

Connections

National Native American Heritage Month
November 2021



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Office of Policy, Management and Budget
Administrative Services and the
Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights



Welcome to Native American Heritage Month

Message from Secretary Haaland

November 2021

Guw'aadzi haupa, hello everyone, and Happy National Native American Heritage Month!

Each year in November, we honor the gifts of our ancestors by celebrating Indigenous knowledge, traditions, language, and culture. But at Interior we do that every day. We respect Indigenous knowledge in our work to fight climate change and Build Back Better than ever before. We're

committed to robust Tribal consultation and living up to our trust and treaty responsibilities. We center our work on the voices of Indigenous people as we address the [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples Crisis](#) and take action to help people heal from the painful forced assimilation practices of the [Indian Boarding Schools](#).

All of our work is done with an all-of-government approach to ensure Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Island communities have a seat at the table.



As the first Native American cabinet secretary, I know that we have a lot of work to do, but I also know that our ancestors are smiling down on us, giving us strength, and are proud of what we've accomplished so far.

Native American history IS American history, and it is only by recognizing that history that we can build a future that is equitable and inclusive.

Happy Native American Heritage Month, everyone!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deb Haaland".



On the cover: Three generations. From left: **Barbara Tenorio Grimes** (San Felipe Pueblo and Isleta Pueblo); her 6-year-old granddaughter **Sophia** (San Felipe Pueblo, Isleta Pueblo, Navajo, Prairie Band Potawatomi, Kickapoo and African American); and her daughter **Tamisha White, Project Manager, Bureau of Trust Funds Administration, Albuquerque, NM** (San Felipe Pueblo, Isleta Pueblo and African American). Photo courtesy Tamisha White. Read more from Tamisha on page 9.

Welcome from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administrative Services

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the Native American Heritage Month 2021 issue of **Connections**.

Native American Heritage Month (NAHM) is a time to celebrate the rich and diverse ancestry, cultures, traditions, and histories of America's Indigenous people. The [National Congress of American Indians](#) reminds us that NAHM is also “an opportunity to educate our workforce, raise awareness about the uniqueness of Native people, and the myriad of ways in which Tribal citizens have conquered challenges to maintain voice and dignity and to remain an influencing presence in a rapidly evolving nation.”

This year's theme, ***Gifts of our Ancestors: Celebrating Indigenous Knowledge and Cultures***, reflects the determination and courage that Native American communities continue to exhibit, sustaining the vibrant diversity, cultures, traditions, and accomplishments of America's first peoples.

At DOI, we value the life experiences and perspectives of all our employees and endeavor to harness the power of Indigenous knowledge in our work to address climate change, steward public lands, create jobs, and serve communities that have been historically marginalized.

Needless to say, the history of Indigenous Peoples in the Americas is complex and troubling. It's a history that demands our continued commitment to thoroughly



understand and learn from, particularly as it relates to the disparities seen to this day for Native American communities. Yet I am encouraged to see that tremendous progress is being made, particularly by members of our DOI family under the exemplary leadership of our first Native American Secretary, Deb Haaland.

I hope you will be inspired to find beauty, strength and empowerment in the ever-evolving story of America.

As always, please be well and stay safe.

- Jacqueline M. Jones

Connections magazine is produced each month by a collaborative, multiagency team of volunteer employees from throughout DOI. Under the direction of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administrative Services **Jacqueline M. Jones** and Acting Principal Diversity Officer and Director of the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights **Alesia Pierre-Louis**, the **Connections** team strives to foster an environment where all employees are respected, valued, accepted, appreciated and feel included. To find out more or to submit your ideas and suggestions for future issues, please contact editor Steve Carlisle at stephen_carlisle@ibc.doi.gov.

Online Resources from the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights:

- [National Native American Heritage Month Website](#)
- [List of 574 federally recognized Tribes](#)
- [BIA Tribal Leaders Directory](#)
- [Land Acknowledgement Database](#)
- [NPS Alaska Native Culture Webpage](#)
- [Learn About Native Languages](#)
- [Resources for Native American Veterans](#)
- [President's Indigenous Peoples Day Proclamation](#)



Did You Know:

Over 9.6 Million U.S. Residents Self-Identify as American Indian/Alaska Native in 2020 Census

The American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) population, alone and in combination, increased from 5.2 million in 2010 to 9.6 million in 2020, an 86.5 percent increase. This means AI/AN people represent 2.9 percent of the population of the United States.

- 3.7 million people self-identified as AI/AN with no other race
- 5.9 million self-identified as AI/AN in combination with one race or more
- 9.6 million self-identified as all or some AI/AN

Data: [US Census Bureau](#)

Above: Glass Installation of Preston Singletary, Tlingit American Artist. Images throughout the issue courtesy the [National Museum of the American Indian](#). Learn more about Preston Singletary and his art beginning on page 36.



Bryan Newland Sworn in as Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs

On September 8, 2021, **Bryan Newland** was ceremonially sworn in as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs by Secretary **Deb Haaland**. “Bryan has worked on behalf of Indigenous peoples and Indian Country for decades. His wealth of experience will advance the Department’s commitment to ensuring Tribes have a seat at the table for every decision that impacts them and their communities,” said Secretary Haaland. “From clean energy projects and economic development to addressing past injustices against Tribal communities, Bryan will lead with the knowledge that we best serve Indigenous peoples when Tribal governments are empowered to lead their communities.”

“I am honored to be back at the Department of the Interior working on behalf of Tribal communities and alongside an historic Secretary,” said Assistant Secretary Newland. “This administration has made clear its priorities to respect Tribal sovereignty and self-governance, fulfill federal trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribal Nations, and make regular, meaningful and robust consultation with Tribal Nations cornerstones of federal Indian policy. I am committed to engaging with Tribes every step of the way and ensuring they have the support and resources they need to fully thrive.”

Bryan Newland is a citizen of the Bay Mills Indian Community (Ojibwe), where he recently completed his tenure as Tribal President. Prior to that, Assistant Secretary Newland served as Chief Judge of the Bay Mills Tribal Court. From 2009 to 2012, he served as a Counselor and Policy Advisor to the Assistant Secretary of the Interior – Indian Affairs. He is a graduate of Michigan State University and the Michigan State University College of Law. Assistant Secretary Newland enjoys hiking and kayaking the shores of Lake Superior, and is a nature photography enthusiast.



About the Ojibwe

The Ojibwe people are among the largest population of Indigenous people in North America, with over 200,000 individuals living in Canada—primarily in Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan—and the United States, in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and North Dakota. The Canadian government recognizes more than 130 Chippewa First Nations, and the U.S. recognizes 22. The Ojibwe people today reside on small reservations or in small towns or urban centers. Each of the new communities created during their long history in the Great Lakes region is autonomous, and each has its own history, government, and flag, as well as a sense of place that cannot be easily distilled.

[Photo of Secretary Haaland swearing in Bryan Newland, September 8, 2021. Image courtesy DOI]



Meet Just a Few DOI Leaders of Indigenous Heritage

Johnna Blackhair is a member of the Chippewa Cree Tribe and serves as Deputy Bureau Director of the Office of Trust Services within the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Ms. Blackhair has 30 years of federal service starting in September 1991 with the BIA's Uintah and Ouray Agency in Fort Duchesne, UT. Beginning in April 2010, she gained extensive experience in the management of land titles and records, real estate services, probate, agriculture, and cadastral surveys, coordinating with the Bureau of Land Management as the Regional Realty Officer in the Southwest Regional Office.



Tony Dearman, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, serves as the Director of the Bureau of Indian Education. Dearman brings more than two decades of experience as a teacher, coach, and administrator in BIE operated and Tribally controlled schools. He began his career in education in 1993 at Sequoyah High School as a science teacher and coach, then served as principal and superintendent at a number of schools. In November of 2015 he was selected as the Associate Deputy Director of BIE Operated Schools. While serving in this position, he assisted in the implementation of the BIE reorganization and reform to improve services to students. As Associate Deputy Director, he oversaw 17 schools, four off-reservation boarding schools, and one peripheral dormitory spanning across eight states.



Jerry Gidner, a citizen of the Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa Tribe, is the Director of the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration. He has served throughout the Department in a variety of capacities: Director of BIA, Deputy Bureau Director for Indian Services, Chief of Staff to the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs, Deputy Associate Bureau Director for Post-Secondary Education at the Bureau of Indian Education, Deputy Chief Learning Officer for the Department of the Interior, and Senior Policy Advisor in the Office of Natural Resources Revenue. Mr. Gidner holds a law degree and a Master's degree in Natural Resources Policy and Management from the University of Michigan and an MBA from American University. He received his Bachelor's degree in Zoology from Michigan State University. He is a published writer of fiction.

Wizipan Little Elk is a citizen of the Sicangu Oyate (Rosebud Sioux Tribe) and serves as **Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs**. Most recently he served as the CEO of the Rosebud Economic Development Corporation. Mr. Little Elk's previous experience includes serving within the Sicangu Oyate government and at the Interior Department as Deputy Chief of Staff to the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale University and his law degree from the University of Arizona. Mr. Little Elk is a hunter and writer. He lives on the homelands of the Sicangu and is married to the love of his life and together raise four children.



Charles F. "Chuck" Sams III is an enrolled member of the Cayuse and Walla Walla of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. He is the first Native American to serve as **Director of the National Park Service**. Mr. Sams has held a variety of roles with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, most recently as their Executive Director. He has also had roles as the President/Chief Executive Officer of the Indian Country Conservancy, Executive Director for the Umatilla Tribal Community Foundation, National Director of the Tribal & Native Lands Program for the Trust for Public Land, and President/Chief Executive Officer for the Earth Conservation Corps. Mr. Sams holds a bachelor's of science degree in Business Administration from Concordia University-Portland and a master's of legal studies in Indigenous Peoples Law from the University of Oklahoma. He is a veteran of the U.S. Navy. Mr. Sams and his wife have four children.



Summer Lee Haunani Sylva is a Native Hawaiian attorney from Waimānalo, O'ahu and serves as **Senior Advisor for Native Hawaiian Affairs**. Ms. Sylva most recently served as the executive director of the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation (NHLC). Ms. Sylva joined Interior earlier this year with more than a decade of experience litigating before federal and state courts in Hawai'i, New York and New Jersey. During her tenure at NHLC, she led litigation efforts on Native Hawaiian rights issues, including water rights, state and federal government entitlement programs, public trust and historic native land claims. Ms. Sylva holds a Bachelor's degree in political science from Barnard College-Columbia University and a J.D. from Cornell Law School.



Meet Eldred F. Lesansee

An enrolled member of the Zuni Pueblo Tribe of New Mexico and Arizona, Mr. Lesansee is the Associate Deputy Director of the Appraisal and Valuations Services Office (AVSO), the Department’s single appraisal organization.

AVSO formed in March 2018 following the merger of two highly functioning offices—the Office of Appraisal Services within the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (now BTFA) and the Office of Valuation Services (OVS) within the Office of the Secretary. Mr. Lesansee administers all matters related to Tribal appraisal programs operating under P.L. 93-638 Self-Determination (Title I) contracts and Self-Governance (Title IV) compacts. Mr. Lesansee graduated from New Mexico State University with a Bachelor of Business Administration in real estate and trust and real property management.

What is the first job you ever had?

“My first job was a maintenance assistant as a summer youth job. I assisted the maintenance staff to clean, refurbish, and lightly remodel the old Zuni Head Start building. I was proud to be paid \$2.10 per hour, which went up to \$2.30 per hour and no benefits. Just Uncle Sam taking a chunk out for something called Social Security.”

What is your Native American heritage?

I am an enrolled member of the Zuni Pueblo Tribe of New Mexico and Arizona. In my earlier years I grew up on the Zuni Indian Reservation with my great grandfather, grandmother, and extended family. Then I was sent to Compton, California, to live with my brother, sister, and parents for three years. (I guess I have Compton clan, too.) My parents returned to Zuni, New Mexico, and I had to relearn the Zuni language to survive. My Native American heritage also includes the Hopi Tribe of Arizona, which comes from my great grandmother who was from First Mesa (Sichomovi).



Against her parents’ wishes she moved to Zuni with my great grandfather.

Will you please share a little bit about your family?

My wife, Darlene, and I are blessed with five sons. My sons are Jared, who is the eldest (29 years old), Eldred (JR), Ryan, Erik, and Jordan (21 years old). Jared, JR, and Ryan completed college and are employed. JR earned a master’s degree from Sciences Po Paris, France. Erik and Jordan are working on their college degrees at the University of New Mexico and Colorado State University. Our longtime friend and family pet is An:she’ (bear in Zuni). He is a 10-year-old golden retriever. An:she’ has a master’s degree in messing up our backyard.

Representation Matters

By Tamisha White, an enrolled member of the San Felipe Pueblo of New Mexico and Project Manager, Bureau of Trust Funds Administration, NM

What does it mean to be serving under the first Native American Secretary of the Interior?

I remember the day it was announced that then U.S. Representative Deb Haaland was nominated for Secretary. I never in my lifetime thought this could happen. I never thought we could see a Native American Secretary of the Interior, much less a Native American woman as Secretary!

In March of 2019, then Representative Haaland visited the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration in Albuquerque, NM, as part of Women's History Month *[pictured, left]*. I held back tears as she spoke about her upbringing, her goals and her culture. Interacting with a U.S. Congressperson

whose appearance, demeanor and history were similar to my own was such a powerful and motivating moment. I was filled with a real sense of hope knowing that here was someone in a leadership position who shared a similar perspective to mine and who was determined to work tirelessly to improve the experience of Native and Indigenous people across the country.

Less than two years later, on her first day with the Department, Secretary Haaland held a virtual all-hands meeting. I invited my six-year-old daughter Sophia and my mom Barbara to watch with me.



As Sophia made herself comfortable on my lap to watch the event *[pictured, below]*, I said, "You see that woman right there? That's Deb Haaland and she is my boss. She is the head of the organization momma works for and she is just like us. She is a Pueblo woman and we share the same language. One day that can be you!" I never thought I would be able to say those words to my daughter.

As I listened to Secretary Haaland, she spoke to us first as people and second as our leader. It was real impactful to feel seen as a person first. You could feel a sense of hope and excitement from each individual who spoke on behalf of their bureaus and organizations. I'm proud to work for the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration with my DOI family, and I'm honored especially to serve knowing Secretary Haaland is at the helm.



Ryan Portalatin is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and serves as a Records Management Specialist for BIA's Branch of Fish, Wildlife and Recreation in Albuquerque, NM.

Ryan learned about the [BIA Pathways Program](#) through an e-newsletter sent out by his Tribe and immediately applied for a position. At the time he was pursuing a bachelor's degree in Natural Resources Management at Texas Tech University where he eventually graduated in the fall of 2017.

Ryan interned with the Branch of Environmental and Cultural Resources Management within BIA's Office of Trust Services and supported the work of the Division of Natural Resources by helping with records management projects and other organizational tasks.

Ryan, what did you like about the Pathways program as a student?

I enjoyed the opportunity to surround myself with a professional environment and learn about the inner workings of the Federal Government. Pathways staff did an excellent job of fostering my interests and placing me in a division/branch that best suited my career goals.

What were some of the benefits you received from Pathways?

The experience of working with BIA personnel and meeting people among all the DOI's bureaus and offices. I was blessed that many BIA personnel took on a mentorship role with me and I was given a lot of great career advice from many great people. I was afforded the opportunity to travel to Billings, Montana for a National Environmental Science meeting and to Rapid City, South Dakota to visit Tribal schools experiencing problems with environmental compliance. The greatest benefits by far are the experiences such as these that I can (and did) take forward with me into my career with the BIA.

What would you say to someone thinking about Pathways as an option?

I would strongly encourage them to apply. The Pathways program is the best opportunity for Native American youth looking to begin a career in the BIA or the Federal Government. The Pathways program provides students with invaluable experiences that prepare them for Federal Employment upon graduation.

List three words that describe your position.

Conservation, Self-Determination, and Trust Responsibility

What are your hobbies and what do you like to do in your free time?

Living in Albuquerque is an outdoorsman's paradise! In my free time I like to go birdwatching, fishing, backcountry hiking, and otherwise explore all of New Mexico's natural beauty. Whether we are hiking high in the Sandia Mountains or wading through the murky waters of the Rio Grande River, I always bring my Spanish Mastiff, Mia, along for the journey.

[Left: Ryan attended a Senate hearing of the Natural Resources Committee in 2019 and posed for this candid shot in an adjacent hearing room. Photo courtesy of Ryan.]



VANGUARD AWARD

LEADING THE WAY

ADVOCATING FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION

DOROTHY FIRECLOUD NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



The *Vanguard Award* is presented by the *Connections* Team to recognize and celebrate the achievements of DOI employees who lead the way championing equity and inclusion. For November, the *Connections* Team is delighted to honor **Dorothy FireCloud**, National Park Service Native American Affairs Liaison.

After almost 30 years in federal service, Ranger FireCloud was selected to serve as the NPS Native American Affairs Liaison last year, the first to hold this critically important position. Additionally, Ranger FireCloud serves on the leadership team from NPS that sponsors the [Council for Indigenous Relevancy, Communication, Leadership and Excellence \(CIRCLE\)](#), an employee resource group formed in 2013 to enhance understanding of American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian (AI/AN/NH) issues. CIRCLE provides recommendations and guidance to NPS leadership regarding the hiring, retention, and improved visibility of AI/AN/NHs throughout the NPS.

For her outstanding advocacy and continuing efforts on behalf of AI/AN/NH employees at NPS and the customers they serve, the *Connections* Team presents Dorothy FireCloud with our *Vanguard Award* for November 2021.



The Department's Trust Principles

It is the policy of the Department of the Interior to discharge, without limitation, the Secretary's Indian trust responsibility with a high degree of skill, care, and loyalty. The proper discharge of the Secretary's trust responsibilities requires that persons who manage Indian trust assets:

Protect and preserve Indian trust assets from loss, damage, unlawful alienation, waste, and depletion;

Assure that any management of Indian trust assets that the Secretary has an obligation to undertake promotes the interest of the beneficial owner and supports, to the extent it is consistent with the Secretary's trust responsibility, the beneficial owner's intended use of the assets;

Enforce the terms of all leases or other agreements that provide for the use of trust assets, and take appropriate steps to remedy trespass on trust or restricted lands;

Promote Tribal control and self-determination over Tribal trust lands and resources;

Select and oversee persons who manage Indian trust assets;

Confirm that tribes that manage Indian trust assets pursuant to contracts and compacts authorized by the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, 25 U.S.C. 450, et seq., protect and prudently manage Indian trust assets;

Provide oversight and review of the performance of the Secretary's trust responsibility, including Indian trust asset and investment management programs, operational systems, and information systems;

Account for and timely identify, collect, deposit, invest, and distribute income due or held on behalf of beneficial owners;

Maintain a verifiable system of records that is capable, at a minimum, of identifying: (1) the location, the beneficial owners, any legal encumbrances (i.e., leases, permits, etc.), the user of the resource, the rents and monies paid, if any, and the value of trust or restricted lands and resources; (2) dates of collections, deposits, transfers, disbursements, third party obligations (i.e., court ordered child support, judgments, etc.), amount of earnings, investment instruments and closing of all trust fund accounts; (3) documents pertaining to actions taken to prevent or compensate for any diminishment of the Indian trust assets; and (4) documents that evidence the Department's actions regarding the management and disposition of Indian trust assets;

Establish and maintain a system of records that permits beneficial owners to obtain information regarding their Indian trust assets in a timely manner and protect the privacy of such information in accordance with applicable statutes;

Invest Tribal and individual Indian trust funds to make the trust account reasonably productive for the beneficial owner consistent with market conditions existing at the time the investment is made;

Communicate with beneficial owners regarding the management and administration of Indian trust assets; and

Protect treaty-based fishing, hunting, gathering, and similar rights of access and resource use on traditional Tribal lands.

FAQ About Trust Responsibility

By the Connections Team

As a federal employee, what is my “Federal Indian Trust Responsibility?”

In 1942 The United States Supreme Court decided [Seminole Nation v. United States](#) (316 U.S. 286). In this landmark case, the Court wrote:

“In carrying out its treaty obligations with the Indian tribes the Government is something more than a mere contracting party. Under a humane and self-imposed policy which has found expression in many acts of Congress and numerous decisions of this Court, it has charged itself with moral obligations of the highest responsibility and trust. Its conduct, as disclosed in the acts of those who represent it in dealings with the Indians, should therefore be judged by the most exacting fiduciary standards.”

Fiduciary standards – what does the Court mean?

In law, there are degrees of “duty of care.” A lifeguard has a duty to watch over people swimming in a pool or at the ocean. A storekeeper has a duty to keep their aisles clear, free from spills or hazards. A parent has an even higher duty of care to their children. A parent must ensure their children are kept out of harm’s way, provided with food, clothing, shelter, and an education. While the duty of care a parent has for their child is very high, it is not the highest. The highest duty of care is the fiduciary duty.

A fiduciary is someone who is obligated to manage and protect the property or assets another (the beneficiary) with the utmost trust, loyalty, confidence, and care. Every action the fiduciary takes must be to the advantage of the beneficiary.

How does this apply to me? I’m a federal Contracting Officer, I don’t work with tribes.

Whether you are in grants, contracting, purchasing, budget, environmental sciences, engineering, fisheries, property (okay, you get the idea) nearly every federal position has the potential to make a decision that would have an impact on a federally recognized tribe or an individual Indian trust landowner.



A contracting officer may be in the position of awarding federal assistance to a tribe.

A grants officer may be reviewing a grant application where the proposed project is located on or near Tribal trust land or individual Indian trust land. If the project has the potential to impact that land (either in a positive way or negative way), then Interior has a fiduciary duty to act for the benefit of the tribe or landowner with regard to that proposed project, and initiate Tribal consultation.

What if a project I’m working on could affect a tribe or individual Indian landowner?

Understanding our fiduciary duty to tribes and to individual Indian landowners can be complicated. Arriving at an answer often depends on the scope of the project, so the best thing to do is to contact your agency or bureau Tribal Liaison or Native American Affairs Office. If there isn’t a local liaison or office, there is typically one at the regional level or at the DC level. The Tribal Liaison will provide guidance or will research a specific question if the answer isn’t readily clear.

How can I learn more?

If you have the opportunity, check DOI Talent for courses on the federal trust responsibility to tribes. While a given course may not be specific to your federal position (such as a Tribal consultation course), it will provide you with insights about working with tribes and how to recognize when a project you are working could impact a tribe or individual Indian trust landowner and when to contact your Tribal Liaison.

Reservation Mathematics: Navigating Love in Native Country

By Tailyr Irvine, Photojournalist

[National Museum of the American Indian](#)

In the following photo essay, photojournalist **Tailyr Irvine** [pictured, right] explores the issues that blood quantum requirements for Tribal enrollment pose for Native Americans. The concept of using so-called “blood quantum”—or amount of Tribal affiliation in a person’s ancestry—to determine Tribal enrollment eligibility has no basis in Native American traditions. In the early 1900s, the U.S. government began imposing this system on tribes as a means of defining and limiting citizenship. While a number of tribes still use this method for determining eligibility for Tribal enrollment, other Native nations use documentation of a person’s descent from an enrollee on a designated Tribal roll or census records.

For “[Reservation Mathematics: Navigating Love in Native America](#),” Irvine interviewed Indigenous residents in Missoula and on her Flathead Indian Reservation in western Montana. They share their deep personal, social and political concerns about the blood quantum system, which can impact Native Americans’ most personal decisions—including with whom they have children.

Through intimate stories, Irvine shows how blood quantum requirements are increasingly putting pressures on Native Americans’ lives.

What is Blood Quantum?

The notion of “blood quantum” sprang from U.S. colonial and racial biases. Non-Native people devised this way to define Native American identity by degree of affiliation to a tribe in their family ancestry. For example, if a person has ancestors who all descended from one American Indian tribe and has a child with someone who is not a member of that tribe, their child would have a blood quantum of $\frac{1}{2}$. If this child grows up and becomes a parent with someone who is not a citizen of his or her tribe, their offspring would have a blood quantum of $\frac{1}{4}$. For those tribes that use blood quantum as a criterion for Tribal enrollment, the minimum blood quantum requirements vary and have ranged from one-half to one-sixteenth.



Michael Irvine and Leah Nelson

When this image was captured in November 2019, Michael Irvine, 22, and his partner, Leah Nelson, 21, were awaiting the birth of their first child, a daughter. They chose to raise their family on the Flathead Indian Reservation in western Montana, home to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, where Michael grew up and where they both currently reside.

Irvine, a member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, has a blood quantum of $\frac{7}{16}$. Nelson, a member of the Navajo Nation, has a blood quantum of $\frac{3}{4}$. Because Irvine’s tribes require $\frac{1}{4}$ Salish and Kootenai blood for enrollment, their child will not qualify to be a member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and will be enrolled in the Navajo Nation. **[Continued on next page]**

All photos by Tailyr Irvine



Michael, Leah and Nizhóní's Story (Continued)

LEFT: On December 9, 2019, Michael Irvine and Leah Nelson look at their daughter Nizhóní Irvine's paternal family tree, printed at the Salish and Kootenai Tribal Enrollment Office. The document shows the blood quantum of each of Michael Irvine's Salish and Kootenai family members from the 1800s to the present—and that Nizhóní is just 3/128ths short of being able to be enrolled in Michael's tribe. A memorandum states Nizhóní is designated a first-generation descendant—but not a member—of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. This classification will limit her participation in the tribes' services, such as financial aid for college and Tribal employment opportunities.

"It sucks that I'm 1/16ths short of having Nizhóní enrolled here," says Michael Irvine. "She's Native, Salish and Kootenai, and living on our reservation. Eventually she's going to ask why she's not a member when her cousins and family are."



Nizhóní Ajéí Irvine Wrapped in Her Salish Bag

ABOVE: Nizhóní Ajéí Irvine was born in November 2019. Her first and middle names are the Navajo words for "beautiful" and "my heart," respectively. As is her mother, Nizhóní will be enrolled in the Navajo Tribe, whose reservation is located in the Southwest, more than 1,000 miles from the Flathead Indian Reservation where the family lives. Here, she will grow up and learn Salish culture and traditions from her father.

See the entire photo essay here:

<https://americanindian.si.edu/developingstories/irvine.html>

Tailyr Irvine is a Salish and Kootenai independent photojournalist from the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana.



Leah and Nizhóní Visit the Woods

ABOVE: As a young descendant of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Nizhóní Irvine is allowed in the tribes' woods without a permit. However, as she is not enrolled in the tribe, after she turns 18 years old Nizhóní will need a permit each time she wishes to access the same outdoor recreational spaces without her father.

Nizhóní's mother, Leah Nelson, describes the relationship between Native culture and access to Tribal land: "I didn't get to experience my culture because I did not live on my Navajo reservation. There are ceremonies I can't learn because I wasn't raised there." She says she wants her daughter to have that connection. "We live here, and it's important to me that she participates in the culture here so she knows where she comes from and who she is. Everything we do is outside because I want to show her our home."

Indian Affairs Launches New Tool to Bring Attention to Missing and Murdered Cases

The Bureau of Indian Affairs announced on December 10, 2021, the launch of its [new website](#) dedicated to solving missing and murdered cases in Indian Country. The tool draws attention to unresolved cases involving Indigenous persons that the BIA, Office of Justice Services, Missing and Murdered Unit (MMU) is working on and invites the public to help law enforcement solve those cases.

“The Missing and Murdered Indigenous peoples crisis has plagued Indian Country for too long, with cases often going unsolved and unaddressed,” said **Bryan Newland, Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs**. “This website represents a new tool in the effort to keep communities safe and provide closure for families.”

“This is an important new resource that connects those who might have case information with the investigating agency and agent -- speeding feedback to address the legitimate concerns of our Native communities,” said **Jason O’Neal, Deputy Bureau Director, Justice Services**.

Under Secretary **Deb Haaland’s** leadership, Interior is committed to working with Tribal governments, law enforcement agencies, survivors, families of the missing, and all communities impacted to coordinate interagency collaboration to address this crisis. Secretary Haaland created the MMU to pursue justice for missing or murdered Indigenous people.



The new site provides detailed case information that can be easily shared, and three pathways to submit important tips and other case information that may help investigators with the detection or investigation of an offense committed in Indian Country.

The site also contains information regarding how to submit tips or case information that may help investigators. For some tips, BIA offers rewards for information assisting in the detection or investigation of an offense committed in Indian country or in the arrest of an offender against the United States. The standard reward may be up to \$5,000, depending on the specific details provided. BIA may increase the amount conditional on the circumstances.

Additionally, an important feature of the site is its connectivity to the [National Missing and Unidentified Person’s System](#) and the [Federal Bureau of Investigation Indian Country Case website](#), which aims to enhance the Missing and Murdered Unit’s ability to connect cases that involve American Indian and Alaska Native people.

For more information, please visit the BIA’s new [missing and murdered cases website](#).

Image from DOI



What is a Land Acknowledgment?

A Land Acknowledgment is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.

Why do we recognize the land?

To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory you reside on, and a way of honoring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is important to understand the long-standing history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history.

Use the [Native Land Digital website](#) to find out who are the original stewards of the land you stand on.

[Tips for Creating an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement Statement](#)

(from the Native Governance Center)

image courtesy Native Land Digital

DID YOU KNOW: Indigenous Tribes of Washington, DC

The United States capital is surrounded by just over a dozen Tribal nations that thrive along the Anacostia and Potomac River watersheds and in the Chesapeake Bay area and the states of Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware. Washington, DC, sits on the ancestral lands of the Nacotchtank (or Anacostans), and neighbors the ancestral lands of the Piscataway and Pamunkey peoples.

The District of Columbia shares borders with Maryland and Virginia, and connects with lands along the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. These river systems and current national parks are where the Piscataway, Pamunkey, the Nentego (Nanichoke), Mattaponi, Chickahominy, Monacan, and the Powhatan cultures thrived. According to the National Park Service, the region “was rich in natural resources and supported the local native people.”

The original people experienced the ravages brought on by the settler-colonial introduction of diseases, encroachment and forced removal, and erasure of traditional and cultural survival of the tribes. Today, the Indigenous people who reside in the Washington, DC, area continue to present their case for recognition for descendant communities. These citizens fight for their nations, hoping to restore or receive a government-to-

government relationship with the US. In Virginia, 11 have achieved state recognition. The Pamunkey tribe recently acquired its land and is one of the only two Virginian tribes that own land after the colonization of present-day Washington, DC. As of January 2018, the Pamunkey, Rappahannock, and Upper Mattaponi tribes have received federal recognition.

Today, roughly 4,000 Indigenous people, including many employees of the Department of the Interior and other agencies, live and thrive in present-day Washington, DC. In efforts to teach locals about their history and culture, communities like the Rappahannock tribe host annual celebrations in the national parks.

Tribal Resources

[Piscataway Conoy Tribe](#)

[Piscataway Conoy Creations](#)

[Pamunkey Indian Tribe](#)

[Nentego \(Nanichoke\)](#)

[The Confederation of Sovereign Nanticoke-Lenape Tribes Mattaponi](#)

[Chickahominy Indian Tribe](#)

[Monacan Indian Nation](#)

[Rappahannocks](#)

[Virginia State Recognized Tribes](#)

[Federal and State Recognized Tribes](#)

[DC Native History Project](#)



National Park Service and historical articles

[Powhatan cultures](#)

[Native Peoples of Washington, DC](#)

[American Indian Tribes Today](#)

[Library of Congress — Native Histories of Washington, DC](#)

[American Indians of Washington, DC, and the Chesapeake](#)

[National Museum of the American Indian Center for Native American Youth](#)

[Bureau of Indian Education](#)

[The National Park Service — Washington, DC](#)

Text and image courtesy of the [Association of Research Libraries](#)

Above: Captain John Smith’s 1612 map identifying Indigenous communities on Chesapeake Bay.

Perspectives

by Barbara Green

Equal Opportunity Manager, NPS, Anchorage, AK



I recently visited the [Alaska Native Heritage Center](#) [pictured, above] in Anchorage intending to write about the Center in its entirety, yet my course of direction changed when I became fascinated with an exhibit featuring a wide array of handmade items. As I approached the Hall of Cultures, I glanced to the left and saw a woman with her head bent, intently stitching pieces of fur together. Not wanting to disturb her, I admired her craftsmanship from afar.

The Hall of Cultures features five major group displays: **Athabaskan; Yup'ik/Cup'ik; Inupiaq/St. Lawrence Island Yupik; Aleut/Alutiiq; and Eyak/Tlingit/Haida/Tsimshian.** While reading the storyboards, I heard a woman passionately describing the level of detail in a carved walrus jawbone depicting two eagles.

I gravitated towards her and marveled over the carving's intricacy. The fellow visitor thanked her and left, and I chose to stay.

"What is your background?" she asked, with genuine curiosity, as she stared intently at my face. We both had masks on and could only see each other's eyes. Hers were warm, twinkling and etched with elegant creases which told a magnificent story of having lived a rich and full life. I replied, "My mother is Korean and my father is Scotch-Irish."

She raised her eyebrows and quipped, "I thought you were one of us." I smiled behind my mask and said, "I am not Alaska Native, yet I love Alaska."

She enthusiastically proclaimed, "We came from Asia; we are all interconnected." I nodded my head and caught a glimpse of her almost upside-down nametag – Margaret. After regaling me with stories of her ancestry and family, Margaret reached into a bag and pulled out a walrus tusk carving [pictured, left]. I was mesmerized by the complexity of the carving, and wanting to be respectful, I asked her permission to take pictures. Her eyes gleamed and she nodded yes. I complimented her considerable talent. "I'm gifted artistically," she exclaimed with immense pride. "You truly are gifted artistically," I happily echoed.

I walked towards the fur coats and Margaret excitedly described the meticulous stitching. She said her mother taught her how to make coats and she taught her children. I was drawn to a doll and remarked on its beauty. "Oh, that's me as a teenager when I went to my first festival dance. I had so much fun," she chuckled. Behind the doll replica of Margaret, colorful doll dresses were hanging on the wall; I was awestruck by her range of creativity.



[Cont'd next page]

Perspectives (Continued)

Margaret sensed my keen interest in her artistry and showed me a necklace, explaining the oval stones in between the beads are walrus fossil pieces. She asked me if I have been to the [Alaska Fur Exchange](#) and I told her no. Margaret said there are walrus fossils there with a blue hue and I should go see it. She laughed heartily and said, "Tell them Marge sent you." I thanked her for her time and knew I would be back to visit again. Hearing Marge describe how she created such exquisite pieces enraptured me and I yearned for more time with her.

I honor and celebrate Marge. Her stories enthralled me and her artistry amazed me. I thought back to her comment, "...we are all interconnected." Whether it is through tradition, history, shared ancestry, appreciation of one another, or learning more about different cultures, she is right – we are all interconnected. And yes, Marge, I will stop by the Alaska Fur Exchange and tell the staff you sent me.

Quyana (Alaska Native thank you), Marge, for your time, a memorable gift I will always treasure.



[Clockwise from above: Margaret's doll; carved walrus jawbone; map of ancestral lands in modern-day Alaska. All photos courtesy Barbara Green.]



Comanche Code Talkers

Nʉmʉrekwa'etʉʉ — “Comanche Speakers”

During World Wars I and II, the United States military used select Native American service men to relay secret battle messages based on words from their traditional Tribal languages. “Code Talkers,” as they came to be known, are twentieth century heroes.

Although the Nʉmʉnʉʉ (Comanche) language was utilized in battle during WWI, it wasn't until WWII that an organized code was developed. Twenty-one Comanche men were hand-picked by the U.S. Government to participate in the WWII Code Talker program. Seventeen of those men went on to enlist in the U.S. Army and received training as radio operators and line repairmen with the 4th Infantry Division. During this time, the Army gave them free rein to develop secret Comanche code words that no one outside the group would be able to understand, including other Comanches. The move proved successful. It took a military machine up to four hours to transmit and decode a message, but a Comanche Code Talker could decode the same message in less than three minutes. Their codes were never broken.

Fourteen of the Comanche Code Talkers were sent overseas during WWII to fight in the European Theater. Thirteen of those men hit the beaches of Normandy with Allied troops on D-Day. When the 4th Infantry Division landed on Utah Beach, they were five miles off their designated target. Several Comanche Code Talkers were wounded in battle but all

survived the war. These valiant soldiers are credited with saving the lives of thousands of American and Allied service men. All the Comanche Code Talkers have now passed away but their heroic actions will forever be remembered by a grateful Nation.

Comanche Code Talkers of World War II:

Cpl. Charles Chibitty
T/4 Haddon Codynah
T/5 Robert Holder
Cpl. Forrest Kassanavoid
T/5 Wellington Mihecoby
Pvt. Perry Noyabad
T/5 Clifford Otitivo
T/5 Simmons Parker
Pvt. Melvin Permansu
Pvt. Elgin Red Elk
Pfc. Roderick Red Elk
Pfc. Larry Saupitty
Anthony Tabbytite
Morris Tabbyetchy
Pfc. Ralph Wahnee
T/5 Willis Yackeschi
Pvt. Albert (Edward) Nahquaddy, Jr.



The last Comanche Code Talker to pass was **Cpl. Charles Chibitty** [pictured, above], 83, on July 20, 2005. In 2008, Comanche Code Talkers of World War I and II posthumously received the [Congressional Gold Medal](#).

[Text and images courtesy [Oklahoma Historical Society](#)]

Comanche Code Talkers—World War II



Four Lakota Values

From Akta Lakota Museum and Cultural Center

Wacantognaka, the Lakota word for generosity, means to contribute to the well-being of one's people and all life by sharing and giving freely. This sharing is not just of objects and possessions, but of emotions like sympathy, compassion, kindness. It also means to be generous with one's personal time. The act of giving and not looking for anything in return can make you a better person and make you happy.

No matter what race or nationality or tribe, people have found when you reach out to help others in your community, you become less focused on yourself and more in harmony with the world.

Wotitakuye, or kinship, is one of the important values coming from the **tiyospaye**, the extended family. It includes the ideas of living in harmony, belonging, relations as the true wealth and the importance of trusting in others. It is one of the values that made the tiyospaye work.

Family is the measure of your wealth. They will support you in good times and in bad times. For a Lakota, you belong to a tiyospaye through birth, marriage or adoption. Your family even extends out to your band and the whole Lakota nation. Whenever you travel somewhere, you can expect to be welcomed and supported as if you were in your own immediate family.

Wacintaka, or fortitude, means facing danger or challenges with courage, strength and confidence. Believing in oneself allows a person to face challenges. Fortitude includes the ability to come to terms with problems, to accept them and to find a solution that is good for everyone.

One of the first lessons a Lakota child learned in the old days was self-control and self-restraint in the presence of parents or adults. Mastery and abilities came from games and creative play. Someone more skilled than oneself was viewed as a role model, not as a competitor. Striving was for achieving a personal goal, not for being superior to one's opponent. Success was a possession of the many, not of the few.



Fortitude may require patience, perseverance and strength of mind in the face of challenges. It involves having confidence in oneself and the courage to continue even when all odds are against you. Fear still exists, but you proceed in spite of fear.

Woksape, or wisdom: The knowledge and wisdom of old people is very important for the well-being of the Lakota people. This is understood to be something sought and gained over the course of one's entire life, but not just by adding years to one's life.

Wisdom has to do with understanding the meaning within natural processes and patterns. It means knowing the design and purpose of life.

It also has to do with understanding and living the spiritual values and beliefs upon which one's culture is founded and being able to share these with others. Wisdom means being able to incorporate the sacred way of life into one's own life and to respect and honor all life. It means being open to the dreams of the day and the night when spiritual direction may come to a receptive child or adult seeking wisdom.

Above: **Warrior Spirit** by Robert Freeman, Luiseno/Santee. A self-taught artist, Robert Freeman's creative talent is vastly diversified. His work encompasses realism, abstractionism, cubism, impressionism, portraiture, cartoons and murals.



Lenape/Delaware Ribbonwork and Beadwork



[Read more about Lenape/Delaware ribbonwork and beadwork here.](#)

Images courtesy DOI Museum online collection.

Tlingit “People of the Tides”

Pronounced TLIN-git” or “KLIN-kit” in English, the Tlingit Indians are the northernmost of the Northwest coast Indians in North America and comprise about 10,000 people in 16 communities inhabiting the green, mountainous islands and coastal lands of southeast Alaska from Yakutat Bay in the north to Ketchikan in the south. As a maritime climate, this region is known for its rainy climate and vast system of waterways. Indeed, the waters were the highways for the Tlingit people and other native tribes, like the Haida. Anyone who has ever spent time in Southeast Alaska knows how unrelenting and harsh the rain can be—but in equal measure—how stunningly beautiful the region is, especially when the sun comes out.

Well-suited to their watery environment, the Tlingit traversed their lands in large canoes of red cedar, masterpieces of efficiency and ingenuity, averaging sixty feet in length. As seafaring people, the Tlingit were also expert fishermen, catching halibut, salmon, herring and cod with harpoons, nets, and bone fishhooks. Seal, clams, shellfish, fish eggs, berries, and venison were also dietary staples.

The clothing of the Tlingit people was well adapted to their climate. Raincoats made of cedar bark and spruce roots were common, and many of their distinct clothing styles are considered an art form. The Chilkat robe is considered a symbol of Tlingit culture. These robes received their name from the Chilkat clan, a group of people noted for their incredible talent in weaving. Crafted from mountain goat



wool and cedar bark strips, these pieces often feature the emblem of a person’s clan.

Tlingit society is divided into two groups called moieties. Each Tlingit person is either a Raven or an Eagle (in the northeastern area the moieties are called Crow and Wolf). Under each of the moieties are numerous clans, and within each village are numerous houses. Each house consists of an extended family under one animal name. These people, amounting to a population of forty to fifty, often lived together in a large, cedar-planked house. A Tlingit person always inherits the moiety, clan, and house membership of his or her mother.

The distinctive art of the Tlingit is reflective of their culture, ancestry, and collective histories. Carving is by far the largest example of Tlingit artwork seen, with totem poles being the most recognized art form seen. The figures featured on totem poles are comparable to family crests, featuring animals such as bears, killer

whales, and eagles.

The Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska is a Tribal government representing over 32,000 Tlingit and Haida Indians worldwide.

Images and text from [Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska official site](#)



Tlingit Chilkat Robe



Tlingit Canoe

Reconciliation and Communication

By [Sharon Grainger](#), Naturalist and artist, Lummi Island, WA

“The Tlingit people were first chased from their lands by advancing ice coming down Tarr Inlet, said to have been at the pace of a running dog! They retreated into Icy Straits and settled in several different locations. The community of Huna represented one of these new Tlingit homes. When the ice retreated north during a two hundred year period of time, relieving the land of its massive weight, and enabling the ground to rebound between 19 and 22 feet, the Huna Tlingit watched and waited. In the early 1900s when they thought of returning to their ancestral land, it had already been declared a National Park. During the last 100 years the thought of reclaiming the land and honoring the ancestors has remained constant.

“Today, this long-awaited dream is represented by the completion of **Xunaa Shuká Hít**, roughly translated as “[Huna Ancestor’s House](#).” Originally, the building was constructed to honor the Huna Clans’ tie to Glacier Bay as a homeland. It has developed into much more. The house now symbolizes reconciliation, an ongoing theme for Indigenous peoples, and represents communication between the clans of the Huna Tlingit and the National Park Service.

“As guests we witnessed the dedication of a Big House to four clans: **Wooshkeetaan** (Shark Clan), **Kaagwaataan** (Wolf Clan), **Chookaneidi** (Porpoise Clan) and **T’akdeintaan** (Kittiwake Clan). This event, happening inside the boundaries of [Glacier Bay National Park](#), is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for each of us.

We are witnessing a beginning: a collaboration between Native Americans and our National Parks. Collaboration is about communicating synergistically. For Native peoples this is about the next seven generations and the future of those generations holding fast to the culture and life ways of the Tlingit people. “



Above: Woman with Tlingit Paddle



Huna Ancestor’s House, Glacier Bay National Park.
Images courtesy Sharon Grainger



Zhawenim giwii-jii-bi-maadaziim we-we-ni doo-daw ga-ye

[Be kind to others and treat them well]

– Ojibwe, Great Lakes Chippewa

★ VETERAN SPOTLIGHT ★

Shannon Fabela

Acting Superintendent, Okmulgee Agency, BIA/Eastern Oklahoma Region

Shannon Fabela is an Air Force veteran who served on active duty (1995-1999) and retired from the Air Force Reserves in 2015. During her active duty she was stationed at Kadena AFB, Okinawa, Japan; Minot AFB, Minot, North Dakota; and Prince Sultan AB, Saudi Arabia. In 1999, she transferred to the Air Force Reserves and served with the 507th located at Tinker AFB, Oklahoma. She also served in Operation Iraqi Freedom at Kirkuk AB, Kirkuk, Iraq.

Ms. Fabela joined the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a Human Resources Assistant (Recruitment & Placement) and Human Resources Specialist (Recruitment & Placement) under the Central Human Resources Office, located in Anadarko, Oklahoma. In 2012, Ms. Fabela joined the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Eastern Oklahoma Region, Office of the Regional Director, Muskogee, Oklahoma as the Regional Management Analyst. Within the realms of her duties as a Management Analyst, she has served on special projects with the Director, Deputy Bureau Director-Field Operations, Human Resources and other various programs. She has served several details including acting as the Regional Administrative Officer and currently as the Acting Superintendent, Okmulgee Agency, Eastern Oklahoma Region.



Ms. Fabela is an enrolled member of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma and direct descendant of Kiowa Principal Chief Dohauson and Kiowa Red Tipi. Although an avid University of Oklahoma (Boomer Sooner) fan, she earned her B.A. in Sociology from the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma.

Ms. Fabela continues to abide by the Air Force core values of “Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do” which has laid a solid foundation in her 21-year federal career.

Ms. Fabela is married and has three children.

HONOR ★ VALOR ★ SERVICE

The DOI Veterans Resource Group is here for you. Please reach out to doi_vets@ios.doi.gov

National Native American Veterans Memorial: A Place for Honoring and Healing

Twenty-five years in the making, a new monument on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., opened on Veterans Day 2020 — the National Native American Veterans Memorial.

"It's an article of faith in Indian country that Native Americans serve at a greater rate than basically any other group," said Kevin Gover, the director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian and a citizen of the Pawnee Tribe of Oklahoma. He said the steel ring sculpture over a carved stone drum, in a wooded area near the museum's entrance, will become hallowed ground. "When people bring their memories and bring their prayers to a place, they make it sacred," he said. "We wish for this to be a sacred place, not just for Native Americans, but for all Americans."

A distinguished group of Native and non-Native jurors unanimously selected the design concept "Warriors' Circle of Honor" by [Harvey Pratt](#) (Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma) from among more than 120 submissions. Pratt [pictured, right] is a self-taught artist whose works include themes of Native American history and tradition and the Cheyenne people. Born in El Reno, Oklahoma, Pratt credits his parents and teachers for encouraging his artistic pursuits and respect for veterans. A veteran himself, Pratt served in Vietnam from 1962 to 1965 as a U.S. Marine in Air Rescue and Security stationed at Da Nang Air Base. He is recognized by the Cheyenne People as an outstanding Southern Cheyenne, and was inducted as a traditional Peace Chief—the Cheyenne Nation's highest honor.



Photos and text courtesy Alan Karchmer/
National Native American Veterans Memorial



The U.S. Department of Defense estimates more than 24,000 American Indian and Alaska Native men and women are on active duty, and more than 150,000 veterans self-identify as American Indian or Alaska Native.

HONOR ★ VALOR ★ SERVICE



Misty D. Lakota

Branch: Army Reserve

Rank: Chief Warrant Officer Two

Years Served: 2008-Current

Locations served: Afghanistan-OFS 2020-2021, and Fort Bragg, NC

Currently: Resident Agent in Charge, FWS-OLE, Albuquerque, NM



US Department of the Interior Veterans Wall of Honor

HONORING INTERIOR EMPLOYEES WHO SERVED IN THE U.S. ARMED FORCES

Did You Know:

Native Americans and Alaska Natives serve in the U.S. Armed Forces at a rate FIVE TIMES the national average. The U.S. Department of Defense estimates more than 24,000 American Indian and Alaska Native men and women are on active duty, and more than 150,000 veterans self-identify as American Indian or Alaska Native.

[The DOI Veterans Virtual Wall of Honor 2021](#) is available for viewing on demand. More than 600 members of the DOI family are included. The Virtual Wall of Honor is a collaborative effort of the [DOI Veterans Employee Resource Group](#) and the **Connections** Team.



Below: Native American Women Warriors confer a blessing at the Vietnam War Memorial. Image courtesy of [The Native American Women Warriors Association](#)

Mitákuye Oyás'ın

To the Creator, for the ultimate gift of life, I thank you.

To the mineral nation that has built and maintained my bones and all foundations of life experience, I thank you.

To the plant nation that sustains my organs and body and gives me healing herbs for sickness, I thank you.

To the animal nation that feeds me from your own flesh and offers your loyal companionship in this walk of life, I thank you.

To the human nation that shares my path as a soul upon the sacred wheel of Earthly life, I thank you.

To the Spirit nation that guides me invisibly through the ups and downs of life and for carrying the torch of light through the Ages, I thank you.

To the Four Winds of Change and Growth, I thank you.

You are all my relations, my relatives, without whom I would not live. We are in the circle of life together, co-existing, co-dependent, co-creating our destiny.

One, not more important than the other. One nation evolving from the other and yet each dependent upon the one above and the one below.

All of us a part of the Great Mystery.

Thank you for this Life.

(Traditional Lakota Prayer)



Photo of lynx by Kaiulani Rees, AVSO

Mesa Verde: Ten Thousand Years of Ancestral History

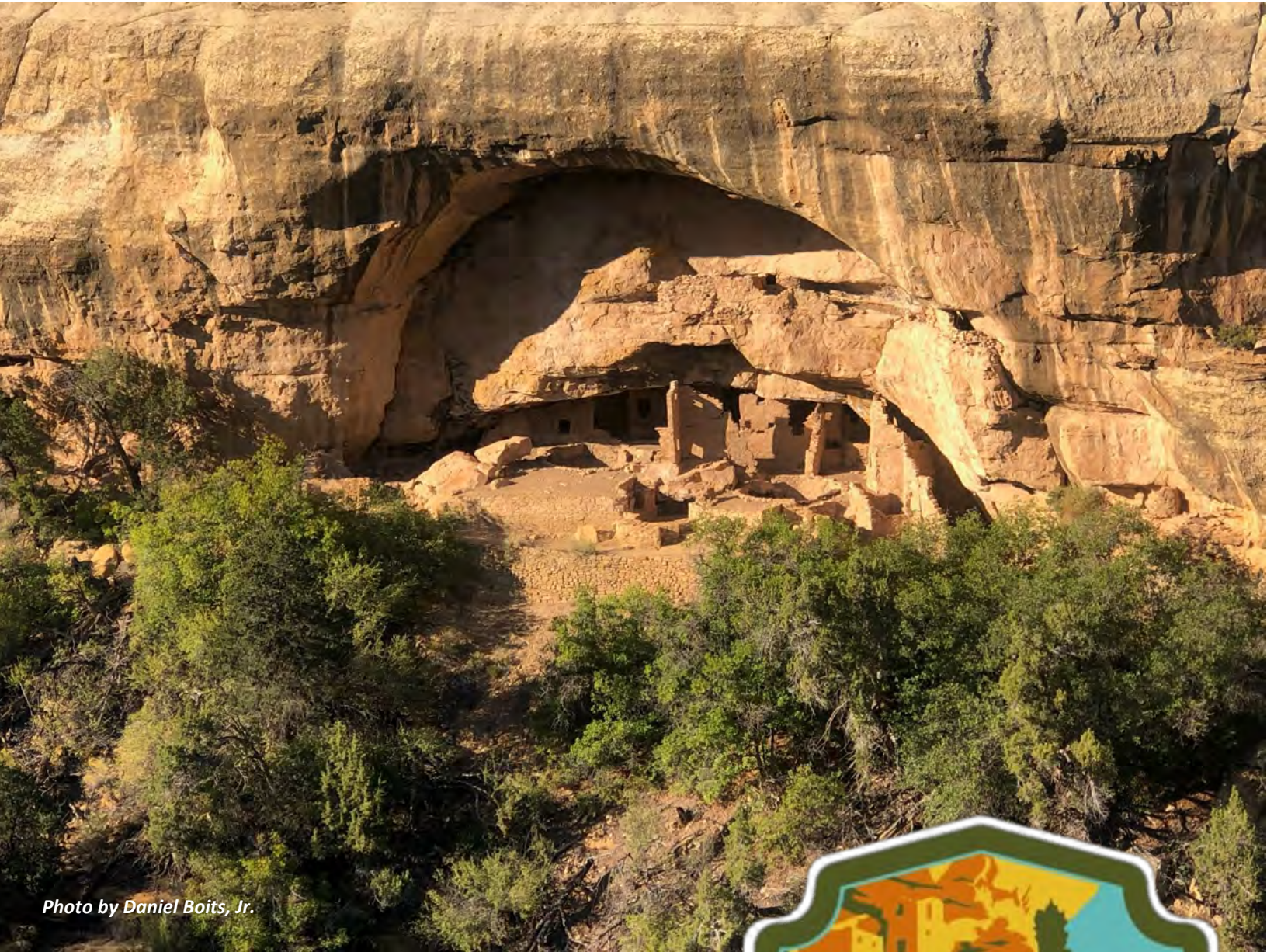
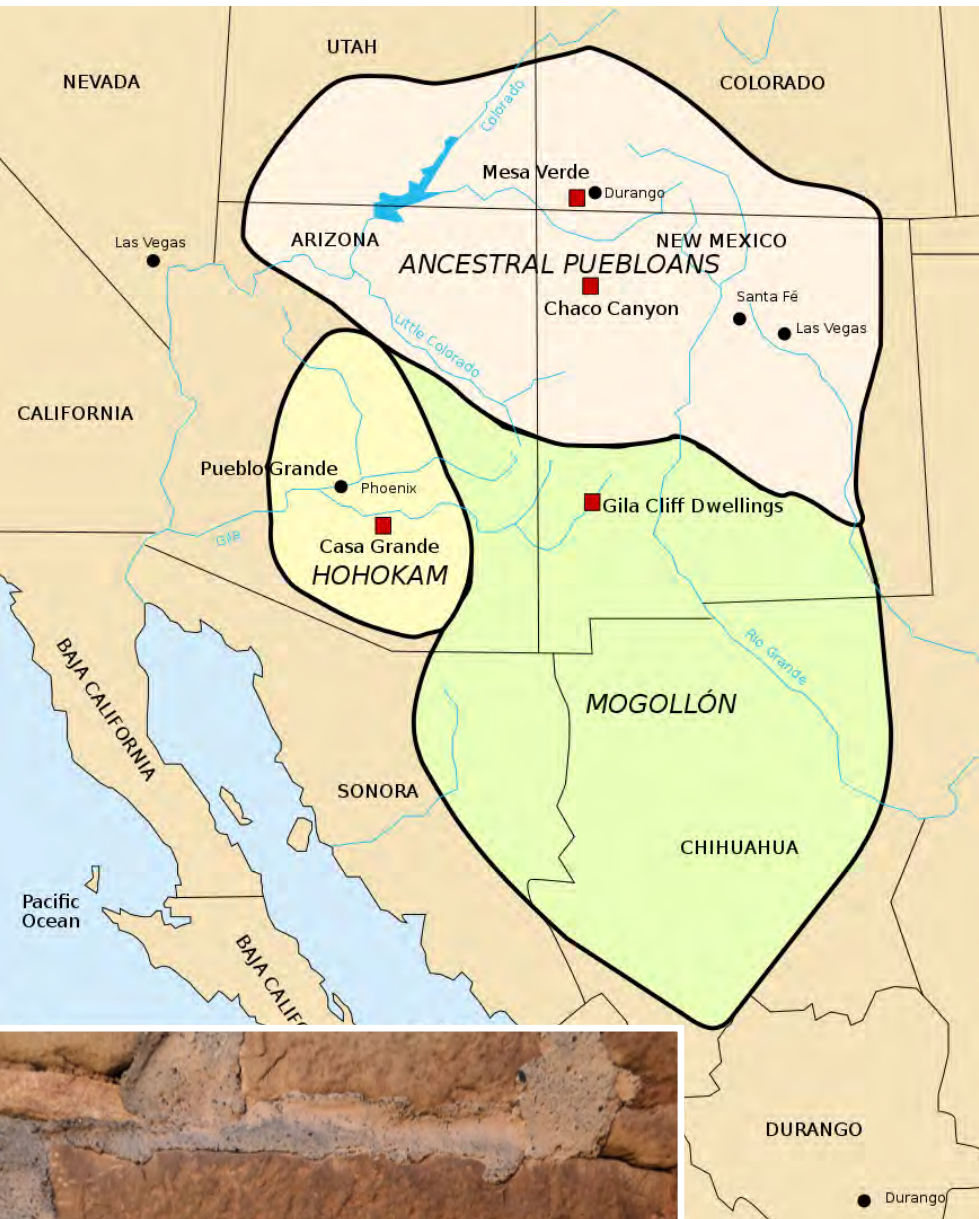


Photo by Daniel Boits, Jr.

Mesa Verde is a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) and [National Park](#) located in Montezuma County, Colorado. The park protects some of the best-preserved [Ancestral Puebloan](#) archaeological sites in the United States.

Established by Congress and President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906, the park occupies 52,485 acres near the [Four Corners](#) region of the American Southwest. With more than 5,000 sites, including 600 [cliff dwellings](#), it is the largest archaeological preserve in the United States. Mesa Verde (Spanish for "green table") is best known for structures such as [Cliff Palace](#), thought to be the largest cliff dwelling in North America. *[cont'd next page]*





Starting c. 7500 BC Mesa Verde was seasonally inhabited by a group of nomadic [Paleo-Indians](#) known as the Foothills Mountain Complex. The variety of projectile points found in the region indicates they were influenced by surrounding areas, including the [Great Basin](#), the [San Juan Basin](#), and the [Rio Grande Valley](#).

Later, [Archaic](#) people established semi-permanent rock shelters in and around the [mesa](#). By 1000 BC, the [Basketmaker culture](#) emerged from the local Archaic population, and by 750 AD the Ancestral Puebloans had developed from the Basketmaker culture.

The Mesa Verdeans survived using a combination of hunting, gathering, and subsistence farming of crops such as corn, beans, and squash. They built the mesa's first pueblos sometime after 650, and by the end of the 12th century, they began to construct the massive cliff dwellings for which the park is best known. By 1285, following a period of social and environmental instability driven by a series of severe and prolonged droughts, they abandoned the area and moved south to locations in Arizona and New Mexico, including [Rio Chama](#), [Pajarito Plateau](#), and Santa Fe.



Photo by Daniel Boits, Jr.

The Basketmaker culture of the pre-Ancestral Puebloans began about 1500 BC and continued until about AD 500 with the beginning of the Pueblo I Era. The southwestern culture was named "Basketmaker" for the large number of baskets found at archaeological sites of 3,000 to 2,000 years ago.

The cultural groups of this period include:

- ◆ [Ancestral Puebloans](#) - southern Utah, southern Colorado, northern Arizona and northern and central New Mexico
- ◆ [Hohokam](#) - southern Arizona
- ◆ [Mogollon](#) - southeastern Arizona, southern New Mexico and northern Mexico
- ◆ [Patayan](#) - western Arizona, California and Baja California



Photo by Daniel Boits, Jr.

According to a discovery archeologists made while studying Mesa Verde earlier this year, the Pueblo people created rock carvings in the Mesa Verde region of the Southwest United States about 800 years ago to mark the position of the sun on the longest and shortest days of the year.

Panels of ancient petroglyphs on canyon walls in the region show complex interactions of sunlight and shadows. These interactions can be seen in the days around the winter and summer solstices, when the sun reaches its southernmost and northernmost points, respectively, and, to a lesser extent, around the equinoxes — the "equal nights" — in spring and fall, the researchers said.

The spiral is one of the oldest symbols used by humans. It appeared thousands of years ago in southwestern Native American Tribal areas on cave walls and on ancient pottery.

Spirals to the Zunis and Puebloans represent water, wind and creatures associated with water such as snails and serpents.

Spiritual Meaning of the Spiral

The spiral is a highly complex and powerful symbol. For many cultures, the spiral is the great creative force, representing growth and expansion. It denotes fertility and the dynamic aspect of all things. It is associated with the web of life. It symbolizes the realms of existence, the various modalities of being and the wanderings of the soul in manifestation. The spiral is connected with the center as the power of life. It represents the path from external materialism to internal awareness and authenticity.

Ultimately, the spiral represents the awareness of the self and the expansion of awareness outwards. It is a highly recognized symbol of the spiritual journey.



Acoma Pueblo



INDIGENOUS WISDOM CURRICULUM PROJECT

The [Indian Pueblo Cultural Center](#) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, has created a learning experience for Pueblo children K-12. [The Indigenous Wisdom curriculum project](#) provides teachers with educational plans for K–12 students ([download curriculum here](#)) to learn about Pueblo culture and history. This Pueblo-based curriculum aims to strengthen the identity of Native American children in New Mexico by providing comprehensive K–12 unit plans on the complex political, social, cultural, and economic history of the Pueblo nations of New Mexico between 1912 and 2012.



On June 29, 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt established [Mesa Verde National Park](#) to "preserve the works of man," the first national park of its kind. Today, the continued preservation of both cultural and natural resources is the focus of the park's research and resource management staff.

- ◆ [People](#): Learn about the Ancestral Pueblo people who lived at Mesa Verde over 700 years ago.
- ◆ [Places](#): Cultural information on Mesa Verde's cliff dwellings and mesa top sites.
- ◆ [Stories](#): A Mesa Verde National Park Timeline.
- ◆ [Collections](#): Information on the park's artifact and archival collections.
- ◆ [Preservation](#): Mesa Verde preserves nearly 5,000 archeological sites. Learn about some of the ways the park's archeological program manages and protects these sites for current and future generations.
- ◆ [Preserving Cliff Palace](#): Cliff Palace, the largest cliff dwelling in the park, inspires visitors to imagine what life was like over seven hundred years ago. But the task of preserving this nearly eight century old site has its challenges as well as its rewards. Learn about the current conservation and stabilization project of this magnificent ancient structure.



Photo by Daniel Boits, Jr.

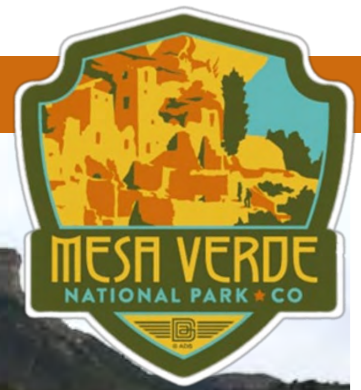


Opportunities for Connection with Mesa Verde

[Mesa Verde Museum Association](#): MVMA is a nonprofit partner that inspires life-long learning and supports the interpretive, educational, and research activities of Mesa Verde National Park. Books, maps, videos, park guides, trail guides, and other materials can be found in their retail stores and on their website. Proceeds support the park.

[Mesa Verde Foundation](#): MVF is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting Mesa Verde National Park. Their website contains information on the foundation and their current projects and events.

[Volunteer in the Park](#): Interested in volunteering? Volunteer opportunities at Mesa Verde vary according to the season and the individual's skills and interests.



AUDIO TOUR: “Welcome to this special place. My name is TJ Atsye. I am a Park Ranger here at Mesa Verde and I am Laguna Pueblo, a direct descendant of the people who used to live here.”

“Even though we physically moved away, the spirits of my ancestors are still here.

If you stop for a minute and listen, you can hear the children laughing and the women talking.

You can hear the dogs barking and the turkeys gobbling.

You can hear and feel the beat of the drums and the singing.

You can smell the cooking fires.

You can feel their presence, their warmth, their sense of community.”

- TJ Atsye, Laguna Pueblo



Preston Singletary

Tlingit Artist

“Raven and the Box of Daylight”

This much-heralded exhibit at the [National Museum of the American Indian](#) features works from internationally acclaimed glass artist Preston Singletary (Tlingit American, b. 1963), and tells the story of Raven, the creator of the world and giver of the stars, moon, and sun. The exhibit will debut on January 28, 2022 and run throughout the year.

Through an immersive, multisensory experience, Raven takes visitors on a journey of the transformation of darkness into light. In addition to Singletary's striking glass pieces, the exhibition features storytelling paired with original music, coastal Pacific Northwest soundscapes, and projected images.

All images courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian and the artist.





“My work with glass transforms the notion that Native artists are only best when traditional materials are used. It has helped advocate on the behalf of all Indigenous people—affirming that we are still here—that we are declaring who we are through our art in connection to our culture.”

- Preston Singletary



ARTIST'S STATEMENT

When I began working with glass in 1982, I had no idea that I'd be so connected to the material in the way that I am. It was only when I began to experiment with using designs from my Tlingit cultural heritage that my work began to take on a new purpose and direction.

Over time, my skill with the material of glass and traditional form line design has strengthened and evolved, allowing me to explore more fully my own relationship to both my culture and chosen medium. This evolution, and subsequent commercial success, has positioned me as an influence on contemporary Indigenous art.

Through teaching and collaborating in glass with other Native American, Maori, Hawaiian, and Australian Aboriginal artists, I've come to see that glass brings another dimension to Indigenous art. The artistic perspective of Indigenous people reflects a unique and vital visual language which has connections to the ancient codes and symbols of the land, and this interaction has informed and inspired my own work.


I have been honored that my success has inspired other artists from underrepresented Indigenous cultures to use glass and other non-traditional materials in their work, and hope that I can continue to encourage more innovation in this area as my career progresses.

[Official Site](#)



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January 15, 2022

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Connections Team

Our team is an engaged group of talented volunteers from across Interior who produce Connections Magazine, sponsor roundtable discussions and seek to foster greater understanding around inclusion, equity and respect.

Special Emphasis Programs such as this are implemented and observed throughout the Department of the Interior primarily to ensure that all are provided an equal opportunity in all aspects of employment. These programs encourage employees to appreciate, value, understand, and celebrate social and cultural similarities and differences.

We would be delighted to have you join us in our efforts by:

- ***Shaping subject matter***
- ***Creating content***
- ***Participating in observances***

When you're ready to get involved, please [reach out here!](#) Thanks!



Connections Magazine

National Native American Heritage Month
November 2021

Connections is a collaborative initiative of the DOI Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Administrative Services, and the DOI Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights. Your input is essential to making this a valuable resource for all employees. Please feel free to share your ideas, suggestions and articles/pictures with editor Steve Carlisle by emailing Stephen_Carlisle@ibc.doi.gov. Thank you!

JANUARY: Dr. Martin Luther King., Jr., Birthday
FEBRUARY: Black History Month
MARCH: Women's History Month

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