

Grades: 9th - 12th Grade**Lesson: 4****Unit:** 1: American Indian traditional land values**Subject:** History/Social Studies**Achievement Goal:** Describe various aspects of the tension between Native and non-Native worldviews regarding cultural property and beliefs.**Time:** Two class periods**Lesson Description:**

Students explore the complexities behind the clash that often occurs between Native oral and cultural history and formal archeological and anthropological science worldviews.

Teacher Background:

American Indian tribes, like many other ethnic groups, have explanations for how they originated as distinct, unique peoples. Origin stories and oral histories relate how the universe and the earth were created, how time and space were established, and how people came into being, usually in a particular area with which they are inextricably connected forever after. Inherent in the story is a reverence of place or location in which ancestors of the tribe were created. From these stories, tribes derived laws, values, traditions and ceremonies.

Certain scientific theories (such as the Bering Strait Migration theory) and investigative means (such as invasive archeological digs at burial grounds) often come into conflict with these oral history traditions and Native systems of belief. On one side, anthropologists and archeologists often argue that oral history is not scientifically reliable and human remains and materials offer important clues about humans in the past. On the other, some Native leaders argue that, by definition, theories are not fact and should not be taught or treated as such. Furthermore, disturbing sites for scientific purposes is more a matter of human rights than science due to cultural beliefs and the sacredness of Native burial sites.

In this lesson, students will be introduced to three aspects of this controversy between Native and non-Native worldviews. First, students will examine the different ways in which tribal oral historians and scientific archeologists contribute to peoples' understanding of themselves. Second, students will study issues surrounding the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Finally, students will study the controversial Bering Strait Migration Theory.

Teacher Preparation Resources:

- Review and prepare according to the following lesson plans and activities found online:
 - "Tribal Oral Historians vs. Scientific Archeologists," page 18-19 in the "In the Light of Reverence," [Teacher's Guide](#).
 - [Artifacts, Remains and Intellectual Property](#): Controversies and Laws, lesson plan. For the second bulleted activity found on page two, create a brief handout with the questions listed in that section. When the students are performing their research, have them write short answers to those questions on the sheet. Make sure they properly cite where they found the information (websites, articles, phone conversations, etc.).
 - [Bering Strait Migration Theory](#), lesson plan found at Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute's site.

Student Activity:

1. Begin this lesson by reviewing the information and questions found in the lesson plan titled, "Tribal Oral Historians vs. Scientific Archeologists" listed in the Lesson Resources section. Ask the students how both oral history and scientific archeology contribute to the ways in which groups of people view themselves and their origins. This "warm-up" discussion will indicate to the educator the knowledge students are bringing into this lesson.
2. Review, in class, some parts of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

Have the students perform some brief research answering the questions listed in the second bulleted section of page two of the “Artifacts, Remains and Intellectual Property: Controversies and Laws.” As a supplement or alternative to this activity, have the students participate in the debate described in the fourth bulleted section of page two.

3. Following the “Bering Strait Migration Theory” plan, have the students read the selected materials and resources listed at the end of the lesson or perform their own research on the theory and the investigation of early human settlement in North America. After this research, hold an in-class discussion about the nature of scientific theory, the strengths and weaknesses of the Bering Strait Theory, the methods of archeological study in general, and how Western science informs public policy, sometimes at the expense of Native cultures.

Evaluation:

1. The goal of this lesson is to expose students to the complexities behind the clash that often occurs between Native oral and cultural history and formal archeological and anthropological sciences that emphasize empirical knowledge. The goal is not to come up with a “right” answer, but to engage students by having them think about how these controversies play out in the realm of public policy and affect tribal communities.
2. Evaluate the students based on the findings of their research on NAGPRA and related issues.
3. Assess the level and quality of the students' participation in the classroom debate and discussion.

Lesson Resources:

- Earth Island Institute’s [Sacred Lands Film Project](#)
- PBS’s [Teacher Source](#)
- [Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute](#)
- National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, National Center for Cultural Resources, [National NAGPRA](#)

Source URL: <http://www.lessonsofourland.org/lessons/distinct-worldviews>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.sacredland.org>
- [2] <http://www.pbs.org/teachers>
- [3] <http://nwindian.evergreen.edu/>
- [4] <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nagpra/MANDATES/INDEX.HTM>
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- [12] <http://www.pbs.org/warrior/content/modules/artifacts.pdf>
- [13] <http://nwindian.evergreen.edu/curriculum/beringstrait.html>