

Political Implications of Shared Authority: Efforts to Retain Indigenous Sovereignty Within the Modern Global Power Structures

Authors : David E. Wilkins

Abstract : While colonialism in its many guises remains the dominant theoretical framework within which to analyze Indigenous relations with state powers, this paper takes a deep look at the treaty, policy, and statutory efforts initiated by both Indigenous peoples and colonial, and later federal representatives within what is now the United States that were intended to create a Native constituent state of the union. While these plans ultimately failed, they are indicative of the reality that, throughout much of the shared Indigenous and American history, there were both Native and non-Native political elites who were keen on the idea of incorporating Indigenous peoples into the burgeoning body politic. This paper explores why these plans arose, who the architects were that devised them, which Native peoples were involved in, and why they ultimately failed to be enacted. Although governmental relations within the US remain fraught and unpredictable, Native nations continue to wield a form of sovereignty that, while truncated, has maintained their distinctive political statuses. There is much to be learned from the exploration of these mixed successes and failures. There are other examples across the globe whereby Indigenous peoples like the Saami and the Māori have secured greater clarity of their retained autonomy through structural political arrangements with the states that have laid claim to their territories while the Ainu struggle to regain their status.

Keywords : indigenous, sovereignty, diplomacy, intergovernmental

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