

# *Bowwow Powwow*

## Indian Education for All Language Arts Model Teaching Unit

### Overview

Anchor Text

#### *Bowwow Powwow*

Author Brenda J. Child, Illustrations by Jonathan Thunder, Translation by Gordon Jourdain  
The book is a winner of the 2020 American Indian Youth Literature Award.

#### Lesson Summary

This lesson plan provides background information regarding powwows and instructional strategies for use with the book. Teaching the book along with the recommended resources and strategies can meet several Essential Understandings and English Language Arts standards.

#### Synopsis\*

Windy Girl is blessed with a vivid imagination. She gathers stories of long-ago traditions, such as dances, sharing, and gratitude, from Uncle. She tells such stories about her dog, Itchy Boy – the way he dances to request a treat and how he wriggles with joy in response to just about everything.

When Uncle, Windy Girl, and Itchy Boy attend a powwow, Windy watches the dancers and listens to the singers. She eats tasty food and joins family and friends around the campfire. Later, she falls asleep under the stars.

Uncle's stories and the powwow inspire other visions in her head, a powwow where all the participants are dogs. Windy sees veterans in a Grand Entry, a visiting drum group, and dancers; all with telltale ears and paws and tails; all celebrating in song and dance; all attesting to the wonder of the powwow.

This playful story by Brenda Child is accompanied by a retelling in Ojibwe by Gordon Jourdain. It is brought to life by Jonathan Thunder's vibrant dreamscapes. The result is a powwow tale for the ages.

#### About the Authors\*

**Brenda Child** (Red Lake Ojibwe) is professor of American Studies at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis and author of *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940*, *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community*, and [My Grandfather's Knocking Sticks: Ojibwe Family Life and Labor on the Reservation, 1900-1940](#).



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**Jonathan Thunder** (Red Lake Ojibwe) is an award-winning painter and digital media artist living in Duluth, Minnesota. View his work at [Thunder Fine Art](#).

**Gordon Jourdain** (Lac La Croix First Nation) teaches at the Misaabekong Ojibwe Language Immersion program for Duluth Public Schools.

Time Frame

Three-four days (30 – 40 minutes per day or as time permits for classroom schedule and student grade level)

## Learning Objectives

While reading and discussing the aspects of the book, students will:

- ✓ summarize relevant and interrelated issues about powwows and cultural traditions;
- ✓ work effectively and respectfully in a small group, listening to everyone's responses;
- ✓ compare and contrast important print/non-print information while using background knowledge to learn about powwows;
- ✓ understand and analyze literary elements such as character and plot;
- ✓ ask questions, check inferences, and summarize information from reading and viewing background sources related to powwows and related cultural traditions;
- ✓ create and share with classmates one's own responses to and understandings of the unique Ojibwe cultural traditions encountered in this book;
- ✓ understand that American Indians have their own unique languages;
- ✓ learn about cultural differences and similarities of the Ojibwe in Minnesota and the Ojibwe (Chippewa) in Montana.

## Materials Needed

- One copy of *Bowwow Powwow*
- One copy of *Powwow Summer*
- *Your Guide to Understanding and Enjoying Powwows* (OPI publication)
- Student journals (a plain lined-paper notebook with student-labeled dates specific to each journal entry works well)
- Access to film clips on IEFA web site
- Paper, pens, pencils, crayons
- Maps of the United States and Montana
- Computers and projector

## Instructional Plan

### Lesson One: Introducing the book and the topics covered

Introduce the journal the students will be using throughout this unit. As an introductory exercise, have students write down a few notes about a recent dream they had. Ask. . .

- What was it about?
- What kinds of images or sounds did you hear/see?
- How much could you remember?
- Was the dream related to a recent experience?

Next, have students draw a picture or an image of their dream and have them share it with the class. After all students have a chance to share, tell them they will be listening/reading a story from the Ojibwe (Chippewa) about a young Ojibwe girl who attends a powwow with her dog and then has a very interesting dream.

Point out that the Ojibwe/Chippewa reside in several states, including Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and Wisconsin. Utilize a map of the United States to show the location of these states and make sure to highlight Minnesota and Montana.

Watch [Greetings from Montana American Indian students](#)

- Consider using a 3 – 2 – 1 prompt to review the film. Ask students to use their journals to write down three things they saw in the video that caught their attention, two questions they have about information presented in the video, and one thing they really enjoyed.
- One key feature of the video to point out is that many of the young people featured in the video were participating in powwows.

With students, explore out-loud what they know or believe about contemporary American Indian powwows. If initial discussion reveals students lack basic knowledge about powwows, provide opportunities for students to access and share accurate information. This lesson provides a means for students, at their discretion, to contribute their real-world knowledge to the discussions. If applicable and appropriate, American Indian students may wish to talk about powwows and their experiences, but please note many students may not want to discuss their experiences.

Review basic information about powwows. Today, powwows, or celebrations, are still very much part of the lives of many Native Americans. The powwow season can begin as early as March but is generally from June through September. Several powwows, also called celebrations, take place —somewhere — every weekend. Many families pack up and go on the circuit, camping out, and enjoying activities, singing, dancing, and seeing friends they may not have seen since the previous season. A powwow may have dancing and singing contests, “giveaways,” encampments, feasting, and other cultural activities. In present times, activities such as hand games (stick games), horse races, softball tournaments, parades, powwow princess contests, and other events have been added.

- a. For more background information utilize the OPI resource called [Your Guide to Understanding and Enjoying Pow Wows](#)

## Lesson Two: Reading Bowwow Powwow

To introduce the lesson, have the students watch the following video [Last Chance Powwow 2019-Helena, MT](#)

- Have the students respond in their journals after viewing the video. Instruct them to begin today's journal entry by writing in complete sentences:
  - one thing they learned by watching the student introduction video which was viewed in the previous lesson.
  - one thing they learned by watching the Last Chance Powwow video.

After the providing time to journal, have a brief discussion, allowing the students share their reactions.

Next, introduce the story and read the story aloud as a class. Point out the use of voice, perspective, vocabulary, traditional words, and figurative language.

Consider using a 3 – 2 – 1 prompt to review the book. Ask students to use their journals to write down three things they heard that caught their attention, two questions they have about information presented in the book, and one thing they really enjoyed.

## Lesson Three: Learning about the Ojibwe

Now reread the story and stop at various points in to talk about the various topics and themes presented in the text. Make sure to point out that the story was written by an Ojibwe author and it also includes text in Ojibwe. Ask the students to think about why the author would want to include Ojibwe language.

Next, share with the class that there are two Ojibwe/Chippewa tribal nations in Montana, the Little Shell Chippewa and the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation.

Display a [map of Montana](#) that shows the location of these two tribal nations. To help provide a context and some basic information about the two Ojibwe/Chippewa tribes in Montana, have students watch the following two videos and write a brief reaction to each video in their journal.

- [Indian Nations: Chippewa Cree](#)
- [Indian Nations: Little Shell Chippewa](#)

Once again, refer to the book and have students summarize key points in the story and utilize the synopsis to guide the discussion and review.

## Extended Learning Activities

- A. If possible, organize a field trip to a powwow or bring in guest speakers to share and demonstrate different types of powwow dances and songs.
- B. For ideas regarding extended learning activities, refer to Unit 1 Emerging Literacy and The Little Duck Sikihsis and Unit 3 Exploring Powwow Traditions with Jingle Dancer located in the [Model Teaching Units Incorporating Indian Education for All in the Elementary Grades](#).
- C. For more short stories about powwows, check out these two stories from the Indian Reading Series, [A Little Boy's Big Moment](#) and [Grandma Rides in the Parade](#).
- D. For more advanced readers have your students check out this book called *Powwow Summer* from your school library. The book features a Chippewa family and shares their story of travelling to powwows around the Minnesota region.

## Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians and English Language Arts Standards

### [Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians](#)

#### **Essential Understanding 1**

There is great diversity among the twelve sovereign tribes of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories, and governments. Each tribe has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.

#### **Essential Understanding 3**

The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. Additionally, each tribe has its own oral histories, which are as valid as written histories. These histories pre-date the “discovery” of North America.

## English Language Arts Standards

### **Kindergarten**

- ✓ KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS RI.K.3 With prompting and support, describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text. Include texts by and about American Indians.
- ✓ CRAFT AND STRUCTURE RI.K.4 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text. Recognize words and phrases with cultural significance to American Indians.
- ✓ RESEARCH TO BUILD AND PRESENT KNOWLEDGE W.K.8 With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question. Include sources by and about American Indians.

### **First Grade**

- ✓ KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS RL.1.2 Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson. Include stories by and about American Indians.
- ✓ RESEARCH TO BUILD AND PRESENT KNOWLEDGE W.1.8 With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question. Include sources by and about American Indians.
- ✓ INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS RL.1.9 Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories including American Indian Stories.

### **Second Grade**

- ✓ CRAFT AND STRUCTURE RL.2.5 Describe the overall structure of a story, including American Indian stories, describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.
- ✓ RESEARCH TO BUILD AND PRESENT KNOWLEDGE W.2.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question. Include sources by and about American Indians.

\* modified from book jacket