



# MEMO TO MERIDIAN ARTS COMMISSION

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Date: 2-9-23

**RE: February Inclusivity Highlight Topic: Mardi Gras Indians, ~ Presented by Meridian Arts Commission Chair Jessica Peters**

In order to continue the Meridian Arts Commission's goals of Arts Access (Goal: Support experiences in the arts for everyone, regardless of age, race, ability or other protected class) the Commission may occasionally include inclusivity highlights at various meetings in order to learn about and promote inclusive arts practices.

## **February MAC Inclusivity Highlight: Mardi Gras Indians**

The Black Masking Indians of New Orleans, also known as Mardi Gras Indians, are groups or krewes of African Americans who gather, dance, and parade throughout New Orleans. This tradition honors the history of Native Americans protecting runaway slaves in Louisiana in the 1800s, and features masks, beads, and feathers in elaborate costumes that mix Indigenous and West African cultures. The costumes are worn in dances and gatherings during the Mardi Gras season, which grew in popularity during segregation when African Americans weren't allowed to participate in Mardi Gras festivities in New Orleans, so they created a celebration in their own neighborhoods known as Carnival. Learn more about the Black Masking Indians in the links below.

**Black Masking Indians: A Historical New Orleans Carnival Tradition:**

<https://youtu.be/VsOxxz4h1rU>

**Mardi Gras Indians – Colorful suits, lively footwork and rhythmic music fill the streets of New Orleans when the Mardi Gras Indians parade:** <https://www.neworleans.com/things-to-do/music/history-and-traditions/mardi-gras-indians/>

**CBS Saturday Morning: The History of Super Sunday and the Mardi Gras Indians:**

<https://youtu.be/awMFbUYF24Y>

**Mardi Gras Indians: Culture and Community Empowerment:**

[https://www.louisianafolklife.org/It/articles\\_essays/creole\\_art\\_mardi\\_indians.html](https://www.louisianafolklife.org/It/articles_essays/creole_art_mardi_indians.html)

**New Orleans's best hidden treasure is its Mardi Gras Indians:**

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/travel/2020/02/28/new-orleanss-best-hidden-treasure-is-its-mardi-gras-indians/>

**After Covid, the Mardi Gras Indians are back in intricate, beaded suits:**

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/interactive/2022/new-orleans-indians/>