

## Unit Essential Questions:

1. What is cultural erasure and how does it impact communities?
2. Who should tell our stories, and why does it matter?

### Lesson 4: Assimilation and Resistance

## LESSON INTRODUCTION

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**Time Frame: 90 minutes**

**Materials: Slideshow, Cultural Tree (2 copies per student) , “Lies My Ancestors Told For Me”**

In this lesson, students explore themes related to resistance, assimilation, cross generational relationships, and family identity, using the poem “Lies My Ancestors Told For Me” by Deborah Miranda, an excerpt from her longer work *Bad Indian*.

*Bad Indian* by Deborah Miranda is a creative non fiction book that explores themes around historical trauma, assimilation, cultural revitalization, family, and identity. The poem “Lies My Ancestors Told For Me” highlights the many challenges that Native communities face as they choose between protecting themselves from violence, and protecting their culture for future generations. The poem includes examples of how Native communities impacted by the Spanish missions often took on elements of Mexican culture to protect themselves. Additionally, examples of Native elders code-switching, or behaving differently depending on their audience and context, show the lengths that many elders took to preserve their cultures in spite of colonization. The title “Lies My Ancestors Told For Me” refers to the many sacrifices Native ancestors and elders have made in order to ensure that future generations had the opportunity to exist and thrive. In some cases, having the opportunity to live has meant removing oneself from traditional culture as a form of self preservation.

## ENGAGE

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Teacher Directions:

Provide students with a copy of the **Cultural Tree** diagram linked at the bottom of this lesson.

Give students time to fill out the tree. It may be helpful to you to create a model to show students.

## EXPLORE

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Teacher directions:

Review the movements and legislation on **Slide 6**.

Ask students to watch the short film, and analyze the images on **slides 8-10**.

Ask students the question on **slide 11**: How do assimilation and resistance exist at the same time?

Discussion Tips:

Students will notice that all of the examples include elements of both assimilation and resistance. Students might notice that the Native people in the video and images are speaking English, are wearing western clothing, etc. However, there are also elements of resistance, like continuing to practice beadwork, or cultural traditions. It is important to discuss how both assimilation and resistance can exist at the same time. In fact, sometimes assimilation was needed in order to survive, in order for future generations of Native youth to have an opportunity to resist and revitalize culture.

## EXPLAIN

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Teacher Directions:

*Poetry Analysis: Lies my Ancestors Told For Me: **Slide 13***

Distribute copies of the poem to students.

Reach the poem stanza by stanza, discussing the following questions:

1. Do you notice the impact of any specific assimilation movements or policies in the poem?
2. How does the poet's family protect themselves from violence?
3. In what ways do they assimilate? In what ways do they protect their culture?
4. What does the title of the poem mean?
5. Choose a line from the poem that stands out to you and share it with your neighbor

## ELABORATE

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Teacher Directions:

Ask students to create a **Cultural Tree** diagram for the narrator in the poem, listing identity and cultural details that are visible on the top, and details that are less visible on the bottom.

## EVALUATE

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Ask students to reflect on the following questions:

1. What are some ways that communities might protect themselves against **erasure**?
2. How does this help the community survive? How does it contribute to **cultural erasure**?

## VOCABULARY

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**assimilate:** to become absorbed and integrated into a society or culture.

**resistance:**the refusal to accept or comply with something; the attempt to prevent something by action or argument.

## STANDARDS

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**Common Core:**

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2](#)

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7

Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6

Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

**Seven Essential Understandings:**

Essential Understanding 2 - There is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined and redefined by entities, organizations and people. A continuum of Indian identity, unique to each individual, ranges from assimilated to traditional. There is no generic American Indian.

Essential Understanding 3 - The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. Additionally, each tribe has its own oral histories, which are as valid as written histories. These histories pre-date European contact, i.e., the "discovery" of North America.

Essential Understanding 5 - There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have affected Indian people and still shape who they are today. Many of these policies conflicted with one another. Much of Indian history can be related through several major federal policy periods: Colonization/Colonial Period 1492 – 1800s; Treaty Period 1789 – 1871; Assimilation Period - Allotment and Boarding School 1879 – 1934; Tribal Reorganization Period 1934 – 1958; Termination and Relocation Period 1953 – 1971; Self-determination Period 1968 – Present.

## SOURCES

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*Bad Indian, "Lies My Ancestors Told For Me"* by Deborah Miranda

*Native American Almanac*

*Elder Land Revitalization Video:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYgZ1Pxxw6al>

<http://www.cloverdalerancheria.com/>

<http://ankn.uaf.edu/IKS/iceberg.html>

<https://www.drycreekrancheria.com/portrait-of-a-dry-creek-legend-laura-somersal/>

<http://www.cloverdalerancheria.com/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/20/us/native-american-occupation-alcatraz.html?auth=link-dismiss-google1tap>

<https://books.google.com/books?id=3SmTBgAAQBAJ&pg=PA298&lpg=PA298&dq=Occupation+of+Ya-Ka->

[Ama&source=bl&ots=mcDft8ClG1&sig=ACfU3U1e81VWSGtAxcKSTWqtroybllUsZQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjS7d6D\\_NjwAhVNsZ4KHTWZCKcQ6AEwC\\_XoECACQAw#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=3SmTBgAAQBAJ&pg=PA298&lpg=PA298&dq=Occupation+of+Ya-Ka-Ama&source=bl&ots=mcDft8ClG1&sig=ACfU3U1e81VWSGtAxcKSTWqtroybllUsZQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjS7d6D_NjwAhVNsZ4KHTWZCKcQ6AEwC_XoECACQAw#v=onepage&q&f=false)

<https://www.earthschool.org/location>

<http://ankn.uaf.edu/IKS/iceberg.html>

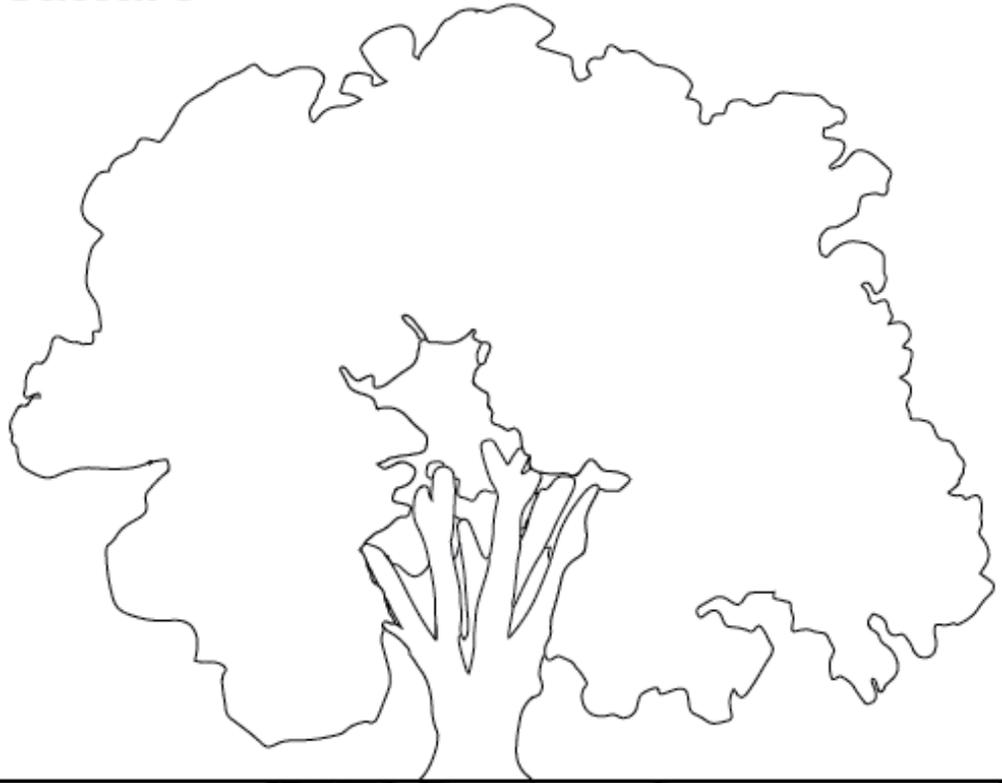
*Photos from Robin Meely, Rudy Hammock Jr., and Christy Carrillo Carr*

## MATERIALS

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# Explicit Culture

Style/Fashion  
Food  
Art & Music  
Holidays  
Language



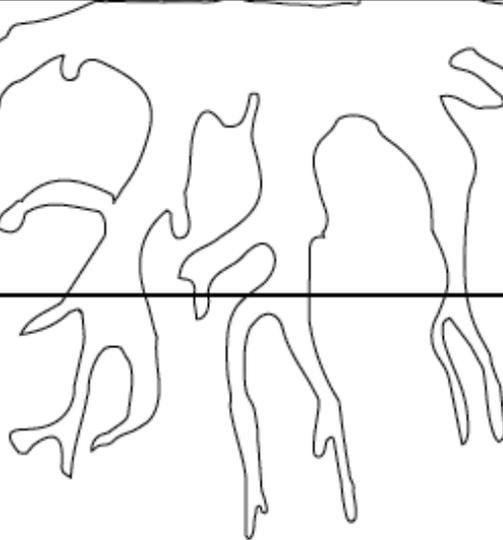
## Interpersonal Culture

Manners  
Work Ethic/ Beliefs  
Personal Space  
Emotional Response  
Relationships



## Implicit Culture

Fairness  
Spirituality  
Relations to Nature/ Animals  
Cosmology  
Kinship/ Group Identity



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Lies My Ancestors Told for Me"  
By Deborah A. Miranda (*Bad Indians*)

(1) Riddle: when is a lie the truth?  
when is the truth a lie?  
When a life saves your life,  
that's truth; when a lie saves the lives  
of your children, grandchildren  
and five generations forward,  
that's truth in a form so pure  
it can't be anything  
but a story.

(2) After the mission broke  
up, it was better to lie  
like a dog about blood,  
say you are Mexican  
Mexican Mexican Mexican  
put it on the birth certificates  
put it on death certificates  
tell it to the census takers  
tell it to the self-appointed  
bounty hunters who appear  
at your door looking for  
Indians Indians Indians  
and when you tell that lie  
tell it in Spanish.

(3) Give your children Spanish  
Names- Tranquilino, María Ignacia,  
Dolores, Faustino-  
lies that deflect genocide,  
so tell them loudly  
at the baptismal font in the Old Mission,  
to the Indian Agent collecting bodies  
for the Boarding School at Riverside;  
broadcast the names in the street  
like wheat when you call  
your Mexican children in at dusk  
for a bite of acorn mush  
and cactus apple.

(4) Grandmothers, dress like a poor white  
woman- in other words, like a Mexican.  
Wear their heavy aprons, high-necked  
muslin dresses, and shoes  
shoes shoes shoes  
Shame your grandchildren  
when they run around barefoot, what are you,  
*an Indian?* and stand, silent, approving, when *Digger*

becomes their favorite  
slur to hurl at the youngest,  
the awkward, the slow,  
the dark. Don't tell them  
you still speak Chumash  
with their mother. That's a lie  
your descendants will hate you for  
but lie anyway,  
so they'll be alive  
to complain.

(5) Grandfathers, lie  
about where you're going  
when you slip out at night,  
retrieve your dancing clothes  
from the hiding place,  
drive up unlit roads  
to a rancheria in the hills  
where clappers and rattles  
whisper the truth  
and bare Indian feet  
beat against the earth  
beat beat beat like children begging  
to be let back inside.

(6) Don't teach old songs  
to your grandchildren,  
don't make the regalia  
in front of them, don't  
dance where young eyes  
might see. Sing the *alabada*  
when the priests can hear;  
hum the Deer Song when they can't.  
Drag your feet in the dust;  
buy a tie for Sunday's.  
Tell the lies now and maybe later  
your descendants will dig  
for the truth in libraries,  
field notes, museums,  
wax cylinder recordings,  
newspaper reports of massacres  
and relocations, clues you left behind  
when you forgot  
to lie  
lie lie lie

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Do you notice the impact of any specific assimilation movements or policies in the poem?
2. How does the poet's family protect themselves from violence?
3. In what ways do they choose to assimilate? In what ways do they protect their culture?
4. What does the title of the poem mean?
5. Choose a line from the poem that stands out to you and share it with your neighbor or class