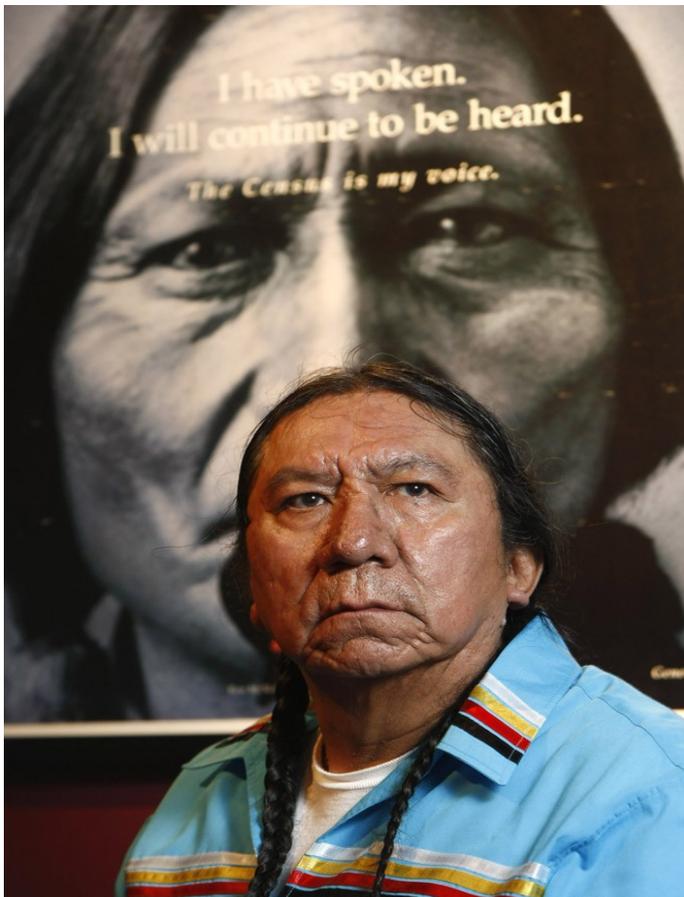


# Native American History and Culture



**American  
Resource  
Center**

**Newsletter  
Summer 2009**

Great Grandson of Sitting Bull  
Ernie LaPointe  
visits Finland in June 2009

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## Legendary Indian Chiefs: Leaders Who Advocated for Their Tribes:

Six great chiefs rode in Theodore Roosevelt's 1905 inaugural parade

By Lauren Monsen

When Theodore Roosevelt, as 26th president of the United States, invited six legendary Indian chiefs to participate in his 1905 inaugural parade, the idea was to "give the people a good show," as he put it.

All six chiefs — Geronimo (of the Chiricahua Apache tribe), Quanah Parker (Comanche), Buckskin Charlie (Ute), American Horse (Oglala Sioux), Little Plume (Piegan Blackfeet) and Hollow Horn Bear (Brule Sioux) — accepted Roosevelt's invitation and came to Washington. Their appearance at the inaugural parade, their subsequent meetings with Roosevelt and their overall legacy are the focus of a photographic exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI).

Titled *A Century Ago: They Came as Sovereign Leaders*, the exhibition outlines the chiefs' roles as advocates for their people at a time when Native American culture was under siege and tribal rights were largely unrecognized. According to José Barreiro, assistant director for research at NMAI, "the American Indian was thought of as 'the vanishing American' during the early 20th century." It was, he said, "probably the worst moment in history for Indian people."

Although Roosevelt's inaugural committee expected the six chiefs to add "a picturesque touch of color" to the festivities, the chiefs had an entirely different agenda, Barreiro said. They regarded the president's invitation as an opportunity to advance the interests of their people, who were being pushed off tribal lands to accommodate white settlers.

### BANDING TOGETHER

Each chief had a compelling personal history that burnished his leadership credentials. Geronimo, the eldest, was a legendary warrior who had fought the U.S. government for years. He hoped that his audience with Roosevelt would convince the president to allow the Apache people to return to their ancestral homelands in the American southwest.

Quanah Parker, a so-called "half-breed" whose mother was a white woman, campaigned skillfully against federal land-allotment policies that sought to break up tribal lands. He invited Roosevelt "to go wolf hunting in the Big Pasture area, an adventure Roosevelt could not resist," the exhibition states.



*Geronimo, an elderly man when he posed for this undated photo, was a leader of great stature among the Chiricahua Apache people*

During his visit with the Comanche leader, Roosevelt said, he recognized that Parker was "now painfully teaching his people to travel the white man's stony road." Parker eventually became the catalyst of the Native American Church, which fused certain tribal practices with traditional elements of Christianity, Barreiro said.

Hollow Horn Bear was a respected peacekeeper who encouraged unity among Sioux leaders, while Little Plume was considered a great warrior and counselor. Buckskin Charlie, revered as a political and spiritual leader, championed tribal values and helped guide his people through the difficulties of adjusting to an agrarian lifestyle. American Horse was a proponent of Native self-governance and educational opportunity.



*Native chiefs Little Plume, Buckskin Charlie, Geronimo, Quanah Parker, Hollow Horn Bear and American Horse appear from left to right.*

## SETTING THE STAGE FOR FUTURE GAINS

Before the six chiefs could press their claims with the U.S. government, they knew they had to “reach the American public, essentially going above the heads of lawmakers,” Barreiro said. “They were very conscious of the importance of public relations.”

Roosevelt’s inaugural parade would boost the chiefs’ visibility and possibly enhance their bargaining position. On horseback, wearing full regalia, the chiefs created a sensation as they entered the parade route; Roosevelt and his entourage, enjoying the parade from the presidential box, rose to their feet as the six men came into view. The chiefs turned in their saddles to acknowledge Roosevelt.

Although he was sympathetic to the Indians’ predicament, Roosevelt refused to halt the dispersal of tribal lands, for fear that more conflict with settlers would result. Geronimo’s appeals to Roosevelt did not succeed, but the Apache chief would later publish his life story and dedicate the book to Roosevelt, and the president read the memoir from cover to cover.

Quanah Parker’s lobbying efforts were more fruitful; he persuaded Roosevelt to modify land-allotment legislation to include the rights of Native children and to provide a \$500,000 fund promised by the government in earlier treaty negotiations. Despite the setbacks they experienced, the six chiefs were tremendously influential in sowing the seeds of the Indian-rights movement that would emerge long after their deaths, Barreiro said. “It was the strength of that transitional leadership that built the cultural and political resiliency” of American Indians, he added.

“It’s only been in the last 35 years or so that people have recognized the value of Native cultures,” but “the issues that the six chiefs dealt with were similar to those of today,” Barreiro said. “Their legacy is carried on by their descendants, who have preserved a lot of the tribes’ oral history.” Also, in the face of misguided federal policies that wreaked havoc on Native societies, “the American public has always had a strong current of sympathy for Indian causes,” Barreiro observed. “In part, that comes from the leadership of the six chiefs who came forth to advocate for their people.”

Not incidentally, “the formative period of American history created a sense of solidarity with rebels and underdogs,” said Barreiro. Probably no one understood that better than the canny, resourceful men who stole the spotlight at Roosevelt’s 1905 inaugural parade, electrifying onlookers as they rode their horses — six abreast — in ceremonial splendor.

Source: <http://www.america.gov/st/arts-english/2009/February/20090213154252GLnesnoM0.3933069.html>

## Artist Offers 21st-Century Interpretations of the American West:

Modern master John Nieto presents a fresh slant on iconic Western themes

By Lauren Monsen

With its imposing landscape and colorful cast of characters, the Old West provided a backdrop to some of the most compelling narratives in the early history of the United States. Artists and photographers from the 1800s onward have explored that territory (both physical and psychological) as a prime source of a national mythology that expresses the struggle to tame a rugged natural environment.



Artist John Nieto poses in front of his painting titled *Coyote Medicine*

Even though the vanished American frontier of the 19th century is seen largely through a prism of nostalgic sepia-toned photographs, iconic images reflecting the spirit of those times have endured and evolved. That evolution is reflected in the work of artist John Nieto, who approaches classic Western motifs with an emphatically modern sensibility.

Nieto's paintings of American Indians and Western wildlife such as the buffalo (American bison), wolf and coyote are presented on dramatically oversized canvases in scorching colors. He replaces the sepia tint of early American photography with the vivid palette of the 20th and 21st centuries, but the essence of these iconic subjects remains intact.

In an interview, Nieto explained how he selects a theme for each new painting. "Ideas come to me and I seem to incubate them for a while, and when they're ready to come out, I paint them," he said. "Themes that I relate to personally are the themes I tackle."

His focus on American Indian tribal culture and North American wildlife reflects his family's centuries-old roots in New Mexico. Nieto is descended from Native Americans and early Hispanic settlers, and his artistic

education embraced the traditions of Europe as well as America. He was born in Denver, Colorado, and raised in Roswell, New Mexico, near the Apache reservation. In his youth, Nieto embarked on a course of self-guided study in Paris, where he analyzed the techniques of Europe's old masters and explored the works of such 20th-century innovators as Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse and André Derain. Audacious experiments with color by Matisse and Derain, leading members of a prominent artistic movement known as the Fauves (Wild Beasts), made a strong impression on Nieto.

Already an accomplished draftsman, Nieto developed into a brilliant colorist and deftly merged both skills into a distinctive painting style widely admired as much for its extraordinary vigor as its fine detail. His return from Paris to New Mexico inspired him to capture the essence of the American West, a complex region with a modern-day vitality imbued with echoes of its storied past.

#### AMERICAN IMAGES, INTERNATIONAL APPEAL

Even though the figures in Nieto's paintings are unmistakably American, the acclaim from art lovers worldwide suggests the images resonate with viewers from many different backgrounds. Nieto said he strives to communicate with a global audience by stressing the universal appeal of his subjects.

"I paint with the hope that the idea I'm painting is worth sharing with someone. If I make that connection, I've succeeded," he said. "My hope is to share my enthusiasm for the subject through the language of painting. The world is my target audience."

From the Plains Indian in ceremonial garb, to the athletic young warrior with bow-and-arrow, the American Indians who emerge on Nieto's canvases embody pride, dignity and endurance in the face of adversity. That same endurance and toughness are reflected in the image of a buffalo crossing the prairie or the figure of a wolf running at full speed toward the viewer.

In artist John Nieto's 2006 painting *Alpha Male*, a running wolf turns his eyes directly on the viewer. Those qualities also are echoed in Nieto's portrayals of the playful but calculating coyote and of the majestic grizzly bear. In Nieto's hands, these creatures symbolize the grandeur and beauty of the natural world, even as they project their own distinct personalities. Their stamina -- their stubborn refusal to go away -- is evocative, too, of the timeless allure of the American West, a mirror to the nation's soul.

Nieto has exhibited his work in Europe, Japan, Latin America and Africa, in addition to such U.S. cities as Santa Fe (New Mexico), New York City, Los Angeles, Palm Springs (California) and Jackson Hole (Wyoming). Nieto's shows typically attract large crowds, and his largest canvases can command prices of \$60,000 or more.



*In artist John Nieto's 2006 painting Alpha Male, a running wolf turns his eyes directly on the viewer*

#### AN ARTIST REBORN

In October 2002, a massive stroke nearly ended his career; his condition seemed so serious that his family feared he would never paint again. A second crisis occurred at the beginning of July 2005, when Nieto showed signs of congestive heart failure, but tests later ruled out heart disease.

Shortly thereafter, Nieto recovered completely from his stroke in a rapid convalescence that astonished and mystified his family and physicians. On July 9, 2005, he resumed work on paintings interrupted by his illness. Nieto's restored health, an unexpected gift that his wife described as "miraculous," is not readily explained in medical terms, but it might be attributed in part to an iron will -- and a creative impulse that demanded its full exercise.

That impulse is flourishing once more, and seems as potent as ever. Nieto's trademark energy and disciplined work habits swiftly reasserted themselves, resulting in two major exhibitions of new paintings in Santa Fe and in Jackson Hole during the late summer and early autumn of 2006. In July 2008, Jackson Hole's Mountain Trails Gallery staged an exhibition -- entitled "John Nieto: American Master" -- that showcased Nieto's most recent efforts. The strong linear style, bold compositions and saturated colors that characterize Nieto's earlier works are all very much in evidence in his latest group of paintings; so too is the dynamic tension that animates all of his subjects, whether animal or human.

Critics have hailed Nieto's return to painting as the rebirth of an artist at the peak of his powers. Reflecting on his recovery, Nieto expressed gratitude for his good fortune -- and a determination to employ his gifts as productively as possible.

"Since my recovery, I think I've re-prioritized the things I consider important in my life, and those things are making

opportunities for growth, and when it happens, I feel alive. It's very satisfying."

Despite his success, Nieto said he regards himself simply as "a working artist who is fortunate enough to earn a living" doing what he loves, very much in the tradition of the artistic forerunners who continually inspire him.

"I find that reading biographies of some of my favorite artists, like Matisse and Picasso, allows me to feel as though I am rubbing elbows with these people and helps keep me excited through the relationship," he explained. "I like being influenced by the great artists of the past. Good art, like truth, never goes out of style."

Source: <http://www.america.gov/st/arts-english/2006/November/20061018121647GLnesnoM0.7739527.html>

### Artist Fritz Scholder Redefined Native American Art:

New exhibition traces Scholder's role, controversial legacy

By Lauren Monsen

Perhaps no contemporary artist of Native American heritage has been as enigmatic, influential or provocative as the late Fritz Scholder (1937-2005), who almost single-handedly demolished some of the most persistent clichés about the nature of American Indian identity.



*American Indian, an undated oil painting by Fritz Scholder, depicts an Indian chief whose face is obscured in shadow*

Now, three years after Scholder's death, his prolific output — including paintings, sculptures and lithographs — is the subject of a major new exhibition staged by the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). Titled Fritz Scholder: Indian/Not Indian, the two-part exhibition opened simultaneously

at the museum's Washington and New York locations on November 1. Most of the artwork can be seen in Washington, with a smaller selection of Scholder's later works on display at NMAI's New York branch.

Co-curated by Truman T. Lowe (of the Ho-Chunk tribe) and Paul Chaat Smith (Comanche), the show is the largest retrospective of Scholder's career ever mounted. In a recent interview with America.gov, Lowe explained that while Scholder is best known for his unconventional paintings of Indians, the artist refused to be confined to any particular category — especially the category of "Indian artist," which he felt was too limiting. "His favorite word was 'paradox,' and he liked to say: 'I am one-quarter Indian, and my paintings are one-quarter Indian,'" Lowe recalled.

Since his father was half-Luiseño Indian and half-German, and his mother was of French extraction, Scholder had little use for tribal militancy — and he was not inclined to perpetuate the romantic myth of the so-called "noble savage," an Indian stereotype that first gained currency in the 19th century. "I've never called myself an Indian artist. Everyone else has," Scholder once said. In his 1979 publication *Indian Kitsch*, Scholder described himself as "a non-Indian Indian," adding: "I do not feel the pull of the dichotomy of two cultures. However, I am aware of the incongruous nature" of those cultures.

### THE POST-MODERN INDIAN

By his own account, Scholder began drawing at an early age, and he apparently never doubted his artistic vocation. Born in Minnesota, he grew up in the Great Plains region, where his father worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Despite his father's occupation, Scholder and his family did not live on a tribal reservation and had little exposure to Native American culture. During his college years, Scholder studied with pop artist Wayne Thiebaud, and in 1964, he received a master of fine arts degree from the University of Arizona. Soon afterward, he was invited to teach at the fledgling Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and his experience there would prove decisive.

Initially, Scholder said he would "never" paint Indians, but his interaction with Native American artists and art students in Santa Fe prompted a change of heart. His modernist and post-modernist training, however, dictated a significant departure from the prevailing — and, to Scholder's thinking, rather primitive — approach to depicting Native Americans.

Since the 1930s, many artists in Santa Fe had been painting nostalgic scenes of Indian village life that reinforced common assumptions about Native American societies. Most of these images had a flat, one-dimensional aspect that came to be known as a hallmark of the "Studio Style" pictorial school, which dominated the Santa Fe art scene for decades. Scholder's decision to

paint Indians “as they truly are” would soon relegate the Studio Style to the artistic dustbin.



*Artist Fritz Scholder's 1969 painting Indian with Beer Can sparked outrage because of its frank depiction of alcoholism.*

He set about “re-imagining” the Indian for a contemporary audience, using loose brushstrokes to outline his figures in electric hues. Contrasting colors provided the only backdrop; no explanatory context was offered. Unlike their quaint Studio Style predecessors, Scholder’s Indians confronted the viewer head-on — and the overall effect was vivid, edgy and distinctly unsettling. Although some of these portraits were based on famous photographs of Native Americans, Scholder imbued his works with a sense of irony that suggested multiple interpretations of an iconic symbol.

#### PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

Scholder’s innovations brought him critical acclaim almost immediately, and ensured a lucrative market for his work. His undated oil painting *American Indian*, with its shadowy image of an Indian chief starkly imposed against a shocking-pink sky, was hailed as a triumph. Scholder’s works from his “Indian” series typically met with that reaction — until he unveiled *Indian with Beer Can* (1969), which sparked howls of outrage from Native Americans and art critics alike. The painting, centered on a male Indian figure seated at a bar or table, with a Coors beer can in front of him, addressed the problem of Indian alcoholism, a sensitive subject that few artists were willing to tackle.

According to Lowe, *Indian with Beer Can* “held a mirror up to the Native community.” The painting, he said, “played on the stereotype of the drunken Indian, but it forced the Native community to take a close look at tough issues.”

Scholder produced other works that examined taboo themes, such as Indian poverty and the long history of injustice suffered by Indian populations. His

unsentimental treatment of controversial topics often shocked his audience, yet it opened the door to a more honest appraisal of acute social problems and uncomfortable truths. In his painting *American Portrait with Flag* (1979), Scholder’s depiction of a Native American wrapped in the U.S. flag reflects the tensions between an indigenous culture and the larger society that has subsumed it.

At the same time, Scholder was eager to pursue universal themes that made no reference to his, or anyone’s, ethnicity. Although he still occasionally returned to Indian motifs, his last two decades were primarily devoted to moody works that explored the complexities of male/female relations (a 1986 painting, *Monster Love No. 1*, shows a couple locked in a fierce embrace) and a growing awareness of his own mortality (a 2001 self-portrait, *Artist’s Skull*, consists of a ghostly black-and-white photograph of Scholder’s head layered over an X-ray of his skull). In fact, skulls appear with some frequency in these later works, along with supernatural figures (vampires, angels) and emblems of Native American spiritualism (shamans).

The meaning of Scholder’s legacy is hotly debated, but his influence has been — and remains — profound. Thanks to Scholder, “a barrier has been smashed,” Lowe said. “He broke the mold of Studio Style art,” and he demonstrated that Indian art stretches well beyond the boundaries of traditional craft objects like textiles, baskets or jewelry. Scholder was a trailblazer who made it easier for today’s young Indian artists — “who have their own stories to tell, their own interpretations of Native history” — to find an audience, Lowe added. “The irony, of course, is that Scholder said he was never going to paint Indians, but that’s what established him as an important artist.”

Source: <http://www.america.gov/st/arts-english/2008/November/20081113151800GLnesnoM0.4871942.html>

#### **Navajo Textbook Aims to Preserve Language, Culture:**

New Mexico is first state to approve Native American language text

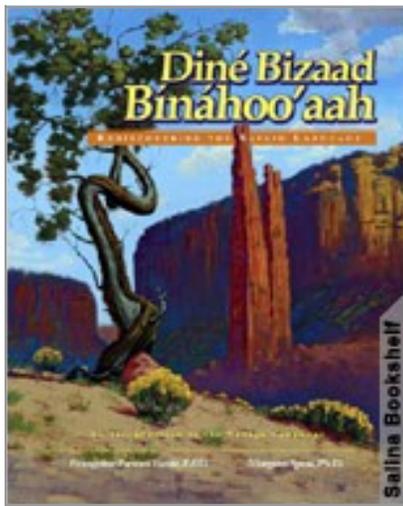
By Jeffrey Thomas

In many countries with indigenous populations, how these groups adapt to the modern world while protecting their own cultures is an important question. It therefore was reported widely when New Mexico in July became the first U.S. state to approve a textbook that teaches a Native American language -- Diné Bizaad Bínáhoó'aah or *Rediscovering the Navajo Language*.

Native North American languages are spoken by about 380,000 Americans, according to the 2000 census. The Navajo Nation numbers almost 300,000 people, of whom about 178,000 speak the Navajo language, making it the most widely spoken Native American language.

Experts estimate that only one-half of the 300 or so native languages once spoken in North America still have any

living speakers, and fewer than 50 still are spoken by children -- the future of any language.



*Rediscovering the Navajo language combines language study with culture lessons about Navajo values and ways*

The textbook is the work of Evangeline Parsons-Yazzie, a professor of Navajo at Northern Arizona University, and Peggy Speas, a professor of linguistics at the University of Massachusetts.

The project grew out of Navajo language classes taught by Parsons-Yazzie, who wanted to create “a tool that will help toward the maintenance and preservation of the Navajo language.”

“By presenting the book in full color, nicely bound, well-written, and easily managed, the textbook would place the Navajo language in the realm of other commonly taught languages; and Navajo students would see this and begin to acknowledge their language as one that is not only for the elders but for the Navajo youth as well,” said Parsons-Yazzie in an e-mail interview.

The book is colorful, beautiful, elegant and graceful so as “to instill pride within Navajo students, leading to pride in their language,” she said, and it presents both Navajo culture and language.

Moreover, she wanted her textbook to reflect her approach to teaching as communication, and the teacher’s guide helps instructors unfamiliar with this approach. “The methodology represented is one that incorporates the way the elders teach where the language surrounds activities, situations, and events. It is in these activities, situations, and events that the elders model the language for the new learner. The bonus here is that the students acquire literacy skills as well,” Parsons-Yazzie said.

“The Workbook is unique in that it requires that the student incorporate Navajo speakers and Navajo elders as their source of information and their source of knowledge,” Parson-Yazzie said.

Speas, who learned Navajo as a graduate student, said in a separate e-mail interview that her role was “to make the explanation of grammar points as simple as possible, and to help figure out what aspects of grammar we did and did not need to include.”

Speas has worked with the Navajo Language Academy, a group of Navajo and non-Navajo linguists that has conducted summer workshops for Navajo bilingual teachers for more than a decade. As a result, she has experience explaining Navajo grammar to people who are speakers of Navajo but do not have a linguistics background.

“I think that linguists who develop teaching materials often include more grammatical analysis than is necessary or helpful,” she said.

The authors faced some major challenges in creating their textbook.

“The greatest challenge for me was the weekly meetings I held with Navajo elders,” Parsons-Yazzie said. “In the meetings, I covered the material, read the Navajo text ... to ensure the vernacular was maintained and that the material would not be offensive to anyone.”

Parsons-Yazzie had to be sensitive to the fact she was “presenting material that is delegated to Navajo male elders, such as teachings about building a hogan [traditional Navajo house], making a cradle board, caring for horses and cows, hunting, etc. I grew up in a home with five brothers so I heard the teachings a lot, so I knew the information, but getting around the fact that it is a woman presenting these topics was of concern to me.”

Another challenge was how to present Navajo culture without appearing to teach traditional Navajo religion. “Many Navajo Christian parents who do not want the religious aspect taught in the classroom find it difficult to allow their children to attend the Navajo language classes,” Parsons-Yazzie said.



*In the Navajo shoe game, players guess which of four moccasins buried in the sand contains the ball of yucca.*

"I was fortunate in that my father was a pastor in the Baptist church and my mother played the piano, interpreted for the Navajo people and the missionaries, and also worked on many translations of Navajo hymns; therefore, I was aware of the 'line' that is drawn between culture and religious beliefs," Parsons-Yazzie said. "Navajo elders who are Christians were consulted on all the cultural components to make sure no one would be offended."

Speas hopes the book will be a model and inspiration for other threatened languages. The visual beauty of the book is essential. "Having young people see their language taken seriously and packaged as something valuable can have a very important impact."

Another aspect Speas hopes will be a model is "the way that Dr. Parsons-Yazzie made the culture lessons into teachings that could apply just as well today, rather than just stories about traditions of the past. The way she describes it, Navajo culture is a set of values and relationships, not just an array of traditional clothing, dances, music and ceremonies."

Source: <http://www.america.gov/st/educ-english/2008/August/200808051601491CJsamohT0.7349359.html>

## Laws Reflect Changing Status of American Indians in U.S. History:

American Indians are citizens of their tribes and of the United States

Following are some of the more significant laws affecting American Indians:

1830 - The Indian Removal Act authorized the president to negotiate with Indian tribes an exchange of their lands located east of the Mississippi River for lands west of the Mississippi River.

1862 - The Homestead Act allowed adult citizens and aliens who had filed for citizenship to submit a claim for 65 hectares in return for a \$10 fee. After living on the land or farming it for five years, the homesteader could pay additional fees and receive the title to the land. This act spurred settlement of land formerly designated as "Indian territory" at a time when American Indians were not considered citizens.

1887 - The Dawes Act, or General Allotment Act, established a census of American Indians known as the Dawes Rolls and allotted tribal lands to individual Indians.

1898 - The Curtis Act reaffirmed allotment of tribal lands on Indian reservations and ended tribal sovereignty in the territories.

1906 - The Act for the Preservation of American



*Harvard University's museum director returns an ancient clay bowl to representatives of two New Mexican Pueblos. (© AP Images)*

Antiquities made excavation, theft or destruction of historic or prehistoric ruins or objects of antiquity on federal lands a criminal offense. However, Indian corpses and Indian artifacts were defined as "archeological resources" and thus considered federal property.

1924 - The Indian Citizenship Act gave U.S. citizenship to American Indians, including the right to vote in national elections. However, it did not provide full protection under the Bill of Rights to Indians living under tribal governments. Several nations, including the Hopi and the Iroquois, declined U.S. citizenship in favor of retaining sovereign nationhood.

1934 - The Indian Reorganization Act, or Wheeler-Howard Act, reinstated the role of sovereign tribes as governments for Indian people and their lands. The law ended Indian land allotment and provided for the strengthening of tribal governments and the restoration of tribal lands and powers.

1968 - The Indian Civil Rights Act prohibited Indian tribal governments from enacting or enforcing laws that violate certain individual rights. It contained language similar to the Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution but did not prohibit an Indian nation from establishing an official religion.

1970 - President Nixon's Special Message on Indian Affairs set a new direction for national policy: self-determination for Indian tribes. In his statement, Nixon condemned the "forced termination" of tribes and described them as separate political entities with special standing under U.S. law.

1971 - The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act settled the claim of Alaska's Native Indian, Aleut and Eskimo population to the aboriginal lands on which they have lived for generations by granting title to 16 million hectares of land to be divided among some 220 native villages and 12 regional corporations.

National Congress of American Indians President Tex Hall delivers the 2005 State of Indian Nations address. (© AP Images)1975 - The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act gave American Indians more control in administering federal programs and services to their people.

1976 - The Indian Health Care Improvement Act declared elevating the health status of the American and Alaska Native people to a level at parity with the general U.S. population to be national policy.

1978 - The Indian Child Welfare Act set up mandatory procedures for state agencies and courts in Indian child custody matters and established that American Indians are allowed to act as foster parents and qualify for adoption. The act also provided Indian communities with child welfare and family services.

1978 - The American Indian Religious Freedom Act protected and preserved the right of American Indians to believe, express and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut and Native Hawaiians, including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects and the freedom to worship through traditional ceremonies and rites.

1988 - The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act allowed tribes to conduct gambling on their land after negotiating agreements with their state governments.

1989 - The National Museum of the American Indian Act ordered the Smithsonian Institution to return American Indian remains to American Indian tribes.

1990 - The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act addressed the rights of lineal descendants, Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations to American Indian human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects and cultural items. The statute required federal agencies and museums to provide information about American Indian cultural items to parties with standing and, upon presentation of a valid claim, ensure that the items undergo disposition or repatriation.

1990 - The Indian Arts and Crafts Act established protections for the work of Indian artists.

1994 - The Indian Trust Reform Act outlined the responsibilities of the U.S. secretary of the interior with respect to the individual trust accounts established in the General Allotment Act, or Dawes Act, of 1887.

2000 - The Indian Tribal Justice Technical and Legal Assistance Act increased American Indians' access to legal assistance and sought to enhance the capabilities of tribal courts.

2004 - The American Indian Probate Reform Act established uniform procedures for inheritance of land allotments authorized in the General Allotment Act, or

Dawes Act, of 1887.

2008 – The Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Reauthorization Act reauthorized the Department of Housing and Urban Development's affordable housing programs for Native Americans and created a new guaranteed loan program for community and economic development activities for tribes.

Source: <http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2006/November/20061106163901bpuh0.5341455.html>

## Sovereignty of Indian Tribes

Federally recognized American Indian tribes are considered sovereign entities within the United States. This sovereign status – sometimes called "nation-within-a-nation" – is protected by treaty, federal law, and court rulings. Members of tribes are not subject to state or local income, sales, or property taxes, and states have little power to regulate Indians in tribal territories. Tribes have their own rule-making bodies and judicial systems to settle disputes arising on tribal lands or between tribal members. While significant, tribal sovereignty is not absolute; Indians are subject to federal taxes and to laws passed by the U.S. Congress.



*Narragansett tribal leader Matthew Thomas addresses 24 eastern U.S. tribes at a meeting in Mashantucket, Connecticut, in 2003.*

Source: <http://www.america.gov/st/usg-english/2008/June/20080628201157eafas0.9045526.html>

## U.S. Honors Contributions of American Indians, Alaska Natives:

National American Indian Heritage Month is celebrated every November

Each November, National American Indian Heritage Month pays tribute to the legacy of the American Indians and Alaska Natives — the first Americans — and celebrates their enduring contributions to the history and culture of the United States.



*Rylan Baker (Hidatsa/Cree), appearing at the National Museum of the American Indian, executes a maneuver from the physically demanding Men's Fancy Dance*

Today, there are nearly 5 million American Indians and Alaska Natives in the United States, or 1.6 percent of the total population, and this is expected to jump to 8.6 million, or 2 percent of the population, by 2050.

Most American Indians live in metropolitan areas and not on the 227,000 square kilometers of land held in trust for reservations. The states with the highest percentage of American Indians and Alaska Natives are Alaska (18 percent of its population), Oklahoma (11 percent) and New Mexico (10 percent).

There are 562 federally recognized Indian tribes in the United States. The largest, by far, are the Cherokee and Navajo nations, according to the 2000 U.S. census.

Navajo is the most widely spoken American Indian language, and almost one-fourth of Navajos speak a language other than English at home — the highest percentage of all tribes. Unfortunately, only one-half of the 300 or so native languages once spoken in North America still have any living speakers. (See “Navajo Textbook Aims to Preserve Language, Culture.”)

A recent study by the public opinion research organization Public Agenda found that non-Indians have little knowledge of the active, vibrant culture of American Indians today. There was a consensus among both Indians and non-Indians in the study about the need for more education on American Indian history and culture. (See “American Indians Seek Greater Understanding, Recognition.”)

## THE CREATION OF AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH

The U.S. Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Indian Affairs provides some background on what has become an annual celebration of the culture and contributions of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

What started at the turn of the century as an effort to gain a day of recognition for the significant contributions the first Americans made to the establishment and growth of the United States has resulted in a whole month being designated for that purpose.

One of the very early proponents of an American Indian Day was Arthur C. Parker, a Seneca Indian, who was the director of the Museum of Arts and Science in Rochester, New York. He persuaded the Boy Scouts of America to

set aside a day for the “First Americans” and for three years they adopted such a day. In 1915, the annual Congress of the American Indian Association meeting in Lawrence, Kansas, formally approved a plan concerning American Indian Day. It directed its president, Reverend Sherman Coolidge, an Arapahoe, to call on the country to observe such a day. Coolidge issued a proclamation on September 28, 1915, which declared the second Saturday of each May as an American Indian Day and contained the first formal appeal for recognition of Indians as citizens.

The year before this proclamation was issued, Red Fox James, a Blackfoot Indian, rode horseback from state to state seeking approval for a day to honor Indians. On December 14, 1915, he presented the endorsements of 24 state governments at the White House. There is no record, however, of such a national day being proclaimed.

The first American Indian Day in a state was declared on the second Saturday in May 1916 by New York Governor Charles S. Whitman. Several states celebrate the fourth Friday in September. In Illinois, for example, legislators enacted such a day in 1919. Several states designated Columbus Day as Native American Day, but it continues to be a day observed without any recognition as a national legal holiday.

National American Indian Heritage Month was first designated in 1990 under a joint congressional resolution approved by President George H. W. Bush, and each year, the sitting president issues a proclamation honoring the American Indian Heritage Month.

Source: <http://www.america.gov/st/diversity-english/2008/November/20081031125448xlrenneF0.3453333.html>



*The National Museum of the American Indian, in Washington*

## Electronic resources on Internet:

### *U.S. Government*

#### [American Indian History, Culture](#)

<http://www.america.gov/st/diversity-english/2008/November/20071220085040IHecuoR0.4121363.html>

List of articles on America.gov dealing with American Indian history and people

#### [Bureau of Indian Affairs \(BIA -U.S. Department of the Interior\)](#)

<http://www.doi.gov/bia/>

Established in 1824, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) provides services directly or through contracts or grants to about 1.7 million American Indians and Alaska Natives. There are 562 federally recognized American Indian tribes in the United States.

#### [Energy Department \(DOE\): Tribal Energy Program](#)<http://apps1.eere.energy.gov/tribalenergy/>

Promotes tribal energy sufficiency, economic growth and employment on tribal lands through the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies.

#### [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\): American Indian Environmental Office](#)

<http://www.epa.gov/indian/>

Coordinates EPA efforts to strengthen public health and environmental protection in Indian country, helping tribes administer their own environmental programs.

#### [Justice Department \(DOJ\): Office of Tribal Justice](#)

<http://www.usdoj.gov/otj/>

The Department's primary point of contact with federally recognized Native American tribes.

#### [Law Library of Congress: Indians of North America](#)

<http://www.loc.gov/law/help/guide/federal/indians.php>

This is a section in the world's largest collection of law books and legal resources

#### [Library of Congress: Native American Heritage Month](#)

<http://www.loc.gov/law/help/guide/federal/indians.php>

Web portal, produced by the Library of Congress and several other institutions, that links to exhibits, collections, images and other resource materials.

#### [National Archives: Native American Records](#)

<http://www.loc.gov/law/help/guide/federal/indians.php>

Links to online records and listings of microfiche and other offline records

#### [National Museum of the American Indian](#)

<http://www.loc.gov/law/help/guide/federal/indians.php>

The Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian – which opened in Washington, D.C., in 2004 – is committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of Native cultures of the Western Hemisphere.

#### [National Park Service: National American Indian Heritage Month](#)

<http://www.loc.gov/law/help/guide/federal/indians.php>

Links to Web pages describing sites protected by the National Park Service and National Register of Historic Places, lesson plans, and other publications.

#### [U.S. Embassy in Berlin](#)

<http://usa.usembassy.de/society-natives.htm>

The embassy offers a Web page with extensive background material and teachers' resources on the American Indian population of the United States.

### *Organizations and Online Resources*

#### [American Indian Library Association](#)

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

An affiliate of the American Library Association (ALA).

#### [American Indian Policy Center](#)

<http://www.americanindianpolicycenter.org/aboutus.html>

Non-profit group focusing on research, policy development and education on critical issues in contemporary American Indian life.

#### [National Congress of American Indians](#)

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

NCAI informs the public and Congress on the governmental rights of American Indians and Alaska Natives. It has 250 member tribes and is the oldest and largest national Indian organization.

#### [Native American Rights Fund](#) <http://www.narf.org>

Nonprofit law firm dedicated to asserting and defending the rights of Indian tribes, organizations and individuals.

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