

Native American Studies

Rationale

All human beings live in a social order known as a society. Each society develops beliefs, customs, folkways, and mores which distinguish it from other societies and make each a unique culture. Approximately 50,000 years ago, Asian people, as small hunting groups, began to cross a Bering Strait land bridge from Asia to the Americas following herds of animals. These early arrivals were the beginning of a series of migrations of culture groups which blended into the creation of a distinct people known collectively as “Native Americans.”

For many years the term “Indian” has been used to identify the natives of America. When the Italian sea captain, Christopher Columbus set sail to find a shorter eastern route to Asia, he encountered a group of people whom he called “Indians,” because he believed that he had landed on islands off Asia. Since that time, the name “Indians” was mistakenly applied to all the diverse peoples of the Americas. Today, the term “Native Americans” is used interchangeably with the term “American Indians.” Both terms have been accepted by this diverse group. In this document, the term “Native American” is used.

Historically, the term “Indian” is used in American literature and in various forms of local and federal legislation. In 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, which provided funds to negotiate treaties that would force Native Americans to move west. In 1968, the American Indian Movement (AIM) was organized to claim Native American rights. In 1972, Congress passed the Indian Education Act and in 1975, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act was also passed. These laws gave tribes greater control over their own affairs and over their children’s education. Literature was written to describe hardships that Native Americans encountered. *The School Days of an Indian*

Girl portrayed the life of a Native American, when taken away from her family to become “Americanized” by Quakers in an Indiana school. Other books such as *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* was written to describe the massacre of Native Americans in South Dakota in 1890. By developing knowledge of the history of the Native American people and examining how their culture has changed, the student will be able to comprehend the diversity and quality of Native American cultures.

Foreword

Native American Cultures

Native American Cultures is a high school elective offered to tenth through twelfth grade students for one credit. The course focuses on a chronological history, with anthropological and archaeological foundations, of the Native Americans from early migration to the present.

The content areas are to be followed as closely as possible.

Native American Studies Course Outline and Topics

- Unit I: Cultural Foundations**
- Unit II: The Ancients**
- Unit III: Native American Mind vs. European Mind**
- Unit IV: Clash of Cultures**
- Unit V: European Expansionism in the New World**
- Unit VI: The Native American and Colonial America**
- Unit VII: The United States and the Native Americans (through the Antebellum Period)**
- Unit VIII: Western Expansion and Conflict**
- Unit IX: Native American Policy at the Turn of the 20th Century**
- Unit X: Native Americans of the 20th Century**
- Unit XI: Cultural Revitalization and Representation**