

1 Read the article below about American Indians and answer the questions.

- 1 How many American Indians are there in the USA today?
- 2 What is the biggest American Indian tribe called?
- 3 Do most American Indians live on reservations?
- 4 What changed for American Indians in 1964?
- 5 Where is the National American Indian Museum?

Where are they now?

History books tell us that the European conquest of the American West was very violent and it almost destroyed the native people and their cultures. But who are the modern American Indians? What are their lives like?

Today in the USA there are three million American Indians and 564 official tribes. The most important ones

are the Navajo, the Cherokee and the Sioux. Many American Indians live in cities from Los Angeles to New York City, but one million live on reservations.

In the 19th century reservations were far-away places where the US government sent the Indians after they had taken their home lands. However, in 1964 the US government recognised the reservations as places where tribes can live by their own rules, have their own government and practise their traditional religions. Reservations cover 227,000 km² – an area as big as England, Scotland and Wales. The largest reservation is home to the Navajo: it is almost as big as the state of West Virginia and 308,000 Navajo live there.

Life on the reservations can be hard because there aren't many jobs there. However, art provides an income for many tribes. Collectors pay a lot of money for authentic American Indian jewellery, pottery or stone and wood carvings.

Attitudes have changed a lot since the days of the Indian wars. In 2004, the National Museum of the American Indian opened in Washington DC. It is a place where you can learn about ancient and modern American Indians' lives and times.

2 Read the blog on page 2 and answer the questions.

- 1 What are some of the names for the native peoples of North America?
- 2 What do people do at pow wows?
- 3 How many native languages are there in North and South America?
- 4 What are dreamcatchers for?

3a Work with a partner. Match the words and the photos.

coyote ☐ raccoon ☐
mountain lion ☐ deer ☐



3b 10 Listen to a legend of the Nez Perce Indians. Decide if the sentences are true (T) or false (F).

- 1 The Monster ate all the animals.
- 2 Coyote ran away from the Monster and jumped into the river.
- 3 In the end, the Monster asked Coyote to be his friend.
- 4 All the animals in the Monster's stomach were dead.
- 5 Coyote used the pieces of the dead Monster to make humans.



NATIVE PEOPLE

Our site is for everyone who is curious about native people. Do you have questions about American Indians? Ask Louise Northrup, writer and teacher from the Ojibwe tribe.



FORUM HISTORY LEGENDS NEWS CONTACT US

Hi, my grandfather was Cherokee. I want to know if 'Indian' is an offensive term. I don't think so, but I'm not sure. Help!

Sammy Redbird

There's no simple answer to your question, Sammy. Many of our friends in the USA refer to themselves as American Indians. In Canada they call themselves First Nation people. Most Indians just use their tribe's name, for example, Cherokee, like you, or Ojibwe, like me. The Navajo call themselves Dineh, which means simply 'the people'.

I have heard the word 'pow wow' in documentary films. What does it mean exactly?

Danny French

The word comes from an old Indian tribe – the Narragansett. For them it was a religious ceremony or a meeting between tribal chiefs. Now it means a big party where we celebrate our culture with music, dance, song, and food. Pow wows take place all over North America and everyone is invited to watch.

I am doing a school report on American Indians and I want to include a few common expressions like, 'Hello' and 'Thank you'. Can you translate those words for me?

Cindy Schwartz

Not an easy question, Cindy. There are about 150 native languages in the United States and Canada, and about 700 native languages in Mexico and South America. Unfortunately a lot of these languages are oral and can disappear because they haven't got any written text. Anyway, migwetch means 'thanks' in my language.

I often see something called a dreamcatcher in gift shops. The label always says that it is a 'genuine American Indian' charm. Is it really true?

Anita Long

Yes, it is. The Ojibwe people of southern Canada first made dreamcatchers. They put them over their babies' cribs as a net to catch nightmares. It's a sort of good luck charm, but now people use them everywhere for protection, including in their cars!

Project space A tradition in my culture

- 4 Think of an interesting tradition in your culture. Imagine you have to tell someone from another country about it. Do research on the internet or in books.**

When and where did it start?

How do you celebrate it?

In my country, before a wedding, the bride has a henna party.
At the party her hands are decorated with henna.