

Date: Thu, 11 Jul 1996 12:07:35 CST6CDT

Words are not things, as we in academia know at least from Aristotle through the (post) structuralists (thank you Foucault) and beyond. The word "Indian" or "indio/a" is not a thing, it is a word that makes reference to a cultural history that grouped millions of peoples together through a term taken from another continent.

Specificity in language use does not constitute political correctness, but instead demonstrates an awareness of the appropriate use of and sensitivity to language, especially taking into account that human beings exist in a dynamic language context. If one wishes to be specific in referring to a group of people, "indios" is not particularly specific and can be (is not always) offensive. If one is interested in avoiding giving offense, context matters. I would think that academics who follow this list have an interest in respecting others.

Words have a cultural history and their interpretation in any given context depends upon the speakers, the subject discussed and the audience, among other important variables. Awareness of differences is a mark of maturity, or at least sensitivity, not political correctness.

With reference to the question "What is wrong with calling Indians 'Indians', or indios 'indios'", I would respond: "What is wrong with calling 'portenos' 'Latins' or 'latinos'?" Historically the inhabitants of Buenos Aires have a relationship with others whose language comes from Latin. Aren't they Latins? But does "Latins" tell you anything about the inhabitants of Buenos Aires? It mainly tells you about a cultural history in which peoples who spoke Romance languages were grouped together by others. In the US referring to someone who speaks Spanish or Portuguese as "Latin" can be offensive because that term has a cultural history of stock, usually negative, stereotypes created by the users of that term. Some Spanish speakers in the US prefer the term "latino/a" but they would never wish to be called "Latin"; other Spanish speakers in the US are NOT "latinos(as)", and so on (not to mention Hispanic). Each term has a separate cultural history.

Similarly, there are Native Americans who refer to themselves as Indians when they are emphasising characteristics shared by many groups; others prefer the former term, but there is NO Native American who does not also have a second identity that is regional for which there is a more specific term such as Navaho (or Navajo). Similarly, there are groups of people working for indigenous rights who use the term "indios". There are also plenty of people who use this term with pejorative intentions and the strong negative connotations associated with the term "indio", mainly on the part of the dominant elite, have led academics to avoid its use, since publication for a mass audience will inevitably cause offense in some places. On the other hand, there are

few or no negative associations with the use of the term 'indigenous', so one is less likely to offend by its use.

Words are not things, indios are not Indians and an indio is not an india or India.

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Date: Thu, 11 Jul 1996 15:29:13 CST6CDT

From: dneufeld@yknet.yk.ca (David Neufeld)

To add to the interesting discussion on the use of the word "Indian" initiated by Kathryn Lehman, Auckland, NZ, I would like to add some information on the evolution of this issue in the Yukon Territory in northwestern Canada and my own recent trans-border experience in the use of similar terminology.

The explorers and miners travelling into the Yukon River basin in the late nineteenth century regularly referred to the indigenous population as "Indians", usually with a regional or indigenous reference prefix, an example is Dr. Willis E. Everette writing in 1884, "[miners would be] constantly in danger from the Tanana Indians, who would be very jealous of them...".

This word was formally adopted by the Canadian departments responsible for "Indian Affairs" and through the twentieth

century, different groups were organized by the government into Indian Bands. These "Bands" were generally established on a geographical basis, probably on the assumption that physical proximity was a useful divider of groups. It also recognized the government's method of gathering aboriginal people into central locations to facilitate administration.

In the Yukon, the aboriginal population was also divided by anthropologists into linguist groupings. This reflected their own focus upon language as a determinant of cultural communication and transmission. These language groups were generally broader than the Indian Band designations of the government.

Yukon aboriginal groups recognize the administrative and linguistic structures super-imposed by both anthropologists (for language training and cultural retention) and government (for local administration) as useful elements. However, for many elements of their lives, these forms are ignored or set aside. Family relations, more often shaped by trading networks pre-dating contact with "newcomers" (the locally accepted word for non-indigenous people of the Yukon arriving in the 19th and 20th centuries) within and reaching outside the territory, are also powerful determinants of identity and linkages.

During the Yukon land claims process, a thirty-five year process, just now coming to fruition, Yukon aboriginal people initially formed themselves into two groups, the Yukon Native Brotherhood and the Yukon Association of Non-Status Indians. Their mutual interests however soon led to their combination into a single umbrella organization, the Council for Yukon Indians, or CYI, to negotiate with the other levels of government.

By the late 1980s, the spirit of independence and self-worth stemming from the land claim negotiations and other advances, led to an aboriginal rejection of the term Indian and its replacement by the new term "First Nations". As an example, the Dawson Indian Band, a Han group of Athapaskan people (by old terms) named because of their proximity to Dawson City (named after George Dawson of the Geological Survey of Canada) recently changed the name of their group. The community has re-taken control of its identity and become the Tron'dek Hwech'in First Nation (sorry, no diacritics in email), that is, "people of the hammer water", a Han language reference to their seasonal reliance upon the fishing of spawning salmon in the Yukon and Klondike Rivers. Today, the use of the term First Nations is widespread in the aboriginal communities and respected by government, researchers and the population as a whole. References to Yukon Indians are rare.

Over the past year I worked with an Alaskan colleague, Frank Norris of the USNPS, on a book on the Chilkoot Trail. While best known for its role as a major route to the Yukon Gold Fields during the Klondike Stampede of 1898, the trail also has a significant, and much longer, history as an aboriginal trade route. In writing about this important aspect of the region's history we

fell afoul of our two nations' different responses to aboriginal presentation. "First Nations" is the Canadian term of choice while in Alaska the favoured term is "Native Americans". After some toing and froing we agreed on a compromise where references to aboriginal peoples in what is, or would become, Alaska became Native Americans (also variously identified as Tlingit, Chilkats, etc.) and their peers in the Yukon became First Nations (similarly identified by specific group names).

Look forward to hearing more on this topic.

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Date: Fri, 12 Jul 1996 14:42:10 CST6CDT

From: jpasley@mailers.fsu.edu (Jeff Pasley)

While I sympathize with the two postings on the term "Indian" (I rail against it in class myself) I have a practical question for the list. Isn't one reason for the continuing use of "Indian" simply the need for an easy-to-say-and-use term to describe people who were in a particular relationship with Euro-American peoples and governments? Don't we use it because students and other mass audiences know who we mean when we do? I ask this practically as a teacher.

For instance, when I lecture on or speak of any Native American-related event, I always try to use specific names of cultural

groups and persons rather than general terms. Yet when dealing with events involving people from multiple indigenous groups, such as Pontiac's Rebellion, or the Battle of Fallen Timbers, or the Treaty of Ft. Harmar, I sometimes need a more general term. Isn't Indian as good as any, especially if students have been sensitized to the difficulties with such a term? Could it not be better simply because it is easier to say? Perhaps I am orally impaired, but I simply find it too verbally awkward to spit out "First Nations peoples," or "indigenous peoples," or "indigenes," or sometimes even "Native Americans" every time I want to describe what, say, an army made up of Potawatomis, Wyandots, Miamis, and Ottawas was doing.

Can't any cultural name be torn apart and deconstructed if we try hard enough, including indigenous cultural-group names themselves? "First Nations" and "Native Americans" can both be criticized on some level. Pre-contact Native Americans did not live in nation-states, did they? And what about Native Americans who voluntarily migrated vast distances to new locations? (And we do not have to go back to Beringia to find those examples.) Is it fully accurate to refer to only to certain mostly-non-European groups as Native Americans when many European and Asian and African Americans can trace their ancestry back through 2 or 4 or 8 or 10 generations of people born in North America? (Our students do think these thoughts, you know, and not always in the humane and enlightened manner that we might wish.)

In those last few remarks, I was mostly playing devil's advocate, the point being that almost no cultural name can claim perfect accuracy. At some point, we simply have to give up and employ terms that are useful and verbally practical, in contexts where they are not offensive. Clearly, some use of "Indian" is still common even among politically aware Native Americans, e.g. Haskell Indian Nations University and the Indian Country Today newspaper. I may let it slip out in class occasionally.

Now, let me have it, but also please devise a substitute term that can be smoothly employed in lectures.

Jeff Pasley

Florida State University

Date: Fri, 12 Jul 1996 14:43:27 CST6CDT

From: Tom Vaughan <wt@frontier.net>

On this general topic, I commend to your attention a new Web site "A Line in the Sand"  
<<http://hanksville.phast.umass.edu:8000/cultprop/index.shtml#line>> offering a great potential for  
discussion/understanding of  
issues of concern to those who were here (Western Hemisphere) before the rest of us came.

--

Tom Vaughan

The Waggin' Tongue

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Cultural Resource Management,

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Date: Fri, 12 Jul 1996 14:45:04 CST6CDT

From: R Irwin <[rsirwin@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca](mailto:rsirwin@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca)>

H-West:

Just a little something that popped into my head regarding the attempt to find a suitable designation for  
Indian, aboriginal,  
indigenous, Native Americans.

The use of the term First Nations in Canada is problematic. I find it interesting that a European concept of  
"nation" has been  
appropriated by a band and family oriented society. Especially since it is suggested this is an important  
aspect of cultural  
preservation.

Anybody else see this as somewhat ironic.

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Date: Fri, 12 Jul 1996 14:45:24 CST6CDT

From: Nriney@aol.com

While I am interested in avoiding giving offense, there are larger matters of context that shape my use of terminology. As a Euro-American (a term I rarely use), the grossest offense I could give would be to use the "n-word" in reference to African-Americans. That would be plainly derogatory, and I do not use it. In the United States, at least, "Indian" does not carry a comparable burden. "Squaw" and "buck" are, however, derogatory, and I neither use them nor condone their use by others. It obviously pays to be aware of the specificity of names, and to be aware of updated tribal names.

But there does come a point of diminishing returns, and this is where I must be aware of both the nuances of terminology and my own aims. By avoiding giving gross offense, I conform to the norms of the profession, and maintain my right to practice my craft within it. It's less clear where my interests lie when (as happened last fall) I'm teaching a class where in addition to their tribal designations, some students identify themselves as Indians, some as Native Americans, some as Native American Indians, and no one likes First Nations.

By raising the issue of terminology, being open to suggestions, and being specific where possible, I can meet the minimum requirements of the profession, and perhaps gain a modicum of respect as a scholar and teacher from my students. No matter how deeply I go into terminology, though, I'm still a white man studying and teaching Indian history. I give some degree of offense just by standing up there at the front of the room. Understanding that, it is sensible to make a distinction between the degree of pliability in terminology that constitutes courtesy, and that which through its extremities of caution and deference

becomes ritual participation in someone else's quest for self-worth and national identity. There is little gain for me in acting out a reverse ritual of conquest where I became the conquered through the mortification of language dysfunction, trying to conduct a class with narrow and contradictory constraints on terminology.

Frankly, I think it's better for everyone involved if I define boundaries for myself as a scholar and teacher that recognize my need to function in the classroom. I do not have to replicate larger patterns of racial and gender domination in the classroom. But neither do I have to act out a reverse conquest by wholly giving up my own power to negotiate language.

Scott Riney

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Date: Fri, 12 Jul 1996 15:47:52 CST6CDT

From: Guy Bensusan <Guy.Bensusan@nau.edu>

I wonder whether it is useful to inquire of those "Indians" in the classroom what they would prefer to be called. In my Arizona classrooms, most want to be called Indian rather than Native American --- a few want to be called by the name of the nation.

By raising that question, I have resolved two challenges --- one is not choosing the phraseology which might be offensive, and two is raising the issue of the need to use many names for covering extensive historical eras, widely diverse regions, inclusion of those who are being referred to, and a raising of consciousness among all the students that no one word will fit all.

Guy Bensusan, Northern Arizona University.

Date: Sat, 13 Jul 1996 19:48:10 CST6CDT

From: Tom Vaughan <wt@frontier.net>

I tend to agree with Gary's approach. Where possible (and necessary to make the distinction) I use the tribal affiliation. Next, I've found Indian to be more acceptable in the Southwest than Native American. I still use Native American in those situations (mostly legal) where it is important to remember that Hawaiians, Chamorros, and other non-Indian first settlers are involved.

--

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Cultural Resource Management,

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Date: Sat, 13 Jul 1996 19:51:04 CST6CDT

From: gibsons@agt.net (Stan Gibson)

Oki Nixokowa!

A tip of my (honorary) eagle-feather headdress to Jeff Pasley, Scott Riney, Guy Benusan, Bob Irwin, Kathryn Lehman, Tom Vaughan, and our professedly fallible co-moderator, the estimable GLS. I have nothing but a personal opinion to add to the otherwise thoughtful-although at times rather academic-discussion. After three years of living and working on the Blood Indian Reserve in southern Alberta (named by Canada's \*Indian\* Affairs Branch), and a dozen or so years of teaching North

American Native Prose Literature (my appellation) and of voluntary (i.e., unpaid) tutoring of First Nations students (their label) at the University of Calgary, I settled- after class discussions-on "Native" as a generally acceptable portmanteau term whenever specific tribal or band affiliations didn't easily fit. No, it's not perfect, but neither is anything else, as others have pointed out. Gus, in his kickoff, may have cast aside his ex-cathedra cape, but (from his North Texas suburb) he nevertheless seems to me to have been speaking wisely, ex urbe ad urbem so to speak-every argument against any of the suggested terms also applies to every other one. Name your poison, then, with whatever appropriateness, modesty, and respect you can muster....

Regards,

Stan (Pitaa)

P.S. Does "ex urbe ad urbem" rate another free post?

GLS answer to the above question. In so far as I am free to make policy on the list you may have a whole hole of posts for that one.

Date: Sat, 13 Jul 1996 19:56:16 CST6CDT

From: sara rachel lowes <slowes@reed.edu>

On Fri, 12 Jul 1996, G. L. Seligmann (AcadCore, x3399) wrote:

\* From: R Irwin <rsirwin@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca>

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>

\* H-West:

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\* The use of the term First Nations in Canada is problematic. I find it

\* interesting that a European concept of "nation" has been

\* appropriated by a band and family oriented society. Especially since it

\* is suggested this is an important aspect of cultural preservation.

>

\* Anybody else see this as somewhat ironic?

>

\* Bob Irwin

\* University of Alberta

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Bob,

Do you mean it is ironic that, in attempting to adopt culture-preserving modes of discussing political, economic and social problems/solutions with the authorities external to the community (have I worded that precisely enough?), Canada's First Nations have had to choose language which negates their culture?

I agree this might appear problematic unless we concede that the political/economic entity which is the nation of Canada does have significant means of effecting the First Nation's way of life; if the First Nations are going to negotiate at all with the Canadian government, they must do so in the same terms used by those who recognize Canada as a nation. The First Nations of Canada are thus claiming a kind of comparability to the "larger national culture" of Canada.

The First Nations' collection of values/ assumptions which inform their traditional practices and social conventions are not the same as those that all other Canadians practice-whether they are members of any subset of the discernible ethnic groups that comprise Canada's diverse population and national/public culture. It is different because it is a nation within a nation, unlike the social groups formed by immigrant populations. The point I take from the First Nations' use of the supposedly "ironic" term, "nation," is that they are not in fact a nation like Canada or like any Eurocentric view of political or economic entities. They are in fact, in my view, labeling themselves as a "nation" out of sorts, corrupt in the traditional sense because they must locate themselves within another nation and speak its political language.

The dialogue is absurd; the situation of native north Americans is tragic, and I think the First Nations are right to use Eurocentric terms to point out the absurdity of their situation, even as a way of intimating the intrinsically Indian substance of their culture. It is their opposition to the nation of Canada which defines them, and their culture is in opposition to the national/public culture of Canada. My opinion is that to call it an irony is to miss the careful process of cultural negotiation and political action that some in

the indian community still have the strength and hope to continue. It not "appropriation" of a term-this makes it sound like stealing. I don't think that their claim to nationhood is so hypocritical as you make it sound-politically calculating, yes, and necessarily so, I would say. The hypocrisy is not in the use of the term, but in the circumstances which force the First Nations to use a foreign system of representation. I think in seeing the irony we see that the First Nations have had to resort to a truly primitive representation of themselves in the terms used by the external authorities: "nation" may be a doubtful description according to indians and scholars, but its the only one the external political culture offers, so as crude a description as it is as useless as it is in developing understanding between the negotiating parties, it is it has to serve as a bargaining chip. It appears to be the only show of good faith that the larger political culture may understand.

I just think it is unfair to assume that the First Nations want to be a legitimate political entity without having to perform duties or accept responsibilities. Rather, it is that they require the entire nation of Canada also to consider what duties and responsibilities are appropriately exacted from such "nations" as the Canadian First Nations. It is not a black and white sleight of hand, it is a squeezing of meanings to their edges where they can blur and change in order to accomodate a large enough living space for everyone. I think, in fact, that the First Nations are offering a greater meaning and bigger understanding by using the term "nation" to describe themselves. We must not view this as a case of indians holding their own culture too dear to share even while sharing the external culture. I just don't think "culture" works like that, tit for tat. That point of view completely misses the fact that there is a problem with the living situation of many native North Americans and a solution depends upon every member being sucked into the debate over what "nation" means, everyone willing to accept that the use is use, conceivable, and therefore meaningful beyond the traditional use. The discomfort is not a sign of injustice, so much as a sign of change that already has taken place and will continue to progress whether it is recognized slowly or quickly by critics.

Voof! Sorry so longwinded. You really got me thinking!

Sara Lowes, Reed College

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Date: Sat, 13 Jul 1996 20:02:25 CST6CDT

From: al schwartz <schwartz@mailhost1.csusm.edu>

The word "nation" suggests a group possessing some form of self-government. That concept of Indian "tribes" was in use in the colonial period and was implicit in the U.S. government's treaty system to 1871. Thus the Six Nations of the Iroquois. Using it now-and "nation" is popular in the U.S. as well as in the Canadian term "First Nations"-is a way of asserting that one's native "national" identity (as a member of a particular group, or as a native person) is as significant, and should be given as much social and political weight, as a person's identity as an American or Canadian.

"Native American" is useful (at least in a U.S. context) because it refers to several different groups which are native to American territory-not only American Indian people, but also Inuits, Aleuts, Pacific Islanders, Hawaiians, etc.

My observation, for what it's worth, is that Indian people tend to use the term "Indian" for Indian people as a group.

Date: Sat, 13 Jul 1996 20:10:46 CST6CDT

From: "Josef J. Barton" <texbart@merle.acns.nwu.edu>

Mae M. Ngai <mn53@COLUMBIA.EDU> writes:]

I am intrigued by David Neufeld's comments on peoples of the Yukon, specifically on the use of "First Nations" by Canadians. On a visit to British Columbia several years ago I noted a similar usage, i believe it was "First Peoples." I am interested in this approach, of naming people in temporal terms. It seems, first of all, to be historically problematic because it is backward looking, adopted to give a relative meaning to the historical "place" (really time) of indigenous peoples, who came first, before others, i.e. before colonists, who came "second" or "later". I wonder if any other group is named, or names itself, post-facto, as it were. Second, it is not clear to me if this name is adopted by the "first nations" or "first peoples" themselves, or if it is a name given/used by anthropologists or others. Because the question of naming is a question really of identity politics, i prefer to use the name that people have given themselves specifically ("Seneca" versus "Native American Indian" [incidentally "Native

American" is problematic because historically it was used to distinguish Americans of European descent born in the U.S.-those of 'native stock'-from European immigrants]). At the same time, there is nothing inherently wrong with a collective name for groups of people that share common territory or experience, i.e. "European" or "Asian," although these are of course also politically determined.

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Date: Mon, 15 Jul 1996 11:51:25 CST6CDT

From: "Charles R. Batten" <crbatten@cache.net>

Re Stan Gibson's comment (and others)--

If you settle on the term "Native" or "Native American," you include me and goodness knows how many millions of others who were born in North America, and whose ancestors for generations were born here (and they are not all WASPS). I'm sure you don't mean to include us, and so those terms appear to me to be completely unacceptable. Are there no non-Indians in your class discussions who raised this objection?

Instead of trying to be politically correct, why not try to be accurate, and refer to them as "indigenous" people, or by their tribal or group name?

Date: Mon, 15 Jul 1996 11:58:41 CST6CDT

From: marks@admin.stedwards.edu (Mark Stoll)

The problem of naming is one I too have run into. I have a lecture I give in my U.S. history courses on what to call people, particularly "the people who lived here when Columbus arrived." That's a mouthful, but is the most accurate. I point out that the names we call many of the tribes in North America are simply what they called themselves, which tended simply to be their own language for some variation of "The People." (Not a very helpful or descriptive term!) The rest of the tribal names are what their neighbors called them, when Europeans contacted the neighbors first. For example (if memory serves), "Apache" is a Pueblo word for "enemy" and (my favorite) "Mohawk" is the Narragansett word for "cannibal" (which says more for the Narragansett fear of Mohawks than it does for any clue to Mohawk culinary preferences). (Of course "cannibal" is derived from "Carib.") "Dakota" is what Sioux called themselves, but "Cheyenne" is a Dakota word meaning "people of alien speech." (The Cheyenne word for themselves ("The People," of course) is something like Dzistiistas-not an easy one for English-trained tongues!) What a mess one gets into into, trying to be inoffensive!

When Europeans arrived, they needed a general term for the people on the American continents. The Americans did not have one. "Indian" was wrong, but by the time Europeans figured that out, a couple decades of usage had made the term indelible, and also a convenient alternative did not exist. No doubt if the discovery had occurred the other way 'round and Europe or Asia or Africa was being "discovered" by Americans, the Mayans/Aztecs/whoever would have needed a word for the Old World peoples, and would have come up with something equally inaccurate. Certainly the Old World peoples (now "First Nations"?) had no one single name for themselves, any more than the New World peoples did.

Which brings us to another problem: "Indians" object to the terms "New World" and "Old World," since to them their world was not "new." The terms "Eastern" and "Western Hemispheres" have been criticized by East Asians, because they represent a European-based view of the world. Perhaps we could most inoffensively label them Hemispheres X and Y? Yin and Yang?

What about the objection to "Indian"? The American tribes do not speak with one voice on this issue. Many do not object to the term, while other tribes or individuals since the cultural revival movement of the early 1970s prefer "Native American." But as far as I know, this name does not extend beyond the boundaries of the U.S.; I have not seen the term applied to the Indians of Mexico or Brazil, for example. As a generic term, "Indian" seems still preferable. And, as Jeff Pasley notes, "native" is literally "born here," as seen in the term "nativist." One could object that everyone's ancestors were at some point immigrants, so how many generations does one need to be here in order to be "native"? (My own ancestors arrived nearly 400 years ago. Other

non-"natives" might even claim 500 years, half a millennium. That should be enough to count as "native," I should think.) And, of course, the "American" part of "Native American" is ultimately derived from a European nobleman who won fame on the basis of fraudulent narratives of his exploits. So even "America" is based on a mistake.

All in all, the names we use carry the burden of history. Someone mentioned the "n-word" for people of African ancestry. Now THERE is a can of worms! The desired name for that group (whose boundaries are terrifically difficult even to define) has changed nearly generationally-National Assn. for the Advancement of "Colored" People, then Negro, then black, now African American or (full circle) people of color-each with its connotations and political implications, each with its objectionable aspects. (And Africans have been in America virtually as long as, and thus are as "native" as, Europeans, to get back to Topic A.)

I use "Indian" (and "black"). Easy to say, reasonably neutral politically, and everyone knows who I'm talking about.

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Co-Moderator, H-ASEH

Date: Mon, 15 Jul 1996 12:03:22 CST6CDT

[David Beriss <beriss@worldweb.net> writes:]

This whole discussion on the term "indian" has been quite fascinating.

Simon Katzenellenbogen's comment about the uses of the term "native" in Africa points to the difficulties of trying to be linguistically appropriate across cultures. Not only is "Native American" used happily in some North American contexts, the

notion of "tribe" has a rather more positive place among North Americans than it does in Africa. I think the history of nation/state creation and the rather different forms of colonial rule are responsible for these differences.

But I have also had contradictory experiences with "Native American" vs. "Indian" here. I used to work for a US senator, serving on the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. The most common term there was (and is) "Indian", except for "Native Hawaiians" and (I think) "Native Alaskans", whose legal status is distinct. Most Indians exist, for Senate purposes, as members of tribes and there is a great deal of stock placed in Federal acknowledgment of a tribe's status. One of our staffers, a Lakota himself, indicated that he preferred Indian to Native American because the U.S. Constitution only recognizes his tribal sovereignty as an Indian (see article 1, section 8 of the constitution). Native American, he felt, reduced his identity to "just another ethnic group" whose rights would be fought out on civil rights grounds, not on a nation-to-nation basis. However, we also had a staff member of Ojibwe origin, who preferred "Native American". Although she did not put it in the clear terms he did (different educational backgrounds accounted for this, I believe), as an "urban" Indian, she felt that her activism had much in common with African Americans, Hispanics, etc. and therefore felt comfortable with an ethnic rather than national status. Of course, all of this skirts the issue of whether people would prefer identification as members of specific tribes...but that choice is probably situational.

My point here is that the usage varies (more broadly than I can account for here) even within one country, but that the usage itself can tell us a great deal about what people want to claim about their identities. And, heck, I never heard anyone refer to "indigenous" peoples in the Senate...

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Date: Mon, 15 Jul 1996 12:18:36 CST6CDT

On Fri, 12 Jul 1996, G. L. Seligmann (AcadCore, x3399) wrote:

\* From: jpasley@mailers.fsu.edu (Jeff Pasley) >

>While I sympathize with the two postings on the term "Indian" (I rail against it in class myself) I have a practical question for the list.

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easy-to-say-and-use term to describe people who were in a particular relationship with Euro-American peoples and governments? Don't we use it because students and other mass audiences know who we mean when we do? I ask this practically as a teacher. Perhaps I am orally impaired, but I simply find it too verbally awkward to spit out "First Nations peoples," or "indigenous peoples," or "indigenes," or sometimes even "Native Americans" every time I want to describe what, say, an army made up of Potawatomis, Wyandots, Miamis, and Ottawas was doing.

Jeff Pasley

Florida State University

Ms Lowes responds:

\* I am really frustrated by this message. Why not be specific? The point of haggling over terms is to ensure that we are not in such a hurry that someone loses pride, sense of identity, living space/resources or political range of motion through lack of consideration. Yes, we know who you mean when you say "indian": all native North, Central and South Americans who Europeans slaughtered when they began to settle those land masses, and those who live out the legacy of that process, preferring to be called after another land mass than the one named after that first Spanish "discoverer" Spaniard, Amerigo. If discussing these peoples causes us to abbreviate their experiences beyond a respectful use of their own names for themselves, maybe we should not discuss them, or discuss them differently. Since many "Native Americans" I know prefer to be called "indian" when being ethnically/culturally/politically differentiated from others, I accept its use over other terms out of respect for those who include me in their discussion-not because it's easy to say, but because those I come into contact with ask me to use it.

Because I study history and feel that in this case where the question of naming is so critical to all interested attention to detail is necessary for a better understanding, I think that in the classroom, breaking down "indian" to more descriptive names is crucial. If we can discover who wants to be called what, or who wanted to be called what, what it means or meant to them and why,

then we can have a better understanding and that is going to help us make people's lives better now. As far as teaching goes, perhaps some groups can be accurately defined by you, the professor, not only by tribal affiliation or by the names of those tribes, but by language similarities, geographic area/lifestyle or life cycle or trading zones if these kinds of categories are more tangible to students who are not familiar with the languages and experiences of Indians. It seems to me very important to me, as an undergraduate student, to be aware of which way professors' explanations are slanted and why they think it is useful to take that particular slant for a description. I am really upset by this need to have a quick and easy explanation-I didn't go to college to be briefed. There are so many problems with the way "nation", "indigenous" and "native" are used, and we must continue sorting out their meanings with care. This takes time, and I think your students will understand that when you give an explanation of a term-what it means to you, why you are using it-they will understand that it is because it is a contestable, and that your entire explanation is not the only one, the right one or even the best one, merely a version that serves a useful function for those interested in studying the subject matter. Your students must be made aware of where their responsibility as students begins-to ask questions about the learning process, and about the subject matter. Since the facts about the experiences of Indians on this continent and others are so contested, at least you can encourage your students to discover why it helps to be careful and why it is important for them to arrive at their own conclusions about what "Indian" means, etc., even in freshman classes. If you trust us we will trust you and we will ask you what you mean. I don't really see how the situation of "Indians" could be simplified to a single term, but then, perhaps it is the acceptance by many that this simplification is the only way at all for "Indian" culture to survive which indicates the real form of the struggle between that culture and the authorities and popular culture external to it. Though, I have a hard time seeing how a single, opaque term is really of use at all in creating a richer understanding. (Or, maybe I've had just a little too much of my thesis for breakfast today.)

Sara Lowes, Reed College

slowes@reed.edu

Date: Mon, 15 Jul 1996 13:20:59 CST6CDT

From: "Mark B. Busby" <MB13@a1.swt.edu>

A few years ago I was editing a book that included a chapter on American Indian literature. The writer used the term "Indian" throughout, and the copyeditor for the press dutifully changed the term to "Native American" throughout the essay. I sent out the page proofs to the authors before publication, and the one on Indian lit came back with a single statement boldly written across the top in all caps: "No damn Indian I know calls himself a Native American."

Mark Busby, Director

Center for the Study of the Southwest

Date: Tue, 16 Jul 1996 13:26:45 CST6CDT

From: R Irwin <rsirwin@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca>

A friend remarked that writing to a list is frightening and humbling. At risk of making a fool of myself, here goes.

Since I posted my note on the use of the term "First Nations" in Canada, I have taken the time to think-always a useful exercise sometimes ignored when I write on e-mail. Here is an explanation of my problems with the terms "First Nation" and although I am not an expert in American history, "Native American."

I am concerned about my role as a historian in the classroom and as a public voice of expertise(?) in history.

Both terms are problematic in this regard. They both emerge in modern political struggles by Indian communities to obtain a voice in the national debates. As Sara Lowes noted, these communities have decided to use the language of modern discourse in order to be heard. In Canada, the term "First Nation" suggests Native people have a role in the Constitutional debates which haunt our country. The use of the term nation in our political and constitutional debates had been restricted primarily to the "pact" or lack thereof between the French and English nations within the Canadian colonial state. Indians in Canada resented the lack of voice this bi-focal debate left for their communities and have made a deliberate effort to obtain a seat at the table. Hence the Assembly of First Nations. While I am reluctant to delve into the American issue, I see similarities in that country.

Nationalism is much more pronounced in the United States and the adoption of the term Native Americans by the leadership of the Indian communities appears intended to lay claims to citizenship in the American polity.

While both terms thus make political sense, as a historian in the classroom they are difficult. First, they are historically invalid.

Canada's treaty and non treaty Indians played no role in the definition of the Canadian state or in the creation of its identity (I would suggest the same is true for the U.S.). Indeed, if they played a role it was the mythology of the "noble savage," and their place in the context of wilderness and lack of civilisation which influenced the debates. Indian communities, like the landscape, were obstacles to be overcome, or in modern western American historical discourse "conquered."

Second, the students in the classroom are confused by the concept of nation as it applies to native people. Nation implies

cultural and in some respects social continuities. As it emerged in the French Revolution and German romanticism, nation

emphasises the collective identity in the face of rampant individualism. It had little to do with self-government. Historical native

actors/actresses do not fit the model of nation which most students bring to the classroom. Students quickly assume that all

Indian people share characteristics and have cultural bonds. They also assume that tribal organisations functioned on lines similar

to our modern states. While it may be true that tribal designations were important to the Northeastern Iroquoian peoples (I have

my doubts) they had little importance to many western American and Canadian Indian communities. These societies were

primarily band oriented societies in which racial, genetic, and cultural continuities were less important than the basic survival

mechanisms which a band developed. Bands were fluid and dynamic because they had to be. They served as both economic

unit and as a mode of dispute resolution. As a recent article in the *Canadian Historical Review* pointed out, the leaders of

different bands of the Peigan (often considered an example of a tribal political entity) responded differently to the fur traders and

neighbouring Cree and Gros Ventre bands. They made choices and their membership varied depending upon those choices.

While some of the problems mentioned above could easily be addressed to any terminology applied to the collective Indian

community, the concept of First Nation, because of the baggage nation brings with it, and similarly the problems associated with

the term Native American and the notion of citizenship this entails (indeed special citizenship) are both worse than other labels.

In my classroom, for the lack of a better idea (I am open to suggestions sent to my personal account if you like) I use primarily

tribal distinctions with an emphasis on the fluid nature of the community. Thus I refer to groups as Anishnabe, Kanai, Siksika,

Cree, Gwichin etc. when possible. When searching for a collective noun for all peoples falling into this racial (ever notice how

North Americans search for racial collectives) collective, I use Indian and Native interchangeable. Indian is important in the Canadian context since it carries legal implications.

The relationship between native communities and the crown is built upon:

sec. 91(24) of the Constitution where Indians and Indian lands are a federal responsibility; Indian Treaties recognised in the Constitution since 1982; and the Indian Act. Thus it continues to find a place in my classroom and in my writings.

Trust I haven't bored you all or made any foolish mistakes.

Bob Irwin

rsirwin@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca

Date: Tue, 16 Jul 1996 13:30:41 CST6CDT

bECUASE OF EXPLICIT LANGUAGE THE FOLLOOWING MESSAGE SHOULD BE  
READ ONLY BY THOSE OF ADULT AND DISCERNING TASTE. By order of the

Moderator-General

X (his mark)

From: gibsons@agt.net (Stan Gibson)

"Native" as a term for North American indigenes is, as I said, far from perfect-but I wasn't tapdancing around the issue.

Non-Indians (your term) predominated in my U. of Calgary classes, but there were many students from the multiplicity of tribes in Alberta as well. After discussion, all of them allowed me my choice of appellation, "Native," and I encouraged them to use theirs, in class and in their papers. And, whenever easily possible, all of us used tribal or band names.

Incidentally, Charles, you and I, and "goodness knows how many millions of others" may have been native to North America, but the "indigenes" in southern Alberta and in Montana have been here for at least eleven thousand years since their own migrations to Turtle Island.

A little story told in class by Bruce Starlight, a Tsuu T'ina (Sarcee) student, may be a propos re nomenclature:

One day two white fishermen with expensive flyrods and other fancy gear, saw an old Sarcee man using a homemade pole in a leaky rowboat on the Bow River.

"Just look at that lazy fuckin' Indian! Let's talk

talk to him....

"Hey, Grampaw! How's that willow switch working?

Caught anything?" No answer.

"Look, Buck, why the hell don't you get a job? Then you could buy a REAL boat and decent tackle." His friend chimed in:

"Yeah! And lots of other good stuff-Laz-Y-Boy chair, color TV, nice car, bank account...."

Finally, the old man tilted his head up: "So I

could go fishin'?"

The whole class agreed that "lazy fuckin' Indian" was a well-known sociological/anthropological scientific term and went off to

Tim Horton's or a campus bar to deconstruct or (hopefully) otherwise profit.

Stan

Date: Tue, 16 Jul 1996 13:37:11 CST6CDT

From: "Ruth Banes (HUM)" <banes@luna.cas.usf.edu>

This response from Professor Bensusan is quite reasonable. I agree with him. In my home state of New Mexico, there are Native Americans who prefer either term. In the end what is important is to study these cultures and let our students know about them. In Florida, I can report that most undergraduate and graduate students have very stereotypical notions of Native Americans. The ignorance is pervasive and extraordinary!!

\*\*\*\*\*

Ruth A. Banes Assoc. Prof. of American Studies

Dept. of Humanities and American Studies Univ. of South Florida, CPR 107

(813) 974-1895 FAX (813) 974-9409 Tampa, Fl. 33620-5550

On Fri, 12 Jul 1996, G. L. Seligmann (AcadCore, x3399) wrote:

From: Guy Bensusan <Guy.Bensusan@nau.edu>

I wonder whether it is useful to inquire of those "Indians" in the classroom what they would prefer to be called. In my Arizona classrooms, most want to be called Indian rather than Native

American --- a few want to be called by the name of the nation. By raising that question, I have resolved two challenges --- one is not choosing the phraseology which might be offensive, and two is raising the issue of the need to use many names for covering extensive historical eras, widely diverse regions, inclusion of those who are being referred to, and a raising of consciousness among all the students that no one word will fit all.

Guy Bensusan, Northern Arizona University.

Date: Tue, 16 Jul 1996 13:45:55 CST6CDT

From: sara rachel lowes <slowes@reed.edu>

On Mon, 15 Jul 1996, G. L. Seligmann (AcadCore, x3399) wrote:

\* From: RH4754@cnsvox.albany.edu

>

>

- \* Bob Irwin's post raises the interesting issue of cultural imperialism.
- \* I prefer to follow the work of Max Weber who attempted to develop a
- \* typology of terms, he called them ideal types, which were trans-
- \* historically and cross-culturally sensitive, and which were founded
- \* on inductive historical research. For Weber, the term bureaucracy,
- \* for instance, could apply to both the European and Chinese forms

\* if they were inductive and hence sensitive to cultural and historical

\* variation. I would suggest that the concept nation or state could

\* similarly be cross-culturally and historically usable.

> ]

\* Ron Helfrich

\* Department of History

\* University at Albany

\* Albany, NY 12222

>

\* Oh. its the hermeneutic problem again...

>

Ms Lowes' response to the above

The problem with relegating the problem of "indians'" appropriation of e

term "nation" (in the case of Canada's First Nation) to the realm of

hermeneutics is that we then must move in the realm of

hermeneutics-essentially an intellectual space for explicating biblical

texts, a literature which did not reach the culture in question

until long after either's coagulation. While hermeneutics-however we

this group want discuss them and the use of them with regard to this topic -may tell us something about what European

explorers/conquerors thought about "the New World," I have little faith in the description of pre-fifteenth century indian culture

rendered by the hermeneutics of "First Nations." On Max Weber and assuming that the Capitalist Spirit is universal human

sensibility which informed "indian" political practices and social organization in the same way it did Europeans in the early

modern world: this seems like bringing this up means we assume that "nations" are evidence of a certain political health or physical

state-a critical kind of conjuncture of collective emotional/psychological needs and physical or rational responses to

economic/geographic conditions like mountains or famine. After a period of time or a number of generations, societies will or

will not develop keen responses to their environments-depending on their latitudinal location (I am carrying this position to the absurd lengths of Analyste historian Fernan Braudel and his ilk)? Weber and use of his conceptual apparatus for tracking human social organization leads us to the conclusion that societies without reaucracy will never progress to the "New World," its silver-based banking practices and the cultural "renaissance" it funded-yes, soem good things came to some people from the capitalist spirit-whatever instance of it-that discovered e Americas. However, many suffered, and the industrialized world is not only a product of Western Culture, but also came of the suffering. It may be comforting to think that all human beings have the same experiences, but its just plain inaccurate, and I think misleading when employed for large scale explanations. Better take the tact of Clifford Geertz-heir to that Claude Levi-Strauss whose artful career explicatinghis deterministic vision of human social organization- which was based on Durkheim, Weber, and others and which has trickled into the practice of social history as both method and inspiration- if we want to engage social structures as a way of linking Them and Us, Then and Now. And I much prefer social history to a monolithic history of human ideas, political forms or cognition. Instead of trying to force square forms on round realities, we might, as Geertz does, talk about the cognitive distance we travel to study Them and the distance They have traveled from their understanding in order to communicate with Us. It makes so much more sense to me not to corporate "indians" into our framework but to link our framework to theirs and to incorporate ourselves into our understanding of their framework-we are going to have to make concessions in our definitions and argumnts in order to discuss Them, not just assume that everyone eventually creates a "nation" if they know what's good for them.

Anyone can grill me for being indelicate with Weber, of course.

Sara Lowes, Reed College

slowes@reed.edu

Date: Wed, 17 Jul 1996 14:05:13 CST6CDT

From: sara rachel lowes <slowes@reed.edu>

Bob Irwin's most recent posting has made me realize a new aspect of this ongoing discussion over ethnic/political terminology.

As an historian, a major problem of practicing one's craft is anachronism, isn't it? I think I had forgotten. The past couple of years I have been trying to balance the problem of being anachronistic in my thinking about history with the need always to be aware of the modern context of my practicing history. The problems I choose to study and the way I choose to study them are themselves determined by more than my "professional integrity" or some other kind of individualism-I mean I believe I am a slave to intellectual fashion. And using methods that respond to these contemporary debates is as important to me as being delicate with history and as true as I can be to its substance-whatever that Grand Scheme is. I think Bob Irwin is well-timed in reminding us that Canadian Indians have not always been "First Nations," and that the contemporary political questions weigh undergraduates in a classroom down as if that phrase were lead. It is a complex thing to have to tell students that history is away of life rather than a thing, and that political terms like "native" are variables, necessarily having different values from one equation to the next, and that many terms, not just "native" are just that political and variable. Changing our lingo to keep up with political currents in the present, we historians risk losing some integrity. How do we explain History beyond fashion, politics, or a generation of its students? It is a subject rumored to claim a great deal of persistence for its nature, a great deal of no-change, of continuities and recognizable functions. Students definitely grapple with the problem of sounding intelligible to themselves, classmates and professors. So I see that my yen to understand the relevance of history to the present may mean sacrilege-a lack of respect for the continuities I am trained to apprehend. However, I maintain a sort of antagonistic relationship with History, its study and its myriad particular manifestations. I refuse to let it reign tyrannical. I see it as a question entertaining endless study and an answer to some of the problems that human beings now struggle with as the planet becomes more crowded, resources dwindle and political debates become increasingly violent and powerful in directing the form our societies take. It has to be an answer or it is useless to me, so I feel that disentangling the political spin inherent to the study of History in front of students is a necessary hillside of devil's club to fall backward into without a backpack. No one so far has dropped the word "anachronistic" with regard to applying our contemporary political culture to an aspect of life we are taught to consider as autonomous from superficial change. So, am I wondering what the real feeling is among historians regarding "political correctness" and the anachronistic history which may ensue from it.

In closing, I want to say I have really been turned on by this discussion and appreciate everyone's input a great deal. I feel I'm learning a terrific amount and hope I'm giving something back, because I'm sure enjoying this group.

Sara Lowes

slowes@reed.edu

Date: Wed, 17 Jul 1996 14:06:38 CST6CDT

From: "h-rhetor, Gary Hatch" <hatchg@jkhbhc.byu.edu>

The problem of what to call Indians is further complicated by their constant identification by Europeans as "cannibal," an issue partly skirted in Mark Stoll's post.

Mohawk is, as Stoll says, the Narragansett word for "eaters of people." But using the word "cannibal," derived variously from Carib, Caribal, and "Galibi," an Arawak word for "strong men," rather than "eaters of people," is to overlay the cultural meanings of "cannibal," which is a wholly European construct referring *\*specifically\** to the peoples of the Americas. Maquia is the Algonquian word for "eaters of people" and "Mohawk"; to make Mohawk=cannibal, however, requires that you put into play the connotations of savagery and bloodthirstiness, as well as the asymmetrical relations of power that led to the colonialist construction of a category called "cannibal" in the first place.

The word appears on 23 November 1492 in Columbus' journal—an identification complicated by the fact that the journal itself is a fair copy created by Father Bartolome de las Casas, *\*not\** Columbus—and soon replaces anthropophagy/us and man-eater (the Anglo-Saxon term) in European languages, but, again, with *\*specific reference\** to the peoples of the Americas. It soon also gained currency as the most common way of representing "Indians"—they all become "cannibals" in western writings.

Peter Sands, Assistant Professor/Writing Specialist

Director, University of Maine at Presque Isle Epiphany Project

(207)768-9459||sands@polaris.umpi.maine.edu||<http://maine.maine.edu/~psands>

Date: Wed, 17 Jul 1996 14:07:12 CST6CDT

From: sara rachel lowes <slowes@reed.edu>

\* From: "Charles R. Batten" <crbatten@cache.net>

>

>

\* Re Stan Gibson's comment (and others)--

>

\* If you settle on the term "Native" or "Native American," you include me and

\* goodness knows how many millions of others who were born in North America,

\* and whose ancestors for generations were born here (and they are not all

\* WASPS). I'm sure you don't mean to include us, and so those terms appear to

\* me to be completely unacceptable. Are there no non-Indians in your class

\* discussions who raised this objection?

>

\* Instead of trying to be politically correct, why not try to be accurate, and

\* refer to them as "indigenous" people, or by their tribal or group name?

>

\* I think the problem with differentiating "accuracy" and "pc" is that then you ignore that fact that for a generation or two "Native

American" has not meant all born Americans, but has meant \_N\_ative \_A\_mericans. This is useage, it's valid, and no matter

how you try to redefine this phrase literally, you are not going to be able to do away with the sense "indigenous" peoples have of

a completely different kind of experience that has centrally to do with a lifestyle/life-cycle/culture linked to the geography of

these continents, a relationship which pre-existed the experience had by immigrants who were joining a distinctly different

political and economic entity than that of "indigenous" peoples. My problem with "indigenous" is that, for all its "accuracy," it's

not a word generally used by indians to describe themselves. This makes me feel that whiel I am interested in the politics and

methodological pros and cons of using that terms, I prefer not to beat unwilling participants over the head with a term which still

connotes positivist, racist scientism rather than socially responsible, and responsive, history.

Sara Lowes, Reed College

slowes@reed.edu

Date: Wed, 17 Jul 1996 14:07:45 CST6CDT

From: "h-rhetor, Gary Hatch" <hatchg@jkhbhc.byu.edu>

From: "Tom Benson 814-865-4201" <T3B@PSUVM.PSU.EDU>

I sent Mark Stoll's note on naming Indians to a friend; this reply came back a few moments later, and I thought it might be interesting to the list:

>Thanks for the interesting note. . . .

according to at least one source the Lanai Lenapai word for their neighbors and enemies, Mohawk, does not mean "canibal" but "man-eater," (an easy transformation from one to the other) and refers to insects who live on humans, like fleas, and lice. So, its a scurrilous term, and does not indicate fear of the Mohawk, but contempt, and is thus similar to the Objibwa term for the Dakota, which the French caught as Sioux, but which is a short term for a phrase that translated as "snake in the grass."

forwarded by Tom Benson

Date: Wed, 17 Jul 1996 15:57:34 CST6CDT

From: Rebel <rpalm@unm.edu>

I'm not really sure what this discussion is about, but my first thought was/is, has anyone asked the Native Americans/Indians/indigenous peoples what they want to be called? I asked a Navajo lady (have asked several actually) if she was bothered by being called "Indian" and she said she had no problem with it as long as the person knew the difference

between Indian, as in from India, and Indian referring to North American Native Americans. She wasn't hung up on labels. Here in New Mexico I've heard Indian used as often as Native American by a whole range of people, from the beleganas (whites) and the various tribal people themselves.

So whose problem is this anyway?

"I don't think a person should believe in -isms; I think a person should believe in himself." Ferris Bueller.

Rebel Palm, MA, Evaluation Coordinator (and dilettante Soc PhD candidate)

Coordinated School Health/Education for Zero Infection Evaluation Project

University of New Mexico

FAX: 505/299-0965

Date: Thu, 18 Jul 1996 14:23:56 CST6CDT

From: LCEBULA@ewu.edu

Friends:

The effort to find a substitute for the term "Indian" has been unsuccessful. All of the proposed terms are as innaccurate as the term they propose to replace. "Native American," as has been pointed out, could equally well apply to many of us born on this continent. Furthermore, many white, black, and asian "native americans" are offended by appropriation of this term to describe only Indians, and it ill behooves us to disregard their feelings. "First Nations" is horribly anachronistic and flunks anthropology 101. "Indigenous" is NOT accurate either, since homo sapiens are not indigenous to the Americas. A Nez Perce acquaintance jokingly calls her people "Original Immigrants." A clever and accurate term, but I can't see it catching on.

Another factor is that most native-indigenous-Indian peoples overwhelmingly prefer the term "Indian." There was an national poll done recently and 2 out of 3 native peoples preferred "Indian" to "Native American" or any other proposed alternatives. (The same poll showed people of African descent preferring "Black" to "African American" by a similar margin.)

Sure, it is better to use individual tribal designations, etc., where possible. But there is still a need for a collective noun. Given the weakness of the proposed alternatives and the overwhelming preference of the people themselves, I continue to say "Indian," and encourage my students to do likewise.

Larry Cebula

Southern Missouri State College

lcebula@ewu.edu

Date: Thu, 18 Jul 1996 14:24:23 CST6CDT

From: IACPAE@asvm.inre.asu.edu

: Patricia A. Etter

Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Arizona State

University, Tempe 85287-1006

Most of the American Indians on our campus prefer to be called by their tribal affiliation-Najavo, Hopi, Tohono O'odham, etc.

The Journal of American Indian Education, which comes out of ASU requires all authors to use the term, American Indian, in potential articles, not Native American. However, individuals identify themselves by tribal affiliation.

Patricia A. Etter, Associate Archivist for Information Ser

vices; Curator, Labriola National American Indian Data

Center. Phone: (602)965-3145 or 965-6490. FAX: (602)965-0776

INTERNET: IACPAE@ASUVM.INRE.ASU.EDU BITNET: IACPAE@ASUACAD

Date: Fri, 19 Jul 1996 13:36:53 CST6CDT

From: HALIDO@aol.com

That many indigenous people refer to themselves as "Indians" does not address the question of what appellation to use in classroom lectures, and the question of consideration of the preferences of those being discussed. As a Choctaw woman, I find the term "Indian" by non-native people offensive primarily because it is often used as a direct substitute for the name of a distinct native group, and because it carries a great deal of racial and historical condescension along with it. Even if the lecturer does not mean to imply anything of the sort, it can be very uncomfortable to the student to hear the same term used by a professor that is also used by bigots in a derogatory context. Often I have heard lecturers begin a discussion using terms such as Choctaw, Cherokee, etc, then suddenly shrug and say "Indians" for the remainder of references, as though it is unimportant to be specific because "Indians" can legitimately be stereotyped. Likewise, "tribe" is offensive. Obviously, these terms carry a lot of highly charged racial implications that are very much alive and well in contemporary America, especially in those areas which have large native populations. It seems best to me for non-native scholars to use the terms "native people/s" or "native group/s," and it wouldn't hurt to begin by briefly discussing the problem of naming groups, and expressing one's sensitivity to this topic.

It seems to me that the context and the speaker are the key issues.

In a classroom we need to be aware of the racial and political ramifications of terms we use to describe groups of people of any sort. One should be aware that however native people refer to themselves, it does not necessarily follow that that is how native people would like to be referred to in the classroom, or by someone of non-native descent.

The use of the term "Indian" in my community more often than not serves to differentiate myself and other native people from people of non-native descent. Within groups which include native people who are not Choctaw, I am "Choctaw" and WE are "Indian." As some of the postings have indicated, sometimes it's inconvenient to use longer terms than "Indian" to describe native people. But it is rude to use short, simplified terms to designate native people rather than a more respectful appellation because it is merely more convenient to do so.

Most native students that I know would be loathe to make an issue about this problem in a classroom setting. It is good to avoid the disrespect which may be inferred by some of your non-vocal, (maybe even unrecognized) native students.

Date: Fri, 19 Jul 1996 14:11:37 CST6CDT

co-editorial comment: "Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we try to be exactly accurate in every case". And yes I think Euro-Americans should handle Mexicans and Hispanics unless Africa truly does start at the Pyrennes as the English Col. Blimps used to opine. gus

From: "Thomas K Dean" <deanth@pilot.msu.edu>

Ah, another can of worms to open. I often use the term "European Americans" or "Euro-Americans." What problems accrue from this, I'm interested to know as well? I know that doesn't solve the problem, necessarily, of Mexicans and Hispanics (or does it?)

Thomas Dean

American Thought and Language

Michigan State University

\* > From: <scdudley@srp.gov> >

>

\* FROM: Shelly Dudley - Water Rights & Contracts, PAB 110 x6627

\* Internet address: scdudley@srp.gov

\* I have enjoyed the discussions on the terms "Indian" and "Native

\* American," but it occurred to me I have a similar problem in

\* reverse and any suggestions might be helpful.

>

\* I am writing my thesis on Indian water rights. I don't

\* like to use the term "whites," but it seems a mouthful to keep

\* using "non-Indian," when I discuss everyone else. Most of  
\* the landowners involved in this Arizona case were primarily of  
\* European origin, but some were Mexican or Hispanic.

>

\* Any assistance would be appreciated.

>

\* Shelly Dudley

\* Salt River Project /

\* Arizona State University

>

Date: Sun, 21 Jul 1996 18:57:33 CST6CDT

From: anmw1@UAA.ALASKA.EDU

I will preface my brief comments by stating that I am NOT a historian but rather an archivist, so have not dealt with the classroom usage issues. And actually, just about anyone who lives up here, academic or not, could tell you that here in Alaska, the term used is Native. We have regional native corporations, native hospitals, native villages, the famous Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, etc. Native (I think) is understood to refer to Eskimos, Aleuts, and Athabascan Indians (and perhaps some other groups that I am not as familiar with). When I first moved up here, when a new acquaintance told me that she had been born and raised in Alaska, I said "Oh! So you're a native." Her reply taught me that one does not \*use\* that word in this state to refer to a "born and raised here" person, but only the ones whose families have been "born and raised here" for thousands of years.

I kept waiting for someone else to bring this up, but as it didn't happen I chimed in even without all those fine credentials. What do you suppose the terminology is in Hawaii?

Not surprised that Alaska gets left out (even though we're further west than almost all of you),

Michele Welck

Assistant Archivist

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Date: Mon, 22 Jul 1996 12:04:12 CST6CDT

From: "Charles R. Batten" <crbatten@cache.net>

Sorry, but I fail to see that the story about the Indian fisherman being harrassed by the two whites has any relevance to the subject of the discussion. Nor do I see any humor in anything that degrades or ridicules another person. There are better ways to make a point, if that is the intent.

Furthermore, the use of obscenities is unnecessary, though I suppose one could say it has some useful purpose in that it says something about the person who uses it. What it says is not flattering.

Date: Tue, 23 Jul 1996 14:53:51 CST6CDT

From: gibsons@agt.net (Stan Gibson)

I sincerely regret having offended the sensibilities of Charles R. Batten (and perhaps other H-Westerners) by my recent post, which relayed a faithfully-worded story told in class by a Native student. Perhaps the circumstances may help explain the blunt, earthy tone of Bruce Starlight's joke, and I shall try, too, to establish the relevance of that story to the terminology thread.

Briefly, then, the class-about 75% "non-Indian" (your preferred term, Charles) -- had achieved a level of easy candor in discussion of common controversies, one of those being the widespread stereotyping of Natives as shiftless recipients of "a free ride" at the university, and largely incapable of "progress." Bruce is an elder in the Sarcee tribe, very proud of his heritage, not at all argumentative, but not a doormat either-hence his story, received with understanding laughter and no detectable offense.

As to relevance to the thread, I hoped that in Bruce's story my own point would be illuminated forcefully, and that its revelation of racist attitudes in coarse dialogue would clearly point up the poison of discriminatory thoughts and behavior, a daily diet for most prairie Natives. If my inclusion of the story's salty language is unflattering to me, I can live with that. If you are sneering at Bruce Starlight, however civilly, I object.

Stan Gibson

Date: Wed, 24 Jul 1996 13:48:07 CST6CDT

From: kmero@ix.netcom.com (Kathleen Mero)

Thank the great spirit, Larry, a man unafraid to call the kettle....well a man unafraid. I have been following the "INDIAN" discussion and kept silent as I lurked. As an amateur historian there are rare occasions when I find myself intimidated by those of you who I so much admire. People who worked for years to get degrees in History and then managed to actually find ways to get paid for 'doing' history.

So as I read the thread of messages on the term INDIAN I was thinking to myself, "Is this how to use your hard won knowledge?" But I was too cowardly to say, "Hey, cool it!" The word INDIAN is not in and of itself evil. It's only a word, it's served us well for a long time, why do we let ourselves be bogged down by gadflies with too much time on their hands, who decide they don't like our words. Is this really 'history'? Who's making the rules here anyway?!? Like Larry, I have been shamelessly using the word INDIAN in my daily discourse. My very

favorite research source here in the office is a CD-ROM called THE INDIAN QUESTION. My research into the life of Dr. John Marsh is bringing me into contact with a wonderful fascinating collection of men and women who were INDIANS. They command my respect, I wonder how they might consider the silliness of this name game. There aren't enough hours in my day to pursue all the research I would like, so I'm not wasting a single minute more worrying about how I should describe these peoples. They were INDIANS, a word cannot by itself be derogatory, it needs help from either the user or the wearer. I for one will never use it to denigrate. If you disagree don't bother to give me your long explanations, I respect your right to have them, but this is the last minute I will spend worrying if I'm using the right word. THANKS LARRY

Date: Thu, 25 Jul 1996 16:16:31 CST6CDT

From: Douglas Sackman <sackman@ea.oac.uci.edu>

"Who's making the rules here" is a very good question. i think the discussion on the use of the word "indian"-its appropriateness for use in various contexts-is directly connected to this question. it's certainly possible for historians to stand back, define the rules about what "indian" means and to whom it refers-and then use it in our writing. it's also certainly possible to admit others into the rule making process through dialogue,, partic ularly those people or the direct descendants of those to whom we wish our terms to refer. if one believes that historians can stand apart from present or past political and social contexts, and objectively present accounts of what happened, then it follows that historians by themselves can and must legitimately make the rules. if one thinks that history writing is always in part about the present, and that historians and the history they write have

important implications for people now living, then i think it's only fair to include others in part of the rule making process. since i tend toward the latter perspective, i very much appreciate hearing how various people designated by the word "indian" respond to that term in various contexts, and about the strengths and weaknesses of various alternatives. it seems to me that this discussion, rather than being an instance of getting bogged down, is rather an instance of getting down to the serious work of responsible and fair scholarship.

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Date: Thu, 25 Jul 1996 16:17:41 CST6CDT

From: "Charles R. Batten" <crbatten@cache.net>

Apology and explanation accepted. Thank you.-No sneering at anybody intended.-and the point the old Indian (my term) made when he said "so I can go fishin'?" is well taken.

Date: Sun, 28 Jul 1996 16:07:46 CST6CDT

From: HALIDO@aol.com

aka Donna Akers Whitt (Choctaw)

ABD U of C Riverside

My final, final word:

First, "Indians" are not people who "were"-historical subjects long dead. We are very much alive and well-and some of us are in

academia and much concerned about the "history" of people who believe there is one "accurate" history. Peter Novick and Joyce Appleby and others have said it very well. I'm sure most of us have evaluated their arguments, among others. Sorry folks, but those of you who think this is a "silly name game" or political activists' quibble just don't get it. Perhaps the literature on the ideological constructions of language might be useful. Thank the Great Spirit that obviously most of my colleagues understand the distinction being made and are careful to be considerate and respectful of the concerns of native peoples, in the past and the present.

Secondly, I wonder if anyone understands the demands of minority persons to have room made at the academic "table," to be able to propose alternative perspectives of history, while being assured of a courteous intellectual environment where strengths and weaknesses of many different alternative views and methodologies are objectively explored. This is the goal of many of us "Indians," indigenous people, Native Americans, Choctaws, and others. I don't see this as a threat, but rather as an opportunity to attain a broader understanding and (gasp!) a more balanced rendition of the common history of this land.

Date: Mon, 29 Jul 1996 10:23:55 -0500

FROM: Ron Helfrich <RH4754@cnsvox.albany.edu>

DATE: 29 July 1996

I object to the use of the term \*Indian\* in the classroom because of its history. It is a term which was used in the context of western colonialism and represents, it seems to me, a case of mistaken identity.

I object to terms like \*Native Americans\* and \*First Natives\* in part because they don't seem to capture the dynamism and diversity of these groups as does a term like \*First Peoples\*. After all, First Peoples did immigrate to the \*New World\* (another unfortunate term?) and they clearly are diverse, as the plural indicates.

Ron Helfrich

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PS. the use of \*Indian\* by First Peoples is not unlike the acceptance of Quaker by Friends, Methodist by Methodists.

Date: Wed, 31 Jul 1996 08:21:49 -0500

>Date: Mon, 29 Jul 1996

>From: "Joe H.C." <whiteclayppl@montana.campus.mci.net>

I have been keeping up with the discussion about how to refer to Indian people. Although I have found it interesting, I think we need to look at it from a different angle. I think that it is important to refer to the tribes by their names, but that becomes problematic. The majority of names which have been associated with the tribes are often inaccurate.

An easy example is the Sioux people who call themselves the Lakota. My tribe, the Gros Ventres of Montana have also had name problems. Almost everything written about my tribe doesn't make the distinction between us and the Hidatsa, who have been referred to as the Gros Ventres of the River. Although the two tribes are not related, they often used interchangeably.

The only remedy which I can see is to refer to the tribes by thier names. For example, my tribe calls themselves A'nin. For those who would call this change "political correctness", I would respond that by calling a group of people by thier real name isn't political, it's respectful.

Respectfully,

Joe D. Horse Capture

History Senior

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