

Native American Higher Education Panel

Faculty Communities for Inclusive Teaching, 2015



Comprehensive Studies Program (CSP)

Project Overview

The event was designed to bring Native American elders, faculty, administrators, and students to a “talking circle” with non-Native academic personnel to discuss:

- Issues of *cultural sensitivity, inclusion, and equity* in curriculum, university culture, admission, student socialization, dissertation and faculty tenure processes *from Native vision*;
- In what manners the University might *create or adapt policies and curriculum to better facilitate inclusion of Native visions*, interact with Native councils or communities;
- Priorities *for increasing the extent to which non-Native administration, faculty, and students are aware of, or respectful to Native cultures and values* – (as may progressively be incorporated into their own initiatives – in balance to pervasively Euro-centric models and history)

Panel Participants

Panel Elder – Warren Petoskey

Panel Leader – Kay McGowan (EMU)

Panelists:

- Fay Givens (American Indian Services)
- Kyle Powys Whyte (MSU)
- Judy Pamp (Ziibiwing Center)
- Susan Sturock (Saginaw-Chippewa)
- Alphonse Pitawanakwat, (U-M)
- Sandra Momper (U-M)
- Andrea Wilkerson (U-M/NASA Student Representative)

Production Moderator – Michael Naylor (CSP Lecturer/U-M)

Key Insights / New Questions

“Loneliness, alienation, in a (University) system that does not accommodate us in any way, it’s a real test of fortitude to get through college as a Native student. As a direct result of boarding schools, (Western) education was a place you went to ‘lose’ your history. Native people are taught to think for themselves, but act for the good of the group. Mainstream (Western) peoples are taught, think like the group, but act in your own self-interest.” Kay McGowan, PhD, Eastern Michigan University

“All the public school experience (and lack of presence or sensitivity to my culture), I just couldn’t imagine four or eight more years of that...” Warren Petoskey (“Light that is Coming”), Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians

“Native students feel that individual competition with other students, is a very different experience (from our cultures). There’s a lack of respect among students in general. Everyone has something to teach someone else... it’s a matter of respect. Coming to the University is a difficult environment, we are immediately put in competition with your peers... this is not our way.” Andrea Wilkerson, Sarnia, Canada Chippewa



Outcome Statement: Native students and faculty (primarily raised in Native communities) by and large *do not feel honored, welcomed or acknowledged in the University environment* on the whole. The *poor recognition of the assault to Native cultures historically*, does not end with the holocaust to their people, but *is magnified by the continued practice of culturally-centric beliefs of value (materialism, capitalism, ownership, and individualism)*, and the practices of competitive advancement of individual agendas, policies and decisions driven by material/financial gain, and the limited vision of intelligence as distinctly that of the European colonizer.

To reverse our current exploitation of the earth’s resources, denigration of community life, insensitivity to spirituality, diverse intelligences, humility, and diverse values – in all things academic – requires the ritualization of dialogue towards these ends.

Artifacts

- With the help of Learning Technologies Group (LSA-ISS) a 20-minute video was created: <https://vimeo.com/132832529>



Resources

The most critical resources available to non-Native peoples, as concerns contemporizing a balanced and respectful vision of Native life, visions, and perspectives – **lies in the inclusion and utilization of Native Peoples, their input and wisdom at every level of the University. Imagine:**

- Before football games, hearing: *“the University of Michigan would like to thank the Anishinaabe for allowing us to have this important contest on their land.”*
- In building “new” organizations or initiatives, asking: *“How would our Native people create Learning communities – based on circular discourse and inclusive collaborative practices?”*

In other words: Changing HOW we operate in the interest of Native values – can have a profound effect on the quality of University life – and thus, planetary life and values.

Next Steps

- **Native students must have a “center”** for building community and creating a strong link between Native traditions and fostering warm relations with those interested in Native ways;
- **The University might seek to reinforce Native traditions** from language, to spirituality, to de-emphasizing ownership, individualism, and materialism as governing principles of University life;
- **Dissertation and tenure committees for Native students and faculty** must have as their “chair” a Native faculty member who is familiar with Native values, spirituality, and community ways;
- **Native communities, tribes, and tribal elders or councils should have a progressive voice** in University policies concerning Native curriculum, students, and faculty;
- **Education, history, and social work students and faculty and University administrators** should increasingly be given sensitivity training in Native history, culture, and curriculum constructed by Native educators.