



Please join HATC in celebrating Native American Heritage Month during the month of November. It is a time to celebrate the traditions, languages, and stories of Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and affiliated Island communities and ensure their rich histories and contributions continue to thrive with each passing generation. This year's theme is ***Celebrating Tribal Sovereignty and Identity***. Tribal sovereignty ensures that any decisions regarding property and citizen rights and responsibilities are made with the participation and consent of tribal nations.

### **State Observances**

The first time an American Indian Day was formally designated was at the state level in 1916 in New York. New York observed the day on the second Saturday of the month. In 1919, Illinois state legislature enacted a bill commemorating American Indian Day. In 1935, Massachusetts issued a proclamation, following a 1935 law, naming the day that would become American Indian Day in any given year. Since 1919, states have enacted legislation and proclamations in observance of the many contributions and rich heritage of Indigenous peoples.

### **1992 - The Year of the American Indian**

The 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the western hemisphere in 1492 was the occasion for national and local celebrations. For Native people, it was an occasion that reminded the nation of its historic atrocities enacted upon the Indigenous peoples of the land over the last 500 years. Congress responded to these concerns by enacting Senate Joint Resolution 217 (Pub. L. 102-188), which designated 1992 as the "Year of the American Indian." It was signed by President George H.W. Bush on December 4, 1991. The American Indian response to the anniversary was marked by public protests. Yet, it also was seen by many in that community as a unique, year-long opportunity to hold public education events, commemorations of ancestral sacrifices and contributions to America, and celebrations for the survival of Native peoples over the last five centuries.

## **Federal Observances**

In 1976, the United States bicentennial year, Congress passed a resolution authorizing President Ford to proclaim a week in October as "Native American Awareness Week." On October 8, 1976, Ford issued a presidential proclamation in this endeavor. In 1990, Congress passed, and President George H. W. Bush signed into law a joint resolution designating the month of November as the first National American Indian Heritage Month (also known as Native American Indian Month). Since then, Congress and the President have observed a day, a week, or a month in honor of the American Indian and Alaska Native people. While the proclamations do not set a national theme for the observance, they allow each federal department and agency to develop ways of celebrating and honoring the Nation's Native American heritage and contributions.

## ***Notable Native Americans in Various Disciplines***

[Karina Walters, PhD – Social Work](#)

[Diane Humetewa – Federal Judgeship](#)

[Native American Advocates](#)

## ***Relevant Educational Materials***

[Maze of Injustice – Amnesty International](#)

[Violence Against Native American and Alaskan Natives – U.S. Department of the Interior, Indian Affairs](#)

[Indigenous Rights – NASW and CSWE statements](#)