Wilson MuŊgnak
Oliver Tusagvik Hoogendorn
Inupiaq

Wilson and Oliver are brothers from Nome, Alaska. They were the first to summit Mount Denali in the 2019 climbing season. The brothers recall walking into the ranger station to register to climb and being met with sideways glances. Despite the ranger's doubts, the brothers proceeded to break trail for the 2019 season on the third-most prominent and isolated peak on Earth, after Mount Everest and Aconcagua. When asked how they prepared for the climb, they attributed their success to their upbringing of hunting, fishing, and Alaskan outback life. Wilson explained, "just doing hard things makes everything easier."

Crystalyn Lemieux
Tlingit

Crystalyn is a suicide prevention coordinator at Cook Inlet Tribal Council. She shares the conversation that saved her own life:

"I had a hard time in school. I felt like I didn't fit in anywhere and was being bullied. I can still picture in my mind looking out mymom's window and I'm having these thoughts of suicide. I ended up telling somebody about it, and folks from the church found out and called my mom. She had this difficult talk about suicide with me. She said, 'Things aren't always going to be this bad. What you're going through is temporary, like the weather. It's not forever. It's eventually going to be sunny out. As you grow, you'll eventually learn how to deal with the rain. You just got to wear the right gear. You have to be prepared and have a good attitude. And you'll adjust.' And so, luckily my mom had that talk. It made me really think. When you're younger, it's hard to have that perspective and to think things through when you're in the thick of it."

The 1491s
Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota, Osage, Siminole, Muskogee, Ponca, Ojibwe, Mdewakanton Dakota, Diné

Bobby Wilson (Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota), Ryan RedCorn (Osage), Sterlin Harjo (Seminole/Muskogee), Migizi Pensoneau (Ponca/Ojibwe), and Dallas Goldtooth (Mdewakanton Dakota/Diné, not pictured) are five hilarious and brilliant men that make up the comedy troupe 1491s. They use slapstick and satire in performances that unpack stereotypes, debunk racism, raid contemporary culture, and fool around with Indianness. Since 2009's The New Moon Wolf Pack Audition, their first viral video gleefully mocking Native stereotypes in the Twilight films, the 1491s have continued to expand their audience base, with appearances on The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, TEDx Talks, a sold-out show at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Between Two Knees, and now the Independent Spirit Award-winning Hulu series Reservation Dogs. With their typical humor and flair, they say of themselves:

"We are a sketch comedy group based in the wooded ghettos of Minnesota and the buffalo grasses of Oklahoma. We are a gaggle of Indians chock-full of cynicism and splashed with a good dose of Indigenous satire. We coined the term 'All My Relations' and are still waiting on the royalties. We were at Custer's Last Stand. We mooned Chris Columbus when he landed. We invented bubble gum. We teach young women to be strong. And teach young men how to seduce these stong women.

Standing Rock Camp
Hunkpapa Oceti Territory

This couple got married at Red Warrior Camp during the active resistance against DAPL. Nahaan commemorated their union with a hand-poked tattoo.

Shane Mclean
Tulalip

On the road to Standing Rock to resist the Dakota Access Pipeline, Shane and Matika gathered red earth to make prayer offerings.

Dennis Allard
Turtle Mountain Ojibwa

Dennis Allard, husband of LaDonna Bravebull Allard, released this eagle back into the wild in prayer at Sacred Stone Camp. This photo was taken at Standing Rock, where we stood in solidarity with our Hunkpapa Oceti relatives, also known as the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, in their efforts to protect their land, water, and lifeways from the Dakota Access Pipeline [DAPL], which now carries oil twelve hundred miles from the Bakken oil fields to a distribution center in Illinois.

Pepper-sprayed Protector
Standing Rock Camp

Milk of magnesia "milk" is poured in a Protector's eyes after he was pepper sprayed for fighting the DAPL.

Elsa Armstrong
Red Cliff Band Ojibwe

When I asked Elsa Armstrong, a junior at Dartmouth College, what the greatest challenge of student life is, she replied:

"Right now, I think it's learning Ojibwemowih, my language, while being away from home and at this institution. I often feel frustrated that I'm not learning faster and that I can't speak with all of the people around me here. I also think Dartmouth as a whole is a great challenge for me as an Indigenous person, constantly having to navigate spaces created for white men. I get my strength from my language. My friends. My family. Seeing little kids back home speaking Ojibwe, and from other Indigenous women being their badass selves."

Toto Ko'o: Feather Dance
Ya-ka-ama, Forestville, California

Ceremonial Pomo youth dancers at Ya-Ka-Ama, which in Pomo means "our land." The nonprofit organization Ya-Ka-Ama, founded in the 1970s, began as a school and evolved into an open sacred space for Tribes in the Sonoma County region.

Spirit Aligned Legacy Leaders
Santa Ana Pueblo

Pictured is the Spirit Aligned eadership Program welcoming a new circle of Legacy Leaders during its Spring Gathering at Santa Ana Pueblo in New Mexico; from left: Jennie Seminole Parker, Northern Cheyenne, Kathleen Sanchez, San Ildefonso Pueblo, Sharon Day, Thelma Whiskers, Faith Spotted Eagle, Onita Bush, and Diane Brown.

Temryss Xeli'tia Lane
Lummi Nation

Temryss Xeli'tia Lane is an Indigenous sports icon. She played soccer at Arizona State University, then professionally for Bälinge Idrottsförening, at the time in the top women's premier division Damallsvenskan in Sweden as a center back. After retiring from playing professionally, Temryss went on to become a fitness model and sports broadcaster. When this picture was made, Temryss was thirty-nine weeks pregnant.

"We all have such different experiences surrendering. I knew I had to surrender and release societal pressure or fear and just go, I'm going to be a mother. I'm so grateful to know this experience, to be able to carry this baby, my body changing more than it ever has or maybe will again. Being an athlete, I thought I would be super active, but it has been more of a surrendering to the softness. In order to get to this place, I had to soften my body, gaining some weight, surrendering the LA fitness model-athlete beach body, perceptions of identity and what's beautiful based on outward appearance. I rarely shave my legs anymore. I'm in this mom-bod; I love it."

Cynthia Parada
La Posta

By age twenty-seven Cynthia Parada was serving as a council member for the La Posta people. When this photo was made, fewer than fifty community members lived on the Rez. Her grandmother and great- grandmother (the only living descendants of the prior community) moved to La Posta when they learned the land was empty.

Fawn Douglas
Las Vegas Paiute

Fawn Douglas is pictured in front of the "Welcome to Fabulous Downtown Las Vegas" sign wearing a traditional Jingle Dress. Most people don't think of Las Vegas as a Native place, but for Fawn, it is her traditional homelands, and home to the Las Vegas Paiute community. Tourists seldom know that the Nuwuvi or Paiute people are the original keepers of that territory, which is now known as a vacation destination.

Fawn is the head of Nuwu Art + Activism Studios, an Indigenous-focused gallery, art collective, and performance/community space. Fawn's artistic practice includes painting, weaving, and sculpture, as well as dance and other performance art.

"My art draws me closer to my Nuwu (Nuwuvi) culture and identity. I have learned much through the lessons of our Tribal elders and traveling to visit our ancestral lands and sacred sites in Southern Nevada . . . my art translates these oral traditions for the viewer. Many pieces operate as a filter that keeps the integrity of sacred information that my people hold dear, while allowing Nuwuvi culture to be shared with a broader audience."

Drew Michael
Yup'ik, Iñupiaq

Drew Michael and his twin brother were adopted and raised alongside a dozen adopted siblings by two non-Native parents in Eagle River, Alaska. Drew felt disconnected from his Indigenous identity until he discovered Yup'ik mask-making.

"Growing up, I did not have a good sense of my culture or identity as a Yup'ik and Iñupiaq man, and would seek out male role models that I felt could help me with the tools I knew I had in me. I did not have access to that until I took a carving class with my father. I was able to create my own piece, my own representation, almost a copy of a mask in a book from an exhibition. That was the first time that I was introduced to my culture, and I felt like I was starting to own it a little bit. As I learned more about masks, why they were used, who used them, and then the ceremonies and rituals, I started to see and learn about my own self through the masks."

Yup'ik masks were originally used for healing and to tell stories of things unseen. Drew is reclaiming traditional Yup'ik mask-making as a way of exploring his own identity as an Indigenous man with Two-Spirit being.

"I know especially in Yup'ik culture, people were Two-Spirited, and typically they would be healers because they could see into both worlds, the masculine and feminine, and can almost hold hands with both. They would be able to bring people together or look into different people and see things that might need to be shared or talked about in a real way, and those healers could also kind of look into the Spirit World because they were in between everything. So, since I am Two-Spirited, and I also do masks and other forms, I try to talk about different healing within my work."

Paul Chavez
Bishop Paiute Tribe

Paul Chavez is from the Bishop Paiute Tribe, located in the luscious Owens Valley east of Yosemite in central California. He has dedicated his life to the preservation and progression of Native life by serving as a Tribal chairman, youth educator, social program director, and tireless advocate for his people and homeland.

For millennia, the Paiute people constructed and managed sixty miles of intricate irrigation systems. After the Indian War of 1863, surviving Paiute returned to the valley to find their ancient waterworks occupied by settlers. In time, the city of Los Angeles seized Owens Lake to secure its largest water source. The Paiute continue to fight to maintain the stewardship of their homelands, its water, and legacy as protectors of Nüümü territory.

"The important thing is that we are here. We survived. If you think about it, every Native that is alive today is a result of our ancestors surviving. So you have to ask yourself, Why are you here? Why am I here? I've come to the conclusion for myself that we are here to carry on as a Tribe. Otherwise we will become our colonizers. We'll just blend in. And that's our struggle—to not do that. Because being a Native person, from here, or wherever you're at, there is value in being who you are. Not only as a Tribe, but for the sustainability of the Earth."

Ramona Peters
Mashpee Wampanoag

Ramona Peters grew up in her Tribal homelands on what is known as Cape Cod. She is an artist who makes beautiful ceramics from local clays, and she is also the retired director of the Historic Preservation Department for the Mashpee Wampanoag. As the Tribe's historic preservation officer, she often educates the public about the truth of her people, who were one of the "first contact" Tribes to encounter and try to coexist with treacherous, exploitative colonizers. This legacy used to bring her shame in her youth, but not today.

"When I was a kid, I used to feel that we were the ones who made the big mistake and caused this big problem. No. We should never be ashamed of being welcoming. We should never be ashamed of being friendly. That's how we were created. That's a big part of our culture. Even today."

Bruce and Bradley Gauchino
Pala Band of Mission Indians

"Growing up, my brother was really into sports. He wanted to be a baseball player and trainer. Him doing sports and working hard all the time made me want to be like him. He never smoked or drank, and I just followed in his footsteps. We were always playing baseball. All my cousins smoke and drink, and it sucks. My sister? She plays sports and is an awesome ballplayer. So, I just lucked out having the role models that I had. My dad always made sure we're telling each other we love each other and hugging each other in the house. Nothing's perfect, but it was a pretty positive upbringing. Once we got out of high school, my brother told me, 'Let's go try out for Team Quest.' It's an MMA school. One class, I fell in love. I love to fight, I love the competition. After that we went over to Gracie Brazilian, real traditional jiujitsu. It humbled you. Little tiny guys throwing you around, getting you in submissions. I was doing that for three years, then Master Cheney just happened to show up and I jumped into the Muay Thai with him. My whole family does it, my fiancée, my son."
After Bradley became a professional fighter, he developed a program for Pala youth. His goal with the program is to be the role model he had when he was a kid, as well as keep kids away from alcohol and drugs like his father did for him.

Sage Andrew Romero
Big Pine Paiute, Taos Pueblo

Sage Andrew Romero is a joyful man with a deep belly laugh and a stirring hopeful outlook.
"My primary dance is the Hoop Dance, which comes from my Taos Pueblo people. That's kind of defined me because I've had to earn my right to do this dance among my family. I am drug-and alcohol-free. I did so by living a healthy lifestyle. The reason I've always wanted to do it was because I was from Taos Pueblo people, and I wanted to do something that represented my father's people. It's a very strong dance in medicine in the traditional sense. It was used to heal people, long time ago, and still is today in a sense. It was believed that those watching would get good feelings while they were seeing that dance, while the shapes were being made, the story was being told, and that was said to be medicine working within and healing them. I recognized that and always wanted to be part of that healing medicine among my people."

Canoe Pullers Wait for Permission to Come Ashore
Lower Elwha Klallam

The Coast Salish Sea is the life blood of Coast Salish people. The water provided ancestral highways which supported vibrant economies, strong Nation-to-Nation relationships, and nourishment through salmon and other essential foods of the sea. The dugout canoe was the vessel to travel long distances, ensuring sufficient quantities of food, establishing and renewing Tribal alliances, and preserving social and ceremonial contacts. The canoe served as the locomotive engine to industrialization and provided the harmonious, potlatching way of life that endured for thousands of years.

The canoe way of life remained until the colonizer banned canoes, burned them or sawed them in half, making Coast Salish people homeless in their own homelands. It wasn't until 1978, with the passing of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, that the spiritual vessels returned to the water.

In 1989, seventeen canoes participated in the first Paddle to Seattle. A few years later, by invitation of Frank Brown from Heiltsuk, there was a paddle to Bella Bella and the annual Canoe Journey was born. Every year since then, "canoe families" have been paddling their canoes in the Coast Salish Sea for multi week-long journeys to visit different host destination Tribes.

Pictured here are canoe pullers waiting for permission to come ashore. When canoes land in a new host destination, pullers wait, sometimes for hours, to be welcomed ashore, honoring an ancient tradition of Nation-to-Nation respect and protocol.

Ruth Demmert
Tlingit

When Mrs. Demmert was a young girl, her relative was the leader of the Keex Kwaan dance group in the small village of Kake, Alaska. Traditionally only a man would be the leader of a Tlingit dance group; but as time went on, the dance group leader could not find a young man to learn his songs and carry forward the traditional dances. That is when Mrs. Demmert accepted the role.

"We were losing the dancing part of our rich culture. So, I started to teach them songs. By 1990, our dance group had grown to nearly half of the village and we attended our first celebration, and we've attended every one since then."

Celebration is one of the largest gatherings of Southeast Alaska Native peoples. The event draws about 5,000 people, including more than 2,000 dancers.

"It's really awesome. The first celebration I went to I was in tears. I know that our culture will survive. When you look at the younger children proudly doing what they were taught, you know that your culture will survive through them. I am glad that I was a part of it."

Ethan Petticrew
Unangax

"Internment had a huge impact on our villages and families. Some villagers stopped speaking their language. Some people said, 'We can't be Unangax anymore. We've got to be white, pretend we're somebody else.' A suicide epidemic has appeared with young people. I'm sick of it and it's a product of colonization. So, I wanted to revitalize Unangax traditional dance. I worked with a school district in the Aleutian region and we put together a plan. We still had elders who remembered songs and did dancing when they were young. We pulled out Russian journals that wrote a lot about our music. We had recorded wax cylinders that we had transferred onto cassette tapes. So, we studied our music from long ago. That's how we started it. One day we were practicing dancing in our village and we had [a] strong earthquake. One of our elders was there with us and said, 'Don't worry, it's fine. It's our ancestors.They're right here with you. They're shaking the earth. They're just very proud.'

Cippy and Waddie CrazyHorse

Pueblo of Cochiti

Cippy CrazyHorse has a career as one of the world's most collected and admired silversmiths, which includes his father, Joe H. Quintana, and son, Waddie CrazyHorse. Cippy described the intergenerational dynamics of their artistry.

"I was given the name Cipriano Quintana, but I changed it to Cippy CrazyHorse after serving in the navy during the Vietnam War. I came back to Cochiti and got employed on the reservoir construction and got hurt. I was getting the tiny compensation check . . . I had a family and bills to pay. That's where I got started with my silverworks.

I consider my dad up there, top of the line as an artist. When somebody came up to him with a project, they'd ask, 'Mr. Quintana, can you make me a silver wine flask?' His words were always, 'It can be done.' He was really, really good at his craft. I admired him. My mom used to send me into his workshop: 'Go in there and watch your dad work.' I figured it was just to make sure my dad was working! But I'm glad I did it. I watched him hammering or soldering, I watched him do everything. I did the same with my son Waddie. I didn't take him by the hand, [saying] 'You got to be a silversmith.' He was interested on his own. Learning through observation, I think that's the easiest way for a person to learn."

Lee Sprague

Gun Lake Tribe

Lee Sprague, former Chief of the Little River Band of Ottawa, started ricing in 1984. Witnessing his passion for manomin was a reminder that, indeed, food is medicine.

"Manomin, or wild rice, is a gift given to the Anishinaabe from the Creator, and is a centerpiece of the nutrition and sustenance for our community. In the earliest of teachings of Anishinaabe history, there is a reference to wild rice, known as the food which grows upon the water, the food the ancestors were told to find, then we would know when to end our migration to the West. It is this profound and historic relationship which is remembered in the wild rice harvest as a food which is uniquely ours, and a food, which is used in our daily lives, our ceremonies, and our thanksgiving feast".

Kaina Makua
Kānaka Maoli

Kaina Makua is pictured at a traditional kalo (taro) farm in West Kauai.

“Our motto is E Ai I Ka Mea Loaa [Eat what you have and be satisfied]. Our bones hardened with every bite of kalo, poi, and luau for generations, but our minds have been diverted to other supplements and distractions. We hope to redirect the attention to not just kalo, but to a sustainable lifestyle once lived by our Kupuna.”

Robert and Fannie Mitchell
Diné

The Mitchells have been married for sixty-three years and have six children. Robert had worked for the railroad for forty-three years before retiring to manage livestock again: “When I grew up I didn’t go to school; all I did was herd sheep. I’m retired and back into herding. All that I do now, since I’m eighty-two years old.”

Fannie explained how people stay married for six decades: “It’s just like holding hands with each other. Being there for each other, and for your children; always go on. That’s the advice that we give all the newlywed couples.”

Richard Aspenwind
Taos Pueblo

Richard is pictured in his family home, located within the village of Taos Pueblo. Since time immemorial the People of Taos Pueblo continue to live here.

Lena Charley
Taaa'tl'aa Dena'

Suzette's mom, Lena Charley from the Taa'tl'aa Dena' (Headwaters People), is pictured in her backyard homemade smokehouse, where she is smoking her daughter's recently shot moose. Mrs. Charley was one of the few women to be a big game guide in Alaska in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, and is among a cherished few Athabascans who tan their own moose hides and other furs. Mrs. Charley is a fluent language speaker, primarily speaking the Upper Ahtna dialect of Batzulnetas and Mentasta.

Dr. Mary Anne Sanipass
Mi'kmaq Nation

Mary Anne Sanipass was a cherished Wabanaki basketmaker, who crafts masterful splint baskets from the critically endangered brown ash as well as birch bark and splint cedar trees.

"My daddy was a woodsman. He made things, he was like a carpenter, made things with his hands. That's how we made our money.

There was no line there, this was part of Canada. The Mi'kmaqs lived running through Maine. Few remain, very few. But we were here, we're Natives of North America. We can't say Indians 'cause we're not. Columbus didn't want to go by land to get to India, get spice and things. But instead of getting to India, he bumped into us here. He called us Indians. You see, he wasn't in India. That's how we got the name Indian. Actually, we're not. We have a different culture, different language. We got a different way of running things and have our own powwows and stuff. And this is what we want. The North American Native, that's the way they want to stay. And we'll never, never go away."

Melba Rita
(Accawinna) Appawora
Northern Ute

Miss Melba Appawora was from the Uintah and Ouray Nation, commonly known as Northern Ute. This picture was made during Bear Dance, an ancient ceremonial mating dance among Ute communities that honors the waking of the bear, strengthens community relationships, celebrates young people coming of age, and ushers in springtime.

"My father used to run the Bear Dance with Henry, my grandpa, and all of the people that used to run it a long time ago. The old people used to wear their regalia in the dance. Henry used to tell me, 'Get ready, it is getting spring! We are going to go dance again. Better get your shawls out!' I laugh at him when he used to say to me, 'Granddaughter, you better get up and go dance.' The rules are that you cannot dance with your own husband or boyfriend. You have to choose another guy. [In the Bear Dance, the woman chooses her dance partner with her shawl.] You walk up there and go like this [she flicks her shawl] and that man watches your shawl, and he goes down to you. My father said, 'When they choose you, you cannot say no.' That is the way it is."

Paul Ortega
Mescalero Apache

Paul Ortega was a medicine man, Tribal president, council member, and world-renowned musician. He revolutionized the landscape of Indigenous music in the 1960s, fusing the guitar, bass drum, and harmonica while offering Apache storytelling and, of course, true Indian humor.

"I am a Mescalero Apache Tribal, I am a medicine man, have been for the last eighty years. My first priority is the tradition; I had to live and learn, and know how to deal with people. I don't heal people. People heal themselves; I just bring them up to level where I can work with them, with whatever the problem is. I don't know what you put inside yourself, that you have to heal yourself. Things are given to us to learn to help each other, to learn how to be better. You have the power to be the greatest and the best. But it is up to you. No one can ruin your life. Only one who can is you. Nobody else can. Help people who need help, nobody can help, unless you ask for help."

Vivian & Raphael Jimmy
Yup'ik

When this picture was made, Vivian and Raphael Jimmy were the oldest and longest-married couple in the Yukon. "We've been married seventy-one years!" Raphael said. They had more than a dozen children, and when asked how many grandchildren they have, Vivian answered: "We never counted them yet." Her husband piped in, laughing, and said: "Too many!"

Helen Williams
Lovelock Paiute

"I didn't graduate, I got too smart and quit. I knew it all, so I just quit. I did go to school here and lived mostly among my Indian people. So I knew about everything over here, 'cause you learned over here and I was hell of a smart. I went to the public school here in Lovelock, Stuart, when I was fourteen or fifteen, getting my hair pulled, getting my head hit with a ruler, getting hit with a big paddle, the white people calling us savages and things like that. That was horrible. The white people were mean, they were mean to Indian people. That's why I hated them. I really did. I hated them more when my grandma told me more about how we were treated long time ago."

Grace Romero Pacheco
Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians

Before colonization, the Chumash lived in what is now named San Luis Obispo, Malibu, and even the Channel Islands—about twenty thousand souls. In 1769 the Spanish arrived and immediately built five Spanish missions, carving Santa Barbara, Summerland, Montecito, and Carpinteria out of Chumash territory. Those missions brought enslavement and disease, reducing the Chumash population to around only two thousand by 1831. Through many years of resistance and great determination, the Chumash people have preserved sovereign land to call their own, and through gaming, they have created the economic stability to support their people. Grace has worked to sustain Chumash language and culture as part of the Elders' Council, a division of Tribal government. Although as a child she was forced to attend the infamous Saint Boniface Indian School in Banning, California, Grace was able to return to her people and as a single mother raise her children as best she could in traditional ways.

"We need a community to raise children. We teach our children to respect everything and everybody. The animals, the trees; when you cut down a tree, you say a little prayer. They are all living things. So, I tried to tell them that. They are all good citizens. We always volunteer. My kids will come when they are going to clean the beach and have a barbecue. All my family goes out there and helps. Whenever here on the Reservation, whatever they call for—to clean the creek, we are always there. Maybe they will get it, know how to treat each other and be respectful. Be kind, because it takes work to be hateful. It takes a lot of work to hate."

Nancy Wilbur
Swinomish

Nancy Wilbur, or Tsa-Tsique, is pictured with her granddaughter Alma Bee. Nancy is a retired Swinomish treaty rights commercial fisherwoman, former Tribal senator, fireworks dealer, teacher, amazing sea-to-table restaurateur, and Native American arts gallery owner— all of which supported her family and reinforced her Tribe's sovereignty. She is a woman nation-builder.

"I think my ancestors are everything. When I look back at choices I've made, I feel like they have been guiding me. When I started fishing, once I got out on the water, I just felt like a door was opened to me. Like the clouds had separated and it just was this awakening and I felt so close to the spirit and to all the natural things, the water, the fish, everything. It was just amazing..

Charlotte Rutherford
Unangax

Charlotte Rutherford is part of her school district's traditional Unangax dance group, led by Ethan Petticrew. "Dancing fills me with the spirit of our ancestors and makes me especially proud and very grateful to have the opportunity to learn about my Unangax culture. It makes me feel connected to everybody else around me and who's doing it with me. It makes me happy to understand that my ancestors have done that for many, many, many years and it made them happy."

Charlotte's Unangax name is Ayagax, which translates to Woman.

Isabella and Alyssa Klain
Diné

we will not rest
hoping is not enough
our resilience shall prevail
together we rise
our ancestors always behind us

Angelina Stevens-DesRosiers
San Carlos Apache, Miwok, Kiowa

Angelina Stevens-DesRosiers is a Teen Inland Empire Princess, the first Native American and Apache to hold this title in Southern California.

"My whole life I was a smaller kid, the only girl, until my youngest sister was born among all our brothers and cousins. I wasn't very strong. I was soft-spoken and not too sure of myself. I realized I could join a pageant and win scholarship money—because I tested high in English and math—and go to community college. I became motivated to try out the pageant. Everyone laughed like, 'Oh, you won't win, you're not the typical girl; you're not blonde; you are too tiny; it's your first pageant; don't expect to win!' With the help of my mom and auntie, I was able to take my first city title, then went on to get my second title as a regional representative in Southern California!"

Daniel Clay Stevens
Oneida

Nine-year-old Daniel Clay Stevens, Wahatalihate (He Made It Warm), is pictured with Osknu·tú (deer). Daniel's mom, Stephanie, explained the importance of deer to Oneida people:

"Shukwayatisu [creator] gave us the deer for sustenance. Oneida people used all parts of the deer. The deer are peaceful animals
and it is understood to have peace in our hearts and minds when we eat venison."

Bahozhoni Tso
Navajo Nation

Bahozhoni sits in front of the Holy San Francisco peaks, near Flagstaff, Arizona where she was raised. These peaks are part of the Navajo people's four sacred mountains. With elevations topping twelve thousand feet, they are, quite literally, the place where earth meets heaven, and at least thirteen additional Tribes also consider these peaks sacred. Bahozhoni sat with her family in peaceful protest to protect the sacred mountain as the Snowbowl Ski Resort proposed to use reclaimed wastewater to make man-made snow for skiing."

Crystal Battise Stephenson
Alabama-Coushatta Tribe

Crystal Batisse Stephenson is from a widely recognized powwow family. Her grandparents were founding members of the Alabama–Coushatta Annual Powwow, which led to Crystal's upbringing in the powwow way. "I grew up in it, like from the day I was born—it's just always been a part of who we are. I mean, my grandpa's always danced, my dad's always danced. And they just raised me that way. And now my kids are dancing. Four generations of dancers. My grandparents especially, they used to travel all over the country and that's like my family now."

Holly Mititquq Nordlum
Iñupiaq

Holly Mititquq Nordlum is a maker of prints, paintings, sculpture, and films. She is also a notable activist and practitioner of traditional Iñupiaq tattooing, and part of the ongoing effort to revitalize the tradition of Iñupiaq tattoos as the organizer of Tupik-Mi (Tattoo People).

"My great-grandmother was the last in our family to have traditional tattoos. Within her lifetime they went from being normal to almost completely dying away. The Seward's Agreement decided which religious factions were going to run towns. They just circled parts of Alaska and were getting rid of culture. The social pressure to conform and succeed in this new system is what I attribute the loss of not just tattoo culture, but language, dance, everything. It really mattered who our colonizer was, how fast things disappeared, and in Alaska it was religion. It's still happening. They don't want people to tattoo in certain villages because it's against what the Bible says."

Ultimately, tattoos have been transformative for Holly and other Inuit women.

"It was really powerful when I had my tattoo done. Honoring my lineage and those traditions carries a lot of weight. A few years ago, there were only a handful of us who had the chin tattoo and now there's been a lot of growth. With Tupik-Mi, I was just trying to bring something positive, a bit of pride. It makes me put my head up in every crowd, even if I have to fortify a bit against the dirty looks."

Sophia & Leah Suppah
Warm Springs

This picture was made at Tipi Village, the Native camp set up at the annual Pendleton Roundup, an enormous rodeo in Umatilla Country, Oregon.

Darling Chngatux Anderson
Unangax

Darling is the Cultural Heritage Coordinator for Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association. In Darling's work in culture preservation, she is mastering her people's language, Unangam Tunuu, as part of its revitalization.

"I feel like there is almost a stigma about speaking it around people who do not know how. But people are being more open to speaking outside language circles, like when they greet each other at schools or the store. That is not something we used to see. We are also trying to make the language more accessible; we are creating a language app that will have both dialects in it and curriculum. More people are becoming interested in learning the language, a lot of young girls stick around."

Starrburst Flower Montoya

Diegueño (Barona Band of Mission Indians), Taos Pueblo

Starrburst was raised among her mother's Barona people, a Diegueño Tribe in Southern California, as well as in the ancient Taos Pueblo Village on her father's side, both powerful and distinct Indigenous worlds.

"I'm very privileged and honored to come from two different backgrounds, and now that I have a son, it's real important to be able to balance that out and expose him to what I can offer.

Sho Sho Esquiro

Kaska Dena, Cree

Sho Sho's family's uncompromising principles and industriousness propelled her successes in fashion. Her designs have earned numerous industry awards and have been shown on the prestigious runways of Couture Fashion Week in New York City and the J Autumn Fashion Show in Paris.

"My relatives taught me to be mindful of the intention that I am putting into the artwork. They told me to strive for perfection. If it isn't sewn right, unpick it, do it over again. Our people are really particular. Sometimes I would have work that my sewing teacher would tell me is okay, but my aunties would tell me to redo. Because if you're sewing something for somebody, and it's 30 to 40 degrees below zero outside and their clothes are defective, somebody could get hurt. They could literally lose a finger from frostbite, so everything has to strive for perfection."

Dr. Desi Small Rodriguez
Northern Cheyenne

Dr. Desi Small Rodriguez is a fierce and unapologetic Cheyenne Chicana with dual PhDs. She teaches at UCLA and runs the Data Warriors Lab, a brainy, avant-garde Indigenous social science platform.

"I'm a demographer and a social researcher, and my work is in part population studies. So blood quantum to me is the most disgusting and devastating effect of colonization that our people continue to perpetuate among each other. It only serves to laterally oppress one another; we've internalized the white man's poison—'full-blood, half-blood'—and we use it against each other, against our babies. We see some sort of legitimacy in being more than one-fourth or more than one-half. There's some sick sense of claim, that people are owed more because they're more Cheyenne or people are supposed to be respected more. That entitlement mentality is really enhanced by the exclusionary powers of blood quantum. And I just, I want nothing to do with it."

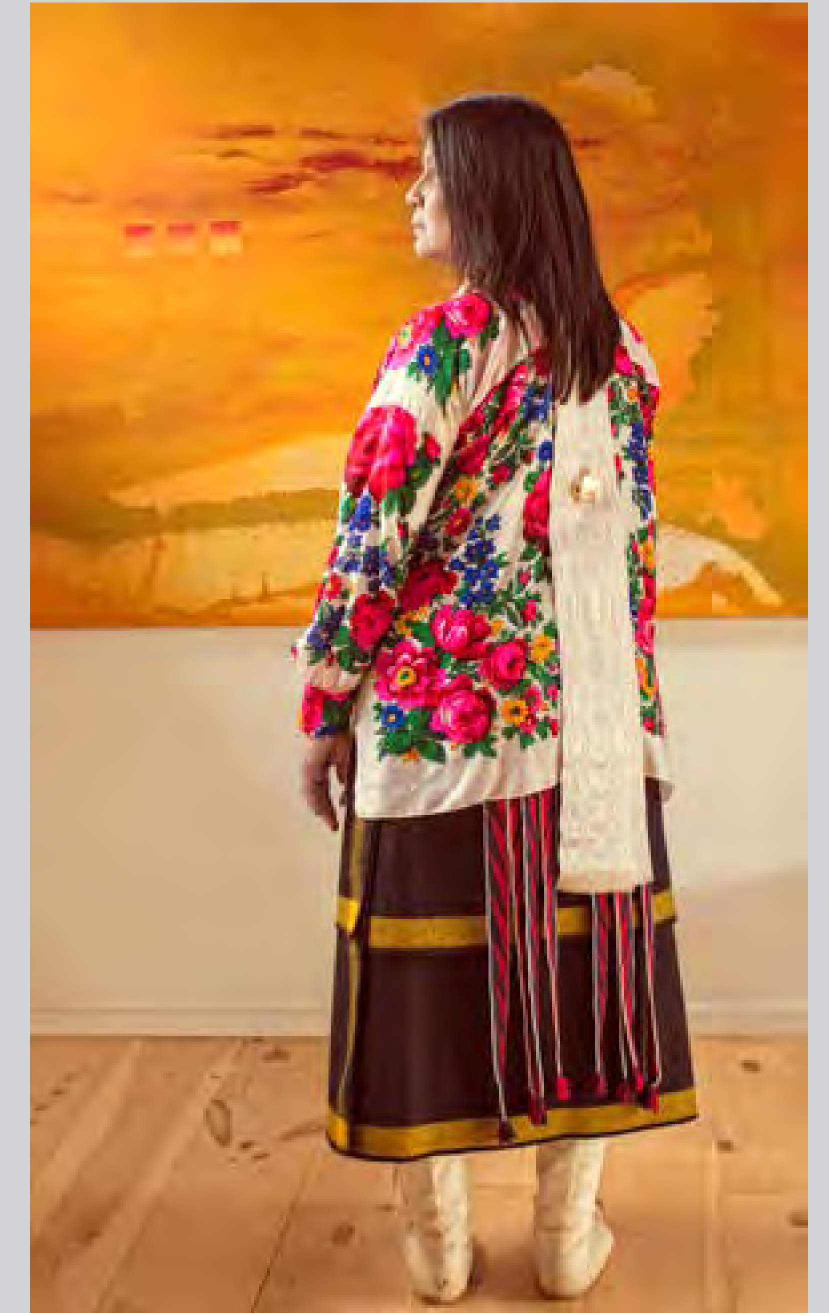
Moira Redcorn
Osage, Caddo

Moira RedCorn is a tough, big-hearted Osage woman and former star rugby player.

"I played at Dartmouth and then in Norman for the Oklahoma Roses; then I played for the western select team, and then the national team. It was before rugby was an Olympic sport—so the highest level was the National Team. It was a lot of fun. Then I coached at Dartmouth for a few years."

After an athletic injury, Moira became a massage therapist and developed an interest in healing.

"I went to that doctor and he worked on my knee . . . just moving it and kind of fixing it and I walked out. It was amazing, and I was like, I want to know how to do that. So I went to medical school."



Donna Pierite-Mora

Tunica-Biloxi

Dona Pierite's story is one of coming home and of creating home. It required the work of many to make Tunica Biloxi sovereign— whites in the Deep South tried to erase the region's Indigenous identity, and in Louisiana in the early 1800s, illegal land claims forced many Tribes from traditional territories for more than a century. In the 1980s, the Tunica Biloxi were finally able to achieve federal recognition.

"Not everything is written down. Sometimes when we teach the kids, we know from what we know. In the 1700s, the Tunica were led down to the Avoyelles prairie by a Chickasaw woman, from where today is Clarksdale, Mississippi, or Friars Point. The Avoyelles were already here, actually from the Ohio River Valley, and then the Biloxi also had some settled here, from Mississippi as well. So, the Tribe is an amalgamation. We still have all that to preserve, to reclaim."

As part of her commitment to reclaiming her people's legacy, Dona is dedicated to reawakening the Tunica language. She has partnered with Tulane University on the Tunica Language Project, which has about sixty Tunica speakers, ranging from beginner to intermediate.

"Young adults come from other places and say, 'I'm Tunica Biloxi, but I don't know anything'. My grandmother would say to me, 'My life is my life, what do you want to know? We have to fight; we have to fight for our culture.'"

Amanda Attla

Athabascan, Yup'ik

Amanda Attla comes from a tough, pioneering dog-mushing family from Huslia, Alaska. Her father, George Attla, was a renowned sprint dog musher, who won ten Anchorage Fur Rendezvous Championship and eight North American Open Championships. These sprints events helped establish the world-famous Iditarod. Amanda loved her dad, a "hard, old-school" Alaska Native.

"Oh man! Four months before he passed away, he won the old man's race. In Huslia, four months before he passed away! All our dads are gone now. But we lived, breathed, and ate dog-mushing. You had to win. And if you didn't, you had to analyze what you did to not win. My dad had to know about the whole race, he'd say, 'You shouldn't have looked that way for that long because . . . ' Being George Attla's daughter was not easy—you had to give it everything you got."

Nahaan

Tlingit, Fort Bidwell Paiute, Kaigani Haida

Nahaan is a righteous steward of traditional Indigenous culture and futurism. His creative practice includes language restoration and a stunning range of Indigenous art and craftsmanship.

"My matrilineal lineage is Tlingit and of the Dakł'aweidi Clan that comes from the Kéet Gooshi Hít (Killer Whale Dorsal Fin House) of Klukwan. My biological father, who is Paiute, comes from Fort Bidwell Reservation, and my actual father was Kaigani Haida from Hydaburg, Alaska. My grandfather's people are Inupiaq from Nome.

More and more, I am passionate about educating Indigenous people, especially those from my immediate clan group and family, and learning what it is to be human through reclaiming and teaching our language, our way of thought, reopening that box of knowledge that has been left in our care, and sharing those gifts with our people. Intergenerational healing is a big part of what I do, and it is at the forefront of activities that include carving and metalwork, traditional tattoo revival, song and dance group, canoe culture, all that kind of stuff. It is just returning back to the better parts of living, like how our ancestors used to."

Christian "Takes The Gun" Parrish

Apsáalooke / Crow Nation

Christian "Takes the Gun" Parrish is a dynamic musical artist known as Supaman whose creations range from award-winning conscious rap to traditional fancy powwow dancing. He integrates traditional round dance songs—using the hand drum and flute—with modern hip-hop beats. His lyricism pays tribute to Rez life, powerfully representing his peoples' resilience, consciousness, and values. "People say, 'Oh, I wanna get off the Rez, I wanna get out of here, man.' Not me. I love Crow Country. I love the land. It's beautiful. We got all the resources. It's got everything. They always say that the Creator has put the Crows right in the right place for our people. And that's what it really is. We got rivers, we got mountains, plains, all of that. We still are able to hunt. This is home for me. This is my people, my culture. This is where I love to be. This is where my ancestors lived. And, you know, to have that tie, just knowing that this is where I come from, is a powerful thing. Rather than 'I wanna get out of here. You know, I can't live a good life unless I'm away from all this negativity.' Anywhere you go, you're going to find negativity. It's up to you to decide how you're going to react to those situations. I love Crow Country. I love my Rez. Love it!"

Robert Piper Jr.
Paiute, Shoshone

Robert Piper Jr. is a singer and dancer from the Owens Valley on the Big Pine Reservation. Robert has been singing since he was twelve years old and is now an established member of the powwow circuit. Like many in the powwow community, he watched before joining.

"Growing up, I always would watch my cousins dance. I was like, 'Oh, I'll be out there one day.'"

Powwow is an inherently social type of dance, where the dancers, singers, and even the audience are brought into the fold of the music. Robert's relationship with dancing and family encapsulate that energy. "I was always a singer, but I always love to dance because just being a dancer to me was like we don't dance for ourselves. We always dance for the people. I always took that wherever I'll go. Before I will go dance, you would see me kneeling down. I put my hand to the ground and then I would usually say a prayer for someone, either someone in my family or someone that's in my life. I'll go and take my fan, pat my heart with my fan, and point up to the sky just for the people that we have lost over the years."

Rupert Steele
Goshute, Shoshone

Rupert Steele shared his prayer to the river while cleansing the eagle feathers of his head dress:

"I ask the water for help to take care of us and our food and medicine around us, and take care of our red road for us, the road we walk on. I ask it to take care of our bodies and get rid of all the bad things we put into our system and clear our mind and pray for all of us that way, in a good way. I ask for good things that we have here, the good things we have here in Mother Earth so that we can be healthy and be well. I ask water to do that for us today."

Kāeo Izon

Kānaka Maoli

Kāeo Izon is a Kumu Ōlelo Hawaii, or a Hawaiian language teacher, and one of the few teachers who teach in the style of Kealaleo in Honolulu, Hawaii. "My passion is for the perpetuation of the culture that belongs to these islands in the Hawaiian archipelago. What fuels me is watching others who begin to understand better where they come from and feel more comfortable in building their self-image as a Hawaiian and when those of non-Hawaiian descent begin to understand better the kuleana of Hawaii's own people and the culture to become better allies."

John Sneezy

San Carlos Apache

For more than thirty years, John Sneezy danced in the pow wow arena as a Grass Dancer, performing a modern men's dance that originated from warrior societies of the vast grasslands of the North. In 2016, he made the journey to the Bay Area American Indian Two Spirit Pow Wow (BAAITS), where he felt safe to dance the way he'd always wanted: in the Traditional Cloth category, a graceful slow dance that is customarily danced by women. John felt nervous but empowered; his self-acceptance and prayer life helped him break through to find comfort in his decision.
"Who I am first is Nnee, which is Apache. That's who I am. But if people do say, 'Are you Two-Spirit, are you gay?' I tell them, 'Yeah.' This morning when I was walking down here, I said a little prayer to myself. Before I traveled here, I said a little prayer. My aunt prayed for me. In our family, especially as Apache people, before we do anything, we are taught to pray. For this occasion, I come in women's regalia, and I wear an Apache camp dress, which represents my Tribe. The reason I chose to dance in the pow wow in women's regalia is to honor those who could not dance and could not be themselves, who are ashamed or being shamed. I dance in honor of those who committed suicide because they couldn't handle the bullying. I dance for those who were murdered because they were transgendered or Two-Spirited or lesbian or gay. And so I feel when I come here and I dance, put all my heart into it, and I gather their spirit and release it into the arena, because they couldn't . . . it is a way to show that we can all be as one."

J Miko Thomas
Chickasaw Nation

J. Miko Thomas, whose drag name is Landa Lakes, is a writer, performer and activist as well as one of the founders of the Bay Area nerican Indian Two Spirit Pow Wow (BAAITS), n annual gathering that celebrates Two Spirit ple and their Tribal relatives in Turtle Island. grew up in Oklahoma. Sometimes when we ent to the largest powwow, called Red Earth, en you're on that gender variance scale, you don't really feel as included or as wanted So e of the things we wanted to do with the Two pirit Pow Wow was make a space that would be completely welcoming of all people, And 's what we did. We want it to be a Two Spirit Wow, but we wanted the whole community ome out. When we had our very first one at LGBT center, we expected like maybe about 150 to 200 people; 500 people showed up! nd ever since, it's just grown and grown and grown."

Yellowtail Brothers
Apsáalooke / Crow

Brothers Stephen and Matthew Yellowtail reclined so I could take this photo, but they insisted the image does not reflect true ranch life.