

Q117 – Name one American Indian tribe in the United States.

DOUGLAS GINSBURG, Federal Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit:

The federal Bureau of Indian Affairs recognizes 574 tribes in the United States. Those tribes once fished, foraged, and hunted across the continent. In the three centuries after the arrival of European settlers, the tribes were steadily pushed off their land – no match for modern weapons and overwhelming numbers of settlers.

Many tribes now live on reservations, but their names remain embedded in the nation's geography and culture. More than half our states derive their names from Indian tribes or Indian words, such as Mississippi, which is also the name of America's longest river.

Two of the Great Lakes are named for tribes: Huron and Erie. A range of the Rocky Mountains is named for the Teton tribe. The capital of Wyoming is named for the Cheyenne – a tribe that once roamed from Montana to Oklahoma. More than a dozen places in the United States are named for the Cherokee. Mohawk is now the name of towns and a lake – and a distinct style of haircut. The Navajo are famous for their intricate style of blankets and the Pueblo for an enduring style of architecture.

The Census bureau estimates that about one-and-a-half percent of our population is Native American. They inhabit land from Alaska to Florida, and from Maine to Hawaii – which is to say, throughout the United States. Explore the history of a tribe where you live, there may be more than one.