

We're Different and the Same; and That's Okay. The Navajo Nation- The People, The Culture, The History- Comes to Your Classroom

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Introduction

When I was 9 years old, my parents took my three sisters and me on a trip “out West.” Seeing the breath-taking and immensely vast Grand Canyon, floating in a boat along the Colorado River (I got to drive long enough for a photo-op), climbing ladders through Mesa Verde National Park (while imagining what life as an Ancestral Puebloan would be like for me rather than listening to the tour guide) are the memories that resonated with me when I returned to my home in Connecticut in time to share what I did over the summer vacation with my classmates.

It is now that I am kindergarten teacher, that I truly realize how fortunate I was to not only have this opportunity to travel, but also to have a way to use it to further my understanding of different cultures, American history, and geography as a young student. So when I began studying “The American West as Place, Process and Story,” I went back to my aforementioned experiences and tried to think of a way to make it meaningful and valuable to my kindergarten students. I want them to be immersed in the Navajo culture-while in a Delaware classroom-to begin to realize the different aspects of the history and culture of the Diné people.

This unit will be implemented in a full-day kindergarten classroom. It will be taught in a cross-curricular/whole-child manner for the students in social studies, English language arts, writing, and developmental centers within the classroom. With a strong emphasis on developmentally and age appropriate experiences, children will use a hands-on approach to learn about the Navajo Nation and the Diné people by participating in art activities, movement and music, dramatic play, fiction and non-fiction texts, observing artifacts and photographs, and discovering in the sensory table.

Using this particular unit will not only incorporate all areas of social studies (economics, geography, civics, and history), it will help the students understand their place in the world. For example, it can often be heard in the classroom, “I live in Bear, Delaware.” Others will chime in, “I live in America” or “I live in the U.S.A.” It is difficult for the concrete learners to realize that they are all correct. This unit will help them with their own geographical awareness but will also expand their thinking while simultaneously comparing it with the Diné.

Ideally, this unit would be implemented at the end of the school year, allowing for students to work cooperatively, use their emergent reading and writing skills, incorporate all the social studies foundational content previously taught and use higher order thinking to relate, compare, and empathize with the Diné. Students will create jewelry, artwork, and writing pieces throughout the unit.

Demographics

Wilbur Elementary is a public, diverse Title I school located in suburban Bear, Delaware. 1,200 children from kindergarten through fifth grades are served in Delaware's largest elementary school. Wilbur is unique in that the students come from different socio-economic status backgrounds; there are children with special needs, children who are English Language Learners (ELL), and diverse ethnicities and experiences.

For instance, my classroom has 22 students made up of 10 boys and 12 girls. About half of them receive free/or reduced breakfast and lunch. 4 of them are English Language Learners. It is very diverse and makes a rich learning environment. My classroom is considered a regular education setting, where 1 student receives ELL pull-out instruction.

Currently, the school uses a district-approved curriculum that covers important social studies content in a basic whole-group instructional format. American symbols, wants versus needs, community leaders, good citizenship, long ago and today, and early map skills are addressed to set a foundation for future social studies content.

Our schedule allows for 25 minutes of developmental play. However, students who eat breakfast in the morning lose out on that time. The language arts block lasts for 100 minutes in the morning, 30 minutes of intervention-where students are divided into homogeneous groups for leveled reading instruction- in the afternoon and 25 minutes for writing at the end of the day. There are 35 minutes scheduled in for social studies (or science instruction). This allows ample time to incorporate the unit and engage the students.

Objectives

1. Geography K-3a: Students will understand the nature and uses of maps.
2. Students will be able to locate their place on the earth using maps of the world and America.
3. Students will be able to make and elaborate on a mental map of their town.
4. History K-3a: Students will use artifacts and documents to gather information about the past.
5. Students will be able to compare and contrast customs and culture in the Navajo Nation to their own.
6. Students will be able to evaluate and compare values of items.

7. Students will be able to distinguish the differences between wants and needs.

Navajo History

To begin to understand the Navajo culture and Diné people, learning about their history, struggles and celebrations will help. Provided is a snapshot, annotated timeline of important historical events that I feel will help the teacher to see the big picture. If there is further information that the teacher needs in order to answer questions about the Diné, she should lead the class on an internet or literature search to find the answers and deliver them in a child-friendly manner.

Navajo beliefs say that in the beginning of time, First man and First woman travelled through many worlds, leading the Diné (Navajo people), and were delivered by floods, to the Glittering World. They settled in Diné Bikeyah (meaning among the 4 sacred mountains) which is now known as their homeland¹. Anthropologists will say that the semi-nomadic people travelled south from sub-arctic regions and evolved to be the tribes known as the Apache and the Navajo. To suggest this to the Dine is not only ridiculous to them, but insulting.² In the four-corners area of the Colorado plateau, a unique Navajo culture formed.

The Diné Creation story tells of the spirits that made people in a previous world. White Shell Woman became lonely after her sister, Changing Woman, left for the west. After 5 days, Talking God realized she was lonely and brought all of the Holy People to her house. Changing Woman brought blankets, Talking God brought buckskins, and First Man and First Woman brought corn. The Holy People put the corn on top of the blankets which had the buckskins underneath and placed the corn so they were pointing in the four directions. When The Wind blew on them, the yellow corn turned into a woman and the white corn turned into a man. The Holy People gave the people minds and voices. After the ceremony the Holy People returned to their homes. Four days later, Talking God brought Ground Mist Girl and Mirage Boy to marry the first siblings. Each couple had one boy and one girl; they became known as the Honeycombed Rock People. One day, the Honeycombed Rock People saw a fire in the distance. After searching and searching they found a group of people and they were hungry. So the Honeycombed Rock People invited the strangers to live with them because they had food. They brought the newcomers to White Shell Woman she named them and made them her children. Soon other clans came to White Shell Woman to be named and live among the Honeycombed Rock People. As new clans joined the Diné, they flourished with skilled hunters and talented craftsmen.³

In the late 1500s, the Navajo had their first interactions with the Spanish people. Although the Spanish tried to impose Christianity on them and many other tribes at this time, the Diné resisted and ultimately, stole Spanish horses and other livestock.

It was in 1774 that the Diné drove the Spanish off their lands on the Eastern region. The Dine were nomadic and moved around frequently, some of the Diné people gathered at Canyon de Chelly around 1750. Here, they used the farming skills taught to them by the Pueblos and settled near a stream ideal land for farming and the rocky terrain prevented attacks from other Native tribes like the Comanche and Ute⁴. In 1805, the Spanish attacked the Navajo children, women and elders hiding in the Canyon del Muerto (now known as Massacre Cave). 115 Diné were killed and 33 were taken captive by the Spanish troop led by Lieutenant Antonio Narbona. The fighting, ransacking of livestock and captives, continued for years; the Diné retaliated as well. Even after the Americans won the Mexican War, the Diné were continuously fighting to protect their land and livestock.

During the Civil War, General Carleton was appointed to protect New Mexico from the Southern Confederates. Having arrived too late, he turned his attention to the Apache and Navajo. So he appointed Kit Carson to force the Navajos to a reservation outside of their homeland in Arizona and New Mexico. Colonel Carson and five companies of New Mexico volunteers marched through Canyon de Chelly and destroyed the hogans (homes), crops, livestock, and peach orchards on the Diné homeland. Because their lands were devastated, the Diné were forced to walk from Fort Defiance, Arizona to Pecos River, New Mexico. People that were too tired or too weak were shot while walking the 350 miles to Bosque Redondo in Eastern New Mexico. Over 8,000 natives were at the fort in 1864, equaling about three-quarters of the whole tribe. By 1866, Chief Manuelito, who had been on the run, had surrendered. He was then paraded through the streets of Santa Fe as a prisoner on his way to Bosque Redondo. There the land was arid. There were floods followed by draughts. The Diné lived in shelters made out of earth and branches. No wood, winter clothing or proper blankets were provided by the government during the winter season. The rations were not sufficient. The alkaline in the water caused gastro-intestinal problems where almost 2,000 people died. When the government realized that the tribe was unable to make the arid land into rich, farming soil as they had hoped for, the Treaty of Bosque Redondo was created. There are differing versions of this historical event; the Diné believe that they convinced General Sherman to release them back to their homeland after performing a Coyote Way ceremony. The treaty stated that the Diné could be released (rather than going east to Indian Territory in Oklahoma), but had to give up much of their homeland. This tragic time in history has been named “The Navajo Long Walk.”⁵ Today, this treaty can still be found on display on the reservation.

In the late 19th century, “Friends of the Indians” was a society in upstate New York made up of White missionaries and reformers that knew how to make Indians a part of their culture.

They felt honor bound to “civilize” the supposedly primitive people on whose land they had settled, and they

knew that they needed to start with the impressionable minds of children.⁶

Their philosophy was “kill the Indian, save the man.” They thought it was necessary to take (sometimes voluntarily, sometimes forcibly) children as young as 5 years old away from their Native families and put them in boarding schools. The schools were usually far enough away to discourage children from running away. There they would share Christianity, speak English, learn to conform, and even get English names. Children were scolded for speaking their native language, talking about their homes, or families. The “Friends of the Indians” allowed children to go home for the summer if they could afford train tickets. Most families could not. Boys were taught carpentry, blacksmithing, gardening and farming. Girls worked on laundry, sewing and cooking. Conforming to the late-nineteenth century Euro-American ways was their ultimate goal. Finally in the 1930s, the most of the schools were closed in America.⁷

In 1936, John Collier, the commissioner of Indian Affairs, needed the Diné to slash their herds of sheep, horses and goats due to overgrazed rangelands that would lead to erosion on their reservation.

When livestock continuously defoliate favor forbs, grasses, and shrubs, they eventually kill the native vegetation they prefer and encourage the invasion and spread of less palatable plants, both native and exotic. As vegetation density decreases, larger areas of soil become exposed to the baking sun, make them more arid.⁸

Although the Navajo were worried by this, they were upset with how the problem was addressed and were reluctant to cooperate. Collier was concerned that the sheep and goats would eventually starve, and then consequently, so would the Diné. The New Deal program on the Navajo reservation created many problems.

Among their many mistakes, they ignored the importance of long-established cultural patterns, disparaged local knowledge and cultural understandings of nature, and refused to listen to the Navajos’ advice in implementing the livestock reduction.⁹

With good first intentions, the end result was problematic. Because the Diné culture is a matricentered society, when Collier excluded women altogether, there was an uproar with Collier and officials but also the Navajo men. Giving up their livestock, their status was not something the Diné were willing to do. Fearing funds would run out, Collier eventually gave up. In hindsight, Collier realized that he had assumed to know the culture within the Diné and never truly comprehended the value of the livestock.¹⁰

During World War II, the Navajo code helped America in an important victory in the Pacific. John Philip Johnston was an engineer who was raised on the Navajo reservation and was confident that few people in the world would understand the syntax and tonal qualities of the Navajo language. 29 Diné that were fluent in Navajo and English created the code. Many of these men were former students of the aforementioned boarding schools. In time, more than 400 Diné served in the code-talker program. The Japanese were never able to break the code. Consequently, in 1948, Native Americans won the right to vote in Arizona and New Mexico.

In 1968, the Navajo Nation established the Navajo Community College, the first tribal college. It received little funding from the local and state governments, relying mostly on endowments and the federal government. Executive orders signed by President Clinton and George W. Bush support the Indian education system from preschool to post-graduate levels.¹¹

Congress passed the Navajo-Hopi Indian Land Settlement Act that partitioned 1.8 million acres to the two tribes in 1974 instigated tribe-versus-tribe conflict. The Indians who were on the “wrong” side were made to move; conflict and legal battles ensued. Finally in 1996, an agreement was reached and the federal law halted the relocation of Navajo people.¹²

Today, the Navajo Nation (the largest tribe in the country) is in Arizona, New Mexico and a bit of Utah. The reservation has over 27,000 square miles. It houses Monument Valley Tribal Park, as well as Canyon de Chelly National Monument and is roughly the size of Connecticut. There are over 250,000 Diné people. The Navajo language remains the most vital of all Native languages, with approximately 100,000 speakers.¹³

The Diné

The Diné are very proud people. They are proud of their culture and their land. They believe that they are stewards of the earth and it is their role in life to take care of their people and the cherished land in some manner. They believe that they were the first occupants of the land and are honored by that fact.

The Family Dynamics

Diné families are matricentered.

“I use the term “matricentered” to capture a way of organizing and thinking about the world that means far more than the commonly used phrases “matrilocal” and “matrilineal.” Women stood at the center of almost all aspects of Diné life and thought: spiritual beliefs, kinship, residence patterns, land-use traditions, and economy. Their most important deity was—and is—Changing Woman,

who created the Diné and their livestock gave them their central ceremony, Blessingway. Diné traced descent exclusively through their mothers, and a newly married couple generally built their Hogan near the wife's family, creating closely knit networks of mothers, daughter and sisters. But women's power did not rest merely on a female solidarity. Women were important to economic production, and significantly they controlled the means of their own production: livestock and land." ¹⁴

Changing Woman came to the Diné, when First Man and First Woman prayed and hoped for a way for their people to be saved for continuation of their people. Then there was a storm on a mountain. When they went to the mountain, they found Changing Woman. She had a rainbow above her head, lightning going across her body to protect her and Mother Earth and Father Sky below her. As she grew, she became their first savior. Changing Woman helped the Diné, but there are still five monsters remaining; thirst, hunger, old age, laziness, and illness. It is now internalized by the women of the Diné that it is the women's job to teach others and protect them against these monsters. Because of Changing Woman's importance to the Diné, the woman is the head of the household. ¹⁵

The husbands marry into the wife's family. He will live with her side of the family and begin to be responsible for her sisters, parents and nieces and nephews. Traditionally, the elders in the tribe arrange the marriages based on what would be best for the tribe and how the woman's family could gain status through marriage. It was rare that marriage is based on romantic feelings. Depending on which family will gain status within the tribe, dowries were exchanged.

The elders are considered the wise and knowledgeable. They are highly respected within the tribe. They inspire the younger Diné by telling stories and providing teachings. Each family has a trade that is often passed down through apprenticeships. It is noted that, older Diné women often stare at visitors. It is not to be interpreted as intimidation, but that is their way of expressing curiosity about the visitor's presence. ¹⁶

Grandparents are often granted the privilege of educating the children. It is an honored gift to them. Sometimes for years, the grandchildren will live with the elders learning about life, culture, stories and traditions. Traditional trades like caring for livestock, weaving, arts and crafts, and using herbal medicine are taught by grandparents. In return, the children provide vibrancy of life to the grandparents. Today, children will live with their grandparents for all of summer vacation to help with farming and to learn about their culture and history from their grandparents.

When a fellow Diné dies, they believe that they will continue on to the afterlife. Death is not the end, but a transition. The belongings of the deceased are destroyed or given

away. If someone had died in a hogan, the home was abandoned. This custom has faded today. Funeral rites are deeply respectful as they wish the transition to be smooth.

The Children

Before a baby is born, the father makes the cradleboard. It can be made from pine or cottonwood.

A baby is placed on a blanket in the carrier. With the arms placed down at the baby's sides, the blanket is then folded snugly around the baby. The buckskin lace is then drawn through the side loops, criss-crossing over the baby, fastening it securely into the carrier. A buckskin or cloth can then be laid over the top to shield the baby from the sun and to protect it from insects.

Being swaddled tightly is often very calming for the baby. The Diné refer to babies in the cradleboard as "under the rainbow." Diné babies that spend time in the cradle board are believed to grow up tall, strong and straight.

Each part of the cradleboard holds meaning to the Diné. Father Sky, Mother Earth, rainbow, ears, and lightning (for protection) are represented. When the baby grows out of the cradleboard, it is cleaned and saved for the next baby in the family. After it is no longer used, it is taken apart.¹⁷

Traditionally, the grandparents were responsible for the education of the children (see aforementioned). The community as a whole cared for, taught and helped with all the children's growth.

Before European contact, Native children were taught the skills necessary to fill their social roles as adults. Young boys learned tracking, hunting, fishing, and farming methods, observational skills and how to increase their physical abilities. The girls learned how to care for the home and children, prepare food, and create utensils such as pottery and baskets. Children would be given small replicas of tools they would need as adults to play and practice with, such as a bow and arrow, a doll or a mortar and pestle.¹⁸

Today, many children attend tribally-operated schools from Head Start preschool to high school. Others attend BIA or religious schools. In the recent past, their drop-out rate was significantly higher than non-Indian society. Elders and parents realized this and have been making an effort to change as they value education both in and out of the classroom. As a reflection of this, the drop-out rate is slowly decreasing.

The Navajo Community College uses traditional Navajo principles to advance student thinking. The school offers opportunities for students to continue onto a 4 year college/university or enter the workplace. The Diné College offers degrees in education, business, social work, Navajo language and more.¹⁹

Children have many chores to help their families year-round. In the spring, the children will help their grandparents move the sheep to the summer hogans. This can be a treacherous descend into the canyon! During summer vacation, the Dine children will live with their grandparents to help with sheering and vaccinating the sheep. They will help plant the corn and plow the fields. Picking owl's foot flowers and walnut leaves provides natural dyes for the wool that will be woven. While with their grandparents, the granddaughters will learn to weave, cook and maintain the house. The grandsons will help herd the sheep, gather and cut wood, and help their elders. When the corn is ready for harvesting, they will help pick corn and prepare foods with the corn. In the fall, the students go back to their parents' homes and return to school. They may play baseball, chorus, etc. In the winter, they will return to their grandparents' home on a regular basis to hear stories, play games and learn about the important lessons of working hard will lead to a good life and good reputation, plants and animals must be cared for, and to respect the earth.²⁰

Children play a winter game with their grandparents called "The Shoe Game." It is a game to entertain the kids and incorporate the Navajo history through storytelling. The story shared is like this: A long time ago before daytime and nighttime, the shoe game was played so the animals could determine what it would be- day time forever or nighttime forever. At the time, it was just perpetually twilight. The nocturnal animals all stood together on the north side and the day time creatures lined up on the south side. Animals like the porcupine and coyote that didn't care which team won, would switch teams depending on who was winning. This game is important to the Dine history because it marked the beginning of when the animals would go out into the world. During the first game, whoever was winning, the sky would show in the level of darkness. For example, if the nocturnal animals were winning, the sky would become darker.²¹ Traditionally, a corn husk chip would be dropped to see which team goes first. If it lands on white, the daytime animals go first; if it lands on the dark side, nocturnal animals begin. It is said that the lizard rubbed his belly for good luck and the turkey sang to distract the other team. The first team drops a yucca ball into one of their four shoes. The other team then has to pick which shoe it fell into. The game eventually ended when dawn of the next day arrived. The animals realized they cannot determine what will happen with light because it is a part of life.

The Stick Game is another game that is only played in the winter. This game is played with three sticks with painted sides and 40 marbles. You will need small kindling sized wood to mark your place on the board. The object of the game is to get to the east first.

The Culture

The Diné believe in the Story of Spider Woman. She was born from holy people in the Second World as a spirit. When her body took form in the Third World, the holy people told her she has capabilities of weaving the universe. She did not know what that meant, but was very curious. One day she was out exploring and gathering food, when out of her right hand, a string came. She wrapped the string around a branch, and then another branch, as she was discovering her new talent.

After doing this for a while, she realized she was creating a pattern. She started maneuvering and manipulating the strings into various shapes. At this particular moment, she knew this was the weaving the holy people instructed her to do. Immediately she broke the string with her left hand without hesitation. She sat and thought carefully about how to use her new gift. For the rest of the day she sat close to the tree and wrapped the strings into various patterns on other branches of the small tree.²²

Her husband made a loom per direction of the holy people. Each part of the loom had significance.

The weaving fork from the juniper tree, used to push the weft down, placing layers upon layers of weft, and thus creating a life. The sound of the weaving fork hitting the weft is considered the heartbeat sound of the textile. The weaving loom was made of the main trunk of a young juniper tree, with all the branches removed. It is made into two main supporting beam, which stand upright on the right and left sides of the loom frame, which represents the pillars holding up the sky and keeping the mother earth secure. The third beam is placed at the foot or base of the two pillars, which represent the earth on which we live. The forth beam is placed at the top, and represents the sunbeams and rainbows, protecting mother earth. It also represents the sky (atmosphere) and the universe.²³

The correlating songs for Spider Man and Spider Woman hold deep meaning to the Diné today. The lesson of the story is for the Diné to create beauty in their life here in the Fourth World. Navajo rugs are an example of this. Still made today, they are a representation of Spider Woman's story.

When a member of the Diné earns a blanket or rug after an important accomplishment, it is truly special, a rite of passage. The blankets and rugs are made from different wools

from different kinds of sheep. They use indigo, rabbitbrush, sagebrush and mahogany roots to add colors.²⁴

Upon scrutinizing, it can be noticed that many rugs have a break in the pattern among the border. This is because the Diné wanted a way for their creative mind to escape. If they did not include it, then they believe they will become trapped in the blanket and get sick from this. So many rugs have an imperfection to let the evil spirits out.²⁵

Navajo jewelry is very significant to the Diné. The designs have meaning and represent family lineage. Some designs represent mountains, skies, horses, water, etc. The cluster design is the most precious piece; the Diné's signature piece of jewelry. It has turquoise in a pattern that resembles a sun or sunflower. Originally, the turquoise was mined in Nevada and Arizona. Then it was traded amongst tribes. The jewelry dates back to the 1800s when the Diné would get silver from the soldiers they came in contact with and melt it down. In the 1940s, when Diné jewelry became popular, it was mostly known for the sandcast and melted silver pieces. It was then that the Arts and Crafts Guild was formed. In the 1960s, the trend developed into smaller pieces that were influenced by the Zuni tribe in New Mexico. Today, you will find more contemporary pieces. The Diné now market their jewelry on a world-wide level.²⁶

Amongst the weaving, jewelry, sand painting, and pottery, prominent symbols can be found. The recurring symbols carry different meanings. The Diné often used the swastika. It dates back before the negative association with Nazis of World War II. To the Diné, the swastika represents life, sun, strength and power. Other symbols represent rain, clouds, stars, food, and heroes among the tribe.²⁷

To the Dine the word Navajo means "People with large cornfields." Although today there is little farming on the reservation.

At the time of European contact...the Navajo and Western Apache had learnt agriculture from the Pueblos and cultivated maize, beans and squash as well as hunting and gathering wild plants.²⁸

Primitive food also consumed by the Diné is acorn, pumpkin, sheep, elk, deer, prairie dog, rabbits, corn, yucca and antelope.²⁹ Today, if guests are invited to a Diné member's house, it is polite to try all the food presented. The Diné feel that they are being generous and by declining their food, you are disrespecting their culture. Mutton stew, Navajo tacos, and Spam are found on menus in Navajo Nation today. On the reservation, alcohol is illegal.

Diné wore deer skin shirts and skirts, moccasins, and blankets. Women wore darkly colored blankets sewn together to make ponchos. Then they began to wear cotton shirts

without collars. Today, Diné wear jeans, t-shirts and sneakers just like non-Indian society. As mentioned earlier, the jewelry is very important to the Diné.³⁰

Traditional homes are called hogans. Living in the southwest, they provided cool shade during the day and warmth at night. Female hogans homes are made of earth and logs and usually are 6 or 8 sided. Male hogans are rounded with stone walls³¹. The Diné never lived in tipis. Today they live in manufactured, modern homes but still use the hogans (without electricity and running water) throughout the year. Some families may have all three types of homes on their property.

In Navajo Nation, many trading posts still exist. Some of them still operate in the original structure from the 1800s. Here traditional Navajo items can be purchased like art, pottery and blankets, as well as day-to-day necessities. The Hubbell Trading Post is post that is noted for its success and connection to the Navajo culture. John Hubbell had an enterprising spirit which the Diné people respected and which brought him great success as a trader. In 1883, over 1.3 million pounds of Navajo wool, 300,000 sheep pelts and more than 100,000 goat hides were purchased. This success allowed the Diné to flourish. Hubbell's Trading Post always offered treats to children, lunch to customers, and housing to customers from far away. His jokes and hospitality created a trust and relationship between the trader and the Diné customers. He would often be sought out to write and read letters, relay information from government officials and recruit silver and iron smith instructors for the Diné silver smiths. The Hubbell Trading Post brought in business by holding "Chicken Pulls" which were like rodeos with rewards for talented horseback riders. For a time, they used tin money that was only good at the trading post. Many posts used different forms of the tin money to create a loyalty to their post. And while many people believed the stereotype of the "vanishing redman," Hubbell knew of the increasing Diné population. He was an advocate for their funding of schools, land and equality. His philosophy not only earned him respect, but success, as Hubbell Trading Post is still in business.³²

"The first duty of an Indian trader, in my belief, is to look after the material welfare of his neighbors; to advise them to produce that which their natural inclinations and talent best adapts them; to treat them honestly and insist upon getting the same treatment from them."

The Diné participate in many ceremonies. Some ceremonies last for hours and some last for days. For the Diné, water is life. Many clans often named themselves after water. Water is often symbolized in pottery, beadwork, carvings, hide paintings and weavings. Corn is also essential. They will bring corn pollen to ceremonies to be used for fertility, harmony and beauty.³³

During a private ceremony, the drum will encourage people to join and dance. The rate of the beat on the tom-tom drum, can invoke many different emotions of the dancers.

Drums are painted, made from all different materials and are sacred. They will live with the owners and be passed down through generations. Other instruments may be played as well. Flutes, bells, whistles, rattles and others add to the ceremony.³⁴

Typically, non-native people are not invited to the ceremonies. If they are, they are encouraged to follow the protocol of the ceremonies. Clapping is discouraged. These are often private because they are for the families or religious reasons.

When offered food, it is polite to try it. The Diné are very generous people who want to share what they have with visitors; whether it be a handshake, a drink of water, turquoise jewelry or food. By attempting to say hello in their language (ya at eeh), the Diné appreciate the gesture immensely.

Classroom Activities/Teaching Strategies

Dramatic Play Area

Hubbell Trading Post. This will be a combination of the materials provided from the traveling trunk, miscellaneous items from the classroom, and I will have my own stand within the post to offer school supplies that the kids can trade at the end of each day. The center will be labeled to ensure a literacy rich environment for the students.

Sensory Table

I will have an assortment of little rock-like beads painted in a turquoise color and placed in a mold of hardened sand. The kids will use little shovels, picks to chip away at the hardened sand to mine for turquoise. They will wear hard hats and eye protection. The students can then use these to make jewelry with their findings and string or pipe cleaners.

Block Area

There will be pictures of hogans displayed. Students can see the inside and outside of the Diné summer and winter homes. Using blueprints, they can create hogans using popsicle sticks, building blocks and/or Legos.

Art Projects

During the unit, the students will have the opportunity to create sand art by using cleaned milk cartons from the cafeteria. The students can decorate their container using designs and symbols from the Diné with colored sand. They can weave paper rugs with the four colors; white, turquoise, yellow and black. With homemade playdough, the kids can shape and then paint bowls like the Dine make pottery.

Classroom Management Tool

Each group of students will have assigned seats at a table. Every table will make up a family. There will be one female student that is the head of the family for that table. Every time a student from that table is doing a positive behavior, they will earn a sheep icon on a poster. At the end of the day, the table will be able to go to the trading post and trade sheep for items from the trading post.

Artifacts and Pictures on Display

I hope to use authentic Navajo rug, cradleboard, dolls, pictures, books, maps and silver jewelry to keep out for exploration during the unit. A poster with common words in Diné language will be visible for teacher and students to use.

T Chart

Throughout the unit, I will display a T chart that is titled the “Diné People” and the two columns are entitled “The Similarities to Kids in Delaware” and “The Differences to Kids in Delaware.” This chart will be used after every lesson to have the students compare and contrast their culture to the Diné. It will be reviewed aloud frequently as well, since the children are emergent readers. Using the compare and contrast strategy, they will be looking at all aspects of the culture through the aforementioned centers and the lessons that guide the unit. This will help the students build on their knowledge and then be able to summarize what has been learned.

Each day I plan to incorporate the theme in English Language Arts, Writing and Social Studies lessons.

Lesson One: Opening

Vocabulary: Navajo, Diné, orienting, mountains

Instruction:

ELA: As we open up every morning with a greeting, today we will start by passing a hello around the circle. The hello will be in Navajo. Each child will address the child sitting next to them as they say, “Ya at eeh!” We will be studying the Diné people and that is how they say hello, “Ya at eeh!”

To open up the unit, I will ask the students, “Where do you live?” and record their answers on the board. Then I will read Me on the Map! By Joan Sweeney. The book starts with a little girl in her room with a map she has made on her room. Each page progresses to show her in her home, street, town, county, state, country, and finally her place on the earth. At the end of the first read through, we will look at pictures of our school, street, town, county, state, country and earth too. The kids will be refreshed in their early map skills that have already been addressed in social studies. They will find Delaware on the map of America. We will look at their responses from the beginning of the lesson and show them that they were all correct, and then we will order the pages of an already prepared version of the book for us in Bear, Delaware. We go to Wilbur

Elementary School in the town Bear, in New Castle County, in the state of Delaware, in the country of the United States of America on planet Earth.

Then I will show the students the map of Navajo Nation. They will see where Navajo Nation is on the same map where they found Delaware. I will explain that they live in America and have many similarities to kids in Delaware. We will be learning a lot about the Diné and their culture.

Writing: I will have the students create a list of materials they need to learn every day. Later in the unit, they will be comparing this to what students in Navajo Nation use. They will also use this list to prioritize the materials they need for school by trading them in at the Hubbell Trading Post in the dramatic play area.

Social Studies: Each student will start at their seat. They will begin the lesson by drawing a map of Bear, Delaware. After the students create them, we will spend time sharing and adding to ours if necessary. Then on the SmartBoard, the students will participate in a lesson using a picture of the classroom and placing items on the classroom picture where they belong. For example, the students will put an icon or picture of a doll in the housekeeping area. They will put the class turtle in his tank. We will have a discussion about how they knew those items went there and how they were familiar with the different areas of the classroom. This is called orienting. We will play a game where we have to orient ourselves in the classroom. Using a blindfold, I will blindfold a child and spin them around 3 or so times. I will point them in one direction. The instructions will be, “When I remove this blindfold, I will give you three seconds to look straight ahead. Then using your sense of direction, I want you to point to where you think the lockers are.” We will play this game three or four times asking the students how they knew each time. If students are still interested in the game, I will assure them that we can play again at recess together.

Then I will tell the students that the Diné people use their sense of location to help them not only identify with where they are but who they are. I will show them where the Navajo Nation is on the map again and point out the 4 sacred mountains that they use to figure out where their home is; similar to the way the students knew where their lockers are. The mountains are Mt. Blanca to the east, Mt. Taylor to the south, San Francisco Peak to the west and Mt. Hesperus to the north. We will refer back to the maps regularly throughout the unit to reinforce map skills and to make connections.

Extension: Part of their homework for the night, will be to talk to their family members about how their family arrived in Delaware to live. For example, they moved here for a parent’s job, their parents went to the University of Delaware, maybe their father is in the Navy, or they moved in with grandparents, etc.

Assessment: Students will find Delaware on a map of the United States of America. Students will be able to orient themselves based on objects in the classroom or playground.

Lesson Two: Creation Stories

Vocabulary: weaving, creation

Instruction:

ELA: To open up this lesson, I will remind the students that we started learning about Diné people and their culture. I will review the notes we made on the T Chart and talk about their homework from the previous night. The students will share how their families came to Delaware to live. After a few students have shared, I will tell the students that everyone will get a chance to share about their families during writing time today.

Then I will share how the Diné believe they got to their homeland. I will use the Creation Story as a reference for myself to tell them the story. Before sharing the story, I will tell them how stories are often passed down by families. In the Diné culture, some stories take months to tell! I am going to tell you the Creation Story of the Diné people.

Afterwards, I will ask them comprehension questions and refer to our LFS Map about differences in cultures.

Then I will teach the kids the “Stick Game” that Changing Woman showed the First Man and First Woman before they went west on their journey to the fifth world. This game must only be played in the winter. The rules and materials can be found here <http://www.zes.aps.edu/Zia/Come%20Share%20Our%20World/J0110605/cgi-bin/stickgamep1.htm>.

Writing: I will model my expectations on the board as I write and draw a picture of how I came to Delaware. I will mention going to the University of Delaware, meeting my husband, and getting a job as a teacher. The students will then write and draw about the prompt. They will have time to share with their tablemates.

Social Studies: The students will learn about Spider Woman! Using a video of the landscape and her rock, found here <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUFWKpzn7O0>, I will tell the story of Spider Woman using the link <http://discovernavajo.com/spho.html> as a guide. Then, I will show pictures of women weaving and how Spider Woman was so important to the Diné. I will explain how the women are in charge of the family in the Diné culture. We will write down similarities and differences on the T Chart.

Extension: The students can weave paper using the four colors white, yellow, black and turquoise.

Writing Prompt: What would you do were Spider Man or Spider Woman to help people?

Assessment: Students will be able to list similarities and differences between the Diné culture and their own.

Lesson Three: Rugs and Trading

Vocabulary: trade, barter

Instruction:

ELA: I will open the lesson by having the students sit in a circle. I will show them a Navajo rug. I will show talk about the design, the colors, the meaning and remind them about Spider Woman and ask them to share what they remember. I will point out the mistake in the pattern and tell them what that means. As I introduce the story, the students will go on a picture walk to build connections with what they have heard and learned already about the Diné. Then I will read the story Songs from the Loom: A Navajo Girl Learns to Weave by Monty Roessel.

At the end of the lesson I will ask comprehension questions that are “in the book” and “in their head;” meaning that the students will have to use some knowledge from the story and some inference skills based on what they have been learning and what they heard in the book.

Writing: During writing, I will let them decorate a piece of paper as their rug. They will have symbols that they can add to their rugs. After they have colored and decorated it, they will have time to write about what their rug means to them and why they chose the symbols that they did.

Social Studies: Today I will introduce the Trading Post in the dramatic play area. I will tell them about the Hubbell Trading Post that is still active today and how it will work in our classroom. Then I will introduce the classroom management tool that I will be using (see “Classroom Management Tool” above). The students will have time to brainstorm as a “family” what they can do to earn sheep and what they would like to trade their sheep for. I will make them aware of the fact that the tables only have pencils at the moment; scissors, glue, crayons, markers, and pencil sharpeners can be obtained at the trading post. Through this simulation, the students will get a chance to implement their understandings of wants versus needs that they had learned about earlier in the school year.

Assessment: Students will demonstrate their understanding of wants versus needs by making appropriate trades at the trading post.

Lesson Four: It’s okay to be different

Vocabulary: chores, responsibility

Instruction:

ELA: On this day, I would revisit the T Chart and talk about all of the things we are doing in class that are connected to Navajo Nation. I will constantly be referring back to the map and have discussions about the Diné culture. I will read Navajo Coyote Tales by Hildegard Thompson. We will talk about the importance of the Coyote to the Diné people. I will pick one story and as a follow up have the children brainstorm connections to other stories they have heard.

We will then play the shoe game! (This game may only be played in the winter.) The game was initially played by the animals of the world. The day time animals challenged the nocturnal animals to decide whether it should be daytime or nighttime for a full 24 hours. The coyote was one of the players that switched back and forth depending on which team was winning. I will assign students the parts of different animals and roles to play. We will play a few rounds and then we will talk about how the story ended charting our findings about the Coyote and the Diné on the T Chart.

Writing: To begin writing class, I will read It's Okay to be Different by Todd Parr. I will have the students share their ideas about the Diné people and how we are different and the same. Then they will finish the writing prompt "It's okay to be different because..."

Social Studies: Using a SmartBoard lesson with pictures, interactive slides and video clips, I will give the students a snapshot as to what life is like as a kid in Navajo Nation. I will cover topics such as school, chores, games, clothing and toys. We will compare our list of school materials to the materials the Diné use to learn. At the end, we will play the shoe game. As we play, I will tell them the story that goes along with it.

Assessment: Students will be able to list similarities and differences between the Diné culture and their own.

Lesson Five: Is it fair?

Vocabulary: treaty, equality

ELA: Read The Goat in the Rug to the students and have them compare and contrast the other books we have read about weaving on a Venn diagram graphic organizer. Then have students list all of the information we have learned about the Dine through the books about weaving. I will then give the children a chance to weave paper. We will allow all students, not just the girls an opportunity. When the students have completed, we could talk about trading them, giving them as special gifts, etc. similar to the Diné.

Writing: After a quick run-down of all the topics and material covered, I will have the children complete the prompt "I want to visit Navajo Nation because..."

Social Studies: While the students are at their special, I will take their belongings out of their lockers and bring them to the playground. I will remove the nametags off of their

lockers and replace them with nametags that say “Mrs. Howell,” our principal. When the students return from their special, we will talk about how fair it is, why she would do that, where did the bookbags go? Etc. After we have brought our bookbags and belongings back into the classroom, I will tell them about the Long Walk that happened a long time ago, just like what happened here today. However, the Diné had to walk hundreds of miles and move away from their homeland with very little to live on. They were away from their four mountains and didn’t know how to identify themselves. After sometime, they were allowed back because there was a treaty. If the students don’t come up with it on their own volition, I will suggest we write a treaty to Mrs. Howell to get our lockers back.

Assessment: Students will be able to list reasons why they need their lockers, their space.

Lesson Six: Writing a Treaty and celebrations

Vocabulary: traditions, celebrations, feasts

Instruction:

ELA: I will read another story from the Navajo Coyote Tales by Hildegard Thompson. We will be listening for the story elements like characters, setting, details in the text, and the events. We will talk about what we know about Coyote and what would we do if we saw a coyote in real life. Why is the Coyote always mischievous? Is there a character that we read about that frequently gets into dilemmas like the coyote?

Writing: Together, we will brainstorm important points to include in our treaty to Mrs. Howell to get our lockers back. Then, in a modeled writing manner, I will write the treaty on large chart paper. The students will all sign the bottom.

Social Studies: I will invite Mrs. Howell into the classroom where we will present our treaty with reasons as to why we need our lockers back. She will agree, but she still wants some of the lockers. When the students return to class, they will be able to put their items away and put their nametags back on the lockers. Mrs. Howell will still have 5 lockers in our room, similar to the government having kept some of the Diné’s land after the treaty.

Then, to celebrate, we will talk about how the Diné celebrate. I will show videos and slides of their celebrations with the preparation, food, music, family and dress. With the remaining time, we will listen to music and eat popcorn.

To close the lesson, I will lead a discussion about how it made them feel when Mrs. Howell took their lockers away. How did they think it made the Diné feel when they took away their land? Imagine what it would have been like to have to leave everything. That happened a long time ago and now the Diné live on a reservation that will always be theirs.

Assessment: Students will be able to list ways that the Diné celebrate in a similar fashion to our culture.

Lesson 7:

Vocabulary: interview, artifacts

Instruction:

ELA: Today I will read, How the Stars Fell into the Sky by Jerrie Oughton. Before doing so, I will tell the students that this is a Diné story and to start, we are going to take a picture walk. After taking a picture walk, I will have the students make predictions about what they believe the story will be about using the pictures as clues and knowing what we have been studying in class for the last week. Then I will read the story. At the end of the story, we will talk about our predictions and what we were right and wrong about.

Writing: To end the unit, the students will brainstorm questions that they would want to ask Diné children. We will use all of the writing prompts, stories, artifacts, T Chart, etc. to help formulate the questions. Later in the day, we will Skype with a classroom in Navajo Nation. Doing the questions beforehand, will allow the students to ask thoughtful questions based on what they have learned and have prompts for when they are Skyping and won't be too shy. It will also allow me the opportunity to read over and provide some redirecting for the kids, if necessary. We will then write them on index cards and save them for later in the day.

Social Studies: We will Skype with a class in Navajo Nation. We will ask them the questions we have prepared and interact with them about living in Delaware.

After the Skype, we will write thank you notes to the class to be sent. The students will have to reference at least one thing they learned during the interview.

To close the unit, I will conduct a discussion where we will talk about how there are many cultures in the world, we just learned about one. It is okay to be different. Using the artifacts and Long Walk simulation, I will tell the students that it is important to learn from the past, and ask them what they learned from the Long Walk/losing their lockers. While this is happening, I will have a clipboard to record the students' thoughts.

Assessment: Students will participate in the aforementioned discussion.

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Appendix A Implementing District Standards

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies

Reading Standards for Literature K-5

Key Ideas and Details

K.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

Craft and Structure

K.4 Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

K.9 With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

K.10 Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Reading Standards for Informational Text K-5

Key Ideas and Details

K.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

Craft and Structure

K.4 Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

K.9 With prompting and support, identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., in illustrations, descriptions, or procedures).

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

K.10 Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Writing Standards K-5

Text Types and Purposes

K.1 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell a reader the topic they are writing about and state an opinion or preference about the topic.

K.2 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

Speaking and Listening Standards K-5

K.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

K.2 Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.

K.3 Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.

Delaware Social Studies Standards

Appendix B

Delaware Social Studies Standards

Geography Standard One: Students will develop a personal geographic framework, or "mental map," and understand the uses of maps and other geo-graphics.

K-3a: Students will understand the nature and uses of maps, globes, and other geo-graphics.

Economics Standard Two: Students will examine the interaction of individuals, families, communities, businesses, and governments in a market economy [Macroeconomics].

K-3a: Students will understand how barter, money, and other media are employed to facilitate the exchange of resources, goods, and services.

Economics Standard Three: Students will understand different types of economic systems and how they change [Economic systems].

K-3a: Students will identify human wants and the various resources and strategies which have been used to satisfy them over time.

Economics Standard Four: Students will examine the patterns and results of international trade [International trade].

K-3a: Students will understand that the exchange of goods and services around the world creates economic interdependence between people in different places.

History Standard Four: Students will develop historical knowledge of major events and phenomena in world, United States, and Delaware history [Content].

K-3a: Students will develop an understanding of the similarities between families now and in the past, including:

- Daily life today and in other times
- Cultural origins of customs and beliefs around the world

Curriculum Unit Title

We're Different and the Same; and That's Okay. The Navajo Nation-The People, The Culture, The History- Comes to Your Classroom

Author

Elisabeth A. Diemer

KEY LEARNING, ENDURING UNDERSTANDING, ETC.

Map Skills
Wants versus Needs
Equality
Differences in cultures

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) for the UNIT

Why is it important to learn about the Dine?

CONCEPT A

CONCEPT B

CONCEPT C

Map Skills

Differences/Similarities in cultures

Equality

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C

How can maps help people?

How does comparing the Dine culture to our own help kids learn about people of the world?

Why is it okay for people to be different?

What can we do to ensure that people are treated fairly?

VOCABULARY A

VOCABULARY B

VOCABULARY C

Navajo, Dine, orienting, mountains, Arizona

Weaving, creation, trade, barter, artifacts, culture

Treaty, equality

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES

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