

Lesson 4: Traditional Foods and Tribal Sovereignty

LESSON INTRODUCTION

Time Frame: One 60-90 min. Lesson *or* Two 40-60 min. Lessons

Materials:

- Google Slides [Presentation](#)
- Projector and computer with access to the internet
- Personal computers for internet research
- “Seeds of Our Ancestors” mini documentary on [Vimeo](#)
- Labels “A,” “B,” “C,” and “D” for *Four Corners* activity
- [Traditional Foods of the Pomo People](#)
- Binder paper, blank paper and writing/drawing utensils

This lesson aims to give students a basic understanding of Tribal Sovereignty, why it is important for Native communities, and how Native peoples are using their sovereignty to combat serious health problems. Students will practice empathy through stories, and create their own story that illustrates what they have taken away from the lesson.

Expressive Outcomes:

I know I can describe tribal sovereignty

I know I can identify some traditional Native foods

I know I can explain the importance of traditional foods for Native communities

Teacher Background:

Tribal sovereignty means the power of a tribe to govern itself, its members, and make decisions about its land. The powers of sovereign governments include the power to enact laws, to establish systems of justice, the power to require people to abide by established laws, the power to tax, the power to zone property, the power to regulate hunting and fishing and so on. The sovereignty of the tribe is important to Indian self-determination. Self-determination is the right of a nation or people, which have a separate and distinct identity, to determine its own form of government, and its own future in its own way.

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The U.S. government, since its inception, has recognized the sovereignty of the tribes. They acknowledge that Native American people were the only inhabitants of this continent before the arrival of Europeans, and therefore there had to be a legal basis for taking away their lands. Treaties were the legal agreements between the U.S. government and Native American tribes. Since tribes were/are considered “nations,” treaties with Indian tribes were negotiated on a nation-to-nation basis. Each tribe was recognized as representing its own citizens.

To this day treaties between the U.S. government and tribes remain in effect. Native American nations remain sovereign nations within the borders of the United States. In return for Native American land, Indian tribes retained the right to exercise self-government within their reservation/rancheria lands. They retained all sovereign rights to control natural resources like water, as well as rights to fish and hunt on traditional homelands, even if those homelands were not part of the reservation. In return for the land the federal government agreed to provide for certain needs of Native American people, including providing for the health, education, and general welfare of Indian people. This is known as the “trust responsibility” that the federal government has with Native Americans.

To be an informed democratic citizen, all students and adults should know about the many other nations that legally exist here, alongside the United States government. These nations are Tribal Nations. When teaching about Native communities, it is important to remember that the government unfairly assigns Tribal status to some groups and not others. Supporting unrecognized Tribes in their fight to gain recognition status is an important part of being an ally to Native peoples. When teaching American history, consider the status of the Tribes you are including, and see if any are unrecognized!

For background information on Food Sovereignty, please read the “Tribal Community Profile,” “History” and “Importance of Food Sovereignty and Food Security” sections of the [Food Sovereignty & Community Collaboration Toolkit](#) on the California Indian Museum and Culture Center’s website.

ENGAGE

Simulation Story (10-20 minutes)

1. Begin the lesson with a story. Students will imagine what it was like to be *sovereign* before European contact, and after.
2. If you have the option, find a comfortable spot outdoors to stimulate the imagination.
3. Read this story out loud, and pause throughout to ask questions:

Imagine your dream house. It has as much space as you need to be happy and healthy. A beautiful, fresh, clean stream flows through your yard. It's so clean you can drink it! It's full of fish, otters, and crawdads, and all sorts of creatures visit to drink from it. There is also a small pool; the water comes straight from the earth, and it is hot! You can mix it with the stream water to take warm baths outside under the tall trees. Your yard also has a lush garden with all of your favorite foods. The only people that live in your house are your friends and family. Sometimes you have visitors from neighboring communities.

What kinds of things do you do in your awesome yard?

What kinds of foods do you grow in your garden? Fruits? Veggies? Nuts/seeds? Herbs?

How do you welcome your visitors?

You and your family and friends have learned over time that when you treat visitors with kindness, they are respectful to your home and the way you do things. One day, you and your friend are fishing in the fresh stream. You notice a bunch of strangers wandering around your yard. They are dressed in strange clothes and looking through all of your things. One of them is using your bath as a toilet! Others are eating food from the garden, chopping down trees, you even see someone kill your pet raccoon! You start to feel very afraid.

How else do you feel about these people?

What do you think you should do?

Why?

Before you have a chance to do anything, the leader of these people shouts something out in a language you don't understand, and the people leave your yard. You hope that they are

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gone for good. Unfortunately, the next day, there is a knock on your front door. You recognize the person as the leader of the group of people who were wandering around your home. You, your family and friends have no idea what he is saying, but it is this, “Hello. We have been called to this place by a higher being, and we have no choice but to make this land our new home. We will be bringing our own plants and animals, and we will need to cut down your trees for shelter, and drink from your streams. We’ve noticed that your way of doing things is very different from ours, and we require that you change your ways so that they support our mission.”

Totally confused, you and your beloved community fear for what might happen next. No one got the impression that these strangers had respect for your home and your belongings. Over the next few months, these people continue to invade your home, but they also try to teach you about their culture. They are mostly friendly. You’ve learned a little bit of their language. They’ve changed everything about your beautiful home, but they promise that you can continue to use the land you have left however you please. Many of your family and friends are getting very sick because the animals they brought with them are contaminating your fresh stream water. They’ve also cut down many trees, which has scared away many of the animals that made your home a thriving ecosystem. The plants they brought are very invasive and have killed many of your favorite plants in your garden. They now think you and your community are in need of being saved, that you must learn their ways to be saved. They tell you that your lives depend on them.

How do you feel?

What do you do?

Who do you think you represent in this story? The strangers?

4. Following a conversation around these questions, **SAY**, “You should be able to begin to imagine what it was like for California Native Americans to experience the invasion of their land by European colonizers like the Spanish. Today we’re going to talk about how colonization has changed the livelihoods of Tribal Nations, and what has remained the same.”
5. **ASK:**
 - a. Is it better to be governed by people who do not understand your community, or by members of your community?
 - b. Is it better to follow your own visions about your future, or be told what you should do and who you should be when you grow up?

6. Through discussion, emphasize that differences between people are neither good nor bad, but occur naturally. What is important is that people learn to respect each other's differences.

EXPLORE

SOVEREIGNTY Spelling Activity (15-30 minutes)

1. **PRESENT** Google Slides, starting with **Slide 3**.
2. **SAY**, “Tribal sovereignty means that tribes have the freedom to determine their own livelihoods through their own self-governing. However, as we feel for them now, their old ways of living were completely turned upside down. Powerful European colonizers had no respect for Native American differences. To this day, many people do not show respect for Indigenous culture. BUT, on the bright side, tribal communities are using their sovereign powers to heal and rekindle their relationships with their ancestral homelands.”
3. **ASK** students what sorts of things they would have to consider if they were responsible for governing their own community:
 - a. *i.e. land, economy, forms of governments, laws, cultural practices*
 - b. Give students an opportunity to ask lingering questions about Tribal Sovereignty.
4. **SAY**, “Now that we have an idea what sovereignty is, we should probably know how to spell it! It can be difficult even for adults, so we’re going to learn a fun trick to help us remember.”
 - a. **Slide 4** - Introduce the concepts of *acronym* and *backronym*
 - i. Acronym - a combination of letters taken from the first letters of a series of words.
 - ii. *ASAP (as soon as possible), LOL (laugh out loud), FOMO (fear of missing out)*
 - iii. Backronym - Taking the letters of a word to form an expression
 - iv. *ADIDAS - All Day I Dream About Sports*
 1. *Note: -onym means name and is found in other words like synonym, antonym, and pseudonym*

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- b. **ASK** students whether the example shown on **Slide 4** is an acronym or a backronym.
- c. **SLIDE 5** - Break up into small groups or partners:
 - i. **READ** the instructions together
 - ii. Walk around the room to assist struggling students

EXPLAIN

“Seeds of Our Ancestors” Mini Documentary (12-15 minutes)

1. **Slide 6: PLAY** *Seeds of Our Ancestors* on [Vimeo](#).
2. **TELL** students that there will be an activity following the video, so be sure to pay attention! If needed, provide scratch paper for students to take notes using words, pictures, quotes, etc.

ELABORATE

Four Corners: Quiz Edition (10-20 minutes)

1. **PROJECT Slide 7:** Four Corners: Quiz Edition
2. **TELL** students that they will be moving around the classroom and voting for responses to each prompt using their bodies
3. **POINT OUT** which corners will represent which lettered responses
 - a. The front and back of the classroom are labeled on each slide but physically labeling each corner is ideal
4. As you read through each slide, you may choose how much you'd like to have students elaborate on their chosen corners. Some questions call for their personal opinion and have no right or wrong answer, while some should only have one answer. See “*speaker notes*” for suggestions!

EVALUATE

Write a Short Story (20-35 minutes)

1. **INSTRUCT** students to take out a piece of blank paper.
 - a. On the header, have students spell out “Food Sovereignty” with the help of the backronyms they made up in the Explore section
 - b. This will be the title of their story
 - c. Reveal the correct spelling before moving on.
 - d. If you have the option, students may use computers to type their story, but should use paper for the spelling quiz.
2. Ask students to write a short story about a feast they could prepare using Indigenous traditional foods. Ask questions such as: What foods will you prepare for people to eat? Will you hunt game or catch fish? How will you catch these animals? Will you need special baskets to prepare the food? How will you care for the land so that its plants will make good baskets?
3. Require students to emphasize *respect, reciprocity and relationships* in their stories.
4. For inspiration they may use a computer to look up these Native American foodways:
 - a. Cafe Ohlone, Berkeley, CA
 - b. Wahpepah’s Kitchen, Oakland, CA
 - c. Indigikitchen YouTube Channel
5. Ask students to draw and discuss pictures of food and basket resources on the land and of the feasts they could prepare from these resources.
6. Print or project on the board this infographic for students to reference
 - a. [Traditional Foods of the Pomo People](#)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Multicultural Potluck Class Party!
2. [Where Does Your Food Come From?](#)
 - a. This is a Nutrition-based lesson geared towards Middle School classrooms, but can easily be altered for 4th graders!
 - b. See the My Native Plate activity on pp. 13-20
3. Alternative/supplementary short film

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- a. [Decolonizing the Diet](#)
4. Entertaining YouTube video on Native American Cuisine
 - a. [Why You Must Try Native American Cuisine](#) - AJ+

VOCABULARY

sovereignty: the power of a tribe to govern itself, its people, and make decisions about its land

acronym: a combination of letters taking from the first letter of a series of words

backronym: taking the letters of a word to form an expression

STANDARDS

Common Core:

Writing

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.A

Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.D

Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.6

With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.9

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Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Speaking and Listening

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 4 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1.C

Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1.D

Review the key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.3

Identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.4

Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

Language

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.1

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.2

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.3

Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CA Indian Essential Understandings:

Essential Understanding 1: *Great Diversity Among Tribes*

There is great diversity among the 150+ tribes of California in their languages, cultures, histories & governments. Each tribe has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern California.

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Essential Understanding 6: *History from a California Indian Perspective*

History is a story and most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. Histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from an Indian perspective conflicts with what most of mainstream history tells us.

Native Knowledge 360° Essential Understandings about American Indians:

Essential Understanding 1: *American Indian Cultures*

Culture is a result of human socialization. People acquire knowledge and values by interacting with other people through common language, place, and community. In the Americas, there is vast cultural diversity among more than 2,000 tribal groups. Tribes have unique cultures and ways of life that span history from time immemorial to the present day.

- For millennia, American Indians have shaped and been shaped by their culture and environment. Elders in each generation teach the next generation their values, traditions, and beliefs through their own tribal languages, social practices, arts, music, ceremonies, and customs.
- American Indian cultures have always been dynamic and changing.
- Interactions with Europeans and Americans brought accelerated and often devastating changes to American Indian cultures.
- Native people continue to fight to maintain the integrity and viability of indigenous societies. American Indian history is one of cultural persistence, creative adaptation, renewal, and resilience.

Essential Understanding 5: *Individuals, Groups, and Institutions*

American Indians have always operated and interacted within self-defined social structures that include institutions, societies, and organizations, each with specific functions. These social structures have shaped the lives and histories of American Indians through the present day.

- American Indian institutions, societies, and organizations defined people's relationships and roles, and managed responsibilities in every aspect of life—religion, health, government, diplomacy, war, agriculture, hunting and fishing, trade, and so on.
- Today, because of treaties, court decisions, and statutes, tribal governments maintain a unique relationship with federal and state governments.
- Today, American Indian governments uphold tribal sovereignty and promote tribal culture and well-being.

Essential Understanding 6: *Power, Authority and Governance*

American Indians devised and have always lived under a variety of complex systems of government. Tribal governments faced rapid and devastating change as a result of

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European colonization and the development of the United States. Tribes today still govern their own affairs and maintain a government-to-government relationship with the United States and other governments.

- Today, tribal governments operate under self-chosen traditional or constitution-based governmental structures. Based on treaties, laws, and court decisions, they operate as sovereign nations within the United States, enacting and enforcing laws and managing judicial systems, social well-being, natural resources, and economic, educational, and other programs for their members. Tribal governments are also responsible for interactions with American federal, state, and municipal governments.

CA Environmental Concepts and Principles

Principle 1: People Depend on Natural Systems

Concept A. The goods produced by natural systems are essential to human life and to the functioning of our economies and cultures.

Concept C. That the quality, quantity, and reliability of the goods and ecosystem services provided by natural systems are directly affected by the health of those systems.

Principle 4: There are no Permanent or Impermeable Boundaries that Prevent Matter from Flowing Between Systems

The exchange of matter between natural systems and human societies affects the long-term functioning of both.

Concept A. The effects of human activities on natural systems are directly related to the quantities of resources consumed and to the quantity and characteristics of the resulting byproducts.

Concept B. The byproducts of human activity are not readily prevented from entering natural systems and may be beneficial, neutral, or detrimental in their effect.

CA Health Content Standards:

2.1.N Identify internal and external influences that affect food choices.

5.1.N Describe how to use a decision-making process to select nutritious foods and beverages.

8.1.N Support others in making positive food and physical activity choices.

SOURCES

- CIMCC [Food Sovereignty & Community Collaboration Toolkit](#)
- *Seeing Our Native Students* [Educator's Guide](#)
 - Read pp. 16-20: "We Are Where We Come From: The Nations Within Our Nation"
- Redbud Resource Group: [SONS Video Series](#)
 - Watch Video 7: Treaties and Federal Recognition
- CIMCC [Traditional Food Resources](#)
 - A list of local Pomo food businesses
- National Conference of State Legislatures: [An Issue of Sovereignty](#)
 - A brief legal history of tribal sovereignty in the United States

Other useful resources to become familiar with:

- Watch [Gather](#) on Netflix to inspire the teaching of this lesson
- You may also enjoy "Tending Nature" on KCET: See [Season 1 Episode 2](#) and [Season 3 Episode 4](#)
- This lesson was adapted from [Lessons of Our Land](#)
- [CA Indian Essential Understandings](#)
- [Native Knowledge 360 Essential Understandings](#)
- [List of Tribal Nations by County](#)