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## **New stock photos tell authentic stories of Native life**

Seattle, WA – On December 26, the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) and TONL debuted “We Exist,” a modern and authentic selection of stock imagery featuring American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) peoples.

“This is a unique set of stock photos because of its real-life portrayal of Native peoples today,” said Abigail Echo-Hawk, Director of UIHI. “Most photos have Native peoples framed in the past or in a stereotypical manner, but these are a stark contrast to that.”

The need for images accurately representing AI/AN people had been apparent to the UIHI for some time, which is why they partnered with TONL—a stock photography business that is focused on making accessible culturally diverse photos that depict the true narrative of diverse communities.

This collaboration was envisioned as a way show the beauty, strength, and diversity of AI/AN peoples, while simultaneously addressing the lack of accurate representation of them in stock images.

“This is TONL’s first collaboration with an organization serving a specific community of color,” said Karen Okonkwo, co-founder of TONL. “But it fell right in line with our mission, and we believe it is going to be a huge benefit to the broader community.”

AI/AN people, and communities of color in general, have historically misrepresented in mainstream media, and stock photography is no exception. According to a 2015 study, “‘Frozen in Time’: The Impact of Native American Media Representations on Identity and Self-Understanding,” AI/AN people experience “relative invisibility” in the media, with the percentage of AI/AN characters in popular films and primetime TV shows ranging from zero to 0.4 percent.

According to the same study, even when AI/AN people are included, typically it is in a historical context, and when they are shown in a modern context, they often are associated with addiction, poverty and a lack of formal education.

“The misrepresentation of Native peoples continues to affect the health and well-being of AI/AN people,” Echo-Hawk said. “UIHI has made it a priority to change that.”

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Contact:  
Howard Echo-Hawk

Communications Lead  
howarde@uihi.org  
Office: (206) 324-9360 EXT: 3034  
Cell: (206) 388-8353

The entire “We Exist” collection is available for purchase at <https://tonl.co/blogs/community/urban-indian-health-institute-x-tonl-we-exist/>

**About the Urban Indian Health Institute**

The Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) is a division of the Seattle Indian Health Board, providing support for the health and well-being of urban Indian communities through information, scientific inquiry and technology. UIHI is one of 12 tribal epidemiology centers (TECs) funded by the Indian Health Service (IHS), and the only TEC nationally focused on the urban Indian population.

For more information, please visit <https://uihi.org> or follow the UIHI @<https://www.facebook.com/UrbanIndianHealthInstitute/>