

# TAKE ACTION: AGAINST THE CURRENT



Native American teen activist 17-year-old Daunnette Moniz-Reyome shares her family's journey to retain the sacred rituals and values of their culture in the wake of centuries of loss due to disease, war and government policies. The effects of this cultural and physical devastation continue to reverberate through the lives of today's Native Americans, especially young people, who grapple with oppression, poverty and racism. Daunnette is a member of the Winnebago Ho-Chunk tribe of Nebraska and a senior at Walthill Public School, on the Omaha Reservation where she lives. Daunnette documents life for herself, her family and her friends as they attempt to juggle modern society and Native American values and rituals. When thinking about issues of societal trauma, the importance of a connected and intergenerational community, and the necessity of cultural autonomy and expression of nationality, **consider Articles 2 and 15 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights:**

*Article 2:*

*Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.*

*Article 15:*

*(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.*

*(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.*

## **For Teachers: Research**

Nearly 60 years after the Declaration of Human Rights was adopted on the floor of the United Nations, the UN drafted and adopted another declaration, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Ask your students to research this second declaration (which can be found at: <https://bit.ly/UNDRIP4kids>), which was passed in 2007. Ask them to consider: Why was it necessary to draft another declaration of human rights specifically for indigenous peoples? Were their rights not protected by the original declaration? Why or why not? What are some of the economic, political, and societal issues that undermine the protections of indigenous peoples around the world, and how do these differ from other people? How are these issues different for the various indigenous peoples in countries around the world? How are they similar? Why did it

take 60 years to draft a document to protect the rights of indigenous peoples? How does this information relate to the personal narrative shared by Daunnette in AGAINST THE CURRENT?

## **For Students: Reflect**

In the United States, Native American traditions, culture and rituals were banned by the federal government until 1978, when the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed. In AGAINST THE CURRENT, Daunnette says, “My parents didn’t grow up being taught our ways of life.” Consider your own heritage and family history. Are your traditions and rituals accepted and encouraged in your community? What do your traditions mean to you? What do they mean to your family? How would you feel if it was a crime to practice your own religious or cultural traditions and rituals? What do you think it does to a person, to a community, when it is against the law for them to celebrate and pass on their culture, their history and their religion? Do you think there is a direct correlation between the struggles that Daunnette sees on the reservation and the fact that Native American life and heritage were criminalized for generations? Explain.

## **For All Of Us: Respond**

1. Host a community or private screening of AGAINST THE CURRENT to raise awareness and understanding of the rich traditions and cultural challenges facing Native Americans historically as well as in today’s world. Email [info@bykids.org](mailto:info@bykids.org) for more information.
2. Create a chain of kindness at your school. Using simple materials like construction paper, paint and markers, cut out or draw the shapes of Native American symbols, such as feathers, bears, arrows, coyotes, Kokopelli, the sun, moon, fire, and others. Create an informational sign that shares the meaning and importance of these shapes and symbols.

At a booth or table in your school lobby or cafeteria, have a fundraiser. Students can purchase one of the shapes and write a message that celebrates kindness and the importance of honoring the indigenous people of the Americas. Hang the shapes all around your school, and send the proceeds to the Native American Rights Fund ([www.narf.org](http://www.narf.org)), an organization fighting to protect the rights of all Native Americans.

3. Learn about Native American history and culture by visiting the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC, or New York City (<https://americanindian.si.edu/>). Share what you learned on social media using hashtags such as #nativeamerican. You can also post what you learned throughout the month of November and use the official hashtag #NativeAmericanHeritageMonth to show your support.
4. Did you know that it is against the law for a non-Native business to falsely advertise their products as Native? Support Native American artists and small businesses. Go to [www.beyondbucks.com/p/buy-native.html](http://www.beyondbucks.com/p/buy-native.html) for a list of authentic Native American brands.
5. Do you live near a Native American reservation or community? Volunteer with groups that address food insecurity, education, medical needs, special events or beautification and maintenance repairs.

Check out [www.globalvolunteers.org/usa/](http://www.globalvolunteers.org/usa/) for ways to volunteer on the Blackfoot and Rosebud Reservations, or [www.simplysmiles.org/volunteer](http://www.simplysmiles.org/volunteer) for ways to volunteer on the Cheyenne Reservation.

6. Sign a petition or start one of your own to protect Native American rights. Go to [www.change.org](http://www.change.org) to start a petition, or add your name to an existing movement, such as:

**Removing Native American imagery from professional sports teams:**

[www.change.org/p/nike-native-american-voices-matter](http://www.change.org/p/nike-native-american-voices-matter)

**Ensuring that Native American history is taught in public schools:**

[www.change.org/p/u-s-department-of-education-make-native-american-history-part-of-school-curriculum](http://www.change.org/p/u-s-department-of-education-make-native-american-history-part-of-school-curriculum)

Your voice matters!

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