
Grades: 3rd - 5th Grade

Lesson: 3

Unit: 4: Building a positive future in Indian communities

Subject: History/Social Studies

Achievement Goal: Research the responsibilities and work of the tribal natural resources department.

Time: One class period

Lesson Description:

Students discuss stewardship and scarcity, summarizing what they have learned in a letter to a tribal resource department.

Teacher Background:

Wise management of tribal lands and natural resources is very important for the future of American Indian communities. Tribes depend on these resources to sustain their economies and cultures long into the future. Tribal leaders know that lands and natural resources are at risk of degradation and there is a need for good management to protect and restore those resources. Each tribe has its own unique and special natural gifts. Coastal tribes have the salmon, Alaska Natives tribes have the caribou, and Great Plains tribes have the bison. In the Great Lakes region there is wild rice and maple syrup. In the Northwest, there is the whale.

Tribal leaders and their teams work hard to sustain natural resources. Students can learn from natural resource managers about the natural resources of their tribe and the projects that are in place to protect and sustain them.

Teacher Preparation Resources:


- Review PDF of “A Slice of Planet Earth” Lesson Plan from Michigan State University Extension in the Lesson Resources section.
- Arrange for a staff person from the local tribe’s Natural Resource Department to speak to the students about what the tribe does to protect and repair tribal lands and natural resources. The staff person can come into the classroom or you may want to arrange a field trip. See if the Natural Resource person can suggest a good area to show the students what natural resources are located in the community and what the tribe is doing to preserve them. Ask the staff person to present a map to the students depicting the location of the tribe’s natural resources.

Student Activity:

1. Begin this lesson by introducing terms that can be used to describe someone who takes care of the environment: caretaker, custodian, attendant, steward. Explain to the students what environmental stewardship is and the activities involved in protecting and preserving the environment. Contrast this idea with the idea of radically changing the environment to fit our needs today without thinking about the future. Illustrate scarcity of natural resources using the “A Slice of Planet Earth” lesson plan listed in the Lesson Resources section.
2. Invite a member of a tribal Natural Resource Department to visit your class. Suggest that they begin by describing the various natural resources found on tribal lands and how these relate to community health and traditional tribal activities. Have the representative explain his or her job duties in relation to these tribal natural resources. Ask the representative to describe his or her relationship with the leaders in tribal government. Have the representative engage the students in a discussion about what the students can do to help the department and the tribe. Leave room for a question and answer session.
3. After the presentation or field trip, have the children write letters to the Natural Resource staff persons thanking them for their time and role in keeping tribal lands healthy. In the letters, ask the children to include descriptions or drawings of what they learned from the staff member. Collect these letters from the children, review them and mail them.

Tribal Resource Departments

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Evaluation:

1. Assess the students' ability to listen respectfully to a classroom guest.
2. Through their questions and thank you letters, assess their comprehension of what a Natural Resource Department does and the meaning of stewardship.

Lesson Resources:

- Tribal Natural Resource Department via a list of [Tribal Governments](#) at State and Local Governments, or at [USA.gov](#).
- PDF of [A Slice of Planet Earth](#) Lesson Plan, Michigan State University Extension.

Source URL: <http://www.lessonsofourland.org/lessons/tribal-resource-departments>