

Dear Senator Warren:

As concerned citizens of the Cherokee Nation, United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians, and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, we recognize our responsibility to stand up for our communities: to those we claim and those who claim us.

Senator Warren, as you seek the Democratic nomination for President of the United States, your [history of false claims to American Indian identity](#) and the defense of these claims with [a highly publicized DNA test](#) continue to dog your political career. For Native Americans, this moment is more than an annoyance; it represents the most public debate about our identity in a generation. In a country where Indigenous people are mostly invisible, what Americans conclude from this debate will impact Native rights for years to come.

Whatever your intentions, your actions have normalized white people claiming to be Native, and [perpetuated a dangerous misunderstanding of tribal sovereignty](#). Your actions do not exist in a vacuum but are part of a [long and violent history](#). The Los Angeles Times recently reported that white members of fake “tribes” have been awarded over [\\$800 million in no-bid federal contracts](#) set aside for minority business owners. Rather than using evidence of Native ancestry, these fake tribes [rely solely on family stories](#) and [commercial DNA tests](#). When you [still defend yourself](#) by stating you believed what you heard growing up, you set a harmful example for [these white people stealing Native identity](#) and resources with stories very similar to your own.

While the average American thinks of Native Americans as a racial category, we are actually political groups. Our rights are based on citizenship in sovereign Nations and those Nations’ treaty relationship to the United States. But that hasn’t stopped opponents to tribes from arguing that laws defending Native rights treat us differently based on race and therefore should be declared unconstitutional. [If they win](#), it could be the end of tribes as we know them. By publicly equating race and biology with Native identity, your DNA test promoted the exact same logic the Right is currently using to try and destroy Native rights.

You have yet to fully address the harm you have caused. While your apologies are a step in the right direction, they have been vague and inadequate. Accountability is not just admitting you made a mistake, but working to correct the harm it caused. A recent [collective statement by Cherokee scholars](#) makes clear that any person who publicly identifies as Cherokee has initiated an open discussion about their identity. As a Harvard professor and U.S. Senator, you have the unique opportunity to turn this controversy into a needed learning moment.

As Native community members, academics, activists, scientists, writers, organizers, aunties, uncles, young people, and tribal citizens concerned about the future of Native rights, we call on you to make a clear public statement that includes the following:

- Like many other white families, your family story of Cherokee and Delaware ancestry is false and it was wrong for you to repeat it as an adult. [You have had the genealogical evidence since 2012](#). Stating you do not qualify for citizenship is not enough; the truth is you and your ancestors are white.

- Equating Cherokee identity with the results of a DNA test was more than a misstep—it [was dangerous](#). Your supporters and the public need to understand why. We ask that you explain that only tribal affiliation and kinship determine Native identity, and that equating Native identity with race and biology erodes the foundation of Indigenous sovereignty.
- Claiming Native identity without citizenship, kinship ties, or recognition from Native communities [undermines Indigenous self-determination](#). As the most public example of this behavior, you need to clearly state that Native people are the sole authority on who is—and who is not—Native.

Native Americans come from [over 574 different nations](#), each with our own unique histories, languages, cultures, and politics. We do not think with one mind or speak with one voice on this issue—or any other. However, Cherokee citizens are the most impacted not only by your actions but by the growing epidemic of white people claiming to be us. If you truly want to listen and change, then you need to hear all Native voices on this issue—whether or not they serve you.

You have done some good things for Indian Country during your time in political service. You have also done real harm. Right now, you have the platform and the opportunity to stand firmly on the side of justice. This is not about politics or your career. This is about the well-being of our nations. The time has come for you to show true leadership and make this right.

Signed:

(Tribal affiliations listed for identification only)

- |     |                           |   |
|-----|---------------------------|---|
| 1.  | ᎠᎭᏍᏔᎵ                     | GWY, ᎠᎭᏍᏔᎵ GWY/ O-gah-pah/ Wa-zha-Zhe     |
| 2.  | ᎠᎭᏍᏔᎵ Ryan Brandon Mackey | ᎠᎭᏍᏔᎵ Cherokee Nation                     |
| 3.  | ᎠᎭᏍᏔᎵ Candessa Tehee      | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 4.  | Adam Reese                | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 5.  | Adrienne Keene            | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 6.  | Ahyoka Youngdeer          | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 7.  | Alan Harrover             | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 8.  | Andrea L. Rogers          | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 9.  | Angi Harrover             | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 10. | Austin Holt               | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 11. | Benjamin Holt             | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 12. | Betty Smoke               | United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians |
| 13. | Bill Davis                | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 14. | Bill Mann                 | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 15. | Billie Jo Rich            | Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians          |
| 16. | Billy Jack Shotpouch      | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 17. | Brandon Morris            | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 18. | Brandon Scott             | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 19. | Brian Barlow              | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 20. | Brian K. Hudson           | Cherokee Nation                           |
| 21. | Bryan Pollard             | Cherokee Nation                           |

22.	Callie Benoit	Cherokee Nation
23.	Carabeth Muskrat Samuels	Cherokee Nation
24.	Cassandra Lynn Cariker	Cherokee Nation
25.	Cassie Snell	Cherokee Nation
26.	Catherine Foreman Gray	Cherokee Nation
27.	Charles Smith	Cherokee Nation
28.	Charmaine Mankiller	Cherokee Nation and Pomo
29.	Cheryl Nichols Brown	Cherokee Nation
30.	Chris Bacon	Cherokee Nation
31.	Christopher Whitmire	Cherokee Nation
32.	Clara McCown	Cherokee Nation
33.	Cole Hogner	Cherokee Nation
34.	Courtney Logan Green Espy	Cherokee Nation
35.	Courtney McCoy	Cherokee Nation
36.	Cynthia Thompson	United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
37.	Daniel Heath Justice	Cherokee Nation
38.	Daryll Mouse	Cherokee Nation
39.	David Cornsilk	United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians and Cherokee Nation
40.	David Montgomery	Cherokee Nation
41.	Deborah Fritts	Cherokee Nation
42.	Deborah Rogers	United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
43.	Dennis G. Dye	Cherokee Nation
44.	Dillard Pullium	Cherokee Nation
45.	Elissa Lyons	Cherokee Nation
46.	Forrest Stokes	Cherokee Nation
47.	Gayle Samuels	Cherokee Nation
48.	Geneva Brixey	Cherokee Nation
49.	Grant Linihan	Cherokee Nation
50.	Gunnar Hatfield	Cherokee Nation
51.	Harry Styron	Cherokee Nation
52.	Herb Wolf	United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians and Cherokee Nation
53.	Jade Day	Cherokee Nation
54.	James Armontrout	Cherokee Nation
55.	James Gilmartin	Cherokee Nation
56.	Janet Foreman-Green	Cherokee Nation
57.	Janet Kaye Backwater	United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
58.	Jared Evans	Cherokee Nation
59.	Jeff Cornstassel	Cherokee Nation
60.	Jeffrey Girty	United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
61.	Jen Deerinwater	Cherokee Nation
62.	Jennie Wilson	Cherokee Nation
63.	Jennifer Anderson	Cherokee Nation
64.	Jennifer Barger Johnson	Cherokee Nation
65.	Jennifer Kate Thiessen	Cherokee Nation

66.	Jenny Flippo	Cherokee Nation
67.	Jeremie Fisher	Cherokee Nation
68.	Jeremy Hamilton	Cherokee Nation
69.	Jerid Miller	Cherokee Nation
70.	Jerrid Grimmett	United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
71.	Jesse Sexton	Cherokee Nation
72.	Jo Ann Tidwell	United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
73.	Jonathan Radocay	Cherokee Nation
74.	Joseph M. Pierce	Cherokee Nation
75.	Katie Jones	Cherokee Nation
76.	Kevin Sac	Cherokee Nation
77.	Kirby Brown	Cherokee Nation
78.	Kristie Bradley	United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
79.	Krystal Ann William	Cherokee Nation
80.	Kurt West	Cherokee Nation
81.	Lianna Costantino	Cherokee Nation
82.	Linda Easter	Cherokee Nation
83.	Linda Sacks	Cherokee Nation
84.	Mandy Adair	Cherokee Nation
85.	Marcus L. Thompson	Cherokee Nation
86.	Mariah Gary	Cherokee Nation
87.	Mariah Gladstone	Cherokee Nation
88.	Marissa Jane Cundiff	Cherokee Nation
89.	Mark DeMucha	Cherokee Nation
90.	Mark Downing	Cherokee Nation
91.	Mary Aboud	Cherokee Nation
92.	Mary Brown	Cherokee Nation
93.	Mason Hudson	Cherokee Nation
94.	Matthew Anderson	Cherokee Nation
95.	Melissa Duggins	Cherokee Nation
96.	Michael C. Lambert	Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
97.	Michael Nephew	Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
98.	Miranda Harris	Cherokee Nation
99.	Mitch McClain	Cherokee Nation
100.	Pam Coodey-York Fox	Cherokee Nation
101.	Patricia St. Peter	Cherokee Nation and Shawnee Tribe
102.	Patricia Wilson	Cherokee Nation
103.	Patsy Edgar	Cherokee Nation
104.	Paul Braun	Cherokee Nation
105.	Rachel Peters	Cherokee Nation
106.	Raymond Pettit	Cherokee Nation and Creek Nation
107.	Rebecca Nagle	Cherokee Nation
108.	Rhonda Lee Earp	Cherokee Nation
109.	Richard D. Teel	Cherokee Nation
110.	Robert Crossno	Cherokee Nation
111.	Robert Easter	Cherokee Nation

112. Robin McLain Smith	Cherokee Nation
113. Roldan Sack	United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
114. Ron Collett	Cherokee Nation
115. Ryley Bunch	Cherokee Nation
116. Sandee Tidwell Lovado	United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
117. Sasha Walker Hudson	Cherokee Nation
118. Shanda Attika Secondi	Cherokee Nation
119. Shauna Amezcua	Cherokee Nation
120. Shea Vassar	Cherokee Nation
121. Sheila Holmes	Cherokee Nation
122. Shellie Shankle	Cherokee Nation
123. Sherri Kay Hattori	Cherokee Nation
124. Sherrie McElwee	Cherokee Nation
125. sky babelawildcat	Cherokee Nation
126. Snow Matthews	Cherokee Nation and Delaware Tribe of Indians
127. Sugar Ali	United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
128. Taylor Keen	Cherokee Nation
129. Thomasenia Johnson	Cherokee Nation
130. Tracey M. Keith	Cherokee Nation
131. Tricia Wickliffe	Cherokee Nation
132. Tsianina Neel	Cherokee Nation
133. Twila Barnes	Cherokee Nation
134. Valerie Leann Kagan	Cherokee Nation
135. Verna Bates	Cherokee Nation
136. Vicki Creighton	Cherokee Nation
137. Victoria M. O'Keefe	Cherokee Nation
138. Virginia Drywater-Whitekiller	United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
139. Wayne Divelbiss	Cherokee Nation
140. William Curtis	Cherokee Nation
141. William Lossiah-Bratt	Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
142. Wynona Burwell	Cherokee Nation
143. Zac Russell	Cherokee Nation

The undersigned Native citizens stand in solidarity with our Cherokee relatives, friends, and colleagues who face a unique epidemic of non-Natives claiming their identity. We recognize that while the problem most often targets Cherokee identity, the public misunderstanding of what it means to be Native American threatens all of our rights. We hope that this long controversy will end, and Senator Warren will do the right thing and set the record straight that Indigenous self-determination comes before unsubstantiated family stories and DNA testing.

144. Ali Watson	Oglala Lakota
145. Amanda Blackhorse	Diné (Navajo) Nation
146. Amber Starks	Muscogee Creek Citizen
147. Ashley Fairbanks	White Earth Anishinaabe
148. Ashley McCray	Absentee Shawnee Tribe/ Oglala Lakota
149. Audra Simpson	Kahnawà:ke Mohawk

150. Candi Brings Plenty	Oglala Lakota Sioux Tribe
151. Carole Lindstrom	Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe
152. Charitie Ropati	Native Village of Kongiganak
153. Christine Brown	Delaware Tribe of Indians
154. Cole DeLaune	Kiowa Tribe
155. Cori Taber	Muscogee (Creek) Nation
156. Debbie Reese	Nambé Owingeh
157. DeLesslin George-Warren	Catawba Nation
158. Desi Rodriguez-Lonebear	Northern Cheyenne Nation
159. Dina Gilio-Whitaker	Colville Confederated Tribes
160. Emmy Scott	Spokane and Winnebago Nations
161. Erica Tremblay	Seneca-Cayuga Nation
162. Erin Thomas Anhalt	Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
163. Eryn Wise	Jicarilla Apache/Laguna Pueblo
164. Eva Coyote	Delaware Tribe of Indians
165. Iakowi:he'ne' Oakes	Mohawk, Snipe Clan, Rotinoshonni
166. J. Kēhaulani Kauanui	Kanaka Maoli
167. Jacqueline Keeler	Diné/Dakota
168. Jean M. O'Brien	White Earth Ojibwe
169. Jen Hubbard	Muscogee (Creek) Nation
170. Jennifer Billie Chadwick	Seminole Tribal of Florida
171. Jennina Rose Gorman/Katsistioasta	St Reggis Mohawk Tribe
172. Jesse Wente	Ojibwe, Serpent River First Nation
173. Jessica Lambert	Choctaw Nation
174. Jodi Byrd	Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma
175. Jodi Voice Yellowfish	Creek Nation
176. John Little	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
177. Johnnie Jae	Otoe-Missouria/Choctaw
178. Jordan Marie Daniel	Kul Wičasa Oyaté, federally known as the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe
179. Joseph Clift	Cowlitz Indian Tribe
180. Jukari Davis	Navajo Nation
181. Julia Coyote	Delaware Tribe of Indians
182. Kaitlin Curtice	Potawatomi Nation
183. Kat Redding	Powhatan (Pamunkey) and Choctaw/Chickasaw
184. Kawennakenre Shirley Meloche	Mohawk of Kahnawake Canada
185. Keely Toledo	Navajo Nation
186. Kim TallBear	Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate
187. Krystal Tsosie	Diné (Navajo) Nation
188. Larissa Nez	Navajo Nation
189. Lindsey Naegeli	Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma
190. Lucas Brown Eyes	Oglala Lakota
191. Mahayla Perryman-Matthews	Seneca-Cayuga Nation
192. Mariah Greenwood Adair	Chickasaw Nation
193. Marla Striped Face-Collins	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
194. Martie Simmons	Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin

195. Mary Coyote	Delaware Tribe of Indians
196. Megan Red Shirt-Shaw	Oglala Lakota
197. Michelle Cook	Navajo Nation
198. Natalie Diaz	Gila River (Akimel O'odham)
199. Nicholas Galanin	Tlingit/Unanga
200. Nick Courtney	Makah
201. Nick Estes	Lower Brule Sioux Tribe
202. Renee' Frerichs	Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska
203. Sandy Grande	Quechua
204. Shannon Speed	Chickasaw Nation
205. Sheldon Beach	Chickasaw Nation
206. Summer Wesley	Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
207. Tanaya Winder	Duckwater Shoshone
208. Tara Houska	Couchiching First Nation Anishinaabe
209. Tara Moses	Seminole Nation of Oklahoma
210. Taté Walker	Mniconjou Lakota & citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe
211. Tiffany Midge	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
212. Trudie Jackson	Navajo Nation
213. Twyla Baker	Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa, & Arikara Nation)
214. Valerie Lambert	Choctaw Nation
215. Yvonne Perryman-Matthews	Seneca-Cayuga Nation

The letter was organized by four citizens of the Cherokee Nation: Joseph M. Pierce, Daniel Heath Justice, Rebecca Nagle, and Twila Barnes. Media inquiries can be sent to the following email address: [ewarrenisnotcherokee@gmail.com](mailto:ewarrenisnotcherokee@gmail.com).