

Cristina Marquez-Guerrero (Anthropology '15)

Being indigenous myself, I know what it feels to be stereotyped. I've had to deal with racial slurs and ignorant people all my life. I know how harmful racial stereotyping truly is for indigenous communities as I've seen people from my community internalize these stereotypes to the point where they themselves have felt ashamed of their heritage. I've always wanted to change how indigenous people are perceived in mainstream society and I believe the Indian Mascot Community Listening Project is a great start in doing so.

Tutoring at Chemawa Indian School has prepared me in this research project as I have frequent interactions with students, giving me a better insight into Native American culture and all its complexities. This project comes at a perfect time as I am reflecting on many of the same issues in my Native North American Cultures course, and in my research project, in which I interviewed and interacted heavily with a transnational indigenous community from Oaxaca, Mexico. Although I recognize the diversity in indigenous communities, something all Native Nations share in common are years of repression, poverty and a historical trauma that continues to impact their lives today. My interest in the Indian Mascot Community Listening Project is born out of my previous experience and my desire to reverse the social inequality I've observed in my interactions with these communities.

This project will be a great opportunity for me, as it will contribute to my intellectual and personal development. First, participating in this project will allow me to contribute to an issue that I feel very passionate about. I've always been interested in improving the mainstream perception and treatment of indigenous peoples. Second, this project will allow me to develop my ability to conduct ethnographic research while working side-by-side with one of the most experienced in my field, as well as people of diverse disciplines, members of the Oregon Indian Education Association (OIEA), and those from the affected communities as we contribute to a single research effort. A wide range of ethnographic research experience proves necessary for an aspiring social Anthropologist, and this particular project is tailored both to my personal interests and academic discipline. Third, I am interested in improving the educational system. I believe that there are still many flaws in this system; the fact that many schools still have Native Americans as mascots supports this is evidence of the change that needs to be made. Equality is not possible if inequality continues to exist within these fundamental institutions, and I relish the opportunity to work within the educational system and use my anthropological background in order to pursue the social equality I have always been passionate about.

I'm most interested in the community mapping projects and the reporting section of the project because of my familiarity with field research after conducting fieldwork last summer. I really enjoy listening to stories and the first steps in creating a research plan, as well as executing the plan I developed. I look forward to being a part of this revolutionary journey toward reconciliation, and to the chance to open my ears to the many different stories lining this path – stories that reflect the unique world that each singular mind constitutes, but that will hopefully come to agreement for a movement away from stereotypes and discrimination and a step towards social equality.