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*Robots at the Nevada Center for Applied Research*

*Christopher Columbus was awful (but this other guy was not)*

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*Across a range of measures, Minnesota's American Indians fare worse than other groups*

*Wilfred L. Tobey*



**Robots** navigate obstacle courses and autonomous vehicles learn how to drive at the **Nevada Center for Applied Research at the University of Nevada, Reno.** And, that's what's happening in only one room of the three-story building. On the other floors, startups and other companies can access the physical and intellectual assets of the university to do groundbreaking research and create life-saving innovations.

Located in the Applied Research Facility on UNR's campus, the Nevada Center for Applied Research is a best-in-class, stand-alone, fully-functional applied research and development technology center. At NCAR, entrepreneurs or other businesses can work with laboratories, testing centers, equipment and expertise that might otherwise be too expensive or difficult to access. The center helps industry, startup companies, researchers and entrepreneurs access the broad range of technical

services, intellectual capital, testing and research capabilities, advanced tools and methodologies at UNR.

NCAR focuses on three main areas of development, including robotics, life sciences, and advanced manufacturing. It offers a variety of laboratories and testing facilities, such as an autonomous robots arena, share wet lab incubation space for biotech startups, and a user-centered, open-innovation living lab ecosystem for autonomous and connected vehicles in Northern Nevada.

**Nevada Center for Applied Research**

University of Nevada, Reno  
Applied Research Facility  
1664 N. Virginia St.  
Reno, NV 89557  
( [map](#) )

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**Christopher Columbus was awful (but this other guy was not)**

[http://theoatmeal.com/comics/columbus\\_day](http://theoatmeal.com/comics/columbus_day)

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[https://www.ecowatch.com/arctic-ocean-fishing-ban-2609554474.html?utm\\_source=EcoWatch+List&utm\\_campaign=05a6aa89e4-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_49c7d43dc9-05a6aa89e4-85895669](https://www.ecowatch.com/arctic-ocean-fishing-ban-2609554474.html?utm_source=EcoWatch+List&utm_campaign=05a6aa89e4-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_49c7d43dc9-05a6aa89e4-85895669)

**Nations to Sign Groundbreaking Arctic Ocean Fishing Ban**

The U.S. and nine of the world's largest fishing economies will sign an agreement Wednesday in Ilulissat, Greenland that bans commercial [fishing](#) in the central [Arctic Ocean](#) for the next 16 years.

"This is the first multilateral agreement of its kind to take a legally binding, precautionary approach to protect an area from commercial fishing before that fishing has begun," the U.S. State Department said in a [statement](#) on Monday.

Signatories include the U.S., Canada, Denmark (for Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Norway, Russia, China, Iceland, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the European Union.

The world's rising temperatures have [significantly thawed](#) Arctic ice, and [shipping operations have eyed](#) the melting North Pole as a new economic opportunity. By the same token, commercial fishing may become viable in areas where such activity was previously not possible, the State Department noted.

The agency added:

In 2009, the United States closed the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) north of Alaska to commercial fishing until such time as domestic fisheries managers have sufficient information about the ecosystem to allow fishing to proceed on a well-regulated basis. U.S. stakeholders, including the Alaska-based fishing industry, have been concerned foreign fishing vessels could begin fishing here in the foreseeable future. At a time when U.S. vessels cannot fish within the

U.S. EEZ, the United States has negotiated this new fisheries agreement for the central Arctic Ocean that reduces the chance that foreign vessels will fish just beyond the U.S. EEZ. The "Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean" bars unregulated fishing in an area that covers 2.8 million square kilometers—or about the size of the Mediterranean Sea—said David Balton, the former U.S. ambassador for oceans and fisheries, who led the negotiations that produced the agreement, to [Pew Charitable Trusts](#).

The agreement also creates a joint scientific research and monitoring program to learn more about the changing Arctic marine ecosystem, Balton said, "to determine when commercial fishing might be viable and how best to manage such a fishery in the future."

The 16-year ban can be extended in five-year increments if the parties agree.

When asked why the Arctic deserves protection, Balton explained to Pew that the region "is warming faster than probably any other part of the planet, more than twice as fast as the global average. And this is bringing about profound change."

"The fisheries agreement is, of course, driven by this underlying change," he continued. "But there are other changes afoot that already are causing serious problems for the people who live and work in the Arctic. The Arctic region is fascinating for a lot of reasons, but I would say the primary reason that it is receiving so much attention has to do with [climate change](#)."

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*"So many intelligent, thoughtful, self-possessed people have turned 18 in the past two years and now have the right and privilege to make their vote count." Taylor Swift*

**ARE YOU REGISTERED? ARE THOSE AROUND YOU?**



Sen. Tom Udall of New Mexico and a dozen other Democratic senators have introduced the [Native American Voting Rights Act of 2018](#) designed to give American Indians the same access to the ballot box as non-Indian voters. This is something Indians are already supposed to have. But there continue to be forces that prefer to do what they can to suppress the Indian vote in areas where those votes can make a difference.

The provisions of the act include establishing a Native American Voting Rights Task Force, restoring the “preclearance” of any changes in voting laws that affect Indians (something that was removed when the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act of 1965 five years ago), providing equal access to voter registration and polls, giving equal status to tribal IDs for voting purposes, mandating that tribes can ask federal observers to monitor elections, and requiring adequate language assistance.

Until the [Snyder Act was signed in 1924](#), most American Indians didn't have the right to vote. A few thousand had gotten that right as a consequence of serving in the military during World War I. Before that some Indians who had proved to authorities that they had given up their Indianness and tribal connections also were enfranchised. The Snyder Act—formally the Indian Citizenship Act—was designed to extend voting rights to the whole Native population, the last population group in the country to see that right legally guaranteed.

But in the 92 years since the act passed, state and local authorities in jurisdictions with large numbers of Indians have engaged in all kinds of manipulations to keep them from voting. Arizona, Colorado, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, New Mexico, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming all found means to block or dilute the Indian vote.

For instance, having ignored the 1924 act, South Dakota did not repeal until 1951 its 1903 law requiring a culture test for Indians to prove they had abandoned their identity as Indians, their culture, their language, and their homeland in order to vote or hold office. As late as 1975, authorities prohibited Indians from voting in elections in Todd, Shannon, and Washabaugh counties, whose residents were overwhelmingly Indian. The state also prohibited residents of these counties from holding county office until as recently as 1980. And South Dakota continued suppressing Indian voting rights decades later.

Although it's not widely known, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 included American Indians in its mandate. Because of the act, Indians on the Ute reservations of southwestern Colorado finally obtained guaranteed voting rights for local elections in 1970. While the suppression of the Native vote has usually been more subtle than the Jim Crow laws that kept almost all African Americans in several states from casting votes until the 1960s, it has definitely had a negative impact on Indians. Native activists or their allies have repeatedly taken officials to court over this suppression and usually won, as in [this 2013 case](#).

But defeating discriminatory laws and actions requires going to court in the first place. That can be an expensive and difficult task for many tribes or individual Indians. The Indian vote matters. [In all but seven states](#), Indians constitute fewer than 5 percent of the eligible voters. In only two states—Alaska and New Mexico—do they account for more than 10 percent of the total population. But even in some cases where they count for no more than 1 or 2 percent of the population, Indian voters have been critical to the success of candidates for public office, and Democrats have usually been the beneficiaries. In North Dakota, challenger [Heidi Heitkamp](#)

[squeaked](#) by thanks to the Indian vote to win a Senate seat in 2012. In 2000, the mobilization of the Native vote in Washington state took out the Indian-hating Republican Sen. Slade Gorton in a squeaker that Democrat Maria Cantwell won.

In a statement in support of his bill, Udall [said](#):

“For too long, Native Americans have been blocked from exercising their constitutional right to make their voices heard in their democracy,” Udall said. “In 1948—70 years ago—my grandfather, Levi Udall, served as Chief Justice of the Arizona Supreme Court where he authored the opinion extending the right to vote to Native Americans then living on-reservation. My grandfather wrote, ‘To deny the right to vote... is to do violence to the principles of freedom and equality.’ I wholeheartedly agree. But today, 70 years later, state and local jurisdictions continue to erect insidious new barriers to the ballot box for Native Americans, from the elimination of polling and registration locations to the passage of voter ID laws intentionally designed to prevent Native Americans from voting. These undemocratic barriers have blocked too many Native voters across New Mexico and Indian Country from exercising their franchise. In light of highly destructive recent court decisions like *Shelby County v. Holder*, it is more important than ever that we pass legislation to ensure that the voices of Native communities across Indian Country are heard at the ballot box.”

The 1948 ruling that Udall references was one of two that year thanks to the anger of Miguel Trujillo, a member of the Pueblo of Isleta in New Mexico and a veteran of the Marine Corps during World War II, and Frank Harrison, another Marine veteran and member of the Yavapai tribe in Arizona. Both had gone to register to vote in their respective counties and were told that because they were Indians living on tribal land they weren't allowed to vote.

But suppressing the Indian vote isn't just historical. Among the ways the Indian vote continues to be reduced in more recent times is by maintaining at-large districts for various offices, such as water boards and county commissions. In 2010, a federal judge [ruled](#) in a decision upheld by the 10th Circuit Court that Fremont County, Wyoming, had to stop using its at-large system because it diluted the strength of the vote of the Northern Arapahoe and Eastern Shoshone Indians on the the Wind River Indian Reservation.

And [just last December](#) in San Juan County, Utah, a federal judge redrew district lines that had been gerrymandered to keep Indians out of public office for the past 30 years. For the Navajo, especially in the southern half of the county, “the lack of political power has meant no voting precincts, no new high schools or roads, no language assistance, no running water and rare jury selection during those decades,” reports Matt Vasilogambros. Now the Navajo who make up a slight majority of the county's population are favored for two of the three county commission seats and three of the five school board seats.

Anyone who doubts that the Udall legislation is badly needed can see why by listening to Phil Lyman, a Republican county commissioner now seeking a seat in the Utah House of Representatives. He has said the Navajos “lost the war” and should have no role in local land management. He's not the only politician with that point of view.

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## Across a range of measures, Minnesota's American Indians fare worse than other groups. So why isn't it talked about more?



MinnPost photo by Jim Walsh

The Hiawatha encampment is home to hundreds of people, most of them American Indians. The season is changing and freezing temperatures are coming, but there's still a tent city off of Hiawatha Avenue in South Minneapolis.

The encampment is now [home to hundreds](#), most of them American Indians, many who have decided that being homeless together is safer than being homeless apart. The colorful tents pitched next to a major commuter thoroughfare have made the problem of American Indian homelessness difficult for the broader community to ignore.

That's new, but homelessness in Minnesota's American Indian community is definitely not.

In 2015, Minnesota's American Indian residents were homeless at 17 times the rate white Minnesotans were — a rate that actually represented an improvement over a much greater gap during the Great Recession, according to the Minnesota Homeless Study, conducted by Wilder Research.

**Stat graphics would not copy: go to [https://www.minnpost.com/politics-policy/2018/10/across-a-range-of-measures-minnesotas-american-indians-fare-worse-than-other-groups-so-why-isnt-it-talked-about-more/?utm\\_source=MinnPost+e-mail+newsletters&utm\\_campaign=e00e34e770-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2018\\_10\\_10\\_04\\_27&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_3631302e9c-e00e34e770-124125841](https://www.minnpost.com/politics-policy/2018/10/across-a-range-of-measures-minnesotas-american-indians-fare-worse-than-other-groups-so-why-isnt-it-talked-about-more/?utm_source=MinnPost+e-mail+newsletters&utm_campaign=e00e34e770-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_10_10_04_27&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3631302e9c-e00e34e770-124125841)**

### Minnesota homelessness rates by race and ethnicity, 2015

#### Homeless adults (18+) per 10,000adults

It's not just homelessness; from housing to income and education to criminal justice, outcomes for Native Americans are at least as bad, if not worse than the disparities between Minnesota's black and white residents, a problem more often talked about.

“I think it’s an unfortunate and tragic event that has organically developed, but some of the silver linings within this challenge is the visibility of this issue,” said Joe Hobot, the president and CEO of the American Indian OIC, a Minneapolis education and job training organization, and a descendant of the Hunk Papa Band of Lakota. “It’s not new, it’s just visible. It’s calling attention to the shortfalls of the system.”

### **Income and poverty**

Minnesota’s median household income is \$68,000, the 12th highest of any U.S. state. That’s driven largely by the state’s white residents, who make up 80 percent of the population and enjoy a median household income of \$72,000.

Incomes are not relatively high here for everyone, though. For Black families, the figure is \$38,000 per year. For American Indian families, it’s \$37,000.

In 2015, Census data suggested median household incomes for black Minnesotans had seen a year-over-year drop. That decline — and the fact that black families’ median incomes were less than half that of whites’ in Minnesota — got a lot of press.

“Leaders rose up in arms — as they should — and demanded immediate redress,” Hobot said. They sought help from elected officials and there was talk of a special session to provide legislative remedies.

What didn’t make the same kind of headlines was that American Indians’ incomes were at least as low, lower still if you exclude from the sample wealthier members of a few bands in Minnesota, Hobot said.

### **Median household income by racial and ethnic group of householder in Minnesota, 2017 Source: U.S. Census, compiled by Minnesota Compass**

Estimated poverty rates among American Indian Minnesotans are among the highest of any racial or ethnic group, too, at an estimated 28.6 percent, compared to 28.2 percent for black Minnesotans, 19 percent for Hispanic Minnesotans, 11.9 percent for Asian Minnesotans and 6.9 percent for white Minnesotans.

### **Education**

Those economic disparities are no surprise when you look at gaps in educational achievement.

Graduation rates for American Indian students are 51 percent, compared to 88 percent for white, non-Hispanic students. American Indian students’ high school graduation rates have long been the lowest of any racial or ethnic group in the state. Minnesota ranks 44th among U.S. states for American Indian graduation rates, while it ranks 35th overall, according to Minnesota Compass, a division of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

### **Minnesota four-year graduation rates by race and ethnicity, 2017 Source: Minnesota Department of Education**

Likewise, reading and math scores for American Indian students in Minnesota are among the lowest of any racial or ethnic group in the state.

These disparities are longstanding and don’t come out of nowhere.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, generations of Minnesota’s American Indian children were taken from their families and put into 16 boarding schools across the state, designed to assimilate them into society. The schools were modeled after Pennsylvania’s Carlisle School, whose founder was known to say “kill the Indian, save the man,” by removing the influence of families and making kids strangers to their own culture.

For members of Minnesota's tribes, the memory is not so distant, said Jane Harstad, the director of the Office of Indian Education at the Minnesota Department of Education and a member of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. Her mother and grandmother both attended boarding schools.

"It was in the relatively near history that this occurred, so there is that distrust of systems, of taking children and trying to turn them into something else," she said.

Oftentimes, Hobot said, dropping out of school is a conscious effort on a student's part to save his or her spirit. Schools can be hostile environments for American Indian students, who are disproportionately suspended and disciplined.

Schools need to better understand the needs of American Indian students in order to make things better, Hobot said.

"When you look at the majority of disparities that are impacting our communities, from access to health care, disease disparities, education, economic — all of them can be walked back within the individual's life to this critical departure, and it's usually when they leave school," he said.

In recent years, Minnesota has increased funding to schools that serve American Indian students. A new provision in the federal Every Children Succeeds Act requires tribes and schools that serve majority-American Indian populations to work more closely together.

"It's getting better, it's just going to take some time," Harstad said.

## **Health**

American Indians are also more likely to be in poor health, and have less access to health care than other Minnesotans.

It starts at birth: American Indian children babies are three times more likely to die as infants as white babies in Minnesota, according to the Minnesota Department of Health.

Life expectancies for American Indians are also the lowest of any racial or ethnic group in Minnesota, at 70 years, according to research by the Kaiser Family Foundation. Notably, life expectancies are worse for American Indians in Minnesota than they are for American Indians in the U.S. as a whole, which is not the case for most other racial and ethnic groups.

### **Life expectancy at birth by race/ethnicity, Minnesota and U.S.**

People in most racial and ethnic groups are better off in Minnesota than they are in the U.S. as a whole when it comes to life expectancy. But Minnesotans who are American Indian or Asian are worse off in Minnesota.

**Source: Kaiser Family Foundation**

In 2016, American Indian Minnesotans died of drug overdoses at more than five times the rate of white Minnesotans and nearly 3 times the rate of black Minnesotans, [according to the Minnesota Department of Health](#). Cirrhosis, a liver disease often caused by excessive drinking, killed American Indians at a rate five times greater than white people in 2016.

American Indians also have some of the highest rates of adult obesity (37 percent) and diabetes diagnoses (18 percent) of any racial or ethnic group in the state.



Making matters worse with those health outcomes, American Indians are uninsured at one of the highest rates of any racial or ethnic group in the state: In 2016, 18 percent of American Indian adults under age 65 were uninsured — five times the rate white Minnesotans were.

### **Criminal justice**

Beyond matters of life and death, race matters when it comes to the trajectory of people's lives in Minnesota.

American Indians are far more likely than white Minnesotans to be stopped by police, arrested, and end up in prison.

The Minneapolis Police Department, which releases daily police stop and use of force information by race, stops American Indians disproportionately: American Indians make about up 1.2 percent of the city's population, but accounted for 3 percent of traffic stops and 6 percent of people involved in use of force incidents this year.

### **Adult population in Minnesota prisons, July 2018**

**Note: Hispanic people are counted as both part of that ethnicity group and as a member Source: Minnesota Department of Corrections**

When it comes to the state's prison population, American Indians are even more overrepresented: compared to 1 percent of the state's population, they make up 10 percent of the prison population.

### **'Not statistically significant'**

All these disparities — and the many more too numerous to list — are interconnected, but time and again, data show American Indians in Minnesota are more likely to be poorer, less educated, less healthy and be incarcerated than white Minnesotans and Minnesotans overall.

"Whatever is good in this state, we're at the bottom of the list, and whatever is bad in this state, we're at the top of the list," Hobot said.

Back near Hiawatha Avenue, Minneapolis is planning to move the homeless encampment into [a navigation center, which, in theory, will help stabilize residents quickly.](#)

Hobot hopes there's silver lining in the line of tents along Hiawatha Avenue in raising lasting awareness of the issue of some of these disparities.

"One of the first challenges we are confronted with is oftentimes we aren't even included in these research efforts," Hobot said. "When we confront folks that are conducting these enterprises, we usually are hit with the same refrain: that owing to the size of our population we aren't quote, unquote, statistically significant."

That's critical, Hobot said, because the gaps are huge and there's a lot of work to do. While Minnesota is, by many measures, one of the best places to live in the U.S. as a white person, it is, by the same measures, one of the worst places to live as an American Indian person.

"While all of these communities are contending with a variety of forms of disparities and historical traumas, hands down the Twin Cities and Minnesota are the worst. They are the most egregious gaps in terms of workforce development, educational achievement, safety, police relations — it's just a joke how far off the mark we are compared to other areas we'd suspect might be worse," Hobot said.



In Loving Memory

**Wilfred L. Tobey**

Entered Into Life  
February 3, 1934  
Nixon, Nevada

Entered into Eternal Life  
September 29, 2018  
Nixon, Nevada

Funeral Service

Walton's, Saturday, October 13, 2018, 11:00 am, 2155 Kietzke Lane, Reno, NV