

Media Resistance and Resiliency Revealed in Contemporary Native Art: Implications for Art Educators

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ABSTRACT

Historic and contemporary media misrepresentations of Native American people in visual/popular culture—such as Edward Curtis’s photographs, Wild West Shows, museum exhibits, Boy Scout and school enactments, art, literature, toys, cartoons, and sports mascots—have been linked with cultural narratives that represent and reinforce the colonization and forced assimilation of the indigenous North American people. Some contemporary Native artists are challenging these dominant historical narratives by expressing their personal, communal, or cultural values and aesthetics to engage viewers in counter-storytelling as a form of resiliency.

The purpose of this article is to examine media representations and contemporary Native art using historical contexts and Indigenous aesthetics and worldviews. The paper is framed by the scholarship of contemporary Native art educators, art historians, art critics, artists, and their allies, starting with recommendations by art educators who advocate teaching about contemporary Native art to improve the ways Native people are perceived and treated in contemporary contexts. Conceptual examples are provided throughout the article to illustrate the concepts of image/narratives (Pauly, 2003), counter-storytelling, counter-image/storytelling, Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005), and Indigenous aesthetics. Next, traditional image/narratives historically used as tools of oppression are juxtaposed with works by artists who challenge traditional hegemonic narratives through counter-image/storytelling, humor, design qualities, and reinterpretations of historically meaningful Indigenous art forms. Finally, recommendations are provided for art curriculum development and teaching approaches advocated by Native American authors from the Museum of Contemporary Native Art (MoCNA), the Museum of the American Indian, and the Indian Mascot and Logo Task Force.

Historic and contemporary media misrepresentations of Native North American people in visual/popular culture—such as Edward Curtis’s photographs, Wild West Shows, exhibits in museums, Boy Scout and school enactments, art, literature, toys, cartoons, and “Indian” sports

mascots—have been linked with culture narratives and discourses of meaning and power that have been used to justify colonization, aggression, oppression, and assimilation of Native American people. Increasingly, contemporary Native American artists are actively critiquing and resisting these narratives and discourses – challenging them through production of artwork using their own personal, communal, or cultural values and aesthetics. This *counter-storytelling* as a form of cultural resiliency allows artists to “brush history against the grain” (Benjamin, 1968, p. 257); that is, to affirm their own histories and to (re)construct and dignify “the cultural experiences that make up the tissue, texture, and history of their daily lives” (Giroux, 2003, p. 51).

Drawing from the scholarship of contemporary Native American art educators, art historians, art critics, artists and their allies, and critical pedagogy frameworks (Tavin, 2003), this article articulates ways to examine media representations in contemporary Native art using historical contexts and Indigenous aesthetics and worldviews. The terms “Native” and “Indigenous” are used throughout this paper in addition to the terms “American” and “Indian,” which reflect a colonial legacy with regard to people indigenous to North America. I have included tribal affiliations when authors self-identify. This paper offers a lens through which teachers can engage with their students in the study of contemporary artwork, stories, and aesthetics as described by Native American artists or as interpreted by Indigenous art historians or museum curators. These artworks interrupt traditional colonial narratives through re-storying / counterstorytelling methods using images and narratives to foreground Indigenous epistemologies and memory. This paper contributes to the literature and efforts by Native people to advance their own sovereignty, identity, and well-being, as advocated by scholars such as Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández (2013).

This article begins with recommendations by art educators who advocate teaching about contemporary Native art to improve the ways Native people are perceived and treated in contemporary contexts. Conceptual tools including the use of image/narratives (Pauly, 2003), counter-storytelling, counter-image/storytelling, Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005; Grande, 2004; Writer, 2008), and Indigenous aesthetics are described. Next, examples of image/narratives historically used by the dominant culture as a form of oppression are paired with works by artists who challenge historical memory by using counter-image/storytelling, humor, design qualities, and re-appropriating historical artforms to open space for dialogue that includes their own points of view. Finally, practical suggestions and recommendations are offered for art curriculum development and arts-based education, drawn from sources such as the Museum of Contemporary Native Art (MoCNA) in Santa Fe, the

Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., and the Indian Mascot and Logo Task Force in Wisconsin.

The Need to Teach About Contemporary Native Art in Art Education

Art education scholars (Ballengee-Morris, 2008; Bequette, 2005, 2009; Delacruz, 2003; Eldridge, 2008; and Stuhr, 1991, 1995, 2003) have emphasized the need for art educators to teach about the art of contemporary Native artists, issues, indigenous aesthetics, and lifeways. Sanders, Staikidis, Ballengee-Morris, & Smith-Shank (2010) have cautioned about the ethics of representing Native people in research and classrooms. Laurie Eldridge (2008), a Cherokee art teacher and scholar, recommends:

Teaching 'backwards' on a historical timeline can emphasize that Native American people are alive, their cultures are alive, and they continue to thrive in contemporary American society despite centuries of colonization ... Art educators can play an important role in improving the ways that Native American people are perceived in mainstream American culture by teaching about Native American arts in the contexts of the contemporary lives of the artists who create them. (p. 3)

In addition to improving the perception of Native American people by others, teachers should study the lives and art of contemporary American Indians in order to address issues of social justice, educational equity, sovereignty, and cultural sustainability for Native people.

Image/Narratives

When Eldridge (2008) told her elementary students she was of Native American descent, they asked her, "Do you live in a teepee? Do you ride a horse to school?" (p. 1) Unfortunately, many people in the United States associate Native American people with stereotyped caricatures, not living people like their teacher. In this case, Eldridge's students likely associated the word Native American with an image of a Plains "Indian" man in full regalia riding a horse and living in a teepee. Pauly (2003) calls this propensity to link stereotypical words, images, and cultural narratives that are intertwined within historical discourses of meanings and power relations an "image/narrative."

Image/narratives exist within discourses and networks of culturally-learned representations, meanings, and power relations, which influence the ways people think, feel, imagine, and act. According to

Hall (1997), words and images stand for things that producers encode and viewers decode based on conceptual maps we carry around in our heads. Freedman and Combs (1996) contend that individuals either consciously or unconsciously retrieve image/narratives at a particular moment to fulfill their needs, fantasies, and desires. These images and narratives influence and justify conceptions people have of themselves and of others, which in turn shape the social values, attitudes, power relationships, and actions that play out in their daily lives. Educators can make visible these image/narratives by actively interrogating them, and by exposing students to the art and perspectives of diverse contemporary Native artists who challenge the dominant ideologies that have traditionally served to maintain asymmetrical relations of power and privilege in society.

Children learn image/narratives through sociocultural interactions: within their families, at school, and through popular culture experiences with toys, movies, cartoons, books, video games, "Indian" sports mascots, and holiday enactments. In the case of Eldridge's classroom, the image/narrative held by her students was one that reduced the cultures of over 500 Indigenous nations to a few decontextualized homogenized pictures and stories. This is hardly surprising, however, when we consider that their social and cultural experiences were likely limited to the narrow, hegemonic, stereotypical depictions of Native American people in mainstream media.

Image/narratives about the Indigenous of the Americas have evolved over history and have been used to justify aggression, oppression, and assimilation. The story of the Plains Indian man with his horse, headdress, weapons, and teepee was constructed and romanticized in the early 20th century, and was coupled with the story of the "Vanishing Race" (Beck, 2010; Deloria, 1998) to legitimize imperial narratives such as Manifest Destiny (justifying "White" European land claims and removal of Native people on the American continents). The dominant image/narratives attached to Native American people also underpin the notion of social Darwinism (Hofstadter, 1944), which posits that stronger, more sophisticated cultures will thrive and triumph, while weaker, less evolved cultures inevitably fade into extinction. Popularized through Edward Curtis's photographs, Wild West Shows, exhibits in museums, Boy Scout and school enactments, art, and literature, these narratives are explored by artists below.

Counter-storytelling and Tribal Critical Race Theory

According to artist and scholar John Paul Rangel (2012), many contemporary Native artists use counter-storytelling (Delgado &

Stefancic, 2000; Yosso, 2006) as a strategy to resist the dominant discourse by “producing work that challenges romanticized notions, stereotypes, and racism” (Rangel, 2012, p. 39). In addition to confronting Western constructions, these artists make art to “assert Indigenous perspectives on creating art, cultural meaning, knowledge production and the material circumstances of actual Native people” (p. 39). The image/narrative concept can be combined with counter-storytelling to become counter-image/storytelling, where the image(s) associated with the story are challenged alongside the sociocultural and historical narrative(s) embodied in the story. Such counter-image/storytelling opens space for reimagining a story or narrative, and for expanding the discourse around who Native American people are, how they are depicted and positioned, and by whom. Indeed, counter-image/storytelling disrupts hegemonic views of Native American people through the situated practice of cultural production. Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) argues that educators who are committed to social change through the arts must recognize that cultural production for democratic engagement is the way forward because it is “a process in which the very boundaries and limitations of every context are open to debate” (p. 228).

Rangel (2012) employs Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) (Brayboy, 2005) to critique the ways colonialism has material consequences for Native people that affect them “physically, intellectually, economically, politically and spiritually. . . includ[ing] governmental policies, tribal sovereignties, decimation of sacred lands, language shift/loss and systematic cultural and physical genocide” (Rangel, 2012, p. 40). In his conception of TribalCrit, Brayboy (2005) goes beyond Critical Race Theory to emphasize the material consequences of colonialism, imperialism, and consumerism in the United States. He stresses the need for Indigenous self-determination and recognition of the sovereign nation-to-nation status between Native Nations and the United States government. While many Native people maintain distinct cultural identification with a particular sovereign nation, language, tradition, and value system, some do not. Indigenous education scholars such as Grande (2004) and Haynes (2008) contend that Natives are not like other subjugated groups who struggle for inclusion; rather, they strive to have their legal and moral rights to sovereignty recognized. From inception, Indian education aimed to “colonize Indian minds as a means of gaining access to Indian labor, land, and resources” (Grande, p. 19).

Indigenous Aesthetics

How do Indigenous scholars and artists propose valuing contemporary Native art and experiences? Some scholars have argued

for common pan-Indigenous aesthetic concepts, while others have focused on aesthetics informed by artists’ contexts or worldviews that promote personal, communal, and cultural resiliency. Christine Ballengee-Morris (2008) (Cherokee- Eastern Band) recommends that art educators interpret the art of Native American artists using multiple trans-indigenous aesthetics such as parallel time and interconnections, which she believes cross tribal, national, geographic, and cultural borders. She writes,

[F]rom a parallel time; the past and future are in the present; therefore the items, histories, and traditions are constant but at the same time in process (Jojola, 2004). Viewing indigenous arts, practices, and places from this perspective, necessitates considering contemporary (historical), narratives (individuals/tribal), philosophies (spiritual/clan) and semiotics simultaneously (Pewewardy, 2002) . . . that includes colonial histories and (post)colonial complexities. (pp. 31-32)

Phoebe Farris (2006) also describes interconnections and a pan-Native aesthetic when she observes, “as artists and indigenous peoples here in the Americas we do not usually separate art from healing or spirituality” (p. 253).

While many art critics assess Indigenous arts using formal qualities, art historian Nancy Mithlo (2011c) (Chiricahua Apache) argues that Native Americans commonly value art for the Indigenous knowledge and memories of cultural experiences embedded in the object (as well as the decorative and utilitarian qualities). She advises viewers to “understand the whole context of Native histories, personal life trajectories, and U.S. political policies that shape and inform the work” (p. 24). Choctaw-Chickasaw curator Heather Ahtone (2012) advocates consulting Indigenous artists themselves to understand the ways that local Indigenous knowledge, worldviews, connections to place, community, cultural expression, histories, and traditions may inform their work. Similarly, Sherry Farrell Racette (Timiskaming) (2011a) argues,

The objects of everyday life, whether tools, blankets or items of dress, confront, provoke memory and are reanimated by human gesture. Objects are viewed for their potential for reactivation but perhaps more importantly, for the history and memory of actions they hold within themselves. (p. 42)

Some contemporary artists rework historical forms that are meaningful to their communities in new ways to provoke multi-layered discussions about the past in contemporary settings, such as Marcus Amerman’s (Choctaw) beadwork portraits, Sarah Sense’s (Chitimacha) reworking of Chitimacha basketry, Alan Michelson’s

(Mohawk) wampum belts, Erica Lord's (Athabascan/Inupiaq) prayer ties, and Marie Watt's (Seneca) use of blankets employed in naming ceremonies that also recall small pox-infected blankets distributed to Natives.

Rangel (2012) applies concepts of relationships, community, hybridity, counter-storytelling, survivance, and indigenization of space to Indigenous aesthetics. Indigenous relationships signify connections to community and respect for the earth, families, and traditions. Many Native people experience hybridity by participating in many cultural, ethnic, national, and spiritual spheres as a member of a sovereign nation within a colonial country. Survivance (Vizenor, 1999), a combination of survival and resistance, might be enacted through counter-storytelling. The "indigenization of space occurs when Native artists reclaim a location through art or performance" (Rangel, 2012, p. 34).



Figure 1. Curtis, E.S., *Sioux chiefs*, photograph, 1905, 15.1 x 20.2 cm. Retrieved from <http://cdn.loc.gov/service/pnp/cph/3g10000/3g12000/3g12400/3g12466r.jpg> Washington, D.C: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

Historical Construction of Native Image/narratives in Popular Culture and Counter-Image/Storytelling with Indigenous Aesthetics

How have popular image/narratives about the Indigenous peoples historically been represented in the American media? According to Deloria (1998),

In the 1800s and 1900s, many non-Natives depicted both

Indians and children as naïve, simple, and natural. Children were sometimes viewed as savages in need of civilizing, and Indians were often seen as children of the Great White Father. (as cited in Eldridge, 2008, p. 1)

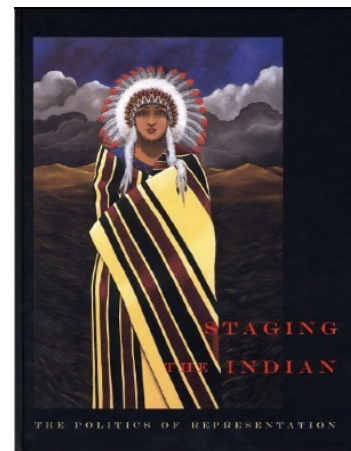


Figure 2. Judith Lowry, *My Aunt Viola*, 1996, [painting] acrylic on canvas. [book] Berry, Sweet, Hauser & Pritzker (2001).

At the turn of the century, the idea of the "Vanishing Native" was popularized by Edward Curtis's photography (see Figure 1). In the book *Staging the Indian: The Politics of Representation* (Berry, Sweet, Hauser & Pritzker, 2001) (see Figure 2), several contemporary Native artists critique Curtis' work including Judith Lowry (Maidu), Marcus Amerman (Choctaw), James Luna (Lusieno), Shelley Niro (Mohawk), Nora Naranjo-Morse (Santa Clara Pueblo) and Bently Spang (Cheyenne). For example, on the cover painting, Judith Lowry represents her aunt Viola from a faded photo taken of her when she was asked to dress up "as an Indian" at a county fair wearing a Plains-style man's war bonnet in exchange for admission.

Native people were also "staged" in exhibits such as the 1893 Columbian World Exhibition, ethnographic dioramas in the American Museum of Natural History, and "Wild West" shows like "Buffalo Bill" Cody's performances (see Figure 3) that toured the United States from 1893 to 1906. Cody earned his nickname by killing thousands of buffalo to supply meat for the railroad.

Frank Buffalo Hyde challenged that legacy when he incorporated Buffalo Bill, an image of his beloved buffalo, and Buffalo wings in his painting *Buffalo Bill #1* (see Figure 4), which appeared in his 2012 show entitled "Ladies and Gentlemen, This is the Buffalo Show." Hyde grew up on the Onondaga Reservation in central New York



Figure 3. Poster, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World*. 1899. Retrieved from http://img0.etsystatic.com/005/0/6847292/il_fullxfull.374180536_qrww.jpg



Figure 4. Frank Buffalo Hyde, *Buffalo Bill #1*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 40" x 60" http://frankbuffalohyde.com/artwork/2595646_Buffalo_Bill_1.html Courtesy of the artist.

where he helped watch over his tribe's buffalo herd. In his artwork, he uses the buffalo as "an allegory for North America" (Rangel, 2012, p. 158). Hunted almost to the point of extinction, the buffalo is "an important symbol for Native American people who valued the animal" (p. 158). According to Hyde, his buffalos often gaze at the viewer as a "homicide detective, always there, witnessing and observing" (ibid). The concept is shown in *Buffalo Field with Mother Ship* (see Figure 5), which asks the viewer "to examine their perceptions of Native Americans and contemporary Native art" (p. 158). Hyde uses the landscape to convey "timelessness" with paranormal elements such as orbs or UFOs, and humor by including the South Park character Cartman. Rangel observes an "underlying connection to settler colonization and manifest destiny as the mother ship is hovering over seemingly unclaimed land" (p. 159). Lowry and Hyde's work exemplify art as counter-image/storytelling by indigenizing the symbols and disrupting the colonial gaze.



Figure 5. Frank Buffalo Hyde. *Buffalo Field #20 Mothership*, 2012, [Painting] Acrylic on Canvas, 40" x 60" <http://frankbuffalohyde.com/zoom/1400x720/2595641.html> Courtesy of the artist.

Started in 1910 and 1912, Boy and Girl Scouts advocated "playing Indians" by making Indian-like costumes, performing dances, and singing songs that mimicked Indian cultures but claimed authenticity to the youth. Teachers were influenced to make pan-"Indian" artifacts and enactments in schools.

Tourists, including art educators, traveled to the Southwest to buy Indian art without learning the context, function, or symbolism embedded in the art they collected. Some art educators were attracted to Hopi Kachinas, yet they did not know that making replicas of sacred objects such as Kachinas, Navajo (Dineh) sand paintings, or Iroquois false face masks were forbidden practices, as Remer (1997) and D'Alleva (1993) recommend doing in their books.

In summary, photographs, exhibitions, shows, scouts enactments, art, and literature emerged at the turn of the 20th century to support stereotyped image/narratives of a homogenized noble or violent "Indian." Imitations have perpetuated these image/narratives in "cowboy and Indian" films and television shows, cartoons like Disney's™ *Peter Pan* and *Pocahontas*, "Indian" sports mascots and logos, and toys like Legos™ Wild West sets.

These image/narratives are all the more powerful without other diversified media representations to balance them. According to a study of prime time TV done by Children Now (2004), there were no Native American characters in any episode in the study's sample. A study of Native American youth (Children Now, 1999) ages 9-17 from 20 tribes in four cities showed that the absence and negative representation of Native American people in the media are deeply felt by Native youth.

As one Comanche youth observed, 'Nobody really talks about our group,' and when they do, it's about 'reservations,' 'casinos,' 'selling fireworks,' and 'fighting over land.'... One Seattle boy told of a rare empowering experience with the news, 'See, there's a pow-wow in Albuquerque. It's called the Gathering of Nations. They announced it on TV...I was really surprised...It was cool.' (p. 4)

Youth spoke about the need for diverse Native representation on television and in popular culture. Art teachers can contribute to this need by teaching about contemporary Native art, artists, and cultures.

"Indian" Boarding Schools: An Example of Historical Media Representation and Resiliency

Several museum exhibitions and Native artists have addressed the representation of Native students who attended the federal boarding schools in Canada and the United States. While children of European ancestry were "playing Indian," Native children were forced to attend boarding schools where they were segregated from mainstream education and forced to assimilate to "White" ways, which contributed to the idea that Natives had disappeared. Starting in 1879, children from over 500 Canadian and U.S. cultures were taken from their homes, forced to cut their hair, required to wear mainstream clothing, forbidden to speak their own languages or follow their cultural practices, and taught to be laborers or domestic servants. Photographs of the students were taken to justify this "civilizing mission."

A contemporary permanent exhibit challenging these representations, *Remembering Our Indian School Days: The Boarding School Experience*, opened at the Heard Museum in Phoenix in 2000. Archuleta, Child, and Lomawaima (2000), the authors of the book that accompanies the exhibition, write:

Indian boarding schools were the key component in the process of cultural genocide against Native cultures, and were designed to physically, ideologically, and emotionally remove Indian children from their families, homes and tribal affiliation. From the first moment students arrived at school, they could not 'be Indian' in any way – culturally, artistically, spiritually, or linguistically. Repressive policies continued to varying degrees until the 1960s when activism, reassertions of tribal sovereignty, and federal policies supporting tribal self-determination began to impact educational institutions and programs. (p. 19)

The authors discuss the stories of boarding school students, some of whom utilized resiliency to survive and resist assimilation. Others found life difficult without familial love and protection; many died, yet a few enjoyed their experiences. Angel de Cora, a courageous young Winnebago (Ho-Chunk) art educator, made a difference at Carlisle Indian School from 1906 until 1915 (Archuleta, 2000). Trained in fine art, she taught her students how to appreciate Native art and create their own symbolic designs.

Many argue that the federally enforced removal of children from their families, the harsh conditions they endured, and the lasting scars left by the boarding schools require a national U.S. debate and an official apology – like the admission of guilt given to Japanese internment survivors – as the Canadians have done. In 2008, the Canadian Prime Minister Steven Harper (Harper, 2008) apologized to 150,000 children and their families for an unjust policy that had caused great harm. The Canadian government also created a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to hear the survivors' stories and educate Canadians about them. An exhibit, *Where Are the Children? Healing the Legacy of the Residential Schools* (Legacy of Hope Foundation, 2002), has traveled to over 23 venues in Canada since 2002 to encourage a national dialogue.

Contemporary Native Artists Respond to the Boarding School Experiences

Artists Marcus Amerman, Steven Deo (Euchee/Muscogee), Tom Fields (Cherokee/Creek), Dorothy Grandbois (Turtle Mountain Chippewa), and, Ryan Rice (Kahnawake Mohawk) respond to the boarding school legacy in their art. The first photograph of Navajo student Tom Torlino (see Figure 6) was taken when he arrived at the Carlisle Indian School in 1882, and the second at an unknown later date.

Tom Torlino's image appears in Marcus Amerman's beadwork *Postcard* (see Figure 7) within the "U" and "N" of the word country. Rangel (2012) writes,

The use of "U" and "N" "are intentional in suggesting 'something undone'" in Tom Torlino; Amerman stated, 'he was un-Indianized. He doesn't have a light in his eye. I see that metaphor for the civilizing process; it takes the light and the willingness to live' (personal communication, February 4, 2012). (p. 132)

Amerman's beadwork is an excellent example of counter-image/storytelling and resiliency. He updated a familiar Santa Fe postcard



Figure 6. Tom Torlino, Navajo, Carlisle School Student, before and after circa 1882, public domain photograph. http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/24/Tom_Torlino_Navajo_before_and_after_circa_1882.jpg



Figure 7. Marcus Amerman. Postcard, 2002, beads and thread on canvas 11" x 17". Retrieved from <http://www.marcusamerman.com/creations/beadwork.html>

depicting images that critique the past with images that show experiences significant to him by re-interpreting the beadwork. The "I" represents the Lakota Leader Crazy Horse. Next, in the "N," Amerman is dressed in his race car suit. Two buffalo and a tornado are evident inside the "D," perhaps suggesting the destruction of the buffalo herds. The image of John Herrington (Chickasaw), the first Native astronaut, is beaded inside the next "I". The "A" shows the Blue Angels F/A-18 Hornets in formation, which Amerman calls a "symbol of transcendence" (Rangel, 2012, p.132). Inside the second "N" he depicts his Osage goddaughter. Amerman shows himself

wrapped as a mummy with a nuclear explosion in the background within the "C;" an image of a tidal wave is located inside the "O;" a volcanic eruption is illustrated within the "T;" lightning is represented in the "R;" and an image of earth taken from space is seen in the "Y." The nuclear explosion, tidal wave, volcanic eruption, and lightning are symbols of power for Amerman. After delving into Amerman's personal narrative within the postcard format, students could study postcards in their cities and create images based on their own experiences.

Teaching History and Representation Using Contemporary Native Art

This section explores resources teachers might use to study the art of contemporary artists who critique historical and contemporary representations and narratives about Native people. To study how other contemporary Native artists have expressed their feelings about the boarding school experience and other historical events, teachers might consider using the book, exhibition, and website located at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI, 2012), entitled *Who stole the tee pee?* (Nahwooksy & Hill, 2000). The authors explore four themes: "Changing Reservation Realities," "School Bells and Haircuts," "Tolerating Tourists," and "Beyond Smoke and Mirrors," featuring the work of Steven Deo (Euchee/Muscogee), Tom Fields (Cherokee/Creek), Dorothy Grandbois (Turtle Mountain Chippewa) and, Ryan Rice (Kahnawake Mohawk).

For example, in Steven Deo's work (see Figure 8) children from a boarding school are represented with red marks over their mouths to depict the silencing of their language and way of life. Superimposed over the children is the word "equal," along with similar words in Deo's Muscogee language, one of the most endangered languages in the world.

Ryan Rice playfully interrogates his school experiences in a book of photographs of himself behind collage items with captions such as: "You're Indian?" "You don't look Indian." "Say something in Indian." and "I have a friend who is Indian, do you know him?" (p. 49). In addition to exploring the history of Indian Boarding Schools, Steven Deo has done remarkable prints, sculptures and installations in response to his family's history during the "Trail of Tears" and their relocation to Oklahoma where he was born. Deo's *End of the Trail* (see Figure 9) sculpture takes the form of a suitcase composed of 80 shoe tops that Deo said are meant to communicate the "metaphor for travel and dislocation" (Jones, Depriest, & Fowler, 2007, p. 12), as well as the convergence of so many tribal groups who were crammed into Oklahoma.



Figure 8. Steven Deo, *Indoctrination #3*, 2000, mixed media, collection of the artist.

End of the Trail reflects the history of Deo's ancestors. In 1830, Congress passed and President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, mandating the removal of Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Muscogee Creek, and Seminole from their homelands east of the Mississippi to Oklahoma even though the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled in favor of the Cherokee's lawsuit to stay in their homeland. Between 1831-1837, hundreds of thousands of people were forced to walk the "Trail of Tears" to Oklahoma, sometimes during frigid winter weather, where many suffered and died.

The Museum of Contemporary Native Arts (MoCNA), the only Native-run museum of contemporary art in the country, is another resource for teachers seeking information. Their free online curriculum entitled *Manifestations* (Mithlo, 2011a) is intended to compliment the book *New Native Art Criticism: Manifestations* (Mithlo, 2011b). The book includes historical essays, photographs of artworks, and biographies about 60 contemporary Native artists written by 14 Indigenous authors. It is a rich research tool that teachers can use to



Figure 9. Steven Deo, *End of the Trail*. 2000, mixed media, shoes, 18"H X 26"W X 10"D.

speaking knowledgeably about Native art. Other recommended books about contemporary Native art include Deats and Leaken (2012), Hill (1992), McFadden and Taubman (2002), Russell (2012), Sanchez and Grimes (2006), Touchette (2003), and Racette (2011b). Rangel's (2012) dissertation provides in-depth interviews with eight contemporary Native artists who demonstrate counter-storytelling.

Teaching Politics and Identity: Art and Action about "Indian" Mascots and Logos

Teachers might consider adopting the *Manifestation* curriculum's organizing themes: 1) continuity and change; 2) politics and identity; 3) adaptation and survival; and 4) reclamation and revival. While exploring the theme of politics and identity, the text recommends studying the work of Charlene Teters, a Spokane artist, activist, and current professor at the Institute of American Indian Art (IAIA). Her art reflects her concerns about representations of Native people in "Indian" mascots and logos.

Teters juxtaposes stereotypic images found in popular culture and images of commodification in contrast to a painting displaying an image and texts with personal significance in her life. Her artwork,



Figure 10. Charlene Teters, *What I Know About Indians: Slum-Ta Self-Portrait*, 1991, Installation, (Touchette, 2003, p. 7)

entitled *What I Know About Indians: Slum-Ta Self-Portrait* (see Figure 10), includes a painting of herself as a child seen through the image of a red Chicago Blackhawks Hockey logo, a woman in a stereotypical cartoon from *Lil' Abner*, and barcodes that she silkscreened onto plexiglass mounted in front of and projected over her painting. The viewer is challenged to see the child through the images. The girl peers through images of Native stereotypes and commodification associated with her identity. Teters produced this artwork in response to the image and performances of "Chief Illiniwek," a sports mascot at the University of Illinois, whose presence she encountered with her children and protested as a graduate student (Delacruz, 2003). As one of the founding members of the National Coalition on Racism in Sports and Media, Teters has lectured widely about the painful and racist implications of mascots. Teters tells her own story and explains her artistic process on her website (Teters, 2012) and in two excellent films (Rosenstein, 1996 and KNME TV, 1996), both available for free online. Although Chief Illiniwek was retired in 2007, Native American logos and mascots still dominate national franchises and high school teams. Art teachers might ask their students to explore artworks like Teters' by investigating what the students perceive, what intertextual connections they make, and what image/narratives reflect discourses of meaning and power in terms of self-representation, identity, and sovereignty.

Students will probably mention stereotypes found in mass media. Stereotypes are caricatures designed by members of one group of people to typecast another group into a standard, and usually inaccurate, conception. Images are commonly linked to old racist historical stories. These image-narratives often function to reduce members of cultural groups into exaggerated and inferior characterizations of sameness that dehumanize people, making them more vulnerable to racist treatment.

Teachers could share Teters' website and films to contextualize her work and then re-interpret it from an individual artist's viewpoint. Teters interrogates the ways people are taught to view and stereotype her community's identity and enact racist behavior at sporting events. Although stereotypic images are commonly used to sell a product or a sports team, they ridicule people whose identities and cultures are associated with it. In contrast to logos, students should research and interview specific Native people to learn that they have complex and diverse cultures, histories, art, clothing, architecture, personalities, and appearances. Next, students could investigate how images in their own mass culture intersect with the images found in their individual cultures, and create art about what they discover regarding how their own identities are shaped or influenced by popular culture. Some of Anne Thulson's (n.d) teaching with elementary students shows how she has addressed some of these goals with second grade students.

Teters's story suggests that students need not separate art from social action. A case in point: the Wisconsin Indian Education Association's Indian Mascot and Logo Task Force (Munson, 2011) has worked for over 20 years to educate students, parents, and legislators, and to pass legislation aimed at eliminating Indian mascots in Wisconsin schools because mascots encourage students to perform racist acts through cheers, images, and dress. A 10-minute film on their website called "Taking a Stand" tells about a group of high school students who testified about the ACT 250, a law to eliminate these mascots. High school students can be encouraged to make plays such as "Kick," a play performed by Delanna Studi in which she enacts nine characters with different points of view on the mascot issue (Howard, n.d.), or make films (Morton & Ohlman, 1998), both of which are available on Munson's webpage (2011). Even though ACT 250 was signed by Governor James Doyle in 2010, Munson (2012) reports that there are still 33 Wisconsin schools with "Indian" mascots, with an enrollment of 25,504 students who also impact other schools' students when they play them in sports.

Other Recommendations for Teaching about Contemporary Native Art

Diversity

Art teachers should teach that Native American art is made today by multifaceted and varied individuals who may or may not draw inspiration from their Native ancestry. Teachers might invite local Native American artists to present their art, or encourage students to research the contemporary arts in their students' home cultures, which can then be linked with local concerns specific to Native nations today. Students might create art or make films to express their understanding or advocate for their cause.

Context

It is important for teachers to research contextual information about how artists construct meanings from their own points of view in books, artists' websites, videos, or in person. For example, students could visit the websites of artists' mentioned in this article, find artworks that interest them, investigate why the artist created the artwork, and interpret what story the artist may be thinking about or questioning through their art.

Identification

Teachers should research how artists want to be identified, such as by their preferred name and tribal affiliation, rather than using general descriptors such as "Native American artist." For example, some Navajos may refer to themselves as Diné or Dineh.

Curriculum Inclusion

Since contemporary Native artists make such varied and powerful art works, it is not difficult for teachers to integrate their art into most subject matter units they teach. This not only makes content learning engaging and meaningful, but it also highlights the depth and breath of Native art while underscoring its relevance to academic learning through a variety of themes, skills, art forms, and creative processes. Teachers might also develop presentations to show diversity in contemporary Native art, or delve deeply into one artist's work.

Creating Art

Students can derive inspiration from Native art, but they should not be encouraged to imitate it. Instead, students should be encouraged to respond to the themes presented by Native artists by engaging in their own artistic processes to express their own ideas, feelings, and experiences.

Individuality

When students understand aspects of Native artists' lifestyles and the sociocultural contexts that inform their art, it helps them to realize

that many Indigenous people live conventional lives, wear common clothes, and reside in houses and apartments. They may or may not be visually identifiable as Native, practice their traditions, live on reservations, or identify with their ancestral culture.

Conclusion

Native scholars and their allies recommend that teachers and students study the art of contemporary Native artists while exploring artists' Indigenous aesthetics, cultural contexts, and related social justice issues such as sovereignty and equity. Some artists have challenged the impact of cultural experiences in their lives, U.S. policies, and representations in popular culture. Historically-constructed media representations and stereotypic image/narratives should be interrogated and counterbalanced by presenting Native art created by diverse people whose art contributes to counter-image/storytelling and personal, communal, or cultural resiliency.

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