

## **Conclusion**

In this study I looked at the impact of modern society on Native American lifestyles and identity, and the ways in which this impact affects their attitudes towards higher education. The qualitative collection of data, the interviews, is an important contribution to this understanding. I plan to use this information for the purpose of creating an outreach program aimed at Native Americans. This study will benefit Mt.SAC, our department, and my own personal development.

In the summary of the interviews, I concluded that the gaming, increased political power, changes in cultural participation levels and other current changes has had, in general, a positive effect on the communities that have these things. The money in these communities allows students to feel as though education is an option for the future. Many elders felt that there is an expectation now for the youth to become college educated. So why are there currently so few Native American students in colleges and universities?

Throughout the interview process, I heard over and over again that the college atmosphere and environment is hostile to Native Americans. Since traditional Native Americans depend on family and community in ways that are not familiar in the dominant society, they feel alienated and lonely at institutions of higher learning. Therefore, it is essential to have places where supportive networks of other Native Americans, either at school (in clubs or centers), or in

the broader local community around the institution. Clubs, centers and community networks allow Native students to feel comfortable and supported in a familiar way. I was told that Native students will drop out of school, not because they are doing poorly academically in classes, but due to loneliness and feelings of isolation. Creating safe havens seems a simple solution to keeping those who enroll committed and ultimately successful.

Many Native Americans, who I interviewed, felt as if they were invisible on campus. They felt as if their ethnic identity issues are not the same as other minority groups, since they are the indigenous people of this country. It was thought that recognition as the first people is not viewed as important by the colleges and universities, and the Natives I interviewed felt this was wrong and needed to be corrected. Through increased recognition and respect, higher self-esteem will come to more students. This will contribute to their success and then to their being role models for future students.

Most often, I heard there was not enough Native American staff at colleges and universities, even when many feel there are qualified people to fill the available positions. The visibility of Native faculty is seen as inspiring and gives students the attitude that higher education is for them. Native faculty with a personal history of traditional upbringing and core values, is seen as ideal.

If Mt.SAC is truly committed to the value of diversity, it makes sense to be supportive of Native Americans in these ways. Mt.SAC will benefit by being supportive of an important component of our Southern Californian population. More students enrolling and participating will bring these students' communities closer, along with their greatly increasing economic and political powers. The insights from this report can help make that possible.

Since nearby universities, UCR and UCLA for example, have Native American Studies programs, it would be in our best interest to offer that as a major for transferring students. Native American Studies programs tell prospective Native American students that the college is supportive and interested in them, even if they do not choose that major for themselves. But, for those who do, it would allow them to transfer to the universities easier and increase our transfer success rates at Mt.SAC.

The immense amount of information I generated about attitudes towards higher education will be incorporated in my lecture material for Anthropology 30, "The Native American", especially in the section that deals with contemporary issues. My understanding and perspective of this issue has been deeply broadened. Another benefit is that I will be able to bring some of the interviewees as guest speakers to the classroom.



As the faculty advisor of the Native American Intertribal Student Alliance (NAISA) at Mt.SAC, my role as informal counselor and support person has gained greater importance to me. This role, as a vital link in the success of Native students, was stressed by all. Many of my former Native American students, including those who I interviewed, have thanked me for the role I played in their success. These include college graduates, graduate students and other success stories. It was heartwarming to know that my contribution made a difference. I feel that this study has reinforced my commitment to making a difference in the lives of the Native American community.

The project was fun and challenging. I met with and became better connected to the local Native American community. I learned that digital recording is far superior to using tapes, at the cost of losing some of the interviews done on tapes. I learned that transcribing is a difficult and tedious job. I learned that even when I don't have formal training as a counselor, my own knowledge of Native American values served me well in directing students to success.