



# The Equity Newsletter | November 18, 2021



## Welcome to The Equity Newsletter!

The purpose of this publication is to provide information about ongoing equity work at the agency, including upcoming events, trainings and suggested educational resources. This week's newsletter continues our commemoration Native American Heritage Month (November 1 - 30).

## RECENT EVENTS

Thanks to all who attended our first Native American Heritage Month event!

*Building Meaningful American Indian Partnerships in Yelamu* garnered **over 235 attendees** virtually and in person, with representation **from SFMTA and across 15 other city agencies.**



On behalf of the agency, we want to extend our gratitude to our partners, the **American Indian Cultural District**, and our guest speakers Sharaya Souza (Taos Pueblo, Ute, Kiowa), Mary Travis-Allen (Mayagna, Chortega, Seneca) and Paloma Flores (Pit River, Purhepecha) for an informative, impactful presentation and panel discussion.

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: WHAT DOES BEING NATIVE AMERICAN/AMERICAN INDIAN MEAN TO YOU?

*"Indigenous peoples are the descendants of the peoples who inhabited the Americas, the Pacific and parts of Asia and Africa prior to European colonization. And being of their lineage, truly ties and grounds me to this land and to this country. I love and am proud of the fact that I am Native. Even my Spanish heritage ties back to New Mexico since 1588! Because of this, I feel a calling to be more engaged in solutions and advocacy for Native American/American Indian people's rights and wellbeing. I hope to find a way to make a some sort of small positive impact. My forefathers were ashamed and compelled to suppress their Native American heritage, so I feel very fortunate to be able to embrace it."*



**Ted Graff**, Director of Parking, Parking & Curb Management, Streets Division

**Tribal Heritage/Affiliation:** Apache, or maybe Navajo

*"Unfortunately my family suppressed its Native heritage for generations. To avoid confrontation and improve and social & economic status they claimed to be Spanish--which is also true, but not fully accurate. DNA records can't accurately tie back to one specific tribe but using the geographic location of my generational family in New Mexico, family records and DNA sampling, we have been able to narrow down to most likely be of Apache but maybe Navajo lineage."*



### Interested in being featured in a future staff spotlight?

The Office of Race, Equity and Inclusion is looking to highlight staff across the agency to increase visibility of cultural heritage, contributions to the agency and experiences as an SFMTA employee.

Please email [equity@sfmta.com](mailto:equity@sfmta.com) if you are interested in being featured.

# FEATURE ARTICLE: AN INTERVIEW WITH MARY TRAVIS-ALLEN



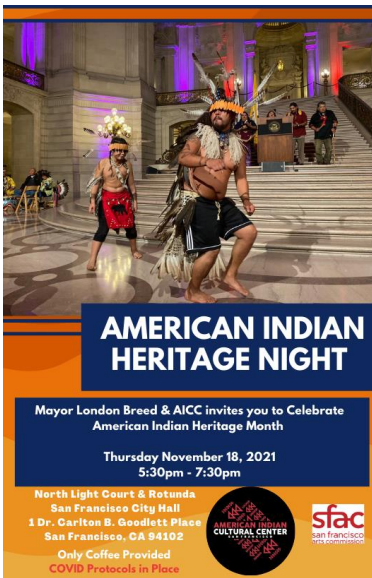
We are honored to recognize **Mary Travis-Allen (Mayagna, Chortega, Seneca)**, a Senior Operations Manager and recent retiree at the agency.

Mary was born, raised and educated in San Francisco. She has roots with Alcatraz, Wounded Knee occupation, and the American Indian Movement. In the 1970's, she frequently spoke at rallies and networked with many other emerging political activist groups in the San Francisco Bay Area that advocated for racial equality, freedom of political prisoners and more.

Mary retired after thirty-two years of employment with the City & County of San Francisco, SFMTA, as a Senior Operations Manager. During her employment she stayed focused on the needs of the people we served and the employees that worked hard to provide service to the City. She sits on the San Francisco Unified School District School Names Advisory Committee and volunteers for Indian Ed. She is also a member of the San Francisco Planning Department Community Advisory Council and the Board President of the American Indian Cultural District.

***Read the full interview with Mary below.***

## UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS



### **American Indian Heritage Night at City Hall**

**(11/18 | 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM)**

North Light Court & Rotunda, San Francisco City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco CA 94102

### **52nd Anniversary of the Alcatraz Occupation (11/20 | 10 AM - 3 PM)**

Alcatraz Island, Industrial Building, San Francisco, CA 94133

### **Indigenous Peoples' Thanksgiving Sunrise Gathering**

**(11/25 | 5 AM - 8 AM)**

Alcatraz Island, San Francisco, CA 94133

### **Truth & Resistance: Mapping American Indian Genocide in San Francisco (11/30 | 5:30 PM)**

Virtual Event

## LISTENING RECOMMENDATION

### **ThanksTaking or ThanksGiving? (All My Relations Podcast)**

Listen to the full podcast episode on the real story of Thanksgiving, from an Indigenous Perspective.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Native American Health Center**  
Main Locations: San Francisco & Oakland
- **Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirits**  
Virtual Office
- **Intertribal Friendship House**  
523 International Blvd., Oakland, CA 94606



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***Read the full interview with Mary below:***

*You have been involved in American Indian organizing at the local and national level for over 50 years. What have been some of your proudest moments in your work advocating for American Indian communities? What have they taught you?*

I was born and raised here in San Francisco in the mid-1950's. I grew up in a time when people, across the Nation, were protesting and marching for social justice, civil rights and equality. In my immediate family, we experienced discrimination where my family could only rent in the Tenderloin, Fillmore, Lakeview and Mission Districts and also where my parents had to struggle to gain and keep employment.

I was a young teenager when the occupation of Alcatraz happened, and I remember the impact it had on my family and community. This was a pivotal event for all of us that gave us visibility and pride. I spent time on the island and also found allies that supported us and began to understand what was going on across this Nation. People of color were uniting in an effort to change Laws and address the prejudice and discrimination that had oppressed all of us.

More protests and actions to reject Government control and assert violations of Treaties were happening. My family and I became more engaged in community organizations and protests that gave us a sense of pride and unity.

There have been many "proud moments" based on finding the strength of my community to come together and support each other. A.I.M. [American Indian Movement], Alcatraz, Wounded Knee, Trail of Tears and more that brought us together and elevated our presence to remind everyone that we have been here and are still here, brings pride to me.

I learned to stand up and speak out against injustices and especially not allow others to tell "our truths" or "define" me or my people.

## *How did your identity shape the way that you engaged with your work during your 32-year career with SFMTA?*

As I said, I grew up here in San Francisco and used public transportation to get around. This gave me insight into the importance of providing service to the people that depend on transportation. I highly respect the employees that come to work every day to support and provide the service to the people that need transportation to get to work, school, doctor's appointments, etc. I felt that it was my responsibility to make sure the employees are respected and supported. I applied my personal beliefs and advocacy for equality and equity in all that I supported at SFMTA. I advocated that the employees be supported and provided what they needed to do their work, career path support for advancement, and that they receive recognition for their effort to support each other and the City. I also brought forward the needs of the people in communities that rely on transportation to support themselves and their families.

*Among various advocacy and organizing roles, you currently work with the American Indian Cultural District, which celebrated its one-year anniversary this past September. **As Board President of the American Indian Cultural District, what are you most excited for in the future?***

So much is happening right now. With the creation of a Cultural District, we finally have established recognition and visibility of our community and create many opportunities to enhance our community visibility and inclusion in City processes and decisions. We have been omitted or overlooked for decades, centuries, by design. With our "**Indigenize Project**", we now can confront the systematic erasure by increasing public awareness through visibility through an interactive experience that includes murals, banners and an informational walking tour of documented American Indian cultural sites. We are securing support for our elders, community and future - our youth.

The **Ramaytush Ohlone Land Acknowledgement** is powerful. It is important for people who live, work and visit this City understand that they are visitors here and that the Ramaytush never ceded this land. This land is to be respected and the Ramaytush Ohlone people are to be acknowledged by affirming their Sovereign Rights as the First People.

There is still a lot of work to be done.