

Standard Four – Lesson Three

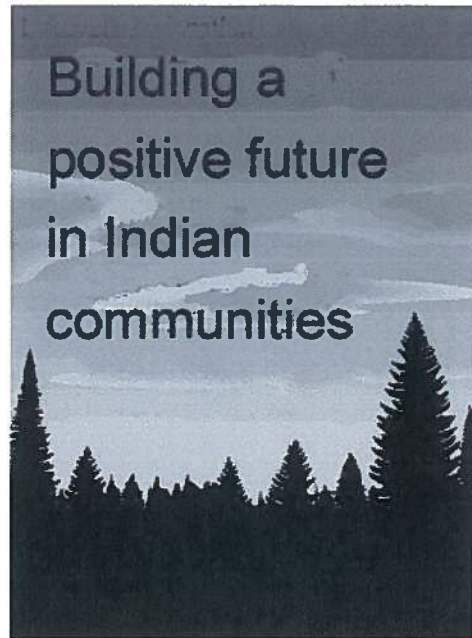
Achievement Goal:
Research the responsibilities and work of the tribal Natural Resources Department.

Time:
One class period

Core:
Civics/Government



For Grades 4-5



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.

Preparation:

- Review the “A Slice of Planet Earth” Lesson Plan found at <http://web4.msue.msu.edu/msuewc/kent/yourland/docs/earth.pdf>.
- 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 to a particular site the Natural Resource person suggests as a good area to show what natural resources are located in the community and what the tribe is doing to preserve it. Ask the staff person to present a map to the students depicting the location of the tribe’s natural resources.

Student Activity:

- 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
 - Invite a member of a tribal Natural Resource Department to visit your class. Suggest to them to 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 their 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 question.
 - After the presentation or field trip, have the children write letters to the Natural Resource staff person 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 in.
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Evaluation:

- Assess the student’s ability to listen respectfully to a classroom guest. Through their questions and thank you letters, assess their comprehension of what a Natural Resource Department does and the meaning of stewardship.
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Resources:

1. Tribal Natural Resource Department.
2. “A Slice of Planet Earth”, Michigan State University Extension, <http://web4.msue.msu.edu/msuewc/kent/yourland/docs/earth.pdf>