

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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County Executive and Council recognize North American First People's Day

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—Summit County Executive Shapiro and County Council are observing North American First People's Day on October 2, 2023. First People's Day was first recognized by County Council in 2019 after students at the Lippman School of Akron proposed the day to honor the first people of this land as part of their longstanding relationship with the Northern Cheyenne Nation of Montana. First People's Day is an opportunity for remembrance, mourning, healing, and reconnection for residents as we reckon with the history of indigenous people and culture in Summit County. This year there is an exceptional reason to celebrate.

On September 19, 2023 the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) officially added the [Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks](#) to the list of World Heritage Sites. This represents the first UNESCO designation in Ohio and only the twenty-fifth in the United States. The designation encompasses eight sites built 1,600 to 2,000 years ago: the Fort Ancient Earthworks and Nature Preserve, Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, Mound City Group, Hopewell Mound Group, Seip Earthworks, High Banks Earthworks, Hopeton Earthworks, and Newark Earthworks. The mounds have long been considered marvels of engineering, with various sites aligning with astronomical and geometric patterns. The term "Hopewell," once used to describe a people or culture, is now understood to be closer to a religious movement that spread across the eastern region of the continent, reaching its peak in what is now southern Ohio. As Summit County recognizes First People's Day, residents are encouraged to visit the earthworks that dot our state.

"We have much to learn and celebrate from indigenous people in Ohio," said Executive Shapiro, "And while we cannot ignore our history, we must take care to remember both the darkest and brightest moments to continue to build a better Summit County for all our residents."

Northeast Ohio was originally inhabited by many native peoples and cultures. At the time of European colonization, it was primarily a hunting ground for the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) but later became home to Seneca-Cayuga and Lenape (Delaware) fleeing their ancestral lands. As European settlement continued, indigenous people were pushed further west until policies such as the Indian Removal Act forced most remaining natives to assimilate or be forcibly relocated. The Seneca-Cayuga and the Lenape were but two examples of the many First Nations subjected to violent assimilation and migration. However, there are many people and organizations dedicated to renewing trust and goodwill with indigenous Americans in Northeast Ohio and beyond.

In Summit County, The Lippman School and the Portage Path Collaborative are working to renew relationships with native people and have hosted several events in honor of First People's Day, including the annual event, "Walk the Portage Path," where residents walk along a historic route with ties to native peoples. For a list of additional events, [click here](#).

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