



AI/AN Heritage Month article for FL PTA Family Community Engagement Committee

November is American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month. It's a time to recognize the many sacrifices, contributions and achievements of Native American people, as well as celebrate their rich and vibrant cultures. Heritage Month is also an opportune time to educate and to raise a general awareness about the unique challenges of the Native American Alaskan Native people.

The first American Indian Day was celebrated in May 1916 in New York. The event culminated an effort by Red Fox James, a member of the Blackfeet Nation who rode across the nation on horseback seeking approval from 24 state governments to have a day to honor American Indians. More than seven decades later, then-President George H.W. Bush in 1990 signed a joint congressional resolution designating the month of November "National American Indian Heritage Month." Similar proclamations have been issued every year since 1994 to recognize what is now called "American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month." The Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum join in paying tribute to the rich ancestry and traditions of Native Americans. Be sure to visit these websites for enriching content during the month of November.

Which is correct Native American or American Indian? To honor the culture correctly, do you say Native American or American Indian? Native American, American Indian and Indigenous Peoples are all used, even within the community. Many prefer their tribal affiliation (like Lakota people, Sioux, Cheyenne, etc.) to generalized terms. Some Native Americans prefer one term over the other, so if you're unsure, just ask! 6.9 Million Individuals make up the nation's American Indian and Alaska Native population alone or in combination with other race groups in 2019. Currently that makes up about 1.2% of the U.S. Population that identify as Native American or Alaskan Native. There were 324 distinct federally recognized American Indian reservations in 2019, including federal reservations and off-reservation trust land and 574 federally recognized Indian tribes in 2020. It is projected that the American Indian and Alaska Native population alone or in combination with other race groups on July 1, 2060 will reach 10.1 million! That would constitute 2.5% of the total U.S. population.

According to the most recent American Community Survey, the Native American population in Florida is 41,776 – at 0.2% of the total population of Florida.

You can check out this link if you are interested in knowing the population of Native American's from greatest to least by city: <https://www.homesnacks.com/data/native-america/fl.csv>
<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2020/aian-month.html>.
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It is important to understand that these numbers mentioned above only represent those that officially registered as Native America/Alaska Native. There are many more Native Americans or Alaska Natives that may not know much about their history or lineage due to traumas of the past (Assimilation, Forced Migration or Genocide). Many elders may have disaffiliated from their tribe or band and choose not to speak about their history with new generations. **Ruth Nowland**, a parent from Hillsborough County Title VI Parent Advisory Council and Alaska Native, states that there are many wounds that need to be healed before much sharing will occur between the older and younger generations.

How can PTA's support and include the Native American families and children?

First you should refer to the National PTA's Child in Focus Standards for supporting student success. The standards include, welcoming all families into the school and community, communicating effectively, supporting student success, sharing power and collaborating with community. Offer a survey to allow families to self-identify. Seek their input as to how they may want to also be a part of the education of their local community. Reach out to community partners or invite Native American representatives to the Great American Teach in. Provide outlets for participation in community and school wide events.

National PTA link: <https://www.pta.org/home/events/About-Every-Child-in-Focus/Calendar/Native-American-Heritage-Month#:~:text=November%20is%20Native%20American%20Heritage%20Month.%20We%20have,Your%20PTA%20Can%20Better%20Support%20American%20Indian%20Families>



Every Child in Focus

How PTAs Can Better Support American Indian Families

National PTA's Every Child in Focus is centered on strengthening family engagement in schools by celebrating important cultural distinctions and achievements, while highlighting solutions to potential educational issues. This November, we turn our focus to American Indian families and the unique challenges they face in supporting student success.

Based on National PTA's Standards for Family-School Partnerships, let's explore ways PTAs can welcome and support American Indian families in the school community.



Standard 1: Welcoming All Families into the School Community

- Invite the entire family to school events. Work on building trusting, respectful relationships with every family.
- Provide opportunities for the entire family to volunteer.

Standard 2: Communicating Effectively

- Invite families to lead culturally relevant craft or art projects, like teaching traditional dances, building family totems, or writing family stories.
- Work with tribal leaders to build the sense of community by informing your communication and outreach strategies.

Standard 3: Supporting Student Success

- Offer frequent high quality learning experiences that engage the entire family.
- Link all events to student learning.

Standard 4: Speaking Up for Every Child

- Advocate for culturally relevant curriculum.
- Work with school staff to hold meetings to discuss educational planning so families know their children are on the right track.

Standard 5: Sharing Power

- Hold brainstorming meetings on school-wide issues to develop trusting relationships and build a sense of community.
- Ask the families what issues are important to them and then work with them to raise those issues with school leaders.

Standard 6: Collaborating with Community

- Work with tribal elders to reinforce the connection between multiple generations and young children's educational outcomes.
- Plan events that engage the entire community, including local tribes.

- **How can we take our support and engagement a step further?** Several counties in Florida have a Title VI council. **What is a Title VI?** Title VI is the designation of the portion of the federal law that addresses Native American and Alaskan Native students' academic success. The mission of the Office of Indian Education is to support the efforts of local educational agencies, Indian tribes and organizations, postsecondary institutions, and other entities to meet the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives so that these students can achieve to the same challenging state standards as all students. **What is the purpose?** The purpose of the program is to provide support for the unique academic and social service needs of the district's Native American and Alaskan Native students to ensure academic achievement, graduation and post-secondary opportunities. **What if your county does not have a Title VI office?** Check with your local school district if you are interesting in joining Title VI, or if you do not have one, you can request to start one as long as there are registered Native Americans living in the county. Ultimately, the decision to establish a Title VI office falls upon your local district. In the interim, PTA's can continue to reach out to families through surveys and ask for input from families who identify as Native American or Alaska Native. There are approximately

644,000 American Indian students in the U.S. K-12 system, with 90% of students attending public schools. Seek out these children and their families to ask for their guidance and suggestions for observing Native American, Alaska Native Heritage month.

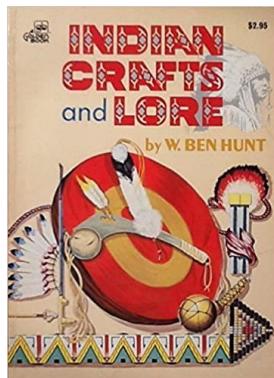
<https://www.sdhc.k12.fl.us/doc/1155/factsheet-11>.

<https://sites.google.com/a/pvlearners.net/indianeducationdepartment/home/title-VII>

How can you celebrate and honor Native American/Alaska Native Heritage Month?

1. Attend or host an educational event. Consider a guest speaker, an art or essay contest, or a program that educates everyone about the Native American culture.
2. Visit a Museum or a reservation where the public are welcome. You can do a virtual field trip with your local unit.
3. Read the work of Native American authors. Construct a book club for readers of all levels. Read up on the culture by visiting the website for the National Archives.
4. Identify and support a Native owned business/s in your area. Potentially do a spirit night to draw attention to that business.
5. “Decolonize” your Thanksgiving Table. For Native American’s, this day is sometimes referred to as the “day of mourning”. Introduce native dishes to the dinner table, remove stereotypical Native American decor and engage in conversations about Native American history with dinner guests. Consider alternatives to typical crafts used in schools that represent the Native American people. (<https://bioneers.org/3-ways-decolonize-thanksgiving/>)
6. Encourage accurate teaching of the first Thanksgiving in the school setting.
7. Don’t just focus on historical Native Americans. Provide some information on contemporary Native Americans to balance the picture.

(5 ways to celebrate: <https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/02/us/national-native-american-heritage-month-trnd/index.html>) Respectful lesson plans and crafts for Thanksgiving: <https://homeschoolsuperfreak.com/native-american-heritage-month-activities/>



Book reference for tasteful crafts:

Ruth Nowland, a Native Alaskan residing in the Tampa area, provided some interesting facts to think about and share with others during November.

- Our U.S. government was fashioned after Iroquois Confederacy and the eagle on the United States shield is the Iroquois bald eagle.
- Over 8,000 Native Americans served during WWI, even though they were not citizens of the United States. Over 24,000 Native Americans served during WWII. One of the most notable groups was the Navajo Code Talkers.
- Lacrosse was first played by Native Americans and the French settlers thought the stick resembled a Bishop's crosier, so they called it La Crosse, which became lacrosse.
- There are 574 federally recognized tribes in the United States.
- Native Americans played a part in the Underground Railroad.
- 0.3% of the 2,858,949 students enrolled in Florida public schools identify as Native American.
- The Florida Graduation Rate for Native Americans is 77.5%, which is higher than the national rate, which is 74%.
- The United States' 23rd Poet Laureate is Joy Harjo of the Muscogee Creek Nation.
- James Francis Thorpe was the first Native American to win an Olympic Gold Medal.
- *Never Alone* is a video game made by Alaskan Natives that is based on an Inupiaq tale.
- Women played a major role in the Native American Society.
- Even within different Tribal names that you may be familiar with, there are different variations and hierarchies within the tribe.
- Native American's and Alaska Natives are still recovering from colonization today.

We hope this article will encourage local units in FL to consider increasing awareness not only during the month of November but year round.

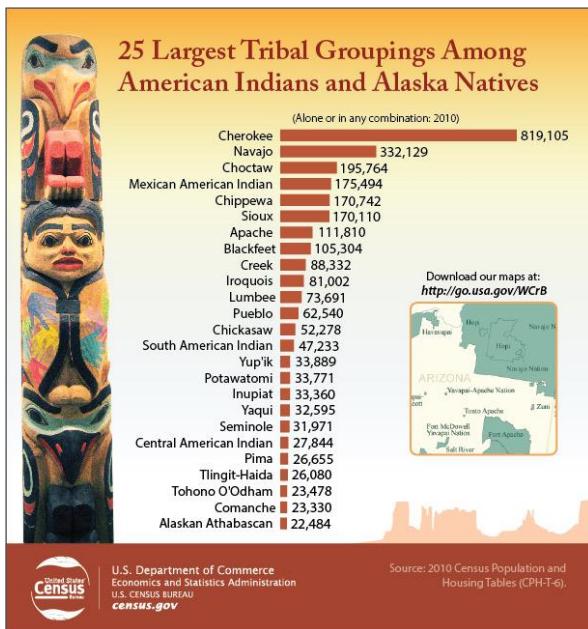
If you have questions regarding this article, you can reach out to Jennifer Southerland jenspearls@gmail.com and if you would like to speak to a local Alaskan Native, Mrs. Ruth Nowland, and asked questions regarding Title VII, you can also reach out to the same email address to be connected.

Below are images to share on the Facebook post to go with different sections shared if desired.





Seminole Tribe: Actually started as combination of many tribes in Florida





Native Americans in Florida Gallery

The images in this section have been grouped into 14 galleries. Click on a thumbnail photo to view all of the images in that gallery.



[Native Americans](#). Contemporary and historic photographs of Native Americans in Florida. (10 photographs)



[Arch Creek Historic Site](#). This site in North Miami-Dade County is one of Florida's earliest landmarks. The area was occupied by Native Americans for hundreds of years before the arrival of European explorers. (8 photographs)



[Crystal River State Archaeological Site](#). This site is believed to have been continuously occupied from 200 B.C. to about A.D. 1400. (14 photographs)



[Indian Mound at Deering Estate](#). Views of the mound and artifacts found in the area. (6 photographs)



[Jacques Le Moyne Galleries](#). This section includes 10 galleries of engravings based on drawings Le Moyne made on his trip to Florida. While there, he documented the lives of the Timucua Indians, who had already been visited by Jean Ribault two years earlier. (421 engravings)

