Grades: 9th - 12th Grade
Lesson: 1
Unit: 3: Contemporary American Indian land issues
Subject: English Language Arts
Additional Subject(s): History/Social Studies; Science

Achievement Goal: Describe how North America and California are home to many distinct Indian tribes and communities and how these groups established their homelands in every part of the continent. Explain the word “indigenous.”

Time: One class period

Lesson Description:
Students learn about indigenous homelands, by exploring maps and discussing communities within larger territories.

Teacher Background:
Long before Europeans came to America the indigenous peoples of North America lived in every environment throughout the continent. From the cold tundra in Alaska to the wet marshes of Florida, from the dry deserts in Arizona to the Eastern seaboard, Indians adapted to and thrived in their home territories. Of course, there was movement and migration of many tribal nations caused by the search for better hunting, gathering and farming lands. There were also territorial disputes both causing and caused by this movement. However, most tribes and groups tended to stay in their chosen lands, believing in their sacred and inherent rights to their lands established long ago. The people carried ancient knowledge about their lands that was passed down through the generations, creating strong bonds to their home territories. Each tribe and tribal community was part of a distinct culture, spoke one of hundreds of languages found on this continent at that time, and had a unique tribal history. They governed themselves and were observant stewards of their lands and natural resources. Such was the nature of their sovereignty when Europeans arrived.

This lesson will introduce students to the word “indigenous” and help them gain insights into how North America was populated by an amazing variety of peoples and cultures before contact. This lesson will also encourage the students to think about how physical geography, place, and culture are intertwined.

Standards:
Associated California Academic Content Standards
For general guidelines for aligning discussions with English-Language Arts Standards, see Using Lessons of Our California Land to Help Students Meet California State Content Standards.

History-Social Science

In this lesson, students in Grades Three through Five will develop map skills, determining the absolute locations of places and interpreting information available through a map's legend, scale, and symbolic representations.

In addition, Grade Three students will have the opportunity to identify geographical features in their local region (Standard 3.1.1) and to trace the ways in which people have used the resources of the local region and modified the physical environment (Standard 3.1.2). Third graders will also learn of the American Indian nations in their local region long ago and in the recent past (Standard 3.2) and to discuss the ways in which physical geography influenced how the local Indian nations adapted to their natural environment (Standard 3.2). Students will also have the chance describe how various periods of settlement left its mark on the land, tracing how the community has changed over time, by drawing on primary sources (standards 3.3 and 3.3.3). Finally, the lesson's discussions of local places and resources could increase students’ abilities to describe the ways in which local producers have used and are using natural resources, human resources, and capital resources to produce goods and services in the past and the present (Standard 3.5.1).
The lesson’s considerations of land use can provide a foundation for fourth grade students to begin to understand the physical and human geographic features that define places and regions in California (Standard 4.1) and to describe how California Indian people have depended on, adapted to, and modified the physical environment (Standard 4.2.1).

This lesson’s investigations of land use can also help Grade Five students describe how geography and climate influenced the way various pre-Columbian nations lived and adjusted to the natural environment (Standard 5.1.1).

Science

The studies of American Indian homelands during this lesson can provide students insights into the effects of environmental changes on plants and animals (Life Sciences Standard 3 in both Grade Three and Grade Four). Also, depending on the places investigated, Grade Five students could gain knowledge of the origin of water used by their local community (Standard 3.e).

Teacher Preparation Resources:

- View the “Early Indian Tribes, Culture Areas, and Linguistic Stocks” map at either of the websites listed in the Lesson Resource section of this lesson.
- Review the lesson “Not ‘Indians,’ Many Tribes” at the National Endowment for the Humanities “Edsitement” webpage. This lesson teaches children about the different Indian cultures found across the United States and helps them relate these different cultures to the different landforms, environment, and natural resources found in these regions. Using an atlas and the “Early Indian Tribes” map listed earlier, you may want to create maps of specific parts of the United States to display greater geographic detail and the diversity of tribes within culture areas.
- To foster the students’ sense of the resources and places once available to North Fork Mono people, read and draw ideas from “Where Are They Now?,” “Deer,” “Soapstone,” the stories in “San Joaquin River History” and the materials listed in “Musical Instruments of the Central Valley Tribes.”

Student Activity:

1. Introduce the word “indigenous” to your students. Explain that indigenous plants are ones that originated, or occur naturally, in an area or environment. Apply the word to animals that may live in the lands surrounding the community. Finally, ask the students what “indigenous people” are. Ask them how this is reflected in, and affects, these peoples’ history, knowledge, spiritual beliefs and culture.
2. Show the map “Early Indian Tribes, Culture Areas, and Linguistic Stocks” or the California Tribal Map to students at the websites listed in the Lesson Resources section of this lesson. Emphasize that Native people were found everywhere in North America. Explain to the students that this map is an anthropological study that seeks to find similarities and differences between groups of people. Explain that any borders shown in the maps between different tribes are conceptual rather than fact.
3. Discuss the concepts of “homelands” and “territory.” Today, a person’s homelands may be the city, community or neighborhood, while a person’s territory could be analogous to their reservation, state or region.
4. Working in small groups, have students quickly brainstorm about different local animals, and what their territories might be. For example, a student might think about a Great-Grey Owl. An individual or family of owls’ home range would be an area of oak woodlands from which they could find food, water and shelter. Its territory as a distinct species might be the Sierra Nevada or other areas of the Northern Hemisphere.
5. Have the students write down some of the things they need in their own homeland, such as places to find food, material for clothes, or places to buy clothes, be with friends, and go to school or the doctor. Have the students share their lists with the class.
6. Have students discuss where their homeland, or community, is located within a larger territory, such as their reservation or aboriginal territory.

7. On the back of the first sheet of paper, have the students write down some of the things their Native ancestors needed in their original homelands before there were stores and cars and shopping. They may want to include some of the social or ceremonial activities of their Native ancestors and where these activities took place. To foster the students' sense of the resources and places once available to North Fork Mono people, read and draw ideas from “Where Are They Now?,” “Deer,” “Soapstone,” the stories in “San Joaquin River History” and the materials listed in “Musical Instruments of the Central Valley Tribes” listed in the Lesson Resources section.

8. Ask what might happen if part of a student’s community or “homeland” was no longer available to him or her. For example, what might happen if the portion of their homeland containing the grocery store or the mall was no longer available to them? How would they adjust to this change? Would they move to find a new source of groceries or clothes?

9. Explain that this is similar to what happened to Native ancestors when other settlers began arriving into their original homelands. If these new settlers claimed their forests, grasslands or lakes and streams, Natives often found they could no longer use those places. That portion of their homelands was no longer available, similar to losing a grocery store today.

10. Ask how Native ancestors would have to adjust their lives if a portion of their homelands disappeared in this manner. For example, what might they have to do if the gravel banks where the salmon spawned were no longer available because utility companies had built hydroelectric dams that blocked the fish from swimming upstream?

11. Have the students think about their current homelands. How would their lives change if the population suddenly increased ten times in only two years? How would this big population growth affect the natural environment? The community?

12. If you seek to have the children relate homelands, culture and geography more closely, have them follow the activity presented in the “A World of their Own: The Americas to 1500” curriculum described in the Lesson Resources section of this lesson.

Evaluation:

1. Students should be able to explain what the word “indigenous” means and spell it.
2. Determine if the students can comprehend the idea of homelands and how modern homelands are similar to those of Native ancestors.
3. Assess the students’ grasp of the relationships between environment, geography and culture.

Lesson Resources:

- Early Indian Tribes, Culture Areas, and Linguistic Stocks, From The National Atlas of the United States of America (Arch C. Gerlach, editor)
- Not ‘Indians,’ Many Tribes, National Endowment for the Humanities “Edsitement” webpage
- California Tribal Homelands Map
- Historical Tribal Groups of South Central California
- Where Are They Now?
- Deer
- Soapstone
- San Joaquin River History
- Musical Instruments of the Central Valley Tribes

Source URL: http://www.lessonsofourland.org/lessons/many-indigenous-homelands-exploring-maps

Links: