

APPROACHES TO
TEACHING LAKOTA CULTURE
2007 Summer Institute for Teachers

Ceremonial Aspects of Lakota Culture:
An Approach to Curriculum Development

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Goal

Students will develop knowledge and understanding of the ceremonial aspects of Lakota culture.

Objective

The key to understanding Lakota culture is best expressed by the Lakota saying “Mitakuye Oyasin” or all my relations. This belief is at the heart of Lakota philosophy, which Vine Deloria described as a “moral universe.”¹ Deloria says that “in the moral universe all activities, events, and entities are related and consequently it does not matter what kind of existence an entity enjoys, for the responsibility is always there for it to participate in the continuing creation of reality.”² This philosophy permeates Lakota ceremony and serves as a touchstone for the ceremonial aspects of Lakota culture. This curriculum will utilize Deloria’s five principles, which he refers to as “the most important components of the Indian universe.”³

Themes

Deloria’s Five Principles

¹ Deloria, V. (1999). If you think about it you will see that it is true. In B. Deloria (Ed.) et. al. *Spirit and reason* (pp. 40-60). Golden: Fulcrum Publishing.

² Ibid.

³ Op cit, p. 49.

Theme 1: The Universe is Alive

Goal: Students will gain an understanding of how all things in the universe have consciousness, feeling, will, and potential for growth and change.

Examples of key concepts

- Wakan Tanka
- Wakan
- Nagi
- Niya
- Nagila
- Sicun

Resources

Deloria, V. (1999). If you think about it you will see that it is true. In B. Deloria (Ed.) et. al. *Spirit and reason* (pp. 40-60). Golden: Fulcrum Publishing.

Walker, J. (1917). Secret Instructions for a Shaman. In *The sun dance and other ceremonies of the Oglala division of the Teton Dakota* (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. 16 pt. 2, pp. 78-92). New York: American Museum of Natural History.

Theme 2: Everything is Related

Goal: Students will learn the significance of the Lakota concept mitakuye oyasin or all things are related.

Examples of key concepts

- Tobtob Kin
- Mitakuye Oyasin
- Tiyospaye
- Hunka ceremony
- Oceti Sakowin
- Lakota camp circle

Resources

- Blunt Horn, J. (1982). Legend of the camp circle. In R. J. DeMallie (Ed.), *Lakota society* (pp. 13-14). Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Deloria, V. (1999). If you think about it you will see that it is true. In B. Deloria (Ed.) et. al. *Spirit and reason* (pp. 40-60). Golden: Fulcrum Publishing.
- DeMallie, R. J. (2001). Teton. In W. Sturtevant (series Ed.) & R. J. DeMallie (Vol. Ed.), *Handbook of North American Indians: Vol. 13, Part 2, Plains* (pp. 794-820). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Walker, J., & Herman, A. (1982). The seven council fires. In R. J. DeMallie (Ed.), *Lakota society* (pp. 14-18). Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Walker, J. (1982). Divisions of the Lakotas. In R. J. DeMallie (Ed.), *Lakota Society* (pp. 18-19). Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.

Theme 3: All Relationships are Historical

Goal: Students will learn the historical Lakota events that originated relationships among gods, spirits, and ancestors that includes the potential for growth and change.

Examples of key concepts

- Creation stories
- Origin stories

Resources

- Black Elk, N. (1980). The gift of the sacred pipe. In J. E. Brown (Ed.), *The sacred pipe: Black Elk's account of the seven rites of the Oglala Sioux* (pp. 3-9). Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Black Elk, N. (1980). Wiwanyag Wachipi: The sun dance. In J. E. Brown (Ed.), *The sacred pipe: Black Elk's account of the seven rites of the Oglala Sioux* (pp. 67-100). Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Deloria, V. (1999). If you think about it you will see that it is true. In B. Deloria (Ed.) et. al. *Spirit and reason* (pp. 40-60). Golden: Fulcrum Publishing.
- Finger. (1991). Wohpe and the gift of the pipe. In J. Walker *Lakota belief and ritual* (pp. 109-112). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Lone Man. (1972). The White Buffalo Calf pipe (Ptehin cala Canopa). In F. Densmore *Teton Sioux music* (pp. 63-67). New York : Da Capo Press.
- Looking Horse, A. (1987). The sacred pipe in modern life. In R. J. DeMallie and D. Parks (Ed.) *Sioux indian religion: Tradition and innovation* (pp. 67-73). R. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Walker, J. (1917). Narratives. In *The sun dance and other ceremonies of the Oglala division of the Teton Dakota* (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. 16 pt. 2, pp. 164-182). New York: American Museum of Natural History.
- Walker, J. (1917). The Sun Dance taught to the Lakota. In *The sun dance and other ceremonies of the Oglala division of the Teton Dakota* (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. 16 pt. 2, pp. 212-215). New York: American Museum of Natural History.

Theme 4: Space Determines the Nature of Relationships

Goal: Students will understand the significance of space, directionality, and location for Lakota ceremonies, kinship, and society.

Examples of key concepts

- Ceremonial directions
- Sacred places
- Particular places

Resources

Amiotte, A. (1989). The road to the center. In D. Dooling & P. Jordan-Smith (Eds.) *I become part of it : Sacred dimensions in Native American life* (pp. 246-254). New York: Parabola Books.

Black Elk, N. (1980). Wiwanyag Wachipi: The sun dance. In J. E. Brown (Ed.), *The sacred pipe: Black Elk's account of the seven rites of the Oglala Sioux* (pp. 67-100). Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Deloria, V. (1999). If you think about it you will see that it is true. In B. Deloria (Ed.) et. al. *Spirit and reason* (pp. 40-60). Golden: Fulcrum Publishing.

Walker, J. (1917). Secret Instructions for a Shaman. In *The sun dance and other ceremonies of the Oglala division of the Teton Dakota* (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. 16 pt. 2, pp. 78-92). New York: American Museum of Natural History.

Walker, J. (1917). The sun dance. In *The sun dance and other ceremonies of the Oglala division of the Teton Dakota* (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. 16 pt. 2, pp. 100-112). New York: American Museum of Natural History.

Theme 5: Time Determines the Meaning of Relationships

Goal: Students will understand the change in Lakota relationships as they develop over time.

Examples of key concepts

- The four times – day, night, month, year
- Seven generations
- Fullness of time⁴
- Lakota star knowledge

Resources:

Black Elk, N. (1980). The gift of the sacred pipe. In J. E. Brown (Ed.), *The sacred pipe: Black Elk's account of the seven rites of the Oglala Sioux* (pp. 3-9). Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Deloria, V. (1999). If you think about it you will see that it is true. In B. Deloria (Ed.) et. al. *Spirit and reason* (pp. 40-60). Golden: Fulcrum Publishing.

⁴ “As there were interspecies communication between humans and other forms of life, people became aware of larger cycles of time, which can be described as the time jointly shared by all forms of life within a geographic area. In some undetermined manner, the universe [has] a direction to it: Every entity [has] a part to play in the creation of the future, and human beings [have] a special vocation in which they initiated, at the proper time, new relationships and events.”

Deloria, V. (1999). If you think about it you will see that it is true. In B. Deloria (Ed.) et. al. *Spirit and reason* (p. 57). Golden: Fulcrum Publishing.