

Unit Overview

This all-inclusive unit plan consists of five units (and all needed materials) on the study of the Indigenous people of the Great Lakes region and their impact on the region over time. The lessons are planned so students will take charge of their learning and will use the teacher as a resource and guide rather than a lecturer. Students in the greater Madison (WI) area will find this lesson to be especially meaningful as it is based in their backyard. The lessons found within can easily be adapted to other parts of the country as well. In addition, these lessons have been specifically designed for the high school classroom. However, they can easily be adapted to both higher and lower level studies. The standards listed on each lesson come from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

This unit has been designed within a "Democratic" model of education. Students (and teachers) are encouraged to use the lessons as a guide through their educational development, rather than the "end-all-be-all" authority on the topic. The subject matter contained in this unit is generally under-represented in American schools. These lessons are designed to alleviate this discrepancy, and in the process, broaden student's civic horizons, a tenant of democratic education. The majority of the activities found within are open-ended in nature. The idea is for students to have more freedom to focus on what is important or interesting to them while still building a solid content base. They should be encouraged to seek more information rather than be chained to their textbook. The individual lessons come with suggested teacher comments. These comments serve as examples and are in no way written in stone within the lesson. Teachers are encouraged to mold the information so it works best for their students. Learning this information is a worthwhile pursuit, and represents democratic education in a positive light.

A large part of the unit utilizes video and documentary footage created by the University of Wisconsin-Madison's American Indian Student Academic Services Unit in 2008. This video gives first-person accounts of American Indian faculty and staff at UW-Madison. The interviews describe various aspects of the Great Lakes Indigenous experience, especially as these transformational experiences pertain to the lesson plan units: history, worldview, cultural landscape, and geography. The footage also looks toward the future of Indigenous Nations and people regionally and globally.

