

**N432 Culture Report- American Indians**

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The American Indian culture encompasses diverse indigenous tribes with unique histories, languages, and traditions. As of the last update in September 2021, American Indians comprise approximately 2.9% of the United States population. They are distributed throughout the country, with significant concentrations in states like Oklahoma, California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Alaska. Traditional American Indian diets varied based on the local environment and resources available. Staples often included corn, beans, squash, wild game, and fish. Today, dietary routines may incorporate elements of both traditional and contemporary diets, with a focus on local, natural, and sustainable foods (Stacker, 2021). Food holds cultural significance for American Indians, and traditional diets may include staples like corn, beans, squash, wild game, and fish. Following childbirth, specific foods may be consumed during postpartum rituals to support the mother's recovery and the newborn's well-being (Thompson, 2019).

Understanding the core values and cultural beliefs of the American Indian culture is vital in providing culturally competent healthcare, especially during the childbearing experience. American Indian communities may have unique practices related to labor, delivery, and the postpartum period (Stacker, 2021). Traditional midwifery practices and the involvement of extended family during childbirth are standard (Thompson, 2019). Postpartum ceremonies and rituals are performed to ensure the well-being of both the mother and the newborn, often involving specific foods and healing practices (Stacker, 2021). Healthcare professionals should respect and integrate traditional healing practices when appropriate. This may involve collaborating with traditional healers to enhance patient care. Pain and suffering are often viewed as part of life's natural cycle in the American Indian culture. Endurance and resilience are valued traits, and many tribes believe in mind, body, and spirit interconnectedness (Stacker, 2021).

Traditional healing practices, such as herbal remedies, smudging, and sweat lodge ceremonies, may be sought for physical and spiritual healing (Thompson, 2019).

Involving the extended family in the patient's care and decision-making process can be crucial for better outcomes and patient satisfaction. The typical structure of the family in the American Indian culture emphasizes solid familial bonds and communal support (Stacker, 2021). Families often include immediate relatives and extended kinship networks. Elders are highly respected for their wisdom and experience; guidance is sought in decision-making processes. In many tribes, elders live with the family and are revered community members (Stacker, 2021). Awareness of and respecting cultural norms in communication and personal space will help build patient trust and rapport. Communication norms in American Indian culture may vary among tribes. Active listening, patience, and non-verbal cues hold significant importance. Verbal and nonverbal communication should be approached with respect and cultural sensitivity.

Regarding gender roles, it is essential to avoid assumptions and allow individuals to speak for themselves (Thompson, 2019). Acknowledging the importance of spirituality and incorporating it into healthcare can positively impact patients' emotional well-being (Stacker, 2021). In healthcare settings, it is essential to understand the significance of spirituality to many American Indian patients. Healthcare providers should respect and incorporate traditional healing practices when appropriate and acknowledge the role of ceremonies and rituals in their well-being (Thompson, 2019). Sensitivity to gender dynamics is essential, as some American Indian patients may prefer healthcare providers of the same gender, particularly during intimate examinations (Stacker, 2021). Understanding patients' dietary routines and preferences can help tailor treatment plans and dietary advice to suit their cultural practices.

The American Indian culture is a diverse and vibrant tapestry of traditions, beliefs, and values (Stacker, 2021). Understanding and respecting these cultural aspects are essential for effective and culturally competent healthcare. The religious beliefs of American Indian tribes are varied, often revolving around a deep connection to nature and ancestral spirits. Many tribes practice animism, believing that all elements of the natural world possess spirits. Ceremonies and rituals are vital to their spirituality, helping them maintain harmony with the environment. By recognizing the significance of family, spirituality, and tradition, healthcare professionals can better engage with patients of the American Indian culture and improve health outcomes for this population (Stacker, 2021).

Understanding the core values and cultural practices of the American Indian culture is essential for healthcare professionals to provide effective and compassionate care during the childbearing experience. By embracing the significance of spirituality, family, and tradition, healthcare providers can foster better communication, improve patient satisfaction, and contribute to positive health outcomes. Culturally competent care ensures that patients from the American Indian culture receive the respect and understanding they deserve in their journey toward health and well-being.

## **References**

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