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Halloween Costumes : A Sampling of Racism for Sale

- 6- Webographie -

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Cross-posted at [Native Appropriations](#).

<http://www.coincoin.fr.eu.org/local/cache-vignettes/L204xH400/Screenshot2011-1-7588b50a-92766.png>
["Sexy Indian Adult Costume"](#)

After my [open letter yesterday](#), I feel like some people still aren't getting it (maybe it was the 100+ comments telling me to eff off ?). Despite my appeals to emotion and greater human decency, it seems that many people in the world of thar' intranets need some more physical reminders as to why dressing like a Native person this Halloween might be a problem. So I, dear random-probably-racist-internet-not-friend, am happy to oblige. Because, as a person of color, that's my job, right ? To *prove* to you that racism exists ? To *teach* you why these things are wrong ? To offer *evidence* of such wrong-doings ? What fun it must be to never have to worry about such things ! What a privilege !

To state my case, I wandered to the [Spirit Halloween](#) website. I did a simple one word search : [Indian](#). I got 56 results, all Native-themed. I chose a few at random to share with you below. Hooray !

To start off, I give you the description for that ["Sexy Indian"](#) above :

Hey cowboy – get a look at this Indian ! Stop him in his tracks in this sexy Indian Dream Catcher adult costume and all your dreams will come true. There's no need for a bow and arrow – just shoot him sexy looks and he'll make tracks in your direction – it might get so hot he'll put out smoke signals !

Awesome. Cowboy/Indian stereotypes, mentions of dream catchers, bows and arrows, and smoke signals ! But it gets better (worse ?) :

<http://www.coincoin.fr.eu.org/local/cache-vignettes/L219xH400/Screenshot2011-1-15dacefb-aba5b.png>
["Tribal Trouble Indian"](#)

Put the wow back in pow-wow when you go native in this very sexy Tribal Trouble Indian adult women's costume. They may need to break out the peace pipe because the other squaws will want to torch your teepee when their menfolk see you in this foxy costume !

"The other squaws will want to torch your teepee ?" That's....great.

But the "menfolk" are included in the fun too :

<http://www.coincoin.fr.eu.org/local/cache-vignettes/L231xH400/Screenshot2011-1-baee2fb5-52bf5.png>
["Indian Brave Adult Men's Costume"](#)

Go native American in this classic adult men's Indian Brave costume. Your job – to hunt. Hunt for prey like food and beer or pretty women in this comfortable costume. Get what you want then lay back and enjoy – pass the peace pipe !

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Glad women are equated with food and beer. Glad the costume is "comfortable" too. God forbid you be "uncomfortable" when you're being an ignorant misogynist ! And I won't even with the peace pipe comment.

and don't forget the teens and tweens...they want to bring boys back to their tipi's too !

<http://www.coincoin.fr.eu.org/local/cache-vignettes/L240xH400/Screenshot2011-1-76b02096-af62a.png>
"Indian Princess Tween Costume"

You are an Indian Princess, able to hunt, gather and lead. In this cute Indian Princess tween costume it will be a snap to gather and lead the boys back to your tipi ! Dance to celebrate the harvest or welcome a full moon in this fun costume trimmed with lots of fringe, feathers and more.

I'm sure every parent wants their daughter to be gathering boys and leading them back to the tipi. but only while they're mocking Indian spirituality by "dancing to celebrate the harvest," of course.

and saving the worst for last :

<http://www.coincoin.fr.eu.org/local/cache-vignettes/L205xH400/Screenshot2011-1-a61b61a4-56cd3.png>
"Pocahottie Adult Women's Costume"

Girl, you won't be sitting around the campfire stringing beads in this Pocahottie Pow Wow costume ! The work is done and it's time to play cowboys and Indians, only this time the Indian picks off the cowboys that she wants. Put the wow in pow wow and practice some native American rituals in this sexy Pocahottie costume. Is that an ear of corn in your pocket or are you just glad to see me ?

Yeah...I can't.

I hope these can serve as examples as to *why* I'm so pissed off. The dripping misogyny and stereotyping is so blatant, it almost reads like satire. But these are real products, for sale on websites and in thousands of Spirit stores nationwide. Thousands of people are seeing, reading and internalizing these messages.

These costumes are hurtful and dangerous because they present a false and stereotyped image of Native people. The public sees these images, and it erases our current existence, so the larger, contemporary issues in Indian Country then cease to exist as well. When everyone only thinks Indians are fantasy characters put in the same category as pirates, princesses, and cartoon characters, it *erases our humanity*. Have fun thinking through that one.

But let's be real for a minute. Can you seriously read those descriptions and still say that this is totes ok ? Really. Be honest with yourself. Read them again. Think about if these descriptions were describing you and your family. Then tell me I'm being "over-sensitive."

Thanks for playing, and have a happy, healthy, racism-free Halloween !

Adrienne K. is a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and a graduate student in Boston, where she studies access to higher education for Native students. In her free time, she blogs about cultural appropriation and use of Indigenous cultures, traditions, languages, and images in popular culture, advertising, and everyday life at [Native Appropriations](#).

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