

Using Inquiry Processes to Research American Indian Issues

Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies

Grade Level: Grades 6-8

Suggested Duration: One – two class periods for topic introduction and a week for research, both inside and outside the class

Stage 1 Desired Results

Established Goals

- (4) The history content standards for sixth through eighth grade are that each student will:
- (c) analyze how, since European contact, historical events and policies have mutually impacted American Indian and European societies;
 - (d) identify how new archaeological and scientific information shapes historical understanding;
 - (f) understand that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations of historical events;
 - (g) analyze how people's perspectives shaped the historical narratives they created;
 - (h) identify limitations and biases in primary and secondary sources, specifically regarding misinformation and stereotypes; and
 - (i) students understand that the questions people ask shape the conclusions they reach.

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 American Indian perspectives frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell. (EU6)

Essential Questions

- What are some facts you have heard about American Indians? How do you know it is a fact?
- Where and how do we get accurate information about American Indians?
- What is something you would like to learn more about regarding Montana tribal nations?
- Why is it important to view events from multiple perspectives?

Students will be able to...

- develop questions to guide their research.
- utilize various resources to gather information about specific events/issues pertaining to American Indians.
- use the inquiry-based process to learn about multiple perspectives regarding historical and contemporary events relating 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.
- how to access and evaluate accurate and relevant information to answer research questions they have about American Indians.

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 and/or oral presentation. 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

Begin the class by posing the following question: Have you ever heard about the Dutch purchasing Manhattan from a Native American tribe and the Dutch using beads for payment? Allow some time for discussion. As a way to introduce inquiry-based learning research utilize this [inquiry-based lesson plan](#) which is about the mythological purchase of Manhattan.

View the actual lesson plan with students and have them examine some key elements of the lesson, in particular, the 1626 painting about the so-called purchase, along with some of the primary sources that are included in the lesson.

Ideally, you would want to teach the entire lesson, but if you are limited by time, a sampling of key components of the lesson would provide students with a concrete example of how some of our country's popular stories about Native Americans in US history are more of a myth than an actual event. This lesson plan would provide an excellent "hook" to get students interested in examining issues from multiple perspectives along with asking the right kinds of questions to get at more holistic and inclusive answers.

Summarize key points and ideas from the Manhattan purchase lesson plan and transition to a brief discussion of Essential Understanding 6.

Share the text and [Key Concepts from Essential Understanding 6](#) – History from American Indian Perspectives and facilitate a class discussion.

Ask students what is something you always wanted to learn more about regarding American Indians?

Facilitate a class discussion and list out topics on the board as students bring them up.

Now ask them how they might find more information about their topic. Where would you look? What resources would you use?

Have students reflect on the topics and discuss a few of them with the class.

After a brief discussion, transition to potential research topics about American Indians and share the following key components regarding the inquiry model:

- stating a "what if" or "I wonder" question to be investigated
- brainstorming possible procedures
- identifying an "I think" statement to test
- designing and carrying out a plan
- collecting evidence and drawing conclusions
- sharing and communication results

Assignment: This could be done as an independent or small group project. Allow students ample time in class to conduct research, which would include independent work outside of class time.

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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 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 will you use to reach your conclusions?

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

Some Potential Research Topics

- American Indian Sports mascots
- Boarding Schools
- 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

Background Information

Inquiry based learning processes

- Creating questions of their own
- Obtaining supporting evidence to answer the question(s)
- Explaining the evidence collected
- Connecting the explanation to the knowledge obtained from the investigative process
- Creating an argument and justification for the explanation

Potential articles and resources to share with students

[Bringing Inquiry-Based Learning Into Your Class](#)

[Emerging Inquiry: Using Nonfiction to Guide Student Research](#)

[Essential Understandings Key Concepts](#)

[I is for Ignoble: Stereotyping Native Americans](#)

[Native American Stereotypes in Early Films](#)

[Probing the Paradoxes of Native Americans in Pop Culture](#)

[Teaching and Learning About American Indians FAQ](#)

[Teaching and Learning about Contemporary Issues in Indian Country](#) – Consider signing up for this HUB course to increase your background knowledge about contemporary issues.

The following reference books were sent to Montana public school libraries. They provide an excellent starting point for research and general background information. Be sure to check out the [List of IEFA Resources Sent to Schools](#) to see other IEFA resources that should be in your school library.

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."

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 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.

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.