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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2003 Volume II: Everyday Life in Early America

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

Guide for Curriculum Unit 03.02.05
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The purpose of the unit is to introduce fifth-grade students to a proper understanding of Native American women on the East Coast with special reference to the Iroquois, Pequot, and Powhatan - and to dispel stereotypes. Judgements on Native American women were based on Anglo-Saxon and European attitudes, customs and standards. In reality, Native American women shared power with men; they owned property and household goods and houses; they participated in social and cultural history. Many tribes were matrilineal and the line of descent was traced through the mother.

Students will differentiate between primary and secondary sources. They will develop their research skills via books and the Web. They will be inspired to think of Native American women today, some living in isolation to maintain their cultural identity (reservations) and others living in the outer world to enjoy the social and economic benefits of "acceptance"(assimilation). Students will also realize that all women, whether they are Native Americans or British colonists, have roles as daughters, sisters, aunts, mothers and grandmothers.

(Recommended for Social Studies, Language Arts, and Social Development, grade 5.)

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