

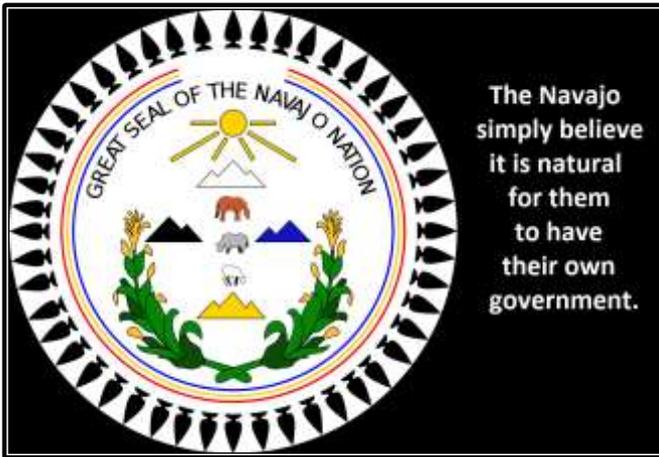
## NATIVE AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS — edited by Anahera Herbert-Graves

<sup>1</sup>The Tribal Governments operating on many Native American reservations are perhaps the most commonly known examples of how Indigenous Peoples exercise governance.

Some participants at the hui of [Matike Mai o Aotearoa](#) (the Independent Iwi Working Group) had visited or worked on reservations and shared their experiences. Some of the members of the Working Group were also familiar with them.

In practice they are quite confined by [Federal law](#) and often merely mimic Federal or State structures. However as with the [Sami Parliament](#) the fact of having a government was simply accepted as part of who they are. It was an institutional expression of their rangatiratanga and thus their constitutional right to govern themselves.

A participant who had worked on the [Navajo Reservation](#) in Arizona noted –



*“What always impressed me was not that they had their own government or their own courts or their own Police Force and schools so much as the way that everyone simply believed that it was all completely natural...no-one argued about whether they had a right to it or whether it was separatist, they just did it...they knew it didn’t always work perfectly but they knew it was their absolute right to have it and that they would eventually fix its flaws because it was theirs. The idea that they shouldn’t have it or might have ever given it away was simply foreign to them...it was the practical expression of their sovereignty and everyone believed in it from the elders to the [mokopuna](#).”*

Others commented on the importance of having some similar institutional recognition of [rangatiratanga](#) –

*“If self determination means anything then it has to mean the same thing for everyone...[Apache](#) or [Hawaiian](#) or [Ngāti Awa](#) or [Ngāti Te Ata](#) or whoever...that’s why what the Native Americans have managed to do is so important and why we need something like it here...it gives an actual real place to say this is our mana and this is what it means in practice”.*

*“Native Americans I know admit there are real issues in some Tribal Governments...like there are with any government, but it’s theirs and they have the chance to decide what its priorities and values are in a much more effective and real way than we do...that’s a real important difference and I can’t help thinking they are much closer to their rangatiratanga than we are”.*

*“At least on the reservations people can point to their government or their courts and say ‘That’s our mana in action’ and that’s a real boost for them...here all we’ve got is the words or some Crown entity like a Trust Board or a [PSGE](#) and that’s not the same because they are Crown entities not ours...they might control some [pūtea](#) but can you imagine the Crown allowing a Trust Board to set up its own court or charging rates?”*



<sup>1</sup> Twenty-third edited extract from pp. 67 – 68 of [He Whakaaro Here Whakaumu Mō Aotearoa – The Report of Matike Mai o Aotearoa](#)

