

“Reclaiming Native Truth”

An Article of the OVWA Monthly Highlight Series

Introduction

November. Native American Heritage Month. But what does that mean? In this month’s OVWA Monthly Highlight Article, we are shining the light on Native Americans and their communities. As we do so, it is extremely important for you to know that these words are from Natives themselves. The following are excerpts from a publication titled, “Reclaiming Native Truth” from the Native activist group, [IllumiNative](#).

Reclaiming Native Truth

“Native Americans live, thrive, and lead all across the United States. As students and teachers, artists and soldiers, doctors and lawyers, and in every walk of life, Native American people work, vote, volunteer, pay taxes, invest in the collective future of all of our children, and contribute to their tribes and communities across the country.

Being Native American may mean being deeply involved in protecting, teaching and advancing the knowledge and traditions of one’s tribe(s). Or it may mean being less connected to tribal communities while maintaining unique Native American identities in other ways within the larger society. There is no “one way” to be Native American. Every tribe and tribal citizen has a unique culture, history and tradition, and many people identify more as a citizen of a specific tribe(s) than collectively as Native American. Even with such a strong identity, contributions and presence, however, contemporary Native Americans are largely invisible to the rest of the country. Native American voices are rarely heard in the news, in popular culture or in history books, and what little is reflected in those venues about Native issues and cultures is riddled with misinformation and confusion.

Reclaiming Native Truth is the largest public opinion research initiative ever conducted in Indian Country, engaging nearly 20,000 people across the United States through focus groups, surveys and other methods and analyzing nearly five million social media posts, blogs and other commentary. More than 180 people have collaborated to understand the findings and develop a strategy, and the project is supported by investments from a wide range of diverse organizations, from respected Native allies to major funders. For the first time, we have data about the toxic combination of the invisibility of Native Americans in contemporary society and the pervasive negative stereotypes.

We know how this combination leads to ongoing discrimination and lack of support for vital issues and initiatives, as well as how it influences not only the general public but also policymakers, the judicial system, K–12 education, pop culture, arts, entertainment, the media and philanthropy. We also have data about pathways for change. We know what aspects of the true, strengths-based story resonate most strongly, and we have proven that hearing this new story significantly increases people’s support of Native Americans and Native issues. We have

identified new allies — a large, diverse audience that is aligned with Native values and is ready to learn an accurate history, hear Native voices and make Native contributions more visible.”

Replacing False Narratives with Truth

By Suzan Shown Harjo (Cheyenne and Hodulgee Muscogee)

“Narrative change is necessary today! Without it, we remain erased, invisible, out of sight, mind and heart. With it, we gain visibility, contemporary understanding, greater voice and respect. We stand 5 million strong today, a reality that needs to be reflected in the national narrative. The current narrative, which has erased Native Nations and Citizens from the dominant American narrative, perpetuates the legal framework that allows our sacred places to be desecrated and will not allow us to protect them or even pray there. It sends a signal to grave robbers, defacers of ancient messages, miners and drillers that what they do is not horrifying, destructive and scarring, but that it’s somehow normal and okay.

We are citizens of hundreds of sovereign Native Nations. This must become the narrative, replacing the erasure of Native Peoples which lets the U.S. Supreme Court stop our Nations from carrying out their inherent sovereign duties to protect families from violence by anyone, even non-Natives. The current narrative results in freedom for the majority of those who rape, murder and torture tribal citizens. It is the reason our women and children face the highest rates of violence in the U.S. today. We carry cultural wisdom and professional expertise into every sector of society, both in our tribes and in American communities. We are artists, history makers and storytellers, adept at sharing our past and our current reality. This must become the narrative, replacing the erasure that obscures our true identities and sanctions their replacement with false personae. The deceptive portrayals of our Nations as unfair and unjust — or as generating poor parenting, unworthy grand-parenting and unnurtured children — lead many to think our babies would be better off in non-Native settings. This has played out in tragic legal wrangling, exposing an intense anti-Native sentiment that some segments of society did not attempt to conceal, as well as a shocking ignorance and anti-Native bias among some jurists. Our young people are strong, proud and resilient. We — and thousands of others — stood with them as they took the lead at Standing Rock. They are reclaiming their cultures and histories on social media, on the stage and in film, and other places of creative expression and leadership. Their voices must spread beyond Indian Country. This must become the narrative, replacing the insidious erasure, which tells our children that they are less than human, and are cartoons, mascots or slurs on a uniform or helmet.

Every harm perpetuated against Native Peoples has been made possible through purposeful erasure, most of which has been carried out by the powerful in governments, educational institutions and the advertising and sports worlds. Even when bad acts are done by individuals, responsible authorities look the other way, often blaming those who are injured for daring to respond to the injury. We all are trying to do what we can to address the multiplicity of emergencies all around us. If we can come together to create narrative change, we can end the foundational corrosion of erasure and its overlayer of false identities, and we will begin to resolve many of the problems we are grappling with in our smaller circles. We cannot do

everything, but this is something we can do — change the narrative, and use that to drive systemic, lasting, transformational change. If we work to restore the narrative that has been erased, we will succeed in generating understanding about laws and policies that continue to devastate our Native world. That will lead to real change. The dominant American narrative dehumanizes, derides and objectifies us. The new narrative tells the truth, the strength of our history, the power of our contemporary attainments, the resilience of our cultures, the continuance of our values. Until we reclaim the narrative about ourselves, our distinctiveness, our diversity, our sovereignty and our nationhood, we will continue to be caught in an erasure quagmire that was designed to secure our extinction. Reclaiming the narrative will be hard work, but it will work, if we do it together.”

A Narrative that Works

This narrative paragraph is taken from a longer overarching narrative statement. The longer version, can provide ideas and inspiration as you write your own narrative based messages and communication.

- The history of Native Americans is one of great strength and revitalization.
- It is a story built around values that have shaped Native cultures and U.S. society: respect for family and elders; shared responsibility to care for the land; and an obligation to do right by the next generation.
- It is a story of resilience through great pain and injustice, from broken treaties and loss of land and language in the past to derogatory sports mascots and biased history taught in schools today.
- Across more than 600 sovereign Native nations and in every profession and segment of society, Native Americans carry the cultural knowledge and wisdom that sustains Native nations and helps build a stronger future for all.
- Let’s find our commonalities, celebrate our differences and creatively work together for our shared future and the futures of the next generations.

Resources

ILLUMINATIVE

<https://illuminatives.org/>

The Do’s and Don’ts for Native Allies

Video: Reclaiming Native Truth

Created and led by Native peoples, IllumiNative is a new nonprofit initiative designed to increase the visibility of – and challenge the negative narrative about – Native Nations and peoples in American society.

- **Messaging:** Developing and sharing fact-based messaging and materials that advance a more positive, inspiring and accurate narrative about Native peoples and Native communities.
- **Amplifying:** Developing a national campaign in partnership with a broad coalition of tribes, Native organizations, youth and allies to amplify the new narrative and strategies to move hearts and minds within strategic demographics.
- **Training:** Fostering understanding and building capacity with media companies, philanthropic institutions, academic institutions, and government about contemporary Native experiences through educational workshops, meetings and trainings.
- **Advocating:** Advocating with – and on behalf of – Native talent for greater representation and accurate portrayals in the entertainment industry, media and K-12 education.
- **Connecting:** Connecting and supporting Native young people and Native talent (e.g., writers, producers, directors, actors, etc.) with specific opportunities in the entertainment industry as well as building relationships and networks with allies and influencers to create opportunities for narrative change and impact.

INDIAN LAW RESOURCE CENTER

Indianlaw.org

The Center provides legal assistance to indigenous peoples of the Americas to combat racism and oppression, to protect their lands and environment, to protect their cultures and ways of life, to achieve sustainable economic development and genuine self-government, and to realize their other human rights.

The Indian Law Resource Center is a non-profit law and advocacy organization established and directed by American Indians. The Resource Center provides legal assistance to Indian and Alaska Native nations who are working to protect their lands, resources, human rights, environment and cultural heritage. Their principal goal is the preservation and well-being of Indian and other Native nations and tribes.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/>

Amnesty International is a global movement of millions of people demanding human rights for all people. Amnesty International is the world's largest grassroots human rights organization, whose approach for protecting human rights uses a three-pronged approach: Research, Mobilization and Advocacy. Amnesty International has been actively involved in protecting Indigenous Peoples human rights throughout the world.

NATIONAL TRIBAL JUSTICE RESOURCE CENTER

<http://www.tribalresourcecenter.org/index.htm>

The National Tribal Justice Resource Center is a central national clearinghouse of information for Native American and Alaska Native tribal justice systems.

Resources include:

- searchable databases of tribal court opinions;
- codes and constitutions;
- a listing of available publications;
- a training events calendar of seminars and conferences;
- funding opportunities

Programs and Services provided by the National Tribal Justice Resource Center include:

- Toll-Free Hotline - 1-877-97NTJRC (877-976-8572)
- On Site-Technical Assistance and Evaluation
- Lending a Helping Hand: The Tribal Justice System Mentor Project Searchable Databases
- Calendar of Seminars and Conferences
- Tribal Judicial Resources

NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

<http://www.ncai.org/>

The National Congress of American Indians, founded in 1944, is the oldest, largest and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving the broad interests of tribal governments and communities. As outlined in the NCAI Constitution, their purpose is to serve as a forum for unified policy development among tribal governments in order to:

- protect and advance tribal governance and treaty rights
- promote the economic development and health and welfare in Indian and Alaska Native communities
- educate the public toward a better understanding of Indian and Alaska Native tribes

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

<https://www.niwrc.org/>

The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, Inc. (NIWRC) is a Native nonprofit organization that was created specifically to serve as the National Indian Resource Center (NIRC) Addressing Domestic Violence and Safety for Indian Women. Under this grant project and in compliance with statutory requirements, the NIWRC seeks to enhance the capacity of American Indian and Alaska Native (Native) tribes, Native Hawaiians, and Tribal and Native Hawaiian organizations to respond to domestic violence.

Projects include:

- **Native Love**, <https://nativelove.niwrc.org/>, empowerment to define healthy relationships with the aim of promoting non-violent, respectful, safe relationships among Native youth, their families, communities, cultures, & Nations.

- **Restoration Magazine**, The Restoration of Sovereignty & Safety magazine is a publication dedicated to informing tribal leadership and communities of emerging issues impacting the safety of American Indian and Alaska Native women.
- **Strong Hearts Native Helpline**, <https://www.strongheartshelpline.org/>, Helpline: 1-844-762-8483, a culturally-appropriate domestic violence and dating violence helpline for Native Americans, available every day from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. CT. StrongHearts advocates offer the following services at no cost:
 - peer support and advocacy
 - information and education about domestic violence and dating violence
 - personalized safety planning
 - crisis intervention
 - referrals to Native or Tribal-based domestic violence service providers
- **VAWA Sovereignty Initiative**
- **Women are Sacred Conference**

OFFICE OF VICTIMS OF CRIME TTAC – TRIBAL VICTIM ASSISTANCE

<https://www.ovcttac.gov/TVA/>

As part of OVC's ongoing commitment to providing relevant resources and tools to Indian country professionals, OVC TTAC has created this site to help guide tribal victim advocates, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, judges, and others to information about how to create a victim-centered response to American Indian and Alaska Native victims of crime across the lifespan. We invite you to explore this site and learn more about available federal and non-federal resources that can help tribal communities better meet the needs of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, and many other forms of victimization.

Tribal Victim Assistance offers:

- Tribal victim assistance resources for victim service providers and allied professionals;
- OVC's Victim Assistance Training Online to help victim advocates learn the fundamentals of advocating for victims of crime;
- OVC's web-based toolkits, including SANE Program Development and Operation Guide, SART Toolkit, Human Trafficking Task Force e-Guide
- OVC's training resources, including standardized, face-to-face trainings, and online modules
- Videos produced by OVC that can help inform and assist victim service providers and allied professionals in their efforts to address the issue of sexual assault in Indian Country.

THE TRIBAL RESOURCE TOOL

<https://www.tribalresourcetool.org/>

A searchable directory of all services available for AI/AN survivors of crime and abuse in Indian Country

TRIBAL LAW AND POLICY INSTITUTE (TLPI)

<https://www.home.tlpi.org/>

The Tribal Law and Policy Institute (TLPI) offers a wide range of exceptional training, technical assistance, and resource services. They strive to facilitate the sharing of resources so Native Nations and tribal justice systems have access to cost effective resources which can be adapted to meet the individual needs of their communities. Their mission is to enhance and strengthen tribal sovereignty and justice while honoring community values, protecting rights, and promoting well-being. Their vision is to empower Native communities to create and control their own institutions for the benefit/welfare of all community members now and for future generations.

Ohio Information and Resources:

ONE STATE MANY NATIONS NATIVE AMERICANS

<https://westernreservepublicmedia.org/onestate/overview.htm>

NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES OF OHIO

<http://www.native-languages.org/ohio.htm>

There are a few federally unrecognized tribes in Ohio. Though this is not a complete list, here are a few active Ohio tribes:

SHAWNEE NATION UNITED REMNANT BAND – SHAWANDASSE NAWBE

<https://www.shawneurb.com/>

NOTOWEEGA NATION COMMUNITY

<http://thereddoorcasino.com/notoweega/>

- Tribal offices located in Logan, Ohio. United States, "Turtle Island".
- Inherent Sovereign Government
- Affiliated with the Escuit, S.C.
- Over 30,000 members
- Pre United States Constitution
- We do not recognize the authority of Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- Conducting Business as a self sustaining people.

MUNSEE DELAWARE INDIAN NATION USA

https://www.facebook.com/pg/Munsee-Delaware-Indian-Nation-USA-134635919922410/about/?ref=page_internal

Ohio Native American Indian Organizations

CLEVELAND AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT

<http://clevelandaim.us/>

THE NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN AND VETERANS CENTER, INC.

https://www.facebook.com/pg/NativeAmericanIndianandVeteransCener/about/?ref=page_internal

The mission of Native American Indian and Veterans Center is to assist in bringing communities together by promoting cultural awareness, and improving personal health and quality of life of the under-served Native Americans and U.S. Veterans.

MYAAMIA CENTER

<http://miamioh.edu/myaamia-center/index.html>

The Myaamia Center is focused on deepening Myaamia connections through research, education, and outreach.

The Center, a Miami Tribe of Oklahoma initiative located within an academic setting, serves the needs of the Myaamia people, Miami University, and partner communities through research, education, and outreach that promote Myaamia language, culture, knowledge, and values.

NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN CENTER OF CENTRAL OHIO

<https://www.naicco.com/>

The Native American Indian Center of Central Ohio is devoted to preserving and restoring balance in the lives of American Indian and Alaska Native youth and families living in and around Ohio through culture, wellness, community, and education.

NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURAL CENTER

<https://ohioindiansnow.com/>

Mission: to better the community both Native and Non-Native through education in order to ensure that our beliefs both cultural and spiritual live on for generations to come.

Services:

- Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act: which provides employment, education and training opportunities for American Indian and Native Alsakans in Ohio.

- Leaders of Tomorrow Program: This program allows the elders of our community to meet with the youth and pass on the knowledge of our ways both spiritual and cultural in order to ensure a bright future for our people.
- Health Education Programs: This program allows distribution of assistance and information to our Native Community for the purpose of raising and improving our Native Community Health.
- NAICC Food Program: This program is funded by private donations and some Federal Funding that allows the Center to provide food to those in need of assistance.
- Advocacy Program: This programs provides assistance to American Indian and Native Alaskan families in regards to the Child Welfare Indian Act Program through tribes, families, local courts, and Children Services Boards.
- Additional Assistance: The Center also provides school supplies to children in the Native Community in order to ensure a less stressful school experience to those in need. Food and Toys to our families in need are also provided through the center with the help of private funding, donations and fund raising.

CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL CINCINNATI – NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRY COUNCIL

<https://cincinnatiathedral.com/native-american/>

The Native American Ministry Council of Christ Church Cathedral has been active since 1984, as the result of a bequest from Nina F. Lansley. The Council’s early work included support for social work with the poor and elderly in the backcountry of the Navajo reservation and summer mission trips to Good Shepherd Mission in Fort Defiance, Arizona.

Services:

- Provide hands-on outreach by witnessing for, and building awareness of, the contemporary needs, values, and traditions of Native American cultures in the US and Canada.
- Contribute to the education and theological development of leadership within Native American communities.
- Support initiatives to empower Native American societies and ministries related to life needs, cultural sustainability, and spiritual growth within Native American values.

Relevant Advocacy Articles

Walter, J and Freedman, H. (2019). **Emerging Strategies in Tribal-State Collaboration: Barriers and Solutions to Enforcing Tribal Protection Orders.** Retrieved from Bureau of Justice Assistance

<https://www.bja.gov/Publications/emerging-strategies-in-tribal-state-collaboration-barriers-and-solutions-to-enforcing-tribal-protection-orders.pdf>

Bachman, R. Zaykowski, H. Kallmyer, R. Poteyeva, M. Lanier, C. (August 2008). **Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and the Criminal Justice Response: What is Known.** Retrieved From

<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/223691.pdf>