

LOCKE LORD DIVERSITY AWARENESS

November 2018: National American Indian Heritage Month

History

In May 1916, New York declared the first American Indian Day. The recognition was prompted in part by a state-by-state horseback campaign led by Red Fox James two years before. Throughout the 20th century, more and more states steadily adopted official days of recognition for indigenous peoples. The federal government joined the movement in 1986 when President Reagan established a nationwide American Indian Week and a yearly proclamation of the same until 1990. Then President George Bush, at the request of a joint Congressional resolution, established November as National American Indian Heritage Month. Presidents annually mark the month of traditional harvest and celebration for American Indians as a time of remembrance, acknowledgment, and celebration of the first Americans. It is a time for celebration of the abundantly diverse cultures, histories and contributions to this land and nation.

Law

Indian law has dealt extensively with the rights of Native Americans under U.S. law. The Supreme Court has been called upon in many cases to interpret and establish the rights, sovereignty and jurisdiction of native tribes and people. Full citizenship for Native Americans was only awarded in 1924, and civil rights were further bolstered in the 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act. Nearly a decade later, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 allowed tribes more control over administering federal programs. According to the National Native American Bar Association, about 2640 lawyers in the United States identify as American Indian, Alaska Native and/or Hawaiian Native. Recently, the National Native American Bar Association conducted a study of its members designed to raise visibility of its attorneys and effectuate reforms. Titled "The Pursuit of Inclusion: An In-Depth Exploration of the Experiences and Perspectives of Native American Attorneys in the Legal Profession," the study found that many Native American lawyers struggle with feeling invisible and that their perspectives are not valid or real. The full study is available at www.nativeamericanbar.org

People

The 2018 election saw a pair of historic firsts as Deb Haaland and Sharice Davids became the first indigenous women to be elected to the U.S. Congress.



Deb Haaland, an enrolled member of the Pueblo of Laguna, was elected to represent New Mexico's 1st congressional district. A graduate of the University of New Mexico and UNM Law School, Haaland became the first Native American woman in the country to chair a state party as head of the Democratic Party of New Mexico.



Sharice Davids is a member of the Ho-Chunk nation, and member-elect for Kansas 3rd congressional district. The Cornell Law School graduate worked in the White House Fellowship program from 2016-2017. Prior to her election, Davids worked with many tribes and reservations to develop economic and community programs and opportunities.



The heart of Locke Lord lies within our people and the many different experiences and perspectives we share. We recognize, embrace and celebrate our differences and believe we can only provide our clients with the best possible representation if we reflect the diversity of the clients and communities we serve.

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