



REPORT

From the office of the...

Diversity Services Director

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Sofia Palma Florido
SUBJECT: Diversity Services Report #5
DATE: November 11th, 2021

Year plan Update

The last month has focused mostly on strengthening the sense of solidarity and community in the Student Interfaith Council and also on preparing the materials for the rebrand. The peer support coordinators are finding it challenging to connect with equity deserving groups on campus for the community circles so we're re-planning our approach to these

Events, Projects, & Activities

General Service Usage

Since community circles and virtual events have not begun yet due to challenges connecting with potential collaboration, our service usage has been limited to asynchronous virtual spaces like Instagram stories, reels, and posts.

Projects & Events: Re-brand (Upcoming)

Now that a name has been agreed on by the team, "Diversity & Equity Network", we are moving forward with Underground to design a new logo for the Service. Once this is all done, a formal proposal will be presented to the Executive Board. Our hope is that we can launch the new name and face of the Service in January of next year with build up throughout the Winter Break.

Projects & Events: Finding Physical Space (On-going)

Our search continues for a physical space. Any help, guidance, and advice are welcome – PLEASE! The purpose of this is to establish continuity for the Service at the executive level but also in the campus fabric. Even if we don't get to use the space this year, we'd love to have something in place for the years to come.

Projects & Events: Halloween Campaign (Complete)

Our Halloween campaign gained a lot of traction on Instagram and allowed for our team to work together well. We've discussed new strategies to mitigate any

issues that came up during this campaign for future learning. The team is very proud of the campaign's outcome.

Projects & Events: Community Circles (Ongoing)

Disability in Colour is now running with Diversity Services input – our first tangible involvement with Peer Support (PS) as a new PS Service! As for other forms of Peer Support, the team is troubleshooting the challenges they have faced and adapting accordingly. A new approach to is being defined and should be in place by the end of this week.

Projects & Events: Alternative Methods of Wellness (Upcoming)

SHEC and the Student Inter Faith Council are planning a seminar series for next semester on “alternative” and non-western approaches to health and wellbeing as part of a collaboration with the Service. We are eager to plan out this initiative.

Outreach & Promotions

Summary

We have focused our energy on Instagram and Facebook engagement. Leading up to Halloween, our SPA and Research and Resources team members launched a campaign on cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation, diving deep into the issues commonly raised during this season. When there is no Service-specific content, our promotional team focuses on using stories (Instagram and facebook) to share resources and relevant content. This has also been a small but noticeable way of engaging and supporting other services as well as organizations and clubs on campus

Social Media Engagement since the Previous Report

Facebook



Posts

3 posts published in the last 28 days.

MOST ENGAGING POSTS

Post Title	Reach	Engagements
If you are not Asian, then Asian culture is not your... November 1	219	28
If you are not Black or Indigenous, then Black o... November 3	140	16
!! Reminder: Halloween is not an excuse to appropri... October 30	187	11

Instagram

Last 30 Days

Oct 12 - Nov 10

Insights Overview

You reached +12.3% more accounts compared to Sep 12 - Oct 11

Accounts reached	2,457	+12.3%
Accounts engaged	278	+41.1%
Total followers	3,068	+0.7%

Content You Shared

3 Posts



90 Stories



Promotional Materials

What is cultural appropriation?

Appropriation is the unjust taking of elements—beliefs, ideas, traditions, speech, material objects— from oppressed/ marginalized cultures by a dominant culture without permission from the oppressed culture.

Context is key when defining examples of cultural appropriation: would a white man wearing a keffiyeh be considered fashionable, while a Muslim man wearing a keffiyeh be considered a terrorist?

Examples of cultural appropriation include unauthorized use of another's culture, often for aesthetic purposes:

- Purchasing and wearing a piece of jewelry or clothing that has cultural significance.
- Attending a cultural ceremony for the primary purpose of posting your experience on social media.
- Tattoos in another language and/or pertaining to another culture, such as tattoos in Kanji characters.

IMBALANCE OF POWER

Cultural appropriation ultimately stems from an imbalance of power between a dominant and oppressed/marginalized culture, by which the dominant culture believes they can borrow from the oppressed/marginalized culture.

The historic oppression and marginalization of Black, Indigenous, and people of colour, as well as other cultural, religious, and ethnic minorities is rooted in the false belief that these groups are lesser and inferior.

Borrowing From Another Culture

American author Brittney Cooper explains this imbalance of power in relation to Iggy Azalea's borrowing from Black culture:

"Iggy profits from the cultural performativity and forms of survival that Black women have perfected, without having to encounter and deal with the social problem that is the Black female body, with its perceived excesses, unruliness, loudness and lewdness. If she existed in hip hop at a moment when Black women could still get play, where it would take more than one hand to count all the mainstream Black women rap artists, I would have no problem"

What are some effects of cultural appropriation?

Indigenous communities have raised concerns that cultural appropriation devalues major historical conflict by portraying those involved in a comical or inaccurate form.

It prevents a true understanding of the culture by reinforcing false ideologies and stereotypes. Stereotypes and portrayals of certain groups could further endanger the communities involved and undermines the symbolism present in an article or item.

- Example: Regalia of hereditary chiefs and the importance of their feathers.
- Dressing in typical "Sexy Native" costumes whilst identifying as non-Indigenous degrades and disregards the continued oppression and violation of Indigenous women.

APPRECIATION vs. APPROPRIATION

Myth: All interactions with another culture fall under cultural appropriation.

Fact: The genuine desire to learn about other cultures, through effortful cultural-exchange, to expand one's knowledge base, perspectives, and cross-cultural competence, is cultural appreciation.

Appropriation: Wearing a South Asian bindi as a fashion statement because you saw it in Vogue.

Appreciation: Respectfully wearing a South Asian bindi, while understanding the cultural significance, when invited to do so at a South Asian wedding.

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MSU DIVERSITY GUIDE TO THE APPROPRIATION OF ASIAN CULTURE

NOT YOUR CULTURE, NOT YOUR COSTUME



Cultural Appropriation

Halloween is a fun time to express yourself through fashion, makeup and different hairstyles. Yet, a trend we often see is the appropriation of cultural attire. We often hear these excuses:

- "It's just a costume"
- "It's just for fun"
- "I just like how it looks"

Look at our first post in our Not Your Culture campaign to see why these are not valid reasons for culturally insensitive costumes. Today, we will be exploring examples of cultural appropriation and going into the cultural significance of various traditional Asian attire and customs.

Fashion Nova Geisha Costume

• The LA-based fashion retail shop Fashion Nova sells geisha costumes for \$49.99, and makes a profit from a historical tradition without crediting it nor using it in its appropriate cultural context.

• The reformation of styling and design (ie. length, size) reinforce a sexual objectification of Asian people (particularly women), as perpetuated by the media.

• Inappropriate usage and depiction of these costumes perpetrate the Western myth that geishas are sex workers.

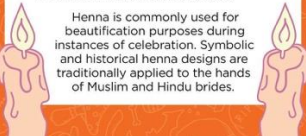


Traditionally geisha were responsible for greeting guests and performing tasks observed only in traditional Japanese culture (ie. tea ceremonies and calligraphy).

What is Henna?

Henna (otherwise known as mehndi) has been used in regions such as South Asia, Africa and the Middle East for thousands of years

Due to the plant's intrinsic cooling properties, henna was traditionally applied on the palms of hands and the soles of feet for those living in warm areas such as the desert.



Henna is commonly used for beautification purposes during instances of celebration. Symbolic and historical henna designs are traditionally applied to the hands of Muslim and Hindu brides.

Henna is Not a Fashion Trend

Growing up, South Asian girls, such as columnist Sidra Rashid, were made fun of for attending school with henna. Rashid recalls when students made hurtful remarks stating that she "doesn't wash her hands." Such comments often made Sidra feel self-conscious and lose sight of the beauty of henna.

Now that henna is a 'fashion trend', several inauthentic booths have opened, typically accompanying non South Asian individuals applying "henna tattoos" on other non South Asian individuals.

Despite holding deep cultural significance and being reserved for special events, henna is now being used very informally for distasteful designs without any acknowledgment for its history and significance.



What can I ask myself to avoid appropriating cultures?

- Does my costume represent a culture that is not my own?
- What culture is this costume the traditional garment of?
- What culture does this hairstyle come from?
- What culture is the ceremony I am participating in a part of?
- Does my costume packaging consist of the words, "ethnic," "colonial," "traditional," "cultural," "tribal," etc? "
- Does my costume perpetuate stereotypes or historical and cultural inappropriateness?

Remember that it **does not matter** whether it is on accident or on purpose. **Context is key.**

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MSU DIVERSITY GUIDE TO THE APPROPRIATION OF BLACK & INDIGENOUS CULTURE

NOT YOUR CULTURE, NOT YOUR COSTUME



Non-Black people wearing Dreadlocks and Cornrows

Dreadlocks, cornrows, and any other hairstyle that is associated with Black culture does not belong on the heads of non-Black people.

It's important to recognize the power dynamics and systems that surround non-Black people wearing Black hairstyles.

What are dream catchers?

Dream catchers are sometimes referred to as "sacred hoops."

As explained by their name, the purpose of dream catchers is to catch bad dreams in its protective net and crush them before they reach the person that's sleeping.

Good dreams pass through the dream catcher, sliding down the feathers and going gently onto the sleeper.



Cultural Commodification of Dream Catchers

Nowadays, dream catchers are sold everywhere — at markets, at shopping malls and even online. However, most of the time, they are being sold by non-Indigenous vendors, despite them having major significance in Indigenous culture.

Traditionally, dream catchers are small and made completely of natural materials. As an authentic symbol of unity, dream catchers today are appropriated in the way that they are completely Westernized, over-commercialized and misappropriated.

What is an Inukshuk?

Inukshuk (inuksuit, for plural) is a stone figure constructed by the Inuit and can be found throughout the Arctic region.

Inuksuit were used as a navigational aid and messaging centers. Moreover, some old inuksuit have a spiritual connotation and are mentioned in Aya-yait, the traveling songs passed from one generation to another.

The image of inukshuk has become a frequent object of appropriation. It has been used in hundreds of advertisements to sell everything from real estate to recreational drugs; a stylized version was even chosen by the International Olympic Committee as the symbol for the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, British Columbia.



Why is cultural appropriation disrespectful?

Cultural appropriation is disrespectful because it perpetuates stereotypes and demeans the difficulties and discrimination that many Black, Indigenous and people of colour face.

In general, cultural appropriation has to do with an imbalance of power and how those who are dominant in the power dynamic take advantage of their privilege. When those in dominant positions of power mimic aspects of people's culture, those aspects are taken directly from them.

References

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Finances

Budget Summary

Nothing has changed on this front since our last report. That is since most of our expenses go towards the standing tab we have with Underground.

Once the re-branding is finalized, we will be spending money on replacing physical promotional content like banners and stickers. For now, however, that our budget is fairly intact.

ACCOUNT CODE	ITEM	BUDGET / COST
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	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	
	REMAINING IN LINE	
TOTALS		
TOTAL BUDGETED DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		
TOTAL ACTUAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		
REMAINING DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		

Executives & Volunteers

Our executives and volunteers are having difficulty balancing all of their commitments, so I've made it a priority to do frequent check-ins and encourage balance. I remind them often that we will make happen whatever it is that they plan, but the purpose of our plans are not for them to be big but to be intentional. This has helped ease some of the stress around meeting deadlines and executing large initiatives. They're planning wonderful things still and I am excited to share them soon.

Successes

The volunteers are showing a great inclination towards collaboration and working as a team with all executives. They enjoy debriefing mistakes and exploring ways of improving our systems of communication and task execution. I am delighted to see such passion in my team!

Current Challenges

As has been mentioned a few times, our community circles system is being ironed out as we have faced challenges in logistics and approach.