



## **Native Americans of the East Coast: With Special Reference to Iroquois, Pequot and Powhatan Women.**

Curriculum Unit 03.02.05

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This unit has been designed to meet the diverse educational needs of an inner-city 5th grade class in a Middle school setting. Nearly 98% are African-American and 2% are a miscellaneous assortment of Hispanic and Asian population. Students come from different socioeconomic backgrounds and this affects the impact of education in their lives. Few of them are under direct parental care. Most of them live with their grandparents or foster parents. A great deal of anger is provoked when something is said about anyone's mother. The image of a mother, irrespective of whether she is part of their daily lives, is very important to these children; they strive constantly to protect that image. Therefore, a unit on Women seems appropriate. This unit offers flexibility and can be modified to match different teaching styles.

My curriculum unit meets the New Haven School District Expectations for 5th graders in Language Arts, Social Studies and Social Development.

### *Language Arts :*

The student will be able to summarize and analyze texts; read and write every day; make presentations to many audiences.

### *Social Studies :*

The student will be able to identify Native Americans and examine their culture.

### *Social Development :*

The student will understand the effect people have on one another.

## Goals of the Unit

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1. The student will learn about the existence of Native Americans before the arrival of Europeans, and about their past as a part of our country's larger history. ("Their history is our history and must be part of our shared and remembered heritage." – John F. Kennedy)
2. The student will come to understand the role of Native American women as daughters, sisters, wives, mothers and grandmothers.
3. The student will come to appreciate diversity and assimilation in a multi-cultural world.
4. The student will consider the problem of Native American Stereotypes.

*( The stereotype of the native man is that of a warlike savage who lived in tepees, wore feathered headdresses, scalped lots of soldiers and settlers and was finally subdued by the U.S cavalry. The stereotype of the native woman is that of a squaw - inferior, subservient, meek, lazy, wild and lustful. Most of it has come from television, movies, books, games, cartoons, songs and the backs of cereal boxes.)*

## Initiation

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The students will fill out the first column of a KWLU chart (What I Know) so that the teacher can assess their prior knowledge and tailor the unit accordingly.

## Native American Indians

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Who are the Indians? Where did they come from? How long have they been here? The Indians migrated from Asia during the ice age, at least twenty thousand years ago. The color of their skin varied from very light yellow to a dark brown; their eyes from black, brown or hazel to gray or even blue; their hair from straight, coarse black to soft brown. There is a strong resemblance between the American Indian and the people of

Eastern Asia. The evidence comes from archaeologists and paleontologists.

Throughout the history of Early America, we see two conflicting images of the Native Americans – a split image. They were viewed as peaceful, gentle, and willing to establish mutually beneficial relations with Europeans. Some whites who had fled to Indian communities or been captured by them became chiefs; this is the most dramatic evidence of the Indian receptivity to others. They were curious and were interested in the newcomers. They admired them and hoped to gain from them. The materialism and technology of their ships, textiles, and firearms impressed them although they found them physically unappealing. Their social style seemed rough and undignified. The Native Americans, on the other hand, were viewed in a very negative light as counter images of the civilized man, lacking Christian piety, purposefulness and the work ethic. In New England, they were experienced as both physical and psychological barriers, as threats to the identity and collective success of the Puritan way. They were regarded as objects. The Indian possession of land was a problem of law, morality and practicality. The colonists' need for land led to hostility rather than cooperation. Indians maintained a relaxed attitude toward personal possessions. During harvest time, wealthy individuals gave away much of what they owned to promote a relationship of obligation with potential followers or allies. Europeans considered them inferior since they were different. If they were to be treated on an equal footing, then they should be converted and assimilated.

American history is also a multi-cultural social history where homogeneity versus diversity is prominent. In 17th century America, the Indians who inhabited America had a culture of their own. Though the Indians were blessed with such great natural wealth, they lived like poor people in the eyes of many colonists.

## **Native American Indians of the East Coast**

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Indian tribes have been listed in-groups or cultural areas. There are seven distinctive cultural areas in United States. Each native nation is as distinct in its customs, language and spirituality as is each European nation. Studying the British and German is as different as studying the Pequot and the Iroquis. Throughout the entire North American continent, there are ten groups and they speak about thirty different languages and six hundred dialects.

The Eastern tribes lived in woodland along the coastline, covered with a variety of deciduous and coniferous trees. The Eastern Algonquian tribes wanted to maintain a balance of power and generally tried to find ways to accommodate the English colonists. They shared knowledge about environment, cultivated foods, medicines, established trails, and cleared lands. There was a conflict between the native tribes and colonists since the tribes considered themselves as stewards of the land whereas the colonists wanted to own the land. Sexual division of labor was marked among the Algonquin tribes of New England who settled between the Kennebec River and Cape Cod. They were the Abenaki, Pawtucket, Massachuset, Narraganset, Pequot and Wampanoag. The Iroquois confederacy consisted of the Mohawk, the Oneida, the onondaga, the Cayuga and the Seneca. Hunting and fishing activities were taken care of by men who had to leave the main camp for many days at a time and were exposed to a greater risk of being hurt or dying.

The Pequots were warriors and their name means "destroyers". Their religion was based on a deep attachment to the land. They have an explanation of creation with three tiers of life- air, land and water- and a

tree of life. In winter they built long houses like the Iroquois and in summer, they lived in portable wigwams near their hunting and fishing grounds. Whereas in other North Eastern tribes only important people could adorn themselves with wampum, it was common for nearly everyone in the Pequot tribe to wear wampum ornaments. There are two tribes: Mashantucket (Western Pequot) and Paucatuck (Eastern Pequot). During the Pequot war of 1637, when the colonists considered them as an evil force deserving destruction, 300 to 700 Pequots, mostly women, children and the elderly were trapped inside the fort. A peace treaty was signed with the colonists in 1638 and the tribe was dissolved. The warriors were executed. Women and children were sold as slaves in the West Indies or given as slaves to the Mohegan, the Narragansett, the Metoac, and the Niantic tribes. Since the Mohegans treated them cruelly, the colonists moved them to Eastern Connecticut. In 1666, 2,000 acres became the Mashantucket (Western) Pequot Reservation in Ledyard. About twenty years later, 200 acres called the Lantern Hill Reservation were set aside for the Paucatuck (Eastern) Pequot.

Powhatan (falls in a current of water) was a confederacy of 30 tribes.

They hunted , fished and gathered in and around the Chesapeake Bay. They ate the eggs of birds and made a milky drink from walnuts. Men and women did not eat together. The men had many wives.

## Native American Women

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### Women and Land

The bond between Indian women and the land is based on respect for Mother Earth. Iroquois people believed that history began with a godlike being called Sky Woman. The Creation Story speaks of the Sky Woman falling from the Sky World and landing safely on the turtle's back. Animals brought earth to put on the turtle's back and this grew into the continent of North America with the Sky Woman's help. The Sky Woman became the first caretaker. From this beginning sprang the Indian women's special yet natural relationship to the land. Its central elements were as follows: all living things are respected; one must live in harmony with all living things; land does not belong to the people but the people belong to the land.

### Women and Clothes

The women of the East Coast (woodland tribes )wore dresses made of soft deerskin, suitable to the climate; their leggings came to just beneath the knee, fastened with tie thongs or a garter; they braided their hair with a bit of ribbon tied to the ends; they never used war paint but sometimes applied a spot of rouge to the cheeks and chin. In winter, they wore blankets for warmth. Their Moccasins were of the same style as men's, decorated with bead or quillwork in traditional tribal designs and patterns.

### Women and Work

Women performed those jobs , which would allow them to take care of children. Their jobs were generally repetitive, could be easily interrupted and did not require travel far from home. Except for tobacco, women took care of crops in Southern New England and further South. The women were the farmers and grew corn, beans, squash in fields of up to 200 acres. They were the food preparers and made clothing, pottery, baskets, mats and wooden vessels called mortars used for grinding foods. In the nonagricultural North where the Pequots lived, women gathered shellfish and birds, wild plants, trapped small rodents, made garments and

were involved in all the food-processing activities. Women owned the wigwams and most household goods such as baskets, mats, kettles and hoes. They moved their camps from field to field as necessary. The women planted corn in scattered plots both near and away from their villages in plots heavily fertilized with dead fish. They gathered seafood on the coast and cattails used in making mats for wigwams. Women brought to their camps the animals, which the men hunted. They butchered and processed them, prepared the hides for clothing, cooking the meat and smoking some of it for use later in the winter. During winter, they made clothes and remained in camp. When men cleared the trees, women burned the logs.

Indian women were very hard working. Indian men looked at their wives as wealth. However to Englishmen Native Women appeared to be slaves. At the same time Native American men looked upon English women as lazy since their handicraft and needlework seemed idle pursuits. Indian women used their hoes and hands to turn soil; colonists used oxen and horses to pull plows.

### Women and Culture

Among the Iroquois, Women were at the center of families. The man lived with the wife's family after marriage. Children belonged to the family line and would inherit property. The husband remained connected to his mother's household and his mother and sisters were dearer to him than his wife. Women were providers for the community at large. The land was theirs and so were the crops. The three sister crops were corn, squash and beans. Corn cultivation was detailed. Women planted, harvested, dried, shelled, ground into flour, sifted and boiled as stew. They farmed; cared for the home; gathered berries and fruits and insects such as grasshoppers; skinned, packed and prepared animals; fished; produced crafts such as basketry, pottery, rope making, leather work. Thus, they produced a variety of household objects for their family and community.

Elder women were called clan matrons and they selected the local chiefs. These matrons decided who should fight and when. They also decided the fate of the captives- burn them or adopt them. Mary Jemison, a "white Indian" was captured by the Iroquois in the 1740's and received favorable treatment from her captors. Matrons would also match-make. Some served as chiefs- *sachems*. Women also maintained social stability through tightly knit female relationships. The mother-daughter bond was particularly strong. Since men were away often, women turned to other women for food, medical care and advice on love and child rearing. Women declared their opinions and decided about wars and the treatment of captives. Their traditional craft skills were making clay pots, shaping bone into combs, needles and toys and weaving fiber mats. They wove sashes with beaded designs and made boxes from birch bark and decorated it with quills. The role of mothers gave them special authority in guarding the welfare of society. Native American women were daughters, wives, mothers and grand mothers and shared certain realities where work, love, sex, and death were concerned. Traditionally, their communities as medicine women did not only esteem Native American women of the Eastern Algonquian tribes, but they also held social and political power.

## Objectives of the Unit

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1. The student will trace the probable migratory routes of Indians from Asia on a world map and locate the Native American tribes of the East Coast using a map of Northern America.
2. The student will describe the life-style of Native Americans of the East Coast using the

Mashuntucket Pequot Museum & Research Center as a primary source.

3. The student will compare and contrast the lifestyle of a Native American woman of the East Coast with a woman of today.

4. The student will recognize the richness of diverse heritages in the classroom by listening to the Educator from Pequot Museum's Outreach Program who will tell stories of the tribes and make history come to life. Children will use artifacts to visualize the importance of natural resources - wood, bones, leather, beads .(*The Native Americans had no writing and history was orally transmitted by story tellers.*)

5. The student will read "The Double life of Pocahontas" by Jean Fritz and summarize the life history of Pocahontas.( *Although Pocahontas is the daughter of a great chief and not a representation of the common native woman, inclusion of her story is appropriate since the Southern Planter Society had a ruling aristocracy, leaders with more authority, great class distinctions between the wealthy and poor unlike the middle class settlement of New England. The book on Pocahontas fascinates students and is an eye opener for them to colonial life in Virginia, particularly James town.*)

## Activities

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A number of teaching modalities will be used to reach the different learning styles of the students so that no child is left behind. On entering the classroom, the students will do a 5 minute " Do Now " activity to help them focus on their learning. To kindle their enthusiasm, they will learn some Pequot words during this time by copying the word and meaning: **neuyewgk**- "my wife "; **nehyashamag** - "my husband "; **pouppous**- " infant newborn "; **muckachux** -"boy "; **squas or quausses** -"virgin girls"; **yewt** -"fire "; **nupp**-"**water**"; **muckasons**- "shoes "; **souchpoun** -"snow ";**sokghean** -"rain ";**mattuck**-" trees "; **wewautchemins**-"

Indian corn"; **mushquissedes**- "beans"; **wumbanute** -"white "; **suggyo**-" black"; **teatum**-" I think "; **moche**-" I will "; **gynchen**- " I kill"; **mundtu**- " God"; **cheeby** - "evil spirit/devil"

They will also respond in a paragraph to a given prompt. This writing activity will be relevant to the day's lesson. The opinions of the class is pooled together and it serves as a tool for the teacher to gauge their prior knowledge and get a feedback of their thinking patterns. The activities will be geared towards the development of the child along the cognitive, social, ethical, psychological, linguistic and physical pathways. After the " *Do Now*", we have the *anticipatory set* when the preceding lesson is revisited and reviewed and the lesson for the day is introduced. The objectives of the lesson and expectations of student performance are explained during this time.

## **Lessons 1 & 2- Building Background Knowledge about Native Americans on the East Coast**

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Duration :45 minutes each

Instruction Methodology: Researching Secondary Sources

Material: KWL chart

Students will individually complete column 2 of the KWL chart.(What I want to know) They will work in the library, researching books and encyclopaedias. They will borrow books to take home and read. If possible, they will visit the Public Library in downtown New Haven and the book mobile which comes to school periodically. They will do a web quest using different search-engines and print relevant information. They will individually complete column 3 of the KWL chart.(What I have learned)

## **Lesson 3 - Focus on Women**

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Duration: 45 minutes each

Instruction Methodology : Co-operative Learning and Journal writing

Materials :

Questioning blocks whose sides have prompts such as

Why? Where? When? What?Who?How?

Graphic Organizer: Copy of Venn Diagram for each student

## Writing journals

Using the printed information about Native Americans, students will focus on the Pequot, Iroquois, Powhatan women and work with Question Blocks in co-operative learning groups of 4. Each student will toss two blocks at a time and follow the prompts to discuss with members of the group and record answers in their journals individually.

They will use the organizer to compare and contrast a Native American Woman of the East Coast with a woman of today –clothes, work, culture.

## **Lesson 4- Field Trip to Mashantucket Pequot Museum & Research Centre, CT 06338.**

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The museum is a primary source and an excellent teaching resource. As a prelude to this activity, it is recommended that the teacher attends a professional development mini-workshop on native culture and history at the Museum. Story telling and Craft workshops are also offered.

Duration: One School Day.

Transport, chaperon and food have to be arranged so that students are assembled and dismissed at school.

Instruction Methodology: Inquiry learning

Materials :

Anticipation Guides

Reservation Confirmation letter from Museum

Field trip permission slips from parents

Before the field trip, students will record their opinions in the first column of a graphic organizer – *The Anticipation Guide* . They will agree/disagree with the given statements about Native American Women or answer yes/no or true/false and give reasons.

Equipped with prior knowledge, students will go on a field trip to the Pequot Museum and examine a primary source of information. It is one of the nation's largest and most innovative Native American Educational institutions. At the museum, they will have a fascinating look at the history and living culture of the Pequots and other Native peoples and experience the past through state-of-the art interactive exhibits. It is a multi-sensory journey through time and the adventures take one to a land covered with glaciers. They will observe the artifacts and listen to the explanations given by the guide. Groups are free to explore the exhibits on their own at the end of their guided tour. Tours most appropriate for this age group (11 years) are "Gifts of the Land and Waters" and "Through the eyes of a Pequot child" .The duration of each guided tour is one hour. Students discover why Native Americans have great respect for the natural world and why resources are valued as "gifts." They observe how stone, bone, shell and wood are transformed into useful tools. They explore the



seasonal dioramas and learn how each of the seasons brings different gifts – vegetables, fish and game – obtained from both land and water.

The tours focus on land, people, community and family. Students view filmstrips and visit the half- acre recreated Pequot Indian village. (audio-tour) They imagine what life was like in the 16th century. On their return, they will complete the second column of the Anticipation Guide after reviewing the statements. This develops their critical thinking skills. The students learn through discovery.

As an extension activity to the field-trip and to reinforce certain values, the Museum Outreach Program brings a Museum Educator into the classroom. He tells stories and brings artifacts for the children to handle. This hands-on activity helps the children to visualize natural resources.

## **Lesson 5- Map & globe skills**

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Duration: 45 minutes

Teaching Methodology: Hands-on experience & peer coaching

Materials:

Topographical map of North America (student copy)

Topographical map of the world (student copy)

Crayons and highlighters

Atlas & Globe

Chart paper

Teacher's copies of maps for display

This is a pair-share activity. Students are divided in pairs for peer coaching. There are two parts to this lesson. During the first part, students color and label the Oceans and continents. The students trace the probable migratory routes of Native Americans from Asia to the East Coast. This is modelled by the teacher on chart paper. During the second part of the lesson, students locate the following tribes on the East Coast (Seminole,, seneca, Oneida, Mohawk, Narraganset, Massachuset, Micmac) and highlight the Powhatan, Pequot and Iroquois.

The teacher also models this on chart paper.

## **Lessons 6 - Text Comprehension**

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This lesson follows a homework assignment (individual practice) where students read "The Double Life of Pocahontas" by Jean Fritz and retell by summarizing it in two paragraphs.

Duration: 45 minutes each

Instruction Methodology: Paideia Seminar (active thinking through dialogue)

The Opening Questions identify the main ideas from the text; the Core Questions focus/analyze textual details & Closing Questions personalize and apply the textual ideas.

Materials:

Copies of "The Double life of Pocahontas" by Jean Fritz

Copies of Book Report format

Chart paper with Key words – Colonist, encounter, explore, native, impress, hostage

The students will be seated in a circle. The teacher will be the facilitator. The definition of key words, their synonyms and antonyms will be discussed as vocabulary instruction. After the responses to the questions are discussed, students will write a partner book-report incorporating visual representations.

## **Lesson 7-Visual Literacy**

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Duration: 45 minutes

Materials: Copies of Oral Presentation format VCR & TV & Video cassette of Pocahontas

Instructional methodology: Viewing & interviewing

They will view a video about Pocahontas. They will individually model an oral presentation of an interview with her.

## **Lesson 8 - Closure of the Unit and Assessment -Visual Literacy**

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Duration: 45 minutes

Instruction Methodology: Examining objects as indicators of culture -artifacts- Moccassin and Wampum

Materials : Native American Motif sheet Clay and construction paper

## **Moccasin**

this is a soft skin shoe. The name is derived from the Eastern Algonquin dialect "Mockasin" or Mawhcasun." The soft-soled moccasin belonged to the woodland tribes, being adaptable to woodland travel and canoe use. The sole and the upper part were made from one piece of soft leather, with the seam being at the instep and heel. The pioneers found that the soft moccasin was ideal since their boots were not suitable for crawling over slippery rocks and fallen trees and walking along ledges. Each tribe made and decorated their moccasins in a little different way with beads and embroidery.

## **Wampum**

Beads were used for decoration and were made from shells, bones, claws, stones and minerals. The Algonquin and Iroquois tribes of the eastern coast made beads from clam, conch, periwinkle, and other seashells. Beads were used as a medium of exchange and called "Wampum." Wampum shells were ground and polished into small, cylindrical shapes, drilled with a stone and strung on animal tendons. Wampum was used as personal adornment and signified a person's rank in society. People of higher ranks wore more. The purple beads had twice the value of the white ones. The wampum was also used for different purposes like establishing friendship. Wealthier people were buried with more wampum than poor people. It was also used sometimes to pay tribute to a more powerful tribe. The Mohegans paid an annual tribute in wampum to the English after the Pequot War of 1637. Tribal members also gave their sachems wampums as an expression of gratitude for their services.

Wampum was used to pass down a tribe's story from generation to generation. Designs were woven into belts as a way of recalling important historical events. Treaties were recorded ; one of them was the treaty which founded the Iroquois League. White symbolized peace and black meant war or mourning. Wampum belts were sometimes used to communicate with other tribes.

Wampum was used to ransom captured prisoners, as prizes for games or sports, as payments to healers for curing the sick and as tokens of a young man's love for a young woman. Warriors wore necklaces from wampum to remind them that they were fighting for their wives and children and material goods.

Students will use higher-order thinking skills to fill an exit slip answering thought questions about the transformation of their view point regarding Native American Women and the realization of diversity enriching one's life. They will record information using the fourth column (Uses/Application) of the KWL chart. They will celebrate their success by inviting other 5th graders and their parents to view and discuss their work on Native Americans. There will be a display of student work - American Indian motifs, arts and crafts, book reports, writing journals, maps and graphic organizers. The students will create a bulletin board on the theme of diversity. Two of the artifacts they will display are models of the moccasin and wampum, made out of construction paper and clay.

At the end of the unit, the teacher and student have acquired a world of information about the different cultural areas of the Native Americans by reading and research.

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[www.nativetech.org](http://www.nativetech.org)

(An educational web site about Native American technology with a focus on the Eastern Woodlands region).

[www.pequotmuseum.org](http://www.pequotmuseum.org)

(Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center. This site contains information about the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, the Pequot Museum and includes access to the library's online catalog.)

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