



# Native American Heritage Month



Throughout November every year, Native American Heritage is honored and highlighted in the United States. In 1990, President George W. Bush and Congress agreed

to pass a joint resolution that officially determined November to be the month that highlights Native American Pride. Learning about the cultures of others not only allows for personal growth but can also create connections through the lens of empathy. This monthly observance is necessary as well as important because it officially acknowledges the contributions that Indigenous Peoples have made to our nation and across the globe. Allow November to serve as a reminder of the resilience and strength of Native communities throughout history.

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[INFUENTIAL ARTISTS](#)

[N.M.O.T.A.I.](#)

[A CHEF'S STORY](#)

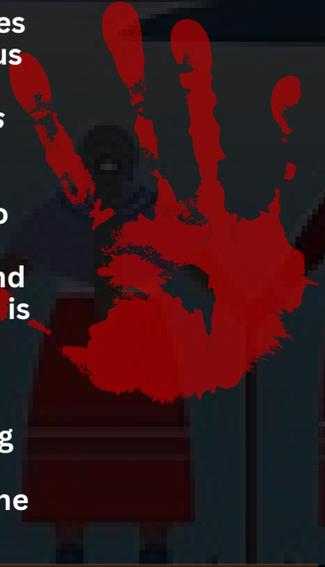
[POWWOW CELEBRATION](#)

[2023 NAHM NEWSLETTER](#)

## M.M.I.W.

[VISIT HOMEPAGE](#)

MMIW stands for 'Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women', a movement that shines a light on an ongoing issue within Indigenous communities. *In 2023, the FBI concluded that 71% of reported missing persons cases from native communities involved women from the ages of 12 and up.* Not only is this statistic alarming, but murder is believed to be the third-highest cause of death for native women. As a symbol of solemnity and awareness, a red handprint over the mouth is used to honor all of the missing sisters whose voices are not heard or have been taken. As a more subtle form of solemnity, individuals may choose to wear red clothing instead. Every year May 5th is observed as the official day of awareness for MMIW in the US and Canada.



## N.J.C.A.I.A.

[VISIT HOMEPAGE](#)

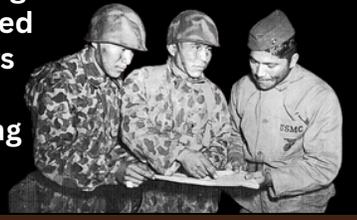
Produced by P.L.1134, c. 295, The *New Jersey Commission on Native American Affairs* was signed into law on December 22, 1995, and placed within the *New Jersey Department of State*. Legislation later modified the name to the *New Jersey Commission on American Indian Affairs*. Nine are selected as members of the Commission: The Secretary of State, serving ex officio, and eight public members. The public members, who are nominated by their tribes and organizations and selected by the Governor, require two members from each of the following: *Nanticoke Leni-Lenape Indians, Powhatan Renape Indians, Ramapough Lenape Indian Nation, and Inter-Tribal People*. Inter-Tribal People refer to American Indian people who live in the state of New Jersey but are representatives of federally and/or State-recognized tribes in other states. One of the missions of the *New Jersey Commission on American Indian Affairs* is to seek understanding and knowledge about the history and culture of the American Indian communities to improve the quality of life for all people in New Jersey. Conversations with the state's American Indian communities encourage a more promising and equal future.



## NAVAJO CODE TALKERS

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From 1942 to 1945, a group of men of Navajo descent assisted in the US military during World War II. These men, 420 of them to be exact, were instructed to translate information using their traditional languages. Their encrypted language code is highly favored in military history and viewed as one the biggest advantages that benefitted the US during the war. Once messages were received, they were coded and transmitted orally. The Code Talkers deciphered each message line one by one, in real-time, without ever writing them down.



## FILMS AND GOOD READS

[SEE MORE OPTIONS](#)

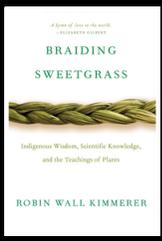
(book) 'Code Talker: A Novel About the Navajo Marines of World War Two'

• Historical Fiction  
Takes the reader through the story of Ned Begay, a man of Navajo descent who was recruited by the US Marines to become a code talker during World War II. He speaks on the trials and tribulations he experienced while being part of the team.



(book) 'Braiding Sweetgrass'

• Nonfiction  
Writing from her own life experiences and research, Robin Kimmerer teaches about the importance of maintaining a relationship with nature. Robin is a member of the *Citizen Potawatomi Nation* who was taught that flora and fauna are our greatest teachers. As a botanist, she studied how our world sends signs, even if we're too oblivious to hear its voices.



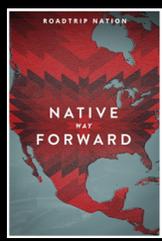
(film) 'We Breathe Again'

• Documentary  
Suicide among Alaska Native peoples is a silent epidemic. Alaska Native men between the ages of 15 and 24 are more likely to die by suicide than women, having the highest rate in the country. This documentary focuses on four unique individuals who are experiencing their own hardships with mental health. Their stories are told as a confrontation of the impacts of intergenerational trauma and suicide.



(film) 'Native Way Forward'

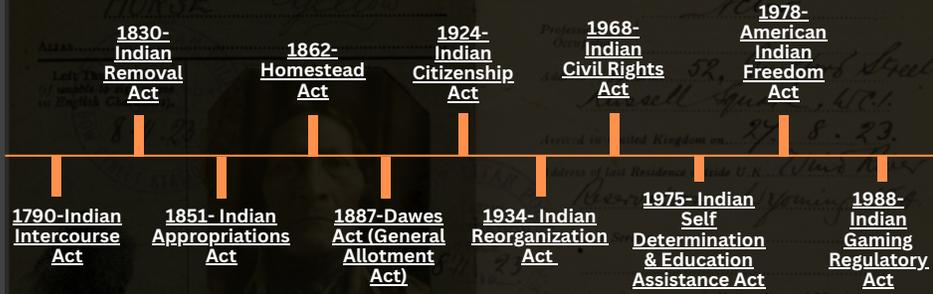
• Documentary  
Considering many documentaries that pertain to Indigenous culture are often based on past or current events that have impacted history, this film shines a light on the future instead. Native leaders are telling their stories in their own words, and focusing on the path for Native youth everywhere. Children are the future and these leaders want to highlight that.



# TERMINOLOGY RED FLAGS

- **‘POWWOW’**- Powwows are enormous celebrations that require months of planning. Using the term to describe a small gathering or last-minute event minimizes the true effort and history behind the term. Instead say: discussion, meeting, gathering
- **‘CHIEF’**- Referencing someone of Indigenous descent as ‘chief’ reduces them to just their race. The term has a history that is intertwined with racism, being placed on them as a slur by early colonialists. Instead say: leader, director, head
- **‘INDIANS’**- Many view the term as a symbol of oppression and relate it to the cultural inaccuracy that occurred when Christopher Columbus assumed he landed in the West Indies but stepped foot in the Caribbean.
- **‘SAVAGE’**- Savage today is used to describe someone bold or fierce. Its origin, however, is rooted in being a term that stereotyped indigenous people as dangerous or barbaric.
- **‘ESKIMO’**- Those native to the Arctic as well as Alaska see this term as derogatory. Archeologists believe the term is associated with the Latin word *excommunicati*, meaning excommunicated, an action committed against them by early settlers. ‘Inuit’ is the current term that politely references natives of Alaskan or Arctic background.

# TOPICS TO BE EDUCATED ON



## NATIVE AMERICAN FIRSTS

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- **Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte (Omaha Tribe of Nebraska)**: First Indigenous woman to earn a medical degree
- **Louis ‘Deerfoot’ Bennett (Seneca Nation)**: First native American track athlete
- **Lily Gladstone (Blackfeet Nation)**: First Native American woman to win a Golden Globe for best actress.
- **Sharice Davids (Ho-Chunk Nation)**: One of the first Native American women elected to Congress; the first openly LGBTQ+ Native American woman elected to Congress
- **John Harrington (Chickasaw Nation)**: The first member of a Native American tribe to fly in space
- **Edmonia Lewis (Ojibwe Nation)**: One of the first known Native American sculptors
- **Deb Haaland (Pueblo of Laguna)**: The first US cabinet secretary of Indigenous American heritage
- **Maria Tallchief (Osage nation)**: America’s first major prima ballerina

## STANDING IN THEIR BELIEFS

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Much like the Roman and Greek soldiers were required to keep short hair for a clean look, American soldiers have a similar history. The requirement for hair grooming standards can be seen as necessary to maintain uniformity in a military population. However, as individuals of more diverse backgrounds began to join, military rules began to slightly evolve. Thanks to a religious hair waiver created by the military, soldiers can fight for their right to grow longer hair for religious or cultural reasons, as long as it is tied up. Cpl. Bradford Flores, who is of Navajo heritage, was currently named the first US marine granted permission to wear traditional native hair. Another man from the National Guard by the name of Spec. Moses Braveheart from the South Dakota Oglala Sioux tribe was recently granted his wish of growing his hair while also wearing a large feather to the side. The feather can be seen as a symbol of experiencing an important life achievement, a representation of a specific community, or a sign of spiritual connection.

## NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN WARRIOR’S

Like their counterparts, native American women have a history of involvement in the US military. The first four women reported to have been actively involved were four who were native to the Sioux Falls nation. The four women were nuns who decided to join as nurses to assist soldiers in 1898 during the Spanish-American War. Founded in 2010, The Native American *Women Warriors* (NAWW), is an organization that is dedicated to honoring and assisting the ladies who sacrificed or are sacrificing their lives for our country. Much like Veterans Affairs, NAWW focuses on transitioning these women from active military life to that of a civilian while also valuing their culture.



[HISTORIC NAMES](#)

## INTERACTIVE INDIGENOUS MAP

[ACCESS MAP](#)

As we’ve learned, indigenous cultures were spread throughout most countries dating back as far as 35,700 years ago. This interactive map was created through the contributions of Indigenous communities, those who hold Indigenous knowledge, and their stories. The interaction encourages you to connect solely with the Indigenous communities to learn more about their territories and histories. Resources like this help us honor the Indigenous past, present and future. *The map does not claim to represent official or legal boundaries.*