

The New Adventures of Super Indian original artwork by Arigon Starr

This lesson was designed as a companion for the Native Voices audio episodes "The New Adventures of Super Indian." The Autry.org/Native Voices

ABOUT NATIVE VOICES

Native Voices at the Autry places Native narratives at the center of the American story in order to facilitate a more inclusive dialogue on what it means to be American. Founded in 1994 by Randy Reinholz (Choctaw) and Jean Bruce Scott, Native Voices is dedicated to the development and production of new works for the stage written by American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and First Nations playwrights. The organization remains committed to both emerging and established Native playwrights and theatre artists, to telling Native stories by and about Native people, and to providing the public access to these plays and playwrights—all with the goals of fostering greater understanding and respect of showcasing artistic voices that might otherwise not be heard.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

You may notice that this lesson uses the terms "Native," "Indigenous," Native American," "American Indian," and "Indian." These words are acceptable terms and are often used interchangeably, but they are not ideal. We use these words to refer to an incredibly diverse group of people who represent 574 federally recognized tribal nations and many unrecognized tribal nations. Each nation represents its own language, traditional practices, and religious beliefs. So, whenever possible, Native people prefer to be called by their specific tribal name, such as Tongva, Yakima, or Penobscot to name a few.

PART I: Super Indian and Superheroes

Superheroes have extraordinary powers to change the world. They fight to protect and save those in need. Sometimes they wear capes, can fly, or have astonishing strength. Some work alone, while others work in teams. Think of superheroes you have seen in the movies or read about in comic books. What powers do they possess? Who do they help? How do they change their world?

Below is an image of Super Indian, a superhero created by Arigon Starr, a member of the Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma. Super Indian represents a small, but growing, group of Native American Superheroes created by Native writers.



Super Indian from *The New Adventures of Super Indian* by Arigon Starr

Directions

Read the biography of Super Indian to answer the questions below (Quotes below taken from *Super Indian: Volume One* © 2012 by Arigon Starr).

"Super Indian is a **Reservation** superhero and powerful alter-ego of Hubert Logan...his handsome exterior is a reflection of Hubert's innate kindness, curiosity and desire to serve and protect his people."

"As a boy he ate tainted commodity cheese and gained superpowers!"

"His known powers include understanding the barks of pet dog, Diogi, enormous strength, sub-sonic hearing, super smell and fire-breath. Despite these gifts, new superpowers continue to emerge."

"He is assisted by his super sidekicks Mega Bear and Diogi, his radio DJ Uncle Chester and his beat-up car known as 'The Rez Rocket."

1. What is Super Indian's mission or purpose?
2. How did Super Indian get his powers?
3. What are Super Indian's powers?
4. Who are Super Indian's sidekicks?
5. Does Super Indian look like a superhero (see previous page for image)? Why or why not?

Glossary

Reservation/Rez/Res: land that is set aside for federally recognized tribes by the United States government through the treaty process

Commodity cheese: processed cheese provided by the United States government

PART II: Real Super Indians

Super Indian is a fictional character who works to serve and protect the people of the Leaning Oaks Reservation where he lives. A reservation is land that is set aside for federally recognized tribes by the United States government.

However, not all individuals who serve and protect their people have superpowers or wear tights. Some individuals help pass laws, fight battles in court, or stage protests to better their community.

In this section, you will read four biographies of Native people who have worked toward the same goal as Super Indian: to serve and protect their people and inspire positive change within their community.

Directions

As you read, annotate the text by highlighting the parts that answer the questions below. You can do this by either underlining your answers on the printed version or by using the highlighting function of the PDF file.

1. What are some of the issues facing their communities?

Some of these issues may include fighting for land rights; ending harmful stereotypes; preserving and promoting Native art, history, and culture; ensuring self-governance or sovereignty; defending religious freedom; and increasing access to social services such as healthcare and education.

2. How did each individual address these issues in their community? What strategies did they use to create positive change?

Some strategies may include educating, helping to write laws, or creating organizations to address specific issues.



Laguna Woman from
The New Adventures of Super Indian by Arigon Starr

BIOGRAPHIES OF REAL SUPER INDIANS

Marshall McKay (1952-2020)

Marshall McKay (Pomo-Wintun) dedicated his life's work to securing **economic independence** for the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation near Sacramento in Northern California and preserving and promoting Native arts and culture. His support for Native causes extended beyond his homeland to the larger Native world.

As a member of the Yocha Dehe Wintun Tribal Council for 31 years, Mr. McKay helped secure economic independence for the tribe by expanding the tribe's ancestral land. His support for building a casino and olive oil production facilities on the land provided a secure source of **revenue** to invest into his community and support **tribal sovereignty**, or the tribe's ability to govern itself without outside influence from state and federal governments. Money from the casino and olive oil production funds tribal healthcare, education, and the development of other tribal businesses.

Mr. McKay's leadership extended beyond his homeland. For many generations, Native communities throughout the United States have faced discriminatory laws and policies resulting in the loss of Native languages, cultural practices, and history. Mr. McKay strongly believed that art provided Native people with a way to share their stories and preserve their history. He supported the arts



Photo courtesy of the McKay family

by serving in leadership roles at cultural institutions, including the National Museum of American Indian and the Autry Museum of the American West. He was a founding member of the Native Arts and Culture Foundation, which supports Native artists and cultural preservation. His work with the California Native American Heritage Commission helped protect sacred and historical sites and the right for Native peoples to practice their traditional religions freely. Other issues he supported included campaigning against Native mascots, promoting sustainable environmental practices, and creating education programs. His advocacy for cultural preservation and renewal help maintain strong Native communities firmly connected to their history and traditions.

Glossary

Economic independence: the ability of a tribe to control its own financial resources and develop its own economy

Revenue: money that is made by businesses

Tribal sovereignty: a tribe's ability to govern itself without outside influence from state and federal governments

Cultural preservation: maintaining cultural traditions in order to protect them from disappearing

Sacred: having to do with religion

Sustainable: using natural resources (water, wood, etc.) in a way that ensures they are available in the future

QUESTIONS				
Why is it important for a tribe to have economic independence?				
Why is it important to preserve culture?				

BIOGRAPHIES OF REAL SUPER INDIANS

Barbara Drake (1940-2020)

Barbara Drake (Gabrieleño/Tongva) was a tribal elder, educator, ethnobotanist, and culture keeper from Southern California who spent her life **revitalizing** and promoting Tongva culture through education and traditional practices. The Gabrieleño/Tongva are the original inhabitants and care takers of the Los Angeles region.

Mrs. Drake worked with children and adults to share her knowledge of native plants and animals, their traditional uses, and their importance to the health of the environment and people. As a founding member of the Chia Café Collective, she promoted the use of California native foods such as acorns, chia seeds, sage, and mesquite for a healthier diet. A diet including native foods can help Native communities that may suffer from diabetes and other health issues. Her organization, Preserving Our Heritage, provided a food bank of native food—gathered and prepared—for tribal elders.

As part of the community organization, Mother Earth Clan, Mrs. Drake led programs and presentations about Tongva culture and traditional skills. She emphasized the importance of sharing this knowledge with Tongva children so they may continue to practice traditional skills to support and strengthen Tongva culture. Using a hands-on approach, Mrs. Drake taught Tongva children and adults



Photo by Deborah Small

to gather and care for native plants, and how to use the plants as food and medicine. She encouraged Tongva community members to build relationships with one another as they built a relationship with the natural world.

Mrs. Drake's work promoting native plants extended beyond the Native community. She taught Native and non-Native students of all ages about native plants and Tongva culture at museums, schools, libraries, and cultural centers throughout California. Many public gardens throughout Southern California, including the ethnobotanical garden at the Autry Museum of the American West, show her influence. These gardens provide people with a place to learn about the medicinal and cultural uses of California native plants and reinforce one of Mrs. Drake's core teachings, that a healthy environment is good for all of us.

Glossary

Ethnobotanist: someone who studies plants and culture

Revitalizing: to give new life to or strengthen

QUESTIONS
How can education help a culture survive?
How does environmental education benefit both Native and non-Native communities?

BIOGRAPHIES OF REAL SUPER INDIANS

Suzan Shown Harjo (born 1945)

Suzan Shown Harjo (Cheyenne and Hodulgee Muscogee) is an activist, writer, and scholar, whose lifework is devoted to protecting Native peoples' treaties and sovereignty, lands and waters, cultural rights, and **heritage languages**, as well as promoting Native arts and ending 'Indian' stereotypes.

As a Carter Administration political appointee, she coordinated the government-wide implementation of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, the United States' policy declaration to preserve and protect Native traditional religions and their exercise at sacred places, in ceremonies, and with cultural items. She led campaigns for follow-on laws to build Native institutions and reclaim Native ancestors and sacred objects—most notably, the 1989 National Museum of the American Indian Act and the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act—requiring museums and other collections to return tribally-requested human remains and cultural legacy.

As executive director of the National Congress of American Indians, president of The Morning Star Institute, and **legislative liaison** of the Native American Rights Fund, she helped Native



Photo by Paul Morigi/AP Images for The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian

nations secure rights and recover over one million acres of land. She has fought to stop **redfacing** and racial stereotyping in popular culture, because they **dehumanize** Native peoples, harm Native children and identity, inflict emotional and physical violence, and trigger and ignore **historical trauma**. A veteran of the **no-mascot movement** since 1962, she has been active in its elimination of most racist stereotypes in American sports. After decades of challenges, including the 17-years-long *Harjo et al* lawsuit, the Washington football team removed its offensive name in 2020. In 2014, President Barack Obama awarded Ms. Harjo the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest **civilian** honor.

Biography courtesy of Suzan Shown Harjo

Glossary

Heritage languages: Languages learned and spoken by Indigenous and/or immigrant communities outside of a dominant language (English, in the U.S.)

Carter Administration political appointee: A person selected to work for and with President James (Jimmy) Carter

Policy declaration: A law guiding other laws.

Follow-on laws: Laws that flow from and continue building on previous laws

Repatriation: the return of someone or something back to their own community

Cultural legacy: Cultural items belonging to all the people of a country or religion or (as with the U.S. Constitution or the George Washington Treaty Wampum Belt; or as with the Bible, Koran (Quran), Medicine Bundle, or Torah)

Legislative liaison: Someone who works to write and pass laws

Redfacing: The practice of wearing feathers, paint, and other items by non-Native people to impersonate, mock or stereotype actual Native nations and persons. (A comparable offense as blackfacing is to actual Black or African-American people.)

Dehumanize: To deprive someone of human qualities, personality, dignity or very humanity.

Historical trauma: an emotional response to a historical event that caused harm and is experienced across multiple generations

No-mascot movement: The movement by Native and non-Native people to remove so-called "Native" mascots at schools and in pro sports

Civilian: a person not in the military

QUESTIONS
What is repatriation and why is it important?
Why are stereotypes harmful?

BIOGRAPHIES OF REAL SUPER INDIANS

Walter Echo-Hawk II (born 1948)

Walter Echo-Hawk II (Pawnee) is a Native American rights attorney, author, legal scholar, and activist from Oklahoma. His work fighting legal battles, helping pass laws, and educating the public about Native issues helped secure and advance the rights of Native peoples across the United States.

Native peoples have been the victims of unjust and discriminatory laws throughout U.S. history. Mr. Echo-Hawk II has worked to overturn these laws and reform federal policies. As an attorney at the Native American Rights Fund for over 35 years, Mr. Echo-Hawk II represented Native tribes from the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. His cases covered important legal issues involving water and hunting rights, treaty rights, religious freedom, prisoner rights, and repatriation. Many of these issues help Native communities continue their traditions and maintain tribal sovereignty. In the case of the Klamath tribes in Oregon, Mr. Echo-Hawk II helped secure rights to access and use water in the Klamath Basin for hunting, fishing, and gathering purposes. Having these water rights allows the tribe to continue to practice their cultural traditions.



Photo courtesy Walter Echo-Hawk

In addition to court battles, Mr. Echo-Hawk II has worked on major **legislation** such as the Native American Graves and Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which passed in 1990, and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act Amendments of 1994. NAGPRA represents an important milestone in granting legal rights to Native Americans. According to NAGPRA, any museum that has sacred Native objects and human remains in its collection must return those to the appropriate tribal community. The American Indian Religious Freedom Act Amendments expanded an earlier law to protect traditional religious practices and sacred sites.

Mr. Echo-Hawk II has spoken publicly and written several books to educate Americans about tribal culture and Native rights. His work to ensure Native peoples are protected by the law not only promotes cultural preservation, but also helps the United States become a more just nation.

Glossary

Legislation: laws

QUESTIONS				
Why are water, hunting, and gathering rights important for Native peoples?				
Why is tribal sovereignty important?				

Directions

After reading the biographies of the four real Super Indians, use your annotation of the text to help you complete the chart below. Then, answer the three questions using the information in your chart.

REAL SUPER INDIAN	WHAT ISSUES DID THEY ADDRESS IN THEIR COMMUNITY?	WHAT STRATEGIES DID THEY USE TO CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE?
Marshall McKay	Example: economic independence, healthcare, education, ending Native stereotypes	Example: supported businesses, leadership in organizations that promote and preserve culture
Barbara Drake		
Suzan Shown Harjo		
days of the Linked helisagement nation obtained and the constant, integrity of Treaties war. While the pain date has hely linked by resulting the pain hele has hely linked by resulting class and millionaries will result		
Walter Echo-Hawk		

QUESTIONS
1. What common issues do you see listed above?
2. What common strategies do you see listed above?
3. Which real Super Indian did you find most interesting? Why?

PART III: Super You!				
You've learned about Super Indian, the character. You've learned about real Super Indians. Now it's your turn! Imagine yourself as a superhero. Answer the questions below to define your superhero qualities.				
1. What is/are your superpower(s)?				
2. How did you get your power(s)?				
3. What do you do with your powers? What is your mission and purpose as a superhero?				
4. Do you have any sidekicks? What do they do?				
5. What do you look like? (draw picture). Feel free to use a separate piece of paper for this drawing.				
My Superhero Name				

PART IV: The Adventures of Super You, Episode 1

Now is your chance to show the world Super You. Something is threatening your community! What is it? How do you stop it? What happens next?

Use the page below to help you tell your story. You may choose to create a comic strip, write a story, or do both! Consider using a separate piece of paper if you need more space.

Title:				
Title:				

Do you want to see your superhero on our Instagram or Twitter? Ask an adult to send a photograph of your superhero drawing, comic strip, and/or story with your name and your age to **outreach@theautry.org** for a chance to be featured on our social media! Accepting work from artists of all ages. Must be 18-years or older to submit.

Extension Activities

1. There are many other real Super Indians to learn about. Below are a few more individuals to research on your own.

Wilma Mankiller (activist/Cherokee Chief)

Joy Harjo (poet)

Mary Kathryn Nagle (playwright/lawyer)

Gerald Clarke (artist)

Harry Fonseca (artist)

Oren Lyons (athlete/activist)

Richard Oakes (activist)

2. Super Indians can be young too! Learn about young Indigenous activists.

https://www.dosomething.org/us/articles/7-young-indigenous-activists-standing-up-for-their-communities

3. Read Super Indian comic books by Arigon Starr, or research other comic book series written by Indigenous authors.

https://superindiancomics.com

4. Continue drawing or writing more episodes for Super You!

Resources

"Frequently Asked Questions." U.S. Department of Interior Indian Affairs. 2021. Web. https://www.bia.gov/frequently-asked-questions

Starr, Arigon. "Characters in the Super Indian Universe." Super Indian Comics. 2020. Web. https://superindiancomics.com/

Marshall McKay

"About the Native American Heritage Commission." State of California Native American Heritage Commission. 2021. Web. http://nahc.ca.gov/about/

Blouin, Melissa (News and Media Relations). "Chancellor's Statement on the Passing of Marshall McKay." UC Davis. January 4, 2021. Web. https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/chancellors-statement-passing-marshall-mckay

"Current Programs/Projects." Native Arts & Cultures Foundation. 2021. Web. https://www.nativeartsandcultures.org/programs

Lauzinksy, Paige. "Remembering Marshall McKay." KCET. February 10, 2021. Web. https://www.kcet.org/shows/tending-nature/remembering-marshall-mckay

Miranda, Carolina. "Marshall McKay, Indigenous leader who helped steer Autry Museum, dies of COVID-19 at 68." Los Angeles Times. January 2, 2021. Web. https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2021-01-02/marshall-mckay-indigenous-leader-autry-museum-dies

Morehouse, Lisa. "California Foodways: Native American Tribe Bets on Olive Oil." KQED. December 7, 2014. Web. https://www.kqed.org/news/10349311/california-foodways-gambling-with-olive-oil

"Tribal Elder Marshall McKay, a 'Resolute Protector' of Native Culture, Dies from Covid-19." Native News Online. January 7, 2021. Web. https://nativenewsonline.net/currents/tribal-elder-marshall-mckay-a-resolute-protector-of-native-culture-dies-from-covid-19

"Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation Mourns Passing of Tribal Elder." Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation. 2021. Web. https://www.yochadehe.org/news/yocha-dehe-wintun-nation-mourns-passing-tribal

Barbara Drake

"Barbara Drake, Chia Café Collective." KCET. 2021. Web. https://www.kcet.org/people/barbara-drake-chia-cafe-collective

Jernigan, Valarie Blue Bird et al. "Food Insecurity and Obesity Among American Indians and Alaska Natives and Whites in California." *J Hunger Envrion Nutr.* 2013: 8 (4). Pp 458-471. Web. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4746017/

"Remembering Barbara Drake." Pitzer College. 2021. Web. https://www.pitzer.edu/communications/2020/11/23/remembering-barbara-drake/

Stoll, Don. "Barbara Drake (Tongva), Walks On." Idyllwild Arts Blog. December 4, 2020. Web. https://www.idyllwildarts.org/barbara-drake-tongva-walks-on/

"Tending the Wild – Decolonizing the Diet: How Native Peoples are Reclaiming Traditional Foods." KCET. 2021. Web. https://www.kcet.org/shows/tending-the-wild/episodes/decolonizing-the-diet?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=kcet&fbclid=lwAR2tp9usevvaK4NndrC4oB9z2WATh3sN8HyMjrqPE0yBxgKwonJI5eXXXIA

Resources

Suzan Shown Harjo

"A Promise Kept: The Inspiring Life and Works of Suzan Shown Harjo." Smithsonian: National Museum of the American Indian. 2019. Web. https://americanindian.si.edu/sites/1/files/pdf/seminars-symposia/Suzan_Harjo_Agenda.pdf

Friedman, Michael. "The Spirit of Suzan Shown Harjo.: Leading the fight against racism." Psychology Today. November 5, 2014. Web. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/brick-brick/201411/the-spirit-suzan-shown-harjo

Milloy, Courtland. "Suzan Harjo fought for decades to remove the Redskins name. She'll wait to celebrate." The Washington Post. July 14, 2020. Web. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/suzan-shown-harjo-redskins-name-fight/2020/07/14/6f382d16-c5f4-11ea-b037-f9711f89ee46_story.html

Office of the Press Secretary. "Remarks by the President at the Presentation of the Medal of Freedom." The White House. November 24, 2014. Web. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/24/remarks-president-presentation-medal-freedom

"Reclaiming Identity: The Repatriation of Native Remains and Culture." Friends Committee on National Legislation. September 29, 2016. Web. https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2016-09/reclaiming-identity-repatriation-native-remains-and-culture#:~:text=Repatriation%20involves%20a%20return%20to,governments%20centuries%20after%20their%20collection.

Weston, Jennifer. "Suzan Harjo." Cultural Survival Quarterly Magazine. December 2010. Web. https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/suzan-harjo

Zotigh, Dennis. "Fulfilling Her Promise: Museums Honor Native Rights Advocate Suzan Harjo." Smithsonian Magazine. September 18, 2019. Web. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-indian/2019/09/19/suzan-harjo-promise-fulfilled/

Walter Echo-Hawk

"About the Native American Rights Fund." Native American Rights Fund. 2021. Web. https://www.narf.org/about-us/

Attocknie, Dana. "Echo-Hawk explains manifest injustice in new book." Native Times. September 27, 2010. Web. https://www.nativetimes.com/jobs/49-life/people/4299-echo-hawk-explains-manifest-injustice-in-new-book

"Interview with Walter Echo-Hawk, Pawnee Attorney and Author." Indianz. February 14, 2011. Web. https://www.indianz.com/News/2011/02/14/interview-with-walter-echohawk.asp

"Klamath Tribes' Water Rights." Native American Rights Fund. 2021. Web. https://www.narf.org/cases/klamath-tribes-water-rights/

"Reclaiming Identity: The Repatriation of Native Remains and Culture." Friends Committee on National Legislation. September 29, 2016. Web. https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2016-09/reclaiming-identity-repatriation-native-remains-and-culture#:~:text=Repatriation%20involves%20a%20return%20to,governments%20centuries%20after%20their%20collection.

Resources

Vile, John R. "American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 as amended in 1994." The First Amendment Encyclopedia. 2009. Web. https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1053/american-indian-religious-freedom-act-of-1978-as-amended-in-1994

"Walter Echo-Hawk." The Dan and Maggie Inouye Distinguished Chair of Democratic Ideals, University of Hawaii at Manoa. 2021. Web. https://manoa.hawaii.edu/inouyechair/portfolio-item/walter-echo-hawk/

"Walter Echo-Hawk." Outspoken Agency. 2021. Web. https://www.outspokenagency.com/walter-echohawk

"Walter Echo-Hawk." Pawnee Nation. 2021. Web. https://pawneenation.org/walter-echo-hawk/

"Walter Echo-Hawk - Biography." Walter Echo-Hawk. 2021. Web. https://www.walterechohawk. com/?page=biography

"Walter Echo-Hawk - A Native American Speaker." Walter Echo-Hawk. 2021. Web. http://www.walterechohawk.com/

"Walter R. Echo-Hawk - Distinguished Visiting Professor." September 11, 2014. Web. https://law.lclark.edu/live/news/27803-walter-r-echo-hawk-distinguished-visiting

