


# Customer Segment Story: NATIVE AMERICAN (INDIAN) NATIONS

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Although the Native American (Indian) Nations may have had to give up most of their land over the years, they retained their right of self-government. Tribal governments are like other state governments, i.e., self-regulating bodies under the protection of the federal government. They provide many services to their members, ranging from health care and housing assistance to education and economic development assistance. There are more than 300 federally recognized Native American Tribes (also commonly referred to as Nations or Bands) in the lower 48 states, and more than 200 Native entities in Alaska. About 250 tribes are on the list of federally non-recognized tribes, with about 150 of these petitioning for federal recognition. Like any modern bureaucracy, records management and protection is a core function of Native American Tribes. In other words, for vendors of office equipment, Native American Tribes may be viewed as an additional channel for government sales – one that is expanding at a rapid pace.

Bob Pulley, Property Manager for the Ho-Chunk Nation in Tomah, Wisconsin, can attest to this fact. Six years ago he had four 4-drawer FireKing fireproof files in an old office which doubled as the “records room.” Now, he protects the tribe’s vital records in 34 fireproof filing cabinets (purchased from Corporate Express out of LaCrosse, Wisconsin) in a special converted office and plans more purchases to keep up with the growth of the tribe. His responsibilities include the management and protection of documents and records regarding home ownership and property management for all the 6,159 members of the Ho-Chunk Nation, who currently hold title to over 2,000 acres of land.

By way of another example, consider what happened in 2003 to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, a Tribe comprised of 2,700 members located in Southwestern Michigan/Northwestern Indiana. Two fires of undetermined origin completely destroyed the Tribal administration office building and the maintenance building located on the tribe’s property. Due to the fact that the Tribe’s vital records were stored in UL-rated fireproof filing cabinets, come the following Monday after the fire, the tribal officers had at their disposal all the paperwork required to keep the business of the tribe running (as well as deal with the ensuing insurance investigation and assist the authorities with the criminal investigation).

The decision to store the Tribe's vital records in UL-rated fireproof filing cabinets can be attributed to tribal leaders, who also had the foresight to ensure that the tribe instituted a policy of regularly backing up copies of vital records; as well as storing some records at different locations.

Mr. H. "Ted" Fenberbosch, Tribal Operations Officer, admitted that he was not 100% certain the fireproof filing cabinets would protect their contents in the event of an actual fire. Once the salvage process began, however, Mr. Fenberbosch commented that "the cabinets worked wonderfully, and we wished we had more fireproof cabinets since not all the filing cabinets in the building were fireproof, and some valuable information was in fact lost to the blaze."

Also, in 1987, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that tribal governments have the right to regulate and control gambling within their boundaries. The 11 Wisconsin tribes that offer gambling made more than \$400 million in profits in 2002 at their 23 casinos, up nearly 60 percent in five years, according to a legislative report. This trend is echoed nationwide – the fact of the matter is that Indian gaming is a big business, and it is only going to get bigger. This growth will lead to an improved standard of living, which will cause a need for more products that store, protect, and manage vital records and documents, especially that which proves ownership of property and other assets.

### **For Further Information:**

For a list of Native American nations listed alphabetically go to:

<http://www.dickshovel.com/trbindex.html>

For a partial list of Native American nations by state go to:

<http://www.ntec.org/reports/states.html>