

A Summary of Native American Activities and Relationships at TCU 2016-17 Academic Year

"As we have discussed in class, TCU sits upon the very land of the Wichita tribe—how would the world around us be different if we were to talk more openly about these unspoken connections between different peoples and the influences that make a difference in these interactions?"

TCU Student (RELI 10043.010, Spring 2017)

During the 2016-17 academic year, TCU took significant steps to engage Native American peoples and perspectives through three main avenues: educational efforts, student recruitment and campus activities, and community relations. The following goals guided these endeavors:

1. To raise awareness of and respect for Native American peoples, cultures, and perspectives
2. To learn from and incorporate Native American knowledge throughout all levels of the campus community
3. To create a welcoming and respectful environment on campus for Native American students, faculty, staff, and visitors
4. To build healthy, respectful, and mutually beneficial relationships with Native American peoples and communities

Educational Efforts

In keeping with TCU's mission "to educate individuals to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community," a variety of activities were carried out, including talks given to small groups, campus-wide presentations, and courses focused entirely on Native American topics.

1. **Symposium:** On October 3, 2016, TCU held its first Indigenous Peoples Day symposium. A variety of activities were held around the theme of Native American and Indigenous perspectives related to the observance of Columbus Day and the ramifications of Western colonization and assimilation of Native peoples and lands.

Collectively, approximately 1000 people participated in the symposium's activities. During the day, several Native American speakers conversed with approximately 400 students. That evening, the symposium's speakers addressed about 600 people (400 of whom were students).

The symposium's impact extended well beyond the day itself. It is clearly the keystone of the year's efforts, being responsible for many of the subsequent events and developments.

2. **Panel Discussions:** During the Spring 2017 semester, three panel discussions open to the entire campus were held. Collectively, a total of 550 people attended these discussions.

On February 28, three Native American speakers addressed an audience of approximately 200 people, 171 of whom were TCU students, regarding Native American perspectives on the Dakota Access Pipeline.

On March 28, two Native American speakers addressed an audience of approximately 225 people, 178 of whom were TCU students, regarding issues related to Native American women, health, and spirituality.

On April 10, two Native American speakers addressed an audience of approximately 125 people, 101 of whom were TCU students, regarding issues related to Native American women, health, and spirituality (these issues differed from those discussed on March 28).

3. **Courses:** The following courses devoted entirely to Native American topics were either taught or developed during the year:

ENGL 20573, "Introduction to Native American Literatures," taught by Dr. Theresa Gaul during Fall 2016

RELI 10043, "Understanding Religion: Society and Culture: Native Americans, Christians, and American Ideals," four total sections taught by Dr. Scott Langston during Fall 2016 and Spring 2017

RELI 30693, "Native American Perspectives on Religion and Contemporary Issues," developed by Dr. Scott Langston and currently going through the curriculum approval process; tentatively scheduled to be taught in Spring 2018

4. **Student speakers:** Native American students made the following presentations:

Albert Nungaray (Puebloan)

- Chi Delta Mu (Religion Department weekly luncheon with faculty and students), Spring 2017; Topic: "What is Important to Me"
- RELI 30783, "Religion and Environmental Ethics," (Dr. Jack Hill), Spring 2017; Topic: "Native American Perspectives on the Environment"

Morgan John (Coushatta)

- RELI 10023.056, "Understanding Religion: Communities: World Religions Through the Centuries" (Scott Langston), Fall 2016; Topic: "The Coushatta tribe's experience with and responses to the efforts to assimilate and Christianize them"

Student Recruitment and Campus Activities

1. **Student Association:** Shortly after the Indigenous Peoples Day symposium, a small group of students organized the Native and Indigenous Student Association. After receiving university approval in November, the association met three times during Spring 2017, as well as participated as co-sponsors of the three panel discussions. Morgan John and Albert Nungaray served as president and vice-president. Morgan John also represented TCU at an event in Dallas held by the organization, American Indian Heritage Day in Texas.
2. **Proposals:** On March 1, 2017, the following proposals were submitted to TCU's administration:
 - That TCU designate the first Monday in October as Native American and Indigenous Peoples Day, to be accompanied by programming that focuses on and incorporates Native American peoples, communities, and perspectives.
 - That TCU acknowledge those Native American peoples who have and are currently living in North Texas, as well as TCU's location on the Wichita tribe's historical homeland, with a permanent marker placed in a new Native American garden located prominently on campus

To date, we have not heard whether these proposals will be implemented.

3. **Tobacco Policy:** On May 4, 2017, TCU's Faculty Senate discussed the following proposal that had previously been approved by the TCU Student Government Association and the TCU Staff Assembly:

"In order to encourage a culture of health and wellness that aligns with the values outlined in our mission statement, Texas Christian University prohibits the use of all tobacco products on university grounds and property."

With the help of Senator Jan Quesada, the Faculty Senate modified and approved the following proposal:

"Let it be resolved that the Faculty Senate support the SGA's *A Resolution to Support the Adoption of a Tobacco Free Campus Policy* (complete text above), with the provision that the wording be changed to say "prohibits the recreational use of all tobacco products..."

The change from prohibiting the use of all tobacco products to prohibiting the recreational use of all tobacco products is important to reflect that TCU understands and respects the sacred and powerful role played by tobacco within many Native American cultures. This action contributes toward creating a welcoming environment on campus for Native American

students, faculty, staff, and visitors, and reflects language often used by tribal colleges and universities.

4. **Career Fair:** On April 20, 2017, Chereese Dickerson, Admissions Counsellor, represented TCU at a career fair held in Dallas at the Urban Inter-Tribal Center of Texas. This represents an important step taken by TCU to establish a presence among the local Native American community and to actively recruit Native American students.

Community Relations

1. **American Indian Heritage Day in Texas:** Following the Indigenous Peoples Day symposium, Scott Langston was invited and began working with American Indian Heritage Day in Texas as one of its ambassadors. This organization seeks to provide awareness, educate, and advocate on behalf of American Indians.
2. **Alumni and Staff:** Conversations were held with the following Native American alumni and staff regarding TCU's efforts and direction: Scott Stafford (Yuchi, classes of 2005 and 2006), Tabitha Tan (Navajo, class of 1999), Carl Kurtz (Citizen Band Potawatomi, class of 2014, and Core Lab Technician, TCU Energy Institute), Katie Tonemah (Comanche/Kiowa, class of 2012), and Sarah Tonemah (Comanche/Kiowa, costume technician in the Theatre Department).

Future Plans

In the upcoming 2017-18 academic year, we hope to engage in a year-long, campus-wide conversation regarding Native American identities. Understanding the complexities and challenges associated with Native American identities is crucial to achieving the goals mentioned on page one and contributing to TCU's diversity initiatives. To that end, we are planning the following activities:

1. **Symposium:** TCU's second Native American and Indigenous Peoples Day symposium will be held on October 2, 2017. The day will consist of a variety of activities, including an address in the evening by Matika Wilbur (Swinomish and Tulalip Tribes of Washington), a professional photographer engaged in photographing contemporary Native America, on *Changing the Way We See Native America: Dismantling Native American Stereotypes*.
2. **Photographic Exhibit:** We hope to host on campus in November, which is National Native American Heritage Month, a photographic exhibit about the DFW urban Indian community. American Indian Heritage Day in Texas is creating the exhibit and describes it as follows:

"Concrete Jungle, presented by American Indian Heritage Day in Texas, is a multi-dimensional photography exhibit defining what it means to be an "urban Indian". Since over 75% of U.S. citizens who identify as American Indians or Alaskan Natives live outside of

tribal areas, the need to understand the term “urban Indian” is more necessary now, than ever. The exhibit will focus on subjects in the Dallas metroplex, creating a visual representation of the term and will be photographed by Emilia Gaston, an ambassador for American Indian Heritage Day in Texas. Through the sharing of stories and visual aids, the exhibit will explore ideas of isolation, modernization, pride in self-identification and the importance of preserving American Indian cultural heritage in an urban setting. In identifying these themes, the exhibit will encompass the simple nuances that explain exactly where culture comes into play for American Indians living off the reservation, who experience life through a different lens by living simultaneously in two worlds.”

3. **Film Screening:** Plans are being made in conjunction with other faculty members and John Singleton to show the movie, *Neither Wolf Nor Dog* as part of the Kinomonda series. The movie is based on the book, *Neither Wolf Nor Dog: On Forgotten Roads with an Indian Elder*, by Kent Nerburn, and its storyline is described as, “A white author gets sucked into a road trip into the heart of Lakota Country, which confronts his awareness of contemporary reservation living and forces him to reexamine his own life.”
4. **Panel Discussions:** A series of panel discussions are being planned for Spring 2018 to explore the many factors contributing to Native American identities (including blood quantum, cultural connection, and tribal membership), as well as the urban Indian experience.
5. **New Course:** Pending final approval, the course developed in 2016-17, RELI 30693, “Native American Perspectives on Religion and Contemporary Issues,” will be taught in Spring 2018.
6. **Student Recruitment:** Plans are being developed in conjunction with Heath Einstein, Interim Dean of Admission, and Victoria Herrera, Associate Director of Admission, to meet and consult with Native American leaders to discuss their communities’ needs and how TCU can better serve these communities, as well as recruit students.
7. **Opportunities:** We welcome any opportunities that may arise to further the educational efforts at TCU by connecting individual teachers and programs with Native American speakers, assisting in curriculum development, or partnering in staging Native American-related events. We also welcome opportunities to support TCU in shaping policies, assisting in recruiting Native American students, and building relationships with Native American communities.

Reflecting the sentiments of a TCU student, we hope that these actions will help TCU continue to reveal and explore the “unspoken connections” between Native Americans, TCU, and the global community, along with “the influences that make a difference in these interactions.”

Respectfully,
Scott Langston
Theresa Gaul