



# DEMOCRACY PROS & CONS

From an Indigenous Perspective

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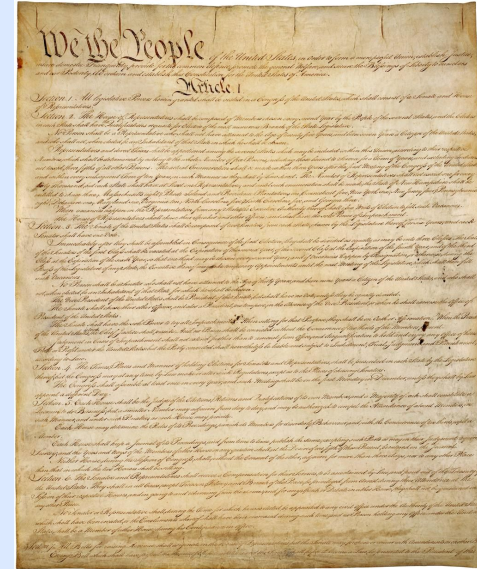
# Democracy Did Not Begin With the U.S.A

Indigenous nations had established systems of government long before the United States  
Governments differed across nations and communities

Many emphasized:

- Consensus
- Collective responsibility
- Political participation
- Diplomacy
- Accountability to the community

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy is one well-known example of an Indigenous political system



# The Constitution & Tribal Nations



## Article I, § 8, cl. 3

### **Indian Commerce Clause**

Congress has the power to regulate commerce **“WITH the Indian Tribes”** vs “among the several States”



## Article II, § 2, cl. 2

### **Treaty Clause**

The president has the power, with Senate approval, to make treaties



## Article VI, cl. 2

### **Supremacy Clause**

Treaties made under U.S. authority are **“supreme Law of the Land.”**



# The Pros of Democracy



## Voice

Voting and political participation



## Representation

Serving in government and public office



## Advocacy

Influencing legislation and public policy



## Accountability

Challenging government decisions through democratic institutions

# The Problem of Majority Rule

Democracy often means the majority decides.  
But what happens when the majority  
consistently outnumbers Indigenous  
communities?

**The Challenge:** Political power is not distributed  
equally simply because everyone can vote.

**The Tension:** Majority rule can conflict with the  
rights of sovereign tribal nations.



# Democracy vs. Sovereignty



## American Democracy

Majority Rule  
Popular Participation  
Representation  
Elected Leadership  
Federal/State Political Systems



## Tribal Sovereignty

Self-Government  
Self-Determination  
Political Independence  
Tribal Governance  
Government-to-government relationship

# Democracy Is a Tool, Not a Guarantee



## Pros

Voice & participation  
Representation  
Political advocacy  
Government accountability



## Cons

Majority domination  
Unequal political power  
Historical exclusion  
Threats to sovereignty

Thank You  
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