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**Zitkala-Ša, Native American Rights Activist, Honored on New Quarter**

The design of the 2024 Zitkala-Ša quarter. Image courtesy of the U.S. Mint.

Zitkala-Ša, “Red Bird,” Gertrude Simmons Bonnin: an activist, author, and composer who fought for citizenship and sovereignty for Native Americans is honored on a quarter as part of the American Women Quarters Program.

Zitkala-Ša (1876–1938) worked throughout her lifetime to give voice and rights to Native Americans, including Indigenous citizenship and women’s suffrage. For two decades, I have had the honor to research her life and impact in American history through [Smithsonian collection photographs](#). More recently, I nominated Zitkala-Ša for the [American Women Quarters Program](#). Her story was selected for the 2024 quarter series.

Portraits of Zitkala-Ša from the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery and National Museum of American History were consulted for the design of the coin with the intent to (re)focus attention on giving her a rightful place in American women’s history. The words “Author, Activist, Composer” were included in the design to amplify her role as a teacher, musician, and writer, and to consider the social and intellectual connections that fostered her success.

*Zitkala-Ša in 1898. Photograph by Joseph Turner Keiley. [Image courtesy of the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery](#).*

Zitkala-Ša, which translates in English to “Red Bird,” was also known as Gertrude Simmons Bonnin. She was a Yankton Sioux woman born in South Dakota to a Native American mother and German American white father, who quickly left the family. She was educated at many schools, including White’s Manual Labor Institute (Wabash, Indiana, Quaker School), Earlham College (Indiana), and the New England Conservatory of Music (Boston, MA). With strong convictions, she became a teacher at the United States Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. She later became an accomplished author, musician, composer, and dedicated worker for the reform of American Indian policies in the United States. Zitkala-Ša lived and worked in two worlds, navigating Native American culture and Western society to make an impact on her world and future generations.

By 1896, Zitkala-Ša was a strong-minded student scholar and celebrated orator, and she firmly opposed to the “Americanization” of Indigenous people. She penned articles in *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper’s Weekly*, and published short stories and books that contained both autobiographical writings and American Indian legends. In 1921, her book *American Indian Stories* was published, further establishing her recognition as an American author and strengthening her position as an advocate for Indigenous rights.

*Zitkala-Ša in 1899. Photograph by Gertrude Kasebier. Public domain. [Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons](#).*

In addition to being a writer, Zitkala-Ša also trained and performed as a concert violinist and composer, including co-writing the first Native American opera, *The Sun Dance Opera*, completed in 1913.

From 1900 to her death, Zitkala-Ša worked tirelessly for American Indian citizenship rights, independence, and tribal sovereignty. She joined the Society of American Indians in 1907 and became co-editor of the *American Indian Magazine*. Through her leadership in the Society of American Indians and respect across Indigenous communities, she influenced Congress towards the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. She also co-founded the National Council of American Indians to advance voting rights, healthcare, legal status, and land rights, and she started the Indian Welfare Committee within the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, expanding the recognition of the rights of Indigenous women more broadly in U.S. society.

Zitkala-Ša lived in and around Washington, DC, and northern Virginia from 1911 to 1938. She and her husband, Raymond Bonnin, worked in Washington, DC, to advance the rights of Native Americans. They continued working within Native American organizations advocating for reform and lobbying for full citizenship rights through World War I, the Pandemic of 1918, and into the years of the Great Depression. Finally, Congress passed legislation for American Indian Citizenship in 1924 and new land rights legislation in 1934.

*Zitkala-Ša in 1898. Photograph by Gertrude Kasebier. Public domain. [Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons](#).*

Zitkala- Ša lived an independent, motivated, and quite accomplished life, but her story is almost forgotten today. Research for the 2019 *Smithsonian American Women* book brought me back to reconsidering Zitkala- Ša’s remarkable life and relentless activism for American Indians rights in the early 1900s. In the lead up to the centennial of the 19th Amendment in 2020, focus on Zitkala- Ša’s achievements and her story have been recognized more fully. Her first biography was published in 2016, her and her husband’s archives are now being researched at Brigham Young University, and many museum collections and Tribal Cultural Centers are reinterpreting Indigenous women’s history collections. The creation of the Smithsonian American Women’s History Museum in 2020 also created renewed interest in Native American Women’s History at the Smithsonian. Through my efforts and other Smithsonian colleagues, I hope that Zitkala- Ša’s legacy will continue to have a prominent place in history, so others may come to understand her aspirations, her accomplishments, and to be inspired by her drive for the best for her family, community, and for the nation.

## References

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- Zitkala-Ša. *Old Indian Legends, retold by Zitkala-Ša*. Boston & London: Ginn & Company, 1901.
- [Brigham Young University Special Collections](#), Zitkala-Ša 1876-1938.

## Related Reading

- [Danced into History: Maria Tallchief Quarter Release](#)
- [Dr. Mary Edwards Walker Recognized on New U.S. Quarter](#)
- [Celebrating Patsy Mink: Champion of Education Equity](#)

Michelle Delaney | [READ MORE](#)

Acting Associate Director for Museum Research and Scholarship, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian.

SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM

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*It’s hard to fathom that 119 years ago, on December 11th, 1906, [a blizzard dumped 4 feet of snow](#) into the Sierras.*

## *Anything missing?*

**Have you visited the local museums in Truckee?** Most specifically have you visited the newest museum, the Museum of Truckee History?

Ideally local museums provide the history of the area and put the stories into the context of the times. They should answer the questions of what was happening back then and what was the atmosphere in the community. As Kathleen Eagan, Truckee's first mayor, said "losing our museums, we will lose our identity".

There are three incredible museums here in Old Town Truckee, each of which tells a portion of Truckee's history with colorful stories of the good, the bad and the truth of the Western expansion.

The Museum of Truckee History (MoTH) is unique in that it tells the story of why Truckee survived when so many towns along the Transcontinental Railroad disappeared. Nine interactive displays, with accompanying artifacts, bring the history alive and allows a deeper insight into each subject matter.

Upon entering the MoTH, you first walk into the trainmaster's office in Truckee's train depot which was built in 1900. From there you learn about the early residents in the area, the Native Americans and how Truckee got its name.

The truth can sometimes be difficult. The Chinese were brought in and critical to the building of the Transcontinental Railroad. Once the railroad was completed, the Chinese found themselves without a job and a way to live. Many of the Chinese wanted to stay in the area and took on jobs that no one else wanted to do.

Logging was a huge industry for Truckee. The lumber was used to help build the railroad, the Comstock mines in Virginia City, cordwood and building materials. Near the same time as the railroad completion, the local logging industry was declining because most of the surrounding trees had been cut down. There were many unemployed loggers in the area and the ice industry was a seasonal job.

The Chinese Exclusion Act, passed in 1882, banned the immigration of Chinese laborers, and dozens of communities across the western United States expelled their Chinese residents. Here in Truckee the Chinese knowledge of herbs and the human body helped many of Truckee's residents since there was only one doctor in town and medical knowledge was limited.

The museum goes on to cover Truckee's ice industry, California's first true lager beer, the beginning of winter sports to the area and where Truckee is today. The last display covers the railroad and how Truckee would not have existed without it. Truckee continues to evolve and is poised to remain a robust community.

Jessica Penman, President & CEO of the Truckee Chamber of Commerce, said it well:

“Local history museums in Truckee, California, play a pivotal role in preserving and celebrating the rich heritage of the region, and their importance extends far beyond nostalgia and education. These museums serve as cultural anchors that draw visitors and residents alike to explore the town’s history, fostering a deeper connection to the community. Our three little museums allow us to respect and learn

about our history while acknowledging our movement forward. The Museum of Truckee History is a small but mighty museum. I was very impressed with the amount of information that the museum is able to present in such a small space. My favorite part is the information on the ice business. If you weren’t familiar with this area I don’t think you would have any idea that ice was such an important part of the development of Truckee.”

The other museums in Old Town include Truckee’s Old Jail Museum and the Truckee Railroad Museum.

Truckee’s Old Jail Museum is one of the few remaining original Old West jails. Built in 1875, and built six years after the opening of the Transcontinental Railroad, its thick mortar and rock walls held many a rabble-rouser, murderer, and logger (who may have been enjoying his time off from work a bit too much).

The Truckee Railroad Museum tells the story of the Transcontinental Railroad and its coming to Truckee. Beginning with a vision by Theodore Judah, the railroad slowly made the difficult passage over the Sierra. It also tells the tale of entrepreneurs being able to grow the community. Getting here and maintaining the rails every year has and always will be a challenge.

Stefanie Olivieri of Cabona’s reinforced the importance of Truckee’s museums. She talked about how museums are important for not only keeping the character of the town alive but also a thriving place to live. “Historic Truckee brings people to our community where we work hard to preserve the natural beauty and historic buildings of the area.” Note that the retail store, Cabona’s, is housed in a building that was built in the 1800s and is part of the story. She recognizes that we have to continually work on making sure we don’t lose our identity.

Supporting the need to keep Truckee’s history the Truckee-Donner Historical Society has a research cabin filled with books, letters, photos, maps and much more covering the local area.

In conclusion..

Truckee was a rough and tumble mountain town with a unique and colorful history. It took years and a lot of hard work to make Truckee an official town. Its museums are a huge asset to the community and need to be preserved. It’s the stories and keeping of its character that makes the town so special and why we need to support the museums.

## [Resilient Women Everywhere](#)

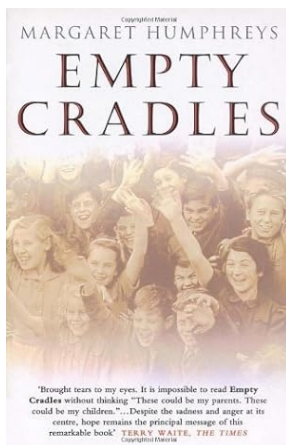
Posted by [Melia Janssen](#)

In 1986, British social worker and mother of two Margaret Humphreys investigated the case of a woman who claimed that, at the age of four, she had been put on a boat to Australia by the British government.

While she initially thought the story was incredulous, Margaret Humphreys soon discovered that this woman's story was just the tip of an enormous iceberg. After her investigation, she discovered that as many as **an estimated 150,000 children** had in fact been deported from children's homes in Britain and shipped off to a new life to Canada, New Zealand, Zimbabwe and Australia, as recently as **1967**. Many of the children were sent to Australia with promises of oranges and sunshine but where they were placed in abusive and harrowing conditions.



During her investigation, she faced opposition and intimidation for her discoveries which went high up the ranks in various governmental organisations. Despite the threats to her life and her family, she persevered and arranged for the reunification of thousands of families who had been torn apart by the practice. She also wrote a book titled [Empty Cradles](#) which formed the basis of the movie [Oranges and Sunshine \(2010\)](#) starring Emily Watson as herself.



The movie also prompted a class action suit against the British government by the surviving child migrants.

Footnotes:

[UK child migrants sent to Australia sue government over abuse](#)  
[Child Migrants Trust](#)

## EPA is urging state to safeguard tribal cultural practices by preserving Delta's water flows

[https://enewspaper.eastbaytimes.com/infinity/article\\_popover\\_share.aspx?guid=65831638-62a8-4ddd-82f6-84850dfeeb8f&share=true](https://enewspaper.eastbaytimes.com/infinity/article_popover_share.aspx?guid=65831638-62a8-4ddd-82f6-84850dfeeb8f&share=true)



### How Indigenous activists lead the largest dam removal project in American history

“Molli Myers was pregnant with her firstborn when the salmon began to die. It was 2002, during the depths of a yearslong drought, and farmers far upstream of her community on the Yurok reservation in Northern California had pressured the George W. Bush administration to divert water from the Klamath River in Oregon to irrigate their fields. Water temperatures rose as the river slowed through the summer, and in September, Chinook salmon returning to spawn began to die, littering the banks with as many as 70,000 carcasses.

Two years later, with her young son in her lap, Myers testified in Orleans, California, before a panel of Federal Energy Regulatory Commission officials charged with renewing the operating licenses of four hydroelectric dams that had contributed to the fish kill. None of the panelists looked her in the eye as she described the structures as an existential threat to the river and the salmon that have sustained her Karuk people since time immemorial.

When the meeting ended, Myers joined a handful of Native people and friends around a bonfire by the river in Orleans to lick their wounds and vent their anger. “That was when we made the decision to dedicate ourselves to dam removal,” Myers recalls. “And that has been our lives.”

For more of the story: [Read more from Outside.](#)

## **THE EXCERPT: The Klamath River recovery begins**

This year marked the end of a 20-year struggle to remove four hydroelectric dams from the Klamath River that runs along the California-Oregon state line. The first of the four dams was built in the 1910's. Their construction ultimately resulted in a river basin high in phosphorus and toxic algae, which flowed downriver killing off fish such as salmon and steelhead, while creating river water that was unsafe for the tribes who called the Klamath River home. The hydroelectric dams also impeded fish migration for nearly a century. Now, all four dams have been taken down. So, what happens next? Indigenous Affairs Reporter Debra Utacia Krol with the Arizona Republic, part of the USA TODAY network, joins The Excerpt to discuss the Klamath River's recovery and the Indigenous tribes working to reclaim their way of life.

[https://open.spotify.com/episode/5uijRE8RglJsHgLUi4dtMg?go=1&sp\\_cid=0ff3057c8b152bc035052e86f02050fc&nd=1&dlsi=b4769ee4057d4a89](https://open.spotify.com/episode/5uijRE8RglJsHgLUi4dtMg?go=1&sp_cid=0ff3057c8b152bc035052e86f02050fc&nd=1&dlsi=b4769ee4057d4a89)

### **New Podcast Episode** **Dec 7 50 min 29 sec** **Episode Description**

Women have been the catalysts of many points of change through means of social and environmental justice and system reform. What does this look like when women work in these systems? What can be done to strive towards reshaping harmful experiences into bringing about more transformative change? This episode of Delta Flows discus

[https://open.spotify.com/episode/6RMrUOOPYq6uxe6HVOCx6?go=1&sp\\_cid=0ff3057c8b152bc035052e86f02050fc&nd=1&dlsi=a0149d481e67465d](https://open.spotify.com/episode/6RMrUOOPYq6uxe6HVOCx6?go=1&sp_cid=0ff3057c8b152bc035052e86f02050fc&nd=1&dlsi=a0149d481e67465d)



## **[Many in This Navajo Community Didn't Have Electricity. An Unlikely Foursome Collaborated to Make a Difference.](#)**

### **A pitch to bring some of California's Colorado River water to Utah might be gaining traction**

“An unusual idea floated by the president of the Utah State Senate to get more shares of Colorado River water is intriguing California water officials. In an interview with FOX 13 News in May, Senate President J. Stuart Adams, R-Layton, proposed a novel idea: “We actually build desalination plants in California and trade them for the Colorado River water.” “Sounds like a great idea,” said Jim Madaffer, San Diego County Water Authority board member and Vice-Chair of the Colorado River Board of California. “Why not? You think of the fact that we have the Pacific Ocean. Now, there's certain locations along the state where desalination makes sense.” San Diego County has built a desalination plant in Carlsbad. Nevada is currently investing in water reuse projects in California that could ultimately benefit them upstream on the Colorado River. ... ” [Read more from the Salt Lake Tribune.](#)



## Lake Powell dam gets \$30 million boost

“The Glen Canyon Dam at Lake Powell in Arizona is set to receive \$30.9 million in upgrades as part of President Joe Biden’s Investing in America agenda, an initiative designed to modernize water infrastructure across the western United States, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) recently announced. The investment will focus on replacing aging station service equipment, modernizing the dam’s powerplant cranes and upgrading its fire alarm systems to meet current safety standards. These updates aim to extend the operational life of the 61-year-old dam, which is a cornerstone of water management in the [Colorado River Basin](#). *Newsweek* contacted the Department of the Interior (DOI) and Bureau of Reclamation via email for further comment. ...” [Read more from Newsweek](#).

## Meet the outdoor school where recess lasts all day and children thrive

This forest school integrates evidence- and nature-based therapies for children of ALL abilities. [https://standtogether.org/stories/education/this-forest-school-uses-outdoor-therapy-to-help-children-thrive-reengage?utm\\_id=120213345641040780](https://standtogether.org/stories/education/this-forest-school-uses-outdoor-therapy-to-help-children-thrive-reengage?utm_id=120213345641040780)

## Daily Yonder: CDC Presents a Five-Year Plan for Rural Healthcare >>

<https://dailyyonder.com/cdc-presents-a-five-year-plan-for-rural-healthcare/2024/11/18/>

**Hiring: Director, EPA Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights**  
The [Office of External Civil Rights Compliance](#) (OECRC) enforces and promotes compliance with federal civil rights laws that, together, prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin (including on the basis of limited English proficiency); sex, disability; or age by applicants for and recipients of federal financial assistance from EPA. OECRC is within the EPA’s [Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights](#).

**The Director (called Supervisory Equal Opportunity Specialist) has a range of duties, including:**

- Play a supervisory role with external civil rights compliance and enforcement staff.
- Plan, organize, and direct the activities of the Office.
- Represent the Office within EPA, within the federal government and through external engagement. Join us.

Be EPA. To learn more and apply, please visit: <https://www.usajobs.gov/job/822866900>

## Biden-Harris Administration, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Announce Over \$122 Million from the *America the Beautiful* Challenge to Restore Lands and Waters

**WASHINGTON** — The Biden-Harris administration joined the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and public-and private-sector partners today in announcing \$122.4 million in grants through the [America the Beautiful Challenge \(ATBC\)](#). The 61 new grants announced today will support landscape-scale conservation projects across 42 states, 19 Tribal Nations, and 3 U.S. territories. The grants will generate at least \$8.7 million in matching contributions for a total conservation impact of \$131.1 million. Approximately 42 percent of all 2024 ATBC funding will support projects implemented by Indigenous communities and organizations,

representing another year of record funding dedicated to Tribally led projects for a single grant program at NFWF.

[\*America the Beautiful\*](#), launched by President Biden in 2021, set the nation's first-ever goal to conserve at least 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030. The 10-year, locally led and nationally scaled initiative lifts up efforts to conserve, connect and restore the lands, waters and wildlife upon which we all depend. Over the past four years, the Biden-Harris Administration has conserved more than 45 million acres of our nation's lands and waters.

ATBC grants support projects that conserve, restore and connect wildlife habitats and ecosystems while improving community resilience and access to nature, which also advance President Biden's ambitious environmental justice goals. The competitive grant awards were made possible through President Biden's Investing in America agenda, with funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, other federal conservation programs, and private sources. The Biden-Harris Administration launched the Challenge in 2022 as a partnership with the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture and Defense, Native Americans in Philanthropy, and NFWF.

"President Biden's *America the Beautiful* initiative has been truly transformative. By working together across the federal family, and through private-public partnerships, we have built an enduring path to support hundreds of locally led collaborative conservation projects across the country," said **Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland**. "The *America the Beautiful Challenge* has advanced engagement with Tribes, funding a record amount of Tribally led efforts and elevating the use of Indigenous Knowledge to benefit endangered species and treasured landscapes. These innovative investments will leave a lasting legacy on our nation's lands and waters."

"The America the Beautiful Challenge is advancing President Biden's ongoing commitment to conserve our lands and waters by supporting locally led conservation and restoration projects in communities across the country," said **White House Council on Environmental Quality Chair Brenda Mallory**. "Thanks to historic investments from the President's Investing in America agenda, these projects in communities across the nation will help ensure everyone can access the benefits nature has to offer for years to come."

"Over the past three years, the America the Beautiful Challenge has served as a marker of the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to protecting our nation's natural treasures for future generations," said **Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack**. "Through these awards, and in partnership with Tribes, NGOs, state partners, and others, USDA will continue to build on its critical work – from voluntary conservation efforts to safeguard our forests and grasslands to increasing access to climate-smart practices and mitigating the risk posed by dangerous wildfires."

"The 18 designated sentinel landscapes are strategically important for the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and allow our DoD installations and ranges to safeguard key testing and training capabilities through mutually beneficial partnerships," said **Brendan Owens, Assistant Secretary of Defense, Energy, Installations and Environment**. "By allocating over \$6 million in DoD Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program funding to six projects across Sentinel Landscapes, this year's America the Beautiful Challenge is strengthening military readiness by protecting capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region, reducing regulatory burdens, and decreasing catastrophic wildfire risk in order to sustain mission-essential activities."

To streamline access to these funds, federal agencies established the ATBC to create a centralized and simplified competitive grant program for landscape-scale conservation and

restoration projects that contribute to conservation plans across the nation. Now in its third year, the 2024 ATBC request for proposals received 331 pre-proposals requesting \$677 million for conservation efforts. Of those, NFWF and partners invited 133 applicants to submit full proposals. The grants announced today address about 18 percent of this overall level of demand, illustrating the highly competitive nature of the ATBC.

These projects will enable states, Tribal Nations, U.S. territories, nonprofits, academic institutions, and other grantees to develop and implement multijurisdictional, high-priority restoration projects on both public and private lands. The program is intended to encourage the development and implementation of voluntary, diverse and comprehensive landscape-level projects that:

- Address priority conservation and restoration needs
- Showcase cumulative benefits to fish and wildlife
- Enhance carbon sequestration and storage
- Engage with and benefit communities, including underserved communities
- Connect people with nature
- Advance existing conservation plans and/or are informed by Indigenous Knowledge
- Help safeguard ecosystems and communities through resilience-focused and nature-based solutions

The ATBC includes an emphasis on supporting Tribal Nations' access to grant funding for restoration, conservation and capacity-building, and seeks projects that incorporate Indigenous Knowledge in planning and implementation. The number of proposals awarded to Tribal Nation applicants in 2024 far exceeded minimum funding and demonstrated the high demand and clear need for innovative funding approaches to Tribally led conservation efforts.

“Indigenous knowledge and leadership are at the heart of addressing the biodiversity and climate crisis,” said **Erik Stegman, CEO of Native Americans in Philanthropy**. “Our Collaborative with the Biodiversity Funders Group demonstrates the power of public-private solutions, leveraging \$1.6 million in private funding to unlock over \$51 million in public resources for groundbreaking Tribal conservation projects. We’re grateful to our partners in philanthropy and government for working together to remove barriers and develop new models for investment in Tribally-led environmental conservation.”

A complete list of the 2024 grants made through the ATBC is available [here](#). To learn more about the program, including applicant eligibility, funding priorities and submission requirements, visit the NFWF [ATBC webpage](#). (*A must peruse!*)

#### **The National Congress of American Indians Endorses Chuckwalla National Monument**

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) passed resolutions in support of the proposed **Chuckwalla National Monument** and **Kw'tsán National Monument** at their recent annual convention. NCAI is the oldest, largest organization dedicated to serving the broad interest of American Indian and Alaska Native governments and communities. NCAI's support underscores the cultural significance of the landscapes and the call from Tribes to designate the monuments.

<https://protectchuckwalla.org/2024/12/10/the-national-congress-of-american-indians-endorse-chuckwalla-and-kwtsan-national-monuments-highlighting-the-landscapes-cultural-significance/>