



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

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LODGE & TRIBAL RELATIONSHIPS

American Indian Program Update Webinar

December 8, 2024

Agenda

- Introductions
- Review of revised AIA program policy
- How to contact a local tribe
- Best practices for reaching out to the tribe
- Questions and Answers



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AIA Policy

Beginning January 1, 2026:

Any program involving American Indian traditions—such as dancing, costuming, drumming, crafts, and pow-wows—must be done in conjunction with a state or federally recognized tribe.



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Implementation Timeline

- August 2024: AIA concluded at national OA events
- October 2024: AIA policy change materials provided to lodges and Scout Executives
- December 2024: AIA training / support materials removed from public access
- December 31, 2024: Issuance of Indian Vigil Honor names ceases
- March 2025: OA Handbook revised to reflect new AIA policy
- May 2025: Webinar on AIA policy transition and additional resources provided
- June 2025: Policy documents and guides updated to new AIA policy



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Implementation Timeline

- September 2025: Revised ceremonies provided to lodges for use
- September 2025: Revised recharter materials provided to Scout Executives / lodges
- December 2025: AIA program concludes at the Section level
- December 2025: AIA program concluded in lodges without tribal relationship
- January 2026: Individual communication with lodges regarding AIA policy status
- June 2026: All use of “legacy” ceremonies concluded



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Connecting with a tribe

American Indian Activities
Working Group

Introduction

- This is a new approach to engaging with American Indians about their heritage
- Understand that we are learning as we go
- Interactions with tribes will be different depending on the tribe / tribal council
 - some councils/lodges may already have connections with tribes
 - this is different, we will need to have an operating/working MOU
- We believe and respect that American Indians are the ones that own their history
 - keep an open mind about location
- This process is about education - both ways



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State and Federally Recognized Tribes

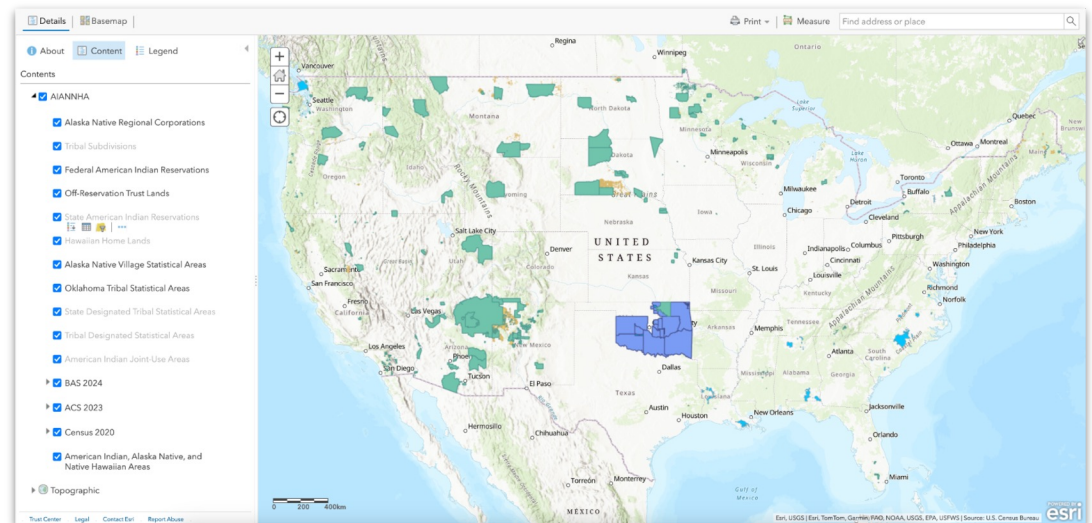
- State and federally recognized tribes have been vetted by the appropriate governmental agencies (e.g., BIA, SBIA, etc.)
- Tribes recognized this way are sovereign entities
 - maintain their own governments, have their own police forces, etc.
- **These are the tribes that we want to have a mutually beneficial relationship through a MOU**
- There are other American Indian groups (e.g., social, museum, bands) which are not state or federally recognized
 - make sure you are working with a state or federally recognized tribe



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Contact Information and Boundaries

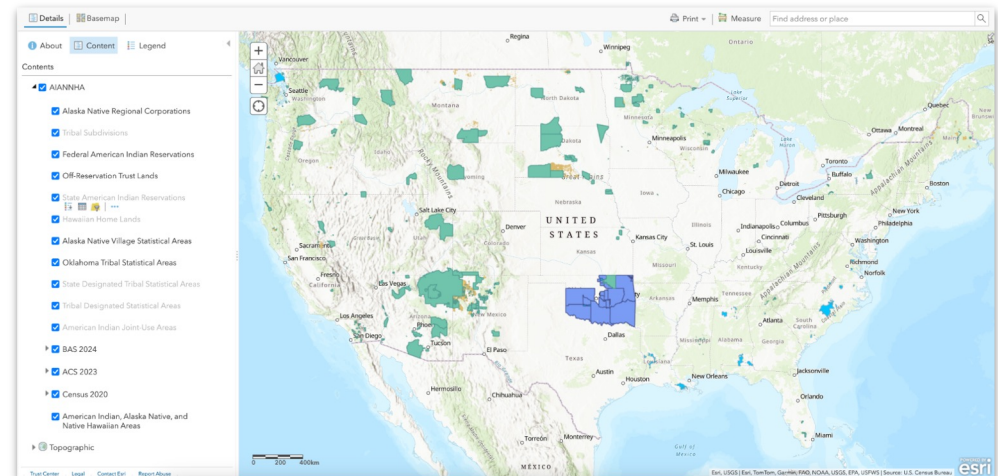
- Federally recognized tribes
 - dataset from US Gov:
 - [Current Tribal Lands](#)
 - (<https://bit.ly/4iCghYm>)
- State Recognized Tribes*
 - Varies by state with level of detail
 - Example: [NC.gov](#)
 - <https://bit.ly/4g6j7mU>
- If your lodge is having trouble finding a tribe in your area
 - Contact: aia@oa-bsa.org



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Contact Information and Boundaries

- Historic Tribes
 - [Tribal lands ceded to the US](#)
 - <https://bit.ly/3VtXh4I>
- Contact Information
 - Sourced from government datasets, tribal websites, and personal connections



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Identifying Historical Tribes in Your Area

- Find a map of historic Native American tribe locations at first contact

Resources:

- Indian Lore merit badge pamphlet
- Another Example: [Tribal Nations Map](#)
 - (<https://bit.ly/3VRP8XZ>)
- Locate your region/ state/ council (lodge) on the map
 - find the American Indian tribes in your area
 - local tribes must have living members who can be reached to develop a relationship



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Future searchable databases

- Option 1: Searchable Table (*what we hope to provide to lodges for assistance*)
 - Web-based table that outputs tribes by state & contact info
- Option 2: Searchable ArcGIS Database by Council
 - Visual search results to help users understand current and historic tribes within each council
- Contact Info Access
 - Users can easily search and reference contact info by tribe



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Once you find a tribe: things to keep in mind

- **Stay humble**
 - They do not need us; we want something from them
- Work on building trust and mutual respect
- Work on real personal relationships with your contact(s)
- Build the relationship before asking them for ANYTHING
 - This might take several months, it's a marathon, not a sprint
- The goal: to have a **mutually beneficial relationship** where we learn from each other



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Reaching out to the local tribe

- This might be a “cold call” unless someone already has a relationship
- A face-to-face meeting will always be the best
- Need to read non-verbal communication aspects
- We suggest:
 - The Lodge AIA Advisor work in conjunction with the Scout Executive
 - Someone who has an AIA background and understands our purpose
 - Someone who knows about Powwow Dancing, Singing, crafting is the best person to do this
- Be ready/patient: It may take several meetings to develop a relationship to move forward



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Ways to get involved with them

What are they already doing in their community?

- Can you support them in what they are already doing?
 - Easier: make a quick positive impression
 - Easier: get them to allow you to serve them
- Volunteer at their events - (service opportunity, Arrowmen)
 - Serve food, move chairs/tables, clean up
 - Park cars at events
 - Work your way up to bigger roles in their events



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Ways to get involved with them

- How would they like us to support them?
Some possible ideas:
 - Canned food drive
 - Coat Drive
 - Eagle Scout projects
 - Yard clean up for elders
 - Holiday meal for the tribe
 - Other ideas?
- Remember, goal: to have a **mutually beneficial relationship** where we learn from each other



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Tribal Agreements

- All agreements are specific to the tribe; they determine the extent of the agreement, duration and oversight of the program
- Agreements must be written and signed by both council/lodge and tribe
- Details what programs/traditions may be used and when
- Lodges will attest to having an agreement annually at recharter
- Agreements must be retained in writing by the council
- All agreements must be consistent with the Guide to Safe Scouting and previous OA policy (i.e., face paint)



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Good News!

- We already have had one council/lodge that has a operating MOU with a tribe!
 - we are learning about what they did
 - we will pass along best practices to everyone
- A couple others are on the way to getting an MOU, hoping early 2025



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Best Practices

- Discussion within the AIA group of the lodge with council on what / who / how this will move this forward - commitment
- Commitment from the council/lodge to support the Indian tribe in the future - not just to get a MOU
 - our obligation teaches us about servant leadership



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Best Practices (cont'd)

Initial ask: how can the tribe and lodge work together in the future to support AIA type programming within the lodge and Indian community

- serve the Indian community
- we are in their 'house', respect is utmost importance

Follow up and Accountability with the lodge/council

- yearly meeting + annual letter (what we did/doing, pictures), etc

Remember, goal: to have a **mutually beneficial long-standing relationship** where we learn from each other



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QUESTIONS?

oa-scouting.org/resources/aia-policy

Further Information

- We can support you if needed
 - If your lodge needs any assistance, please contact: aia@oa-bsa.org
- There will be additional webinars, best practices and other program updates released through 2025



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