

Student Exhibits of Native American Photography

Purpose: Students will reckon with the complicated history of photography of Native Americans, grapple with questions of agency and consent, and gain familiarity with historical labels and contemporary self-definitions of Native American communities by curating exhibits that center photographic representations of Native Americans. In pairs or small groups, students will select and caption 2-3 photographs, write a brief exhibit introduction, and compose explanatory statements for each selected photograph. Balancing descriptive and analytic writing, students are required to use multiple terms, concepts, or ideas from the Glossary page of the William L. Clements Library online exhibit *'No, not even for a picture': Re-examining the Native Midwest and Tribes' Relationships to the History of Photography*.

Resources:

- *'No, not even for a picture': Re-examining the Native Midwest and Tribes' Relationships to the History of Photography* [Online Exhibit](#) access
 - [Glossary](#) with key terms related to Native American Studies and Photographic studies
 - [A Note on Naming](#) concerns naming conventions and the importance of self-identification
- Photograph Set - selections from the [Richard Pohrt Jr. Collection of Native American Photography](#)

Steps:

- Have students access and read *'No, not even for a picture': Re-examining the Native Midwest and Tribes' Relationships to the History of Photography* and come to class with at least one question about the exhibit.
- Instructor leads brief class discussion on cultural sensitivity in relation to contextualizing historical and cultural material
 - a. The included Photograph Set is a selection from the larger Pohrt collection, and does not include scenes from Ghost Dances and other sacred religious ceremonies and traditions of Native American peoples. Photographs of deceased individuals and battle scenes are also excluded, as are photographs with captions using outdated or offensive terms. Why are such materials excluded, and how could researchers sensitively use these problematic materials?
 - b. Issues of individual and Tribal sovereignty, privacy and consent of subjects
- Pair or group students, who will then select 2-3 photographs that embody key themes or concepts, or places or peoples, from the exhibit Glossary or from an exhibit section (Land and Sovereignty, Struck in a Pose, etc.) Students can be creative and choose themes of personal interest, and should use glossary terms both as an overarching frame and to structure captions and written portions of the assignment.

This lesson plan accompanies the online exhibit ['No, not even for a picture': Re-examining the Native Midwest and Tribes' Relationships to the History of Photography](#).



- Writing Assignments:
 - a. Title of exhibit and short introduction that identifies photographs and adds historical and cultural context
 - b. Caption of 1-2 sentence length for each image, including at least one glossary term
 - c. 250-300 word explanatory statement for each photograph that includes glossary terms, establishes linkages between exhibit photographs, and identifies the importance or significance of each photograph and its connections to a main organizing theme or argument. Students are encouraged to explain why they selected certain images, how they identified common themes or elements within the photographs, and to talk about the broader significance or meaning of their exhibit and the message it conveys. Students may bring in themes and concepts from lecture, or secondary readings, to inform their analysis
- This lesson could unfold over multiple discussion sections or class periods, with collaborative take-home work between meetings. Students could use the first meeting to select images, a common unifying theme, and begin to brainstorm captions. With Google Documents or other collaborative applications students could continue working on written portions from home, and use the second class period to come together, review work, and continue writing. The assignment should be submitted shortly after the second meeting.

Photograph Set:

See notes in catalog records for information on individual photographs. Titles of photographs derived from inscriptions and captions.

- [Sioux Indians of the Pine Ridge Reservation S. Dakota.](#)
 - Dressed in their Best.
 - Wm. (Crazy Bull) Girton. A Carlisle Graduate. Indian Policeman.
 - Ms. Bull Bear.
 - Fast Eagle and Family.
 - The Spotted Eagle Family at Home.
 - A typical scene.
- [Playing Wah-koo-chad-ah \(Moccasin\) a favorite game.](#)
- [Grand Council of the Hostile and Friendly Sioux Indian Chiefs at Pine Ridge Agency S.D. Jan 17th 1891.](#)
- [Scene at Indian Payment.](#)
- [Sophie Assiniway.](#)
- [Chippewa Indians making Birch Canoes](#)

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