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**The 400 Years Project Looks At Native American Identity Through The Native Lens**

The year 2020 marked the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower's arrival from England to Plymouth Rock, Mass., a moment encapsulated with the general notion that the following year, pilgrims broke bread with the Wampanoag Tribe in an act of friendship.

For generations that story — from the white settlers' perspective — has been taught to children in schools.

"The Mayflower and its aftermath has become the first and most culturally iconic story told to many young Americans about the country's founding and initial relationships with Native people," says photographer Sarah Stacke.

"But the stories they're told of a golden age of friendship, new beginnings, and untouched wilderness, is a myth."

Correcting those myths and looking at the evolution of Native American identity over the last 400 years is the mission of The 400 Years Project, a pictorial collection of Native American life. It includes original photo essays, text essays and a digital library of Native photographers from the mid-1800s to the present.

Project founders Stacke, Sheena Brings Plenty and Brian Adams want to address colonization while centering the Native voice.

The site's library of Native American photographers currently stands at more than 60, but Brings Plenty is hoping to expand. The goal is for Native photographers to tell their stories and showcase their work. "The library is 100% Native and all we ask is that they are dedicated to the craft of photography," Brings Plenty says.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its tragic effects on Native American tribes have brought on parallels to the plight Native Americans have faced since the days of the Mayflower. Death rates for Native American and Alaska Native people are more than double that of white people. Stacke says it has "highlighted how fiercely the keepers of knowledge need to be protected and why the commitment to preserving and recording stories is as urgent as ever."

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