

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:11:07 - 00:00:45:10

Hi, welcome back to a new season of College Bound. I'm Tajae, I'm one of your hosts of the College Bound podcast, and one of the ND Admissions interns. Today we're back and we're continuing the season and we're continue to explore identity at Notre Dame. So we've had episodes on being black at Notre Dame, being AAPI and being Hispanic at Notre Dame. Now we want to explore being indigenous at Notre Dame and here with me today to share their experiences are Yvette Pino and Mikayla Murphy. So first off, I want to just start off with some ND intros, so I will go to you first, Mikayla.

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Awesome. I'm Mikayla Murphy. I am a fifth-year senior at Notre Dame. I majored in American Studies, and I used to live in Cavanaugh Hall, but now I live off campus.

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All right, great. Thank you so much for being here, and Yvette?

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I'm Yvette, I live in Johnson Family Hall. I'm majoring in psychology. I'm a junior and I'm really excited to be here.

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Jess, thank you guys so much again for being here. I'm really excited to hear your guys this experience and your stories about your identity here at Notre Dame. So to kind of get it started, I want to talk about what did you expect before attending Notre Dame? So as we know, Notre Dame is a PWI, a predominantly white institution, so I want to hear like what perceptions you had before coming to the university.

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Sure. So when I was applying to Notre Dame, I wasn't really thinking about like diversity, or like what I would feel like coming on to like a predominantly white institution, but I had a very positive outlook. I was super excited to be attending such a prestigious institution. I was really excited to be part of like the community here that I've heard so much about, like when you hear about Notre Dame, it seems like everybody seems to know somebody who went to Notre Dame or have some kind of connection to Notre Dame, so I was super excited to be a part of that community, so when I was coming and applying here, like I had such a positive outlook.

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Thank you so much for that, and for sharing. Mikayla, how is your experience?

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I was kind of similar to you about when I was applying. I wasn't thinking about Notre Dame being predominantly white. I wasn't really thinking about what my experience would be as how it would be different than anyone else's because of not being white, it just really wasn't on the list of things that I was thinking about when I was trying to figure out what school to attend, what schools to apply to. So I kind of went into Notre Dame very blindly on that aspect, not thinking about it as being predominantly white. I was mostly just excited about the opportunities that Notre Dame would open.

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Same thing with the community. I was very excited to go to a school with a really strong community, but yeah, I didn't really think a lot about it as a predominantly white institution until after I started school here.

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I actually don't think we said this at the beginning of the episode, but where are you guys from? I think we left that out by accident in the ND intros.

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Yeah, I'm from northeastern Oklahoma town called Tahlequah. It is a part of the Cherokee Reservation in Oklahoma.

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So I'm from this small reservation called Laguna, so it's like part of the Laguna Pueblo. It's probably about 50 miles west of Albuquerque.

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All right. Thank you, guys. So you both have kind of spoken about saying you really came in with no perceived like ideas about what it meant to come to the university, but just really excited to kind of get this education and just be a part of this community. My next question is, what has like that academic and social experience been like for you, being a native student at the University of Notre Dame?

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Yeah. Academically, it's been pretty good. I think professors have been very willing to listen when I have brought up issues that have arose in classes, just things like language I don't think is appropriate for people to use when regarding indigenous people or small things like that. And professors have, for the most part, been very open to having those discussions with me and also opening that discussion to the class. It is always kind of a weird experience because I typically am the only indigenous person in a classroom.

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There have been enough occasions that I can count on one hand how many times I have had another native student in a class with me, but for the most part, academically, I think professors are willing to listen to us and take into consideration what we need from them.

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I agree. I think that for the most part, like my experience here with professors and academics has been really positive. I have found a really great support system, and most of the professors are willing to listen to my experience and like, learn from it instead of like wanting to silence my voice or like, make me feel unsafe in the classroom. So I think that's something that, like I don't take for granted. I know that some students have not always had positive experiences in the classroom, but for me, it's been mostly positive.

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Has there been any like social? How is like the social setting? We kind of discussed it, but has there been any like things that stuck out to you negative or positive?

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I think for me and I don't know if Yvette had the same experience, but the Native American Student Association at Notre Dame, that was kind of where I first started making friends and finding my community, so that was kind of that's kind of been my social life for the last five years has been through the Native American Student Association and the people I've gotten to meet through that.

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For me, I think the primary that's where I met most of my friends was through the Balfour-Hesburgh Scholars Program. It has been a really good resource and like, you know, you just you go through that summer before our freshman year, and you kind of like really bond with each other because you're literally all the other people see. So that has been that was really fun. And then also, like Mikayla said, like NASAND (Native American Student Association of Notre Dame) has been such a great resource for me. Like, it's really nice to make friends with people who really understand where you're coming from, because not everybody can understand what it's like to grow up as an indigenous person, or like on a reservation, so that has been such a huge resource, and they have been like people who I turn to when I'm in my times of need.

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Thank you guys so much for sharing. You guys mentioned resources, so what kind of resources are there available on campus that can help indigenous students?

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So like Mikayla and I mentioned, NASAND has been such a great resource. Last semester, Notre Dame hired Dr. Ashley Byrd, who's a faculty member here on campus. She's in the American Studies department, and she has a Ph.D. in native studies, so she's been such a great resource and so supportive and willing to, like, be a part of NASAND and like be a faculty member that we can all look up to.

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Also, just like a little bit more broadly, not necessarily just for indigenous students, but the Multicultural Student Programs and sServices at Notre Dame, MSPS, have been really helpful with helping NASAND get events going along and they are also just offer really good resources for all students of color at Notre Dame.

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Great. Thank you guys so much for providing those resources. So I don't want to throw you off of this question because we initially didn't talk about this one, but what do you want from the university and how do you think it can support you, other indigenous students and just other students of color? Like, obviously, I don't need like a well- thought out answer, it's on the spot, but I'd have like, I'd love to hear your thoughts and what you think could be done.

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I think on a wide university scale for faculty like professors and advisors, the people that students see most often, I think Notre Dame could really benefit from some sort of training that help them be more aware of native issues both on campus and just more widespread, because I think just with a little bit more training and like cultural sensitivity knowledge, Notre Dame could be an even better place for native students.

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Like we have Dr Byrd now, and that's great, but it would be wonderful if every professor on campus had at least a little bit of knowledge of what native students go through so that they can help us. And same thing with advisors. I just think it would be a lot more beneficial for native students if they had a little bit more knowledge or training on how to help us, rather than just saying, I know your native and that makes you a little bit different, but here's the resources we would give to a white student or to a black student-- because our experiences aren't exactly the same, and I think that would be like a really big step that Notre Dame could take just to help the entire campus climate for native students.

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Yes, I agree. I really appreciate what you guys had to say, and I really appreciate the point, Mikalya, that you said, that our needs as black students, and your needs as indigenous students, it's it's not the same. And even within these like these ethnic groups, our experiences aren't the same from person to person, so I think there is like a place where we can start just kind of educating more people so that we can build this better community.

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So thank you guys so much for your insights on that. I really enjoyed hearing them. And our final question, unfortunately, you know, I wish we could stay here forever, I wish you could sit here for two hours. Is what has your ND experience given you? So essentially, what has your favorite part about Notre Dame been?

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I think for for me, like what Notre Dame has given me is something that I will take with me for the rest of my life, and that is it has given me confidence, and it has given me my voice. Notre Dame, in my experience here, has shown me that my voice matters, and that my voice matters, in particular, for the people that I represent. I know that my experience may not be representative of indigenous peoples everywhere, but I know that I share a similar experience among many of the students who may come here in the future years, and Notre Dame has shown me that it is possible to fight for what's right and that the problems that we face and the issues that we face may seem hard. It may seem really difficult, but it does not mean that they're impossible to overcome.

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My answer sounds so much less insightful than Yvette's. I think my favorite part of being at Notre Dame is just all of the opportunity. I've had to travel around the country and see new places and get to experience all of these things all through Notre Dame. The Center for Social Concerns does something called Urban Plunge, where you spend like a weekend in another or in a city close to you, and you look at the way that poverty is affecting that city. And so I got to travel to Denver and it was really cool to just be with a group of people who were there very service minded, very wanting to help and just getting to spend time with, like the impoverished community in Denver and kind of seeing the different struggles that they go through, so just Notre Dame has given me a lot of opportunity to see the world through a lot of different lenses and to see different places in ways that I wouldn't have gotten to experience had I traveled on my own.

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Thank you guys so much for being on this episode with me today and sharing your experience. I really appreciated it and I know prospective students, native students who want to come to the university. I want to hear more about this will appreciate this episode as well, and really just anyone wanting to hear more about what the university is doing, what your experience is like, what can take a lot of value from this.

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Thank you to everyone listening, and thank you guys for listening. Please remember to follow us on our social media channels at @NDAdmissions on Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and Facebook, and I hope you guys have a wonderful rest of your day. Go Irish!