

FIVE INFLUENTIAL NATIVE AMERICANS IN 2022

Joy Harjo Muscogee (Creek) Nation

Harjo has received acclaim for her poetry collections, including becoming the first Native American poet laureate in U.S. history.

Harjo has a diverse background, but she's been a member of the Oklahoma-based Muscogee tribe since the age of 19. Her work confronts and dismantles long-held stereotypes around Indigenous people.

In addition to poetry, she's a musician and playwright whose activism goes beyond just Native American issues to support women's rights and equality. Her creative works often focus on land rights for Native Americans and the gravity of the disappearance of "her people." Harjo is a vocal critic of Native American stereotypes formed from stories of the Wild West and old narratives that helped colonialism erase Native American histories.



Sharice Davids Ho-Chunk Nation

Elected in 2019, Davids is one of the first two Native American women elected to a Congressional seat and the first openly lesbian person to represent Kansas

She is pursuing initiatives to boost economic growth and community development for Native Americans locally while also supporting efforts to expand access to healthcare, voter protections and resources for small business owners nationally.

A graduate of Cornell Law School, Davids is the only Democrat from Kansas' Congressional delegation. Her political career follows a brief period as a professional mixed martial artist (MMA) in the 2010s.



Jessie Little Doe Baird Wampanoag

A renowned linguist, Baird has become known as a specialist in Indigenous language preservation. Her work to revive the language of the Wampanoag nation has received a great deal of attention. She received a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 2010 for developing a language database of written records, religious texts and government documents.

Her work led to the production of a dictionary with more than 11,000 terms and a grammar book for the layperson to accompany the dictionary. She has worked to educate language teachers and developed a curriculum to teach the Wampanoag language to children of the tribe. She serves as the vice-chairwoman of the Mashpee Wampanoag Indian Tribal Council.

Tommy Orange Cheyenne and Arapaho

Orange is the author of the 2018 novel, *There There*, which received the 2019 American Book Award and was one of the finalists for the 2019 Pulitzer Prize, among other honors. A graduate of the Institute of American Indian Arts, Orange's novel focused on the lives of indigenous people living in Oakland, California, and the experiences they've had with urban life. His goal was to challenge antiquated ideas about Native Americans.

Orange has spun the book's success into writing for various magazines and newspapers like *Esquire* and *McSweeney's* while also working on the sequel to *There There*.



Deb Haaland Laguna Pueblo

A 35th generation member of a Laguna Pueblo tribe, New Mexico's Haaland was the other Native American woman elected to Congress in 2019. She's worked as an environmental activist and strongly advocates for increasing tribal autonomy over their lands.

In 2021, Haaland took on a new responsibility when she became the first-ever Native American Cabinet secretary, taking the role of Secretary of the Interior under President Joe Biden.

Thus far, she has approved a new constitution for the Cherokee Nation, created an initiative to investigate abuse at now-defunct residential boarding schools housing Native American children and established a new unit in the Bureau of Indian Affairs to investigate cases of missing and murdered Native Americans.

