



Accomplice

For the Record

Installment 03: We Are Not Alone

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Featured Resource: *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor* by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang

Survey results

To better understand the full picture of an incomplete account of our campus history, we asked our community to share their knowledge, explain what story they had been told, and recall what they knew about the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi.

Throughout their time on campus, Notre Dame students may receive education about Indigenous communities on local to international scales, both historical and present. However, this is not building on earlier exposure in Moreau. We opened a survey to the entire Notre Dame community, and students responded to questions about what they learned regarding Notre Dame history in their Moreau courses. Many responded, “no mention at all” of Indigenous people, while some students focused merely on the roles of Fr. Badin, Fr. Sorin, and the Congregation of Holy Cross in the founding story, indicating that “The Native American tribes they displaced were mentioned as brief footnotes.”

Another common theme is exemplified by the statement “an Indian chief gave us our land,” indicative of a formal, consensual, or mutually desirable agreement, free of exploitative intent. In fact, a student summarized the transfer of land as merely “consensual.” A student reports learning that, due to the Holy Cross’ education of the Natives in the area, the Pokagon band *converted* to Catholicism, a direct contradiction to a reality in which the Pokagon band was already practicing Catholicism.

Respondents mentioned learning about the role Native people played in the University’s founding after Moreau. For example, “We learned absolutely nothing about the Potawatomi people. Basically as it was taught, this was empty land that Sorin showed up on and built the school on..... I didn’t even realize until I started taking courses in the CSC, where professors like Kyle Lantz signed their emails acknowledging that we are on stolen land.” Another student learned through independent research. In other words, students that did learn more often actively sought out the information or acquired it through means other than the one most readily accessible to them, which may not have even told a story of omission, but rather, a story replete with misinformation.

This is especially concerning considering that, on a scale from 1 to 5, over 88% of students rated their knowledge of Native history and culture a 3 or less. In fact, over half rated their knowledge 2 or lower. In another question, we asked students to, out of a checklist, identify whose land the University of Notre Dame occupies. While nearly 98% of respondents were able to correctly identify the Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi, 21% of respondents admitted to resorting to Google in support of their answer. This, also, is after many students had been educated via other means discussed above; they might not have necessarily learned about Notre Dame's native history in their Moreau course.

However, there was an expressed desire to learn more, and specifically about Notre Dame's full history. 72% of students expressed maximal interest (a 5 on a Lickert scale) in learning more about Notre Dame's history with Indigenous people. And more telling, no one responded to this question with a response lower than a 3. Our survey demonstrates that significant interest does exist on campus, although students need to seek it out on their own.

The survey concluded with a few open-ended questions about our project, one of which inquired about questions respondents had regarding Indigenous people and culture. In this section, one student asked, "Why aren't we learning more of this?" This is the reason that this project began; the fact that other students feel the same way is simultaneously encouraging and disheartening. While current acknowledgement of Native history at Notre Dame is lacking and incomplete, a modification of the Moreau curriculum to reflect students' desire to learn more would be advisable and just in a desire to further students' learning. This desire for increased learning was reflected in the passage of a resolution calling for a more inclusive curriculum this semester.

Resolution Passed

Significant progress was made on this project during this past semester; one key example of progress was the passage of a revised version of the Senate Resolution, which had failed to pass by slim margin last spring. As was mentioned in a previous installment, in Spring 2020, a senate resolution had been presented which was endorsed by the Native American Student Association at Notre Dame (NASAND). The resolution called for increased inclusivity in the Moreau curriculum through modification of the history and cultural competency units to include Native American communities and voices. This resolution was sponsored by Directors of the Departments of Diversity and Inclusion and Academic Affairs in the Student Senate; it also received considerable support from the student body president and vice-president. Unfortunately, the resolution failed to pass by a single vote.

Convinced by the importance of our project to spur positive change on campus, we persisted. Just a few weeks ago, we were able to present and pass an updated version of the resolution through the Senate. This newer version also received sponsorship from the student body president, vice president, and chief of staff. Throughout the process, we have collaborated with NASAND and received their support.

We hope to be able to create a curriculum for the Moreau course which speaks to Native history and culture, and preferably through the voices of Native people. We are encouraged by these key steps towards progress in obtaining the support of the student body, and we look forward to making the vision stated in our resolution a reality.

Peace Con was a success!

On Saturday, April 17, we presented our project at the 2021 Notre Dame Student Peace Conference, Beyond the Surface: Moving the Needle on Global Peace. We were proud to be a part of the “Considering Indigenous Histories” panel, moderated by Dr. Justin de Leon. Our fellow panelist was Notre Dame Master’s of Global Affairs student Rachael Rosenberg, who presented a paper on online Armenian activism related to the 2020 Karabakh War, which she found has taken on the language and tone of an indigenous struggle against settler-colonialism by Azeris.

While our topics were ostensibly quite different, we were pleasantly surprised to see shared themes of narrative, and positionality at the center versus the margins. Both ours and Rachel’s presentations dealt with constructed narratives that hinged on identity, belonging, and claim to place. We also discussed power dynamics that place an empowered group at the center and relegate a disempowered group at the margins. Overlooked or erased, people at the margins have a much clearer and more comprehensive view of the entire scope of stakeholder dynamics, both at the center and other places along the margins.

Our moderator also questioned us regarding the Indigenizing of our University. Most succinctly defined, “Indigenization requires non-Indigenous people to be aware of Indigenous worldviews and to respect that those worldviews are equal to other views. Indigenization is about incorporating Indigenous worldviews, knowledge and perspectives into the education system, right from primary grades to universities.” We shared that we have found many other instances of educational institutions and universities actively Indigenizing themselves, or at the very least acknowledging their colonial history in a much more transparent way than Notre Dame. If you are interested in seeing how other schools are dealing with similar histories, we recommend Princeton, Miami University, and University of Arizona.

Finally, we invite you to view our conference PowerPoint here, and visit our Linktree which we prepared for conference attendees to further explore. Most of the information linked here we have already conveyed to you, our Accomplice readers, but here it is compiled.

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We have been happy to discover other places that we are seeing discussion and consideration of Indigenous issues on campus, be it through student-led projects or in the classroom. We wish to introduce our peer and colleague Koki Kobayashi ('21), who is calling on the University to fly the Pokagon flag:

Imagine you own a home. For hundreds of years, your ancestors lived in this home, took care of the yard, cooked your favorite food in the kitchen, and made cherished memories that were passed down from generation to generation through their stories. One day, a few guests arrive, seeking food and shelter from the harsh winter. You generously invite them into your home, feed them, and teach them about how to sustain themselves off of the land around your home. Now, these guests would like to transform your home into a school, and you are invited to be part of the first student class, all for free. Of course you accept! But after a few years, your home starts to look unrecognizable. The guests start telling stories about how they “discovered” the land that the school stands on. They replace your family photos and oral traditions with their own. When you ask them to restore your ancestral history, they ignore you. Soon enough, your guests overtake your home, a home you and your family lived in for centuries, and refuse to recognize your existence, your hospitality, and your right to a promised free education. You become forgotten. You lost your home. You lost everything.

Though simplified, this is essentially the story of Notre Dame’s founding. In 1842, the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi welcomed Fr. Sorin into their home and helped him build what is now the University of Notre Dame. Over the years, the university erased this early cooperation and thriving relationship between the Catholic Pokagons and Sorin from its own history. Promises were broken, including an agreement for free education for Pokagon students. Instead, here stands a university that preaches the pursuit for truth and solidarity with its neighbors, yet fails to uphold this mission with their earliest partners. Notre Dame is not a welcoming environment for Pokagons. This home is long overdue for an overhaul.

What are our “renovation plans” for this home under the dome? Our first goal is to put up a Pokagon Band of Potawatomi flag in a highly-visible, public area on Notre Dame’s campus. Preferably, this would be at the southeast corner of the grounds of Notre Dame Stadium, where a flag display already exists. The five flags that currently fly there are the American flag, flanked on either side by the flag of the Vatican and the state of Indiana, and on the outer edges are a Notre Dame athletics flag and a “#1” flag. Earlier this year, the fifth flag was a “HERE” flag, which goes to show this university values an unpopular and shaky campaign that failed to keep 2,000 students and employees (including the President) safe from COVID-19 more than its rich history and relations with the original inhabitants of these lands. This university needs to straighten its priorities and uphold its mission in a much better way.

By putting up a Pokagon flag, the university can begin the process of reconciliation with the Pokagon Band and establish itself as an institution that values diversity, inclusion, and equity. The evidence for the benefits of putting up Native flag displays is everywhere. Across the United States and the world, there are over 30 (and counting) primary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities that already acknowledge their presence on indigenous land by flying flags of Native nations. The University of Oregon has a flag plaza in the center of their campus that flies the flags of all nine tribes that reside in the state of Oregon. The university’s Assistant Vice President, Jason Younker, explained how both Native and non-Native students and faculty take great pride in this flag display, as they feel safe, welcomed, and represented on their campus. This display has the ability to increase student morale

and also recruit more Native students to higher education. Thus, it is a valuable investment not only for Native partners, but for the university as well.

For a university that prides itself in leadership and being an "enlightening force" for a world in need, Notre Dame is already so far behind the pack. Let's change that. Let's take a step in the right direction by flying the Pokagon flag on campus. Let's restore their place in this home. There is absolutely nothing to lose, but there is everything to gain. ~Koki Kobayashi, '21

Beyond extracurricular initiatives, we are also seeing professors engage with Indigeneity and Native issues in their coursework. We asked students to list courses in which they had discussed Indigenous people and cultures. We received a list of over 30 courses in disciplines including English, Spanish, Peace Studies, History, Theology, Political Science, and Center for Social Concerns, among others. In these courses, students reported learning about the Native story and beyond; one student even mentioned analyzing Fr. Sorin's letters to Fr. Moreau. In fact, one student even spoke of learning about Notre Dame's Native history in a theology course. Many students spoke of learning about Native culture, history, and resilience more broadly, on national to international scales. This highlights how, despite an incomplete telling in Moreau, students are willing to seek out a fuller story and professors are able to relay a more complete understanding of Indigenous history and cultures.

- American Ruins (AMST)
- American Wilderness (AMST)
- Captives & Slaves (AMST)
- Fashioning American Identities (AMST)
- History of American Indian Education (AMST/ESS)
- History of American Education (AMST/ESS)
- The Indian School and American Culture (AMST)
- Introduction to American Studies (AMST)
- Native American Histories and Cultures in the 20th Century and Beyond (AMST)
- Native Literature (AMST)
- Natives in Boarding Schools (AMST)
- Notre Dame and America (AMST)
- Public Art & Memory in America (AMST)
- Social Justice, Indigenous Insight (AMST)
- Sports and American Culture (AMST)
- Witnessing the Sixties (AMST)
- Indigenous Communities (CSC)
- Indigenous Peoples, Past & Present (CSEM)
- Introduction to Creative Writing (ENGL)
- God, Country, Notre Dame (ESS/HIST)
- Appalachia: Land and People (HIST)
- Genocide and the Modern World (HIST/IIPS)
- History of the American West (HIST)
- Introduction to Peace Studies (IIPS)

- Perspectives on Peacebuilding (IIPS)
- Holy Cross-roads: Religion & Politics from South Bend to Southeast Asia (KSGA)
- Latin American Politics (POLI)
- Transitional Justice in Latin America (POLI)
- Colonial Latin America (ROSP)
- Cultural Conversations & Writing (ROSP)
- Sustainability and the Holy Cross Charism at ND/SMC/HCC (THEO)

You will notice that several of these courses come from unexpected departments--Spanish, Theology, and Education, to name a few. The American Studies department is also gaining a faculty member for the 2021-2022 academic year specifically for Native American Studies.

The presence of these courses only further solidifies our belief that introducing Native history in Moreau will be an appropriate introduction to a topic that students may return to in their coursework or extracurriculars. It is clear the revised "Notre Dame Story" curriculum will not be a non sequitur; it will be an overdue overture to an education which students are already seeking out on campus.

Letter to those who take up the cause...

Calling all First Years and sophomores!

We are so excited that you will be continuing the important work started here. Thank you for your awareness and active interest in this area and for all the hard work you will do. We wish to recap here the work that has been done over the past two years, which will continue.

Our primary initiative is one to include Native history and voice in the Moreau First Year Experience curriculum. Most importantly, this project has the support and cooperation of the Native American Student Association of Notre Dame.

Last Spring (2020) a Student Senate Resolution calling on Moreau to change to be more transparent and inclusive failed to pass by *just one vote*. After a year of hard work and clarifying our project's goals, we are happy to announce that this March, a Resolution was passed with the support of student government leaders and the executive board, President Rachel Ingal, Vice President Sarah Galbanski, and Chief of Staff Aaron Benavides. This resolution and initiative were featured in former President Rachel Ingal's Year in Review Letter, and the continuation and fulfillment of the resolution to update the Moreau FYE curriculum will achieve a component of the Njomo-Bisner administration's solidarity platform.

Seeing that we have student support, our next challenge is engaging administrators and amending policy, and then actually developing curriculum. Adding material to the MYFE is not new. The course is constantly being evaluated by faculty, administrators, and the Moreau Student Advisory Council. Recently (2020) the topic of sustainability was added to the course. We will continue having meetings with any relevant stakeholders who will hear us out, and we appreciate any new contacts you may have.

If you are interested in joining us next year, get ready for lots of meetings and dialogues on this topic. We have been happy to lay the groundwork through research, academic presentations, and authoring publicity materials like these Accomplice installments, but now is the time for boots on the ground. This is the time when we need motivated, committed, driven students to help us talk to decision makers one on one to make this project a reality.

Please contact us:

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