

REPORTING AND INDIGENOUS TERMINOLOGY

The Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) is committed to increasing the representation of Indigenous people in mainstream media and encourages both mainstream and tribal media to attain the highest standards of professionalism, ethics and responsibility. This guide on terminology is designed to promote accurate phrasing when it comes to the coverage of Indigenous people and expected to accompany NAJA's *100 Questions, 500 Answers: A Guide To Native America* as well as pre-existing stylebooks. The rigorous, detailed use of language is paramount to fair coverage of Indigenous people and reflects NAJA's mission to recognize Native Americans as distinct peoples while promoting diversity.

AMERICAN INDIAN OR NATIVE AMERICAN

Either term is generally acceptable and can be used interchangeably, although individuals may have a preference. Native American gained traction in the 1960s for American Indians and Alaska Natives. Over time, Native American has been expanded to include all Native people of the continental United States and some in Alaska. Native American and American Indian can be used interchangeably; however, the term is used only to describe groups of Native Americans - two or more individuals of different tribal affiliation. Journalists should always identify people by their preferred tribal affiliation when reporting on individuals or individual tribes.

NATIVE

The term "Native" can be used as an adjective to describe styles; For instance, Native fashion, Native music, or Native art. Journalists should exercise caution when using the word, though, as it is primarily used as slang.

INDIGENOUS OR ABORIGINAL

While an official definition of "Indigenous" is not agreed on, the United Nations has developed an understanding of the term based on self-identification, historical continuity to pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies, links to territories and resources, distinct social, economic and political systems and possession of distinct languages, cultures and beliefs. In the case of the United States, tribal membership or citizenship denotes Indigenous identity. These factors make the words "Indigenous" and "Aboriginal" identities, not adjectives, and NAJA urges outlets to capitalize these terms in order to avoid confusion between indigenous plants and animals and Indigenous human beings. Finally, avoid referring to Indigenous people as possessions of states or countries. Instead of "Wyoming's Indigenous people" try "the Indigenous people of Wyoming."



Native American Journalists Association

If your media outlet or organization has questions about this guide or would like to host a NAJA representative to facilitate a newsroom discussion on these points, please contact us at naja.com.

INDIAN COUNTRY

Indian Country is a legal term used in Title 18 of the U.S. Code. It broadly defines federal and tribal jurisdiction in crimes affecting American Indians on reservations. But it also has popular usage, describing reservations, lands held within tribal jurisdictions and areas with American Indian populations.

TRIBAL AFFILIATION

Reporters should identify Indigenous people by their specific tribes, nations or communities. Headlines and text should also refer to tribes by their proper names, not a catch-all phrase like “Oklahoma Native American Tribe” or “Native American group.” While many Indigenous people share a common history of oppression and colonialism, tribal nations are diverse and different; Failing to use the actual name of the tribe you are reporting on is neither accurate, fair or thorough and undermines diversity by erasing the tribe’s identity. The practice never happens when reporting on other places or groups, as shown to the right:

Reporters unsure of names and terms should ask the Indigenous people they are reporting on which words are preferred, or access tribal government websites for correct nomenclature. If your media outlet or organization has questions about this guide or would like to host a NAJA representative to facilitate a newsroom discussion on these points, please contact us at naja.com.

INCORRECT

- ✘ Pope Brings Message of Brotherly Love To Pennsylvania City
- ✘ Asian Country Pushes Legal Overhaul That Would Bolster State Power
- ✘ Native American Tribe To Open First Marijuana Resort In The U.S.

CORRECT

- ✔ Pope Brings Message of Brotherly Love To Philadelphia
- ✔ China Pushes Legal Overhaul That Would Bolster State Power
- ✔ Santee Sioux Tribe To Open First Marijuana Resort In The U.S.



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