

## Debating Cultural Appropriation

### OVERVIEW

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What is cultural appropriation, how does it affect Native American communities, and should it be regulated by law?

#### OVERVIEW

*In this lesson, students will engage in a structured academic controversy to address the question, “should appropriation of Native American cultural practices be regulated by law?” Working in small groups, students will consider cultural appropriation in varying degrees by watching RUMBLE clips of African American “Mardi Gras Indian Tribes” from New Orleans, viewing images of sports logos, controversial fashion items, and consulting divergent viewpoints in regards to each. Groups will pair off into a “yes” and “no” answer, and support their position with evidence. Then, the groups will switch, and each defend the opposite position. Finally, the class will end with each student drafting a personal response to the activity. Throughout the lesson, students will additionally encounter poetry written by Native Americans that offers their perspectives on the issue of cultural appropriation.*



In 2013, A Tribe Called Red, a Canadian collective of First Nations DJs whose work regularly samples traditional Indigenous Music, requested on Twitter that their Non-native fans refrain from wearing Indigenous headdresses and “warpaint” at their performances. “It’s insulting,” they wrote, adding later that donning such outfits is an act of “racial stereotyping and cultural appropriation.”

A Tribe Called Red’s statement is one of the many that have brought the contentious issue of “cultural appropriation” into public consciousness. The practice, defined by Fordham Law Professor Susan Scafidi as, “Taking intellectual property, traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, or artifacts from someone else’s culture without permission...[especially] when the source community is a minority group that has been oppressed or exploited in other ways,” is viewed by some as a serious issue that deserves legal action. Others, however, believe that “cultural appropriation” is a natural outgrowth of the “melting pot” culture of a place like the United States and that there is nothing negative about it whatsoever. Perhaps no bellwether of the contentiousness behind the term is as telling as the Wikipedia entry for the term, where the open source nature of the site allows anyone to make edits, and they do. “Cultural appropriation” is updated, and also reverted to its previous state almost daily as individuals seek to control the meaning of the concept itself.

## OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

### 1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- The definition of “culture”
- Various definitions of “cultural appropriation”
- About the debate regarding the validity of the concept of “cultural appropriation”
- About specific instances in popular culture labeled as “cultural appropriation”
- About the Mardi Gras “Indians” of New Orleans
- Some of the ways certain Native American musicians and poets have responded to cultural appropriation

### 2. MASTERY OBJECTIVE:

- Through textual analysis of divergent viewpoints on cultural appropriation, students will be able to evaluate both sides of the debate and then employ research-based evidence in the statement of their own beliefs about the issue.

## ACTIVITIES

### MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

1. Show **Image 1, “A Tribe Called Red Tweet.”** Ask students:

- Have you ever heard of “A Tribe Called Red”? Who might they be?
- A Tribe Called Red is a group of Indigenous DJs from Canada who regularly draw upon traditional Native American music. Why might fans of A Tribe Called Red be coming to their shows in headdresses and warpaint?
- Why might A Tribe Called Red consider this practice insulting?
- Why is the group only speaking to the Non Natives in this tweet?

2. Show students **Image 2, “A Tribe Called Red Tweet Responses.”** Ask students:

- Why might wearing headdresses and warpaint at A Tribe Called Red performance be considered racial stereotyping?
- How does A Tribe Called Red further defend their position?
- What might A Tribe Called Red mean by using the phrase “cultural appropriation”? What is cultural appropriation?

## PROCEDURE:

1. Tell students that they will be discussing the issue of “cultural appropriation” in class. But before you can assess the idea, you must address the words separately. Ask students:
  - How might you define “culture”?
2. Show students **Image 3, “Culture - Oxford Dictionary,”** and ask:
  - What might be some examples of things considered “culture” by this definition?
3. Now show students **Image 4, “Appropriate / Appropriation - Oxford Dictionary,”** and ask:
  - How might appropriation apply to culture? Can you think of any examples?
4. Show students **Image 5, Fordham law professor Susan Scafidi’s definition of cultural appropriation, “Cultural Appropriation Definition,”** and ask:
  - Can you think of any examples of cultural appropriation? Do you think that it is an issue that should concern people?
5. Tell students that Indigenous culture has been a source of fascination since European colonizers first came to the Western Hemisphere. From Hollywood movies to sports to comic books, non-native companies and institutions have profited from Indigenous culture. Pass out to students **Handout 1 - Excerpts from *The Real Indian Leans Against, Chrystos***. After reading the poem individually or as a class, ask students:
  - What is Chrystos describing in this poem?
  - For you, what emotion of feeling is Chrystos getting across in this poem?
  - In what ways might Chrystos be connecting the sale of figurines with the treatment of Native Peoples in the United States?
  - What is Chrystos doing in the final stanza? What new idea are they introducing?
  - How might the final line, “I want to live somewhere where nobody is sold,” have a dual meaning within this poem?
  - What might this poem say about cultural appropriation?
6. Play **Clip 1, “‘Indians’ at Woodstock,”** and ask:
  - Why do you think “Indians were in” at Woodstock?
  - What do you think the elements of Native American fashion you saw in this clip might have meant to the people who wore them? (*Encourage students to think of what Woodstock represented at the time: freedom, escape from the mainstream, etc. Perhaps the Native American clothing suggested freedom, outsider-ness, and a connection to nature and the past, even if those things were more imagined than real.*)
7. Pass out to students **Handout 2 - *What’s an Indian Woman to Do?* Marcie Rendon**. After reading the poem individually or as a class, ask students:
  - What is Rendon describing in this poem?

- For you, what feeling is Rendon conveying in this poem?
  - Do you think Rendon's message in this poem is directed at any audience in particular? Who?
  - Do you see any connections between this poem and Chrystos' poem? If so, what might be the connections?
  - What might this poem be saying about cultural appropriation?
8. Break students into small, even-numbered groups, ideally of four, for the Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) activity. Then divide each group into Side A and Side B. Inform groups that they'll be addressing the question, "Does cultural appropriation negatively affect Native American communities, and should it be regulated by law?" Over the course of the activity, Sides A and B will switch positions, arguing both in the affirmative and the negative.
9. Tell students that they will gather information for the SAC at four stations. Groups should move through the stations as time and space permits, and may begin their journey at any of the four stations. Groups should follow the instructions on **Handout 3 - Cultural Appropriation Structured Academic Controversy**.
- Station 1: Thoughts on Cultural Appropriation
  - Station 2: Music - Mardi Gras Indians in New Orleans
  - Station 3: Sports Logos
  - Station 4: Fashion

## SUMMARY ACTIVITY

1. Ask students:
- Having taken both sides of this debate, how do you now feel about cultural appropriation? Is there a "yes" or "no" answer to its existence? Does it concern you? Is it always the same, or do you feel differently about the varying ways you see cultural appropriation occur?

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

1. Look up the term "Hollywood Indian." In a short essay, use two examples of the "Hollywood Indian" to address the idea of cultural appropriation in American cinema and television. How have Native Americans been portrayed? What does the portrayal of Native Americans suggest about the mostly white producers and directors who have written and casted them?

## STANDARDS

### COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

#### *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading (K-12)*

Reading 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Reading 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Reading 4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Reading 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Reading 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Reading 8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Reading 9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Reading 10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

#### *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing (K-12)*

Writing 1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Writing 7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Writing 9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

#### *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening (K-12)*

Speaking and Listening 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and

expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Speaking and Listening 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

## **SOCIAL STUDIES – NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)**

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Theme 9: Global Connections Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

## **NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION**

Core Music Standard: Responding

Analyze: Analyze how the structure and context of varied musical works inform the response.

Interpret: Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators' and/or performers' expressive intent.

Evaluate: Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis, interpretation, and established criteria.

*Core Music Standard: Connecting*

Connecting 11: Relate musical ideas and works to varied contexts and daily life to deepen understanding.

## **NEW JERSEY STATE LEARNING STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS**

Reading

NJSLSA.R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

NJSLSA.R6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

NJSLSA.R8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

NJSLSA.R9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

## Writing

NJSLSA.W1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

NJSLSA.W7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects, utilizing an inquiry-based research process, based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

NJSLSA.W9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

## RESOURCES

### VIDEO RESOURCES

- Rumble – “Indians” at Woodstock
- Rumble – Big Chief Monk Boudreaux
- Rumble – Ancestry

### HANDOUTS

- Handout 1 - Excerpts from *The Real Indian Leans Against*, Chrystos
- Handout 2 - *What's an Indian Woman to Do?* Marcie Rendon.
- Handout 3 - Cultural Appropriation structured Academic Controversy
- Handout 3 - Cultural Appropriation structured Academic Controversy
- Handout for Station 1 - Cultural Appropriation Arguments
- Handout for Station 2 - Music – Mardi Gras “Indians” in New Orleans
- Handout for Station 3 - Sports – The Washington Redskins Logo
- Handout for Station 4 - Fashion

# Lesson Materials





# Image 1, “A Tribe Called Red Tweet”



**A Tribe Called Red** ✓

@atribecalledred

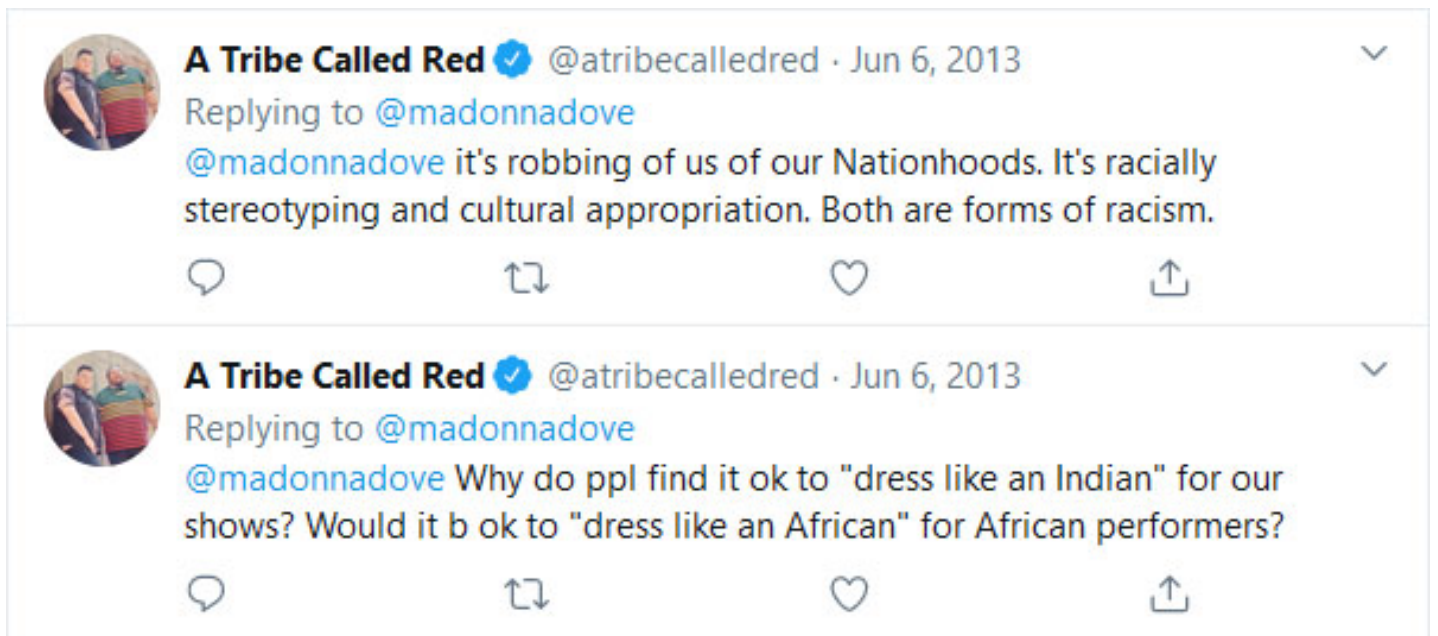


Non Natives that come to our shows, we need to talk. Please stop wearing headdresses and war paint. It's insulting. Meegwetch and Nia:we.

10:52 AM · Jun 2, 2013 · Twitter for iPhone

**174** Retweets   **89** Likes

# Image 2, “A Tribe Called Red Tweet Responses”



# **Image 3, “Culture – Oxford Dictionary”**

## **Culture**

The ideas, customs, and social behavior of a particular people or society.

# **Image 4, “Appropriate / Appropriation – Oxford Dictionary”**

## **Appropriate**

Take (something) for one's own use, typically without the owner's permission.

## **Appropriation**

The deliberate reworking of images and styles from earlier, well-known works of art.

# **Image 5, “Cultural Appropriation Definition – Susan Scafidi”**

## **Cultural Appropriation**

“Taking intellectual property, traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, or artifacts from someone else's culture without permission...[especially] when the source community is a minority group that has been oppressed or exploited in other ways,”



## Handout 1 - Excerpts from *The Real Indian Leans Against*, Chrystos (Menominee)

*Chrystos (1946- ) is a two-spirit poet and activist born in San Francisco. Their poetry focuses on issues of social justice, feminism, and Native Rights, and they have released poetry books including Not Vanishing (1988), Dream On (1991), and Fire Power (1995).*

the pink neon lit window full of plaster of paris  
& resin Indians in beadwork for days with fur trim  
turkey feathers dyed to look like eagles  
abalone & bones  
The fake Indians, if mechanically activated  
would look better at the Pow Wow than the real one in plain jeans  
For Sale      For Sale  
with no price tag  
On holds a bunch of Cuban rolled cigars  
one has a solid red bonnet & bulging eyes ready for war  
Another has a headdress from hell  
with pained feathers no bird on earth  
would be caught dead in  
All around them are plastic inflatable  
hot pink palm trees grinning skulls  
shepherd beer steins      chuckling checkbooks

[. . .]

There are certainly more fake Indians  
than real ones but this is the u.s.a.  
What else can you expect from the land of sell  
your grandma      sell our land      [. . .]  
You too could have a fake Indian in your parlor  
who never talks back

Fly in the face of it  
I want a plastic white man  
I can blow up again & again  
I want turkeys to keep their feathers  
& the non-feathered variety to shut up  
I want to bury these Indians dressed like cartoons  
of our long dead  
I want to live  
somewhere  
where nobody is sold



## Handout 2 - *What's an Indian Woman to Do?* Marcie Rendon (Anishinaabe)

*Marcie Rendon (1952- ) Anishinaabe is a poet, playwright, community activist, and member of the White Earth Nation. She has written two novels, including Girl Gone Missing (2019), and well as a variety of children's books. She is also producer and creative direct at the Raving Native Theater in Minnesota.*

what's an indian women to do  
when the white girls act more indian  
than the indian women do?

my tongue trips over takonsala  
mumbles around the word mitakuye oyasin  
my ojibwe's been corrected  
by a blond U of M undergraduate

what's an indian woman to do?

much to my ex-husband's dismay  
i never learned the humble,  
Spiritual,  
Native woman stance  
legs tight, arms close, head bowed  
three paces behind

my mother worked and fought with men  
strode across fields  
100-pound potato sacks on shoulders broad as any man  
the most traditional thing  
my grandfather taught me  
was to put jeebik on the cue stick  
to win a game of pool

so I never the learned the finer  
indian arts  
so many white women have become adept at  
sometimes I go to pow-wows  
see them selling wares  
somehow the little crystals  
tied on leather pouches  
never pull my indian heart

huh, what's an indian woman to do?



i remember Kathy She Who Sees the Spirit Lights  
when she was still  
Katrina Olson from Mankato, Minnesota  
and Raven Woman?  
damn, I swear I knew her  
when she was a jewish girl  
over in st. paul

as my hair grays  
theirs gets darker  
month by month  
their reservation accents  
thicker  
year by year

used to be  
reincarnation happened  
only to the dead

hmmm?!?!?

what's an indian woman to do  
when the white girls act more indian  
than the indians do?

**RUMBLE**  
The Indians Who Rocked the World





### **Handout 3 - Cultural Appropriation Structured Academic Controversy**

**The Question:** Does cultural appropriation negatively affect Native American communities, and should it be regulated by law?

**The Process:**

*Phase 1:* Group A defends the “yes” answer, Group B defends the “no” answer

- Travel to each of the 4 stations. Gather three pieces of evidence to support your position
- Groups A and B come back together, each presents their evidence and listens to the other side’s evidence, without interrupting

*Phase 2:* Group A defends the “no” answer, Group B defends the “yes” answer

- Repeat the process. Each group is allowed to keep one of the other group’s pieces of evidence, but must find at least one more of its own
- Groups A and B come back together, each presents their evidence and listens to the other side’s evidence, without interrupting

*Phase 3:* Groups A and B abandon their assigned positions and have a “free” discussion about the question

*Phase 4:* Discuss the question as a class



## **Station 1 - Thoughts on Cultural Appropriation**

### **Introduction to Cultural Appropriation (excerpt)**

**Nadra Kareem Nittle, Thoughtco.com, Oct. 11, 2017**

People from hundreds of different ethnicities make up the U.S. population, so it's not surprising that cultural groups rub off on each other at times.

Americans who grow up in diverse communities may pick up the dialect, customs, and religious traditions of the cultural groups that surround them.

Cultural appropriation is an entirely different matter. It has little to do with one's exposure to and familiarity with different cultures. Instead, cultural appropriation typically involves members of a dominant group exploiting the culture of less privileged groups. Quite often, this is done along racial and ethnic lines with little understanding of the latter's history, experience, and traditions.

### **In Defense of Cultural Appropriation (excerpt)**

**Kenan Malik, New York Times, June 14, 2017**

Campaigns against cultural appropriation reveal the changing meaning of what it is to challenge racism. Once, it was a demand for equal treatment for all. Now it calls for cultures to be walled off and boundaries to be policed.

But who does the policing? Every society has its gatekeepers [whose role is to] protect certain institutions, maintain the privileges of particular groups and cordon off some beliefs from challenge. Such gatekeepers protect not the marginalized but the powerful. Racism itself is a form of gatekeeping, a means of denying racialized groups equal rights, access and opportunities.

In minority communities, the gatekeepers are usually self-appointed guardians whose power rests on their ability to define what is acceptable and what is beyond the bounds. They appropriate for themselves the authority to license certain forms of cultural engagement, and in doing so, entrench their power.



## Station 2: Music - Mardi Gras “Indians” in New Orleans

### Watch Clip 2, “Big Chief Monk Boudreaux”

#### From [Bigchiefmonk.com](http://Bigchiefmonk.com):

The history of the Mardi Gras Indian culture in New Orleans is complex, and accounts of its origins are sometimes inconsistent. An affinity shared between Native American and African American people, both of whom were enslaved and persecuted at various times in the city’s history, was clearly a driving force in those origins and the mixing of their cultures. Both ethnic groups also share an appreciation of tradition, and the unique New Orleans Mardi Gras Indian music, costumes, and rituals are a melding of influences from both cultures.

#### From “Mardi Gras Indians,” in *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, pp. 235-6. George Lipsitz:

Although it takes place in response to the rituals and timetables of European carnival traditions, the Indian spectacle is not primarily European. It presents visual and narrative references to Native American Indians, but it bears little resemblance to genuine Indian celebrations and ceremonies. It draws its determinate modes of expression from African culture and philosophy, but it is not a purely African ritual...[it picks and chooses] from many traditions to fashion performances and narratives suitable for arbitrating an extraordinarily complex identity.

#### From [Louisianafolklife.org](http://Louisianafolklife.org):

The “Mardi Gras Indian” tribes of New Orleans are, in fact, the oldest cultural organizations surviving from the original African tribes which were brought into New Orleans during slavery days. The tribes are particularly noted for preserving African “dress art” and musical heritage in the New World. The sewing and beadwork incorporated in Mardi Gras Indian suits, which are destroyed and redesigned each year, are widely considered to be the finest example of traditional African-American folk art in North America. Now long hidden in the Black ghettos of New Orleans, the Mardi Gras Indian tribes pursue cultural traditions, rooted in what they think of as a mysterious past, which despite being some 10 to 15 generations removed from their origin in Africa, still give them pride and serve to maintain their spirits against the dehumanizing effects of modern society.

Like small colonial armies on the march, a core of musicians play all sorts of drums and percussion instruments, speak in unknown tongues, and sing and chant dressed in elaborate African-American Indian costumes. During the day, they methodically hunt down other Indian gangs-some friendly gangs, in order to show off their new suits, and some not so friendly gangs, in order to show off their strength and power-all bringing back both the warrior spirits of Africa and the kindred spirits of Native American Indian people they came to respect and love.

### Watch Clip 3, “Ancestry”

### Station 3: Sports - The Washington Redskins Logo



#### **Ending the Legacy of Racism in Sports and the Era of Harmful “Indian” Sports Mascots, National Congress of American Indians, October 2013**

“Indian” sports brands used by professional teams were born in an era when racism and bigotry were accepted by the dominant culture. These brands which have grown to become multi-million dollar franchises were established at a time when the practice of using racial epithets and slurs as marketing slogans were a common practice among white owners seeking to capitalize on cultural superiority and racial tensions.

Among the professional ranks, the effort by the NFL and the Washington football team to retain the violent and racially derived term “Redsk\*ns” has been a focus of national and international media. The legacy of racism which was established by the team’s owner, George Preston Marshall, is an important component to the story of the Washington football team name, in addition to its violent origins in American popular culture.

The term originates from a time when Native people were actively hunted and killed for bounties, and their skins were used as proof of Indian kill. 16 Bounties were issued by European companies, colonies, and some states, most notably California. By the turn of the 20th century it had evolved to become a term meant to disparage and denote inferiority and savagery in American culture. By 1932, the word had been a term of commodification and a commentary on the color of a body part. It was not then and is not now an honorific.

#### **“Are You Ready For Some Controversy? The History Of ‘Redskin’” (excerpt), Lakshmi Ghandi, Code Switch, npr.org, September 9, 2013.**

Throughout the 1800s, the word [Redskin] was frequently used by Native Americans as they negotiated with the French and later the Americans. The phrase gained widespread usage among whites when James Fenimore Cooper used it in his 1823 novel The Pioneers. In the book, Cooper has a dying Indian character lament, “There will soon be no red-skin in the country.”

Decades later, the word “redskin” began to take on a negative, increasingly violent connotation. Author L. Frank



Baum, best known for his classic *The Wizard of Oz*, celebrated the death of Sitting Bull and the massacre at Wounded Knee with a pair of editorials calling for the extermination of all remaining Native Americans. In one of the December 1890 pieces, Baum wrote, "With his fall the nobility of the Redskin is extinguished, and what few are left are a pack of whining curs who lick the hand that smites them."

### **From Sportslogohistory.com**

The Redskins primary logo used today was first designed in 1971 in close consultation with Native American leaders. Among those who unanimously approved and voiced praise for the logo was Walter "Blackie" Wetzel, a former President of the National Congress of American Indians and Chairman of the Blackfeet Nation. Years earlier, Mr. Wetzel had been deeply involved with U.S. President John F. Kennedy in the movement for civil liberties, civil rights, and economic freedom for all. In 2014, Mr. Wetzel's son Don commented, "It needs to be said that an Indian from the State of Montana created the Redskins logo, and did it the right way. It represents the Red Nation, and it's something to be proud of."

### **Washington Redskins win trademark fight over the team's name, June 29, 2017, Washington Post**

One of the earliest points of contention came on March 29, 1972, when a delegation of Native American leaders met with then-Redskins president Edward Bennett Williams, lobbying him to change the name. Though he didn't do so, the team scrapped "Scalp 'em" from its fight song, replacing it with "Beat 'em." The team also got rid of the cheerleaders' black braided wigs.

It would be another 20 years until Native American activists took their first legal action against the team. On Sept. 10, 1992, seven Native American activists led by Suzan Shown Harjo filed a petition with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, asking that the team's six registrations be revoked.

Seven years later, the patent and trademark office's appeals board ruled in Harjo's favor. But the team never quit fighting to defend itself, arguing that most Native Americans were not offended by the name, and that the activists hadn't proved that the name was widely considered a slur.

As the Redskins and Harjo battled in court, a 2004 poll by the Annenberg Public Policy Center seemed to back up the team's argument: 9 in 10 Indians did not find the name offensive.



## Station 4: Fashion



Victoria's Secret "Angel" Karlie Kloss at the 2012 Victoria's Secret Fashion Show

### **Victoria's Secret's Racist Garbage Is Just Asking for a Boycott, Ruth Hopkins, Jezebel, November 12, 2012**

Why is this practice offensive to Natives? Let's peel away the layers of this tacky, racist onion. For one, Ms. Kloss has no business wearing a war bonnet at all. Not only is she not Native, she hasn't earned the honor. Among my people, the Oceti Sakowin (Sioux), war bonnets are exclusively worn by men, and each feather within a war bonnet is symbolic of a brave act of valor accomplished by that man. Not just any Tom, Dick or Harry had the privilege of wearing a war bonnet. Who wears a war bonnet? Tatanka Iyotanka, Sitting Bull... This brings me to my next point: the hypersexualization of Native women. Unfortunately, these days, if you search "war bonnet" or even "Native" on the Internet, you're likely to come across dozens of pictures of naked, or nearly naked, white women wearing headdresses. Given the epidemic levels of sexual violence Native women and girls are faced with in the United States, why can they not see how incredibly insensitive and inappropriate it is to equate Native womanhood as little more than a sexual fetish?

### **Jennifer Weston, Endangered Languages Program Manager at Cultural Survival (Hunkpapa Lakota, Standing Rock Sioux) in "A Much-Needed Primer on Cultural Appropriation," Jezebel, November 13, 2012**

Such misrepresentations sexualize, commodify, and pervert our traditions — and impart to children of all cultures and backgrounds that it's perfectly acceptable to "play dress up" as a Native person, without regard for our ceremonial practices that have persisted here for millennia despite historic violence, and recent legal acts that literally outlawed our religions until 1978!

### **In Defence of Cultural Appropriation, Yo Zushi, New Statesman, October 12, 2015**

The policing of appearance is nothing new. In the mid-1920s, the then Mexican president, Plutarco Elías Calles, forbade Catholic priests from wearing clerical collars outdoors; more recently, on 14 September 2010, the French Senate passed the Loi interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public, better known in the English-speaking world as "the burqa ban". What is curious, however, is that the latest round of strictures on how individuals can present themselves comes not from repressive, dictatorial regimes or panicked politicians but from those who consider themselves progressives: liberals united against the menace of "cultural appropriation".

At a time of heightened racial tensions across the world, with police shootings of black men in the United States



and Islamophobia (and phobias of all kinds) seemingly on the rise, this rage against cultural appropriation is understandable: no right-minded liberal wants to cause unnecessary offence, least of all to minorities. Yet simply to point out instances of appropriation in the assumption that the process is by its nature corrosive seems to me a counterproductive, even reactionary pursuit; it serves no end but to essentialise race as the ultimate component of human identity.

Speaking to the website Jezebel, the law professor Susan Scafidi of Fordham University in New York explained that appropriation involves “taking intellectual property, traditional knowledge, cultural expressions or artefacts from someone else’s culture without permission”. Yet such a definition seems to assume the existence of mythical central organisations with absolute mandates to represent minority groups – a black HQ, an Asian bureau, a Jewish head office – from which permissions and authorisations can be sought. More troubling is that it herds culture and tradition into the pen of a moral ownership not dissimilar to copyright, which may suit a legalistic outlook but jars with our human impulse to like what we like and create new things out of it.

### **Here’s Why I’ll Be Wearing A Native American Headdress Next Halloween. Milo Yiannopoulos, Breitbart, November 5, 2014.**

You’ve probably, at some time in your life, considered showing up to a fancy dress party as a Red Indian—or, as we’re obliged to call them these days, a “Native American.” You probably didn’t then consider the delicate racial politics of your costume choice, innocently believing that dressing up was the sort of perfectly normal, morally neutral thing you do on, say, Halloween. But it might be time to start worrying.

Today, [Ellie] Goulding is the latest victim of the faux-left’s ridiculous war on what they call “appropriation”—that is, homages in fashion, art or music to earlier cultures. Since appearing in a Red Indian headdress, Goulding has been the subject of furious tweets from well-meaning morons telling her that donning such a costume is “no better than blackface.”

But when a nice, innocent, sweet and talented girl from Herefordshire is being abused by vicious third-wave harpies with axes to grind (none of whom, of course, has experienced an iota of oppression or suffering themselves, of course), it’s perhaps time to ask why we’re giving oxygen to malcontents determined to close off avenues of cultural enquiry and shut down free expression, all in the name of bogus offence-taking.

Of course, if she’d actually wanted to be offensive, she might have donned the more recognisable modern Native American costume of a fleece jacket, vodka breath, a betting slip and a pair of jeans from Big and Mighty straining under the effects of a Taco Bell paunch. But I digress.