



AMERICAN INDIAN
Health & Family Services

NATIVE AMERICAN
EDUCATIONAL
RESOURCE GUIDE

A guide for teachers of Native American students
and of Native American cultures and history.

Dream Seekers Youth Program

AIHFS
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www.aihfs.org

General Background

Native American cultures are diverse, resilient, and alive today. In spite of centuries of oppressive policies by the federal government aimed at eliminating Native American culture, American Indians continue to survive and thrive, maintaining connections to traditional ways of life while creatively adapting to an ever-changing world.



Community Drum Group, American Indian Health and Family Services, 2014

There are hundreds of tribes in North America, 567 of which are federally-recognized as sovereign nations within the United States. Each tribe has a unique language as well as religious and cultural customs. Many aspects of Native American cultures, including Native foods and medicines, have made vital contributions to the development of American culture.



Garden Planting, American Indian Health and Family Services, 2015

Michigan Indians

Michigan and the Great Lakes region is the ancestral home of the Anishnaabe, or People of the 3 Fires, consisting of the Ojibwe (sometimes referred to as Chippewa), Odawa (or Ottawa), and Potawatomi nations. Michigan is also a migratory home of the Wyandotte (Wendat) tribe. There are currently 12 federally-recognized Anishnaabe tribes in Michigan today. Although many Native Americans live on reservations in Michigan and in other states, most Native Americans (or American Indians) live outside of reservation boundaries, and many live in urban areas including Detroit.

According to the 2010 US Census, the 7 counties in the Detroit metro area are home to about 35% of Michigan’s Native American population. Although Native Americans make up less than 1% of Michigan’s general population, they have proportionally the second highest percentage of youth ages 10-24 (25%) (US Census, 2010).

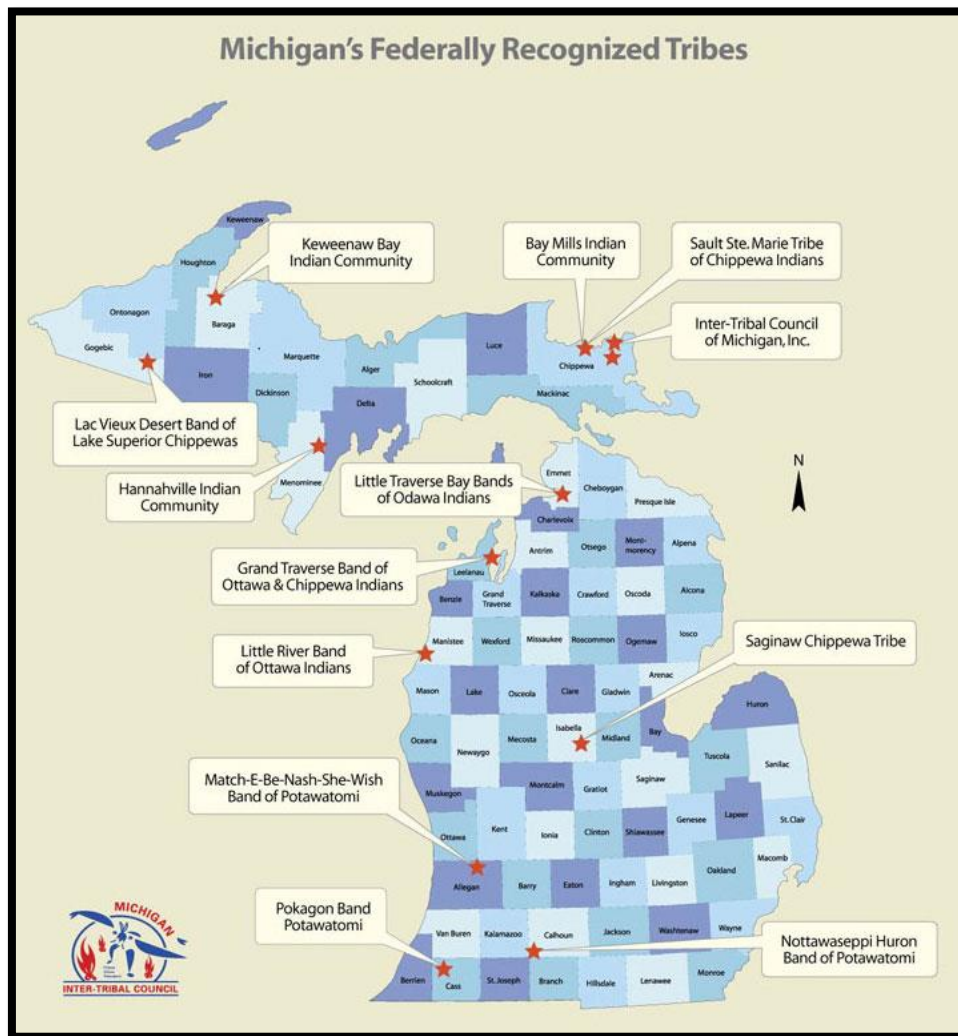


Image Source: Intertribal Council of Michigan, 2012

Trauma and Resilience

As a result of historical traumas inflicted upon Native American families and communities over generations, including the forced removal of children from Native households and their placement into boarding schools where physical, sexual, and cultural abuse often occurred, many Native families have lost connection with their traditional cultures and languages. These historical traumas have also resulted in disproportionately higher risk factors for suicide and substance abuse among Native Americans. Rates of substance abuse among Native American adolescents is greater than that of the general US population and Native American adolescent substance abusers experience greater negative outcomes than that of their non-native peers (Lowe, et al., 2012).

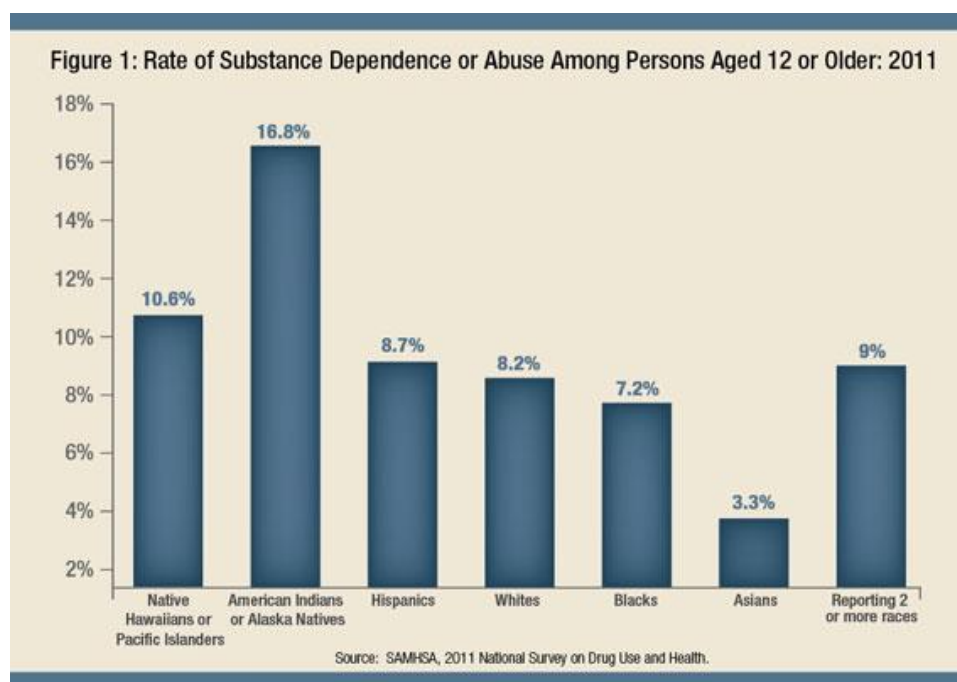


Image Source: National Child Welfare Resource Center for Tribes, 2013

Research affirms the intelligence and wisdom of Native American communities who are seeking solutions to substance abuse problems through culturally-based interventions. Data suggest that a “Native American adolescent culturally-based intervention was significantly more effective for the reduction of substance abuse and related problems than a noncultural-based intervention” (Lowe et al., 2012). Such vital programs, such as the Dream Seekers Youth Program, exist within Detroit’s urban Native American community.

Stereotypes and Misinformation

Many cultural and racial stereotypes of Native Americans exist in American culture and can be found in sports mascots, Halloween costumes, TV shows, movies, advertisements, and in some educational settings. These stereotypes commonly depict Native Americans as having certain physical features and behaviors, such as being fierce and savage warriors or speaking in broken English. Native Americans are often presented in educational settings as existing only in the past. Such images and ideas are harmful to the mental and emotional health of Native Americans, especially to Native American youth (Stone et al., 2008).



Image Source: The Good Men Project, 2014



Image Source: Lewis & Clark College, 2013

Native American cultures and history should be presented to students with accurate information and respect for the dynamic intelligence of Native people. Stereotypes should be named and discussed as examples of continued harm done to Native people and the use of such images and ideas should be discontinued in the classroom.

Many Native Americans use traditional medicine plants such as sage, sweetgrass, cedar, and tobacco for spiritual ceremonies such as smudging, a ritual in which the plants are burned and the smoke is used for purification. These practices are part of many Native American religious customs and are protected under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978. Prior to that legislation, many traditional Native American religious ceremonies were suppressed by governmental or religious institutions. Sometimes non-Native people confuse practices like smudging with smoking or substance use, yet they are very different. In fact the use of traditional medicine plants is an important part of culturally-based substance abuse prevention programs in the Native American community.

Dream Seekers Youth Program

American Indian Health and Family Services (AIHFS) in southwest Detroit is one of 34 urban clinics across the country funded by the Indian Health Service (IHS). In addition to offering medical and behavioral health services to the urban Indian community, AIHFS provides a culturally-based after-school alcohol, drug, and suicide prevention program for Native American youth called the Dream Seekers Youth Program.



Dream Seekers Youth Program, American Indian Health and Family Services, 2014

Dream Seekers staff, interns, and volunteers are committed to creating a safe, structured, inclusive, and culturally-based group that supports the well-being of Native American youth in Detroit. This includes actively encouraging youth to be proud of their Native American heritage and to stay engaged in their schoolwork. We welcome collaboration with educators who would like to better support Native American students in their schools and classrooms. We are also happy to do classroom presentations about Native American culture.

Please utilize the following organizations as resources while you approach the education of Native American students and when teaching about Native American cultures and history. Together, we can help create a strong and bright future for Native American youth and for all children in Detroit and in Michigan.

Sources

1. The Good Men Project (2014), "A Washington Fan Responds to Fans' Hate Mail to Navajo Activist," www.goodmenproject.com
2. Lewis & Clark College (2013), "Inclusion and Multicultural Engagement," www.college.lclark.edu
3. Lowe, John, Liang, Huigang, Riggs, Cheryl, and Henson, Jim (2012), "Community Partnership to Affect Substance Abuse among Native American Adolescents," *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, 38(5): Pp. 450-455.
4. Intertribal Council of Michigan (2012), www.itcmi.org
5. National Child Welfare Resource Center for Tribes (2013), www.nrc4tribes.org
6. Stone, Joseph, Oyserman, Daphna, Markus, Hazel, Fryberg, Stephanie (2008), "Of Warrior Chiefs and Indian Princesses: The Psychological Consequences of American Indian Mascots," *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 30(3): Pp. 208-218.
7. United States Census Bureau (2010), www.census.gov

Educator Do's and Don'ts

When working with Native American students

Do get to know Native students in your classroom for who they are.

Do ask them whether they would like to share about their heritage and culture.

Do respect their innate wisdom and intelligence as well as their cultural beliefs and practices.

Do respect their perspectives on American history, even if they differ from yours.

Don't expect them to speak on behalf of all Native Americans.

Don't make assumptions about who they are or what they know.

Don't punish them for expressing their culture.

Don't expect them to look a certain way or fit into a stereotype.

When teaching about Native American cultures and history

Do teach about the diversity of Native American cultures past and present.

Do teach about the many contributions of Native Americans to American culture.

Do teach the full story of Columbus, including the harm he inflicted upon Native peoples.

Do teach the full story of Thanksgiving, including the many ways in which Native people helped European settlers learn how to survive.

Do teach the full history of the United States, including the long legacy of colonization and disenfranchisement of Native American people by the US government and religious institutions.

Do use the writings of Native American scholars and historians.

Do teach that Native American communities are an important part of contemporary society.

Do collaborate with local Native American organizations and tribes.

Don't "dress up" like Indians – Native American cultural dress is not a costume!

Don't teach solely from the white American perspective.

Don't teach that "Columbus discovered America."

Don't perpetuate stereotypes of Native Americans.

Don't teach about Native Americans only in the past tense.

Don't teach that there is only one Native American culture or tradition.

Don't misappropriate words such as "pow-wow" and "peace pipe" in your conversations.

Don't use offensive phrases such as "Indian-giver," "squaw," or "redskins."

Native American Cultural and Educational Organizations

American Indian Health and Family Services (AIHFS)

Urban clinic in Detroit serving the Native American community of southeast Michigan with medical, behavioral health, wraparound, and youth program services. ***Home to the Dream Seekers Native American Youth Program! Available for classroom presentations.***

Address: 4880 Lawndale, Detroit, MI 48210

Phone: 313-846-3718

Website: www.aihfs.org

American Indian Services (AIS)

AIS studies and implements successful models that address cultural and socioeconomic issues facing urban Natives and other impoverished populations.

Address: 1110 Southfield Road, Lincoln Park, MI 48146

Phone: 313-388-4100

Michigan Indian Education Council

Organizes annual statewide conference on Native American education for students and educators.

Address: PO Box 378 Haslett, MI 48840

Website: www.miec.org

National Museum of the American Indian

The national Smithsonian museum dedicated to American Indian cultures, created in collaboration with tribes and Native communities. ***Great resources for teachers!***

Address: Fourth Street & Independence Ave., S.W. Washington, DC 20560

Phone: [202-633-1000](tel:202-633-1000)

Website: www.nmai.si.edu/explore/foreducatorsstudents

NMAI American Indian Perspectives on Thanksgiving Booklet:

http://nmai.si.edu/sites/1/files/pdf/education/thanksgiving_poster.pdf

Nokomis Learning Center

A cultural learning center dedicated to preserving and presenting Anishnaabe culture through programs, exhibitions, and special events.

Address: 5153 March Rd. Okemos, MI 48864

Phone: 517-349-5777

Website: www.nokomis.org

North American Indian Association of Detroit (NAIA)

Provides employment and training services, elders' programs, and emergency food assistance to Detroit's Native American community. Also offers cultural classes and workshops.

Address: 22720 Plymouth Rd. Detroit, MI 48239

Phone: 313-535-2966

Website: www.naiadetroit.org

Southeast Michigan Indians

Promotes and develops Native American educational, economic, social and cultural opportunities by providing and sponsoring Native American exhibits, conferences, forums, cultural expositions and cultural education for the general public.

Address: 26641 Lawrence, Center Line, MI 48015

Website: www.semii1975.org

We Shall Remain

A 5-part PBS documentary series of Native American history from the 1600s to the 1970s, made in collaboration with Native American filmmakers and scholars. ***Great videos to show in the classroom!***

Website: www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain

Ziibiwing Center of Anishnabe Culture and Lifeways

A tribal-run museum operated by the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe. Provides educational experiences for students and teachers on Anishnabe history and contemporary culture. ***An excellent field trip location!***

Address: 6650 E. Broadway Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

Phone: 989-775-4750

Website: www.sagchip.org/ziibiwing