

North American Indian Group Names

As people learn about North American Indians, it is helpful to use correct terminology and names of specific local or regional groups. Knowing names of people who are located among them or to whom they themselves belong can be useful. There is much information about some and little about others. Stoutenburgh gives over 900 specific names of Native American groups in the *Dictionary of the American Indian*.

Various names are used for groupings. Here are some of the terms that will be found in the literature.

Band	Nation
Branch	Patrilocal clan communities or
Clan	extended family communities
Demes	Phratries
Division	Phratry
Family group	Sibs
Gens	Sub-phratry
Group	Subclan
House clan	Subgens
Linguist family	Tribe
Moieties	

Be alert to various definitions of the word nation. It has been "a term used to denote the 'five civilized tribes,' Oklahoma, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and the Cherokee. The term formerly included many others such as the Catawba. The term used to include those tribes of the Gulf States of the United States." (Stoutenburgh, 277) Note that the writer questioned the use of the word civilized. The same author used the word nation to refer to other groups. When speaking of the Iroquois he wrote, "These Indians were known also by the name of the Five Nations and were composed of the Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca and the Onondaga. Later on they were called the 'Six Nations' when the Tuscarora were added to the group." (Stoutenburgh, 164) Morris defined nation as "a federation or tribe, especially one composed of North American Indians. (Morris, 874).

The word tribe is defined as "a large or small group of individuals who are bound together in a permanent body, having a unified purpose." (Stoutenburgh, 422) These are some of the well-known groups Stoutenburgh labels as tribes.

Arapaho	Menominee	Oneota
Chippewa	Michigamea	Ozark
Erie	Mohave	Potawatomi
Hopi	Navajo	Potomac
Iowa	Omaha	Tappan
Massachusetts	Oneida	

The confederation “was a group or political organization of two or more tribes who banded together for offense or defense. These alliances when formed caused each tribe to give up some of its own rights for the good of all concerned.” (Stoutenburgh, 77) The Delaware, Illinois, and Iroquoian were confederations with well-known names.

Many linguistic families exist. “There are fifty-six families of speech. (Stoutenburgh, 215) Examples of such families are the Algonquian, Iroquoian, and Siouan.

Harold Driver defines some of the other category labels in chapters about the family. (See pages 222-268)

Identify local or regional groups and determine which categories the labels represent. Determine their size, type, location, purpose, and place in the past, present or future.

Sources

Driver, H. (Ed.). (1969) *Indians of North America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Morris, W. & Others (Ed.). (1973). *The American heritage dictionary of the English language*. Boston: American Heritage Publishing Co.

Stoutenburgh, J. (1960). *Dictionary of the American Indian*. New York: Wings Books.

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