

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HERITAGE MONTH

History and Significance

Every November, we celebrate Indigenous Peoples Heritage Month to commemorate the rich traditions, languages, and stories of Indigenous peoples including Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Island communities. National Native American Heritage Month was federally recognized in 1990, but traces its roots back to 1916 when New York became the first state to recognize “American Indian Day.”

This year’s theme ‘Celebrating Tribal Sovereignty and Identity’ highlights the importance of Tribes’ participation and consent for any decisions made regarding their property and citizens. There are 574 federally-recognized Tribes in the U.S., and many more are advocating for the recognition. Tribal leaders advocate for self-governance as a key to preserving Tribal Nations’ unique cultures and identities.

The term "Native Americans" encompasses a rich tapestry of Indigenous peoples residing across North, Central, and South America. While it is preferable to refer to Native individuals by their specific tribal names, the terms "Native American," "First American," "American Indian," "Native," and "Indigenous" are all considered acceptable and are often used interchangeably when describing Indigenous communities within the continental U.S. Alaskan Natives and Native Hawaiians are typically identified by their specific names. As racial and ethnic identities are deeply personal and continually evolving, the choice of terminology should respect individual preferences.

Ways to Celebrate in NYC

Here are a few ways to celebrate locally:

- [NYC Park’s Native American Heritage Month Events](#)
- [New York Public Library’s Native American Heritage Month Programs & Events](#)
- [Celebrate Native American Heritage Month 2023 in New York State](#)
- Attend an event hosted by the [Redhawk Council](#).
- Learn more about Native New Yorkers with the [Lenape Center](#).

A note from the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As we celebrate Indigenous Peoples Heritage Month, we want to acknowledge that our campus is built on the ancestral homelands of the Lenape people. We deeply respect the enduring connection these lands have for the Lenape Nation, both in the past and present. As New York City is home to the largest urban Native population in the United States, we invite you to find activities and events that allow you to reflect on and appreciate this vibrant community.

Community Spotlight



Martin Maag is a respected member of our Rockefeller Security team.

As a descendent of the Choctaw Nation, Martin grew to love nature and developed a strong sense of self through witnessing the resiliency of his grandparents in Oklahoma, where their ancestors were forced to settle during the Trail of Tears.

Embodying the Choctaw’s fierce warrior spirit, Martin’s passion for protecting and preserving his family and community led him to work in the FBI for 20 years on Tribal lands before joining the Rockefeller University in 2013. The university’s mission resonated with his Choctaw value of being open-minded and investing resources in innovative ideas for the betterment of humanity.

Martin’s groundedness in peace, balance, and harmony shines through his interactions with the Rockefeller community. We appreciate Martin’s service to making our campus safer.

If you know anyone who may be interested in being featured in the Community Spotlight in our future newsletters, fill out a nomination form on bit.ly/RockefellerSpotlight