

# Frequently Asked ?s

What term should I use: American Indian or Native American?

It depends! The term **Native American** came into use in the 1960s and is used by the US Census to count people who identify as American Indian or as Alaska Native. Many tribes now prefer the term **American Indian**, but people also have personal preferences; listen to how an individual identifies herself or himself.

How many American Indians live in North Carolina?

According to the 2020 US Census, over 130,000 American Indians live in North Carolina.

How many American Indian tribes are in North Carolina?

There are currently eight American Indian tribal communities recognized by the state of North Carolina: Coharie, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Haliwa-Saponi, Lumbee, Meherrin, Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation, Sappony, and Waccamaw Siouan.

Who is an American Indian?

Generally, an Indian is a person who has Indian ancestry and is recognized as an Indian by a tribe and/or the United States. Each tribe establishes its own rules for tribal membership. While many people claim some American Indian ancestry, this alone does not make them Indian in the eyes of tribes or state or federal governments. Continued family, social, and community connections, and knowledge of tribal history are examples of criteria used by tribes to determine cultural identity.

What's an Indian tribe?

An Indian tribe is a body of people who are bound together by blood ties, who trace their American ancestry prior to European settlement, and are socially, politically, and often religiously organized. Members of a tribe usually live in or around a defined territory, and in many cases speak a common language or dialect.

Don't most American Indians live on reservations?

No. Around 88 percent live in urban and rural areas. Not all tribes have reservations, but many have "home communities" to which they maintain family and social ties.

How many American Indian languages are there?

Around 300 Native languages were spoken in North America before the arrival of Europeans—around 175 can still be heard today. Linguists predict that more than 80 percent of these will stop being used within the next generation. Most North American Indians speak English as their main language.

What's a powwow?

Powwow comes from a Narragansett word that referred to curing ceremonies. It has come to mean a celebration and social gathering that honors Indian traditions through dancing, drumming, and singing. Although powwows may be held to honor an individual or to mark a special occasion, they are usually social events, often with drumming and dancing competitions.

What's an "Indian stereotype"?

Inauthentic, unrealistic, and offensive images of Indians have been used to sell everything from butter to tobacco to cars, and have served—and continue to serve—as mascots for sports teams. Despite efforts to correct or end the use of stereotypes, distorted imagery and misinformation about Native peoples are common. Stereotypes are often the result of oversimplifications of real traditions and lifeways.