



# HISTORY OF UNITED TRIBES TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Enter United Tribes Technical College and you're on Indian land. This 200-acre campus along Bismarck's University Drive is owned and governed by the tribal nations of North Dakota. American Indian students are joined by students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds and welcomed into this family learning environment in a place of historical significance.

## Tribal Homeland

UTTC is the site of a former military post. But long before the first brick buildings took shape in 1900, this was open prairie. Wooded ravines nearby and fertile bottomlands sustained the Mandan and Hidatsa People. Earth lodge villages, hunting sites and sacred places dotted the landscape of the Missouri River Valley near Apple Creek.

## Military Post

Unmistakable on the UTTC campus today are the parade grounds and brick buildings of Fort Lincoln. This was the second Fort Lincoln in the area. Custer and his 7th Cavalry were at the first Fort Lincoln south of Mandan, not here.

Bismarck's Fort Lincoln served on and off through the first half of the 20th Century. Periodically troops were garrisoned, assembled, trained and mobilized here. In 1917, the post was a busy assembly center for North Dakota National Guard troops departing for World War One in Europe.

Bismarck citizens welcomed the post, accepting the troops and officers into the community with civic events and activities, and by lobbying to continue the flow of federal resources into the local economy.

## Internment Camp

During World War Two, Fort Lincoln was tapped for another purpose. In 1941 a portion was cordoned off with 10-foot-high cyclone fences topped with barbed wire and fortified by guard towers. The fort became an internment camp operated by the U.S. Justice Department. Locked here were only men; most were citizens of Germany and Japan. However, some prisoners in 1945 were Japanese American U.S. Citizens, who had lawfully protested their confinement in other camps. Their incarceration tied Fort Lincoln to the unjust treatment of select groups targeted by race and ethnicity. In the Japanese American community, Fort Lincoln became known as "Snow Country Prison."

## Post-War Era

After the war, Fort Lincoln continued in government service. It became the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers headquarters for planning Garrison Dam on the Missouri River, a public works project that flooded tribal land, devastating citizens of the Mandan/Hidatsa/ Arikara Nation at Fort Berthold.

In 1964, the fort became surplus property and was later remodeled and used as a Job Corps training center, and later by the Peace Corps.

## College Bound

The start of United Tribes Technical College was rooted in the vision and activism of tribal leaders in the 1960s. Faced with threats to tribal sovereignty and the need for training and jobs development, the tribes of North Dakota incorporated in 1968, did some lobbying of their own, and

obtained the fort for education and training. Classes began in September 1969. Thus, it became the second tribal college in the nation and one of the founding institutions of the nationwide American Indian Higher Education Consortium.

Because several tribes were involved, UTTC holds the distinction of being the first intertribally-controlled and operated postsecondary vocational school in the nation. The governing tribes are located wholly or in part in North Dakota: Mandan/ Hidatsa/ Arikara Nation, Spirit Lake Tribe, Sisseton- Wahpeton Oyaté, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.

## College Progress

United Tribes was formed as a supportive campus-community, where students could maintain their culture and build on their experience as tribal people, as they acquired an education leading to employment and life-long opportunities. A hallmark has been the ability to identify and respond to the changing needs for jobs training and education. In 1982, the college attained full membership accreditation with the College Progress United Tribes was formed as a supportive campus-community, where students could maintain their culture and build on their experience as tribal people, as they acquired an education leading to employment and life-long opportunities. A hallmark has been the ability to identify and respond to the changing needs for jobs training and education. In 1982, the college attained full membership accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, maintaining its good standing ever since. The college's first associate degrees were offered in 1987. Accreditation followed for all of the college's associate level programs in 1993. Tribal College Land Grant status was conferred in 1994. UTTC was the first tribal college in the nation to receive accreditation to offer associate degrees online. Bachelor's degree programs now round out the offerings that make UTTC one of the leading tribal colleges in the nation.

## Transformation

Today, the UTTC campus features modern educational buildings and equipment. The historic setting is transformed, serving students from tribes all across the country and non-Native students. The college continues to enjoy community support as an economic input, cultural asset, and historic site.

Thousands at UTTC have been successful in this learning environment, demonstrating that education is the highest and best use of a one-time military fort in the tribal homeland.

**For more information:** Library - United Tribes Technical College ([uttc.edu](http://uttc.edu)) (<http://uttc.edu>)