

**Sample Student Exercises for Native American & Indigenous Peoples Day Symposium:
*A Celebration of Contemporary Native American Peoples and Cultures***

One of the major goals of the 2018 Native American and Indigenous Peoples Day symposium is that through personal encounters students will better understand contemporary Native American peoples and cultures as living, resilient, adaptive, and modern, while dispelling misinformation and stereotypes. We also hope students will understand some of the issues confronted by today's Native Americans and how they are using their cultures to make modern responses. Through interactions with two Native American artists, Luci Tapahonso and Supaman, students hopefully will see how they address modern issues and express cultural values and ideas through mediums not often associated with Native American cultures—Western-style poetry and hip hop. In short, students hopefully will learn some of what it means to be a contemporary Native American, but also will think more critically about broader matters such as the nature of culture and the nature of diversity understood not only in terms of ethnicity, but also as different worldviews that impact responses to national and international issues. The following three exercises can be used or adapted to help students process their encounters during the symposium in light of your particular class goals.

Exercise 1

This exercise will allow students to articulate their impressions of Native Americans and then evaluate them in light of their experiences at the symposium. Any of the following questions could be modified to fit the particular emphases of your course, as well as open up broader discussions on topics such as stereotypes, cultural appropriation, cultural change and development in relation to tradition, adaptation, innovation, etc.

At the beginning of the semester, have students answer the following questions:

1. Describe your understanding of who Native Americans are, what makes a person Native American, and what Native American culture is like. Your description could include discussion of what Native Americans look like, where they live, their lifestyles and beliefs, and so on.
2. Describe your experiences and encounters with Native American peoples, cultures, and histories. How did you get your knowledge and impressions of them?
3. Describe a major issue that Native American communities are currently confronting.

Have students keep a copy of their answers for use after the symposium. Or, you can keep them and then re-distribute them after the symposium. Answering these questions will help students foreground their perceptions of Native Americans.

After attending Supaman's concert and/or Luci Tapahonso's poetry reading, have students write brief reflections on any or all of the following questions:

1. Describe what took place at Supaman's concert and/or Luci Tapahonso's poetry reading. What did you see, hear, or feel that surprised you? How was Native American culture communicated and expressed and what important issues were addressed?
2. Review your responses to the three questions made at the beginning of the semester and evaluate these responses based on your experiences at the symposium. Which of your impressions were correct and which were incorrect, explaining what made you realize the latter were incorrect?
3. How were traditional elements of Native American cultures mixed with modern elements? What does this suggest about contemporary Native American peoples and cultures?
4. Finally, please include one question you have about Native American peoples, cultures, and histories. (These questions could be used for class discussion or just used for further self-reflection.)

Exercise 2

The following exercise will allow students to reflect on the use of hip hop by Native American artists to address historical or intergenerational trauma. Any student can benefit from understanding historical trauma, but those in the medical and social work fields will especially find this particularly relevant.

According to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, "Historical trauma is the cumulative exposure to traumatic events that not only affect the individual exposed, but continue to affect subsequent generations"

(https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Training/Trauma_Informed_Care/page35.asp). The historical trauma that previous generations of Native Americans experienced under European and American efforts to colonize and assimilate them, continues to impact contemporary Native American peoples and communities.

Before attending Supaman's concert, have students read the article by Carrie Louise Sheffield, "Native American Hip-Hop and Historical Trauma: Surviving and Healing Trauma on the 'Rez'," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 23.3 (Fall 2011): 94-110 (pdf available through the JSTOR database or we can send you a pdf). Sheffield observes that, "For Native American artists . . . hip-hop provides an ideal venue to speak to a large, adolescent and young adult audience and articulate methods of healing, resistance, and the (re)formation of positive identities in the wake of historical trauma and genocide" (pg. 97).

Have students write a brief essay that evaluates how specifically Supaman's music as performed at TCU reflects Sheffield's conclusion. What does Supaman's music and use of hip hop reflect about contemporary Native American cultures?

Exercise 3

This exercise will challenge students to reflect on specific Native American stereotypes, while also coming to terms with contemporary Native American cultures being mixtures of both traditional and modern ideas, practices, technologies, and material goods.

A few of the most common stereotypes and attitudes regarding Native Americans are:

- "Indians are confined to reservations, live in tipis, wear braids, and ride horses"
- "All the real Indians died off"
- "All Native Americans share essentially the same culture"
- "Native Americans will not prosper until they give up their old ways and embrace modern ways"

Have students critique one or all of these sentiments based on their experiences at Supaman's concert and/or Luci Tapahonso's poetry reading. Ask students to reconcile Supaman's/Tapahonso's mixing of traditional cultural ideas and elements with modern ideas and elements. What does this suggest about contemporary Native American peoples and cultures and, more generally, about the nature of human cultures? Students could also be asked to comment on the sources and origins of these stereotypes.

If you'd like for students to read short critiques of these and other stereotypes, see Devon Abbott Mihesuah (a TCU alumna), *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities* (Clarity Press, 2015) and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Dina Gilio-Whitaker, *"All the Real Indians Died Off" and 20 Other Myths About Native Americans* (Beacon Press, 2016).