Celebrating National Native American Heritage Month

By Meg Shamblen

November acknowledges and celebrates the rich heritage of Native American people past, present, and future. November also serves as a time to remember those in the transgender community whose lives were taken too soon. Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) has been held every November 20th since 1999 to honor the lives of transgender individuals who were lost to anti-transgender violence. Individual’s names are read aloud among community members to bring greater awareness to the magnitude of harm that can occur as a result of a transphobic society. GLAAD provides educational information, resources, and ways to get involved this November at glaad.org/tdor.

In 2021, Autostraddle honored the intersections of transgender and Native American history by sharing the story of transgender woman and Navajo elder, Matee Jim. Matee identifies as Diné and has spent several decades at the First Nations Community Healthsource working to support and offer resources around HIV prevention to indigenous communities. Matee’s journey began when she joined the Coalition for Equality in New Mexico after becoming sober at age 24. Through her work, Matee learned about the word transgender, began to transition, and continued working towards greater wellness for the indigenous LGBTQ+ community in New Mexico. Her growing legacy is a testament to the wisdom that originates from the intersections of transgender and indigenous identities.

Native American Heritage Month is also an opportunity for white settlers to learn more about indigenous history, including the tribal territories where they currently reside. Native-Land.ca is a web and mobile map that allows you to input locations and discover the indigenous languages, tribes, and treaties of that area. The app opens with the following disclaimer: “This map does not represent or intend to represent official or legal boundaries of any Indigenous nations. To learn about definitive boundaries, contact the nations in question.” This community-informed resource is constantly evolving, which can help white settlers begin to think about the land that they currently occupy, and foster greater conversations around what the return of land to indigenous communities could look like as a step towards further healing and cultural preservation.

As of 2021, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (established in 1824) has federally recognized and worked with 567 Tribes. One nation that is actively trying to reobtain federal recognition after having it rescinded by the U.S. government is the Chinook Indian Nation. The Chinook Indian Nation consists of 5 tribes located in territories known today as Oregon and Washington. To learn more about the Chinook people and their fight for sovereignty, visit chinookjustice.org.

For more information on Envision:You visit our website, envision-you.org or contact us at info@envision-you.org
5 HEALTHY TIPS …for supporting the transgender people in your life.

1. You don’t have to understand someone’s identity to respect it.
2. You can’t always tell if someone is transgender or gender diverse by looking at them, so don’t make assumptions.
3. Speak out in support of transgender folks and transgender rights.
4. Use the language a person uses for themself when it comes to things like identity and pronouns.
5. Take your education into your own hands by seeking out resources on your own.

LEARN MORE

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

Envision:You was recently awarded a grant to continue work on our LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Provider Training Program from the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS). This grant was made possible through Colorado’s Behavioral Health Recovery Act, which provided $2 million to provide culturally relevant workforce training for behavioral health care workers throughout the state. The grant Envision:You was awarded is a part of CDHS’ “Comprehensive Plan to Strengthen and Expand the Behavioral Health Safety Net System,” which outlines behavioral health services that all individuals across the state should have access to. The funding provided will cover costs associated with the program, as well as allow us to update existing training content. We will also be able to provide free and discounted training to 200 providers across the state with funds from this grant.

ADVOCATE & COMMUNITY PARTNER:

This month, we are highlighting Inside Out Youth Services, a nonprofit organization that has served LGBTQIA2+ youth in the Pikes Peak region since 1990. If you read the newsletter last month, you would have seen mention of their work with Community Health Partnership and Envision:You on a grant to bring our LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Provider Training Program to 125 providers in El Paso county. Inside Out is also working with our Q is for Questioning program to provide space to host workshops for adults who want to be an affirming presence in the lives of LGBTQIA2+ youth. We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with Inside Out as well as for the amazing work they do for the community.

As part of their support for queer youth, Inside Out is partnering with Be You Colorado to host an LGBTQIA2+ Health Equity Resource fair on Dec. 2 from 2:30–5:30 p.m. at Hillside Community Center (925 S. Institute St, Colorado Springs). The event will feature affirming community organizations in mental, physical, and sexual health. Following the fair, youth and young adults ages 13-24 are invited back to Hillside Community Center for a semi-formal winter ball/silent disco from 7-9 p.m. More details to come at insideoutys.org.