PRESERVING CULTURE, ENRICHING PEOPLE, SUSTAINING THE ENVIRONMENT AND BUILDING COMMUNITY.
Today’s Tribes

Washington state is home to 29 federally recognized American Indian tribes and more than 300,000 American Indians and Alaska Natives. Tribes are located throughout the state—from Neah Bay on the Pacific Coast to Usk near the eastern state border. Tribal governmental and business enterprises are creating tens of thousands of jobs and investing billions of dollars in the state’s economy.

In the Beginning

Native peoples inhabited North America long before European governments sent explorers to claim lands and resources. No one knows how many people inhabited North America before 1500, and estimates vary widely from 1.5 million to 20 million.

Representatives of European governments interacted with tribes in diplomacy, commerce, culture and war—acknowledging tribes’ systems of social, cultural, economic and political governance. As the United States formed its Union, the founders continued to acknowledge the sovereignty of tribal nations, alongside states, foreign countries and the federal government, in the U.S. Constitution.

Native peoples and their governments retain fundamental political and treaty rights in their relationship with the U.S. government that are not derived from race or ethnicity. They are based on treaties and actions by the President or the Congress and confirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court. Tribal citizens are citizens of three sovereigns: their tribe, the United States and the state in which they reside.

What is Tribal Sovereignty?

Sovereignty is a legal term meaning the right of a people to self-govern within jurisdictional borders. Tribal sovereignty recognizes that American Indian tribes have the political status of nations and that Indian nations are located within the territorial boundaries of the United States. As sovereigns, tribal nations have a government-to-government relationship with the two other sovereign governing bodies in the U.S.—the federal and state governments.

Tribal, federal and state laws define governments’ responsibilities, powers, limitations and obligations. Tribal sovereignty allows tribal nations autonomy to govern, exercise jurisdiction, and protect and enhance the health, safety and welfare of tribal citizens within tribal territory.

Annual Community and Economic Benefits of Tribes in Washington

Source: The Economics & Community Benefits of Tribes in Washington, Washington Indian Gaming Association/ May 2020 washingtontribes.org/resources

37,371
Washington State Residents
Directly Employed by Tribes

$1.2B
State and Local Tax Revenue Generated

$1.5B
Wages and Benefits Paid

$6.6B
Value Added to the State Economy

“The Congress shall have the power to...regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the states, and with the Indian tribes”

U.S. Constitution Article 1, Section 8

Washington: 29 Tribal Nations

Twenty-nine federally recognized American Indian tribes are located on reservations and other tribal lands throughout Washington state. Each tribal nation is different. Some reservations are just a few acres in size, while others span more than a million acres; some have a few hundred citizens, others have thousands of citizens; some have significant financial resources to finance government services, others have very limited funds. Because water provided a means of transportation and natural resources, reservations are often found along rivers, Puget Sound or the Washington coast. Only four tribes are in eastern Washington, and each relies on rivers.

Tribal Governments

Tribal governments determine their own governance structures, pass laws, enforce laws, exercise jurisdiction and deliver programs and services. Led by a body of elected officials, tribal governments are responsible for healthcare, education, housing, public safety, courts, transportation, natural resources, environment, culture and economic development. Tribal governments collaborate with state and local jurisdictions on a multitude of issues, from taxation to transportation improvements to natural resource management to emergency services.

Indian Lands

Indian land ownership is complex and includes lands held in fee and in trust. Reservation boundaries are established by treaty, executive order or an act of Congress, but tribes have jurisdiction over a broader category of land defined in federal law as “Indian country.” Indian country includes all land within reservation boundaries and land held in trust for the tribe or one or more of its members outside of the reservation.

LEARN MORE ABOUT TRIBES

National Congress of American Indians | ncai.org
National Museum of the American Indian | nmai.si.edu
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission | nifiwc.org

Washington Tribes | washingtontribes.org
Subscribe to the Washington Tribes Newsletter | http://eepurl.com/hrjR67
CONFRONTING CHALLENGES

The relationship between tribal nations and the U.S. government has evolved throughout history. Early policies left a legacy of challenges (fragmented and marginalized land rights, isolation of many Indian reservations, loss of culture and language, limits on the ability to raise revenue via taxation and development limitations on trust land) that continue to affect American Indian communities today. These policies made economic development in Indian country very difficult, limiting income sources largely to federal grants and extraction of local resources. Before the early 1990s, most tribal governments struggled to pay for essential services.

While much progress was made in the late 20th and early 21st century, the challenges facing American Indian communities continue to be significant. Tribal investments have helped Indian communities recover from long-lasting hardships, yet much still needs to be done. On reservations, many of which are in geographically isolated areas far from economic, education and health centers, poverty and unemployment rates remain very high.

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) confirmed the rights of tribes to conduct gaming on Indian lands. (Tribes have always had gaming—see the FAQ on page 8 to learn more.) IGRA required states and tribes to enter into compacts for certain types of gaming. Under these compacts, tribes reimburse the state for the costs of regulating Indian gaming and enter into agreements to provide additional support to the community, particularly in times of need, such as the COVID pandemic. For example, in November 2020 the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians donated $600,000 to two food banks in the nearby communities of Arlington and Stanwood.

Washington’s tribal governments are making investments and charitable contributions that improve people’s lives and support neighboring local governments. Over the past decade, thousands of organizations—from school districts to local first responder agencies to food banks to performing arts organizations—have received millions from the tribes.

“Tribes are running business enterprises, not to maximize profits, but to benefit communities. Gaming opens the door to possibilities.”

W. Ron Allen
Chairman, Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe

CARING FOR COMMUNITIES

SUSTAINING THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Tribal environmental and natural resource programs play a critical role in efforts to restore and protect important cultural and natural resources. Tribal governments employ experts and scientists in all disciplines. These programs include watershed planning, water quality programs, environmental education, environmental assessments, salmon recovery programs and more.

Tribal natural resource programs play an important role in balancing the sustainable harvest of salmon, game, timber and other resources with environmental restoration and the protection of sensitive species and habitats.

Washington’s rich natural resources provide thousands of jobs for tribal members and nonmember alike. Tribes are committed to making investments in sustainable natural resource management practices so that resources can thrive and be available to all for future generations.

Indian Socioeconomic Status in Washington

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>All persons in WA</th>
<th>American Indians on WA reservations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INCOME PER PERSON</td>
<td>$39,401</td>
<td>$18,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNEMPLOYMENT</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLEGE ATTAINMENT</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census, 2019

TRIBAL CONTRIBUTIONS UNDER GAMING COMPACT

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) confirmed the rights of tribes to conduct gaming on Indian lands. (Tribes have always had gaming—see the FAQ on page 8 to learn more.) IGRA required states and tribes to enter into compacts for certain types of gaming. Under these compacts, tribes reimburse the state for the costs of regulating Indian gaming and enter into agreements to provide additional support to the community, particularly in times of need, such as the COVID pandemic. For example, in November 2020 the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians donated $600,000 to two food banks in the nearby communities of Arlington and Stanwood.

Charitable Giving

Gaming tribes agree under compacts with the state to contribute to communities and nonprofits. Many tribes also go above and beyond these agreements to provide additional support to the community, particularly in times of need, such as the COVID pandemic. For example, in November 2020 the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians donated $600,000 to two food banks in the nearby communities of Arlington and Stanwood.

Tribal Community Contributions in 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount Granted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington Indian Gaming Association</td>
<td>$10.1M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Indian Gaming Association</td>
<td>$8.7M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Indian Gaming Association</td>
<td>$1.9M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Indian Gaming Association</td>
<td>$2.7M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WILL 100-POUND SALMON RETURN?

Legend has it that mighty salmon weighing as much as 100 pounds returned to spawn on the Elwha River. Salmon returning from the ocean had to be big and strong to swim up the fast-moving river to spawning areas. In the early 1900s, two dams were built on the river. The dams fueled economic growth but blocked salmon migration and flooded the historic homelands and cultural sites of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. After two decades of planning, the largest dam removal in U.S. history began in 2011. Today, the Elwha River once again flows freely from its headwaters in the Olympic Mountains to the Strait of Juan de Fuca. And salmon and other fish and wildlife are returning!

SEE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION:

- Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge
- Colville Forest Management
- Elwha Dam Restoration
- Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe

Washington Indian Tribes Today
Tribes in Washington state place a high priority on enhancing and preserving their rich and vibrant cultures.

Thriving tribal communities with arts and culture are critically important. American Indian culture has flourished in our region for thousands of years, despite past failed efforts by the U.S. government to “assimilate” American Indians into the general population by stripping away their cultural identity. American Indian children were sent to government boarding schools and forbidden to speak their native language, wear traditional clothes or practice their religions.

Today, tribes in Washington are working to ensure native culture continues to be an integral part of our regional identity, for the benefit of American Indians and non-Indians alike. This is achieved by investing in museums, art and cultural centers, elder programs, school programs, song and dance, language programs, carving and weaving, traditional foods and medicine programs, and other tribal community building efforts.

Canoe Journey

Canoe Journey is a celebrated cultural tradition in the Pacific Northwest and a revival of a traditional method of transportation. Host tribes welcome as many as 100 canoes and 15,000 people for a weeklong celebration. Participants learn traditional canoe carving and decorating and learn to work together as a “canoe family.” Canoe families take turns telling stories, singing, drumming and performing dances. All Canoe Journey activities are family-friendly and drug- and alcohol-free. Each year, a different nation hosts singing, drumming and performing dances. All Canoe Journey activities are family-friendly and drug- and alcohol-free. Each year, a different nation hosts singing, drumming and performing dances. All Canoe Journey activities are family-friendly and drug- and alcohol-free. Each year, a different nation hosts.

Salmon: A Symbol of Tribal Culture

Salmon play an important role in the region’s ecosystems. Salmon return from the ocean providing nutrients to rivers, feeding wildlife and enriching forests. Salmon have shaped the lives of American Indians, influencing their cultures, interactions with other tribes, fishing technologies and religions. Salmon are an integral part of religion, culture and sustenance. Salmon need good quality habitat. Harvest reductions are only effective if there are equally strong efforts to restore salmon habitat. Salmon are tough. Despite dams, pollution, predators, climate change and many more challenges, they never stop trying to return home. Tribes have to be just as tough when it comes to the salmon recovery and the return to sustainable levels.

Fishing is still a culturally preferred livelihood for many American Indians and an essential aspect of their nutritional health and culture.

Education

Tribal governments build and operate early learning centers, schools, libraries and youth activity facilities. Most tribes provide substantial financial support to college students. The investment is paying off—high school graduation rates are improving and the number of tribal citizens attending college is increasing.

Roads, Transportation and Utilities

Tribes are building roads, sidewalks, bridges, communications networks, transit, electric power companies—even small hydroelectric-generating plants. Most of the projects are done in collaboration with local governments, or the state, and are intended to benefit the general public, as well as tribal members.

Public Safety

Tribes invest in public safety, emergency services, and disaster preparedness and response to protect all citizens, property and natural resources. Tribal governments pay for critical services like police, courts, emergency medical response and fire departments.

Housing

Providing adequate housing, especially for low-income families and the elderly, is a priority for Washington’s tribes. Tribes are constructing new affordable homes and apartments throughout the state.

Economic Development

Tribes invest hundreds of millions of dollars in hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues, tour/ticket attractions, retail, forest products, fisheries, agriculture, ranching, real estate development, manufacturing, aquaculture and more. In tribal communities where the ability to generate tax revenues is limited, these enterprises take the place of a sufficient tax base to support tribal governmental functions.

All Washingtonians aspire to the same basic things—safe communities, excellent schools, decent jobs, clean air and water, good health, and roads and transit that make travel easy. We want our kids to have more opportunities than were given to us. And we value a culture where neighbors help neighbors.
THE TRIBES OF WASHINGTON

To request a free poster-size print, visit: bit.ly/WashingtonTribesPoster

1. Chehalis chehalistribe.org
2. Colville colvilletribes.com
3. Cowlitz cowlitz.org
4. Hoh hohtribe-nsn.org
5. Jamestown S’Klallam jamestowntribe.org
6. Kalispel kalispeltribe.com
7. Lower Elwha Klallam elwha.org
8. Lummi lummi-nsn.org
9. Makah makah.com
10. Muckleshoot muckleshoot-nsn.us
11. Nisqually nisqually-nsn.gov
12. Nez Perce nezperce.org
13. Port Gamble S’Klallam pgst-nsn.us
14. Puyallup puyallup-tribe.com
15. Quileute quileute-tribe.org
16. Quinault quinaultnation.com
17. Samish samish-tribe.org
18. Sauk Suiattle sauksuiatte.com
19. Shoalwater Bay shoalwaterbay-nsn.gov
20. Skokomish skokomish.org
21. Snoqualmie snoqualmietribe.us
22. Spokane spokanetribe.com
23. Squaxin Island squaxinisland.org
24. Stillaguamish stillaguamish.com
25. Suquamish suquamish-tribe.org
26. Swinomish swinomish.org
27. Tulalip tulaliptribes-nsn.gov
28. Upper Skagit upperskagитетriebes-nsn.gov
29. Yakama yakamination-nsn.gov

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does the United States still make treaties with Indian tribes?

No. There were 370 treaties signed by the U.S. government and American Indian Tribes between 1778 and 1871.

Did treaties grant Native Americans special rights?

Treaties represented a contractual acknowledgment of certain rights already held, and to be retained, by tribal governments and their people. Tribes relinquished some rights (land) in exchange for retaining others (hunting and fishing, including outside reservations). Indian treaties have the same status as treaties with foreign nations, and because they are made under the U.S. Constitution they take precedence over any conflicting state law.

Who’s eligible for tribal citizenship?

Federally recognized tribal governments set their own enrollment eligibility requirements.

What is Indian Country?

Indian Country is land under the jurisdiction of tribal governments and the federal government. Federal law describes Indian Country as “all land within the limits of any Indian reservation; “all dependent Indian communities within the borders of the United States” and “all Indian allotments, the Indian titles to which have not been extinguished.” Indian Country includes all lands within reservation boundaries as well as off-reservation land owned by the U.S. in trust for tribes and individual Indians. (18 U.S. Code § 1151)

How do tribal citizens govern themselves?

Most tribes are governed by an elected body—usually a tribal council, typically led by a Chairperson or President. Tribal governments and their people. Tribes relinquished some rights (land) in exchange for retaining others (hunting and fishing, including outside reservations). Indian treaties have the same status as treaties with foreign nations, and because they are made under the U.S. Constitution they take precedence over any conflicting state law.

Who’s eligible for tribal citizenship?

Federally recognized tribal governments set their own enrollment eligibility requirements.

What is Indian Country?

Indian Country is land under the jurisdiction of tribal governments and the federal government. Federal law describes Indian Country as “all land within the limits of any Indian reservation; “all dependent Indian communities within the borders of the United States” and “all Indian allotments, the Indian titles to which have not been extinguished.” Indian Country includes all lands within reservation boundaries as well as off-reservation land owned by the U.S. in trust for tribes and individual Indians. (18 U.S. Code § 1151)

How do tribal citizens govern themselves?

Most tribes are governed by an elected body—usually a tribal council, typically led by a Chairperson or President. Tribal governments represent the voices of the people, or members of a tribe, who identify with the tribe. Some tribes have an elected tribal council representing the people of the tribe, while other tribes are governed by a tribal council elected by the people of the tribe. The tribal council is responsible for the overall management and administration of the tribe.

Who’s eligible for tribal citizenship?

Federally recognized tribal governments set their own enrollment eligibility requirements.

What is Indian Country?

Indian Country is land under the jurisdiction of tribal governments and the federal government. Federal law describes Indian Country as “all land within the limits of any Indian reservation; “all dependent Indian communities within the borders of the United States” and “all Indian allotments, the Indian titles to which have not been extinguished.” Indian Country includes all lands within reservation boundaries as well as off-reservation land owned by the U.S. in trust for tribes and individual Indians. (18 U.S. Code § 1151)

How do tribal citizens govern themselves?

Most tribes are governed by an elected body—usually a tribal council, typically led by a Chairperson or President. Tribal governments represent the voices of the people, or members of a tribe, who identify with the tribe. Some tribes have an elected tribal council representing the people of the tribe, while other tribes are governed by a tribal council elected by the people of the tribe. The tribal council is responsible for the overall management and administration of the tribe.

Who’s eligible for tribal citizenship?

Federally recognized tribal governments set their own enrollment eligibility requirements.

What is Indian Country?

Indian Country is land under the jurisdiction of tribal governments and the federal government. Federal law describes Indian Country as “all land within the limits of any Indian reservation; “all dependent Indian communities within the borders of the United States” and “all Indian allotments, the Indian titles to which have not been extinguished.” Indian Country includes all lands within reservation boundaries as well as off-reservation land owned by the U.S. in trust for tribes and individual Indians. (18 U.S. Code § 1151)
Washington Indian Tribes Today is an educational resource used in classrooms throughout Washington state.

To request a print copy for your classroom or for sharing with others, please fill out the form at: www.surveymonkey.com/r/WATribesToday