

Native, First Nations, Indian: Researching Indigenous Peoples

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While this session will review and provide guidance on basic methods of the rich resources of information for Native/First Nations peoples, this session will not discuss the tribal enrollment process. Each tribe, as sovereign nations, create their own enrollment information. Once you are reasonably sure of your relevant Native lineage, you should contact the tribal “Enrollment Office” or tribal council for information on enrollment requirements, procedures and necessary documents. Most tribes have this information also on official websites.

Remember these strategies and keys for Native/First Nations research:

- Do genealogy as you would do it for any family – begin with yourself and move backward in time, documenting everything as you go.
- Research all family members and document their lives through birth, marriage, death and census records.
- Information is only as accurate as those sharing wanted it to be – information was given voluntarily by someone in the household but they may have had a reason to “fabricate” information.
- Records may give English names and Native names – it is fortunate when you can obtain records that have BOTH names together, to help in confirming how to track families and members.
- Children in the household may be the children of either the father or mother, and maybe not both.
- Indexes are secondary records – check them against the original records.
- Look at the whole neighborhood for the families living nearby – these could be helpful in marriages, info about the ancestral home and ethnic groups in the area (a potential clue if you don’t know the family’s origins).
- Find your family in any rosters or lists, and track them through time including their siblings. If you can’t find your direct ancestor by name, look for former neighbors, siblings, etc.

Specific to Native/First Nations Peoples:

- Geography is key – tracking where and when your ancestors were in a region, can narrow down the tribal connections and relationships that will guide your research.
- Records specific to tribal affiliation – allotments, rolls, land records, and reservation connections – are easier to find IF you know the tribe!
- Learn about naming patterns, family relationships, clans or other groupings
- Occupations can sometimes give hints about tribal affiliations – remember to use FAN (friends, acquaintances, neighbors) too

Websites:

- Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, findmypast.com, and HeritageQuest Online (available through the library)
- Cyndi's List – Native American research <http://www.cyndislist.com/native-american/general/>
- AccessGenealogy.com – Collection of Native American records including indexes and rolls
- Fold3.com (<http://www.fold3.com>) has digitized and indexed the Dawes Enrollment Cards
- Ancestry.com has digitized and indexed Native American enrollment cards and lists records in specific states that apply to Native ancestry.
(<http://www.search.ancestry.com/search/group/nativeamerican>)
- Oklahoma Historical Society (<http://www.okhistory.org>) – Indexed records especially of the Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole) but also other tribal groups.
- Ancestry.com's wiki about American Indian genealogy - Overview of Native American Research:
https://www.ancestry.com/wiki/index.php?title=Overview_of_Native_American_Research
- A Guide to Tracing Your American Indian Ancestry – Department of the Interior
<https://www.doi.gov/tribes/trace-ancestry> This guide discusses how to begin genealogy research.
- [Starting Genealogy and Family History Research - National Archives and Records Administration \(NARA\)](http://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/start-research/)
<http://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/start-research/>
NARA explains what types of information are needed for genealogy research and highlights books that focus on the research process and document collection.
- [Genealogy Research](http://web.archive.org/web/20081120194049/http://www.ntjrc.org/native/genealogy.asp)
<http://web.archive.org/web/20081120194049/http://www.ntjrc.org/native/genealogy.asp>
From the National Tribal Justice Resource Center, this web page includes excerpts from the Department of Interior Genealogy Guide and other links to directories, resources and guides.
- [Access Genealogy](http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/)
<http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/>
This web page has several features. On the right side in the menu bar is a link to "Native American Nations" that provides historical information about tribes. In the middle of the page are links to agencies with genealogical information by state.
- Native Americans – “Specific Tribal or Nation Resources” and “USGenWeb Project”
<http://www.cyndislist.com/native.htm>
These two sections of this web page (toward the bottom) connect people to resources of specific tribes, which include some tribal web sites. But other sections of this site also link to resources that are tribe-specific, such as "Mailing Lists, Newsgroups, and Chat."
- Vital Records – Native American Directory
<http://www.daddezio.com/records/room/indian.html>
This web site offers a search feature by tribe. Each tribal section contains contact information for genealogical records or information and links to online and other resources (some are advertised as free and some are advertised for sale).

- The Genealogy Page – National Archives and Record Administration (NARA) <http://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/index.html>
A section toward the bottom of the page highlights "Native American Records." This section mostly contains links to web sites of census rolls. NARA also provides publications for sale and information about workshops offered at various regional locations. At the bottom of the page is a list of genealogical associations and resources with links to those web sites.

Michigan Libraries or Online Sites with Special Collections:

- Archives of Michigan and the Michigan Historical Center -702 West Kalamazoo Street, Lansing, MI 48915 "Seeking Michigan" online research: <http://seekingmichigan.org/>
- Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University clarke@cmich.edu 989-774-3352
https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Native_American_Material/Pages/default.aspx
- Michigan State University – 366 W. Circle Drive, East Lansing, MI 48824
<http://libguides.lib.msu.edu/c.php?g=95603&p=624366>
- University of Michigan Library – 1150 Beal Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48109 734-764-3482 <http://bentley.umich.edu/for/family-historians/> And a guide "Indigenous Research Guide" for the Graduate Library: <http://guides.lib.umich.edu/c.php?g=283427>
- Wayne State University – 5155 Gullen Mall, Detroit, MI 48202 313-577-4023
<https://library.wayne.edu/?search=Native%20American>
- Durant Roll – A survey taken from 1907 to 1910 of the Mackinaw, Sault Ste. Marie, Grand River and Traverse Bands
http://www.mifamilyhistory.org/mimack/native_american/miller/durant.asp
- Michigan GenWeb site: <http://www.migenweb.net/index.html>

Midwest Library Collections:

- Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, IN <http://www.genealogycenter.org/>
- Minnesota History Center, Gale Family Library - MN Historical Society Library, 345 West Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55102: <http://libguides.mnhs.org/ojibwefh>

INDIAN or TRIBAL ROLLS:

National Archives, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Rolls:

<https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/rolls> There are many “rolls” or census records of native people in the United States (Baker, Guion Miller, Kern-Clifton, Roblin, Wallace, etc.)

Dawes Rolls: <https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/dawes/tutorial/intro.html>

Tribal enrollment between 1899 and 1907 - Five Civilized Tribes who resided in the Indian Territory, which later became the eastern portion of Oklahoma. The Five Civilized Tribes consist of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole and Chickasaw Indians.

Indian Census Rolls : <https://www.archives.gov/research/census/native-americans/1885-1940.html> 1885-1940 - Contains census rolls that were usually submitted each year by agents or superintendents in charge of Indian reservations, to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, as required by an act of July 4, 1884 (23 Stat. 98). The data on the rolls vary, but usually given are the English and/or Indian name of the person, roll number, age or date of birth, sex, and relationship to head of family.

AND there are individual tribal enrollment records, held by Tribal Enrollment Offices, that may or may not be available for public review (they are most often NOT online) and establish who is able to receive benefits and services from a given tribal government.

Federal Sources:

Indian Census and Annuity Rolls document tribal groups, individuals and families for a variety of reasons. The National Archives, Department of the Interior, the Bureau of Indian Affairs have been preserved on microfilm, microfiche and online. There are collections of Indian school records, allotment records and proceedings, reports to Congress by Indian Agents and the Department of the Interior (documenting who was occupying what “reservations” and what leaders/chiefs were principally there), federal court cases and more. With the massive collections of these records, you will want to check here:

<https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans>

Published works, state, local or tribal resources:

Warren, James W. “Methods and Sources for Researching Midwestern and Plains American Indian Ancestors”, syllabus submission, *National Genealogical Society 1998 NGS Conference in the States*.

AND OTHER NGS or national conference publications/recordings!