

# Miigwetch, Pidamayaye, & Thank You Ancestors: Indigenous Innovations Impact the Past, Present, and Future

Despite the narrative perpetuated by mainstream history textbooks, Columbus did not “discover” America in 1492—we were already here. Hundreds of nations with living, breathing, complex, and thriving cultures already existed on the American continent. The innovations and contributions of indigenous people are vast, impressive and ongoing.

Dr. Cecil White Hat said, *“Science is just catching up to ceremony.”*

1.

The U.S. Constitution owes its notion of democracy to the Iroquois Tribes, including freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and separation of powers in government.



Only difference is the Iroquois included women and non-whites.

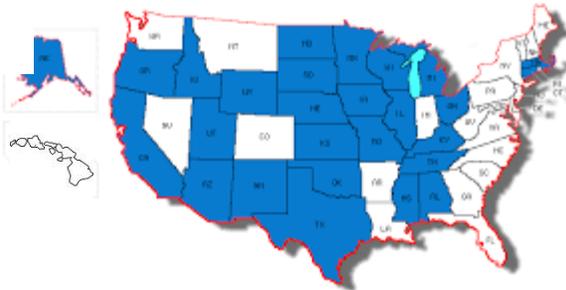
**Representative Democracy** - Thank you to the Iroquois League, which consisted of the Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Tuscarora tribes, for demonstrating the governmental model that the Albany Plan, the Articles of Confederation, and the U.S. Constitution stem from. <sup>1</sup>

2.

**Foods** - Tribal nations in North, South, and Central America domesticated different plants and foods based on region – Corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, sunflowers, wild rice, sweet potatoes, white potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, peanuts, avocados, artichokes, and turkey ...to name a few! <sup>2</sup>



3.



**Place Names** – While some state name origins are debated, at least half of the United States have names based on indigenous languages. Many cities, rivers, lakes, mountains, and other words comes from Native languages as well. <sup>1</sup> Minnesota comes from the Dakota phrase, “Mni Sota Makoce” which means Land Where the Waters Reflect the Clouds. <sup>3</sup>

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4.



**Military Service** – A military code based on the Choctaw language was successfully used by the U.S. in WWI. In WWII, a code based on the Navajo language was used to transmit more than 800 messages – the code was never broken.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, according to the VA (2012), “Native Americans serve at a high rate and have a higher concentration of female Servicemembers than all other Servicemembers.”<sup>5</sup>

5.

**Sustainability** – In the traditional Ojibwe language, there was no single word for “environmentalist” – there was no need for one. Rather, the worldview and beliefs embedded in the language show a deep connection, respect, and sense of equality among human beings, animals, plants, rocks, and other natural inhabitants. Traditionally, you never took more than could be used. When harvesting manoomin (wild rice), some always fell back into the water, reseeding the bed for next year, helping it survive and ensuring future nourishment for the Anishinabeg.<sup>6</sup> When making decisions, think how they will affect 7 generations to come and recognize you are where you are only because of the 7 generations which came before.<sup>7</sup>



Now more than ever, as we face significant challenges ahead in terms of climate change, overpopulation, and inequitable access to vital resources, the sustainable practices and planning used by our indigenous relatives and ancestors needs to be prioritized by all. Gratitude to all the Water Protectors at Standing Rock and other sites who remind us of this.

Image Sources:

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