

# Civic Learning and Engagement



- National American Indian Heritage Month
- St. Michael's Church and Feeding Hays.
- FHSU Welcomes Dr. Daniel McClure for Native American Heritage Month
- Events

## NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Native American Heritage Month is observed in November to recognize the achievements and contributions of Native Americans.

Each year a similar proclamation is issued. President Clinton noted in 1996, "Throughout our history, American Indian and Alaska Native peoples have been an integral part of the American character. Against all odds, America's first peoples have endured, and they remain a vital cultural, political, social, and moral presence." November is an appropriate month for the celebration because it is traditionally a time when many American Indians hold fall harvest and world-renewal ceremonies, powwows, dances, and various feasts. The holiday recognizes hundreds of different tribes and approximately 250 languages, and celebrates the history, tradition, and values of American Indians. National American Indian Heritage Month serves as a reminder of the positive effect native peoples have had on the cultural development and growth of the U.S., as well as the struggles and challenges they have faced."



## **EMPOWERING THE COMMUNITY: ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH AND THE VISION BEHIND FEEDING HAYS**

In the heart of Hays, St. Michael's Episcopal Church has become a beacon of hope and service under the leadership of Pastor Ben Houchen, who has been with the church for two and a half years, recently stepping into his role as priest. With a background in family and community leadership, Houchen's ministry is driven by a passion for inclusivity.

Houchen's transition to St. Michael's was driven by his evolving beliefs, particularly around inclusivity. Coming from a conservative Christian background, he sought a space where LGBTQ+ acceptance was a priority. This search led him to the Episcopal Church and eventually to St. Michael's, where he found a sense of family and unity. "It's a big deal for me to find a church where acceptance is fundamental," Houchen shared. This ethos of inclusion is at the heart of his mission at St. Michael's, guiding the church's outreach and community initiatives.

### **FEEDING HAYS: ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY**

One of St. Michael's standout programs is Feeding Hays, a community-driven initiative that serves hot meals to those in need every Thursday evening. What started as a modest effort serving 5 to 10 meals weekly has grown significantly, with the church now providing around 210 meals each week. The impact is profound, with the program on track to deliver nearly 7,000 meals in 2024.



In addition to providing meals, Feeding Hays has a unique element—encouraging community co-creation. Houchen emphasizes collaboration with volunteers, including students from Fort Hays State University (FHSU). "Thursday nights are the best way for students to get involved," Houchen noted. The program not only offers a chance to serve meals but also to take on leadership roles, helping to expand services and develop new projects like food drop boxes around town.

Feeding Hays has also become a crucial partner in addressing student lunch debt within the Hays school district. The initiative invites meal recipients to contribute donations, which go directly toward paying off this debt. Last year, Feeding Hays managed to clear \$2,000 of outstanding lunch balances, ensuring that no student received a reduced meal due to debt. "We want to remove the shame associated with lunch debt and ensure every student has access to a hot meal," Houchen emphasized.



St. Michael's is exploring ways to further expand its reach. Plans are in motion to add additional meal service nights, which would require more volunteers and leaders to manage the program. "We're looking for people who can help lead and support our efforts, especially as we expand," Houchen said. Beyond volunteer support, the church is also seeking financial contributions to sustain and grow its programs, understanding that funding is key to continuing their mission.



Under Houchen's guidance, St. Michael's has become more than a place of worship; it is a community hub that actively works to make Hays a more inclusive and supportive place for all. By addressing food insecurity and advocating for marginalized groups, the church is living out its mission of love and service. As Houchen reflects on his work, he finds the greatest reward in "opening a window for people to meet a God that is love."



## FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY WELCOMES DR. DANIEL MCCLURE'S INSIGHTS FOR NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

As Native American Heritage Month approaches, Fort Hays State University (FHSU) takes the opportunity to reflect on the rich histories and contributions of Indigenous communities. Dr. Daniel Robert McClure, an Associate Professor in the History Department at FHSU, shared his perspectives on the importance of recognizing Native American legacies and the role educational institutions can play in fostering understanding.

Dr. McClure specializes in 20th-century U.S. history, the history of capitalism, African diaspora, popular culture, world history, and historical theory and methods. He has written extensively, including his book *Winter in America* (2021), and is currently working on a manuscript that examines 1960s free jazz within the context of decolonization and civil rights movements. His academic journey brought him from California, where he taught at multiple institutions, to FHSU in 2019. His decision to join the university was influenced by the unique flexibility the institution offers, allowing faculty members to pursue creative ideas and interdisciplinary projects that benefit both students and the broader community.

Dr. McClure emphasizes the ongoing relevance of Indigenous histories, stating, "Native American history doesn't end in the 19th century. It continues through the 20th into the 21st century." He points out that many people view Indigenous populations through a mythologized lens, seeing them as a part of the past rather than acknowledging their ongoing presence and cultural vitality.



He urges communities to engage in "honest conversations" about history, which includes recognizing the legacies of land appropriation and the impacts of historical policies that sought to assimilate or marginalize Indigenous communities.

Dr. McClure believes that open dialogue is essential for addressing the tensions surrounding Indigenous history. He notes that resolving these issues requires honest discussions about sovereignty, treaties, and the roles played by institutions like Fort Hays, which was originally a military outpost during westward expansion. For Dr. McClure, an honest reckoning with history is a vital step toward fostering a respectful relationship with Indigenous knowledge and rights. "Having an honest dialogue with history can lead to solutions for issues that continue to linger," he asserts.





Fort Hays State University, named after its historical roots as a military fort, holds a special responsibility in educating its community about the area's Indigenous past. Dr. McClure highlights the importance of understanding which Indigenous groups lived in Western Kansas before European settlement. He believes that both faculty and students should take advantage of the flexibility FHSU offers to explore interdisciplinary initiatives that deepen this understanding.

For example, Dr. McClure collaborates with faculty from the English department to organize a "5-Minute Film Festival," where students are encouraged to create short films using their smartphones. This initiative aims to foster a culture of creativity and interdisciplinary engagement, offering students a unique platform to showcase their projects. "It's about creating experiences that students wouldn't find at larger institutions," Dr. McClure explains.

As we prepare to observe Native American Heritage Month, Dr. McClure encourages the community to reflect on the legacies that we inherit. "It's important to take responsibility for a history you might not have had any part in, but that you inherit," he states. He hopes that students and community members alike will take this time to understand the rich history of the Indigenous peoples who lived in the area and continue to be an integral part of the cultural fabric.

Dr. McClure's insights offer a valuable reminder of the importance of historical reflection and cultural awareness, encouraging all of us to approach Native American Heritage Month with a spirit of curiosity, respect, and a commitment to



honest dialogue.

On October 25, 2024, President Joe Biden delivered a historic formal apology to Indigenous people at the Gila Crossing Community School in Laveen Village, Arizona. The apology addressed the Federal Indian Boarding School era, a 150-year period from the early 1800s to 1970 during which Native American children were forcibly removed from their families and communities.

President Biden acknowledged the trauma and cultural loss inflicted by this policy, describing it as "one of the most horrific chapters in American history"

This marks the first time a sitting U.S. president has officially apologized for the boarding school era, signaling a significant step towards reconciliation and healing for Native American communities.

For more information please [click here](#)

Civic Learning and Engagement, the Leadership Programs, Student Engagement,  
Forsyth Library, and Global Affairs presents

# SWIPE OUT HUNGER

Step Up, Pack Up, and Fight Hunger Locally! Join the mission to  
make a difference.

**Event set up: 10:00am**  
**Meal packing: 12:00pm**

**Saturday,**  
**November 16th 2024**  
Black and Gold Room,  
Memorial Union



**Volunteers  
needed**  
**Scan the  
QR code**

**For more information contact Donnette Noble: [djnoble@fhsu.edu](mailto:djnoble@fhsu.edu)**





You're invited to

# Friendsgiving

Monday, November 11, 2024

5:00 - 8:00 PM

Rose Garden Banquet Hall  
2350 E 8th Street, Hays, KS 67601

## What to Expect:

- Casual/Comfortable Dress Code
- Traditional Holiday Meal starting at 5:30
- Giveaways from 6:00 to 7:00
- FHSU Jazz Ensemble
- Cultural Dance Performance
- Community Art Project
- Crafts and Games for Kids starting at 6:00

Register via  
QR Code or  
URL Link:



<https://forms.gle/2YQAKowYcM7zDKaL8>



**FORT HAYS STATE  
UNIVERSITY**  
CIVIC LEARNING  
AND ENGAGEMENT

Contact Donnette Noble  
with Questions:  
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# **HAPPY FALL BREAK, STUDENTS!**

As the leaves turn golden and the air grows crisp, it's time to recharge your batteries before the final push of the semester. Make the most of this well-deserved break!

Happy fall break, students! Rest, enjoy autumn, and spend time with loved ones. This break is your chance to recharge. Safe travels, and come back refreshed and ready to excel!




## CONTACT INFORMATION


For any inquiries, information, or assistance, please feel free to reach out to the Civic Learning & Engagement Administrative Team

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*Newsletter Credits*

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