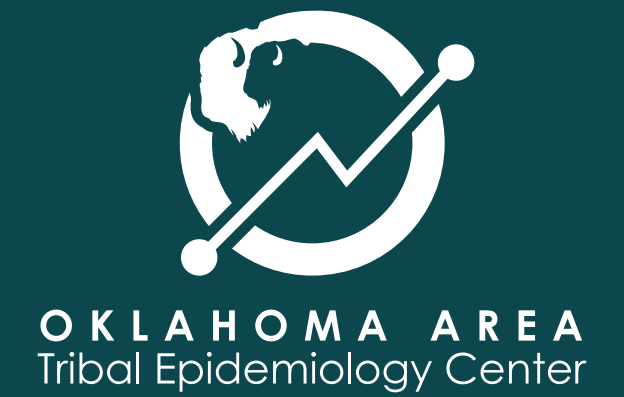


# How a Racial Misclassification Logo focused on American Indian/Alaska Native Data Produced a Centralized Resource Hub to Mitigate Racial Misclassification

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# RACIAL MISCLASSIFICATION

## The Challenge

Accurate and reliable data are crucial to understanding the population burden of disease and injury, identifying disparities among population subgroups, monitoring trends over time, and prioritizing programs and resource allocation. Misclassification of race is a significant problem when describing health disparities and equity. Correct data are paramount for many decisions, including appropriately sourced funding, organizational processes, and quality measures. This has been problematic for the American Indian/ Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations as they are often racially misclassified in datasets that are critical for decision-making. Furthermore, AI/AN data may be altogether omitted from data reporting. This complicates outreach efforts to a historically marginalized population.

Nationally, **40%** of the AI/AN population were misclassified in mortality records.<sup>1</sup> Recent enhanced-linked data show that **Oklahoma ranks first in the nation** for racial misclassification for mortality data. Although Oklahoma is the only state in the nation to include racially corrected mortality data on its health department website, there are caveats. The importance of this corrected data cannot be understated; however, it is one data set and reliant on many external components to produce. The SPTHB realizes the importance of thinking upstream by proactively minimizing errors rather than retroactively correcting them.

The SPTHB has been focused on resource development, outreach, and partnerships to address this issue. Through this work, it became apparent that a central resource center for racial misclassification was needed to align various groups working to address racial misclassification.

Recognizing the importance of uniting work and programs, a logo was created alongside a website for racial misclassification that can be universally used. To this end, the logo and website were designed to be easily accessed as a centralized hub working towards highlighting different ways to mitigate racial misclassification, something that has yet to be created until now.

1. Arias, PhD., et al. The Validity of Race and Hispanic-origin Reporting on Death Certificates in the United States: An Update. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. August, 2016.

[www.RacialMisclassification.org](http://www.RacialMisclassification.org)  
[www.spthb.org](http://www.spthb.org)

## The Vision

In order to create a centralized hub to contain information, resources, and technical assistance, a logo was needed first. A symbol that encompassed many aspects and implications of racial misclassification was necessary. It was a challenge to appeal to the various sectors racial misclassification impacts. What might resonate with the funeral services industry might not resonate with public health officials and data stewards.

Listening sessions also illustrated an opportunity for community awareness, education, and advocacy. The logo and website seek to connect the personal aspects of racial misclassification to its impact on data integrity and ultimately, public health. Furthermore, the more sectors we investigated, the more opportunities for awareness and education we uncovered. The SPTHB Creative Services Director and staff were consulted to design a logo that encompassed such.

The Creative Services Director describes the logo: “This initiative is already a national disparity, but those advocating for data integrity haven’t had a visual mark to unify their efforts. **We do now.** The challenge was [not only] to illustrate the negative connotations of racial misclassification, but [also] to highlight the data integrity impact on future generations. I thought it was important to include symbolism of what this initiative is trying to reverse, **Erasure.**”

**See me-I count** - The antidote for erasure and the end goal. A graphical representation for this [is a] checkmark/checkbox. The challenge was to take something as simple as a checkmark and breathe creative life into it. **Indigenous regalia**—an otter cap medallion, a necklace medallion, and an earring— to represent ‘I count’ and ‘see me’. I also thought it was important to use three generations of **REAL people** in our Southern Plains tribal community from three different tribes.

Logo colors- Red and tan was chosen to signify the land and earth that our Creator gave us stewardship over. A dark teal color was chosen to contrast red and tan. I also feel like dark greens represent **growth** and maturity. For this, the growth would be knowledge of racial misclassification and key stakeholders **changing a broken system together** (is the ripple effect for future generations). Font style - I used lowercase ‘i’s to reinforce the meaning of ‘I count’. “

Additionally, the image evokes the essence of a **heart** without overtly being a heart. The regalia of each person also has a checkmark, reinforcing the message, “See me”, “I count”, and the **problem and solution co-exist** in the letter “i”; erasure and how the simplicity of checking the correct box can have such a profound impact.

## Practical Application

The SPTHB was granted a trademark for the logo so that it can be licensed to other organizations free of charge in hopes that it becomes widely used and a universal symbol of racial misclassification.

The website will contain a resource tab, and any organization creating resources for mitigating racial misclassification is welcome to submit them for review to be made available on the website. Currently, the resources include internally created documents, collaboratively created information, as well as resources created by the National Council on Urban and Indian Health (NCUIH) and others. These resources are aimed at a variety of organizations and individuals. For example, there will be an article written in collaboration with the United Southern and Eastern Tribes (USET) which was published in The Director, which is the official publication of the National Funeral Director’s Association. This publication highlights the crucial role the funeral services industry plays in public health.

A resource that will be particularly highlighted is a Tribal Burial Resource Guide, which was created internally. This document was developed as a tool for the funeral services industry to assist in broaching the topic of race with families in hopes of mitigating misclassification on death certificates. The guide contains tribe-specific resources available to families for burial and associated expenses. This guide is also a valuable resource for tribal members as well. A tab for technical and training assistance is also included on the website. We are hopeful as awareness spreads, so will the requests for such assistance. To promote the website, an animation will run on Good Health TV throughout the SPTHB’s service area.

The SPTHB has several projects addressing racial misclassification, and the website will serve as a central launching and connection point for them all. As our work grows in combating racial misclassification, so will our website. We have several upcoming initiatives that conduct outreach to various sectors, further validating the need for the logo and the website. As our investigation into racial misclassification in multiple databases produced a snowball effect-the more we looked, the more we found; we are hoping the same is realized conversely with the website-the more it is seen, the less racial misclassification occurs.



## Why Death Certificate Demographics Matter

Our mission, as public health professionals, is to prevent unnecessary death, injury and suffering from disease. To understand when to focus our efforts, we examine data. By means of the national death system, every single death is counted and compiled into the National Death Index, a comprehensive database the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) manages. Given this information's completeness, death certificates create a powerful data source that can be used to understand living populations' health.

