Intersections between land, culture, and identity in the Native American Community

Brenda J. Cowe
Summer Scholar
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National Endowment for the Humanities

Introduction/Overview:

This unit of study has five components that will be outlined below.

1. Introduction (whole class activity): Students will be exposed to several videos that give an overview of the major topic of Native Americans and reservations/land issues. Each facet of the project will be discussed and objectives for the entire unit will be posted and handed out to students. Further discussion will ensue of what students may already know about the issues.

2. Initial research (whole class, direct & guided instruction, and independent work): conducted on the history of Native American land cessation and the creation of Indian Reservations in various parts of North America/United States. Topics will include the Haudenosaunee (Tuscarora and Seneca Nations specifically) the Mohegan Tribe, and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe and issues regarding land for each of these groups. Students will practice specific skills of developing search terms and search strategies, accessing and navigation of select electronic resources and databases, extracting information through note-taking, and summarizing information. Finding aids and graphic organizers for note-taking and summarizing will be used.

3. Close reading (whole class, direct & guided instruction, small group): Lesson will open with a review of the brief video of The Saylor Foundation on land loss. Students will practice close-reading of selected texts, using graphic organizers. They will work in small groups to read articles on issues of Native sacred land and issues of being cut off from Native culture or land and the effect of this on Native communities. Students will practice answering open-ended questions by specifically referring to texts they've read. This lesson will close by listening to a song written and sung by Native people in response to land loss.

4. Socratic Circle (direct instruction, demonstration, & practice): Project will culminate in a Socratic Circle discussion of essential questions related to each topic of the unit. Students will have a rubric to guide them for the culminating circle.

5. Reflection Essay (individual): Students will write a two part reflection piece. The first part will discuss what they learned, what they still need to know, how the research process and Socratic discussion pieces worked or didn't work for them and how they might approach this type of research project in the future. The second part of the reflection essay will be their opportunity to discuss or elaborate on any personal observations they may have regarding any of the issues or topics researched or discussed.

Essential Questions:

How does connection to ancestral lands or sacred spaces shape or affect issues of identity in the Native American community?

How does being cut off from your ancestry or culture affect a person's sense of self and identity?

How can aspects of the actual physical landscape and features of a particular place affect Native American cultural identity?
Background information/historical context for teachers:
Issues of land and loss of land are central to the story of Indigenous people in North America. This unit will first examine some of the history of land loss of Native Americans. In the featured lesson presented here, students will learn about the importance of the land and how Indigenous peoples value, and interact with, the natural environment. Next, students will examine land issues in more recent years, including the present. The unit will culminate in a Socratic Seminar where students will discuss the main essential questions.

Primary Sources with citations:


Annotated Bibliography of secondary sources:
An article on the past losses of land and subsequently culture, affecting various Indian tribes in North America with emphasis on how they are reclaiming and/or preserving their prosperity and cultural identity.

Extensive report on the background of Native American sacred sites, sacred objects, fourteen specific types of sacred sites and their purpose, burials and ruins, mourning and condolence ceremonies, impact of the United States Government on sacred sites, and discussion of laws related to Native American sacred places.

The article discusses issues in current land loss and how the Indian Land Tenure Foundation works to stop land loss. The article highlights the importance of land-based resources to Native communities and their well-being.

Brief article on the subject of culture, dominant culture, and Native communities current efforts to revitalize their cultural practices. Includes the aspect of land loss as a reason for cultural loss.
  Video animation of the land losses of Native Americans from 1784 to the present.

  This article discusses the Iroquois celebration at Gandongan of the Great White Pine Tree of Peace. It also discusses the history of the site and the importance behind it to the Haudenosaunee.

  This report discusses the idea of corporate responsibility in protecting Native American Sacred sites. Highlighted are a number of case studies in which corporations and the Native Community worked on a plan to protect sacred spaces. The report ends with information on promoting corporate responsibility.