

Native American Culture Report

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Culture is the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group (Culture definition, 2025). Culture holds great significance for Native Americans. As of 2024, there is estimated to be between 3.1 and 8.7 million Indigenous people in the United States of America (Indigenous World, 2024). The state with the largest Native population is California; the place with the largest Native population is New York City (Indigenous World, 2024). The poverty rate for those who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native is around 18 percent (Indigenous World, 2024).

Introduction

There are no local native American tribes to central Illinois. Today, the living descendants of the Illinois Indians are represented by the Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma, which was incorporated as an independent tribe in 1940 (Native Americans, 2025). The Peoria Tribe maintains its headquarters in Miami, Oklahoma, and currently has 2,639 members living throughout the United States (Native Americans, 2025). The Peoria tribe used to be apart of the Illinois Confederation which was the Illini Indians before they dissolved (Native Americans, 2025).

Religion

Many Peoria people practice Christianity, especially Roman Catholicism, but some still practice animism (Peoria People Facts for Kids, 2024). Animism is a belief system that attributes a soul or spirit to all living and non-living things (Peoria People Facts for Kids, 2024). Animism in relation to healthcare is adopting a more natural approach to healing, as opposed to relying on

Western medicine (Peoria People Facts for Kids, 2024). Roman Catholicism puts restrictions on reproductive health by denying abortions and in vitro fertilization (Bayley, 2020).

Healing Beliefs and Practices

Native Americans are very stoic regarding pain and may maintain a neutral facial expression despite being in severe pain (Givler, 2023). Their pain may be under-treated and only expressed privately to family or friends (Givler, 2023). The beliefs, values, and taboos regarding pregnancy, labor, delivery, postpartum, and newborn care vary from tribe to tribe and from individual to individual, but these are a few: A pregnant woman should not look at a deformed, injured, or blind person or the baby will have the same defect, being around dying people or animals is unhealthy for the mother and baby, if a pregnant woman eats animals' feet, her baby will be born feet first, if the pregnant woman eats the tail of an animal, her baby will get stuck during delivery, if berries are eaten during pregnancy, the baby will have a birthmark, if liver is eaten during pregnancy, it will make the infant's skin darker (Koithan & Farrell, 2010).

Family Life

In Native American cultures, family is not limited to immediate relatives; it encompasses a broader network of relationships (Lee, 2025). Extended family members often play important roles in childcare, cultural transmission, and community decision-making (Lee, 2025). Elders are respected and often the guardians of cultural traditions, passing down stories, songs, and ceremonies to younger generations (Lee, 2025).

Communication

The Native American people are often quiet; silence is something that has long been embedded in their culture (Cultural differences in communication, n.d). If they are angry or upset, especially in a social situation, they do not express those emotions (Cultural differences in

communication, n.d). These are some of the rules that they have for communication in their culture: You should know someone well before speaking to them for long periods of time or confiding in them, children should not display themselves verbally in front of adults, it is inappropriate to express emotions in public or around people you don't know very well, verbally or non-verbally, you shouldn't ask direct questions or expect an immediate response from people you don't know very well, it is inappropriate to verbally discipline or praise a child in public, and it is inappropriate to speak for someone else, no matter who that person is (Cultural differences in communication, n.d). Other rules consist of: Do not signal someone out directly and do not gaze directly at someone the entire time they are talking (Cultural differences in communication, n.d).

Diet

Food can be essential to the Native American people because of its use during rituals. Some food related things with the culture would be: If a raw bean is swallowed during labor and it slipped down with ease, the delivery will be easy, while the infant's cord is being cut following birth, the mother bites on a white pebble to ensure the child's teeth will be strong and white, and different tribes clearly specify the appropriate dress, position, and who is in attendance for birth, as well as dietary and bathing specifications during the postpartum period (Koithan & Farrell, 2010). Corn, squash, and beans are often an important part of their diet. Cultural specific diet requirements could impact hospitalization by requiring the family to bring certain foods in rather than trying to pick the right things off the hospital menu.

Core Values

Every part of culture can affect the childbearing process. Being aware of people's preferences and culture is important so that healthcare professionals are better able to incorporate

their wants and needs into their childbearing experiences. Being mentally aware of these differences will help individuals provide better care to patients.

Overview

When working with a patient from a different cultural background, it is essential to ask about their preferences. Make sure to stick to their preferences as much as possible and communicate when you are unable to meet certain expectations. Just because a person is being stoic in the face of pain does not mean that they do not have pain and should still be assessed.

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