Native American Genealogy Research Guide

The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center (IPCC) receives numerous inquiries on locating information regarding Pueblo and Native American ancestry. The IPCC’s Library & Archives and Museum staff has prepared this guide to assist you in locating resources to tracing Pueblo and/or Native American lineage. Although, the Library & Archives does not maintain tribal enrollment records of the 19 Pueblos, state, local, obituaries or vital records within our collections, however, our staff can direct you to knowledgeable genealogical specialist to assist you further in your ancestral research.

About
Native American genealogy brings on many challenges, particularly for a culture intertwined with oral traditions in which written records did not exist before Spanish and European arrivals. Conducting Native American genealogy requires the understanding of the tribe’s culture, language, history, family structure and/or kinship. Native American genealogical research is a combination of basic genealogical fundamentals, historical research, and investigative techniques to reach some substantial truths.

Things to consider:
- Study and research what resources and facilities are accessible to the public for genealogical research. Not all facilities will provide records or conduct genealogical research.
- Validate your tribal affiliation. It’s very important to identify the tribe to further your research.
- Prepare yourself psychological as the outcome may not turn out as you had hoped.
- Be respectful of tribal communities, including their traditional beliefs and restrictions. Please do not show up to a tribe’s village or religious events unannounced. Always contact the tribe before making attempts to reconnect with tribal communities or members.
- Familiarize yourself with the tribe’s etiquette and governmental rules. Native American communities are a sovereign nation; therefore, tribal governmental rules will differ among tribes, including federal, state, and local statutes.

Steps to trace your Native American Family History
Once you have validate your tribal affiliation, tracing your Native American linkage begins with basic genealogy research in gathering all type of information about your family members, beginning with your immediate family extending outwards to external family members

- Beginning with yourself, gather as much information about your Native American family members, such as tribal names, surnames given or adopted, relationships, clan names, and relatives. Look for different spelling variations of tribal names and places.
- Identify geographical locations, dates, and regional histories. Historical moments and events have hugely impacted tribes which have altered and broken family members, structures and communities.
- Create a family tree by identifying maternal or paternal parents, including parent’s hometown.
Oral history is an integral part of Native American culture. Gather all family stories. Do not rule out any stories. Stories of mixed ethnic backgrounds of family members should be noted as it can provide more history regarding your family members. This can direct you to records that may have been created within that community. Every detail is essential, especially when validating family oral history.

Once you have gathered all your information, you must:

- Research the tribe’s history, including what group the tribe came in contact with.
- Identify what records were created with that tribe and its jurisdictions.
- Investigate those records, which were created by the groups the tribe became in contact with.
- Take notes that provide connections with your family members. Determine if any additional information found may need further research.
- Importantly, validate family oral history by comparing stories with existing documents. As you further your research, you may omit stories proven wrong.

Tribal Census
Tribal enrollment varies amongst tribes. It is important to contact the Tribe’s enrollment offices regarding their processes, guidelines, and criteria. Please keep in mind, tribal offices do not conduct genealogical research, therefore, will not release records of its current enrolled tribal members to the public.

Record Resources for New Mexico and Southwestern Tribes
The IPCC Library & Archives does not have access to the following resources within their collection. However, the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Library (ABCL) has the following resources available at their Genealogy Center located on 501 Copper Avenue, Albuquerque NM 87102.

Census Records
There are several censuses in the Southwest that can provide information of family members. Earliest census records may be written in Spanish and you may request if any English translations have been made.

- Spanish Census, 1750 - 1790
- Mexican Census, 1850
- New Mexico Census, 1850 - 1900
- United States Census, 1900 – 1930
- BIA Census, 1880 - 1940

Many of these resources can be found through major genealogical online databases, such as Ancestry and FamilySearch. However, the Genealogical Center at the Albuquerque Public Library does have some print materials and microfilm not available on these databases.
Church Records
Many of the Catholic Churches in the Southwest maintained records of baptisms, marriages, and burials in Pueblo communities beginning in 1690, and for other Southwest tribes. There are sets of parish records of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe and Gallup available the ABCL Genealogy Center and the library of the National Hispanic Cultural Center. Early records may be written in Spanish, but may have been translated into a book. These books can be found at the ABCL Genealogy Center.

Vital Records
Birth and death records provide some information regarding family relationships, spouses, dates, and locations. Many of these records can be found through major database, such as Ancestry and FamilySearch. However, the ABCL Genealogical Center does provides access to vital records complied by local genealogical societies.

Military Records
Southwestern Native American communities have a long history and relationship with the US and Spanish military regime. Historical military records can provide some information. Many military servicemen kept journals and letters documenting their life, which you may find some information in Special Collections and Archive libraries. Most military records can be found through Fold3.com and National Archives at Denver.

Land Records of New Mexico and Southwest
Several tribal members who served as scouts or soldiers were given land. Several tribal members were also allotted land. Several of these resources can be found through genealogical databases, such FamilySearch, however, some archive libraries or law libraries may have regional records.

Indian School Records of New Mexico and Southwest
Native American children from all tribes were taken from families and sent to various Indian Boarding School across the United States. Many southwestern Indian Boarding School records and information can be found through various resources, such as the National Archives in Denver, annual reports in digital archives repositories, and yearbooks within several local and regional archive libraries. The following is a list of some major Indian Boarding Schools located in the southwest.

- Albuquerque Indian School (recent records are lost)
- Santa Fe Indian School
- Phoenix Indian School
- Saint Catherine’s Industrial Indian School
- Intermountain Indian School (later known as Intermountain Inter-Tribal School)
- Indigenous Digital Archives
  [https://omeka.dlcs-ida.org/s/ida/page/home](https://omeka.dlcs-ida.org/s/ida/page/home)
National Record Resources for Indian Schools

- Carlisle Indian School Digital Resources Center
  http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/
- National Records and Archives
  https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/schools/school-records-more
  https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/bia-guide/schools.html

Archive Collections
Two major New Mexico archival collections contain many primary sources, such as Native American oral histories, photographs, diaries, personal papers, etc., which can provide some historical context about ancestral family members.

- Center for Southwest Research and Special Collection-University of New Mexico
  https://elibrary.unm.edu/cswr/
- New Mexico State Archives
  http://www.nmcprr.state.nm.us/archives/about-the-archives

Federal government records, such as BIA Indian Census are accessible online and through regional offices of the National Archive and Records Administration (NARA). The Southwest Regional NARA office is located in Denver, Colorado.

- National Records and Archives Administration
  https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans
- National Archives at Denver
  https://www.archives.gov/denver/public/genealogy

Major Online Databases

Many of the records are available online and are commonly found in the following databases.

Ancestry.com https://www.ancestry.com/
Ancestry is a subscription based service, however, many public libraries provide free access to Ancestry.com within their libraries. Please visit or call your local public library for more information. Ancestry has a Native American database, which encompasses many North American tribal records, such as the Dawes Rolls, Indian Census, Vital Records, and some Land Records.

FamilySearch.org https://www.familysearch.org/
FamilySearch is a free subscription once an account has been created. The database provides information on researching Native American genealogy through their wiki page.

Fold3.org https://www.fold3.com/
Managed by Ancestry, the Fold3 database is a subscription base service. Fold3 provides access to military records, photos, and personal documents.
New Mexico Local and State Genealogy Resources Centers

The following facilities provide some classes on genealogical research and have dedicated collection to genealogy.

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The Association of Professional Genealogist and Bureau of Certified Genealogist provide a listing of professional genealogist for hire. However, many are not proficient in Native American Genealogy.

- Association of Professional Genealogist https://www.apgen.org/
- Bureau of Certified Genealogist https://bcgcertification.org/

Other Resources


“Tracing Native American Family Roots.” National Indian Law Library, 2018
https://narf.org/nill/resources/roots.html

“Tribal Enrollment and Genetic Testing Resources” American Indian & Alaska Native Genetics Resource Center, 2018
http://genetics.ncai.org/tribal-enrollment-and-genetic-testing-home.cfm

“Native American History and Genealogy.” Access Genealogy. 2018
https://www.accessgenealogy.com/native-american


Tsosie, Mary Alice. “Native American Genealogical Research: The Paradox, a Navajo Librarian’s Perspective.” *New Mexico Genealogist* v.44, no.4, pp. 214-218, December 2005