



## Lesson Plans

This unit is an introduction to Native American history in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The lessons focus on U.S. government policies that have determined the official relationship between the government and Native American tribes that survived European colonization. The unit assumes prior student knowledge of the great variation in tribal identities throughout the U.S. and of initial colonial era encounters between Europeans and Native Americans. Teachers should be aware, however, that students today may no longer possess a universal awareness of Native Americans that previous generations gained from popular culture portrayals of Indians.

This is a primarily positive development. Children today are not growing up surrounded by the fictionalized Old West television and movie images of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a consequence, teachers will hopefully encounter among their students fewer pre-conceived, stereotypical notions about Native Americans. Because primary grades typically study Native American units, students' prior knowledge by the 5<sup>th</sup> grade will often include an awareness of the original variety of native tribes in the pre-Columbian Americas. A number of students, however, may not be aware that many tribes continue today and have preserved their languages, art, and religious traditions. This unit should create an awareness of Native peoples and tribes in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Because constant change and confusion is endemic to the history of U.S. government Indian policy, confusion about the shifting policies studied in this unit may concern students. It is fine to affirm this, and help children use their own confusion to grasp the confused nature of the policies. A timeline is an organizing resource students may use to place these ever-changing policies into context. By constructing a timeline gradually and throughout the course of the unit, students will have a visual reference for ongoing review.

With these issues in mind, then, a good place to begin is with a question central to this unit: **“What became of the Native American tribes when their homelands became the United States?”**



## Activity 1: Indian Removal and the Trail of Tears

### Content Goals:

- ❖ Students are introduced the concept of government “policy”.
- ❖ Students become familiar with President Andrew Jackson’s Indian policy, which was to push native tribes westward and give their lands to European-American settlers.

### Process Goals:

- ❖ Constructing a position paper

### Centerpiece:

- ❖ Description of Jackson’s removal policy; memoir on the
- ❖ Trail of Tears -- the Cherokee removal from Georgia and North Carolina to Oklahoma. Book: **If you lived with the Cherokee.**

### Process:

- ❖ The unit may begin with a question: **“What became of the Native American tribes when their homelands became the United States?”**
  - Class reads aloud selections from **If You Lived with the Cherokee.**
  - Class brainstorms the question, and then begins an exploration into history to find evidence for an answer.
  - First step: Defining the term “policy”.
    - What is a policy? (Synonyms include: procedure, program, practice, system, approach.) Begin with school policies (all children must attend school, dress codes, etc.) to establish the concept, then move to other areas such as city traffic laws and library policies. Conclude with discussion of federal government policies, such as the welfare system, support for higher education through student loans and grants, federal interstate highway system, federal environmental regulation.
  - Jackson’s Indian Removal Policy – read description as a class.
  - The native experience on the Trail of Tears. Did anyone benefit from the removal policy? Who? How?
  - Students respond to the readings – Students write a one-page paper describing their position on this policy. Would they have supported or opposed it had they lived in the 1830’s? Why?

### Product:

- ❖ Position papers



### Timeline:

- ❖ Indian Removal Act (1830)

### Resources:

- ❖ **If You Lived with the Cherokee** (Kamma, A., Roop, C., Smith, K., Roop, P.; 1998, Scholastic.)
- ❖ Description of removal policy
- ❖ Trail of tears account

## Activity 2: What is a Reservation?

### Content Goals:

- ❖ Students study the shift in federal Indian policy from removing native tribes westward, to confining tribes on reservations as Euro-American settlement continued to spread westward, settling more and more territory originally occupied by Native peoples.

### Process Goals:

- ❖ Document analysis
  - Centerpiece: 1850 quotation from Orlando Brown, Commissioner of Indian Affairs; Treaty of Fort Laramie.
  - Content: Orlando Brown's description of a federal reservation system. The establishment of the reservation as the cornerstone of Indian policy by the 1851 Indian Appropriations Act.

### Process:

- ❖ Class reads Orlando Brown's quotation and discusses its meaning. Class speculates on how a reservation system may impact Native tribes. Teacher may create a "before and after" chart on the board to record student predictions.
- ❖ Class reads excerpts from the Treaty of Fort Laramie and completes NARA document analysis together as a class. Students should be encouraged to look for specifics in the treaty. Your guidance as a teacher is crucial for this process – the treaty is fairly dry reading unless the students are encouraged to make connections to their own lives and experience. For example, question 6D on the Nara analysis asks students to "List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written". If you approach this question by first asking students how they would give someone directions



from their house to school, you capture their interest and then may channel their focus to the description of reservation boundaries in the treaty. Today we use street signs and buildings to navigate from place to place. One hundred fifty years ago on the Great Plains, people navigated primarily by natural landforms. This process encourages students to think about simple geographic differences between modern American life and Great Plains life in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and relates a potentially dry treaty exercise to their own lives.

**Product:**

- ❖ Nara analysis.
- ❖ “Before and after” chart on classroom board

**Timeline:**

- ❖ Establishing the reservation system (1850-1)

**Resources:**

- ❖ Orlando Brown quotation

### **Activity 3: Where were the Reservations established?**

**Content Goals:**

- ❖ Students learn where many reservations were established.
- ❖ Students learn various in-depth details about a specific tribe.

**Process Goals:**

- ❖ Mapping
- ❖ Internet Research

**Process:**

- ❖ Working in groups or pairs, students are assigned a reservation (unique to each group) to investigate on the internet. The groups should report for the class:
- ❖ The tribe(s) affiliated with each reservation
- ❖ The state where the reservation is located.
- ❖ The year the reservation was established (this may be more difficult to locate – optional)



- ❖ Population on the reservation (also optional)
- ❖ Two interesting pieces of information about each tribe affiliated with the reservation.

**Product:**

- ❖ Reservation reports

**Timeline:**

- ❖ Known dates when specific reservations were established.

**Resources:**

- ❖ Reservation map
- ❖ Official reservation internet sites

## **Activity 4: Life on the Reservations**

**Content Goals:**

- ❖ Students are introduced to some native experiences on the reservations.

**Process Goals:**

- ❖ Document analysis

**Centerpiece:**

- ❖ First person accounts (reservation memories) from native students of the Hampton Institute; 19<sup>th</sup> century reservation photos. Book: **Navajo Long Walk**.

**Content:**

- ❖ Individual and collective experiences on the reservations.

**Process:**

- ❖ Class reads and discusses **Navajo Long Walk**.
- ❖ Class reads Hampton Institute accounts/memories aloud.
- ❖ Class analyzes photos uses Nara analysis guide.
- ❖ Discussion
  - What experiences in these accounts were unique to an individual?



- What qualities or experiences of reservation life seemed to be common among various tribes or individuals?
- ❖ You may wish to have students write a poem or draw a picture illustrating an aspect of reservation life.

**Product:**

- ❖ Poem or drawing.

**Resources:**

- ❖ **Navajo Long Walk : Tragic Story Of A Proud Peoples Forced March From Homeland** (Bruchac, J., Begay, S.; 2002, National Geographic Press.)  
Readings on reservation life.
- ❖ Nara photo analysis.

## Activity 5: Assimilation policy – The Dawes Act

**Content Goals:**

- ❖ Students learn in the 1880's the government made another policy shift in the form of the Dawes Act. This legislation allotted tribal members 160 acres of reservation land for private ownership.
- ❖ Students learn the native land base was severely decreased by the Dawes Act. Reservation land leftover after allotment was either sold to non-natives or placed in a government trust.

**Process Goals:**

- ❖ Document analysis

**Centerpiece:**

- ❖ The Dawes Act; Description of the legislation's results.

**Content:**

- ❖ Assimilation policy

**Process:**

- ❖ Define **assimilate**: To become or be like; resemble. To bring into conformity. And **assimilation**: the merging of cultural traits from previously distinct cultural groups (from the Random House College Dictionary, 1973, New York).



- ❖ Ask students if they have ever had to assimilate to something. Questions for discussion:
  - Before the removals and the reservations, how did certain Native American tribes live differently than European Americans? What were some of the ways various native cultures differed from Euro-American culture?
  - (Dress, language, land ownership v. no philosophy of land ownership – instead Natives occupied sometimes fluid tribal territories, religion.)
  - Once the U.S. government decided Natives should become part of Euro-American society, how did the government try to eliminate the cultural differences?
  - This question should be revisited as the unit continues – ultimately the list should include at least individual land ownership, education, dress styles, and language.
- ❖ Read the Dawes act.
- ❖ Discussion: **Predict** the Dawes Act effect on native peoples.
- ❖ Read the results of the Dawes Act together as a class. Compare with predictions.

#### Timeline:

- ❖ Dawes Act (1887)

#### Resources:

- ❖ Dawes Act
- ❖ Results of the Dawes Act

### Activity 6: Boarding Schools

#### Content Goals:

- ❖ Students learn boarding schools were used to eliminate native culture and language and assimilate natives into Euro-American culture.
- ❖ Students learn about some individual students' experiences in boarding schools.

#### Process Goals:

- ❖ Photo analysis



- ❖ Empathize with children who attended boarding school.

**Centerpiece:**

- ❖ Background on the Pratt school and Indian education, student boarding school “Assimilation through education” accounts and photos

**Content:**

- ❖ Student experiences at boarding school, the use of boarding schools to destroy native cultural traditions, family connections and languages: “Kill the Indian and save the man.”

**Process:**

- ❖ Read the background information on Indian education.
- ❖ Working in groups, students read accounts of boarding school experiences and study photos.
- ❖ Diary activity – student imagine they are a native child and write an account of a boarding school experience. They may write about the day they are leaving for school, a day at school or leaving school to return home to the reservation. Students should be encouraged to include details from the historic evidence in their diaries.

**Product:**

- ❖ Diary account

**Timeline:**

- ❖ The Carlisle Indian school established in 1879 – the first Native boarding school.

**Resources:**

- ❖ Pratt school description
- ❖ Boarding school photos
- ❖ Student accounts from boarding school





## Activity 7: Indian Reorganization Act

### Content Goals:

- ❖ Students learn about the government's response to the failure of the Dawes Act to assimilate native peoples into Euro-American society: the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, its goal of preserving what remained of the reservations so that tribes might salvage tribal languages and cultures after the destructive impact of the Dawes act.

### Process Goals:

- ❖ Document analysis

### Centerpiece:

- ❖ The Wheeler-Howard act (Indian Reorganization Act 1934)

### Content:

- ❖ A review of the Dawes act, the resulting poverty, starvation and destruction of native family relationships. An examination of the Wheeler act, its intent to re-establish tribal ties and use the reservation as a place to accomplish gradual assimilation, instead of the rapid assimilation intended but not accomplished by the Dawes act.

### Process:

- ❖ Class reviews the Dawes act and reads accounts from the period. Questions:
  - What did the people who wrote the Dawes act intend it to do?
  - Did it accomplish this?
  - If you were native, how would you have felt about the goals of the act?
  - If you were native, what would you have liked about going to boarding school?
- ❖ Class reads the Wheeler-Howard act. Nara analysis and discussion of the act as a class.

### Product:

- ❖ Nara analysis sheets.

### Timeline:

- ❖ Wheeler-Howard Indian Reorganization Act (1934)



**Resources:**

- ❖ Indian Reorganization Act (Wheeler-Howard Act)
- ❖ Accounts of native life from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Activity 8: Tribes today**

**Content Goals:**

- ❖ Students are introduced to tribal movements and activities today – art, economics, education and social gatherings that preserve tribal culture and language.

**Process Goals:**

- ❖ Reading and internet research

**Centerpiece:**

- ❖ Books and internet information about tribal activities and policies today.

**Content:**

- ❖ Pow-wows provide traditional social outlets for contemporary natives; traditional artistic expression is thriving on many reservations and among natives in the cities; reservation tribal colleges established in the 1970's, 80's and 90's seek to preserve tribal languages and social traditions, while helping tribal members learn skills for careers that may support their families; AIM has worked to secure legal and political recognition of Native rights.

**Process:**

- ❖ Groups are assigned a topic in current Native life to profile. Possible topics: The American Indian Movement; native environmental activism; native musicians; native authors/writers; native business development; native religious and cultural ceremonies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- ❖ The groups choose the format in which they wish to present -- mind-map, power point, essay, live play, poetry, art, newspaper?

**Product:**

- ❖ Group presentations



**Timeline:**

- ❖ American Indian Movement formed (1966) and any dates from the group reports.

**Resources:**

- ❖ Books, if available
- ❖ Internet site information

## **Activity 9: An Essential Dilemma for Native and Other Americans**

**Content Goals:**

- ❖ Students encounter the idea that problems ingrained in the history of Native and other American relations continue; there are no simple solutions to these issues.

**Process Goals:**

- ❖ Discussion

**Centerpiece:**

- ❖ Book: **Patrick Desjarlait: Conversations with a Native American Artist,** reading selections: “Purple Mesa” and “You have to Learn the Ropes.”

**Content:**

- ❖ The choices many native people face – remain on the reservation and live possibly in poverty, or move to a different place for a more secure, better-paying job and lose close contact with your family and friends and culture.

**Process:**

- ❖ Discussion – What would you do if you were native?
- ❖ Students try to think from the perspective of a member of one of the tribes they researched earlier in the unit -- would they stay on their reservation or move to an urban area? What challenges and rewards might they experience depending on their choices?

**Resources:**

- ❖ **Patrick Desjarlait: Conversations With a Native American Artist** (Desjarlait, P., Williams, N.; 1994, Runestone Press.)



- ❖ “You have to Learn the Ropes.” (Studs Terkel; 1967, in **Division Street: America**, pp.104-111, Pantheon Books.)
- ❖ “Purple Mesa and Bright Color.” (Larry Cuban and Philip Roden; 1975, in **Promise of America: Struggling for the Dream**, pp. 109-111, Scott Foresman and Company.)