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Title: Native Americans at U of I

About the Author: I am a freshman here at the University of Illinois with an undecided major. However, I am interested in majoring in advertising or speech communications. I am open to meeting all different sorts of people and that is one of the main reasons I choose U of I. I like playing all different types of sports as well as singing and dancing. I am very involved with my church which is one of the reasons I became interested in this project. One of my trips was to a Native American resort where I was able to see how Native Americans lived their everyday lives.

Keywords: Native American, Native American house, segregation, Chief

Abstract: My research project was all about Native Americans at the University of Illinois. My main goal for this project was to make people aware of the lack of Native Americans on campus as well as people's lack of knowledge of what they offer our campus. To find out my information I did two interviews, a survey, went to the archives, and did an annotated bibliography. The two interviews helped me the most as I discovered about the classes offered at the University as well as what the Native Americans do at their house on campus. Then I went to the archives to do a comparison of how Native Americans used to be on our campus. After having barely any success I was able to locate an event, Sheequon, which showed racism towards the Native Americans on campus in the 1960's. From there I talked about how bad racism was on how there have been improvements since then like having the Native American House. From this project I have discovered that there have been many improvements for Native Americans but it is still not enough. There is not equality on our campus and I learned from the survey's that there is not enough emphasis put towards the culture houses we have on Nevada Street. I have also learned and focused a little attention on the Chief and how different people approached their reasoning's behind bringing the Chief back or not. Overall this project has brought up many issues that no one had really addressed as people mostly focus on the most common races to argue about.

Initial Exercises:

Question: The subject that I am most interested in is the Native Americans on campus and the things they involved themselves in. We have focused a lot on how Caucasians, African Americans, and Asian Americans seemed to hang out with each other but rarely talked about Native Americans. I know I personally have not seen a group of Native Americans walking down the street or at the bars together. The questions I have are do Native Americans tend to hang out with each other like other races? What activities do the Native Americans involve themselves in as individuals as well as a house? What are their current feelings on the Chief? I am also wondering the development of the Native Americans culture on this campus including their history?

Plan: I plan to:

- give a survey
- give several interviews
- go to the Archives and look at old videos, pictures, and documents

I think giving a survey which will help me compare my thoughts to others as far as how much they know about Native American culture on our campus. I also would like to put one question about the Chief but nothing like do you want the chief to be reinstated but something involving the relationship between Native Americans and our mascot. I will give the survey after my interviews so that I am more knowledgeable on things.

One person I want to interview is the person who runs the Native American house, try and get a feel for their position as well as their thoughts on different thoughts and ideas. Another person I would not mind interviewing are some of the students that are involved in the Native American house. Since I am also curious on why Native American studies is not a major let alone a minor I would like to interview a professor who may teach a course and ask them their thoughts on the courses available to students to learn about the Native American culture. I think asking the people who are Native American on this campus the questions I have will be my best resource in information.

When I looked at the archives I noticed they did have videos along with pictures that had to do with Native Americans here at campus. I am very curious on what I will actually find in Archives and if it will be useful or not. I think this will help because I am hoping to compare how things were in the past with Native Americans on campus compared to how they might be now. I think it is important to look at the development or lack of that Native Americans may have on this campus. I am especially curious about the videos that the Archives said they had because maybe some people have already started research on this topic that I may be able to continue.

Data: Annotated Bibliography

Farnell, Brenda. "Zero-Sum Game: An Update on the Native American Mascot Controversy at the University of Illinois."

Journal of Sport & Social Issues; May2004, Vol. 28 Issue 2, p212-215, 3p

Farnell's article seems to covers the main problem of the U of I mascot while including other concerns as well. Along with the controversial debate on the mascot, Farnell also includes Native American student's aspect on how they feel about the issue along with other concerns they have involving their race. She goes on to continue that though there have been positive an improvement with the Native American community on campus, the Chief has continually been a

negative issue. She concludes her thoughts with how Chancellor Cantor retirement not only hurt the education system but also did not solve anything with the issues involving the Chief. This paper helps me in the sense that Farnell writes of some of the students thoughts about issues that I has not considered. She also talks about how the Native Americans on campus tend to blend in as Latinos and Caucasians. I am also curious is if Native Americans hang out with their own race or mingle between different races. This article will definitely help when I look into the mascot issue involving Native Americans.

“Historical Formation of Champaign-Urbana”

This article appears on the IDEALS website and consists of some of the same things I am trying to discover myself. In here the author focuses on the past 100 years of Native Americans on campus as well as Native American tribes that may be around this area. The author also discusses his concern on the lack of information on Native Americans that he could find in several different areas. At first I was concerned when I read some of this information because I didn't know how my report would then go. However, there are some things that are different from my report to the author's/ to start off he was not from Champaign so a lot of his contact was threw email and mine will almost all be done face to face because I am currently living in the area. Something that may benefit me, however, is some of the questions that he used while interviewing people. I have not yet thought of the questions to ask the people I interview as well as the people I survey so that will be beneficial. I really feel I will be able to prove this author

wrong and be able to find out more information than what he found.

“Methodists defend grant vs. Indian mascot”

Christian Century; 02/21/2001, Vol. 118 Issue 6, p9, 2p

Again, the overall topic for this article is the controversy about the Chief.

However, this was is more about the people who are fighting against the mascot.

The information that I got from it is not very useful to what I will be discussing but is something that I had not really considered before. There is a methodist church that supported getting rid of the Chief, which got me wondering why other cultures get so involved in this battle if it is not their race being insulted. I guess that would be like if someone insulted a African American and I would defend them. After reading the article it made me ponder the thought that people are defending Indians like other people defend other races. The article also gave a quote from the director of Native American ministries which I may be able to use in my interview. She made claims that the dance that was performed at halftime of sport events was very offensive to their race. I would like to use that quote to ask other Native Americans if they agree with that exact statement.

“No charges against U of I students accused of threats”

Native American Times.: Feb 9, 2007. Vol. 13, Iss. 6; pg. 1, 1 pgs

Though this article is very short I was actually one of the most useful pieces of information that I could find. The overall topic is about how a non Native

American started making threats on a website about the mascot. Since most of the information I was finding was just the basic information about the Chief this one really stood out to me. This helped me to realize that not only could Native Americans feel insulted by the idea about the Chief they could also be judged for fighting against the Chief. Though I will not be able to get whole lot information from this small article I may be able to incorporate some questions about people ever feeling threatened by other students based on everything that has happened with the Chief.

Tenoso, Genevieve. "What we don't know about Indians"

Tenoso's key question involving American Indians was "What would you say to someone who wanted to know about American Indians?" Her main goal is to teach people of non American Indian decent about the depth of the culture besides knowing a mascot can be Indian. She also would ask people where they could find information on Native Americans. This source could definitely benefit me because she did a lot of similar studies as I did including a type of survey. Tenoso also researched Native Americans in the Archives and her specific details of where she searched will help me further my research as well. Tenoso's seems to focus a lot on the comparison of the Chief with the rest of the Native American culture and people's knowledge of the two. This information will support my argument and my findings but it does not cover everything that I am looking in to.

The Archives

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Discuss:

Native American's at U of I

Where it All Began

My quest all began when I saw a movie in my Rhet class that discussed Native Americans being discriminated against in American and having to assimilate to Caucasian dominate environment. When I saw this I was appalled at how they were treated. After that video, the rest of the information our class looked at seemed to be based on the inequality of African Americans and Latinos and the treatment they received in different situations. It made me wonder, what about Native Americans? Not only do we not hear a lot of things that occur to Native Americans in the world, but at our campus, no one ever seems to be concerned on what goes on with the Native American culture. Also, people always say that there is segregation on campus of African Americans hanging out with each other and Caucasians hanging out with each other as well. Again I wondered, what about Native Americans? No one ever complains about them being segregated from other cultures but that is only because Native Americans are not really seen on a daily basis walking around campus, let a lone many hanging out together. The only time I have ever seen many Native Americans together was at the beginning of the school year on Quad Day. There was an event called The Taste of Nevada where each minority house on Nevada Street set up a booth with food and information about each house. I went with one of my friends to the Native American booth and was able to see the inside of the Native American house. Having just a little connection to the house made me want to learn even more

about what sort of things Native Americans are involved in as far as a our campus life.

Plan

Through a few interviews, as well as a survey, and analyzing text from the past, I want to discover the key reason of why Native Americans are not seen often on campus. It is important to understand what the university is doing to change the environment involving segregation of Native American's on our campus. I figured the appropriate way to figure out why things are the way they are today would be to look at the way things used to be for Native Americans based on how they may have been treated. Please note that even though the Chief is not one of my key concerns I will be taking a look at a few different people's opinions on the Chief once again becoming our mascot. Though there are solid facts in my ethnography research, it should be known that my main goal is to draw awareness to the issue dealing with Native American's on the University of Illinois campus.

Native American's at the University of Illinois

According to the History section of Native American House website, it took a lot of effort and a lot of fighting from Native American students on campus in order to get a Native American House on Nevada Street. After about 15 years of fighting, the house was finally opened in 2002. It amazes me that the house took that long in order to become a part of this University after many of the other houses were already on Nevada Street. For example, the Asian American house

was formed in 1997 and started offering a minor in Asian American Studies in 2002. Just as the Asian American culture was gaining more and more recognition, the Native Americans were fighting for something that the Asian American's had already had for five years (About Us, Asian American Studies). I think it is key for this house to stay on our campus because of the fact that is where Native Americans on our campus can unite and learn more about their culture as well as just being able to connect to more people who have the same ancestor history as themselves. It is also important to inform others about the house. While giving a survey out to fifteen people, six of them had never heard of the Native American house. The next question I asked was "if so, have you ever visited the house, why or why not?" To my amazement, the most frequent replies were that there was no reason to visit since they were not Native American, as well as there are no events there so why should any non Native Americans go? This is a prime example of segregation on our campus, for the simple fact that there are people who feel that there needs to be a reason to learn about another culture, not making an attempt to learn for themselves.

I had an opportunity to interview one of my friends who is a part of the Native American house. Though Susie is only one-eighth Choctaw she is considered enough Native American to get some advantages of minorities on our campus. The reason I say that this is important is because there are approximately one hundred and seven Native American's total on this campus including undergraduates, graduates, and staff! This includes people who may be one

hundred percent Native American or one eighth. For those of you who are unaware of how big the University of Illinois really is, we have one lecture hall class that holds seven hundred people. That means that one seventh of the students in that one class makes up the entire Native American population on our campus.

I decided to ask Susie several questions about the Native American house as well as her feelings toward certain things on campus. I started the interview out by asking Susie of her involvement in her house. I figured by asking this question I could figure out what people in the house may actually do to keep other people informed. Though she does not have a lot of involvement at the Native American house she does have a job that she got through the house as well as a position in the house. Her position in the house is being a member of the Student Cultural Programming Fee committee. When I asked Susie what that was she went on to tell me that it was a committee that combines a few people from each minority house to decide which minority events should get what money. A direct quote from the Campus Honors Program website states:

“The purpose of the Student Cultural Programming Fee is to provide direction and allocation of resources for culture-specific programming for African American, Asian American, Latina/o, and Native American programs and activities for all UIUC students. The goal is to advance more cultural awareness, encourage diversity, education the greater community, and provide a forum for

the development, exploration and improvement of cultural programs” (Schmallr).

The funding to help pay for the events comes from every U of I students tuition, putting around four dollars towards the minority events held on campus. The group that Susie is involved in reads the proposals for events and decided how much money each event should be given in order for it to be run properly. The interesting thing about this is when I asked Susie what kind of events the Native American house puts on she said it was mostly guest speakers who speak about their culture. The reason I find this so interesting is because it seems as if their house spends a lot of time informing people of their culture then enjoying putting on events like say a craft show or something else other than speakers. I do not want you to get the wrong impression, informing people of one’s culture is very important but I have not heard of any other activities beside that. Could it be possible that there is so much time put in to trying to teach people about Native Americans because there is not a large representation on our campus? Or can it be that there are not a lot of Native Americans to show up to hosted events by the house that guest speakers are something that anyone can attend and a great number of the house does not have to be at? By no means am I trying to jump to any sort of conclusions but trying to figure out why it may be that Native American events on our campus are not well known and not hugely attended like some other minority group activities?

Something that may go along with this is how busy a lot of the people in the Native American house are. When I asked Susie if a lot Native Americans hang

out with each other she replies that some do but not others. She went on to explain that everyone in the house is very busy so when they try and get everyone together it is hard for everyone to attend. This goes along with the point about events being hosted by the house. With not much of a representation on campus of Native Americans on campus, it must be hard to host things because there is much more dependency on fewer people for things to be run.

This question is also appropriate to think about when it comes to thinking about certain races and ethnicities hanging out with each other. For Caucasian people to hang out with each other it is pretty convenient. The majority of the people on my floor are and most of my friends are Caucasian. So if I want to do an activity or hang out with people of my own race it does not take a lot of effort to find at least one person. When Susie talked about the house trying to set up gatherings so that all the students can hang out and bond it brought up another point. The fact that events need to be planned in order for people to hang out is a new concept. It is not an everyday thing to see Native Americans living in the dorms and walking around, meaning it is harder for everyone to hang out and converse with each other on a daily basis.

Though it is frustrating for me to think about the small amount of Native Americans on campus, Susie did bring up a good point. When I asked her about the opportunities that Native American's have on campus I was happy that there were some benefits for them being on campus. Just like other minorities on campus Native Americans receive access to tutors as well as counselors that are

just involved with the minority groups on campus. I think this is especially important for Native Americans because of lifestyle of lifestyle that some Native Americans grow up in. One reason that Susie thinks that there are not a lot of Native Americans on our campus, which I agree with, is because of the way that many Native Americans grow up on the resorts they live in. Because a lot of them live on reservations around the country their education systems are not as strong and they do not receive as well as opportunities as other students may have.

I was able to witness some Native American's living environment first hand when I went on a mission trip to Minnesota. Most of the resort was in poor conditions with a lot of run down building and houses. One of the big reasons why things were the way they were was because of the casinos surrounding the resort. Many people have lost a good amount of money there as well as new towns and buildings being built around the resort. The schools were in okay condition though I learned that the learning environment was not the best and not the safest. As a matter of fact, there was a school shooting at the high school I took a shower in just four months after I was there. Because there was not as many opportunities where these people lived, many of them did not go to college, and if they did they were less likely to go out of state to a top university like the University of Illinois.

A Racist Situation at the University

My original intentions when going to the archives was to look at the history of Native Americans on this campus, to see if there was any recorded activities

hosted by anyone associated with Native Americans. I originally thought I was in luck when I was directed to the library archives to find some videos and photos. However, when I got there, the archival researcher told me it may take a little bit to find something so he encouraged me to check the Illio first. The Illio is the yearbook that comes out every year with photos of all the clubs and activities as well as graduating students of that year. For no definite reason I started at the year 1950 to see if I could find things that may connect to any Native American organizations or anything that may help me learn about something history related. After finding being unsuccessful I decided to skip ahead ten years to 1960 where I found something that was definitely surprising to me.

In a three page article in the Illio was I astounded by what I found. It was the second anniversary of a campus event called the Sheequon. The name Sheequon means Spirit of Spring which comes from the Menominee tribe, whom lived on some of the land that U of I is now built on. This event was a whole weekend event where apparently the whole campus came out to watch a parade/ a huge celebration in the spring. The theme for the 1960 parade: Being an Indian for a Weekend! Now when I say Indian I actually mean Native American. That is the first contribution to a very insulting themed weekend. According to “Guidelines for Avoiding Racist Language”, Native Americans are not Indians, when referring to an Indian person it is a person from India (86). With that being said, the things that the anonymous author of this article said were pretty racist, with photos backing up this racist event.

“Many a merchants in town always wishes he had a bigger supply of grease paints and musline when we decided to become Indians for this weekend.” This was one of the many quotes used to describe this “thrilling” event. The way the author paints a picture in reader’s mind shapes people’s mind to certain stereotypes against Native Americans. In today’s society Native Americans dress like every other person so why is it necessary to act like they load up on grease paint before they go out in public? Another quote in the article was, “...were transformed into Indians or Aztecs gods or perhaps a series of teepee's”. The way this event was looked at was that if you put on a costume that resembles how Native Americans dressed in history that everyone can become that specific race and be a part of their culture. I am not Native American but I take offense to this because of the simple fact that every culture has a history and especially Native Americans have not had the easiest in American, and no one has a right to pretend be a part of the struggles that they have gone through as a culture.

Supporting this article are a good amount of pictures demonstrating how most of the campus imitated being Native Americans. There were students dressed like the stereotypical Native American, with face paint on, a feather in their hair, and outfits resembling how many historical Native Americans looked. Underneath one picture of a young adult male dressed like a Native American was a caption asking “Do modern Indians wear tennis shoes?” This caption especially bothered me because even if it was written as a joke it is not funny. To ask if Native Americans really wear tennis shoes in today’s society is just an unnecessary. The

words are so racist because of the fact that people are pretending not to know that the Native Americans have assimilated into our culture, like European Americans made them do.

The interesting part about this whole thing event is that the University allowed this to happen. This was not event that was run by a club or done secretly but was widely known on campus. The author even emphasized how it was almost as if the whole campus shut down for this event because it was so big. In today's issues involving campus life and racism it mostly involves the Greek life. In the past few years there have been issue involving themed parties' incorporating racist themes. Though some people complain that the consequences for these parties were not harsh enough, at least there was a punishment. Sheequon went on and was celebrated without any questions as well as being positively publicized. In a way it shows how our campus as grown to be more aware of racism that occurs, but in another way I wonder why it was even allowed in the first places.

And Then There's the Chief

One of the most debated arguments on campus involving Native Americans, is definitely the Chief being U of I's mascot. Since the mascot's last dance was in the winter of last year, students at the University have been fighting to get the famous Chief back on our campus. Since coming to this school my opinion has been indifferent because I had never been here when there was a Chief so I didn't feel like I was missing anything. However, when everyone would roar "CHIEF"

at sporting events; a part of me felt like I was missing out on something that was so important. These feelings continued with me up until doing this project, when I really got a chance to take a step back and think about who was really fighting for what.

One of the big questions I wanted to figure out was how the Native Americans felt about having the Chief as our mascot, as well as the University getting rid of it. I originally thought the subject may be hard to research because everyone usually has different opinions. How But boy was I blind, due to the fact that the Native American House website conformed there own statement on the mascot under the section entitled 'Mascot Info'. The following statement comes directly from the website:

“The Native American House at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign provides a place where students, faculty, staff, and community members may increase their knowledge and understanding of the histories of American Indian peoples and their cultures, both past and present. Part of this understanding rests on the ability to critique and set aside images that confine the perception of an entire people to a limited and narrow existence. Stereotypical images, negative or positive, are barriers to understanding and seriously miseducate the public about Native Americans. Therefore, the Native American House and American Indian Studies faculty insist that the University Of Illinois Board Of Trustees discontinue the use of 'chief illiniwek' in name, performance, and symbol.”

With this being clearly stated and labeled on the website I do not understand why people still fight for the mascot. Native Americans on our campus are offended by the mascot so why push it? Another interview I conducted in my research was with a freshman who is in an American Indian Studies course. The way that Janet explained the mascot situation really opened my eyes to what was really being argued. For Native Americans, the Chief is a representation of their ancestors. Though some think that this is respecting Native Americans they forget to remember the fact of the genocides that Native Americans have been put through, as well as a forceful encouragement for them to assimilate into the American culture. Students have gotten so angry about the Chief no longer being our mascot, that there were threats towards people who were anti- Chief which ended up leading to arrest (No Charges). This is a prime example of people just see the issues of the Chief from one point of view instead of taking a look at the whole picture.

Another thing to think about is the way the Chief dresses. Though it is similar to the way that Native Americans may have dressed in our history it reminds me a lot of the Sheequon event. People thought that is how Native Americans dress in today's society completely forgetting that things have changed over the decades. It is nice to remember the ancestors of Native Americans but it is not right to forget of the progress the Native Americans have had.

Since starting this project I have turned complete anti- Chief. However, during my survey there were a few people that brought up a valid point. Two people

coincidentally answered the questions of “Should the chief be brought back?” the same. Both people responded by using the example of the Notre Dame’s Fighting Irish. They do not understand how it is okay to have a mascot of an Irish person drinking beer and not have a Native American as a mascot. My counter argument was going to be that the Irish were never mistreated which is actually a false statement. So to that, I would have to say in time things may have to change completely across the board. The University of Illinois taking away the Chief as the mascot I think is just the beginning of things changing as far as athletics and mascots. I do not think that it is fair to have a professional football team named the Redskins or a baseball team called the Indians. Though I am glad that not having a mascot is respecting what the Native Americans want, I do think that it is unfair to not change things across the board, especially because the names that are still around are even more offense than our school.

Opportunities to Become More Aware

Though the university has had a past of being somewhat unfair to Native Americans on our campus, they are making improvements on how people can become more knowledgeable on Native Americans. For the fall 2008 semester there are twenty eight American Indian Study (AIS) courses opened to all undergraduates. They have made it possible for the AIS to be a minor which Susie is planning on getting herself. She has also informed me that a major in American Indian Studies may be available to people in the near future.

Janet, the girl I interviewed, is currently in AIS 102 even though she is not Native American herself. She originally became interested in their culture when she went on a mission trip to a Native American resort. Her class is completely based on current problems that Native Americans face around the world as well as issues like the Chief. Her professor is part Native American so Janet explains he is very passionate about what he teaches because he has a personal connection with the issues being discussed. The reason I strongly encourage students to take a course in AIS is because it is a perfect opportunity for people to get aware of other cultures that they may not regularly encounter in their lives. The University is starting to create chances for students to become aware of races that they may see on daily basis. Now is the time to grasp the opportunities you may only get in your four years at the University of Illinois.

EUI Links: Farnell, Brenda. "Zero-Sum Game: An Update on the Native American Mascot Controversy at the University of Illinois." *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*; May 2004, Vol. 28 Issue 2, p212-215, 3p

Giago, Tim. "NOTES FROM INDIAN COUNTRY: Illinois legislature ignores facts of racial stereotypes. " Indian Country Today [Oneida, N.Y.] 4 May 1995, A4. Ethnic NewsWatch (ENW). ProQuest. University of Illinois Library, Champaign, IL <<http://www.proquest.com/>>

Reflect: At the beginning of this assignment I was very frustrated because I could not narrow my paper down into one topic. I was very interested in a media and stereotypes but also with the Native Americans on our campus. When it came down to it I found more passion and interests in Native Americans.

My most rewarding moment would have to be when presenting my research to people who do this stuff for a living. Though I was really

nervous and was not sure on what to say in the end I presented what I had researched and put together. It was nice to get positive feedback on what I had done and how people were actually interested in what I had to say. I would say the most difficult part of my project was not having enough time to do all the research that I wanted to. I feel like there is so much for research to do and was disappointed that I could not do it all on my own. I think the most surprising part of my research is discovering how many Native Americans there actually are on our campus, which is only 107!

With this research I am most proud that all my hard work will pay off and my research will be published. I am also proud that I think I stated my opinions in a classy way where people will not take offense to anything I had to say. If I were given the option to redo anything I do not know if I would necessarily do anything differently. I am proud of my work, but I just wish I would have had more time to do more research. I would have liked to interview more people from the house but due to come circumstances that are going on I am satisfied for getting one interview.

Overall this whole thing was a new experience for me and I really enjoyed it. From the different ways of research to the required consent forms we had to get signed, everything was done so professionally and it was all very new to me. This whole project also helped me with managing my time when it comes to writing papers and organizing my paper with different parts.

Recommendations: The main recommendation I have for the University when it involves Native Americans is to promote Taste Of Nevada more. Quad Day is promoted so much and this year I barely heard about the Taste of Nevada because none of the focus was on that event. With more a promotion of that event more people will see the different minority house including the Native American house!