



Reclaiming Native Truth

*A PROJECT TO DISPEL AMERICA'S
MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS*

Presented by:

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Reclaiming Native Truth

Reclaiming Native Truth is an unprecedented national project to transform the way society, institutions, popular culture and Americans perceive Native Americans that can lead to equity, inclusion, accurate representation, policy change and social justice.

GOAL:

Research public opinion and inform narrative and cultural strategies that will shift public perceptions and win hearts and minds to catalyze transformative change.



Reclaiming Native Truth will set the stage for the next phase and long-term to result in:

- Improved accuracy of portrayals in the media and entertainment
- New narratives in pop culture and media that can lead to greater cultural shifts
- Greater inclusion in government decision-making
- Increased support for key issues and policies important to Indian Country
- Inclusion of accurate history in K-12 educational curricula
- Increased social and philanthropic investment in Native communities, innovation and Native-led solutions
- Increased self-esteem, hope and opportunities for Native youth to realize their full potential

OUR RESEARCH INCLUDED A COMBINATION OF LITERATURE REVIEWS, SOCIAL LISTENING, FOCUS GROUPS, ONLINE FOCUS GROUPS, NATIONAL SURVEYS, AND IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS AS DETAILED BELOW.

2

comprehensive literature reviews conducted on existing public opinion research on Native Peoples and on the strengths and limitations of narrative frameworks to transform negative stereotypes by challenging implicit bias and misperceptions

28

focus groups completed in 11 states and nationally online (see map on previous page)

45

in-depth interviews completed among elites including members of Congress; former political appointees; judges; foundation officials; and civil rights, business and entertainment leaders

3,401

college students from 12 colleges/universities participated in a national study examining perceptions of Native Peoples and issues related to Native Peoples

13,306

respondents to nationally representative surveys on key issues and perceptions regarding Native Peoples

240,380

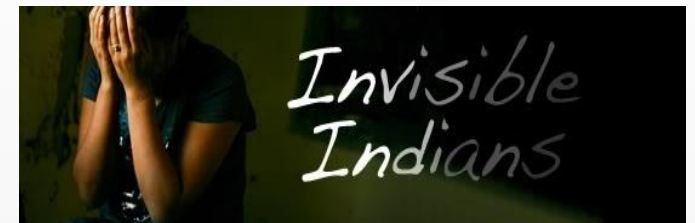
Facebook and Twitter posts on cultural appropriation and Native Peoples analyzed

4.9 million

social media posts analyzed from Twitter, Facebook, 300 million blogs, and other social media platforms to uncover the dominant narratives around Native Americans and how the conversations differ across channels, demographics and influencers

Significant Research Findings

- **Invisibility** may represent the biggest obstacle Native peoples face when it comes to changing public perceptions, winning hearts and minds
- The majority of respondents **admit they do not know any Native Americans.**
- Many believe **population is declining** because they do not see or hear much in popular culture and media.
- **narratives, myths and misconceptions** perpetuated in schools, pop culture & media:
 1. Native peoples **receive money from the government** for just being Native and are growing **rich off of casino dollars**
 2. **Harmful stereotypes in Hollywood** films, TV, sports, **pop culture;**
 3. **Negative reports in media** about poverty, alcoholism and crime
- **Only 34%** of Americans believe that Natives face discrimination
- **“Familiarity” or close proximity to tribes does not necessarily lead to supportive or progressive views-in fact opposite.**
- Respondents in rural areas/close to reservations had less respect for tribal sovereignty and rights than their counterparts they were not in close proximity.



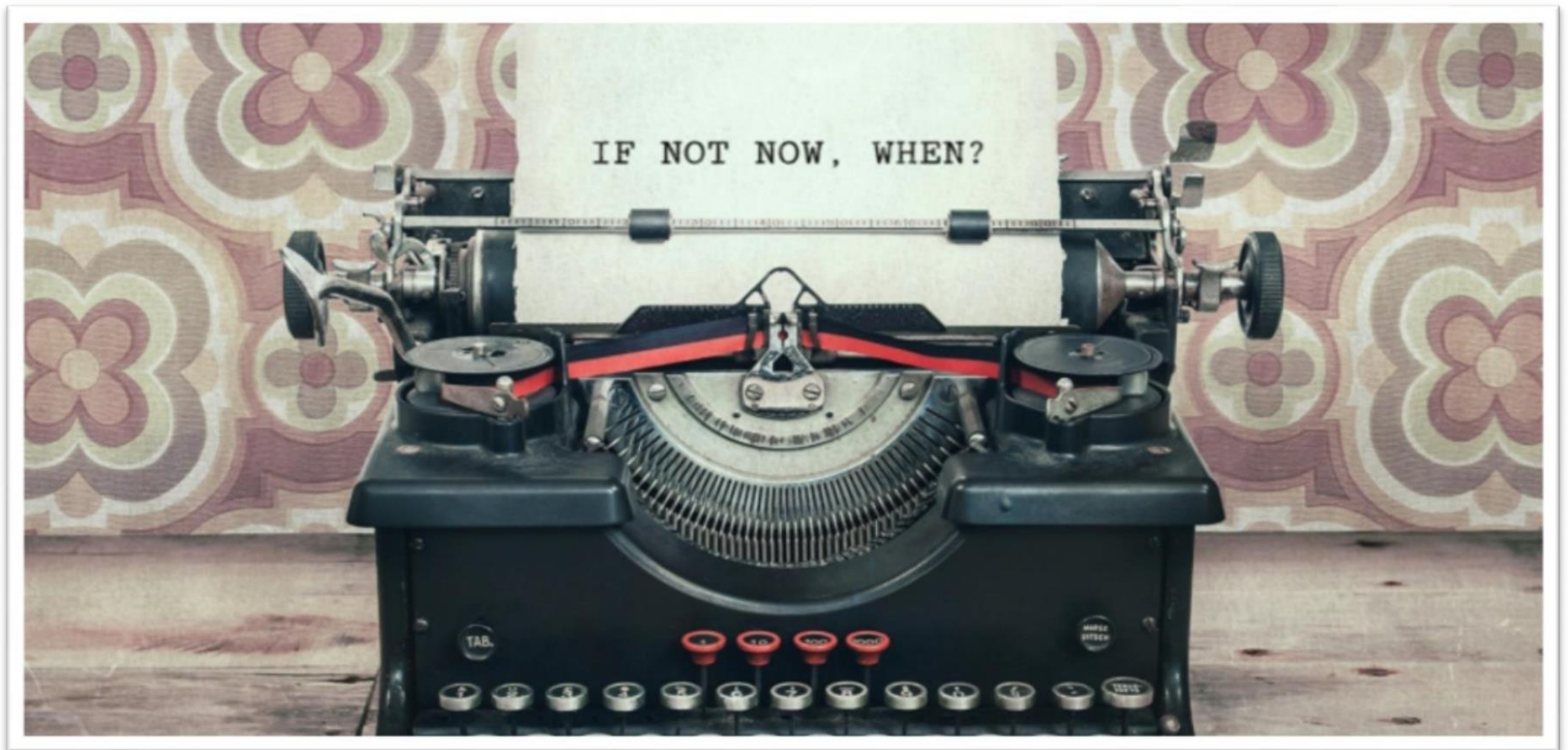
Significant Research Findings: Political & Judicial Research by Pipestem Law

- Federal judges and their law clerks are particularly ignorant about tribal nations, Indian law and sovereignty
- Judges' perceptions of Native peoples, tribes and Native issues are often formed by limited experiences in the form of criminal cases (murder, rape) and are informed by the same toxic narratives and issues of invisibility of other respondents surveyed.
 - "Tribes often call themselves 'nations' to puff themselves up."*
 - "Native communities are dysfunctional."*
 - "Indigenous means primitive."*
 - Indian law cases were perceived to be "nonsensical" and "irrational"*
- Congresspersons and administrative officials agree that invisibility, stereotypes and narrative set by others affect policy. They said that tribes do not do enough to educate Congress on the realities of reservation life and how much each tribe contributes to local communities and states.
- Some view Native peoples as having an "outsized influence."
- Tribes are seen as having moral authority, expertise and influence on matters related to natural resources and the environment. On issues such as taxes, housing, education and health care, however, tribes are perceived to be an "afterthought." On criminal justice matters, tribes have very little influence at all.

Significant Research Findings

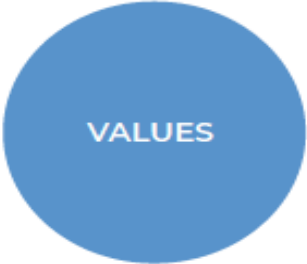
- Perceptions of Native Americans formed for most participants in:
 - 1) K-12 education;
 - 2) Popular Culture; and
 - 3) Media
- The majority of participants across the country had basic knowledge of Standing Rock and were supportive of the tribe's fight "to protect its land and water," across all demographics, political affiliations.
- Standing Rock created a major disruption in dominant narratives and opened new space for interest in, support for Native American issues.
- The impact of Standing Rock, even today, cannot be underestimated-created an opening that we must act quickly on
- **Invisibility** of Native Americans found to be **equally if not more damaging than myths, misconceptions and stereotypes** and was a strong indicator for continued bias, lack of support for social justice for Native Americans.
- **GOOD NEWS:** when **basic historical facts**, discussion of core, traditional Native **values**, modern **contributions** of tribes and Native peoples and learning about **modern injustices** helped to move many respondents to **change perceptions**, be more supportive and open to learning more
- **72%** believe it is necessary that to make **significant changes to school curriculum** on Native American history and culture.
- **64%** Even among conservatives, support **increasing resources to reduce poverty and improve health care and education**.

Changing the narrative



The Four Themes That Make the Narrative Strong

The research done by *Reclaiming Native Truth* revealed four key themes that need to be part of the new narrative because, used together, they move hearts and minds:



VALUES

Native values of family, connection to the land, and respect for culture and tradition are understood and highly respected by non-Native Americans. Linking to these values creates a connection and builds understanding. Illustrating how these values are present today helps prevent a slip into historic, romanticized ideas of Native cultures.



HISTORY

Research shows that most non-Native people do not fully understand the true histories of Native Americans and nations, are open to learning, and feel frustrated when they realize that what they were taught in school was false or incomplete. Weaving in facts — not too many, but a few to get the conversation started — about Native Americans' histories makes people more receptive to hearing more and more willing to act on many issues of importance to Native Americans.



VISIBILITY

History must be directly linked to contemporary life. This shows two things: 1) that Native Americans' cultures and contributions are vital parts of modern life, and 2) that injustices continue today. Because many non-Native Americans don't know (or don't realize they know) any Native Americans, highlighting Native peoples' involvement in every aspect of modern life helps people to move past the systemic erasure and stereotypes and to see what is true today.



CALL TO ACTION

The other essential piece of the narrative is a strong call to action or request for people to do something. It will vary depending on the audience and the issue, but it should be clear, specific and inviting. See the issue-specific narratives on page 16–19 for some examples.



Key findings: New Narrative

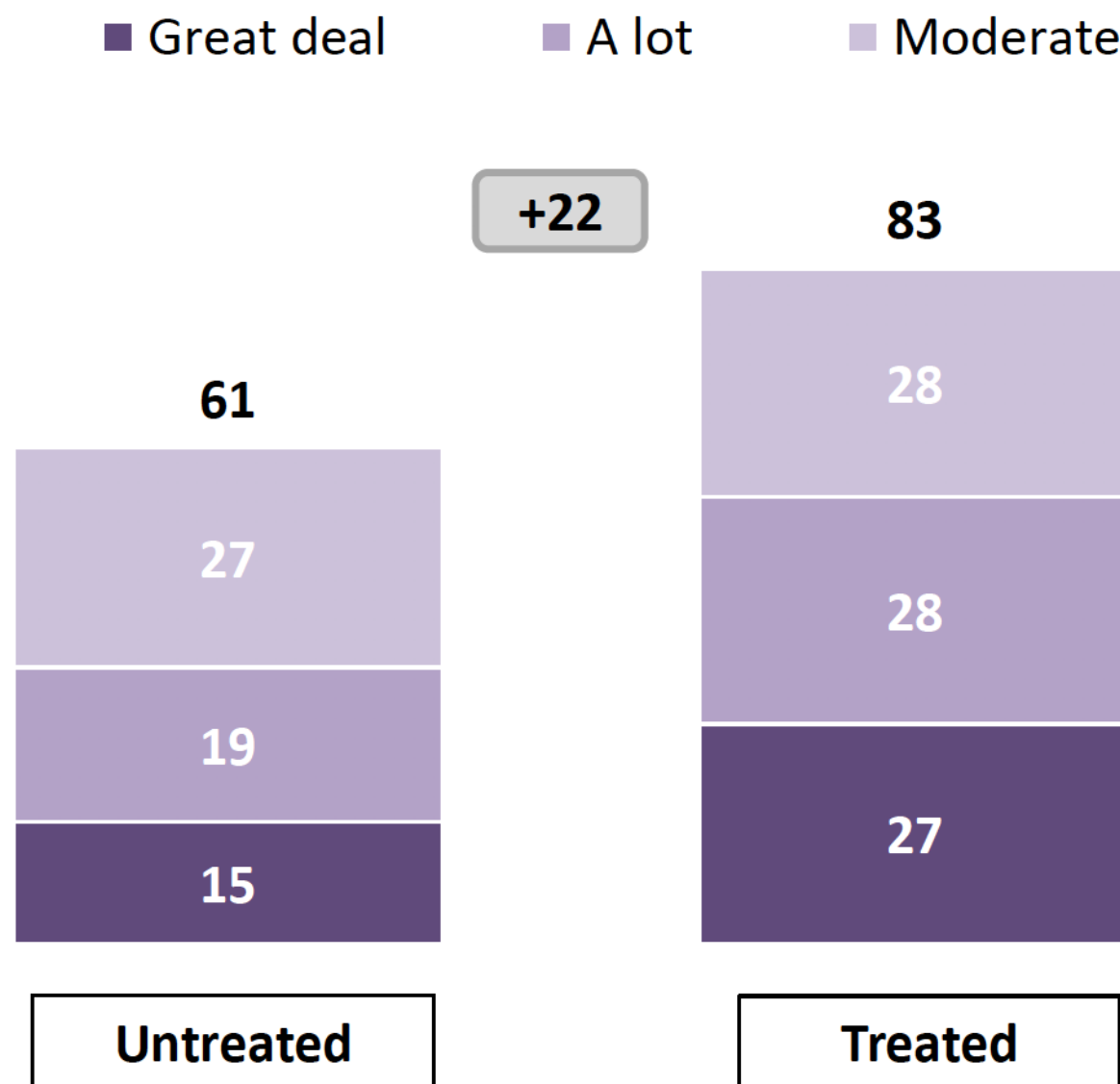
- **78%** Most Americans are generally open to hearing this narrative. A 78 percent majority in this survey say they are interested in learning more about Native American cultures. Strong majorities support Native American positions on most issues—mascots excepted—without hearing the narratives.
- **81%** The public reacts strongly to our narrative.
- **88%** Nearly nine in ten voters find it credible

The narratives move people.

Participants who read our narratives consistently demonstrate more support for all Native American issues.

Perception of discrimination against Native Americans increases after more information

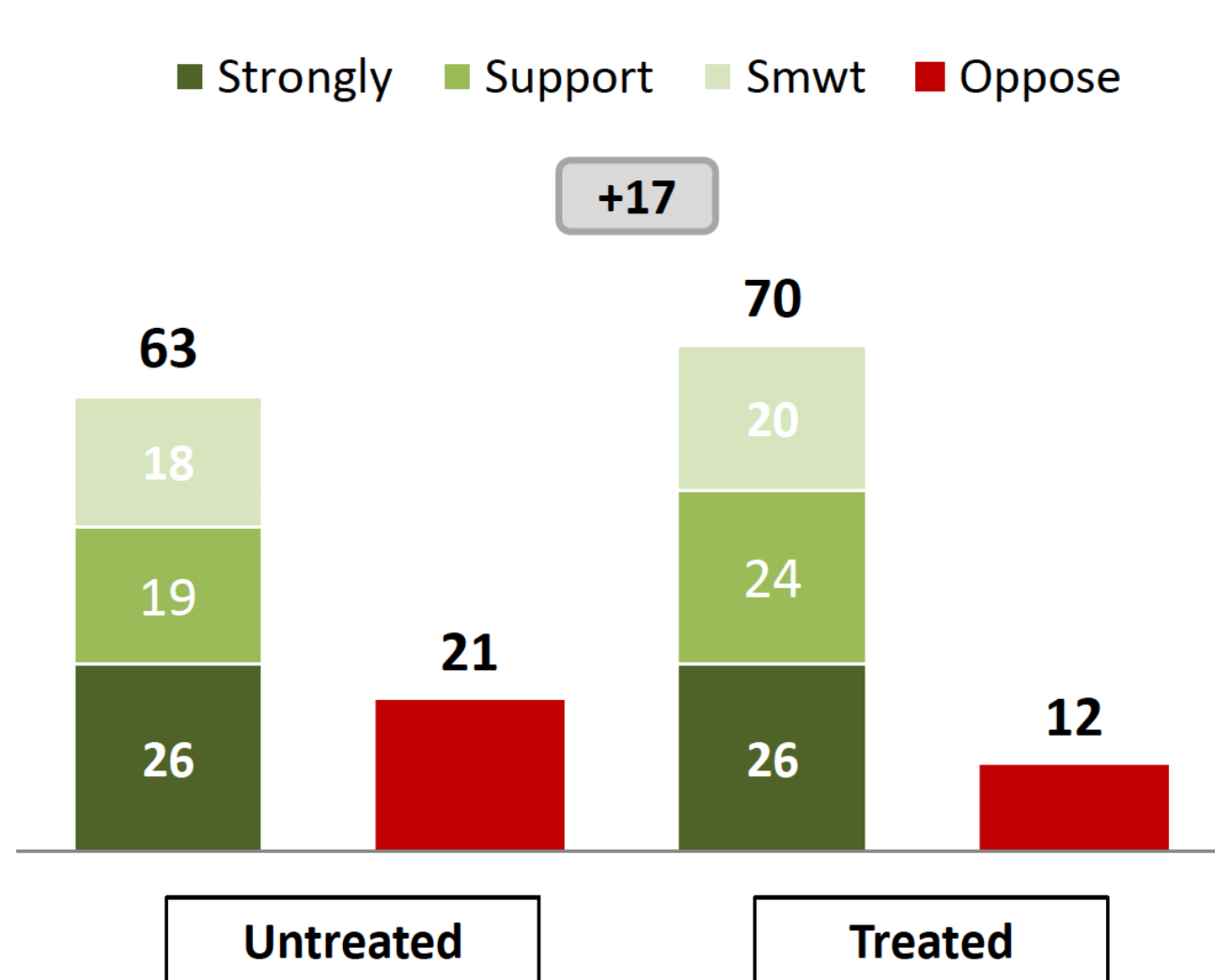
(SPLIT B) How much discrimination would you say Native Americans face in the United States today?



	% Great deal/ a lot/moderate
Total	+22
Non-college men	+29
Lib/mod Rep	+28
Af-Am men	+28
Hispanic women	+28
Cons Rep	+26
White men	+26

Support for sovereignty increases among older, conservative, college graduates who hear narrative

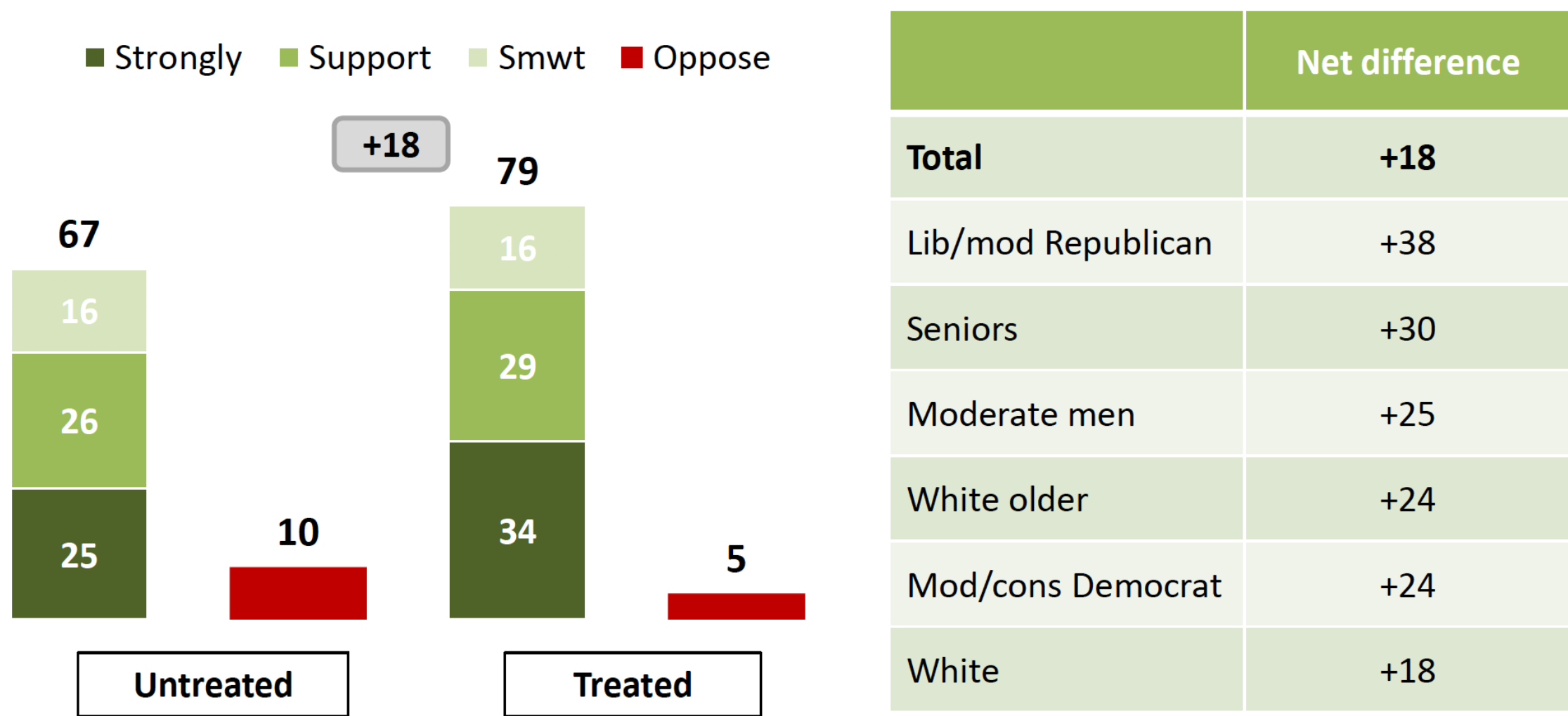
(SPLIT B) Do you support or oppose giving Native tribes full legal authority on their own lands, including the ability to make their own laws that may conflict with state or local laws, without interference from the federal or state government?



	Net Difference
Total	+17
Seniors	+40
Older college grads	+39
Conservative women	+37
Older Hispanic	+36
Older men	+28
Older white	+28

Support for ICWA jumps among moderates, older white respondents who hear narrative

(SPLIT B) Do you support or oppose the Indian Child Welfare Act, which keeps Native American children with their own extended family or with another Native American family?



Audience segments

Allies	Moveable	Tougher
People of color, especially Hispanics	Asian Americans	Whites in Indian Country
Democrats	Young, non-college graduates	Seniors
Liberals	Liberal/moderate Republicans	Older, non-college men
Northeast	Mountain states	Conservatives
Know a Native American	Deep South	Conservative Republicans
Native American ancestry	Young men	
Young, college educated	Dads	
Young women	Young African American	

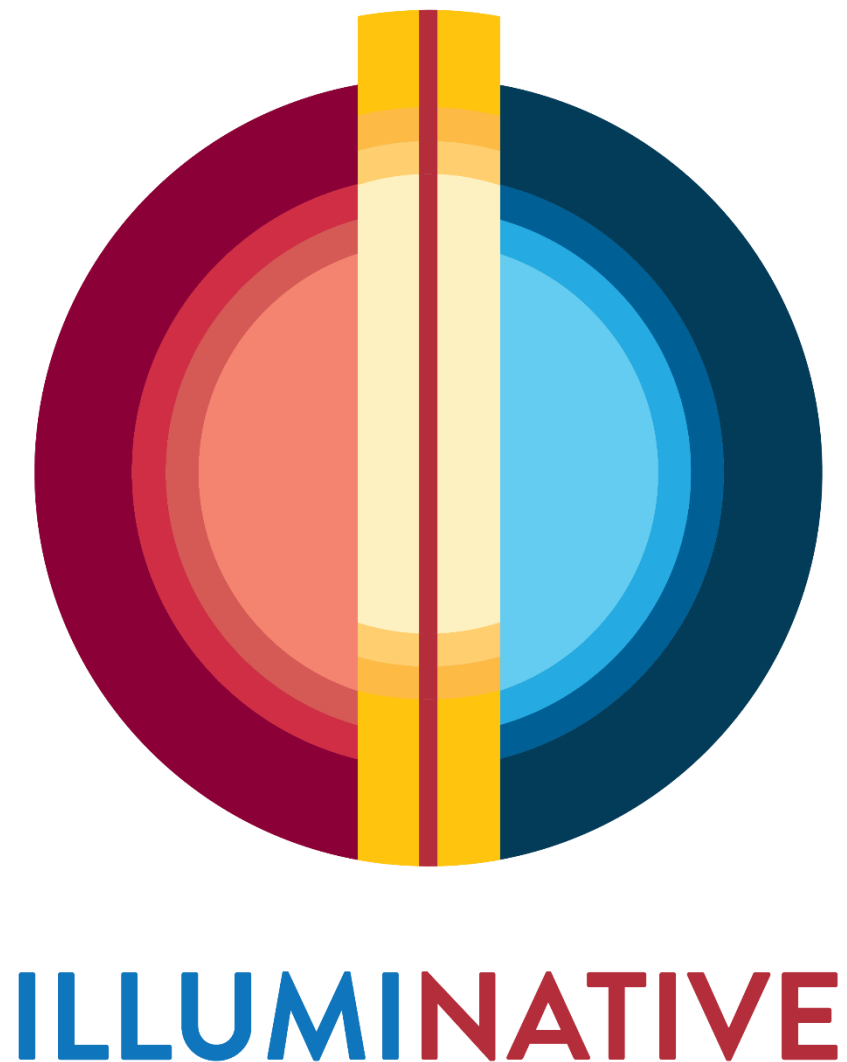
CALL TO ACTION

- **Download** research, message guides, narrative change strategy and **share widely**: www.reclaimingnativetruth.com
- **Mobilize and Organize**: actively working to seek funding to organize a national coalition of tribes, Native organizations, grassroots communities, thought leaders and allies to form a coalition to launch a multi-year, multi-prong campaign

Opportunities

1. **Translating data** into actionable formats and strategies
2. **Building a national coalition**
3. ***“New narrative can create a strong chorus of many different voices singing in harmony, the effect is surround sound.”***
4. **Training & building capacity new narrative strategies**: Native speakers bureau, tribes, organizations, grassroots, youth and coordinated rapid response communications capacity
5. **Multi-media and multi-prong campaign**
6. **Targeted dissemination** and work with allies and “moveables identified” in **pop culture, media, education, policy and philanthropy=impact**
7. **Need to resource movement and build collaboration**





IllumiNative is on a mission to create a narrative shift in pop culture, entertainment and media about, by and for Native peoples.

We seek to break through the dominant negative narrative and erasure of Native peoples to illuminate the vibrancy of authentic Native lived experience and the promise of a bright future.

IllumiNative will actualize this mission by instilling authentic Native stories and content into the key opinion shaping levers of film, television, media, digital mediums and entertainment. We will work with a diverse collective of Native storytellers, youth, tribal and grassroots leaders as well as non-Native partners in entertainment and social justice to create, re-frame and activate Native content across multiple platforms. It will also work to build the capacity of grassroots communities, artists, Native youth and diverse Indian Country leaders to develop new and more effective messaging and storytelling strategies about issues of critical importance to Indian Country.

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The Time is Now.



Thank You!

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