

Being Culturally Sensitive

We are a living people, created with a place and purpose. We are no greater or less than other created peoples that walk this earth with us.

In being respectful of who we are as indigenous peoples, please consider the following~

- ~ Be careful not to generalize about Native Americans. People of Native backgrounds come from urban areas, rural areas, reservations; they may speak a variety of languages, and they have a multiplicity of cultures and backgrounds.
- ~ It is inappropriate to dress in what you consider Native American attire and do not refer to it as "costume." Native clothing can have traditional, cultural and spiritual significance to people and it is important to respect this.
- ~ Drums are an important aspect of Native American culture and pow wows. Who can perform drumming varies according to tribal traditions. It is not appropriate for just anyone to use drumming because of its sacred nature for many Native people.
- ~ There are hundreds of tribes and traditions in Native America. Be careful that you do not "stereotype" with certain images of Native Americans.
- ~ It is disrespectful to give others what you consider American Indian names. Names are sacred and special to Native people.
- ~ Do not speak about Native Americans in the past tense. They are a people of a living culture.
- ~ Avoid trying to imitate things from Native culture that you do not understand. It is important not to borrow words or actions from Native traditions and use them out of context. To do this is cultural theft and offends traditional Native people.
- ~ Many Native people dislike themselves being characterized as mascots. They feel it is disrespectful and demeans the sacredness of the warriors, their eagle feathers and honor paint.
- ~ Cartoon characterization of Native people demeans, demoralizes, and disgraces Native people and continues the stereotyping that perpetuates historical trauma and grief.
- ~ It would be respectful and honoring Native people if you engage in conversation with them and ask questions to help you gain awareness...questions such as...."What does honoring and respect feel and look like to you?" "What does dishonoring and disrespect feel and look like to you?" Many times what non Native people think and feel respect and honoring is....is not the way Native people see or feel it.