



Columbus Day 'absurdity' protested

By Nancy Stohs

Demonstrators wore black armbands and carried signs, in bold red letters, saying, "Who's Columbus?" "Chicano Power" and "Sioux".

Indian women wearing colorful fringed shawls over their jeans danced around a large drum, while Indian men chanted the American Indian Movement (AIM) national anthem.

A Chicano student in a poncho sat on the State Historical Society Museum steps with his guitar.

About 60 UNL students, representing the United Minorities and Concerned People's Organization (UMCPO), protested Columbus Day, near the steps of the State Historical Society Museum, Friday.

News Analysis

"This is the day Columbus got lost and was found and fed by the Indians," UNL Indian student Rick Williams said, in a speech to the protestors. "But there's an Indian tradition, you know. Once you eat, you leave. Columbus never left."

Williams said, Columbus Day is "absurd, because Indians have been here since the beginning of time. "This is my land, but it's not my country."

Most participants were protesting the holiday's historical mistruths. One Chicano student said, "Columbus is one of the fallacies of education. Students don't want to face the truth, Indians were here first."

A white student said she was protesting because she wanted people to know the myths they were reading in history books and how they were oppressive to Indians and other minorities.

At William's direction, the protestors marched across 15th St. to O St. toward the Indian Center on 9th St.

As they were escorted by police, the crowd chanted, "No more Columbus Day," "Boo Columbus" and "Columbus Who?"

Most people ignored the marchers.

"I hope they win their football game," one shopkeeper said as they walked by, shouting and clapping.

Black students said they were not only supporting themselves, but also UNL's Chicano and Indian students.

"I'm tired of being only one of a few blacks here," one said. "It took the university four years to get 20 Indian students here. How much is that asking?"

"The university is unfair to minority groups," another black said.

A Chicano student addressing the group said he was glad to see his Indian brothers and sisters, the marchers' emphasis was on getting together.

But UMCPO did have a point, and four UNL minority groups made it together.

"All these tall buildings you see, all this land, is ours," Williams said, looking back over the march route. "Yet they stick us all in one building (Indian Center). We've got to get it back, and to do it we're going to have to all work together—black, brown, red and white."



Photos by
Gail Folda

