



Cultural Competency: Maine Native Americans

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LD. 291

Title 20-A: Education §4706. Instruction in American history, Maine studies, and Maine Native American History

2. Maine studies. Maine history, including the Constitution of Maine, Maine geography and environment and the natural, industrial and economic resources of Maine and Maine's cultural and ethnic heritage, must be taught. A required component of Maine studies is Maine Native American studies, which must be included in the review of content standards and performance indicators of the learning results conducted in accordance with section 6209, subsection 4.

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Title 20-A: Education §4706. The Maine Native American studies must address the following topics:

- A. Maine tribal governments and political systems and their relationship with local, state, national and international governments;
- B. Maine Native American cultural systems and the experience of Maine tribal people throughout history;
- C. Maine Native American territories; and
- D. Maine Native American economic systems.

Terminology

- What term should I use?
 - Tribal affiliation is preferred
 - First Nations
 - David O'Connor - As long as it is positive
 - Not us(we)/them

Not a “Unit”

- “Teachers often feel that the best way to learn about American Indians is to isolate them as a unit of study. A much more respectful and developmentally appropriate strategy is to integrate Native literature and curricular materials throughout the year, in all units of study.” (Lessons from Turtle Island, p. 25)
- “Setting [Native people] apart as a topic of study isolates them from the larger context of today’s society and focuses more on differences than similarities. This is why we recommend talking about Native American peoples, and really all peoples, as part of all the general curricular units we already study.” (Lessons from Turtle Island, p. 44)

More Than Just History & Culture

- Not a past tense people
- Use them in contemporary settings as you would any other group
 - Houses & Jeans
- Geography, Economics, Government

Whose Land Are You On?

- Begin where you are
 - Honor indigenous land and knowledge
 - Land acknowledgement
 - Who is your local/nearest tribal nation?

Understanding Diversity

- Diversity across tribe and within tribes
 - Wabanaki has five groups (four in Maine)
 - 573 federally recognized nations
 - Diverse language, lands, traditions, current

Choosing Children's Books & Activities About Native Americans

What to look for

Authenticity: Accurate and respectful information & images about tribes, customs, and people

Indigenous people of yesterday & today: A balance of historic and modern depictions with real life events and daily activities

Diversity: Books that reflect the diversity of North America's many different tribes

What to avoid

Inaccurate or misleading information: Images or stories that mix different tribes' customs together or lack historical basis

Stereotypes: The wild Hollywood Indian; stories where children (or animals) "play Indian"; stories about children dressing up as Indians for Halloween or Thanksgiving

The generic "Indian": Books, worksheets, or coloring pages about "the Indian" that provide little or no context or detail

Respectful language: Language that conveys respect for Native Americans and their traditions

Positive images: Native American role models, from Jim Thorpe to the young female lawyer in *Jingle Dancer*

Relevance: Books and meaningful activities connected to an educational context, such as local Native Americans in the community or a particular tribe or custom

Loaded language: Expressions such as "Sit Indian style," "Walk in Indian file," "Bunch of wild Indians"; songs such as "10 Little Indians"

Negative images: Native American characters who are sneaky, violent, or participating in stereotypical activities such as dancing around a fire. Learn more from [Images of Indians in Children's Books.](#)

Isolated activities: Making a headpiece, a drum, or Indian outfit without any connection to a particular context

Text Considerations

Debbie Reese (previous) offers the following criteria:

- Does the author/illustrator specify a tribal nation?
- What is the time period?
- Is the history accurate?
- How does the author/illustrator present gender?
- Does the author's word choice indicate bias against Native peoples?

Learning Opportunities

- Misunderstandings are opportunities for learning
 - Stereotypes are everywhere in pop culture, challenge these with students
 - Don't do dress-ups or dances or make up your own legends
 - Webinars to Support
 - [DOE Social Studies Page](#)
 - [Hudson Museum](#)

Multiple Perspectives

- All of our students should see themselves and others in your curriculum
 - Should be included alongside European, African American, Women, Latino, socio-economic, etc.
- Windows/Mirrors/Sliding Doors
- Dr. Linda Tropp - UMass-Amherst

Maine DOE Resources

- [Maine Native American Standards Training Page](#)
- [Maine Native American Resource Page](#)
- [Maine Native American Support Page](#)
- [Maine Learning Results Support Page](#)
- [John Bear Mitchell Standards Overview Video](#)
- [Maine Social Studies Webinar Series - Teaching About Maine Native Americans & Culturally Responsive Practices](#)
- [My Diigo - "Wabanaki"](#)

Other Important Resources

- Maine
 - [Abbe Museum](#)
 - [Hudson Museum](#)
 - [Holding Up the Sky](#)
 - [Wabanaki Place Names in Western Maine](#)
- National
 - [Native Knowledge 360](#)



Q & A



Thank you!

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