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1 message

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In Australia, the aboriginal people are recognized based on two parameters:

- 1) self-identification as indigenous coupled with
- 2) identification as indigenous by the community the person lives in.

Here in the US, the entire federal recognition system is a mess. Many "casino tribes" are throwing out people, in some cases direct descendants of former chiefs. A new tribe is currently being formed on private land that consists of such disenrolled and nonstatus Indians who are fullblood or close to fullblood. Their only requirement, apart from being fullblood or close to fullblood, is that everyone live within the tribal boundaries without moving away and live as close to the traditional lifestyle as is feasible, which means mainly farming or sheep raising and other Amish-type living or homesteading-type living, and honor the mandates and callings of the tribe, which include building houses for tribal members right now. I met their Chief and when I told her that her tribe will never be recognized, her response was something close to, "Who cares if an illegitimate colonial government recognizes you or does not recognize you? Do the Amish care what the government thinks of them? New tribes were continuously being formed for tens of thousands of years on this land. Today we may be perceived as unrecognized but a hundred years from today, we will be hailed as the most traditional tribe in the country."

Next, consider the case of some indigenous people I met at the Gathering of Nations. How about those people? How will revamping the federal recognition of tribes help those indigenous people? Their traditional healer said, "Generations ago, people from my tribe were sold as slaves to distant foreign lands. When we contacted our tribe in the US, they were excited and invited us to join their festivities but were not eager to accept us into their tribe. Ironically, we still have the language and culture while our original tribe in the US have lost their language and culture. If we apply for visas to return to the US as former Indian slaves who were shipped overseas, we will have "shown ties" to America and we will never get visas. So we came to the US on student visas or work visas or illegally and have been here for a few generations now. We live as families in rural US like in the traditional times, practicing our religion, speaking our Native American language and keeping our traditions alive. We know we will never be federally recognized but we are far more legit than our original tribe that is federally recognized."