




HERE

FACES AND VOICES  
OF NATIVE AGGIES

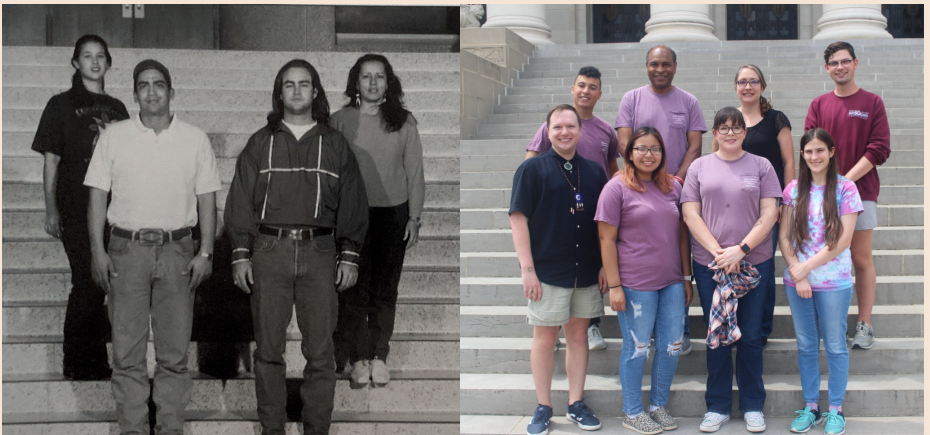
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Runyon Learning Gallery | Forsyth Galleries  
Memorial Student Center



# HERE: FACES AND VOICES OF NATIVE AGGIES

*HERE: Faces and Voices of Native Aggies* celebrates Native American students (referred to as Native Aggies) and their influence on Texas A&M University. The exhibition explores how Native Aggies have made a difference in all areas of the school. Through interviews, artifacts, and photographs, the past and continued presence of Native Americans is demonstrated throughout the University's history. By opening the week of Muster, we echo the community's recognition of past and present A&M students to show that Native Aggies are 'HERE.'




On the left, the Native American Student Association, 1994

On the right, the Native American & Indigenous Student Organization, 2022



## Native American Students at Texas A&M

This exhibition reflects just a small portion of the many unique contributions Native Aggies have made in this community and their roles outside the school. Native American Students at Texas A&M represent several tribes, including the Choctaw, Quapaw, Muscogee, Navajo, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Citizen Potawatomi, and Sioux Assiniboine. They attended the school between 1900 and the present day and have represented majors from all the University's Colleges. Like many A&M students, they have participated in various clubs, organizations, sports, and traditions, including the Corps, sports teams, and clubs. Outside of A&M, they have affected many communities through their various roles, such as musicians, soldiers, lawyers, and teachers. The exhibition's collection of items and images presents the faces and voices of these students to show their unique place in the community.






# Land Grant University

The First Morrill Act allocated public domain lands to raise funds for launching colleges nationwide. While this act expanded educational opportunities in the country, it was achieved at the expense of displaced and mistreated Native Americans. Millions of acres were seized from hundreds of tribes and placed in public trusts by the government. These lands were distributed to states and sold for seed money for higher education institutions. In the exhibition, Texas A&M's land grant history is discussed along with a Territorial Acknowledgement in order to portray the historical and continuing presence of Native Americans in the University's location and development.

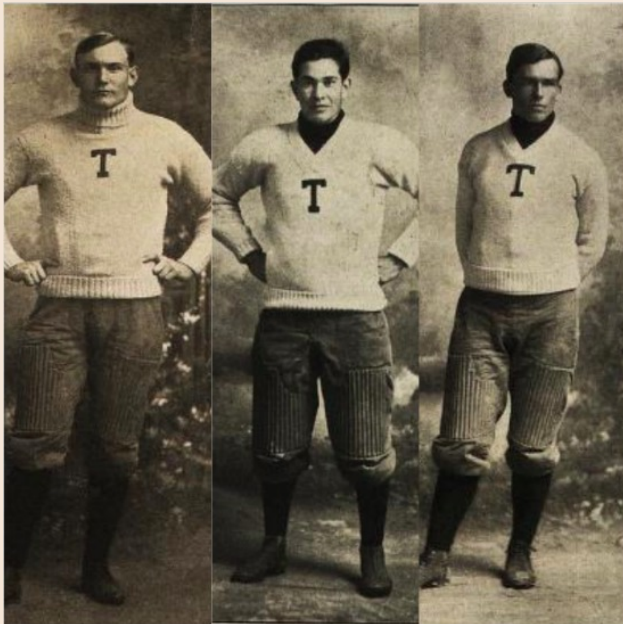
*We acknowledge that Texas A&M University (College Station) is situated on the land of multiple Native nations, past and present. These original homelands are the territory of Indigenous peoples who were largely dispossessed and removed. We specifically acknowledge the traditional stewardship of this land by the Tonkawa, Tawakoni, Hueco, Sana, Wichita, and Coahuiltecan peoples. We pledge to support and advocate for the histories, cultures, languages, and territorial rights of historic Indigenous peoples of Texas and the Indigenous people that live here now.*

*This statement affirms continuous Indigenous presence and rights, acknowledges the ongoing effects of settler colonization, and supports Indigenous struggles for political, legal, and cultural sovereignty.*



## Native Aggies in Sports and Clubs

Native American students have participated in various sports and activities. In the early 20th century, Native Americans were heavily recruited for their athletic prowess. Students like Victor "Choc" Kelley, James Keese Ross, Michael Balenti Jr., and James "Sig" Flinchum became household names for their accomplishments in football and baseball. Images in yearbooks illustrate the numerous events and clubs these students also enjoyed. They made a lasting impact on Texas A&M, represented in the various local newspaper articles celebrating them both during and after their collegiate careers. They went on to play professionally or helped develop athletic programs at various schools.



James Keese Ross, Victor 'Choc' Kelley, James 'Sig' Flinchum, 1908

## Native Aggies in the Corps and Military

Under the Morrill Act, which allowed for the founding of Texas A&M, military training was compulsory. The Corps of Cadets was established in 1876 in concurrence with the University. All students of Texas A&M were members of the Corps of Cadets until 1965. While studying at Texas A&M in the early 20th century, several Native Aggies put a hold on their education to serve in the U.S. military during World Wars I and II. While Native Americans were still excluded from full citizenship, these students became decorated heroes. Choctaw soldiers like Otis Leader used their Native American heritage to help in a unique way as Code Talkers. Today, while the Corps and military participation are voluntary, several Native American students have chosen to participate in the Corps and serve their country after graduation.



Otis Leader, 1917

## Native Aggies in the Arts

Native Aggies have participated in various artistic endeavors. One graduate highlighted in this area is Rose Red Elk, "Red Feather Woman," an international performing arts entertainer and accomplished storyteller, singer, songwriter, and author. Her albums blend traditional spoken word and the mysticism of Native American stories into original contemporary songs and have earned her several awards as a recording artist. Also featured is William Leftwich, whose works include an illustrated history of the Corps and various illustrations on tooled leather.



Rose Red Elk, "Red Feather Woman" class of 1995


## Native American & Indigenous Students Organization

The Native American and Indigenous Student Organization (NAISO) is Texas A&M's cultural club dedicated to bringing awareness to the University's indigenous community. The organization consists of both Native and non-native members and aims to provide a community for students on campus. They provide campus-wide events, including film screenings, community conversations, and special lectures from various professionals. The club also organizes trips to local Powwows and participates in community-wide events. Members from the club's past and present versions provided interviews, images, and artifacts for this exhibition.



George Hass, Class of 2022





## Sources Regarding Land-Grant Universities

Lee, R. and T. Ahtone. 2020. "Land-Grab Universities." *High Country News*.


The article that brought recent recognition to the history of Land-Grant Universities. The article shows how the Morrill Act turned Indigenous land into college endowments. It also reveals how the system continues to take advantage of Indigenous lands.

Lee, R., T. Ahtone, M. Pearce, K. Goodluck, G. McGhee, C. Leff, K. Lanpher and T. Salinas. 2020. "Land-Grab Universities: A High Country News Investigation." *High Country News*.  
[www.landgrabu.org/](http://www.landgrabu.org/)

This unique database transforms the extensive reporting and research from the above article into interactive displays and maps. The site links schools to the parcels that funded them throughout the nation. There are also extensive tables on the money paid and earned for the parcels, as well as shocking statistics on the rate of Native American attendance at land-grant Universities.

Gavazzi, S.M. and J. N. Low. 2022 "Confronting the Wealth Transfer from Tribal Nations That Established Land-Grant Universities." *American Association of University Professors*.

This article, co-written by Stephen Gavazzi, author of *Land-Grant Universities for the Future*, addresses the history of land-grant Universities. It also discusses possible steps toward atonement and reconciliation. Such efforts are a vital secondary part of the current conversations on land-grant Universities' difficult history.



# Decolonize Your Bookshelf

## Novels


*There There*, T. Orange  
*The Bone People*, K. Hulme  
*Sabrina & Corina*, K. Fajardo-Anstine  
*Where the Dead Sit Talking*, B. Hobson  
*Five Little Indians*, M. Good

## Non-Fiction

*An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, R. Dunbar-Ortiz  
*Code Talker: The First and Only Memoir By One of the Original Navajo Code Talkers of WWII*, C. Nez  
*The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee*, D. Treuer  
*Yellow Bird: Oil, Murder, and a Woman's Search for Justice in Indian Country*, S. C. Murdoch  
*From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, H.K. Trask  
*Mankiller: A Chief and Her People*, M. Wallis  
*Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West*, N. Blackhawk  
*Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, R. W. Kimmerer

## Memoir

*Bury My Heart at Chuck E. Cheese's*, T. Midge  
*Mamaskatch: A Cree Coming of Age*, D. J. McLeod  
*In My Own Moccasins: A Memoir of Resilience*, H. Knott  
*Lakota Woman*, M. C. Dog  
*n̄tis̄ânak*, L. Nixon  
*Blonde Indian: An Alaska Native Memoir*, E. Hayes  
*Heart Berries*, T. T. Mailhot  
*Crazy Brave*, J. Harjo  
*Carry: A Memoir of Survival on Stolen Land*, T. Jensen  
*American Indian Stories*, Zitkála-Šá



# Decolonize Your Bookshelf

## Sci-Fi

*Future Home of the Living God*, L. Erdrich

*Trail of Lightning*, R. Roanhorse

*Monkey Beach*, E. Robinson

## Horror

*The Only Good Indians*, Stephen G. Jones

*Taaqtumi: An Anthology of Arctic Horror Stories*, A. Johnston et al.

*Moon of the Crusted Snow*, W. Rice

## Mystery

*Winter Counts*, D. H. W. Weiden

*The Things She's Seen*, A. Kwaymullina & E. Kwaymullina

*Empire of Wild*, C. Dimaline

## Graphic Novel

*Oak Flat: A Fight for Sacred Land in the American West*, L. Redniss

*Surviving the City*, T. Spillett

*Pemmican Wars: A Girl Called Echo*, K. Vermette & S. B. Henderson

*This Place: 150 Years Retold*, K. Akiwenzie-Damm et al.

*Empowerment \$aga*, R. R. E. Hardman

## Children's Books

*Fry Bread*, K. N. Maillard

*The Legend of the Bluebonnet*, T. dePaolo





## Acknowledgements

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