

## NATIVE NORTH AMERICAN TERMS

### You need to know!

#### **American Indian/Native American/Red Indian – which is correct?**

Native American, American Indian and Red Indian have all been used throughout history. Native American is preferred, as Indian was used first by European explorers when America was mistaken for the East Indies. Red Indian was a term used to describe the red face paint people wore to protect skin in harsh weather conditions or during war. In 1960 the Red Power Movement, similar to Black Power, attempted to use the term in a positive way but this term is viewed as derogatory and is not used today.

#### **What is a Tribe?**

A Native American Tribe is a group of people who live together, have the same characteristics and speak the same language. We differentiate Native peoples by using Tribal names because tribes who live in the North of America are different from those who live in the South.

#### **What is a First Nation?**

A First Nation is the term given to peoples who live in Canada. The term nation is also used when there are a number of tribes that make up a collective.

*For Example:*

- Inuit is a collective term for people who reside in Northern and Arctic Canada, Alaska, Siberia and Greenland. Each area has separate tribes with separate names. In Canada there is Inuit, in Alaska the Yupik or Inupiat. In Siberia are the Inupiat and in Greenland the Kalaallit. There are separate tribes within these nations.
- The Kwakwaka'wakw who are made up of a number of tribes including the Mamalilikala.

#### **Why is it important to use tribal names instead of “Native American”?**

Not all Native Americans are the same, speak the same language, or live in the same area. Native people prefer to be called by their tribal name. There are even separate clans and groups within tribes who live in the same area. It is similar to the way the United Kingdom is divided into the English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish. Further still, people living in different regions have different accents and can be identified according to where they live.

#### **Original name or common spelling/pronunciation – which is correct?**

When European explorers arrived in America and interacted with Native Americans, many found it hard to pronounce tribe names resulting in names being shortened to make pronunciation easier.

*For Example:*

- The Kwakwaka'wakw Nation is commonly known today as the Kwakiutl.
- The Wynadot are known as the Huron, an offensive term given to them by the French meaning “wild boar”.

#### **What is a Culture Area?**

The United States is divided into ten geographical areas which group Native North American cultures that are broadly similar. These are: The Southeast, the Southwest, The Plains, The Great Basin, the Plateau, California, the Northwest Coast, the Subarctic, the Arctic and the Northeast.

