



# National Society Daughters of the American Revolution

*Pamela Edwards Rouse Wright, President General*

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## AMERICAN INDIAN MINUTES 2023–2024

### Native American Women

- 1. Wilma Mankiller (1945-2010)** – Wilma Mankiller was a Cherokee citizen born in Tahlequah, OK. Mankiller relocated with her family to California at the age of 11 under the Bureau of Indian Affairs Relocation Program. In her teenage years, she took part in the Indian Center of San Francisco. She also supported the Black Panther Party in its early days. She later became an activist for the reclamation of Alcatraz Island.

In 1977, Mankiller returned to Oklahoma and got involved in numerous community development projects to benefit her Native American neighbors.

In 1983, she was appointed as Cherokee Nation’s deputy principal chief, and two years later she became the first female Principal Chief for Cherokee Nation. A modern pioneer and consensus builder, she advocated for improved education, healthcare, and housing services.

Notably, she governed the United States’ second-largest Native American tribe for ten years. Remarkably, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1998. In 2022, Mankiller became one of just two Native women- alongside Sacajawea-to have her face printed on American currency.
- 2. Susan La Flesche Picotte (1865-1915)** – Susan La Flesche Picotte, born on the Omaha Reservation, was a 19th-century Native American reformer and physician with a reservation hospital named after her near Walthill, Nebraska.

Dr. Picotte is widely recognized as the first Native American to hold a medical degree. In addition, she worked for public health and served for the land’s legal and formal allotment to the members of the Omaha tribe.

As part of the 19th century’s temperance movement, she worked to prevent drinking on the reservation, where she served as a doctor. Beyond that, she ran a campaign for the prevention and treatment of tuberculosis. Her mark on the indigenous community and beyond cannot be overstated. She continues to inspire Native women with her work ethic and commitment to public health.
- 3. Nancy Ward (1738-1822)** – Nanyehi (meaning “one who goes about”), a Cherokee woman later known as Nancy Ward, was born in the Cherokee chief-city, Chota in what is now Monroe County, TN. She became a strong political leader for the Cherokee tribe and earned the prestigious title, “Ghigau,” meaning “beloved woman.” She advocated for Native American women during a period of intense conflict between Whites and Native Americans.

She played a role in the American Revolution and bravely advocated for peaceful coexistence with European Americans. Later in life, she spoke out for Cherokee retention of tribal hunting lands. She is credited with the introduction of dairy products to the Cherokee economy.

Oral history tells that, in her last years of life, Nanyehi had recurring visions of what is now known as the Trail of Tears. Her visions were specific—and correct. She died before the Cherokee were removed from their remaining lands.

She is considered a visionary, a staunch advocate, and a fearless leader for Native American women.
- 4. Sarah Winnemucca (1844-1891)** – Sarah Winnemucca, of the Numa tribe (also known as Northern Paiute) was born during a time when Native Americans held great distrust for White people, who were trying to force Native American tribal members to adopt a different culture, language, and religious beliefs.

When her family and neighbors were forced onto a reservation, she became an advocate for her people and even became a language interpreter for the military in that area. She later went on to fight for reform for the Paiute tribe.

Sarah Winnemucca's voice still resonates today through her autobiography, "Life Among the Paiutes." According to the Smithsonian, it's "the first English narrative by a Native American woman." The book "voices a thoughtful critique of Anglo-American culture while recounting the fraught legacy of federal lands, including Nevada's Pyramid Lake and Oregon's Malheur region, recently the site of a militia takeover."

5. **Maria Tallchief (1925-2013)** – When talking famous Native American women, it's impossible not to mention the breathtaking ballerina, Maria Tallchief.

She was born on January 24, 1925, in Fairfax, Oklahoma, a small town located on the Osage Indian Reservation. She moved to New York City at the age of 17 to pursue a career in ballet dancing. Tallchief is widely credited as the first major prima ballerina of America. Beyond that, she was the first Native of North America to earn the distinction.

Tallchief toured the world to become the first Native American to perform in the Bolshoi Theater of Moscow. In the 1970s, she worked for Chicago's Lyric Opera as its Director of Ballet.

In 1996, Tallchief was awarded a Kennedy Center Honor for her lifetime achievements, the only Native American to receive the honor.

6. **Zitkála-Šá (1876-1938)** – Zitkála-Šá, (which means Red Bird in Lakota) a musically inclined Yankton Dakota woman, worked tirelessly as an activist for women and Native American civil rights. She promoted a pan-Indian movement to unite all of America's tribes in the cause of lobbying for citizenship rights, leading to the passage of the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act.

Growing up in both South Dakota and Indiana, Zitkála-Šá was brought up in two different worlds with different mindsets on how women should act and what they should do with their life. She rejected the idea that women should serve men and not attend college. After graduating college, Zitkála-Šá began her years-long pursuit of recording Native American oral histories and translating them into English.

Most importantly, she began to advocate for Native Americans to be able to become full citizens of the United States of America. In 1924, the Indian Citizenship Act was passed partially due to her passionate lobbying around Native American suffrage rights. She continued to fight for her people's rights until her death.

7. **Pocahontas (1596–1617)** – Pocahontas rose to prominence for her association with Virginia's colonial settlement at Jamestown, yet much of her story has been changed and fictionalized through the years. She is one of the most famous Native American women of all time. A Native American woman belonging to the Powhatan people, Pocahontas is notable for her association with the colonial settlement at Jamestown, Virginia. She was the daughter of Powhatan, the paramount chief of a network of tributary tribes in the Tsenacommacah, encompassing the Tidewater region of what is today the U.S. state Virginia.

In 1613, she was captured and held for ransom by the Colonists, then forced to assimilate. Colonists made her convert to Christianity and get baptized under the name "Rebecca." She married a man named John Rolfe when she was just 17 and bore his son, Thomas Rolfe, in 1615.

When the Rolfes traveled to London in 1616, Pocahontas was presented to English society as a "civilized savage," in hopes of securing investments for the Jamestown settlement. Pocahontas garnered celebrity status among the settlement and Englishmen. However, in 1617, when the Rolfes set sail for Virginia, Pocahontas died at Gravesend of unknown causes, likely around her 21st birthday. She was buried in St. George's Church, Gravesend in England, but her legacy lives on in the United States of America and beyond. She remains an essential part of any lesson on Native American women in history.

8. **Sacajawea (1788–1812)** – Sacajawea was an indigenous Lemhi Shoshone woman, best known for helping the Lewis and Clark Expedition achieve the objectives of their chartered mission by exploring the Louisiana Territory. Like other Native women, her contributions speak for themselves.

From North Dakota to the Pacific Ocean, Sacagawea journeyed thousands of miles with the expedition. Adding to her services to natural history, she aided in the establishment of cultural contacts with Native American populations.

9. **Elizabeth Peratrovich (1911–1958)** – Elizabeth Peratrovich was an American civil rights activist, Grand President of the Alaska Native Sisterhood, and member of the Tlingit nation who worked for equality on behalf of Alaska Natives.

After seeing a “No Natives Allowed” sign on a hotel near her hometown in Juneau, Alaska, the display sparked outrage and served as the catalyst for Peratrovich to fight discrimination against Native Americans and other groups in Alaska.

In 1943, she attempted to get an anti-discrimination bill passed in Alaska. Two years later, two American Native individuals represented Alaska’s senate and helped fight alongside Peratrovich.

In the 1940s, her advocacy was credited as being instrumental in the passing of Alaska’s Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945, the first state or territorial anti-discrimination law enacted in the United States

Recently, she was honored with her very own piece of history: a Google Doodle, which was illustrated by Michaela Goade.

10. **Annie Dodge Wauneka (1910–1997)** – Annie Dodge Wauneka was an influential member of the Navajo Nation as a member of the Navajo Nation Council. She focused her platform on education and healthcare. Her two main objectives were to eradicate tuberculosis within her Native American nation and to create a dictionary to help medical professionals translate medical terms from English to the Navajo language.

Some of her greatest achievements include being awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by Lyndon B. Johnson as well as the Indian Council Fire Achievement Award and the Navajo Medal of Honor. She also became the second woman to be elected to the Tribal Council. Wauneka was a bona fide earth-shaker, and not just among the Native American community.

11. **Elouise Cobell (1945–2011)** – Elouise Cobell, also known as “Yellow Bird Woman,” was born in 1945 on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana. She served as a tribal elder, rancher, banker, and activist. Furthermore, she was also a leading petitioner in 2009’s revolutionary class-action suit, Cobell v. Salazar.

This challenged the government’s mismanagement of trust funds related to over 500,000 Native American individuals. They eventually reached a \$3.4 billion settlement with the government in 2010. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously.

Throughout her life, Cobell helped her husband to operate their ranch, raising cattle and crops. Active in local agriculture and environmental issues, she founded the first land trust in Indian Country and served as a Trustee for the Nature Conservancy of Montana.

12. **Deb Haaland (1960–Present)** – Deb Haaland made history when she was confirmed as the first Native American Cabinet secretary and head of the Interior Department. Haaland is a 35th Generation New Mexican, an enrolled citizen of the Pueblo of Laguna, and one of the first two Native American women elected to Congress.

Her confirmation makes a clear statement that the government is placing a priority on not only environmental issues but also in establishing a much-overdue, collaborative relationship with indigenous people across America.

Secretary Haaland ran her own small business producing and canning Pueblo Salsa, served as a tribal administrator at San Felipe Pueblo, and became the first woman elected to the Laguna Development Corporation Board of Directors, overseeing business operations of the second largest tribal gaming enterprise in New Mexico. She successfully advocated for the Laguna Development Corporation to create policies and commitments to environmentally friendly business practices.

After running for New Mexico Lieutenant Governor in 2014, Secretary Haaland became the first Native American woman to be elected to lead a State Party.

Throughout her career in public service, Secretary Haaland has broken barriers and opened the doors of opportunity for future generations.

13. **Michaela Goade (1989/90 – Present)** – Michaela Goade, an enrolled member of the Tlingit and Haida tribes of Alaska, received the prestigious Caldecott Medal for her illustrations in the picture book, “We are Water Protectors.” In doing so, she became the first Native American to win the award.

Over the last few years, her work has focused on Indigenous KidLit. She is honored to work with Indigenous authors and tribal organizations in the creation of beautiful and much-needed books. Michaela’s Tlingit name is Sheit.een and she is of the Kiks.ádi Clan (Raven/Frog) from Sheet’ká.

She was raised in the rainforest and on the beaches of Southeast Alaska, traditional Lingít Aaní (Tlingit land) and currently lives in Sheet’ká (Sitka), Alaska, a magical island on the edge of a wide, wild sea. She has the honor of illustrating a Google Doodle of Elizabeth Peratrovich.

Reference - PowWows.com