

LVA

What is at stake with the recognition of Native Americans today ?

Document 1

Illinois students will be required to learn about Native American history, sovereignty, genocide and more

Northern Public Radio, by Peter Medlin, July 31, 2023

[...] Begay's going into her third year at Columbia College Chicago, studying marketing. She's Navajo & Santo Domingo Pueblo. She travels almost every weekend to dance at Pow Wows across the country.

Today, she's not just teaching dance and showing her jingle dresses -- she's also talking with the students about her college experience so far.

"There's not that many of us," said Begay, "and there's a lot of stereotypes of Native Americans not making it in life or being high school dropouts and you guys want to break that."

Starting in the 2024-25 school year, all Illinois K-12 students will be required to learn about Native American history, tribal sovereignty, genocide and much more. Begay's glad Illinois just passed the new Native American history bill. But she wants non-native students to know that their story hasn't ended. [...]

That is a key part of the legislation which is still waiting for Governor Pritzker's signature.

Students will learn about the history of indigenous people in Illinois, but also Native contributions to the arts, sciences and more. It'll describe the large urban native American populations in Illinois.

The state has no federally-recognized tribal land. But over 70% of Native Americans nationwide live in urban areas, not reservations. Chicago has one of the largest urban American Indian populations in the country, with around 175 tribes represented.

Older students will delve further into tribal sovereignty, the genocide and discrimination of Native Americans and forced relocation. The instructional materials for these lessons will be developed in consultation with the Chicago American Indian Community

Collaborative -- a group of independent Native organizations that the American Indian Association of Illinois is part of.

Dorene Wiese is an enrolled member of the White Earth Ojibwe nation in Minnesota and president of the American Indian Association of Illinois. Wiese has been an educator in Illinois for over 50 years and was the president of the Native American Educational Service -- the first urban American Indian college of its kind with an all-Native faculty.

She says Native American representation has been rare within Illinois education. She knows of two American Indian teachers who have taught in Chicago Public Schools in the past half century. She says there are still very few Native American students attending college in Illinois.

“I have homeless people; I still have kids dropping out of school. I can't talk the parents into borrowing a bunch of money to send their kids to college,” said Wiese. “Believe me, I'm working the summer on it, to try to convince them it's worth it.”

Andrew Johnson is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and the Executive Director of the Native American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois. He's also part of the community collaborative. He helped lead the legislative push for the history bill.

He says the plan will also finally give Native Americans a seat on the State Board of Education's equity committee. [...]

But there were some unforgettable uplifting moments too. Late last year, Native American drums and dancing could be heard in the Capitol building rotunda during the Native American Summit. Johnson was there gathering support for issues like the Native American history bill -- along with several other Native-related legislation like one focused on Native remains receiving proper burial in Illinois. [...]

Document 2

Supreme Court Delivers Major Win for Native Rights and Tribal Sovereignty

Newrepublic.com, June 15, 2023, by Tori Otten

In a stunning ruling, the Supreme Court has rejected a challenge to the Indian Child Welfare Act.

The Supreme Court on Thursday rejected challenges to the Indian Child Welfare Act, a major win for Native rights and the protection of Indigenous culture.

The justices voted 7–2 to uphold the Indian Child Welfare Act, or ICWA, a law that prioritizes ensuring Native American children are adopted by Native American families. The law, enacted in 1978, has helped uphold tribal sovereignty and stabilize Native communities.

“The bottom line is that we reject all of petitioners’ challenges to the statute, some on the merits and others for lack of standing,” Justice Amy Coney Barrett wrote in the majority opinion.

The court heard arguments in November for *Haaland v. Brackeen*. The Brackeens, a white evangelical couple from Texas, fostered a Cherokee and Navajo boy. But when they tried to formally adopt him, the Navajo Nation intervened, arguing that a Navajo family should adopt him instead.

The main issue at play went much further than simply who could or could not adopt an Indigenous child. As *The New Republic*’s Matt Ford explained, the big question was about the extent of tribal sovereignty and “whether tribal governments—and this country’s Indigenous peoples—are a legitimate part of the American constitutional order.”

The ICWA is also hugely significant for the longevity of Native culture. The law was implemented in an attempt to rectify the decades of Indian boarding schools, when Native children were taken from their families, cut off from their culture, and subjected to horrific abuse for the sake of forcing them to assimilate to white culture. Making sure that Native children stay with Native families allows for cultural knowledge to be passed on.

The Supreme Court shocked everyone last week when it ruled in favor of voting rights for Black residents of Alabama. Thursday’s ruling was another huge win for human rights. Only Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito voted against the ICWA (surprise, surprise).

In his concurring opinion, Justice Neil Gorsuch pointed out that Native Americans are often denied justice at the Supreme Court. “But that is not because this Court has no justice to offer them,” he wrote. “Our Constitution reserves for Tribes a place—an enduring place—in the structure of American life.”

“In adopting the Indian Child Welfare Act, Congress exercised that lawful authority to secure the right of Indian parents to raise their families as they please; the right of Indian children to grow in their culture; and the right of Indian communities to resist fading into the twilight of history.”

Document 3

Killers of the Flower Moon: Does it do right by Native Americans?

BBC Culture, by Kate Nelson, October 25, 2023

As a Native American woman, I admit I was both excited and apprehensive to see *Killers of the Flower Moon*, Martin Scorsese's new film about the brutal 1920s murders of the Osage people over their oil-rich Oklahoma reservation lands. I'm not Osage, but I'm also no stranger to the atrocities that Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island have endured, including attempted eradication, forced assimilation, and the purposeful decimation of our traditional ways of life. Even today, the lingering effects of colonialism plague our communities. We die younger, experience inordinate violence, and suffer disproportionate rates of poverty, disease, addiction, and suicide.

Adding insult to injury, we're rarely authentically represented in media. That is, when Native characters are shown at all, which is less than 1% of the time in US TV and film, according to recent studies.

[...] Scorsese has been commended for earning the trust of Osage tribal leaders and engaging them to shepherd their horrific history onto the silver screen. [...] I couldn't help but wonder: did Scorsese get it right?

[...] First, it's an undeniable accomplishment that this movie was made by a major studio with a major player like Scorsese. So too is the fact that the famed filmmaker had the wherewithal to rework the script from its source material, David Grann's bestselling book *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI*, to focus less on the FBI investigation and more on the Osage plight. And I can't overstate how absolutely thrilling it is to see so many Native talents on the big screen. [...]

But [...] herein lies the paradox: Native Americans can both be elated that our stories are finally being told yet still wish they were told from our perspective.

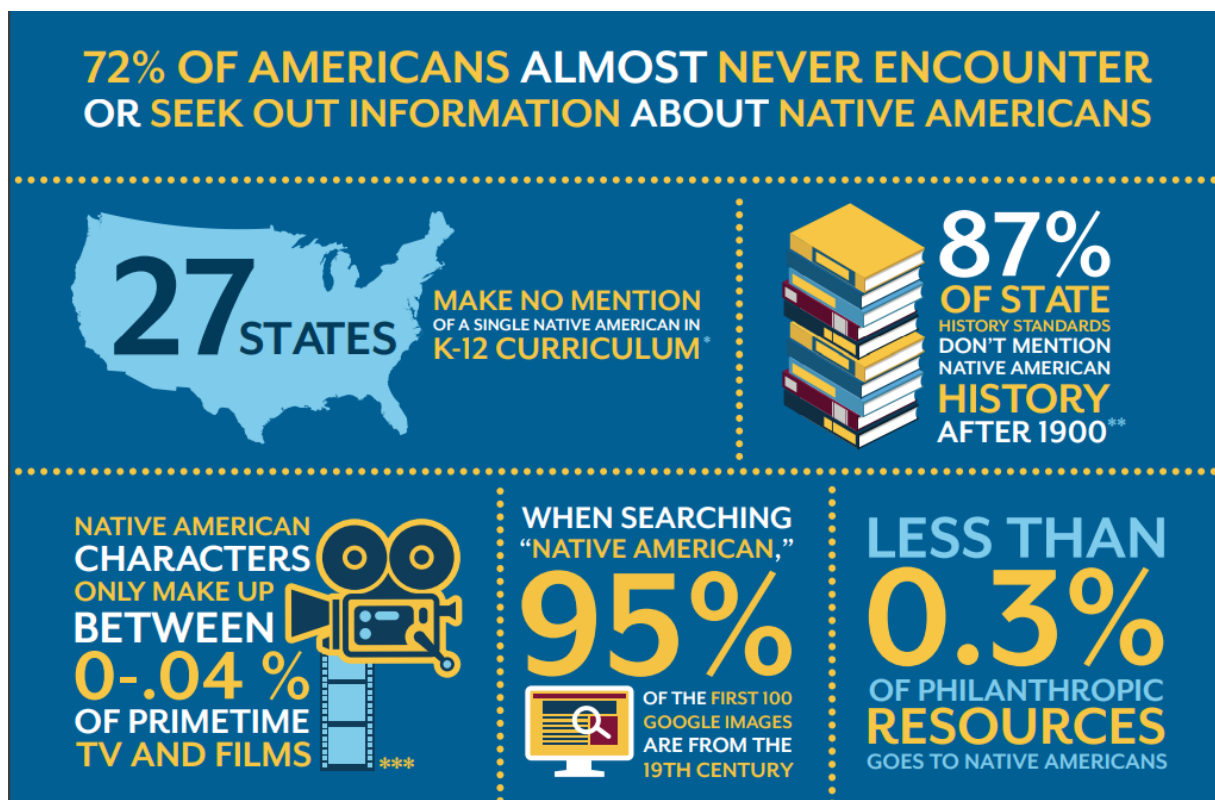
Instead of shining the spotlight on Gladstone's Mollie, the film focuses on her husband (Leonardo DiCaprio) as he schemes alongside his uncle (Robert De Niro) to steal her family's oil riches. [...] The movie also noticeably neglects to mention the harmful federal policies that have oppressed and exploited Indigenous communities, such as the acts that exiled the Osage to Oklahoma in the first place.

Here's where it gets even more complicated. One could argue that the only way to accurately tell Native stories is to have Native creators tell them. After all, the acclaimed TV series *Reservation Dogs*, which recently finished its third and final season, proved how powerful that approach can be, with its all-Indigenous team of writers, directors, and regular actors.

But I'm not naïve to [...] the reality that white male directors and showrunners like Scorsese and Yellowstone's Taylor Sheridan have access to opportunities and resources that many Native creatives sadly don't. Which leads us to this question: is it better to have Americans – who have largely remained ignorant to Indigenous injustices – see some authentic Native representation, even from a white gaze, rather than none at all? [...]

Document 4

Invisibility, toxic stereotypes, and false narratives are perpetuated and institutionalized through K-12 education, popular culture, and the media. Reclaiming Native Truth



<https://illuminatives.org/reclaiming-native-truth/>

Document 5

Environmentalists in Juneau protest Arctic drilling, 2021

