PROCLAMATION

Native American Heritage Month is a time for recognition, reflection and reckoning. Across the nation, commemorations of this month take on a new meaning amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating impacts on tribal communities. In 2020, we are faced with the stark reality that we as a nation have failed the first peoples to call these lands home. COVID-19's disproportionate impacts on tribal communities have highlighted these disparities and made it clear that these shortcomings continue today.

For many Native Americans, these challenges have been a renewed call to action. They have brought the issue of political representation to the forefront, demanding that the interests of Native peoples be taken into consideration at the federal, state and local arenas. Native Americans nationwide are compelling us to reexamine this nation's history and identity through protest, art and persistent advocacy. This leadership has challenged us to evolve into a better, stronger nation and helped us step up to the plate to make true a California for all.

This Native American Heritage Month, we recognize the strength and resilience of Native Americans and their reassertion of place in these lands. Since time immemorial, Native Americans stewarded these lands, from the redwood forests and salmon of California, to the buffalo and sweet grass of the Great Plains, to the Three Sisters cultivated and cherished from sea to sea. They built communities, fostered rich cultures and spoke some 300 different languages and dialects. Today, Native Americans carry on these traditions, while working to confront some of the most pressing challenges for all Americans, by leading the country in renewable energy, disaster and emergency response, health care, natural resource management and job creation and so much more.

In recognition of the immeasurable contributions that Native Americans have made to our Nation, California has sought to change the paradigm for State engagement with Tribes, reckoning with our past, making space for healing and promoting equity. We have advanced this by establishing the California Truth and Healing Council to ensure we are accounting for the whole history of California – a step we encourage other leaders to take in good faith alongside California. We have taken important policy, legislative and budget strides to expand tribal stewardship of ancestral lands and natural and cultural resources, promote visibility of the rich diversity of Native cultures and teach our youth the true history of California. We have signed into law bills that expedite the return of Native ancestors to their people by ensuring Tribes can protect and repatriate invaluable cultural resources, make voting more accessible to Native American voters, and seek to address the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

I believe that we can most effectively address ongoing equity challenges – for example in housing, in education, in the workplace, in land and natural resources, in voting and in child welfare – through a sustained effort to effect real change and an unwavering dedication to work together with mutual honesty, communication and respect.

This month, I encourage everyone in our state to learn more about the people who first called this Nation home, as we pause to reflect on their past, present and future.

NOW THEREFORE I, GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor of the State of California, do hereby proclaim November 2020, as "Native American Heritage Month."

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this 19th day of November 2020.

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GAVIN NEWSOM
Governor of California

ATTEST:

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ALEX PADILLA
Secretary of State