

## 2023 USET/Close Up Youth Statement on Sovereignty

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We are 82 High School students representing 12 different Member Tribal Nations of USET. We have been nominated by our peers to present the 2023 USET Youth Statement on Sovereignty. Over the course of 4 hours, each of our workshops deliberated on Tribal Sovereignty, its value to our generation, and the issues facing our tribal communities. Our statement focuses on the following 4 issue areas 1) Economic Development 2) Crime & Public Safety 3) Education 4) Land & Natural Resources.

Economic development is important in tribal communities because it will affect both future and current generations. Youth do not have the resources or opportunities to reach their full potential. If our Tribal Nations funded different programs like after school programs, sports and positive entertainment, our youth would benefit greatly. As the future of our tribal communities, we will be able to learn more and possibly help later generations. The younger generation would be greatly impacted because if you don't have control or a voice in your community how can you contribute or be heard? Tribal sovereignty is impeded by federal and state governments, which is a direct cause of the long waiting periods when we want to improve infrastructure and programs.

The US government should have little to no say when tribes want to spend their money, especially when investing in infrastructure and our native youth. Tribal sovereignty should include authority over their land, people and finances. We did not consent to financial dependence on the US Government instead, we as the people have a strong desire to control our own business, finances and economy.

Tribal sovereignty refers to the self-governing authority of Native American tribes, which includes the power to enforce laws and maintain public safety on tribal lands. The issue of crime, safety, and jurisdiction can impact a tribal Nation by threatening the well-being of the community and undermining its sovereignty. To address these issues, a tribal Nation may consider developing its own law enforcement agencies and programs that reflect its unique cultural and community values. While partnering with state law enforcement agencies can provide additional resources and support, it is important to ensure that such partnerships respect tribal sovereignty and do not erode the Nation's self-governance authority. By prioritizing the preservation of tribal sovereignty, a tribal Nation can effectively address crime and safety issues while maintaining its independence and autonomy.

Our Tribal Nations need to emphasize the need for better education - especially considering the rate of indigenous youth that do not graduate or receive advanced degrees. Native American youth are not receiving the proper education and resources they need to prosper and go on to higher education. In the education system, we face problems of negative stereotyping that coincides with being a Native American in today's society. Nations should step in and provide resources for native youth, block out harassment from overpowering outside entities in our schooling Institutions and provide tutors and proper education geared towards Native Youth and their needs.

Our Tribal Nations exercise sovereignty by applying their culture, lifeways and political status to address land and natural resources issues. As a result of factors such as climate change and water insecurity, many of our Tribal Citizens face harsher conditions on their tribal territories, impacting their ability to live healthy and fulfilled lives. Outside influence and interference from Federal and State governments should not determine how Tribal Nations use, maintain, or profit from the natural resources of our lands. We are concerned about maintaining our traditional ways of life - this includes fishing, hunting, livestock maintenance and agriculture on our ancestral homelands. We hope to be more involved in tribal leadership decision making that impacts our lands and natural resources. We call upon our collective Tribal Nations and USET to do what is necessary to maintain sovereignty and independence for future generations.