



Grade Level: HS
Subject: Health

The Health of Our Nation

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- Sovereignty
- History
- Identity
- Language
- Genocide, Federal Policy and Law

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will be able to understand the complex history of Native American people and their health disparities in current times.
- Students will be able to analyze different factors that contribute to Native American health, including cultural and historical trauma, socio-economic circumstances, and public health policies.
- Students will be able to identify potential solutions to address health inequalities that Native American people continue to face, such as supporting traditional healing practices and incorporating native health practices into Western medicine.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES

- Connecting to the lives of students
- Higher level thinking: analyzing
- Student talk, working together and individually

ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed on their participation and contribution to classroom discussions and the small group presentation about Native American health.

TIME REQUIRED

2, 45-60 minute sessions

Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about the historical and present day health of Native American people. The lesson will begin with an overview of the history of Native American healthcare, including the impact of colonization and forced relocation. Students will then explore the current health challenges facing Native American communities, such as high rates of obesity, diabetes, and substance abuse, and the barriers to accessing healthcare. The lesson will also highlight efforts to promote Native American health and wellness, such as traditional healing practices and community-based health programs.

MATERIALS

- [The History of Native American Health Handout](#)
- [Native Americans know how place affects health | Place Matters Oregon | OHA](#) YouTube Video
- [Native American Traditional Healing Systems Handout](#)
- [IHS Health of Indian Country Handout](#)
- [Disparities in Health Charts](#)
- Initiative Resource Links (see page 3 of lesson plan).

LOGISTICS

- Where does this activity take place?
Classroom
- How are the students organized?

Whole Class Teams: 3-5

Pairs

Individually

STANDARDS

Oregon Health Education Standards & Performance Indicators

HE.1.12.3 Explain how environment (both physical and social) and personal health are interrelated.

HE.1.12.6 Explain how genetics and family history can impact personal health

HE.1.12.7 Identify and analyze barriers that prevent people from practicing a variety of healthy behaviors.

HE.1.12.8 Explain disparities that exist between access to health care and health status.

HE.1.12.44 Explain key concepts of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs including tolerance, addiction, recovery, peer pressure, short and long term health impacts (Steroid law).

HE.1.12.47 Explain the key concepts of violence and suicide prevention including roots of violence, signs and symptoms of suicidal thoughts, strategies for preventing violence.

HE.2.12.1 Analyze how culture influences health beliefs, behaviors, and outcomes.

HE.2.12.6 Analyze how race and ethnicity influences health beliefs, behaviors, and outcomes.

HE.2.12.9 Analyze how the family influences health beliefs, behaviors, and outcomes.

HE.2.12.13 Analyze how public health policies and government regulations can influence health promotion and disease prevention.

HE.2.12.14 Analyze the relationship between health risk factors and the likelihood of engaging in unhealthy behaviors.

HE.3.12.1 Use a variety of valid and reliable resources to research health information.

HE.4.12.2 Demonstrate and/or explain how to ask for and offer assistance to enhance the health of self and others in a culturally relevant manner.

HE.8.12.1 Utilize data to formulate a health-enhancing message.

HE.8.12.4 Work cooperatively as an advocate for improving personal, family, and community health.

Background for Teachers

Today, Native American communities face a number of health challenges, including higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and substance abuse. As teachers engaging with this topic, it's important to understand the historical and present-day issues facing Native American people and to approach this lesson with sensitivity and respect for their culture and experiences. Please review all materials prior to presenting to students and utilize the included resources to obtain more information:

- [Indigenous Native American Healing Traditions - PMC](#)
- [Native American Health: Historical and Legal Context - Communities in Action - NCBI Bookshelf](#)
- [About IHS | Indian Health Service \(IHS\)](#)
- [Native Americans Feel Invisible In U.S. Health Care System](#)
- [Urban Indian Health Institute](#)

VOCABULARY

- **Sovereignty** - the authority of a community to govern itself according to its own laws and customs, without interference from outside forces.
- **Traditional Healing** - a philosophy and practice of health and wellness encompassing spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical aspects of individuals and communities.
- **Trauma** - an emotional response to a deeply distressing or disturbing experience, which can have long-lasting effects on mental and physical health.
- **Diabetes** - a chronic disease caused by the inability of the body to regulate blood sugar levels, which can lead to serious complications such as heart disease, kidney failure, and blindness. Native Americans have some of the highest rates of diabetes in the world, with factors such as genetic susceptibility, dietary changes, and economic disparities contributing to the disease burden.

Opening

- Start the lesson by asking students what they know about Native American health. Write their responses on the whiteboard.
- Use this discussion to highlight some of the common stereotypes and misconceptions about Native American health.
- Explain that the purpose of the lesson is to explore the complex issues that contribute to the health disparities experienced by Native American people.

Activity

Lecture and Discussion (30+ minutes):

1. Provide a brief overview of the historical context of Native American health, including the impact of colonization, forced relocation, and loss of culture and language.

- *Historical Health Issues:*
 - Using the History of Native American Health Handout, share the complicated history of Native American health. Discuss how each federal policy impacted Native American Health.
 - Discuss how historical trauma from colonization, forced removal from ancestral land, and displacement can lead to poor health outcomes.
 - Contrast with the traditional practices that value balance and harmony in one's overall health and well-being. Show students the video [Native Americans know how place affects health | Place Matters Oregon | OHA](#). Then distribute the Native American Traditional Healing Systems Handout and discuss as a group.
 - How are this handout and the information in the video related?
- *Present-Day Health Issues:*
 - Using IHS Health of Indian Country Fact Sheet, review the statistics that indicate the health disparities facing Native American communities today, including diseases of the heart, cancer, suicide, and diabetes.
 - Pass out copies of the Disparities in Health Charts document. Allow time for students to review the charts. Encourage them to create connections between their prior knowledge of Native American health, the history they just learned, and the charts they see before them. Share conclusions aloud with the class.
 - Explain that these disparities are linked to historical and ongoing oppression, lack of access to quality healthcare, and environmental factors such as poverty and pollution (see *HS.HLTH.Barriers to Healthcare Lesson* for more information)

2. Strategies for Action:

- Review some of the initiatives in place that support Native American people in terms of preserving their traditions and promoting wellness. Highlight the importance of culturally appropriate healthcare and show how certain programs are making healthcare more accessible in Native American communities.
 - [Healthy Tribes | CDC](#)
 - [Tribal Practices for Wellness in Indian Country \(TPWIC\) | CDC](#)
 - [Health Promotion/Disease Prevention | Indian Health Service \(IHS\)](#)
 - [Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board](#)
 - [CareOregon - Tribal Care Coordination](#)

Closure

- Divide the class into small groups.
- Assign each group a different aspect of Native American health to research, such as traditional healing practices, access to healthcare, or diabetes prevention.
- Ask each group to share their findings with the class, using visual aids or props to enhance their presentations.

Differentiation

- Optional video to explain the effects of Federal Policy on Native American Health
 - Federal Indian Policies and Health: https://youtu.be/L0mnZfKZ_Vg
- Teachers can choose to display the handouts in front of the class versus printing copies for each student.
- Teachers can allow time for students to explore the initiatives in small groups or research other initiatives on their own.

Extension

- Public Health Policy and Native American Communities: Students research public health policies that have affected Native American communities, such as the Indian Health Care Improvement Act and the Affordable Care Act. They should analyze the impact of these policies on the access to and quality of healthcare for Native American people. Students can compare and contrast the experiences of Native American communities with those of other populations in the United States.

Notes/Other

Jan Michael Looking Wolf's or Grand Ronde Canoe Family audio tracks can be played as background music while students are working. These audio tracks can be found on Spotify or Apple Music.

Jan Michael Looking Wolf: [Spotify](#) and [Apple Music](#)
Grand Ronde Canoe Family: [Spotify](#) and [Apple Music](#)

Appendix

- The History of Native American Health Handout: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dAXZIYBtHexm7ODb3aWpfR4mmE9zuB99/view?usp=drive_link
- Native Americans know how place affects health | Place Matters Oregon | OHA YouTube Video: https://youtu.be/lozB8K_tnYc
- Native American Traditional Healing Systems Handout: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HVpNbqFXtGnplqdllFqgh5zOHuc4CtwG/view?usp=drive_link
- IHS Health of Indian Country Handout: https://drive.google.com/file/d/12quLvYus1rd7OfiNIqmVz-GlyJrd9kZ/view?usp=drive_link
- Disparities in Health Charts: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Byko4L5hYPiD0ahmK-K4_gYga-Kh3Dx/view?usp=drive_link
- Initiative Resource Links
 - Healthy Tribes | CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthytribes/index.htm>
 - Tribal Practices for Wellness in Indian Country (TPWIC) | CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthytribes/tribalpractices.htm>
 - Health Promotion/Disease Prevention | Indian Health Service (IHS): <https://www.ihs.gov/hpdp/>
 - Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board: <https://www.npaihb.org/>
 - CareOregon - Tribal Care Coordination: <https://www.careoregon.org/members/more-careoregon-services/tribal-care-coordination>