



Native AMerican Culture

Many cities, sports teams, and states have names that come from Native American tribes. For example, I used to live in Omaha, Nebraska. Omaha is also the name of an Indian tribe. Nebraska originated from an Indian word meaning "flat water". The name refers to a river in Nebraska and also to the fact that the state is flat; there are no mountains in Nebraska.

To better understand American culture some key Native American events/terms/people to know are below.

*Native American(s) will be shortened to NA(s) throughout this paper

Events

- Thanksgiving
 - An annual holiday celebrated on the 4th Thursday of November. It's a holiday that focuses on spending time together with family and being thankful for good things from earlier in the year.
 - First celebrated in the 1620's, official date was set in 1941 by U.S. President FDR. Now the 4th Thursday of November.
- The French and Indian War (1754-1763)
 - During this war Native American forces in America fought alongside the French against the British.
 - (NA+France vs England)
 - Britain essentially won the war, which established it as the dominant power in America, until the American Revolution.
- The Trail of Tears
 - In 1831 Native American nations were forced to relocate from the southern U.S. by the government. Several thousand died during the journey.
- Custer's Last Stand (June 25-26, 1876)
 - Battle of the Little Bighorn is another common name
 - A battle between tribes and the U.S. army where the U.S. army underestimated the strength of tribes and lost.
 - People will often refer to the event when discussing a situation where someone underestimated an opponent.



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Terms

- Pow-wow
 - A social gathering that includes singing and dancing
 - Also used a slang term to describe a meeting. May be viewed as disrespectful. Often used in the following way:
 - We need to have a pow-wow (meeting).
- Teepee
 - The typical cone-shaped home associated with NAs. It was used by tribes in the Great Plains (Midwest area).
- Wigwam
 - A dome-shaped structure used by tribes in the Northeast.
- Canoe
 - Good for warfare due to its silence in the water.
- Arrow Head
 - A tool used for hunting and in warfare, now a popular souvenir that can be found in gift shops throughout America.
- Dreamcatcher
 - Used for capturing nightmares. Web is symbolic of a spider.

People

- Chief
 - The leader of the tribe, usually
 - The term *chief* is also used today when talking about someone that's in charge.
- Medicine Man/Woman
 - Provided medicine and spiritual healing.
- Sacagawea
 - Female travel guide and interpreter that helped the U.S. government when it was exploring the West.
 - Commemorated on a \$1 coin.
- Pocahontas
 - Saved the English explorer John Smith from death. Their relationship is often romanticized as forbidden love. 2 people from 2 completely different cultures falling in love.
 - Historical note: She married a different person named John Rolfe.
- Geronimo (person's name)
 - Apache war hero famous for his bravery and persistence.
 - During the 1930's the phrase "Geronimo" started to be used among paratroopers of the U.S. army. They said it to show they had no fear.
 - People still shout the phrase *Geronimo* today before jumping out of an airplane, like for skydiving.