



November 21, 2016

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Commemorates Native American Heritage Month

The Commission joins in the celebration of Native American Heritage Month, recognizing the treasured contributions of Native Americans to our society. We think it is worth noting that Native American heritage is represented by such a wide array of cultures and lands that one month is hardly enough time to commemorate this diversity.

As President Obama [stated](#) last month, “Over our long shared history, there have been too many unfortunate chapters of pain and tragedy, discrimination and injustice.” The Commission similarly acknowledges our Native peoples’ sacrifice and bloodshed that is deeply woven into the fabric of this country’s history.

In 2003, our “Quiet Crisis” [report](#) found significant shortcomings in federal funding for tribal communities that exacerbated the health and welfare of Native Americans. We are currently preparing an update to the report, to formulate actionable recommendations for improving the lives of the first Americans.

Yet, while of course reflecting on our often-troubled history of treatment of Native Americans, and the marginalization still faced by tribal communities, this month is one of celebration and hope. The contributions, customs and traditions of our Native American brothers and sisters are rich and diverse, and should be recognized and cherished by all Americans.

Commission Chairman Martin R. Castro stated, “The First Peoples of the Americas remain important contributors to the vibrant fabric of the United States of America and we celebrate their culture and traditions this month. We at the Commission pledge to be vigilant in doing our part to protect the civil rights of American Indians and urge the federal government to safeguard and respect Native American rights, traditions and culture.”

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Founded in 1957, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights matters and issuing a federal civil rights enforcement report. For information about the Commission, please visit <http://www.usccr.gov> and follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/usccrgov>