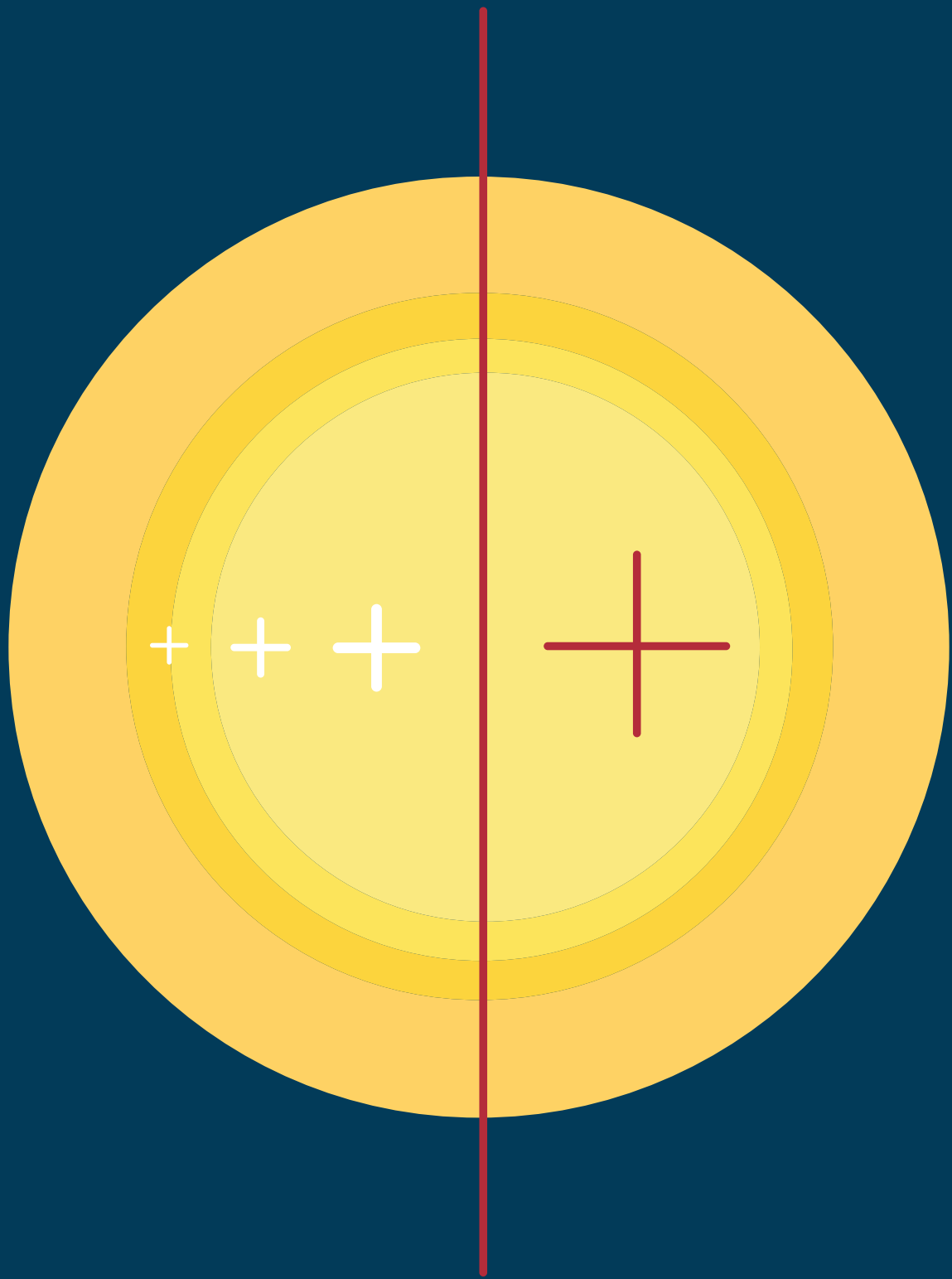


ILLUMINATIVE
CHANGE THE STORY
CHANGE THE FUTURE
INSIGHTS AND ACTION GUIDE





@_IllumiNatives



_illuminatives



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BACKGROUND

Echo Hawk Consulting co-led the largest formative research project ever conducted by, for, and about Native peoples - Reclaiming Native Truth*. The research pointed to the invisibility and false narratives that exist about Native peoples across major sectors of society. It was the first step in launching IllumiNative, a Native-led non-profit, that is using the research as a road map of action to change the narrative about Native peoples in pop culture, media, k-12 education, and other critical sectors through the use of high-impact communication campaigns and initiatives. Key insights about the findings follow.



WHAT'S AT STAKE

We are fighting for a future where the self-determination of Native peoples and tribal sovereignty are respected and supported; where equity for Native peoples is achieved; where Native communities are flourishing and recognized as vital to the fabric of this country; where Native languages are thriving and cultural practices are valued; where Native children, families, and communities no longer face the devastating effects of discrimination and racism; and where Native peoples shape, author, and control their own narrative.

* Citation: Reclaiming Native Truth • <https://illuminatives.org/reclaiming-native-truth/>





WHAT STANDS IN OUR WAY?

INVISIBILITY— THE MODERN FORM OF RACISM AGAINST NATIVE PEOPLES

The research confirmed that invisibility of Native peoples fuels bias and racism — in schools, the media, the courts, and Congress. Erasure and invisibility are critical challenges that Native Americans face — and the scope of the problem is staggering.

INVISIBILITY, TOXIC STEREOTYPES, AND FALSE NARRATIVES ARE PERPETUATED AND INSTITUTIONALIZED THROUGH K-12 EDUCATION, POPULAR CULTURE, AND THE MEDIA

72% OF AMERICANS ALMOST NEVER ENCOUNTER OR SEEK OUT INFORMATION ABOUT NATIVE AMERICANS

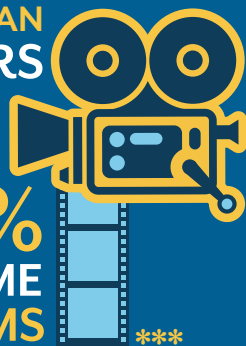


MAKE NO MENTION OF A SINGLE NATIVE AMERICAN IN K-12 CURRICULUM*



87% OF STATE HISTORY STANDARDS DON'T MENTION NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY AFTER 1900**

NATIVE AMERICAN CHARACTERS ONLY MAKE UP BETWEEN **0-.04%** OF PRIMETIME TV AND FILMS***



WHEN SEARCHING "NATIVE AMERICAN,"

95%



OF THE FIRST 100 GOOGLE IMAGES ARE FROM THE 19TH CENTURY

LESS THAN **0.3%** OF PHILANTHROPIC RESOURCES GOES TO NATIVE AMERICANS

EFFECTS OF INVISIBILITY:

- ✦ **Negatively impacts support of Native communities.** The more college students are unaware or in denial of the prejudice, bias, and discrimination faced by Native peoples the less they report supporting Native issues.
- ✦ **Keeps Native communities from having a seat at the table.** Civil rights leaders in our study observed Native peoples to be notably absent from the national conversation around race and diversity.
- ✦ **Negatively impacts policy.** Members of Congress interviewed agreed that the lack of representation and information negatively impacts key decisions on the creation and passing of legislation and policy.
- ✦ **Negatively impacts outcomes in courts of law.** Judges and law clerks lack knowledge of tribal sovereignty and Federal Indian law, most have never taken a Federal Indian law course. Instead, their perceptions of Native peoples today are formed by what they see in the media, or the criminal defendants they see in their courtrooms. In spite of their lack of knowledge, they consider their perceptions of Native identity to be the ultimate truth. Decisions made in courtrooms can have devastating and long-lasting effects.
- ✦ **Dehumanization.** Due to the lack of visibility of Native peoples in the media, entertainment, schools, and society, only 34% of Americans believe that Native peoples face discrimination.

THE INVISIBILITY OF CONTEMPORARY NATIVE PEOPLES, VOICES, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND ISSUES CREATES A VOID THAT IS FILLED WITH TOXIC STEREOTYPES AND MISPERCEPTIONS.

This void is filled with racist sports mascots, over-sexualized portrayals of Native women, offensive Halloween costumes, myths, and inaccurate portrayals in movies, TV, and news. Stereotypes are dehumanizing and damaging. Federal and state policies, court decisions on tribal sovereignty and Native families, and discrimination all have a profound impact on Native peoples but decisions on these issues are being made by those with no accurate knowledge of Native communities.

AMERICANS HOLD NEGATIVE AND ROMANTICIZED STEREOTYPES SIMULTANEOUSLY.



WITHOUT CONTEMPORARY, AUTHENTIC PORTRAYALS READILY AVAILABLE, NON-NATIVES RELY ON STEREOTYPES AND INACCURATE HISTORY TO JUDGE NATIVE COMMUNITIES.





STEREOTYPES HAVE DIRE CONSEQUENCES

- ✦ Provides a politically convenient excuse to ignore poverty, serious health issues, suicide, and income inequality by blaming Native peoples.
- ✦ Undermines tribal sovereignty because non-Natives believe tribes cannot be sovereign if they are reliant on US government funds.
- ✦ Rationalizes past and current injustices by falsely assuming that Native peoples have already received help.
- ✦ Justifies the forcible separation of Native children from Native communities and families.
- ✦ Little to no philanthropic investment in Native communities.
- ✦ Increases instances of documented discrimination by teachers, students, and administrators against Native students, which negatively impacts the educational attainments of Native students.





WHAT'S THE SOLUTION? CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

WHAT ARE NARRATIVES?

Perceptions, messages, myths, stereotypes, and personal or secondary experiences create a dominant narrative or story, a way of viewing or understanding the world. Narratives work like a filter. People ignore information that doesn't fit into their narrative, i.e. their story about the world. Narratives are created and reinforced by the dominant culture.

WHAT IS NARRATIVE CHANGE?

Narrative change happens through a variety of strategic actions that, when combined, shift the dominant story people receive, internalize and act on, consciously and unconsciously. Elements of narrative change involve communication — how stories are shaped and who shapes them in the news media, social media, and pop culture. Narrative change effects far more than media. Shifting the dominant narrative can change the way decision-makers and influencers are educated and selected, the way children are taught, and the way funding is distributed.

Narrative change requires a coordinated, long-term commitment by Indian Country and allies to combat the dominant conversation about Native communities by replacing it with a positive, contemporary, and authentic narrative — a new story.

CHANGE THE STORY - CHANGE THE FUTURE.

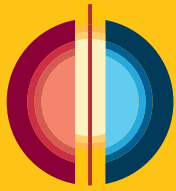
Amplifying contemporary, accurate stories, voices, issues, and representation of Native peoples, sharing

accurate history, and communicating Native values are keys to disrupting and interrupting invisibility. We must strategically smash stereotypes by authoring, owning, and controlling our story in order to re-educate Americans and change the dominant cultural narrative.

- **When offered accurate narratives about Native peoples, 78% of those polled want to learn more about Native Americans.**
- **72% of Americans, including teachers, support changing curriculum to ensure accurate Native history is taught in schools.**

Changing perceptions and dismantling invisibility, false narratives, and their consequences is a process. However, if Native peoples and allies work together to change the narrative, transformative change is possible.

When Americans have a clear, accurate view of the issues that Natives face, we can work together to build a world where Native peoples thrive.



NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK

There are key elements that, when used together, change hearts and minds. These elements work together to create the Narrative Framework, a “recipe” for all communication intended to advance the new narrative.

The Narrative Framework is highly flexible, enabling Native peoples and allies to incorporate and customize specific messages, facts, and stories into the overall recipe. You can communicate about your issues, histories, stories, and opportunities uniquely — while at the same time echoing, modeling, and reinforcing a common, overarching new narrative. The key is to integrate the below themes into a new narrative.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Often you will be in situations where you need to set additional context by including a problem statement to lead into your narrative. A problem statement is a short, descriptive statement that illustrates an issue or condition. It defines the gap between the current problem and the desired goal. The statement always includes a proposed solution, i.e., the vision.

VALUES

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.

HISTORY

Research shows that most non-Native people do not fully understand the true history 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 — enough to get the conversation started — about Native Americans’ histories facilitates receptivity to learning more — instigating advocacy for Native issues.

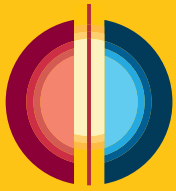
VISIBILITY

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; 2) that injustices continue today. Because many non-Native Americans don’t know (or realize they don’t know) any Native Americans, highlighting Native peoples’ involvement in every aspect of modern life helps people move past the systemic erasure and stereotypes to see what is true today.

CALL TO ACTION

A Call to Action (CTA) gives audiences an opportunity to take action. It is a critical step in changing the narrative and building community. CTAs drive fundraising, advocacy, and organizational engagement. A CTA needs to be urgent, use actionable language, be clear and concise. Your CTA should pop off the page.





NARRATIVE CHANGE WORKS AUDIENCES ARE MOVABLE

WE TESTED A NEW 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.”

IMPACT: THE NEW NARRATIVE WORKED

- 81% of people agreed with the narrative statement.
- 2/3 said they are willing to share this statement with others.
- The narrative works with people in all parts of the country — all genders, all age groups, and both Republican and Democratic voters.
- At the beginning of the survey, 34% 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%.

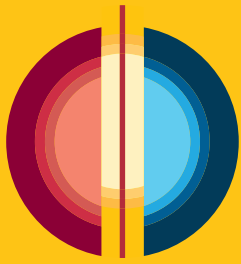
**88% FIND THIS
NEW NATIVE NARRATIVE
CREDIBLE
AND 65% SAY THEY ARE
willing to share it with others**

78%
OF ALL AMERICANS
believe it is important to feature more
STORIES ABOUT NATIVE AMERICANS
on television, in movies, and in other entertainment
(33% BELIEVE IT IS VERY IMPORTANT)

SPECIFIC NARRATIVES ABOUT SOVEREIGNTY, THE INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT, BANNING NATIVE-THEMED MASCOTS, AND ACCURATE REPRESENTATION OF NATIVE AMERICAN VOICES ALSO PROVED HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL.

TO SEE SPECIFIC NARRATIVES TESTED ON THESE ISSUES,
VISIT WWW.ILLUMINATIVES.ORG/RECLAIMING-NATIVE-TRUTH/



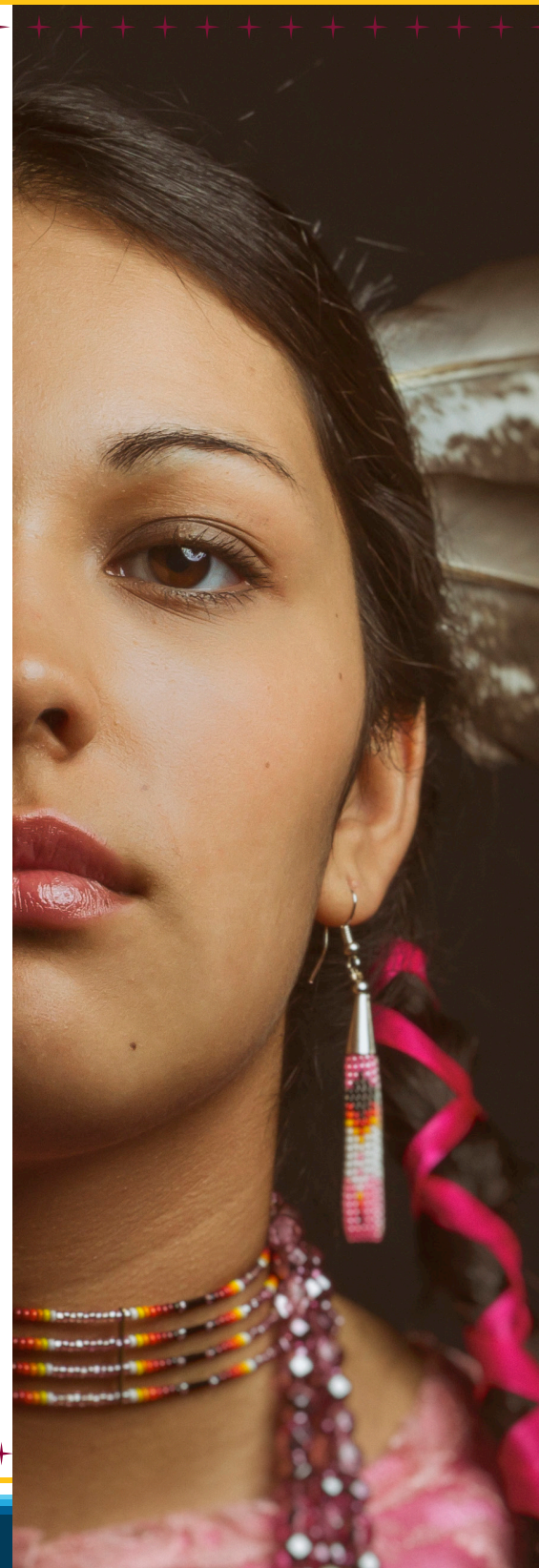


TAKE ACTION NATIVE PEOPLES

WHAT CAN INDIAN COUNTRY DO?

USE THE NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK AS YOU CREATE CONTENT.

- Find ways to incorporate the new narrative in your work. Experiment with how to make your messages, website, presentations, grant requests, and other tools align with the narrative while retaining your unique voice.
- Consider how data and images can advance the new narrative as much as words can. Use art and images that are contemporary, positive, and strong to reinforce the new narrative.
- Train members of your community and staff to use the Narrative Framework. Inside the organizations where you work or volunteer, use the narrative in conversations among staff and peers.
- Refrain, and remind others to refrain, from using deficit language when talking about Native communities. Help each other avoid inadvertently falling into a deficit-based narrative. If you hear or see others perpetuating myths, stereotypes or other aspects of the false narrative — whether out of ignorance or blatant racism — share with them the correct information in the narrative format. Shift your language to reinforce the new narrative based on values, history, visibility, and a strong call to action.
- Create guides, resources, and fact sheets to educate non-Natives on how to be good allies.



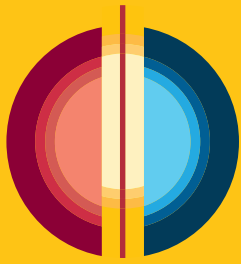
UTILIZE MEDIA TO SHARE YOUR MESSAGE AND THE NEW NARRATIVE.

- Use the power and reach of social media. Social media has been essential in educating non-Natives about Native cultures and issues. Model the narrative through social media and it will spread quickly across 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.
- Find opportunities to share your narrative in news media. If you work with the news media, pitch stories that support the new narrative. If you see a story that perpetuates the old narrative, contact the reporter and/or submit a letter to the editor using the Narrative Framework to correct the narrative and paint an accurate picture. If you have a good relationship with a reporter, ask for a meeting to share this new information and the narrative, and ask them to stop deficit-based reporting.

BE AN ADVOCATE AND SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT THE NEW NARRATIVE WITH MEMBERS OF YOUR COMMUNITY.

- Involve your Board of Directors, investors, vendors, partners, and other stakeholders in changing the narrative. Use the narrative in all presentations and communication. Explicitly discuss the shift you are making and why. Invite them to join you in committing to the new narrative. **Share the tools with funders, allies, partners, and other non-Native organizations.** Schedule a time to brief them on the new narrative and invite them to start using it. Discuss how using these new narratives and following the Narrative Framework can strengthen their work on racial equity and social justice. Focus on how working together can make everyone more effective.





TAKE ACTION ALLIES

WHAT CAN ALLIES DO?

EDUCATE YOURSELF AND OTHERS.

- Educate yourself about the history and current issues that impact Native communities. It's your opportunity and responsibility to learn all you can. Respectfully seek clarification and insights from people with whom you've built relationships, and respect their feedback, even if it's critical.
- Take time to understand how history impacts Native peoples' contemporary reality: understanding the history of genocide, forced assimilation, and boarding schools helps allies understand the need for laws and resources for Native communities. Learn about the significant contributions Native peoples have made, throughout history and today, to our democratic forms of government, food, music, art, culture, modern politics, and state and national economies.
- Listen to Native communities and support the issues that impact us. Issues like voting rights, preservation of traditional Native lands, protection of water and the environment, school funding, ending the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, self-determination, and banning Native mascots are critical to Native peoples and to the health and well-being of democracy in this country.
- Learn about the myths and stereotypes that continue to harm our communities. Commit to speaking up and calling out when you hear them used by others and stop using them yourself.

CHANGE THE WAY YOU TALK ABOUT NATIVE COMMUNITIES.

- Don't focus on the negative. Only talking about Native peoples using negative descriptions or language perpetuates stereotypes and dehumanizes us. Use the Narrative Framework instead.
- Look for opportunities to share story ideas that support the new narrative. Talk about the strengths, resilience, and contributions of Native peoples. Share stories that support the new narrative on social media, newsletters, and other publications.
- Commit to making Native peoples visible and active partners in your work. Find opportunities to incorporate Indigenous land acknowledgments at your meetings and public events. Invite Native speakers and content experts to participate; hire Native peoples and include them in your equity goals.

SEEK OUT NATIVE STORIES AND AMPLIFY NATIVE VOICES, KNOWLEDGE, ISSUES, AND CONTRIBUTIONS.

- Respect that Native Americans must be the authors and primary storytellers of their own stories to change the narrative. Commit to seeking out Native artists, writers, and journalists to hear us tell our own stories.
- Call out use of negative narratives about Native peoples. If you see a story that perpetuates the old narrative, contact the reporter or submit a letter to the editor to correct the story and point

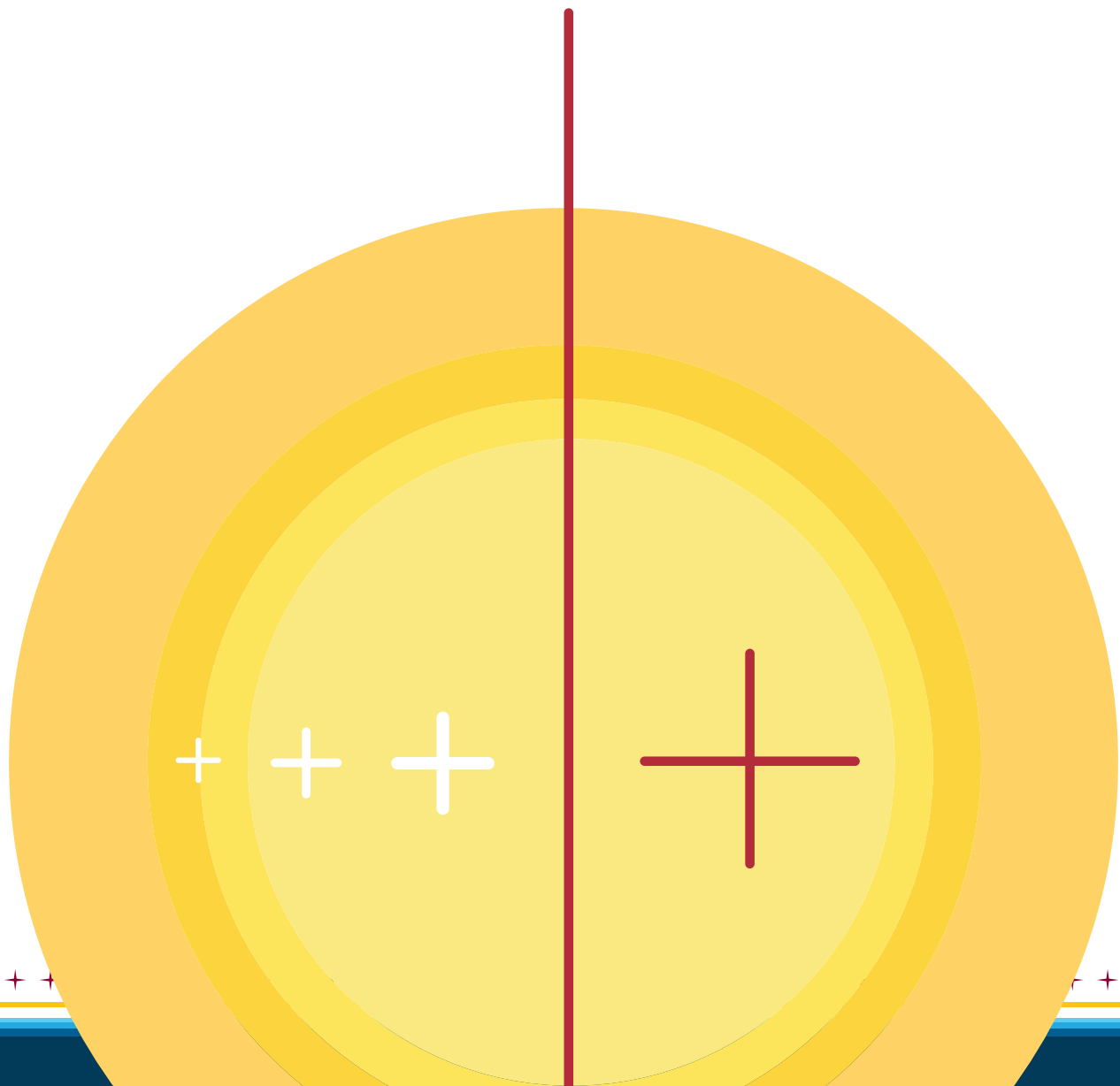
a more accurate picture. Suggest that reporters talk directly with Native peoples or organizations to include their point of view.

- Learn from Native leaders, content experts, organizations, and communities. Find opportunities to showcase Native perspectives, voices, education, and stand ready to partner to fight for equity and social justice.

MAKE NATIVE REPRESENTATION IN YOUR WORK OR INDUSTRY A PRIORITY.

- Hire Native Americans. Seek out and hire Native Americans in your organization, company, or foundation. Appoint Native Americans as Board members and to coalitions, advisory groups, and commissions. Contract with Native artists and other professionals. Find opportunities to bring Native American leadership, expertise, cultural values, knowledge, and creative voices into your work.

- Bring Native voices into media and entertainment. If you work in the entertainment field or news media or in pop culture, commit to hiring Native Americans as producers, directors, editors, artists, and writers. Commit funding to Native projects.
- Fund Native organizations and issues at parity. If you are a grantmaker ensure that you are supporting Native American issues and organizations at a level at least at parity with the U.S. population. This means that at least two percent of your grantmaking dollars would be allocated to Native-led projects. No matter what issue you prioritize, from education to health, to the environment, Native Americans continue to experience inequities and are leading the way to innovative solutions.



CHANGE THE STORY. CHANGE THE FUTURE.

TO LEARN MORE VISIT WWW.ILLUMINATIVES.ORG

ABOUT ILLUMINATIVE

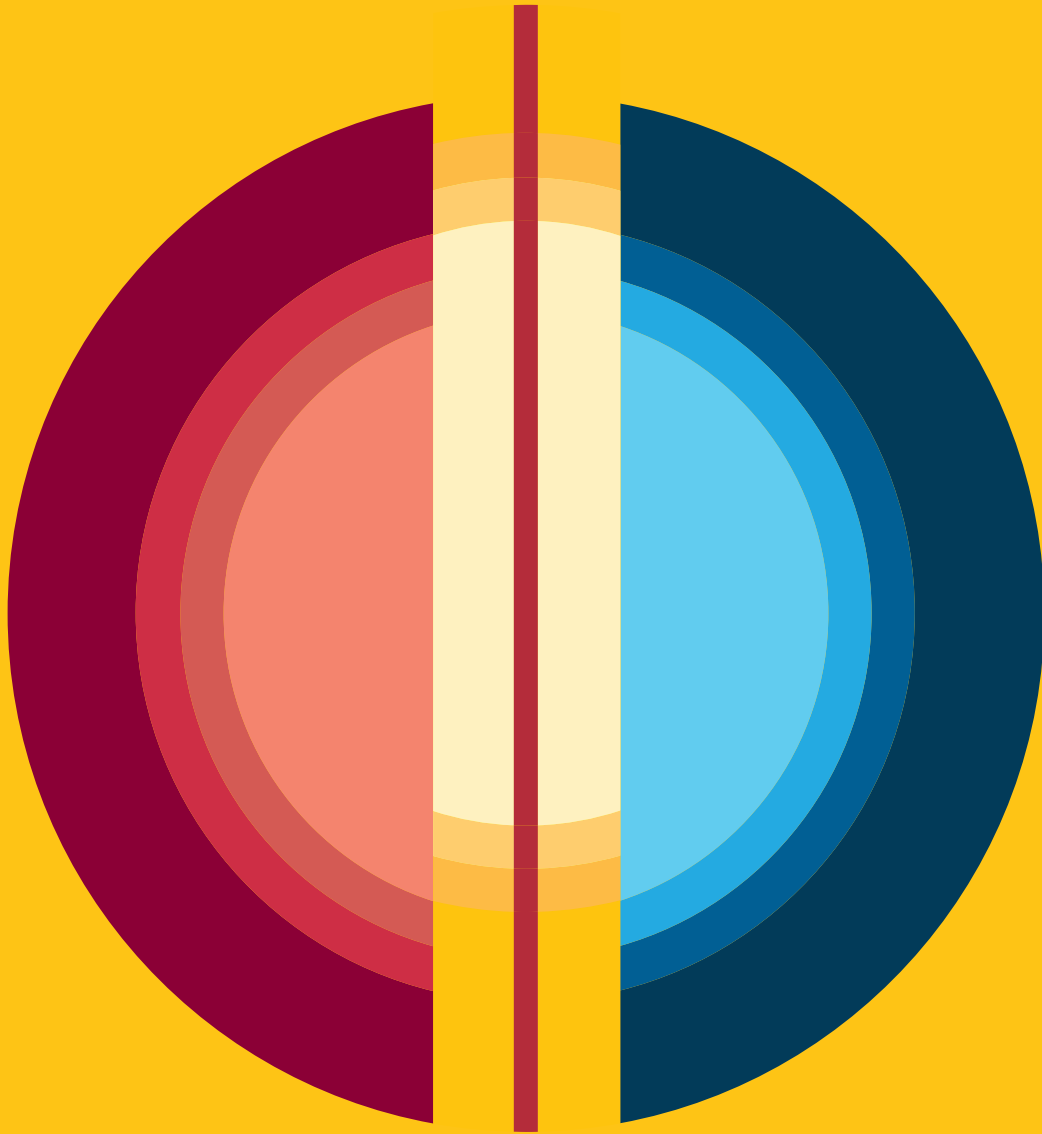
IllumiNative, a Native-led nonprofit, was launched to increase the visibility of Native peoples in American society by changing the national narrative. *IllumiNative* challenges negative narratives, stories, and stereotypes about Native peoples. We provide tools for Native advocates and allies including youth, community and tribal leaders, activists, and professionals across critical sectors — to develop and advocate for accurate and contemporary representations and voices of Native peoples.

The Reclaiming Native Truth (RNT) Project, co-led by Echo Hawk Consulting, was an unprecedented two-year public opinion research and strategy-setting project conducted by, about, and for Native peoples that resulted in comprehensive data detailing the challenges and opportunities that Native Americans face. The outcome of the study provided *IllumiNative* a clear road map on how to re-educate Americans and shift the dominant perceptions and stories about Native peoples across society, and within key institutions, including pop culture, media, education, Congress, and the courts. Visit www.illuminatives.org to view the full research report.





THE FUTURE
IS ACCESSIBLE



ILLUMINATIVE

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CHANGE THE FUTURE.**

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