

A Tribal Identification Guide for Alaska Native Families

How to navigate potential responses from children, youth and families regarding tribal affiliation

Does Not Know	“I’m not part of a tribe.” or “I have no idea.”
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The question of tribal affiliation can be confusing to Alaska Native people for various reasons. ***It may be helpful to ask what community or village their family is originally from on their mother, father or grandparents’ side of the family.*** The BIA office should be contacted if the tribe is still unknown.

Race/CDIB	Alaska Native or American Indian
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The Federal Office of Management and Budget creates the standards on race that guides the United States Census. The current recognized races are: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Please note that ‘Aleut,’ ‘Eskimo’ and ‘Indian’ is no longer on the US Census, but it is still on the Certificate Degree of Indian Blood that Alaska Native people obtain to certify their Alaska Native ancestry. Most tribes require a copy of the CDIB from the Bureau of Indian Affairs in order for a child to become a tribal member. A copy of the child’s CDIB needs to be kept in the case file.

Ethnicity	Alutiiq/Sugpiaq, Athabascan, Cup’ik, Eyak, Haida, Inupiaq, Tlingit , Tsimshian, Unangax, Yup’ik
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Ethnicity pertains to what social group a person might feel they belong to and typically identifies national or cultural ties. Interestingly, the United States census only defines ethnicity in terms of whether a person is Hispanic or Not. In Alaska, the Alaska Native population has 10 distinct ethnic groups. Some of these ethnic groups have distinct cultural groups, such as the Athabascans, which include Denaina, Koyukon, Gwich’in, etc. Many Alaska Native social group names translate to *the real people*.

Village or Tribe	“My family is from the Native Village of ____.”
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Alaska has 229 Federally recognized tribes. Many Alaskan tribes have tribal names that are the ‘Native Village of ____.’ Most villages are tribes in Alaska. Every year the U.S. government updates the list of federally recognized tribes and their contact information in the Federal Register. Please use the most recent register to find the tribe’s contact information. In the case that a family is not affiliated with a federally recognized tribe (such as Qutackak in Seward, Alaska), please staff these cases with your regional ICWA specialist, supervisor and AAG.

Regional Corporations	AHTNA, Aleut, ASRC, Bering Straits, Bristol Bay, Calista, Chugach, CIRI , Doyon, Koniag, NANA Sealaska
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The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) passed in 1971 and created 12 regional corporations in Alaska. Alaska Native people at that time were eligible to become shareholders based on where they were born or where they lived. Corporations are not tribes; they are corporate businesses that serve shareholders. Some corporations have open enrollment. If a child is a regional shareholder, the corporation needs to be contacted so the child’s shareholder dividend can be held in trust by the corporation.

Village Corporations	Examples include: Afognak Native Corporation, Chenega Corporation, Sitnasuak, Bethel Native Corporation, Eklutna, Inc., Gwitchyaa Zhee Corporation, Tyonek Native Corporation
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ANCSA also created over 200 village corporations in Alaska. In addition to being a shareholder of a Regional Corporation, Alaska Native people may be a shareholder of a village corporation. Again, corporations are not tribes.

Alaska Native Regional Non-Profits	Aleutian Pribilof Island Association (APIA), Arctic Slope Native Association (ASNA), Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA), Chugachmiut , Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC), Copper River Native Association (CRNA), Kawerak , Kodiak Area Native Association (KANA), Maniilaq, Tlingit-Haida Central Council, Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC)
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Each regional corporation has a non-profit organization affiliated with it. Most regional non-profits provide social services to families. Some regional non-profits compact with tribes to provide child welfare services. The Federal Register of Alaska Native and American Indian tribes will list both the tribe and regional non-profit if compacting agreements are in place. In these cases, OCS should notify both the listed tribe and regional non-profit on the federal register.