



National Native American Heritage Month

Every November, we celebrate National Native American Heritage Month. It is an opportunity to acknowledge the diverse cultures, traditions, and important contributions of Native American people, as well as remembering the population's hardships throughout history and continuing today. We also honor their sacrifices, which we recognize as intricately woven into the history of this country.

As the First Americans, Native Americans have helped shape our nation at every point since before its founding, including being the inspiration for the ideals of self-governance and determination that are the framework of the government.

There are approximately 326 Indian land areas in the U.S. administered as federal Indian reservations, covering more than 56 million acres. Currently, there are 574 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages.

Famous Native Americans have impacted our country such as Lori Arviso Alvord, born in 1958 and raised on the Navajo Reservation in Crownpoint, New Mexico. She was the first Navajo woman to become a board-certified surgeon. In 2013, she was a nominee to become the U.S. surgeon general. John Herrington became the first Native American to walk in space when he traveled to the International Space Station for 13 days in 2002. Mary Golda Ross was an engineer who worked at Lockheed Martin on the design of planes and spacecraft, including the P-38 Lightning fighter plane and the Agena rocket, which helped pave the way for NASA's Apollo mission.

Locally, I want to recognize George R. Gandara who was the first Yaqui Mexican American VFW Director of Homeless Veteran's programs for the 5th District of Illinois, Lake & McHenry County. As well as the Commander for the Libertyville VFW post. George serves as a volunteer at Operation Fetch/In Dog's we Trust and the Toys for Tots program at Great Lakes and is the former Chairperson of the Lake County Sheriff's Veteran's winter coat drive. George has also held various roles with the Potawatomi Trails Pow-wow council committee and is past President of Trickster's Native American Veterans of Illinois.

As we close out National Native American Heritage month we honor our native people, their ancestral homes, their religion, and recognize their contributions historically, today, and in the future of our community.

Mayor Johnson