Research your Native American ancestors the same way you would research any ancestor:

- Start with yourself and work backwards; resist the urge to jump straight to Native American-specific record collections
- Look for clues in basic records (vital, military, census records, etc.)
- Determine the names, birth and death dates, and location of all possible Native American ancestors
- The goal is to narrow down to “Ancestor Zero” (the most recent with some level of tribal affiliation) – you must know the name of your that ancestor in order to research their affiliation

Things to keep in mind when making the jump to Native American-specific records

- Determine a formal or informal tribal affiliation to cut down on wasted time and frustration from guessing
- Determine which records that tribe would be included in (i.e. any treaty rolls, reservation censuses, etc.)
- Remember that not all record collections have been digitized
- Consider less obvious record sources, such as Indian school student records

Separating Fact from Fiction

- Take family stories with a grain of salt
- Don’t fall for the old “dark hair and skin, high cheekbones” trick
- Don’t assume anything, be open to new leads
- Even history books can be inaccurate or unreliable informants

Possible Limitations

- There’s a lack of (reliable) information in your family history
- You don’t know their name or tribe, or cannot determine it
- Your family’s oral history contradicts local history
- Your ancestor had no formal affiliation with the tribe
- “They hopped of the Trail of Tears and assimilated” if true, then you wouldn’t find them enumerated as Native American or included in tribe-affiliated records

Where to Look for Clues in Basic Records

Use the same records you are already using:

- Vital records
  - birth, death, marriage, etc.
- Church records
  - i.e. Cherokee: Moravian Church Records, Bethlehem, PA
- Military records
  - draft cards, enlistment, pension
- Personal records
  - anything you may have in a shoebox at home, i.e. family bibles

Using Maps

- Use maps to determine the location of tribal lands in relation to where your ancestor lived
- If they’re living in Oklahoma c. 1900 it’s a strong indicator for Five Civilized Tribes and The Dawes Rolls
- Check map of Southern Indian Removal Trails (see below) to see the trajectory of trails (i.e. if a certain tribe was taken through a certain city in the south and that matches a family story)
- Also try the map here: [http://native-land.ca](http://native-land.ca) — enter a location to see which tribes were located there

CLUES IN FEDERAL CENSUS RECORDS

Things to Keep in Mind When Looking for Native Americans on the Federal Census
- “Indian Territory” was enumerated in 1860 Census, but not again until 1900
- Some reservations are identified starting in 1870 as the township or institution at the top of the page
- From 1900 on, Indians were enumerated on both Federal and Indian Census
- 1900 & 1910 Censuses had Special Indian Schedules (see below)

Notes on Enumeration
- Prior to 1870, “Indian” was not an official identifier in the race or color column (options were: W, B, M)
  - This was seen in rare instances on 1850 & 1860 Censuses
- Caution: “Mulatto” was sometimes a catch-all designation that could have included Native Americans, but it does not necessarily mean the individual was Native American
- Compare various years of the U.S. Federal Census, specifically the Race column, for those who assimilated and were enumerated later as “white”
- Native Americans may be identified in Race column as “I,” “In,” or “Indian”
**Special Indian Schedules**

1900 — 1910

- Top half of sheet asks identical questions to Federal Census, only shortened.
- Bottom half asks questions specific to Indians (see below)
  - tribe, blood quantum, type of house, etc.
- "Ration Indian" listed as occupation meant they were an individual who was financially dependent on the U.S. government.

Same family, enumerated as “Indian” on 1900 & 1910 Census, but as “White” on the 1920 Census
“Reservation Census” 1885–1940

- Enumerated by agent of Bureau of Indian Affairs, usually the reservation superintendent
- Only those who maintained a formal affiliation with a federally-recognized tribe were enumerated
- Depending on when and where it was taken, varying degrees of detailed information and legibility
- Intermarried non-Indians typically not included
- Families of mixed tribal affiliation were not always enumerated together, check “at another jurisdiction” column

Reservation Census for Tonawanda Band of Seneca, New York; taken June 1897

Reservation Census for the Osage, Oklahoma; taken June 1914, includes Indian name

Same family, partially enumerated on two different reservation censuses, taken on the same day in 1934
Intended to assimilate and convert, typically located outside the reservation, include:

- Carlisle Indian School, Pennsylvania, 1879
- Haskell Institute, Kansas, 1884
- Sherman Institute, California, 1903
- Chilocco School, Oklahoma, 1884
- Chemawa Indian School, Oregon, 1880
- Intermountain Indian School, Utah, 1949

Types of School Records

*Varies from school to school*

- Census of pupils
- Applications for Enrollment (non-reservation schools)
- Medical/Physical Records
- Outing Records
- Progress Records

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**Application for Enrollment in a Nonreservation School.**

This Application for Enrollment provides:

- Name
- Name/Address of Guardian
- Place/Date of Birth
- Father's Name/Degree/Tribe
- Mother's Name/Degree/Tribe
- Previous Schools Attended

**Family History:**

- Status/Health of Father *(living, has hemoptysis)*
- Status/Health of Mother *(died of consumption)*
- Status/Health of Any Brothers *(3 died of consumption)*
- Status/Health of Any Sisters *(4 died of consumption)*
- Student’s Personal Health History
- Remarks/Ongoing Symptoms
What are they?
- "Final Rolls of Citizens and Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes" or "The Dawes Rolls"
- Undertaken by the Dawes Commission, first try in 1893 failed, a second attempt in 1898 was successful
- The goal was to determine who was eligible to receive an allotment of land in Indian Territory
- Over 250,000 individuals applied between 1898 and 1907
- All applicants from first attempt in 1893 had to reapply
- If you can’t find who you’re looking for, check the applications for individuals who applied but were later rejected after the vetting process

Who will be on the Rolls?
- Citizens of the Five Civilized Tribes living in Indian Territory from 1898 – 1907
- Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole
- Only those who chose to enroll for an allotment and were approved
- Freedmen and some Intermarried Whites (IW)

Information provided includes an individual’s:
- Name, age, sex
- Tribe affiliation & blood quantum
- Census card number & page
- Enrollment number

Note: The age given is the age of the individual around 1902; those listed as “newborns” and “minors” were born after 1898, but before March 1907

Application packets included:
- Sworn interviews
- Supplementary forms and records
- Letters from individuals corroborating information

Sworn interview by George W. Hicks of Oakdale, OK, regarding his and his family’s Cherokee affiliation
Enrollment records were generated in relation to:

- Treaties & official trade agreements with the US government
- Land claims & allotments
- Removal
- Military service
- Government trust funds

These rolls include:

- Guion Miller Roll, 1906 (Eastern Cherokee)
- Armstrong Roll, 1830 (Choctaw)
- Shawnee Census Roll of Cherokee Territory, 1871 (Shawnee)
- 1887 Land Allotment in Kansas (Potawatomi)

NOTE: Individuals may appear on multiple rolls

**Chapman Roll, 1851**  
Paint Town, Haywood County, NC

Stacy, 13;  
daughter of Au-yyu-wee or Isaac Davis

Na-chil-leh, 28;  
wife of As-stoo-ge-cut-to-keh

**Hester Roll, 1884**  
Cherokee, Swain County, NC

Stacey, 44;  
now married with one child recorded, father’s name “Isaac Davis” provided

Na-chil-leh (“Rachel”), 59;  
now widowed, recorded with her daughter and grand-daughter, her father’s name (Teh-tal-leh-eh/“Borrower”) provided; also provides a new spelling variation for hers
Where to Find Native American Rolls:
Ancestry Library Edition; U.S., Records Related to Enrollment of Eastern Cherokee by Guion Miller, 1908-1910 Collection (Can be located and searched directly by using the Card Catalog Search feature)
AccessGenealogy; Native American Rolls Collection www.accessgenealogy.com/native/native-american-indian-rods.htm

Treaties

- Tribes were treated as foreign governments in colonial America
- Treaties between the US government and a tribe (or tribes) were signed by significant individuals
- Digital copies are often available online through tribal websites or state and federal archives
  - Legibility and quality of the scan may vary
- e.g. U.S. Treaty with the Wyandot, 1815
  - signed individually (often by mark) by “the warriors and chiefs” of certain bands of Wyandot, Delaware, Seneca, Shawano, Miami, Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi tribes, residing within the limits of the State of Ohio, and the Territories of Indiana and Michigan

Note: Most treaty documents will look similar to this one; handwritten with varying legibility and not all have been transcribed.

FREEDMEN RECORDS

Who are they?

- Freedmen (and women) were former black slaves of the Five Civilized Tribes
- Typically Cherokee, but not all
- Often also intermarried into various tribes
- Ongoing conflict between descendants of Freedmen and the Cherokee Nation over tribal status and citizenship based on blood quantum

Freedmen Rolls

- Wallace Roll, 1890-93
  - Cherokee; includes “authenticated freedmen, admitted freedmen, those who died between 1883-1890, and ‘Free Negroes’ associated with the tribe”
- Kern-Clifton Roll, 1896-97
  - Intended to correct discrepancies and fill omissions in the Wallace Roll
Freedmen are present on the Dawes Rolls
Beyond the information all Dawes applications included, Freedmen also provided:
- Name(s) of previous owner(s)
- If parents were slaves, names of their owners
- Previous residences during period of slavery

**BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS (BIA)**

**The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)**
www.bia.gov
- Has limited involvement in past records
  - Probate records, major land records, etc.
- **Does not** handle general record requests or assist in genealogy research
- When contacting a BIA field office, be prepared:
  - Determine that you are contacting the correct office for that jurisdiction, check here: www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/RegionalOffices/index.htm
  - Know the tribe, name & birth date of individual(s), relatives, etc. of the individual

**Tribal Citizenship**
- Some tribes provide in-house genealogy resources
- Each tribe has its own qualifying blood quantum
- **To establish citizenship:**
  - Prove ancestry, meeting requisite blood quantum
  - Obtain a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) Card, provided by the BIA
    - The form and further information is available here: www.bia.gov/FOIA/Genealogy
  - Apply for formal citizenship through tribe, often online

**DATABASES & REPOSITORIES**

**Ancestry Library Edition** (free access through CCPL; also subscription)
*Collections include:*
  - U.S., Indian Census Rolls, 1885-1940
  - U.S., Native American Applications for Enrollment in Five Civilized Tribes, 1898-1914 (Dawes Rolls)
  - U.S., Native American Citizens and Freedmen of Five Civilized Tribes, 1895-1914 (Dawes Rolls)
  - U.S., Schedules of Special Census of Indians, 1880
  - U.S., Ratified Indian Treaties and Chiefs, 1722-1869
  - Oklahoma, Indian Land Allotment Sales, 1908-1927
  - U.S., Wallace Roll of Cherokee Freedmen, 1890-1893
  - U.S., Records Related to Enrollment of Eastern Cherokee by Guion Miller, 1908-1910

**Fold3** (free access with Mid-Continental Public Library card; also subscription)
*Native American Archives, all digitized: Dawes Rolls enrollment packets and application documents, Indian Census Rolls, historical image collections, etc.*

**Oklahoma State Historical Society**
*Home Page: www.okhistory.org*
*Genealogy Resources/American Indian Ancestry: www.okhistory.org/research/genealogy*
AccessGenealogy
Home Page: www.accessgenealogy.com/americA
Native American Resources: www.accessgenealogy.com/native-american
Indian Census Rolls: www.accessgenealogy.com/native/free-us-indian-census-rolls.htm
Native American Rolls: www.accessgenealogy.com/native/native-american-indian-rolls.htm
Tribal Resources and History: www.accessgenealogy.com/native/indian-tribes-of-the-united-states.htm
Indian Schools Resources: www.accessgenealogy.com/native/indian-schools-seminaries-asylums.htm

National Archives and Records Administration
Home Page for Genealogists: www.archives.gov/research/genealogy
Native American Research: www.archives.gov/research/native-americans
Bureau of Indian Affairs Records (still under construction at this time): www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/mbia

Visit the library’s locations page (www.casscolibrary.org/locations) for CCPL Genealogy’s location, contact information, and hours of operation.

Information regarding our digital collections, access to online databases, submitting inquiries, and more, can be found on Cass County Public Library’s Genealogy Resources page, located here: www.casscolibrary.org/genealogy

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