Alisa Ciulla [00:00:00]:

For a while in my first couple years at college, I was like, I don't want to mention it. I don't want to. And then I said, you know what? No, it is a part of this and I am going to make it aware and I'm going to be a shining example. And if I'm the only Native American person that these people have met, they're going to know that we're smart, we're educated, we talk up like all those things. I want people to see that.

Chisa Uyeki [00:00:21]:

Welcome to the Mount San Antonio College Podcast. I'm Chisa Uyeki, a Mount Sac professor and librarian and I'm pleased to be your host for this season. Our goal is to keep you connected to our campus by bringing you the activities and events you may not have time to attend to share the interesting things our colleagues are creating and innovative ways they are supporting and connecting with Mount Sac students. Join me as we explore Mount Sac.

Ivan Sanchez [00:00:56]:

Today we are excited to bring you an in depth conversation with two special guests, Primavera Reza-Nakonechny, the Director of Mount Sac's First Peoples Native center, whose family is from the Tarumara or Ramuri peoples in the unceded lands of Chihuahua, Mexico. We'll also hear from Alisa Ciulla, a passionate second year student at Mount Sac who's a descendant of the Pueblo tribe. They share the story of how the First People's Native center was founded and its key role in empowering Native students. We also explore the Center's vital role in fostering identity development and a sense of belonging. So join us as we explore the impact of the First Peoples Native center in students lives.

Chisa Uyeki [00:01:40]:

I'm so excited to be here to speak to you all. I'm so excited in general about the development of having a First Peoples Native center on campus. So that's where I wanted to start is that I know that it's fairly new as part of the Equity center. So if you could share with us what you know about the development and how it came to be and then also the mission of the center.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:02:04]:

First People's Native center the need for a center started with student activism. So through the efforts of students and also some faculty and staff on campus, we're advocating for the need of a Native center and they were also advocating for El Centro as well. Now El Centro got started first and then through the efforts of advocacy on campus and then also with things around the world and more support for Native representation is how then the First Peoples Native center got started and then with the center with some seep Funding that's held through with Dr. Eric Lardas help in creating the center here within the Equity Center. So Eric, along with research, was able to pull data and showcase how many students do we have that do identify as Native American and Indigenous on campus. And so from that research, we're able to utilize that information, that data, to apply for a grant. And that was for the Native American Student Success and Programs grant, the NASP grant that is funded through the Chancellor's office. And so actually, it comes full circle again.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:03:20]:

All these things. It's not just like one thing that happened. It's a multitude of various things happening all at once. Right place, right time. One of my mentors, Dr. Molly Springer, she's Cherokee elder, she used to serve as an administrator at Sacramento Community College. And she, along with other Native advocators, had actually gone to the Chancellor's office back in like the 80s and was saying, like, the need for Native centers and need for a grant, something like this. And at that time, the Chancellor's office had said, you know, not right now, like it's not the time for it.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:03:55]:

And now it came back around again. And so with her advocacy efforts, along with other Native, you know, advocators within the community college, the Los Angeles Times had actually interviewed Dr. Mollingspringer asking about Native representation in higher education. And so Molly was able to speak to the efforts, the advocacy efforts that some of the faculty and staff are doing, including, right, the need that we need a Native center because Native student population in higher education, it's less than 1% are earning Bachelor's degrees. And so we can see that less than 1%, and it's actively declining. And one of the intervention strategies would be to have a Native center so that we can have representation and start connecting with the student population and so forth. So Audrey at that time had seen the Los Angeles article and then connected with Eric, Dr. Eric Latta, which of course, Eric was already advocating the need to have a Native center.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:04:55]:

And a few other folks here at Mount Sac were already advocating that there needs to be this Native presence. And so then from there, Audrey worked with Eric and said, you know, we need to create the center. These students are hurting. Right. What can we do here at Mount Sac to create in the Native center? So that's how they were able to get support, institutional support, and seek funding to create the Native center first. And then from there, that's when Eric utilized right research and was able to justify that we have the 1500 students and apply for the NASP grant, which was then happening shortly afterwards. So I think it's just like a bunch of things all at once kind of helped to create this into fruition. And then once we were awarded the NASP grant, and the NASP grant is only awarded to 20 community colleges within the state of California.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:05:46]:

Mount Sac is one of those 20. But a lot of the schools are in Northern California, so we are one of the few that are in Southern California. We're also one of the largest because of our student population. And so we're one of the largest community colleges within Southern California that was awarded the NASP grant. So it's a huge privilege, it's a huge opportunity, and we're making strides in where we're going to be going going forward. And that's kind of how, from my understanding, from storytelling, from elders in the community, and also from advocators who have been doing the great work here at Mount Sac before, through faculty and staff, through student advocacy, through all those efforts all combined together, is how the First Peoples Native center got started at Mount Sac and also how the grant has now been started. Because actually, we have two, right? We have the center and we have the NASP grant. I know it's a lot, so I was like, I'm hoping that I'm, like, capturing everything perfectly because there's so many moving parts and there's so many components to it.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:06:48]:

And in Native community, it's always. We're very mindful to respect those who have come before us, because it's not one person who has come in and done, you know, the work. It's like, recognize the helpers, recognize who has been here before.

Alisa Ciulla [00:07:03]:

So I came to Mount Sac about two years ago, and I'm a very social person. So right away, I'm like, where can I meet and talk to other students, like, outside of my classroom? And I saw advertisements talking about the Native American Club on campus, which is separate from our NESA room, but it did direct me to the NASA room. So I visited there, and I noticed, like, all of these culturally significant items there. And just, like, I noticed people start coming in, and I met the director, and I was actually the first person to sign up for the email service. And I was just super excited. I've seen familiar faces that I've seen before. I don't know if you guys have ever met him or talked to him, but he goes to Sundance with my parents. Like, he's been since he was a.

Alisa Ciulla [00:07:48]:

You know, could barely walk. So seeing him and seeing everybody, I was like, oh, like this is my place. And I even went to go to the NASA Club, which shortly after that I got a job on campus on Fridays specifically. So I couldn't go anymore. But it just made me really happy and really excited because I didn't even expect them to have like a club. So when I saw those flyers, I was like, I need to go connect with the people there or I need to see what they're doing or if I have like some input.

Chisa Uyeki [00:08:15]:

And yeah, Primavera, can you speak some to the mission? And you talked about the grant and the work that you're doing and the activities that you're doing to reach those goals.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:08:28]:

Yeah, sure. So now the mission is with the grant because we have the NASP grant. So the grant, there are four objectives with the grant. So we are looking at students and how many are transferring to the four year university or if they are graduating or earning a certificate, because it has that career component. So what is their career objectives, whether it be transferring or graduating or earning a certificate. We are also building relationships with K12. So in that we are actively recruiting high school students, Native high school students to come to Mount Sac. And we have a mentoring component to that as well because we are creating future leaders.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:09:09]:

And then one of them is also to create a land acknowledgement, an official land acknowledgement for the campus. And so with that, all our events and with the goals that we are creating is all centered around the mission within the NASA grant. So for me, within year one, the most important goal for me right now is awareness. Like that's objective. Awareness. Awareness. Awareness. Because there has not been a center here, you know, not a formal center before at Mount Sac.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:09:38]:

And so I really want for the Mount Sac community, so on campus and also off campus to understand that Mount Sac welcomes Native presence. And so that is the primary. Everything that I'm doing is just awareness first and foremost. And then within that is also, you know, we still have our targeted goals to meet the NASP grant objectives. As far as like our events, I feel like you kind of see, I'm hoping that folks see that right through our Heritage Month is coming up in November and we just finished Indigenous Peoples. Well, I extended it into Indigenous Peoples Day. So we had a week, Indigenous Peoples Week. So a week long of events and programming celebrating Indigenous peoples.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:10:20]:

We had California Native American Day, which was the very first time that we have celebrated that here at Mount Sac. I know Dr. Eric Lara said that last year they tried to do it, but things fell through, so they weren't able to do A California Native American Day. So that was the first time Mount Sac has experienced that here. Each of the events has been such a great turnout. So to me, that signals that the demand is here. It's ready. Students wanted to see Native presence.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:10:46]:

Faculty and staff want to see it. But for whatever reason, maybe the timing wasn't right, but now it's here, and folks are hungry for this. Like, they really want to connect a Native presence and celebrate it. And that's kind of where our events are coming from, is that first and foremost is awareness, right? And to say we have a saying also Native community, is that we are here because it's like, we've been here, we are still here, and we are here. A common misconception that you'll hear from folks sometimes is that, like, what does a Native American person look like? And that they want to see something like, they might see in a museum that that looks like for what a Native American person is. It's like, no, we've been here, we're still here. We're regular people just like everyone else, and that's what we're working through. You know, like, what does Native presence look like? You know, what does it look like in higher education? How are we celebrated? How are we welcomed? And that's what the biggest part is, at least for me personally, with the NASS grant and with the center and here at Mount sac, and then, of course, we have the objectives for the grant embedded within that.

Alisa Ciulla [00:11:54]:

I want to speak a little bit about that presence part of being a Native American on campus. And I've been in other campuses before, like high schools, elementary schools, where my presence actually wasn't welcome. So when we say that, like, we really mean it. Like, sometimes your presence is literally, like, we don't want you to talk about that. We want to teach it the way we want to teach it, or we don't want to acknowledge that. We want it to be old school or something like that. And I've also ran into this, like, where I'm a very, like, academically, like, rigorous student. Like, I always want the best grades.

Alisa Ciulla [00:12:25]:

I want to be on the top, like, all the time, because I'm pursuing a doctorate in psychology, and I want to be able to serve my community by offering them the therapy that we've been needing and to incorporate my culture, my personality, my understanding to another person to help them. Because me personally, it wasn't on purpose, but I randomly got a Native therapist, and it genuinely made a humongous difference in my life. And I want to be able to do that. But at times I feel like in school I have to check my identity at the door because I don't want it to affect the way that my professors or my peers see me. And I don't want them to see me as annoying or, like, overly, like, pushing. Because it also has to do with spirituality. It's a political ideology. Like, it's very tied into a lot of things.

Alisa Ciulla [00:13:13]:

So I don't want it to seem that I'm all about that. But through my time here at Mount Sac, I've realized that I am all about that. And it does have everything to do with my study. It has everything to do with every single class that I take. So I've been able to take that more and, like, feel that pride because of the community we created here in the NASA. Like, we've had many great conversations about things like that. Like, I expressed to some of my peers, like, I don't feel like telling sometimes, like, my professors or my peers that I am native because of that. And they encourage me to continue to, like, carry that and to be proud of it.

Alisa Ciulla [00:13:50]:

And so that's something really great like, that I got from here. It's literally that, like, for a while in my first couple years at college, I was like, I don't want to mention it. I don't want to. And then I said, you know what? No, it is a part of this, and I am going to make it aware, and I'm going to be a shining example. And if I'm the only Native American person that these people have met, they're going to know that we're smart, we're educated, we talk up, like, all those things. I want people to see that. So when I get these good grades or when I pursue higher education, like, it's extremely important to me, and I carry that.

Chisa Uyeki [00:14:21]:

Can you speak some to what faculty and staff can do to make the classroom and the college environment more welcoming for Native students and what faculty can do to support Native students who are in their classes?

Alisa Ciulla [00:14:39]:

Honestly, like, I've had really understanding, like, faculty members, and I feel like partly the reason why is because I'm usually, like, always participating, like, always leading. Like, that's just kind of, like, naturally how I am. Like, it's not really that I'm trying to, but it just happen sometimes. And I feel like because of that and because I'm representing so well, they're open to hear me when I talk. Because one time, like, in the classroom, we were recently trying to change the moniker and the mascot and in the classroom, I heard overheard people, like, you know, not understanding the reasons why. And I was like, if only these people understood the reason why. Like, it's not dramatic. Like, there's a whole history on it.

Alisa Ciulla [00:15:17]:

Like, just learn about it. Just learn. Like, that's all I want you to do. So I told one of my friends, one of my peers from NASA, and they were like, no, like, I have to go, and I have to go explain, and this. And at this time, I was not really feeling like expressing, you know, all my culture. So I was like, I don't know. I don't know. And they were like, you should.

Alisa Ciulla [00:15:35]:

Like, if you heard something and you didn't agree with it and you feel like you can shed some light on it, then you should. And I was like, okay, fine, let's do it. And so I told my professor, and because I'm always participating, I always, you know, my exams are always as all this stuff. He has to hear me out, like, almost. So he's like, oh, and this is the professor I was talking about that thought that there was only four Native American students on campus in 2024. So that was very outdated. And I was like, not only is this a teaching experience for the people who didn't understand the moniker or the mascot change, but also to my professor, who, even though he's very educated, very equitable, all these things, great qualities, great professor. It's just that misinformation that he has.

Alisa Ciulla [00:16:18]:

All we need to do is just let him know and, you know, he could have a different perspective, and he realizes that, like, we deserve this respect because I've shown him that I'm a good student. I'm, you know, all these qualities. So we had a conversation about it. And, I mean, whether or not the people changed their opinion, that's none of my business. It's just letting them know and providing reasoning.

Chisa Uyeki [00:16:41]:

I love that also, because you're showing how you are an active member of an educational community. Right. That it's not passive, that if you sit and listen, that's just one part of learning and being in college. But that active engagement is so important. So as a professor, I thank you for that. So, Primavera, do you have things that you would like to add for students, for staff, for faculty who maybe don't know the native student community or aren't aware what you would want them to know about the students that we're serving?

Alisa Ciulla [00:17:19]:

Sure.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:17:20]:

Yes. And just to go back to Alisa, like, I resonate with that so much, and I'm so thankful for you like sharing your story. And I learned so much from the students as well. Like, our students are some of the greatest teachers I know that we were talking about, like, on here is like, learning outcomes as well. When I created, like here, the learning outcomes, cultural resilience and empowering through identity, they're so important just exactly for that. Because for such a long time, our community has been under the threat of erasure. And even now, depending on where you are in the world, it's not super safe to say that you are Native American or indigenous. We're privileged to live in Southern California, where we're more accepted here.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:18:03]:

Even then, sometimes you still have to be careful. And I knew that coming into this space, it was like, it depends on who the person is, that if you feel safe and you feel comfortable to say that you are part of this community, that you are Native, because you don't know how it's going to be received. And so I'm somebody who's an urban Native. And so I live. I grew up in the city. I grew up in Los Angeles. I'm so far removed from tribal ancestry. I also try to break down stereotypes of what it means to be Native American and indigenous.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:18:35]:

And a lot of this comes with intersecting identities. So I really try to promote that. A lot is intersecting identities and solidarity amongst shared struggles and oppression. Because, like, if we were able to understand the more commonalities that we have in our struggle, then we can make bigger strides rather than trying to divide us or further marginalize the struggles and the problems. And I feel that if we can work in unity and solidarity, then we can organize, we can create coalition. Like, we'll be able to make further moves rather than further dividing us, because that just perpetuates the problem even further. But in intersecting identities, I very much do resonate with what Alyssa, what you were sharing. Because I do identify as a Native American person, but I also identify as Latina as well.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:19:26]:

And I understand the shared identity in that. And growing up as a very young child, you know, my dad used to tell me, my dad and my grandmother, where I get most of the tribal lineage from, would say, like, eres India. Like, you're Indian, right? Eres India. So you're Indian and you're beautiful. But growing up in Los Angeles in, like, the 80s and 90s, it wasn't so celebrated to have that identity. It was celebrated in my personal experience to say, you're Latina, right? And then that is something that people understood. And it was like, okay, you have this identity. It's celebrated, especially in Southern California.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:20:07]:

I speak on this with students sometimes, like when you're applying for admissions in college and filling out paperwork, sometimes you feel societal pressure to select one box on what your identity is. Things are changing now, you know, it's understanding the holistic self of a student, the holistic self of a person where you're not necessarily having to choose just one identity. Because, yeah, I can select the box that I'm Latina, Hispanic, but that's not exactly. It's not the whole self, right? And I think that a lot of this work comes with that, especially here at Mount Sacrifice, is that what does it mean to be a Native person is not a monolithic identity. It's very diverse. So I work very intentionally with the cultural centers that are here at Mount Sac. That's why it's called the First Peoples, because it's the first identity. So it's the first identity.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:20:58]:

And then it intersects, right, with center for Black Cultural Student Success with El Centro with Arise. It's going to intersect with each of them. And then I also look at not only the racial and ethnic cultural identity, but how does it intersect with each of the cultural centers here too. So I'm working very intentionally, with pride for our two Spirit students with rising scholars, with veterans and so forth. Because the First Peoples center has identity and Native representation throughout campus. And this piece about our learning objectives, that's why understanding cultural resiliency, that's the way in Native spaces we say, like, we are here. Like, we're here because we've been here and we're still here. And what does that look like? It might not look like sometimes the way people think, you know, how you see in museums or how Hollywood might paint us sometimes.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:21:50]:

But it's your average person, right? A regular person every day. But they do have intersecting identities. And that's something that I do listen to a lot, is like advocacy through music and advocacy through art. And so one of the musicians that I do listen to is talking about we are creating a new identity, right? We are reconstructing our indigenous identity because of the resiliency that we have empowered through. And that's where this empowering through identity comes from. For such a long time, you know, it wasn't safe or we were not embraced to embrace Native presence. Right? In the 90s was the last boarding school had closed. And even during that, it was not safe to speak your native language.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:22:36]:

Things are different now. But we still have our students who have parents.

Alisa Ciulla [00:22:40]:

I still prejudice a lot. Like, I've literally I've experienced racism. Like, and I'm somebody who, you know, I didn't even expect that to happen. I was like, oh, when I'm gonna share my culture at school, like, everyone's gonna think I'm, like, so unique, and I'm gonna bring something new. And then I was shocked to, like, be greeted with, like, the ridicule and the misunderstanding and the people who are just not educated. But I feel that I'm the perfect person, like, to be born as Native, because I'm so open to, like, sharing, and I love to talk to my peers. Like, I just go to class, and, like, I literally am like, oh, what do you guys. You know, what kind of people do you want to do therapy with? Like, just for no reason.

Alisa Ciulla [00:23:17]:

Like, just because I want to talk. And through that, of course, like, my identity comes through. Like, my Native identity comes through, and it just has to come up in conversation. And when I do that, because Native American identity has been, like, you know, repressed, like, in society, I'm literally reviving it, and I have the power and I have the tools to revive it. And I have to create the history and to literally create the concept and the idea inside of people's mind that they didn't even have at all. So, like, when I do it, I do it very intentionally, and I share with them. Like, in my class, I'll share something, and I'll be like, well, you. That applies more, like, to European religions.

Alisa Ciulla [00:23:56]:

Or that's more like. Because in class, we were talking about, does the race of the person you're having therapy with matters? And at a surface level, no, it's racist to believe that, you know, but when you start to think about it on a deeper level, if you're a Native American person, you kind of need someone to be able to understand, like, what you're saying to them. And you would waste your time, like, trying to explain every single little thing to someone who doesn't understand. So, you know, I offer that perspective sometimes that other people don't really see. Like, because a lot of the things we do here in America is really, like, Eurocentric. So I bring that idea, and sometimes I start conversations, and, like, other people, like, they consider, and they're like, you know what? Yeah, I didn't even think about that. And I like to do that, and I like to create what a Native American is in other people's point of view, because I feel like I do it very well.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:24:49]:

I just wanted to go back. Sorry. For the learning outcomes for Heritage Month, our community is really strong in community. That's why it's here. It's like building community and advocacy is one of the learning outcomes. Because I want students to be able to feel empowered in Native presence, in, again, like reclaiming Native identity and then knowing that there is community here. And so much of our students, right when we go back to the sense of belonging for students, I want them to have sense of belonging, but also thriving in that. And so through that is going to be in community.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:25:21]:

Community is so powerful, and I want students to be able to feel empowered to do that, to find community. Know that community is here for you and that we are helping to support you through education, whatever direction that you want to go with that. But know that we are definitely supporting you here at Mount Sac. You know, the Native community has had such a challenging relationship with higher education because of the boarding schools, because of history and higher education, through colonization and whatnot. But as we're moving forward, we're healing through that. So that's why the healing center practice is so important. Because in order for us to be able to move forward, we have to be able to heal through that. And then how do we now reconstruct our new identity, our Indigenous identity, feel empowered through that and be able to advocate for Native presence and be able to build community and be able to move forward.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:26:13]:

We have to do that healing process and then be able to move forward with it. The healing center is also really important because it aligns with Mount Sac's mission as well. Because one of Mount Sac's main goals is now with Dr. President Garcia. She's been beautiful in really centering the healing aspect of it. And to be Indigenous is healing practices. So I feel like that's just a natural, like, alignment there. That was really easy to say, like, well, yes, of course, let's put healing at the forefront of that.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:26:39]:

Because to be Indigenous is to understand healing at the forefront, healing and love. Because what we do in community and doing this work is from love at the forefront. Like, it's through love to be Indigenous. Through love, we are welcoming. We believe that all Indigenous peoples are related. We're all families. So with students, they might call me auntie, you know, Dr. Frances Barela.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:27:04]:

She's been doing the advocacy work here on campus for over 26 years. She's anti Francis because that's how we show love in our community, and we show love to each other and students and faculty and staff and through this work that to be Indigenous is to be healing and also to show love for everyone as we Move forward.

Alisa Ciulla [00:27:24]:

To identify as being Native American or Indigenous in the first place is to reject the things that were imposed onto us through colonization. So that's the first step that you have to take in even identifying as Indigenous in the first place. So I also find that it's the first step that you take is to reject the negativity and the labels that others try to impose onto you through violence, literally in the past.

Chisa Uyeki [00:27:49]:

It's so powerful, and it's so powerful to hear you talk about speaking in class and feeling empowered to do so. And I also just think, you know, it's not necessarily your role to teach, but you're taking that on as well. And I just think about the students who are in the class who may be hearing that, and whatever their identity, whoever their ancestors are, that may be for them an opening to see how they can grow into their authentic selves.

Alisa Ciulla [00:28:17]:

Offering my perspective, like, it just comes up in casual conversation and like, obviously it's not the first thing that I tell somebody, but as we talk and as they get to know me and as we share conversations, like good conversation, I'll just mention it to them, you know, when it's relevant, like, oh, you know, like in my culture, like, we do this and it means this to me. And that's why I'm coming here before you as this person that you can get along with, have a laugh with, like, whatever. Like, that is what makes me up. And, you know, you like me, so you should support Native American students, basically.

Chisa Uyeki [00:28:50]:

I also wanted to mention you were talking about the healing centered practices and that when I heard Dr. Garcia talking about that, it was really powerful for me because I've spent a lot of time talking and thinking about trauma informed practices. But that is so deficit minded, you know, I mean, we want to be informed, we want to be thoughtful, but that's really looking at the past, looking at what had happened or looking at rather than moving forward positively.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:29:19]:

Right.

Chisa Uyeki [00:29:20]:

So that healing centered, I feel like, does seem and feel more loving, more open. So I'm so appreciative of the work that you're doing. And I loved, I was really impressed and excited about the learning outcomes that you shared for Native American Indigenous Heritage Month, which is November. So I really appreciated you sharing those and being able to access them. And I think it shows the intentionality as well, which is so great. So thank you all so much. Is there anything else about the center that you all would want to share?

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:30:02]:

The center is located. So we are in a shared space. We are located within the Equity center in building 16E. What's great about the shared space is we do work very collaboratively along with the other equity programs that are in here. So, you know, and we're able to lean on them for wisdom and support as well. So we are in a shared space with Dream for our undocumented or AB540 students. We have Arise, which I believe ARISE is open and welcoming for all students, but they do center and talk about, highlight challenges centered around Asian and Pacific Islander communities. And then we also have Next Up Reach that helps our former and current foster youth students and then first peoples and then for the first peoples.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:30:48]:

I want students to know that we are welcoming and accept all students. So you do not have to be Native American or indigenous to connect with this community, with this population. It's open for everyone. You can also utilize our services. So we do have a counselor and we have a graduate assistant that helps mentor our students as well for students who are thinking about going into grad school. But you don't have to be Native American or indigenous. You don't have to identify with that. We are welcoming for all students.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:31:14]:

We do highlight topics and challenges that impact this community, but we are welcoming for everyone. We also don't ask for proof. So everything is the student self identifies. So we're not talking about like DNA or blood quantums or anything like that. It's all about the student who self identifies and then they can connect. I mean, they'll self identify as Native American or indigenous. And we are absolutely welcoming whatever stage that student is in. So we do understand that a lot of our students are reconnecting with their indigeneity.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:31:49]:

So because again, we've been under the threat of erasure, that student through the identity development process may be in various stages. Right. Of reconnecting. So sometimes students will even come and say, I know that my family is from a geographic region. Can you help me kind of learn more about that? And so we do help them through that process. Other students will say, like, I've heard a family member say that I have a grandparent or an aunt or an uncle, but I'm not really sure. And so we kind of help them kind of navigate through that and that reconnecting process through it. Yeah.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:32:21]:

And then we have our counselor to kind of work through those questions too, if they're just like. Because it might bring up feelings and it might bring up other things for that student. So we do have a counselor that's available on Mondays to help with the counseling piece. And they can schedule via navigation to kind of work through some of those feelings. We've had questions about how do I enroll with a tribe that I know I'm with? And so we can help them through that, too. And how does that process work, all those questions that they might be having? Like, we can help them through that, too.

Alisa Ciulla [00:32:50]:

I think it's hilarious that we even have to say that we're not, like, checking IDs or checking DNA because, like, it's so absurd. And I've had this conversation with many indigenous people, people with friends, about how, like, being Native American is the only identity where people, like, will question you. Like, you can't just say that you are. Like, people will question you. And there's no other community that exists like that. Like, in the black community, what is there to question? In the Mexican community, what is there to question? Like, in the Asian community, nobody questions you on your identity, but as a Native American, they will. And oftentimes they do. Like, they will.

Alisa Ciulla [00:33:24]:

Sometimes you get looped into a conversation with somebody and they're really crazy about blood quantum, and they're, like, you know, telling you how much your blood quantum is, even though they don't even know you. So I think it's important to highlight because a lot of Native American spaces, like, sometimes they are exclusionary in that way, but it should never be that way, like, on a campus that's open to all people, especially people who are trying to reconnect. And that's the whole, like, that's essential to understanding about Native American people, is that we are reconnecting. And of course, somebody might not have their card, their tribal recognition, or, of course, that their blood, you know, is mixed, because that is the history. So it's very important to acknowledge that.

Chisa Uyeki [00:34:04]:

Thank you so much, both of you. I learned a lot and I appreciate you having me in your space.

Primavera Reza-Nakonechny [00:34:09]:

Thank you, Chisa. Thank you.

Chisa Uyeki [00:34:12]:

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