

# Alaska Indigenous

BY AQUKKASUK | JANUARY 21, 2017 · 10:26 PM

## Federally recognized tribes should brace for possible termination policy under Trump

Whether we like it or not, Saglutupaġataq (“the compulsive liar” in Iñupiatun) is now president of the United States and Republicans control Congress. Federally recognized Alaska Native and American Indian tribes should brace for the worst, including the possibility that Congress may move to terminate federally recognized tribes.

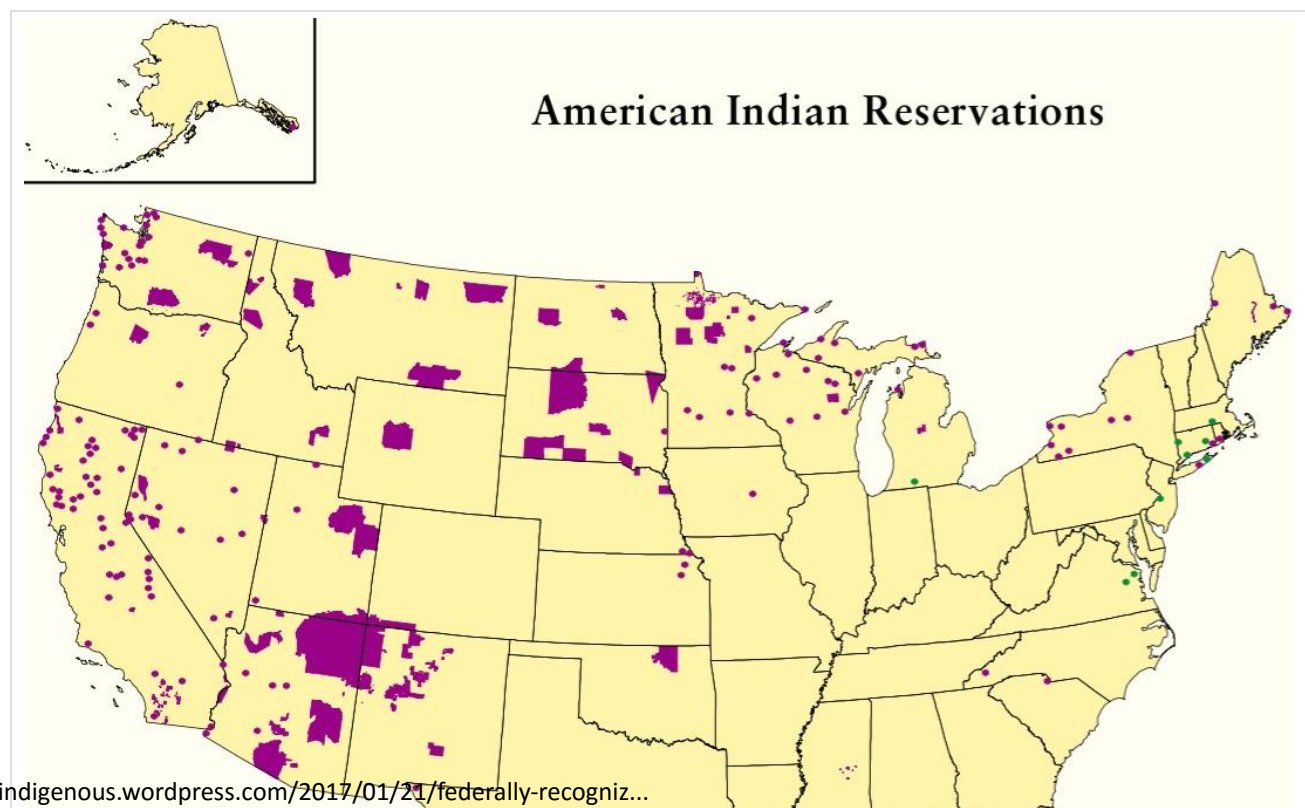
The termination era of 1953 to 1968 involved Congress stripping tribes of their lands and criminal jurisdiction. The policy was thinly disguised as an attempt to lift American Indians and Alaska Natives out of poverty by assimilating them into mainstream society. However the real goal was to privatize and ransack American Indian and Alaska Native lands.

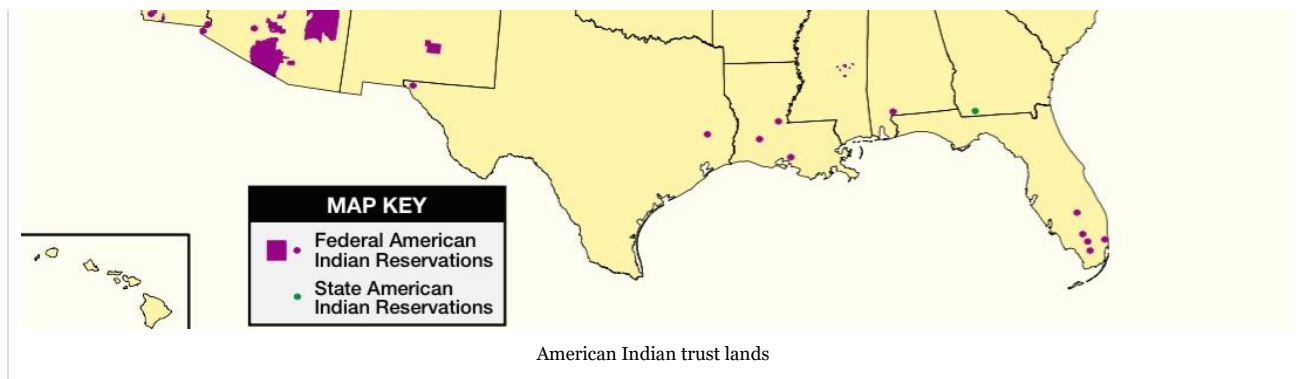
From the American Indian Relief Council:

From 1953-1964 109 tribes were terminated and federal responsibility and jurisdiction was turned over to state governments. Approximately 2,500,000 acres of trust land was removed from protected status and 12,000 Native Americans lost tribal affiliation. The lands were sold to non-Indians the tribes lost official recognition by the U.S. government....Public Law 280 which was passed in 1953 turned power over to state governments to enforce most of the regular criminal laws on reservations as they were doing in other parts of the state.

Saglutupaġataq’s administration apparently [began mobilizing](#) to pursue the privatization of Indian lands as early as October 2016 with the formation of his 27 member Native American Affairs Coalition. The Coalition is chaired by “Cherokee” pretendian Rep. Markwayne Mullin. Like the termination policy of more than 60 years ago, the Coalition contends that impoverished tribes are saddled by federal regulations that stymie self-reliance and prosperity. Tribal lands should be privatized, it argues, so that American Indians can pursue development projects that lift them out of poverty.

Saglutupaġataq has tapped Montana Rep. Ryan Zinke for secretary of the Interior, the federal agency overseeing the Borough of Indian Affairs. Zinke is a known [fraudster](#) with little integrity. Scientific American characterizes Zinke as a “[mixed bag](#)” with an anti-environment, pro-industry [voting record](#). It is unlikely that he will be a friend to Indian Country or to Alaska Natives.





Some estimate that American Indian lands held in trust by the federal government hold as much as one fifth of the nation's oil and gas, along with significant coal reserves. Saglutupiaġataq released his "[America first](#)" energy plan hours after being sworn into office. It states the following:

Sound energy policy begins with the recognition that we have vast untapped domestic energy reserves right here in America. The Trump Administration will embrace the shale oil and gas revolution to bring jobs and prosperity to millions of Americans. We must take advantage of the estimated \$50 trillion in untapped shale, oil, and natural gas reserves, especially those on federal lands that the American people own.

American Indian reservations are federally owned lands held "[in trust](#)" for tribes. The "vast untapped domestic energy reserves" referred to in Saglutupiaġataq's energy plan are largely within American Indian reservations. These lands would need to be sold or leased to private sector corporations by the federal government in order for development to proceed. But first, tribal jurisdiction over those lands would need to be terminated by Congress and vested in states.

The termination era of 1953 to 1968 shows us that tribal lands and thus tribal governments, peoples, and cultures remain vulnerable to the whims of Congress. There is a strong possibility that American Indians may soon be fighting against a renewed and calculated assault on their political, cultural and spiritual existence.