

2010 Reservation Demographics *by Darrel Smith*

Many people view reservations as the home of American Indians. This view lacks accuracy and causes many misconceptions. According to the 2010 census there are 5.2 million Indians, Eskimos or Aleuts in the United States. Only 22% of them live on reservations. Of the 296 reservations there aren't any Indians on 15 reservations and another three reservations have only one resident Indian each.

The racial composition of reservations is just as surprising. While there are 437,358 Indians living on reservations, there are also 370,738 (45.9%) non-Indian reservation residents. If we remove the population of the large, and mostly Indian, Navajo reservation from the totals, there are 293,953 Indians on the remaining 295 reservations. There are 365,413(55.4%) non-Indians on these same reservations. More non-Indians than Indians reside on reservations in the following states: California, Colorado, Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, Oklahoma, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

These numbers do not properly reflect two other important factors affecting tens of thousands of people. Many people consider themselves "Indian" but have only a small percentage of actual Indian blood. The numbers also don't tell us how many Indians have moved to different reservations because of jobs, marriages or some other reason. These Indians can't participate in tribal government because they can't become members of the tribe that governs the reservation they live on.

This information raises some interesting questions. Let me ask just one. Is it likely that, over the long term, tribes can successfully impose taxes, license requirements and regulation on the 370,738 non-Indians on reservations without allowing them the right to vote and the protections of the Constitution?