

INFLUENTIAL NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLE

- Artists, Activists, Athletes, Filmmakers & Actors
Politicians, Musicians, Authors, Engineers –
Native Americans have their handprint on every
aspect of society.
- Here are just a few – can you think of or find
others?

JIM THORPE



TRIBE: Sac & Fox

1887- 1953

- **Considered one of the greatest athletes of the 20th century**
- **First American Indian to win a Gold Medal**
- **Played professional football & baseball (is in the NFL Hall of Fame)**
- **Played football at the Carlisle Indian School (the first boarding school in the U.S.)**

LOUIE GONG



TRIBE: Nooksack

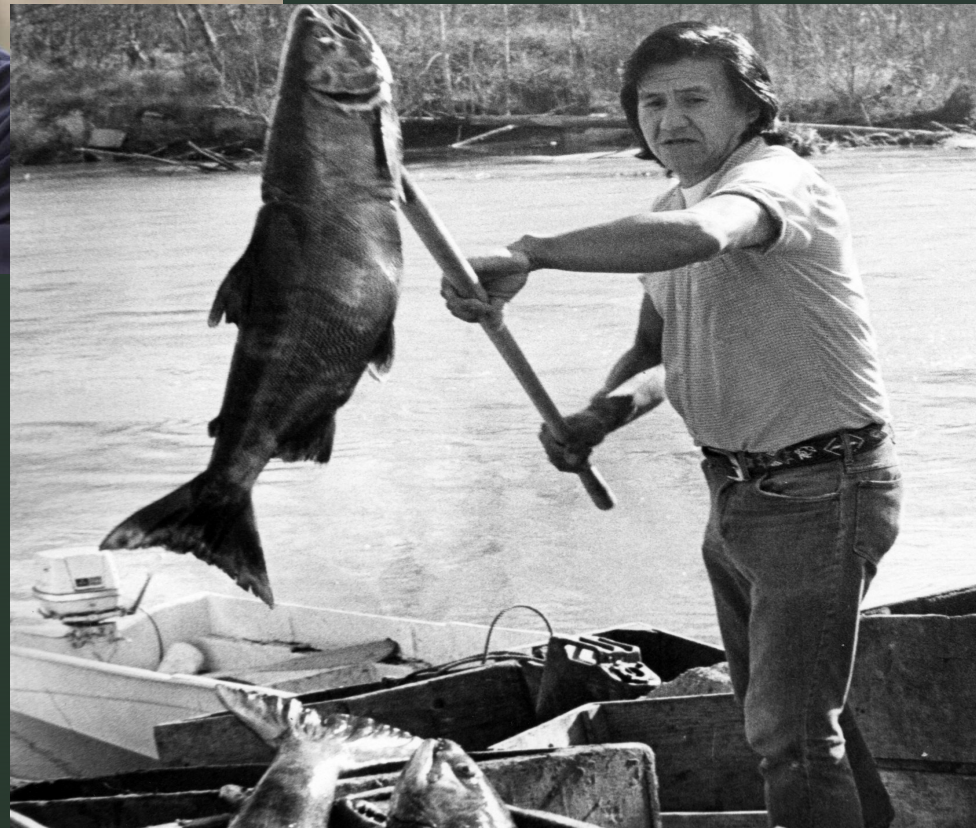
1974 - Present

- **Artist, Educator, Entrepreneur**
- **Founder of Indigenous business “Eighth Generation”**
- **Started business by drawing Coast Salish designs on a pair of Vans a friend bought**
- **The company sells items designed by numerous Native artists/designers**
- **Educates others on harmful effects of cultural appropriation**

BILLY FRANK JR

TRIBE: NISQUALLY

1931- 2014



- Fought for Native American treaty rights for five decades
- His activism in the 1960s and early 70s led to the historic Boldt Decision legal ruling, affirming tribal fishing rights
- A steward of environmental protection
- Presidential Medal of Freedom honoree
- A statue of him will soon represent Washington state in the U.S. Capitol

DEB HAALAND



TRIBE: Laguna Pueblo

1960 - present

- **Current U.S. Secretary of the Interior**
- **First Native American to be in a presidential administration's Cabinet (high level, inner circle)**
- **Formed a unit within the Bureau of Indian Affairs to tackle the decades long MMIW crisis**
- **Created a federal Boarding School Initiative to investigate and write the first government report on the historical abuse in these schools**

NICOLE MANN

**TRIBE: WAILACKI OF THE
ROUND VALLEY INDIAN TRIBES**

1977 - Present

- **NASA SpaceX astronaut**
- **First Native American woman to ever go to space (Oct. 2022)**
- **Has a Mechanical Engineering degree and a Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering**
- **Former Colonel in the Marines, test pilot for the F/A-18 Hornet**
- **The first Native American in space was John Herrington (Chickasaw) in 2002**



STERLIN HARJO



Tribe:
Seminole Nation of
Oklahoma

1979 - Present

- Award winning filmmaker
- Co-creator of 2021 acclaimed FX Channel show Reservation Dogs
- Part Native sketch comedy group The 1491s

"It's not up to Hollywood to change Native representation in the media. They have failed at it for decades. It's up to us - Artists, Filmmakers, Storytellers and Activists. That power is ours alone."

- Harjo

BILLY MILLS



**TRIBE: Oglala Lakota
(Sioux)**

1938 - Present

- **Shocked the world at the 1964 Olympics**
- **An afterthought in the 10,000M race he WON the Gold Medal flying past the two leaders down the final stretch**
- **Runs a non-profit helping American Indians in need**
- **A movie about his life was made in 1983**
- **Video of last lap in Olympic race is a must watch (find on YouTube)**

JEFFREY VEREGGE

Port Gamble S'Klallam

- Award winning artist
- Mixes Native art with pop culture and comics
- Did the cover art for the first Native American comic book Marvel ever did (Red Wolf)



MARY ROSS



TRIBE: Cherokee

1908 - 2008

- **NASA Aerospace Engineer**
- **First female Native engineer**
- **Played pivotal role in sending Apollo astronauts into space and helped paved the way for future interplanetary travel**
- **Much of her original work on rocket & missile systems is STILL classified**

REDBONE



TRIBE: Yaqui & Shoshone

Rock Band 1969 - present

- **Formed by brothers Pat & Lolly Vegas**
- **Wrote and recorded the song "Come & Get Your Love" in 1974**
- **First Native American band to have a Top 5 song on the charts**
- **A remix dance cover of the song in 1995 charted at #19**
- **The song had a resurgence in 2014 as it was featured on the Guardians of the Galaxy soundtrack**

JOY HARJO



TRIBE: Muscogee/Creek

1941 - present

- Poet, playwright, author, musician
- The **23rd U.S. Poet Laureate** and first Native American one
- An important figure in the late 20th century Native American Renaissance that reclaimed and told the story of authentic Native American culture
- As Poet Laureate she created a project called **“Living Nations, Living Words: A Map of First Peoples Poetry”** which focuses on mapping the U.S. with Native poems and poets.

JOSEPH BRUCHAC



TRIBE: Abenaki

1942 – Present

- **Author & Storyteller**
- **Written over 100 Native American books for all grade levels**
- **His books connect on tribal identity with his characters, history and culture, folklore, and mysteries**
- **His stories take place in all eras - far in the past, the mid-1900s, all the way today**
- **Can find many of his books online to buy**

QUANNAH CHASINGHORSE



TRIBE: Navajo & Lakota

2002 – Present

- **Activist & Model**
- **Uses her platform to raise awareness of Native sovereignty and environmental issues**
- **A 4th generation land protector for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**
- **Wanted to model at a young age, but didn't think she could as she never saw Native models before**
- **She makes a point of celebrating Indigenous fashion designers when possible**

NAVAJO CODETALKERS



TRIBE: Navajo
(also

World War II

- **The Unbreakable Code**
- **How it worked:** The soldier in battle would translate information back to the base camp or ship in Navajo and another soldier would translate it into English for the military command
- **It is said to have helped turn the war in the U.S. favor**
- **The Japanese were never able to decipher the Navajo code**