



A Veterans' Talking Circle: Urban Indian Peoplehood and Re-Indigenizing Places

Material Religion

Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17432200.2021.2015927>

One-Sentence Summary: This article explores the ways urban Indian peoplehood emerges from the re-Indigenizing praxis of material life, reflecting the generative culture making Native studies scholars call resurgence and that moves away from essentialist and static definitions of Native identity that rely on blood quantum.

Reviewer Amiya Fellows

Methods: An ethnographic vignette on an inter-tribal veterans' talking circle that discuss how Native people living in diaspora are re-indigenizing their lives and spaces with the focus on two Native Vietnam veterans; Gregory Gomez and Will Naranjo.

Main Findings / Recommendations:

- Although both men served their time in the military, they struggle with the Veterans Affairs, VA, to get their basic medical needs met. Naranjo says they are still fighting a war, but now it's on paper. Ironically, the VA recognized their unique experiences as Native vets, made them valuable assets, and invited the veterans to talk to VA administrators to educate them of the specific needs of Native vets.
- Gomez and Naranjo both agree the talking circle is an integral part of their healing and recovery from, not only, war but historical trauma caused by colonial dispossession. Through the talking circle, Gomez learned he has PTSD and took advantage of different forms of therapy the VA offered.

Potential Issues:

- The potential of the VA cancelling Native veteran talking circles for mysterious reasons again.

Useful Summary Stats, Quotes:

- "While the all Native veterans' talking circle has been going relatively strong since in the 1990s and was initially supported by the VA, the VA intermittently cancelled or put it on hiatus several times over the years for inexplicable reasons."
- "Ultimately, the work Will and Gregory do in the talking circle--trying to hold this shared sacred space for themselves and the younger generation of Indian Vets--provides a place where they can honor the experiences of one another and heal the many psychic wounds they have incurred

Reviewers Opinions:

| | Strongly Disagree (1) | | Strongly Agree (5) | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---|--------------------|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Impactful for Indian Country? | | | | X | |
| Novel? | | | X | | |
| Trustworthy? | | | | | X |

Reference:

Natalie Avalos (2022) A Veterans' Talking Circle: Urban Indian Peoplehood and Re-Indigenizing Places, *Material Religion*, 18:1, 92-105, DOI: [10.1080/17432200.2021.2015927](https://doi.org/10.1080/17432200.2021.2015927).

