

# AMERICAN INDIANS 101:

## *A Look at the Contemporary Native American Community*

**Kent County Cultural Insight Council  
Brown Bag Luncheon Series – November 6, 2008  
Levi Rickert (Potawatomi)**



***The Indian task of keeping an informed public available to assist tribes in their efforts to survive is never ending . . .***

***-- VINE DELORIA, JR., Lakota Sioux***

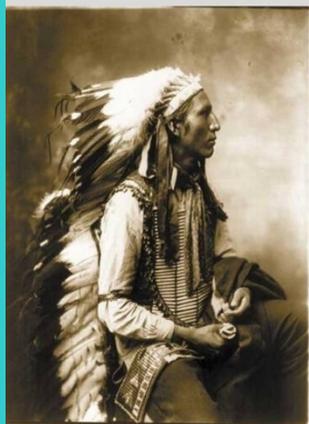
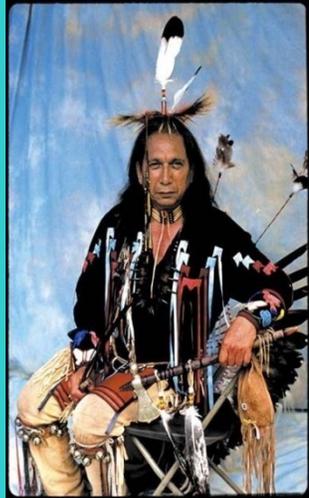




*Is it*  
**American Indians**  
**or Native American?**



# Both terms are misnomers



- Columbus thought he landed in India; thus the inhabitants were called Indians.
- People born in either the North or South Americans are technically “native Americans”
- The term “American Indian” enjoys duality of who we are as indigenous people
- Most American Indians, particularly when talking to one another, refer to their tribal affiliation



# Part I

## American Indians Today



***We are still here!***

Greater Grand Rapids  
Combined Statistical Area 7,125

Numerous Tribes  
People of the Three Fires

Chippewa, Ottawa & Potawatomi



# Culture Resurgence

- Powwows – Respect for culture
- Tribes – getting stronger as result of casinos
- Language – Classes and tapes are now available



# Treaties Still Impact American Indians Today

Treaties are legal documents made between sovereign entities. Tribes are domesticated nations within the nation (US government)



# Tribal Sovereignty

The word “sovereignty” has a basic meaning that implies the inherent right to govern.

The Marshall trilogy— *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831) and *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832).

These cases established tribes as “domestic dependent nations” whose independence was limited in only two ways: 1) the power to convey land and 2) the ability to deal with foreign powers.



# Urban American Indian Issues

- Environmental
- Housing
- Employment
- Education- Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver
- Indian Child Welfare Act (Adoption)
- Religious Freedom
- Racism



# Indian Casinos

- Allowed through 1988 Indian Gaming Regulatory Act for economic development purposes – tribal economies are built with casino revenue.
- \$26 Billion industry - 2007
- Boost local economies through jobs, non-Indian vendors; provides benefits to American Indian tribes.



**Part II**  
*Dances*  
*with*  
*Misconceptions*



# Misconception # 1

*American Indians are of the past – fossils, savages or extinct.*

Reality: American Indians represent on a percentage basis the one of the fastest growing populations in the United States among all racial/ethnic groups. American Indians are generous, peace-loving people. American Indians live in the modern world.



# Misconception # 2

*American Indians fit into one size fits all.*

Reality: There are over 560 different tribes in the U.S. Though there be may similar characteristics among indigenous people across the country, tribes may differ in culture, language and geography.



# Misconception # 3

*American Indians don't pay taxes.*

Reality: Individual American Indians pay federal and state income taxes. In some cases, tribal members may not pay state taxes on certain purchases, depending on the agreement between their tribe and the state.



# Misconception # 4

*American Indians receive a monthly check in the mail for being Indian.*

Reality: The government does not write checks to individuals for merely being American Indian. Some tribes may distribute per capita payments from gaming revenue.



# Misconception # 5

*American Indians get to hunt and fish without licenses.*

Reality: Some tribal members are exempt from having to have a license to hunt or fish due to treaties. However, the vast majority of American Indians must purchase a license to hunt and/or fish in Michigan.



# Misconception # 6

*All American Indians have drinking problems.*

Reality: Alcoholism is not intrinsic to American Indians. However, high levels of poverty, unemployment and feelings of alienation may contribute to heavy drinking among American Indians, as a means to escape.



# Misconception # 7

*American Indians don't want to conform to the American lifestyle and values.*

Reality: Similar to other racial / ethnic groups, American Indians want to retain their culture and unique value system, while still having pride in the United States, as evidenced by a high percentage of American Indians who join the military and those who are now veterans.



# Misconception # 8

*American Indians are all rich because of casinos.*

Reality: Only 39.3 percent of tribes operate casinos. Only 8.2 percent of American Indians receive any direct compensation from Indian gaming.



# Misconception # 9

*All American Indians are spiritual – just because.*

Reality: Not true – In a survey of American Indians across country, answered as follows:

70 % - Christianity

15 % - No religion

9 % - No answer

6 % - Other (traditional)



# Misconception # 10

*American Indians maintained male dominated societies.*

Reality: Differences existed between tribes. For instance, the Potawatomi, who have occupied south of Grand River for centuries in Michigan, maintained a matriarchal system of governance.



# Resources – Kent County

## **Native American Family Services**

671 Davis, NW – Suite 103

Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504

616/458-4078

## **Michigan Indian Child Welfare Agency**

1345 Monroe, NW – Suite 212

Grand Rapids, Michigan 49505

800/800-2089

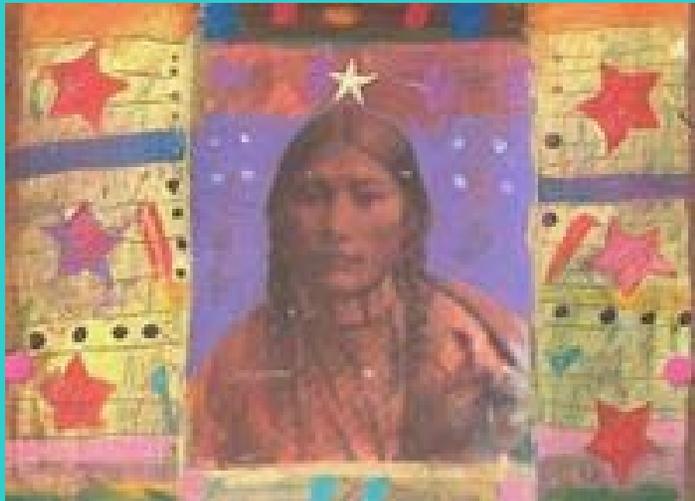


# Michigan Indian Tribes

- Bay Mills Chippewa Indian Community  
906/248-3241
- Grand Traverse Bay Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians  
866/534-7750
- Hannahville Potawatomi Indian Community  
906/466-0306
- Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi 888/499-5151
- Keweenaw Bay Indian Community  
906/353-6623
- Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians  
906/358-4577
- Little River Band of Ottawa Indians  
888/723-8288
- Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians 866/652-5822
- Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Gun Lake Pottawatomi Indians  
866/681-9510
- Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians  
888/376-9988
- Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan 989/775-4000
- Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa  
800-793-0660



# For Future Presentations



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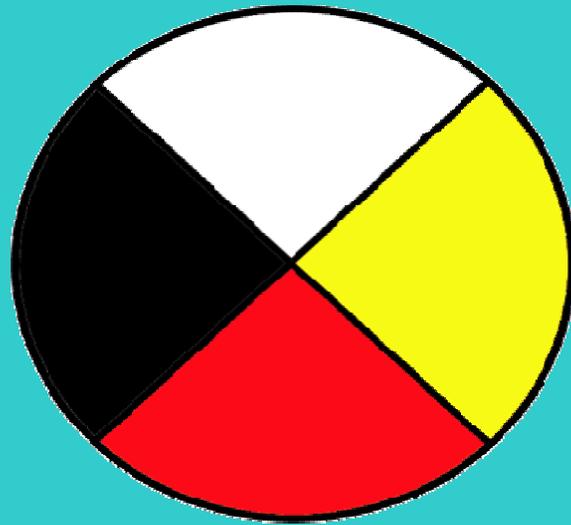
**616/299-7542**

**levi@wamimiemployment.com**



***Megwetch!***

***Thank You!***



***QUESTIONS?***

