

# DIVERSITEA: AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE

A Duke DPT Diversity Club and  
Diversity & Inclusion Committee Newsletter



## CELEBRATE NATIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH IN NOVEMBER

### By the numbers...

- **6.9 million:** The nation's American Indian and Alaska Native population alone or in combination with other race groups in 2019.
- **10.1 million:** The projected American Indian and Alaska Native population alone or in combination with other race groups on July 1, 2060. They would constitute 2.5% of the total population.
- **324:** The number of distinct federally recognized American Indian reservations in 2019, including federal reservations and off-reservation trust land.
- **574:** The number of federally recognized Indian tribes in 2020.
- **142,972:** The number of single-race American Indian and Alaska Native veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces in 2019.

National American Indian Heritage Month celebrates and recognizes the accomplishments of the peoples who were the original inhabitants, explorers, and settlers of the United States. The first American Indian Day was celebrated in May 1916 in New York. Red Fox James, a Blackfeet Indian, rode horseback from state to state, getting endorsements from 24 state governments, to have a day to honor American Indians. In 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed a joint congressional resolution designating November as National American Indian Heritage Month.



# Health Disparities of American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN)



- **Diabetes:** At 16.1%, the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) population has the highest age adjusted prevalence of diabetes among all U.S. racial and ethnic groups. AI/AN mortality from diabetes is 3x higher than that of the general U.S. population.
- **Smoking:** Cigarette smoking is more common among AI/AN than almost any other racial/ethnic group in the U.S. More than 1 in 5 (22.6%) adults with an AI/AN heritage smokes cigarettes.
- **Communicable diseases:** HIV, viral hepatitis, STDs (chlamydia, gonorrhea, primary and secondary syphilis, congenital syphilis), and TB take a greater toll on the AI/AN population.
- **Mental health:** AI/AN had significantly higher rates compared with national data rates for PTSD ranging from 2-3x the national rate. Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for Native people aged 10-34. For AI/AN aged 15-34, the suicide rate is 1.5x higher than the national average. In some tribal communities, the youth suicide rate is 10x greater than the national average.
- **Substance abuse:** AI/AN populations had the 2nd highest overdose rates from all opioids among racial/ethnic groups in the US.

## Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country (GHWIC)

Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country (GHWIC), a 5-year \$98 million program, is the CDC's largest investment to improve health among American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN). This program will support a coordinated, holistic approach to healthy living and chronic disease prevention; reinforce the work already underway in Indian Country to make healthy choices and lifeways easier for AI/AN; and build off the previous GHWIC cycle to emphasize strategies in Native communities, reduce obesity, prevent type 2 diabetes, reduce commercial tobacco use, and other risk factors for heart disease and stroke.

## Tribal Epidemiology Centers Public Health Infrastructure (TECPHI)

Many federal and state agencies have excluded American Indians and Alaska Natives from routine disease and risk factor reporting because of the relatively small size of these populations and widespread race misclassification. The Tribal Epidemiology Centers Public Health Infrastructure (TECPHI) program, launched in September 2017, seeks to increase the ability of tribal epidemiology centers to deliver public health services to and with tribal communities. The program builds public health capacity and infrastructure in Indian Country to collect data and study chronic diseases that affect tribal communities; prevent and control chronic disease, injury, and disability; and monitor and evaluate activities.



# Dakota Access Pipeline: Standing with Standing Rock



The Standing Rock Sioux tribe has opposed the Dakota Access Pipeline, designed to transport 500,000 barrels of crude oil daily from North Dakota to Illinois, since first learning about plans for the pipeline in 2014. But only in 2016 did the issue gain national attention, as thousands of protesters - including many Native Americans - gathered in North Dakota in an attempt to block the 1,200-mile project.

The pipeline would travel underneath the Missouri River, the primary drinking water source for the Standing Rock Sioux, a tribe of around 10,000 with a reservation in the central part of North and South Dakota, and even the smallest spill could damage the tribe's water supply. The Standing Rock Sioux also argue that the pipeline traverses a sacred burial ground. And while the land being used for the pipeline is not technically on its reservation, tribal leaders argue that the federal government did not adequately engage the Standing Rock Sioux during the permitting process - a requirement under federal law. Protesters and tribal leaders have accused officials of unnecessarily rough treatment. Police used pepper spray, rubber bullets, and concussion cannons, and allowed their dogs to charge protesters, among other tactics.

Despite these protests, construction was completed in 2017. In 2019, plans were announced to double pipeline capacity to 1.1 million barrels per day. In July 2020, A U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. ordered on Monday that the Dakota Access Pipeline must halt operations within 30 days, pending an environmental review. Unfortunately, an appeals court reversed the decision in August 2020. Now, the Standing Rock Sioux are asking U.S. District Judge James Boasberg to clarify his earlier ruling to satisfy the appellate judges and then to again order the line to cease operations.

## Colonialism and COVID-19: When Past is Present

Episode 60 of AC4 Columbia's radio show and podcast ***Conversations from the Leading Edge*** focuses on the disparities experienced by the people of the Navajo Nation, as well as the Republic of Zimbabwe and Brazil, during this era of COVID-19. These disparities can be attributed to the past and current culture of colonialism.

Dr. Farina King, a citizen of the Navajo Nation and Assistant Professor of History and affiliated faculty of Cherokee and Indigenous Studies at Northeastern State University, states that "colonialism is a vampire" - a parasite that is sucking life out of a people.





# 25th Red Nation International Film Festival



Red Nation International Film Festival (RNIFF) is the largest American Indian & Indigenous film festival in the U.S. that takes place every year as part of American Indian Heritage Month. The festival is dedicated to breaking the barrier of racism by successfully replacing American Indian stereotypes with recognition, new vision, arts, culture, and economic prosperity by placing American Indian Filmmakers at the forefront of the entertainment industry and to introduce American Indian Filmmakers to larger, global mainstream audiences. This year, 100+ films will be streamed virtually throughout the month of November.

## Experience America's Largest Powwow

Over 700 tribes attend the Gathering of Nations in Albuquerque, New Mexico, a three-day cultural heritage celebration each year. In the past 36 years, the Gathering of Nations has grown from an early, simple dream to one of the world's most recognized annual festivals. The Gathering of Nations is a powwow where Native people can come together to celebrate and share culture, and a place where singers and dancers can feel confident that competition is fair to all.



## Native American Fashion Show

In 2019, a fashion show hosted by the Native American Development Corporation at the Billings Hotel & Convention Center in Montana featured five designers who meshed unique tribal dress with contemporary fashion. Native fashion allows designers a way to reclaim what was stripped from many Native Americans as cultures and fashion were westernized.



# National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)



Founded in 1944, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) is the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) organization serving the broad interests of tribal governments and communities. For nearly seven decades since its founding, NCAI has remained true to the original purpose of the organization: to be the unified voice of tribal nations.

As outlined in the NCAI Constitution, their purpose is to serve as a forum for unified policy development among tribal governments in order to: (1) protect and advance tribal governance and treaty rights, (2) promote economic development and health and welfare in AI/AN communities, and (3) educate the public toward a better understanding of AI/AN tribes.

## The 2020 Census: Indian Country Counts



The Indian Country Counts campaign is an initiative launched by the National Congress of American Indians to ensure all American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) are accurately counted in the 2020 Census. Nearly \$1 billion in annual federal resources are allocated to Indian Country based on census data. Nationally, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that AI/AN living on reservations or in Native villages were undercounted by approximately 4.9% in the 2010 census, more than double the undercount rate of the next closest population group.

## The 2020 Election: Native Vote

NCAI's national nonpartisan initiative - Native Vote - partners with Native Vote coordinators throughout the country to revitalize civic engagement in Indian Country. Tribes are America's first governments and Native Vote works to ensure all Native citizens participate in shaping the future of their communities. Native Vote also encourages American Indians and Alaska Natives to exercise their right to vote and works to protect voting rights across the country.



Born in an era when racism and bigotry were accepted by the dominant culture, "Indian" sports brands have grown to become multi-million dollar franchises. Rather than honoring Native peoples, these caricatures and stereotypes are harmful, perpetuate negative stereotypes of America's first peoples, and contribute to a disregard for the personhood of Native peoples. As documented in a comprehensive review of decades of social science research, derogatory "Indian" sports mascots have serious psychological, social, and cultural consequences for Native Americans, especially Native youth. As a result of ongoing education and advocacy, in total, two-thirds or over 2,000 "Indian" references in sports have been eliminated during the past 35 years. Nearly 1,000 still remain today.

## Ending the Era of Harmful "Indian" Mascots



### **The Origins of the NFL's Washington Redskins: A Legacy of Racism**

The NFL's Washington football team name "Redskins" is a dictionary defined racial slur. The slur's origin is rooted in government bounty announcements calling for the bloody scalps of Native Americans in the 1800s. From the early 1900s up until today, the term has been carried on as a racial slur in popular culture. For much of the 20th century, the term was used interchangeably in movies and books with the word "savage" to portray a misleading and denigrating image of the Native American. This derogatory term was selected by team owner George Preston Marshall for use by the team in 1932 at a time when the federal "Civilization Regulations" were still in place, confining Native people to reservations, banning all Native dances and ceremonies, confiscating Native cultural property, and outlawing much of what was traditional in Native life. In 1933, Marshall was the self appointed leader amongst NFL owners to institute what would become a 13-year league-wide ban on African-American players from the NFL. The Washington football team did not integrate until 30 years later, when Marshall was forced to do so. While the team has moved on from Marshall's segregationist policies, it had until July 2020 refused to close the chapter on Marshall's ugly use of race-based marketing at the expense of Native people and communities. The team is currently called the "Washington Football Team," pending a formal change to an undetermined new name.

## **The Pendleton Problem: When Does Cultural Appreciation Tip Into Appropriation?**



Pendleton Woolen Mills is home to high quality clothing and accessories, though most notably known for their wool blankets which often sport Native American-inspired designs. But, the problem is that these blankets aren't made by Native Americans at all. Cultural appropriation is when "people from a more powerful or more affluent culture profit by taking symbols, arts, and ideas from historically disenfranchised groups without credit or compensation." Companies like Pendleton, along with Urban Outfitters and Restoration Hardware, have been called out for their use of unique Native American designs without permission or any royalty from sales of those products. Pendleton is working to change their past, which started with hiring Bunky Echo-Hawk (Pawnee), pictured on the left.



# CHAMPIONS OF DIVERSITY:

## Native Persons as Modern Pioneers

### Joy Harjo - First Native American to Serve as U.S. Poet Laureate

Joy Harjo was appointed as the Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry in June 2019. Harjo was reappointed to a second term in April 2020. Harjo is the first Native American poet to serve in the position, as an enrolled member of the Muscogee Creek Nation. She is the author of nine award-winning books of poetry. Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden says, "To her, poems are 'carriers of dreams, knowledge, and wisdom,' and through them she tells an American story of tradition and loss, reckoning and myth-making. Her work powerfully connects us to the earth and the spiritual world with direct, inventive lyricism that helps us reimagine who we are."



### Tommy Orange - Acclaimed Author Dispelling Stereotypes through Stories

Tommy Orange's debut novel ***There There*** told the story of several Indigenous Americans living in Oakland, CA and their experience with urban life. It was a sensation, making the ***New York Times*** Best Seller list, earning a prize for best first book from the National Book Circle Awards, and a shortlist spot for the Andrew Carnegie Medals. In the novel, he sought to challenge antiquated ideas around being a Native American. A citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Nations of Oklahoma, he said, "[People think] the only real way to be a real Native American is to be historical or have a headdress or look this one way. It's deeply damaging to a people to not have a dynamic range of ways to be that are still acceptable as Native."



### Sharice Davids - One of the First Native American U.S. Congresswomen

Representative Sharice Davids is one of the first two Native American women to be elected to Congress (alongside Deb Haaland) and the first LGBTQ person to be elected in Kansas. She is also a lawyer and former professional mixed martial artist. Davids is part of the Ho-Chunk Nation, which originated in Wisconsin, and she regularly works on projects to help the Indigenous population, including boosting economic growth and community development. On a national level, she's worked to protect and expand access to healthcare, strengthen voter protections, and provide more resources to small business owners.



### John Herrington - First Native American in Space

John Herrington, of the Chickasaw Nation, was the first Native American to fly in space and perform a spacewalk. A retired U.S. Navy aviator and NASA astronaut, the Oklahoma native was a crew member aboard the space shuttle STS-113 Endeavour when it launched from Kennedy Space Center on November 23, 2002. During the mission - which delivered crew and cargo to and from the International Space Station - Herrington performed three spacewalks totaling nearly 20 hours. In honor of his heritage, he carried with him six eagle feathers, a braid of sweet grass, two arrowheads, and the Chickasaw Nation's flag.



# LASTING IMPACTS

## Anecdotes about times you have felt connected to or welcomed into Native Culture

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"A couple years ago, I went to Northern California with my friends to attend a concert, and during the day we decided to go to a powwow nearby. It was my first time ever going to one, and it was a truly incredible experience. The traditional music, dancing, and clothing were gorgeous, and being amongst such a large crowd of people - both Native and otherwise - created such a strong sense of community as we reveled and celebrated Native American culture."

- **Anonymous**

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"My grandpa was Choctaw Native American and a sharecropper in Mississippi. He passed away when I was young, so I never got a chance to learn about the culture and his life experiences. Not much is known in my family about our Choctaw heritage. I however make sure to research, advocate for, and bring awareness to Native American culture whenever possible."

- **Anonymous**

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"I had the pleasure of working with several master craftspeople on Navajo Nation during my 801 TCE. Sheep are the primary livestock tended by Navajo, and the wool is often processed for weaving tapestries. For elders who spent most of their time at home weaving, I gave a lot of seated home exercise programs that could be completed alongside weaving. For other patients, a lot of PT goals related to being able to complete ranching chores to care for sheep and other livestock. One patient in particular raised her own sheep and then harvested, processed, dyed, and spun the wool for all of her weaving. On one of my last days, she brought in some of her tapestries to show, carefully explaining how she had made each dye - sourced from vegetables and local wild plants. It was inspiring to see such a dynamic creative process that included not just the finished product, but all the work that went into raising the sheep and creating each material for her craft."

- **Lydia Friz**