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CHELLAM NAYAR

*THE INCLUSION OF NATIVE VOICES IN
OUTDOOR RECREATION CULTURE*

HONORABLE MENTION

May 2019

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Chellam Nayar

Submission title: "The Inclusion of Native Voices in Outdoor Recreation Culture"
College Writing Programs 50AC, "Researching Water in the West: Its Presence, Its Absence, and Its Consequences for the Peoples of California"

Instructor: Patricia Steenland

Abstract:

We think of wilderness as an escape from civilization, a place we can feel free and find ourselves. Historically, wilderness recreation and outdoor adventuring have been a space for, predominantly, white men. Even today, the people I see out on the trails consist predominantly of Caucasians and males. Recently, large corporations and organizations have started campaigns that address the absence of women and minority groups in outdoor recreation culture. However, still missing from the story are Native Americans, who have called these landscapes their home for centuries. The fact that these people are erased from their own landscape brings into the question of how we think about wilderness and who belongs there.

To discover how Native views are represented, or not, in wilderness culture today, I decided to compare and contrast the activism of large outdoor companies with those of Native people and organizations. I looked at current activist campaigns by large wilderness companies, REI, and The North Face, which attempt to increase minority representation in outdoor culture. I also interviewed Kris Hohag, founder of Legendary Skies Enterprises, in-person and Jolie Varela, founder of Indigenous Women Hike, by phone to hear an Indigenous perspective. I found that while both sides were advocating for minority representation, and their primary means was by education, the two sides were very separate. There was little to no mention of Indigenous people in the corporate campaigns, and I could only find Native representation through these personal interviews and social media presence.

To understand why there was such a divide between the two forms of outdoor activism, I looked back at what we define as wilderness, and how our recreation culture is shaped around that definition. I examined influential books, such as the historical book *My First Summer in the Sierra* and the contemporary book *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail* to see how our definition of wilderness has been shaped and perpetuated. I also looked at the piece "Imagine Nature and Erasing Class and Race." These pieces showed that throughout history, we had created a dichotomy between civilization and wilderness, and one cannot exist without the other.

Large movements that advocate for minority movements still advocate under the assumption that there is a dichotomy between wilderness and civilization. There is an idea of what an outdoor recreationist looks like: someone clad in big-name gear and carrying expensive packs. These movements leave the original inhabitants out of the story. The mainstream view contrasts the reality of Native tribes, who struggle to find a place in the landscape in which their ancestors have been living in for centuries. While the goals and methods of native activists and mainstream activists are similar, the erasure of the Native community from the landscape has caused Native struggles to be ignored. I found that those whose home is the wilderness and who belong to the land are the most overlooked.

My project is an exploration into the inclusion of native voices in outdoor recreation culture. In the class “Researching Water in the West: Its Presence, Its Absence, and Its Consequences for the Peoples of California”, I was particularly struck by the discussion of how Native Americans were affected by white settlers’ cooption of their water resources, and how they were essentially erased from the narrative of land use in California. As someone who spent her life loving the outdoors and what it has to offer, I realized that large-scale wilderness recreation had also caused the native peoples’ stories to disappear.

The American Cultures curriculum explores culture and diversity in new ways, beyond reading texts and scholarly journals. In our class, to understand the history of water for Paiute communities, we sat down and talked with the members themselves. Their stories had been left out of the narrative written by the white explorers and water development companies. The only way to get an accurate representation of their history was to talk to them. During the meeting with the Paiute members, I wondered what else had been hidden from our version of the history of the land. Meeting with these members and learning facts completely different from the history I had been taught throughout my years as a student in California led me to pursue a research project that included interviews with tribe members as some of my sources. I found that these interviews were the only way to hear their stories, as their voices were not represented in any other sources.

I approached the project trying to learn as much as I could about how prominent figures and companies in the outdoor recreation industry talked, or failed to, about native history and presence on the land. I also wanted to hear what Native people had to say about what it is like to live in a place that is traveled by outdoor enthusiasts. For my project, I conducted a literature survey, focusing on big-name brands like Recreation Equipment, Incorporated (REI)

and The North Face, books prominent in outdoor recreation cultures like John Muir's *My First Summer in the Sierra* and the book that got turned into a movie, *From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail*. These brands and books have had a tremendous influence on both people who have practically grown up in the outdoors, and those who are just beginning to get their feet outside. I also visited the Yosemite Visitor Center's exhibit and focused on their representation of Native American presence in the park. The park receives 4 million visitors per year, so the exhibit reaches a broad audience. Finally, I interviewed members of the Paiute Indian tribe and listened to their perspective on how large-scale outdoor activities have impacted their lives as Native people.

My focus on influential brands and stories allowed me to show that Native American culture is missing from the culture of recreation on their land, but I also wanted to see what the people themselves had to say about this erasure. I interviewed two members of the Paiute tribe who are activists for indigenous representation in wilderness recreation. I listened to these peoples' voices on the struggles of having to educate others on the fact that yes, they do still exist on the land, and should have a voice when it comes to recreation on that land.

The culture of exploration and discovery of new lands is a recurring narrative in the history of the Americas. Part of the reason I love going out into nature is experiencing a landscape completely different from the one I know daily. It is a landscape seemingly free from the influence of humans. That is the narrative we have been told so often, yet it leaves out a large part of American history and erases the culture of Native Americans from the public view. However, these people have been living on the land for centuries, and their culture lives in the area we love to explore.

My project supports the goal of strengthening the understanding of culture and diversity as an essential aspect of outdoor recreation. Wilderness recreation is a realm that has only just recently started to focus on the inclusion of women and people of color. However, the absence of Native American voices from this discussion erases the history of the land, and without the land we cannot enjoy the wilderness. For my project, I wanted to highlight that these voices are missing, yet understanding Native American culture and its roots in the places we go to recreate leads is crucial to taking part in outdoor activities. Listening to and interacting with these people is the only way to bridge this gap between the outdoor and Native cultures.

As outdoor recreation continues to become more prevalent in our society, as more people start to get excited about hiking, camping, rock climbing, and skiing, it becomes easier to forget the history of the land and the presence of the people to whom it still belongs. Outdoor recreation is a realm historically dominated by wealthy, white men. While larger companies have started to address the issue of diversity in the outdoors, the discussion still lacks Native American representation. In this project, I attempted to recognize that these people are prevented from accessing nature and that we have the responsibility to learn about the land's origins and increase its inclusivity. Talking to members of tribes who are affected taught me to acknowledge the original inhabitants of the area that I love to use, and this is a message I hope to spread by sharing this project.

Note: My project includes a reflection written after completion of the project, which I included because I believe they send different messages. The one that is part of the project is a more personal reflection, whereas this one describes the project and explains why it connects with the mission of the American Cultures program.

Research Question: How are Native views represented in wilderness culture and activism today?

Muir, John. *My First Summer in the Sierra*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990. Print

Summary: John Muir's book detailed the awe and beauty of the Sierra Nevada wilderness. His account was not only a journal-style account of his adventure but also a lens into his interpretation and emotion about the landscape. His account was impactful beyond any other book written about the wilderness, and he stands out today as the symbol of preservation and forefather of wilderness recreation.

Analysis: Muir's descriptions about the Sierra Nevada paint the wilderness as a pristine landscape, antithetical to humanity and civilization. In describing his travels through the landscape, Muir uses vivid imagery and first-person point of view to convey his amazement at the beauty of the natural world. He spends paragraphs describing every detail about a lily an incense cedar, or explaining the kinship he feels to a wood rat. While most would describe a dirty rat as ugly, Muir says about it, "No rat or squirrel has so innocent a look, is so easily approached, or expresses such confidence in one's good intentions. He seems too fine for the thorny thickets he inhabits..." However, when describing Native Americans, he pictures these people, who have been a part of the landscape for centuries, as dirty. He says about the Indian women he sees, "The worst thing about them is their uncleanliness. Nothing truly wild is unclean." In this passage, Muir recognizes that he does not believe Natives are genuinely part of the wilderness. Muir notes a sharp contrast between his views on the animals of nature and the people of it.

The contrasting views Muir has towards the non-human aspects of nature and the people who reside there are important because his writing was so influential. By explicitly pointing out the beauty of nature and the disgust of Natives, Muir makes the point that Natives do not truly

belong in the wilderness. Muir loved the beauty of nature, yet disliked the people who lived there. For him, nature was an escape, a place for him to enjoy and be alone in a beautiful, peaceful setting. The idea that Natives called this place their home and their civilization did not fit in with the notion that wilderness was pristine.

Strayed, Cheryl. *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012. Print.

Summary: *Wild* is a memoir written by Cheryl Strayed about her journey on the Pacific Crest Trail following a devastating period of her life. After Strayed loses her mother to cancer, starts using heroin, and divorces her husband, she decides to take a journey of recovery by hiking 1,100 miles of the PCT. Throughout her journey, Strayed faces physical struggles, including a lack of nutrition, physical exertion, wild animal encounters, and dangerous conditions.

Throughout the journey, Strayed learns that she is independent, and content being alone.

Analysis: Strayed's book is one about self-discovery. To her, the PCT is a place to learn independence and find her identity. On the trail, Strayed realizes that what keeps hikers on the trail is the powerful, intoxicating feeling of being in the wilderness. Strayed also notes her excitement to have a "real world weekend" after being on the trail for so long. In her book, she also presents the notion that civilization and wilderness always exist together. She can't feel the stimulating freedom of being in the wild without the idea that "normal" life exists just beyond the ridge. In this way, Strayed presents wilderness as an escape, as a means to find oneself. It is the idea of wilderness, not wilderness itself in which Strayed finds power and independence.

Strayed's book is so important because its success and adaptation into a film brought her idea of wilderness to many people. Since the film's release, the number of permits issued per year has more than tripled. Her book influenced many to take up their own stories of reclamation in the wilderness and perpetuated her idea that it is almost a fantasy for us from which to make meaning. Her concept of nature is entirely different from those who have lived in the

wilderness and call it home. The Pacific Crest Trail is part of the ancestral Paiute landscape. To Natives, the wilderness is not some idea of a place to conquer; it is their home.

Yosemite Visitor Center exhibit. Accessed 1 May 2018.

Summary: The Visitor Center and Yosemite National Park hold a small exhibit on the history of the park and its landscape. The exhibit recognizes Native presence in the landscape by including their legends about the natural landscape, names of landmarks, and how the tribes used the land. However, every mention of the tribes that lived in the area treats them as if they no longer exist.

Analysis: The fact that the park recognizes that Natives used to inhabit the land that is now a national park is important because it acknowledges that these people had been living in the wilderness for centuries before white settlers came to the West. However, the fact that the exhibit treats the tribes as if they have disappeared erases many of their struggles today. The fact that a park that receives 4 million visitors per year perpetuates the notion that Natives are no longer part of the landscape is concerning. For Native activists, one of the hardest parts of their work is teaching people that Natives do, in fact, still, exist. When large organizations that have such a large audience fail to recognize current, not just historical, Native struggles, it makes it difficult for Natives today to have their voice heard.

DeLuca, Kevin and Anne Demo. "Imagining Nature and Erasing Class and Race: Carleton Watkins, John Muir, and the Construction of Wilderness." *Environmental History*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2001, pp. 541–560.

Summary: In their piece, DeLuca and Demo make the case that environmentalism and appreciation of wilderness are fundamentally racist and classist. They point out that the idea of wilderness is a human creation and a product of civilization. The contrived concept of wilderness, as opposed to nature, is innately linked to whiteness.

Analysis: While their analysis is radical, DeLuca and Demo bring up interesting points. They believe that we have culturally contrived an idea of wilderness that is not an appreciation of the landscape itself, but appreciation for the social value of nature. This societal outlook glorifies nature as a place to appreciate the aesthetics of pristine nature and ignores the fact that people have been living and transforming the landscape for centuries. DeLuca and Demo believe that our idea of wilderness ignores the fact that the wilderness is and has been home to Native people.

The idea that wilderness is an escape from civilization rings true in much of the sentiment about nature today. Strayed glorified wilderness as a place to find herself, and many large companies perpetuate the idea that there is an image of what an outdoor enthusiast “looks like.” Wilderness has been commodified as a place to explore after buying expensive gear and making oneself look like they belong there. Starting with Muir, outdoor recreation as an industry has created an idea of wilderness as a place antithetical to civilization, and it leaves those who do not fit in with this image out of the picture.

Stritzke, Jerry. “Force of Nature: Let’s Level the Playing Field.” *REI Co-op Journal*, www.rei.com/blog/news/force-of-nature-lets-level-the-playing-field.

Summary: In this article, Stritzke, CEO of Recreation Equipment, Inc., explains the lack of representation of women in outdoor stories. He notes that while women have favorable views of outdoor recreation, a majority cannot name a female role model and believe that men’s interests in outdoor recreation are taken more seriously. Stritzke announces the launch of the effort “Force of Nature” that will advocate for gender equity in outdoor recreation. The REI plan has four pillars: changing the narrative, creating community, closing the gear gaps, and investing in communities.

Analysis: REI is one of the largest outdoor recreation service corporations in the United States. The co-op has over 6 million members and almost 2 million likes or followers on social media, so a company announcement about this mission reaches a broad audience. The mission's most substantial aim is to create awareness about the historical lack of representation of women in outdoor recreation and encourage more participation by advocating on the community level. REI's recognition of the lack of female representation in wilderness culture is essential. Awareness is the first step in making a change, and over the past year, I have noticed a far greater representation of women outdoor athletes. However, the message fails to mention any intersectionality. Women of color are not mentioned specifically and are generally even more underrepresented in outdoor recreation. Additionally, the mission attempts to fit women into the idea of what an outdoor athlete looks like; it does not break down the idea that an outdoor athlete has to look a certain way. Their project includes designing gear targeted towards women so that women look and feel like what the traditional outdoor enthusiast looks like.

Especially absent from the narrative are indigenous women. Their idea that there is an image of what an outdoor athlete looks like is in sharp contrast with the reality that Natives have been living in nature for centuries, and do not need to look a certain way to enjoy nature. However, in comparing REI's "Force of Nature" movement with the goals of indigenous wilderness activities, their missions are very similar: create awareness about their group of underrepresented people, develop a sense of community with groups with similar goals, and invest in change at the community level.

Force of Nature. REI Co-op Journal, www.rei.com/blog/tag/force-of-nature.

Summary: The "Force of Nature" page on the REI Co-op Blog contains stories spotlighting female outdoor athletes and advocates and showing the impact of female empowerment. Stories

that highlight the accomplishments of female athletes provide role models that amateurs interested in outdoor sports can look up to. Stories that show the benefits of female empowerment indicate the great impact of movements like Force of Nature.

Analysis: Glaringly absent from these stories are points of view of Native Americans. The stories on the Force of Nature blog do include stories from women of color. There are pieces entitled, “Girltrekk Honors Harriet Tubman by Walking 100 Miles Along the Underground Railroad”, and “I Would But: I Am the Only Person of Color.” REI’s campaign does make room for intersectional stories, and the very present issue that outdoor recreation is dominated by white people. However, there are no stories of Native American women, though there are many of these women who have gained support and popularity through social media platforms like Instagram. There is not a lack of their stories, but a lack of representation--the very issue the Force of Nature campaign is trying to address. It is surprising that among the 137 articles featured as part of the campaign, not one covers this group of underrepresented people.

Gleich, Caroline. “Caroline Gleich’s Tips on Supporting Causes That Matter Most.” *REI Co-op Journal*, www.rei.com/blog/stewardship/caroline-gleichs-tips-on-supporting-the-causes-that-matter-most.

Summary: Gleich recounts her experience advocating for the protection of Bears Ears and how her work advocating for the cause helped turn Bears Ears into a national monument. She explains that dealing with political problems is hard work, but because climate change and environmental issues are things she cares deeply about, it was worth persevering and making a change. Gleich strives to inspire others to take action and recommends ways to get involved: think about your relationship with nature, get involved with environmental nonprofits, use your sport to make a change, devote time to giving back, stay informed, know your representatives, and show up in person to make your voice heard.

Analysis: Gleich starts her article with an anecdote about her experience speaking at a public meeting about the future of Bears Ears. She explains that she found out about the event through the Utah Dine Bikeyah, a group of five Native American tribes who were leading the fight for the land's protection. Gleich notes that she stopped by their tent to buy a t-shirt, but doesn't mention the group or their efforts for the entirety of the article. Instead, she explains how her work on the project to turn Bears Ears into a national monument was impactful, and why her connection to the land led her to become an advocate. It is striking that Gleich fails to discuss the Indigenous connection to the land or how their efforts contributed to the Monument's success.

Furthermore, when discussing ways to get involved with wilderness activism, she makes no mention of interacting with the people who have been living on this land for centuries. Instead, she highlights speaking with environmental nonprofits and government representatives, those who have historically existed in the conversation regarding environmental issues. Because environmental activism is in many cases on the same side as Native American viewpoints, successful activism should involve collaboration should involve working with the original inhabitants of the land. It is striking that Gleich mentions these people early in her article, yet makes no mention about the possibility of collaborating with them.

Move Mountains. The North Face, www.thenorthface.com/featured/she-moves-mountains.html.

Summary: This webpage focuses on the North Face's mission to empower women by spotlighting female role models in outdoor recreation. The campaign celebrates Hilaree Nelson, a professional skier and mountaineer, Ashima Shiraishi and Margo Hayes, teenage professional climbers, Tiera Fletcher, an African American aerospace engineer, and Fernanda Maciel, a professional runner and environmental advocate. The website also showcases The North Face's partnership with Girl Scouts of the USA and the program's focus on getting girls outdoors. The

company also created a hashtag #SheMovesMountains encouraging public participation in the campaign.

Analysis: The mission showcases The North Face's interest in inspiring underrepresented groups in outdoor recreation. It focuses on creating female role models in outdoor sports, an area that has historically lacked female participation. As with REI's campaign, it is interesting to see such large companies start advocating for minority participation in outdoor sports. However, while their campaign includes some diversity, three of the five female role models are white. Thus, while many are on board with advocating for gender equality, women of color are even more underrepresented, and campaigns that focus on advocacy for women still leave these groups out.

Hohag, Kristopher, and Kinsinta Joseph. Members of the Bishop Paiute tribe.

Personal interview. 21 March 2018.

Kris Hohag is a member of the Bishop Paiute and the founder of Legendary Skies Enterprises, a company that gives tours of the ancestral Paiute landscape of the Owens Valley with an intent to educate people about Native presence on the landscape. He also attempts to help get his people back out into nature, since after being confined to a reservation, some Natives never leave the one square mile community. Because there is no mention of native views in mainstream outdoor culture, I wanted to speak with members of the Native American community who are activists in wilderness recreation culture to see how their goals are both similar and different to those of larger organizations.

Kris, in our interview, talked about his goals as a Native American and outdoorsman to educate others about Native American culture and land and also get his people back out into nature. He explained that education is his main goal, "The main intention is education...How do

we take people that already have an interest and open their minds up to what they don't learn on the surface." Many people he meets do not know that Native Americans still exist, but once he talks to them, they are open to learning about his people's history. Kris also strives to get people in his community outdoors. Native Americans have historically lived across the land, but now, many members of the Bishop Paiute tribe never leave their one square mile reservation. Teaching his people about the importance of getting outdoors heals the community.

Like both Jolie Varela, founder of Indigenous Women Hike (whose work is discussed in the following entry), and the company campaigns, Kris's primary goal is education. However, like Jolie, it is challenging to educate people when you do not have the broad consumer base of a big company and do not even have the visibility of other groups of color. Kris explained that when he went to college, many people he met did not know that Natives even existed, and many who did believe in broad stereotypes about his people. Through that experience, he learned to educate others about who he and his people are.

With the corporate campaigns, it is easy to recognize who they support and identify with their message; we all know women in our lives, and most of us know people of various ethnicities and backgrounds. However, in Kris's case, not many people have met a Native American. "Most of the stuff you don't really learn just by showing up and reading the Forest Service stuff, at just the surface level. You really have to get to know a local, go to the cultural center and have these conversations to learn the beneath the surface stuff, but it's so interesting and there's such a big story that affects our current reality that we think it's necessary that people have that context, that way they can be more responsible stewards." It is difficult to identify with a cause that we are so removed from. Kris finds that people are extremely responsive when he meets and interacts with people recreating in the Owens Valley, and near Bishop Paiute land. His

tour company provides a way to educate others on a personal level. Unlike teaching at a broad base as wide-reaching corporate messages do, Kris educates on a personal base and can change lives one by one.

Kris also attempts to educate his people about the importance of getting outdoors. Empowering his community is important because many people feel constrained by the limits of their reservation. “I grew up there, and I didn’t really identify with the hiking or climbing crowd, just because I grew up within the tribal reservation didn’t mean I didn’t like being outside or going and doing these things, but you kind of get pigeonholed...climbers are climbers, and hikers are hikers, and natives are natives. So we are kind of trying to take those labels off and give back to our ancestral ways in a modern way. Ideally, make the land a better place for all that.” Kris and Kinsinta, Kris’s girlfriend and fellow indigenous activist, feel that getting his people outdoors heals them. However, mainstream outdoor activism still behaves under the assumption that outdoor recreationists look a certain way, and for natives, that can be a barrier.

Slowly but surely, people are becoming more aware of Native American presence in the landscape. By taking small steps to stay true to their message and culture, while educating people they encounter and reach out to, Jolie and Kris are making an impact at the smaller scale of their communities to empower their people and raise recognition for their culture. By working on a more personal level, Native activists are working from outside the established industry of outdoor recreation to prove that there is not a certain way an outdoor enthusiast has to look and that Natives belong in the landscape.

Varela, Jolie. Member of the Bishop Paiute tribe. Personal interview. 15 April 2018.

Jolie Varela is a member of the Bishop Paiute and the founder of Indigenous Women Hike, a collective and social media presence that intends to educate the public about the indigenous presence on the landscape and reclaim her people's history. She, along with other Native friends, plan to hike the historic Paiute trade routes, the Nüümü Poyo, today known as the John Muir Trail. Her goal is to raise awareness for the erasure of Native presence in the wilderness and to reclaim this land and its name for her people.

In our interview, Jolie talked about the lack of representation of Native Americans in outdoor sports and culture and the need for people to recognize that her people are still alive and exist, and deserve respect. She talked about the need to get past the idea of what a hiker or climber looks like; Natives have been living in these "wilderness" areas, and don't need special gear to get out into the wilderness. It is a different experience being a Native woman in outdoor recreation, to go outdoors "as a native woman and not see others like [her]."

While she has tried to form connections with large outdoor companies, she has found that some are less than enthusiastic about collaborating with her collective and other Native American organizations. Like both corporate groups and other Native organizations, Jolie is working to increase awareness and representation of her people. However, in the case of more popular campaigns, companies have the support of their many customers, many of whom identify with the campaign's message. Native American rights is not a cause that resonates with a broad audience. Jolie faces the task of reaching out to people who sometimes do not even know Native Americans still exist.

Jolie explained ways other than company sponsorship that she is trying to get her message across, including reclaiming places and their names, educating the public, and working collaboratively with other organizations that support underrepresented groups in outdoor

recreation culture. Jolie mentioned that sometimes, when she posts an Instagram photo where she speaks her mind about controversial issues, she loses followers. In a world where her largest audience is these people, it is a tough decision to decide whether to hold back or stay true to herself and speak out. For Jolie, it is crucial to collaborate with other minority wilderness activists. This way, she has a larger group of people to both confide in and advocate with. She prefers this collaboration instead of collaborating with companies who don't know the struggles she and her community have been through and may not be willing to represent her full message. Jolie highlighted the hard space in which Native Americans exist. While their homes are the "wilderness," outdoor recreation culture has caused us to look at Native American outdoor recreationists as outsiders because they do not fit into our image of an outdoor athlete. Jolie is working on challenging the idea that an outdoor athlete should look a specific way, and show that these outdoor monuments are her people's home. What drives her to keep working is the knowledge that she does not have to change the world, but her community for the better.

Indigenousandwomenhike. Instagram, www.instagram.com/indigenousandwomenhike/.

Summary: Indigenousandwomenhike is an Instagram account created by Jolie Varela, a member of the Bishop Paiute, and an indigenous wilderness activist. The account has over 5 thousand followers and is a platform to share the collective's projects and points of view. The account includes posts that bring to light ways in which Native people are stereotyped and ignored, show what the coalition is doing to increase Native participation in outdoor activities, and highlight collaboration with other groups that strive to increase minority representation in outdoor recreation. This summer, the group will hike their ancestral trade routes, the Nüümü Poyo, today known as the John Muir Trail, to reclaim their land and their names, and empower their communities.

Significance: The Instagram account has over 5 thousand followers, and has been growing

quickly. The coalition uses their platform to inform the public about Native points of view, narratives that are largely absent from public view. Like the REI and The North Face campaigns, this account raises awareness for groups that are underrepresented in outdoor recreation culture. While the account has far fewer followers than REI, for example, they are still able to make an impact.

The Instagram account @mypubliclands, managed by the Bureau of Land Management, posted a photo with a caption saying that the Volcanic Tableland area was a spot visited only by climbers. This post fits in with the notion that wilderness monuments were visited, not inhabited. However, the area is culturally significant to the Paiute Tribe, who have been living in the area throughout history. When @indigenouswomenhike pointed out the erasure of Indigenous history, many followers commented on the original BLM post urging them to revise the caption, and they did. The revised caption acknowledged the Native connection to the land and their continued presence in the area. This change, though small, represents a hope that wilderness can be acknowledged not as a monument to visit, but as a home to Native people.

The fact that @indigenouswomenhike can inspire so many followers to change the ways of such a large, established organization shows how just raising awareness for a cause can make tangible change. Through the Instagram account, the coalition can reach out to thousands of people who otherwise would not know about indigenous history and their connection to the land.

Reflection

I grew up loving the wilderness. When I was a child, my dad would take me on hikes in the mountains only a few blocks from our house, and today I know those trails like the back of my hand. In high school, I started backpacking almost every weekend with my closest friend, and we loved the freedom of getting out of our daily routine to take a step back and appreciate the natural world around us. In my first years of college, I became interested in rock climbing and became friends with avid climbers who took me on trips to climb outdoors.

As a woman of mixed background, I had realized that even in the very progressive and diverse location of Los Angeles, I did not fit in with the majority of people I saw out on the trails, who were white, and usually men.

The piece, “Imagining Nature and Erasing Class and Race,” which I read for class, resonated with me. Though I couldn’t fully agree with some of its more radical assumptions, I identified with the idea that wilderness appreciation so often ignores people of color and people who cannot afford to take time to go out into nature and recreate.

However, it was not until our class discussion with members of the Paiute tribe that I thought about how Indian tribes might be affected by mainstream outdoor recreation culture. In my many years of being an outdoor enthusiast, I had never really thought about how these tribes were affected by people recreating on their ancestral land. When climbers scale rocks and hikers forge trails, they leave a mark on the landscape. Also, having a mainstream culture so focused around the people who venture into the wilderness on the weekends, or during their vacation days erases the lives of the actual inhabitants. I had known about Bishop, California, from its world-renowned climbing, yet I had no idea that a Native tribe even existed there.

I set out to do my research paper on how Native perspectives fit in with mainstream outdoor recreation culture because as an outdoor enthusiast I had never heard their perspective, yet I knew that as people who have been living in the wilderness for centuries, they had to have

some opinion. I had indeed fallen victim to the idea of wilderness as an escape from civilization, and I was acquainted and supportive of the large companies' missions that advocated for women in the outdoors. However, upon talking to Native Americans who devote their lives to wilderness activism, I learned so much about their perspectives and lives, and their stories made me call into question my own beliefs and support of mainstream movements.

I began the project attempting to look at the differences between Native activism and mainstream activism. I was interested in looking at the material available to outdoor companies' followers and the general public since this is the material that influences the opinions of wilderness enthusiasts. I scoured the REI blog, where they had announced their movement, Force of Nature, and had several articles written by and about women and women of color participating in outdoor activities. On the other side, I interviewed Native activists Kris Hohag and Jolie Varela, who devote their lives to educating the public about the Native presence in the landscape and do work to better the lives of their communities. I chose to interview them because I knew they would have a relevant perspective regarding how wilderness culture affects Native people. I was nervous about doing these interviews at the start of my project. I was worried that these people would think that I just wanted to talk to them so I could use them as "subjects" for my project and that I did not truly care what they had to say. However, Kris, Kinsinta, and Jolie were so gracious and honest with me, and they left me with love for their work and a desire to learn more about their people and their goals. After speaking with these activists, I found that both the corporate and Native groups had similar goals, and was confused as to why Natives were not mentioned at all in corporate language.

Upon the suggestion of my professor, Pat Steenland, I decided to take a step back and see how both of these groups' participation in outdoor activities is framed within our notion of what

wilderness is. I looked at both historical and contemporary pieces, such as Muir's *My First Summer in the Sierra* and Cheryl Strayed's book *Wild*, and found that mainstream wilderness recreation is predicated on the notion that wilderness and civilization are innately tied together. Wilderness cannot exist without civilization. The large companies advocate for women to get outdoors by telling them that they can, too, look like an outdoor athlete. However, they still advocate without questioning the notion that an outdoor adventurer looks a certain way, clad in gear.

However, Jolie and Kris mentioned that growing up, they did not see themselves as outdoorsmen. Climbers and hikers did look a certain way, yet their people looked a different way but had also been on the landscape for centuries. I realized that it is likely that this dichotomy is what makes it so hard to find common ground between outdoor companies and Native activists. Native people do not want to lose their identity by conforming to the capitalist nature of outdoor companies, and these companies only benefit if they get Natives to conform.

Learning that larger companies ignore Native perspectives even in wilderness activism made me question the methods of large company movements. While many individual recreationists are very perceptive to Kris and Jolie's messages, the companies perpetuate the idea that outdoor enthusiasts must look a certain way, and by ignoring Native stories, they erase the history of Native presence in the landscape. If I had more time, I would like to correspond with more Native activists to get a higher diversity of perspectives and ask them directly about how this dichotomy affects their struggles.

I signed up for College Writing 50AC because I needed to fulfill my American Cultures requirement, and the course's title seemed a little more up my alley than most other courses. I did not expect in the least to learn so much about the process about primary source research,

meet people who would completely change the way I thought about specific issues or engage in research that questioned my long-held beliefs. Talking to Jolie and Kris has affected how I see myself as an outdoor enthusiast, and has caused me to be much more attentive to both racial inequalities outdoors, and the existence, or lack thereof, of Native perspective when I go outdoors. What Kris said is true, speaking to real people means so much more than just reading about issues in a pamphlet or online.