

Where AI Fits in Your Operation

A short, opinionated guide for tribal organizations, indigenous non-profits, and tribal enterprises trying to figure out what to actually do with AI — without buying the wrong thing or hiring the wrong consultant.

The honest starting point

Most organizations we sit with don't need AI. They need to delete a couple of meetings and turn on a feature in software they already pay for. AI delivers real value in a specific, narrow set of situations — and our goal here is to help you tell whether you're in that group.

If you read these signs and recognize your organization in three or more of them, the next step is a 15-minute conversation. If not, save your money for the things that will actually matter this quarter.

Five signs AI actually fits

1. You have a recurring report someone hand-builds.

The single highest-leverage AI use case is the weekly executive brief that someone spends three hours building from five different exports. Pull from systems you already have, summarize, surface what changed. Pennies per brief, half a day saved per week.

2. You have data trapped in PDFs and emails for the people who need it.

Tribal contacts in CRM, member data in another platform, grant submissions in a third tool. The data exists. AI is good at routing and summarizing across systems and presenting it where humans actually look.

3. You have a clear repetitive workflow without novel judgment.

"Email lapsed members about renewing dues" — yes. "Decide which families receive emergency assistance" — no. The first is a workflow with clear inputs and a clear template; AI shortens it from four hours to five minutes of review.

4. You've already shipped at least one piece of operational software staff actually use.

If your team is still on shared Google Sheets and three different inboxes, AI is decoration on a missing foundation. The first job is a real CRM. AI on top of working tools is force multiplication; AI without them is theater.

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5. You have a decision-maker who can say yes to a 4-week project.

AI projects ship fast or they die. The first useful version of an executive brief should land in production in 30 days. If governance means a 60-day procurement review, you're not blocked on technology — you're blocked on the org. We can work with that, but we need to scope the smallest possible thing first.

Three signs AI is not the answer (yet)

- **The pitch is "5x growth."** AI is a productivity tool for work you're already doing. Anybody promising 5x is selling.
- **You can't describe the problem in a sentence.** "We need AI" isn't a problem. "We need to know which 2,400 members are at risk of not renewing this quarter" is.
- **Your data is fundamentally bad.** Bad data + AI = confidently wrong answers at scale. Fix the data first; AI second.

If this resonates: the cleanest first step is a free 15-minute call. We'll talk through your situation, identify whether one of the "yes" signs is acute for you, and tell you straight if AI isn't the right move. No pitch, no follow-up sequence. → lanierdev.com/contact

Why this guide exists

Lanier is a small AI consulting practice. We've spent the last decade building software for indigenous-serving organizations — most prominently as the engineering team behind *destinationnativeamerica.com* and the internal hub for AIT (formerly AIANTA). The continuity is the whole point: there aren't many engineering teams that have been in this room for ten years, and that experience shapes which AI moves we recommend.

This 1-pager is what we'd hand to a leadership team in the first 10 minutes of a conversation. Print it, share it with your board, keep it in the desk drawer next to the next AI vendor pitch. If it spares you one bad procurement decision, it's done its job.