

University of Oklahoma Professor Falsely Claims to be Indigenous

Subject: Dr. Claudette Grinnell-Davis

Title: Associate Professor of Social Work, University of Oklahoma

Indigenous Identity falsely claimed: "Ojibwe," "Anishinaabeg," "Métis," and/or "Apache"

Determination: Zero American Indian ancestry

Cherokee, North Carolina

Responding to complaints from Indigenous people, the Tribal Alliance Against Frauds (TAAF, which is pronounced 'taff') conducted a comprehensive investigation into the genealogy of Dr. Claudette Grinnell-Davis. Dr. Grinnell-Davis is a University of Oklahoma professor who claims to be Indigenous, specifically "Ojibwe," "Anishinaabeg," "Métis" or "métis;" and/or "Apache."

Following an examination of hundreds of Grinnell-Davis's ancestors, who span the US-Canadian border, together with reams of public documents about these individuals, TAAF's investigation revealed that Grinnell-Davis has zero Indigenous ancestry. All of Grinnell-Davis's relatives have their origins in Europe, especially in England, Ireland, France, and Germany.

It is particularly reprehensible that Grinnell-Davis falsely claims to be Indigenous given that her area of expertise centers on such a highly sensitive and painful area of Indian/Indigenous experience and history. Grinnell-Davis's research specialty is Indian/Indigenous child welfare, with a focus on the foster care and adoption systems and the Indian Child Welfare Act. Her intrusion into spaces in which Indigenous people have experienced profound trauma, as well as her engagement with some of the most vulnerable members of our Indian Tribes and First Nations, amplify the significant harm this self-Indigenizer has been doing to Indigenous people.

Grinnell-Davis has effectively leveraged her false claims for profit and for growing amounts of power and influence. First, she captured a professorship at an R1 doctoral university. Then, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation awarded her \$442,000 as Principal Investigator of an Indigenous families project that is falsely marketed as Indigenous-led. Building upon this success, with a second self-Indigenizer Grinnell-Davis acquired the powerful position of Indigenous Cluster Co-chair of the Society of Social Work and Research. This allows her, not actual Indigenous scholars, to decide which Indigenous scholars and scholarship merit inclusion in one of her field's most important conferences. Bolstering her growing power and influence over Indigenous scholars and scholarship, Grinnell-Davis has since become a decider of who wins "Indigenous led" grants for Partners for Advancing Health Equity and Evidence for Action.

Especially as the flagship university of a state with more than three dozen Indian Tribes and the highest percentage of Indian people, the University of Oklahoma (OU) needs to stop disrespecting Indians by repeatedly hiring professors who falsely claim to be Indian. Grinnell-Davis is at least the third false claimant whom OU has recently hired as a tenure-track professor, and TAAF found no evidence that OU has any Indigenous verification process. The harm being done to Indian students, professors, and Tribes is incalculable, profound, and unacceptable.

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