

Ethnic research paper

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



However, disregarding the loss of culture through the western culture, Native Americans put the effort to preserve their culture as much as possible through storytelling. Native Americans have nothing but stories to tell. In order for them to know they have existed in the past. Native Americans keep themselves and their culture alive through the power of storytelling, regardless of how the stories are expressed by the storytellers, they all have the implication point at the end. To prevent Native American heritage from fading, Native Americans tell stories as time changes.

Being born and raised up in the United States, realized that the western culture has more of an impact on me than my home-based culture, Indian. The day I went to a temple in India was when I realized I was not influenced by my culture at all; instead I was influenced more by western culture. When I went to the temple, was familiar with manners that were performed in a temple, however was not as familiar with the language that was being spoken as the priest said the prayers. My mother had taken me up to the prayer room where the priest was standing in front of the stage, where all the statues of the gods were set p.

I was standing as I clasped my hands in prayer. The priest walked up to me asking me, " What is your name child? " in Hindi. As I struggled to understand him, I looked back at my mother for assistance, and she translated for me telling me what the priest was asking before I made a fool out of myself. I replied back saying, " Shiva. " Then the priest asked me another question in Hindi again, " What is this god's name" as he point at the statue of a god with an elephant head. When he asked me this, I could not comprehend as to what he was asking was so baffled.

Again, looked to my other for help, and she gives me a look as if she expected me to know what the priest was asking me. By this, I realized there was a language barrier between my culture and me. I recognized that if cannot converse with another Indian, how am I suppose to be close to them in general if western culture is so influential. Culture defines one's identity, because it is the only way one can connect with another by sharing the same language, stories, traditions, songs, beliefs and most importantly morals.

In the PBS article, " Revitalization Native American Cultures" it States, " Language is really a key to he soul of the culture. " I was never taught Hindi properly because I have always lived in the United States; I have always spoken broken Hindi blended with English UN like my parents who were taught the knowledge to speak Hindi fluently because they were taught by parents as they grew up in India. In We Are Still Here by Leigh Podgiest, Katherine states, " When you know your language, you know who you are. But now, today many of my people are in great danger of forgetting who they are. Because I do not know my language properly, I feel like I am out of place when I go to places where my Indian culture IS highly present. Feel as if I do not know who I am. For instance in India I felt out of place because I could not relate with my native members. I did not feel at home, yet was in my home country. In many cultures such as the Native American and Indian cultures, language holds an importantresponsibilityin one's life. Language is a symbol of ones identity and not knowing my language shows how much priority I give to my culture.

I felt foreign due to my lack of awareness of my culture. As the western culture is so resilient, it is going to cause cultures including Indian and Native American culture to decay along with native languages of the cultures as the future generations are born after another. Native American culture is vanishing through various ways, one being language, because of the influence of western culture. In the article, " Katherine Siva Sable, preserver of Cahill culture, dies at 91", written by Elaine Woo, mentions something Katherine used to say often, " When you lose your language you lose everything.

You can't interpret your song, your stories - it's gone. " By the time my grandchildren children are born, western culture is going to dominate, gashing away the importance of many home-based cultures such as, Indian culture, and Native American culture. I have noticed parents who live in the United States do not offer great attention to teach their children their traditions and heritage of their roots of origin like how they were taught when they were raised.

By this, it triggers the youths of today's generation to think it is not important to know what their native culture is and be downright influenced by the western culture. In the Issuance Film Festival Classic Film called, " Conversion" by Nabob Becker. It uncovers a story about the Navajo Reservation in the Southern West of United States. Christian missionaries cause disastrous consequences for a Native American family, intruding their worlds with their own ways causing the families to be torn apart.

The film starts off with a young Native American girl walking through the dry fields, as she pulls out a card with a image of Jesus on it, and on the back there is a written verse that says, " That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent. John 17: 3". As she is left with hopeless while she and her family faces struggles of her grandfather death, she gazes at the card with hope, as her east resort. With no guidance being offered, or any kind of help as she is alone in her world, this little Native American girl turns to the missionaries.

She starts believing in Christianity, more importantly in Jesus Christ trusting he can support her through the misery she and her relatives are bearing. By this scene in the film, it shows the influence of the western culture of the missionaries, having extreme power on the young Native American girl and her beliefs. In the beginning of the film, it proves that the struggle to preserve the Native American culture and land failed, as the fields are dry with no epees in sight. In the PBS article, " Revitalization Native American cultures" it says, " Indians were to be assimilated into the dominant European " civilization. " The film continues on by showing a young Native American girl's conversion. Leaving her faith, she starts believing in Jesus Christ. By this it displays that as the missionaries attempt to take over native land with their western culture, their appearance on to native land has gradually start affecting and influencing the Native Americans' upcoming generation. When one stops believing in their culture, and starts believing in another, shows heir change in identity; being ignorant and insensible to where they come from or their culture is.

Nowadays, many people consider cultures to be fashion trends. Living in the United States as an Indian, I have noticed how the Western culture uses other cultures such as mine, the Indian culture for fashion desires. The Western culture has been devaluing the significance of the Indian customs by taking commodities from the Indian culture for fashion purposes. In the Indian culture, mehendi, or henna holds a great cultural purpose. At wedding ceremonies, mehendi plays an important role.

Mehendi is meant to signify the strength of the bride's marriage and the amount of love she is about to receive from the groom's family. Mehendi also symbolizes luck for the bride and her marriage, the darker the color the more luck she has. However, Americans taking the idea of mehendi from our religious wedding ceremonies, and hiding the significance of it, using it for fashion purposes undervalues the importance of the religious aspect of mehendi at Indian weddings. For instance, in the Western culture mehendi is popular at summer festivities or music festivals such as concerts and raves.

Taking this custom and relating it back to what Katherine states in the play *We Are Still Here* by Leigh Podgietz, "our social structure and society had broken so far down there was no one left who knew the proper way to perform the ritual." Just like Katherine states America's society snatched the ritual aspect of mehendi because many Americans are desensitizing from India's significance of wearing mehendi on their hands. Americans have also belittled Native American's heritage in many ways such as, using feathered Indian headdresses for events that require costumes such as, Halloween, raves, and fashion shows.

Emends IS not the only religious Indian ornament that is used by Americans for fashion statements. They also use, other religious ornaments such as binds, palls, tikes that are typically used to Binds, palls, and tikes, are also typically used for honoring the start of a new life for the bride. Americans using Native American's heritage for their fashion purposes degrades the Native American culture, that comes with a history of events, such as cultural genocides, domestic schools, prejudice, lost generations, and the annihilation of tribes of people and their tribal cultures. In an article written by Angela R.

Riley called, " Sucking the Quilted Dry' discusses about the disrespect and insensitivity the Native American tribe called Quilted had to endure as they encountered MS. Com and Nordstrom use their tribe name and land for commercial benefits. MS. Com disrespected the culture of the Quilted tribe by making and publishing a virtual tour video of " Twilight", and Nordstrom designed and sold items such as hoodoos, and accessories that were related and named after the Quilted tribe. MS. Com trespassed onto the reservation cemetery of the Quilter's hat is considered sacred for a virtual tour video of " Twilight".

Instead of asking the Quilted tribe for permission to enter the sacred grounds, MS. Com asked the Chamber of Commerce for permission to able to go on the grounds of the Quilter's. By doing so, it displays therespectMS. Com held for the Native American tribe, none. As MS. Com videotaped graves of past chiefs that were displayed on the sacred grounds, presenting the images in the video with chilling music in the background not only shows

the ignorance of the American culture in today's society, but also the disrespect awards the Native American culture.

As soon as the Quilted tribe discovered this video, they persuaded MS. Com to remove the video off of the Internet. Later on, MS. Com realized that trespassing the great sacred parts of the reservations was wrong because it holds such great significance to the tribe; causing them they apologized to the Quilted tribe. The significance and authenticity of the Quilted tribe is diminishing slowly as the American society began marketing their culture in high-end store such as Nordstrom.

The Quilted tribe does not mind sharing their tribal culture, as long as it was shared in a respectful way, and if they received credibility for it. However, when Nordstrom promoted products related to the tribe such as hoodoos, accessories, and charm bearing Quilted werewolf tattoos they gave no recognition or payment to the Quilted tribe. Similarly to Gwen Stefani, in a recent No Doubt music video, dressed in Native clothing, complete with a fringed tribal dress and feathered headdress. She is chained to a wall by cowboys, captured and held hostage at gunpoint and asks in her lyrics, " Do you see me looking hot? The response from the Native American community as a decided no. Backlash included accusations of making a mockery of Native culture, and unfairly profiting from racist stereotypes in the article, " Native American Culture is not a trend" by Altair Combat. By these selfish acts of the American commerce, tribes such as the Quilted tribe, and other Native American tribes still fall under the poverty mark, while their culture is

used for money-making purposes that degrades and lessens the importance their heritage and traditions.

As the people of today's culture think it is acceptable to use sacred land, authentic wardrobe of the Native Americans and vending tribal cultural related items for entertainment and fashion purposes not only undervalues the significance of the traditions of the Native American tribes but also insults the culture. As Native American culture is declining, through all the past and present predicaments they have faced taking bits and parts of the culture, altering it. The only method to save the culture is through storytelling. As storytelling is the door to another time, people and culture.

In Native American society, storytelling plays a great role in holding the stories from the past, to present day stories, which contains the importance of modifications of values, beliefs, customs and daily lives in Native American culture. In the article, "How to live ethnically" written by Arthur Durbin states, "Stories provide a way of understanding our place in the scheme of things by structuring our understanding of events. They root us in an on-going stream of history and thereby provide us with a sense of belonging and helping establish our identities. Many different Native American storytellers share their stories about the heritage and culture, however regardless in which form the story is expressed they altogether have the same purpose at the end, preservation of their culture. Storytelling is a way to keep different tribe's culture alive. In the article, "Native storytellers connect past and the future" by Shannon Smith it states, "Each tribe has a different creation story, ranging from tribes emerging directly out

of the earth to the divine breathing life into medicine bundles. Storytelling is a universal resource of collaborating cultural traditions, morals, and beliefs, as well as a mechanism for passing on information about history, science, government, and politics. Some stories are new; others have been handed down from the ancients (Storytelling and Culture). Storytelling and stories are important in the creation of the basket in the poem, "Reweaving the World Alone" by Stephen Meadows, because the basket itself represents the universe of the Native Americans.

The basket symbolizes hope for the future of the Native Americans, because their heritage has faced so many tremendous hardships to their land and culture. The basket is composed of loops that are woven one at a time, as each loop is constructed of a story. These native stories are stories that collect their past, present and future of their culture. These stories are incorporated with different traditions, wisdom, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs. The basket in the poem not only represents a collage of stories but can also be interpreted as a symbol of hope for storytelling.

Majority of Native history was contained in the words of elders to children. Storytelling is a powerful medium of imagery and description to provide a foundation of understanding Native culture through the diffusion of ideas and history through themes, as well as give guidance to the role of a woman as protectors of culture and values (Smith). Storytelling provides audience for future descendants as it collects the knowledge of past and present experiences, one is able to live through the lives of many, learn from the mistakes of many, and gain the wisdom of many.

It is the cycle Of life. Despite repeated attempts at annihilation, Native people remain. Native culture focuses on the preservation of culture for future generations, which includes the long past and current reality. As storytelling undergoes radical changes due to the scattering of native people from the tribal community, the future generation holds the power to progress storytelling, however new and millamp challenges simultaneously the rotten to extinguish the traditional form (Smith).

Storytelling not only hands down knowledge and enlightenment but also keeps the culture prospering, and modifying with the growing time as it emphasizes lives and values of native peoples. As morals and values are passed down through culture and traditions they are altered through passing of each generation. Cultures such as Indian and Native American are gradually being influenced by western culture, causing them to diminish slowly as they are devalued through many ways. Western ultra have disrespected and undervalued Native American culture along with Indian culture by using customs, and their heritage for commercial benefits.