START WITH THE BASICS

Approach tracing your Native American ancestors the same way you would approach any other relative. Use the same information, documents, and techniques you use in all genealogical research:

- Vital Records
- Federal and State Census
- Personal Records
- Probate/Court Records
- Church Records
- Interview family members

**Note:** It helps to begin by pinpointing your ancestor’s location in the federal or state 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. Prior to 1870, "Indian" was not an official option for the race or color column. Native Americans who assimilated and passed as white may have been enumerated that way on the census.

FACT OR FICTION?

Be cautious when searching for an ancestor who, according to a family story, was Native American, especially when the evidence is anecdotal. You can’t always take it as self-evident that great-great grandma “was an Indian because she had darker skin and high cheekbones.”

Just as with basic genealogical research, use solid research methodology and find hard evidence to support your family story.
BASIC RECORDS
There are a few records that are good for beginners to Native American genealogy:
- Federal Censuses
- Federal Census Indian Schedules
- Indian Census Rolls
- Allotment and Treaty Rolls
- Indian School Records

DAWES ROLLS
The Final Rolls of Citizens and Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes, known as the “Dawes Rolls,” allowed members of these five tribes (Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Seminole, and Creek) to apply for an allotment of land in Indian Territory. Over 250,000 individuals applied between 1898 and 1907. Many who applied were rejected, either because they did not meet the residency requirements or could not prove tribal citizenship. In the instance of Cherokee Freedmen, the sworn interviews may provide the names of parents and former master(s) for the emancipated slave. Indexes for the Rolls are available online and several databases have digitized application packets. Other rolls include the Guion-Miller Roll, the Chapman Roll, and the Wallace Freedmen Roll.

Application Packets
These packets include sworn interviews, supplementary forms and documents from corroborating witnesses. Information provided here includes: name, age (circa 1902), sex, tribe affiliation, blood quantum, family members, reservation census card number and page and enrollment number.

INDIAN CENSUS ROLLS, 1851–1940
These reservation censuses were enumerated by agent of Bureau of Indian Affairs, usually the reservation superintendent. Only those who maintained a formal affiliation with a federally-recognized tribe, typically by living on the reservation, were enumerated. Intermarried non-Indians often were not included, though the children were. Families of mixed tribal affiliation were enumerated together, but you can check the “at another jurisdiction” column to determine any other censuses where those individuals appear.

ONLINE RESOURCES
Ancestry Library Edition (library use only)
Use the Card Catalog feature with “Indian” or “Native American” as the keywords to view all relevant collections. Examples include:
- Indian Census Rolls, 1851-1940
- Special Census of Indians, 1880
- Dawes Rolls Applications & Rejections U.S., Indian Wills, 1910-1921
- Indian Land Allotment Sales, 1908-1927

FamilySearch (free)
www.familysearch.org
Collections here include:
- Native American Birth and Death Records
- Eastern Cherokee Indian Reservation Rolls
- Eastern Cherokee Enrollment Records
- Native American, Censuses Rolls, 1885-1940

Access Genealogy (free)
www.accessgenealogy.com/native-american
Indian Census Rolls, research guides, and more

Carlisle Indian School Digital Records
http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu