



Overview of American Indian Research

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Introduction

Knowing about the records and resources available for searching for an American Indian Ancestor will help you succeed.

There are over 566 federally recognized tribes in the lower 48 states. There are another 230 Alaskan Native Villages, and many state recognized tribes, and many tribe are not currently recognized.

PREPARE A PEDIGREE CHART

Document yourself; establish your relationship, generation by generation through documents. Working from the known to the unknown. Try to locate more than one document to establish a date and place.

RECORD ORAL HISTORIES

- Record what you know about your family.
- Make a list of relatives - contact the oldest ones first, learn more about the family and the family name.
- Obtain copies of documents – held by family members
- Record stories, take photos, and ask for help in identifying photos

PREPARE FAMILY GROUP RECORDS

Knowing the extended family – aunts, uncles, cousins and the in-laws will help identify the family in other records and prevent running into brick walls

WHERE AND WHEN DID THE INDIVIDUAL OR FAMILY LIVE?

Locality is determined by documents that indicates or establishes the residence of an ancestor

STUDY, LEARN, AND CREATE

- Study family histories
- Study the history of the county, state and region.
- Learn which tribes were in the area, and when did the tribe as a whole arrive or leave the area.

- Create a time line for your ancestor including important historical events for the county, state, region and country.

SEARCHING FOR AN INDIVIDUAL OR A FAMILY

HAVE YOU LEARNED?

- Their names
- When the individual lived
- Where the individual lived
 - On a reservation
 - Not on a reservation, Intermingled with non-Indian population (may be listed in the censuses)

SEARCHING FOR AN INDIVIDUAL BY TRIBE

Study the history of the tribe, search for records in county, and state. Learn which agencies were involved with the tribe. Search for agency records. Search Library Catalog and online databases.

- Five Civilized Tribes: Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole
- Tribe other than one of the Five Civilized Tribes (federally recognized, state recognized, and others)

RECORDS UNIQUE TO INDIANS

Allotment (land), annuity (payment, for land), enrollment (membership), heirship (probate), register of families (Kinship: to help determine direct blood lines), and Sanitary (health)

RECORD CONTENT AND AVAILABILITY

In home of individual, Tribal office 1934 – Present, Agency 1830-1940, Area Office 1900-1950, and Superintendence's 1800-1880.

Agency, Area Office and Superintendence records may be available through the National Archives and Family History Library

- Charts presented in PowerPoint – last two pages of syllabus

LOCATING AVAILABLE RECORDS THROUGH FAMILYSEARCH

Utilize FamilySearch research wiki and FamilySearch catalog

[FamilySearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org) 24-7 Availability, Free, and 4,700 local FamilySearch Centers to serve you.

FamilySearch Research Wiki:

United States Genealogy

American Indian Genealogy

- Locality FamilySearch Wiki has a page.....

- Tribes and Bands of State, Agencies, Records, Reservation. Online links, References, Bibliography)
- Military – List of Forts

Tribes Pages FamilySearch Wiki

- Tribal Headquarters, Bands and Clans, History, Timeline, Reservations, Agencies, Records, Treaties, Vital Records, References and Bibliography

RECORDS ARE MOST OFTEN ARRANGED, MAINTAINED, AND UTILIZED BY THE AGENCY AND TRIBE

Record Types: Allotment, Annuity, Census, Enrollment, Heirship, Military, Oral Histories, Register of Families, Removal, Sanitary, School, Vital Records and Treaties,

Tribes maintain records for the support of tribal members, their focus is to serve the living members. Some tribes have archivist, research specialist, or librarians that serve tribal members. **Tribal headquarters do no provide research services**

Historical or records over 100 years in age may be available through the tribe, agency, National Archives, or Family History Library

FAMILYSEARCH CATALOG

Compliments and supplements online searches, the FamilySearch research wiki, and provides the researcher access to the vast collection of records for over 110 countries, and territories.

Search by: Locality, Subject. Author, Title, and Keyword.

ONLINE / WEBSITES

- National Archives
- Ancestry
- Heritage Quest
- Find My Past
- Access Genealogy Free genealogical source with excellent Native American databases

The key to success in American Indian genealogy is the cross-disciplinary approach.

One cannot just be a genealogist who pours through public records.

Only the very lucky will find a census records with a notation that so-and-so was a Choctaw Indian. The task requires an expanded thought process where one must investigate all possibilities without tiring of the effort.

The history of the family, community, county and state must be known.

Church and local records must be examined for any clue regarding family origins.

A successful researcher must also have an intimate knowledge of tribal history and culture.

This is a very big order, indeed especially for the small splinter groups that dot the southern map.

The quest can be a noble and romantic endeavor.

At the least, one can come away with a great body of knowledge of the first American.

At most, one can find that allusive {sic} Native American ancestor.

Thomas J. Blumer, "Practical Pointers in Tracing Your Indian Ancestry in the Southeast," *Journal of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society*, 13 (Spring/Fall 1994): 67-82.

American Indian Record Availability and Policy Periods 1st Contact - 1934

Records	1 st Contact- 1830	Removal 1830-1850	Reservation 1850-1887	Allotment 1887-1934
Allotment*			X	X
Annuity*		X	X	X
Biography	X	X	X	X
Census 1885-1940			X	X
Church	X	X	X	X
Court		X	X	X
Enrollment*			X	X
Heirship*or Probate				X
History	X	X	X	X
Individual History Card				X
Land and Property	X	X	X	X
Military	X	X	X	X
Newspaper				X
Register of Families*				X
Sanitary*			X	X
School		X	X	X
Vital				X
Tribal Records*				X
Treaties	X	X	X	

Types of records “possible” for policy or time periods may not be available for all tribes. Records may not have been kept, lost, or not yet accessible or available for use.

*Indicates records specific to American Indian research

- **Annuity:** largest and most consistently kept record. Also known as Annuity payrolls.
- **Church:** Quaker, Moravians, Presbyterian, Baptist, Catholic and others
- **Enrollment:** legal tribal record of individuals who have met membership requirements
- **Heirship or Probate:** records regarding estate and allotment
- **History:** family, tribal, local, county, state, regional and territorial
- **Land and Property:** (allotment) city, county, state, region, territorial, federal, and military
- **Register of Families:** determining blood relationships
- **Sanitary:** Sick, wounded, birth and death records

American Indian Records and Content

Document Contents	Allotment	Annuity	Census	Church	Citizenship	Enrollment	Heirship	Ind. Hist. C	Military	Removal	Register of Families	Sanitary	School	Treaty	Vital-Birth	Vital -Mar	Vital-Death
Date of Document	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Place of Document	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Name	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Indian Name	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
English Name	X		X	X				X	X	X			X		X	X	
Age	X	X	X	X		X			X	X		X	X			X	X
Sex		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
Tribe	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X			
% Blood			X			X						X	X		X	X	
Birth date				X	X	X		X				X			X		
Place of Birth			X			X									X		
Marriage Status			X			X											
Marriage date				X				X								X	
Place of Marriage																X	
Death date				X		X	X	X				X					X
Place of Death																	X
Burial / Cemetery																	X
Agency			X				X					X					
Reservation												X					
Allotment Number	X						X	X							X	X	X
Annuity Number		X						X									
Land Owner	X		X			X	X										
Census Number			X					X							X	X	X
Enrollment Number						X		X									
Relationship			X	X		X	X	X			X		X		X		X
Spouse			X			X	X	X	X			X					X
Children	X		X			X	X	X									
Father				X		X		X				X	X		X	X	X
Father's Birth Place			X												X		
Mother				X		X		X				X	X		X	X	X
Mother's Birth Place			X												X		
Siblings						X	X	X					X				
Military Service									X								
Occupation			X			X											
Slave Status			X			X											
Citizenship	X	X				X	X										
Baptism/Christening				X													
Witness / Clerk																	
Signature / Mark	X					X											

Prepared by: Joan Evans Healey, AG® 2008