

# NON-VERBAL THREAT COMMUNICATION FOR TRIBAL SECURITY

A Tribal Security Awareness Toolkit — National Native Justice Institute | [www.nativejustice.us](http://www.nativejustice.us)

## ■ NON-VERBAL THREAT INDICATORS IN TRIBAL SECURITY SETTINGS

Most security incidents are preceded by observable pre-attack behaviors — non-verbal indicators that a person is preparing to escalate to violence, escape, or cause disruption. Security officers who can recognize and respond to these behavioral indicators before an incident reaches its peak have a significant tactical and safety advantage. In tribal courts and security settings, where cultural communication norms vary and historical trauma shapes community interactions, developing this awareness requires both technical training and cultural competency.

- 👁️ The single most important security skill is observation. Officers who are looking at their phones, talking to colleagues, or focused on paperwork miss the behavioral cues that precede almost every security incident.
- ⚠️ Pre-attack indicators are rarely single signals. They appear in clusters and in context. Train yourself to read patterns, not isolated behaviors.
- 🧠 Confirmation bias is a threat awareness danger: if you've decided someone is not a threat, you will unconsciously discount indicators that suggest otherwise. Maintain active, objective observation at all times.
- 👉 Non-verbal awareness combined with de-escalation skill is the most powerful security combination available to a non-armed tribal security officer.

## ■ UNDERSTANDING NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

### The Baseline Concept

Effective threat detection begins with establishing a behavioral baseline — what is normal for this environment, this population, and this time of day. Deviations from baseline are what demand attention, not any single behavior in isolation.

- What is the normal affect, movement pattern, and behavior of people in this space? (Waiting room: seated, using phones, quiet conversation)
- What behaviors deviate from that baseline? (Pacing, scanning, repeated entry and exit, unusual agitation or emotional flatness)
- Context matters: a person crying in a courthouse waiting area is expected. A person laughing loudly and clapping their hands is a baseline deviation worth monitoring.

## ■ PRE-ATTACK BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS

### Physical Arousal Indicators

- Increased respiration rate: visible rapid breathing inconsistent with physical exertion.
- Color change: flushing in the face or neck (anger, arousal) or unusual pallor (fear response).
- Perspiration: sweating in a cool environment or at a rate inconsistent with temperature or activity.
- Carotid pulse visibility: a visibly pulsing neck artery indicates extreme physiological arousal.

### Preparatory Behaviors

- Target glancing: the person repeatedly looks at their intended target (judge, officer, victim) and then away in a pattern that suggests rehearsal.
- Self-grooming: adjusting clothing, touching hair, or straightening appearance immediately before approaching or acting — a self-calming behavior common before confrontation.
- **Weapons check** – Touching or patting a specific location on the body (waistband, ankle, pocket) where a weapon might be concealed. This is one of the most reliable pre-attack indicators available to security officers.
- **Bladed stance** – Turning the dominant side away from the officer while facing them — a protective behavior that conceals the weapon hand.
- Dropping of personal items: setting down a bag, purse, or jacket before an action — removing encumbrances in preparation for movement.

### Behavioral Red Flags in Court Settings

- An individual who arrived with others suddenly separating from the group and moving toward a restricted area or protected person.
- Someone who was calm during earlier proceedings becoming visibly agitated immediately following a ruling or verdict.
- A person in the gallery who is not watching the proceedings but is instead watching security officers and their movement patterns.
- An individual who has been escorted out returning to the facility through a secondary or unmonitored entry point.

## RESOURCES, GRANTS & SUPPORT

Funding, Training, and Support Resources — Tribal Security Non-Verbal Threat Recognition Programs | [www.nativejustice.us](http://www.nativejustice.us)

### FEDERAL GRANT RESOURCES

#### Court Security Funding

- **COPS Tribal Resources Grant (TRG)** – Funds tribal public safety including court security staffing, training, and equipment. [cops.usdoj.gov/tribalresources](http://cops.usdoj.gov/tribalresources)
- **CTAS – Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation** – DOJ consolidated tribal funding for courts, law enforcement, and security programs. [justice.gov/tribal](http://justice.gov/tribal)
- **BJA Tribal Justice Programs** – Supports tribal court operations and court security capacity. [bja.ojp.gov/program/tribal-justice](http://bja.ojp.gov/program/tribal-justice)
- **FEMA Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program (THSGP)** – Annual DHS funding for tribal security infrastructure and emergency preparedness. [fema.gov/tribal](http://fema.gov/tribal)

#### Behavioral Threat Recognition

- **DHS – Behavioral Detection Resources** – DHS behavioral detection resources and training tools applicable to tribal court security. [dhs.gov](http://dhs.gov)
- **FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit Resources** – FBI behavioral threat recognition materials for law enforcement and security professionals. [fbi.gov](http://fbi.gov)
- **National Center for State Courts – Court Security** – Court security threat recognition standards and training resources. [ncsc.org](http://ncsc.org)

### STATE & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **State Court Security Standards** – Most state court administrative offices publish court security standards applicable to tribal courts under intergovernmental agreements. Contact your State Court Administrator.
- **State Homeland Security Grants (SHSGP)** – Tribal court security programs may be eligible for state-administered FEMA homeland security funding. Contact your State Administrative Agency (SAA).
- **Tribal Law & Order Act (TLOA) Resources** – TLOA expanded tribal justice authority and DOJ technical assistance for tribal courts and security programs.
- **Grants.gov Tribal Search Tool** – Search all federal grants available to tribal entities. [grants.gov](http://grants.gov) (filter: Tribal Government eligibility)

### HELPFUL TIPS FOR TRIBAL PROGRAMS & LEADERS

<p><b>Integrate Behavioral Observation into Pre-Shift Routines</b></p> <p>A structured pre-shift observation protocol — establishing the behavioral baseline for the day’s environment and docket — builds the habit of active, systematic threat detection.</p>	<p><b>Use DHS and FBI Video Training Resources</b></p> <p>DHS and FBI provide free behavioral threat recognition video training resources. These are highly effective for building pattern recognition skills and can be incorporated into annual security training at no cost.</p>
<p><b>Conduct Regular Observation Practice Scenarios</b></p> <p>Monthly scenario practice where security officers identify planted behavioral indicators — in their own facility or using video — builds the pattern recognition skills that protect courts.</p>	<p><b>Reward Officers Who Identify and Report Behavioral Concerns</b></p> <p>A security culture that values and rewards behavioral threat reporting — even when the concern turns out to be benign — produces officers who stay actively engaged and alert throughout their shifts.</p>

### KEY WEBLINKS

National Native Justice Institute	<a href="http://www.nativejustice.us">www.nativejustice.us</a>
National Center for State Courts	<a href="http://ncsc.org">ncsc.org</a>
COPS Tribal Resources Grant	<a href="http://cops.usdoj.gov/tribalresources">cops.usdoj.gov/tribalresources</a>
BJA Tribal Justice Programs	<a href="http://bja.ojp.gov/program/tribal-justice">bja.ojp.gov/program/tribal-justice</a>
DHS Behavioral Detection	<a href="http://dhs.gov">dhs.gov</a>
FBI Behavioral Resources	<a href="http://fbi.gov">fbi.gov</a>

### PARTNER WITH NNJI — WE ARE READY TO SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY

**TAKE ACTION TODAY** — Contact NNJI at [www.nativejustice.us](http://www.nativejustice.us) to schedule training, consultation, or access resources.

*Strengthening Tribal Justice — One Community at a Time*