



A newsletter from the Holmes Cultural Diversity Center and the Office of Diversity and Equity Programs

National American Indian Heritage Month November 1 – November 30

THE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Aretha Jones-Cook and Carson C. Cook, Jr.

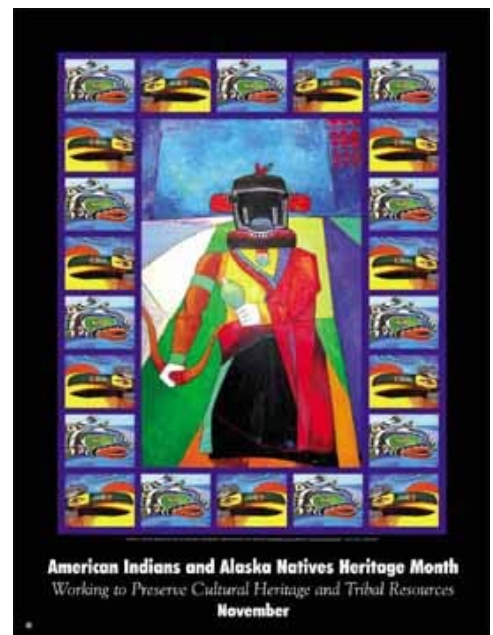
The strength of our Nation comes from its people. As the early inhabitants of this great land, the native peoples of North America played a unique role in the shaping of our Nation's history and culture. During National American Indian Heritage Month, we honor the accomplishments and culture of American Indians and Alaska Natives and recognize their contributions to our country. American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month originated in 1915 when the president of the Congress of American Indian Associations issued a proclamation declaring the second Saturday in May of each year as American Indian Day. The first American Indian Day was celebrated in May 1916 in New York. In 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed a joint congressional resolution designating November 1990 as "National American Indian Heritage Month." Similar proclamations have been issued every year since 1994.

The theme for 2004 National American Indian Heritage Month is "**Working to Preserve Cultural Heritage and Tribal Resources.**"

As we move into the 21st century, American Indians and Alaska Natives will play a vital role in maintaining our Nation's strength and prosperity. Almost half of America's Native American tribal leaders have served in the United States Armed Forces, following in the footsteps of their forebears who distinguished themselves during the World Wars and the conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf.

Today, their patriotism is reflected in the more than 13,000 American Indians and Alaska Natives serving on active duty and the more than 6,400 reservists. In Iraq, Specialist Lori Piestewa of the Army's 507th Maintenance Company and a member of the Hopi tribe, was the first American servicewoman killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom and the only known American Indian woman killed in action in any conflict. Her bravery, service, and sacrifice are an inspiration to our men and women in uniform and to all Americans.

We encourage you to learn more about the history and heritage of the Native peoples of this great land. Such actions reaffirm our appreciation and respect for their traditions and way of life and can help to preserve an important part of our culture for generations yet to come.



!WOW! Facts

4.3 million people in the U.S. are estimated to be American Indian and Alaska native or some combination thereof with one or more other races as of July 1, 2002. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002)

3.1 million American Indians and Alaska natives claim membership in a specific tribe. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002)

43% of the U.S. Native American population is concentrated in the West. 31% of American Indians live in the South, 17% in the Midwest, and 9% in the Northeast (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002)

There are approximately **538,300** American Indians and Alaska natives living on reservations or other trust lands in the U.S. Of this number, **175,200** reside on Navajo nation reservation and trust lands, which span portions of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. This is by far the most populous reservation or trust land.

On July 1, 2002, the State of California has approximately **156,000** American Indians and Alaska natives living in Los Angeles County. Los Angeles led all the nation's counties in the number of people in this racial category.

There are about 560 Native American tribes defined by unique cultures, histories, languages and geography recognized by the U.S. Federal government.

--Indian Circle, 2004



The Largest Indian Tribes in America *

<u>Name</u>	<u>Population</u>
Cherokee	729,533
Navajo	298,197
Choctaw	158,774
Sioux	153,360
Chippewa	149,669
Apache	96,833
Blackfeet	85,750
Iroquois	80,822
Pueblo	74,085

* U.S. Census Bureau

Famous Indian Chiefs

- Red Cloud
- Sitting Bull
- Crazy Horse
- Pontiac
- Sequoyah

Who was Pocahontas?

Born around 1595 to Powhatan, the powerful chief of the Algonquian Indians in the Tidewater region of Virginia, Pocahontas was an Indian princess. Named Matoaka, she is better known as Pocahontas, which means "Little Wanton," playful, frolicsome little girl.

Pocahontas probably saw white men for the first time in May 1607 when Englishmen landed at Jamestown. The one she found most likable was Captain John Smith. The first meeting of Pocahontas and John Smith is a legendary story, romanticized (if not entirely invented) by Smith. He was leading an expedition in December 1607 when he was taken captive by some Indians. Days later, he was brought to the official residence of Powhatan at Werowocomoco, which was 12 miles from Jamestown. According to Smith, he was first welcomed by the great chief and offered a feast. Then he was grabbed and forced to stretch out on two large, flat stones. Indians stood over him with clubs as though ready to beat him to death if ordered. Suddenly a little Indian girl rushed in and took Smith's "head in her arms and laid her own upon his to save him from death." The girl, Pocahontas, then pulled him to his feet. Powhatan said that they were now friends, and he adopted Smith as his son, or a subordinate chief. Actually, this mock "execution and salvation" ceremony was traditional with the Indians, and if Smith's story is true, Pocahontas' actions were probably one part of a ritual. At any rate, Pocahontas and Smith soon became friends. [click here to read more....](#)



The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian opened its doors to the public on Sept. 21. The museum is the first national museum in the country to be dedicated exclusively to Native Americans, and the first to present all exhibitions from a Native viewpoint. American Indians played a key role in the design of the building and landscape near the U.S. Capitol, as well as the exhibitions and public programs. [Click here](#) to explore the museum...

Navajo Code Talkers

The code that was never broken

Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Peleliu, Iwo Jima: the Navajo code talkers took part in every assault the U.S. Marines conducted in the Pacific from 1942 to 1945. They served in all Marine divisions, transmitting messages by telephone and radio in their native language—a code that the Japanese never broke.

Why Navajo?

The idea to use Navajo for secure communications came from Philip Johnston, the son of a missionary to the Navajos and one of the few non-Navajos who spoke their language fluently. Johnston, reared on the Navajo reservation, was a World War I veteran who knew of the military's search for a code that would withstand all attempts to decipher it. He also knew that Native American languages—notably Choctaw—had been used in World War I to encode messages.

Johnston believed Navajo answered the military requirement for an undecipherable code because Navajo is an unwritten language of extreme complexity. Its syntax and tonal qualities, not to mention dialects, make it unintelligible to anyone without extensive exposure and training. It has no alphabet or symbols, and is spoken only on the Navajo lands of the American Southwest. [Click here](#) to read more...

Did You Know....?

The Choctaw Indian Reservation contains some 35,000 acres of land situated throughout Mississippi in ten different counties. This land is held in trust for the Tribe by the federal government. The Tribe has seven officially recognized Choctaw Indian communities. Their names are Pearl River, Red Water, Bogue Chitto, Standing Pine, Tucker, Conehatta, and Bogue Homa. Pearl River, located in Neshoba County, is the largest Choctaw Indian community, and the site of Tribal government headquarters.

Veterans Day 2004: Nov. 11

- 24.9 million - total number of U.S. military veterans.
- 1.7 million - women veterans
- 2.4 million - Black veterans
- 1.1 million - Hispanic veterans
- 272,000 - Asian veterans
- 59,000 - American Indian or Alaska native
- 30,000 - Hawaiian and other Pacific islander

Origins of Native Americans

LONG BEFORE the white man set foot on American soil, the American Indians, or rather the Native Americans had been living in America. When the Europeans came here, there were probably about 10 million Indians populating America north of present-day Mexico. And they had been living in America for quite some time. It is believed that the first Native Americans arrived during the last ice age, approximately 20,000 - 30,000 years ago through a land bridge across the Bering Sound, from northeastern Siberia into Alaska. The oldest documented Indian cultures in North America are Sandia (15000 BC), Clovis (12000 BC) and Folsom (8000 BC)

Although it is believed that the Indians originated in Asia, few if any of them came from India. Christopher Columbus, who believed mistakenly that the mainland and islands of America were part of the Indies, in Asia, first applied the name "Indian" to them.

Native American Church

Native American religious group whose beliefs blend fundamentalist Christian elements with pan-Native American moral principles. The movement began among the Kiowa about 1890 and, led by John Wilson (Big Moon), soon spread to other tribes. The sacramental food of the group was peyote, a hallucinogenic cactus, and the members came to be known as peyotists. In 1918, peyotists from a number of tribes incorporated their movement as the Native American Church. In 1940 the church was declared illegal by the Navajo Tribal Council, which saw it as a threat to Navajo culture and to Christianized Navajos. The church flourished underground, however, until 1967, when the tribe reversed its decision. By 1996, the church had 250,000 members in the United States, Mexico, and Canada.

--The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th ed. Copyright © 2004, Columbia University Press.

Who is an Indian?

No single federal or tribal criterion establishes a person's identity as an Indian. Tribal membership is determined by the enrollment criteria of the tribe from which Indian blood may be derived, and this varies with each tribe. Generally, if linkage to an identified tribal member is far removed, one would not qualify for membership.

Why are Indians sometimes referred to as Native Americans? The term, "Native American," came into usage in the 1960's to denote the groups served by the Bureau of Indian Affairs: American Indians and Alaska Natives (Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts of Alaska). Later the term also included Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in some federal programs. It, therefore, came into disfavor among some Indian groups. The preferred term is American Indian. The Eskimos and Aleuts in Alaska are two culturally distinct groups and are sensitive about being included under the "Indian" designation. They prefer "Alaska Native."

The State of Georgia's Historic High Country Chieftains Trail features Native American Sites in North Georgia and offers a free brochure by mail with history of Moundbuilders, Creek, and Cherokee Indians. [click here to read more....](#)



The Trail of Tears

In 1830 the Congress of the United States passed the "Indian Removal Act." Although many Americans were against the act, most notably Tennessee Congressman Davy Crockett, it passed anyway.

With passage of the Act, the forced removal of Native Americans throughout the United States began. By 1838 almost all tribes east of the Mississippi had been relocated further west or destroyed in battle.

Early during the summer of 1838, General Winfield Scott and the United States Army began the invasion of the Cherokee Nation. In one of the saddest episodes of our country's brief history, men, women, and children were taken from their land, herded into makeshift forts with minimal facilities and food, then forced to march a thousand miles (Some made part of the trip by boat in equally horrible conditions.) Under the generally indifferent army commanders, human losses for the first groups of Cherokee removed were extremely high. Chief John Ross made an urgent appeal to General Scott, requesting that the general let his people lead the tribe west. General Scott agreed. Ross organized the Cherokee into smaller groups and let them move separately through the wilderness so they could forage for food.

Over a period of two years the Cherokee moved from their "Enchanted Land" in Georgia to a new home in Oklahoma. During that time more than 20 distinct groups of Cherokee Indians headed west along three separate routes.

About 4000 Cherokee died as a result of the removal, including Ross' wife Quatie. The route they traversed and the journey itself became known as "The Trail of Tears" or, as a direct translation from Cherokee, "The Trail Where They Cried" ("Nunna daul Tsuny"). [map of The Trail of Tears](#)

Thanksgiving

As American as Pumpkin Pie

Prior to the mid-1800s, Thanksgiving had nothing to do with the 1621 harvest celebration, Pilgrims or Native People. Thanksgiving started as a traditional New England holiday that celebrated family and community. It descended from Puritan days of fasting and festive rejoicing. The governor of each colony or state declared a day of thanksgiving each autumn, to give thanks for general blessings. As New Englanders moved west in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, they took their holiday with them. After the harvest, governors across the country proclaimed individual Thanksgivings, and families traveled back to their original homes for family reunions, church services and large meals.

The Pilgrims, Native Peoples and Thanksgiving were first linked together in 1841, when historian Alexander Young rediscovered Edward Winslow's account of the 1621 harvest celebration. The account was part of the text of a letter to a friend in England, later published in Mourt's Relation (1622). Young isolated the description of the harvest celebration, and identified it as the precedent for the New England Thanksgiving. At this point, Young's claim had little impact on the popular concept of Thanksgiving, however.

In the 1800s, battles between pioneers and Native People trying to hold onto their land colored images of Thanksgiving. Images of Natives and colonists sharing a meal did not fit with contemporary scenes of violence between pioneers and Natives in the west. While there were a couple of images showing a "First Thanksgiving" with Pilgrims and Natives together, such scenes were not common until after the end of the "Indian Wars" in the 1890s. The association between Pilgrims, Natives and Thanksgiving became stronger after 1890, when the census revealed the western frontier to be closed, and the "Indian Wars" ended.



By the late 1800s, America was changing, and the image of the Pilgrims and Thanksgiving became useful history. Starting in the 1880's, immigration increased dramatically. The new immigrants came from Eastern and Southern Europe, with different languages, religions and customs than the old-stock Yankees. Combined with other dramatic changes like growing industry and movement to cities, the large numbers of immigrants began to pose a threat to many Americans' way of life. How could these newcomers be taught how to become good Americans? As in any time of crisis, people looked to the past for answers. By the early 20th century, the Pilgrims and Thanksgiving became a tool to teach immigrants and schoolchildren about America.

Another way to teach newcomers was through their children. Education reformers at the turn of the century set out to design curricula to teach children to become good citizens. The Pilgrims, as early immigrants, became prototypes for newcomers. Unlike other historic figures or groups of the past, the Pilgrims had a holiday associated with them. November became the time to teach all children, both immigrant and native-born, about Pilgrims and the associated holiday of Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving school plays, as well as images of a single long table from textbooks and art, have become part of our holiday traditions. From a tool used to teach school children and immigrants, this simplified view of Thanksgiving has become a familiar symbol in American culture, used in all sorts of media from cartoons to greeting cards. It is important to remember that this view is part of the history of the holiday, rather than historic fact.

HAVE A SAFE AND ENJOYABLE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY!

Contributions to *Diversity Matters*, preferably via e-mail, are welcome at any time.