

“How can we model the behavior we seek to inspire?” An On-going Series

State Humanities Councils and Indigenous Peoples

"How can we model the behavior we seek to inspire? Do our boards, staff and volunteers reflect the diversity of the communities we serve? How can we be more inclusive?"

In the January 2013 newsletter, Federal/State Partnership announced that each issue of the newsletter through October will address issues raised by the theme of the November 2013 Federation of State Humanities Councils conference in Birmingham, Alabama. The primary source for these surveys is the contextual section of councils' self-assessment report. We will use examples from all 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils in this series. This article first appeared in the August 2013 newsletter. Links to all the articles will be attached to the lead article to the series as they appear in the newsletter. Each will also be posted as a separate article in the Resource Library.

A printable pdf of this article is attached.

The mission of the 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils is to provide “adequate”—the term used in the founding legislation—public humanities programming for the populations they serve. This includes efforts to serve as many of the various resident groups as is feasible. Many states have sizeable Native American communities; all are home to native people. Outreach is achieved in numerous ways. Some provide programming that explores native history and culture as well as programming developed specifically for native communities that addresses their interests and concerns. Some councils have people of native origin on their staffs and boards. Native representatives serve as project directors and as humanities experts to advise projects with council support. For three of the four Pacific Island councils (in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and American Samoa), indigenous cultures are key to everyday life. The work of the Hawai'i Council for the Humanities is very much influenced throughout by native Hawai'ian history and culture.

Even though native peoples now make up a relatively small proportion of the overall American population, there are parts of the country where their presence helps create a distinctive cultural character. This essay looks at the census data for the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders and at the Native American and Native Alaskan population group. Please note that the census statistically combines the “Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Island” populations and the “Native American and Native Alaskan” populations.

As you can see from these census data, there is significant growth and movement taking place among the Pacific Island population group and the Native American and Native Alaskan group. The states with significant communities of these populations can be found throughout the United States, with growth especially in the South.

The 2010 census reported that, while the population of the United States grew by 9.7 percent between 2000 and 2010, the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Island population group had a population increase that was more than three times faster than the total U.S. population, growing by 35 percent from 399,000 to 540,000 people. It was the most likely group to report belonging to multiple races. Nearly three-fourths of the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population lived in the West. The South, however, experienced the fastest growth of this population group (up by 66 percent) and it was in the Northeast that this group reported most frequently that it belonged to multiple races. Fifty-two percent of the NHPI group lives in Hawaii and California.

Native American and Native Alaskan population group grew more than three times faster than the U.S. population as a whole, growing by 18 percent between 2000 and 2010. Nearly half of this group reported belonging to multiple races. In the 2010 Census, 41 percent of the American Indian and Alaska Native alone-or-in-combination population lived in the West. The South had the second-largest proportion followed by the Midwest and the Northeast. The proportion of this group living in the West declined while it increased in the South, even if by only three percent. Nonetheless, this population grew 36 percent in the South and 35 percent in the Northeast. The ten states with the largest Native American and Native Alaskan populations are California, Oklahoma, Arizona, Texas, New York, New Mexico, Washington, North Carolina, Florida, and Michigan. The census analysis states that, "Alaska and South Dakota replaced Michigan and Florida among the states with the ten largest American Indian and Alaska Native alone [i.e., not multiple-race] populations." The counties having the highest concentration of Native Americans and Native Alaskans are in Oklahoma, "the upper Midwest, the four corners area of the Southwest where Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah meet, and in Alaska."

With the exception of the Virgin Islands Humanities Council, the councils listed below have indigenous populations with which they work. The Amerika Samoa Humanities Council and the Northern Marianas Humanities Council serve predominantly indigeous populations. The program emphases of the Minnesota Humanities Center, the Alaska Humanities Forum, and the Oklahoma Humanities Council are shaped by the native populations they serve. The New Mexico Humanities Council and the North Carolina Humanities Council operate in states with growing native populations. Although the indigenous population of the Virgin Islands no longer exists as it does elsewhere in the country, it shares many of the characteristics of the other islands states and territories, especially with regard to the preservation of long-standing cultural characteristics in the face of outside influences.

- **Mni'sota** is a Dakota word that can be translated as a place where the water reflects the sky. The use of this word to name the state signifies the deep historical, cultural and economic significance of water to communities in this region. In 2008 an amendment to the State Constitution dedicated three-eighths of one percent of a new state sales tax to preserving the unique physical and cultural character of the State. About 48% of this new revenue source is dedicated to the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund and the Minnesota Humanities Center is one of the cultural organizations that has been given a leadership role in designing and creating a new state cultural landscape. About five percent of Minnesota is occupied by 11 Ojibwe and Dakota reservations, including sites on the state's four largest bodies of water. The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, a consortium of tribal governments, is an important programming partner of the Minnesota Humanities Center.
- With its thirty-eight federally recognized tribes, **Oklahoma** offers many opportunities for the Oklahoma Humanities Council to assist with cultural programming. The Clemente Course was an early partnership with the Kiowa, Chickasaw, and Cherokee tribes that focused on teaching native traditions alongside the classics. The council has given special awards to the administrator of the Euchee language preservation program and a Kiowa elder for her work in the public humanities. In 2007, the Council gave its highest award to the former Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, Wilma Mankiller. Among the many recent grants to tribes, the council has been fortunate to fund a documentary entitled, "Lost Nation: the Ioway"; a museum exhibit at Comanche Nation College on early Indian schools; the Native Humanities Forum at the Chickasaw Nation; and several cultural programs at the Cherokee Heritage Center.
- Alaskan Whites / Caucasians make up 68 percent of the **Alaska's** population whereas 15 percent is American Indian and Alaska natives. At the same time, the state is experiencing increasing urbanization and ethnic diversification. In 2008, the Anchorage School District, Alaska's largest, became minority-majority. The Alaska Humanities Forum's Rose Urban Rural Exchange, pairing urban and rural schools and communities, was established in 1999 and is successful in bridging

cultures and understanding between urban centers and traditional Alaska Native villages. Similarly, the Take Wing Alaska project assists rural Alaska Native students adapt to urban and post-secondary cultures while maintaining their traditional culture and values. The new Creating Cultural Competence in Rural Early Career Teachers (C3) Project provides a cross-cultural immersion for new teachers moving up to Alaska's rural villages for teaching positions.

- The population of **American Samoa** remains ethnically Samoan at 89 percent. Other ethnic groups on the islands are Niuean, Tongan, Tokelauan, Filipino, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Caucasian/White, Fijian, and Indians. More than 20,000 people in American Samoa are neither a citizen nor a national of the United States. The trend of foreign-born increased from less than 20 percent in 1960 to over 40 percent in the recent census, with the majority coming from neighboring independent Samoa. There is growing diversity in ethnicity, culture, and language as well as weakening value given to the Samoan language and culture among the younger generation. American Samoa is bilingual and has an additional ancient oratorical *matai* language in which chiefs, pastors, and others are conversant. While there is concern that English and Samoan may not be well-spoken or well-written, virtually everyone can communicate at some level in both languages.
- Although the American Indian population of **North Carolina** is only 1.5 percent, that amount has grown by almost 50 percent between the last two censuses. Currently, North Carolina has the largest Native American population east of the Mississippi River. There are eight state recognized tribes in North Carolina: the Cherokee, Coharie, Haliwa-Saponi, Lumbee, Meherrin, Occaneechi Bands of the Saponi, Sappony, and the Waccamaw Siouan Indian Tribes. In addition, North Carolina has one of the fastest-growing immigrant populations in the country. Race relations seem to have worsened as the state's population has gotten more diverse. Although there are increasing numbers of Asians across the state and the American Indian population has risen in total numbers, the dominant racial groups are white, African American, and Latino. North Carolina has the fastest-growing Latino population in the country.
- Although tiny by mainland standards, the population of the **Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands** is ethnically diverse. In addition to indigenous Chamorros and Carolinians who, combined, account for roughly 35 percent of the population, the CNMI is also home to sizable Filipino and Chinese communities and smaller numbers of Korean, Japanese, and islanders from other parts of Micronesia. Euro- and African-Americans combined account for under 2 percent of the population. The population has changed dramatically over the past three decades. Indigenous residents were the majority in 1980; they were a minority only ten years later and have maintained minority status over the past 20 years. The CNMI Constitution establishes three official languages: Chamorro, Carolinian, and English. In practice, however, English has become the dominant language and there are fears that the local languages are in danger of being lost.
- Columbus landed on St. Croix in 1493 and the indigenous population of Carib, Arawak, and Taino Indians disappeared from what is now known as the the **U.S. Virgin Islands** during the subsequent European colonization. With the slave trade, which began in the 17th century, the population became dominated by people of African descent and remains so today. Nonetheless, the population of the Islands is diverse. Because of the distance between the two major islands, St. Thomas and St. Croix, bridging the internal cultures is an everyday activity: St. Thomas is the commercial center and St. Croix, the cultural center. One could walk from one end of St. Thomas to the other and hear the languages and dialects of every Caribbean locale, plus those of many foreign areas. Economically, the Virgin Islands is dependent on tourism, especially the year-round cruise ships that visit St. Thomas, and its rum industry.

- The New Mexico Humanities Council operates in an environment of poverty and richness, beauty and endangered resources, history and pride, family and heritage. Over 66 percent of **New Mexico**'s population is urban, with most living in the Albuquerque metropolitan area. It is the most diverse state in the continental U.S. and its population has grown by 13 percent, with American Indians accounting for 9 percent and Hispanics for 46 percent. The American Indian population continues to grow, gaining 20,000 during the decade. During that same period of time, non-Hispanic whites became a minority in New Mexico. Now only four out of ten New Mexicans are non-Hispanic whites. Oil and gas production, tourism, and federal government spending are important components of New Mexico's economy. The state ranks 49th in the number of people living below the poverty level.