

Using Inquiry Processes to Research American Indian Issues

Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies

Grade Level: Grades 7-8

Suggested Duration: One day for topic introduction and a couple weeks for research, both inside and outside the class

Stage 1 Desired Results

Established Goals

Social Studies Standard 1, Benchmark 1 Students will apply the steps of an inquiry process (i.e., identify a question or problem, locate and evaluate potential resources, gather and synthesize information, create a new product, and evaluate product and process).

Students will use the inquiry-based process to learn about multiple perspectives regarding historical and contemporary events relating to American Indians.

Understandings

- History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from an Indian perspective frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell (EU 6).

Essential Questions

- What is a stereotype? What are some stereotypes you have heard about Indians?
- Why is it important to view events from multiple perspectives?
- Why are terms like "discover" and "new world" problematic?

Students will be able to...

- utilize various resources to gather information about specific events/issues pertaining to American Indians.

Students will know...

- in the study of historical and contemporary events there are multiple perspectives to take into account when forming opinions and making judgments.

Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks

1. Students will be asked to research a particular issue/event pertaining to American Indians.
2. Students will gather evidence and present their findings in the form of a brief research paper.



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Other Evidence

1. If class time allows, have students present their findings to their classmates. This could be done through poster board presentations, role plays, speeches, and debates.

Stage 3 Learning Plan

Learning Activities

Suggest the following statements: All Indians are good hunters; Indian people lived in tipis; Indians speak the same language; All Indians live on the reservation (these are just suggestions for starters).

Have students reflect on the statements and discuss each one of them with the class. Have students brainstorm possible responses or comments about each statement. After a brief discussion, assign students a particular American Indian topic to research (please refer to the suggested topics under Materials/Resources to help guide students with their research).

Use of a [RAFTS writing prompt](#) is suggested in order to help students organize their findings.

Have students use the following questions to help guide their research:

- What is the issue? (redefine it in your own words)
- What do you currently know about this topic? List your ideas and save to compare with information gathered as the lesson progresses.
- Have students identify potential questions regarding their particular topic.
- What are some differing perspectives surrounding this topic and what are their sources? (You can only know this after a good deal of time spent research and reading.)
- What resources did you use to reach your conclusions?
- Has your perspective changed as a result of your research, or do you feel more informed about this particular issue?

Suggested Research Topics

American Indian Sports mascots

Columbus and "discovery"

Lewis and Clark – American Indian perspectives

Manifest Destiny

Pocahontas

Indians, Pilgrims and the "first Thanksgiving"

Legal Issues – i.e., water rights, land issues, court cases

Materials/Resources Needed

The following reference books were sent to Montana public school libraries. They provide an excellent starting point for research and general background information.

American Indian Contributions to the World, edited by Emory Dean Keoke (Lakota) and Kay Marie Porterfield.

- ❖ This excellent five-volume set of Keoke's and Porterfield's earlier work is accessible to students from fourth grade through high school. The subjects covered are "Buildings, Clothing, and Art,"

"Food, Farming and Hunting," "Medicine and Health," Science and Technology," and "Trade, Transportation and Warfare."

A Broken Flute: The Native Experience in Books for Children, edited by Doris Seale and Beverly Slapin.

- ❖ *A Broken Flute* deals with the issue of cultural appropriation in books for children and evaluates hundreds of books for children and teenagers published from the early 1900s through 2004. According to a review in "Multicultural Review," it is "as close to comprehensive as a bibliography on a given subject can get." "Equally valuable," the review continues, "are the reflections of the reviewers and their children about the negative images perpetrated by mainstream society and its educational system as well as their own efforts to make their voices heard."

Native America in the Twentieth Century, An Encyclopedia, edited by Mary B. Davis.

- ❖ All classroom teachers who are teaching anything about "Native Americans" should have this single-volume encyclopedia available and use it frequently. The emphasis is on Indian peoples today, and the involvement of a great many knowledgeable Indian people, close to much of what they describe, contributes greatly to accuracy and coverage of usually ignored matters.

American Indian Contributions to the World: 15,000 Years of Inventions and Innovations, edited by Emory Dean Keoke (Lakota) and Kay Marie Porterfield.

- ❖ With entries ranging from anti-asthmatic medications to zoned biodiversity, this meticulously researched volume is a comprehensive resource to the numerous inventions and innovations made by the indigenous peoples of North, Meso-, and South America. Containing over 450 entries, alphabetically arranged and fully cross-referenced, this indispensable reference book is a must for every classroom and library.

Native North American Almanac: A Reference Work of Native North Americans in the United States and Canada, edited by Duane Champagne.

- ❖ This huge comprehensive volume provides historical and contemporary information about the Native peoples of North America. A broad range of topics including history and historical landmarks, health, law and legislation, activism, environment, urbanization, education, economy, languages, arts, literatures, media, and gender relations makes this highly readable book essential for librarians and teachers.

[Office of Public Instruction Indian Education for All website](#)