

From: G&G Storyteller <gng-gng.net@shared1.ccsend.com>
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To: annecook@coquilleiha.org
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STORYTELLER

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In this edition of the G&G Storyteller, we honor March being Women's History Month by highlighting three Indigenous Women Leaders of the past. Our next story highlights behavioral health issues in Indian Country, as well as some positive potential solutions. We then dive into a unique topic of Native Americans in motorsports, and lastly, a 2025 Native Media Recap, highlighting some major Indigenous TV/film successes.

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March is Women's History Month and it honors the successes and sacrifices of all women in the United States. It dates to March 8, 1857, when hundreds of women from New York City garment and textile factories rallied to protest harsh working conditions. This March, we honor the sacred leadership of Indigenous women, past, present, and future.

For generations, Native women have carried strength, wisdom, and care for our families and communities. Here we will highlight three Indigenous Women who sacrificed greatly towards Indigenous causes in the past and greatly influencing the present, the first of which is Sarah Winnemucca. Sarah was a Northern Paiute writer, activist, lecturer, teacher, and school organizer. Throughout her life, she argued that the suffering and injustice her people had endured could no longer be borne without the U.S. government taking measures that granted her tribe agency and allowed them to be self-sustaining.

The second is Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte. Susan (Omaha Tribe), was the first Native American woman to receive a medical degree (1889), who later opened a hospital in Nebraska. During this time period with few rights as a woman and as an Indigenous Woman, the pioneering doctor provided valuable health care and resources to her Omaha community.

Last but definitely not the least, we call attention to Wilma Mankiller. Wilma (Cherokee), who became the first female principal chief of the Cherokee Nation in 1985, expanding health clinics and tribal infrastructure. She was also an activist, social worker, and community developer. A quote here from Wilma sums up these Indigenous Women Trailblazers "One of the things my parents taught me, and I'll always be grateful is to not ever let anybody else define me but for me to define myself."

The roles that American Indian and Alaska Native women serve include: matriarchs, life bearers, cultural teachers, artists, storytellers, homemakers, healers, writers and mentors and many others. The strength, knowledge, spirit, ingenuity and beauty of past generations are in each of us today. Take a moment to reflect on your mother, grandmothers, aunties, sisters, and extended female relatives who influenced you and who are an important part of your life.





Native American communities are disproportionately affected by a number of behavioral health disparities, including higher rates of depression, substance abuse, and suicide. Some studies show significantly higher rates of substance use disorders (around 15%) and alcohol/drug use (48%) among Native Americans. Only about 5.3% of Native Americans needing substance use treatment actually receive it, creating a large gap. Also, 25% of Native Americans live in poverty. Lack of insurance, geographic isolation, and workforce shortages hinder access to behavioral health care.

Historical trauma plays a role in the mental health concerns of Native American people. The most robust research shows that this population has higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), addiction, and suicide than the general U.S. population. These conditions are sometimes rooted in trauma and may also be linked to the fact that many Native American people live more in impoverished, high-risk settings. Studies show Indigenous people have disproportionately higher rates of mental health problems such as suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder, violence and substance use disorders. These high rates result in American Indian and Alaska Native people reporting serious psychological distress, 2.5 times more than the general population over a month's time.

American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations experience the highest suicide rates among US minorities. Effective care requires culturally appropriate, community-driven approaches that incorporate traditional healing practices. Tribes are increasing their management of behavioral health services, utilizing teletherapy to bridge gaps in remote areas. Culturally competent behavioral health programs for Native Americans focus on holistic, community-based care. Many of these programs are supported by the Indian Health Service and Tribal partnerships and utilize, smudging, drumming, and Talking Circles to address trauma and mental health as well as many other Tribal Cultural practices.

NATIVE AMERICANS IN MOTORSPORTS



Native Americans have a notable, and overlooked history in motorsports, ranging from early 20th-century pioneers to modern NASCAR and IndyCar competitors. Native American drivers have often brought a background in diverse sports like off-road racing, dirt bikes, and, historically, the high-speed, technical driving developed during the Prohibition era that influenced the birth of stock car racing. Many Native racers are driven by a dedication to representing their heritage and encouraging youth participation.

Some Native Racers and drivers highlighted here:

- Navajo driver Cory Witherill was the first full-blooded Native American to compete in the Indianapolis 500 (2001).
- Matt Kobyluck (Mohegan) won the 2008 NASCAR Camping World East Series Championship.
- Derek White (Mohawk) became the first Native American to start a Sprint Cup race in 2015.
- AJ Russell was part of the first team with a Native American owner and driver in the NASCAR Truck Series.
- Marcos Bojorquez is a driver/mechanic in the Gila River Indian Community.

Indigenous influences in Motorsports continues today. The influence of Indigenous culture is also celebrated through sponsorships, such as the 2023 DEWALT Racing design which incorporated Native American art. Also many drivers are continually sponsored by tribally owned casinos and resorts. There is even Altus Motorsports, owned by Choctaw Tribal Member: George Nassaney. As long as these influences continue, Native People will be involved alongside the continual evolution of motorsports.

2025 NATIVE MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



In March we like to highlight Native Media Highlights from the previous year, particularly in Native Film and TV. Below are our 2025 Highlights:

- North of North series premiered on Netflix. The show tells a modern story of an Inuk woman and is the first Canadian and Native American Series from Netflix.
- Season 3 of the series Dark Winds Premiered. The series is a Psychological Thriller, and features a predominantly Native American Cast and Crew. The Navajo Language is spoken and the series is loosely based on Tony Hillerman mystery novels.
- On Apple TV, Chief of War Premiered. The series follows 18th century Hawaiian History from their perspective. Working with a Polynesian Cast, the series highlights the sophisticated Hawaiian societies before colonization.
- A partnership between Cherokee Nation and DreamWorks animation produced a Cherokee Language version of How to Train Your Dragon, which was released on Peacock.
- The Series Welcome to Derry features a Native American cast, crew, and consultants. The shows' theme culturally represents Maine's Wabenaki People.
- Bring Them Home/Aiskotahkapiyaaya Premiered on PBS. The documentary tells the story of the Blackfoot People working to reintroduce wild buffalo on Tribal land after 100 years of absence. Narrated and produced by Lily Gladstone.

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