AMERICA250MI

Program Guide

1776–2026

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

America250MI is operated by the Historical Society of Michigan and the Michigan History Center

Sponsors

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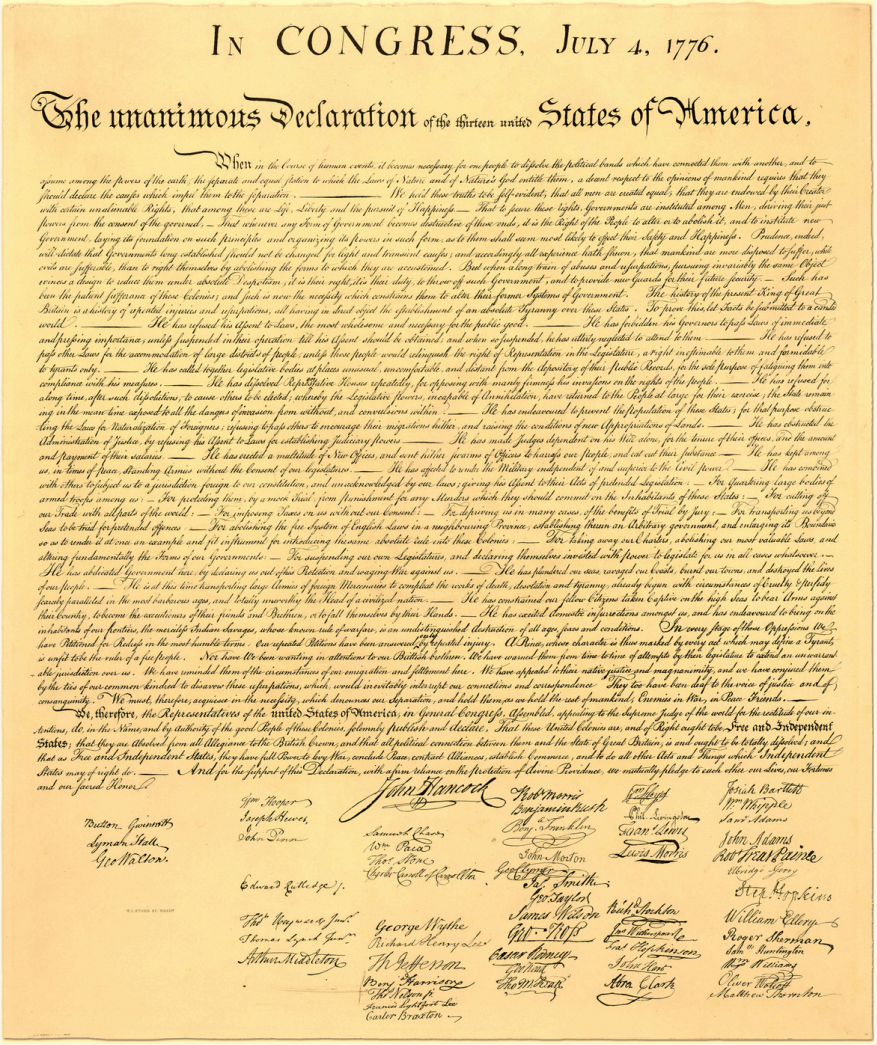
Rooted in America250MI's 5 Guiding Themes — Unfinished Revolutions, Power of Place, We the People, American Experiment, and Doing History — this guide supports event planning while orienting you to our mission, vision, and strategic goals for the semiquincentennial. For everything America250MI, visit our Community Hub at www.America250MI.org.


IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.

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About America250MI

In 2026, the United States will commemorate 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the development of a new country dedicated to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” The founding of the United States of America was an experiment, and in the ensuing years, the country has experienced many successes and challenges.

To observe this momentous occasion, the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission was established by Congress (P.L. 114-196) to encourage Americans to remember our past, mark the present, and build towards a promising future. America250MI is Michigan’s official committee for the commemoration of the history of our state and its relation to the development of the United States of America.

Welcome to America250MI

The coming years offer a unique opportunity for those in the history field to better demonstrate history's relevance to communities and individuals across the country. The semiquincentennial is an opportunity to create impactful and thoughtful exhibitions, events, and programs that focus on Michigan's role in American history — before, during, and after the Revolutionary Era. Together, we can make a lasting impact.

Long before the arrival of Europeans, the area known as Michigan was populated by an estimated 15,000 Indigenous peoples, among them the Anishinaabek — the Odawa, the Ojibwe, and the Potawatomi. By the 1600s, the French established Catholic missions and forts at Sault Ste. Marie (1668), near the Straits of Mackinac (1670), along the St. Joseph River (1691), and in Detroit (1701). The British came into power in 1760 during the French and Indian War. The British posts of the Great Lakes played an active role in the American Revolution. The Treaty of Paris gave our state the shorelines of four of the five Great Lakes, making the American Revolution a truly seminal part of our history.

Michigan will commemorate the two hundred fiftieth anniversary of the Revolution with wide-ranging activities, beginning in 2023 and culminating in 2026. Our activities will include educational outreach, online resources related to our state's history, and a wide variety of events. The activities listed here are subject to change. For the most current information, visit the America250MI Community Hub at www.America250MI.org. The goal of the America250MI Committee is to empower Michiganders to engage with our rich and diverse history, including but certainly not limited to the last 250 years.

This nationwide commemoration is a call for "all Americans to embrace this historic moment—unique in our lifetimes—and to act upon it by renewing our commitment to the unfinished pursuit of a more perfect Union."

Quote above is from: "A Common Cause to All: A Resolution of the States Gathered in Partnership on the 250th Anniversary of Virginia's Committee of Correspondence."

America250MI Mission

America250MI will engage all Michiganders in exploring the legacy of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution (late 1700s), fostering collaboration to explore Michigan's history from that pivotal moment to today, and build a better future.

America250MI Vision

America250MI will unite Michigan communities to commemorate our shared heritage and significant contributions to the American story, uncovering unheard voices, fostering historical awareness, and inspiring lasting civic pride.

America250MI's Strategic Goals

Awareness

- America250MI will engage all Michiganders in exploring the lasting legacy of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution (late 1700s), fostering collaboration to explore Michigan's history from that pivotal moment to today and build a more inclusive future.

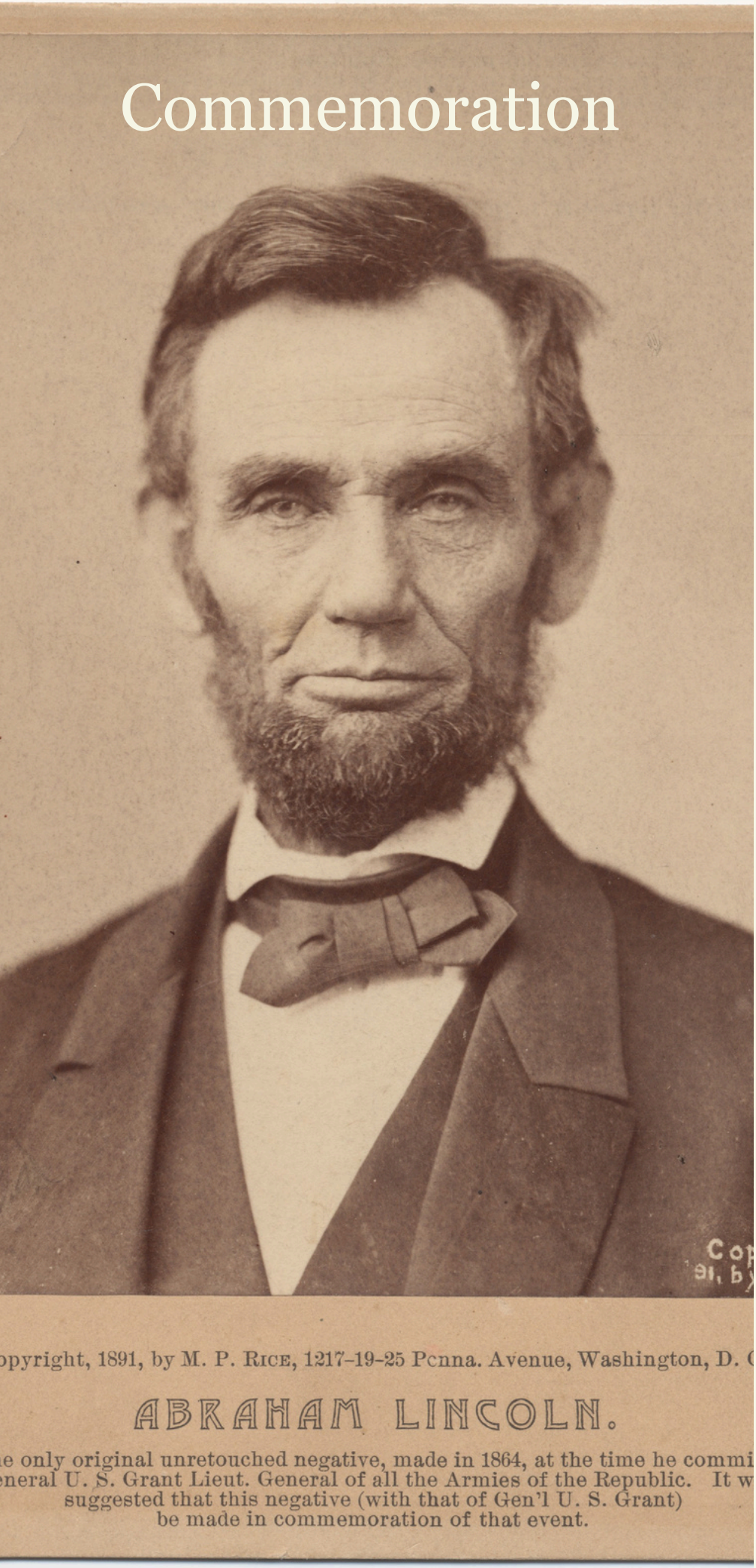
Promotion

- Support and promote commemorative events, arts initiatives, preservation efforts, heritage tourism, and educational programming occurring throughout the state by sharing Michigan's stories from diverse perspectives.

Grants

- Two rounds of grants –first opening on March 1, 2025 and the second opening on November 1, 2025– will support historical organizations that undertake initiatives to interpret, preserve, and explore Michigan's rich and diverse history, foster collaboration, and enhance accessibility to its impact on all communities.

Commemoration



Commemoration is a profound and meaningful act of recognition, imbued with a collective purpose, through which we celebrate, remember, reflect, and mark significant events. It serves as an intentional endeavor to honor the past, allowing us to preserve the essence of cherished moments, acknowledge the struggles and triumphs that have shaped us, and pay homage to those who have profoundly impacted our journey. It urges us to embrace the entirety of the nation's story, recognizing the importance of good, bad, and ambivalent histories, while setting the stage for a more compassionate and united future.

To truly mark the semiquincentennial of the American Revolution is to memorialize not just the iconic moments but also the stories of everyday heroes, the forgotten narratives, and the diverse voices that have added to the nation's mosaic. It is an opportunity to observe history in its entirety, with honesty and integrity, appreciating the transformative power of both the glorious and the challenging chapters of Michigan's history. By grappling with the complexities of the past, we pave the way for a collective reckoning — instilling a renewed commitment to justice, equality, and the pursuit of a more perfect union.

How to Use This Guide

As we prepare to mark this anniversary, we are focused on lifting the voices of all Michiganders — both historical and current — to present a more complete narrative of our state's role in our country. To that end, we are happy to introduce the America250MI Program Guide. In it, you will find the 5 Guiding Themes along with suggestions on how you can engage with the anniversary. The 5 Guiding Themes were built on the framework established in the American Association for State and Local History's (AASLH) "Field Guide to the Semiquincentennial" and by other organizations involved in the planning for the semiquincentennial.

The 5 Guiding Themes are meant to stimulate, inspire, and provoke those in the greater field of public history as we prepare to commemorate the two hundred fiftieth anniversary of our nation's founding. The 5 Guiding Themes inform how we at America250MI source and develop content that will define the statewide commemoration. We encourage you to refer to them for inspiration in planning your local activities. To encourage a deep engagement with each theme, our committee has provided questions for consideration — including some example topics — that will spark ideas for exhibits, community conversations, lesson plans, books, podcasts, and a wide range of other programs and events.

Local historical and heritage organizations have a responsibility to highlight the connections of their diverse Michigan communities to the themes of the semiquincentennial. Those organizations should look for opportunities to collaborate and develop programming with local municipalities, communities, tribal communities, schools and educators, and the public.

Collaboration among museums, historic sites, libraries, and schools will help communities discover the history that surrounds them. Beneficial partnerships can highlight local connections to the semiquincentennial not only through place and time, but also through ideals of the American Revolution.

Interested in hosting an officially recognized event, program, or project?

When planning activities, we encourage those to align with our 5 Guiding Themes. Officially recognized entities of America250MI will be promoted on social media, added to the official event calendar on the website, and permitted to utilize the America250MI logo. Programming can help audiences consider their community's role in the founding of the United States and their continued place in history.

Apply today!

AMERICA: 250 YEARS

IN THE MAKING

American innovation powered by people and purpose.

Visit The Henry Ford for a commemoration of America's 250th anniversary with special programming, new exhibitions, exciting events and more to highlight the history of American innovation throughout 2026.

Learn more at **THF.org/America250**

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5 Guiding Themes

for the

America250MI Commemoration

UNFINISHED REVOLUTIONS

Michigan's people have struggled for liberty and freedom before, during, and after the American Revolution. This country's founding document did not account for women, enslaved individuals in the territory, or the Indigenous people who were often forcibly removed and separated from their land. It is not commonly known that the Declaration of Independence had multiple drafts, with the final draft containing only one mention of Indigenous peoples — referring to them as "savages" — and completely removing the mention of enslaved individuals all together. The American Revolution separated the American government from Great Britain, but it created a legacy of division among the region's populations and an ongoing discussion of the compromises made and injustices endured in order to form a more perfect union.

Michigan has a history of people fighting for freedom, recognition, and respect of their most basic human rights, whether it was along the Underground Railroad, in movements for civil and labor rights, or part of the continued struggle of Indigenous peoples to reclaim their cultural heritage and land. Workers across the state have fought for fair conditions and basic rights from mines in the Upper Peninsula to factories in Detroit, to ensure not only their own happiness but that of future generations.

Throughout the 250 years since the American Revolution, millions of people of different faiths, races, and cultures have flocked to the United States seeking freedom and the promise of a better life, and many of them call Michigan home. Those immigrants have challenged the country's concept of what it means to be an American and, at times, were vilified for their criticisms. The American story is defined by the challenge of being a unified nation with a pluralistic society, a land of opportunity with equal rights for all people.

Questions to Consider

What are some "revolutionary" movements from the past and present that have ensured rights or counteracted legal impediments to freedom for all people?
When have members of your community advocated for liberty and equality?
How have those with power responded? **How** have others within the community responded?
When has there been progress — or setbacks — in the fight for rights and justice?
How do the perspectives of different individuals, groups, or social movements change how we have defined "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?"

These themes have been adapted from the themes written by the American Association of State and Local History for the 250th Commemoration of our nation's founding. For more information, please visit AASLH.org/250.

POWER OF PLACE

Place is a powerful concept that allows us to view the past through the geographic, geologic, and physical environment while also being inclusive of the political, economic, historic, cultural, and emotional connections to it. A deep engagement with place enables us to reconsider significant questions about our history: from Indigenous peoples' past and present connections with American spaces; to a community's relationships with and use of land, waterways, and natural resources; to the profound and unequal consequences of imperial expansion and colonization across the continent.

It has become human nature to identify ourselves by our region, state, peninsula, county, city, and/or township; nearby geographical landmarks (Great Lakes, straits, rivers, national forests, dunes, snow belt); and maybe even the natural resources for which our areas are known (agriculture, timber, nickel, copper, coal, etc.).

Michigan has become the physical place we know today through wars and the establishment of treaties, ordinances, and statehood. As children, Michiganders are taught to use their hands (mittens) to represent a Michigan "map." People's relationship with place and land has been a vital part of Michigan's history since well before the American Revolution.

Questions to Consider

What was happening in the place where you live before, during, and after the Revolutionary Era?

How has your "place" changed over time? Who has historically lived in your geographic area and how did they experience major events in our past?

Consider:

- Indigenous peoples
- Immigrants
- Migration
- Major economic drivers

How can peoples' past and present connection to places and environments inform our understanding of historical developments and contemporary challenges?

Consider:

- Native American perspectives
- Land and preservation laws
- Immigration — cultural practices and commemorations

These themes have been adapted from the themes written by the American Association of State and Local History for the 250th Commemoration of our nation's founding. For more information, please visit AASLH.org/250.

POWER OF PLACE

More Questions to Consider

How did the natural environment — including rivers, lakes, forests, and swamps — influence past events, such as settlement and migration, imperialism and expansion, or economic development and innovation? In turn, **how** did human events shape the environment? *Consider:*

- The Great Lakes served as an efficient trade route for goods.
- The Northwest Ordinance altered land boundaries.
- Mining of copper and iron in the Upper Peninsula
- Underground Railroad
- Industry: agriculture, factories, commerce, etc.
- Recent climate change and environmental recovery

What places in your community are typically preserved today for their historic value? **What** other kinds of stories could be told through historic preservation? **How** do we protect place and culture today and for the future? *Consider:*

- Sites of historic events
- Biographical sites of important Michigan figures
- Waterways, shorelines, rivers, roads, railways, and airports
- Historic landscapes
- National, state, and local parks

How does your organization, community, municipality, historical site, school, etc. publicly acknowledge the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary stewards of the land your place occupies?

- Consider creating a Land Acknowledgement for your place.
- Visit native-land.ca for more information.
- Share the Land Acknowledgement movement with others in your community.
- Consider how to go beyond acknowledgement to actively work with tribes and other parts of your community.
- Learn how you can be a steward of Michigan's lands.

WE THE PEOPLE

Since the nation's founding, definitions of "We the people," the boundaries of national belonging, and the very nature of citizenship have changed. For much of its history, the United States has excluded people — women, free and enslaved African Americans, Indigenous peoples, immigrants, people with disabilities, the poor, and many others — from full participation and representation in the nation's political, economic, and cultural life. Yet, over time, the United States has also incorporated people of different backgrounds into its society as diverse populations have staked their claim to belonging and pressed for a more pluralistic, more equitable nation. Every generation is an opportunity for reinterrogation of those governing documents and policies.

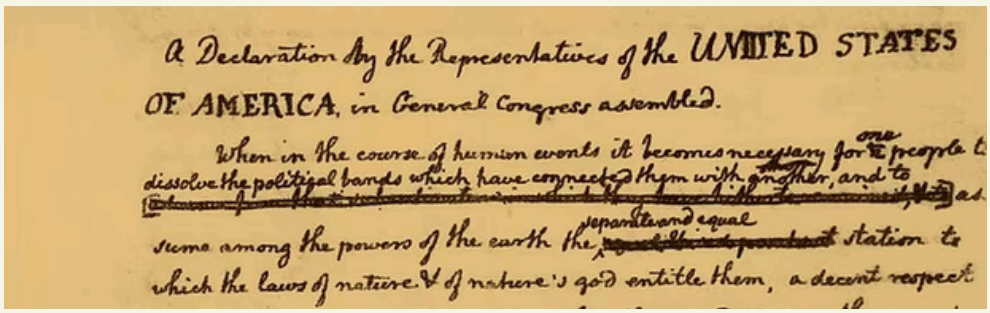
Michigan is made up of more than 10 million unique people of different races, cultures, languages, ethnicities, religions, and points of view. The term "Michigander" is defined in the dictionary as "a native or inhabitant of Michigan." However, throughout Michigan's past, many people have been excluded and not welcome to consider themselves Michiganders or Michiganians because of founding institutional documents and laws.

"We" all have identities within the American experiment. "We" are American, but we also identify with different ethnicities, races, faiths, regions, and languages. Being American today means something different than it did 250 years ago.

Questions to Consider

How has the experience of various people influenced events throughout Michigan's history?
Who is considered a "Michigander"? An "American"? **How** are those decisions made? **Who** gets to make those decisions? **Do** you identify as a "Michigander" and/or an "American"? Why or why not?
What are the characteristics, experiences, and events that impact how you define your identity? *Consider the following:*

- Historical
- Economic
- Political
- Cultural


A Declaration by the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in General Congress assembled.

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature & of nature's god entitle them, a decent respect

These themes have been adapted from the themes written by the American Association of State and Local History for the 250th Commemoration of our nation's founding. For more information, please visit AASLH.org/250.

WE THE PEOPLE

More Questions to Consider

How, when, and **why** have definitions of "We the People" and ideas about belonging changed in the United States, Michigan, and your local community? *Consider:*

- Tribal identities
- Westward expansion
- Immigration
- Emancipation
- War

Who has been excluded from full participation and/or representation in our democracy? **Who** is currently excluded? **Why?**

How have the U.S. Constitution, Michigan's state constitution, and the laws stemming from them changed over time to incorporate the rights of different groups of people? *Think about laws and policies such as:*

- 1790 Naturalization Act
- 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act
- 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868
- Immigration Act of 1924
- Indian Citizenship Act of 1924
- Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952
- Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act

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AMERICAN EXPERIMENT

The leaders of the past did not have all the answers. Though their government based on representative democracy and a rights-based constitution was innovative, they knew the nation was an experiment. They expected future generations to improve upon the republic they created.

When we look at the founding documents of our country and our state, we can reflect on those excluded from the original American Experiment. There were intentional omissions of tribes, people of color, women, and many immigrants. Additionally, the authors of those documents also could not have anticipated every change that American society would undergo. As we move towards a more full and inclusive Michigan, there are still those whom the American Experiment does not fully represent.

The two hundred fiftieth anniversary offers an opportunity to reconsider the origins of our government, democratic institutions, and broader civic life and a chance to reflect on the ways we have changed them over time. Encouraging discussion about our democracy and civic institutions can help strengthen understanding, inspire action, and reveal ways that all of us can participate in and shape the ongoing American Experiment.

Questions to Consider

How "revolutionary" was the American Revolution? **What** kind of nation did it create?
How was Michigan's or your community's government organized, and what were key moments in its evolution? **Who** did it serve—and who does it prioritize over other groups?
What treaties have impacted Michigan? **Who** signed them, and who was affected by them?
When was Michigan's state constitution ratified? **When** has it been changed? W**hy** did those changes happen?
Which groups of people have been traditionally prioritized in the American Experiment?
Which groups have been exploited so that other groups could achieve/succeed in the American Experiment?
How have people in your community engaged in civic action in the past? **How** have those actions evolved over time?
Who have been leaders of civic action in your community?
How has the American Experiment changed over time? Is America still undergoing experimentation?

These themes have been adapted from the themes written by the American Association of State and Local History for the 250th Commemoration of our nation's founding. For more information, please visit AASLH.org/250.

DOING HISTORY

You are invited to discover and uncover history! As scholars, curators, educators, historians, librarians, archivists, preservationists, civic and community members, students, interpreters, and influencers, we must work together with our communities to interact with Michigan's past. Now is the time to openly engage our communities in conversations about what history is, how it is done, and why it matters. By being open and transparent when helping our communities understand the methods, sources, evidence, and perspectives that influence history, we can inform how community members can engage with history in their own lives and how history can speak to the current challenges our communities face every day.

When we invite our communities to engage with the historical method, we can help them see the value of inclusive narratives and become more comfortable with the ambiguous, contested, and always-evolving nature of history. Our community members are the answer to our missing, silenced, and excluded histories. Working together, we can fill in blanks and share more inclusive narratives through oral histories, developing new questions, uncovering new evidence, and informing our histories through community knowledge.

Questions to consider

What is history? **How** is it different from "the past?"
Where can we learn about Michigan's past? **Who** is teaching/sharing Michigan's diverse and unique history?
How do history professionals use different kinds of sources — written records, oral traditions, material culture, archaeological evidence — to make sense of the past?
Whose stories have been collected in the official record at local and state archives and museums, and whose have yet to be included? **How** has that influenced the way history has been told?
How can the inclusion of multiple perspectives and experiences clarify our understanding of the past?
How can we use evidence to uncover and share the lives of individuals traditionally ignored or silenced by the written record?
What stories can you contribute to Michigan's historical record? **How** can you "do" history?

These themes have been adapted from the themes written by the American Association of State and Local History for the 250th Commemoration of our nation's founding. For more information, please visit AASLH.org/250.

Engage

with the

America250MI Commemoration

Committee in Every County

www.america250mi.org/localcommittees

Developed in partnership with the Michigan Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), this initiative supports local committees to convene governments, tribal nations, schools, museums, libraries, veterans, cultural groups, and business stakeholders around county-level plans.

Form Your Committee

Start a vibrant, open conversation about the Declaration of Independence, Michigan history, and America250MI. Host a friendly gathering to explore the 5 Guiding Themes and invite everyone — the students who spark ideas, seniors with lived memory, local leaders, tribal voices, teachers, historians, artists, and neighbors. Co-create a short mission that centers on a shared purpose and appoint a liaison to communicate with America250MI. Build a team that mirrors all of Michigan's residents and energy!

Pass Your Resolution

Pass your Official Resolution to earn formal recognition, unlock doors to local partnerships, and show your whole community you are committed to Michigan's stories. Use the provided template to weave in local connections to the 5 Guiding Themes, set tangible goals for your commemorations, and invite voices from all corners to participate. Plan the adoption with a concise, engaging presentation and keep momentum going with information sessions and America250MI committee meetings!

Celebrate and Take Action!

Celebrate and take action with real heart! After the resolution, announce it publicly, line up local media, and give thanks that lift everyone's spirits. Keep the fire alive by scheduling regular meetings, brainstorm events tied to the Declaration of Independence and the 5 Guiding Themes, and build partnerships that enrich the entire community. Leverage America250MI resources and statewide initiatives to expand momentum and deepen community engagement. Most of all, celebrate Michigan's unique and exciting stories!

A RESOLUTION
RELATING TO THE FORMATION OF A LOCAL AMERICA250MI COMMITTEE

A resolution of the _____,
(Town, City, Township, County, or Organization)
located within the state of Michigan, supporting the Michigan Committee for the United States Semiquincentennial (AMERICA250MI)

WHEREAS, The Michigan Governor appointed the HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN and the MICHIGAN HISTORY CENTER to create and lead AMERICA250MI in 2020 to plan, encourage, develop, and coordinate the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the United States and Michigan's integral role in that event and the role of its people on the nation's past, present and future;

WHEREAS, AMERICA250MI hopes to engage ALL Michiganders and ALL 83 counties through their many signatures and officially recognized programs, projects and events over the next several years by inspiring future leaders and celebrating all Michiganders contributions to the nation over the last 250 years; and

WHEREAS, _____ will form a local AMERICA250MI committee;

WHEREAS, the local committee will plan and coordinate programs occurring within the locality and communicate regularly with AMERICA250MI and submit relevant and applicable events through the AMERICA250MI website;

WHEREAS, the local committee will agree to follow the branding and planning guidelines set forth by AMERICA250MI; and the AMERICA250 FOUNDATION where applicable;

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors wishes to undertake this endeavor with AMERICA250MI to promote and commemorate this important historic milestone.
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE _____:

1. The Board of Supervisors hereby desires to support the Michigan Committee for the United States Semiquincentennial (AMERICA250MI) and their efforts to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States of America.
2. _____will form a committee to aid in the planning for the commemoration period made up of a diverse group of people to work with AMERICA250MI within their perspective town, city, township, county, organization, or other institution or group.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the LOCAL COMMITTEE must appoint a representative to liaise with the STATE COMMITTEE. This representative will attend all local committee meetings and report to the STATE COMMITTEE on a quarterly basis.
ADOPTED this_____ day of_____, 202___.

SIGNATURE:_____
(Committee Liaison)

LOCAL COMMITTEE LIAISON

Representative Name: _____ Title: _____

Contact Info: (_____) _____-_____ Email:_____@_____

Sharing the Spirit of America

www.America250MI.org/sharing-the-spirit-of-america

On July 8, 1776, when Colonel John Nixon first read the Declaration of Independence aloud in Philadelphia's State House Yard, he wasn't simply announcing a break with Britain — he was voicing a radical idea: that legitimate power comes from the consent of the governed, not from the crown or the sword. In that moment, a public reading became a public promise — one we are still striving to keep.

Born in Hawai'i as a community tradition, Sharing the Spirit of America has grown, neighbor-to-neighbor, into a nationwide event — across all 50 states and the nine U.S. territories — of publicly reading the Declaration of Independence on July 8, 2026, at precisely the same time that John Nixon first read it, 6:00 PM EST.

In 2026, Michigan joins this chorus — inviting towns, campuses, libraries, tribal communities, faith groups, veterans' halls, and families to gather in public spaces and lend their voices to a founding text that still challenges us to become our best selves.

Bring your voice. Bring your family. Bring your story. Read with us — then keep working — to secure Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness for everyone who calls Michigan, and the Unites States of America, home.

Colonel John Nixon (1733-1808)
Portrait by Gilbert Stuart
Courtesy Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts

Educational Resources

www.america250mi.org/education

America250MI and partners will provide standards-aligned K–12 resources for spring 2026, connecting founding documents to Michigan places and people.

The Henry Ford

Semiquincentennial package featuring a rare Declaration printing and the Rosa Parks Bus
www.THF.org/America250

National Constitution Center

- Interactive Constitution
- Interactive Declaration and America at 250 Toolkit
- Free K–12 curriculum and field trips

www.constitutioncenter.org/declaration

Lou Frey Institute & C-SPAN Classroom

Nine lessons that encourage middle and high school students to analyze primary and secondary sources to gain a better understanding of the Declaration of Independence and its impact in American history.
www.floridacitizen.org/doi250

Visit our Education Resources page for guides that include the Michigan Social Studies Standards for each lesson as well as lessons for elementary teachers on a variety of topics that focus on what it means to be a citizen and why that is important in a representative government.
www.america250mi.org/education

Statewide Events Calendar

www.america250mi.org/calendar

Michigan's efforts to recognize the 250th is coming to life on the America250MI Events Calendar. Explore celebrations across the state: courthouse readings and museum pop-ups, student exhibits and living-history weekends, oral-history nights at libraries, lantern-lit hikes in state parks, film screenings, veterans' panels, and tribal celebrations. Browse by date or event type, plan a weekend road trip, or find something right around the corner — there's always a new way to connect with the story of Michigan and the nation.

Have something planned? Share it and we will help you amplify it. When you submit your event, our team adds it to the statewide calendar and sends you a Branding & Marketing Kit — America250MI logos, social media template images, press release templates, and a branding guide — to make promotion simple and on-message. Recent listings range from July 8 Declaration readings in multiple languages, to Underground Railroad walking tours, digitization "scan-a-thons" at local archives, school "Voices of the Declaration" nights, and brewery talks on labor and industry. Your idea belongs on that list!

Discover what's happening, then click "Submit an Event" to put your community on the map. Let's fill 2026 with Michigan voices!

America250MI Social Media Campaign

Facebook: www.facebook.com/America250MI
Instagram: www.instagram.com/America250MI

Join us on our America250MI social media campaign on Facebook and Instagram, where we celebrate the rich diversity of Michigan's history and culture! Our platforms are dedicated to highlighting the stories, events, and contributions of all communities across the state and the nation. By following us, you can stay informed about exciting initiatives, share your own stories, and engage with fellow Michiganders as we approach the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

Together, let's honor our shared heritage and inspire future generations to embrace the important narratives that define our great state!

America250MI Newsletter

America250MI Newsletter Sign-up

Stay connected to the statewide commemoration with the America250MI Newsletter — a concise monthly brief that keeps partners and participants aligned on deadlines, resources, and key milestones. Each issue highlights major initiatives and announcements, new toolkits and templates, education spotlights, upcoming events and calls for submissions, and short features that connect Michigan's stories with the broader history of the original 13 Colonies.

Get Involved

America250MI is here to support and amplify commemorative activities happening across Michigan. Commemorative efforts empower Michiganders to reflect on the ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence—both in their historical context and in our lives today. While America250MI will coordinate major statewide initiatives, the heart of this commemoration is local. We encourage you to plan programs rooted in your community's history and aligned with America250MI's 5 Guiding Themes—Unfinished Revolutions, Power of Place, We the People, American Experiment, and Doing History. Topics often cross multiple themes; that is expected and welcomed.

Whether you are organizing a lecture or panel, a community conversation, a public reading, a performance or screening, a pop-up exhibit or display, a walking tour or heritage trail activation, a student showcase, or a community heritage project such as oral histories or preservation days, your event belongs in Michigan's statewide story. Share it so we can help amplify it. Submit your event to the America250MI Events Calendar through our Community Hub at www.America250MI.org/events. Once listed, eligible events may be highlighted on our website, newsletter, and social channels to reach audiences across the state.

America250MI Community Hub

www.America250MI.org

PUBLIC EVENTS

Host a Speaker Series
Host a lecture series by inviting experts on Michigan history to speak on their work at a venue such as a local library or school. Historians, curators, archivists, and historical interpreters from across the state are encouraged to develop presentations on various Revolutionary Era topics. Work with your local organizations to identify and highlight important events and people in your community. Community storytelling with local storytellers can entertain and educate as well as encourage community elders to share their history.

Support the Performing Arts
Consider screening a film related to one of the topics mentioned and develop questions to engage the audience in viewing. Other options include musical performances, theater, or artist exhibitions that allow everyone to share a spirit of pride in your community and its history. Last but not least, plan a reading of the Declaration of Independence in your community on July 4, 2026.

Augment an Existing Festival
Add America250MI themes, activities, and historical interpreters to an annual event to highlight the commemoration without planning an entirely new event.

Design a Traveling Exhibit
Traveling exhibits are non-artifact based and designed to be flexible in setup and configuration for a variety of locations. Develop a special, pop-up exhibit featuring original documents from your collections or to examine moments across 250 years that define the unique experiences of Michiganders.

Archaeology Days
Participate in or plan a public excavation event at various historic sites across the state (i.e., St. Joseph, Mackinac Island, Ft. Detroit, etc.) with coordinated student involvement.

Embrace Literacy with Your Local Library
Start a book club and meet weekly to discuss topics related to the Revolutionary War, civil rights, colonial food, and other topics.

RESEARCH

Genealogy

Uncover your roots, connect with your ancestors, and embrace the enriching journey of discovering your family history! Genealogy is by far one of the most popular hobbies in the United States. Expertise and skill levels vary considerably, from novice to professional genealogy gurus. Share your genealogical findings with the social media community, and play a role in preserving history. Let us ensure our ancestors' stories live on!

Write a History Book

Are you a history enthusiast, eager to write a history book, but not sure how to present your information? There are many ways to arrange and share history with your readers, and each method has its own unique advantages. No single approach is better or worse; it is really a matter of finding which works best for you and your material. There are many forms of history books: biographies, hidden-history stories, photograph collections, historical novels, deep dives into specific topics, and even quizzes!

Historic Preservation

Advocate for Michigan's historic places, which contribute to the state's economic vitality and provide Michiganders with a sense of place and connection to the past.

There are many ways you can help preserve history!

- Support local historic Main Streets, districts, and small businesses
- Form a volunteer group
- Create a guided tour or heritage trail
- Host a fundraising event
- Nominate an endangered place
- Conduct a community workshop
- Educate local agencies
- Survey historic resources
- Advocate for preservation
- Manage a grant program
- Sponsor research
- Vote for tax credits for historic rehabilitation
- Encourage building reuse
- Share stories of the past
- Conduct archival research
- Clean up our parks
- Treasure your family history

Michigan Humanities is proud to support America250MI

Michigan Humanities' mission is "bringing people together through stories, histories, cultures, and conversations." Through this mission, we support programming that highlights the America250MI themes of history, the power of place, and identity.

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

1776: An Anishnaabe Perspective

The year 1776 and the subsequent creation of the United States of America has many meanings to many people. It is impossible to sum up what the United States means for all Americans. There are simply too many people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, ethnicities, and stories. This reflection on 1776 holds true for the Native people of this continent as well. Tribes are unique, independent, and sovereign nations, each distinct from one another. A single Native or a single tribe does not speak on behalf of all the hundreds of nations. This perspective of what the United States means come solely from one Anishnaabe person, myself. My perspective is shaped by my community, work, travels, experiences, and study of history.

When I think of 1776, I think of a pivotal time that did not benefit Native nations on Turtle Island (North America). For the preceding centuries, Europeans had been invading Native lands and waging wars against tribes for land and resources, under the argument that it was their divine right to do so—manifest destiny. That accelerated with the creation of the United States in 1776. The "founding fathers" did not see tribes as equals, or even as civilized. Natives are briefly mentioned in the Declaration of Independence as "merciless Indian savages." The Louisiana Purchase did not have tribal nations at the table when the deal was signed. The Northwest Ordinance barely has Natives in it. Those foundational documents were critical in creating this country, yet the first people to the land are invisible in the writings. But Natives were not invisible in the country's subsequent actions.

The United States would go on to war with tribes, pass laws to remove them, pass laws to "civilize" them, sign hundreds of treaties to secure lands (most treaties were signed under duress), not honor the treaties, make Native religions illegal, create Indian boarding schools to forcibility assimilate Native children, and destroy millions of acres of land. The list of negative ripple effects could go on and on, but the story is much more complicated than ending on this note.

Natives constitute the highest percentage of any population to serve in the military. American flags adorn numerous Native homes, and I have seen fierce loyalty by Natives identifying as American. Tribal communities are strong in individual identity and choices, both traits that have served us well in surviving into the twenty-first century.

I ask questions often about 1776. Did the tribes invite the Americans here? What are the benefits? What was detrimental? What happened to my community because of 1776? What has changed since then? Where will the Anishnaabe be 250 years into the future? To answer the last question, I believe we will be at home in the Great Lakes, as we have been long before the United States of America began on July 4, 1776.

Eric Hemenway, Archives Director
Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians

REVOLUTIONARY WAR IN MICHIGAN

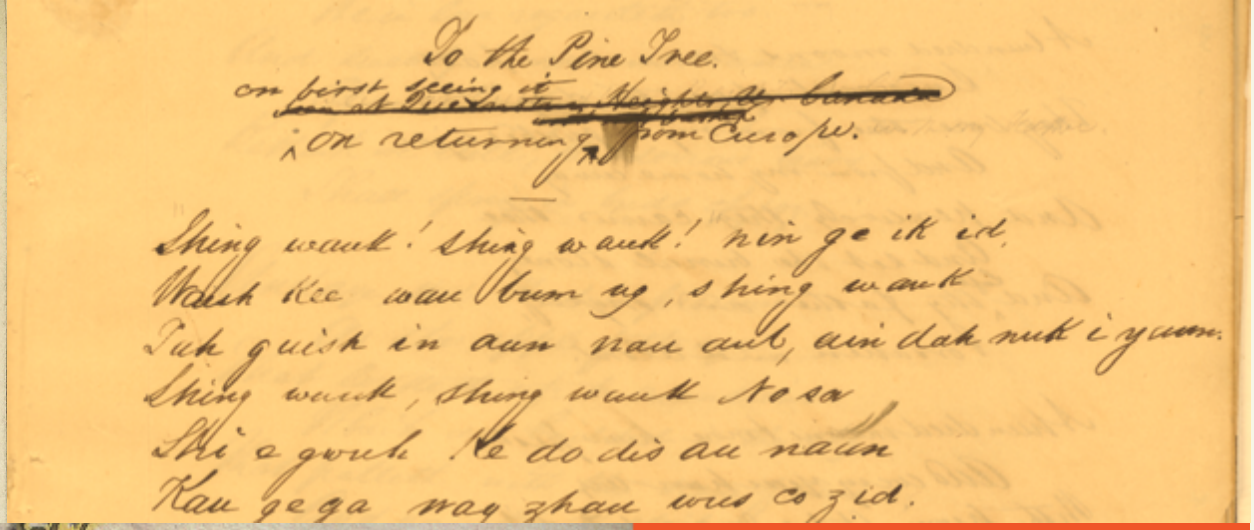
Although Michigan was not a hotbed of revolution, the people of this area played an active role in the American War of Independence. Whether to protect their business interests, safeguard their traditional way of life, or simply maintain the status quo, most of the residents of Michigan and Canada firmly supported continued British rule.

In addition to Anishnaabek communities throughout the region, major European settlements at Detroit and Michilimackinac, as well as smaller villages at Sault Ste. Marie and St. Joseph, were essential to the Canadian fur trade centered on the Great Lakes. Throughout the war years (1775-1783), the Anishnaabek and other regional Indigenous groups, eager to prevent American encroachment into their homelands, allied with the British. The British government maintained military garrisons, as well as government offices, at Detroit and Michilimackinac.

Along with the Canadian civilian population, the British and Anishnaabek worked together to defend the region from rebel incursions. Indigenous war parties from Michilimackinac joined British forces to fight the rebels at Montréal and in eastern New York, while other campaigns were launched against the Americans in the Illinois country and Spanish possessions west of the Mississippi. In retaliation, Spanish troops briefly occupied and burned St. Joseph. Major raids involving British regulars, Indigenous warriors, and Canadian militia regularly left Detroit to strike rebel outposts throughout the Ohio River Valley, successfully protecting the hub of British rule in the western Great Lakes. Detroit and Michilimackinac were heavily fortified, with the latter community moved from the mainland to nearby Mackinac Island, a more advantageous defensive position. Both towns remained important diplomatic centers, where British and Indigenous leaders held regular councils to determine the course of the war in the west, and both communities provided essential support for the British defense of the eastern Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River Valley.

Those wartime efforts proved successful, and the American rebels and their allies never seriously threatened Michigan. At war's end, the British retained control of the Great Lakes, and the debt-ridden American government was too militarily weak to force them to leave. The Anishnaabek and other Indigenous groups decisively defeated later American attempts to push into the region, and only diplomatic efforts in 1795-1796 transferred the region to the United States.

Craig Wilson, Chief Curator
Mackinac State Historic Parks



To the Pine Tree.
on first seeing it
on returning from Europe.

Shing wauk! shing wauk! nin ge ik id,
Wabish kee wau bum ug, shing wauk
Puk quish in aun nau aub, ain dah nub i gwam.
Shing wauk, shing wauk Nosa
Shi o gouk Ke do dis au naun
Kau ge ga mag zhau wus co zid.

Everyone has an awkward phase ... even me.

– MICHIGAN

Michigan History Center

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Michigan.gov/MHC
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1776–2026

The Declaration of Independence

COUNTDOWN TO THE 250TH

THE 14TH AMENDMENT

NOR SHALL ANY STATE DEPRIVE ANY PERSON OF LIFE, LIBERTY, OR PROPERTY, WITHOUT DUE PROCESS OF LAW

America250MI

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COUNTDOWN TO THE 250TH

1776 - 2026

5 Writers of The Declaration of Independence

JOHN ADAMS OF MASSACHUSETTS, ROGER SHERMAN OF CONNECTICUT, ROBERT R. LIVINGSTON OF NEW YORK, THOMAS JEFFERSON OF VIRGINIA, AND BENJAMIN FRANKLIN OF PENNSYLVANIA

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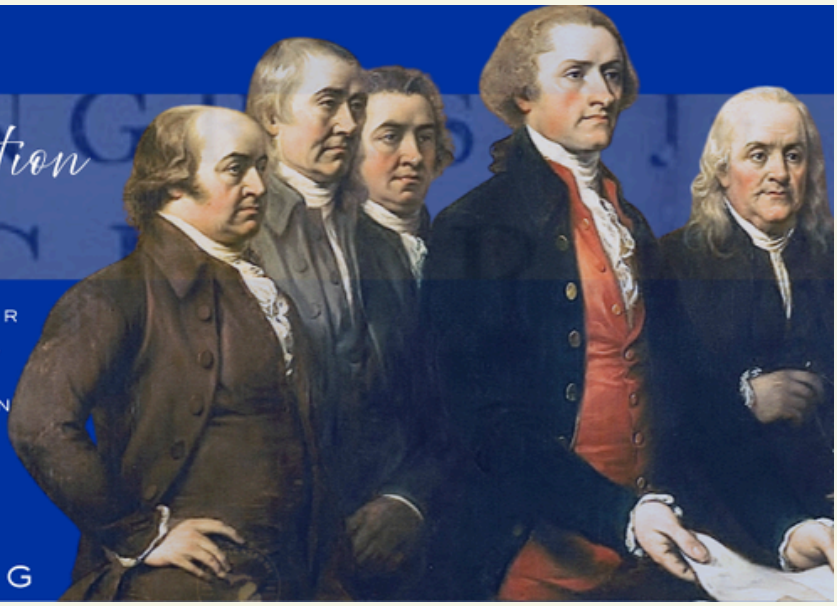
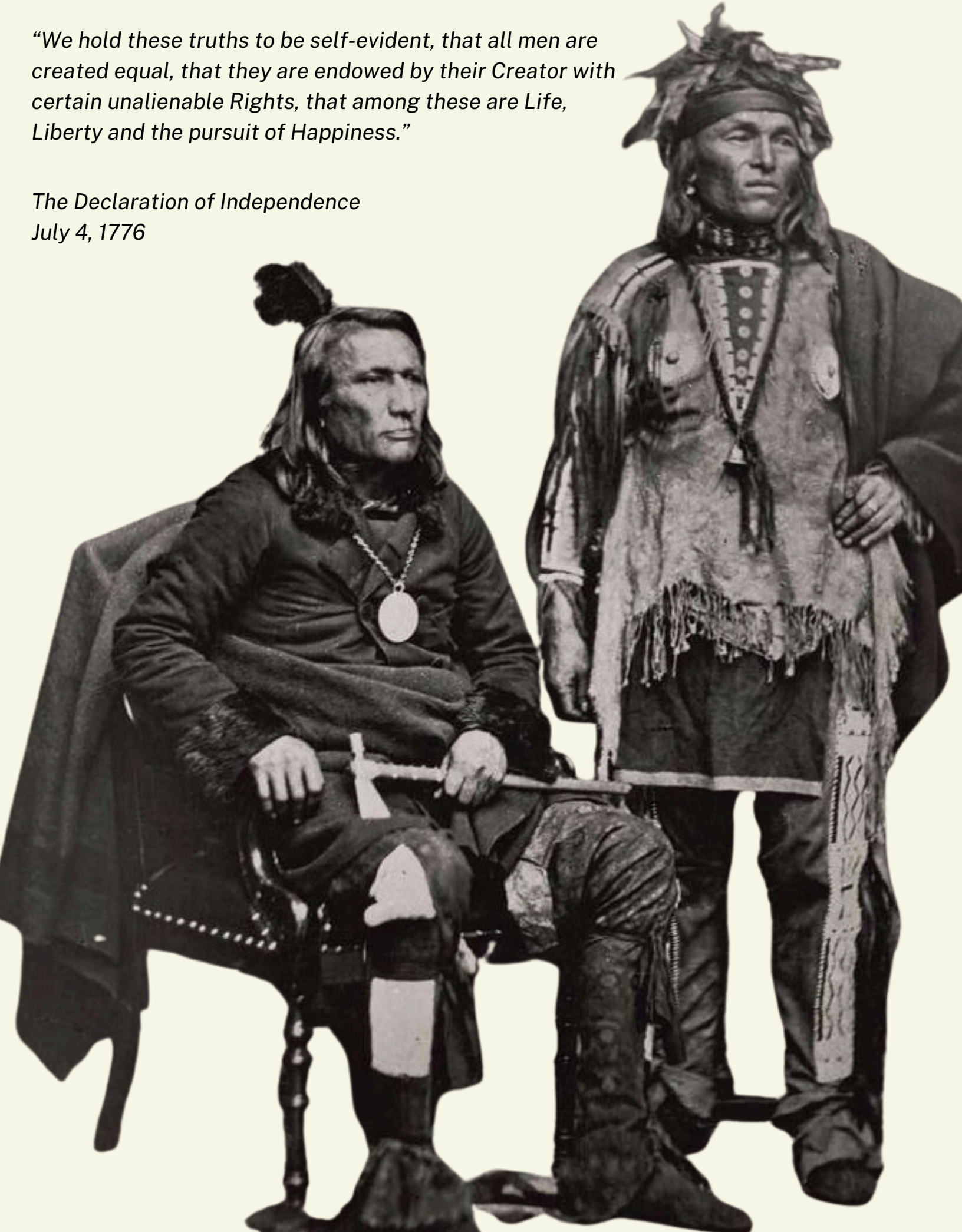


“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

The Declaration of Independence
July 4, 1776



Join America250MI as we work together to Commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the United States in 2026.

Acknowledgements

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The America250MI Program Guide

was prepared in collaboration with a dedicated group of scholars, public historians, and museum professionals from across the state.
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Additional Resources

For additional resources about how Michigan is preparing for the two hundred fiftieth anniversary, including publications, educational resources, and other materials, visit our Community Hub at www.America250MI.org

For additional information about the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission and America250, visit www.America250.org or the American Association for State and Local History Guide and Programs: www.aaslh.org/programs/250th.

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