

Grades: Pre-K

Lesson: 2

Unit: 1: American Indian traditional land values

Subject: English Language Arts

Additional Subject(s): Arts; Cultural Arts

Achievement Goal: Relate to the students a sense of their connection to the land or the earth and how all who live on earth are related to one another. Students will learn how the source of life is circular and how everything in life has a circular path that starts with us and returns to us.

Time: Two class periods

Lesson Description:

Students learn about their connection to the land through storytelling and other activities.

Teacher Background:

Being part of a global world with many diverse cultures, it is important that children have a strong identity with their own culture. It is important that Native American children learn and exhibit Native American values in all aspects of life, contribute to the well-being of their tribal people and communities, and honor and uphold Native American beliefs and morals. This Native American focused curriculum will enhance and sustain pride and interest in student heritage and culture of the past, present and future. Native American children are the future of our tribes and it is crucial to help them identify with their unique and special heritage in order to be better prepared for the world at large.

This culturally appropriate Head Start curriculum is designed to instill in Native American children a comprehensive understanding of their place within Creation and a fundamental sense of belonging to their traditional land base. Head Start children, ages three to five, will develop a respect for the land and all elements of life through long term exposure to culturally relevant activities that are developmentally appropriate. This basic level of understanding will provide the foundation for future learning regarding land issues in Native America.

Each of the head start lessons is built around an element of life and creation, including Creation itself, Mother Earth, Fire, Water, Air, Plants, Animals and, finally, the Stars. The lessons include materials lists, sample Native American stories, discussion questions, art activities, nature walks, music and movement, and vocabulary words. Children have a natural curiosity about the activities and materials that are set before them. Allowing children to study the topics through their play, and providing them with the opportunity to explore will have lifelong benefits that will impact future learning.

Standards:

Head Start Performance Standards require programs to support and respect the home languages and cultures of all enrolled children. Use of this cultural curriculum will fulfill this often underdeveloped, and sometimes overlooked, requirement. The standards also require programs to implement a curriculum in collaboration with the enrolled families. This curriculum can be easily modified to include any represented cultures. An initial assessment of the families enrolled each school year should be done in order to obtain backgrounds of all cultures represented for the year. The information should then be incorporated into this curriculum through the use of the tribal stories, arts, languages, etc. of each represented tribe. The cultural curriculum is designed to be an addition to each programs regular Head Start Curriculum.

Teacher Preparation Resources:

- Take a look at all of your classroom areas to decide what types of materials can be added to extend learning time and methods. Gather additional materials, if needed.
- Gather materials for Modeling Dough Recipe:
 - 1 cup salt

- 2/3 cup water
- 1 cup flour
- Food Coloring
- Mix flour and salt in large bowl. Add water and mix until consistency reaches that of thick frosting.
- Continue mixing until modeling consistency is reached. Add food coloring immediately before molding.

Student Activity: Storytelling at Circle Time

1. Play music while the teachers gather the students for Circle Time.
2. Tell a story about the importance of the Mother Earth or use the example provided in the Lesson Resources section.
3. Introduce new vocabulary and characters in the story. Classroom areas should again be modified to include materials for extended play. Possible materials include: water table filled with water and sand/dirt, modeling clay, containers to store rocks, dirt, etc, globe and maps, plants, plastic animals.
4. Ask the following, or related, questions about the story:
 - What types of things does your mother do for you?
 - Why the earth is called Mother Earth?
 - What kinds of things live on the Mother Earth?
 - How can we take care of and respect Mother Earth?
 - Who had the dream about the tree?
 - What happened after they pulled the tree loose?
 - What color do you think the earth muskrat brought back was?
 - Who told muskrat to put the dirt on his back?

Mother Earth and Creation Mural

1. After discussing the story, make the modeling dough from the recipe in the Teacher Preparation Resources section and help children make a turtle.
2. Make a large turtle shape out of clay. Do not make the outer shell.
3. Introduce the shape to the children and ask them what is missing.
4. The children will help make the shell of the turtle by decorating their own section of the shell.
5. Each child will add their section of the shell to the body of the turtle.
6. After everyone has added their piece to the shell the turtle can be placed on the mural painting from the previous lesson.

Nature Walk

1. Pick a location with a variety of dirt or rocks to look at.
2. Talk with the children about what dirt is and does for mother earth.
3. Allow children to look at and touch any dirt or rocks in the area.
4. Take some samples back to the classroom for exploration in the sensory table.
5. The children can use the dirt/rocks to plant seeds or flowers.
6. The dirt can also be used to mix with water to explore concepts of damp and dry.

Music and Movement

1. Play any type of background music to encourage dancing or body movement.
2. Ask the children to imitate swimming motions like the duck the beaver and the muskrat.
3. Talk about and model how animals and people need to hold their breath while under water.
4. Ask the children to try holding their breath for a short time.
5. Re-enact flying motions such as the birds that held the woman in the air.
6. Talk about the turtle in the story and discuss the movement of turtles together.
7. Ask the group to move around the room like turtles.

Evaluation:

1. Evaluate students on their ability to sit and listen quietly during story time and follow instructions during other activities.
2. Assess the students' understanding through participation in discussion and activities.

Lesson Resources:

- [The Earth on Turtle's Back](#), by Michael J. Caduto
- Vocabulary:
 - Brown—gi
 - Mother Earth—Ina
 - Circle—womime
 - One—wanji
 - Turtle—keya
 - Respect—yuonihan

Source URL: <http://www.lessonsofourland.org/lessons/mother-earth>