

DAY 6: Honoring Michigan's First People

There are many terms used to describe the Indigenous People of America. For example, "American Indian" is used in the legal context by the branch of law, Federal Indian Law, as well as through the U.S. Census Bureau. "Native American" was a term that grew out of political movements in the 1960s and '70s. There is no universally agreed upon preferred language and the best practice is to ask an individual how they prefer to be identified.

Michigan was historically inhabited by three Anishinaabe (ah-nish-ih-nah-bey) nations of the Council of Three Fires: the Ojibwe (also known as the Chippewa), the Odawa (also known as the Ottawa), and the Potawatomi. In the late 18th and 19th centuries, the Council of Three Fires negotiated a series of treaties with representatives of the U.S. government. These treaties, however, were generally not conducted fairly and frequently followed a military defeat of Native Americans or took place within a framework that threatened a resort to military force.

The first of two Michigan treaties affecting the Anishinaabeg were the 1795 Treaty of Greenville, in which Detroit was ceded, and the 1807 Treaty of Detroit, in which much of Southeastern Michigan was ceded. These treaties forced the Anishinaabeg to give up large swathes of their land to the U.S. government and set up reservations where the Anishinaabeg were made to live. Michigan-related treaties continued, and by 1842 the Anishinaabeg only held 32 square miles of reserved land, with the remaining 58,216 square miles having been ceded to the U.S.

It is important to know that while the government forced many Anishinaabeg off their land, the former indigenous groups of Michigan were not lost in the shadows. Some were relocated out west, some fled to Canada, and others eventually returned to their homeland where they still live today. Currently, [Michigan is home to 12 federally recognized tribes](#).

Today's resources will help you dig deeper into the history of Michigan's first people. Before you dig into today's resources, [watch this short video](#) on dispelling myths and misconceptions regarding Native Americans. (*Content warning: The beginning of the video contains images from past and recent pop culture that are considered offensive to indigenous populations.*)

Today's Challenge:

Listen:

- Listen to this episode of Stateside to come to face [the painful legacy of Michigan's Native boarding schools](#).
- Check out this episode of Focus podcast, which documents [a new effort in Michigan to teach what really happened to Native Americans in this country and our state](#).
- Listen to this episode of the Detroit History Podcast detailing [the Native American origins of what is now the city of Detroit](#).

Share your reflections on today's topic on social media using the hashtag **#unitedforequity** or **#uwwcequitychallenge** and tag **@uwwashtenaw**.

Read:

- Check out this article on [Eating with the Seasons. Anishinaabeg. Great Lakes Region](#). Read about [the history of land cessions in Michigan](#).
- Find information about the [Federally Recognized tribes in Michigan](#).

Watch:

- Learn about the [Jingle Dress Project](#) focused on healing with art by Navajo photographer Eugene Tapahe.
- Watch [The Invasion of America](#) to see how more than 1.5 billion acres were stolen from America's Indigenous People.
- This news story explains [Michigan's role in Native American boarding schools](#). *Content warning: this video describes situations of sexual assault and suicide ideation.*
- Watch and learn as 7 [Native American young adults debunk the common misconceptions about their culture](#).

Act:

- Explore this resource to [find what historically indigenous land you live and work on](#).
- If your organization recognizes Columbus Day by that name, consider changing it to Indigenous Peoples' Day. This is an act that shifts the focus away from glorifying people and institutions that have caused harm and trauma to Native, Black, Asian, Latinx and other communities of color. Then check out this [Activist's Guide for Supporting Indigenous Peoples' Day Toolkit](#).



**Discrimination?
Injustice?
Racial Inequities?**

YES.

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21-Day Equity
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