OK. Hi. Good morning. I'm Dr. Jack Porter. And this is Northern Essex Community College, Wednesday, March 25, 1992. And we have classes here from the sociology department at Northern Essex and my class in sociology as well as some other classes. And my other class in criminology will be later, but it won't be filmed.

I first got interested in Native American or Indian life about a year or two ago. I was going through some very difficult personal and other issues. And just by chance, somebody gave me a flyer. And I went down to one of the meetings.

And I was introduced to someone by the name of Wildcat-- it's actually Wildcat-- who himself had gone through many things in life and had returned to his people. And he was a man of great wisdom and helped me through this crisis. And since then I have, I would say, began to devote my life to Native American cause too in many ways.

What you read about in the newspapers and films and et cetera is not what really existed. The so-called white man's version of Indian life is totally different than the true version. Only now, it's ironic, Dances with Wolves, we only get the real view of what happened to the Indians from their point of view. It only took us 100 years or more or 500 years.

It's also ironic that it's 1492, 1992, it's 500 anniversary of Columbus's discovery of America, allegedly discovery. And I'm happy to see that a revisionist approach is taking place there that it turns out that from his point of view, you know, he didn't discover America. America was discovered. And when he did come here, genocide was committed and all kinds of atrocities. And so we're getting a different point of view.

But today, I'd like to introduce the two friends who will talk maybe about politics, but more maybe about culture-- Slyfox and his wife, Whispering Tree [NON-ENGLISH].

Mm, hmm.

--known as John and Claire Oakley from Bradford. And I'll turn it right over to them.

Good morning.

Good morning.

To most of my people, I am called [NON-ENGLISH], and that is Slyfox in our native tongue. I like to start this by-- how many people heard of the Pilgrims? Not everybody? All right. How many people heard of the Wampanoag? All right. Very few. I find that a lot of places I go.

And actually, the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag should go hand in hand because if it wasn't for my ancestors, you know, the pilgrims wouldn't have survived their first winter here. I am a Cape Cod Wampanoag. Mashpee is the area I'm from.

And at one time, the Wampanoag used to extend from Provincetown, Cape Cod, all the way into Bristol, Rhode Island. Today, we only have about five or six strong Nations, Mashpee being the strongest, Gay Head, Herring Pond. They're in the Brockton area and the Lakeville area.

Today, we have more and more gatherings since the Indian awareness come out. Today, powwows are shooting up all over the place. I don't know if some of you are aware we have a powwow in Haverhill now too. This will be our fourth year.

Now, I'm going to do this-- usually, what I do is I explain my crafts and artifacts. And what I try to stress is the importance of nature in the environment because just about everything here is from the environment. And the way things are going today, you know, the environment doesn't look that good. Feel free to ask any questions, when or if you want, you know.

Our culture, we hunt, fish, or whatever we do, we're not a wasteful nation. You know America has become the most wasteful nation in the world today. And when we kill something, we use just about every part of that animal or bird that

we can. We either use it, the leather for our clothing and our footwear. The bone, this is all bone. We use the bone, the feathers for decorations of our regalia or our different crafts that we make. So we don't waste nothing.

Of course, you know this leather that I'm wearing. These here are called leg ties. And these are the shells from the hoofs of a deer.

And the purpose of these years ago this was when you was going visiting in your encampment and you wore some kind of leggings that make noise, your neighbors knew that somebody was coming to visit and wasn't the enemy. Today, we use them for dancing in the circle to keep rhythm with the drum.

Here, you had the little dew clothes that are on the side of the-- these little clothes here that are on the side of the deer leg. And see we also use-- some people might make walking sticks. If you bend these when they're fresh, you'll hold that position.

And here we have the turtle shell. And we don't call these rattles. We call it shakers. And mostly, we use these if we're doing some sort of dance in a line or if we're dancing to the drum in a circle to sort of keep beat to the drum.

And just to show you some of the different kinds of shakers, this one is made out of bark and the corn cob for a handle. And I'm assuming it's corn kernels in there. This was given to me. So I'm not sure. So this is all part of nature.

And this one here is made out of the horn, more likely a steer, because buffalo's horns are hard to come by today. And on this one here, we have carvings. And on the front here, the turtle, we call this Turtle Island. And there's a story behind it, but I'm not too familiar with it.

Here is a carving of a drum. And the drum is the heartbeat of the Indian. When we're dancing in a circle on Mother Earth, we dance to the drum. And I've been to a lot of gatherings. And over the PA system, they'll say all Indians are in regalia to the circle. But hardly anybody moves. But once that drum starts beating, you see them come falling down there.

Here we have the fir tree, which is a sign of peace. And as most of you are familiar with the Massachusetts seal? OK. If you don't notice it, next time you pull out something with the seal on it, there's an arm with a sword over an Indian. And we interpret that we're still being ruled by the sword.

A lot of people say, well, I wouldn't interpret it that way. Well, you're not in a position to interpret it that way. And it's in the legislature now to have the fir tree put on there.

A lot of you people use the Indian corn for decorations. Well, this is food. Usually, a lot of your ears will have more dominant colors. Some will have the distinct red, white, black, and yellow. And that represents the four cardinal directions and the four race of man. A lot of people wasn't aware of that. And it's just been within the last two or three years that I've become aware of it.

I am still learning about my culture. I had a drinking problem for about 30 some odd years. And, you know, I've always been around my people off and on, but not that much. But since I've been sober, I've got into the culture pretty heavy. And I'm into my 12th year now with no alcohol or substance abuse.

And, you know, I try to learn as much about my culture and other native cultures, as far as native people. Whenever we travel, whatever area we're in, we get with the natives of that area. And the cultures are so much different.

You see all kinds of different crafts up here. In each area you're in, they make their crafts according to what resources they have. Around Arizona, New Mexico, you'll find a lot of turquoise work, turquoise and coral. And these incidentally are some trades that I've done while I was down there a year before last. I traded some beadwork and quillwork for things like this.

This is called a squash blossom. Usually, the more common ones are turquoise and coral and silver. This happens to be

jet. It looks like onyx. But native people use a lot of jet. That also was a trade, something similar to this neck piece I have here.

Just some more to work down that way. I don't know if anybody can notice, the blue up here, the blue turquoise shells? Well, that's the fellow's mark. That's his signature. Also, when I'm doing some of the bead work, I'll put a red and white bead at the end of it, which would be my signature.

These here are bone, tubular bone. The wolf is a bone. And I wear the wolf because the wolf is the top of our totem.

Everybody's familiar with this, aren't they? That's the quahog shell. And they make the Wampum jewelry with the quahog shell. At one time, that was used as a currency. And the more purple in it, the more value it had. At one time, I guess the Dutch finances went completely broke, and that's entirely what they used for money, wampum.

Yeah, I'd like my wife to explain this, Whispering Tree.

Good morning, everyone. This piece of pottery is native to Arizona. And this is done by the Acoma people, who are known as the Sky People, who live in cliff dwellings.

And this pottery is done by the elder women of the tribe. And as you can see-- but you'd have to get a much closer look. And when you come up to the table you can see it's a very geometric design. It looks as if it would almost drive you blind really because of the intricacy of it. And this is known as a seed bowl. And the reason for the small opening is is that the birds can't get into the bowl. So this is a quite a beautiful piece of pottery, a very treasured piece, which was a gift to us.

And this also is known as a wedding pitcher. In other words, the husband and the wife would both drink out of the pitcher at the same time. And this is a Navajo design. So you can see the difference with the different tribes, usually in the Southwest.

This also right here is Acoma pottery, very distinctive. We have a lot of things that have been given to us as gifts in appreciation for people coming to eat with us at our campsite. And it's a way of extending their appreciation and thankfulness for being around the campsite.

Sweetgrass.

This is an abalone shell. And what I use it for is a smudge pot. We have a lot of smudging ceremonies. Say if we're dedicating something or for purification. And this is my medicine bag.

And a lot of times, if we're in a circle, what I'll do is either put sage, sweetgrass, or tobacco in this shell. And I'll go around to each individual. And the smoke from whatever I have in here, I'll fan it. And, you know, you kind of take the smoke from it and fan it over your body as a form of purification for us.

We use a lot of smoke in our ceremonies, either the tobacco with the pipe, or just the tobacco. If we're dedicating something, we dedicate the four corners for the four directions, we'll sprinkle tobacco. And we feel that the tobacco will take our thoughts up to the Creator. We choose to call God, whatever you want to call it, we choose to call him the Great Creator. Basically, I mean, everybody has different name for it.

The word Indian, you know, some real traditionalists hate to be called Indian because that was stuck on us by the Spaniards. And one of the definition of Indian is heathen. And what it was, these Spaniards got off the ship and they saw an Indian talking to a rock or talking to a tree. And they figured, you know, just took it for granted that they were worshiping that particular item.

And that's not so. What they were doing was thanking that particular object for being there for a purpose. Like a tree might have showed them the directions. Or they used it as a landmark, you know. You can tell direction by the tree, either the side that the moss grows or the bark is a little different color, the leaves are different colors are different

directions. So you can actually tell the direction in which you're going just by the growth of the tree.

This is called a hand drum. And usually, if you're doing a march type dance, this is something you would use. And this is all deerskin. Even the ties here is deerskin.

And what you do is you take a log and cut a slab and hollow it out. This is all stretched out. But if I was to wet this and put it near the heat, it would draw it tight. And this is the beater that you would use.

A lot of people see me carrying this they think I'm a medicine person. A lot of people take it for a real snake. Actually, it's a bittersweet vine wrapped around a sapling. And that's exactly how I cut it, except for dressing it up.

I use it either as a walking stick or when I go into the circle dancing. But the colors do have a meaning. You have the blue and the green, the blue for the sky and the water, the green for mother earth. And you have the white, yellow, black, and red. And that's also for the four race of man and the four cardinal directions.

And again, just to show you that we use different items for decoration. And that's one of my old braids, part of the deer, antler, and the wild turkey, and the Canadian goose, and part of the raccoon tail. This good conversation piece. I get a lot of comments on this.

You see all different types of arrow quivers. A quiver is what you hold your arrows in. And I just dry tearing this raccoon and made it out of that. And a lot of times I'll wear this if I'm marching in the parade or dancing in a circle. And the arrows have the real stone arrowheads. By the way, the ones that I'm using here are replicas. But I do have some authentic finds here if you get to get a closer look after.

A lot of people see me with all this fur and animals. Oh, he's a mean guy. I do not go out and shoot or kill to make something. A lot of times I might come out at 6:30 in the morning and somebody dropped the raccoon or porcupine or something off on my porch because they know that I'll use it.

This is a little different from a walking stick. This is a dancing stick. And a couple of friends of mine made this up for me. You have the skull of the red fox. And when you're in a circle dancing with it, the tassels there, you got little brass cones there to kind of keep beat with the drum. And you have horsehair here.

This I call-- this is a clan stick actually. You can use it for a walking stick. And I use it mostly for either clan stick. Most people that know me, if they see this in front of my campsite, they know who it is. That's why I wear the eel, the beaver, and the turtle. And that's my clan, like your family crest.

But mostly, I use this for a talking stick. And I try to have a talking stick at my campsite, maybe three or four gatherings a year. The purpose of the talking stick, I'll start it. And I'll pass it to the next person. He can either take it or say whatever's on his mind.

And while he's talking nobody interrupts him. And he'll pass it on to the next person. He can either talk or pass it on.

And in my culture, I haven't had a talking stick yet where somebody interrupted the one that had the stick. Now, if this person, excuse me, had a question and asked this person, in order for him to answer your question, he's got to wait till it gets back to you. So hopefully if it's something that you're really interested in knowing he doesn't forget.

I have shared a lot of happiness, a lot of sadness, a lot of hurt, a lot of pain with this. Once people start going, I mean, they really open up. I think the most emotional talking stick I had was up in Big Cove in Canada with the Mi'kmaq people. A few of us were invited up there last year.

And this stick can go around and around and around until nobody has anything to say. Then it exhausts the stuff. Usually, this thing is going around for hours. And I usually have to end up exhausting it myself. But it is good therapy, you know, real good therapy. These are just--

Oop.

--two different types of peace pipes. This is one I made. The bowl is carved out of wood. Normally, you'd use sandstone or clay. It is smokable. And again, I use the feathers for decoration.

And this is a more modern type more, knickknack, novelty thing. And I say this one is used for either peace or war. It is smokable. That was also given to me.

We get a lot of things given to us. In our culture, we also have a giveaway. But wherever we go, I have like a field kitchen. And rather than, you know, five or six different camps are starting up a fire, you know, they all bring food. And I do most of the cooking myself. And a lot of times, spectators think that I'm selling food. And I say the only thing it will cost you is to join our campsite.

And then after the meal is over, we sit around and socialize. Usually after it gets dark where we can have an open fire, I will start a talking stick. And I've had them run three or four or five o'clock in the morning before I exhausted it.

And people to show their appreciation, like a lot of these items, especially the clay pottery and a few other the pieces up there were given to me. Like these are salt and pepper shakers. And these are real fine, fine beads. I have enough problems with beads this size, you know. And the work is real intricate.

This mug I just put up here because it has some of the older designs or symbols that you don't see too much today. I don't even know how old it is. This was given to me. Somebody-- a lot of times people will find something pertaining to native people, and they'll just give it to me, you know.

Like I just recently acquired these actual finds. And this is what they use as a plant corner-- yeah, corn planter. And I think that's what they made their rows with, the holes put the corn in.

And this here is a bark remover. If there was going to take something, use part of a tree, maybe like for a totem or something, they'd scraped the bark with this. And those are actual finds.

This was another item given to me up in Hunter Mountain up in Hunter, New York. And this is all llama fur. And there was a fellow from-- where's Chino from? Peru or Chile?

Chile.

Chile.

He was wearing this. And he shared a few meals with us. And he took this off his back and gave it to me. He also gave you a shawl, didn't he?

Mm, hmm.

And this is warm. It's real warm. And that is all handmade.

Maybe some of you got some questions out there. I'd like to cover something you'd want to know.

Yeah, I just wanted to ask if you grew up on a reservation?

You may want to repeat the question, because they don't have a microphone.

Did you grow up on a reservation?

OK, in this area, we don't have reservations. They're called reserves or plantations. Actually, we have one small parcel of land, which is in Lakeville. We call Watuppa. And basically, that's the only reservation.

Now, a lot of people get a misinterpretation of what a reservation is. A reservation is land that's been allotted to Native people. And usually, it was land that they thought was worthless.

And when you're on a reservation, you are a ward of the federal government. It's like being on welfare. OK, a lot of people believe that an Indian does not pay taxes, which is true. As long as you're living on a reservation, you are government supported. Once you go to work off that reservation, you pay taxes like anybody else.

Like now, we are fighting for our hunting and fishing rights back, which we lost somewheres in 1940-something. And when the commissioner brought it up before the legislation, the first thing they think of the revenue. So my cousin, he happens to be the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He's also the supreme medicine man of the Wampanoag Nation. And when the revenue was brought up, he says, maybe 100 of my people, only 15 will utilize it. So, you know, how much revenue are you losing?

Now a lot of people got misinterpretation about the land claims. You know, they thought Native people out to make money or this and that, which is not so. We gave up on the cape because our purpose is defeated. And our purpose for the land claims was to try to keep as much of the land in its natural state and to preserve the wildlife.

So in Mashpee where I'm from, at one time, they had a building freeze. And once they lifted that, all hell broke loose. I mean buildings started going up all over the place. So we gave up on the land claims because our purpose was to defeated.

Now, we are still fighting for our federal recognition. Now, Gay Head, which is also Wampanoag-- that's on Martha's Vineyard. More people are probably more familiar with Gay Head than they are Wampanoag. But actually, they're the same people, only that's the area where they live.

Now, to this day, I can't understand why that particular area got federal recognition in the rest of us are still fighting for it. We're all under the same nation. It don't make a lot of sense to me, you know.

A lot of people today, they don't understand what the litigations are. Like when we were going for federal-- when we first started our federal recognition, we got the Penobscots, the Passamaquoddy, and the Narragansetts, we got them all together for the pros and cons because the way they explain it to the people, they don't understand what's going on. So in some areas, you lose something and you win something.

At one time in Maine, the Passamaquoddy and the Penobscots had fishing and hunting rights throughout the state. Now it's just within the reservations, within their boundaries. So you've got to be very careful when you go on something that you understand what they're trying to throw on you.

Can you explain to me something about the gambling casinos which are going up on the Indian lands now?

Actually, the purpose of the gambling casinos, there's so much poverty and the jobless rate, you know. What they're trying to do is find sources of income. And that's supposed to be all native control. And it brings in resources for the people of the area. And most of them that they've started so far are doing real well.

And you take like Maine, when they got their land claim, what it was they were allotted money. They didn't get the land. They allotted money to buy the land back. And there was a lumber mill up there that was really in the red. And they straighten that out. And they're doing very well with that and several other industries that they have gone into.

So in fact, I'm not sure if Martha's Vineyard-- or the Gay Head got it, the cellular phone. They had put in a bid for that. I do think that they did get it though.

But, see, the thing is they're competing with all these big outfits. And that's why I'm against big corporations in the government because like I said a reservation is usually land that's allotted to you, which they believe is worthless. And as soon as something of value is found on that property, then they try to find some way to get you off it, either relocate

you or try to buy you out, or whatever. And it's my opinion that big corporations and the politicians work hand in hand.

You calling on me?

The one sitting behind you first, then you.

Do you non-Indians into your powwows?

When we have powwow, it's open to the public. What we're trying to do we're not out there to be exploited. We're trying to share our culture, explain our culture.

And about three or four years ago, we were at Roger Williams Park in Rhode Island. And there was this girl about 11 years old. She was petrified of the Native people. And I finally got her to talk to me. It took some doing. But I finally got her to talk to me. And she was with her mother.

So finally, when I went into the circle-- they have a dance where the spectators can join. So I try to get her to come in a circle. Finally, I went out and got her, and she did come in with me.

And this girl was actually petrified. And then when we were ready to part, she says, I'm glad I talked to you, because it changed our whole concept of Native people. And most people, all they know is what they see in the movies, TVs. But today, any Native movies they make is with the understanding is going to be Native people participating and as true to their culture as they can do it.

I want to say something first. Then I want to ask you something. One time I stayed at this girl's house. I was her babysitter. I couldn't sleep at the house. And she told me the next morning that it was an Indian burial ground. And I ended up hearing drums. And I ended up hearing my name being called. Do you think it's wrong to build a house on a burial ground?

Yes, I do. I do.

[INAUDIBLE]

All right, you know, I'm not an activist. I don't know, probably a lot of you heard about the Mohawk incident, where they wanted to build a golf course. All right, the Mohawks took a stand. In fact, the Mi'kmaqs and a few others were ready to join them. I mean they were shooting. They blockaded roads and everything, all over a golf course. They wanted to extend the golf course, and they want to take Indian sacred grounds.

And that's the way society is. They don't care about any other's feelings or culture or religion as long as they get what they want. A few years back in the Dakotas, Honeywell wanted to build a missile testing site out there. And it was on sacred ground.

And if it wasn't for the non-Indian farmers down there that sided with the Indians, they would have went in there and did it anyways. And that's what we need. We need the support of the non-Native people because the politicians they don't care about our vote because there's not enough of us to make that much of a difference. And we need the support of the non-Americans-- I mean non-Natives.

Got the time for a question that was asked previously. How does one become an Indian? Do you have problems-- like if you inter-marry, does someone become in Indian, or passing it on to your children or an outsider? You know what I'm saying?

Well, the only way to become an Indian is like any other culture. You've got to be born that. My wife is non-Indian. But when she married me, she married into the tribe. See, I had two weddings. I had an Indian wedding one week. Then the following week, I got married again in Amesbury.

Offsprings would be part Indian. Well, we won't have no offsprings. But what--

Can you become an Indian?

You're only born an Indian.

Born an Indian.

Yeah. Whatever nationality, you can only be born that. But my wife is respected amongst my tribe and all the tribes we come in contact. And we come in contact with a lot of them. And like I say, when she married me, she married into the tribe. She didn't just marry me. She married the whole tribe.

And like there's a lot of things she feels uncomfortable either wearing or participating in not being of Native blood and because that's the way she feels she feels uncomfortable doing it, which I respect her for that. And she knows, well, maybe more about my culture than I know myself. She speaks more of the language than I do.

If I could just elaborate on that for a moment, when we had the wedding ceremony down at 55 Acres, it's very different from what you would normally expect. And of course, I'm French myself. So of course, I was brought up Catholic.

And this was very, very different, very traditional. The ceremony is done with the men on one side and the women on the other. The medicine person talks about your responsibility to each other and to the members of the tribe as a whole so that you see everyone as your brother and sister.

And really, to me, reminds me of what an extended family used to be like when I was growing up. There were always several aunts and uncles around, grandparents, et cetera. And this is very similar in the Native culture so that when you are together at a gathering, you very often are surrounded by 20, 30 people. And other people keep an eye on your children, or you keep an eye on theirs.

It's all very family oriented. It's a wonderful feeling. So that being non-Native, they accepted me very well. But I kind of stood back a little bit in the beginning. I didn't know quite what to expect. So I would kind of observe and watch and wait. But in time, I got to feel more comfortable.

Now, as far as John's reference to regalia, I could wear regalia in the circle if I chose to. But I'm just not comfortable with that. That's my own feeling. Yet after the powwow closes down, the open powwow for the public, I do dance in the evening around the circle. I enjoy that.

And then we often have closed gatherings, which are very traditional and ceremonial. And I do partake a lot of that. So I'm very involved in the culture. I enjoy it. I love the people.

I love their way of not being judgmental about people. They accept people for what they are. And I really appreciate that.

Another question?

I was just wondering, you said that you-- I was wondering what church you were got married in after the ceremony. Did you get married in the Catholic church?

No. No. We had the traditional ceremony first. And then we were married by a minister following that.

Yeah, like I was saying, I'm a recovering alcoholic. I can't stand people who say they are a recovered alcoholic. I will not be recovered until the day I die.

And I don't know if anybody's familiar with the Haverhill area, up the Grace Methodist up on Main Street, the minister that used to be there, I used to talk to him a lot. And since then, he's been moved to Amesbury. And we become close,

you know.

So I had him perform the second marriage, just civil service. And that was also outside. We had both of them outside.

Just to elaborate on that so that you'll understand, I still consider myself a Catholic. I will always be that. And we did a presentation before a group of nuns at a convent. And they asked me a question, did I feel comfortable being Catholic involved in the native philosophy?

And the way that I answered that was I feel at this time in my life, and I have had several experiences leading up to this, I feel at this time in my life that I think that there is no reason why I cannot embrace both my traditional feelings as a Catholic and the native philosophy. I know probably, as well as I'm standing here, that when I die I will always be considered a Catholic.

But in the meantime, I much appreciate the native philosophy, their feelings about the environment, the animals. And I respect that a great deal. But still traditionally in my heart, I always have those feelings of being Catholic. If that kind of elaborates a little bit for you.

OK, I'm going to end it now so that people can come up here, talk individually, touch, feel, and to see the stuff until you have to get back to your class.

OK, yeah, feel free to ask any questions about any of these items up here.

Thank you very much.

You're welcome.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]