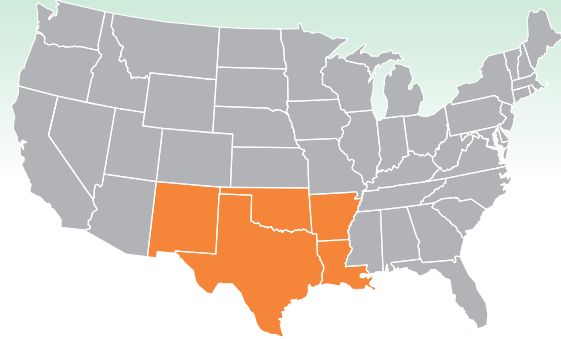


Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest

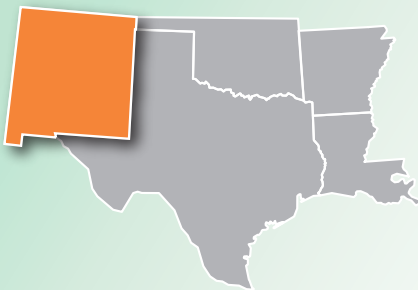
Indigenous Students and Languages in the REL Southwest Region: A Snapshot

Indigenous students from diverse tribal nations live across the REL Southwest region and are served by public schools, tribally controlled schools, and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)-operated schools. Although Native language use was historically forbidden in U.S. public schools, these heritage languages survived, and many schools and communities are engaged in efforts to revitalize them. REL Southwest works with partners across our region to support indigenous students, Native language programs, and the educators serving them.

Native language acquisition and development can help indigenous students advance their English language skills.^{1,2} Studies have shown that bilingual programs that include students' native languages and cultures are associated with stronger self-esteem, motivation, social skills, and cultural pride.^{3,4} At the same time, the practice helps sustain the cultural heritage of tribal nations. The disappearance of native languages across successive generations in indigenous communities makes the current generation of students crucial to the preservation of indigenous languages.



New Mexico



There are 24 federally recognized tribes and pueblos in New Mexico.

- Jicarilla Apache Nation
- Kewa Pueblo
- Mescalero Apache Tribe
- Navajo Nation
- Ohkay Owingeh
- Pueblo of Acoma
- Pueblo of Cochiti
- Pueblo of Isleta
- Pueblo of Jemez
- Pueblo of Laguna
- Pueblo of Nambe
- Pueblo of Picuris
- Pueblo of Pojoaque
- Pueblo of San Felipe
- Pueblo of San Ildefonso
- Pueblo of Sandia
- Pueblo of Santa Ana
- Pueblo of Santa Clara
- Pueblo of Taos
- Pueblo of Tesuque
- Pueblo of Zia
- Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
- Zuni Tribe of the Zuni Reservation



There are 32,366 indigenous students enrolled in public schools in New Mexico.⁵



Of these students, 77 percent attend public schools, 4 percent attend charter schools, and 19 percent attend BIE-controlled schools.^{5,6}



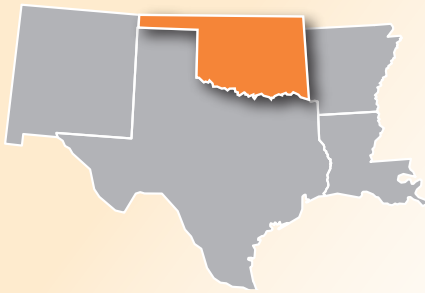
There are 22 BIE-operated schools, 22 tribally controlled schools, and 3 tribal colleges in New Mexico.^{7,8}



In New Mexico there are eight indigenous languages spoken. Seven of these eight languages are taught in school-based language programs, and 7,045 New Mexico students participate in Native Language Programs.⁹ The state offers a State Seal of Bilingualism-Biliteracy that offers a Tribal Language Proficiency Certification, in which tribes certify that a student is proficient in the tribal language using their methods and processes for determining proficiency.¹⁰



Oklahoma



There are 39 federally recognized tribes in Oklahoma.

- Absentee-Shawnee Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma
- Alabama Quassarte Tribal Town
- Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
- Caddo Indian Tribe of Oklahoma
- Cherokee Nation
- Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma
- Chickasaw Nation
- Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
- Citizen Potawatomi Nation
- Comanche Nation
- Delaware Nation
- Delaware Tribe of Indians
- Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma
- Euchee Tribe of Indians
- Fort Sill Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
- Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma
- Kaw Nation
- Kialegee Tribal Town
- Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma
- Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma
- Miami Tribe of Oklahoma
- Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma
- Muscogee (Creek) Nation
- Osage Nation
- Otoe-Missouria Tribe of Indians
- Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma
- Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma
- Peoria Tribe of Oklahoma
- Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma
- Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma
- Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma
- Seminole Nation of Oklahoma
- Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma
- Shawnee Tribe
- Thlopthlocco Tribal Town
- Tonkawa Tribe of Oklahoma
- United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
- Wichita and Affiliated Tribes
- Wyandotte Nation



There are **78,568** indigenous students enrolled in public schools in Oklahoma.⁵



Of these students, 94 percent attend public schools, 5 percent attend charter schools, and 1 percent attend BIE-controlled schools.^{5,6}

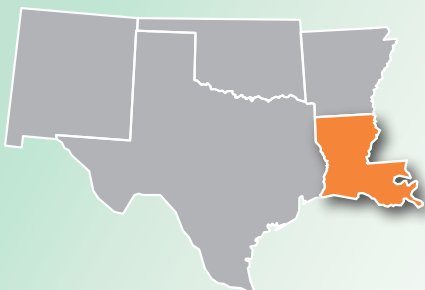


There is 1 BIE-operated school, 4 tribally controlled schools, and 1 tribal college in Oklahoma.^{7,8}



Students in Oklahoma can earn high school world language credits by taking Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Comanche, Mvskoke, Osage, Pawnee, Potawatomi, the Otoe-Missouria language of Jiwere-Nat'Chi, and other courses.¹¹

Louisiana



There are 15 federally and state recognized tribes in Louisiana.

Federally recognized

- Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana
- Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana
- Jena Band of Choctaw Indians
- Tunica-Biloxi Indian Tribe

State recognized

- Adai Caddo Indians of Louisiana
- Bayou Lafourche Band of Biloxi-Chitimachas
- Choctaw-Apache Tribe of Ebarb
- Clifton Choctaw Tribe of Louisiana
- Four Winds Cherokee
- Grand Caillou/Dulac Band of Biloxi Chitimacha Choctaw
- Jean Charles Choctaw Nation
- Louisiana Band of Choctaw
- Natchitoches Tribe of Louisiana
- Pointe-au Chien-Indian Tribe
- United Houma Nation



There are **4,053** indigenous students enrolled in public schools in Louisiana.⁵



Of these students, 91 percent attend public schools and 9 percent attend charter schools.^{5,6}



There is 1 tribally controlled school and no tribally controlled colleges in Louisiana.^{7,8}



Today, the only remaining indigenous languages with fluent speakers in Louisiana are the Caddo and Choctaw languages.¹²

Texas



There are 4 federally and state recognized tribes in Texas.

Federally recognized

- Alabama-Coushatta Tribe
- Kickapoo Tribe
- Tigua Tribe

State recognized

- Lipan Apache Tribe of Texas



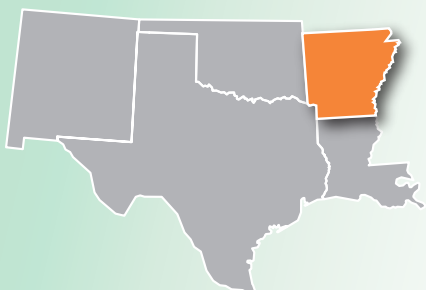
There are 18,028 indigenous students enrolled in Texas public schools.⁵

There are no BIE-operated or tribally controlled schools in Texas.⁶



There are 18 identified Indigenous languages spoken across Texas public schools.¹³

Arkansas



There are no federal or state recognized tribes in Arkansas.



There are 2,899 indigenous students enrolled in Arkansas public schools.⁵

To learn more about REL Southwest's support for indigenous students and educators, read our blog posts [REL Southwest resources supporting Indigenous English learner students](#) and [Sowing culturally responsive educators to cultivate success for Indigenous students](#), view our video series [Walking in Both Worlds](#) that describes how schools can support indigenous students in learning both English and their tribal language, and visit our [website](#).

References

- ¹ McCarty, T. L., & Nicholas, S. E. (2014). Reclaiming Indigenous languages: A reconsideration of the roles and responsibilities of schools. *Review of Research in Education*, 38(1), 106–136. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1020604>
- ² McCarty, T. L., & Wyman, L. T. (2009). Indigenous youth and bilingualism: Theory, research and praxis. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 8(5), 279–290. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ863399>
- ³ McCarty, T., & Wiley, A. (2011). *The role of native languages and cultures in American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian student achievement* [Policy paper prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Indian Education Programs]. Kauffman and Associates. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/52cf1070e4b048ae22d972b2/t/54aac6b3e4b0c309d027948a/1420478131256/McCarty+%282011%29>
- ⁴ Burkhauser, S., Steele, J. L., Li, J., Slater, R. O., Bacon, M., & Miller, T. (2016). Partner-language learning trajectories in dual-language immersion: Evidence from an urban district. *Foreign Language Annals*, 49(3), 415–433. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1115027>
- ⁵ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), *State Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey*, (2022–2023) v.1a. <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/files.asp>
- ⁶ According to federal data, indigenous students in the United States are currently estimated to be about 1 percent of the total K–12 student population in public schools (as of fall 2021), comprising 93 percent of all indigenous students nationwide. The analysis conducted by AIR's Indigenous Student Identification Project indicates that the undercounting of Indigenous students may be as high as 70 percent nationwide. American Institutes for Research. (2023). *Indigenous students count: A landscape analysis of American Indian and Alaska Native student data in U.S. K–12 public schools*. <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/Indigenous-Students-Count-report-2023.pdf>
- ⁷ Bureau of Indian Education. (n.d.). *BIE schools directory*. <https://www.bie.edu/schools/directory>
- ⁸ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2019). *Integrated Postsecondary System (IPEDS)*. <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>
- ⁹ The State of New Mexico. (2022). *Tribal education status report: School year 2021–2022*. <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/TESR-NMPED-2021-2022.pdf>
- ¹⁰ New Mexico Public Education Department. (n.d.). *State Seal of Bilingualism-Biliteracy (SSBB)*. <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/languageandculture/seal-of-bilingualism-biliteracy/>
- ¹¹ Martinez-Keel, N. (2024, March 11). Enrollment in tribal language courses grows in Oklahoma as tribes aim to increase fluency. *Oklahoma Voice*. <https://www.oklahoman.com/story/news/2024/03/11/oklahoma-schools-teaching-indigenous-languages-programs-choctaw/72930520007/>
- ¹² LSU Libraries. (n.d.). *Indigenous materials in special collections; Indigenous languages in Louisiana*. <https://guides.lib.lsu.edu/c.php?g=1095533&p=7990155>
- ¹³ Texas Education Agency. (n.d.). *Indigenous students and families*. <https://www.txel.org/media/2wskbhoo/indigenous-students-and-families.pdf>

Learn more



relsouthwest@air.org



@RELSouthwest



ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/region/Southwest

This document was prepared under Contract 91990023C0003 by Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest, administered by the American Institutes for Research. The content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of Institute of Education Sciences (IES) or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.