

League of Women Voters Minneapolis
October 2022 Unit Meetings
Study Guide and Discussion Questions
Topic: Native American Communities & Voting

Background:

Minnesota is home to Native American members of eleven tribes who make up 1.1 percent of our population, approximately 107,000 people in 2018. In 2020, about 6,000 Native Americans lived in Minneapolis, about 2500 lived in St. Paul, and about 1500 lived in Duluth. Others live around the state, including in nine Anishinaabe reservations or four primary Dakota communities.

It is important to remember that all of Minnesota once belonged to the Native Americans. A reservation is not land that was given to them by the State, but is land retained when transferring other land to the State and Federal governments.

In the time since white settlers arrived in Minnesota the Native American population has faced many challenges: war waged against them; Treaty deals ignored; their sources of livelihood gone with land taken and wildlife decimated; and efforts to destroy their culture by removing their children from their communities to boarding schools.

As a result of all of this, the State of Minnesota estimates that about 31 percent of Native Americans live in poverty, the highest rate of any ethnic group in Minnesota. Some of the challenges of life in poverty, such as housing instability and lack of convenient transportation, can make it difficult to register to vote and vote. Native Americans have also faced poor treatment at the polls because of prejudice and discrimination.

For more information:

Join the *Civic Buzz* on Thursday, October 6 at 7:00 p.m. and learn about the Native American Community Development Institute's (NACDI) program, Make Voting a Tradition. Our speaker Jolene Jones, a Native American who grew up in South Minneapolis, leads the program. Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://lwvmn-org.zoom.us/j/82476976652>

Native American Community Development Institute, <https://www.nacdi.org/>

Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center, <https://www.miwrc.org/>

American Indian Movement, a Native American activist group founded in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1968. <https://www.aimovement.org/>

Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, <https://www.mn.gov/indianaffairs/>

Demographic Trends: American Indian health status in Minnesota.

https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/equity/reports/maihsr01demographics_report.pdf

Tribal - State relations training. Minnesota trains its state workers for better communication and working relationships with tribal leaders.

<https://www.dot.state.mn.us/tribaltraining/index.html>

(The pdf summary of the 2019 trainings, a link on the site, has gorgeous color renditions of each tribe's seal).

Risjord, Norman, A Popular History of Minnesota, Minnesota Historical Society Press (2005). Excellent chapters on early Minnesota and Native Americans.

Discussion Questions:

Describe an early experience you had with Native Americans in Minnesota, or exposure to Native American culture through literature or film. How did it influence your perception of Native Americans?

Do you have any experience with the League of Women Voters Minneapolis and Native American issues? Tell us about it.

How could Minnesota's voting system be improved to make it easier for low-income Native Americans and anyone in poverty to vote?

What could we as individuals, or LWVMpls as an organization, do to improve the lives of Native Americans in our community?