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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Indigenous communities celebrate the long-awaited recognition of Indigenous People’s Day, shifting the narrative from “heathen” to healing.

Indigenous communities across the nation celebrated a long-standing demand for the recognition of the second Monday in October to be recognized as Indigenous People’s Day. For over a century this date has been a federal holiday celebrating conquer and conquest of so-called “heathens,” perpetuating lies in classrooms and communities at the detriment of the original inhabitants. This year, the efforts received a huge boost when President Biden made the first national proclamation recognizing the date as Indigenous People’s Day and a step towards historical reconciliation and healing.

For the past seven years, the Indigenous People’s Day New York City committee has been working to amplify the tribal nations of New York by urging former Governor Cuomo and city officials to recognize the federal holiday as Indigenous People’s Day with an annual event held on Randall’s Island. The results of hard work, prayers, and political petitions paid off as Gov. Kathy Hochul stated, “For the first time ever, I am declaring that this is Indigenous Peoples’ Day and I have a proclamation which will be arriving shortly. But I also want to celebrate the heritage of the thousands of Italian-Americans who came here as immigrants.”

But NYC Mayor Bill De Blasio was not as quick to recognize or honor Indigenous People’s Day despite the political and moral pressure. “It shouldn’t be a versus. Tens of millions of Italian-Americans, including my grandparents, came to this country, made this country a better place. We gotta honor the Italian-American people. That’s what the day should be about.”

“It’s basically saying to the city there’s a parade on Fifth Avenue, but despite the honoring of Columbus in that parade, we are here celebrating our existence, our survival,” said Cliff Matias, co-founder of Indigenous People’s Day NYC. Organizers of the event are happy to see progress, but focus more on the healing that takes place at the gathering. People traveled from as far away as Columbia to represent Indigenous cultures, communities and to repair the land and each other. The events started Sunday with celebration and continued Monday morning with a sunrise water ceremony. And while the NYC sponsored parade on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue took place, the Randall’s Island

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gathering continued the festivities and honoring of ancestors and a who's who of speakers and performances from across the nation.

Mary Jane Oatman, who is the founder of ICANNC and *THC Magazine*, Idaho ACLU President and member of the Nez Perce Tribe traveled from Idaho with a call to action to protect Indigenous rights in plant medicine as federal cannabis legalization gears up. "We have heard it before, if we are not at the table we are on the menu. As people who have had a relationship with plant medicine since time immemorial, we must speak up to ensure our voices are front and center in the conversation to also protect our environment. The current "green rush" mirrors the depredations of the "gold rush," and our future generations deserve better."

Indigenous People's Day NYC committee co-chair Chene Bullock, managing director of Shinnecock Nation's Little Beach Harvest Dispensary, was also front and center to amplify the message on her homelands in partnership with Conor Green Consulting, the Indigenous CANNabis Coalition (ICANNC) and Honeysuckle Magazine. This is the third campaign that *Honeysuckle Magazine* has collaborated with ICANNC to develop corporate marketing campaigns to elevate Indian Country cannabis companies in New York City's Time Square.

On Monday, Bullock stood below the glowing billboards of NYC Time Square, clearly emotional as she witnesses the Shinnecock campaign for the first time in a live Instagram reaction. She humbly states, "This will become the new normal."

The media partners worked with Conor Green and the Shinnecock Nation to promote Indigenous People's Day for the state and city of New York. Conor Green is dedicated to strengthening sovereignty through Tribal economic development. ICANNC is a 501(c)3 that promotes Tribal Hemp & Cannabis cultures, economies and healing in plant medicine through education and advocacy and publishes *THC Magazine*, the nation's first and only print publication dedicated to tribal cannabis. Honeysuckle Media is an award-winning, female led print and digital publication that emphasizes diverse voices with high visual impact.

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