



RIGHTS SITES NEWS

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN THE CLASSROOM

A Publication of The Advocates for Human Rights

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The Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the United States

"The white man says, there is freedom and justice for all. We have had "freedom and justice," and that is why we have been almost exterminated. We shall not forget this."

~From the 1927 Grand Council of American Indians

Although the United States of America is often considered the world's most prominent advocate for freedom and liberty, its establishment was built on the denial of basic human rights to Native Americans that included brutal killings, the spread of conquerors' diseases, racist government policies, broken treaties, theft, removal from native lands, uninhabitable reservations with poor land for farming, child kidnapping and assimilation in boarding schools, lack of education, poor health care, and banning of their languages, culture, and religion. The annihilation of the Native American population during the Indian Wars was so devastating that it has been referred to as "far & away, the most massive act of genocide in the history of the world."¹ Estimates show that the North American Indian population went from an estimated 12 million in 1500 to barely 237,000 in 1900.² Other estimates show that in total the numbers of Native American killed by genocide, diseases, famine, etc. range between 10 and 30 million people.³

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, economic, social and cultural characteristics, as well as their legal systems, while retaining their rights to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State.

~Article 4, Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

This long history of oppression and marginalization continues today. As the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, James Anaya, states: "indigenous peoples in the United States constitute vibrant communities that have contributed greatly to the life of this country; yet they face significant challenges that are related to widespread historical wrongs, including broken treaties and acts of oppression, and misguided government policies, that today manifest themselves in various indicators of disadvantage and impediments to the exercise of their individual and collective rights." For example, of the more than 5.2 million Native Americans living in federally recognized tribal areas in the United States, 28.4% live in poverty, nearly double the national average.⁴

November is Native American Indian Heritage Month, and the Friday after Thanksgiving is Native American Indian Heritage Day. In this time for giving thanks, when many of us are celebrating with family, food, and football, let us not forget that for many others this is a time of reflection and mourning. This edition of **Rights Sites News** is dedicated to respecting this truth and providing educators with resources and accurate information to help them teach students about Thanksgiving in a manner that neither demeans nor stereotypes Native Americans.

1. Stannard, David (1992). *American Holocaust*. Oxford University Press. Pg ix.
 2. Lewy, Gunter. "Were American Indians the Victims of Genocide?" *History News Network*. September 2004. <http://hnn.us/article/7302>.
 3. Thornton, Russell (1990). *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492*. University of Oklahoma Press. p. 48.
 4. U.S. Census Bureau. 2011. "Facts for Features: American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month: November 2011." <http://csde.washington.edu/news/docs/AlaskaIndian.pdf>.

FEATURED RESOURCE: RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES TOOLKIT



The Advocates is pleased to announce its newest toolkit on the rights of indigenous peoples in the U.S., an important resource for learning more about the human rights issues indigenous people face in the U.S. every day. The kit will help you:

Learn. Read the fact sheet to learn about how well the U.S. is doing in fulfilling the rights of indigenous peoples and then test your knowledge with a quiz.

Take Action. Use the *Take Action Guide* to advocate on indigenous peoples rights.

Teach. Use the lesson plan to educate about indigenous rights in the United States.

The Rights of Indigenous Peoples Toolkit is available at www.discoverhumanrights.org/human_rights_toolkits.html.

Lesson: Thanksgiving Mourning

Source: Teaching Tolerance. <http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/thanksgiving-mourning>

Grades: 6-12

Goal: Challenge students preconceived notions of Thanksgiving

Objectives:

- Examine how diverse groups can perceive shared experiences differently
- Review commentary from indigenous writers about Thanksgiving
- Make inferences and draw conclusions based on written information
- Write letters of thanks

Essential Questions?

- ? How and why do we celebrate Thanksgiving?
- ? What can we learn from diverse groups shared experiences?
- ? What is the story of Thanksgiving from a Native American perspective?
- ? What can we learn from the past and the present?

Time Frame: 1 class periods

Materials:

- Copies of The Suppressed Speech of Wamsutta James from the United American Indians of New England, available here: www.uaine.org/wmsuta.htm.
- Copies of Thanksgiving: A Native American View by Jacqueline Keeler from the Pure Water Gazette (Editor's note: the song referenced on this webpage should be "America"), available here: www.purewatergazette.net/nativeamericanthanksgiving.htm.

Background: Much of the Thanksgiving story focuses on a peaceful, cross-cultural exchange between the "Pilgrims and Indians." While it is true that the Wampanoag and the Planters shared in a harvest celebration, within fifty years, the Wampanoag would no longer be a free people. For some Native Americans, Thanksgiving is no cause for celebration, but rather serves as a reminder of colonization's devastating impact on indigenous peoples.

In this activity, students will review two written works by Native American authors. The first -- a speech written by Wamsutta James in 1970 -- gave birth to the National Day of Mourning, which is observed on Thanksgiving by some indigenous people. To them, Thanksgiving is "a reminder of the genocide of millions of their people, the theft of their lands, and the relentless assault on their culture." The Day of Mourning, on the other hand, is a day of remembrance and spiritual connection, as well as a protest of the racism and oppression that Native Americans continue to experience.

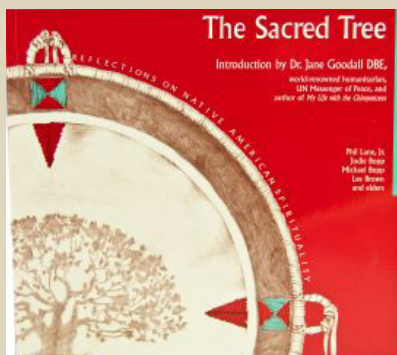
The second document is an essay by Jacqueline Keeler, a member of the Dineh Nation and the Yankton Dakota Sioux; she works with the American Indian Child Resource Center in Oakland, Calif. Unlike some of her Native peers, Keeler celebrates Thanksgiving. And unlike most non-Native Americans, she does so through a distinctly indigenous lens.



Procedure:

1. Students: Get together with a partner. While one of you describes what you know about the origin of the Thanksgiving holiday, the other one writes down key words and images from your description. (Note: If necessary, draw out elements of the origin story that relate to Native Americans.) Where did you learn these stories? What ideas or values do you think of when you celebrate Thanksgiving? (Note: Examples students may give: thanks, charity, generosity, being good neighbors.)
2. Teacher: Share information from the Background section and pass out copies of readings. Students: With your same partner, one of you read, *The Suppressed Speech of Wamsutta James*, and the other reads, *Thanksgiving: A Native American View*. After you finished reading, take turns summarizing what you read to each other.
3. As a class, discuss:
 - Reflect back on the values of Thanksgiving you described at the start of the activity. Did the Pilgrims uphold these values in their treatment toward the Indians? Why?
 - What was new to you in the authors' descriptions of the first Thanksgiving? Why do you think these details are sometimes omitted from popular culture's take on Thanksgiving?
 - Why does Keeler refer to Native Americans as a "very select group of survivors"? Is her characterization consistent with James's perception? Why?
 - Wamsutta James' speech inspired some Native Americans to boycott Thanksgiving and instead observe a National Day of Mourning. Keeler takes a slightly different approach. Which approach makes the most sense to you? Why?
 - Keeler sees present-day Thanksgiving celebrations as a tool for healing. What are ways this can happen? Does the Day of Mourning advance or hinder healing? Why?
 - In what ways are James's and Keeler's perspectives gifts to our nation?
4. To wrap up, write journal entries about whether you have a new view of Thanksgiving. Identify specific things you learned from either James or Keeler and explain how this new knowledge affects your understanding of Thanksgiving.

Featured Book and Curriculum: The Sacred Tree



The *Sacred Tree* was created by the Four Worlds Development Project, a Native American inter-tribal group, as a handbook of Native Spirituality for indigenous peoples all over the Americas and the world. This beautifully illustrated book presents many of the universal concepts and teachings handed down through the ages in Native societies throughout North America concerning the nature, purpose, and possibilities of human existence.

The book uses the ancient symbol of the medicine wheel as a mirror which reflects not only what a person is, but also what they might become through the development of their potentialities. The book and accompanying curriculum guide are available here: www.shop4worlds.com/.

BOOKS: STORIES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

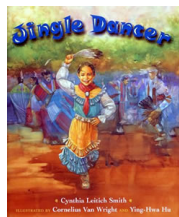
Ages 4+



Chicora and the Little People: The Legend of Indian Corn, A Lumbee Tale

By Arvis Boughman

A young Lumbee girl shares how Indian corn became multicolored. Readers learn the importance of the wisdom of children and of being courageous in the face of ridicule.



Jingle Dancer

By Cynthia Leitich Smith, Cornelius Van Wright, Ying-Hwa Hu

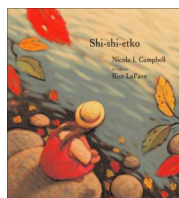
Jenna, a contemporary Muscogee (Creek) girl in Oklahoma, wants to honor a family tradition by jingle dancing at the next powwow. But where will she find enough jingles for her dress? An unusual, warm family story.



Baseball Bats for Christmas

By Michael Kusugak, Vladlyana Langer Krykorka

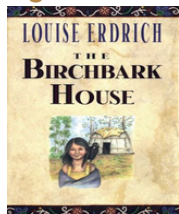
Never having seen trees, the children in Repulse Bay decide that the funny things delivered to them one year for Christmas must actually be for making baseball bats.



Shi-shi-etko

One of the finest examples of an age-appropriate lesson to teach children about a dark chapter in Native history. In vivid, tender prose, the author conveys for children the true impact of residential school policies for Indian communities in the U.S. and Canada.

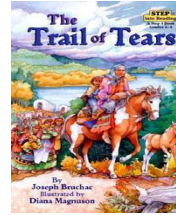
Ages 8+



The Birchbark House

By Louise Erdrich
Omakayas lives on the land her people call the Island of the Golden-Breasted Woodpecker. The satisfying rhythms of her life are shattered when a visitor comes, bringing with him an invisible enemy that will change things forever.

Ages 8+



Trail of Tears

By Joseph Bruchac
In 1838, settlers moving west forced the great Cherokee Nation, and their chief John Ross, to leave their home land and travel 1,200 miles to Oklahoma. An epic story of friendship, war, hope, and betrayal.

Ages 12+



My Name is Seepetza

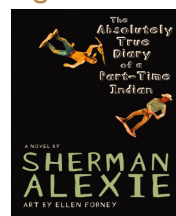
By Shirley Sterling
Her name was Seepetza when she was at home with her family. But now that she's living at the Indian residential school her name is Martha Stone, and everything else about her life has changed as well.



Who Will Tell My Brother?

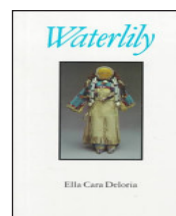
By Marlene Cavell
Determined to sway high school officials to remove disparaging Indian mascots, Evan assumes a struggle that spirals him onto a soul-searching journey and exposes him to a barrage of bullying, taunts, and escalating violence.

Ages 14+



The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

By Sherman Alexie
This story of one Native American boy who leaves his troubled school on the reservation to attend an all-white small town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot.



Waterlily

By Ella Cara Deloria
Waterlily is a story of the Dakota people, as their lives were beginning to be disrupted by the wasichu. Told from a woman's viewpoint, it emphasizes the traditional network of obligations and relationships that formed cultural unity.

CHOOSING BOOKS ON INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

How to Tell the Difference?

www.oyate.org/index.php/resources/41-resources/how-to-tell-the-difference

This online guide is aimed at making it easier for parents, students, teachers, and librarians to choose undistorted books about the lives and histories of indigenous peoples. It provides a list of questions and guidelines to consider when choosing books.

Indigenous Book Lists

indigenouspeoplesissues.com

This website provides a list of books on indigenous peoples worldwide (see sidebar), which can be browsed by geographic region. The site also has news, movies, videos, and other non-print resources.

LESSON PLANS ON INDIGENOUS RIGHTS IN THE UNITED STATES

American Indian Code Talkers

nmai.si.edu/education/codetalkers/html/lessons.html

This resource is a specific lesson that explore the lives and experiences of Native American Code Talkers or servicemen who used their tribal language to aid the US military during World War I and World War II. (Grades 6-12)

American Indian Issues

americanindiantah.com/lesson_plans.html

This site provides lessons about the historical and contemporary political, economic, and social characteristics of sovereign tribal nations throughout the United States. (K-12)

American Indian Perspectives on Thanksgiving

nmai.si.edu/sites/11/files/pdf/education/thanksgiving_poster.pdf

This resource doubles as a curriculum guide for teaching about Thanksgiving. Cultural information and related activities about the environment, the group identity of Native Americans, and many more topics are provided. (Grades 4-8)

Assimilation through Education

loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/assimilation/pdf/teacher_guide.pdf

This guide explains several ways to teach students about the injustices faced by Indian children seeking education. (K-12)

Countering Bias through an Inclusive Curriculum

aps.edu/indian-education/employees/countering-bias-through-an-inclusive-curriculum

This resource provides strategies for countering potential Native American biases in the classroom. (K-12)

Cradleboard Core Curriculum Materials

cradleboard.org/curriculum/index.html

This resource provides core curriculum from a Native American perspective. (K-12)

Indian Education for All

opi.mt.gov/pdf/indianed/ConnectingCultures.pdf

This curriculum provides cultural information, lessons, and related activities that span many different subjects, including Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies. (K-12)

It's All Part of the Story

pbs.org/circleofstories/educators/lesson1.html

This lesson teaches students how to become better storytellers and highlights how different forms of communication are all important in preserving the traditions of different cultures. (Grades 8-12)

Native American Heritage Month

nativeamericanheritagemonth.gov/teachers/index.html

A collection of lessons, art, and other resources for teachers to use during Native American Heritage Month. (K-12)

Native American Influences in U.S. History

tolerance.org/activity/native-american-influences-us-history-and-culture

This resource provides multiple choice, matching, true/false, and other exercises, which test a person's knowledge of Native American influences on the past and present. (Grades 6-12)

Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center

nativeshop.org/resources/health-book.html

This resource includes workbooks, which are available for purchase and detail topics relating to Native American women. (Grades 7 and up)

Our Small World

pbs.org/circleofstories/educators/lesson2.html

In this lesson, students explore contributions made from a variety of different cultures and are taught to appreciate the differences among their findings. 6-8 50 minute periods. (Grades 8-12)

The People vs. Columbus

zinnedproject.org/posts/1497#.UCVACaGPWj6

Through role-playing and a trial simulation, students investigate who was responsible for the death of three million Tainos on the island of Hispaniola in the years after 1492. (Grades 9-12)

The Spirit Survives: The American Indian Boarding School Experience: Then and Now

racebridgesforschools.com/dovie_tracks/thespirtisurvives.pdf

This two-session lesson plan offers an accessible way to address this oppressive, rarely taught episode in U.S. history. (Grade 7-12)

Teaching About Native American Issues

understandingprejudice.org/teach/native.html

This lesson plan offers several helpful tools in teaching about Native Americans, including a Dos and Don'ts list, tips on how to use positive language, and several classroom activities. (Elementary School)

Teaching Young Children about Native Americans

ecap.crc.illinois.edu/eeearchive/digests/1996/reese96.html

This resource explains several Native American stereotypes, perpetuated through television, film, and children's literature, and offers several strategies to overcome these stereotypes. (Elementary School)

APPROPRIATE METHODS FOR TEACHING ABOUT NATIVE AMERICAN ISSUES AND PEOPLE

Source: The Carolina Indian Heritage Association (<http://carolinandnheritage.tripod.com/id60.html>)

Many U.S. teachers discuss Native American history and culture, especially at Thanksgiving time. Unfortunately, the portrayal of Native Americans is often stereotypical, inaccurate, or outdated. This checklist provides tips on how to teach more effectively and appropriately about Native Americans.

- ✓ Understand the term "Native American" includes all peoples indigenous to the Western Hemisphere.
- ✓ Present Native American Peoples as appropriate role models to children.
- ✗ Do not single out Native American students and ask them to describe their families' traditions or their peoples' culture(s).
- ✗ Avoid the assumption there are no Native American students in your class.
- ✓ Use books and materials which are written and illustrated by Native American people as primary source materials: speeches, songs, poems, and writings, which show the linguistic skill of a people who have come from an oral tradition.
- ✗ Do not equate Indians with "things." For example, if alphabet cards say, "A is for apple, B is for ball, I is for Indian," pick a different word so that Indian people are not presented as objects.
- ✗ Avoid rhymes or songs that use Native Americans as counting devices, i.e. "One little, two little, three little..."
- ✓ Research the traditions and histories, oral and written, of Native Americans before attempting to teach these.
- ✗ Avoid referring to or using materials which depict Native Americans as "savages," "primitives," "The Noble Savage," "Red Man," "Red Race," "simple," or "extinct."
- ✗ Do not speak of Native Americans exclusively in past tense. There are nearly one million Native people in the U.S. today, yet many books and videos still have titles such as *How the Indians Lived*.
- ✓ Use materials and texts which outline the continuity of Native American societies from past to present.
- ✓ Present Native American Peoples as having unique, separate, and distinct cultures, languages, beliefs, traditions, and customs.
- ✗ Avoid materials which use non-Native Americans or other characters dressed as "Indians."
- ✗ Do not encourage children to dress up as Indians for Halloween. Even when well-intentioned, costumes involving imitation feathers, face paint, headdresses, and buckskin are disrespectful of traditional Native dress (which many Indians consider honorable or even sacred).
- ✓ Avoid craft activities which trivialize Native American dress, dance, and beliefs, i.e. toilet-paper roll kachinas or "Indian dolls", paper bag and construction paper costumes and headdresses.
- ✓ When making Indian crafts, research authentic methods and have the proper materials. Realize that many songs, dances, legends, and ceremonies of Native American Peoples are considered sacred and should not be "invented" or portrayed as an activity.
- ✓ If your educational institution employs images or references to Native American peoples as mascots, i.e. "Redskins", "Indians," "Chiefs," "Braves," etc. urge your administration to abandon these offensive names.
- ✓ Correct and guide children when they "war whoop," use "jaw-breaker" jargon, or employ any other stereotypical mannerisms.
- ✗ Do not let children to imitate Indians with stereotypes such as one-word sentences ("Ugh," "How"), Hollywood-style grammar ("Me heep big hungry"), or gestures (e.g., war whoops and tomahawk chops).
- ✓ Do challenge TV and movie stereotypes of Native Americans. Discuss the meaning of stereotypes and help children understand that Native Americans were no more savage than others who fought to defend their homes and community.



- ✓ Depict Native American peoples, past and present, as heroes who are defending their people, rights, and lands.
- ✗ Avoid manipulative phrases and wording such as "massacre," "victory," and "conquest" which distort facts and history.
- ✗ Do not perpetuate the myth that a few Europeans defeated thousands of Indians in battle. Historians say the number killed in battle was relatively small; what really defeated Native Americans were European diseases from which they had no immunity.
- ✓ Teach Native American history as a regular part of American History and discuss what went wrong or right.
- ✗ Avoid materials and texts which illustrate Native American heroes as only those who helped Europeans and Euro-Americans, i.e. Thanksgiving.
- ✗ Do not divide Indians and non-Indians into "us" and "them." Instead, explain that Indians were the first Americans and that today Indians are American citizens with the same rights as all Americans.
- ✓ Use materials which show respect and understanding of the sophistication and complexities of Native American societies. Understand and impart that the spiritual beliefs of Native American Peoples are integral to the structure of our societies and are not "superstitions" or "heathen."
- ✓ Invite a Native American guest speaker/presenter to your class or for a school assembly. Contact a local Native American organization or your library for a list of these resources. Offer an honorarium or gift to those who visit your school.
- ✓ Use materials which show the value Native American Peoples place on our elders, children, and women.
- ✗ Avoid offensive terms such as "papoose", and "squaw." Use respectful language.
- ✓ Understand that not all Native American Peoples have "Indian" surnames, but familiar European and Hispanic names as well.
- ✓ Help children understand Native American Peoples have a wide variety of physical features, attributes, and value as do people of ALL cultures and races.
- ✓ Do discuss a variety of Indian nations, such as Hopi, Lakota, and Navajo, rather than lumping all Native Americans together. Explain that each nation has its own name, language, and culture.
- ✗ Avoid the assumption that a Native American person knows everything about all Native Americans.
- ✓ Do understand that Native American children are not always aware of their heritage. Native children sometimes know more about "TV Indians" than about their own heritage, and they should not be singled out to provide a Native perspective or asked to recount Native history.

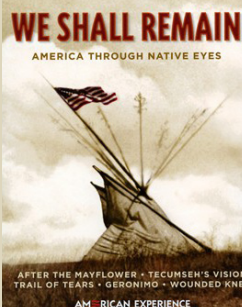


"Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children."

~ Sitting Bull

Perhaps the single most important ingredient in teaching is respect. Native Americans have been stereotyped and treated disrespectfully for so many centuries that it is sometimes hard to recognize when they are being demeaned. It is critical to remember that Indians are living people still carrying on past beliefs and practices in today's world. Be aware that some of your students may be of Indian ancestry, and seek to learn as much as possible about Native American issues so that your teaching is sensitive to the needs of all students.

PBS HOME VIDEO



Featured Film Series: We Shall Remain

A five-part award-winning PBS series that establishes Native history as an essential part of American history. The films show how Native peoples valiantly resisted expulsion from their lands and fought the extinction of their culture - from the Wampanoags of New England in the 1600s who used their alliance with the English to weaken rival tribes, to the bold new leaders of the 1970s who harnessed the momentum of the civil rights movement to forge a pan-Indian identity. *We Shall Remain* represents an unprecedented collaboration between Native and non-Native filmmakers and involves Native advisors and scholars at all levels of the project.

To learn more and buy the DVD, please visit: www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/.

HUMAN RIGHTS CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

- National American Indian Heritage Month - nativeamericanheritagemonth.gov/about/
10 World Science Day for Peace and Development - www.un.org/en/events/scienceday/
16 International Day for Tolerance - www.un.org/en/events/toleranceday/
20 Universal Children's Day - www.un.org/en/events/childrenday/
25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women - www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday/
29 Native American Indian Heritage Day - www.nabifoundation.org/heritage_day.html

DECEMBER

- 1 World Aids Day - www.worldaidsday.org/
2 International Day for the Abolition of Slavery - www.un.org/en/events/slaveryabolitionday/
10 Human Rights Day - www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Day2011/Pages/HRD2011.aspx
18 International Migrants Day - www.un.org/en/events/migrantsday/
20 International Human Solidarity Day - social.un.org/index/InternationalDays/InternationalHumanSolidarityDay.aspx

JANUARY

- 16 World Religion Day - www.worldreligionday.org/
18 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - www.mlkday.gov/
27 International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust - www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/focus/ihrd/comment_post.php

FEBRUARY

- 21 International Mother Language Day - www.un.org/en/events/motherlanguageday/

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Rights Sites News is published quarterly by the The Advocates for Human Rights to promote human rights education in the classroom and support teachers. We welcome suggestions and comments.

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To sign up to receive this free quarterly newsletter and periodic e-mail updates about opportunities related to human rights education, please send your name and your e-mail address to: efarell@advrights.org.

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www.DiscoverHumanRights.org



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