

Achievement Goal:
Describe family members, how they relate to one another, and how a relationship with nature resembles a relationship with family members

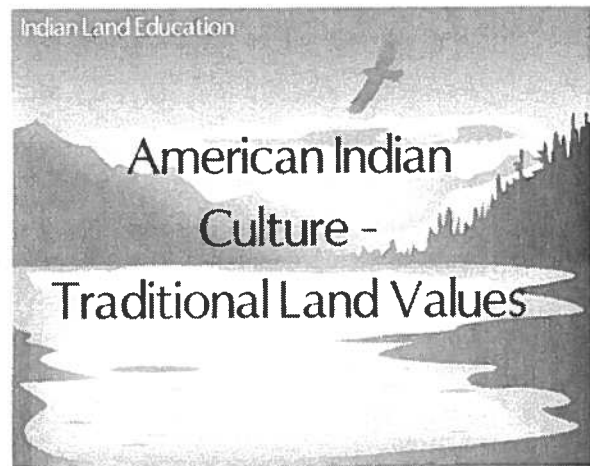
Time:
One class period

Core:
Cultural Arts



Grades: 2-3

Standard One – Lesson Six



Background:

Many nomadic tribes of American Indians lived in small groups consisting mostly of “extended family.” Many stationary tribes of American Indians may have lived in larger communities, but the family relationships were well-known and often operated through a system of “clans” or other forms of extended family divisions. Family was the center of the “kinship” system. This kinship system ensured group or tribal well-being and a sense of belonging and security for young people. Each member of the group was related to the extended family by blood or adoption or marriage. “Family” involved a large number of people, all of whom were considered relatives.

Today, this extended family concept continues among many American Indians. Children grow up within the immediate family of parents, brothers and sisters. They also live within a larger group of grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins and more distant relatives. Children are taught from birth to respect and acknowledge a relationship to each member of the group. Because of this family setting, children learned to address each member correctly by using terminology for the relationship.

There are no orphans within this kinship or extended family system. Children are the responsibility of all relatives. If a child loses a parent, there are always others to step up as parents. Like many indigenous people, American Indians believe it takes a village to raise a child. The entire village is the home of each child. The sisters of the child’s mother are often considered second mothers; the brothers of the child’s father are often considered second fathers. Their children are all considered brothers and sisters. Uncles and aunts often assume the roles of disciplinarians and teachers. Grandparents are also teachers who express gentle and open love for their grandchildren. The children are exposed from birth to a large variety of personalities, behaviors and talents that allow them to fully socialize and integrate into the community.

The beauty of this concept of kinship extends into the relationship to the land, to plant life, and all animals. In some tribal societies the sky is Father and the earth is Mother. In some tribal societies the creator of the natural world is known as Grandfather. To quote Joseph Bruchac, the author of several books listed as resources for this curriculum, “The native people of North America speak of their relationship to the Earth in terms of family. The Earth is not something to be bought and sold, something to be used and mistreated. It is,

quite simply, the source of our lives – our Mother. And the rest of Creation, all around us, shares in that family relationship.” One and all have a responsibility to treat all parts of the natural world with care, concern and respect, just as one would treat human relatives.

Student Activity:

- Discuss with the students the concept of kinship and extended family.
 - From magazines, newspapers or discarded books have the students find and cut out pictures of people who represent mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles, aunts and cousins.
 - Post the photographs on a bulletin board, arranging them with the nuclear family in the center. Label all photographs and discuss how they are related to each other.
 - Lead a question and answer session on relationships and how one must care for and respect all relatives.
 - Discuss the difference between blood relatives and relatives through marriage.
 - Obtain photographs or pictures of “wild” landscapes that show grasses, trees, wildlife, water and sky.
 - Show the students how the gifts of nature are all related: the animals breathe the air, the sky rains and creates water, the animals drink and live in the water, the trees and grasses help make healthy air, the animals feed upon the grasses and trees.
 - Place a photograph of a boy and girl into the landscape.
 - Describe how the boy and girl and all humans are related to the nature: how they breathe the same air as the animals, drink the same water as the animals, eat foods from the earth just as animals do, and sometimes eat the animals.
 - Study the “gifts” from a tree. Discuss how the tree is a relative because it supports life by producing many gifts such as the air that we breathe and some of the things that we eat.
 - Have the students describe some of the things we eat that come from trees.
 - Demonstrate how leaves fall from trees and help make healthy soil that grows other trees.
 - Identify tribal expressions or words that define kinship and relationships. Write these words on large sheets of paper and display in the classroom.
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Evaluation:

- Students should be evaluated by their participation and contribution in activities provided with this lesson.
 - Assess the students’ knowledge and understanding of family relationships through their participation in identifying relatives.
 - Assess the students understanding of relationships with the natural world through their participation in the discussion of natural gifts.
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Resources:

1. Books, magazines and other sources for the images described above.