

Sophia Powless

Selected Audio Transcript

I believe people need to know more about the Indigenous people he [Columbus] encountered. I forget the name of the tribe, but I definitely remember learning in school when I got older. All you hear about is his voyages, what he did when he discovered America, but you don't really hear about the people, how they were affected, what things were said about them. I believe they refer to it as bringing "civilization" to these peoples. That's kind of the general term. They said it was bringing civilization to these peoples. And that's kind of the outlook everybody sees it as. It's "Columbus came, discovered it, he brought civilization, now we have America, everything's great." But what is really not considered is the fact that there was already a culture, a developed culture, a developed civilization with language, food, ceremonies, dances; everything was already here. And you don't learn about that.

Biography

Nya·wéñha Sgé·noñ', Hothahyoñníh nwa'wage'se·e'deñ' gaiye·i wa'ganoñhsgeh Ga nëndawaks' ongya·stha'. So that roughly translates to: 'Hello, I'm thankful that you are well. My name is Shakes the Hemlocks, and I am Wolf Clan, longhouse from the Onondaga nation.' All of us have that introduction. And I think a lot of people aren't really aware, we each have our own Indigenous names, that are connected to medicine. And that, of course, is very powerful. That name is mine. And mine since I was given when I was a child, and that's what I like to be known as. Of course, I go by Sophia, in the regular sense, but I also have that identity that's very strongly tied to me. That's how I like to introduce myself any time I have events that I'm a part of, because I think showcasing myself as being Indigenous is such an important thing. Because not many people get to meet someone who is Indigenous, or don't know about my life or point of view, or how I grew up, or anything like that. So that's how I like to show myself first.