A PROJECT TO DISPEL AMERICA'S MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Presentation by Mary Kathryn Nagle, Partner, Pipestem Law, Research and Project Team Member, Reclaiming Native Truth Project

Reclaiming Native Truth is an unprecedented national project to transform the way society, institutions, popular culture and Americans perceive Native Americans that can lead to equity, inclusion, accurate representation, policy change and social justice.

#### **GOAL:**

Research public opinion and inform narrative and cultural strategies that will shift public perceptions and win hearts and minds to catalyze transformative change.



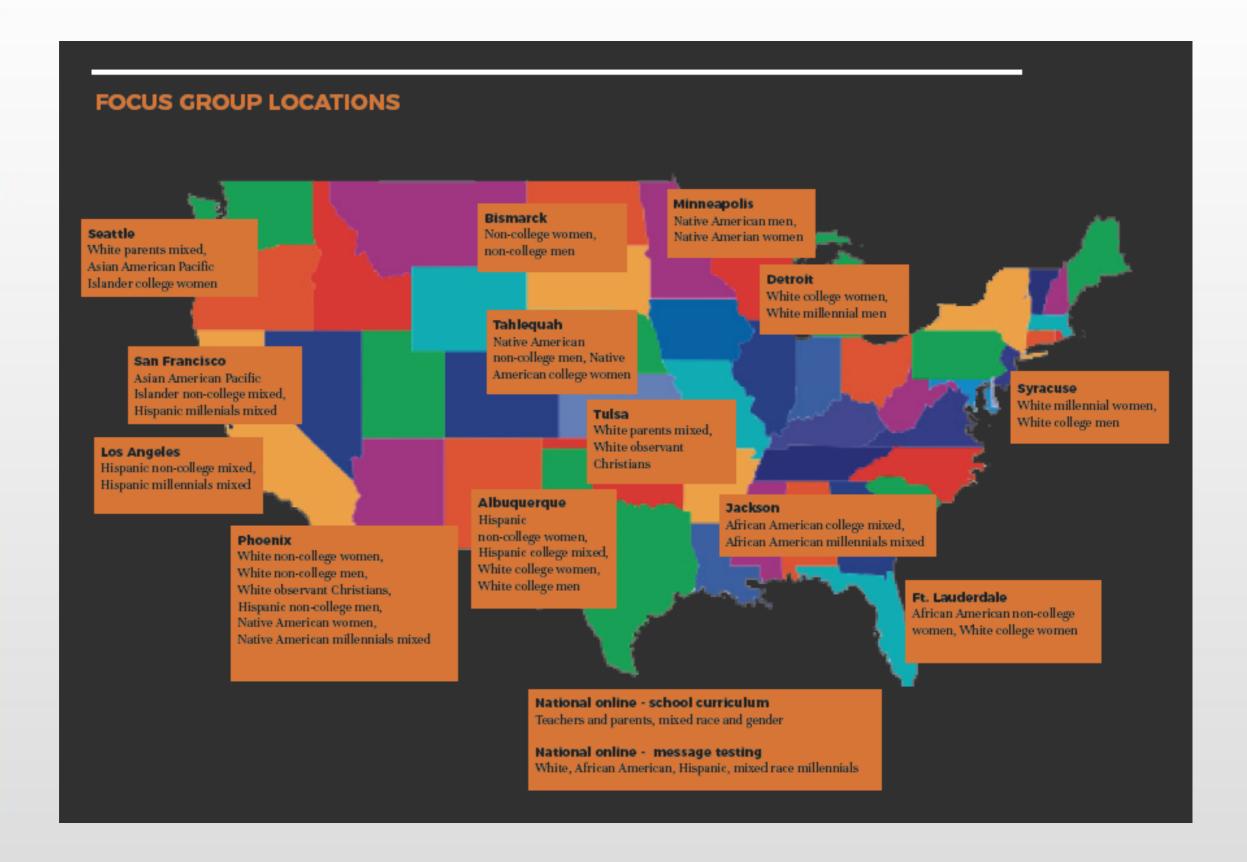
Reclaiming Native
Truth will set the
stage for the next
phase and long-term
to result in:

- Improved accuracy of portrayals in the media and entertainment
- Authentic storytelling and new narratives in pop culture and media that can lead to greater cultural shifts
- Greater inclusion in government decision-making
- Increased support for key issues and policies important to Indian Country
- Inclusion of accurate history in K-12 educational curricula
- Increased social and philanthropic investment in Native communities, innovation and Nativeled solutions
- Increased self-esteem, hope and opportunities for Native youth to realize their full potential

## OUR RESEARCH INCLUDED A COMBINATION OF LITERATURE REVIEWS, SOCIAL LISTENING, FOCUS GROUPS, ONLINE FOCUS GROUPS, NATIONAL SURVEYS, AND IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS AS DETAILED BELOW.

2	comprehensive literature reviews conducted on existing public opinion research on Native Peoples and on the strengths and limitations of narrative frameworks to transform negative stereotypes by challenging implicit bias and misperceptions
28	focus groups completed in 11 states and nationally online (see map on previous page)
45	in-depth interviews completed among elites including members of Congress; former political appointees; judges; foundation officials; and civil rights, business and entertainment leaders
3,401	college students from 12 colleges/universities participated in a national study examining perceptions of Native Peoples and issues related to Native Peoples
13,306	respondents to nationally representative surveys on key issues and perceptions regarding Native Peoples
240,380	Facebook and Twitter posts on cultural appropriation and Native Peoples analyzed
4.9 million	social media posts analyzed from Twitter, Facebook, 300 million blogs, and other social media platforms to uncover the dominant narratives around Native Americans and how the conversations differ across channels, demographics and influencers

## **Focus Groups**



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## Summary of Research Findings: Focus Groups

- People fall back on <u>media tropes of the savage/ noble warrior</u> or reports of negative outcomes such as poverty and alcoholism rather than seeing Indians in everyday, contemporary roles.
- They underestimate the degree of current discrimination.
- Believe population is declining because they do not see or hear much in popular culture and media.
- The <u>majority</u> of respondents (focus groups and national poll) admit they do not know any Native Americans.
- Perceptions of Native Americans formed for most participants in:
  - 1) K-12 education;
  - 2) Popular Culture;
  - 3) Media
- The majority of participants across the country had basic knowledge of Standing Rock and were supportive of the tribe's fight "to protect its land and water," across all demographics, political affiliations.
- Standing Rock created a major disruption in dominant narratives and opened new space for interest in, support for Native American issues.
- Issue of <u>invisibility</u> of Native Americans found to be <u>equally if not</u> more damaging than myths, misconceptions and stereotypes and was a strong indicator for continued bias, lack of support for social justice for Native Americans.









### Summary of Research Findings: Focus Groups

While many people of color see a shared history of discrimination, many of the same biases emerge among people of color. Moreover, there is some tension from the belief that Native Americans receive more benefits than other minority groups.

Reclaiming Native Truth

- History has a role in re-writing the narrative. Most people know Native Americans were oppressed and had their land stolen, but the <u>depth and breadth</u> of this violence is <u>underappreciated</u>. It is also critical to make plain that the injustice did not end in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.
- Focus group participants who were reminded of the challenges and obstacles faced by Native Americans, particularly around modern injustices, were found to be more open-minded toward changing the narrative and how Native Americans are treated.









## Preliminary Findings: Judicial Interviews & Social Listening

#### **Judicial Interviews**

- While federal courts routinely render significant decisions that have huge impacts on the health, welfare, and self-government of Tribal Nations and their citizens, the majority of the individuals who render these decisions have little to no experience with tribal nations and/or American Indians.
- Of the 874 authorized Article III judges in the United States, <u>only one tribal</u> <u>citizen sits on the federal bench</u>.
- Troubling examples of bias were evidenced in interviews with judges, law clerks and law professors interviewed.

#### Social media analysis

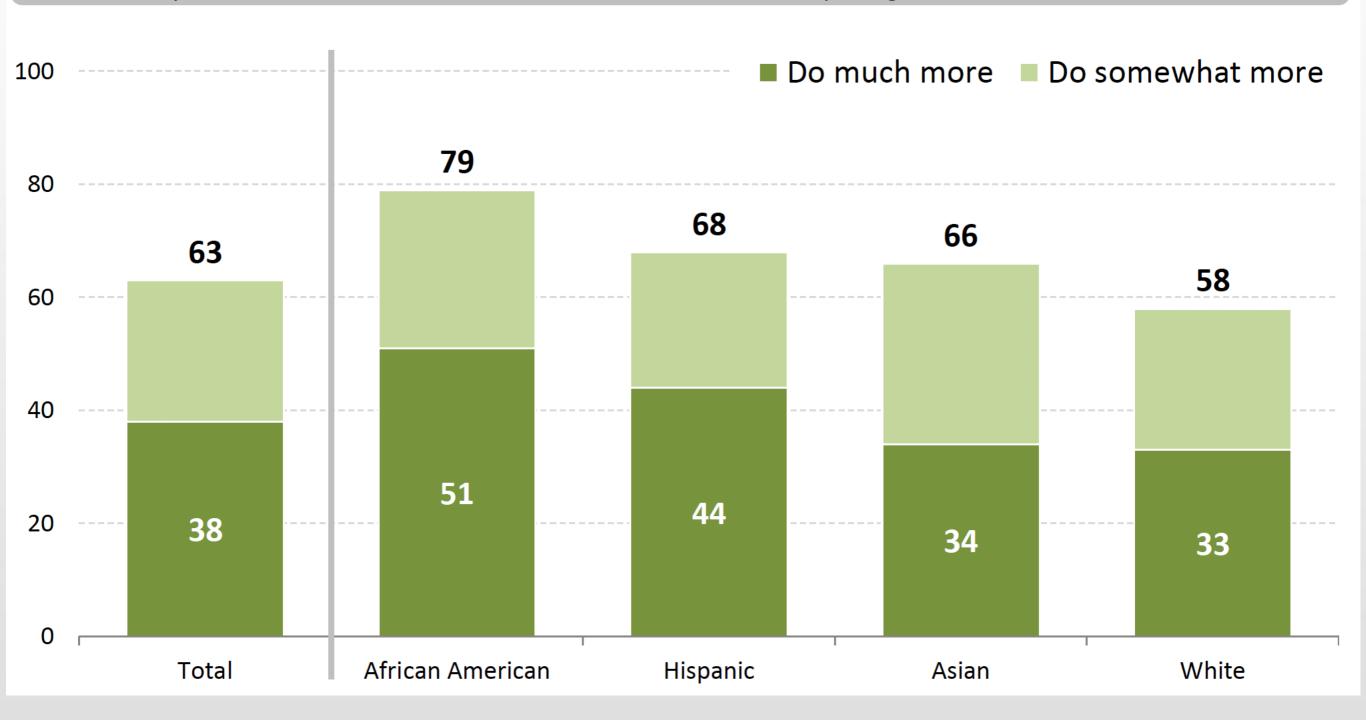
- In many online debates around Native American issues, non-Native voices
   <u>divide along partisan and ideological lines</u>, creating gridlock and amplified
   rhetoric especially when they hear Native Americans are on both sides of
   the debate.
- Many social media <u>users are looking to learn more</u> about how to respect Native Americans.

## Findings: National Phone Survey

- 3,200 adults age 18 & above. Nationally representative with oversamples of African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian American Pacific Islanders, as well as the states of Michigan, Mississippi, and New Mexico
- 72% believe it is necessary that to make <u>significant changes to school</u> <u>curriculum</u> on Native American history and culture.
- Even among conservatives, 64% support <u>increasing resources to</u> reduce poverty and improve health care and education.
- 53% believes that the <u>government gives benefits</u> to Native Americans <u>just for being Native American</u> that are not available to other minority groups.
- Only 36% believe Native peoples face a great deal of discrimination which indicates the <u>level of discrimination is underestimated</u> compared to other groups.
- The <u>more</u> respondents were unaware or in denial of the prejudice, bias, and discrimination faced by Native American, the <u>less</u> they support issues related to Native Americans.

## Large, diverse majority for "doing more"

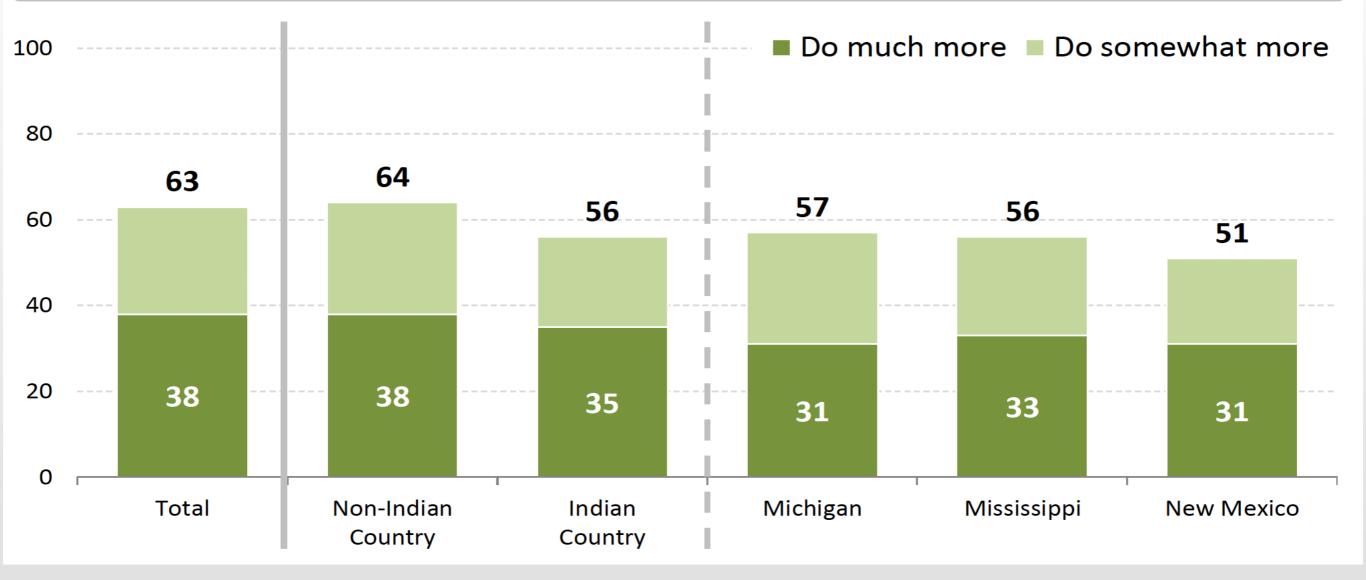
Now I'm going to ask you some questions about Native Americans. Generally speaking, when it comes to helping Native Americans, do you believe the United States should do more, do less, or keep things the same?





## Somewhat lower support in New Mexico and in Indian Country

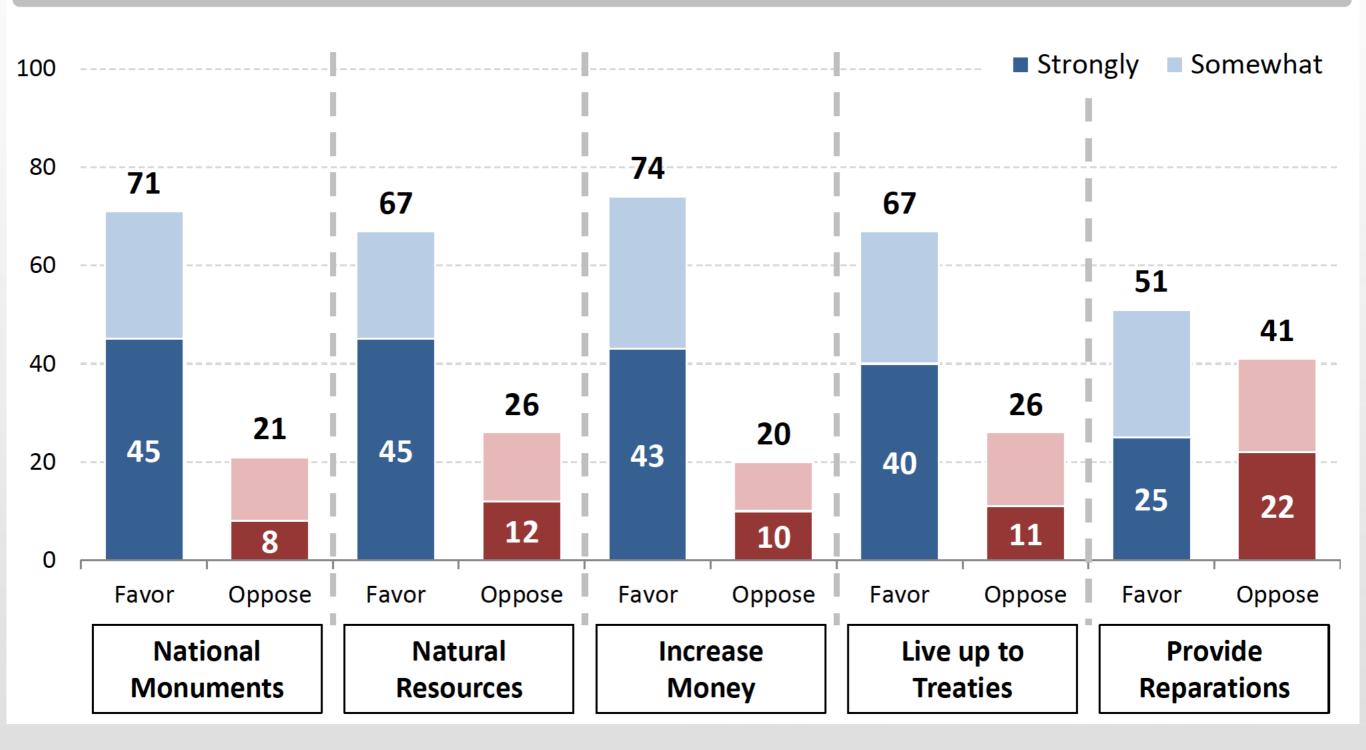
Now I'm going to ask you some questions about Native Americans. Generally speaking, when it comes to helping Native Americans, do you believe the United States should do more, do less, or keep things the same?



\*For the purposes of the research, "Indian Country are cities where focus groups were conducted that are in close proximity to reservations.

## Strong support for most policy agenda items

Please tell me whether you FAVOR or OPPOSE the following changes in U.S. law when it comes to Native Americans.



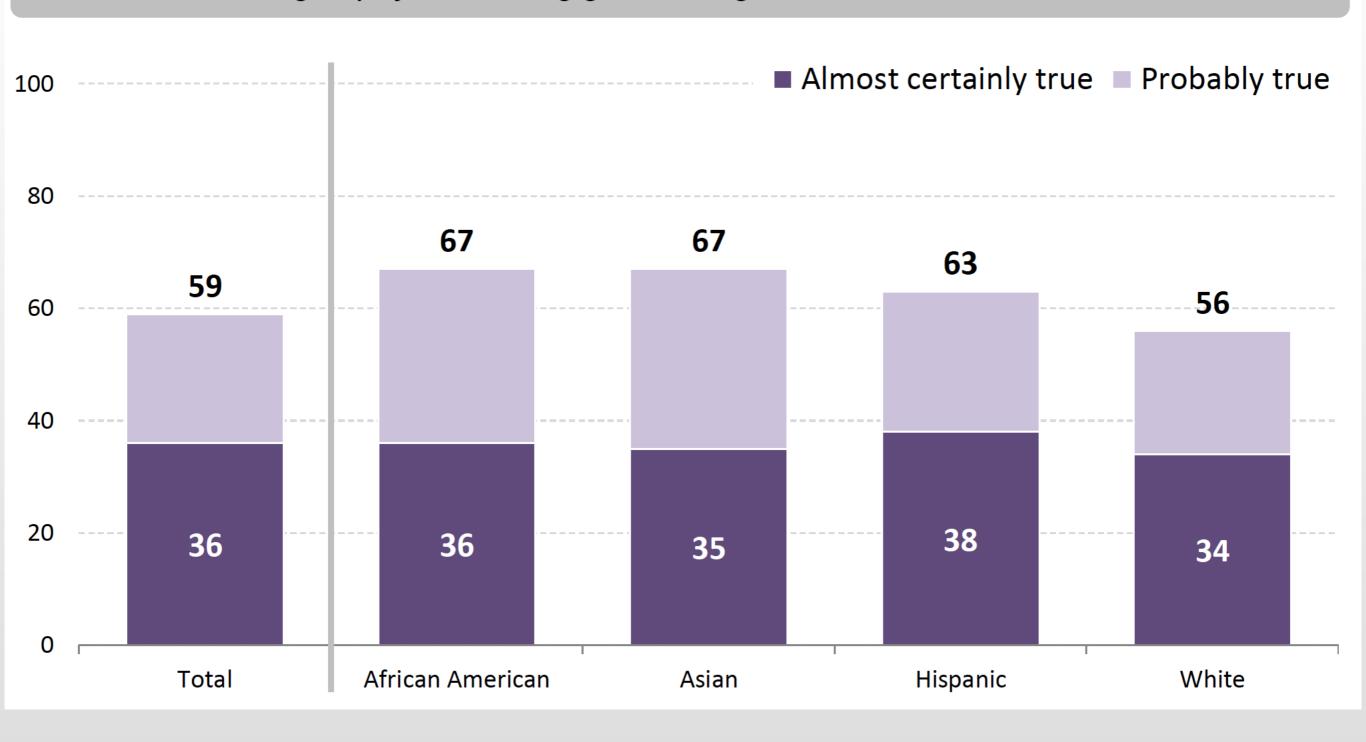
## Some notable findings

- Even among conservatives, 64 percent support increasing resources to reduce poverty and improve health care and education.
- Expanding national monuments is one of the few issues where Indian country is more supportive of Native American positions than non-Indian country (77 and 71 percent, respectively).
- A 71 percent majority of African Americans support reparations.

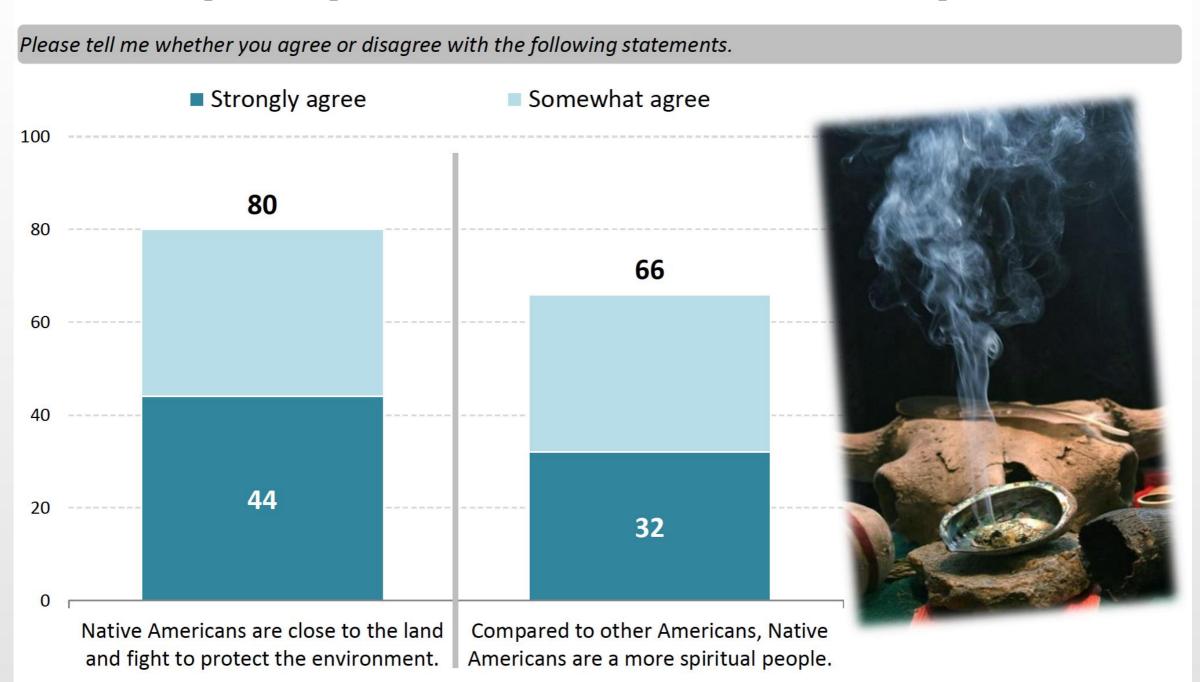


## Recognize genocide of Native American peoples

The United States is guilty of committing genocide against Native Americans.



## Positive perceptions: environmental and spiritual



## Some myths about Native Americans widely held

Now I am going to read you some statements about Native Americans. For each one I read, please tell me if you believe this statement is almost certainly true, probably true, probably untrue, or almost certainly untrue.

	Total % True
The United States is guilty of committing genocide against Native Americans.	59
The government gives benefits to Native Americans just for being Native American that are not available to other minority groups.	53
Most Native Americans are now doing well financially due to revenue from Indian casinos.	32
Individual Native Americans are not required to pay income taxes.	20
Native Americans are one of the fastest growing groups in the United States.	12

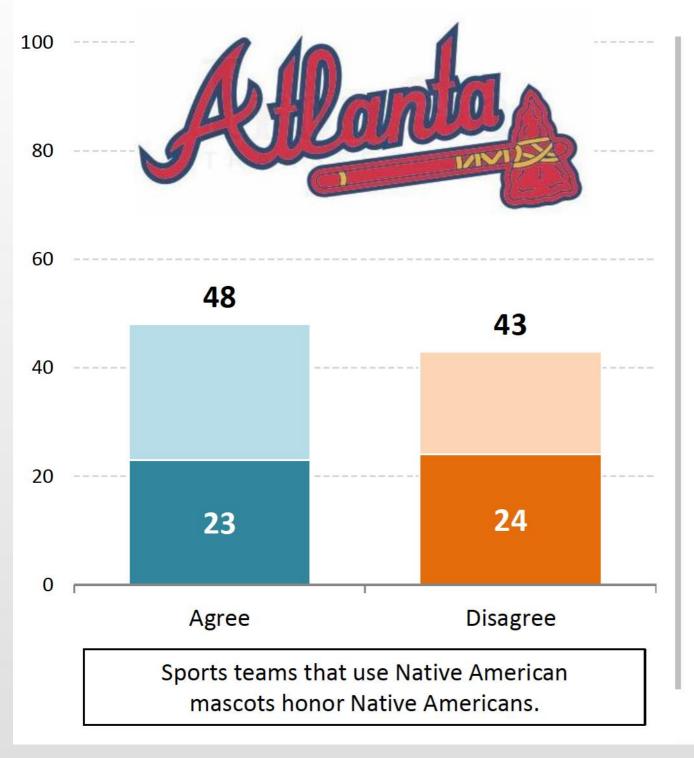
# Large number of respondents believe Native Americans get "free stuff"

	% Believe true	% Believe false	% Not sure
The government gives benefits to Native Americans just for being Native American that are not available to other minority groups.	53	28	19
Indian Country	57	27	16
Most Native Americans are now doing well financially due to revenue from Indian casinos.	32	51	17
Mississippi	49	37	14
Individual Native Americans are not required to pay income taxes.	20	40	40

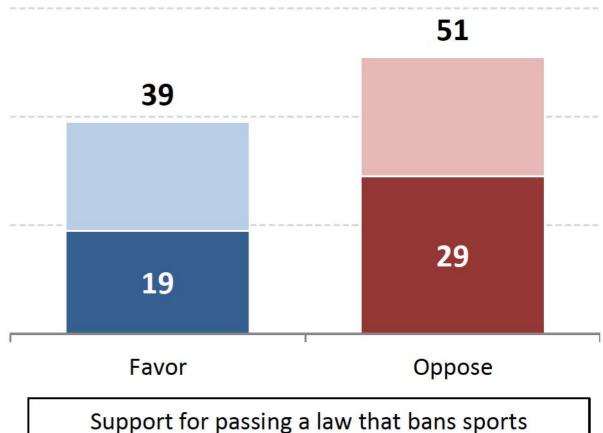
\*"Indian Country" for the purposes of this research project denotes areas in close proximity to reservations where focus groups were conducted

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## Mascot issue is difficult



\*60 percent of millennial women support ban on Native American mascots; only 38 percent of millennial men feel the same way.



teams from using Native American mascots.

## Most likely to shift in our favor

#### **Shift toward do more**

17% of population

Under age 30

Age 40-49

Asian over 50

Hispanic

Hispanic conservative

Deep South region

Younger white non-college men

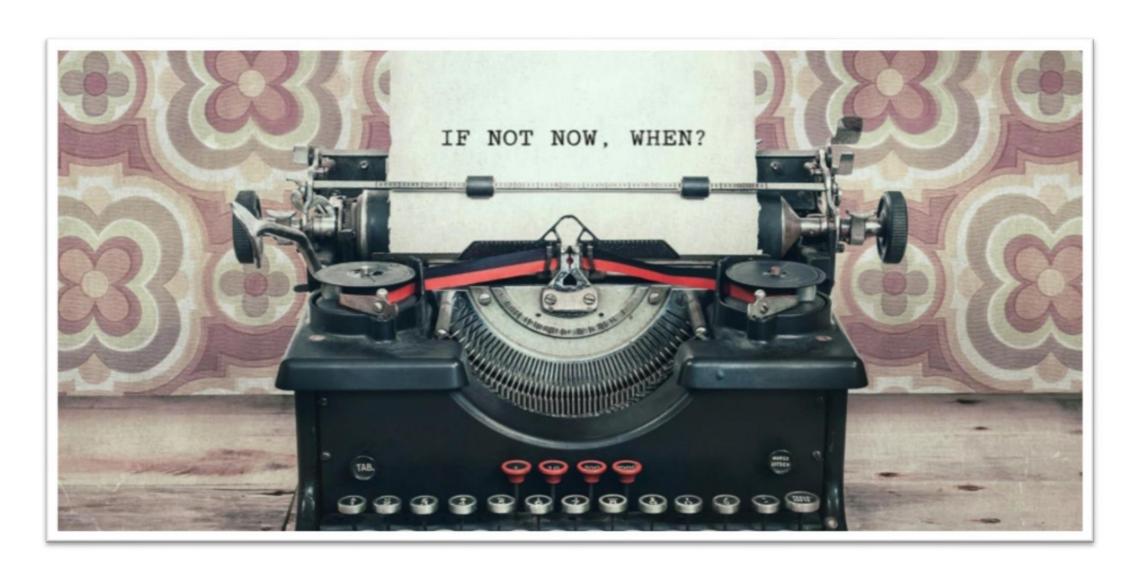
Younger white college grads

Little knowledge (self-ascribed 0-4)

Believe NA face little discrimination



## Changing the narrative



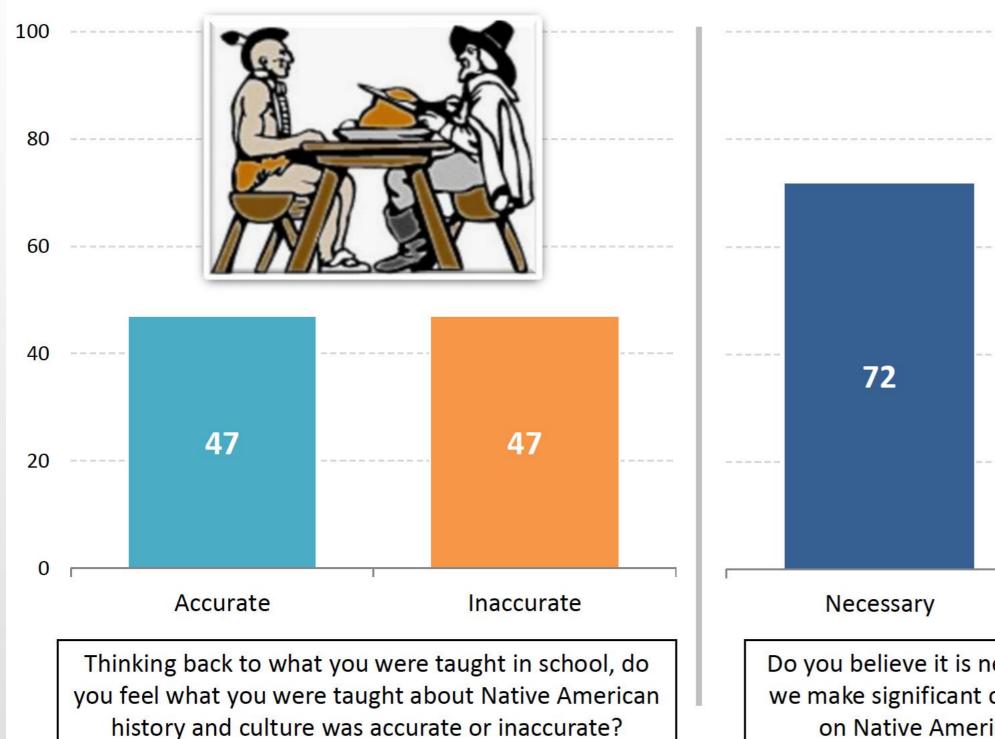
## Key message findings

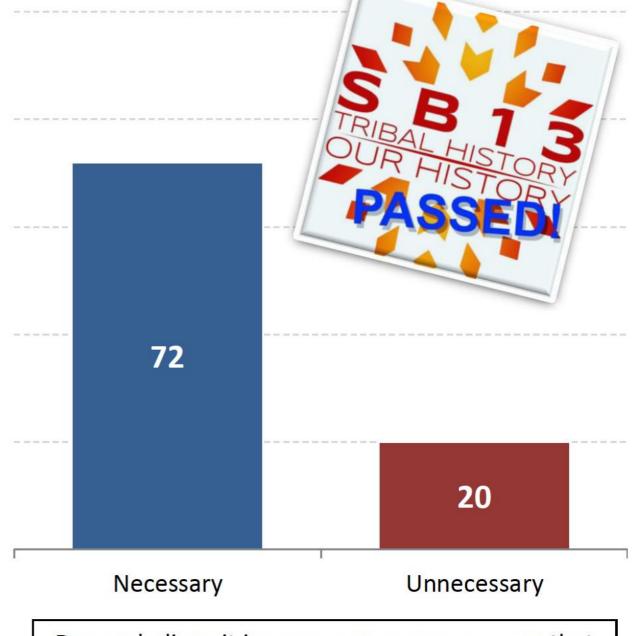
- Reflecting focus groups, arguments around culture and, especially, values, find traction. These two themes should comprise the primary message frames for this effort and we will be testing the execution of these frames in the next round of research.
- While it is important to avoid deficit framing, history has a powerful role in this effort. Hearing this history not only amplifies the impact of our messaging, but diminishes the impact of opposition sentiment.
- In addition to other avenues (social media, print, TV, etc.), we strongly recommend looking at schools and changing school curriculum as a primary medium for this effort.

## **Vulnerable to opposition arguments**

	Total % 8-10	Notable results
(UNFAIR) Other ethnic groups and minorities have experienced unfortunate injustices throughout our country's history, and while our government has taken steps to right some of those wrongs, it's unfair to give preference to one group over another.	40	46% among African Americans
(PAST IS PAST) What happened to Native Americans in this country is tragic, but we can't keep paying for something that happened centuries ago for the rest of time.	32	
(ASSIMILATE) America is a melting pot, and Native Americans will not enjoy all the benefits of this country until they leave their reservations and assimilate into the broader American culture, just like the Irish, Italians, and other groups have done.	23	34% among white seniors
(ENOUGH) The United States has done enough already for Native American peoples and tribes, including providing free health care, welfare, and education, as well as millions of dollars from casinos.	18	

## **Huge opportunity with school curriculum**





Do you believe it is necessary or unnecessary that we make significant changes to school curriculum on Native American history and culture?

## **Creating New Narratives**

- In December 2017, RNT presented the research findings to more than 150 Indian Country stakeholders and allies for feedback
- Feedback: 1) Need to include more research on the impact of Standing Rock; 2) Conduct asset mapping in Indian Country to include work of other Native organizations working on narrative change; and 3) RNT needs to work with Native writers, artists and storytellers to create the new narrative informed by RNT research
- RNT heard this mandate and completed all these action items
- Highlight: In February 2018, RNT convened 20 Native artists, filmmakers, writers, playwrights, fashion designers, academics, messaging experts, journalists and Indian Country pop culture influencers to review the research and help develop the concepts to inform a new narrative.





# Building a New Narrative That Works

Grounded in the research from *Reclaiming Native Truth*, we worked with Native storytellers, artists and advocates from across the country to create a new narrative.

We tested this narrative in a nationally representative survey and found that support among people who read the narrative increased significantly. Their support was also higher than that of people who answered similar questions a year ago.

## The Four Themes That Make the Narrative Strong

The research done by *Reclaiming Native Truth* revealed four key themes that need to be part of the new narrative because, used together, they move hearts and minds:



Native values of family, connection to the land, and respect for culture and tradition are understood and highly respected by non-Native Americans. Linking to these values creates a connection and builds understanding. Illustrating how these values are present today helps prevent a slip into historic, romanticized ideas of Native cultures.



Research shows that most non-Native people do not fully understand the true histories of Native Americans and nations, are open to learning, and feel frustrated when they realize that what they were taught in school was false or incomplete. Weaving in facts — not too many, but a few to get the conversation started — about Native Americans' histories makes people more receptive to hearing more and more willing to act on many issues of importance to Native Americans.



History must be directly linked to contemporary life. This shows two things: 1) that Native Americans' cultures and contributions are vital parts of modern life, and 2) that injustices continue today. Because many non-Native Americans don't know (or don't realize they know) any Native Americans, highlighting Native peoples' involvement in every aspect of modern life helps people to move past the systemic erasure and stereotypes and to see what is true today.



The other essential piece of the narrative is a strong call to action or request for people to do something. It will vary depending on the audience and the issue, but it should be clear, specific and inviting. See the issue-specific narratives on page 16–19 for some examples.

## SPOILER ALERT...

# THE NEW NARRATIVE WORKS!!!

## **Narrative**

The history of Native Americans is one of great strength and revitalization. It is a story built around values that have shaped Native cultures and American society: respect for family and elders; shared responsibility to care for the land; and an obligation to do right by the next generation. It is a story of resilience through great pain and injustice, from broken treaties, and loss of land and language in the past, to derogatory sports mascots and biased history taught in schools today. Across more than 1,000 Tribal Nations and in every profession and segment of society, Native American peoples carry the cultural knowledge and wisdom that sustains Native Nations and helps build a stronger future for all.

Let's move forward together.



## Perception of discrimination against Native Americans increases after more information

(SPLIT B) How much discrimination would you say Native Americans face in the United States today?

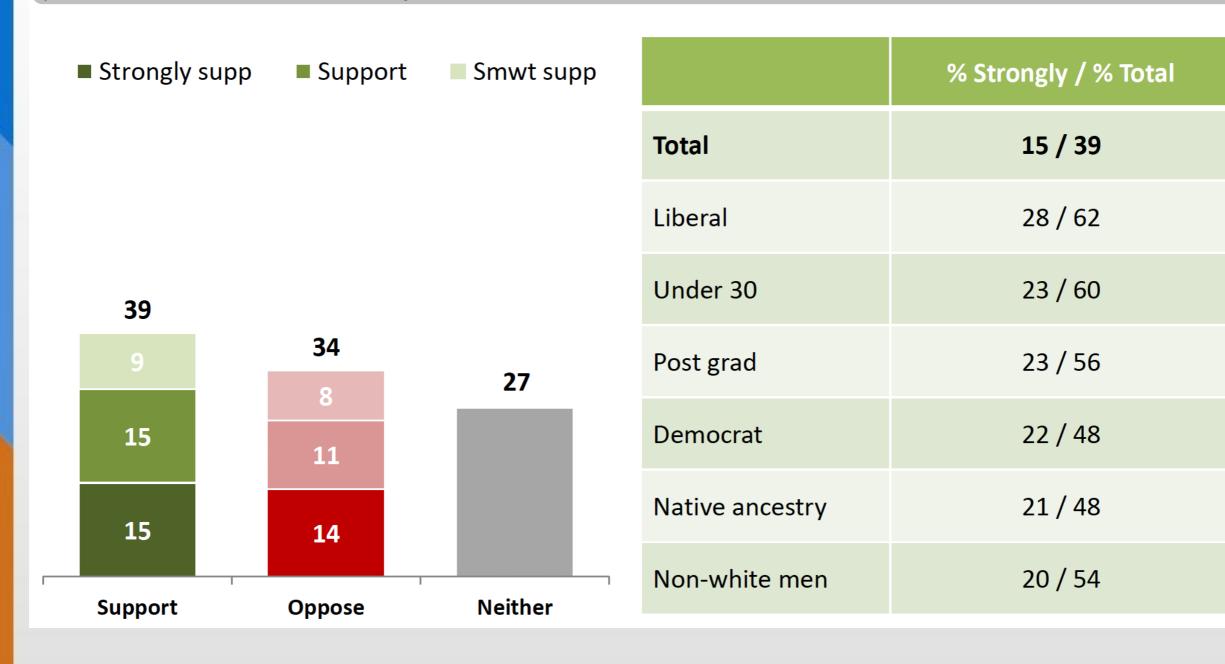
■ Great deal	■ A lot	■ Moderate
	+22	83
61		28
27		28
19		
15		27
Untreated		Treated

	% Great deal/ a lot/moderate
Total	+22
Non-college men	+29
Lib/mod Rep	+28
Af-Am men	+28
Hispanic women	+28
Cons Rep	+26
White men	+26

## MASCOTS

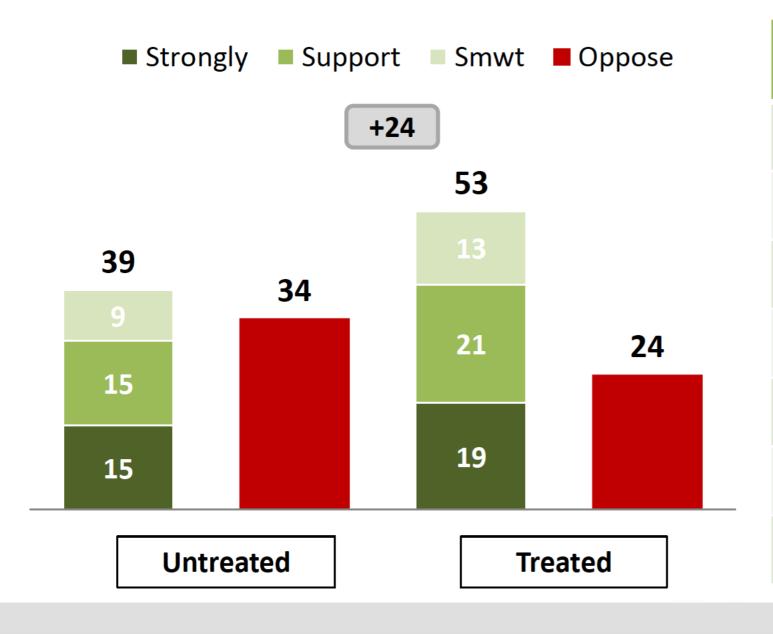
## Mascots is the toughest issue

(SPLIT A) Do you support or oppose a law banning sports teams from using Native American names, symbols, or images as sports team mascots, such as the Chiefs, Braves, or Indians?



# Majority of respondents who hear narrative support law banning Native mascots

(SPLIT B) Do you support or oppose a law banning sports teams from using Native American names, symbols, or images as sports team mascots, such as the Chiefs, Braves, or Indians?



	Net difference
Total	+24
Hispanic women	+46
Lib/mod Republicans	+32
Moderate men	+31
Non-college men	+31
College women	+28
White men	+27

## SOVEREIGNTY

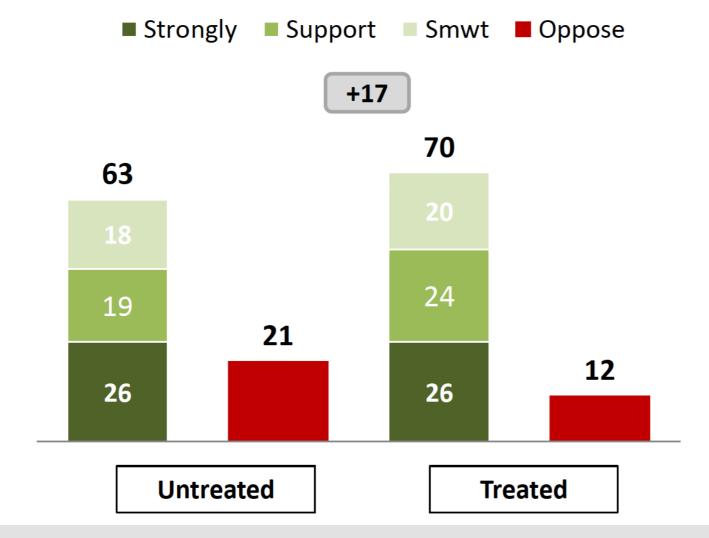
## **Sovereignty narrative**

(SPLIT B) Honor and integrity are important values we look for in other people.

They're important values for countries, too. When a country makes an agreement or signs a treaty, you expect them to live up to it. And yet, our own country has broken more than 500 treaties with Native Nations that were here long before the United States was founded. Today, there are nearly 600 sovereign Native Nations within the borders of the United States. Their residents are citizens of both their own Native Nations and of the United States, and they pay federal taxes like all Americans. Yet, our federal and state governments, corporations, and individuals continue to violate these treaties and challenge the sovereignty of these independent nations to set their own laws and do what is right for their own citizens. It is only fair to honor our treaties with Native Nations and to respect their sovereignty.

# Support for sovereignty increases among older, conservative, college graduates who hear narrative

(SPLIT B) Do you support or oppose giving Native tribes full legal authority on their own lands, including the ability to make their own laws that may conflict with state or local laws, without interference from the federal or state government?



	Net Difference
Total	+17
Seniors	+40
Older college grads	+39
Conservative women	+37
Older Hispanic	+36
Older men	+28
Older white	+28

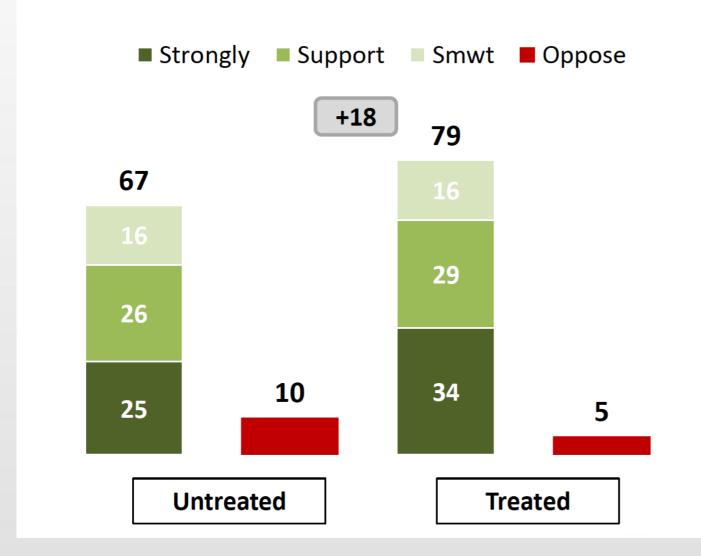
## **ICWA**

## **ICWA** narrative

(SPLIT B) All children deserve to be raised by loving families in supportive communities, surrounded by the culture and heritage they know best. In Native cultures, family is defined very broadly. Everyone plays an active role in raising a child and is ready to help in times of crisis. But when the U.S. child welfare system was created, it was biased against raising a child in this way, as a community. As a result, the U.S. government removed Native children from their families – not because of abuse or neglect, but because of this way of being. The Indian Child Welfare Act, or ICWA, was passed in 1978 to prevent Native American children from being unjustly taken away and adopted outside their culture. Today, however, ICWA is not consistently respected. We need to uphold and improve the law to make sure we are doing what is best for Native children.

# Support for ICWA jumps among moderates, older white respondents who hear narrative

(SPLIT B) Do you support or oppose the Indian Child Welfare Act, which keeps Native American children with their own extended family or with another Native American family?



	Net difference
Total	+18
Lib/mod Republican	+38
Seniors	+30
Moderate men	+25
White older	+24
Mod/cons Democrat	+24
White	+18

## POP CULTURE

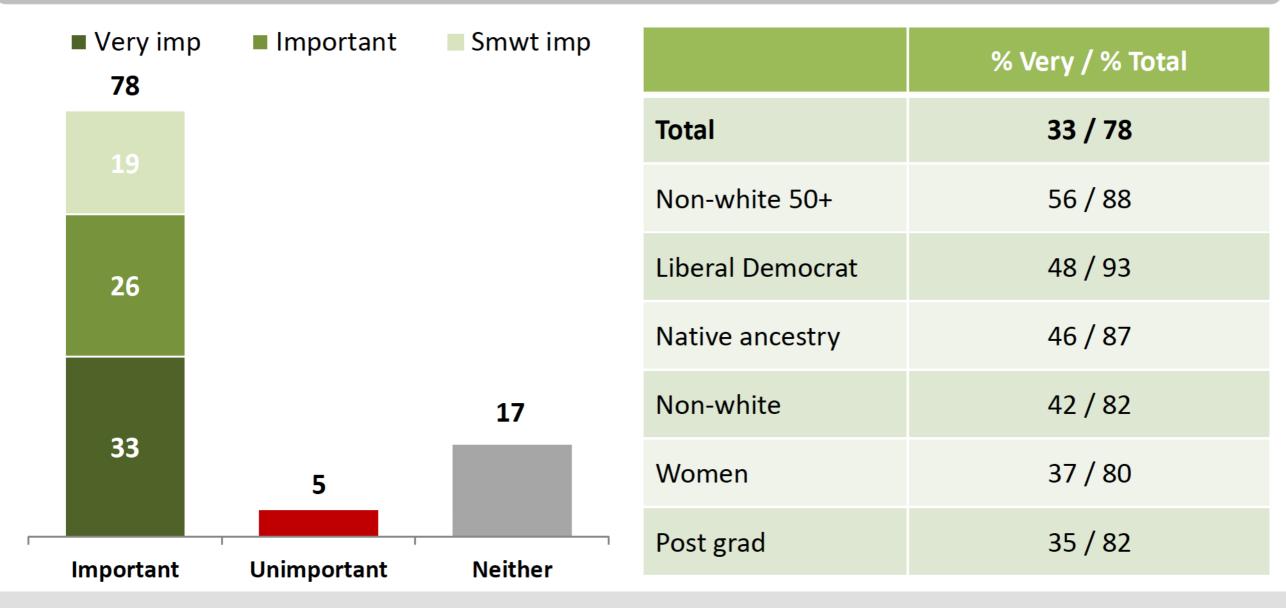
#### Pop culture narrative

Representations of Native Americans in entertainment – from books and television to Disney films – are often based on negative stereotypes. Even portrayals that seem positive at first can be harmful when they romanticize Native culture and imply that all Native American Peoples are the same. This often happens because Native characters are played by non-Native people, and Native writers, producers, directors, actors, musicians, and others are excluded from the industry. The truth is that Native storytellers & artists have always been here and they are increasingly creating and driving innovation in popular culture and the arts. Native American peoples' stories and voices connect with values that are core to American culture and that are needed today more than ever. Hollywood needs to invest in and promote new Native stories in film and TV, hire more Native artists, & replace false depictions with Native Peoples' stories.



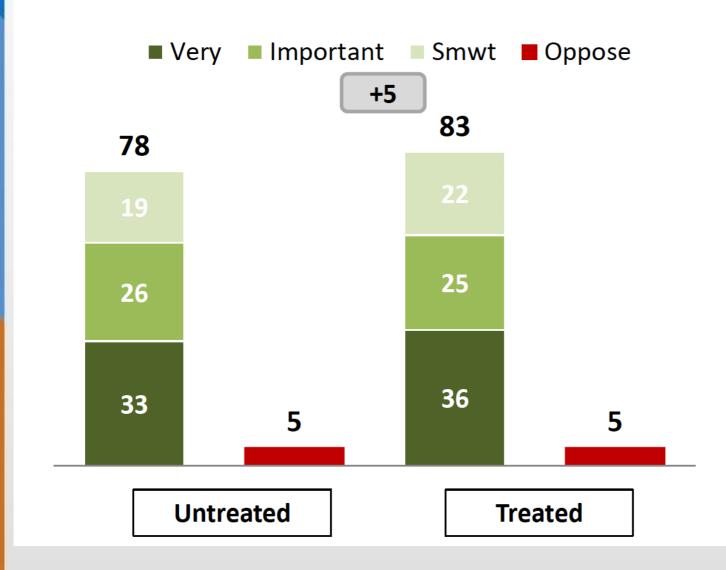
# Nearly unanimous support for increasing Native representation in entertainment from the start

(SPLIT A) How important is it that Hollywood feature more stories about Native Americans in TV, movies, and other entertainment, and ensure that contemporary representations of NAs are accurate, and that history is told as it happened?



# White, older, conservative men more likely to find Native representation important after narrative

(SPLIT B) How important is it that Hollywood feature more stories about Native Americans in TV, movies, and other entertainment, and ensure that contemporary representations of NAs are accurate, and that history is told as it happened?



	% Share of support
Total	+5
Conservative	+14
White men	+13
Non-college men	+11
White older	+10
Seniors	+9
Older non-college	+8

#### Reclaiming Native Truth =

### People Across the United States Are Ready for This New Narrative

We tested the new narrative in a nationally representative online survey of 2,000 U.S. adults across the country. Half of the people in the survey read the narrative; the other half did not. Both groups answered the same questions about their level of interest in Native American issues, their perception of the amount of discrimination Native Americans face today and their support for key Native issues.

This new narrative — built on values, history, visibility and a call to action — increases people's support of the overall narrative and of several issues that are important to Native Americans. Consider these findings from the survey:

Diverse Native professionals, artists, community leaders and leaders of major Native American organizations also reviewed the narrative for accuracy, usability and effectiveness.

#### 81% agreed

81 percent of people agreed with the narrative statement, and only 5 percent disagreed (the remaining 14 percent were neutral).

#### <sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> will share

Two-thirds said they are willing to share this statement with others.

## Works with all

The narrative works with people in all parts of the country — all genders, all age groups, and both Republican and Democratic voters.

#### 55% believe

At the beginning of the survey, 34 percent of respondents said they believed that Native Americans face a great deal or a lot of discrimination. After we introduced the narrative, that number jumped to 55 percent.

#### **Success Story: Standing Rock**

Tens of thousands of individuals, hundreds of tribal nations and many allies stood with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in its opposition to a pipeline that threatened to destroy the tribe's drinking water, historic treaty lands and sacred sites. From August 2016 through February 2017, millions of Americans and a global audience witnessed a powerful narrative unfold. At a time when most Americans continued to believe that Native Americans and nations no longer exist in the United States, this movement forced a new conversation around values, identity and our collective connection to the Earth and the lands we live on.

The full analysis of this movement is complex; however, we have extracted a few key insights that align with and inform ongoing narrative change:

- The movement interrupted the systemic erasure of Native Americans. Contemporary Native Americans populated the daily news diet with articulate, powerful statements that followed an overall shared narrative.
- The movement's core organizers controlled the narrative and refused to let opponents and mainstream media define their movement.
- The narrative centered on the sovereignty of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and all tribal nations — as well as the collective threat that climate change and losing our drinking water poses to us all.
- All four themes appeared. The narrative brought historic injustices to the present, it
  was grounded in the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's traditional teachings and cultural
  values, it illustrated the contemporary presence and leadership of Native Americans
  and it invited engagement and support from across Indian Country, and from diverse
  non-Native allies around the world.
- The narrative was repeated over and over. The core, values-based message Mni Wiconi/Water Is Life — reverberated across social media, citizen journalism and, eventually, mainstream news channels.
- Many voices carried the narrative, and everyone had a role. There was unprecedented
  collaboration and a coalescing of nearly 400 tribes. In addition, many non-Native allies
  joined the movement, and many remain engaged today.
- The power of Standing Rock wasn't just about narrative; it was also about combining narrative change with grassroots action. This made Standing Rock a powerful phenomenon that not only helped awaken understanding and shift perceptions about Native peoples but also elevated their voices and political power.





Chief Arvol Looking Horse prays near the Dakota Access Pipeline. Oceti Sakowin Camp 2016. Photograph by Josue Rivas

This movement forced a new conversation around values, identity and our collective connection to the Earth and the lands we live on.



A water protector gets aid after getting pepper sprayed by law enforcement. Oceti Sakowin Camp 2016. Photograph by Josue Rivas

# What Can You Do to Change the Narrative?

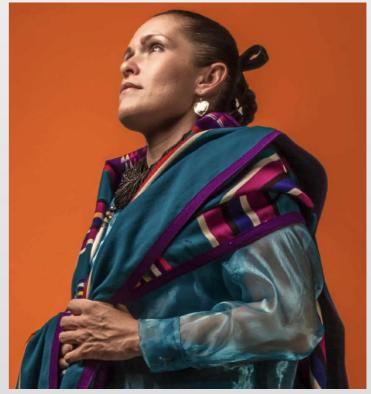
This new narrative creates a strong chorus of many different voices singing in harmony. When many people, organizations and movements start to use the new narrative in their unique work, the effect is one of "surround sound." People across the United States begin hearing the same song across their networks of influencers and information sources. Over time, the more positive, accurate, forward-moving narrative becomes the story they are used to hearing.



## Use the power and reach of social media

Especially among young people, social media has been essential in educating non-Natives about Native cultures and issues. Model the narrative through your social media words and images, and it will spread quickly across social channels. If you have a youth board or coalition, discuss the narrative with them and ask them to make it their own on social media.





#### Reclaiming Native Truth

# Share it widely and broadly

Talk about the narrative, and the power of narrative change, with your children and their teachers, with your friends and tribal leaders, with your industry colleagues and with many others.







#### **Engage Stakeholders** and Allies

"If we allow ourselves to stay on an island and only talk to Indian Country, we are not going to make a lot of progress in narrative change because we are preaching to the choir. Strategic partnerships with mainstream media and other organizations will not dilute our message, it will magnify it."

Bryan Pollard (*Cherokee*), President, Native American Journalists Association Board of Directors; Director of Tribal Relations, Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative, University of Arkansas

#### **Next Steps**

- Reclaiming Native Truth officially concluded on May 31, 2018
- By mid-June, Reclaiming Native Truth will disseminate all of the research findings, message guides for Indian Country and allies, a campaign plan and raw data
- Primary goal to give data to Indian Country to use in their work
- Phase 2: "Movement of many movements." The next phase will be dedicated to building a coalition and network of Native organizations, tribes, activists, youth, other Native stakeholders and allies to continue to coordinate on narrative change goals that can in time lead to policy change, and change that impacts the lives of Native peoples, tribes and youth in a good way
- Many thanks to our National Advisory Committee comprised of Native organizations, tribal leaders, activists and allies, including NCAI
- Additional thanks to the more than 150 Native leaders from across diverse communities and issues in Indian Country and allies that contributed to this project.
- Next phase will have a new name and brand identity. Please consider joining this movement to change the narrative!
- Stay tuned...www.reclaimingnativetruth.com will be live soon

#### Reclaiming Native Truth =

Reclaiming Native Truth is immensely grateful to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for its vision, partnership and investment in this vital work and greatly appreciates the many supporters who made this work a reality.



- \$3.3 million total raised
- W.K. Kellogg
   Foundation's \$2.5
   million investment
   the Foundation's
   largest investment
   in narrative
   change work to
   date
- \$200,000+
   invested by
   individuals, Native
   organizations,
   tribes and
   anonymous donors

#### Thank You!





Reclaiming Native Truth Project Co-Leaders