

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE



Developed by
The Center for Parent Information and Resources



NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Dedication

This terminology guide is dedicated to Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and American Indian parents, and their children and youth with disabilities, all of whom deserve to be seen, heard, approached, and assisted by the ever-resourceful Parent Center network and other caring service providers and allies.

We invite you to visit **The Native American Resource Collection** at <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/welcome-to-the-naptac-library/> or view the QR code



NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

August 2024

**Center for Parent Information and Resources
@ SPAN Parent Advocacy Network**

Carolyn Hayer

Project Director
Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR)
chayer@spanadvocacy.org

Michele Tyler

Associate Project Director
Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR)
mt Tyler@spanadvocacy.org

Myriam Alizo

Associate Project Director
Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR)
malizo@spanadvocacy.org

Project Officer

Carmen Sanchez

Education Specialist
U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs
carmen.sanchez@ed.gov

Disclaimer

The SPAN Parent Advocacy Network, Inc. and Native American consultants produced this document under the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs Grant Number H328R230009, Center for Parent Information and Resources, Carmen Sanchez, Project Officer. The contents of this document and any documents cited herein do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education.

This product is in the public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, the citation should be:

Native American Terminology Guide, Center for Parent Information and Resources at SPAN Parent Advocacy Network, New Jersey (2024). Retrieved from
<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/native-american-terminology-guide/>

Alternate Formats:

On request, this publication can be made available in alternate formats, such as large print. For more information, contact SPAN, 973-642-8100.

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Preface

Welcome to the 2024 Guide to Terminology Related to Native Americans. This guide was developed with support from OSEP and the Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR). The intent of this document is to provide guidance to Parent Center staff, researchers and others who are sincerely interested in learning about and meaningfully interacting with American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

The guide provides definitions of frequently used terms. It includes terminology used by the Federal Government in their relationship with tribes, villages and Native Hawaiians, as well as terminology frequently used among Native community members. Occasionally, in addition to the straightforward definition, information from a Native historical, political or community perspective is offered, along with occasional tips regarding possible outreach opportunities.

Our hope is that by learning more about the terms associated with Native communities, readers of the guide will be more comfortable interacting with and outreaching to Native youth, parents, families and community members.

Author:

Joann Sebastian Morris

Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa Tribe of Michigan
Native Specialist | Writer | Educator
Contractor for Center for Parent Information and Resources

Reviewed by:

Judy Wiley

Oklahoma Apache
Native Specialist
Former Director, Native American Parent Technical Assistance Center
Contractor for Center for Parent Information and Resources

Rosie Rowe

Hawaiian
Executive Director, Leadership in Disabilities & Achievement of Hawaii
Contractor for Center for Parent Information and Resources

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

A

Aboriginal: The term aboriginal is not an acceptable collective noun to use to describe American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians. It is acceptable to use the term as an adjective, as in: the aboriginal title to a land base. It's also the acceptable collective noun for the original peoples of Australia.¹⁵

AFN: AFN is the acronym for the Alaska Federation of Natives, an advocacy organization founded in 1966 and based in Anchorage, AK. Also see Alaska Federation of Natives.

AIM: AIM is the acronym for the American Indian Movement, founded in 1966 in Minneapolis, MN. Also see American Indian Movement.

AIHEC: AIHEC is the acronym for the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, founded in 1973 in Denver, CO to provide a support network for tribal colleges and universities. Also see American Indian Higher Education Consortium, and Tribal College.

Alaska Federation of Natives: The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) is the largest statewide Native advocacy organization in Alaska. Its membership includes 158 federally recognized tribes, 141 village corporations, 10 regional corporations, and 12 regional nonprofit and tribal consortiums that contract and compact to run federal and state programs. The AFN represents around 140,000 Native peoples, about 1 out of every 5 Alaskans.¹

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act: The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) is the federal legislation passed in 1971 that extinguished the aboriginal land title of Alaska Natives to the 375 million acres of Alaska territory and its waters. In return, Alaska Natives were returned 40 million acres of land and a financial settlement. Unlike other legislation that returned land to tribes, ANCSA mandated that Alaska Natives form 13 regional corporations and about 200 village corporations. The land and settlement funds were distributed among these corporations, not among the tribes and villages of Alaska. ANCSA has remained controversial since it forced a corporate structure on extremely rural Native peoples more suited to a subsistence economy. However, some advocates point out that ANCSA freed Alaska Natives from the federal bureaucracy of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.³

Alaska Native Education Act: The Alaska Native Education Act is included as Part C of Title VI, Indian, Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native Education, within the comprehensive Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The Alaska Native Education Act, also known as the Alaska Native Education Program, supports the Federal trust responsibility to Alaska Natives, since Alaska ceased to receive educational funding from the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1983. The overall purpose of the Act is to meet the unique, cultural educational needs of Alaska Natives, wherever they reside. The program is located in the Office of Indian Education in the U.S. Department of Education. The program provides supplemental education grants to fund programs, such as those emphasizing curriculum development, student enrichment in science and mathematics, professional development for educators,

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

family literacy and dropout prevention.⁴²

TIP: Since the Act is recorded as Title VI of ESEA, Parent Center staff may hear Native community members refer to it simply as Title VI. Title VI regulations require that federal grants to schools with a significant Native student population include a Native parent committee that generally meets monthly. Presentations are allowed. Attending the meetings, making a presentation about your Parent Center/organization, and becoming familiar with the active parents can lead to further introductions to parents, youth and families in the local Native community. A list of all Title VI federally funded programs in a state can be obtained from the state education department.³⁵

Alaska Natives: Alaska Natives are generally defined as people with cultural and historical distinctions who belong to indigenous tribes and villages of Alaska. The U.S. Census Bureau defines Alaska Natives and American Indians collectively, as “a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment”(Census). The main groups historically indigenous to Alaska include Inupiaq, Yup’ik and Cup’ik (all formerly known as Eskimo), Aleut and Alutiiq (residents of the Aleutian Islands), and tribes (Athabaskan, Haida, Tlingit, and Tsimshian). Most Alaska Natives prefer their distinct aboriginal designations over a generic state-focused label. The term Eskimo is no longer acceptable. It was a generic label that’s said to mean eaters of raw meat, a label “given” to them by outsiders/enemies. They’ve returned to their original names in their Native languages: Inupiaq, Yup’ik and Cup’ik.¹³ Also see Inuit.

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

TIP: As with any culture different from your own, if you are unsure of local preferred terminology, listen to how individuals within the culture refer to themselves or how they use a specific term; or ask a community leader.³⁵

American Indian Higher Education Consortium: The American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) was founded in 1973 in Denver, CO by staff members of the first six tribal colleges to provide a support network as they worked to advance higher education opportunities in tribal/reservation communities, and to influence federal policy on American Indian higher education. AIHEC is currently a strong network of 37 tribal colleges and universities with its office in Alexandria, VA.² Also see AIHEC, and Tribal College.

American Indian Movement: The American Indian Movement (AIM) is a grassroots organization that started in 1968 in Minneapolis, MN to help recently urbanized Indians. They later spoke out and used “confrontational politics” to address national civil rights abuses of American Indians on reservations and in cities, and to champion full sovereignty and treaty rights. AIM chapters still exist across the country since national human and civil rights abuses of Native Americans continue.¹⁶ Also see AIM.

American Indians: The term American Indians is an inaccurate label said to originate with Columbus who thought he’d arrived in “the Indies”, so he called the people whose lands he visited “indios,” the Spanish word for Indians. It’s always been a generic and confusing term that was continued by the settlers to North America, even though they were interacting with hundreds of distinct tribal entities.¹⁵ American Indians are generally defined as people with

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

cultural and historical distinctions who belong to the indigenous tribes of the continental U.S.

The U.S. Census Bureau defines American Indians and Alaska Natives collectively, as “a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.”⁶

TIP: Most American Indians identify with and prefer to describe themselves by their tribal affiliation, which carries deeper meaning to them, and acknowledges strong connections to ancestors and the land. Nonetheless, this generic term still may be acceptable to and used by some American Indians out of habit or convenience (e-learning ppt). As with any culture different from your own, if you are unsure of local preferred terminology, listen to how individuals within the culture refer to themselves or how they use a specific term; or ask a community leader.³⁵

ANCSA: ANCSA is the acronym for the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, passed by Congress and signed by President Nixon in 1971. Also see Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.



Ancestry: Ancestry is a term used by individuals when their amount of American Indian or Alaska Native blood is insufficient for them to be enrolled or registered by the claimed group, neither are they eligible for services from the federal government. Thus, they say they have Native ancestry.^{15, 39} Also see: Descent, and Heritage.

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

B

BIA: BIA is the acronym for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, an agency within the U. S. Department of the Interior, responsible for providing administrative services to all federally recognized tribes and villages. Also see Bureau of Indian Affairs.

BIE: BIE is the acronym for the Bureau of Indian Education, an agency within the U. S. Department of the Interior, responsible for providing educational services to all federally recognized tribes and villages. Also see Bureau of Indian Education.

BIPOC: BIPOC is the acronym for Black, Indigenous and People of Color. The term is meant to unite all people of color while acknowledging that Black and Indigenous peoples face different and often more severe forms of racial oppression and cultural erasure as a consequence of colonialism and systemic racism.³⁹

Blood Quantum: As sovereign governments, American Indians and Alaska Natives have the right to set citizenship requirements of their members, usually requiring a specific amount of Indian blood - referred to as blood quantum - a concept introduced and/or required by the Federal Government. Contemporary American Indians and Alaska Natives worry that continuing to use federal blood quantum requirements may cause them to commit cultural suicide in the near future.¹¹

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

An example of how blood quantum is calculated follows. Tribe A has a blood quantum requirement of $\frac{1}{4}$ or 25% to be enrolled as a member, a common cut off point among tribes. If only one of two parents is a full blood Indian enrolled in Tribe A and the second parent is non-Native, their child would be 50% or half Indian and eligible for enrollment in Tribe A. If that half-blood child grew to marry a non-Native, his/her child would be $\frac{1}{4}$ Indian and eligible for membership in Tribe A, but she/he and any siblings that followed would be the last descendants to have that right.

Native Hawaiians also make distinctions using blood quantum. The term **native** Hawaiian (with an intentional lower-case “n”) refers to those with 50%+ Hawaiian blood. Whereas the term **Native** Hawaiian (with both terms capped) refers to those with an unspecified level of Native Hawaiian ancestry, but less than 50%.³⁵

Boarding Schools: A network of boarding schools for American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian children began well before Congress passed the Indian Civilization Act Fund of 1819 but grew rapidly after increased federal funds became available. It is unknown exactly how many Native children were involved but records indicate that hundreds of thousands of children were removed from their Native families and home communities and placed in boarding schools funded by the federal government and operated by the government and various church denominations. Most schools were many miles away from the home communities. The federal intent was the systemic destruction of Native cultures and communities, beginning with the children. Much has been written about the trauma caused by

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

these schools where the children's traditional clothing, long hair and personal possessions were removed; and where they were punished for speaking their traditional language and for acting in any way that approximated a traditional or cultural practice. The children suffered cultural, physical, sexual, and spiritual abuse and neglect. Many children died in these institutions; often their bodies were not returned home. Most boarding schools are closed but some still exist.²⁸

In 2021, news of unmarked graves found at Native boarding schools went viral in Native communities nationwide in the U.S. and Canada, where a similar boarding school system existed. Trauma was revisited on all Native communities, especially on those individuals who attended these schools and their family members. As more unmarked graves are found on former boarding school properties, the government's boarding school policy will remain a critical topic within Native communities. Native organizations are also focusing on how to heal individuals and communities from the intergenerational trauma caused by this federal school system.³⁵

Bureau of Indian Affairs: The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was created in 1824 to assist in negotiating treaties between the U.S. and tribes and, according to their website, to carry out the original federal policy of subjugating and assimilating American Indians and Alaska Natives. Their new policy is to promote self-determination. BIA staff do this by working with tribal governments on the administration of law enforcement and justice, agricultural and economic development, tribal governance, and natural resource management. The BIA

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

operates 12 regional offices and 83 field agencies.⁴ Also see BIA.

Bureau of Indian Education: The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) was formerly the Office of Indian Education Program under the BIA. In 2006 it became its own bureau. As stated by law, the BIE's basic mission is to provide quality educational opportunities from early childhood through life. BIE currently funds or operates 183 elementary and secondary schools on 64 reservations and serves approximately 46,000 students. Of the 183 schools, 53 remain under BIE administration; 130 are tribally controlled through BIE contracts or grants. BIE also funds and operates two post-secondary institutions and provides funding to another 35 tribal colleges and universities.⁵ Also see BIE.

C

Chief: The term chief is one of many titles used to designate an American Indian leader.

Among the commonly used titles are chairman/chairwoman, governor, president, and chief.

Each title signifies that the man or woman has been elected by their adult tribal members as the top leader and spokesperson. Chief was the most common label used historically,

although different names in the traditional language would have been used for political,

religious, village or clan chiefs. The term has also been misused primarily by non-Indians to address any Indian man, whether in jest or mockery.²⁶

Native Hawaiians were originally governed by a monarchy. Their leaders were kings and

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

queens and included other minor chiefs. Members of the traditional nobility were called Ali'i Moi, when referring to Kings and Queens; Ali'i when referring to Nobles; and Ali'i Nui when referring to Princes and Princesses. In contemporary society, there is no recognized leader of all Native Hawaiian peoples. The last traditional reigning princess, Princess Abigail Kawananakoa, recently passed away on December 11, 2022, at the age of 96.³⁵

Citizenship: American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians have dual citizenship as citizens of their tribe, village or community, and as American citizens. Congress granted citizenship to American Indians and Alaska Natives in 1924.³⁹ Although Native Hawaiians were granted U.S. citizenship in 1900, many disapprove of accepting or acknowledging citizenship within the United States. They continue to claim their sovereignty as an independent nation.³⁵

Colonist: The term colonist is used in contemporary society and writing to refer to mostly white descendants of British, Dutch, French, Spanish and other explorers to North America, who subjugated Native communities by force.³⁹ Also see Settler.

Cultural Appropriation: Cultural appropriation occurs when people claim an ancestry or culture that's not their own. They are essentially taking something that doesn't belong to them. It can also refer to the appropriation of tribes', villages' and communities' legal names, Indigenous vocabulary, sacred symbols, cultural designs, artifacts and other elements; and using them in advertising, tourism, art, films, cartoons, decorations, Halloween costumes, the fashion industry and many other industries. It may also be referred to as cultural

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

misappropriation.^{29, 39}

Customary/Traditional Adoption: A customary adoption is a traditional Indigenous practice, ceremony or process that is long-established and continues to the present day. By the people of a tribe, it's considered to be binding and has been found by tribal courts to be authentic. It gives a child a legally recognized permanent parent-child relationship with a person other than the child's biological parents without either parent having to relinquish their parental rights.²⁴

Also see Hānai.

D

Descent: Descent is a term used by individuals when their amount of American Indian or Alaska Native blood is insufficient for them to be enrolled or registered by the claimed group, neither are they eligible for services from the federal government. Thus, they say they are of Native descent. Also see Ancestry, and Heritage.^{15, 39}

E

Elders: Elders are recognized because they have earned the respect of their community through the harmony, balance and wisdom exhibited in their actions and teachings. Elders try to instill respect in their community members for the natural world, the spiritual world, and for

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

each other.¹⁵ Also see Kupuna.

Enrollment: For American Indians and Alaska Natives, enrollment in a tribe or village is registration with that tribe/village that verifies membership in that community. Since tribes and villages are sovereign governments, each sets their own rules regarding enrollment and membership. Enrollment or membership requirements can often be found in tribal constitutions or codes. Most tribes have adopted blood quantum or lineage requirements. Generally, an enrollment card is given to the tribal member.^{11, 29} Also see Hawaiian Registry Program.

Eskimo: Eskimo is a term that was previously used in Alaska and elsewhere to refer to Inuit peoples across the world. However, now it is considered an unacceptable term by the majority of Alaska Natives, primarily because it is a disparaging colonial term imposed by outsiders/enemies.¹³ Also see Alaska Native, and Inuit.

F

Federal Recognition: Federal Recognition is a legal term that confers recognition of a political government-to-government relationship between an Indian tribe or Alaska Native village with the federal government, usually as a result of a treaty or legal agreement signed between two sovereign nations. To federally recognized American Indians and Alaska Natives, their unique political relationship identifies them as more than just another racial minority

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

group. In the U.S., Federal recognition is a requirement for American Indian and Alaska Native tribes/villages and their citizens to receive federal services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other federal agencies. Currently, there are 574 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages in 35 states.^{4, 29}

The option to receive federal recognition, like American Indians and Alaska Natives, was offered to Native Hawaiians in 2009 in the Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act. The bill became a source of controversy and deadlines within the bill were not met. Today, a federal framework for formal recognition remains for a time when Native Hawaiians form a unified Hawaiian government and decide to seek a government-to-government relationship with the U.S. Federal recognition by the U.S. government remains a topic of debate in Hawaii and among Native Hawaiian communities on the U.S. mainland.¹²

First Nation: First Nation is a term used in Canada to identify Indigenous peoples who are not Inuit or Metis. It is not used in the U. S. by tribes or Native communities.¹⁵

H

Hānai: Hānai is the Hawaiian word meaning to raise, rear, feed, nourish, sustain and provide. The hānai tradition includes the giving away of a Hawaiian child by his/her birth parents to be raised by another. A child is considered the greatest of gifts. A hānai child is any child who is intentionally and lovingly cared for and nurtured as their own by extended family members or

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

non-blood relatives. Hānai is informal, exists in proclamations of care and affection for non-related friends and loved ones, and is not limited to members of a particular race, and does not require acceptance in a courtroom to be considered legitimate. Hanai takes place openly among family and close friends. Hānai children, in open-adoption fashion, usually maintain a friendly connection with their biological families. Hawaiian cultural beliefs about family include awarding family status much more generously to others, creating a predisposition for effortlessly accepting and loving someone else's children as one's own.¹⁷ Also see Customary/Traditional Adoption.

Haole: Haole is the Hawaiian word for foreigners, tourists or more commonly white people.³⁹

Hapa: The term hapa comes from the Hawaiian word for half. In the Hawaiian community, the phrase hapa haole is common when referring to those who are half white/foreigner. It now refers to anyone whose heritage is half white and half another race, especially Asians and other Pacific Islanders.³⁹

Hawaiian Home Lands Recovery Act: A forerunner to the 1995 Hawaiian Home Lands Recovery Act was passed by Congress in 1921 as the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, with the goal of returning Hawaiians, especially the poorest, to their native land. It was the idea of Prince Jonah Kuhio Kalaniana'ole, who was the then-non-voting member of Congress in 1918. He envisioned using some of the 1.8 million uncompensated acres of former kingdom land to create a land trust to uplift Native Hawaiians and reverse the severe Hawaiian population decline following the overthrow. The state has been operating the program since statehood in

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

1959. According to the 1995 legislation, anyone who is half Hawaiian and over 18 years of age is considered a beneficiary of the land trust and eligible to get a homestead in a “prompt and efficient manner.” However, the waitlist is currently prohibitively long, with thousands of beneficiaries still on hold.³⁶

Hawaiian Language Immersion Program: Since 1987, Hawaiian Language Immersion Programs have been established within the Hawai‘i Department of Education to help Native Hawaiian children reconnect with their culture, learn to speak and read their language – found only in one state in the world: Hawai‘i - and retain their Hawaiian identity. Native Hawaiian children on the mainland also have the opportunity to attend locally organized Hawaiian language classes, primarily via online classes and programs.¹⁰

Hawaiian Registry Program: The Hawaiian Registry Program is a branch of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), which handles Native Hawaiian ancestry verification. The program strives to verify Hawaiian ancestry through biological parentage. No blood quantum is required by this program.³⁴ Also see Enrollment.

Heritage: Heritage is a term used by individuals when their amount of American Indian or Alaska Native blood is insufficient for them to be enrolled or registered by the claimed group. Neither are they eligible for services from the federal government. Thus, they say they have Native heritage.^{15, 39} Also see: Ancestry and Descent.

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE



ICWA: ICWA is the acronym for the Indian Child Welfare Act, an important piece of legislation affecting many Native families. Also see Indian Child Welfare Act.

IHS: IHS is the acronym for the Indian Health Service, an agency within the U. S. Department of Health & Human Services that is charged with providing comprehensive health services to approximately 2.7 million members of federally recognized tribes and villages and to federally recognized tribal members residing in urban areas. Also see Indian Health Service.

Indian Child Welfare Act: The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is a federal law passed in 1978 to guide states when they are placing an Indian child in their custody. The act was passed in response to the alarmingly high rate of Indian children being removed from their homes unnecessarily. The removal practices of local and state government agencies were seen as further attempts to separate Indian children from their cultures and assimilate them. ICWA requires that states seek placement for the Indian child with family relatives, members of the family's tribe, and other American Indian homes before looking at non-Native homes.²⁴ Also see ICWA.

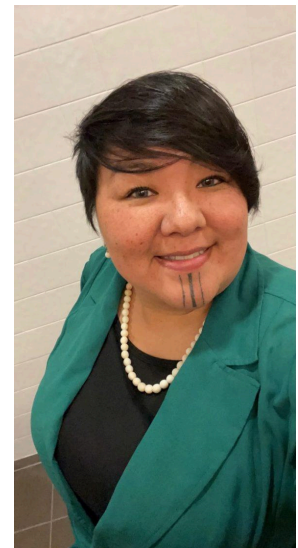
Indian Country: Indian Country is a popularly used term by American Indians and Alaska Natives to describe reservations, lands held within tribal/village jurisdictions, and other areas with concentrations of Native populations in the continental U. S. It is also a legal term used in

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Title 18 of the U. S. Code, where it broadly defines federal and tribal jurisdiction in crimes affecting American Indians on reservations.²⁹

Indian Education Act: The Indian Education Act of 1972 was a landmark piece of legislation that established a comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students. The supportive, original language has been retained in subsequent reauthorizations of the Act. It is currently included as Part A of Title VI, Indian, Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native Education, within the comprehensive Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Its original focus on Native students in public schools has been expanded. After early and consistent community input, the Act continues to recognize that American Indians have unique, educational, culturally related academic needs, and very distinct language and cultural needs.

The Act is comprehensive in that it established the Office of Indian Education within the U.S. Department of Education, that offers grants that cover pre-school through graduate level education. It also provides educational services not covered by the Bureau of Indian Education. The legislation is important to Native communities since it reaffirms the federal government's responsibility related to the education of American Indians, promised in hundreds of treaties. It also authorizes a national advisory body, the National Advisory Council on Indian Education.⁴² Also see Alaska Native Education Act, Native Hawaiian Education Act, NACIE, National Advisory



NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Council on Indian Education, and Office of Indian Education.

TIP: Since the Act is recorded as Title VI of ESEA, Parent Center staff may hear Native community members refer to it simply as Title VI. Title VI regulations require that federal grants to schools with a significant Native student population must include a Native parent committee that generally meets monthly. Presentations are allowed. Attending the meetings, making a presentation about your Parent Center/organization, and becoming familiar with the active parents can lead to further introductions to parents, youth and families in the local Native community. A list of all Title VI federally funded programs in a state can be obtained from the state education department.³⁵

Indian Health Service: The Indian Health Service (IHS) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is charged with providing promised health services to citizens of federally recognized tribes and villages, and to federally recognized tribal members residing in urban areas.⁴³ Also see HIS.

TIP: Parent Centers near reservations/villages will want to meet staff at the local IHS clinic, an active site for Native families. IHS staff routinely sponsor health fairs and other community events to inform and engage the local Native population. PTIs may be able to sponsor an informational booth at such events. Parent Centers near or in urban centers will want to investigate the IHS Office of Urban Indian Health Programs. The agency currently funds 41 non-profit urban Indian organizations in 22 states to address health concerns of off-reservation Indians. These non-profit organizations also host numerous health education events for

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

families where PTIs can set up information booths and reach out to the growing population of urban-residing American Indians and Alaska Natives. PTI training events can also be arranged at IHS facilities in reservation and urban communities and announced in their local online or print newsletters.³⁵

Indigenize: Indigenize is a contemporary verb referring to the need to transmit and incorporate an Indigenous perspective and reality to something, such as: to indigenize the film industry.³⁵

Indigenous: Indigenous is a collective term referring to American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians in common use by some Native Americans. Indigenous generally means native to the area; hence, indigenous to North America.¹⁵ Also see Native.

Inuit: Inuit is the commonly preferred collective term for those Alaska Natives formerly called Eskimo. The latter term is now an unacceptable label. Among the Inuit of Alaska, the preference is to be called by the names they use for themselves in their Native languages: Inupiak, Yup'ik and Cup'ik.¹³ Also see Alaska Native.

K

Kamaaina: A kamaaina is a native born in any place and continuing to live in that place. The word comes from two Hawaiian words: kama = child, and aina = land).⁴¹

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Kanaka Maoli: Kanaka Maoli means a full-blooded Hawaiian person, someone whose lineage is pure Hawaiian.⁴¹

Kupuna: Kupuna is a commonly used Native Hawaiian word for elders or grandparents.

Kupuna play a vital role in preserving culture and traditional values through storytelling and explaining the chronicles of Hawaiian history to their grandchildren or others younger than them.³⁹ Also see Elders.

L

Land Acknowledgement: A land acknowledgment is a formal statement that recognizes the unique and enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. Native Land Acknowledgements recognize and honor the Indigenous inhabitants who were the original stewards of this continent as well as the Hawaiian Islands. They recognize displaced or disappeared peoples and tribes, while simultaneously acknowledging contemporary local Native communities. Native Land Acknowledgements offer the opportunity to establish respectful and enduring relationships with Native parents, families, and communities, as long as action follows. Offering a Native land acknowledgment without further relationship building becomes meaningless. It should always open special events, such as conferences, celebrations and Board meetings.¹⁹

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

M

Māhū: Māhū is the Hawaiian word for a third gender of person, the “in-between”, alongside male and female persons, with traditional spiritual and social roles within the culture. For example, they were seen as keepers of culture who were accepted for their skills teaching hula and chant, passing down genealogies, and naming children. Prior to the arrival of Christian missionaries, Hawaiian culture and society were open-minded about gender roles. While the term originally referred to gender fluid and gender non-conforming individuals, in contemporary society it has also been used as a pejorative for Hawaiian homosexuals.³⁷ Also see Two-Spirit.

Maoli: Maoli means Native in the Hawaiian language. It refers to a Native of the Polynesian people who settled Hawai‘i.³⁵

Mascots: The use of Native Americans as mascots, the depiction of them as caricatures, and the misappropriation of tribal, village and community names and Native symbols by sports teams, the auto industry, the alcohol and cigarette industry, tourism and many other industries seeking an identifiable brand trivializes Native American cultures and heritage, perpetuates stereotypes, and encourages mocking behaviors. No other group continues to suffer from such openly racist treatment and cultural misappropriation.²⁶ Many Native Americans and allies have worked for decades to eliminate the use of Natives as mascots. Much has been achieved at the national and local levels, but the work remains incomplete.³⁵

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Military Service: Military service by many, but not all, Native Americans is deemed an honor, something many feel compelled to do. In fact, American Indians and Alaska Natives represent the largest percentage of any ethnic group that's served in the U.S. armed forces since the American Revolution. Many American Indians and Alaska Natives believe that they are rooted in this land; this is where the Creator made and put them. That's why there is such an overwhelming effort to protect and defend this country. Other veterans believe they were called due to the customary role of a warrior, a protector of their community. Native families are extremely proud of the male and female relatives who have served in the armed forces. Native communities honor all veterans at powwows with special honor dances and at other memorial events.²⁷

Due to their history, Native Hawaiians don't share the same sentiment as American Indians and Alaska Natives. This is due to the fact that in the 1900's Native Hawaiians were forced to serve in the US armed forces; they had no choice. Currently, military service is undertaken generally as a way to honor the family, not necessarily the country whose militarily deposed their kingdom. Today, Native Hawaiians join the military as one of few options to secure a future. Many who join dislike school and do not intend to go to college; yet they too seek a better life from poverty and economic hardship. Thus, they join as a means to support their families.³⁵

MMIW: MMIW is the acronym for Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women. Sometimes it is spelled MMIWG to include the words: and Girls, or MMIWG2S to include the words: and Two

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE



Spirit. (Also see Two Spirit.) Recently, in some communities the movement has included missing and murdered Native males too. Thus, the acronym MMIR for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives may also be seen in and near Native communities. The MMIW movement emphasizes a human rights crisis disproportionately affecting Native women in the U.S. and Canada. Thousands of Indigenous women and girls have been murdered,

kidnapped, and gone missing, particularly near reservation communities. Police departments and legal systems offer Indigenous women and their families little support during the first crucial hours when they go missing, and little recourse to prosecute if a predator is ever found. A red hand over the mouth has become a symbol of this movement, standing for the missing sisters whose voices are no longer heard, as well as the silence of the media and law enforcement during this international human crisis. A slogan that's come out of this movement is: No more stolen sisters.³²

N

NACIE: NACIE is the acronym for the National Advisory Council on Indian Education, as advisory body to the federal government, which is authorized and funded by the Indian Education Act within the comprehensive Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Also see

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Indian Education Act, National Advisory Council on Indian Education, and Office of Indian Education.

Nation: Nation is a term used by some tribal governments instead of the word tribe, e.g., Navajo Nation. All federally recognized tribes are deemed to be self-governing – or sovereign nations – by Congress, hence, the name preference.¹⁵

National Advisory Council on Indian Education: The National Advisory Council on Indian Education (NACIE) is authorized and funded in Title VI of the Indian Education Act within the comprehensive Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The 15-members of the Council are American Indians and Alaska Natives, geographically disbursed, and appointed by the President of the U.S. The primary role of NACIE is to advise the Secretary of Education and the Secretary of the Interior about the funding and administration of education programs for American Indian and Alaska Native children, youth and adults. NACIE is staffed by personnel from the Office of Indian Education in the U.S. Department of Education.⁴² Also see Indian Education Act, and NACIE.

National Congress of American Indians: The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) is the oldest, largest and most representative organization advocating for all 574 federally recognized tribes and Alaska Native villages. It was founded in 1944 in Denver, CO in response to the federal policies of termination and assimilation, which were contrary to tribal treaty rights and tribes' status as sovereign nations. Protecting and preserving those rights has been at the heart of NCAI's mission up to the present day. It engages in multiple special

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

projects, such as tribal health initiatives, the Native vote and tribal food sovereignty from its office in Washington, DC.²² Also see NCAI.

TIP: Since the NCAI focuses its work on the needs of federally recognized tribes, American Indian and Alaska Native parents living on or near reservations/villages will be most familiar with and possibly will be active in this national organization.³⁵

National Indian Education Association: The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) is the oldest and largest national organization advocating for educational change for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. It was formed in 1969 in Minneapolis, MN by educators eager to improve the education of all Native students. Its office is located in Washington, DC. The NIEA annual conference was established to create a forum for sharing and developing ideas and strategies, and for influencing federal policy. The annual conference is usually held in October in a different location across the country. The conference hosts excellent workshops, a research and student strand, and averages 1500 attendees each year.²⁵ Also see NIEA.

TIP: Parent Centers can submit an application to conduct a workshop and/or host an exhibit booth at the annual NIEA convention, or their staff may simply attend for an immersive cultural and educational experience. It is an excellent networking opportunity for those working with Native youth, parents, and communities.³⁵

Native: Native is a collective term referring to American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Hawaiians in common use by some Native Americans. If using it as a collective noun or adjective, as in Native peoples, the term should be capitalized. If it's used to speak of plants, animals, or other things native to North America, it need not be capitalized.¹ Also see Indigenous.

Native American: In the 1970's the new generic term, Native American, was adopted by the Federal Government for use in legislation, and by the public as an alternative to the term Indian. This term generally includes all indigenous peoples of the U.S.: American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians.^{15, 29} The U. S. Census Bureau is one federal agency that does not use the term Native American. Rather, they use racial categories. Thus, American Indians and Alaska Natives are defined together, while Native Hawaiians are included in the designation of "Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander".⁷

TIP: Native peoples understand the government needs a generic term of convenience that includes all indigenous peoples of the U. S. Nonetheless, the term Native American is still not uniformly accepted by all indigenous peoples. When in doubt, listen carefully to the terms people use to speak of themselves, or ask local community members or leaders. Legally, the term Native American does not include any American born in the U. S., although it has been used that way by some non-Natives to achieve "ethnic" status, and to gain employment, college entrance, scholarships, and other resources meant solely for American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians. Instead, Americans born in this country could refer to themselves as native-born.^{29, 35}

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Native American Church: The Native American Church (NAC) is one organized religious group with predominantly American Indian members. It should not be perceived as the major religion of all Native Americans.³⁵

Native Hawaiian: A Native Hawaiian has been defined by the U. S. Congress as an individual any of whose ancestors were natives of the area which consists of the Hawaiian Islands prior to 1778. Native Hawaiians do not see themselves as Americans, due to the forceful overthrow of their sovereign kingdom by the U.S. They do not refer to themselves as Native American, a federal collective term of convenience, or use the term tribe. It's considered unacceptable for those born in the state of Hawai'i with no Hawaiian blood to refer to themselves as Hawaiian.³⁵ In 1974, the Native American Programs Act was amended to include Native Hawaiians as eligible grantees for the first time. Once legally recognized by Congress as Native Americans, Native Hawaiians became eligible for more, but not all, federal programs providing federal assistance to the Indigenous peoples of the U. S.⁴⁵

The U. S. Census Bureau is one federal agency that does not use the term Native American. Rather, they use racial categories; thus, Native Hawaiians are included in the Census designation of "Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander".⁷

Native Hawaiian Education Act: The Native Hawaiian Education Act is included as Part B of Title VI, Indian, Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native Education, within the comprehensive Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It was first authorized by Congress in 1988. Also known as the Native Hawaiian Education Program, its purpose is to develop innovative

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

education programs to assist Native Hawaiians, wherever they reside. Through the Act, grants and contracts are made to develop programs that meet specific priorities. Among the authorized activities are: Early childhood education and care, family-based education centers, early literacy, gifted and talented education, special education, professional development for educators, and entrance to and completion of post-secondary education. It also authorizes a national advisory body - the Native Hawaiian Education Council.⁴² Also see Native Hawaiian Education Council.

TIP: Since the Act is recorded as Title VI of ESEA, Parent Center staff may hear Native community members refer to it simply as Title VI. Title VI regulations require that federal grants to schools with a significant Native student population must include a Native parent committee that generally meets monthly. Presentations are allowed. Attending the meetings, making a presentation about your Parent Center/organization, and becoming familiar with the active parents can lead to further introductions to parents, youth and families in the local Native community. A list of all Title VI federally funded programs in a state can be obtained from the state education department.³⁵

Native Hawaiian Education Council: The Native Hawaiian Education Council (NHEC) is authorized and funded by Title VI, the Native Hawaiian Education Act, located in the comprehensive Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The role of the Council is to advise on the educational needs of Native Hawaiian children, youth and adults wherever they reside: in Hawai'i and on the continental U.S.^{31, 42} Also see Native Hawaiian Education Act, and NHEC.

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

NCAI: NCAI is the acronym for the National Congress of American Indians, established in 1940, the oldest continuously operating national organization that advocates for federally recognized tribes. It is based in Washington, DC. Also see National Congress of American Indians.

NHEC: NHEC is the acronym for the Native Hawaiian Education Council, which is authorized and funded by the national Native Hawaiian Education Act. Also see Native Hawaiian Education Council.

NIEA: NIEA is the acronym for the National Indian Education Association, established in Minneapolis, MN in 1969, the oldest continuously operating national organization that advocates for improved education for American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians. Also see National Indian Education Association.



Office of Hawaiian Affairs: The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) is a self-governing corporate body of the state of Hawaii created by the 1978 Hawaii State Constitutional Convention. It grew out of organized efforts in the 1970s to right past wrongs suffered by Native Hawaiians for over 100 years.³⁴ Also see OHA.

Office of Indian Education: The Office of Indian Education (OIE) was established in 1972 in

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE



the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education in the U.S. Department of Education, after the passage of the Indian Education Act. The office provides formula grants to Local Education Agencies offering programs to benefit Native American students. They also offer a range of discretionary

grants: Demonstration grants for Indian children, Indian education professional development grants, Native American language grants, and grants supporting state tribal education partnerships. OIE staff members support the National Advisory Council on Indian Education and engage in other national Native American education activities.⁴² Also see NACIE, National Advisory Council on Indian Education, and OIE.

Office of Native Hawaiian Relations: The Office of Native Hawaiian Relations in the U.S. Department of the Interior was authorized by Congress in 1995 and 2004. It serves as a liaison with the Native Hawaiian community and works with the various bureaus in Interior on issues affecting Hawai'i.⁴⁴

OHA: OHA is the acronym for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs founded in 1978 and based in Honolulu. Also see Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

Ohana: Ohana is the frequently used Hawaiian word for family. Family is extremely important to Native Hawaiians. In their culture, family is more than the nuclear family and even more than the extended family. It can include friends and others to whom they have no biological

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

connections.³⁹

OIE: OIE is the acronym for the Office of Indian Education located within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education in the U.S. Department of Education. Also see Office of Indian Education.

‘Ōlelo: ‘Ōlelo is the Hawaiian word for doing something verbally or orally. It is commonly used to refer to language. The Hawaiian language (‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i) is one of the oldest living languages in the world. The Hawaiian alphabet contains 13 letters, 8 consonants, 5 vowels, and no consonant clusters.³⁸

P

Pidgin: Pidgin is a language that’s officially referred to as Hawaiian Creole English. It came into use after Hawai‘i was annexed by the U.S., when the Hawaiian language was banned from schools and the state government. Pidgin grew out of necessity because many plantation workers came from different countries, such as Japan, China, Korea, Portugal, and Puerto Rico, and all spoke different languages. Along with Native Hawaiian plantation workers, all islanders needed to be able to communicate. Thus, pidgin was created. It may be considered Hawaiian slang, but it is technically a creole, meaning an entirely new language derived from two or more separate languages. It is in active use among Hawaiians today.³⁸

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Pow wow: A pow wow is a tribal or inter-tribal gathering, fair and celebration. Some pow wows are held to honor an individual or local event. Although some community-based pow wows are strictly traditional and non-competitive; many more are large inter-tribal, competition events that draw hundreds of dancers and thousands of spectators over two or three days. The majority of pow wows are held during the summer months. Traditionally, they were held outdoors, but many are now held inside gymnasiums or sports arenas so can be held year-round. Many are fundraisers for a local cause so a nominal fee may be charged for attending. For Native peoples they can be a way of life. They connect Native families and communities across the U.S. and Canada. They provide a sense of identity and pride. They offer an opportunity to demonstrate creativity in dance, singing, beadwork, regalia-making, cooking and more. Currently, pow wows represent the survival of ancient cultures and the ability to retain a Native identity in a 21st Century world.²⁶

TIP: Most pow wows welcome the public. Food is sold as are traditional arts and crafts. These are excellent opportunities for casual networking with Native families. At smaller local pow wows, Parent Centers and other non-profit organizations can check with pow wow organizers and apply to host an informational booth at no cost and introduce their services to local Native families.³⁵

Pretendian: Pretendian is a recent term for a person who falsely claims Indigenous identity by declaring to be a citizen of a Native tribal nation or to be descended from Native ancestry. It's a 21st Century pejorative term.³⁵ Also see Self-identification.

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

R

Redskin: Redskin is an overtly racist term that, for American Indians, is comparable to the n-word.³⁹

Religion: There is no one pan-Native religion. There are many traditions and beliefs among the millions of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. For many, spiritual beliefs are an integral part of daily life and aren't reliant on an institution for worship. Prayers take a variety of forms and may include songs, chants, dances and offering water and native plants such as tobacco, sage, cedar, sweetgrass and corn pollen. Since the 1700's, many Native Americans have been converted to Christianity; some by force.²⁹

Hawaiian religion refers to the Indigenous religious beliefs and practices of native Hawaiians, also known as the kapu system. Hawaiian religion is based largely on the tapu religion common in Polynesia and likely originated among the Tahitians and other Pacific islanders who landed in Hawai'i between 500 and 1300 AD. It is polytheistic and animistic, with a belief in many deities and spirits, including the belief that spirits are found in non-human beings and objects such as other animals, the waves, and the sky. Today, Hawaiian, American Indian and Alaska Native religious practices are protected by the American Indian Religious Freedom Act.⁸

Relocation: Relocation is the term for a federal program established in 1952 by the federal

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

government and carried out by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The program coerced American Indians from rural and mostly isolated reservations to move to urban areas, including some of the largest cities in the country like Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. It created a time of cultural upheaval for many Indian families as they tried to survive in huge cities only to return home where there were still very limited employment opportunities. Relocation occurred at the same time as the U.S. Congress was terminating tribes, to force assimilation and make tribal lands available for sale.¹⁴ Also see Termination.

Reservation: Indian reservations are areas of land reserved by the federal government as permanent tribal homelands. The government's reservation policy started in 1787. Based on tribal history and preference, some tracts of reserved Native land are called colonies, communities, pueblos, rancherias, and villages instead of reservations.^{29, 39}

S

Self-Identification: Self-identification refers to the voluntary, self-described declaration of Native or Indigenous identity with no biological or cultural connection to the purported identity.¹⁵ It often occurs when a non-Native person wishes to claim a scholarship, job, etc. designated for an American Indian, Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian. Native groups have begun calling out such behavior as it makes a mockery of true Native ancestry. A new term has surfaced for such people: Pretendians.³⁵ Also see Pretendian.

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Settler: The term settler is used in contemporary society and writing to refer to descendants of British, Dutch, French, Spanish and other explorers to North America, who subjugated Native communities by force.³⁹ Also see Colonist.

Sovereignty: Sovereignty is a legal term for a simple concept: the right to self-govern.²² Prior to contact with Europeans, Native groups/communities were always self-governing, so possessed sovereignty. In the 1830's, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall declared that "... tribes possess a nationhood status and retain inherent powers of self-government". Tribal sovereignty means that federal, tribal, and state decisions about tribal citizens and their property must be made with tribal participation and consent, since they continue to retain their sovereignty up to the present day.⁴

State Recognition: American Indian tribes can seek state recognition. Tribes who became landless and lack federal recognition can receive state recognition if state laws have set up such authority. State legislatures can create a legally binding relationship between a tribe and the state. That relationship could include state funding, a land base and/or other resources. State recognized tribes are not eligible for federal services reserved for federally recognized tribes and villages. In 2023, there are at least 66 state recognized tribes in 13 states.²¹

T

TCUs: TCUs is the acronym for Tribal Colleges and Universities, of which there are 37 across

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

the country in 2023. Also see Tribal College.

Termination: Termination is the term for a policy established by the U.S. Congress in 1953, which lasted until 1968. The policy eliminated most government support to select Indian tribes and ended the protected trust status of the tribe’s reserved land. The intent was to abolish tribes, erase tribal rights, and sell their land.

Around the same time, a policy of relocation was instituted within the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which moved Indians off reservations and into urban areas with little to no support.¹⁴ Also see Relocation.



Transition: Transition services for students with disabilities are defined in IDEA as “a coordinated set of activities...focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities.”⁴²

TIP: When parents and their youth with a disability attend an IEP meeting focused on “transition” planning, caution should be taken when using the term transition with American Indian and Alaska Native families. Most Native parents aren’t aware of the word transition as it is used by service providers. For them, the word transition likely brings to mind the passage from life to death. Instead of referring to “transition services”, it is best to speak with Native

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

parents and teens using the phrase: *post-high school services* or *post-graduation services*.³⁵

Treaty: A treaty is a legally binding agreement between two or more sovereign nations, such as between the United States and a tribal nation. U.S. treaties are ratified by Congress; 370 were signed with Indian tribes. Treaties generally define the rights of the original inhabitants of the land and resources within a specified area. To gain control of Indian lands, most treaties promised Indians the following: protection (from other tribes as well as from encroaching settlers), goods such as food and blankets, services such as education and health care, continuing self-governing rights, and a tribal homeland.^{15, 29} Also see Treaty Rights.

Treaty Rights: Treaty rights are those rights specified in a treaty, such as a tribe's original rights to hunt and fish in their traditional territory.¹⁵ Also see Treaty.

Tribal: The term tribal is generally used as an adjective when referring to American Indians and Alaska Native entities, groups and organizations.¹⁵ Unacceptable is the current use of the word tribal by the media when referring to mainstream group behavior, where the "tribal" behavior is insinuated to be negative, narrow-minded and/or provincial.³⁵

Tribal College/Tribal University: A tribal college or university is a post-secondary institution that was created and chartered by a tribe. The first tribal college was established in 1969 by the Navajo Nation. In 2023, there are 37 tribal colleges and universities in 15 states, including one in Barrow, AK. All offer associate degree programs; 33 offer baccalaureate degree programs; and 4 offer master's degree programs. All receive some federal funding from the

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Bureau of Indian Education. The purpose of tribal colleges is to provide higher education opportunities in rural areas through programs that are supportive, culturally relevant, and locally based. Each belongs to a support network established in the early 1970's, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium.² Also see AIHEC, American Indian Higher Education Consortium, and TCUs.

Tribal Council: A tribal council is the governing body of a tribe and is usually made up of the officials elected by their adult community members to govern and to facilitate the administration and delivery of services to their members. Heading the council is an elected man or woman, whose title is chief, chairman, chairwoman, governor, president or other label of honor, and who is the community's recognized leader and spokesperson.^{15, 39} Also see Chief.

Tribal Education Department: Tribal Education Departments are found on most reservations. They serve as a comprehensive agency for all education services provided to tribal members, whether students attend public schools, BIE schools or charter schools. They administer tribal programs and oversee federal education funding from the BIE, U.S. Department of Education, and other federal agencies, as well as private grants.^{18, 40}

TIP: For Parent Centers who are near reservation communities, a tribe's Education Director and his/her staff are important people to meet and to introduce to the Parent Center network and its services. The Education Director can help introduce PTI staff to the community, especially families with children with disabilities. They can assist in scheduling training events

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

for local parents, and informing PTIs of upcoming education events, tribal health fairs or other local family events where an informational booth may be set up to introduce the Parent Center to the community. The tribal education director can also introduce PTIs to staff of the tribal newspaper and/or radio station, through which PTI services may be announced.³⁵

Tribe: Tribe is the commonly used term for a federally recognized or state-recognized tribal entity with a government-to-government relationship with the federal and/or state government. Some American Indian or Alaska Native tribes prefer the term nation because their tribal people signed treaties with the federal government as sovereign nations. Other terms frequently used in official tribal names, in lieu of the term tribe, include band, colony, community, pueblo, rancheria and village. In 2023, there are 574 federally recognized tribes and 66 state-recognized tribes.³⁹

Two Spirit: The term Two Spirit has been present in Native communities for countless generations. Two Spirit people have both a male and female spirit within them and see life through the eyes of both genders. The French word *berdache* was first used when early Jesuits missionaries observed men in women's clothing among the Iroquois and has been used to describe Native individuals who crossed genders. After contact with missionaries, Two Spirit culture went underground to avoid persecution. The collective English term doesn't diminish the tribal-specific names, roles and traditions that tribes have for their Two Spirit citizens. A Two Spirit person may be gay, but a Native gay person is not necessarily Two Spirit. Claiming the role of Two Spirit includes taking up the spiritual responsibility that the role

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

traditionally had in Native communities. That role would include maintaining and teaching cultural traditions, medicines, language, art, songs, etc. Importantly, Two Spirit is a term only appropriate for use by Native people.^{9, 26} Also see Māhū, and MMIW.

U

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a legally non-binding declaration passed by the United Nations in 2007, after decades of work by Indigenous activists and allies. It defines the individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples, including their ownership rights to cultural and ceremonial expression, identity, language, health, employment, education and other issues. Ownership includes protection of their intellectual and cultural property. The Declaration emphasizes the right of Indigenous peoples “to maintain and strengthen their institutions, cultures and traditions”. It “prohibits discrimination against Indigenous peoples” and it “promotes their full and effective participation in all matters that concern them” The goal of the Declaration is for nations to work alongside Indigenous peoples. After originally voting against the Declaration in 2007, the U. S. finally voted in support of it in 2010.⁴⁶ Native Americans highly value the Declaration but worry that the U. S. doesn’t share their commitment to it.

U. S. Congressional Acknowledgement: U.S. Congressional acknowledgment is a type of

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

political designation for Native Americans, which primarily impacts Native Hawaiians, and occasionally impacts other Pacific Islanders from US-affiliated entities. This type of official acknowledgment is embedded in Acts of Congress but does not confer federal recognition or services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. An example of Congressional recognition was when the U.S. Congress passed, and President Clinton signed into law, a 1993 joint resolution apologizing to the Native Hawaiian people for U.S. participation in the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom. The apology resolution explicitly acknowledged the “special relationship” between the U.S. and the Native Hawaiian people and confirmed that Native Hawaiians are an “indigenous people.” Congressional acknowledgment impacts over 1.6 million Native Hawaiians, per 2020 Census figures.⁷

Urban Indians: Urban Indians are American Indian and Alaska Native individuals who may or may not have active or direct ties with their tribe, yet who identify with and are somewhat active in the Native community in the urban area where they live. Indians in urban areas may be long term residents, forced residents, or medium to short term residents. Long-term residents have been in a city for multiple generations. Forced residents are those who were forced to relocate to urban centers by government policy, beginning after WWII, or by the need to access specialized health or other services. Medium and short-term residents are those visiting family and friends, or getting an education, and who always return to their homeland.²³ Urban Indians now make up the largest percentage of the American Indian and Alaska Native population according to the 2020 Census.^{6,7}

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

REFERENCES

1. Alaska Federation of Natives. Online at <https://nativefederation.org>
2. American Indian Higher Education Consortium. Online at <https://www.aihec.org>
3. Berardi, G. M. (2005). The Alaska Native claims settlement act (ANCSA) – Whose settlement was it? An overview of salient issues. Environmental Studies Faculty and Staff Publications. 1. Online at https://cedar.wvu.edu/envs_facpubs/1/
4. Bureau of Indian Affairs. Online at <https://www.bia.gov>
5. Bureau of Indian Education. Online at <https://www.bie.edu/>
6. Census Bureau. Online at <https://www.census.gov/aian>
7. Census Bureau. Online at <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html>
8. Dbpedia Association. Online at https://dbpedia.org/page/Hawaiian_religion
9. Enos, T. (2018). 8 things you should know about two spirit people. Indian Country Today. September 13, 2018. Online at [8 Things You Should Know About Two Spirit People - ICT News](#)
10. Hawaii Department of Education. Online at [Hawaii DOE | Hawaiian language immersion program \(hawaiipublicschools.org\)](#)

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

11. Hilleary, C. (2021). Some Native Americans fear blood quantum is formula for “paper genocide”. Voice of America. July 24, 2021. Online at [Some Native Americans Fear Blood Quantum is Formula for 'Paper Genocide' \(voanews.com\)](https://www.voanews.com/news/indian-america-some-native-americans-fear-blood-quantum-is-formula-for-paper-genocide-20210724)
12. Hilleary, C. (2019). Native Hawaiians divided on federal recognition. Voice of America. February 7, 2019. Online at: [Native Hawaiians Divided on Federal Recognition \(voanews.com\)](https://www.voanews.com/news/indian-america-native-hawaiians-divided-on-federal-recognition-20190207)
13. Holton, G. (nd). Alaska Native Language Center. University of Alaska Fairbanks . Online at [Languages | Alaska Native Language Center \(uaf.edu\)](https://www.uaf.edu/alaska-native-language-center/)
14. Howard University School of Law. Online at: [The Termination Era \(1953 - 1968\) - A Brief History of Civil Rights in the United States - HUSL Library at Howard University School of Law](https://www.husl.org/civil-rights-the-termination-era-1953-1968-a-brief-history)
15. Indigenous Corporate Training, Inc. (2021). *Indigenous peoples: A guide to terminology*. E-book online at <https://www.ictinc.ca>
16. Lurie, J. (nd). American Indian movement (AIM). MNopedia. Minnesota Historical Society. Online at [American Indian Movement \(AIM\) | MNopedia](https://www.mnopedia.org/american-indian-movement-aim)
17. Marsh, R. (nd). Shortcomings in American adoption policies and a Hawaiian alternative. Hilo, HI: University of Hawaii at Hilo. Online at: [Shortcomings in American Adoption Policies and a Hawaiian Alternative](https://www.hawaii.edu/indian/shortcomings-in-american-adoption-policies-and-a-hawaiian-alternative)
18. McREL. (2009). American Indian education: The role of tribal education departments.

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Denver: Author. Online at [American Indian Education: The Role of Tribal Education](#)

[Departments](#)

19. Morris, J. S. (2021). Native land acknowledgment: The why and how for Parent Centers.

Center for Parent Information and Resources. Online at [Native Land Acknowledgment: The](#)

[Why and How for Parent Centers | Center for Parent Information and Resources](#)

[\(parentcenterhub.org\)](#)

20. Morris, J. S. (2019). How values impact communication with American Indians and Alaska

Natives. Center for Parent Information and Resources. Online at

[native-values-communication-2019.pdf \(parentcenterhub.org\)](#)

21. National Conference of State Legislators. Online at <https://www.ncsl.org>

22. National Congress of American Indians. Online at <https://ncai.org>

23. National Council of Urban Indian Health. Online at <https://ncuih.org>

24. National Indian Child Welfare Association. Online at <https://nicwa.org>

25. National Indian Education Association. Online at <https://niea.org>

26. National Museum of the American Indian. (2007). *Do all Indians live in tipis? Questions and Answers from the National Museum of the American Indian*. New York: HarperCollins

Publishers.

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

27. National Museum of the American Indian. Why we serve. Native Americans in the United States armed forces. Online at: [Why We Serve \(si.edu\)](#)
28. National Native American Boarding School Coalition. Online at <https://boardingschoolhealing.org>
29. Native American Journalists Association. (2014). *100 questions, 500 nations: A guide to Native Americans*. Canton, MI: Read the Spirit Book
30. Native American Rights Fund. Online at <https://narf.org>
31. Native Hawaiian Education Council. Online at <https://nhec.org>
32. Native Hope. Online at [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women \(MMIW\) \(nativehope.org\)](#)
33. Nesterak, M. (2019). Uprooted. The 1950's plan to erase Indian Country. American Public Media Reports. Online at [The 1950s plan to erase Indian Country | Uprooted | APM Reports](#)
34. Office of Hawaiian Affairs. Online at <https://oha.org>
35. Personal communication/experience of authors
36. Pro Publica Inc. Online at [Promised Land — ProPublica](#)

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

37. Ravida, M. (2018). The mähū. Manoa Now. February 11, 2018. Online at [The Mähū | Special Issues | manoanow.org](#)
38. Rowe, R. (2020). Historical trauma of Native Hawaiians. Center for Parent Information and Resources. Online at [Historical Trauma of Native Hawaiians | Center for Parent Information and Resources \(parentcenterhub.org\)](#)
39. The Diversity Style Guide. (2023). Online at <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com>
40. Tribal Education Departments. Online at <https://tedna.org>
41. Ulukau Hawaiian Dictionaries. Online at <https://wehewehe.org/>
42. U. S. Department of Education. Online at <https://www.ed.gov>
43. U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. Online at <https://www.hhs.gov>
44. U. S. Department of the Interior. Online at <https://www.doi.gov>

NATIVE AMERICAN TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

