian students, consistent with the requirements of the World's Best Workforce¹⁷ and the Indian Education Act of 1988.¹⁸ Permissible aid program expenditures include student and staff support services, innovative teaching and student

evaluation, career counseling, and culturally competent instruction, among other expenditures, all of which must help increase the completion and graduation rates for American Indian students. American Indian education aid is funded on a per-pupil basis based on the legacy count of American Indian students. For fiscal year 2019, 128 school districts, four tribal schools, and 24 charter schools qualify for aid.

American Indian Scholarships. The American Indian scholarship program provides need-based scholarships to Minnesota residents who are at least one-fourth or more Indian ancestry.¹⁹ The scholarships are funded through the Office of Higher Education, and may be used at accredited Minnesota postsecondary (public and private) institutions.

Indian Teacher Preparation Grants. The American Indian teacher preparation program assists American Indian people who intend to become teachers through grants to cooperative programs between school districts and colleges and universities. Grants are statutorily prescribed to: the University of Minnesota at Duluth and the Duluth school district; Bemidji State University and Red Lake school district; Moorhead State University and one of the school districts located within the White Earth Reservation; and Augsburg College and Minneapolis school district and St. Paul school district. Grant money may be used for programs, student scholarships, and student loans.²⁰

Tribal Contract School Aid. Minnesota pays tribal contract school aid to the four tribal contract schools in the state. The tribal contract schools must comply with Minnesota's education statutes, and state aid must supplement, not replace, funds provided by the federal government. State aid for tribal contract schools is allocated on a per-pupil basis, and intended to make up the difference between what the federal government provides and the per-pupil funding the state provides to school districts and charter schools.²¹

Tribal contract schools that receive state aid are also eligible for early childhood family education (ECFE) revenue. For school districts, ECFE funding is based on a statutory allowance times the population that resides in the school district from birth to age 5. The total ECFE funding for tribal contract schools in contrast is set at a fixed amount, with the same proportionate share of the total allocated to each of the four tribal contract schools.

Language Revitalization. Legacy funding has been provided to the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council for Dakota and Ojibwe language revitalization grants.²² Recognized educational institutions and certain nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for the grants.

Facility Support for Some School Districts with Low Property Tax Base. School districts located on tribal reservations tend to have small property tax bases. As a result, these districts find it difficult or impossible to finance construction projects through conventional bond sales. The maximum effort school aid law allows a district with a small property tax base to receive a forgivable capital loan. This program has been used for several school construction projects in the Red Lake and Nett Lake school districts. The state finances the loans through bond sales. Maximum effort capital loans are forgiven if they are not paid within 50 years.²³ The loans to Red Lake and Nett Lake will be forgiven when the 50-year term is reached.

Indian Education Programs Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021 Appropriations

Program	Amount	
	2020	2021
American Indian Education Aid (Minn. Stat. § 124D.81)	\$9,515,000	\$9,673,000
Tribal Contract Schools (Minn. Stat. § 124D.83)	3,275,000	3,763,000
Indian Scholarships (Minn. Stat. § 136A.126)	3,500,000	3,500,000
Indian Teacher Preparation Grants (Minn. Stat. § 122A.63)	460,000	460,000
Tribal College Grants (Minn. Stat. § 136A.1796)	150,000	150,000
Early Childhood Programs at Tribal Schools (Minn. Stat. § 124D.83 , subd. 4)	68,000	68,000
Total	\$16,968,000	\$17,614,000

House Research Department

American Indian Education Act of 1988

The Minnesota Legislature passed the American Indian Education Act to provide American Indian people with education programs that meet their unique education needs. The act encourages districts and schools to provide elementary and secondary language and cultural education programs that include: instruction in American Indian language, literature, history, and culture; staff support components; research projects examining effective communication methods; personal and vocational counseling; modified curriculum, instruction, and administrative procedures; and cooperative arrangements with alternative schools that integrate American Indian culture into their curricula.

The act directs the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board to grant to eligible individuals teaching licenses in American Indian language and cultural education. Districts may seek exemptions from the licensing requirement if compliance would make it difficult to hire qualified teachers. Districts and schools that provide a language and cultural education program must try to hire persons who share the culture of the American Indian children enrolled in the program. American Indian schools and school districts in which there are ten or more enrolled American Indian children must consult with a parent committee regarding curriculum that affects American Indian education and the educational needs of the students.

Under the act, a school district with at least ten enrolled American Indian children may retain an American Indian teacher who is a probationary teacher or who has less seniority than other, non-American Indian teachers the district employs when laying teachers off.²⁴

Tribal Nations Education Committee. The state education commissioner must consult with the Tribal Nations Education Committee on all issues related to American Indian education, including the administration of Minnesota's American Indian Education Act of 1988 and other American Indian education programs, American Indian scholarship and postsecondary preparation grant awards, and recommended education policy changes affecting American Indian students.²⁵

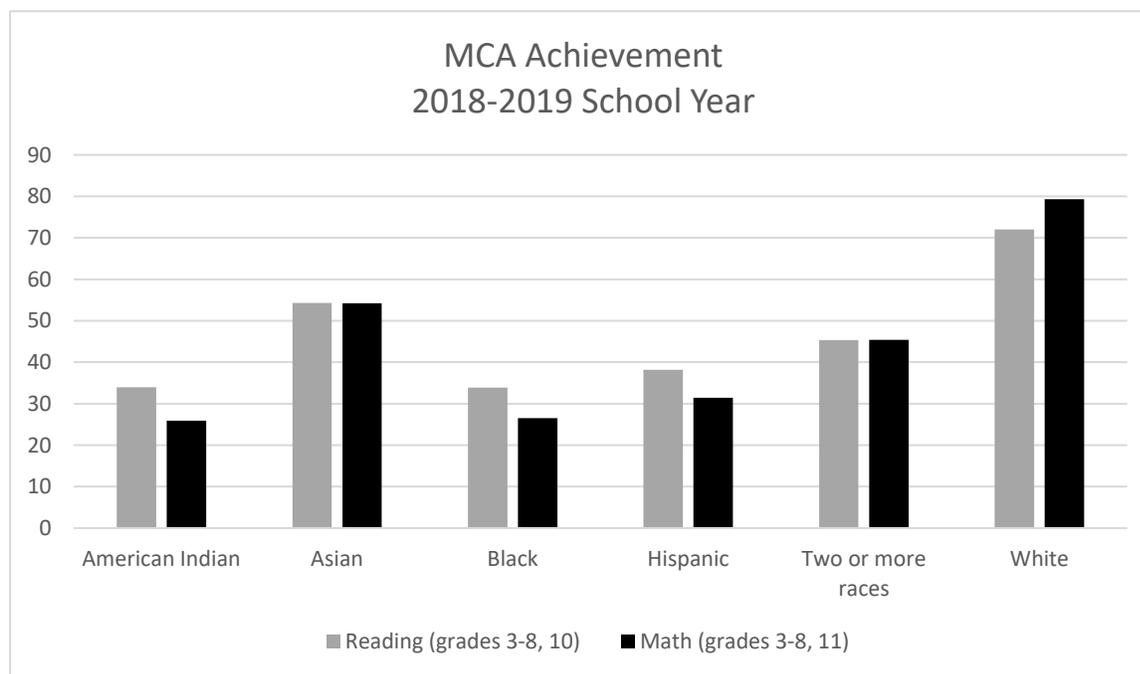
American Indian Education Director. The state education commissioner must appoint an Indian education director to: serve as a liaison with American Indian tribes and organizations; evaluate the state of American Indian education in Minnesota; seek advice from the American Indian community and other persons interested in American Indian education on improving the quality of American Indian education in Minnesota; advise the commissioner on American Indian issues; develop a strategic plan and a long-term framework for American Indian education that is updated every five years; and keep the American Indian community informed about the work of the state education department.²⁶

American Indian Students

ESSA requires states to set goals for academic achievement and graduation rates, and to create accountability systems to measure progress toward state goals. Minnesota’s accountability system, known as the North Star,²⁷ uses the statewide reading and math Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs), four- and seven-year graduation rates, and consistent attendance.²⁸ The next several charts provide an overview of how American Indian students perform on these indicators, along with other information about American Indian academic performance and student discipline.

Academic Assessments

American Indian students generally score lower on the MCAs than other student groups. The chart below shows the percentage of students in each group that meet or exceed state standards, as measured by the 2019 reading and math MCAs. Minnesota’s reading achievement rate for all student groups in grades 3 to 8 and 10 was 58.3 percent; the math achievement rate was 53.9 percent. The reading achievement rate for American Indian students was 34.0 percent, and the math achievement rate was 25.9 percent.

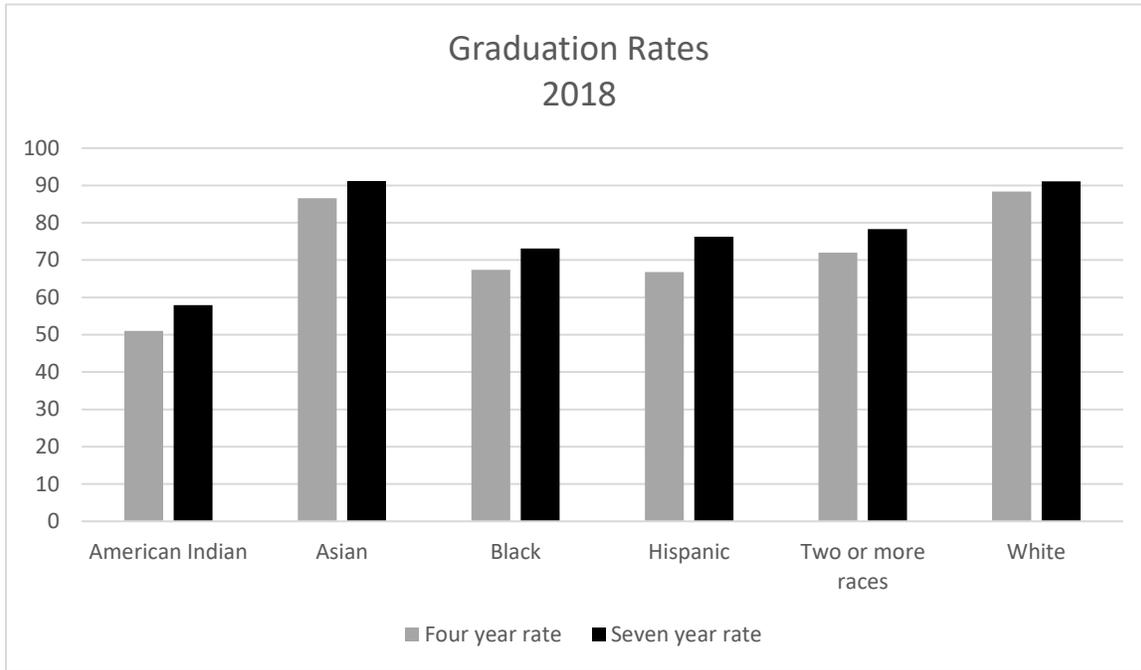


Source: Minnesota Department of Education

In addition to the MCAs, American Indian student performance is measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a continuing, federally mandated test of what students know and can do in math, reading, science, writing, and other subjects. The National Center for Education Statistics administers the test using a sampling procedure that captures the diversity of U.S. schools and students. NAEP results make possible state and district comparisons of student academic progress over time. NAEP data on student achievement are reported for different demographic groups, including socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity. American Indian students consistently score lower on the NAEP 4th and 8th grade reading and math assessments than the national average for non-Indian students.²⁹

Graduation Rates

American Indian students graduate at lower rates than other students in Minnesota. In 2018, 83.2 percent of all Minnesota students graduated in four years, and 87.5 percent graduated in seven years. For American Indian students, the four-year rate was 51 percent, and the seven-year rate was 57.9 percent.

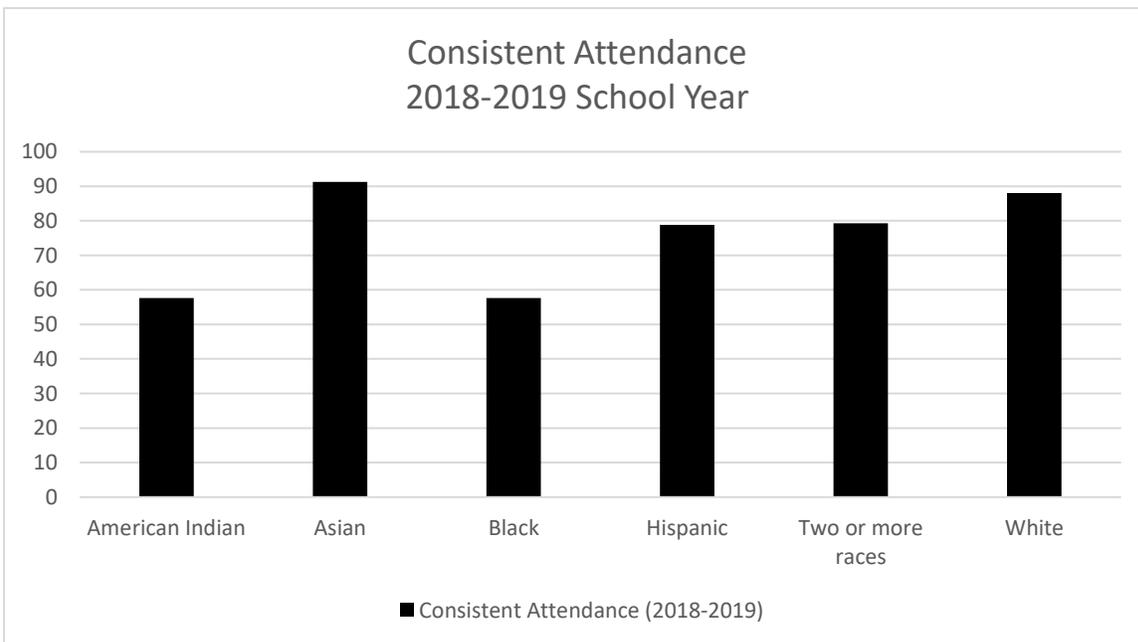


Source: Minnesota Department of Education

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Consistent Attendance

The Minnesota Department of Education defines “consistent attendance” as attendance at least 90 percent of school days. For purposes of ESSA, the department reports the overall percentage of students and percentage by student group that had consistent attendance. In the 2018-2019 school year, 85.4 percent of all Minnesota students, and 57.6 percent of American Indian students had consistent attendance.



Source: Minnesota Department of Education

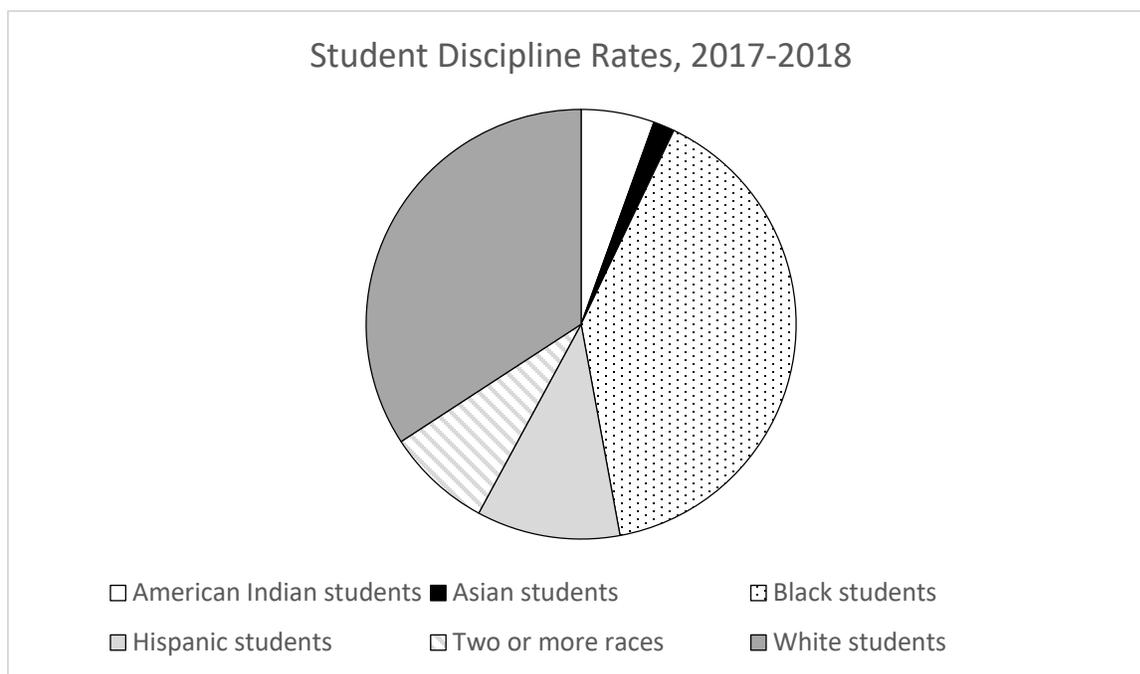
House Research Department

Other Academic Indicators

American Indian students are underrepresented in the Minnesota Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program and among Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) exam takers.³⁰ High school students who participate in PSEO earn college credit without having to pay college tuition and fees.³¹ Students who take AP courses may take AP exams to qualify for college credit. Some high schools offer an International Baccalaureate program, which allows students with qualifying IB scores to receive college credit. Minnesota subsidizes the cost of AP and IB exam fees for low-income students, and provides scholarships for teachers attending AP or IB training.³²

Student Discipline

American Indian students make up approximately 1.7 percent of students in Minnesota, but account for 5.5 percent of all kindergarten through grade 12 disciplinary actions across the state. Discipline rates include out-of-school suspensions of one day or more, expulsions, and exclusions.³³ The chart below shows disciplinary actions across the state, by reported racial or ethnic group.



Source: Minnesota Department of Education

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Special Education

Minnesota’s American Indian students are identified as special education students at a much higher rate than students of other races/ethnicities. The table below shows that 27.1 percent of Minnesota’s American Indian students are identified in one of Minnesota’s 13 disability categories.

Percent of Special Education Students by Race/Ethnicity; 2018-19 School Year

	Special Education Students	Total Students	% of Students in Special Education
Asian	6,229	60,989	10.2%
Black	17,117	99,604	17.2%
Hispanic	15,955	84,784	18.8%
American Indian	4,019	14,839	27.1%
Two or More Races	8,729	44,021	19.8%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	102	771	13.2%
White	91,774	584,296	15.7%
Total	143,925	889,304	16.2%
Source: Minnesota Department of Education			

House Research Department

Curriculum

The state education commissioner must include the contributions of Minnesota’s American Indian tribes and communities when reviewing and revising state academic standards.³⁴ All school districts and charter schools must provide students instruction in accordance with the state academic standards. World language and culture programs must encompass indigenous American Indian languages and cultures.³⁵

Constitutional Issues

Constitutional issues affecting elementary and secondary American Indian students and teachers often involve distinctions between Indian and non-Indian students, and questions over whether these distinctions are political or racial.

The Supreme Court has upheld employment preferences for American Indians at the BIA, holding that the preference was not “racial” because the preference, as applied, was not to American Indians as a discrete racial group, but as “members of quasi-sovereign tribal identities whose lives and activities” were governed by the BIA in a “unique fashion.” The court went on to say that “where the preference is reasonable and rationally related to further Indian self-government,” the preference does not violate due process clause of the 5th amendment.³⁶

Federal courts have relied on the Supreme Court’s reasoning when considering distinctions between Indian and non-Indian students. In 1972, a federal court found that Minneapolis public schools were racially segregated, that the school board’s actions had at least in part contributed to the segregation, and that the segregation had to be eliminated. The court established guidelines for addressing the segregation, and remained involved in later years in overseeing how the board implemented required changes. The district later asked the board to modify the desegregation order, in part by permitting a high concentration of Indian students in one or a limited number of schools, arguing that concentrating American Indian students would

better serve their special educational needs, and would be helpful in spending federal funds. The district argued that maintaining, increasing, or causing the segregation of American Indians was constitutional because the American Indian classification was “political” rather than “racial.” The court denied the request, concluding that the district’s classification “has nothing to do with tribal membership or any quasi-sovereign interests of particular tribal groups or reservations. The classification can only be deemed to be ‘directed toward a ‘racial’ group consisting of Indians.’”³⁷ The Eighth Circuit upheld the district court’s decision on appeal.³⁸

Minnesota’s School Desegregation/Integration Rule

In 1973, the Minnesota Board of Education (which before 2000 was the rulemaking and policy-making body for the Department of Education) adopted desegregation rules based on comparisons of minority student enrollment among schools within the same district. In 1978, the rules were amended to specify that segregation occurred when the minority student population in any school building exceed the minority racial composition of the student population for the entire district by 15 percent. Schools that were found segregated based on the 15 percent standard had to submit for approval a comprehensive plan to eliminate segregation. The substance of the rules remained the same through the 1970s and 1980s. New rules were adopted in 1999, which remain in place.

Under the 1999 rules, the commissioner uses data on the racial composition of each school to determine whether "segregation" exists, whether there is a "racially identifiable school" within a district, and whether the district as a whole is "racially isolated." Each of these terms is defined in the rule. If the commissioner determines that a racially identifiable school exists, the commissioner must determine whether the racial composition at the school is the result of acts motivated at least in part by a discriminatory purpose. If the commissioner finds that segregation exists, the district must submit a plan to remedy the segregation. The plan must include programs that provide instruction about different cultures, including options such as American Indian language and culture programs that are uniquely relevant to American Indian students.³⁹

For purposes of developing a school or school district desegregation plan under the state rules, the definition of segregation does not include a concentration of enrolled American Indian students that (1) exists to meet the students’ unique educational needs through federal education programs, and (2) is voluntary on the part of the parents or students or both.⁴⁰

The 2013 Legislature adopted a new achievement and integration program⁴¹ for pursuing racial and economic integration, increasing student achievement, and reducing academic disparities in K-12 public schools. To ensure that the new program and the underlying school desegregation rules conformed, the legislature directed the education commissioner to review the rules for consistency with the new statutory program and, if needed, to recommend rule and statutory amendments.⁴² In 2015, the department began the rulemaking process to amend the achievement and integration rules. After a hearing on the rules, an administrative law judge issued a report disapproving certain proposed rules. The department withdrew the proposed rules and concluded the rulemaking process. Prospective changes in the substance of the school desegregation rules may affect American Indian students.

Endnotes

- ¹ The legacy count of American Indian students allows a student to select only one race. The legacy count of American Indian students is significantly higher than the annual federal count that relies on census definitions and allows students to choose the category “more than one race.” Unless noted separately, the data in this report is based on the federal count.
- ² [Minn. Stat. § 124D.68](#). The graduation incentives program uses statutory criteria to identify at-risk students.
- ³ [Minn. Stat. § 128B.011](#).
- ⁴ 25 C.F.R. § 32.3.
- ⁵ *Id.*
- ⁶ *Cohen’s Handbook of Federal Indian Law*, 2012 edition, 22.03[2][a].
- ⁷ U.S. Department of the Interior, Indian Affairs, Frequently Asked Questions, available at <https://www.bia.gov/frequently-asked-questions>.
- ⁸ Pub. L. No. 90-638.
- ⁹ Pub. L. No. 100-297, § 5202(7), 102 Stat. 385 (1988) (repealed Pub. L. 107-110, § 1043, 115 Stat. 2063 (2002)).
- ¹⁰ 25 U.S.C. § 2501 (a).
- ¹¹ U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Education Strategic Direction, 2018-2023, issued Aug. 16, 2018, available at https://www.bie.edu/cs/groups/xbie/documents/site_assets/idc2-086443.pdf.
- ¹² 42 U.S.C. § 2004b.
- ¹³ 20 U.S.C. § 7401 *et seq.*
- ¹⁴ 20 U.S.C. § 7918. *See also* Minnesota Tribal Consultation Guide, Minnesota Department of Education, August 2018.
- ¹⁵ The Impact Aid program was established in 1950. In 1994, it was incorporated into Title VIII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. When the ESEA was reauthorized as ESSA, the program was revised and moved into Title VII.
- ¹⁶ [Minn. Stat. § 124D.81](#).
- ¹⁷ [Minn. Stat. § 120B.11](#). The World’s Best Workforce is Minnesota’s academic accountability system. It requires districts and charter schools to develop plans for meeting statutory goals to develop the World’s Best Workforce.
- ¹⁸ [Minn. Stat. §§ 124D.71 to 124D.84](#).
- ¹⁹ [Minn. Stat. § 124D.84](#).
- ²⁰ [Minn. Stat. § 122A.63](#).
- ²¹ [Minn. Stat. § 124D.83](#).
- ²² [Laws 2019, 1st Spec. Sess. ch. 2](#), art. 4, § 2, subd. 9.
- ²³ [Minn. Stat. §§ 126C.62 to 126C.72](#).
- ²⁴ [Minn. Stat. § 124D.77](#). In 2017, the legislature modified the teacher layoff requirements, requiring districts to adopt layoff plans and removing the statutory default of seniority-based layoffs when no plan exists.
- ²⁵ [Minn. Stat. 2013 Supp. § 124D.79](#), subd. 4.
- ²⁶ [Minn. Stat. 2013 Supp. § 124D.791](#).
- ²⁷ The Minnesota Report Card displays information used in the North Star system, and is available at <http://rc.education.state.mn.us/#mySchool/p—3>.

²⁸ ESSA also requires states to set goals for English-language proficiency; Minnesota uses the ACCESS test to measure English learner progress, and includes ACCESS performance data in the North Star system.

²⁹ The Nation’s Report Card, NAEP Data Explorer at <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/landing>. For an analysis of contextual factors associated with higher- and lower-performing American Indian students, see U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, “National Education Study 2015: A Closer Look” (2019) available at <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/studies/pdf/2019048.pdf>.

³⁰ Rigorous Course Taking: Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Concurrent Enrollment and Postsecondary Enrollment Options Programs, Minnesota Department of Education (2018) available at <https://www.leg.state.mn.us/docs/2018/mandated/180661.pdf>.

³¹ [Minn. Stat. § 124D.09](#).

³² [Minn. Stat. § 120B.13](#).

³³ *The State of Our Students*, Minnesota Department of Education, p. 8 (2019).

³⁴ [Minn. Stat. § 120B.021](#), subd. 4.

³⁵ [Minn. Stat. § 120B.22](#), subd. 1, para. (b).

³⁶ *Morton v. Mancari*, 417 U.S. 535, 553-55 (1974).

³⁷ *Booker v. Special School District No. 1*, 451 F.Supp. 659, 668 (D. Minn. 1978) (quoting *Mancari*, 417 U.S. at 553 n.24).

³⁸ *Booker v. Special School District No. 1*, 585 F.2d 347 (1978).

³⁹ [Minn. Rules, parts 3535.0160](#), subp. 3, para. B; and [3535.0170](#), subp. 6.

⁴⁰ [Minn. Rules, part 3535.0110](#), subp. 9, para. B.

⁴¹ [Laws 2013, ch. 116](#), art. 3, §§ 29, 30, and 35.

⁴² [Laws 2013, ch. 116](#), art. 3, § 32.

Elections, Voting Rights, and Civic Engagement

by Matt Gehring (651-296-5052)

In general, members of tribes who meet all other eligibility requirements may participate in federal, state, and local elections—as candidates, as voters, and as advocates on ballot issues.

Tribal members (and tribes themselves) may also participate in other aspects of the civic process, such as engaging in public debate and advocacy and lobbying public officials on policy issues. Some of these activities may require registration and reporting under federal and state laws.

The rights of a tribal member to engage and participate in tribal elections are governed exclusively by tribal law; those rights are not provided for or regulated by federal or state law.

Eligibility to Vote

Tribal members may vote in federal, state, and local elections in Minnesota, provided all other eligibility requirements are met. To be eligible to vote, a person must be:

- a United States citizen;
- at least 18 years of age on election day; and
- a resident of Minnesota for at least 20 days.

A person who has previously been subject to a felony sentence is eligible to vote if he or she has completed all parts of the sentence. A person who has been declared legally “incompetent” by a court is not eligible to vote.¹

Use of tribal identification in election day voter registration.

Members of federally recognized tribes may register to vote on election day using their tribal identification card, if the card includes the member’s name, current address, signature, and photograph. If the tribal member’s identification includes all of those items except a current address, the tribal member may register to vote using the identification card along with other proof of residence.²

A current listing of the documents that may be used to prove residence is available through the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State, or online at: www.mnvotes.org.

In 2004, Minnesota’s laws governing the use of tribal identification cards for the purpose of election day voter registration were subject to a legal challenge. The legislature later amended the law to incorporate the content of two court orders resulting from that challenge. The current law remains consistent with those orders.

Polling places on tribal lands.

Many reservation lands in Minnesota include at least one designated polling place for purposes of voting in state and local elections.

Eligibility to Hold Public Office

A tribal member may hold any elected or appointed public office in Minnesota, as long as any other eligibility requirements for the office are met. These requirements include eligibility to vote, and certain age and residency standards, all of which are provided in the Minnesota Constitution.³

The eligibility requirements for holding federal offices, such as president of the United States, and United States senator or representative, are provided by the United States Constitution and are not regulated by state law.

Campaign Finance and Political Contributions

Tribes and individual tribal members may make contributions and expenditures to support candidates for state and local public office, or to advocate on behalf of, or against, ballot questions. These contributions and expenditures must comply with the general laws governing campaign finance and campaign finance reporting.⁴

Members of the House are prohibited from soliciting or accepting a contribution from a tribal organization during a regular or special session of the legislature.⁵

When advocating for or against candidates for federal office, tribes and tribal members are subject to campaign finance and reporting requirements as provided in federal law. For more information on federal campaign finance laws, see the website of the Federal Elections Commission at: <http://www.fec.gov/>.

Lobbying and Advocacy

Tribes and tribal members may engage in advocacy on public policy issues being considered by state and local governments.

Depending on the nature of the activity, the tribe or tribal member may need to register with the Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board as either a “lobbyist” or as a “principal.” In addition to registration, lobbyist and principals must submit periodic disclosure reports to the board. Many tribes located in Minnesota are currently registered as principals.⁶

In general, lobbyists and principals may not give gifts to public officials, employees of the legislature, or local officials of a metropolitan government unit.⁷

More information on the types of activities that trigger registration and reporting requirements under state law is available from the Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board online at: <http://www.cfboard.state.mn.us/>.

Lobbying and advocacy activity before Congress and federal agencies are subject to registration and reporting as provided in federal law.

Endnotes

¹ [Minn. Const. art. VII, § 1.](#)

² [Minn. Stat. § 201.061](#), subd. 3, para. (d).

³ [Minn. Const. art. IV, § 6](#); [art. VII, § 6](#).

⁴ [Minn. Stat. chs. 10A and 211A](#); [§ 211B.15](#).

⁵ [House Rule 9.10](#).

⁶ [Minn. Stat. §§ 10A.03](#); [10A.04](#).

⁷ [Minn. Stat. § 10A.071](#).

Appendices

Appendix I: Population of American Indian and Alaska Native Persons.....	124
Appendix II: Demographic and Other Information about Minnesota’s Indian Reservations	127
Appendix III: Secretary of the Interior’s Authority to Acquire Land in Trust for Indian Tribes	154
Appendix IV: Tribal Courts in Minnesota	157

Appendix I: Population of American Indian and Alaska Native Persons

American Indian and Alaska Native Persons Minnesota and County Populations, 2013-2017

County	Population	American Indian Population	% American Indian	% of MN American Indian Population
Aitkin	15,841	512	3.2%	0.5%
Anoka	344,861	5,386	1.6%	5.1%
Becker	33,552	3,401	10.1%	3.2%
Beltrami	45,847	10,746	23.4%	10.2%
Benton	39,360	406	1.0%	0.4%
Big Stone	5,039	20	0.4%	0.0%
Blue Earth	65,767	425	0.6%	0.4%
Brown	25,243	65	0.3%	0.1%
Carlton	35,408	2,572	7.3%	2.4%
Carver	98,799	644	0.7%	0.6%
Cass	28,810	3,955	13.7%	3.7%
Chippewa	12,040	226	1.9%	0.2%
Chisago	54,297	618	1.1%	0.6%
Clay	62,040	1,491	2.4%	1.4%
Clearwater	8,824	1,035	11.7%	1.0%
Cook	5,270	541	10.3%	0.5%
Cottonwood	11,437	87	0.8%	0.1%
Crow Wing	63,505	1,132	1.8%	1.1%
Dakota	414,655	4,102	1.0%	3.9%
Dodge	20,485	150	0.7%	0.1%
Douglas	36,891	261	0.7%	0.2%
Faribault	13,966	102	0.7%	0.1%
Fillmore	20,825	85	0.4%	0.1%
Freeborn	30,619	258	0.8%	0.2%
Goodhue	46,138	989	2.1%	0.9%

County	Population	American Indian Population	% American Indian	% of MN American Indian Population
Grant	5,923	51	0.9%	0.0%
Hennepin	1,224,763	19,419	1.6%	18.4%
Houston	18,709	123	0.7%	0.1%
Hubbard	20,743	735	3.5%	0.7%
Isanti	38,584	501	1.3%	0.5%
Itasca	45,237	2,356	5.2%	2.2%
Jackson	10,104	35	0.3%	0.0%
Kanabec	15,948	272	1.7%	0.3%
Kandiyohi	42,577	413	1.0%	0.4%
Kittson	4,384	20	0.5%	0.0%
Koochiching	12,776	623	4.9%	0.6%
Lac qui Parle	6,840	32	0.5%	0.0%
Lake	10,578	124	1.2%	0.1%
Lake of the Woods	3,841	108	2.8%	0.1%
Le Sueur	27,810	200	0.7%	0.2%
Lincoln	5,724	46	0.8%	0.0%
Lyon	25,789	229	0.9%	0.2%
Mahnomen	35,816	267	0.7%	0.3%
Marshall	5,500	2,756	50.1%	2.6%
Martin	9,397	107	1.1%	0.1%
McLeod	20,084	40	0.2%	0.0%
Meeker	23,105	128	0.6%	0.1%
Mille Lacs	25,635	1,782	7.0%	1.7%
Morrison	32,880	273	0.8%	0.3%
Mower	39,386	240	0.6%	0.2%
Murray	8,394	45	0.5%	0.0%
Nicollet	33,477	227	0.7%	0.2%
Nobles	21,854	167	0.8%	0.2%
Norman	6,589	238	3.6%	0.2%
Olmsted	151,685	1,000	0.7%	0.9%
Otter Tail	57,790	705	1.2%	0.7%
Pennington	14,197	338	2.4%	0.3%

County	Population	American Indian Population	% American Indian	% of MN American Indian Population
Pine	29,057	1,200	4.1%	1.1%
Pipestone	9,229	295	3.2%	0.3%
Polk	31,564	807	2.6%	0.8%
Pope	10,932	70	0.6%	0.1%
Ramsey	537,893	10,271	1.9%	9.7%
Red Lake	4,017	104	2.6%	0.1%
Redwood	15,430	837	5.4%	0.8%
Renville	14,798	269	1.8%	0.3%
Rice	65,251	637	1.0%	0.6%
Rock	9,433	85	0.9%	0.1%
Roseau	15,537	384	2.5%	0.4%
St. Louis	200,294	6,879	3.4%	6.5%
Scott	141,463	2,002	1.4%	1.9%
Sherburne	92,024	1,144	1.2%	1.1%
Sibley	14,888	79	0.5%	0.1%
Stearns	155,300	1,015	0.7%	1.0%
Steele	36,612	178	0.5%	0.2%
Stevens	9,759	257	2.6%	0.2%
Swift	9,448	27	0.3%	0.0%
Todd	24,423	352	1.4%	0.3%
Traverse	3,357	178	5.3%	0.2%
Wabasha	21,490	141	0.7%	0.1%
Wadena	13,626	175	1.3%	0.2%
Waseca	18,898	195	1.0%	0.2%
Washington	250,979	2,813	1.1%	2.7%
Watonwan	10,936	104	1.0%	0.1%
Wilkin	6,398	282	4.4%	0.3%
Winona	50,992	445	0.9%	0.4%
Wright	131,130	936	0.7%	0.9%
Yellow Medicine	9,930	507	5.1%	0.5%
State Total	5,490,726	105,477	1.9%	100.0%

House Research Department

Appendix II: Demographic and Other Information about Minnesota’s Indian Reservations

Bois Forte	129
Fond du Lac.....	131
Grand Portage.....	134
Leech Lake.....	136
Lower Sioux.....	139
Mille Lacs.....	141
Prairie Island	144
Red Lake.....	146
Shakopee-Mdewakanton.....	148
Upper Sioux.....	150
White Earth.....	152

This appendix includes information and certain demographic data about Minnesota’s 12 federally recognized Indian reservations. Following is a brief description of certain terms and concepts used in this appendix.

Note: Maps of reservations on the following pages are from the U.S. Census Bureau, using federal definitions of American Indian areas. These census maps do not align with legal definitions of reservation boundaries and are used in this report as geographic illustrations.

Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Member: Indicates whether the reservation is a member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe is a federally recognized tribal government that provides certain services and technical assistance to its six member reservations—Bois Forte, Fond du Lac, Grand Portage, Leech Lake, Mille Lacs, and White Earth. The Red Lake reservation is not included as a member reservation.

Adjacent County: Lists the counties in which the reservation is located.

Tribal Enrollment: Enrollment numbers are subject to frequent change due to deaths, births, new enrollments, and relinquishments of tribal memberships. The numbers presented represent the most accurate count available at the time of publication. House Research collected enrollment numbers via direct phone contact with the enrollment offices of each tribe during the fall of 2019. In some cases, tribes were unable to provide an exact number of enrolled members, but instead gave approximate estimates of their current enrollment. Because the House Research Department was unable to directly gather enrollment numbers for the White Earth and Grand Portage bands of Chippewa, it used numbers provided by the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe.

Tribal Land/Individual Land/Government Land: Lists acreage information received from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Midwest Regional Office on February 21, 2020. The BIA collected acreage data from the Trust Asset and Accounting Management System. “Tribal land” is land held in trust for the tribe by the federal government.

Top Three Industries Employing Residents: Lists the three industries employing the largest numbers of reservation residents. Percentages reflect the percent of the civilian workforce ages 16 and older employed in a given industry. These percentages include all residents of the reservation, not just enrolled members of the tribe. Data was obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, five-year estimates for 2013 to 2017.

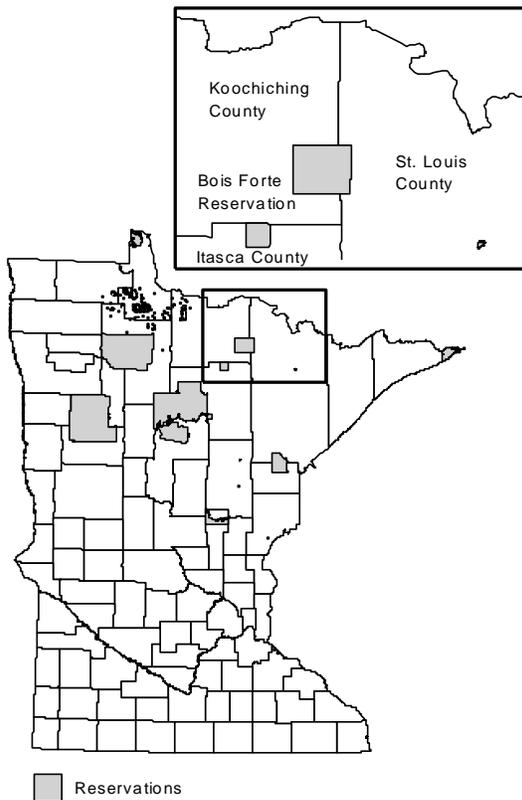
Tribal Governance: Lists basic information on the tribal governance structure, as well as contact information for important tribal leaders. Information was collected directly from tribes.

Demographic Information: Provides information about a reservation, its adjacent counties, and the state, including:

- *Population and Percent American Indian:* The total population for the geographical area; the American Indian and Alaska Native population for the geographical area, alone or in combination with another race; the percentage of the geographical area's population represented by the American Indian population, and the share of the statewide total American Indian population.
- *Age:* Data on the age of the geographical area's population.
- *Economic and Income Data:* The median household income, the per capita income, the percentage of the population with incomes below the poverty level in the last 12 months, and the percentage of the population receiving cash public assistance in the last 12 months.
- *Labor:* Includes the percentage of the population aged 16 and older in the labor force, the percentage of the civilian labor force that is employed, and the percentage of the labor force that is unemployed.
- *Education:* Information about the educational attainment of the population age 25 and over in each geographical area, including the percentage with no high school diploma, a high school diploma only, some college with no degree or an associate degree, and a bachelor's or graduate degree.

House Research compiled all demographic information from the 2013-2017 American Community Survey five-year estimates. Data for adjacent counties was weighted by county population.

Bois Forte (Nett Lake)



Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Member

Bois Forte Tribal Government – Nett Lake
5344 Lakeshore Drive
Nett Lake, MN 55772
218-757-3261 or 800-221-8129
218-757-3312 (Fax)
www.boisforte.com

Adjacent Counties: Itasca, Koochiching, and St. Louis Counties

Nearby Cities: Big Falls, Cook, Little Fork

Tribal Enrollment (2019): 3,544

Tribal Land: 29,116.25 acres

Individual Land: 11,924.57 acres

Government Land: 0 acres

Casino: Fortune Bay Resort Casino
1430 Bois Forte Road
Tower, MN 55790
800-992-7529
www.fortunebay.com

Top Three Industries on Reservation: Education, health care, and social services (16.3 percent); arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (30.7 percent); public administration (13.9 percent).

Tribal Governance: Governed by five-member tribal council.

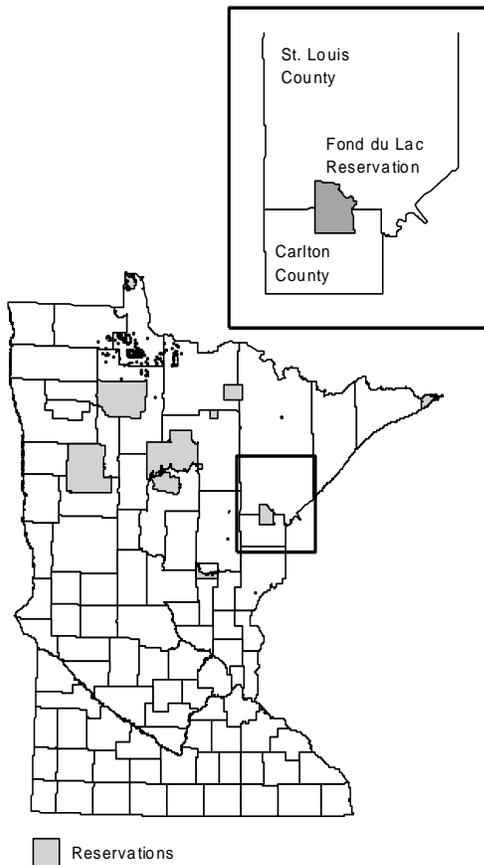
Tribal Chair (Term expires June 30, 2020):

Cathy Chavers
cchavers@boisforte-nsn.gov
Phone: 218-757-3261

Demographics of Bois Forte Reservation and Surrounding Areas

Population				
	Population	American Indian Population	% American Indian	% of MN American Indian Population
Bois Forte	1,087	779	71.7%	0.7%
Adjacent Counties	258,307	9,858	3.8%	9.3%
State	5,490,726	105,477	1.9%	100.0%
Age				
	% Under Age 18	% Age 18 to 64	% Age 65 and Over	
Bois Forte	28.9%	57.7%	13.4%	
Adjacent Counties	19.5%	61.9%	18.6%	
State	23.4%	62.0%	14.6%	
Income				
	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	% with Income Below Poverty Level	% with Cash Public Assistance Income
Bois Forte	\$37,750	\$17,546	22.4%	7.9%
Adjacent Counties	\$50,943	\$28,781	8.6%	3.8%
State	\$65,699	\$34,712	6.6%	3.4%
Labor				
	% Population Age 16+ in Labor force	% Labor Force Employed	% Labor Force Unemployed	
Bois Forte	60.3%	51.0%	9.3%	
Adjacent Counties	61.4%	58.1%	3.2%	
State	69.9%	66.8%	3.0%	
Education				
	% of Pop. Age 25+ Less than HS Grad	% of Pop. Age 25+ HS Graduate Only	% of Pop. Age 25+ Some College or Associate Degree	% of Pop. Age 25+ Bachelor's or Graduate Degree
Bois Forte	13.3%	34.9%	42.9%	8.9%
Adjacent Counties	6.4%	29.5%	37.2%	26.9%
State	7.2%	25.4%	32.6%	34.8%

Fond du Lac



Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Member

1720 Big Lake Road
 Cloquet, MN 55720
 218-879-4593
 218-879-4146 (Fax)
www.fdlrez.com

Adjacent Counties: Carlton and St. Louis Counties

Nearby Cities: Cloquet and Duluth

Tribal Enrollment (2019): 4,119

Tribal Land: 15,672.48 acres

Individual Land: 15,633.65 acres

Government Land: 38.25 acres

Casinos:

Black Bear Casino
 1785 Highway 210, P.O. Box 777
 Carlton, MN 55718
 888-771-0777
 218-878-2327
www.blackbearcasinoresort.com

Fond du-Luth Casino
 129 East Superior Street
 Duluth, MN 55802
 800-873-0280
 218-722-0280
www.fondduluthcasino.com

Top Three Industries on Reservation: Education, health care, and social services (27.3 percent); arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services (17.2 percent); public administration (10.4 percent).

Tribal College:

In collaboration with Mille Lacs' Anishinaabe College (fdltcc.edu)

Tribal Governance: Governed by five-member tribal council consisting of three regional representatives, a chairperson, and a secretary/treasurer. Tribal council members are elected to staggered four-year terms. Chairperson and secretary also serve as members of the Executive Committee of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe.

Tribal Chairman (Term expires June 30, 2020):

Kevin R. Dupuis Sr.

kevindupuis@fdlrez.com

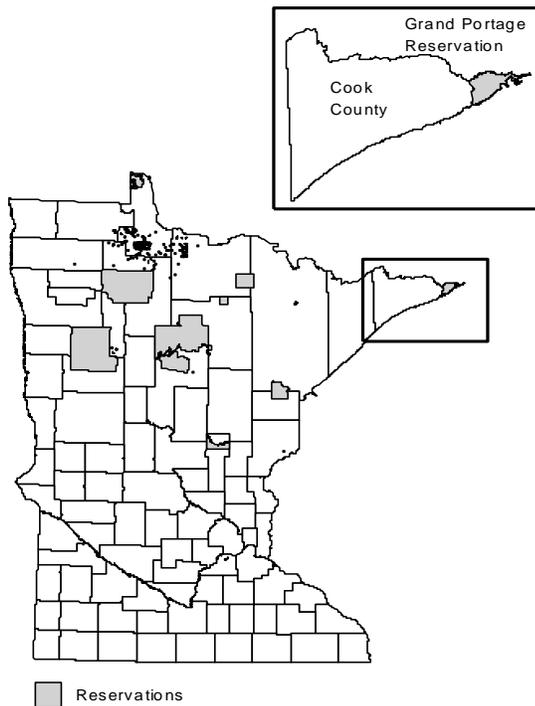
218-879-4593

Demographics of Fond du Lac Reservation and Surrounding Areas

Population				
	Population	American Indian Population	% American Indian	% of MN American Indian Population
Fond du Lac	4,011	1,687	42.1%	1.6%
Adjacent Counties	235,702	9,451	4.0%	9.0%
State	5,490,726	105,477	1.9%	100.0%
Age				
	% Under Age 18	% Age 18 to 64	% Age 65 and Over	
Fond du Lac	23.3%	62.8%	13.9%	
Adjacent Counties	19.7%	62.8%	17.5%	
State	23.4%	62.0%	14.6%	
Income				
	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	% with Income Below Poverty Level	% with Cash Public Assistance Income
Fond du Lac	\$52,850	\$26,587	13.4%	4.1%
Adjacent Counties	\$52,128	\$28,852	8.2%	4.0%
State	\$65,699	\$34,712	6.6%	3.4%
Labor				
	% Population Age 16+ in Labor force	% Labor Force Employed	% Labor Force Unemployed	
Fond du Lac	60.9%	56.0%	4.8%	
Adjacent Counties	62.3%	59.1%	3.0%	
State	69.9%	66.8%	3.0%	

Education				
	% of Pop. Age 25+ Less than HS Grad	% of Pop. Age 25+ HS Graduate Only	% of Pop. Age 25+ Some College or Associate Degree	% of Pop. Age 25+ Bachelor's or Graduate Degree
Fond du Lac	12.5%	34.5%	36.2%	16.8%
Adjacent Counties	6.3%	29.5%	36.8%	27.4%
State	7.2%	25.4%	32.6%	34.8%

Grand Portage



Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Member

Post Office Box 428
 Grand Portage, MN 55605
 218-475-2277
 218-475-2284 (Fax)
www.grandportage.com

Adjacent County: Cook County

Nearby City: Grand Marais

Tribal Enrollment (2019): 1,090

Tribal Land: 39,925.81 acres

Individual Land: 6,267.62 acres

Government Land: 0.0 acres

Casino: Grand Portage Lodge and Casino
 P.O. Box 233
 Grand Portage, MN 55605
 800-543-1384
 218-475-2401
www.grandportage.com

Top Three Industries on Reservation: Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (24.3 percent); education, health, and social services (16.5 percent); retail trade (16.5 percent)

Tribal Governance: Governed by five-member tribal council consisting of a chairman, a vice chairman, a secretary/treasurer, and two at-large members. Enrolled members of the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa elect half of the members of the tribal council every two years, with council members serving four-year terms.

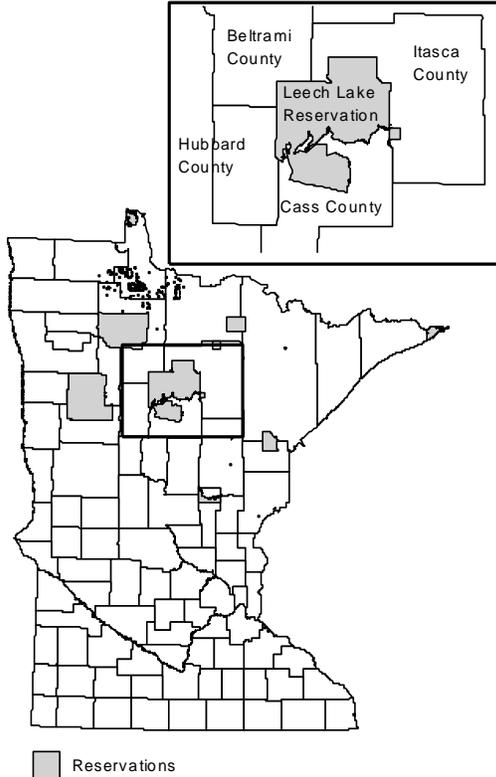
Tribal Chairman (Term expires June 30, 2020):

Beth Drost
 218-475-2277
bethdrost@grandportage.com

Demographics of Grand Portage Reservation and Surrounding Areas

Population				
	Population	American Indian Population	% American Indian	% of MN American Indian Population
Grand Portage	718	481	67.0%	0.5%
Adjacent Counties	5,270	541	10.3%	0.5%
State	5,490,726	105,477	1.9%	100.0%
Age				
	% Under Age 18	% Age 18 to 64	% Age 65 and Over	
Grand Portage	22.0%	66.3%	11.7%	
Adjacent Counties	14.8%	59.1%	26.1%	
State	23.4%	62.0%	14.6%	
Income				
	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	% with Income Below Poverty Level	% with Cash Public Assistance Income
Grand Portage	\$49,028	\$22,968	12.3%	6.2%
Adjacent Counties	\$51,903	\$31,831	7.6%	4.0%
State	\$65,699	\$34,712	6.6%	3.4%
Labor				
	% Population Age 16+ in Labor force	% Labor Force Employed	% Labor Force Unemployed	
Grand Portage	71.8%	67.8%	4.0%	
Adjacent Counties	58.8%	57.2%	1.5%	
State	69.9%	66.8%	3.0%	
Education				
	% of Pop. Age 25+ Less than HS Grad	% of Pop. Age 25+ HS Graduate Only	% of Pop. Age 25+ Some College or Associate Degree	% of Pop. Age 25+ Bachelor's or Graduate Degree
Grand Portage	9.1%	42.3%	34.3%	14.3%
Adjacent Counties	4.1%	21.5%	34.0%	40.4%
State	7.2%	25.4%	32.6%	34.8%

Leech Lake



Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Member

190 Sailstar Drive NW
 Cass Lake, MN 56633
 800-442-3909 – Toll Free
 218-335-8200
 218-335-8309 (Fax)
www.llojibwe.org

Adjacent Counties: Beltrami, Cass, Hubbard, and Itasca Counties

Nearby Cities: Bemidji, Deer River, Grand Rapids, Walker

Tribal Enrollment (2019): 9,680

Tribal Land: 14,829.89 acres

Individual Land: 12,146.57 acres

Government Land: 140 acres

Casinos:

Northern Lights Casino
 6800 Y Frontage Road NW
 Walker, MN 56484
 800-252-7529
northernlightscasino.com

Cedar Lakes Casino & Hotel
 6268 Upper Cass
 Frontage Rd, NW
 Cass Lake, MN 56633
 844-554-2646
cedarlakescasino.com

White Oak Casino
 45830 U.S. Highway 2
 Deer River, MN 56636
 800-653-2412
whiteoakcasino.com

Shingobee on the Bay
 7114 Shingobee Rd, NW
 Walker, MN 56484
 218-547-6233
shingobeeonthebay.com

Top Three Industries on Reservation: Education, health, and social services (23.6 percent); arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (20.4 percent); retail trade (11.5 percent)

Tribal College:

Leech Lake Tribal College
 Cass Lake (Cass County)
lltc.edu

Tribal Governance: Governed by five-member Reservation Business Committee (commonly referred to as Reservation Tribal Council), composed of a tribal chair, secretary/treasurer, and three regional representatives.

Tribal Chairman (Term expires June 30, 2020):

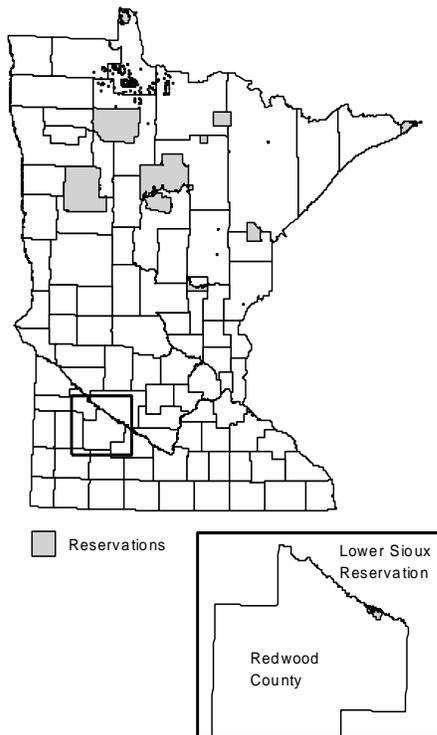
Faron Jackson, Sr.
faron.jackson@llbo.org
218-335-8200

Demographics of Leech Lake Reservation and Surrounding Areas

Population				
	Population	American Indian Population	% American Indian	% of MN American Indian Population
Leech Lake	11,456	5,396	47.1%	5.1%
Adjacent Counties	140,637	17,792	12.7%	16.9%
State	5,490,726	105,477	1.9%	100.0%
Age				
	% Under Age 18	% Age 18 to 64	% Age 65 and Over	
Leech Lake	28.4%	53.3%	18.3%	
Adjacent Counties	22.5%	57.3%	20.2%	
State	23.4%	62.0%	14.6%	
Income				
	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	% with Income Below Poverty Level	% with Cash Public Assistance Income
Leech Lake	\$43,641	\$22,036	20.2%	8.8%
Adjacent Counties	\$49,797	\$26,464	10.1%	4.0%
State	\$65,699	\$34,712	6.6%	3.4%
Labor				
	% Population Age 16+ in Labor force	% Labor Force Employed	% Labor Force Unemployed	
Leech Lake	57.8%	51.3%	6.5%	
Adjacent Counties	60.1%	56.2%	3.9%	
State	69.9%	66.8%	3.0%	

Education				
	% of Pop. Age 25+ Less than HS Grad	% of Pop. Age 25+ HS Graduate Only	% of Pop. Age 25+ Some College or Associate Degree	% of Pop. Age 25+ Bachelor's or Graduate Degree
Leech Lake	10.4%	33.2%	38.9%	17.5%
Adjacent Counties	7.9%	31.0%	36.6%	24.4%
State	7.2%	25.4%	32.6%	34.8%

Lower Sioux



Part of Mdewakanton Band of Dakota

39527 RES Highway 1
 P.O. Box 308
 Morton, MN 56270
 507-697-6185
 507-697-8617 (Fax)
www.lowersioux.com

Adjacent County: Redwood and Renville Counties

Nearby City: Redwood Falls

Tribal Enrollment (2019): Approx. 1,261

Tribal Land: 1,768.59 acres

Individual Land: 0 acres

Government Land: 0 acres

Casino: Jackpot Junction Casino Hotel
 39375 County Highway 24
 Post Office Box 420
 Morton, MN 56270
 800-946-2274 or (507) 697-8000
www.jackpotjunction.com

Top Three Industries on Reservation: Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (46.3 percent); education, health, and social services (16.6 percent); retail sales (11.4 percent)

Tribal Governance: Governed by the five-member Community Council of the Lower Sioux Reservation, composed of a chairman, vice chairman, secretary, treasurer, and assistant secretary/treasurer. Voters elect either two or three members of the council every two years. The community council is responsible for electing from its membership the positions of president, vice-president, etc.

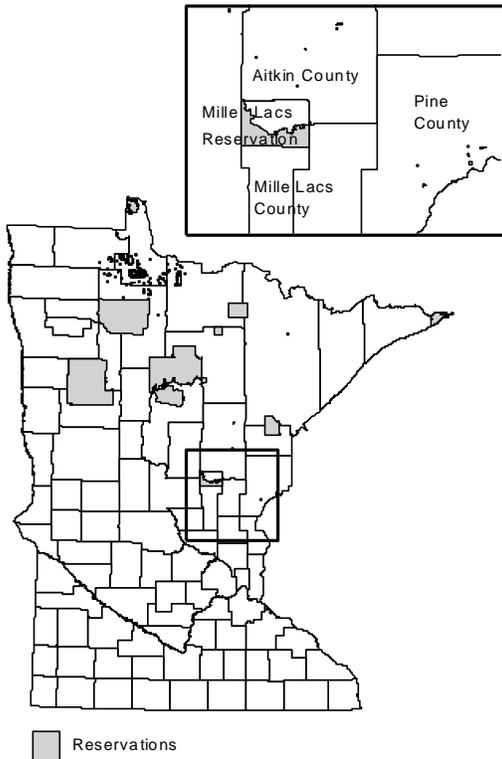
Tribal President (Term expires September 1, 2021):

Robert Larsen
 507-697-6185 Ext. 2512
robert.larsen@lowersioux.com

Demographics of Lower Sioux Reservation and Surrounding Areas

Population				
	Population	American Indian Population	% American Indian	% of MN American Indian Population
Lower Sioux	462	393	85.1%	0.4%
Adjacent Counties	30,228	1,106	3.7%	1.0%
State	5,490,726	105,477	1.9%	100.0%
Age				
	% Under Age 18	% Age 18 to 64	% Age 65 and Over	
Lower Sioux	32.3%	57.3%	10.4%	
Adjacent Counties	23.3%	56.2%	20.5%	
State	23.4%	62.0%	14.6%	
Income				
	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	% with Income Below Poverty Level	% with Cash Public Assistance Income
Lower Sioux	\$51,875	\$19,225	13.4%	4.4%
Adjacent Counties	\$54,245	\$29,341	7.0%	2.9%
State	\$65,699	\$34,712	6.6%	3.4%
Labor				
	% Population Age 16+ in Labor force	% Labor Force Employed	% Labor Force Unemployed	
Lower Sioux	58.2%	52.9%	5.3%	
Adjacent Counties	64.2%	62.4%	1.8%	
State	69.9%	66.8%	3.0%	
Education				
	% of Pop. Age 25+ Less than HS Grad	% of Pop. Age 25+ HS Graduate Only	% of Pop. Age 25+ Some College or Associate Degree	% of Pop. Age 25+ Bachelor's or Graduate Degree
Lower Sioux	19.2%	36.0%	36.8%	8.0%
Adjacent Counties	10.7%	37.4%	35.4%	16.5%
State	7.2%	25.4%	32.6%	34.8%

Mille Lacs



Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Member

43408 Oodena Drive
 Onamia, MN 56359
 800-709-6445
 320-532-4181
 320-532-7505 (Fax)
www.millelacsband.com

Adjacent Counties: Aitkin, Crow Wing, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Morrison, and Pine Counties

Nearby Cities: Brainerd, Onamia

Tribal Enrollment (2019): 4,787

Tribal Land: 5,492.95 acres

Individual Land: 132.72 acres

Government Land: 0 acres

Casinos:

Grand Casino Hinckley
 777 Lady Luck Drive
 Hinckley, MN 55037
 800-472-6321
www.grandcasinomn.com

Grand Casino Mille Lacs
 777 Grand Avenue
 Onamia, MN 56359
 800-626-5825
www.grandcasinomn.com

Top Three Industries on Reservation: Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (19.3 percent); education, health, and social services (25.6 percent); retail sales (10.4 percent)

Tribal College:

Anishinaabe College
 In collaboration with Fund du Lac (fdltcc.edu)

Tribal Governance: Separation of powers system featuring an executive branch led by a chief executive and a legislative branch called the Band Assembly. The Band Assembly is composed of a secretary/treasurer, who serves as the assembly speaker, and three district representatives. The chief executive, secretary/treasurer, and district representatives are elected to four-year terms.

Chief Executive (Term expires June 30, 2020):

Melanie Benjamin

Melanie.benjamin@millelacsband.com

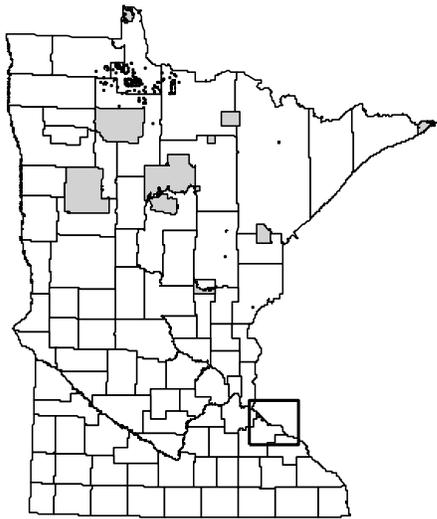
320-532-4181

Demographics of Mille Lacs Reservation and Surrounding Areas

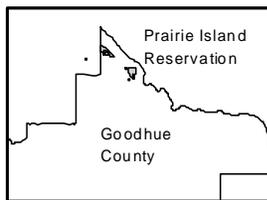
Population				
	Population	American Indian Population	% American Indian	% of MN American Indian Population
Mille Lacs	4,459	1,425	32.0%	1.4%
Adjacent Counties	182,866	5,171	2.8%	4.9%
State	5,490,726	105,477	1.9%	100.0%
Age				
	% Under Age 18	% Age 18 to 64	% Age 65 and Over	
Mille Lacs	23.5%	54.0%	22.5%	
Adjacent Counties	21.9%	57.7%	20.4%	
State	23.4%	62.0%	14.6%	
Income				
	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	% with Income Below Poverty Level	% with Cash Public Assistance Income
Mille Lacs	\$36,892	\$21,595	17.1%	5.7%
Adjacent Counties	\$51,375	\$27,519	7.7%	3.5%
State	\$65,699	\$34,712	6.6%	3.4%
Labor				
	% Population Age 16+ in Labor force	% Labor Force Employed	% Labor Force Unemployed	
Mille Lacs	52.9%	45.7%	7.2%	
Adjacent Counties	61.0%	57.9%	2.9%	
State	69.9%	66.8%	3.0%	

Education				
	% of Pop. Age 25+ Less than HS Grad	% of Pop. Age 25+ HS Graduate Only	% of Pop. Age 25+ Some College or Associate Degree	% of Pop. Age 25+ Bachelor's or Graduate Degree
Mille Lacs	13.7%	36.4%	35.0%	14.9%
Adjacent Counties	9.0%	36.2%	36.2%	18.6%
State	7.2%	25.4%	32.6%	34.8%

Prairie Island



Reservations



5636 Sturgeon Lake Road
Welch, MN 55089
800-554-5473
651-385-4124
651-385-4180 (Fax)
www.prairieisland.org

Adjacent County: Goodhue County

Nearby City: Red Wing

Tribal Enrollment (2016): Approx. 978

Tribal Land: 3,370.14 acres

Individual Land: 33.80 acres

Government Land: 0 acres

Casino: Treasure Island Resort and Casino
5734 Sturgeon Lake Road
Welch, MN 55089
800-222-7077
www.ticasino.com

Top Three Industries on Reservation: Public administration (36.8 percent); retail trade (21.0 percent); tie between manufacturing and education (15.8 percent each)

Tribal Governance: Five-member tribal council composed of president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and assistant secretary-treasurer. Council members are elected every two years to serve two-year terms. Elections were held in November 2019.

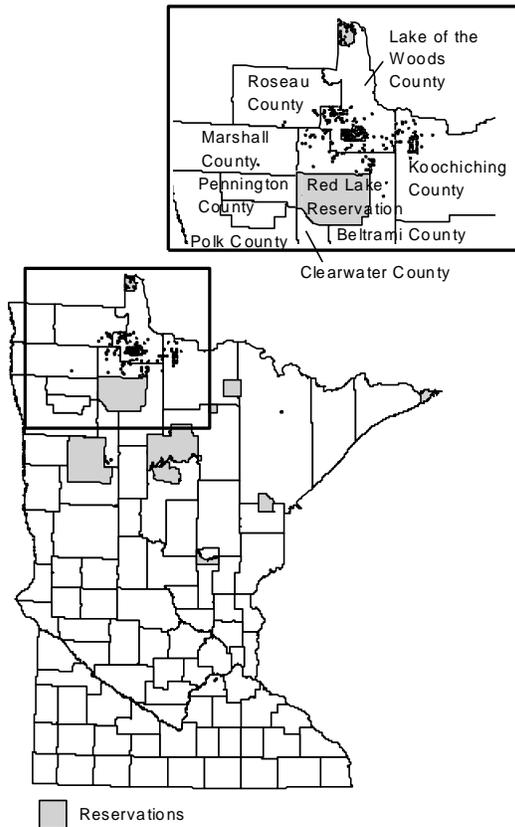
Tribal President (Term expires November 2021):
Shelly Buck

Inquiries for council members should be directed through the tribal council's administrative assistant, Jody Johnson, jody.johnson@piic.org.

Demographics of Prairie Island Reservation and Surrounding Areas

Population				
	Population	American Indian Population	% American Indian	% of MN American Indian Population
Prairie Island	186	111	59.7%	0.1%
Adjacent Counties	46,138	989	2.1%	0.9%
State	5,490,726	105,477	1.9%	100.0%
Age				
	% Under Age 18	% Age 18 to 64	% Age 65 and Over	
Prairie Island	20.4%	68.8%	10.8%	
Adjacent Counties	22.8%	59.1%	18.1%	
State	23.4%	62.0%	14.6%	
Income				
	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	% with Income Below Poverty Level	% with Cash Public Assistance Income
Prairie Island	\$103,750	\$36,762	20.0%	1.3%
Adjacent Counties	\$62,431	\$33,477	7.0%	1.7%
State	\$65,699	\$34,712	6.6%	3.4%
Labor				
	% Population Age 16+ in Labor force	% Labor Force Employed	% Labor Force Unemployed	
Prairie Island	43.7%	39.7%	4.0%	
Adjacent Counties	67.6%	64.8%	2.8%	
State	69.9%	66.8%	3.0%	
Education				
	% of Pop. Age 25+ Less than HS Grad	% of Pop. Age 25+ HS Graduate Only	% of Pop. Age 25+ Some College or Associate Degree	% of Pop. Age 25+ Bachelor's or Graduate Degree
Prairie Island	19.5%	28.8%	39.8%	11.9%
Adjacent Counties	6.2%	32.7%	36.4%	24.7%
State	7.2%	25.4%	32.6%	34.8%

Red Lake



15484 Migizi Drive
 Red Lake, MN 56671
 218-679-3341 (Tribal Council)
 218-679-3378 (Fax)
www.redlakenation.org

Adjacent Counties: Beltrami, Clearwater, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods, Marshall, Pennington, Polk, and Roseau Counties

Nearby Cities: Bemidji, Thief River Falls

Tribal Enrollment (2016): 11,828

Tribal Land: 598,264.92 acres

Individual Land: 102.20 acres

Government Land: 0 acres

Casinos:

Seven Clans Red Lake Casino and Bingo
 10200 Hwy. 89
 Bemidji, MN 56671
 888-679-2501
www.sevenclanscasino.com/red_lake

Seven Clans Thief River Falls Casino
 20595 Center Street East
 Thief River Falls, MN 56701
 800-881-0712
www.sevenclanscasino.com/thief_river_falls

Seven Clans Warroad Casino
 34966 - 605th Ave
 Warroad, MN 56763
 800-815-8293
www.sevenclanscasino.com/warroad

Top Three Industries on Reservation: Education, health, and social services (38.0 percent); arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (21.2 percent); retail sales (11.5 percent)

Tribal College:

Red Lake Nation College (rlnc.education)

Tribal Governance: Governed by an 11-member tribal council, consisting of two representatives from each of the four main communities on the reservation and three members elected at large. Seven hereditary chiefs, descendants of past leaders of the tribe, serve lifetime appointments as advisors to the tribal council.

Current Tribal Chairman:

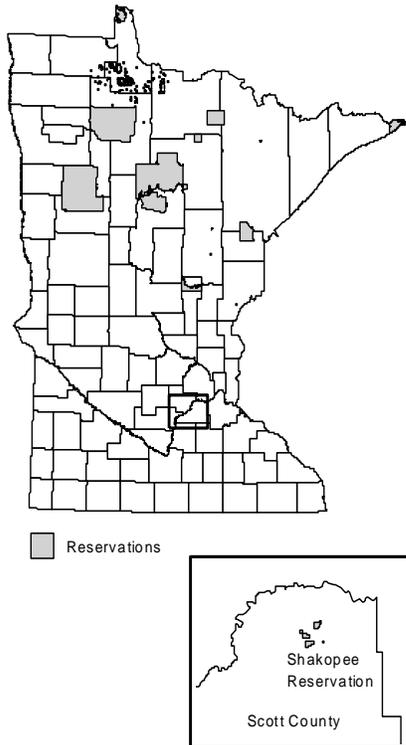
Darrel G. Seki, Sr.

218-679-3341

Demographics of Red Lake Reservation and Surrounding Areas

Population				
	Population	American Indian Population	% American Indian	% of MN American Indian Population
Red Lake	5,873	5,570	94.8%	5.3%
Adjacent Counties	141,983	14,148	10.0%	13.4%
State	5,490,726	105,477	1.9%	100.0%
Age				
	% Under Age 18	% Age 18 to 64	% Age 65 and Over	
Red Lake	41.5%	53.1%	5.4%	
Adjacent Counties	23.7%	59.1%	17.2%	
State	23.4%	62.0%	14.6%	
Income				
	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	% with Income Below Poverty Level	% with Cash Public Assistance Income
Red Lake	\$34,717	\$11,152	31.3%	16.4%
Adjacent Counties	\$50,829	\$26,366	9.5%	3.7%
State	\$65,699	\$34,712	6.6%	3.4%
Labor				
	% Population Age 16+ in Labor force	% Labor Force Employed	% Labor Force Unemployed	
Red Lake	65.2%	49.3%	15.9%	
Adjacent Counties	65.3%	61.7%	3.6%	
State	69.9%	66.8%	3.0%	
Education				
	% of Pop. Age 25+ Less than HS Grad	% of Pop. Age 25+ HS Graduate Only	% of Pop. Age 25+ Some College or Associate Degree	% of Pop. Age 25+ Bachelor's or Graduate Degree
Red Lake	26.1%	37.1%	30.2%	6.6%
Adjacent Counties	9.0%	33.1%	35.4%	22.5%
State	7.2%	25.4%	32.6%	34.8%

Shakopee-Mdewakanton



2330 Sioux Trail NW
 Prior Lake, MN 55372
 952-445-8900
 952-445-8906 (Fax)
www.shakopeedakota.org

Adjacent County: Scott County

Nearby City: Shakopee

Tribal Enrollment (2013): Approx. 500 (unknown to public)

Tribal Land: 3,177.21 acres

Individual Land: 0 acres

Government Land: 0 acres

Casinos:

Little Six Casino
 2450 Sioux Trail NW
 Prior Lake, MN 55372
 952-403-5525
www.littlesixcasino.com

Mystic Lake Casino Hotel
 2400 Mystic Lake Boulevard
 Prior Lake, MN 55372
 952-403-5555
 800-262-7799
www.mysticlake.com

Top Three Industries on Reservation: Education (18.2 percent); finance, insurance, real estate, leasing (13.6 percent); retail sales (11.4 percent)

Tribal Governance: Governed by a General Council and Business Council. All enrolled members of the tribe 18 years old and older are members of the General Council, which elects the Business Council every four years. The Business Council is responsible for day-to-day governance of the tribe and for implementing the wishes of the General Council. The Business Council consists of a chairman, vice chairman, and secretary/treasurer.

Tribal Chairman:

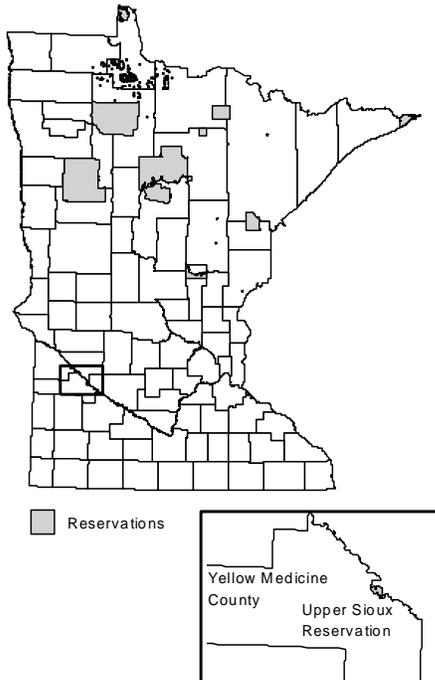
Charlie Vig

To contact Business Council members, contact Tribal Administrator Bill Rudnicki:
bill.rudnicki@shakopeedakota.org, or 952-445-8900.

Demographics of Shakopee-Mdewakanton Reservation and Surrounding Areas

Population				
	Population	American Indian Population	% American Indian	% of MN American Indian Population
Shak.-Mdwn.	695	455	65.5%	0.4%
Adjacent Counties	141,463	2,002	1.4%	1.9%
State	5,490,726	105,477	1.9%	100.0%
Age				
	% Under Age 18	% Age 18 to 64	% Age 65 and Over	
Shak.-Mdwn.	34.0%	53.2%	12.8%	
Adjacent Counties	28.5%	61.9%	9.6%	
State	23.4%	62.0%	14.6%	
Income				
	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	% with Income Below Poverty Level	% with Cash Public Assistance Income
Shak.-Mdwn.	\$64,000	\$99,648	17.2%	1.1%
Adjacent Counties	\$93,151	\$38,322	4.1%	1.9%
State	\$65,699	\$34,712	6.6%	3.4%
Labor				
	% Population Age 16+ in Labor force	% Labor Force Employed	% Labor Force Unemployed	
Shak.-Mdwn.	30.0%	25.2%	4.8%	
Adjacent Counties	76.1%	73.4%	2.7%	
State	69.9%	66.8%	3.0%	
Education				
	% of Pop. Age 25+ Less than HS Grad	% of Pop. Age 25+ HS Graduate Only	% of Pop. Age 25+ Some College or Associate Degree	% of Pop. Age 25+ Bachelor's or Graduate Degree
Shak.-Mdwn.	9.4%	39.1%	36.1%	15.3%
Adjacent Counties	5.1%	22.9%	33.1%	38.9%
State	7.2%	25.4%	32.6%	34.8%

Upper Sioux



P.O. Box 147
 5722 Travers Lane
 Granite Falls, MN 56241
 320-564-3853
 320-564-3264 (Fax)
www.upperSiouxcommunity-nsn.gov

Adjacent County: Chippewa and Yellow Medicine Counties

Nearby Cities: Granite Falls, Montevideo

Tribal Enrollment (2019): 523

Tribal Land: 1,546.59 acres

Individual Land: 54.34 acres

Government Land: 0 acres

Casino:

Prairie's Edge Casino Resort
 5616 Prairie's Edge Lane
 Granite Falls, MN 56241
 320-564-2121
 320-564-2547 (Fax)
www.prairiesedgecasino.com

Top Three Industries on Reservation: Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (36.4 percent); public administration (20.0 percent); manufacturing (20.0 percent)

Tribal Governance: Governed by five-member Board of Trustees, elected to serve staggered four-year terms. Board is composed of a chairman, vice chairman, secretary, treasurer, and senior member at large.

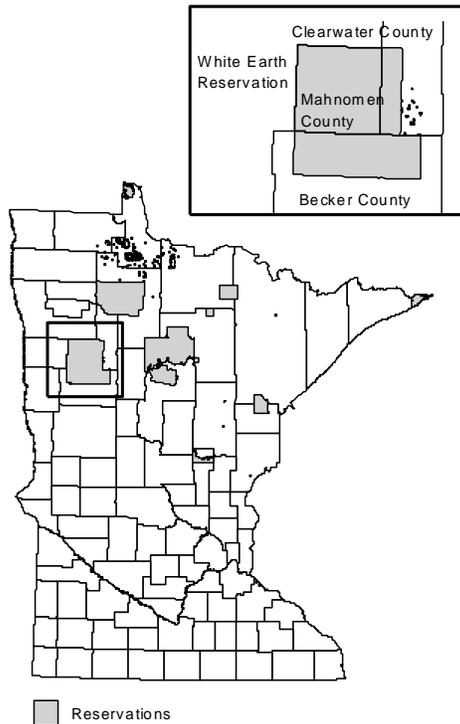
Tribal Chairman (Term 2017-2021):

Kevin Jensvold

Demographics of Upper Sioux Reservation and Surrounding Areas

Population				
	Population	American Indian Population	% American Indian	% of MN American Indian Population
Upper Sioux	182	163	89.6%	0.2%
Adjacent Counties	21,970	733	3.3%	0.7%
State	5,490,726	105,477	1.9%	100.0%
Age				
	% Under Age 18	% Age 18 to 64	% Age 65 and Over	
Upper Sioux	42.3%	49.5%	8.2%	
Adjacent Counties	23.2%	56.8%	20.0%	
State	23.4%	62.0%	14.6%	
Income				
	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	% with Income Below Poverty Level	% with Cash Public Assistance Income
Upper Sioux	\$43,500	\$17,448	20.5%	0.0%
Adjacent Counties	\$56,265	\$28,824	8.8%	1.9%
State	\$65,699	\$34,712	6.6%	3.4%
Labor				
	% Population Age 16+ in Labor force	% Labor Force Employed	% Labor Force Unemployed	
Upper Sioux	57.0%	50.0%	7.0%	
Adjacent Counties	66.1%	64.5%	1.6%	
State	69.9%	66.8%	3.0%	
Education				
	% of Pop. Age 25+ Less than HS Grad	% of Pop. Age 25+ HS Graduate Only	% of Pop. Age 25+ Some College or Associate Degree	% of Pop. Age 25+ Bachelor's or Graduate Degree
Upper Sioux	10.7%	40.5%	31.0%	17.9%
Adjacent Counties	9.5%	35.8%	37.8%	16.9%
State	7.2%	25.4%	32.6%	34.8%

White Earth



Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Member

Post Office Box 418
 White Earth, MN 56591
 218-983-3285
 800-950-3248
www.whiteearth.com

White Earth Headquarters
 35500 Eagle View Rd
 Ogema, MN 56569

Adjacent Counties: Becker, Clearwater, and Mahnomon Counties

Nearby Cities: Bemidji, Detroit Lakes, and Park Rapids

Tribal Enrollment (2016): 41,282 = Chippewa
(2019): 17,995 = White Earth

Tribal Land: 65,272.06 acres

Individual Land: 2,846.83 acres

Government Land: 790.42 acres

Casinos: Shooting Star Casino Hotel
 777 Casino Road, P.O Box 418
 Mahnomon, MN 56557
 800-453-7827
 218-935-2711

Top Three Industries on Reservation: Education, health care, and social services (24.3 percent); arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (19.0 percent); construction (8.8 percent)

Tribal College:
 White Earth Tribal and Community College
wetcc.edu/employment.html

Tribal Governance: Governed by five-member tribal council consisting of chair, secretary/treasurer, and three district representatives.

Chairman (Term Expires June 30, 2020):
 Michael Fairbanks

218-983-3285

michael.fairbanks@whiteearth-nsn.gov

Demographics of White Earth Reservation and Surrounding Areas

Population				
	Population	American Indian Population	% American Indian	% of MN American Indian Population
White Earth	9,799	5,094	52.0%	4.8%
Adjacent Counties	47,876	7,192	15.0%	6.8%
State	5,490,726	105,477	1.9%	100.0%
Age				
	% Under Age 18	% Age 18 to 64	% Age 65 and Over	
White Earth	31.2%	52.8%	16.0%	
Adjacent Counties	25.4%	55.4%	19.2%	
State	23.4%	62.0%	14.6%	
Income				
	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	% with Income Below Poverty Level	% with Cash Public Assistance Income
White Earth	\$41,691	\$20,492	18.7%	9.7%
Adjacent Counties	\$52,451	\$26,889	10.2%	4.7%
State	\$65,699	\$34,712	6.6%	3.4%
Labor				
	% Population Age 16+ in Labor force	% Labor Force Employed	% Labor Force Unemployed	
White Earth	58.0%	52.6%	5.4%	
Adjacent Counties	62.3%	59.3%	3.0%	
State	69.9%	66.8%	3.0%	
Education				
	% of Pop. Age 25+ Less than HS Grad	% of Pop. Age 25+ HS Graduate Only	% of Pop. Age 25+ Some College or Associate Degree	% of Pop. Age 25+ Bachelor's or Graduate Degree
White Earth	13.2%	37.5%	35.7%	13.6%
Adjacent Counties	9.4%	33.4%	36.1%	21.1%
State	7.2%	25.4%	32.6%	34.8%

Appendix III: Secretary of the Interior's Authority to Acquire Land in Trust for Indian Tribes

The Indian Reorganization Act generally authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to accept transfers of land in trust for Indian tribes and individual Indians.¹ Trust status transfers title to the federal government, in trust for the tribe or individual Indian. Under federal law, the land is exempt from state and local property taxes. Fee lands owned by the tribe, by contrast, are subject to property taxes.

The federal statute authorizes the secretary “in his discretion” to acquire land “for the purpose of providing land for Indians.”² The statute itself provides no standard or restrictions on when transfers into trust may be accepted. Agency regulations provide three circumstances in which the secretary may acquire land for a tribe in trust status. Each of these is an *independent or separate* basis for acquiring the land:

- The property is located in or adjacent to the reservation boundaries
- The tribe already owns an interest in the land
- The secretary determines that acquisition of the land is “necessary to facilitate tribal self-determination, economic development, or Indian housing”³

Agency regulations also provide the specific criteria that apply when the land is within or adjacent to a reservation, and the acquisition is not mandatory. For land on or adjacent to a reservation, the department looks at the following:

- Whether there is statutory authority for the acquisition
- The tribe’s need for the land
- The purpose for which the land will be used
- Impact on state and local governments of removing the land from the tax rolls
- Potential jurisdictional problems and conflicts of land use
- Whether the BIA can handle any administrative responsibilities that result from the acquisition
- The extent to which the tribe provided information needed to comply with environmental law relating to hazardous substances⁴

For trust requests on land that is not adjacent to or on a reservation, the agency also considers:

- The location of the land and the distance from the existing reservation; and
- Anticipated economic benefits if acquired for business purposes.

Prior to the new rules, the process of taking land into trust was ambiguous.

The recently revised BIA rules require the state and local government to be notified when a tribe requests land be taken into trust and allows the state and local government 30 days to provide written comment to the BIA on how the acquisition will affect regulatory jurisdiction, real property taxes, and special assessments.⁵

The new federal regulations also clarify the agency decision-making process, clarify the appeal rights of applicants, clarify the procedure for judicial review, and provide that the trust transfer occurs immediately.⁶ The Supreme Court has ruled that the courts can overturn a trust transfer so the need to stay the transfer is no longer necessary. Recent changes have also updated the specific rules for title examination prior to the land to be taken into trust.⁷

In 1998 the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community requested the secretary to transfer a parcel of land into trust for the tribe. The BIA regional officer declined the request, and there was no appeal. The decision provides some insight into the way in which the BIA may apply the regulations on trust transfers. Some of these insights include:

- The need for the trust status must be shown. It is not clear how this is to be done, but it seems likely that a tribe could meet it by showing that the property tax exemption is an economic necessity for the stated purpose. The need for exemption from local regulations might also be relevant. The need for these exemptions must tie back to (1) fostering economic development or (2) supporting tribal self-government.
- The BIA decision makes it clear that in measuring the effect on local tax bases, it will look only at the loss of current tax base, not any potential loss of future tax revenues.
- The decision also suggests that loss of tax base will be evaluated relative to the size of the local tax base. If it is a small share, it is unlikely to affect the application for trust status.

Events following the 1998 BIA decision underline the ambiguity involved with the rules for accepting trust transfers for Indian tribes, such as Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux. In 2000, the tribe renewed its request to transfer the property into trust; this request involved 752 acres. State and local officials continued to object to the transfer. The BIA did not act upon this request for six years until July 2006 when the Midwest Regional office granted the request. The letter granting approval stated that federal law “does not include any type of evaluative factor to consider the wealth of the tribe prior to bringing land into trust status.”⁸ However, one week later, the BIA director withdrew this decision on the grounds “it was issued prematurely.”⁹ Ultimately, the land was taken into trust for the tribe.

In a U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Carciari v. Salazar*,¹⁰ the Court found that a plain reading of the Indian Reorganization Act prevents land from being taken into trust for a tribe that was not “under federal jurisdiction” in 1934, when the law was enacted. This created a broad restriction for many tribes and uncertainty about which tribes could take land into trust. Since then, federal courts have found that the tribe could have been “under federal jurisdiction” without being federally recognized.^{11,12} There has been proposed congressional legislation to “fix” the *Carciari* decision and clarify how the law will be applied. While congress has not yet amended the IRA to provide clarity on this issue, the Department of Interior indicated in a memo issued in 2014, a two-part legal analysis would be used by the department to determine whether or not a tribe was under federal jurisdiction in 1934.¹³

Endnotes

¹ 25 U.S.C. § 5108.

² 25 U.S.C. § 5108.

³ 25 C.F.R. § 151.3.

⁴ 25 C.F.R. § 151.10.

⁵ 25 C.F.R. §§ 151.10 and 151.11.

⁶ 25 C.F.R. § 151.12.

⁷ 25 C.F.R. § 151.13.

⁸ Quoted in Anthony Lonetree, “Shakopee Tribe gets Land Trust Go-ahead” *Star Tribune* p. 1A, (July 11, 2006). This seems contrary to the approach taken by the BIA in reviewing the 1998 request.

⁹ Memorandum from Director of Bureau of Indian Affairs to Terrance Virden, Midwest Regional Director, dated July 14, 2006. This memorandum indicates that the final decision would be issued by the national office of the BIA.

¹⁰ 555 U.S. 379 (2009).

¹¹ *Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community v. Jewell*, 830 F.3d 552 (D.C. Cir. 2016).

¹² *Armador v. U.S. Department of the Interior*, 872 F.3d 1012 (9th Circ. 2017).

¹³ The meaning of “under federal jurisdiction for the purposes of the Indian Reorganization Act” memorandum from the solicitor to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, March 12, 2014.

Appendix IV: Tribal Courts in Minnesota

Tribal court judges are appointed by the governing body of each tribe.

<p>Bois Forte Band of Chippewa P.O. Box 25 Nett Lake, MN 55772 Phone: 218-757-3462 Fax: 218-757-0064</p>	<p>Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa 1720 Big Lake Road Cloquet, MN 55720 Phone: 218-878-7151 Fax: 218-878-7169</p>
<p>Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa 54 Upper Road P.O. Box 428 Grand Portage, MN 55605 Phone: 218-475-2800 Ext. Agatha Armstrong Fax: 218-475-2284</p>	<p>Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe 190 Sailstar Drive NW Cass Lake, MN 56633 Phone: 218-335-3682 Fax: 218-335-3685</p>
<p>Lower Sioux Community in Minnesota P.O. Box 308 39527 Res. Hwy. 1 Morton, MN 56270 Phone: 507-697-6185 Ext. 8615 Fax: 507-697-8621 E-mail: court.clerk@lowersioux.com</p>	<p>Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe 43408 Oodena Drive Onamia, MN 56359 Phone: 320-532-7400 Fax: 320-532-3153</p>
<p>Prairie Island Indian Community 5636 Sturgeon Lake Road Welch, MN 55089 Phone: 651-385-4161 Fax: 651-267-4009 E-mail: deb.english@piic.org</p>	<p>Red Lake Band of Chippewa P.O. Box 572, Hwy 1 East Red Lake, MN 56671 Phone: 218-679-3303 Fax: 218-679-2683</p>
<p>Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux (Dakota) Community SMSC Community Center 2330 Sioux Trail NW Prior Lake, MN 55372 Lynn McDonald (952-233-4246; fax: 952-233-4259) Phone: 952-445-8900 Fax: 952-445-8906 E-mail: lynn@smsccourt.org</p>	<p>Upper Sioux Community P.O. Box 155 Granite Falls, MN 56241 Phone: 320-564-6317 Fax: 320-564-4915 E-mail: tribalcourt@upper Sioux community-nsn.gov</p>
<p>White Earth Band of Ojibwe P.O. Box 289 White Earth, MN 56591 Phone: 218-983-4648 Fax: 218-983-3294 E-mail: lori.thompson@whiteearth-nsn.gov</p>	
<p>Minnesota Chippewa Tribe P.O. Box 217 Cass Lake, MN 56633 Phone: 218-335-8581 Fax: 218-335-8496</p>	<p>Minnesota Chippewa Tribe – Court of Appeals from Six Chippewa Boards P.O. Box 217 Cass Lake, MN 56633</p>

House Research Department