

## ***Photography of Identity: Exploring the experience of a Native American student in higher education***

*By HGSE Students Kerry Venegas & Marit Dewhurst*

**Presentation Abstract:** As educators seeking to better understand the multiple layers of personal, social, and cultural identity in higher education, we explore the role of photography as a research methodology. Our presentation highlights the historical use of photography in Native American communities—a history reflecting the complexities and controversy of the medium as a tool of both domination and empowerment. Our pilot study of Native identity through photography highlights the importance of using innovative methodologies to authentically document and understand the complicated influence of identity in education, and the ways we can create positive and affirming learning experiences for all students.

**Kerry Venegas** is a third year doctoral student in Harvard's Graduate School of Education and a 1665 Caleb Cheeshahteamuck Fellow. Her research focuses on the role of sovereignty and community control in creating excellence for Indigenous adults and at-risk youth who have left school and return to complete their high school diploma. She has worked in alternative education both domestically and internationally, served as an Einstein Fellow with the National Science Foundation, and worked on policy issues for several non-profit organizations.

**Marit Dewhurst** is a second year doctoral student in Harvard's Graduate School of Education. Her research focuses on the role of community-based art as a tool for social change, particularly in marginalized communities. She has worked in museums, juvenile detention centers, and afterschool settings with youth both domestically and internationally.