

Nevada's Great Basin Tribes

Facts on Nevada's Great Basin Tribes:

Nevada's Indian Territory is home to the Great Basin Tribes: Washoe, Northern Paiute, Southern Paiute and Western Shoshone, who all feel a deep connection to the environment and all its gifts. These tribes sustained their ethnic identity longer than in other areas because it took longer for Euro-Americans to settle there.

Across this nation there are 573 federally-recognized Tribes, all uniquely different, and all having sovereign status. That is, they have the inherent right to govern themselves. In Nevada, there are 20 federally-recognized tribes, comprised of 27 separate reservations, bands, colonies and community councils.

The Tribal Nations are not a special interest group or to be considered race based. The Tribal Nations are sovereign governments. And, the ways that individual tribes exercise their sovereignty vary widely, but, in general, tribal authority is used to form tribal governments; to determine tribal membership; to regulate individual property; to levy and collect taxes; to maintain law and order; to exclude non-members from tribal territory; to regulate domestic relations; and to regulate commerce and trade.

Ninety-seven percent of Nevada's Tribal Nations are rural; their population numbering approximately 32,426 or 1.1% of Nevada's population. The tribal land base in Nevada amounts to over 1.16 million acres. American Indians have dual citizenship; they hold US citizenship as well as Tribal citizenship. And, all American Indians residing in the state of Nevada, whether on or off the reservation, are citizens of the State of Nevada.

Given the significant land base, natural resources, and assets held by tribal communities, the private and public sector has taken a significant interest in establishing partnerships and working relationships with tribal governments to ensure the vitality of the multiple industries that are core to the economic and social well-being of the State of Nevada. As sovereign nations, tribal communities are relevant and major contributors to local economies, particularly in rural areas, and share a unique government to government relationship with the State of Nevada and the United States federal government.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What does the term "federally recognized" mean?

Only tribes who maintain a legal relationship to the U.S. government through binding treaties, acts of Congress, executive orders, etc., are officially "recognized" by the federal government. Once "recognized" a tribe has a legal relationship with the United States. There are currently 573 federally recognized tribes in the United States, including some 200-village groups in Alaska. However, there are still hundreds of tribal groups undergoing the lengthy and tedious process of applying for federal recognition.

What does "tribal sovereignty" mean and why is it so important to American Indians?

Tribal sovereignty describes the right of federally recognized tribes to govern themselves and the existence of a government-to-government relationship with the United States. Thus a tribe is described as a dependent nation with the right to form its own government, adjudicate legal cases within its borders, levy taxes within its borders, establish its membership and decide its own future fate. The federal government has a trust responsibility to protect tribal lands, assets, resources and treaty rights.

What is a reservation?

In the U.S., there are several kinds of reserved lands; two more well known include military and Indian reservations. An Indian reservation is a land base that a tribe reserved for itself when it relinquished its other land areas to the U.S. through treaties. More recently, Congressional acts, executive orders and administrative acts have created reservations.

Who is an American Indian?

As a general principle an American Indian is a person who is a descendant of recognized native groups and an enrolled member of a federally recognized tribe or village. While there exists no universally accepted rule for establishing a person's identity as an American Indian, the criteria for tribal membership differs from one tribe to the next. As sovereign governments, each tribe determines its own eligibility and membership standards and criteria. To determine a particular tribe's membership eligibility, one must contact that tribe directly. For its own purposes, the Bureau of the Census counts anyone as an Indian who declares to be such. By recent counts, there are currently more than two million American Indians, including Native Alaskans and Native Hawaiians.

Why are American Indians sometimes referred to as Native Americans?

When referring to American Indians or Alaska Natives, it is appropriate to use the terms American Indians and Alaska Natives. These terms denote the cultural distinction between the indigenous people of the continental United States and those of Alaska. While the term "Native Americans" came into usage in the 1960s out of respect for American Indians and Alaska Natives, usage of the term has expanded to include all Native people of the United States and its territories, including Native Hawaiians and American Samoans.

What is an Indian tribe?

An Indian tribe was originally a body of people bound together by blood ties who were socially, politically, and religiously organized, who lived together in a defined territory and who spoke a common language or dialect. In the eyes of the U.S. government a body of people as described above must be federally recognized to be considered a tribe.

Do Indians pay taxes?

All Indians are subject to federal income taxes. As sovereign entities, tribal governments have the power to levy taxes on reservation lands. Some tribes do and some don't. As a result, Indians and non-Indians may or may not pay sales taxes on goods and services purchased on the reservation depending on the tribe. However, whenever a member of an Indian tribe conducts business off the reservation, that person, like everyone else, pays both state and local taxes. State income taxes are not paid on reservation or trust lands.

Facts about American Indian/Alaska Native Populations:

- As of 2015, the nation's population of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN), including those of more than one race, numbered **6.6 million**, which makes up 2% of the total population in the U.S.
- The median age for that population is 30.2 years of age, as compared to the median age of the U.S. population as a whole, which is 37.8 years of age.
- The projected AI/AN population, including those of more than one race, is expected to reach **10.2 million** by 2060, which would comprise 2.4% of the total population in the U.S.
- Currently, there are over 21 states in the U.S. with an AI/AN population of 100,000 or more.
- In 2015, there were 130,802 single-race American Indian and Alaska Native veterans of the armed forces.

For Questions Please Contact: Nevada Indian Commission at 775.687.8333 or at rupert@nic.nv.gov