

Native American Quick Facts – Culture and History

- Native Americans are thought to have come to the contiguous United States over 15,000 years ago.
- There are 574 federally recognized tribes in the United States.
- European colonization of the Americas, which began in 1492, resulted in a precipitous decline in Native American population due to new diseases, war, ethnic cleansing, and enslavement. Many historians describe this as an extended genocide of Native American populations.
- The Spanish introduction of the horse to North America in the 17th century greatly altered the Native Americans' lifestyle in hunting and travel.
- In the early years, as Native Peoples encountered European settlers and engaged in trade. They exchanged food, crafts, and furs for blankets, iron and steel implements, horses, trinkets, firearms, and alcoholic beverages; often to the disadvantage in trading value to Native Americans.
- Cultural understanding and practices differ from tribe to tribe and person to person. Some tribes include the use of sacred leaves and herbs such as tobacco, sweetgrass, or sage. Many Plains tribes have sweatlodge ceremonies, though the specifics of the ceremony vary among tribes. Fasting, singing, dancing, and prayer in the ancient languages of their people, and drumming are common.
- Billy Mills, a Lakota and USMC officer, won the gold medal in the 10,000-meter run at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. He was the only American ever to win the Olympic gold in this event. An unknown before the Olympics, Mills finished second in the U.S. Olympic trials.
- Native American art comprises a major category in the world art collection. Native American contributions include pottery, paintings, jewelry, weavings, sculpture, basketry, and carvings. The Native American arts and crafts industry brings in more than a billion dollars in gross sales annually.

Suggested Resources:

Books:

- Two new books have been added to the library: *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* by Dee Brown and *God is Red* by Vine Deloria Jr.
- *Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians but Were Afraid to Ask* by Anton Treuer
- *Indians of the Pacific Northwest* by Vine Deloria, Jr.
- *American Indian Places* by Francis H. Kennedy
- *Esther Ross, Stillaguamish Champion* by Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown
- Children's Book: *Fry Bread* by Kevin Noble Maillard and Juana Martinez-Neal
- Children's Book: *We are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom and Michaela Goade

Experiences:

- [Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community \(SMSC\) Powwow](#)
- [Minnesota Council of Churches Sacred Site Tours](#)
- [The Sioux Chef located in Minneapolis](#)
- [Hočokata Tí's exhibit Mdewakanton: Dwellers of the Spirit Lake in Shakopee](#)
- [Minnesota History Center Exhibit Our Home Native Minnesota](#)
- [Minneapolis American Indian Center](#)
- [Minnesota Humanities Center's Minnesota Native American Lives Series](#)