

And Justice for All?

United States Indigenous Populations, Environmental Policy, and Federal Oversight
 Claire J. Stevens, Michigan State University, Master of Public Policy



Federally recognized sovereign U.S. tribes or nations within a nation

The State of Michigan has five American Indian reservations and 12 Federally recognized tribes

The Federal government has a trust responsibility to tribes and retains constitutional powers over Indian affairs



National Environmental Protection Act guides federal decision-making to protect, restore and enhance the environment.



Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, strengthened environmental policy for all.



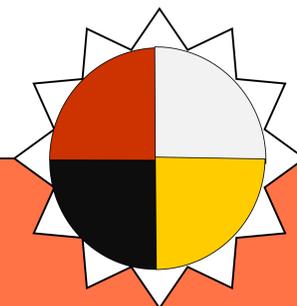
Tribal populations still face injustices due to disproportionately high human health and environmental impacts in proportion to North American population as a whole.



Twenty years after the executive order, Tribal populations continue to have the **second highest infant mortality rate** in the nation, an indicator of overall population health.

- American Indian/ Alaskan Natives (AIAN) make up **2%** of the entire US population
- 90%** of uranium mining in the United States took place on or just outside the boundaries of Native American reservations
- Cancer rates of self-identified indigenous peoples are **15x** the average of the United States population

Resolution is complex due to overlapping policy issues, unique legal status of tribal entities, and historical failure of the Federal government to protect the population.



What Next?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) should address disparate impacts by:

- Requiring environmental justice reviews in all assessments
- Consider not only populations on site but surrounding areas
- Consider historical patterns of exposure and cumulative effects
- Recognize interrelated economic, social, cultural, historical, and occupational factors that may amplify natural and physical environmental effect of a proposed agency decision
- Include Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) methodologies as means of analysis during the decision-making process



Adequate Funding
Fully fund Tribal programs and toxic site cleanup

Enforcement
Stronger actions against environmental degradation

Intersectional
Health, environmental, and economic justice

Cultural Appropriation
End the usage of Indian mascots and imagery

Reparations
Reverse spiritual, emotional, and intellectual challenges

Decolonization
Restoration of lands and culture to pre-colonization