

List Your Enrolled Tribe

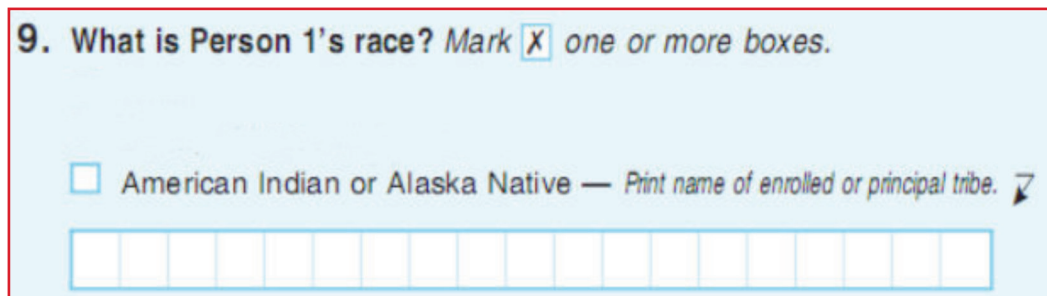
The instruction is pretty simple. After checking the box to identify your race as American Indian or Alaska Native on your 2010 Census form, print the name of your “enrolled or principal tribe.” There’s a 19-space blank line for the answer.

That should be an easy matter for American Indian or Alaska Native people.

The basic federal law setting out US Indian policy¹ defines an Indian person as “a member of an Indian tribe.” Historically, the government dealt with Indian people as part of a tribe or a band of a tribe. Treaties were made with tribes.

Membership in an Indian tribe is determined by a process called “enrollment.” Each tribe uses an enrollment process, applying specific eligibility criteria to determine who belongs to that tribe. Tribal members are citizens of a tribal government, with voting rights and other privileges according to the tribe’s constitution and/or ordinances. The situation of Alaska Natives is generally similar. Enrollment is a common practice among the 229 tribes in Alaska, based on the government-to-government relationship with the federal government.

The instructions on the 2010 Census form asks the person to list the name of his or her enrolled (or principal) tribe. It’s important that the tribal name that’s used be the proper name of the tribal government involved even if that takes up more than the space provided on the form. This is true with respect to tribal government names in Alaska as well as those in the “lower 48.”



9. What is Person 1's race? Mark one or more boxes.

American Indian or Alaska Native — Print name of enrolled or principal tribe. ↴

There may be other ways to identify a person’s tribe -- by its general name, such as O’odham, Salish or Ojibwe or even by a specific band of the tribe, such as Miniconjou (Mnikoju) Sioux. However, when it comes time for the Census Bureau to tally persons by tribe, there will be no confusion if the person lists the proper name of the tribal government in which he or she is enrolled.

Many Indian people can claim descent from several tribes. Their parents or grandparents may have belonged to different tribes. However, most tribes currently do not permit “dual enrollment,” membership in more than one tribe. The tribe in which the person is enrolled should be the tribe listed.

As far as the Census Bureau is concerned, the listing of a person’s tribe is entirely a matter of what the person writes in the blank line provided on the Census form. No proof of the person’s relationship to that tribe is required. It’s all a matter of self-identification.

¹The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. 25 U.S.C. 450 et seq.

What are the benefits of listing your tribe?

The Census Bureau uses the information that people provide on the Census form to tabulate statistics on how many people are associated with a tribe or a group of tribes sharing a similar language or other characteristics. This data can help to provide an idea of the number of persons associated with a tribe living in a particular city or other off-reservation area. Even on a reservation there may be a significant number of Indian people who are not enrolled in the tribe with jurisdiction over that reservation. These show up in the Census Bureau's numbers on the Indians on a reservation when tabulated by tribe. Tribes, planners, grant writers, and others can use this information to supplement enrollment data and other data sources.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that only a tribe's enrollment office -- not the Census Bureau -- has the official count of the number of members of that tribe. The right to determine who belongs to an Indian tribe is a fundamental aspect of tribal sovereignty and is held exclusively by each and every tribe.

For more information on how the Census Bureau tabulated data on persons by tribe from the 2000 Census, check out the links under the heading "Tribes" on the Census Web site at <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/aian/index.html>.