



South Carolina Native Americans: Data Equity and Inclusion

South Carolina Native American Health Board

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TIMELINE

- 1740 South Carolina passed The Negro Act eliminating the Native American race entirely
- 1944 South Carolina granted Catawba Indian Nation state citizenship
- 2004 South Carolina passes the Recognition of Native American Tribes, Groups and Special Interest Organization in a process managed by South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs
- 2018 SC Law eliminated recognition for future Native American Groups through South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs

FLOATING 100 YEAR EXISTENCE

A SC State Recognized "Tribe" means "an assembly of Indian people comprising numerous families, clans, or generations together with their descendants, who have a common character, interest, and behavior denoting a separate ethnic and cultural heritage, **and who have existed as a separate community, on a substantially continuous basis throughout the past 100 years.**"³

There is no requirement to prove colonial existence, and the 100 year start date is 100 years ago from today.

INTRODUCTION

South Carolina (SC) eliminated the Native American "race" and "ethnicity" in 1740 with "The Negro Act". In 2004, under the South Carolina Commission for Minority Affairs, SC nodded at the acknowledgement of the existence of Native American/American Indian/Alaskan Natives and tribal entities in SC with passage of the "State Recognition of Indian Entities".^[1,2] The law creates "state recognized" tribal entities on a floating "100 year" existence^[1,2] but confers no state citizenship to any SC born Native Americans (with exception of Catawba Indian Nation granted state citizenship by law in 1944) and fails to include any Native Americans outside of the alleged "state recognized" tribal entities.

STATE ALIENATION

- How is a "tribal entity" "recognized" by a State but its "members" not be State citizens acknowledged as Native Americans who are actual SC taxpayers?
- Why is the sovereignty of the historical entities that are not "state recognized" overlooked at a federal level?
- What about Native Americans who move to SC? Are they still Native American?
- Who is "Native American" in South Carolina?

FEDERAL ALIENATION

The federal level makes identification and inclusion even harder. Federally recognized Tribes largely ignore non-federally recognized Tribes and Native Americans unaffiliated with a tribal entity, whether legitimate or not. Because of these barriers, at least two definitive brick walls exist: South Carolina and the Federal level. This is not unique to South Carolina. As a result, overall "Native American" data falls short at both the State and national levels in many areas.

HIDDEN FIGURES

South Carolina largely only documents "White", "Black" or "Other" as race/ethnic identifiers. Racial identification is usually by observation rather than self-identification. Historically, and legally, Native American data has not been collected or otherwise so low in number that the data is combined with another race. Usually on state records, Native Americans MUST identify as "Other."

"If you eliminate us in the data, we no longer exist"

**Abigail Echo-Hawk,
Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma Citizen
Director, Urban Indian Health Institute**

DATA EQUITY/INCLUSION FAILURE

Table 1. Excerpt from "Report Card on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and State COVID-19 Surveillance Data for American Indians/Alaska Natives: United States, January 2020–January 2021" (Source: Urban Indian Health Institute)⁵

State	AI/AN Population	State-Reported COVID-19 Information (Is AI/AN Population Included on State Dashboard?)	Overall Grade
South Carolina	58,171	No	F (58)

DECOLONIZING DATA MOVEMENT

Since the 2019 pandemic, Pine Hill Health Network (PHHN)⁴ has advocated for South Carolina to establish health data and systematic healthcare data collection protocol changes to create Native American health data. South Carolina COVID-19 data failed to report Native American data, leaving tribal leadership blind in protecting their own People.

Funded by Urban Indian Health Institute, PHHN launched the SC Native American Health Board (SCNAHB) in June 2022 to continue this advocacy for policy change. "We didn't know there were Native Americans here" leads conversations into educating health providers of our existences. PHHN and the SCNAHB has engaged healthcare agencies to re-address their "cultural competence" and "cultural humility" towards the Native American presence in SC, allow self-identification at intake, and become aware that our health history information is vital to making informed medical diagnoses and treatment plans.

DECOLONIZED DATA

Table 2. Source: Pine Hill Health Network

Pine Hill Health Network Program	Native Americans Served in South Carolina in 2022
Total Native Americans Served	32,567

CONCLUSIONS

- It is known that national health data is available for Native Americans, but national data largely excludes South Carolina. Thus...
- How is the "Tribal Health Data" conversation inclusive and equitable to SC Native Americans?
 - Where does SC fit in the national discussion?
 - Where is our voice in this national discussion?
 - What is the defined population for "Tribal Health Data"?
 - Should the definition of the defined population for "Tribal Health Data" change?

REFERENCES

1. S.C. Code § 1–31–40(A)(10)
2. SC Code § 1-31-60
3. The "100 year" requirement floats; e.g., 100 years ago from today is July 1923. As time progresses, the first year of the 100 years progresses.
4. Pine Hill Health Network is a sub-organization of Pine Hill Indian Community Development Initiative, a "state recognized" tribal nonprofit organization of Pine Hill Indian Tribe, the First People of Fort Jackson.
5. Vickie M. Mays, Abigail Echo-Hawk, Susan D. Cochran, and Randall Akee, 2022: **Data Equity in American Indian/Alaska Native Populations: Respecting Sovereign Nations' Right to Meaningful and Usable COVID-19 Data** American Journal of Public Health **112**, 1416_1420, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2022.307043>