

"They're The First New Mexicans": Celebrating Indigenous Peoples Day In The Land of Enchantment October 11, 2022

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'They're the first New Mexicans': Celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day in the Land of Enchantment

"We need to celebrate, study, and learn about the Pueblo people every day of the year because it's important. Our history is important," Robert Martinez, the New Mexico state historian, said.

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Breana Albizu f

Anchor/Reporter

CELEBRATING INDIGENOUS CULTURES

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — A celebratory day for pueblos across the Land of Enchantment.

Oct. 10 marks Indigenous Peoples' Day in New Mexico. In 2015, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed House Bill 100 into law, replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples' Day in the state.

"They've been here for thousands of years and they're really the heart of everything that we have because through the centuries," Robert Martinez, the state's historian, said.

While indigenous people are located throughout the United States, they're most prominent in New Mexico.

Existing pueblos still remain today: Acoma, Diné, Jemez, Laguna, Nambé, Ohkay Owingeh, Taos, Tewa, San Felipe, San Geronimo, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Santa Domingo, Tano, Tesuque, Zuñi.

There's not just one kind of native pueblo and people," Martinez said. "There's diverse communities. It's pueblos, so to speak, with different languages and different cultural expressions."

There's been a way that indigenous people have survived here since 10,000.

When it comes to food, hybrid is a staple for many pueblos. It's also a fan-favorite at the Indian Pueblo Kitchen.

"It's traditional fry bread and we use the bluebird flour, so that's always the traditional flour that we use in back of the house," David Becenti, Executive Chef at the kitchen, said.

Staff members use fresh ingredients every day, and grow them from their own garden. The outdoor facility is located behind the kitchen.

A similar action Native American people utilize for their own homes.

"We pick the berries, we pick the squash, we pick everything that we do because it's coming from Mother Earth," Becenti said.

She added that the food is what brings the experience of indigenous culture to visitors. All while sharing the history of their beloved ancestors.

"We want people to have an idea of how they're sitting there like this is what indigenous people use a long time ago," Becenti said.

Creativity is also a skill many Native Americans have and it comes in many forms.

For Michael Tenorio, it's all about the paintings. A passion he loves to pursue over and over again.

"I like seeing people happy, putting smiles on their faces and making their homes beautiful," he said.

Tenorio was just one of several vendors stationed at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center for their indigenous.

Orlando de Chavez, a painter from the Santa Domingo Pueblo, was also doing his work.

"I grew up with a lot of different my parents and my family and I love it," he said. "My grandparents and I have kept it up all these years."

For Cheryl, her focus is on the more traditional jewelry.

Jewelry has been my family business for a long time, so I love it.

"I love that they take away the experience that comes with our knowledge of the villages. I love that," she said. "You want to know how it's made."

When it comes to jewelry, it's all of the above.

And for a 21-year-old artist from the Acoma Pueblo.

"Once you see the history of it, it starts to become art. It's not just a piece," he said.

On an important day like Indigenous Peoples' Day, they said the performance became a special. To show respect for the people's growth in our state.

"It's nice because different cultures get to see what we're doing to show to them," he said.

The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center also included the observance of American Indian Heritage Month, which is a time to honor the contributions of Native Americans to the United States.

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