

DENVER ART MUSEUM

1300 LOGAN STREET, DENVER, COLORADO

DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN ART

FREDERIC H. DOUGLAS, CURATOR

TRIBAL NAMES: PART 3

LEAFLET 101

DECEMBER, 1941

1. **INTRODUCTORY.** The names by which most Indian tribes are commonly known today are not usually those applied by the tribes to themselves. The names given them are from various sources, the main ones being the following: corruptions of native names by French, Spanish, English and Americans; nicknames applied by one tribe to another; corruption of these in non-Indian languages; translations into English, often incorrect, of native names and nicknames; names in non-Indian languages which have no connection with the native name. Few tribes use these names themselves except in dealing with the Whites. The native names are usually words for "people," "men" or the like.

2. **ACCURATE INFORMATION** about these matters is difficult to obtain. Many of the books which discuss them were written before the study of native languages had advanced as far as it has now, with resulting mistakes about names. The information given in this leaflet has been checked by the authorities listed on the last page.

3. **PLAN OF THE LEAFLET.** This is the third of several numbers of this series devoted to tribal names. The other numbers in the group are 82 and 85. This number is concerned with some tribes of New York and California.

NEW YORK

4. **CAYUGA** (Kay-yóo-gah). An English corruption of the native name "Gah-yo-kwóo-nunh," itself a condensation of "Gah-hon-yo-gwen-hóo-nunh," meaning "at-the-place-where-boats-were-taken-out people."

5. **IROQUOIS** (Ír-o-kwoi). The English pronunciation of the French corruption of the name given the group by the neighboring Algonkin Indians. This Algonkin name is "Ee-reen-ah-kwah" meaning "real adders." The Iroquois had two names for themselves: "On-gwáh-non-shah-nee-gay-ah," meaning "we longhouse dwellers;" and "On-gway-on-weh," meaning "real men."

6. **MOHAWK** (Mó-hawk). The English pronunciation of an Algonkin Indian word, varying dialectically, which means "eaters of (animate) things," and therefore presumably "man-eaters." "Mo-ho-wah-oo-uck" is the Narragansett version of this term. The Mohawk called themselves "Kah-nee-yen-gay-háh-gah," meaning "people of the place of flint."

7. **ONEIDA** (O-ny-dah). An English corruption of either one of two native names for the group: "O-nén-yote-day-ah-gah" or "O-nén-yote-kay-ah-gah." Both mean "at-the-standing-stone people."

8. **ONONDAGA** (O-non-dáh-gah). An English corruption of the native name "O-non-dáh-gay-o-non," meaning "people on the hill (or mountain)."

8. **SENECA** (Séh-ne-kah). Seneca is the English pronunciation of the Dutch corruption of the Mahikan Indian translation of the name in the Iroquois language for the Oneida. This Iroquois word (see section 7) means "at-the-standing-stone people." In the language of the Mahikans, a tribe of the Hudson River valley, this name is "Ah-sin-nee-ee-kah." The Dutch pronounced this "Sinnikens" and the English twisted the Dutch version into Seneca.

The Dutch applied this Mahikan word to all of the Iroquois. As they penetrated west into New York they discovered the true names of the various tribes as they reached them. Finally only the Seneca, the westernmost group, were left and so this general name, Seneca, was finally fastened on them, though it is actually a translation of the name of another group, the Oneida.

CALIFORNIA

9. **THE TERM "TRIBE,"** as generally understood, is not applicable to the various groups of Indians in California, with a few exceptions, for these groups had no conception of a political organization which bound its members into a unit. While the members of any one group recognized the tie of language and common customs their political organization was limited to the family or at most the village. Hence the names listed below are simply those applied to different groups of people living in one general region and speaking a distinct language.

10. **CHEMEHUEVI** (Chim-ay-wáy-vee). A Spanish version of the name for this Southern Paiute band in the Mohave language. Its meaning is not known.

11. **DIGGER.** This name refers to no particular tribe but has been used by Whites in relation to dozens of groups scattered all over the West. The name is a reference to the widespread custom among many western tribes of digging up various kinds of roots for food. The term was first applied to Indians in the Utah-Nevada area and later spread into California and elsewhere. Because these people were poor and unattractive they were looked down on by the Whites so that "Digger" came to be a term of contempt.

12. **HUPA** (Hóo-pah). Derived from "hu-po" the name for the valley where the Hupa lived in the language of the neighboring Yurok. The Hupa call themselves "Nah-tin-noh-hoi," from Natinnoh, the Trinity River near which the Hupa live.

13. **KAROK** (Káh-rok). From the expression in their own language "Kah-ruk vah-rah-rah," meaning "up river person."

14. **MAIDU** (My-doo). A close approximation of the word for "person" in their own language. There is no distinct tribal name.

15. **MISSION.** This name is commonly applied to the groups of Indians who gathered around the Spanish missions in southern California and were given Spanish names based on those of the missions with which each group was associated. The important groups were the Juaneno (San Juan Capistrano); Luiseno, (San Luis Rey de Francia); Fernandeno (San Fernando); Gabrielino (San Gabriel); and Diegueno (San Diego). "Mission" has also come to be applied loosely to all of the southwestern California groups.

16. **MIWOK** (Mée-wuk). An approximation of the word for "person" in some of the dialects of the language. There is no distinct tribal name.

17. **MONO** (Mó-no). An English abbreviation of a meaningless word applied to the group by various neighboring Indians. For example the Yokuts call the Mono "monachi;" the Miwok, "monok;" and the Maidu, "monozi." The word is not derived from the Spanish word for monkey or doll; or from the Yokuts Indian word for fly (monoyi). The Mono call themselves "noo-moo," meaning "persons."

18. **POMO** (Pó-mo). This name is one form of an expression in the Pomo language which is not used separately, is not clearly translatable, but which is connected with such ideas as house, village, person and people. The Pomo have no distinct name for themselves.

19. **WASHO** (Wáh-sho). This name is derived from their word for person, "wah-she-oo" or wah-see-oo." They have no tribal name of their own.

20. **WINTUN** (Wín-toon). Their own word for "person." There is no distinct tribal name.

21. **YANA** (Yáh-nah). Their own word for "person." There is no distinct tribal name.

22. **YOKUTS** (Yó-kuts). This name is derived from "yo-kots," the word for "person" in some of the dialects spoken by the group. The Yokuts are commonly called Tulare (too-lah-re) a name based on the Spanish word for rush. They are so called because they lived near a lake in which rushes grew.

23. **YUKI** (Yoó-kee). A word in the Wintun Indian language meaning "stranger" or "foe" and applied by the Americans to the Yuki. They call themselves "ah-taht," meaning "person."

24. **YUROK** (Yoó-rok). A simplification of the term in the Karok Indian language "Yoo-rook vah-rah-rah," meaning "downstream people." Their own name for themselves is "otl," meaning "people."

Compiled from the following sources by F. H. Douglas:

BUREAU OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY

1. Handbook of American Indians—F. W. Hodge, editor. Bulletin 30, 2 vols, 1907-1910. Articles by J. N. B. Hewitt containing data on Iroquois tribal names.
2. Handbook of the Indians of California—A. L. Kroeber. Bulletin 78, 1925.
3. Tobacco among the Karuk Indians of California—J. P. Harrington. Bulletin 94, 1932.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

4. Problems arising from the historic northeastern position of the Iroquois—William N. Fenton. An essay in volume 100 of the Miscellaneous Collections. 1940.
5. The League of the Iroquois—Lewis H. Morgan. 2 volume edition prepared by Herbert M. Lloyd. Dodd, Mead & Co., New York, 1922.

Thanks are due to Dr. William Fenton and Dr. A. L. Kroeber for assistance in preparing this leaflet.