



# Unci Maka Wounspe

Teachings of Grandmother Earth

A cultural curriculum

## INTRODUCTION

Being part of a global world with many diverse cultures, it is important that children have a strong identity with their own culture. It is important that Native American children learn and exhibit Native American values in all aspects of life, contribute to the well being of their tribal people and communities, and honor and uphold Native American beliefs and morals. This Native American focused curriculum will enhance and sustain pride and interest in student heritage and culture of the past, present and future. Native American children are the future of our tribes and it is crucial to help them identify with their unique and special heritage in order to be better prepared for the world at large.

This culturally appropriate Head Start curriculum is designed to instill in Native American children a comprehensive understanding of their place within Creation and a fundamental sense of belonging to their traditional land base. Head Start children, ages three to five, will develop a respect for the land and all elements of life through long term exposure to culturally relevant activities that are developmentally appropriate. This basic level of understanding will provide the foundation for future learning regarding land issues in Native America.

Each of the eight lesson sets is built around an element of life and creation, including Creation itself, Mother Earth, Fire, Water, Air, Plants, Animals and, finally, the Stars. The lessons include materials lists, sample Native American stories, discussion questions, art activities, nature walks, music and movement, and vocabulary words. Children have a natural curiosity about the activities and materials that are set before them. Allowing children to study the topics through their play, and providing them with the opportunity to explore will have lifelong benefits that will impact future learning.

# HEAD START REQUIREMENTS

Head Start Performance Standards require programs to support and respect the home languages and cultures of all enrolled children. Use of this cultural curriculum will fulfill this often underdeveloped, and sometimes overlooked, requirement. The standards also require programs to implement a curriculum in collaboration with the enrolled families. This curriculum can be easily modified to include any represented cultures. An initial assessment of the families enrolled each school year should be done in order to obtain backgrounds of all cultures represented for the year. The information should then be incorporated into this curriculum through the use of the tribal stories, arts, languages, etc. of each represented tribe. The cultural curriculum is designed to be an addition to each programs regular Head Start Curriculum.

## LESSON PLANNING AND DOCUMENTATION

Each of the eight lessons should be introduced one per month and carried out as long as the children are expressing interest and curiosity in the topic. Longer exposure to new concepts and ideas will allow more time for the children to make connections and gain understanding of each lesson. The hands-on activities are designed for young children; as such they are shorter in time and provide active, concrete experiences. The teacher's responsibilities to guiding these activities include the introduction of the stories, providing appropriate materials for support, flexibility to adapt to new ideas, and allowing children to make choices and discoveries. The lessons should be thoroughly thought out and planned using your own programs current lesson planning format. Program assessment in the developmental areas is still needed to document the growth of the children's skills. Development of these skills will occur naturally as the children explore the curriculum topics.

