

01. *Examples of Flawed Stereotypes*

- **"Native Populations are Dwindling"**
 - An estimated 78% of Americans believe Native populations are dwindling because they rarely see, hear, or read about these communities (Stereotypes - Dennison 2020)
 - Historical representations/media view Natives and modernity as mutually exclusive, thus perpetuating the idea that Indigenous peoples are a thing of the past (Thrush 2006)
- **Flawed Portrayals in Popular Media**
 - Film and television often characterize Indigenous peoples as "**noble savages**"—uncorrupted by civilization with a strong spiritual connection to nature and cultural practices
 - Natives are also portrayed as "**ignoble savages**"—uncivilized, brutal, and bloody-minded
- **"Natives are Fundamentally Primitive"**
 - Belief that Indigenous peoples lack the ability to take care of themselves or their family due to their biology, character, and intellect (Justice 2018)
 - Positions harmful federal practices such as forced adoptions, land allotments, and boarding schools as "helpful" toward Native populations

NATIVE STEREOTYPING



[1] Cara Romero's "TV Indians" challenges stereotypes by framing four Natives against the backdrop of a pile of old televisions displaying films that remain "somewhat beloved", despite their stereotyping, racist fixations, and use of the white savior trope

02. *Implications of Native Stereotyping*

- **Fuels Invisibility and Erasure of Natives**
 - Misrepresentation of Natives **freezes cultures**: makes it feel as though the only authentic Native culture is from the past
 - As such, very little information is taught about contemporary Native peoples in K-12 education
- **Justifies and Hides Colonialism**
 - Violent policies are regarded as helping Indigenous communities
 - **Forced Adoption**: Native children were forcefully taken from their communities and given to white families based off the stereotype that they needed to be "saved from being Indian" (Mazo 2018)
 - Ignores the existence of complex societies
- **Fuels Bias and Racism Toward Indigenous Communities**

03. *Challenging False Narratives*

- **Reclaiming Stories**

- **Through photography:**

- *Cara Romero*², a photographer and member of the Chemehuevi Tribe, uses complex and nuanced images¹ to rewrite stories of Native identity, battle cultural misappropriation, and confront stereotypes—all while combining traditional motifs and symbols with a modern perspective

- **Through music:**

- Indigenous musicians today push against the stereotype that Native cultures are stagnant
- In *A Tribe Called Red*³, Indigenous artists combine modern music and narratives with First Nations rhythms to emphasize how Native peoples/cultures continue to persevere (*A Tribe Called Red*, 2018)

- **Through Native-led Initiatives:**

- *IllumiNative* challenges the negative narrative that surrounds Native communities and promotes an accurate and authentic portrayal of Natives in pop culture and media.

[2]



[3]



04. *How to Support the Dismantling of Stereotypes*

- **Amplify Native Voices, Stories, and Issues**

- Supporting contemporary Native voices creates a more authentic portrayal of Native peoples as they are able to shape their own stories

- **Education**

- Curriculum about Native Cultures can **bring awareness** to the existence and ramifications of stereotypes. Students will then have the tools to correct misinformation and expose their own biases

- **Natives in Mainstream Media**

- A poll of 450 Indigenous opinion leaders found that ~45% laid the blame of anti-Indian sentiment on media stereotypes (Schmidt 2007)
- Native people should have the most input in **creating accurate and realistic Native characters**, allowing for a more positive portrayal of Natives in media
- Mainstream media must be **held accountable** for sidelining authentic Native stories and voices and for not hiring more writers, editors, and producers of color