

FAQs: Top Ten Frequently Asked Questions about the Proposal to Recognize the Lumbees

Based on actual questions U.S. taxpayers have asked about this proposal

1. How much will federal recognition of the Lumbees cost the federal government?

Experts have calculated the cost of Lumbee federal recognition as a **whopping \$1.74 billion**.

Experts explain, [“In 2012, the Congressional Budget Office \(CBO\) estimated that federal recognition of the Lumbee Tribe would cost \\$846 million over the 2012–2016 period. Adjusting for inflation and membership growth since 2012, the estimated cost with 3.16% inflation rate for 60,000 Lumbees for the 2025-2029 period is approximately \\$1.74 billion” . . . and this is just through 2029.](#)¹

2. Given today’s deep cuts in federal spending, does this massive expenditure make sense?

No, it does not make any sense for the federal government, especially under the Trump administration, to take on such a costly expenditure, especially given that the Lumbees already receive significant federal funding. Experts report that in FY 2022, [Lumbee entities “received federal contract awards over 35 times greater than the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians \(EBCI\).” Historically, federal contract awards to Lumbees have been “over 38 times greater” than those to the EBCI.](#)²

3. Do the Lumbees have, as they claim, “partial” federal recognition as an Indian Tribe?

No, they do not. The Lumbees often make this claim based on a law Congress passed almost 70 years ago in 1956 called “Relating to the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina.” [This law](#) (70 Stat. 375) acknowledged only that [the group that previously called themselves the “Cherokee Indians of Robeson County” or the “Siouan Indians of Robeson County” were now calling themselves the “Lumbee Indians of North Carolina.”](#) The law did not recognize the Lumbees as an Indian Tribe, even in part. As the Solicitor’s Office in the Department of the Interior clarified in 2016, [“the act merely served to name the Lumbee Indians...”](#) The solicitor goes on to point out that Lumbee representative Dr. D.F. Lowry testified on behalf of the Lumbee that [“the Lumbee Indians had no interest in seeking services or benefits provided to Indians.”](#) Thus, the Lumbees themselves did not intend for the Act of 1956 to recognize them as a Tribe, even in part. Also, because this law acknowledged only a name change (and not a Tribe), the 1956 law asserts that

¹ <https://www.uinoklahoma.com/copy-of-defend-native-cultures>. Note that these figures are based on data from federal platforms that include the Federal Audit Clearinghouse, USAspending.gov, and the Department of Education.

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the Lumbees are not eligible to receive federal services *as Indians*. The Lumbees receive many, many other federal, state, and local services as non-Indian U.S. citizens.³

4. Are the Lumbees state recognized in North Carolina? No, they are not. The Lumbees claim that they are state recognized, but this is based on a [140-year-old law](#) wherein North Carolina recognized a group called “the Croatan Indians.” Today, Lumbees argue that this 1885 state law recognized their group, but it did not. It is not possible for that law to have recognized their group because the Lumbees did not exist in 1885. Thousands of North Carolinians have been urging the Lumbees to go through their state’s recognition process, especially before they pursue federal recognition.⁴

5. I’ve heard that as many as 141 American Indian Tribes have come out against Lumbee federal recognition. Why? Despite what the Lumbees say, these federally recognized Tribes do not oppose Lumbee federal recognition. Rather, [these Tribes contend that the Lumbees should go through the process of the Office of Federal Acknowledgment in the Interior Department, where the Lumbees’ claims to being Indian can be thoroughly evaluated and vetted for factual accuracy](#). This is especially important given that Lumbee recognition would cost U.S. taxpayers so much: \$1.74 billion—and this is just through 2029. [If the Lumbees’ claims are shown to be supported by the facts, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and other Tribes have promised that the Lumbees will be warmly welcomed into the family of federally recognized Tribes.](#)⁵

6. Why should the Lumbee, and other groups, be required to go through the Federal Acknowledgment Process, rather than through Congress? As Ute Tribal Chairman, Shaun Chapoose, points out, [“Recognition of Indian tribes. . . is one of the United States’ most solemn and important obligations.”](#) Chairman Chapoose adds that “Congress is not staffed or equipped to manage the recognition of Indian tribes.” The Federal Acknowledgment Process, as established by federal law ([25 CFR Part 83](#)), protects Tribal sovereignty from being corrupted by Congressional and partisan politics. It protects the United States from fraudulent “made up” Tribes with little to no Indian ancestry, who illegitimately seek access to programs designed to fulfill the U.S. trust responsibility with Tribes. And, because federal recognition is an acknowledgment of Tribal sovereignty, the United States must be careful to restrict this status only to legitimate Tribes. To do otherwise would be an irresponsible, reckless, and unpatriotic

³ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-70/pdf/STATUTE-70-Pg254.pdf>;
https://www.uinoklahoma.com/_files/ugd/b4d05d_a41fcb736a9c4c9f82464d321243bff2.pdf
<https://www.doi.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/m-37040.pdf>

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https://www.carolana.com/NC/Education/1885_02_10_Act_to_Provide_for_Separate_Schools_for_Croatan_Indians.html

⁵ <https://rollcall.com/2022/11/28/141-tribes-stand-to-defend-tribal-sovereignty/>;
<https://www.indian.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/Hicks071206.pdf>

cession of U.S. sovereignty. Given the high stakes for Indians and non-Indians alike, actual Indians seeking federal acknowledgment would eagerly embrace a fact-based review by the Federal Acknowledgement Process.⁶

7. Is it true that the Lumbee are not allowed to be reviewed by the Office of Federal Acknowledgement? No. This is not true. In 2016, the Solicitor's Office in the Department of the Interior revisited the question of whether the Lumbee could be reviewed through the acknowledgment process. The [decision](#) clarified that the Lumbee petition can indeed be reviewed by the Office of Federal Acknowledgment. This reversed a 1987 determination that maintained that the Lumbee Act of 1956 prevented the Lumbee from review through the administrative process. The Lumbee want the public to believe that they have no option other than to go through Congress for acknowledgment. This is but one example of deceptive misinformation that the Lumbees are providing to the public to achieve their political objectives.⁷

8. Do the Lumbees even have Indian ancestry? To prevent the bilking of the federal government by groups masquerading as Indian Tribes, federal regulations ([25 CFR Part 83](#)), derived from federal law, mandate that Indian Tribes must have actual (rather than just claimed) Indian ancestry and descend from a Tribe that existed in early colonial times. As is well-known, [Congress lacks the expertise to determine whether such claims are supported by the facts](#). Despite many decades of research, including research by Lumbee scholars, professional genealogists and historians have not been able to find ancestors for the Lumbees who are definitively Indian. A team of professional genealogists at the Tribal Alliance Against Frauds researched the genealogies of 20+ present-day elected and appointed Lumbee leaders, finding no Indian ancestry among any of them.⁸ These professional genealogists instead found what other professional genealogists have found: Lumbees descend from African Americans and Whites. In an award winning genealogical study, the leading genealogical expert on the Lumbee, [Paul Heinegg](#), concluded that, in order to escape anti-Black racism, at the turn of the 20th century ancestors of the Lumbees shifted their longstanding identities of Black, Colored, and Mulatto to "Native American" or "Indian." The lack of genealogical evidence connecting the Lumbees to Indians is underlined by the fact that they have shifted their tribal identity over time.⁹

⁶ <https://democrats-naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Ute%20Ltr%20Bishop%20Opposition%20Recognition%20Bill%2010%2027%2015.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.doi.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/m-37040.pdf>

⁸ These genealogies are available by request from genealogydepartment@proton.me.

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<https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/raca/revisions-regulations-federal-acknowledgment-indian-tribes-25-cfr-83-or-part-83>); <https://democrats-naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Ute%20Ltr%20Bishop%20Opposition%20Recognition%20Bill%2010%2027%2015.pdf>
<https://freeafricanamericans.com/introduction.htm>

9. Did a “Lumbee tribe” exist in early colonial times, as the federal government requires?

No, [even Lumbees admit that they themselves made up the name “Lumbee” in the early 1950s.](#) When asked to identify the historic Tribe from which they descend, Lumbees don’t agree, and there is no evidence that ties them to any of the numerous tribes that Lumbees have named as “their” tribe. Historically, the Lumbees have repeatedly claimed to be [Cherokee](#). Today, the Lumbee organization claims that the Lumbees descend from [“various Siouan, Algonquian, and Iroquoian speaking tribes.”](#) The Lumbees’ leading scholar, Malinda Maynor Lowery (2018), identifies more than 17 tribes from which she claims Lumbees descend, but she acknowledges that there exists no proof of any such descent. These tribes are the Cheraw, Yeopim, Potoskite, Nansemond, Nanticoke, Pamunkey, Gigaskin, Winyaw, Saponi, Weyanoke, Tuscarora, Tutelo, Wateree, Pee Dee, Coree, Neusiok, Cape Fear, and, as she puts it, “others.”¹⁰

10. Do the Lumbees have—or have they ever had—an American Indian language?

No. The Lumbees do not have—and there is no evidence they ever had—an Indian language.

11. (Bonus Question #1) Do the Lumbees have an American Indian culture? And why are they called “culture vultures”?

The Lumbees have no culture of their own. They are often called “culture vultures” because they steal the culture of real Tribes and appropriate it as their own. For example, the Lumbees stole the 4-color medicine wheel symbol from Plains tribes and now use it as the [Lumbee “tribal” seal](#). The Lumbees stole the game of stickball from the Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws—even to the point of [building a stickball field and claiming it as “their” game](#). The Lumbees stole the traditional long cloth dress of the Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Muscogeese, calling this traditional dress “theirs” and donning it as [Miss Lumbee](#). An especially disturbing example is their theft of the reverence many real Tribes have for eagle feathers. All over the internet is photographic and [video evidence](#) of Lumbees flagrantly breaking the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act ([16 U.S.C. 668-668d](#)). This federal law allows only people from federally recognized Tribes to possess eagle feathers. The Lumbees regularly wear eagle feathers, breaking the law, to desperately try to convince the public that they are “real” Indians.¹¹

12. (Bonus Question #2). Why didn’t the Lumbees have to go on the Trail of Tears like other Tribes from the South? The Trail of Tears, or the forced marches of Indian Tribes from the South to Indian Territory, began in 1830 and lasted several decades. The historical evidence

¹⁰ <https://global.unc.edu/news-story/student-fights-for-recognition-respect-of-lumbee-tribe-2/>; <https://dsi.appstate.edu/projects/lumbee/1327>; <https://www.lumbeetribe.com/history--culture#:~:text=The%20Lumbee%20are%20the%20amalgamation,Gazette%20October%203%2C%201771>; Lowery, Malinda Maynor. *The Lumbee Indians: An American Story* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018). ;

¹¹ <https://www.lumbeetribe.com/>; <https://www.lumbeetribe.com/single-post/children-play-social-stickball-at-the-1st-annual-indigenous-games>; <https://www.lumbee.org/past-ambassadors>; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_WDfFMptBA; <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/16/668>.

suggests that the ancestors of the Lumbees were not forced onto the Trail of Tears, despite living in the South, because at this time the ancestors of Lumbees were living as free people of color and not as Indians. Only much, much later would the Lumbees try to switch to being Indian.