

# Indigenous Communities Leading Today

By Fishtank Staff

*Indigenous communities across the United States are strong and active today. On reservations, in cities, and in rural villages, Indigenous people are protecting their cultures, leading their communities, and building the future.*

## Protecting and Growing Languages

The Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma has opened Cherokee language immersion schools. In these schools, children learn reading, math, and science in the Cherokee language. Leaders created these schools so more children can speak the language of their ancestors.

In Alaska, the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska partners with Elders to record stories, create language apps, and offer youth language camps. Language warriors work together so younger generations can learn their languages.

Similarly, in the Southwest, the Navajo Nation supports Navajo language programs in schools and communities. Children and adults are learning to read and speak Diné Bizaad. The language is also heard at community events and on local radio stations.

In the Northeast, the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe offers Wôpanâak language classes to help bring back a language that had not been widely spoken for many years. Community members



\*DOI Secretary Deb Haaland Visit. Media availability remarks near Yellowstone River by YellowstoneNPS is marked with Public Domain Mark 1.0.

Former Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, a member of the Pueblo of Laguna, was the first Native American to serve as a cabinet secretary. She continues to work to protect Indigenous lands, cultures, and communities.

have worked tirelessly to rebuild the Wôpanâak language using historical documents. Today, children and adults are learning it again.

Across the country, Indigenous Nations are working to make sure their languages continue.

## Leading in Government and Law

Indigenous leaders serve in tribal governments and in the United States government.

Deb Haaland, a citizen of Laguna Pueblo, became the first Native American to serve as the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. She works to protect public lands and strengthen relationships with tribal Nations.

Sharice Davids, a citizen of the Ho-Chunk Nation, serves in Congress. She helps create laws that support Native communities and families.

## Protecting Land and Water

Members of the White Earth Nation in

Minnesota work to protect wild rice lakes. Wild rice is an important food and cultural resource for the Anishinaabe people.

In the Pacific Northwest, citizens of the Lummi Nation have worked to protect salmon and local waterways. Salmon are central to their culture and way of life.

In the Southeast, the Seminole Tribe of Florida manages its own businesses and natural resources, including wildlife conservation areas. These efforts support both the environment and the tribal community.

These actions show care for the land and responsibility to future generations.

## Life in Urban Communities

Not all Indigenous people live on tribal lands. Many live in cities.

In Minneapolis, organizations like the Native American Community Development Institute support Native artists, entrepreneurs, and families. Cultural centers offer language classes, art workshops, and youth programs.

In Phoenix, the Native American Connections provides housing and health services for Native families. These organizations help urban Indigenous communities stay connected to culture and one another.

Urban Indigenous communities create spaces where culture and leadership continue.

## Artists and Youth Leaders

Indigenous artists from many Nations share culture through weaving, carving, beadwork, painting, music, and dance.

For example, Teri Greeves, a citizen of the Kiowa Nation, creates beadwork that honors

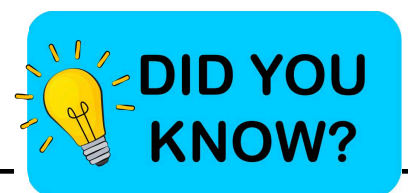
For example, Teri Greeves, a citizen of the Kiowa Nation, creates beadwork that honors traditional Kiowa designs while sharing them in new ways. Her art teaches others about Kiowa history and identity.

Indigenous youth are also leaders. Young people from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe helped organize water protection efforts that brought attention to the importance of clean water.

Across generations, Indigenous people are shaping the present and building the future.

Indigenous communities across the country are leading in many different ways. They are teaching their languages, governing their Nations, protecting land and water, creating art, and caring for their people. Through these actions, Indigenous Nations continue to strengthen their communities and shape the future.

Now it is our turn to learn more. Who are the Indigenous Nations whose lands we live on? How are they leading and thriving today? Let's find out!



### Seven Generations Principle

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy teaches an idea often called the Seven Generations principle. This teaching reminds us to think about how our decisions will affect people seven generations into the future. It encourages care for the land, water, and community, not just for today, but for children and grandchildren yet to come.

Many other Indigenous Nations also teach about caring for future generations.