

# Contributions of Indian People

## Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies  
Grade Level: Grades 7-8  
Suggested Duration: 50 minutes

## Stage 1 Desired Results

### Established Goals

**Social Studies Standard 2, Benchmark 8.5** Identify and explain the basic principles of democracy.

### Understandings

- Students will understand American Indian people have been and will continue to have an impact on our society (EU 3).
- Images and ideas associated with our democracy were borrowed from American Indian cultures.

### Essential Questions

- What was the Iroquois Confederacy?
- How did the Confederacy influence early Colonial thinking?
- What role do American Indian oral traditions play in examining history from multiple perspectives?

### Students will be able to...

- develop an understanding and appreciation for ongoing oral traditions/stories that have been passed down for centuries.

### Students will know...

- the Iroquois Confederacy played an important role in the early formation of the US democracy.

## Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

### Performance Tasks

1. Students will be asked to find and share information from their textbooks and write up a brief reaction to what they have learned during the lesson.

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### Performance Tasks

Students could develop displays or presentations on the various ways the Iroquois Confederacy (and other tribal nations) influenced early colonial thought.

### Stage 3 Learning Plan

#### Learning Activities:

Ask students what they know about the Iroquois Confederacy. Lead a brief class discussion about the Iroquois.

Have students look up references to the Iroquois in their social studies textbook to find information about Iroquois influence on early colonial thinking. Give them approximately five-ten minutes to find Iroquois references and discuss what they found.

Explain that in addition to the stories written about the Iroquois Confederacy in their text, descendants of the tribal nations who made up the Confederacy still pass down oral stories and traditions. Many of these stories have to do with early interactions between them and the colonists.

Today they will have an opportunity to learn how the design of the US Seal was influenced by concepts from Iroquois Confederacy.

Have a student display a dollar bill (may also want to display an overhead of the US Seal). Find the Great Seal of the United States on the right side of the dollar bill. Notice that the eagle on the Great Seal is clutching arrows in his left claw. When Ben Franklin met with the leaders of the American Revolution, he demonstrated what he had learned from his time spent with the Iroquois Confederacy, particularly, a conversation he had with Canassatego, an Onondaga leader. Canassatego handed an arrow to Ben Franklin and asked him to break it. He was able to break it easily. He then handed Franklin six arrows. He was unable to break them. Ben Franklin used this demonstration later on when the colonists, slowly growing incensed with British and their increasing efforts to tax the colonists to pay for the cost of British troops stationed in North America. It was the basis of Franklin's famous quote, "We must all hang together or assuredly we shall all hang separately." A reminder of this famous story can be found on the back of the dollar bill, with the thirteen arrows, representing the thirteen original colonies, clutched in the eagle's claw.

Have students read the interview Bill Moyer's conducted with Oren Lyons. Oren Lyons is the Faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan, Onondaga Council of Chiefs of the Hau de no sau nee (ho dee noe sho nee), of the Onondaga Nation (meaning People Building a Long House).

After reading the interview ask them to write up a short reaction paper (2-3 paragraphs) on what they have learned and turn in before the end of class.

#### Materials/Resources Needed

Dollar bill – US seal is on the back



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[Information on the Great Seal](#)

[Oren Lyons interview transcript](#)

