



# Tribal Relations Training Key Learnings: Practice Fraud Prevention

Friday, September 19, 2025

Akomawt Educational Initiative

Chris Newell (Passamaquoddy), Director,  
Native American Cultural Programs,  
University of Connecticut

endawnis Spears (Diné/ Ojibwe/  
Choctaw/ Chickasaw), Practitioner in  
Residence for Tribal Engagement, Brown  
University

Dr. Jason Mancini, Executive Director,



**Sovereignty and the power to determine citizenship :**

**What is the difference between an enrolled citizen and a descendant?**

**Importance of Terminology:**

**Tribal Nations**

**Indigenous**

**Indian/American Indian**

**Native American**

**Understanding the legal status of enrollment is a unique facet of working with Native artists. It is everybody's responsibility to be aware of fraud and to practice fraud prevention conscientiously.**

**Fraud Prevention:  
Unscrupulous individuals and organizations may claim Native heritage to gain  
visibility or access to resources.**

- Historical context for identity fraud: “Playing Indian” as an American pastime
- There are real economic and rhetorical impacts to “culturally inspired”/copycat art
  - Undermines livelihood of Native artists/ communities
  - Disempowers Native artists/communities
- An overview of Indian Arts and Crafts Act:
  - Truth in advertising
  - Who is allowed to sell
  - Fines and penalties for violations
- We will not have all of the answers in this session

## Working with federally recognized tribes is one way to shape programs with confidence

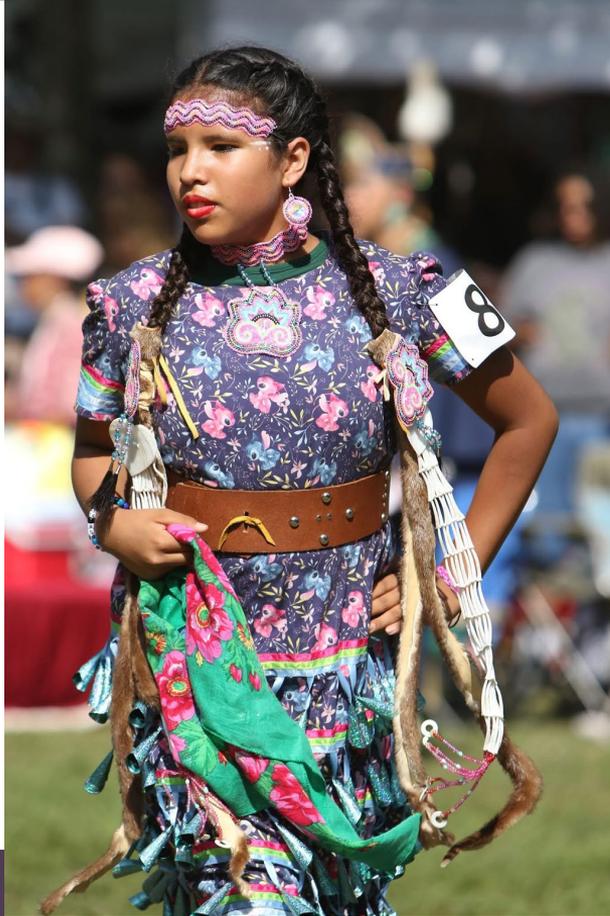
- Begin with the tribal nations and enrolled citizens. There is a sequential element to this work that centers tribes and sovereignty and then moves outward.
- This is not about being an arbiter of legitimacy. It is about cultural survival for cultures that have been systematically erased.



Community members learn traditional methods for canoe making. Photo courtesy of the Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Center

# Non- Federally Recognized Indigenous Communities

- Take note of state recognition:
  - Not the same as federal recognition
  - Not all states have state recognized tribes, and there is no uniform set of criteria for state recognition
- Additional Insights:
  - Indigenous individuals who are not enrolled citizens of a federally recognized tribe are often left out of policy decisions and have a difficult time accessing resources.



## Additional Insights:

- Approach the intersection of Native arts and folk/traditional arts with caution.
  - Understanding indicators of potential fraud
- Native history and culture requires thinking across state borders.
- Successful tribal relations work requires a substantial commitment of time and considerable adaptation.
  - Extraction vs. reciprocity
- Celebrate progress.
- SAA cannot resolve or change federal or inter/intra tribal dynamics. We can all be aware of the need not to compound problems.

# Thank You

## Resources:

Program Profiles, Strengthening State Arts Agency Relationships with Native Communities

Native Arts and Culture: Resilience, Reclamation and Relevance

Establishing a Creative Economy: Art as an Economic Engine in Native Communities

## Session 4:

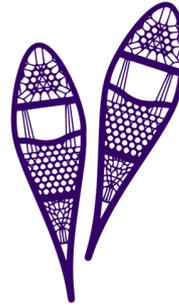
Action Recommendations: Education, Respectful and Reciprocal Relationships, Access to Resources, Communications, Friday, October 10, 2025, 1-2:30PM EST

## Bonus Reels

Available at NASAA's Tribal Relations Training Sessions Landing Page

Akomawt is the Passamaquoddy word for “snowshoe path”, the symbol driving our mission. The snowshoe path forges ahead leaving behind a trail others can follow. As the path is used, it becomes easier to traverse. Akomawt Educational Initiative is dedicated to furthering knowledge of Native America through innovative learning approaches designed to impact how we teach history and contemporary social issues. Our goal is to leave this world better than when we found it; our tool is education. Collaborating with educators in schools, institutions of higher learning, and public history sites, we will help generate new learning paths that create awareness and informed dialogue about American Indian history, contemporary Native lifeways and Indigenous futures.

Our vision is to effect a lasting positive and informed change to the dominant narrative of how Native histories and cultures are taught in America. Through our work we hope to foster greater understanding of Indigenous North America with an emphasis on social change. Our educational resources will cultivate better, more complete understandings of the history and contemporary issues of Native American peoples. Akomawt, the snowshoe path, changes and renews with the seasons just as we work to bring change and renewal to the way we educate our world about Native America. You can find us by the tracks we leave behind.



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