

REAL SIMPLE

How to Put Your Money Back Into Native Communities on Indigenous People's Day (and Every Day)

Here are five things you can do to support Native and Indigenous communities in ways that really matter.

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The [holiday formerly known as Columbus Day](#) (October 11) is right around the corner. These days, it goes by a few new names. [Indigenous People's Day](#) is the most widely known, but it has also been observed as Native American Day or First People's Day in some U.S. states. No matter what you decide to call it, the day acknowledges North America's Indigenous people's struggle for rights, recognition, and reparations since 1492. Over 500 years later, the new holiday has come to include the Native population not just in the 48 contiguous states, but also in Alaska, Hawaii, and the

U.S. territories. Each place, of course, has its own history and customs, but there are trends in the ways that non-Native people can honor the past—and give back in the present.

Although there's very little that anyone can do now to address the historical inequities faced by people who identify as Native Americans or [Alaskan Natives](#), non-Natives can still get educated—enough to become vocal allies and to directly support initiatives that improve the lives of Indigenous peoples today. Here are five ways you can put your money—and your time—into Native and Indigenous communities this year.



Credit: Tony Anderson

Educate yourself.

"For centuries, the history we learned in school has omitted Native American history or at least a Native viewpoint," says Joshua Arce, President and CEO of Partnership With Native Americans (PWNA). "But one point of history is true:

The Wampanoag saved the pilgrims from starvation, so Indigenous Peoples Day through Indigenous Heritage Month and Giving Tuesday is a perfect time of year to remember Native Americans and give back." The first step to setting things right is education. Native-authored books and media are the best place to start.

Tune in to [Wes Studi's educational video series](#) with the Partnership for Native Americans. Read Native American news sources, such as [Indian Country Today](#) and [Native American Times](#). Educational [podcasts](#) and [book lists](#) are good resources too. And don't forget the stories of mixed-race people who are both Native *and* white, [Black](#), or [Latinx](#), as well as those who write in [Indigenous languages](#). And if you'd like to support Native

writers and creatives, gift their titles to friends and family, and [donate to the publications](#) committed to telling their stories.

Provide basic food security for Native people.

A [2020 Feeding America report](#) said that one in four Native Americans experience hunger and food insecurity, as compared to one in nine non-Native Americans. Often, exclusively Native-serving charity organizations have a specific request for food donations, particularly for vulnerable elders and children. Consider making a regular contribution to the [Northern Plains Reservation Aid](#), [Pueblo Relief Fund](#), and [Native American Heritage Association Emergency Food Relief Fund](#).

Buy products and services from Indigenous vendors.

There are lots of [Indigenous vendors](#) to choose from for your holiday gift-giving needs, but don't forget to buy Indigenous all year-round, too. Let's say your company needs pamphlets printed; consider contracting with the [Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium's Print Shop](#). Trying to find the best way to send a special thank-you to a new client? Choose a [Bedré Chocolates Gift Basket](#). Before going with big-box stores or online behemoths, consider searching for a Native-led company that provides the product or service you or your business are seeking.

Support scholarships for Indigenous college students.

You may have heard about America's [historically Black colleges and universities](#) or the "[seven sisters](#)" [women's colleges](#), but you might not know that there are [32 fully accredited tribal colleges and universities](#) (TCUs) in the U.S.

Most are located in the [midwest and west](#), but accept students from all over the country—both Native and non-Native. [Reports say that most college grads who identify as Native or Indigenous completed their education at a TCU](#). You can support them by [donating today](#) or establishing a [legacy plan with the American Indian College Fund](#). Otherwise, there are ample opportunities to also fund [scholarships](#) that directly benefit Indigenous students—including Hawaiian and Alaskan Native students—studying outside of the TCU system.

Invest in Native languages.

Unfortunately, Native American languages face the very real threat of language death—aka so few speakers that the language disappears. In the face of aging and assimilation, it takes a concerted effort on the part of fluent speakers to educate new speakers so that the language continues for generations. Whether you'd like to support programs that educate heritage speakers or you personally want to learn a Native language commonly spoken in your region, there are ample opportunities to invest. You can start by supporting the [University of Hawai'i](#) foundation, the [Canadian Language Museum](#), and the [Alaska Native Language Center](#). Or you could even learn [Cherokee](#) online yourself.