

# Researching Indigenous Peoples and Tribal Trails in New York

## Preserving Your New York Story series



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While this session will review and provide guidance on basic methods of the rich resources of information for Native/First Nations peoples, this session will not discuss the tribal enrollment process. Most tribes have this information on official websites.

### Remember these strategies and keys for Native/First Nations research:

- Do genealogy as you would do it for any family – begin with yourself and move backward in time, documenting everything as you go.
- Research all family members and document their lives through birth, marriage, death and census records.
- Information is only as accurate as those sharing wanted it to be – information was given voluntarily by someone in the household, but they may have had a reason to “fabricate” information.
- Records may give English names and Native names – it is fortunate when you can obtain records that have BOTH names together, to help in confirming how to track families and members.
- Children in the household may be the children of either the father or mother, and maybe not both.
- Indexes are secondary records – check them against the original records.
- Look at the whole neighborhood for the families living nearby – these could be helpful in marriages, info about the ancestral home and ethnic groups in the area (a potential clue if you don’t know the family’s origins).
- Find your family in any rosters or lists and track them through time including their siblings. If you can’t find your direct ancestor by name, look for former neighbors, siblings, etc.

### Specific to Native/First Nations Peoples:

- Geography is key – tracking where and when your ancestors were in a region, can narrow down the tribal connections and relationships that will guide your research.

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- Records specific to tribal affiliation – allotments, rolls, land records, and reservation connections – are easier to find IF you know the tribe!
- Learn about naming patterns, family relationships, clans or other groupings.
- Occupations can sometimes give hints about tribal affiliations – remember to use FAN (friends, acquaintances, neighbors) too. For example, “high steel” workers were strongly Mohawk or Oneida tribal members in New York construction.

### **Alliances with French and British During the Colonial Era**

In broad terms, the French formed alliances with several Native American groups, including the Abenaki, Mi'kmaq, Algonquin, Lenape, Ojibwa, Ottawa, Shawnee, and Wyandot (Huron). These alliances were important for trade, exploration, and establishing permanent settlements.

And, also in broad terms, the British were aided by Native American tribes, including the Fox, Chickamauga, Iroquois, Kickapoo, Mascoutah, Mohawk, Ojibway, Potawatomi, Sauk, and Shawnee.

The alliances also influence where records may be found. Military, missionary, church (Catholic for French allies, Congregational and other early colonial Protestants for English allies), colonial governments, French and British official reports back to overseas kings or administrative officials, are all possible sources for noting relationships with Indigenous peoples.

### **Other Indigenous/First Nations/Native Information:**

The original inhabitants of areas of what is now New York state were Algonquian (Lenni Lenape, Mohegan and Wappinger) and the Iroquois Confederation (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and, later, Tuscarora who joined in the 1700s). The Tuscarora moved from North Carolina when the European/English settlements were pushing into their territories and tensions increased.

### **Tribes moved from New York to other areas too:**

**Lenape** were in parts of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware but moved/were forced to move to Oklahoma (many died of European diseases).

The **Mahicans** sold land in the Mohawk Valley to Dutch settlers in 1626, later some to the state. In the 1720s some moved to Indiana and also Pennsylvania, Ohio and out to Wyoming. The group moving west became known as the **Stockbridge** tribe, with a small group moving into Green Bay.

The **Oneida** homelands in New York shrank from over six million acres to around 4,500 acres by the late 1830/40s. Many joined up with relatives in Ontario.

**Wappinger** were Algonquian people from southern New York and western Connecticut. They were nearly decimated and survivors joined with the Stockbridge people becoming the “Stockbridge-Munsee”.

### **Key Resources:**

New York State Library: [nysl.nysed.gov/](https://nysl.nysed.gov/) Try typing in “American Indian”, “Native”, “Indian” or searching by tribal names (see below)

New York State Archives: [archives.nysed.gov/research/researcher-services-overview](https://archives.nysed.gov/research/researcher-services-overview) Treaties, records of Indian schools, minutes of meetings with tribal peoples, specific tribal mentions and more.

Online Genealogy Records for Native American tribal groups:  
[familysearch.org/wiki/en/American\\_Indian\\_Online\\_Genealogy\\_Records](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/American_Indian_Online_Genealogy_Records)

List of federally recognized tribes:  
[federalregister.gov/documents/2020/01/30/2020-01707/indian-entities-recognized-by-and-eligible-to-receive-services-from-the-united-states-bureau-of](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/01/30/2020-01707/indian-entities-recognized-by-and-eligible-to-receive-services-from-the-united-states-bureau-of)

### **Websites:**

- Tribal Migration, Library of Congress ([loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/native\\_american.html](https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/native_american.html)) - Outstanding visual representation of original lands of tribal peoples, with information on the forced removals and patterns of migrations of tribes. Sturtevant, W. C. & Geological Survey, U. S. (1967) *National atlas. Indian tribes, cultures & languages: United States*. Reston, Va.: Interior, Geological Survey. [Map] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/95682185/>.
- Vital Records – Native American Directory [daddezio.com/records/room/indian.html](https://daddezio.com/records/room/indian.html) This web site offers a search feature by tribe. Each tribal section contains contact information for genealogical records or information and links to online and other resources (some are advertised as free and some are advertised for sale).
- The Genealogy Page – National Archives and Record Administration (NARA) [archives.gov/research/native-americans](https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans) This section contains links to web sites of census rolls, military records, photos and more. NARA also provides publications for sale and information about workshops offered at various regional locations.
- **Interactive Map with territories, treaties and linguistic groups of tribal peoples:** [native-land.ca/](https://native-land.ca/)

## INDIAN or TRIBAL ROLLS:

### National Archives, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Rolls:

<https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/rolls> There are many “rolls” or census records of native people in the United States (Baker, Guion Miller, Kern-Clifton, Roblin, Wallace, etc.) - New York tribes were not enumerated in this way, but through the following types of records by government agencies:

- Allotment Records
- Annuity Rolls
- Census Records
- Correspondence
- Health Records
- Government Reports
- School census and records
- Vital Records

AND there are individual tribal enrollment records, held by Tribal Enrollment Offices, that may or may not be available for public review (they are most often NOT online) and establish who is able to receive benefits and services from a given tribal government. Efforts are also underway at NARA to digitize the 377 Native Treaties (in news released in 2018– see announcement here: <https://www.archives.gov/news/articles/efforts-begin-to-digitize-377-native-america-treaties?fbclid=IwAR2sD6SpimGAM274rx3DhrOhvge0FK8ePRuVJ3zr-5Z7RCdGfN4SlgMYXew>)

Tribal Leaders Directory – This site guides you to the people, addresses and phone numbers that may be helpful in connecting with tribal offices. <https://www.bia.gov/tribal-leadersdirectory>

### Books:

New York Public Library Holdings: *NYG&B Subject and Locale Files*:

French and Indian Wars – Typed transcript of a journal from Colchester to Ticonderoga, June 8, 1758 by an unidentified author.

Indians of North America 1990-1991; Newspaper clippings

Mohegan Indians Their Descendants 1861

Lincoln, Madison County, New York: History of Indian Purchase 1802 and First Settlers; presented by William H. Tuttle

Moravia, Cayuga County, New York Indian Mound Cemetery; Inscriptions, copied by Leslie L. Luther, 1952.

Venice, Cayuga County, New York, Indian Field Road Cemetery, copied by Leslie L. Luther, 1966.

Westerly, Washington County, Rhode Island Indian Grant 1660 (Land Records-Deed).

**Within the NYG&B Resources:** (with sincere thanks to Chriselle Tidrick!):

Fort Stanwix (Rome, NY) Indian Baptisms, 1768 from July 1972 (page 154)

[newyorkfamilyhistory.org/online-records/nygb-record/566-517](http://newyorkfamilyhistory.org/online-records/nygb-record/566-517)

Excerpts from the Records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts from April 1974 (pages 117-120)

[newyorkfamilyhistory.org/online-records/nygb-record/566-526](http://newyorkfamilyhistory.org/online-records/nygb-record/566-526)

**Additional Resources:**

Dollarhide, William. *American Migration Routes, Part 1: Indian Paths, Post Roads & Wagon Roads*. Orting, WA: Family Roots Publishing, 2022. Note especially pg. 72 – Iroquois Train/Great Genesee Road and 103 – Lake Shore Path/Seneca Road and French-Indian Trail.

Morton, Sunny Jane. “Over the Borderline”, *Family Tree Magazine*, September 2018, pg 54-6.

Prevost, Toni Jollay. *Indians from New York: a Genealogy Reference*. Bowie Maryland: Heritage Books, c 1995. 3 V. FamilySearch Library books (970.1 P949i) - Found originally here: [familysearch.org/en/search/catalog/739952](http://familysearch.org/en/search/catalog/739952)

Pritchard, Evan T. (April 12, 2002). *Native New Yorkers, the Legacy of the Algonquin People of New York*. Council Oaks Distribution.  
([google.com/books/edition/Native\\_New\\_Yorkers/c5hky9f5PgoC?hl=en](https://books.google.com/books/edition/Native_New_Yorkers/c5hky9f5PgoC?hl=en) )

Ruttenber, E.M. “Footprints of the Red Men: Indian Geographical Names in the Valley of Hudson’s River, the Valley of the Mohawk, and on the Delaware: Their location and the probable meaning of some of them”. *Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association - the Annual Meeting, with Constitution, By-Laws and List of Members*. 7th Annual. New York State Historical Association, 1906.  
([google.com/books/edition/Proceedings\\_of\\_the\\_Annual\\_Meeting\\_with\\_C/i3kSAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=wapani&pg=RA1-PA38&printsec=frontcover](https://books.google.com/books/edition/Proceedings_of_the_Annual_Meeting_with_C/i3kSAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=wapani&pg=RA1-PA38&printsec=frontcover))

Trelease, Allen. *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York.*, . Univ of Nebraska Press, 1997. ([books.google.com/books?id=xMDxp3EaVPgC&q=Indian+Affairs+in+Colonial+New+York](https://books.google.com/books?id=xMDxp3EaVPgC&q=Indian+Affairs+in+Colonial+New+York))

Watt, Gavin K. *The Burning of the Valleys: Daring Raids from Canada Against the New York Frontier in the Fall of 1780*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997.

**Contact Judy for a list of books that appropriately offer information about tribal groups.**