

It Does Not Stop at Treaties: Filling the Void of Indigenous Governance

Yamina Sfiat

The field of public administration has rarely investigated the complexities of intergovernmental relationships among Tribal governments. Very little is known about how Tribal governments function as their own administration or as an administration within another nation, or about the many intricacies and histories centralized within that dynamic. Not understanding how these governments function, how they overlap, or how the United States often works against sovereign nations is detrimental to any policy created with the intent of service to Tribal governments. This article seeks to address this issue and provides an agenda of questions for scholars to explore. Tribal public administration must be placed at the core of public administration rather than at the margins, and in doing so, public administration as a field must prioritize Indigenous voices.

Given the long complicated relationship between the United States and each Indigenous Nation, it is noteworthy that the field of public administration has rarely investigated the complexities of intergovernmental relationships among them. With nearly 600 federally recognized Tribal Nations, very little is known about how Tribal governments function as their own administration, as an administration within another nation, or about the many intricacies and histories centralized within that dynamic. Not having a better understanding of how these governments function, how they overlap, or how the United States often works against sovereign nations is detrimental to any policy created with the intent of service to Tribal governments. This article seeks to be a step in closing that gap and expanding research on Tribal public administration as a core issue in public administration rather than a marginal issue. I propose a research agenda for Tribal administration and argue that Indigenous peoples and Indigenous governance should occupy a more central place in our field and contribute to the central research and theory that informs public administration.

To start, it is imperative to have working definitions of Tribal sovereignty, Tribal Nations, and governance. These definitions maintain consistency and allow room for further nuance. Following a discussion of terms, I review the literature on Tribal administration through a meta-synthesis. In doing so, the shortcomings of pub-

lic administration as a field are examined followed by an extensive, but by no means exhaustive, overview of questions and areas of study. These can prompt scholars to enhance the relevance of Tribal public administration and to integrate it into a more inclusive body of literature.

I utilize Gregory Younging's *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing by and About Indigenous Peoples* (2018) as a reference for writing on the topic of the United States' Indigenous Peoples. Some legal descriptions will use "Indian" as a term to refer to Native peoples. The term "Indian" is objectionable to many because it is used in Treaties, existing federal law, and federal cases. Outside the context of law, *Native* and *Indigenous* peoples will be used interchangeably throughout the article.

Defining Key Terms

In order to provide context, I define three key terms: Tribal Nation, Tribal sovereignty, and governance. While seemingly clear terms, each holds a more nuanced and often unknown relation to the non-Indigenous reader. Therefore, I define Tribal Nation and Tribal sovereignty with both Western legal and Indigenous uses of these terms. I also explore the definition of governance. While not specific to Indigenous peoples, public administration as a field has struggled with firmly

defining governance. I analyze major overlapping concepts so they speak to a greater Indigenous perspective on what governance means.

Tribal Nation

Tribal Nations existed long before settlers arrived. Many nations would also argue that treaties were the first point of establishing nationhood and legitimacy in a Western government-to-government relationship, not the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (IRA) (Wunder 1994). Under American law, “Tribal Nation” refers to all American Indian Tribes, bands, or communities that the secretary of the interior acknowledges as a federally recognized Tribe. This also includes Alaska Natives and incorporating villages and corporations as other definitions of a Tribal Nation through the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 [43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.]. In order to be considered a federally recognized Tribal Nation, a Tribe must submit documentation that proves its own legitimacy to the U.S. Constitution, a process that began with the IRA. However, there are roughly 200 Tribes that remain unrecognized terminated nations by the U.S. government. Therefore, we cannot rely on the legal definition of Tribal Nation.

As such, the American definition of “Tribal Nation” is one of exclusion. It is a term built upon colonial structures that were meant to limit Tribes’ abilities for self-determination in the eyes of the U.S. government. Some states have recognized Tribes, though currently only 16 states offer state recognition of Tribal Nations (U.S. Dept. of HHS n.d.). The difference between federal and state recognition is access to funding as well as legitimacy. State-recognized Tribes are ineligible to receive any federal funding through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) (U.S. Dept of HHS n.d.). Considering the sheer number of those that go unrecognized, it is more plausible that Western definitions of a “nation” do not consider the phrases that Indigenous peoples have of the same concept. A nation need not be defined by a particular legal process or Treaties, though that is certainly an aspect of that definition post-contact of European settlers.

There is not one way to define a Tribal Nation, as that often depends on who is considered part of that nation. Nationhood may be defined by land base, and by practices both cultural and forced by assimilative practices, such as blood quantum (Spruhan 2006). This also plays into the question of who is Indigenous, which

reflects a political and racialized colonial system. If a Tribal Nation lacks enough members by a process, for example, of blood quantum, barring them from enrollment into a Tribe, it cannot legally gain recognition as a state or federally recognized nation. These facets of the definition, while seemingly unrelated, are all factors that many Indigenous communities wrestle with as part of defining their nationhood. There is no universal definition because each Tribe defines their nationhood differently. Because of this complex identity and culture, versus the strict legal definition, the term can be constraining when applied to Indigenous peoples and their expressions of self-determination. This complexity further nuances discussions about Tribal Nations and makes it difficult to draw boundaries around the study of Tribal governance within public administration or to fully understand intergovernmental relations. Exploring these complexities is necessary to develop scholarship surrounding Tribal governance and intergovernmental relations. Allowing for flexibility can also provide a refreshing perspective in understanding governing concepts not rooted in Western thought.

Tribal Sovereignty

The word “sovereignty” is an English word, and as such, reflects an Anglo-Euro concept of governance. Much of the term’s history derives from European monarchs, more specifically as a means to describe English reign as that of ruling by divine right or authority to establish law or change it (Philpott 1995). “Sovereignty” refers to the authority of a state. However, within the U.S. context and in international affairs, sovereignty can be described as referring to the nation-state’s ability to exercise powers that are deeply intertwined with its sense of self (Cobb 2005). From an applied perspective, there are interesting ways in which Tribes can exercise sovereignty through Western laws a Tribal Nation is forced to work within. Hae-Jun Ahn reminds us that sovereignty is not defined from a Tribal perspective; rather, it emerges from Western law and co-opts a Tribe’s advantage. How a state exercises its sovereignty in a case against the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) establishes a precedent in which any sovereign entity defending itself from the federal government can utilize *parens patriae* doctrine to assert sovereign boundaries (Hae-June Ahn 2010).

Tribal sovereignty is sometimes confused with Tribal Nation as both exemplify the presence and political

body of a group of people. However, these terms should not be confused with each other. A Tribal Nation may be a physical embodiment, as discussed, of who is part of a Tribe. Tribal sovereignty can be described as *exercising* the right of a Tribe's nationhood as well as a means to defend, protect, and revitalize Native peoples and their lifeways. Tribal sovereignty can also be described in other ways. For example, Wallace Tsosie (Yaqui) and Rebecca Coffey (Comanche) explain that Tribal sovereignty is a politically-based framework that seeks federal recognition, but undermines itself by conforming to Western laws that continuously seek to remove sovereignty (Coffey and Tsosie 2001). They argue for a new framework that explores cultural sovereignty as a means to empower Tribes to define themselves based on Indigenous norms rather than federal law.

Skenandore (Oneida/Potawatomi) expands upon the concept of "cultural sovereignty" and the importance of its use when approaching concerns over case law. In discussing *Santa Clara v. Martinez*, Skenandore argues that while the *Santa Clara* decision seemed like sexism with regard to Tribal enrollment, it is ultimately up to the Tribe to exercise cultural sovereignty when addressing such issues within their community. While well-meaning, non-Indigenous peoples who viewed the gendered practices as unequal and sought to create ways to accommodate them, many of those efforts were viewed as harmful to Tribal sovereignty (Skenandore 2002). Outside influence to pressure Tribal practices to appear more equal would emphasize Western political sovereignty. This accommodates Western power structures rather than the Tribe empowering itself to make the necessary changes as they see fit.

Amanda Cobb (Chickasaw) adds further nuance to understandings of Tribal sovereignty as not just a political and legal term, but a term that conveys ". . . theoretical conceptualizations of sovereignty—cultural, intellectual, hermeneutical, and rhetorical [that] demonstrate the power the term sovereignty has to transform oppressive practices and to revitalize cultures" (Cobb 2005, 129). In doing so, these conceptualizations understand sovereignty as something entirely different from the Western understanding of it. Sovereignty is a preservation and revitalization of culture and the ability to conceptualize sovereignty through Indigenous thinking rather than relying on outside thinkers to describe Indigenous processes of thinking. These nuanced understandings of Tribal sovereignty are imperative to the

field of public administration. Not all governing bodies within the United States are rooted in Western structures; in fact, many are not. Incorporating these perspectives is imperative in any future advancements in Tribal public administration scholarship.

Tribal Governance

There is no universal, agreed-upon definition for "governance" in the field of public administration. However, key elements of governance still cut across the literature, and those elements are largely within Western literature. Generally speaking, governance can be defined as "the ability to achieve a goal for a group of individuals or organization with regards to their interests" (Lynn, Heinrich, and Hill 2000, 235). While broad, this term allows application in both micro and macro scales of governing, from communities to nationwide organizations and the levels of U.S. government, including local, state, federal, and Tribal governments. This also includes that of markets, but for the sake of relevance, the scope of governance will remain within public bodies of government. In defining public governance Lynn and others refer to it as "regimes of laws, rules . . . and practices that constrain, prescribe and enable the provision of publicly supported goods and services" (Hill and Lynn 2004, 4; Lynn et al. 2000, 235). When utilizing "governance" in the context of Tribal governments, it refers to the ability of a Tribal government to have regimes and practices that enable the ability to provide public services. This applies to all facets of the government: administration, courts, and agencies that provide public goods.

Several authors have expanded and transformed scholarly understandings of governance to Tribal governance. While not exactly explicit in defining the term, Francis Prucha points out important concerns with Tribal governance that can relate to political sovereignty as discussed earlier. Tribal governments who demand the U.S. government continue its responsibilities in the context of holding trust and trust lands for Indigenous peoples perpetuate an endless cycle of paternalism (Prucha 1984). Without full ownership over their lands, Indigenous peoples are not able to fully exercise subsistence practices as a form of economy tied to traditions. Not allowing Indigenous peoples autonomy over their own economy further undermines Tribal sovereignty but more specifically, does not fully allow Tribal governance to exercise its full capacity. In assessing the dynamics of Tribal Nations and the U.S. gov-

ernment, Matthew Snipp reminds us that previous historical analyses described Tribal Nations as “captive nations,” meaning a political condition established through legal doctrine. This situation makes Tribal Nations subordinate to the U.S. government (Snipp 1986, 458). However, with natural resource development as a prevalent issue, a “captive nation” has evolved to that of an “internal colony.” The latter term signifies an economic approach to governing dynamics in which Tribal Nations’ lands as “internal colonies” are exploited for a non-Native economy (Snipp 1986, 459). This distinction expresses how the dynamics of Tribal–U.S. government relations have evolved over time. This gives more nuance to Tribal governance while acknowledging colonial government dynamics.

Through the rest of the article, I explore the larger issue, namely, that there is a lack of literature on Tribal public administration. However, that does not mean that I seek to conflate governance and public administration. Tribal governance will be referred to as the regime that Lynn describes with the nuance elaborated by Snipp and Prucha. Tribal public administration will refer to the execution of the laws set by said regime. It is worth noting that none of these should be viewed as static definitions, but ones that are continuously evolving tools to describe Indigenous lifeways in a political space.

Current Literature

This is not the first call to address gaps in Tribal governance literature, nor should it be the last. Other scholars have argued that current literature in Tribal governance is scattered throughout the social sciences but may not necessarily be labeled as “public administration” despite its relevance to the field (Aufrecht 1999; Ronquillo 2011). Even so, the scope of the current literature review will speak specifically to public administration. While this most certainly excludes scholarship across other fields such as sociology, criminology, and anthropology to name a few, this is meant to demonstrate flaws in terms of how the subject is approached in public administration. It is difficult to piece together a flowing narrative given the current literature on Tribal public administration. While some themes recur, most of the literature are fragments with great potential for more exploration, but little to no follow-up. The approach, then, for this article is to move chronologically to showcase patterns and the evolution of a disjointed narrative.

The earliest public administrative literature about

Tribal governance was written in the 1990s. Interestingly, this occurs around the same time as the Clinton administration and its efforts in rethinking and redefining federalism in considering political reform. This reform extended to all levels of government: federal, state, local, and even Tribal (Galston and Tibbetts 1994). While in some ways Galston and Tibbetts’ article addressed concerns of overregulation by the federal government, the article does not consider the need to reform relationships between a Tribal government and other governments. Their writing dives into other facets of federal, state, and local relationships, leaving Tribal governments on the periphery. Mason (1998) approaches this new era of federalism differently and seriously considers how Tribal governments and their relationships can be shaped by this reform. In his discussion on state regulation of Indian gaming, Mason describes the dilemma in which state governments sought to increase regulation of Indian gaming while also arguing for less federal regulation on state matters (Mason 1998). This makes for a reversal of roles in which states want more freedom from the federal government while they want Tribes to have less freedom within their state boundaries. By doing so, states perceived themselves to have more power over sovereign Tribal Nations, when legally they should be viewed as equal (Mason 1998). Many Tribal governments also argue for reforms to the relationship between their governments and federal and state governments. Mason argues they too, just as the states, do not want heavy regulation (Mason 1998).

Mason was not the only one concerned with Tribal–state relations. The discussion of new federalism brought many questions about the regulation and deregulation of state and Tribal laws. Wilkins (Lumbee) explores this relationship by considering new dynamics of Tribal–state relationships through compacts or formally negotiated agreements that typically involve boundary disputes (Wilkins 1994). He suggests a compact process as a more appropriate method of Tribal–state negotiations, considering litigation has been legally not afforded to Tribes as it has for states. This is meant to be a temporary solution as he further argues that federal governments should reclaim the role of sole constitutional authority (Wilkins 1998). States’ assertions of power over Tribal affairs and economies systematically violate disclaimers that states are obligated to follow the guidance of the federal government. He argues that dis-

claimers remain vital to retaining Tribal sovereignty as they explicitly dictate that states have renounced claims to public lands or lands owned by Tribal Nations. Federal governments should reinforce their power to assert these disclaimers, and states should not interfere with them (Wilkins 1998).

Discussions on Indigenous representation in government and the hurdles it presents in comparison to representation for other people of color open questions on how Indigenous citizenship to their Tribal Nations is utilized as an obstacle by state and county lawmakers (Berman and Salant 1998). Another piece in early Tribal public administration literature points out that the Iroquois Confederacy did not influence the U.S. Constitution. The analysis states that the Great Binding Law was undemocratic to European understandings of democracy (Lutz 1998). Lutz also argues that the Great Binding Law was the first fully formed constitution in North America prior to colonization.

At the same time that discussions of a “new era” of federalism and tribal-state relations were occurring, Tribal governance as an under-researched topic was acknowledged. Ronquillo (2011) argues that Tribal governance literature is not missing but rather well-researched in other disciplines. Aufrecht cites the lack of information on Tribal governments and their administrations in many introductory public administration textbooks (Aufrecht 1999). Aufrecht also provides many approaches to researching Tribal public administration, including ways to approach the subject with cultural awareness. His benchmark article is arguably the earliest in which public administration scholarship is called out for its inadequate exploration of Tribal governance and public administration.

Some progress has been made in that there are explorations of Tribal-state relationships about environmental concerns. Examinations of structures that connect Tribes and state and federal government describe Tribes as municipalities rather than their own polity. Using the example of waste management across 16 states and the District of Columbia, Ortiz (2001) examines the relationships Tribes have with other governments, ranging from uncooperative, to formal, and informally cooperative. Ortiz concludes that Tribes have a complex interplay of all types of relationships with the state, local, and federal government (266). This is partially a result of how policy is shaped in which Tribes are placed in a position inferior to their actual political standing.

Other assessments of environmental concerns include disaster and resource management. An assessment of water resource management demonstrates the need for more intergovernmental coordination and collaborative relationships that focus on shared concerns such as water quality (Wilson 2002). Such efforts can improve Tribal-state relations despite the convoluted jurisdictional overlapping of natural resources.

Intergovernmental challenges are also prevalent regarding the risk and spread of wildfires. The lack of coordination demonstrates the complexity of disaster management when state, federal, and Tribal governments have little cohesion. McDowell (2003) urges more intergovernmental coordination and lists numerous areas for improvement, many of which push for interagency coordination, growth management, and regional organizations that address the reduction and management of wildfires (McDowell 2003). Intergovernmental relations are also not limited to environmental management. Proof of intergovernmental coordination has existed in other policy areas, notably with the Nixon administration in the 1970s and moving forward into gaming policies in the 1980s (Steinman 2004). While Nixon’s self-determination policy was problematic in addressing Tribal sovereignty issues, it did lay out mechanisms to create intergovernmental relationships that came into play with Indian gaming laws. Such intergovernmental relations utilized non-litigious strategies and coexisted but still encountered conflict within cooperation (Steinman 2004). Steinman demonstrates that while the conditions were far from perfect, the groundwork has begun in some circumstances for more intergovernmental cooperation and makes a contribution to the otherwise overwhelming deficits in Tribal–state relations.

Light (2004) continues the discussion on Indian gaming law through a different approach. He approaches the subject from an educational perspective in which Indian gaming law is a tool to understand cross-cultural public administration issues with regard to Tribal sovereignty (Light 2004). By doing so, Light provides methods and instructions in which educators can create pedagogy designed to promote understanding of the complexities of Tribal–state relations, jurisdiction, and Tribal governance for both Native and non-Native students (Light 2004). Cheryl King and Megan Beeby (Snoqualmie) use the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and its liaison, Colleen Jollie

(Turtle Mountain Chippewa), as a teaching example. Indigenous stories help to conceptualize intergovernmental structures and relationships to teach about more effective cooperation within the agency (King and Beeby 2008). In this case, Jollie facilitated change within WSDOT by not only recognizing herself as Coyote, the changer and trickster in many Indigenous stories, but by utilizing Coyote's story to facilitate and transform how the WSDOT functions through individuals' actions (King and Beeby 2008). This method created more Indigenous representation in WSDOT and facilitated more cooperation between Tribes and WSDOT. Moreover, the case demonstrates how Indigenous peoples can Indigenize spaces in public administration that, in turn, can create more intergovernmental cooperation.

Through an extensive overview of Supreme Court cases from 1998 to 2003, Wilkins and Richotte (Turtle Mountain Chippewa) showcase the erosion of Tribal sovereignty from a historical perspective rather than a pedagogical one. They surmise that policy not only has become more conservative, but the redefining of federalism at the turn of the century has allowed for more powerful states' rights over Tribal Nations' sovereignty (Wilkins and Richotte 2003). They predict through this historical analysis that Tribes will likely face more difficulties in litigation in the future, which will further jeopardize Tribal sovereignty. Pointing to nonprofit organizations focused on Native issues, the authors are hopeful their knowledge and advocacy can combat this pattern through more advocacy and a reaffirmation of sovereignty, such that jurisdictional authority returns to Tribes (Wilkins and Richotte 2003).

Aufrecht and Case contribute to the discussion of Indian law through their own analysis of Supreme Court cases and the importance of including stories that provide context and understanding of Indian law (2005). In this context, stories created by non-Natives about Natives often seek to discount the stories that Indian law and policy initially described, that Tribal Nations were always sovereign up until Judge Marshall's ruling. This coincides with many non-Natives' deliberate ignorance of the law (Aufrecht and Case 2005). This ignorance stemmed from stories that only sought to fit non-Natives' narratives. Aufrecht and Case's analysis is important in that it provides more context to how Indian law is shaped by factors beyond the scope of law and how this continues to be a major influence in the whittling of Tribal sovereignty.

Laura Evans' book, *Power from Powerlessness: Tribal Governments, Institutional Niches, and American Federalism* (2011) places itself in the discourse by providing a way of contextualizing Tribal resilience to ebbs and flows in policy in a way that does not center on culture and tradition. Instead, it centers on a method of increasing power. She describes how institutional niches provide a way for Tribes to incrementally gain political power. These niches take the form of aid to cultivate knowledge in key areas such as external environments and technical expertise (2011, 5–7). In this in-depth analysis, she concludes that not only are these niches used as resources, but they are also strategically used to build upon their own infrastructure and influence other actors to encourage their external environment to create opportunities for them that would otherwise not exist (2011, 201).

Within the last decade, literature has included more concepts related to multi-level governing (MLG) to understand Tribal governance. While initially conceptualized within a European framework, MLGs are a form of governance that places states as actors among others, such as specific industries or international institutions. The state retains the ability to set goals while other actors fulfill their specific roles within a strict hierarchy (Saito-Jensen 2015).

In a comparative analysis between Canada and the United States, Papillon examines both federal governments and how their structures allow adaptation to Indigenous self-determination claims (Papillon 2012). Their article argues that dynamics between Tribal governments and the federal governments could be redefined through policy. However, neither system allows for changes in their jurisdiction. Instead, they utilize MLG regimes in place of rethinking jurisdiction (2012, 304). Utilizing MLG as a conceptual framework for Tribal governments is still a form of assimilation and does not explicitly reinforce Tribal sovereignty. Rather, Indigenous frameworks that do not adhere to Western structures would benefit Tribes and First Nations' self-determination (2012, 306). Alcantara and Nelles argue, however, that instead of using an all-or-none approach to MLG as Papillon described, MLG can be used situationally (Alcantara and Nelles 2014). They clarify MLG with three categories: actors or governments, the scale in which each actor is embedded through political or territorial places, and the decision-making process in which negotiations occur between actors (2014, 186). Their definition utilizes MLG as a tool rather than a descriptor of governmental relationships. This allows

scholars to analyze policy and relationships on a government-to-government basis with a more just and equal assessment (2014, 199–201). As an example, while not specifically oriented around MLG, Tribal and non-Tribal enforcement partnerships create a positive intergovernmental relationship. Cross-deputization agreements increase socioeconomic conditions and reduce crime compared to areas in which Tribal and non-Tribal law enforcement do not have partnerships (Conner and Witt 2016).

Another article seeks to reflect on past policies and cases in which Native peoples have fought back against the U.S. government. Stivers (2017) wrote a historical analysis of a Supreme Court case, *Cobell v. Norton*, about the mismanagement of trust funds. She attributes the dilemma to the problematic relationship fostered by the U.S. government's concept of individual Indians' trusts. Stivers treats this as an example of not only problems with U.S.–Tribal relations, but also a moment in which Native peoples successfully fought back on problematic policies.

Finally, a recent anthology has taken a step that has never been taken before. The book, *Tribal Administration Handbook: A Guide for Native Nations in the United States*, has compiled the big issues surrounding Tribal governance (Webster and Bauerkemper 2022). The book is designed for practitioners to use as a reference and as a way to collaboratively learn from other's lessons in strengthening Tribal sovereignty. No other book like this exists and it has broken new ground within the field of public administration. This book sets the stage for a new step, a more deliberate conversation about Tribal public administration.

Some themes have emerged through this narrative. Scholarship has shown a developing interest in Tribal–state relations, notably in discussions on the new era of federalism brought on toward the end of the 20th century. Reforms of federalism during the Clinton administration prompted discussions of federal regulations, but also states' increased desires to control Tribal governments. These conversations continue but in different directions, from ideas of conceptualizing Tribal–U.S. intergovernmental cooperation within the context of environmental issues, to utilizing MLG as a tool for creating Tribal–U.S. partnerships on a state level. Issues surrounding Indian gaming became a focal point of both conflicts and cooperation in Tribal–U.S. relations.

Throughout this account, bits and pieces of historical analysis of Indian law provide context to the complexities of Tribal sovereignty and Tribal–U.S. relations

at the federal level. However, the narrative is still fragmented. There is little in-depth discussion as many of these pieces only touch the surface of the complexities in Tribal–U.S. relations. Each of these topical areas is in themselves only snippets that paint a partial picture of these relationships. We now turn to how the field can take a more in-depth analysis of these areas with a more robust research agenda moving forward.

A Tribal Governance Research Agenda

While I have shown chronological shifts in the literature, some gaps have emerged in doing so. One explanation for so little research can be attributed to the sheer number of Tribal Nations that exist in the United States. It may seem unrealistic to do a meta-analysis of nearly 600 Tribes and their government structures, but at a bare minimum, it is worth analyzing case studies of specific Tribes. Without case studies, it is harder to discern the needs of each Tribe and to tailor public policy that can be constructive and that avoids doing major harm as other generalizing policies have done in the past. Explorations of each of the policy areas already mentioned will benefit from case studies of Tribes and should be encouraged.

Multi-level governing originally was conceptualized within the context of European Union (EU) intergovernmental structures and the necessity to understand a state's role within the web of partnerships and connections of institutions (Tortola 2017). While Tortola also prompted exploration of MLG in non-EU contexts, other scholars are hesitant to fully embrace the concept within a Tribal government context, particularly in the context of federalist nations such as Canada and the United States (Alcantara and Nelles 2014; Papillon 2012). More research on the topic—specifically how MLG can be used appropriately without allowing it to be a form of assimilation—can be useful to rethink Tribal government and federal government relations both in the United States and Canada. Even then, it is true, as Alcantara and Nelles point out, that Indigenous conceptualizations of multigovernmental structures are more appropriate and should be prioritized in future research.

Intergovernmental partnerships have become increasingly important with the rise of the climate crisis. Management of natural disasters stretches across agencies and jurisdictional boundaries and Tribal governments should be involved in that discussion. Extensive

research in ecological sciences has shown that Indigenous management of lands has reduced the severity of natural disasters by utilizing Indigenous science to appropriately care for and steward lands (Menziés 2006; Reed et al. 2021). More research in emergency management is necessary, especially on how federal, state, and local governments can partner with Tribal governments and stewards to utilize Indigenous science as a preventative measure. Rather than focus resources on responding after a disaster has happened, resources can be shifted to doing preventative work that may reduce the risk of future disasters.

Policing is another area of concern where it is important to approach the topic with a Tribal public administration perspective, as the complexities of jurisdiction are pervasive. Extensive analysis is done in Eileen Luna-Firebaugh's (Choctaw/Cherokee) book on Tribal policing (Luna-Firebaugh 2007). It examines Tribal government structures and the unique nature of Tribal policing compared to other law enforcement agencies and structures. While her book provides in-depth research, further scholarly research has not followed up on how Tribal law enforcement agencies have evolved structurally, nor how the U.S. government influences those systems. Earlier discussions examined the benefits of Tribal government and local law enforcement partnerships having positive outcomes (Conner and Witt 2016), but discrete fragments fail to reflect the evolution of the concern. Rather, it places these issues as static. Topics to explore within policing can focus on community relationships, street-level bureaucracy from the perspective of Tribal frontline workers, and collaborations with criminal justice in rethinking the existence of correctional facilities. The latter can be explored through the concept of restorative justice, which is the idea that community is at the center of justice. Utilizing Indigenous methods, particularly in Tribal courts, to use cultural practices in facilitating healing relationships between the victim, offender, and community can be advantageous rather than punishing (Brown 1999; Immarigeon and Daly 1997; Nancarrow 2006). Such research from a public administration perspective is imperative in helping conceptualize and operationalize restorative justice at local, state, Tribal, and/or federal levels of justice.

Other topics from a political perspective can explore Intertribalism and how that may affect Tribal government structures. Considering the financial means of

many Tribes, collaboration has been used to consolidate resources to better support their communities. Removal, or the Trail of Tears, is largely responsible for placing multiple Tribes into a designated space and thus facilitating collaborations as a method of resilience. As a result, there is a level of Intertribal relations occurring within Tribal governments. How do such structures affect the needs of Indigenous peoples within a reservation? When considering that a majority of Indigenous peoples live outside of the reservation, how then does Tribal government affect Native peoples in major cities where Tribal jurisdiction is usually not present? These are only a few considerations of the many that public administration can explore.

Conclusion

Researching Tribal public administration will require extensive interdisciplinary work. Much of the current literature on Tribal government, Tribal law, economics, and development is well-researched in other fields. That does not excuse public administration from doing the work needed to create a holistic picture of how Tribal government and administration function, interact, and strengthen sovereignty and nationhood. Case studies can be a useful way to examine these questions and topics. For example, there is no case study that gives an in-depth examination of the relationship between a Tribal Nation and the U.S. government from a public administration perspective. Even if it is considered a grand venture to have a case for every one of the nearly 600 Tribal Nations, that should not deter scholars from approaching the issue in this way. Case studies are valuable for capturing nuance, opening conversations for deeper reflection, and for pointing to similar circumstances that could be addressed through policy.

Though there is extensive literature on Tribal governance, much of the literature is published in books. Not to discount those works—they are imperative in the expansion of our understanding of Tribal governance and administration—but public administration as a field should be doing empirical research to examine structures and relationships with other settler institutions in scholarship (Ronquillo 2011). Research should be consistently produced because what may have been apparent a decade ago may not be the case now. Continuous research must be done to examine patterns, evolutions, and the decline of Tribal sovereignty and governance. Both quantitative

and qualitative scholarship would aid in the understanding and revitalization of Tribal sovereignty.

Finally, Indigenous scholars should be more present in public administration, and it is imperative that the field expand the inclusion of Indigenous voices in scholarship. While non-Indigenous peoples have certainly contributed important work, Indigenous voices are lacking, and public administration scholars should acknowledge this gap. In this regard, I implore all future scholars to utilize Gregory Younging's *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing by and About Indigenous Peoples* as an appropriate tool for writing about Indigenous scholarship. Particularly for non-Indigenous and non-Native scholars, it is important that we support this language to help strengthen scholarship surrounding Tribal and Indigenous issues. However, for the non-Indigenous scholar, it is imperative to tread cautiously. While the work is important and it is imperative for allies to aid in the expansion of Tribal sovereignty and governance, ultimately what needs to be supported for this work to take place is to work directly with Indigenous scholars. Plenty of groundwork has created a foundation for ethical practices in serving Indigenous communities. Public administration should be no different in practicing such ethics. The silence of Indigenous voices erases Tribal governance from the canon of public administration. While allies surely should be encouraged to work and support revitalization, centering Indigenous voices must be the priority.

In providing questions and suggestions to the field regarding Tribal governance, I hope that public administration will reconsider its role not as the main thinker of governance, but as a perspective within the larger context of governance. Public administration scholars must reassert that the original thinkers and practitioners are Indigenous peoples. They have practiced governance longer than any modern government today and should be held with regard, not only for understanding how governance works, but as the first innovative thinkers who have preserved and maintained a culture of relationship building that has adapted despite adversity. Governance is a part of Indigenous lifeways, beyond treaties, and beyond any Western concept of nation-building. The space must be given to Indigenous scholars to usher in an era of public administration that seeks to learn through innovation, resilience, and the cultural diversity that has long existed before any settler.

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Yamina Sfiat (she/hers) (yaminasfiat@outlook.com) received her MA in Indigenous Studies at the University of Kansas. Her focus is on Tribal sovereignty in relation to criminal justice reform. Prior to graduate study, her educational background was within criminal justice and political science focusing on incarceration, Indigenous rights, and international relations. She is Chicana and North African, born and raised in Massachusetts to immigrant parents. Her Indigenous heritage is traced to Huichol, Nahuatl, and Amazigh communities, though she was not raised directly within those communities and traditions.