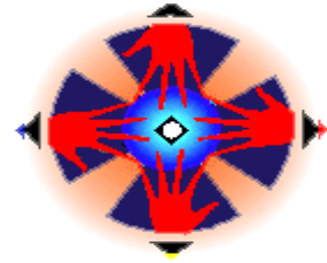


The Riches of Indigenous Peoples Heritage: Beginning Indigenous Genealogical Research

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Successfully engaging in historical and genealogical research requires that one continually place one's research in the appropriate historical, geographical, and chronological context. This is especially critical with Indigenous Peoples research. Knowledge of life patterns, religious beliefs and ceremonies, migration and settlement patterns, and all aspects of a particular Indigenous culture must be a part of a family historian's research posture.

Building a Framework

- ▲ Brief history of "Native Americans"/Indigenous Peoples
 - Reason for the term Indian.
 - Myths and misconceptions.
 - Ethnocentrism.
- ▲ Holism as an Indigenous life philosophy.
 - Impact on naming patterns.
 - Impact on kinship terms.
 - Impact on migration patterns.
 - Impact on life practices.
- ▲ Three-Step Process to Determine the Indigenous Tribe of One's Ancestor
 - Thoroughly investigate the early histories of the areas where ancestral research is being considered for the identities, histories, and other data of the Indigenous peoples.
 - Employ a carefully constructed and consistently applied methodology for locating the greatest number of research documents and data on the tribe of a potential ancestor.
 - Work through all the materials on a particular tribe or nation to obtain the fullest understanding of its people and the most complete individual-specific group of records.

General Histories and Records

- ▲ Important because Indigenous Peoples naming patterns, kinship terms, and inter-tribal relations typically were quite different than those experienced by European Americans.
- ▲ Numerous histories of Indigenous peoples in a particular geographic area exist in public and state libraries, county and state historical societies, as well as major research repositories. Care should be exercised when using these works as they are typically

written from a particular bias. These are vital for establishing which tribe(s) may have been in a particular area and during what time period.

- ▲ Many societies and organizations have compiled bibliographies of first and secondary source materials pertaining to Indigenous Peoples in specific areas. These are vital for establishing what resources are available for research and where they are housed.

Establishing Tribal Affiliation

- ▲ General histories and geographic-based information gathering are most important first step. Both dated and contemporarily published materials are useful, and help a researcher narrow and define the tribal possibilities of a potential ancestor.
- ▲ Efforts should be made to critically evaluate oral traditions and stories preserved and communicated through generations of family members.
- ▲ Engage in a thorough study of maps and atlases indicating indigenous people in particular geographic areas.
- ▲ Assistance can be provided by published community histories.
- ▲ **Methodological Statement**: Timelines set Indigenous events in the context of encroaching European settlement and identify encroachers; narratives complement the detail provided by cartographic data; and bibliographies provide the researcher with additional sources of information.

Tribe-Specific Data

- ▲ Histories of particular tribes provide one with data on location, migration places and time periods, and customs, particularly those relating to naming patterns, marriage and burial practices, and other important life events.
- ▲ Detailing the individuals and groups (trappers, Indian agents, missionaries, government agents, etc.) who interacted with Indigenous Peoples is significant since most Indigenous Peoples have few written records, with the majority of Indigenous languages having a written history of only approximately one hundred years.
- ▲ City and county historical societies tend to collect the manuscript or primary source documents while local public libraries and state libraries tend to collect published accounts or secondary source materials.
- ▲ Extraordinary record possibilities are available through the National Archives, its regional branches, and the Federal Record Centers.
- ▲ As oral histories are used to establish tribal affiliation, they can be used in gathering more specific details about a particular Indigenous group, band, or tribe as well. These may be found in many research collections under some form of the heading "first hand narrative accounts."
- ▲ As the United States federal government initiated and maintained some of the earliest contacts with Indigenous Peoples, federal government documents can be a rich source of tribe-specific data.

▲ A Research Check-list:

- Where did Indigenous tribes originally live, migrate, & finally settle in the 20th century.
- First-hand narrative accounts.
- Official government (state and federal) records.
- Determine if the tribe had any unusual naming patterns and/or hereditary titles.
- Find the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Office that serves the tribe of your potential ancestor.
- Investigate National Archives and Federal Record Center holdings.

Individual-Specific Data

▲ Genealogically significant records include, but are not limited to, the following:

Census records Became a requirement in 1884; several hundred rolls of National Archives microfilm; "transitional censuses" are important as they list both Indigenous and Euro-American names; numerous names spelled phonetically; the appearance of an individual on a census did not establish Indigenous Peoples blood.

Enrollment records Often called the "official census rolls;" data on such records often includes name of tribe and date of validity, roll number, all associated personal names, sex, date of birth, date of death & probate number if applicable, blood degree, and the names of both parents & blood degree.

Allotment records Often referred to as "heirship records" because (a) if an allottee died, ownership of the allotment (land) would pass to his heirs and/or (b) if the allotment was to be sold, all legal heirs would have to agree to the sale.

Indian school records Could be agricultural, industrial, or missionary; the "student record" portion of school records may include name, age, sex, tribal affiliation, degree of Indian blood, names of parents, home address, dates of arrival & departure as well as attendance records, health cards, examinations and grades, and letters to parents.

▲ Other records of genealogical consequence include will and probate cases, church records, land claims materials, government documents and treaties, periodical & special publications, and various miscellaneous records.

Beginning Tips for Successful Genealogical Research

- ▲ Begin gathering and organizing materials as one would do with any family history.
- ▲ Care should be taken to record all second names, other names, etc. and any other details.

- ^ Need to determine the Indian tribe of the family in question.
- ^ Careful record keeping is essential.
- ^ Watch spellings -- most often names are spelled phonetically.
- ^ Record degree of Indian blood.

Consequential Extras:

Indigenous Peoples of North America Gateway

www.genealogycenter.info/nativeamerican

Use DNA test results and AI as important tools in your tool kit.

Books published in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are still quite valuable and provide solid, actionable information.