

## **ISSUE: Non-Western Economic Values**

**BACKGROUND:** Many cultures have concepts of wealth that are very different from European economic roots and practices. When “Western” economic values were brought to Native American tribes many Europeans felt that Native economic and social values would destroy their cultures and that it would be in their best interests to adopt European ideas of wealth and economic gain. It was also most profitable for whites if the Indians could barter and trade on “Western” economic terms. When “Western” thought and practice was politically forced on Indian people, Native Americans were forbidden to practice potlatches and other ceremonies of wealth because the dominant culture could not understand how giving everything one owned away could be a sign of wealth since the wealthiest man was often essentially the poorest man, materially speaking, in the tribe.

### **EXAMPLE LESSONS**

**Title: A change of perspective: The Scenario Game**

**Standard: 1.) analyze how human settlement patterns create cooperation and conflict which influence the division and control of the Earth, 2.) analyze how various personal and cultural points of view influence economic decisions, 3.) analyze the impact that supply and demand, scarcity, prices, incentives, competition, and profits influence what is produced and distributed in various economic systems, 4.) use basic economic concepts to compare and contrast local, regional, national, and global economies across time and at the present time, 5.) compare and contrast how values and beliefs influence economic decisions in different economic systems.**

**Grade Level: can be adapted for 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, or 11<sup>th</sup>.**

**Lesson:** The students will engage in a game of economic exchange that will present a variety of perspectives on wealth.

1. Divide the students into groups of 5. For each group make a copy of the scenarios below and cut them apart into one scenario for each player. Give each student a number 1-5 and allow the students to draw a scenario from the 5 slips of paper you have cut apart (the player must redraw if he/she draws his/her own number). Repeat this process for each group of 5 students. Then give each student \$1000 in Monopoly money.
2. Give the students the following instructions: Read your scenario quietly to yourself. Do not share it with your neighbor. Write in your journal as your paper instructs. Take whatever other action your paper tell you to take. Then wait patiently for other students to finish.

### **SCENARIOS**

**Player #1's is your friend and his/her cousin has just graduated from college. He/she wants to have a celebration for him, but a lot of people will be there and he only has money to buy a little food. Your friend has given you a lot of happy memories and always listens to you when you have problems. If you want to you can give him some of the money you have, but you don't have to. Explain in your journal why you decide to do what you do and if you choose to help him/her out give player #1 your money.**

**Player #2 is your neighbor and his/her brother has died and you know that his family will have a lot of visitors and a lot of funeral expenses. You enjoy your neighbor and all of the conversations you've had from your back yards. Sometimes when you get locked out of your house he/she lets you stay over until you can get a key. If you want to you can give him some of your money and you can decide how much. Explain your choice in your journal and if you decide to do so, give your money to player #2.**

**Player #3 is your aunt/uncle and his/her brother is getting married to someone from another country. Your aunt/uncle wants to have a "giveaway" and adopt this person into the family. Your aunt/uncle wants to give 10 blankets that each cost \$100, three horses that each cost about \$1,000, five drums that each cost \$50, some fabric for making dresses that costs about \$200, and 10 shawls that each cost \$25. Your aunt/uncle has spent a lot of time teaching you important things and taking you on little trips to see different places. If you want to you can buy some of these items for your aunt/uncle. You can choose one, several, or none. Explain your choice in your journal and if you choose to do so, give the money for the items you want to give your aunt/uncle to player #3.**

**Player #4 is your brother/sister and his/her little boy has just turned two years old and is about to dance his first dance with the other members of the family. To celebrate the occasion, your sister/brother is sponsoring a dance contest where he/she will give away \$1500 in prize money. (\$700 for first place, \$500 for second, and \$300 for third) You really like your little nephew and you have a lot of hopes that he will be successful and enjoy life. You also want him to have a lot of wise mentors while he is growing up. If you want to you can contribute to the family to help them cover the cost of the contest. You can choose how much you would like to contribute. Explain your choice in your journal and if you choose to contribute, give your money to player #4.**

**Player #5 is your brother/sister and he/she is receiving his/her name in a special ceremony. Your parents will pay the drum \$100 for playing honor songs and singing, they will sponsor a giveaway with blankets, towels, baskets of food, and toys for the small children costing \$700, and they will give the elder who names the child a gift of three wool blankets, a saddle, and \$100 in cash (gift totals \$1,300) as a sign of appreciation and respect. You are very proud of your brother/sister and you want him/her to have a special place in the world. You think he/she deserves to feel special and to know how many people care for him/her. If you want to you can**

**purchase some of these items for your parents to give away. You can choose to buy one, several, or none of the items. In your journal explain your choice, and if you chose to contribute to the give away give you money to player #5.**

3. Following the above exercise, ask the students to read their scenarios to their group members. This will explain why different amounts of money were given to each of the players in the group.
4. After reading the scenarios ask each student in the group to write a thank you note for the gift they received (if they received one) and give it to the person who gave them the gift. On the note they should mark the specific amount of money that was received. The note should express clearly and specifically why the gift was meaningful. You may need to give an example of this activity.
5. Following this writing activity, engage the class in a discussion about how we use money in the Western culture. Who is rich in America? Who is poor? How can you tell how much money people have?
6. Following this discussion ask students to give their thank you notes to the group members who gave them money. Then show them a table of items they can purchase (pencils, stickers, other school supplies work well). Then ask students to display the money they have remaining on their desks. Take this money and explain that in some cultures wealth is measured by what you give instead of what you have. In your discussion it is important to note that there is reciprocity in giving and that giveaways work because they distribute material wealth as well as the wealth of friends and family and healthy society. Explain that there are no set amounts that must be given, but that the giving is an expression of appreciation for the help and support friends and family have given and of respect for the guidance and wisdom elders offer. In many Native American cultures the oldest and wisest leaders are often also the poorest though they are well supported by the other members of the society because they recognize what elders can contribute in knowledge and advice. Then explain that each student is now wealthy according to the amount of money on the thank you note they received (the amount they gave). Allow them to use these thank you cards to purchase items from the display table. If they have truly learned the lesson they will probably share with the students who have nothing because they gave nothing.

**Assessment: Following the scenario game ask students to do a reflective writing in their journal that explains the new perspectives on wealth they have just learned. They should explain how Western economics works and how other systems of wealth can also work. They may critique strengths and weaknesses of both systems and should also include emotional responses of their own to today's experiences.**