

Isabella Aiukli Cornell



Isabella Aiukli Cornell, a member of Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, turned her high school prom into a political and fashion statement. The importance of color to Indigenous people cannot be underestimated and Cornell made headlines in spring 2018 for her activism surrounding missing and murdered Indigenous women. A striking red prom dress shouted awareness to the poignant issue^{1,2}. The dress featured a Crow tribal appliqué design while showcasing Cornell's tribal heritage¹. Since an early age she has done advocacy work such as presentations on decolonization and reestablishing tribal sovereignty¹. When Cornell turned 14 she began organizing alongside her mother and other Native women in Oklahoma to bring to attention to the epidemic of violence against Native women and girls¹. She helped organize Matriarch, a women's intertribal organization, which includes Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Cherokee. The group was co-founded by her mother as a safe space for women who are victims of domestic violence and other forms of abuse¹. When Cornell was featured in Teen Vogue, social media exploded with positive coverage, bringing her message to a much wider audience. The dress is now a part of the collection, "Girlhood, It's Complicated," at the National Museum of American History.

Citations

1. Sam Vong, N. 24. (2022, January 4). Isabella Aiukli Cornell makes prom political. National Museum of American History. Retrieved January 25, 2023, from <https://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/prom-political>
2. History, M. of N. A. (2021, March 12). Women's History Month: Isabella Aiukli Cornell. monah. Retrieved January 27, 2023, from <https://www.monah.org/featured/2021/3/3/isabella-aiukli-cornell>