

Some Native American Basics

Second Annual Native American and Indigenous Peoples Day

Texas Christian University

October 2, 2017

Native American Population

- Whereas at one time indigenous peoples in North America comprised 100% of its population, as of the 2010 U.S. Census, American Indians and Alaska Natives, totaled 5.2 million, or 1.7% of the U.S. population (which includes 2.3 million in combination with one or more other races).
- In 1900 the U.S. census counted only 470 American Indians in Texas, but in 2010 the number had risen to 315,264.
- Texas has the fourth largest American Indian population in the U.S, with larger populations residing only in California, Oklahoma, and Arizona.
- There are currently 567 federally recognized tribes (and many unrecognized tribes), as well as 334 federal and state recognized reservations.
- The Bureau of Indian Affairs defines a federal Indian reservation as an area of land reserved for a tribe or tribes by treaty or other agreement with the United States as permanent tribal homelands, and where the federal government holds title to the land in trust on behalf of the tribe.
- Over one-half of the total U.S. American Indian and Alaska Native population now live outside their tribal lands. The Urban Inter-Tribal Center of Texas, located in Dallas, indicates that 62,191 American Indians and Alaska Natives live within its 11-county service area (<http://uitct.com/uitct-history-mission-2/>).

Native Americans, the United States, and Texas

- A federally recognized tribe is an American Indian or Alaska Native tribal entity that is recognized as having a government-to-government relationship with the United States, and is eligible for funding and services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the fundamental principle that has guided federal Indian law is that tribes possess a nationhood status and retain inherent powers of self-government.
- Native American tribes have limited sovereignty, that is, they possess the right to form their own governments; to make and enforce civil and criminal laws; to tax; to establish and determine tribal citizenship; to license and regulate activities within their jurisdiction; to zone; and to exclude persons from tribal lands.
- The United States has a federal Indian trust responsibility, that is, a legal obligation to protect tribal treaty rights, lands, assets, and resources, as well as a duty to carry out the mandates of federal law with respect to American Indian and Alaska Native tribes.
- American Indians and Alaska Natives are citizens of the United States and of the individual states, counties, cities, and towns where they reside. They can also become citizens of their tribes or villages as enrolled tribal members. As citizens, they pay taxes.
- While many tribes are similar, each one is different and must be understood in its own right, having its own culture and social and governmental organizations.
- Although at one time hundreds of Native American groups were located in Texas, three federally recognized tribes currently live in the state: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (Livingston); Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas (Eagle Pass); and Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo (El Paso).
- Texas recognizes the Lipan Apache Tribe of Texas (McAllen).

- The word, *Texas*, comes from the Caddo word, *taysha*, meaning, “friends” or “allies.” The Spanish pronounced the Caddo term as *tejas*.
- The United States observes November as National Native American Heritage month (<https://www.bia.gov/bia/document-library/native-american-heritage-month>).
- In Texas, the last Friday in September has been designated as American Indian Heritage Day in recognition of the historic, cultural, and social contributions American Indian communities and leaders have made to the state (<http://americanindianheritagedayintexas.com/>).

Native Americans and TCU

- TCU is located on the historical homelands of the Wichita.
- N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), winner of the 1969 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, spoke at TCU’s Honors Day Convocation in 1973, and again in 1983 as part of Creative Writing Week and the opening of the extended Mary Couets Burnett library.
- From 1983-1986 the TCU community collected and sent food, clothing, and medical supplies to the Kickapoo tribe living in Eagle Pass, Texas.
- Cherokee Principal Chief Wilma Mankiller spoke at TCU in 1987.
- In 1992 a group of Native American students formed TCU’s first Native American Student Association. Larry Adams, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the time, served as the group’s advisor. Fourteen Native American students were attending the university.
- In 2012 Dan D. Brook, a Muscogee (Creek) artist, successfully completed eighteen large scale relief sculptures for TCU’s new football stadium (<http://brookstudio.net/>).
- In 2016 TCU held its first Indigenous Peoples Day symposium, and soon after, the Native and Indigenous Student Association formed.

Today’s Native Americans

- American Indians and Alaska Natives have a long and distinguished history of serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. During World Wars I and II, hundreds of Native Americans in the U.S. military, later known as Code Talkers, used their languages to send coded messages that contributed significantly to the success of the American war efforts. In 2014 there were 140,556 American Indian and Alaska Native (single race) veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.
- In 2012 there were 274,238 American Indian and Alaska Native-owned businesses.
- As of 2008 the number of American Indian and Alaska Native students enrolled in colleges and universities and the number of postsecondary degrees awarded had more than doubled in the past 30 years.
- The music, arts, and entertainment industries have seen a significant surge in Native American musicians, actors, and artists.

Want to learn more?

- Join TCU’s Native and Indigenous Student Association, which is open to both Native and Indigenous students and alumni, as well as interested and respectful non-Native students.
- Take a course at TCU related to Native Americans. Courses can be found in various departments, including History, Art History, Anthropology, English, and Religion.
- For more information on these and other opportunities, send an email to s.langston@tcu.edu.

**Much of the preceding information was obtained from the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (<https://www.bia.gov/>), the U.S. Census Bureau (<https://www.census.gov/>), and the National Congress of American Indians (<http://www.ncai.org/>).