

Title

Exploring Environmental and Spiritual Relationships in Lakota Art.

Grade Level

4-5th Grade.

Theme

Expressing the relationship between Lakota people and nature through visual representation.

Duration

1 week; 1 hour per day.

Goal

- Students will be given introductory knowledge on Lakota kinship through diagramming and classroom exercise.
- Students will explore Lakota spirituality by examining various natural elements such as spider webs, the four seasons, and the cycle of precipitation.
- Students will examine a selected piece of Lakota art for environmental influences.
- Students will create a piece of art based on observations in a natural setting.

Objectives

- Students will be able to understand the relationship between Lakota people and their environment.
- Students will be able to identify emotional and spiritual expression in Lakota art.
- Students will be able to explore their own relationship with the environment to be expressed in a medium of their choosing.
- Students will be able to follow Lakota oral tradition by telling the story behind the artwork.

Cultural Concept

The relationship between Lakota people and the environment.

Cultural Background

The philosophy of Lakota people is circular in nature. Their understanding of symbiotic relationships in nature is carried over into everyday life. The central theme of this philosophy is to be a good relative. By being respectful, generous, and thankful, they understand that if a life is lived in this manner, it promotes harmony and balance. Actions taken will be actions received.

However, as in nature, there are imperfections, which can upset this balance. At times there is strife; which must be addressed and resolved to the best of one's ability. Whether in a time of prosperity or a time of struggle, resulting emotions are too powerful to be internalized. They are expressed in songs, dances, and various mediums of artwork. This lesson is designed to introduce students to the environmental and spiritual influences experienced by Lakota artists.

Student Activities

- Students will examine a double cover shield designed by Minneconjou Lakota artist Nathan James Little Wounded.

- Students will be asked to identify various environmental elements such as colors, shapes, materials, and dimensions based on the lesson from Day 2—Exploring Lakota Spirituality.
- Students will journal their observations and then compare them to the explanation provided by the artist.

Resources

- Color image of double cover shield created by artist Nathan James Little Wounded.
- Journals.
- Copies of artist's explanation of shield.

Assessment

- Review of journal entries
- Discussion: Where or how did the artist find the image? What does the piece represent spiritually and physically?

References

DeMallie, R.J. & Jahner, E.A. (Eds.) *Lakota Belief and Ritual*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

*This reference is listed to provide further background information for the instructor.

Developer

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