

Tribes and the Census

The American Indian Council in Kansas City Gets Mid-America Ready for the 2020 Census

All across the US tribes are fully occupied in persuading their member/citizens to participate in the 2020 Census. The political clout the tribes have depends on the picture the Census paints of Native people, living on the reservations governed by the tribes.

At the same time getting Indian people to answer the 2020 Census questionnaire in areas outside of tribal lands is equally important. In the 2010 Census a full 70% of those that identified as only American Indian or Alaska Native lived in areas outside the boundaries of any federal reservation, former reservation area in Oklahoma or any Alaska Native Village Statistical Area.

The American Indian Council, based in Kansas City, knows this well. It actively promoted participation in the 2010 Census and is even more active this time around.

AIC has been working with Indian people in the heart of Mid-America since it was founded in 1972. Its goals are to promote economic self-sufficiency, cultural awareness and preservation for American Indians in its service area.

Today its principal program provides workforce services for Indian people within a three-state service area. It receives funding for these services from Section 166 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Unlike other federal programs supporting services for Native people, this one distributes funds throughout the entire nation under a formula that allocates monies the same way for off-reservation areas as it does for reservations.

AIC's Executive Director, Christine Campbell, has been an important leader among the Section 166 programs nationwide. She was recently reappointed to the Native American Employment and Training Council, the legally mandated advisory body to the Secretary of Labor on Native workforce issues. She is the driving force behind AIC's efforts to promote the 2020 Census, as she was in promoting the 2010 Census.

AIC's geographic service area covers 208 counties in the states of Missouri, Iowa and Kansas. It has four field officers in addition to its headquarters office in North Kansas City, Missouri. The field offices are housed in five different Workforce Centers throughout Kansas and Iowa.

The main thrust of AIC's Census promotional efforts is to make the Census a community-focused activity, rather than simply a requirement of the federal government. AIC introduces Census messages to Indian people at pow-wows and other community events as an activity that is crucial to the visibility and power of the Indian community, a community that can otherwise be virtually invisible in a region of the country that has only one Indian reservation.

The organization also emphasizes how Census counts mean funding for services vital to many Indian people. The distribution of federal funds for Medicaid, SNAP (food stamps) and the Title I education program for schools are all very important for Native people far from reservation boundaries and direct tribal services. All these major federal programs use Census data in some way in their fund allocation formulas.

The 2020 Census as a Source of Jobs for Native People

Workforce services, helping Native people understand where and how to get decent jobs, is the core activity for AIC. That makes the workers needed to conduct major parts of the Census operations an important focus of the organization's current work. Census jobs provide immediate employment at competitive salaries and offer flexible hours, all advantages for AIC's customers.

The Census Bureau continues to actively recruit workers for the upcoming decennial census. The agency is particularly interested in hiring local people who know the neighborhoods in which the hardest-to-count people live. AIC is well positioned to help the Bureau live up to its promise to hire Indian people. In addition, the job placements that result from AIC's cooperation with Census recruiters help it meet AIC's own job placement goals.

The ability to offer computers to AIC clients as well as other Indians in the communities AIC serves has become important for the 2020 headcount. The Census Bureau needs a majority of the population to fill out the 2020 questionnaire on line. AIC is able to offer access to computers in its headquarters office in Kansas City and its various field offices.

An organization that covers a three-state area needs partners. AIC has been eager to form relationships with major players in its Census work. The various Complete Count Committees coordinating Census promotional work at both state and city levels within the organization's service area have all been approached by AIC. Participation on these "CCCs" provides access to many Census promotional events and materials.

As the major metropolitan area within AIC's service area, Kansas City's Complete Count Committee is particularly important. A resolution passed by the City Council

encourages all neighborhoods, faith-based institutions, schools and community organizations to work together to achieve a complete and accurate count.

AIC has sought participation in the state level Complete Count Committees in all three states. And it already has a close working relationship with the local Indian center in Kanas City, an important partner as well.

AIC's efforts underscore how important it is for off-reservation Indian organizations throughout the country to become fully involved in promoting participation in the 2020 Census. Census Day is now just over three months away.

For more information on how AIC works to encourage all Indian people in its three state service area to participate in the 2020 Census, please contact its Executive Director, Christine Campbell at ccampbell@indiancouncil.net or by phone at (816) 810-6626, Extension 405.

Census 2020 Budget About to Be Finalized

Finally some good news for the Census Bureau's budget for the upcoming decennial Census. Leaders of both parties in both houses of Congress and the Administration have all agreed on a budget package for Fiscal Year 2020 that provides the Census Bureau with what it needs to conduct the 2020 Census. That package is now working its way through the Congress in the hope it can become law by the time the "continuing resolution" currently funding the agency expires this Friday.

The year that each decennial is conducted requires a big increase in appropriations to handle all Census activity, including the all-important Non-Response Follow-up operation. "NRFU," as it's called, involves the push to collect questionnaires from households that did not complete the Census questionnaire when they were invited to go on-line and respond or fill out a paper copy and mail it back.

The budget agreement provides almost \$6.7 billion for the 2020 Census. This is the amount that Census advocates recommended to cover the all-important operations this coming year. In providing this sum, the Congressional Appropriations Committees emphasized the need for the Bureau to form strong partnerships with tribes and community organizations to promote participation in the upcoming national headcount, especially participation by hard-to-count populations.

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