

Situated Communication: Identity and Rhetoric in The Kumeyaay Web Presence

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Abstract

McLuhan (1964) argues that technologies are extensions of man—with the wheel being an extension of the foot, radio an extension of the ear, and television an extension of the eye. Extending McLuhan's metaphor to the Internet allows for a conception of the Internet as an extension of identity. Understanding the Internet as an extension of identity is a fruitful metaphor when identities are analyzed in rhetorical contexts. Howard (2004) argues that "Understanding society requires that we study media embeddedness—how new communication tools are embedded in our lives and how our lives are embedded in new media." Thus, we can understand websites through their interaction with society in offline contexts, especially in terms of rhetoric emerging from a given society. To explore the Internet as an extension of identity, this paper examines rhetoric about Indigenous peoples infused throughout mainstream U.S. culture and online responses from indigenous people, specifically the Kumeyaay people of San Diego County in California. Mainstream U.S. rhetoric sets up images of indigenous peoples as anchored in the past. In response, the Kumeyaay web presence actively works to engage and diffuse the power of mainstream images of "indian-ness" through a representation of Kumeyaay culture as living in the present San Diego county area of the U.S. This case demonstrates the connection between ideology about Native Americans and the online responses which assert Kumeyaay identity as situated in the present.

Keywords: Indigenous, Identity, Internet, Rhetoric

Introduction

The Internet can be understood as an extension of identity, following McLuhan and Hall's definition of technologies as extensions of "some human faculty."¹ This extension of identity can be portrayed as rooted in social, cultural, and trans-national contexts. McLuhan's theory is driven by technical determinism, with the technology itself having a level of agency. In contrast to McLuhan, I argue that technology is part of a system, and as such influences the system, but is not the change agent. Thus, it can be argued that technology does bring about cultural change; however, change comes in a less direct manner than McLuhan suggested with "the medium is the message." Rather, the Internet opens up a space in which people can extend their identities and identify with each other using the speed and reach which both connects and reflects Internet users.

People using the Internet become connected through the opportunities afforded by speed and reach, as well as the ability to bypass traditional gatekeepers. At the same time, these connections reflect and reinforce the cultural context around the users—enabling them to extend their identities, identities embedded in experience and in cultural systems. For example, in the case of the Kumeyaay, the web presence created by the sites Kumeyaay.com, Kumeyaay.org and AmericanIndianSource.com works to assert Kumeyaay identity against a mainstream American ideology that

¹ McLuhan, Marshall & Quentin Fiore *The medium is the message*. New York: Random House. 1967.

attempts to define Native American authenticity, which will be discussed further in the case study.

In this paper I will begin connecting McLuhan's media theory with cultural practice by looking at the notion of extension discussed in correspondence between McLuhan and anthropologist Edward T. Hall, who also used the notion of extension in his theoretical approach to understanding culture. After linking media theory and cultural practice, I will then discuss the concept of identification and how the cultural practice of identification is extended through the medium of the Internet. Finally, I will look at the concept of identification and misidentification through examples of misidentification between Native Americans and mainstream Americans and examine the ways in which the Kumeyaay web presence asserts identity to respond to and reduce misidentification, using the medium of the Internet to assert and extend their identity as Kumeyaay through communication about their culture.

Technologies as Extensions

The concept of technologies as extensions was made famous by Marshall McLuhan in *Understanding Media: The extensions of man*. Here McLuhan explores the notion of technology as extension, an idea that, according to Rogers (2000), he developed and tested in his correspondence with Edward T. Hall, who is often credited with founding the field of Intercultural Communication. When these two notions of extension are combined—Hall's explanation of extensions as part of cultural practice and McLuhan's explanation of extensions as part of perception, the ground work for understanding the Internet as extending identity rooted in cultural practice is established.

McLuhan and Hall corresponded with each other, and discussed the notion of extensions in that correspondence (Rogers 2000). Thus, the initial conception of extensions is arguably anchored in both media theory and cultural theory. So through the notion of extending identity, which is arguably a cultural construction, the connection between technology and culture is emphasized. Both McLuhan and Hall were influenced by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, and they characterized their work as extending the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis can be simply stated as the hypothesis that there is a close relationship between language and thought, and the extent to which this relationship is constrictive or constitutive has been a source of continued debate. Hall extended the notion of language in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis to include non-verbal communication in *The Silent Language*, and McLuhan extended the notion of language in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis to include the medium. Both Hall and McLuhan used the term "extensions" to describe how technology extends people's senses.

Hall traced the notion of extensions to cultural practices in *Beyond Culture* (1976). To build his argument for extensions as part of cultural practices, Hall explains that people alter their environment through two complimentary processes—externalization and internalization. He gives the example of the conscience as an internal process of control, and locks as an example of an external process control. Hall goes on to explain walls, doors, and locks as a physical extension of morality. (p.28). Focusing on extensions as having effects on the social and physical environments around us, McLuhan argues, in the *Medium is the Message*, that "All media are extensions of some human faculty—psychic or physical." (p.26). He then gives examples of extensions as "The wheel is an extension of the foot... the book is an extension of the eye...clothing is an extension of the skin... (and)

electric circuitry, an extension of the central nervous system.”(p. 26-41). Combining Hall and McLuhan allows us to expand the concept of psychological extensions both as linking to culture and as affecting our social and physical environments. This combination helps set the ground for understanding the Internet as an extension of identity.

Technologies can also be seen as a part of culture because they affect opportunities for action within that system, and the emphasis on the senses in a cultural system. Over time, this combination of opportunities for action and ways in which people make use of them can begin to shift cultural norms and even underlying values. However, I will take issue with McLuhan’s statement that we must focus on the media in order to understand social and cultural change. Instead of focusing on “the way media work in environments,” I will focus on the way identity is communicated through media in cultural contexts by first examining identity and identification as situated in culture, and then looking at identity on the Internet through the Kumeyaay case.

Identity as Situated in Culture

Approaching identity as situated in culture, combined with understanding cultural norms as coming out of not merely the majority norms as claimed by Hofstede (1984, 2001), but the interaction between majority and minority norms which shape and influence each other, offers a construct of identity that is influenced by the interaction of majority and minority groups through presentation in media such as newspaper coverage, academic writing, and of course, the Internet.

Identity can be seen as the combination of identifications between members of the same group and with outside groups or individuals. Thus, identification is arguably one of the building blocks of identity. Burke (1969) gives several definitions of identification, demonstrating the centrality of identification to rhetoric. He describes identification as inseparable from persuasion and communication (p.46), which leads to understanding rhetoric as a dialectic process similar to the process of reducing rhetorical distance through an increasingly accurate understanding of another culture. Following this understanding of rhetoric allows for a connection between identity, identification and misidentification, all situated in a cultural system in which the norms of the majority and minorities interact and influence each other (Kampf 2005).

To account for cultural context on the Internet, we need models of culture which address the co-existence of and interaction between majority and minority narratives, pointing out their often conflicting norms within the same society. As we will see in the case of the Kumeyaay web presence, these cultural norms are intertwined and seem to define each other. In effect, they are distinct, yet inseparable. These different world views inhabit the same physical location, and affect each other through their interaction. At the same time, this interaction is not direct. Each cultural group interacts with their image of the other. Figure 3.1 demonstrates the disconnection created through mainstream Americans interacting with their images of Indians instead of Native American cultural realities. Note that realities is plural, inferring that that the experience of being Native American is not unified nor unproblematic, but rather a set of experiences that are related and intertwined due to similar experiences coming out of the power relations between mainstream Americans and Native Americans inherent in the political systems of U.S. Federal governments, State governments, and Native American Nations throughout the U.S. As a result, they begin to identify, not with the real Native

Americans, but with their constructed images of “Indian-ness.” This causes a misidentification, which inhibits intercultural understanding.

One example of this misidentification is shown in Woodward (2003) when the Makah, a Native American tribe from the Seattle area, revived their cultural custom of whale hunting, to the dismay of many mainstream Americans who protested, often violently. Woodward explains the negative reception of the Makah’s whale hunt as a misidentification. Woodward’s analysis of this misidentification points out that the Native Americans need to find legitimacy from the mainstream American viewpoint; however, when their cultural practices are criticized by the mainstream Americans they are then faced with a choice between pleasing the mainstream or their cultural practices. Woodward’s label of misidentification puts the burden of choice on Native Americans; however, the issue of misidentification involves more than the choices of Native Americans. Rather, in the example of the Makah, misidentification also involves the interaction between mainstream Americans and their images of Native Americans, instead of the cultural reality of the Makah people. In this way, misidentification and identification are related to the reduction of rhetorical distance—with misidentification resulting from a large rhetorical distance, and the possibility of identification coming with a reduced rhetorical distance.

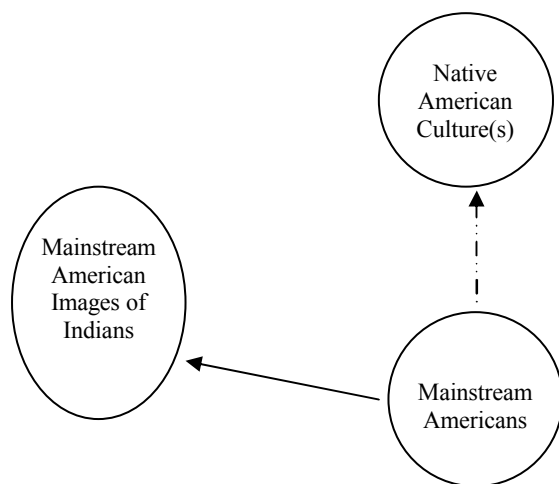


Figure 1. The Interaction between Mainstream Americans and Their Images of Indians as a Cause of Misidentification

Figure 1 demonstrates the interaction between mainstream Americans and their images of Indians as a solid connection, resulting in identification, as opposed to the partial connection with Native American cultures, which in the case of the Makah, ended up in misidentification. In this manner, mainstream Americans misidentify with Native American cultures because understanding is directed via the solid line to the images of Indians. When Native American cultures, such as the Makah in the Seattle area, do not fit the images, the result is misidentification. In analyzing the case of the Makah, Woodward questions their actions and suggests that they remember the importance of identity—both within their own group and within the larger nation state context. Thus, Woodward implies that Native Americans should be careful of the implications inherent declaring their cultural identity. However, shifting the understanding of mainstream Americans can also help turn the misidentification into identification by closing the rhetorical distance so that the mainstream American images of Indians are closer to the realities, which would allow for identification.

In the Kumeyaay web presence, the three webmasters not only maintain their websites, but they also interact with mainstream Americans in the San Diego area by providing resources for elementary school teachers teaching local history and culture, giving presentations in elementary schools, and encouraging teachers to use their websites, with the purpose of shifting the images of Native Americans in the mainstream from what Richard Bugbee, the Kumeyaay Daily News editor from Kumeyaay.com, explained were images of “digger Indians” who subsisted off the land in a distant past to images of the Kumeyaay as situated in the current time, images with which Native American and mainstream American youth can identify. (Kampf 2005)

Images of Native Americans from Mainstream U.S. versus Native American Perspectives

Differences in images of Native Americans from a mainstream U.S. perspective and a Native American perspective can be seen through anthropologist writings and Native American responses, as well as through media coverage of incidents involving misidentification such as the Macah Whale hunting rights dispute in Seattle.

Anthropologists’ definitions of Native Americans find their way into history books and textbooks used in primary and secondary education, and therefore play a role in influencing mainstream American images of Native Americans. As scholars, cultural anthropologists often claim the right of definition for authenticity in Native American culture. These definitions not only govern focus and understanding of Native Americans in mainstream culture world views, but because of U.S. law and the history of treaties between the Federal government and different Native American tribes, they also have legal and fiscal implications for Native Americans.

Anthropologists, ecologists, and sportspeople have claimed the right to define Native American culture as a culture that existed in the past and is no longer alive. This leads to tension in ideologies between the European Americans’ perspective on Indian culture and different tribes of Indians who claim the right to define themselves. The tension in the ideologies underlying some anthropologists’ writings and Native Americans can be seen in Vine Deloria, Jr.’s analysis in *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policy*². Deloria begins his critique by quoting from the back cover of the book where a quote from “Penny Jessel, Shawnee Woman” states that:

The editor and authors are able to soar among the clouds, look down and view the whole scene with sharp eyes. They evaluate what they see with clear logic...I applaud them for simply telling the truth. They are right.

Deloria points out that this quote puts any critique at a disadvantage, since any critique “will be understood by the authors as trying to introduce even more ‘pro-Indian’ fictions into a scene which they are trying to reform” (p. 65). Deloria states that “the first point we must consider is that there never has been an objective point of view regarding Indians and there never will be. Conflict between red and white has been the predominant characteristic of race relations for half a millennium ...” (p. 66). Deloria portrays the political agenda of the collection as “rolling back whatever inroads and changes the

² In the collection *Natives and Academics*, edited by Devon A. Mihesuah, Deloria critiques *The Invented Indian* author by author, pointing out the issues of defining Indians which he finds inherent in the text.

authors believe Indians have made in recent decades.” His problem with the collection is that it claims to be objective but it covers up the political agenda which is apparent to him. He describes the “emotional undertone” of the collection as apparent in the motivation of the authors, which he characterizes below:

The authors, for the most part, seem to be very disappointed that modern Indians do not act like the Indians of their undergraduate textbooks or the movies they enjoyed as children, and they seem determined to attack contemporary expressions of Indian-ness as fraudulent and invalid because modern Indians fall short of their expectations. Part of the authors’ goal is to excoriate Indians for not being their own ancestors and behaving as such.

In other words, Deloria identifies the issue as being the tension between past and present perspectives on Indians. As no one would expect European Americans to act as their ancestors did in terms of dress, technology, and such, so Deloria questions why Indians would be expected to act as their ancestors.

The identification of culture as static for Indians but dynamic for mainstream Americans is part of the issue that Deloria is taking with the collection. For example, two of the essays in *The Invented Indian* focus on whether or not specific technologies such as using fish fertilizer for corn and maple syrup, believed to be used by the Indians, are truly indigenous, and he concludes that they were taught to the Indians by the European settlers. The notion that they were invented by Indians is a myth. In the context of Indians having live cultures which change and shift and adapt to other people and practices around them, these points are moot. Native American culture(s) have not been isolated from European cultures, and so diffusion of technologies between the two groups is a natural process. Focusing on which cultural group invented a given technology does not contribute to understanding Native American cultures. Instead it shifts the focus on Native American culture to peripheral issues rather than core issues about identity. The discussion of whether or not a technology or practice originated from European or Indian culture leads the focus away from who has the right to define Indian cultures to an assumed definition of culture as practices anchored in a time that has past. Another essay in this collection argues that since the accounts of different Indians about their experiences with European Americans follow a similar storyline: they must be fictionalized and part of created history. These essays, as Deloria points out, are situated in a “struggle for authority and control of definitions,”³ specifically the definition of Indian-ness.

The Clifton collection is not alone; another work by Shepard Krech, III sets out to debunk the myth of the ecological Indian:⁴

American Indians have long taken on the Noble Indian/Ecological Indian stereotype, embedding it in their self-fashioning, just as other indigenous people around the world have done with similar primordial ecological and conservationist stereotypes. Yet its relationship to native cultures and behavior is deeply problematic.

³ Deloria Jr., Vine “Comfortable Fictions and the Struggle for Turf.” in Minesuah, Devon A. ed. *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 1998. p. 68.

⁴ Krech III, Shepard *The Ecological Indian*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company. 1999. p.27.

Krech explains 'situations which he feels are controversial and attempts to demonstrate that Indians have as problematic a relationship with the environment as mainstream Americans. In the conclusion, Krech lists examples of Native Americans relating to their environment along with counter examples which seem to fly in the face of Indian stereotypes. One of the counter examples he cites is a proposal from the Campo band of Mission Indians (Kumeyaay) to manage a garbage dump on their lands.⁵ Krech chooses to portray the idea of Native Americans proposing a garbage dump on their land as an example of the "myth of the ecological Indian;" however, Krech does not explain the complexity of the situation. McGovern (1995), in *The Campo Indian Landfill War: The Fight for Gold in California's Garbage*, explains the complexity of the situation in terms of the communal ownership of the Campo reservation land and the economic needs of the Kumeyaay living on the Campo Reservation. When the high unemployment and economic needs of the community are taken into consideration, along with a decision making process which included the community, it is not accurate to simply dismiss the Campo as not having a heritage and culture concerned with the environment. Krech does not go into detail about the situation, but oversimplifies the situation when he states that:

Many Native peoples themselves draw on a tradition of texts promulgating noble imagery that has generally had deeper roots in European self-criticism than in indigenous realities.⁶

In this way, Krech also questions the rights of indigenous peoples such as the Kumeyaay to define themselves and to work in contemporary contexts. He portrays the ecological aspects of indigenous cultures, such as the understanding of the environment claimed by the Kumeyaay to be part of their heritage, as coming from European self-criticism.

Other examples of the tensions over the right to define Indian-ness can be seen in reactions to Indians asserting their treaty rights to hunting and fishing. One example of this comes from the clash between conservationists and the Makah Indians in Washington State.⁷ Woodward explained that the Makah wanted to revive their traditions of whale hunting 25 years after an archeological dig involving both Makah people and Washington State University uncovered whaling artifacts and documented a 2500 year history of whaling.⁸ Woodward documents the clash between the Makah and conservationists in the area with a letter from the Seattle Times:

Michael McCarty, a Makah, was quoted as saying, "Harpooning, going back to the old days is just awesome for the whole tribe." Wouldn't it be even more "awesome" to really go back to the "old days?" Make your clothing on looms so you really look like your ancestors when you are hunting. Give up Gore-Tex and Thinsulate, wear moccasins instead of sneakers and hiking boots. Grow and hunt the rest of your food, stop going to grocery stores. Stop using electricity and all of the appliances it supplies...Stop living in modern day homes and live in lodges like

⁵ Krech III, Shepard *The Ecological Indian*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company. 1999. p.220.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 227.

⁷ Woodward, Gary. *The Idea of Identification*. Albany: State University of New York Press. 2003.p.112-119.

⁸ *Ibid.* p.112-113.

your forefathers. If you really want to return to the “old days” of your culture, then turn around and go all the way back.⁹

This argument of all or nothing—that Indians should be just like their ancestors if they want to follow their traditions, echoes the implication by Krech that the Campo band of Kumeyaay cannot claim an ecological heritage if they propose a contract for a dump on their lands. In Wisconsin, as well, arguments against the Chippewa Indians claiming their treaty rights for spearing walleye also followed the same logic. Indians were criticized by Wisconsin anglers for using motorboats, spotlights, and any other technology that was not present at the time the spear fishing treaty rights were ratified.¹⁰

As these examples indicate, the right of Indians to grow and change as part of living cultures situated in the present day is denied by mainstream Americans—first the by anthropologists through their claim of the right to define Indian cultures and then by the environmentalists and sportspeople who claim that to merit treaty rights, Native Americans need to “turn around and go all the way back.”

Kumeyaay Responses to Mainstream Ideology on The Internet

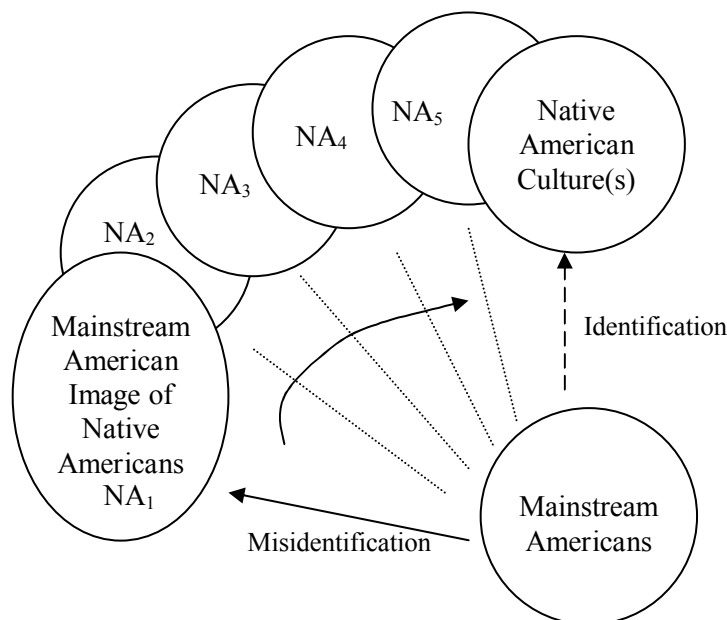
The Kumeyaay web presence engages the misidentifications in mainstream American perceptions of Native Americans through documenting present day events in the Kumeyaay community, telling stories about their own lives, and representing the history of the San Diego area from a Kumeyaay perspective. In the interviews, all three webmasters talked about the importance of education not only for Native American youth, but also mainstream American youth with respect to the Kumeyaay perspective. Larry Banegas, one of the webmasters, explained that he believed Kumeyaay culture could offer help to the people of San Diego in dealing with natural disasters such as the fires. As we sat on his lawn, he pointed to the mountains and described the recent San Diego fires as looking like a fireball rolling across the valley. He explained that his grandmother had told him stories about the fireball rolling across the valley as a child, and the Kumeyaay people in the area had traditions which helped them avoid such disasters through their long experience with the land. Banegas then explained that he hoped his website would help people in the San Diego area better understand the Kumeyaay, in addition to offering information to help Kumeyaay youth build their self-esteem.

The Kumeyaay web presence asserts Kumeyaay identity, thus operating as an extension of identity aimed at reducing the rhetorical distance between mainstream American and Kumeyaay perspectives through the information about the Kumeyaay, perspectives on history, perspectives on the present day, and stories found throughout all three websites. Figure 2 demonstrates the manner in which rhetorical distance can be reduced through information and interaction. The information and interaction which the Kumeyaay web presence offers as part of a multimedia experience is designed to encourage users to interact with sites and leave with a better understanding of the Kumeyaay perspective.

⁹ Woodward, Gary. *The Idea of Identification*. Albany: State University of New York Press. 2003. p. 115.

¹⁰ Debi McNutt and Zoltan Grossman, Midwest Treaty Network, Madison, WI. Letter to the editor of CERTAIN website, run by CERTAIN an inter-tribal Indian group established in 1999 to counter the anti Indian Environmentalist movements against the Makah and the Chippewa for exercising their treaty rights. Available: <<http://www.certain-natl.org/wisconsinobjbwe.html>> Accessed April 19, 2005.

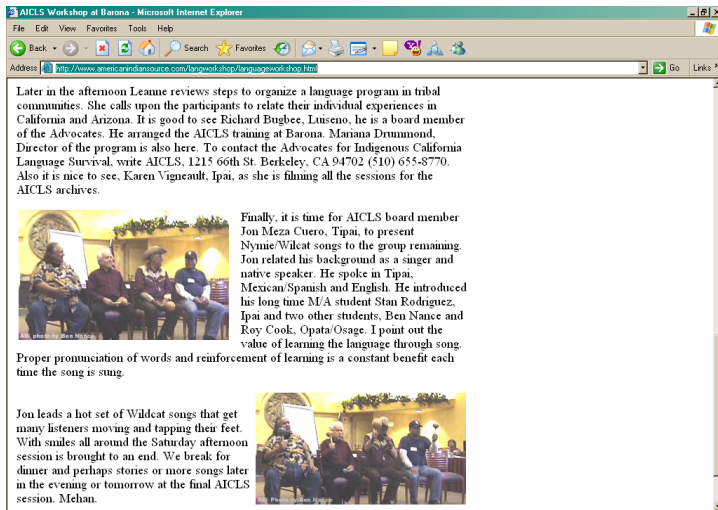
Figure 2. Reducing the Rhetorical Distance by Moving from Misidentification to Identification through Interaction
(based on Varner & Beamer 1995).



In Figure 2, the circles NA₁, NA₂, NA₃, NA₄, and NA₅ represent the shifting images of Native Americans from a mainstream American perspective through the process of learning. The distance between NA₁ and the circle on the right labeled Native American culture demonstrates the rhetorical distance between the two cultures. Circles NA₂, NA₃, NA₄, and NA₅ represent a shifting understanding of Native Americans based on interaction and information. Circle NA₅ represents a refined prototype which is much closer to Native American reality. With the refined prototype comes the reduced rhetorical distance between mainstream American and Native American cultures. Refined prototypes lead to enhanced understanding across cultural and rhetorical distances. The process of refining these prototypes is iterative; and so the circles NA₁, NA₂, NA₃, NA₄, and NA₅ also represent several iterations of understanding through experience and gathering information. Internet technology enhances this understanding because it offers a forum into which the Kumeyaay can extend their identity and open up the opportunity for reducing rhetorical distance. The webmasters in the Kumeyaay web presence use different strategies aimed at reducing rhetorical distance including documentation of present day Kumeyaay events, multimedia enhanced virtual tours of a reservation, and Kumeyaay perspectives on history.

Roy Cook, webmaster for AmericanIndianSource.com, includes documentation of present day Kumeyaay events, complete with pictures of people participating and a narrative that links each person pictured to the community. He documents cultural celebrations, special events honouring Kumeyaay elders, and language revitalization workshops. Figure 2 shows an example of Cook's documentation for a California Indigenous Language Revitalization workshop.

Figure 3. Documentation of a Language Revitalization workshop from AmericanIndianSource.com



<http://www.americanindiansource.com/langworkshop/languageworkshop.html> accessed March 17, 2005.

In Figure 3, Cook is among the singers depicted in these pictures, demonstrating his involvement and ties to the community. He also describes the event as it unfolds, giving the reader a sense of participation through both the pictures of people and statements such as “It feels good to be here” and “Kasaw! It’s time to eat.”

In addition to Cook’s documentation of present day Kumeyaay events, Sam Brown also works at reducing rhetorical distance by bringing the reservation to the viewer through multimedia on his site. Brown offers a section of his site called “Virtual Viejas” which gives the viewer a tour of the Viejas reservation filmed through a camera sitting in his car, shown in (<http://www.tribaldigitalvillage.org/brown/drive.htm>, accessed March 30, 2006) In addition, Brown has a Viejas Cam section of the site which offers a live video feed view of Viejas Mountain (<http://www.kumeyaay.org/live.htm>, accessed March 30, 2006) including commentary about the mountain and the tribe’s traditions along with a description of the camera as being placed in his kitchen window, as well as the technology that he used to set it up (<http://www.tribaldigitalvillage.org/brown/drive.htm>, accessed March 30, 2006).

Brown uses not only video, but also stories from his family and his life to bring his experiences to viewers, portraying Kumeyaay culture from the perspective of his mundane, everyday life—even to the point of including pictures of remodelling his house and his birthday cake. Brown portrays Kumeyaay culture from the perspective of the mundane, showing that he lives in a world that is different from his ancestors, yet reminding viewers that his heritage as Kumeyaay is a part of that mundane world.

Larry Banegas, founder of the Kumeyaay.com website also asserts Kumeyaay identity against the mainstream U.S. perspective through his presentation of history from a Kumeyaay perspective. He explains that he began the process of design with this notion:

I didn’t want it to be like any other site. I talked to everyone—the white people working on it—to raise as much consciousness and respect as possible. I gave them a history lesson before they began designing the site.

Larry Banegas, Website founder, Kumeyaay.com¹¹

¹¹ Larry Banegas, Personal communication, Sunday January 30th 2005.

For Banegas, this history lesson was arguably the most important step in the design process. He needed to help the designers reframe their understanding of history and see the importance of the heritage he was entrusting to them. He needed to know that the pictures of his ancestors and his knowledge of the history of his people would be respected to begin the work. He needed the designers he hired to not only present information, but to understand how it fits into a web of relationships and world views. He explained that this understanding on the part of the professional design team made the difference in his site. Kumeyaay.com's graphics come from Benegas' own photos. In addition, he presents a timeline of the history of the San Diego area from a Kumeyaay perspective at

<http://www.kumeyaay.com/history/timeline/index.html>. This timeline begins with creation, placed before 12,000 B.C. and focuses on events which have affected the Kumeyaay people. The categories for the timeline are:

- Pre-contact
- Spanish Incursion
- Mexican
- American
- Sovereignty
- Kumeyaay

The final category of the timeline, Kumeyaay, begins in 1999 when "Viejas tribal chairman Anthony Pico delivers the first 'state of the tribe' public address, announcing that 'tribes are governments and that (the Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians) are not an extinct people or a stagnant culture.' "

Through these different uses of Internet technology, The Web presence built by Cook, Brown and Banegas works to reduce rhetorical distance between mainstream Americans and the Kumeyaay people by offering information, photos, and video which allows viewers to experience the Kumeyaay perspective and asserts their identity as Kumeyaay against the mainstream images of Native Americans. The technology of the Internet affords the media-richness, speed and reach to allow them to extend their identity beyond their immediate discourse communities and work at reducing the rhetorical distance between Native Americans and mainstream Americans.

Conclusion

The content of the Kumeyaay web presence offers an illustration of the Internet as an extension of identity. The technology itself is not isolated from the cultural context, but rather offers the technical affordance of speed, reach, and access from educational institutions such as primary and secondary public schools which allow the Kumeyaay webmasters to assert their identity and perspectives into a public forum which is accessible to mainstream Americans not only from a technological perspective but also from a social perspective given that education about the history of the local area is included in the standard curriculum of the public school system. Thus, the Internet offers the Kumeyaay and other Native Americans the opportunity to extend their identity and engage with mainstream American images of Indian-ness in order to reduce rhetorical distance.

The notion of technologies as extensions coming out of both media studies through McLuhan and cultural anthropology through Hall brings media theory and cultural theory together, offering a fruitful approach to understanding both the medium of the Internet, and the manner in which that medium both affects and reflects the cultural contexts in which it is situated. Some areas for further investigation include comparative studies with

indigenous peoples' use of the Internet in Australia and New Zealand to see whether the Internet can be understood as an extension of identity for indigenous peoples in those contexts as well, as well as investigating the notion of rhetorical distance and whether or how other cases of rhetorical distance are being addressed in web presences around the world.

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