

NATIVE IDENTITIES 101



Native people identify and belong to their communities in many ways and regardless of where they live Indigenous people are validly Native!

SOME IDENTITIES INCLUDE

- Living in an urban setting and having a Native Community
i.e., Urban Seattle Native Community
- Living on a reservation
- Using language such as “descendants” from a Tribe
- Having grandparents or family who are or were Native but have now lost community and cultural connection. (This is okay, it is time to reclaim!)
- Speaking their Indigenous language while some might not.
- Being mixed race
- Being enrolled in their Tribe
- Being able to actively practice their Indigenous culture, some may not, or may have never learned.

URBAN INDIAN COMMUNITIES

Approximately 70% of the AIAN population lives in urban settings. Why? Forced relocation like the Indian Relocation Act of 1956, economic opportunities, and autonomous free will.

Urban Native communities are strong cultural communities made of many different tribal Nations. Most Indigenous people will have an urban experience at some point in their life.

All of these are valid ways of being an Indigenous person. The effects of colonialism have created structures that purposefully separate Native people from language, culture, land, and community.

IPI is a space where we can have these conversations and continue to learn about ourselves.

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SUGGESTED READINGS

Red Skins, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition¹

Glen Sean Coulthard

Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America²

Eva Marie Garroutte

There, There³

Tommy Orange

Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond⁴

Renya K. Ramirez

God is Red: A Native View of Religion⁵

Vine Deloria Jr.

A History of My Brief Body⁶

Billy-Ray Belcourt

ONLINE RESOURCES

Urban Indian Health Institute (www.uihi.org)

¹Coulthard, G. S. (2014). Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

²Garroutte, E. M. (2003). Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America. Berkeley, California: Univ. of California Press

³Orange, T. (2018). There There. New York: Vintage Books.

⁴Ramirez, R. K. (2007). Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

⁵Deloria, V., Jr. (2007). God is Red: A Native View of Religion. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum.

⁶Belcourt, B. (2020). A History of My Brief Body. Columbus, Ohio: Two Dollar Radio.

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