



## Lesson Plan – Culture, Language & Families

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### Overview

"We need to keep in mind, too, that the lines of demarcation are never clean cut. Imagine a patchwork quilt in which the scraps of cloth are, unfortunately, not of fast color. After one wash there would be a blurring out of tones, a blending of each two neighboring colors along the seams. That's about the way culture areas are (Southeastern, Eastern Woodlands, Plains, Plateau, Southwestern and North Pacific Coast). The world over, people borrow and adapt ideas when they have the chance" (Ella Deloria. *Speaking of Indians*, University of Nebraska Press, 1998, page 17).

My name is Nicole Menard. I was born in Gordon, Nebraska and I am Oglala Lakota. It is with honor that I speak of my family who are from the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Most of my immediate family now live in Denver, Colorado.

I recently received a Master of Arts degree in American Indian Studies at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona. I am an English teacher who is currently working with high school expelled students in the Lincoln Public Schools District. It is my life's passion to share my experiences and assist at-risk youth in achieving the gift of life long learning.

An Anglo family adopted me at birth, so I personally relate to many of the topics presented in *Indian Country Diaries*. I have used the following activities and lessons with my students over the years. I hope they will help other educators and students explore and understand Native American culture.

"Peoplehood is a community of human beings that possesses a distinct language, a particular territory, a specific ceremonial cycle and a sacred history that essentially tells how they came into existence, how they should behave in relation to their environment, when and how they perform ceremonies, and how they are related to each other within the community... The diagram of the Peoplehood Model shows the four factors as they overlap, entwine, interpenetrate and interact." (Tom Holm. "Sovereignty and Peoplehood," *Red Ink*, v.8.2, Spring 2000, page 43).



This lesson uses Holm's Peoplehood Model and Deloria's patchwork quilt as a representation of culture and the blending of colors as the similarities and differences between cultures. The lesson is designed to focus student's attention on the similarities between cultures around the world,

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even the "American" culture. Students will examine sections in *A Seat at the Drum* and *Spiral of Fire* that address the many components of culture according to Holm's Peoplehood Model.

The lesson is divided into three parts. The first part will be a discussion of *A Seat at the Drum* and *Spiral of Fire* as it relates to Native culture and its place in modern society. The second part of the lesson will be group work according to the Holm's Peoplehood Model in which students will identify how their culture is similar to the cultures represented in *A Seat at the Drum* and *Spiral of Fire*. Students will be examining documents and ideas of modern Native authors as well as using the *A Seat at the Drum* and *Spiral of Fire* resources.

The third part of the lesson will be bringing all the "quilt pieces" together to form a cultural quilt that represents how cultures today "borrow and adapt ideas when they have the chance."

## Grade Level 9 - 12

### Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Explore the similarities and differences of culture between Native American societies and non-Native societies
- Explain what culture is to Native American peoples as it relates to language, land, ceremonies and sacred history
- Research culture as it relates to the student's own particular history

**National Standards** [All standards are from McREL's compendium of national standards, <http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/index.asp>.]

- Understand the similarities and differences among Native American societies (Standard 1 Level IV, 2)
- Understand the different European perceptions of Native American societies during the years of exploration (Standard 1, IV, 6)
- Understand the interactions between Native Americans and white society (e.g., the attitudes and policies of government officials, the U.S. Army, missionaries and settlers toward Native Americans; the provision and effects of the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887 on tribal identity, land ownership and assimilation; the legacy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century federal Indian policy; Native Americans responses to increased white settlement, mining activities, and railroad construction) (Standard 19, Level III, 1I)

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- Understand scientific and technological developments in America after World War II (e.g., and how they improved the standard of living and changed demographic patterns) (Standard 26, Level IV, 1)
- Understand the socioeconomic factors of the post-World War II period in America (e.g., the gap between poverty and the rising affluence of the middle class, the extent of poverty in post-World War II) (Standard 26, Level IV, 3)
- Understand the various influences on American culture (e.g., how ethnic art, food, music, and clothing are incorporated into mainstream culture and society) (Standard 31, III, 4)
- Understand how different groups attempted to achieve their goals (e.g., the grievances of racial and ethnic minorities and their reference to the nation's charter documents to rectify past injustices, local community efforts to adapt facilities for the disabled) (Standard 31, III, 5)
- Understand major contemporary social issues and the groups involved (e.g., continuing debates over multiculturalism, bilingual education, and group identity and rights vs. individual rights and identity) (Standard 31, IV, 5)

## Estimated Time

Four days, depending on time allotted for research, organization and construction

## Necessary Materials

- Computers with Internet access
- Printers
- The Diagram of Holms' Peoplehood Model (see end of this document)
- The pages on this web site DVD or a copy of *Indian Country Diaries* programs available at VisionMaker Video
- Selections of books and web sites listed in Recommended Resources below
- Construction paper
- Glue
- Student notebooks

## Teaching Procedure

1. Students will view both segments from *Indian Country Diaries*, or will research pages on this web site listed below. Students will record in their notebooks their initial reactions and thoughts about *A Seat at the Drum* and *Spiral of Fire*. Next, students will write down

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everything they know about Native Americans, or questions concerning the documentaries. Have a class discussion about their questions or concerns. If students do not have any topics to discuss, item two contains discussion questions to get them thinking about culture:

2. *A Seat at the Drum*: Choose one or more segments to watch from *A Seat at the Drum*. Below are questions and ideas that students should watch for when they view the program or view the video segments on this web site. Students will need to take notes.

What to watch for:	On the DVD	On this web site
<p><b>Background for Teachers:</b> In <i>A Seat at the Drum</i>, Mark Anthony Rolo notes that some young, urban Indians are getting interested in their traditional culture, but many of the elders are returning to the reservations. "These elders are the last native speakers," Rolo says, "the last reservoirs of tradition, dance and ceremony. When they move back home, the second and third generations will be completely cut off in the cities."</p> <p><b>Questions for Students:</b> What happens when a culture dies?</p>	<p>Chapter Four "Assimilation"</p>	<p><u>Revitalizing Native Cultures</u></p>
<p><b>Background for Teachers:</b> At the Creek Nation picnic, Mark meets a man who has only 1/32<sup>th</sup> Indian blood in his veins. "You're pretty blooded out," Mark jokes. The Creek are one of a few tribes that do not require a certain level of blood quantum to be a member.</p> <p><b>Questions for Students:</b> Is blood the best way to define membership? How would you feel to be called a "half breed?" How important was learning the culture to tribes before contact with Europeans? Should people wanting to become tribal members today have to prove their ancestry or prove they know and follow the culture?</p>	<p>Chapter Five "Politics of Identity"</p>	<p><u>Voting Rights</u></p>

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<p><b>Background for Teachers:</b> There are two factions in the Creek Nation, the modern, urban Indians and the traditionalists who mostly live on the reservation in Oklahoma.</p> <p><b>Questions for Students:</b> How important is spirituality to those factions?</p>	<p>Chapter Five "Politics of Identity"</p>	<p><u>Spirituality</u></p>
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3. *Spiral of Fire*: Choose one or more segments to watch from *Spiral of Fire*. Below are questions and ideas that students should watch for when they view the program or view the video segments on this web site. Students will need to take notes.

<p><b>What to watch for:</b></p>	<p><b>On the DVD</b></p>	<p><b>On this web site</b></p>
<p><b>Background for Teachers:</b> "The Cherokee language defines who we are," says Laura Pinnix. "If we will ever lose our language we will not be Cherokee, because the language encompasses everything." Out of the hundreds of languages spoken before contact, only 175 are still spoken by Native people. Of those, only 20 are being taught to children in the home.</p> <p><b>Questions for Students:</b> Do you think it's possible for a language to carry an entire culture? What happens when languages die?</p>	<p>Chapter Three "Language &amp; Culture"</p>	<p><u>Cherokee Language &amp; Culture</u></p>
<p><b>Background for Teachers:</b> One of the teachers at Cherokee High School says, "We're losing a lot of our kids right after sixth grade, especially the boys. The statistics show the high drop out rates. Studies show that it's just lack of self-esteem. They don't know their culture. They're kind of lost. 'Who am I? Am I white? Am I Native American?'"</p>	<p>Chapter Four "Education"</p>	<p><u>Education</u></p>



<p><b>Questions for Students:</b> How can you teach a language and culture when the mainstream American culture is so tempting? Bo Taylor says families have to be immersed in the traditional culture. Is that practical today? What do you think of the Cherokee's plan for an educational village where older students will help younger ones?</p>		
<p><b>Background for Teachers:</b> LeAnne Howe is excited to participate in a Stomp Dance with other Cherokee women. LeAnne also says, "For Cherokees as well as all other Indians, the question of identity is tied to the land as perfume is to the rose."  <b>Questions for Students:</b> How important do you think ceremonies and spirituality is to the preservation of a culture? How can there be a spiritual tie to the land when so many tribes have been forced by the government to move throughout history?</p>	<p>Chapter 9 "Spirituality"</p>	<p><u>Spirituality</u></p>

4. After students have finished viewing these segments and examining their notes, brainstorm all that students know about culture and display those ideas on a board. What is culture? What exactly encompasses a tribe's culture according to the Native people in *Indian Country Diaries*? Be sure that students understand culture according to Holm's Peoplehood Model in order to make comparisons as they do their smaller group activities.
5. Small group work: Divide students into four groups. Each group will research an element of Holm's Peoplehood Model (Language, Territory/Land, Ceremonial Practice/Cycles, Sacred History) according to their own group's cultures. Remember, the focus of the cultural quilt is to find the similarities between Native culture and the student's own cultures. Hopefully, there will be many different cultures represented in each small group, but if not, the research component will allow students to research "a culture" and participate in the making of the culture quilt. Research papers will be one to two pages in length.



## Group 1 Language

This group will investigate their own ancestral languages. Students will look at the similarities between Native languages and their own languages. Students could look at the way in which languages are recorded historically, linguistic traces or how language is connected to place and religion. Some other ways students can show how their language is similar to Native languages is through literature, letters, oral stories, jokes, historical accounts and science (astronomy, etc.). Each student will write a one to two page research paper on their own ancestral language (students will need access to a computer and printer).

## Group 2 Sacred History

This group will investigate sacred history as it relates to Native people. Then, students will research their own sacred history as it pertains to their culture and find similarities and differences between the two. If students can't think of their history in terms of "sacred," then they need to research their own cultural history. This might be how their ancestors came to be "Americans." Each student will record their historical story in a one to two page research paper (students will need access to a computer and printer).

## Group 3 Ceremonial Practice/Cycles

This group will investigate the ceremonial practices/cycles they witnessed in *Indian Country Diaries* and the historical significance of these ceremonies. Next, students will research their own ceremonial practices and find the similarities to Native ceremonial cycles. Students can record appropriate ceremonies that are relevant to their lives and incorporate them into the cultural quilt. For instance, the Lakota have a sacred ceremony during the summer solstice called the Sun Dance. The Cherokee and many other tribes have Green Corn ceremonies. Each student will record appropriate ceremonies relevant to their lives in a one to two page research paper (students will need access to a computer and printer).

## Group 4 Territory/Land

This group will investigate the territory/land that is discussed in *Indian Country Diaries*. Where is the land in *A Seat at the Drum* and where is the land in *Spiral of Fire*? Why is it so important to Native peoples? Be sure to explain how all four components of Holm's Peoplehood Matrix are connected to one another. Discuss how Native people have passed down origin stories for generations, and how each story includes where they came from. For example, the origin story of the Navajo tribe states that they came into existence through a series of different colored under-worlds beneath our present day world. They emerged at Xajinai, in the La Plata Mountains in Southwest Colorado. The Navajo people are surrounded by four sacred mountains in Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona.

Once each student has acquired this information, they will investigate the territory/land that is a part of their cultural background. Each student will research his or her territory/land and record why it is important to them in a one to two page research



paper (students will need access to a computer and printer). The record will be incorporated into the cultural quilt.

6. Once students have had ample time to research their topic areas and the similarities between their cultures and the Native people represented in the PBS series, each small group will put together 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the quilt using all the research papers from each student.
  - A. Glue research papers onto construction paper.
  - B. Each group should arrange research paper together to form 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the “quilt”Display each section from the small group work together on a wall. There should be four sections of research representing Holm’s Peoplehood Model (Language, Territory/Land, Ceremonial Practice/Cycles, Sacred History). Each student should present their research paper to the class in their small groups, making sure to show the similarities of their cultural experience to those of Native people in *Indian Country Diaries*.

## Assessment Recommendations

Students will be assessed on the following:

1. The final document that they individually research. This will be assessed using the Six Traits Writing Rubric. Information about the rubric can be found at this external link. [<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/6traits.html>]
2. Group presentation to the class. See sample grading rubric at the end of this document.
3. Class participation and appropriate behavior towards other cultures.

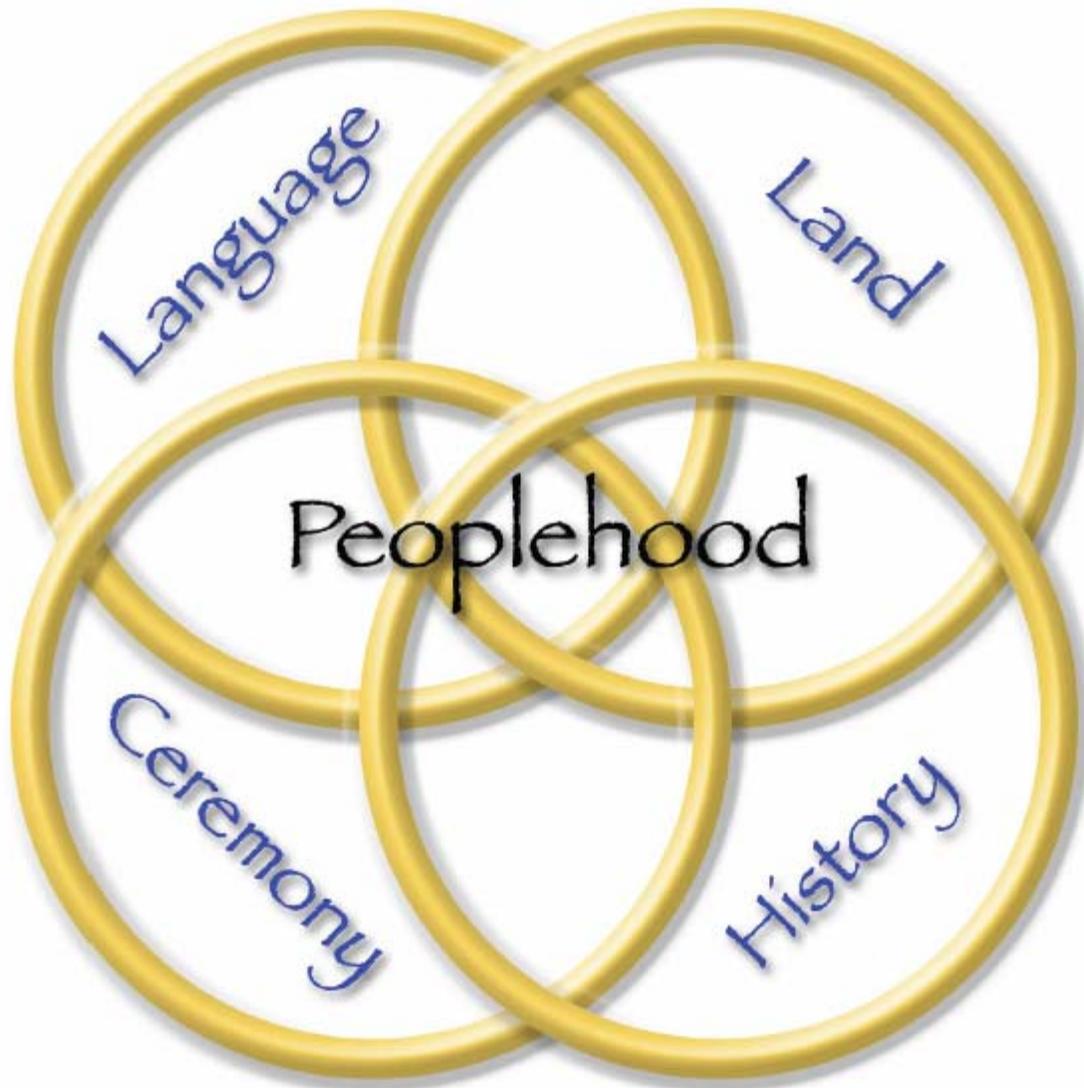
## Recommended Resources

The *Indian Country Diaries* DVD chapters and web pages listed above.

Bassa, Keith H. Wisdom Sits in Places, University of New Mexico Press, 1996.

Deloria, Ella. *Speaking of Indians*, University of Nebraska Press, 1998.

Holm, Tom. "Sovereignty and Peoplehood," *Red Ink*, v.8.2, Spring 2000.



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<http://www.pbs.org/indiancountry>

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### *Group Presentation*

Names of Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

	Points			
	1	2	3	4
Explained the Groups Form of Government Thoroughly				
Voice Was Loud Enough				
All Group Members Participated				
Includes Research of a Specific Tribes Sovereignty				
Demonstrates an Understanding of Sovereignty				
Time _____	Total Points _____			

Teacher Comments: