



Developing Effective SOPs for Tribal Environmental Programs

Alaska Tribal Conference on Environmental Management
March 25, 2026

www.tribaltab.org





The Tribal Technical Assistance to Brownfields (Tribal TAB) program supports Indigenous communities in protecting and restoring sacred lands.

Who We Are

Tribal TAB is a collaborative partnership between KSU, ITEP, and ANTHC.



What We Do

The Tribal TAB network provides free technical assistance to all federally recognized Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, and other Tribal entities.



Contact Us

Tribal-TAB@ksu.edu

How We Can Assist

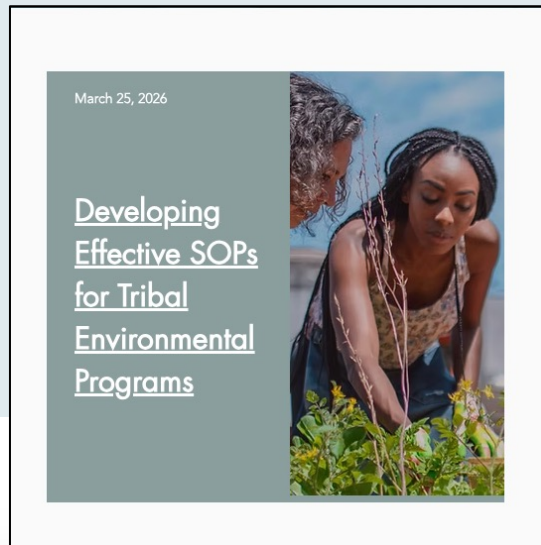
- ❖ Help identifying & prioritizing brownfields
- ❖ Tribal Response Program resources
- ❖ Tribal Brownfields Knowledge Circle
- ❖ Identify potential funding
- ❖ Brownfields for renewable energy & energy sovereignty
- ❖ Incorporate culture & tradition in brownfields efforts
- ❖ Planning & redevelopment visioning
- ❖ Review of technical documents
- ❖ And much, much more

Templates & Resources

Visit

www.tribaltab.org/developingeffectivesopsfortribalenvironmentalprograms

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OR



Agenda

- SOPs – Do We Need Them?
- What is an SOP?
- Benefits of SOPs
- Organization Goals
- Have it Your Way
- Effective SOP
- Writing and Implementing an SOP
- Programmatic SOPs
- Field Specific SOPs
- Group Exercise & Presentation

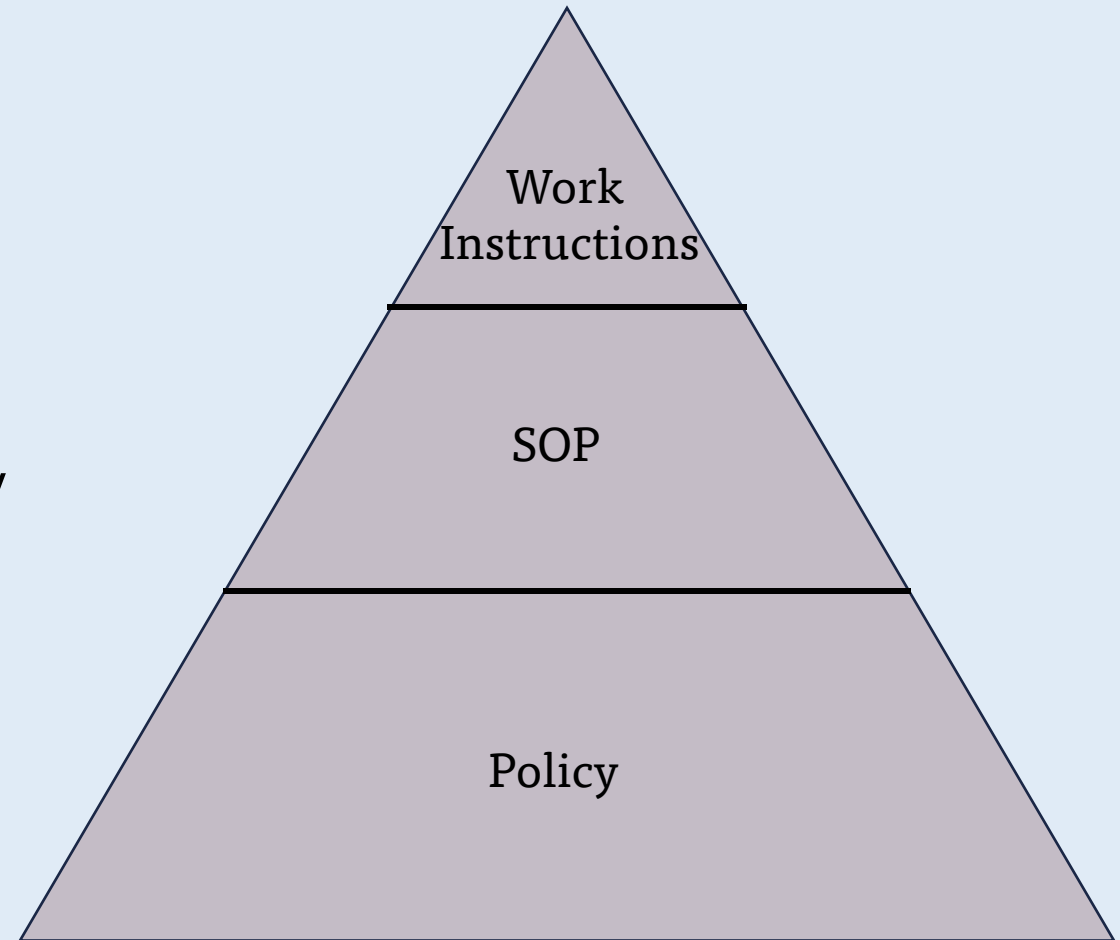
Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) – Do We Need Them?

- <https://youtu.be/FN2RM-CHkul?si=nuoWqu8ApHCLb0KC>



What is an SOP?

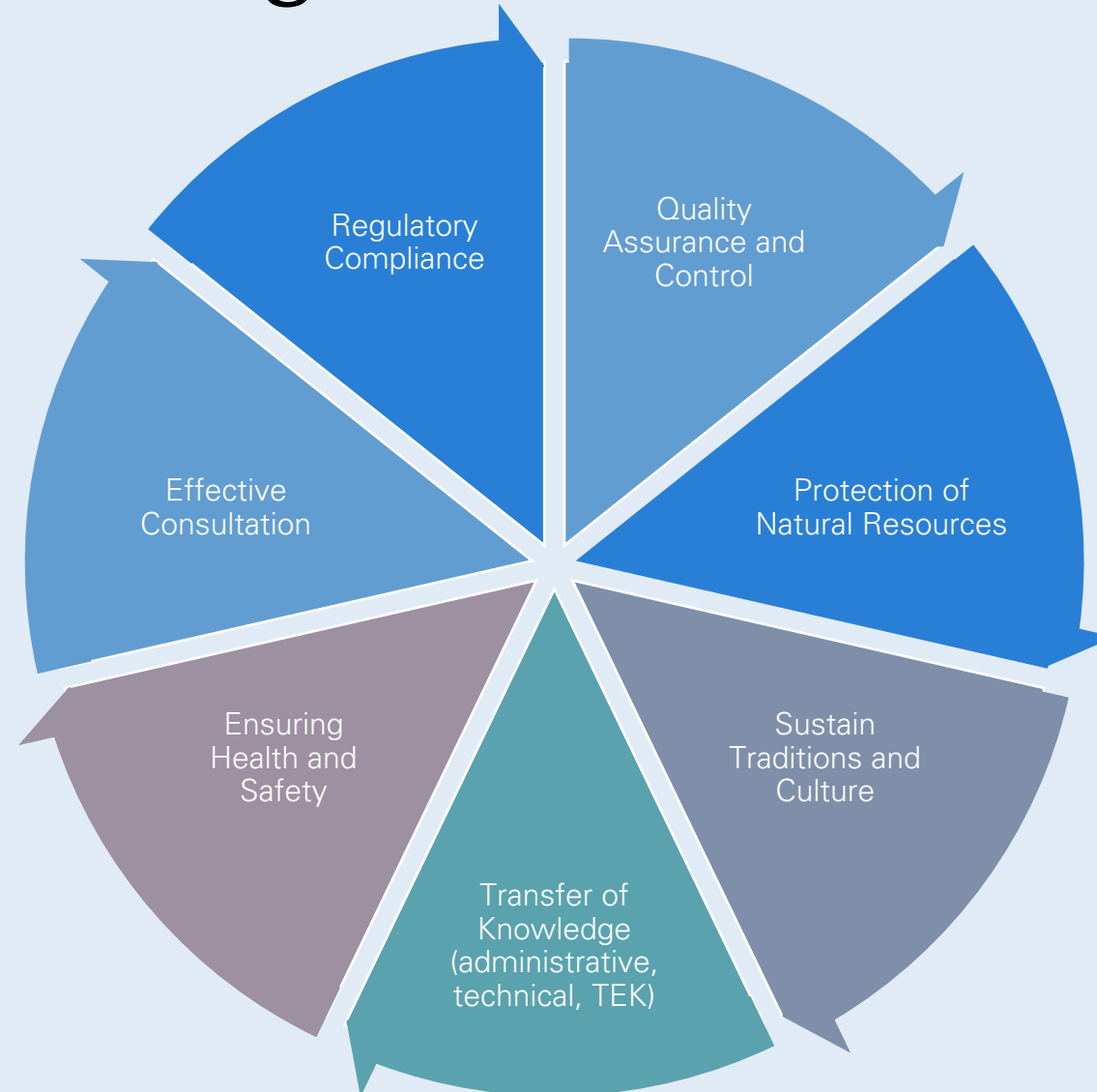
- An SOP describes how to complete an activity to meet specific standards and requirements.
- An SOP can be a procedure or any document that describes how a process works.
- An SOP is a response to a policy or a regulation.
- Work Instructions are more detailed



Benefits of SOPs

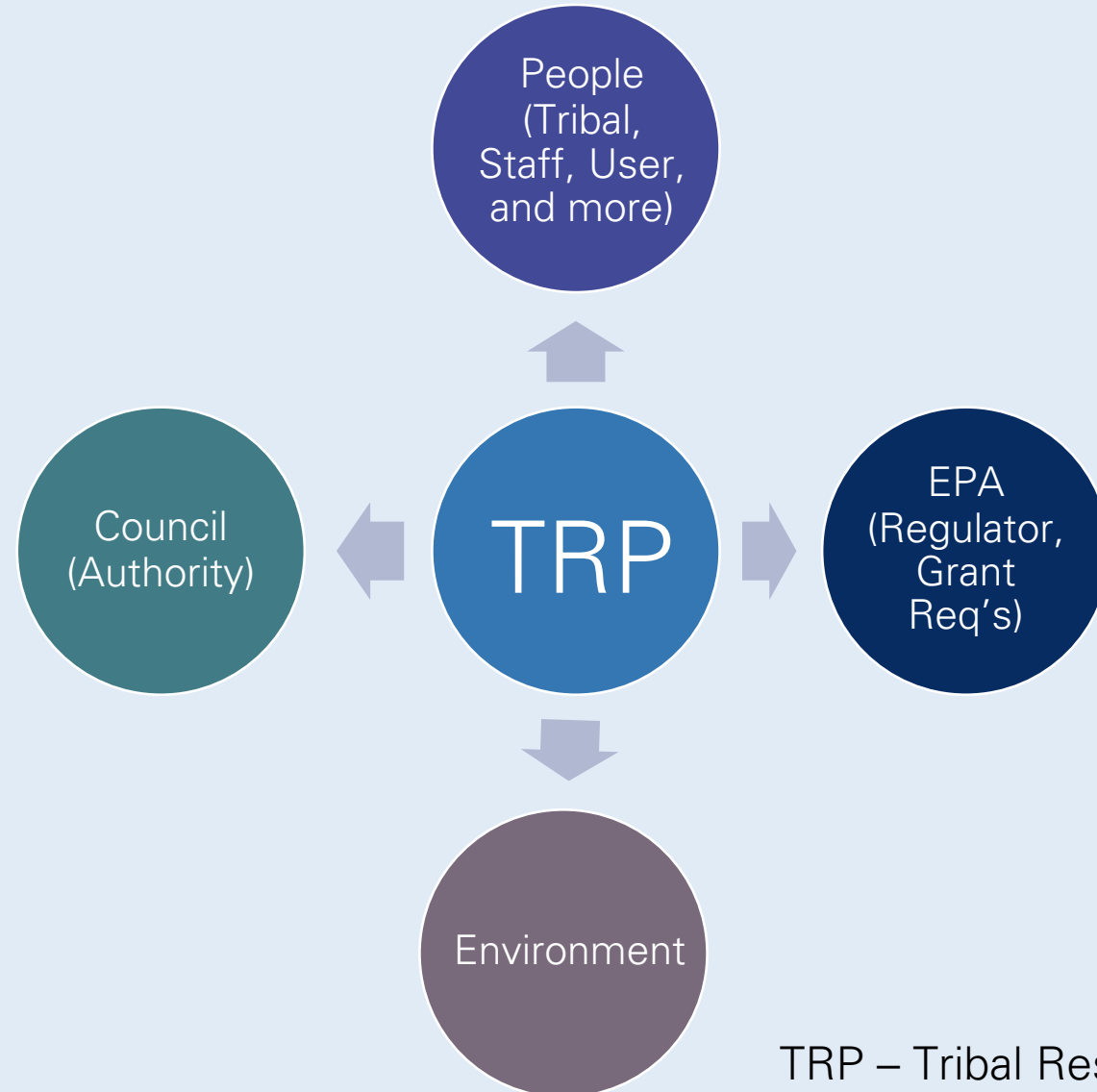
- Minimizes variation and re-work.
- Reduces miscommunication and safety risks.
- Increases efficiency, consistency and accuracy in data collection.
- Documents expectations for all tasks.
- Ensure compliance with regulations and quality standards.
- Core component of training program.

Organization Goals



Organization Goals

- It's all About Relationships
- Results-Oriented
- The art of getting things done



TRP – Tribal Response Program
Section 128(a)

Audience Questions

Which element drives your organization's goal?

- Use the elements on the previous chart

What is your greatest barrier in getting things done?

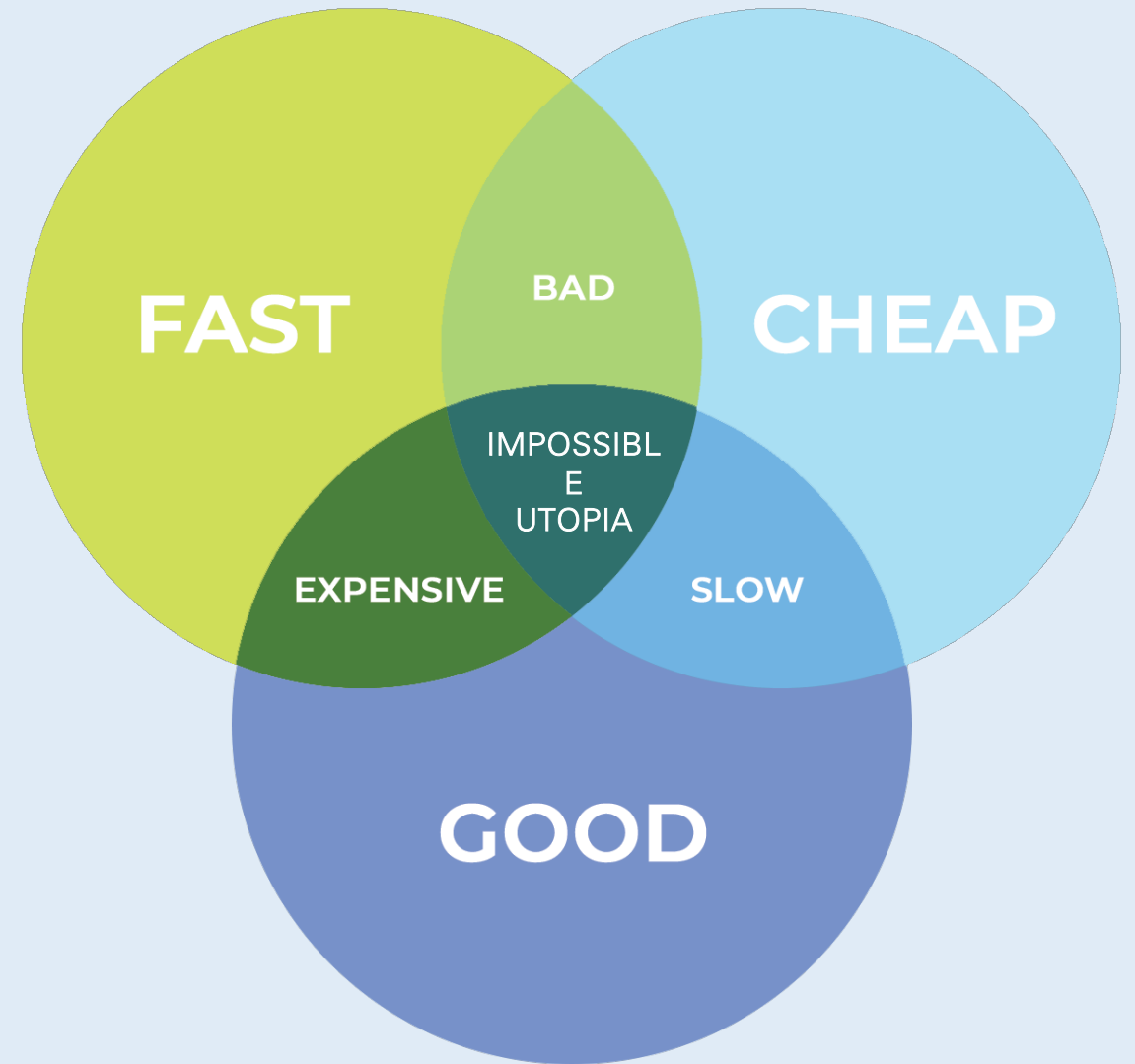
SOP Training - ATCEM



Possible SOP Goals

- Accuracy
- Deliver Results
- Responsiveness
- Center of Knowledge
- Great Communicator
- Partnering
- Engagement
- Safely Perform Work
- Community Health
- Consistent Quality
- Strict Regulatory Compliance
- Protector of Natural Resources
- Adaptive to Change
- Mission Ready

Have It Your Way



Have It Your Way – You Can!



Effective SOPs

SOPs work well when:

- Tasks are standard, routine, and require repeated instructions or fall under a specific regulation
- Traceable
- Consistently reproduced
- Staff understand and comply
- Meet quality standards

SOPs fail when:

- They are too detailed or overly complex
- Feedback from employees using the SOP is ignored
- Difficult to find or access
- Employees are not trained on the SOP
- When they are outdated

Elements of an Effective SOP

- Written in a concise, step-by-step and easy-to read format.
- Contain sufficient detail to allow someone with limited experience or knowledge to reproduce the task when unsupervised.
- Includes visual tools such as process flowcharts and diagrams to aid understanding.
- Draft SOPs should be tested by a variety of staff before finalizing.
- Information must be current to be useful.

SOP's are like Recipes

- Who is going to make it?
- What are the ingredients?
- When must it be made?
- How do you make it?
- Why are you making it?



Elements of an Effective SOP – Who, What, and When?

- **Roles, Responsibilities, Resources, and Timing:**
 - Identify the roles/entities that are directly involved in the process
 - Identify resources needed to complete the procedure, such as equipment, specific training, or relevant documents
 - Discuss cautions or warnings related to the procedures or materials used in the process
 - Indicate when the procedure needs to be performed and how often

Elements of an Effective SOP – How?

- **The Procedures:**
 - Describe what needs to be done.
 - Identify each step in the process in the exact order that they must be performed.
 - If the process is complex, you may need to include sub-steps to provide additional detail or attach a detailed work instruction.
 - Include diagrams, images, or illustrations when appropriate.
 - Procedures must include safety measures (field)

Elements of an Effective SOP – Why?

- **SOP Purpose or Goal:**
 - Define the objectives: What is the purpose of the SOP, and what do you want to achieve?
 - Indicate the specific processes that require documentation based on their importance and risk factors
 - Indicate who is responsible for the SOP and who is the target audience

Elements of an Effective SOP – Suggested Format

- Title Page with a Title and Document Number
- Table of Contents
- Purpose
- Scope
- Responsibilities
- Term Definitions
- Tools or Requirements
- Procedure
- Related Documents
- Revision History
- Original Date
- Version Date
- Approval and Verification Signature

Writing and Implementing an SOP

- Determine the SOP format – simple checklist, written procedure, visual guide, and organizational requirements
- Ensure you have the right staff helping to develop the SOP: those who routinely perform the process, subject matter experts, and experienced SOP writers
- Include all steps in the process, but remember that if you write it down, you will be expected to follow it.
- **Test the SOP, and revise based on the results of testing**
- Train staff on the SOP and distribute to relevant groups
- Plan for updates and revisions to the SOP (annual review?)

Suggested Brownfields SOPs

Programmatic:

- Preparing a Health & Safety Plan
- Preparing a QAPP
- Completing an Eligibility Worksheet
- Developing a Site Inventory
- Preparing a Property Profile
- Entering Data into ACRES
- Tribal Member Engagement
- Public Notices

Field Specific:

- Site Inspections or Monitoring
- Collecting Soil Samples
- Collecting Groundwater or Surface Water Samples
- Collecting Soil Vapor Samples
- Field Equipment Calibration
- Sample Custody and Handling

Audience Questions

Are you most concerned about Programmatic or Field Specific SOPs?

Which SOPs are most needed in your organization?

SOPs - ATCEM last question



The Four Elements Required by CERCLA Section 128(a)(2)

1. Timely Survey and Inventory of Brownfields
2. Oversight and Enforcement Authority
3. Mechanisms and resources to provide meaningful opportunities for public participation
4. Mechanisms for approval of cleanup plans and verification that cleanup is complete.

Programmatic SOPs

Meet Requirements of the TRP128(a) Grants

- The Four Elements
- Public Record Requirement

Organizational Responsiveness

- **SOPs are the baseline**
- Operational Effectiveness – identify, adapt, improve
- Accountability and Transparency – audits, reporting, evaluating

Performance Measures

- What do we measure?
- Metrics for Safety, Resource Protection, Responsiveness, Budget Management, and others.

Field Specific SOPs

Written set of instructions that describe in detail how to safely perform work involving hazardous substances.

- Working around hazardous substances or potentially hazardous substances
- Working with hazardous equipment (drill rigs and excavators)
- Ensure consistent quality
- Integrity of results (defensible)
 - Completeness
 - Accuracy
 - Precision
 - Representativeness
- Ability to replicate results
- Always incorporate safety



Templates & Resources for Group Exercise

Visit

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OR



Group Exercise

- Group together with your Organization partners
- Write your organizational goal, or create one from the template – 4 minutes
- Select a single element you are passionate about – 2 minutes
- Select a task or deliverable that aligns with your element – 2 minutes
- Groups will have 22 minutes to write an SOP – We are not expecting completed SOPs, but we want to get you started
- Selected groups will report out their findings



What's Wrong with this SOP?

Example 1

- Open Discussion

Example 2

- Open Discussion

Example 3

- Open Discussion

SOPs Require Commitment

- If you write it, you must do it
- Test it – make sure it works
- Know your audience
- Know your customer
- Train your staff
- Prepare for staffing changes
- Review and Revise (annually)

We Want to Hear Your Feedback

Please provide feedback on today's training:

Scan this QR image from your smartphone

Or

Complete a paper copy found on the tables





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Let's Connect!

Scan to get in touch with a Tribal TAB team member or to join our mailing list



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AKANA

Akana is a Native American owned professional services firm specialized in providing environmental, planning, design, and construction services in Indian Country. Akana was established in 1990 and currently has over 200 employees working from offices in Oregon, Washington, Nevada and Illinois, as well as remote workers located throughout the USA. Our Environmental Services Group specializes in planning, permitting, site investigation, remediation, brownfield redevelopment, and environmental compliance.