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# Native American Indian Language & Culture in New York

NY Statewide Language RBE-RN at NYU  
Metropolitan Center for Urban Education



**NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT/ THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF  
NEW YORK, ALBANY, NY 12234**

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Dear Colleague,

It is with great pleasure that the NYS Language Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (Language RBE-RN) at New York University, under the direction of the New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies, presents the *Native American Indian Language & Culture in New York Resource Guide*.

The Resource Guide provides educators with an overview of the eight federally recognized Indian\* tribes in New York today. The *Native American Indian Language & Culture in New York Resource Guide* enables students and teachers to understand the unique history of Native Americans living in New York from 9000 B.C. to the present day. Focusing on the similarities and differences in their languages, education, religions and holidays, as well as other cultural aspects, the Guide shares input from researchers and educators about how to teach students about Native American peoples.

The principal objective of the Resource Guide is to provide educators with information and resources to help educate and support English Language Learners who are Native American Indians from any of the tribes in New York State. However, the Guide also provides information relevant to Social Studies curriculum units about Native Americans. In addition to providing a historical perspective of Native American peoples in New York State, the Guide also includes extensive references and teaching resources.

We invite your comments on this Resource Guide and appreciate your input relevant to the education of our students.

Sincerely,

Pedro J. Ruiz, Ph.D.  
Coordinator

\*American Indian, Indian, Native American, and Native are all acceptable. Most preferable is when Native people are called by their tribal names.

\*Per the **National Museum of the Native American**.

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## Introduction

There are eight federally recognized Indian tribes in New York today. While other Native American populations live within New York State, this document will focus specifically on the recognized tribes of New York. There are over 500 Native American tribes recognized by the U.S. government. Federal recognition provides the tribe sovereignty, independent power possessed by the community, and also provides benefits in health, education, and welfare.

The eight federally recognized Native American tribes of New York:

- Cayuga Nation of Indians
- Oneida Indian Nation
- Onondaga Nation
- St. Regis Band of Mohawk Indians
- Seneca Nation\*
- Tonawanda Band of Senecas
- Shinnecock Nation
- Tuscarora Nation

*\*Not a member of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.*

All of the Native American tribes listed above are members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, except for the Shinnecock Nation, which resides in Suffolk County, Long Island. The Shinnecock Nation was first recognized federally in 2010.

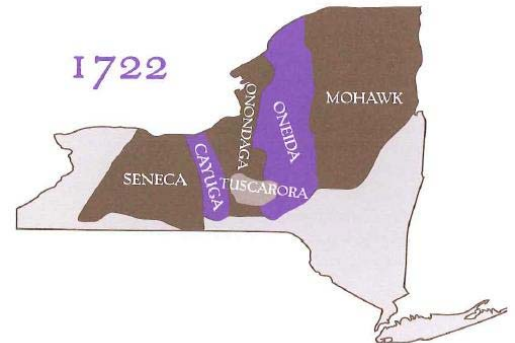
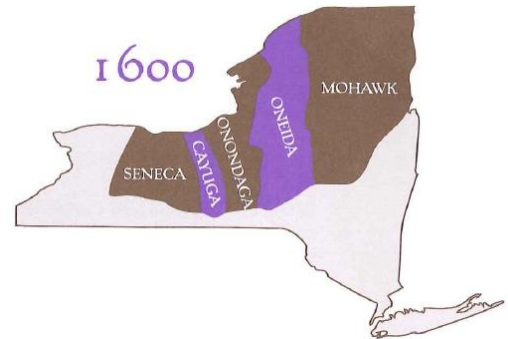
Is “American Indian” or “Native American” correct?

American Indian, Indian, Native American, and Native are all acceptable. Most preferable is when Native people can be called by their tribal names.

*From the National Museum of the Native American, New York.*

## Native American Territory in New York State over time:

*Adapted from the National Museum of the Native American Education Office.*



## Haudenosaunee: Six Nations

In the Iroquois language Haudenosaunee (hoe-dee-no-SHOW-ne) means, “people who build a house.” The name refers to an alliance among six Native American nations who are more commonly known as the Iroquois Confederacy. The Haudenosaunee can also be referred to as Öngweh’önweh (ongk-way-HON-way), which simply means “the People.”

The traditional homelands of the Six Nations are located in upstate New York, southern Ontario, and Quebec, Canada. Today, there are Haudenosaunee communities also located in Oklahoma and Wisconsin. Each nation has its own identity. These nations are known as:

**Cayuga (ka-YOO-ga) or Guyohkohnyoh**  
“People of the Great Swamp.”

**Oneida (o-NY-da) or Onayotekaono**  
“People of the Standing Stone.”

**Mohawk (MO-hawk) or Kanien’kehaka**  
“People of the Flint.”

**Seneca (SEN-i-ka) or Onondowahgah**  
“People of the Great Hill”

The Mohawk are also known as “Keepers of the Eastern Door” since they are the easternmost nation in the Haudenosaunee territory, who were traditionally responsible for defending the eastern boundaries of Haudenosaunee territory.

The Seneca are also known as “Keepers of the Western Door” since they are the westernmost nation in the Haudenosaunee territory, who were traditionally responsible for defending the western boundaries of Haudenosaunee territory.

**Onondaga (on-nen-DA-ga) or Onundagaono**  
“People of the Hills.”

**Tuscarora (tus-ka-ROR-a)**  
“The Shirt Wearing People.”

The Onondaga are also known as “Keepers of the Central Fire” since the Onondaga Nation is considered the capital of the Confederacy.

In 1772, members of the Tuscarora Nation, who were living in present-day North Carolina, traveled north to seek refuge. They were invited to join the Confederacy, becoming its sixth nation. Since then, the Confederacy has also been known as “Six Nations.”

## Shinnecock Indian Nation

The Shinnecock Nation, federally recognized on October 1, 2010, is located on the East End of Long Island, adjacent to the Town of Southampton. The Shinnecock are known as “People of the Stony Shore.”

**Historic Timeline: 9000 B.C to 1609 A.D.****9000  
B.C.**

Anthropologists have discovered flint quarries along the Hudson River that are the earliest evidence of native peoples. The first New Yorkers, "Paleoindians," are thought to have lived primarily off of land animals, later taking on the trade of fishing.

**900 to  
1500  
A.D.**

Complex chiefdoms begin to emerge with a developed infrastructure of long-distance trade of ritual objects, materials, and knowledge. Related symbolism found within art evidences the broad spread of knowledge north to Canada, west to the Mississippi, and into the South. Hundreds of self-governing groups live in this area, with at least 18 distinct groups living in and around New York City.

**1570  
A.D.**

The "Six Nations" Iroquois Confederacy is formed, uniting the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, and Cayuga tribes. (The Tuscarora tribe joins later in the 1700s). Known as the Haudenosaunee, or "People of the Longhouse," the confederacy develops a Wampum, Hiawatha's Belt, to serve as the group's flag and symbol.

**SPOTLIGHT: Hiawatha Belt***The Hiawatha Belt*

The Hiawatha Belt symbolizes the unity of the six Haudenosaunee nations, connected by the Great Law of Peace. The belt was created by the 5 original Iroquois tribes—the Tuscarora Nation joined after the belt was created. The white lines represent the path of peace, welcoming other nations to take shelter under the Great Law of Peace and join the Confederacy.

**1609  
A.D.**

Henry Hudson is the first European to enter New York, while attempting to find a passage for the Dutch East India Company. According to a journal from a crewman on his ship, Rober Juet, the Europeans are afraid of the Native Americans and have violent first interactions with them.



## Historic Timeline: 1626 A.D. to 1795 A.D.

1626  
A.D.

Belgian Peter Minuit “purchases” Manhattan for sixty Dutch guilders worth of trade goods. At the time, Indians did not believe that land could be privately owned, any more than could water, air or sunlight. They interpret the Dutch trade goods as gifts in appreciation for the right to share the land. The process of evicting indigenous people from the area begins.

1626 to  
1790s  
A.D.

By 1800, the last of the Native Americans have been forced out of the New York City area. Some Native Americans assimilate into the new American culture, while others move. Small numbers of Native Americans form reservations on Long Island and in New Jersey. Native leaders use different strategies to confront expansionism: Tecumseh (1768-1813) a Shawnee orator and military strategist becomes a war leader; Keokuk (1780-1858) believes the Sac and Fox people cannot resist expansionism, and negotiates with the Americans. Many Native Americans also side with the British during the American Revolution, in hopes of slowing expansionism. Others fight alongside the Americans. Wars, forced relocation, and the spread of infectious diseases such as smallpox, measles, and influenza affect the Native American peoples greatly.

1795  
A.D.

The Act of April 9, 1795 is passed in New York for the better support of Oneida, Onondaga and Cayuga Indians, enabling the government to sell back land in northern New York at the value of four shillings per acre.

### SPOTLIGHT: “THE INDIAN QUESTION”

“When the Indian, being a man and not a child or thing, or merely an animal, as some of the would-be civilizers have termed him, fights for his property, liberty, and life, they call him a savage. When the first settlers in this country fought for their property, liberty and lives, they were called heroes. When the Indian in fighting this great nation wins a battle it is called a massacre; when the great nation in fighting the Indian wins, it is called a victory.”

—*Inshata-Theumba*, excerpt from her 1880 essay, “The Indian Question”



*Inshata-Theumba*

## Historic Timeline: 1800s to Present Day

1800 to  
1900s  
A.D.

Many Woodlands (East Coast) tribes are forced to relocate further and further West, as expansion continues. An official governmental policy of assimilation is adopted, outlawing customs and forcing native children to attend Indian Boarding Schools to further adopt American culture and the English language in place of their own traditions and heritage.

1940s to  
1950s

The Urban Indian Relocation Program is created by the U.S. government in 1952 in an effort to encourage native peoples living on reservations to move into American cities and end governmental responsibility to Native Americans living on reservations. Many Native Americans are unprepared for urban life, and experience high rates of alcoholism, suicide, and homicide.

1960s to  
1980s

Approximately 750,000 American Indians move to cities—including New York—from 1950 to 1980. Native Americans continue to move into New York City after this time. Native Americans participate in the Civil Rights movement, demanding greater self-determination, and the pan-Indian movement spreads.

1980s to  
Present  
Day

The 1980s and 1990s usher in an era of increased government support, Indian controlled schools, the protection of religious freedoms, and the preservation of traditional languages. Following the Civil Rights movement, and the governmental support of the 1980s-90s, many Native Americans enjoy greater opportunities and acceptance, although some problems still remain.

## Present Day Reservations

Reservations consist of lands set aside by and for tribes when they gave up enormous portions of their original landholdings in treaties with the federal government. There are 300 reservations in the U.S. and approximately 2,670 Canadian Reserves that Native tribes call home. Many of the reservations are incapable of sustaining agriculture and other economic pursuits, but many Indians have come to consider them “home,” and reservation lands continue to be imbued with cultural and religious significance.

### Cayuga

**Location:** The Cayuga people do not have a reservation or land base. Most members of the nation live on or near the Seneca Nation reservation. The Cayuga Nation filed a land claim in federal court in 1974, and is currently negotiating its land claim with New York State.

**Population:** There are approximately 450 members of the Cayuga nation living in New York.

### Oneida

**Location:** The Oneida Reservation is located south of the city of Oneida in Madison County, New York. The reservation includes the Turning Stone Casino, which is located near Interstate I-90.

**Area:** 32 acres

**Population:** Approximately 40 of the 1,000+ members of the Oneida Nation live on the reservation.



*A longhouse built on the reservation*

### Onondaga

**Location:** The Onondaga Reservation is located five miles south of Syracuse, New York. New York State Route 11A is a north-south highway that runs through the reservation.

**Area:** 7,300 acres

**Population:** The 2000 census recorded a population of 468 people living within the reservation.



*A view of a field within the reservation*

### Seneca

**Location:** The Tonawanda Reservation, also known as the Tonawanda Creek Reservation, is located in Western New York. Most of the reservation lies within Genesee County, with portions of the reservation flowing into Erie and Niagara counties. The Tonawanda Creek flows through the reservation to the Niagara River.

**Area:** 5,759 acres

**Population:** The 2000 census recorded a population of 533 people living within the reservation.



*Tonawanda Community Building*

## Present Day Reservations *(continued)*

### Shinnecock

**Location:** The Shinnecock Reservation is located in the town of Southampton in Suffolk County, New York. It lies on the east side of Shinnecock Bay on southeastern Long Island, near Tuckahoe, Shinnecock Hills, and the village of Southampton.

**Area:** 3.4 square miles

**Population:** The 2000 census recorded a population of 504 people living within the reservation.



*The Shinnecock Cultural Center and Museum*

### St. Regis Band of Mohawk Indians

**Location:** The Mohawk Reservation, also known as Akwesasne, sits along the St. Lawrence River on the U.S.-Canadian Border. The entire reservation spans two countries and has three tribal governments. It is located in Franklin County, New York.

**Area:** 14,650 acres

**Population:** The 2000 census recorded a population of 3,288 people living within the reservation.



*The Mohawk Reservation Community and Administration Building*

### Tuscarora

**Location:** Tuscarora Reservation is located in Niagara County, New York, ten minutes from Niagara Falls and 20 minutes from Buffalo, New York.

**Area:** 9.3 square miles

**Population:** As of the census of 2000, there were 1,138 people living on the reservation.



*Map of the three main parcels of land owned by the Tuscarora*

## Demographics

### Native American Populations in New York State

50% of Native Americans live in urban areas.

22% of Native Americans live on reservations.

Most other Native Americans live in areas around reservations.

Data derived from *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* by Beverley Tatum.

### Native American Populations in the United States of America Over Time

- **1492:** 3 to 5 million Native Americans live in the U.S.
- **1850:** 250,000 Native Americans live in the U.S.
- **Today:** 2 million Native Americans live in the U.S.

### What caused an increase in population from 1850 to today?

- An increase in the birth rate.
- A decrease in the infant mortality rate.
- From 1970 onward, following the Civil Rights movement, there was an increase in individuals self-identifying as Native American.

Data derived from *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* by Beverley Tatum.

### Native American Nations Recognized by the U.S. Government

564 Native American nations have been recognized.

250 Native American nations remain unrecognized (approximate).

Data derived from Federal Register Volume 75 Number 190 (October 2010).

### 2010 Census: Native American Populations in New York

**221,058** New Yorkers were identified as members of American Indian and Alaska Native Populations in the 2010 census. This was a **28.8% increase** from 2000, when **171,581** New Yorkers were identified as belonging to these groups.

New York City has the largest number of American Indians and Alaska Natives of any location within the United States, with a population of **111,749** Native Americans out of the total population of **8,175,133** New Yorkers.

Data derived from "The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010 Census Briefs."

## Education

### Native American Students

Native American students' academic success is measurably lower than their white peers. Native American students are the second least likely population to graduate from high school or college (second only to Latino students). Organizations such as the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) work to provide American Indian and Alaska Native students with the best educational opportunities possible, which includes access to a quality education that will respect and address their unique cultural and language needs.

### Secondary Education

The New York State Legislature authorized Education Law 4118 in 1953 to provide funding for Native American students from tribes located within the state. Students who are eligible receive grant awards up to \$2,000 per year for their attendance at any approved postsecondary institution in New York State. Students are also eligible for aid for less than four years of study and for part-time study.

### Native Culture, Language, and Access for Success in Schools (CLASS) Act

This Act was passed by the federal government in 2011 to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) to recognize and support the role of tribal governments in education policy affecting Native students, including the inclusion of Indian tribes in the school improvement process. It also provided Native American communities the authority to develop alternative licensure and certification requirements for teachers. The act created a grant program to assist tribes in providing educational alternatives for Indian youth who have been sentenced to incarceration or juvenile detention. It expanded programs for Native American students to include Native language and culture education in addition to English language instruction. A grant program was also developed to support Native Americans working to maintain the survival and vitality of Native American languages.

### Quick Facts on Education

**644,000** American Indian and Alaska Native Students are enrolled in the U.S. K-12 System.

**90%** of Native students attend public schools.

**8%** of Native students attend schools administered by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE).

Over the past ten years, Native students have been **the only population to have not improved in reading or math** (grades 4 – 8).

On average, **less than 50% of Native students graduate from high school** each year. *(Based upon data from 7 states with the highest percentage of American Indian and Alaskan Indian students).*

American Indian and Alaskan Natives in the U.S. attend **an average of 11.7 years of schooling**, compared to an average of 12.8 years by their White counterparts.

In Prose Literacy, only **36% of Native American adults** are proficient at Level 3 or above (out of 5 levels), compared to **61% of their White peers**.

In Document Literacy, only **36% of Native American adults** are proficient at Level 3 or above (out of 5 levels), compared to **56% of their White peers**.

In Quantitative Literacy, only **36% of Native American adults** are proficient at Level 3 or above (out of 5 levels), compared to **61% of their White peers**.

*Data derived from the National Congress of American Indians (2012) and the U.S. Department of Education & the National Center for Education Statistics National Adult Literacy Surveys (1992).*

## Language & Writing

*From: The National Congress of American Indians, "Language."*

Language encompasses and expresses a worldview shaped by centuries, in some cases tens of thousands of years, of experience, knowledge, practices, spiritual beliefs, and relationships between a people, its neighbors, and its environment, which cannot be replicated in any other tongue.

The survival of American Indian and Alaska Native languages is essential to the success of tribal communities and Native ways of life. However, without urgent and sustained intervention, far too many Native languages risk extinction within the coming decades.

NCAI is committed to ensuring that tribes have the tools and resources necessary to revitalize and sustain their Native languages for current and future generations.

In 2010, NCAI declared Native languages to be in a state of emergency. According to UNESCO, 74 Native languages stand to disappear within the next decade. Equally alarming, scholars project that without immediate and persistent action, only 20 Native languages will still be spoken by 2050. This crisis is the result of longstanding government policies—enacted particularly through boarding schools—that sought to break the chain of cultural transmission and destroy American Indian and Alaska Native cultures.

Native language revitalization is a critical priority for tribes because language goes to the heart of tribal identity. A language is not simply a collection of words; nor is one language interchangeable with another. In many ways, language is culture.

Immersion schools have proven to be one of the most successful models in producing fluent Native language speakers. Because children are learning the language, immersion schools help ensure that the language will be carried forward for a longer period of time. However, establishing and operating immersion schools carries a significant cost and is beyond the current means of many tribes. NCAI urges the federal government to provide tribes with sufficient funding, training, technical support, and educational flexibility to revitalize their Native languages.

## Cayuga (Goyogohó:nQ')

Cayuga is an Iroquoian language spoken mainly along the Grand River in southern Ontario, Canada by about 100 people. A number of Cayuga elders in New York State also speak the language. There are a number of different spelling systems for Cayuga. Alternative spellings are listed here.

*Note:* In this spelling system, the letter *h* is always pronounced: *th* is pronounced like the *th* in “outhouse,” rather than the *th* in “think,” and *sh* is pronounced like the *sh* in “mishap,” rather than the *sh* in “shell.”

### Vowels

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol	Pronunciation
a	u	a	Like <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> .
a:	a·, aa	aː	Like <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> , only held longer.
e		e	Like <i>a</i> in <i>gate</i> .
e:	e·, ee	eː	Like <i>a</i> in <i>gate</i> , only held longer.
i		i	Like <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> .
i:	i·, ii	iː	Like <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> , only held longer.
o		o	Like <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> .
o:	o·, oo	oː	Like <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> , only held longer.
u		u	Like <i>u</i> in <i>flute</i> .
u:	u·, uu	uː	Like <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> .

### Nasal Vowels

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol
ê	eñ, enh	ẽ̃, ã̃
ê:	ê·, êê, e:ñ, e-ñ, eenh	ẽ̃ː, ã̃ː
Q	ø, oñ, onh, un	õ, ü
Q:	ø·, Q·, o:ñ, o-ñ, oonh	õː, üː

### Consonants

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol	Pronunciation
d	t	d	Like <i>d</i> in <i>day</i> .
g	k	g	Like <i>g</i> in <i>good</i> .
h		h	Like <i>h</i> in <i>hay</i> .
j	ts, ch	dz, dʒ	Like <i>ds</i> in <i>Edsel</i> , <i>j</i> in <i>jar</i> , or <i>ch</i> in <i>char</i> .
k	g	k	Like the soft <i>k</i> in <i>ski</i> .
n		n	Like <i>n</i> in <i>night</i> .
r		r	Like <i>r</i> in <i>red</i> .
s		s, ʃ	Like <i>s</i> in <i>sing</i> . Before <i>y</i> or <i>r</i> it is pronounced more like <i>sh</i> in <i>show</i> .
t	d	t	Like the soft <i>t</i> in <i>star</i> .
ts	j	ts	Like <i>ts</i> in <i>tsunami</i> .
w		w	Like <i>w</i> in <i>way</i> .
y		j	Like <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i> .
'	ʔ, ʔ	ʔ	A pause sound, like the one in <i>uh-oh</i> .



## Mohawk (Kanien'keha)

Mohawk is an Iroquoian language spoken by about 3,350 speakers, most of whom are elderly. The population of Mohawk speakers in New York State is within the Ahkwesáhsne community. Mohawk was first put into writing by French missionaries in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The spelling system was based on French pronunciation. There are a number of different spelling systems for Mohawk.

*Note:* In this spelling system, the letter *h* is always pronounced: *th* is pronounced like the *th* in “outhouse,” rather than the *th* in “think,” and *sh* is pronounced like the *sh* in “mishap,” rather than the *sh* in “shell.”

### Vowels

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol	Pronunciation
a		a	Like <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> .
a:	a, a·	ã	Like <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> , only held longer.
e		ã, e	Like <i>a</i> in <i>gate</i> .
e:	e, e·	ẽ	Like <i>a</i> in <i>gate</i> , only held longer.
i		i	Like <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> .
i:	i, i·	ĩ	Like <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> , only held longer.
o		o	Like <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> .
o:	o, o·	õ	Like <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> , only held longer.

### Nasal Vowels

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol
en	ê, Ê, enh	ẽ̃
en:	en, ê:, Ê:	ẽ̃̃
on	ø, Ɔ, onh	õ
on:	on, ø:, Ɔ:	õ̃

### Consonants

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol	Pronunciation
h		h	Like <i>h</i> in <i>hay</i> .
k	g	g, k, k <sup>h</sup>	Like <i>g</i> in <i>gate</i> , soft <i>k</i> in <i>skate</i> , or hard <i>k</i> in <i>Kate</i> .
kw	gw, khw	gw, kw	Like <i>gw</i> in <i>Gwen</i> or <i>qu</i> in <i>queen</i> .
r	l	l, ɹ	Like <i>r</i> in <i>right</i> in some dialects, but <i>l</i> in <i>light</i> in others.
n		n	Like <i>n</i> in <i>night</i> .
s	sh, c	s, ʃ	Like <i>s</i> in <i>sell</i> . Before <i>y</i> or <i>i</i> , the pronunciation is like <i>sh</i> in <i>shell</i> .
t	d	d, t, t <sup>h</sup>	Like <i>d</i> in <i>die</i> , soft <i>t</i> in <i>sty</i> , or hard <i>t</i> in <i>tie</i> .
ts	j, ch	ts, tʃ, dʒ	Like <i>ts</i> in <i>tsunami</i> . Before <i>y</i> or <i>i</i> the pronunciation is like <i>j</i> in <i>jar</i> , and before <i>hy</i> or <i>hi</i> it is like <i>ch</i> in <i>char</i> .
w		w	Like <i>w</i> in <i>way</i> .
wh		f, w̥	Some Mohawk speakers pronounce this sound with the voiceless “breathy w” that many British speakers use in words like “which,” but others pronounce it like <i>f</i> in <i>fair</i> .
y		j	Like <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i> .
'	ʔ, ʔ	ʔ	A pause sound, like the one in <i>uh-oh</i> .

## Oneida (OnAyota'a:ka)

Mohawk is a Northern Iroquoian language spoken by about 200 speakers in southern Ontario, Canada, in New York State, and in Wisconsin. The language has only been written down systematically within the last couple of generations.

### Vowels

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol	Pronunciation
a	u	Ě, a	Like <i>a</i> in <i>what</i> or <i>father</i> .
a:	a·, aa	a̟	Like <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> , only held longer.
e		ǎ	Like <i>e</i> in <i>get</i> .
e:	e·, ee	e̟	Like <i>e</i> in <i>gaze</i> .
i		ɪ	Like <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> .
i:	i·, ii	i̟	Like <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> , only held longer.
o		Ū, o	Like <i>u</i> in <i>put</i> or <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> .
o:	o·, oo	o̟	Like <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> , only held longer.

### Nasal Vowels

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol
Ě	ê, enh, unh	ẽ̃
Ě:	Ě·, ê:, e·	ẽ̟̃, ẽ̟̟̃
u	ø, ø, unh, onh	ũ
u:	u·, ø:, ø·, ø:, ø·	ũ̟

### Consonants

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol	Pronunciation
h		h	Like <i>h</i> in <i>hay</i> .
ts	j, ch	ts, tʃ, dʒ	Like <i>ts</i> in <i>tsunami</i> . Before <i>y</i> or <i>i</i> the pronunciation is like <i>j</i> in <i>jar</i> , and before <i>hy</i> or <i>hi</i> it is like <i>ch</i> in <i>char</i> .
k	g	g, k, k <sup>h</sup>	Like <i>g</i> in <i>gate</i> , soft <i>k</i> in <i>skate</i> , or hard <i>k</i> in <i>Kate</i> .
l	r	l	Like <i>l</i> in <i>light</i> .
n		n	Like <i>n</i> in <i>night</i> .
s	sh, c	s, ʃ	Like <i>s</i> in <i>sell</i> . Before <i>y</i> or <i>hy</i> , the pronunciation is like <i>sh</i> in <i>shell</i> .
t	d	d, t, t <sup>h</sup>	Like <i>d</i> in <i>die</i> , soft <i>t</i> in <i>sty</i> , or hard <i>t</i> in <i>tie</i> .
w		w	Like <i>w</i> in <i>way</i> .
y		j	Like <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i> .
'	ʔ, ?	ʔ	A pause sound, like the one in <i>uh-oh</i> .

## Onondaga (Onq̄da'géga' or Onoñda'géga')

Onondaga is an Iroquoian language spoken by about 15–30 speakers within the United States who are primarily elderly. Today, there are two Onondaga communities: one south of Syracuse, New York and the other in Ontario. Each of the two communities has its own writing system, with a few minor differences between them.

### Vowels

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol	Pronunciation
a	u	Ě, a	Like <i>a</i> in <i>what</i> or <i>father</i> .
a:	a·, aa	a̟	Like <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> , only held longer.
ä	æ, ae, ra	æ	Like <i>a</i> in <i>cat</i> .
ä:	ä·, æ·, ää	æ̟	Like <i>a</i> in <i>cat</i> , only held longer.
e		ă, e	Like <i>e</i> in <i>get</i> or <i>a</i> in <i>gate</i> .
e:	e·, ee	e̟	Like <i>a</i> in <i>gate</i> , only held longer.
i		i	Like <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> .
i:	i·, ii	i̟	Like <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> , only held longer.
o		o	Like <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> .
o:	o·, oo	o̟	Like <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> , only held longer.

### Nasal Vowels

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol
ê	eñ, enh	ě
ê:	ê·, ê ê, e:ñ, e· ñ, eenh	ě̟
ø	q̄, oñ, onh, un	ũ
ø:	q̄·, q̄·, o:ñ, o·ñ, oonh	ũ̟

### Consonants

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol	Pronunciation
c	sh, š	ʃ	Like <i>sh</i> in <i>show</i> .
d	t	d	Like <i>d</i> in <i>day</i>
g	k	g	Like <i>g</i> in <i>good</i> .
h		h	Like <i>h</i> in <i>hay</i> .
j		ts, dʒ	Like <i>ts</i> in <i>tsunami</i> or <i>j</i> in <i>jar</i> .
k	g	k, k <sup>h</sup>	Like soft <i>k</i> in <i>ski</i> or hard <i>k</i> in <i>key</i> .
n		n	Like <i>n</i> in <i>night</i> .
s		s	Like <i>s</i> in <i>sing</i> .
t	d	t, t <sup>h</sup>	Like soft <i>t</i> in <i>sty</i> or hard <i>t</i> in <i>tie</i> .
w		w	Like <i>w</i> in <i>way</i> .
y		j	Like <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i> .
'	ʔ, ?	ʔ	A pause sound, like the one in <i>uh-oh</i> .

## Seneca

Seneca is an Iroquoian language spoken by 150 speakers within the United States who are primarily elderly. The language is spoken in West New York, Tonawanda, Cattaraugus, and Allegheny reservations, in addition to northeast Oklahoma where it is intermingled with Cayuga.

### Vowels

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol	Pronunciation
a		a	Like <i>a</i> in <i>what</i> or <i>father</i> .
a:	a·, á, aa	ã	Like <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> , only held longer.
ä	æ, ae	æ	Like <i>a</i> in <i>cat</i> .
ä:	ä·, æ:	æ̃	Like <i>a</i> in <i>cat</i> , only held longer.
e		e	Like <i>e</i> in <i>gate</i> .
e:	e·, é, ee	ẽ	Like <i>e</i> in <i>gate</i> , only held longer.
i		i	Like <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> .
i:	i·, í, ii	ĩ	Like <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> , only held longer.
o	u	o, u	Like <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> or <i>u</i> in <i>flute</i> .
o:	o·, ú, oo	õ, ũ	Like <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> or <i>u</i> in <i>flute</i> , only held longer.

### Nasal Vowels

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol
ê	ê, enh	ẽ
ê:	ë·, ê:, ê ê, eenh	ẽ̃
ö	o, ø, onh	õ, ü
ö:	ö·, o:, oonh	õ̃, ü̃

### Consonants

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol	Pronunciation
d	t	d	Like <i>d</i> in <i>day</i>
g	k	g	Like <i>g</i> in <i>good</i> .
h		h	Like <i>h</i> in <i>hay</i> .
j		dʒ, tʃ	Like <i>j</i> in <i>jar</i> or <i>ch</i> in <i>char</i> .
k	g	k, k <sup>h</sup>	Like soft <i>k</i> in <i>ski</i> or hard <i>k</i> in <i>key</i> .
n		n	Like <i>n</i> in <i>night</i> .
s		s	Like <i>s</i> in <i>sing</i> .
š	sh, š, c	ʃ	Like <i>sh</i> in <i>show</i> .
t	d	t, t <sup>h</sup>	Like soft <i>t</i> in <i>sty</i> or hard <i>t</i> in <i>tie</i> .
ts		dʒ, ts	Like <i>ds</i> in <i>Edsel</i> or <i>ts</i> in <i>Patsy</i> .
w		w	Like <i>w</i> in <i>way</i> .
y		j	Like <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i> .
'	ʔ, ?	ʔ	A pause sound, like the one in <i>uh-oh</i> .

## Tuscarora (Sgarooreh')

Seneca is a Northern Iroquoian language spoken by about 13 speakers within New York and North Carolina, in the United States, and in Canada. The speakers of Tuscarora are primarily elderly. The language is spoken in West New York, Tonawanda, Cattaraugus, and Allegheny reservations, in addition to northeast Oklahoma where it is intermingled with Cayuga.

### Vowels

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol	Pronunciation
a	u	a, ɔ	Like <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> or <i>au</i> in <i>caught</i> .
a:	a, aa	aː	Like <i>a</i> in <i>father</i> , only held longer.
e	eh	ɛ, æ	Like <i>e</i> in <i>set</i> or <i>a</i> in <i>sat</i> .
e:	e, eh	ɛː	Like <i>e</i> in <i>get</i> , only held longer.
i	ee	i, ɪ	Like <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> or <i>i</i> in <i>pit</i> .
i:	i, ee	iː	Like <i>i</i> in <i>police</i> , only held longer.
u	oo	u, o	Like <i>o</i> in <i>note</i> or <i>u</i> in <i>flute</i> .
u:	o:, o', oo	uː	Like <i>u</i> in <i>flute</i> , only held longer.

### Nasal Vowels

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol
ê	e, enh	ẽ, ã
ê:	e:, êê, eenh	ẽː, ãː

### Consonants

Character Used	Alternative Character Used	IPA Symbol	Pronunciation
d	t	d	Like <i>d</i> in <i>day</i>
f		f	Like <i>f</i> in <i>fair</i> .
g	k	g	Like <i>g</i> in <i>good</i> .
h		h	Like <i>h</i> in <i>hay</i> .
ch		tʃ, dʒ	Like <i>ch</i> in <i>char</i> or <i>j</i> in <i>jar</i> .
k	g	k, k <sup>h</sup>	Like soft <i>k</i> in <i>ski</i> or hard <i>k</i> in <i>key</i> .
n		n	Like <i>n</i> in <i>night</i> .
r		r	Like <i>r</i> in <i>red</i> .
s	sh, c	s	Like <i>s</i> in <i>sell</i> . Before <i>y</i> the pronunciation is like <i>sh</i> in <i>shell</i> .
t	d	t, t <sup>h</sup>	Like soft <i>t</i> in <i>sty</i> or hard <i>t</i> in <i>tie</i> .
th	è	è	Like <i>th</i> in <i>think</i> .
w		w	Like <i>w</i> in <i>way</i> .
y		j	Like <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i> .
'	ʔ, ?	ʔ	A pause sound, like the one in <i>uh-oh</i> .

## Shinnecock

The Shinnecock language has not been spoken fluently for nearly 200 years, a fact that the Shinnecock Native American tribe is trying to reverse. In collaboration with Stony Brook University, and T.R.A.I.L.S., software that teaches, restores and archives indigenous languages, Shinnecock tribal members are working to revive the ancient language. The last Shinnecock Indian Nation member to fluently speak the language was Wickham Cuffee, who passed away in 1925. There are still speakers of the language within the community; yet, there are no longer any members of the nation who can speak fluently. The Shinnecock Nation Cultural Enrichment Program is working to oversee the language education program, focusing on a range of issues from the proper pronunciation of words to the best way to teach the Shinnecock language.

The reclamation of the language is a two-step process, beginning with research into what the language looked like. Researchers are using remembered prayers, greetings, sayings, and word lists—including a list created by Thomas Jefferson in 1791. The information found will then be compared to similarly structured languages that are well-documented, in order to reconstruct Shinnecock based upon the similarities and differences between the two languages.

This is not an unusual situation for Native American peoples to find themselves in, as only 175 of the original 300 indigenous languages spoken in the United States remain, according to the Indigenous Language Institute. Without restoration efforts, the institute expects that no more than 20 of the original 300 will be spoken by 2050.

## Common Vocabulary

English	Onondaga
One	Sgá:dah
Two	Dégnih
Three	Áhsəh
Four	Gayí:h
Five	Hwíks
Man	Hę:gweh
Woman	Gųnų:gweh
Dog	Jí:hah
Sun	Gáähgwa:'
Moon	Ęhní'da'
Water	Ohnéganos
White	Owähé'sda'
Yellow	Oji'tgwa:'
Red	Otgwəhda:'
Black	Oshwə'da'
Mom	Ganoha'
Dad	K'niha
I'm thankful you're well	Nya wenha ska nonh

English	Mohawk
One	Enhskat
Two	Tekeni
Three	Ahsen
Four	Kaye:ri
Five	Wisk
Man	Ron:kwe
Woman	Yakon:kwe
Dog	Erhar
Sun	Karahkwa
Moon	Ehnita
Water	Ohne:ka
White	Kenra:ken
Yellow	Otsinekwar
Red	Onekwenhtara
Black	Kahòn:tsi
Eat	Raeks
See	Ratkahtos
Hear	Rahron:kas
Sing	Raterennotha'
Leave	Rahtentyes

English	Oneida
One	Íska
Two	Tékeni
Three	Áhs
Four	Kayé:
Five	Wisk
Man	Lukwé
Woman	Yakukwé
Dog	É:lhal
Moon	Ohní:ta'
Water	Ohne:kánus
White	Owískela'
Yellow	Otsí:nkwala'
Red	Onikwhtala'
Black	O'sw:ta'
Eat	Í:laks
See	La:khe'
Hear	Lothu:té:
Sing	Tehalihwákhwa'

English	Seneca
One	Ska:t
Two	Tekhni:h
Three	Səh
Four	Ke:ih
Five	Wis
Man	Hökwe
Woman	Yakökwe
Dog	Ji:yäh
Sun	Kä:hkwa:'
Moon	Ĕ:ni'ta:'
Water	O:ne:ka'
White	Kakē:'ět
Yellow	Jitkwä:'ė:'
Red	Tkwəhtä:'ė:'
Black	Jē:sta'ė:'

English	Cayuga
One	Sga:t
Two	Dekni:
Three	Ahsə
Four	Gei:
Five	Hwihs
Man	HQ:gweh
Woman	AgQ:gweh
Dog	So:wa:s
Sun	Ga:gwa:'
Moon	Ęni'da:'
Water	Ohneganohs
White	Gę'gę:
Yellow	Oji'tgwa:'
Red	Otgwej'ia:'
Black	Swę'daę'

English	Tuscarora
One	Ę:chi
Two	Né:kti:
Three	Áhsə
Four	Hę'tahk
Five	Wisk
Man	Rę:kweh
Woman	Akę:kweh
Dog	Chír or Gís
Sun	Híhte'
Moon	Í:ka'r
Water	À:we
White	Uhwarýá:kę'
Yellow	Uchi'tkwáhneh
Red	Katkwarà:yę'
Black	Kahęschi
Eat	Rachù:rih
See	Ratkáhtuhs
Hear	Rathęhna:ch

## Native American Culture

Throughout this section, much of the history and many of the traditions of the Native American peoples of New York will sometimes be examined through the groupings of the Haudenosaunee and the Shinnecock, instead of separating out the intricacies of each individual tribe. The six nations of the Haudenosaunee are related through language, similar cultural traditions and family bonds. Each nation speaks an Iroquoian language and shares a similar way of life; however, it is important to note that each tribe has its own distinct identity that should be examined further.

### Clans

The most basic unit of Haudenosaunee society is the clan, a group of relatives that traces its ancestry to a single woman, with matrilineal heritage. Each clan is self-governing, joining other clans to govern the village and the greater tribe. One of the main functions of the clan is to provide kinship with clan members in other villages. For Iroquois men, who historically traveled away from home, food and lodging always awaited them in the home of another clan member regardless of the distance.

Each clan is named for an animal, but not under the belief that their clan is descended from that animal. Rather, tradition states that each clan was named for a bird or other animal that was seen nearby the clan in its founding. The Haudenosaunee have historically recognized the importance of the animals with which they share the forest, depending on animals for survival and patterning their societies on the structure of Nature.

### Homes

Historically, the Haudenosaunee lived in large bark homes called longhouses, which held members of a clan, and would extend up to four hundred feet long and twenty-five feet wide. Longhouses had either one or two entrances, each decorated with the family's clan animal. Doorways were covered with hide or bark doors, and roofs had covered fire holes that could be opened to provide ventilation and light.



A single longhouse could hold up to a dozen families through a harsh winter, each with its own private space and a fire it shared with others. Each family section would contain a raised platform covered with reed mats or pelts that served as seats during the day and beds at night. Articles of clothing were hung on the walls or stored in bark bins and baskets along with food and supplies.

The longhouse is also an important symbol to the identity of the 6 nations—the word Haudenosaunee means “People of the Longhouse.”

Within the past 200 years, Haudenosaunee people began to move from longhouses to family cabins that contained extended members of families. The two room cabins, which would sometimes feature a second story, provided enough space to allow families to continue to rely on aunts and grandparents to help raise the children.

Today, the Haudenosaunee live in a wide assortment of homes, including log homes, two story homes, ranch style houses, and mobile homes.



## Cuisine

The Iroquois people skillfully manage the natural bounty of the region by living in accordance with the seasons of the year. They hunt, fish, gather nuts, berries, and other wild foods when these resources are available, and they cultivated crops.

The three most important crops, corn, beans, and squash, are known as “Three Sisters.” These foods are thought to be the first three foods given to the people from mother earth. Each of these crops has a song that is sung to give thanks to the crop for doing its duty and providing for the people.

Meals commonly include corn soup, corn bread, beans, vegetables, fruits, nuts and meats from deer, bears and fish. Today, modern Haudenosaunee eat a range of food, from anything found at the grocery store to local restaurants.



The Cayuga Nation, specifically, has built a farm call Gakwiyo, which means Good Food. This farm is located in Seneca County by Cayuga Lake. The vegetables and other produce from the farm are cultivated and shared by each family of the Cayuga Nation.

In New York, many Haudenosaunee fish, and hunt deer, turkey, rabbit and game found throughout the area. Modern-day hunters still follow the tradition of taking only what is needed, sharing any excess with fellow tribe members. Like the hunters, gatherers of food are also taught to take only what is needed, to leave resources for those who are not yet born.

## Arts and Crafts

As a result of an increasingly reduced land base and the depletion of game and fur-bearing animals in the nineteenth century, many Native American peoples turned to traditional arts such as basketry, embroidery, quillwork, wampum and beadwork, to be sold to non-Native people and tourists. The tastes of the tourists determined what types of items the artists made, and these items have now become a medium of expression of Native identity and a source of pride.

Of the crafts made by Native American peoples, beaded objects are some of the most popular and widespread. Most beaded items have been made by Tuscarora and Mohawk women beadworkers, whose style of beadwork utilizes large translucent glass beads, clustered together to form ornate, raised floral patterns. Today, Haudenosaunee artists typically create art through carving, weaving, corn husk dolls, jewelry, stone, clay, and beading.



*Bag*  
(1850-1875)



*Moccasins*  
(1850-1875)

In addition to creating art for sale, many Native American groups have established organizations to support the creation of art within their community. The Oneida Nation Arts program in particular works “to promote diverse artistic expression within the community reflecting our heritage and spirit of future generations.” Many Native American tribes have museums located within their communities or reservations, such as the Seneca Nation Museum, which features information about the rich history and heritage of the tribe, including ancient artifacts and contemporary arts and crafts.

## Wampum

Before the Haudenosaunee had a system of writing, they depended on oral storytelling to pass down their history, traditions, and rituals. As an aid to memory, the Haudenosaunee used shell beads. The Europeans called the beads wampum, from wampumpeag, a word used by Indians in the area who spoke Algonquin languages.



The type of wampum most commonly used in historic times was bead wampum, cut from various seashells, ground and polished, and then bored through the center with a small hand drill. The purple and white beads, made from the shell of the quahog clam, were arranged on belts in designs representing events of significance. Each shell is thought of as a living record, used to remember agreements or stories, and the history of the people.

Wampum serve a variety of uses, and can be used to invite other nations to meetings. In this case, wampum strings are distributed, and each string is detailed with the topic that participants are to meet to discuss. At the end of each wampum string is a wooden stick; as each day passes, a notch is cut off the stick, so that when the notches are gone, the invitees know it is time for the meeting to take place. Wampum can also be used for treaties, condolences, messages, invitation, and identification. In addition to their practical uses, wampum can symbolize titles within the members of the Haudenosaunee. Each Clan Mother of a Chief has her own wampum string. When a person holds this title for the Nation, they carry the wampum to show their place in the community. When a leader falls, the wampum is passed on to the new leader.

When a string of wampum is held in a person's hand, they are said to be speaking truthfully. During ceremonies, wampum strings are used to convey that a speaker's words are true. People listening to a speaker holding a wampum are attentive and respectful of the speaker's message.

When wampum are used for historical purposes, individual elders are designated to memorize the various events and treaty articles represented on specific belts. The elders would then be able to interpret the belts and reproduce their contents with accuracy. Today, the belts are stored at Onondaga, the capital of the confederacy, in the care of a designated wampum keeper.

## Dress

The fundamental item of Haudenosaunee men's clothing was a breechcloth made of a strip of deerskin or fabric. Passing between the legs, it was secured by a waist belt, and decorated flaps of the breechcloth hung in the front and back. A sash—sometimes worn only around the waist, and sometimes also over the left shoulder—was woven on a loom or on the fingers, and might be decorated with beadwork. The young Tuscarora child pictured in this image typical male attire of Tuscarora men. The Fingerwoven Sash, made of wool, was woven for him by his mother. Historically, it might have been woven out of rattlesnake snakeskin or “Indian Hemp,” milkweed, which is a plant with fibrous qualities similar to cotton. To create the woven design, the hemp fibers are twisted into a twine and then dyed different colors using berry juice and other natural substances. The specific pattern represented around the shoulder of the young boy pictured is called “Chevron” and is commonly used in a variety of Indian communities; sashes are not distinct to the Tuscarora alone.



The picture to the right features a young Onondaga girl wearing traditional Haudenosaunee attire. The basic item of women's clothing was a short petticoat. Other items that were worn by both sexes included a fringed, sleeveless tunic, separate sleeves (connected to each other by thongs, but not connected to the tunic), leggings, moccasins, and a robe or blanket. Clothing was adorned with moose-hair embroidery featuring curved line figures with coiled ends. Decorated pouches for carrying personal items completed the costumes. Women used burden straps, worn across the forehead, to support litters carried on their backs. By the end of the eighteenth century, trade cloth replaced deerskin as the basic clothing material. Women began to wear loose fitting blouses often decorated with a beaded yoke. Woolen skirts and leggings now began to be decorated with beadwork, as imported glass beads replaced porcupine quills as decorative elements.



## Sports & Games

The Cayuga Nation shares many of the same sports found in the culture of the Haudenosaunee. These sports were not strictly played within the Cayuga Nation, but there was competition between all the Nations of the Haudenosaunee.



2010: A member of the Haudenosaunee Lacrosse Team.

**Lacrosse** – Lacrosse is one of the most popular games played by members of the Haudenosaunee tribes. Also called “the Ball Game” by the Cayuga nation, the game features six to eight players on each team. Each player has a lacrosse stick and tries to shoot the ball into the net.

**Running** – Running is seen as a competitive sport between members of the Haudenosaunee nations, with races of short and long distances. Historically, those who could quickly run long distances would become messengers, sending messages between Nations.

**Snow Snake** – This favorite game, played in winter, involves two snakes: one short and one long. Each snake is thrown down a track of snow. The individual who can throw his/her snake the farthest is deemed the winner.

**Dish Game** – This game, usually played at Green Corn, Harvest, and Midwinter ceremonies, involves a wooden or strong stone bowl and five or six flat stones. Each stone is painted black on one side and white on the other. To play, the bottom of the bowl is hit onto the ground to make the stones jump. The object of the game is to get all of the stones to land with the same color facing up.



A Haudenosaunee dish.

## Ironworkers



Hard Hat, Richard Glazer-Danay (Caughnawaga Mohawk), 1997.

Beginning in the early 1900s, Mohawks earned a reputation for being top-notch ironworkers on high steel. They began travelling from Native communities in upstate New York and Canada to work at sites around the world. Mohawk men worked on most of New York's major construction projects, including the George Washington Bridge, Empire State Building, United Nations, and World Trade Center. Today, they continue to work on high steel, carrying the Mohawk reputation for skill, bravery, and pride that has spanned six generations. Unfamiliar challenges confront Native people who move to urban areas. Life in the city often requires a balance of traditional cultural values with the often-conflicting requirements of mainstream society.

## Religion and Stories

### Chief Haiwatha

The Haudenosaunee draw little distinction between what is political and what is spiritual, leading the story of the founding of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy by Chief Haiwatha to become a story of both spiritual and political importance. The Hiawatha belt, which represents the founding of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, is named for the legendary co-founder of the confederacy, Haiwatha. He is believed to have been a member of the Mohawk or Onondaga peoples. Chief Haiwatha, the Peacemaker, is said to have come to the warring Five Nations, carrying with him the message of Kaianeraserakowa—the Great Law of Peace. He carried with him Skennen—Peace, Kariwio—The Good Word, and Kasatensera—Strength, aiming to unite the five nations in peace as one extended Longhouse with each Nation having their own hearth fire. The Nations would have shared leadership of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy while retaining the sovereignty over their own Nations. When Haiwatha’s peace proposal was accepted by the Mohawk, Onondaga, Seneca, Oneida, and Cayuga, the League was formed, and Hiawatha was named Lawgiver and Chief Spokesman for the Council. Hiawatha was also Keeper of the Wampum, responsible for the wampum belts representing the Great Law and the confederacy as well as those assigned by the council to remind the Haudenosaunee of treaties, or to announce a decision reached by the Grand Council of Chiefs.



*Image of Chief Haiwatha by John Fadden.*

### The Creation Story (from *The Journal of Major John Norton, 1816*)

Many northeastern Indian peoples share a legend of how the world was created on the back of a giant sea turtle, and some still refer to North America as Turtle Island. While there are many versions of the tradition, the following selection is from the Iroquois Indians of New York State (also known as the Haudenosaunee).

In the beginning before the formation of the earth; the country above the sky was inhabited by Superior Beings, over whom the Great Spirit presided. When the Great Spirit’s daughter became pregnant by an illicit connection, he pulled up a great tree by the roots, and threw her through the Cavity thereby formed. To prevent her utter destruction, he ordered the Great Turtle to carry slime up from the bottom waters on its back, and to wait on the surface of the water to catch her. After falling onto the back of the Turtle, with the mud she found there, she began to form the earth, and by the time of her delivery, the mud had formed a little island. Her child was a daughter, and as she grew up the earth extended under her hands. When the young woman arrived at the age of discretion, the Spirits who roved about, in human forms, made proposals of marriage for the young woman. The mother always rejected their offers, until a middle aged man, of a dignified appearance—his bow in his hand, and his quiver on his back—paid his addresses. Once accepted, he entered the house, and the mother observed that her son-in-law did not lie down all night; but taking two arrows out of his quiver, he put them by the side of his bride: at the dawn of day he took them up, and having replaced them in his quiver, he went out.



Image from *Native Ingenuity*.

After some time, the old woman perceived her daughter to be pregnant, but could not discover where the father had gone, or who he was. At the time of delivery, the twins disputed which way they should go out of the womb; the wicked one said, let us go out of the side; but the other said, not so, lest we kill our mother; then the wicked one pretending to acquiesce, desired his brother to go out first: but as soon as he was delivered, the wicked one, in attempting to go out at her side, caused the death of his mother.

The twin brothers were nurtured and raised by their Grandmother; the eldest was named Teharonghyawago, or the Holder of Heaven; the youngest was called Tawiskaron, or Flinty Rock, as his body was entirely covered with such a substance. They grew up, and with their bows and arrows, amused themselves throughout the island—which continued to grow. Tawiskaron was the most fortunate hunter, and enjoyed the favor of his Grandmother.

Teharonghyawago labored to people the earth with inhabitants, and to found Villages in happy situations, extending the comforts of men. Tawiskaron was equally active in destroying the works his brother had done; and in accumulating every evil in his power on the heads of ill fated mortals. Teharonghyawago saw, with regret, his brother persevere in every wickedness.

One day, Teharonghyawago was attacked by his brother Tawiskaron. They fought a long time, over the whole of the island, until at last Tawiskaron fell under the conquering hand of his brother. According to the varied tones of their voices in the different places through which they passed during the contest, the people, who afterwards sprung up there, spoke different languages.

### **Cornhusk Dolls** (*Adapted from the National Museum of the American Indian*)

A long time ago, there lived a girl who was given the gift of beauty. People in her village would turn their head to see her when she walked by. Everyone would talk about how beautiful she was. The girl realized she was beautiful and spent all her time looking at herself in a pond. When it came time to plant the Three Sisters (corn, beans, and squash), she was nowhere to be found. When the garden needed weeding, she was nowhere to be found. When it was time to prepare the animal hides for clothing and other useful things, she was nowhere to be found, and when it was time to grind corn into meal, she was nowhere to be found.

When it was time to serve the meals, she was the first one to eat. When it came time to get new clothing, she got the best hides. When it was time to dance and sing at the ceremonies, she was the first in line to start. The people were very unhappy with the way the young woman was behaving. They complained so much that the Creator decided that something had to be done. The Creator came to the young woman one day and said to her: "I gave you the gift of beauty and you misused it. I will have to punish you." The Creator reached out and took her face and hid it. That is why the cornhusk doll has no face, to remind us that no one is better than anyone else, and that we must always cooperate with one another.



*Cornhusk Dolls. ca. 1950.*

Iroquois women have a lengthy tradition of creating dolls from cornhusks. In the past, they made the dolls for girls to play with or for use in rituals. Today women also make them for sale to non-Native collectors. The dolls, as the story tells, generally have no facial features.

## The St. Regis Mohawks

For centuries the Roman Catholic Church and its missionaries have interacted with the Mohawk people. The Saint Regis Mohawks, as their name reflects, have had a close association with the Church for more than 200 years.

The founding of the St. Regis Mission and the construction of the first church took place against the backdrop of the French and Indian War. This global conflict between the superpowers of the day, France and Great Britain, was particularly divisive to the Mohawk people, who had alliances with both.

Kahnawake, the Mohawk community known to historians as Caughnawaga and Sault St. Louis, was by this time already overcrowded. Another mission village, Sawekatsi, had been established in 1747 by the French at what is now Ogdensburgh, New York. This mission attracted numerous Onondaga, Oneida, and a few Cayugas and Mohawks, but by 1754 it too was getting overcrowded and an epidemic had broken out. With the prospect of more Mohawks coming north to live in a community that could not support them, the French authorities agreed to allow the French clerics to start another mission village about halfway between Kahnawake and Sawekatsi upriver of Lake St. Francis. This village served a two-fold purpose: first, it strengthened the southern frontier of the French colony from English incursions, and second, it got many of the people at Kahnawake away from the vices of nearby Montreal.

By the time the war was in its final stages, the defeat of France seemed inevitable to the Mohawks of the St. Lawrence. They sent peace envoys to negotiate with the British army that was then preparing to descend their river for the final conquest of New France. When the British forces and their Iroquois allies passed through Akwesasne on August 1, 1760, they stopped at Akwesasne to smoke the pipe of peace. At least ten Akwesasne men volunteered to help guide their bateaux through the treacherous Lachine Rapids further downstream, and were later awarded medals for their service.

## The Story of Kateri Tekakwitha, the Mohawk Catholic

More than 300 years ago, a young Mohawk woman embraced the Catholic faith and carried out works of charity and benevolence among her people for most of her very short life. She has since become a great source of pride for the Mohawk people.

Her name was Kateri Tekakwitha. Kateri, the Iroquois form of Catherine (her baptized name), means pure; Tekakwitha means putting things in order. Her very name signifies the mission for which her life and death are now remembered.

The poor health which plagued her throughout her life and caused her violent pain affected her death in 1680 at the young age of 24 years. The Roman Catholic Church honored Kateri Tekakwitha for her devotion to Christ and her commitment to charity and chastity. The present day Mohawk Catholics have prayed and worked to one day see Kateri canonized as a saint. In the 1940s, the Vatican bestowed the title venerable on Kateri; this was the first step toward canonization. In June 1980, she was beatified and now is known as Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha. Mohawks and other Catholic Indian people from throughout the United States and Canada continue their campaign to see Kateri elevated to full status as a saint.

## Cultural Do's & Do Not's for Educators

Use the following guidelines to teach your students about Native American peoples. This set of tips also includes information about how to and how not to treat students from within Native American populations.



- ✔ **Do** present Native peoples as appropriate role models with whom Native children can identify.
- ✔ **Do** avoid arts and craft activities that trivialize Native dress, dance, or ceremony. Only create “Indian crafts” if you know the authentic methods and have authentic materials.
- ✔ **Do** discuss the relationship between Native peoples and the colonists, and what went wrong with it. Native American culture should not be taught just at Thanksgiving.
- ✔ **Do** use primary source material—speeches, songs, poems, writing—that show the linguistic skill of people who came from an oral tradition.
- ✔ **Do** highlight the Native American philosophy of respect for every form of life and for living in harmony with nature.
- ✔ **Do** discuss a variety of Indian nations, such as Hopi, Lakota, and Navajo, rather than lumping all Native Americans together. Explain that each nation has its own name, language, and culture.
- ✔ **Do** challenge TV and movie stereotypes of Native Americans. Discuss the meaning of stereotypes and help children understand that Native Americans were no more savage than others who fought to defend their homes and communities.
- ✔ **Do** understand that Native American children are not always aware of their heritage.

- ✘ **Do not** single out Native children, asking them to describe their traditions or cultures. Native children sometimes know more about media-portrayed Native Americans than about their own heritage, and should not be singled out to provide a Native perspective or recount their history.
- ✘ **Do not** use counting books that count “Indians” or sing “Ten Little Indians.”
- ✘ **Do not** speak of Native Americans exclusively in the past tense. There are 2 million Native people in the U.S. today; yet, many books and films have titles such as *How the Indians Lived*.
- ✘ **Do not** perpetuate the myth that a few Europeans defeated thousands of Indians in battle. The number killed in battle was relatively small; the European diseases—from which Native Americans had no immunity—were what really defeated Native American peoples.
- ✘ **Do not** let children imitate Indians with stereotypes such as one-word sentences, Hollywood style grammar, or gestures.
- ✘ **Do not** encourage children to dress up as Indians for Halloween. Even when well-intentioned, costumes involving imitation feathers, face paint, headdresses, and buckskin are disrespectful of traditional Native dress.
- ✘ **Do not** divide Indians and non-Indians into “us” and “them.” Instead, explain that Indians were the first Americans and that today Indians are American citizens with the same rights as all Americans.

## Holidays

**Mid-Winter Ceremony** (*January 27 – February 4*)—for continuation of all life-sustaining things; celebrated with tobacco offerings, confession of offenses, singing, drumming, dancing, name-giving, and dream-telling. Iroquois believe Awenhai/Sky Woman created the Sun, Moon, and Stars from Her body.

**Maple Ceremony** (*February 21—24*)—in thanksgiving for the Maple tree and its sugar.

**Thunder Ceremony** (*March 22—25*)—in thanksgiving for the rains. Iroquois believe Awenhai/Sky Woman bore the twin brothers Thahonhiawakon/Order and Tawiskaron/Chaos.

**Corn-Planting Ceremony** (*April 21—24*)—in thanksgiving for the corn seed. Iroquois believe Awenhai/Sky Woman descended from the Sky into the watery abyss, and landed on Turtle, on whom She created Earth.

**Strawberry Ceremony** (*May 20—23*)—in thanksgiving for the strawberry harvest.

**Green Bean Ceremony** (*June 19—22*)—in thanksgiving for the bean harvest; celebrated with tobacco offerings, singing, drumming, dancing, and feasting.

**Feast of the Great Spirit/Great Mystery that encompasses Mother Earth and Father Sky** (*June 20—21*)—honors the Deity Orenda.

**Green Corn Ceremony** (*July 19—25*)—in thanksgiving for the maize harvest. Rites include the Thanksgiving Prayer, Confession Chant, and Feather Dance.

**World Indigenous Peoples' Day** (*August 9*)— to celebrate the empowerment of indigenous peoples world-wide; vigil for justice and respect for the social, cultural, and political rights of all indigenous peoples. This day of recognition was established by the United Nations.

**Squash Ceremony** (*September 15—18*)—in thanksgiving for the squash harvest. Iroquois rites also include the secret Little Water Ceremony for preserving the potency of medicine and Dark Dance for appeasing spirits.



## Native American Wisdom

### Haudenosaunee Proverbs and Sayings

The greatest strength is gentleness.

Today we have gathered and we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now, we bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as People. Now our minds are one.

- Excerpt from Thanksgiving Address that the Haudenosaunee recite whenever they gather

In every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.

We return thanks to our mother, the earth, which sustains us.  
We return thanks to the rivers and streams, which supply us with water.  
We return thanks to all herbs, which furnish medicines for the cure of our diseases.  
We return thanks to the moon and stars, which have given to us their light when the sun was gone.  
We return thanks to the sun, that has looked upon the earth with a beneficent eye.  
Lastly, we return thanks to the Great Spirit, in Whom is embodied all goodness, and Who directs all things for the good of Her children.

- Iroquois Confederacy Prayer (from the 1800s)

## Famous Native Americans

### Tasquantum (“Squanto”) (1585—1622)

Tasquantum was a member of the Patuxet Native American tribe, and he earned his fame by assisting the Pilgrims during their first harsh winter in the would-be United States. Squanto served as an interpreter between the first settlers and the Wampanoags, their Native American neighbors. In 1608, Squanto and other Native Americans were kidnapped by Georgie Weymouth and brought to England. After five years of learning English and working within English society, Squanto successfully returned home in 1613 aboard John Smith’s ship, only to find that his tribe had been completely wiped out by the plague.



*Squanto Statue in St. Louis, Missouri*

### Chief Tecumseh (1768— October 5, 1813)

Tecumseh, whose name meant Shooting Star, was born at Old Piqua, along the Mad River in Ohio. Tecumseh was trained to be a warrior, and through his bravery in battle, became a trusted leader of the Shawnees. He believed that, united together, Native Americans would have a better chance to defend their land. Tecumseh's younger brother, Tenskwatawa the Prophet, helped to unite the Indians together. In 1811, William Henry Harrison defeated Tenskwatawa and his followers at the Battle of Tippecanoe, weakening Tecumseh's Confederation. During the war of 1812, Tecumseh and his remaining followers allied themselves with the British, hoping that the English would eventually return the Indian's homeland to them. After the British retreated mid-battle, Tecumseh was killed by an American bullet at the Battle of Thames in 1813. His death ended the united Indian resistance against the Americans.



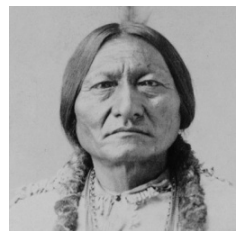
### Sacagawea (1788— December 20, 1812)

Sacagawea is known for her travels with Meriwether Lewis and William Clark in their expedition to discover the western United States in 1806, as an interpreter and guide. Born in the Shoshone tribe, her original name was Agaidika or “Salmon Eater.” Although the spelling of the name Sacagawea is disputed, it is thought to come from the Hidatsa language, from the phrase tsakáka wía, “Bird Woman.” Sacagawea married Toussaint Charbonneau, giving birth to two children, Lizette (who died young) and Jean. In 2000, the United States Mint issued the Sacagawea dollar coin in her honor, depicting Sacagawea and her son, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau. The face on the coin was modeled on a modern Shoshone-Bannock woman named Randy'L He-dow Teton. No contemporary image of Sacagawea exists.



### Chief Tatanka Iyotake (“Sitting Bull”) (1831— December 15, 1890)

Tatanka Iyotake, first named Slon-he or “Slow,” was a Hunkpapa Lakota medicine man and holy man, born near the Grand River in Dakota Territory. He earned fame for his defeat of General George Armstrong Custer and the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, on June 25, 1876. Sitting Bull had a premonition of defeating the cavalry, which motivated his Native American people to a major victory at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. To the U.S. Army, he was an enemy, but in the eyes of his people, he was praised as a hunter, brave warrior, and peacemaker. He was killed by Indian agency police on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation during an attempt to arrest him and prevent him from supporting the Ghost Dance movement.



### Tǎšaúnke Witkó (“Crazy Horse”) (1849— September 5, 1877)

A member of the Lakota tribe, Thasunke Witko’s name literally meant “His Horse is Crazy.” He was originally born Cha-O-Ha meaning “In the Wilderness.” In the Great Sioux War of 1876, Crazy Horse led a group of 1,500 Lakota and Cheyenne warriors in a surprise attack against General George Crook’s force of 1,000 English troops and 300 Crow and Shoshone warriors. Crazy Horse then joined Sitting Bull to defeat General Custer’s troops at the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1867. Crazy Horse opposed the U.S. government in its policies of Native American affairs, and is remembered for his independent spirit and resolve to protect his people’s way of life.



**Will Rogers (November 4, 1879—August 15, 1935)**

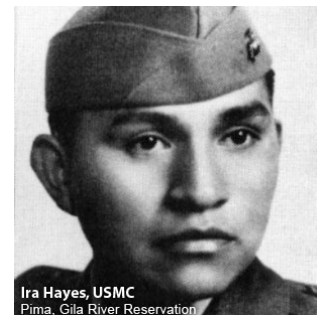
Born William Peen Adair Rogers, Rogers was a comic genius, radio personality, actor, columnist, and social commentator. Rogers was born into the Cherokee Native American tribe on the Dog Iron Ranch in Indian Country, which later became Oklahoma. Rogers first began his career as a Wild West performer and vaudeville showman, which was followed by a long and successful career on Broadway. He was well known as a popular newspaper columnist in America, with exposure in the New York Times Magazine, in addition to other outlets. Rogers made 71 films (50 of which were silent), wrote more than 4,000 nationally-syndicated newspaper columns, and became a world-famous figure. He died in a plane crash in 1935 at the age of 55.

**Jacobus Franciscus “Jim” Thorpe (May 28, 1888—March 28, 1953)**

Jim Thorpe was born in Oklahoma as a member of the Sac and Fox Nation. His Indian name was “Wa-Tho-Huck,” which means Bright Path. In 1912, Thorpe earned the Olympic gold medal in pentathlon and decathlon events. Shortly thereafter, Thorpe was stripped of his Olympic titles when it was discovered that he had previously played two seasons of minor league baseball, violating amateur status rules. Throughout his athletic career, Thorpe played baseball, basketball, football, and track and field. Thorpe struggled with racism for much of his life; headlines often described him as “Redskin” and “Indian Athlete.” In the 1930s, Thorpe appeared in several short films, usually, in cameo appearances as an Indian. Thorpe was named the greatest athlete of the first half of the twentieth century by the Associated Press in 1950. After his sports career came to an end, Thorpe lived in poverty, working odd jobs, struggling with alcoholism, and living out the final years of his life in failing health. In 1983, thirty years after his death, Thorpe medals were restored posthumously.

**Ira Hamilton Hayes (January 12, 1923–January 24, 1955)**

Ira Hayes was a United States Marine Corps Airborne Warrior. Ira Hayes was an Akimel O'odham, or Pima Indian, from the Gila River Indian Reservation in south central Arizona. He is most famous for his participation in the famous WWII flag raising on February 25, 1945 on Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima. After his immortalization in the famous photograph by Joe Rosenthal, Hayes became a national hero, along with the two other survivors of the photograph; however, his story drew particular attention due to his Native American heritage. Hayes lived uneasily with his new fame, making appearances, appearing for honors, and playing a part in a John Wayne movie. Corporal Hayes' decorations and medals included the Commendation Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, American Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal. Hayes died at Bapchule on January 24, 1955. He was 33 years old.

**Maria Tall Chief (January 24, 1925—)**

Born Elizabeth Marie Tall Chief to an Osage father mother of Scottish and Irish descent, Tall Chief was a famously known ballerina. She was born on an Indian Reservation in Fairfax, Oklahoma, and when her family relocated to Los Angeles, California, Tall Chief discovered her passion for music and dance. After studying under famous teacher Bronislava Nijinska, Tall Chief joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, quickly achieving in soloist status. While starring in George Balanchine's *Serenade*, Balanchine himself saw her performance, and the two fell in love and later married. Tall Chief achieved widespread fame following her performance in *Firebird* in New York City Ballet's first season. President Eisenhower declared Tall Chief “Woman of the Year” In 1953. In 1965, Tall Chief founded the Chicago City Ballet and remained its artistic director for many years.



**Ben Nighthorse Campbell (April 13, 1933—)**

Ben Nighthorse Campbell, a Northern Cheyenne Chief, was a U.S. Senator from Colorado from 1993—2005 and was at one point the only Native American serving in the U.S. Congress. Campbell was the third Native American to serve in the Senate. Previous to his experience as a senator, Campbell served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1987—1993. Originally a member of the Democratic Party, Campbell switched to the Republican Party in 1995. During the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, from January 3, 1999 to January 3, 2001, Campbell had more free-standing Senate legislation passed into law than any other member of congress.

**Jacoby McCabe Ellsbury (September 11, 1983—)**

Jacoby Ellsbury, a member of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, is a Major League Baseball outfielder for the Boston Red Sox, and is the first Native American of Navajo descent to reach the Major Leagues. In 2005, Ellsbury began his professional career with the Lowell Spinners in the short-season Class A New York-Penn league. After a few years of working through A through AAA class teams for the Red Sox, Ellsbury earned his chance to advance to the Major Leagues, and was called up to the Red Sox in 2007. In 2007, he was declared a “cult hero” by the New York Times, and he was later named as Major League Baseball’s American League Rookie of the Month for September 2007.



## Resources for Educators

### Museum Resources

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#### The National Museum of the American Indian

<http://nmai.si.edu/home/>

Information about the museum's exhibits, programs, publications, collections, and memberships, plus a calendar of exhibits and events.

#### The National Museum of the American Indian: Classroom Lessons

<http://nmai.si.edu/explore/foreducatorsstudents/classroomlessons/>

Materials for use in the classroom, as developed by the museum's education staff in collaboration with Native community members. The materials are available for download, or can be ordered in print.

#### Encyclopedia Smithsonian

[http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia\\_SI/](http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/)

To reach Native American content, click on *American Indian History & Culture*.

#### Lakota Winter Counts

<http://wintercounts.si.edu/>

An online exhibit from the Smithsonian's National Anthropological Archives. This exhibit includes a teacher's guide.

### Book and Resource Recommendations

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#### Tips for Choosing Culturally Appropriate Books & Resources About Native Americans

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/39579/>

A collection of classroom materials and strategies for accurate and appropriate lesson planning.

#### Peace 4 Turtle Island: Haudenosaunee Books

<http://www.peace4turtleisland.org/pages/books.htm>

A collection of new releases and 'must have' books by Native American Haudenosaunee author Kanatiiosh.

#### Oyate

<http://www.oyate.org>

A Native organization working to see that Native American lives and histories are portrayed honestly in books for children. Visit the site to purchase recommended books, read book reviews, or see warnings concerning books to avoid.

#### The Internet Public Library: Native American Authors

<http://www.ipl.org/div/natam>

Provides information on Native North American authors, with bibliographies of their published works, biographical information, and links to other online resources.

## Resources and Information from Native American Sources

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### Native Networks

<http://www.nativenetworks.si.edu/nn.html>

The NMAI's Film and Video Center is dedicated to presenting and disseminating information about the work of the Native Americans in media.

### The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)

<http://www.ncai.org/>

Since 1944, the NCAI has been working to inform the public and Congress on the governmental rights of American Indians and Alaska Natives. In addition to information on current issues, the site includes a directory of U.S. tribal governments.

### Native New Yorkers

<http://www.nativenewyorkers.maureengoogoo.com/>

The American Indian Identify of New York City. Information about Native Americans in the great metropolis, past and present. Site created by Maureen Googoo, Mi'kmaq from Nova Scotia.

## Resources for Students

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### Kid Info: Reference Resources, Native Americans

[http://www.kidinfo.com/American\\_History/Native\\_Americans.html](http://www.kidinfo.com/American_History/Native_Americans.html)

A directory of Native American information on the Internet.

### Reconnecting the Circle

<http://www.reconnectingthecircle.com/>

The site's mission is to encourage people to learn about Native American people and cultures, and to develop a more complete and meaningful perspective, and includes resources for students and educators. This includes reaching out to Native and non-Native students in order to build a bridge of understanding and increase awareness about shared values.

## Additional Resources

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### Native Language of the Americas

<http://www.native-langauges.org>

Preserving and promoting American Indian languages. A vast compendium of online materials about the indigenous languages of the Western Hemisphere and the people who speak them.

### U.S. Census Bureau: American Indian & Alaska Native (AIAN) Data & Links

<http://factfinder.census.gov/home/aian/index.html>

The U.S. Census Bureau offers data compiled about Native American and Alaska Native populations. The site includes demographic, economic, and tribal profiles as well as links to relevant organizations and programs.

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