



# EETAP *Resource Library*

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## **Approaches to Environmental Education by Indigenous Cultures in North America**

One of the major goals of environmental education is to prepare a citizenry capable of making informed choices and able to address its environmental concerns through positive actions. One way to achieve this is by encouraging sharing of knowledge and exchange of experiences between different cultures.

Many cultures, rich in traditional wisdom, indigenous knowledge and notions about sustainable uses of natural resources coexist in the United States. These diversified groups have one characteristic in common - a desire to live in harmony with nature. The natural resources are considered a gift by these indigenous cultures and are used with respect. This inculcates a responsible behavior towards managing natural resources.

Since the long term goal of environmental education is to change behaviors so that waste of natural resources can be prevented, it is important to share and exchange information as well as learn from the teachings of these indigenous cultures, namely Native Americans.

Another implicit goal in much of environmental education is to allow the learner to discover the world - not only around them, but also in other parts of the globe and in other cultures both nearby and distant. Thus, educators can find value in resources that explore and appreciate the different ways in which various cultures view and understand the human relationship to the Earth.

To achieve these goals, educators of formal and non formal environmental education need to have ready access to resources that provide background and historical information for understanding the native American influence on conservation and conveying environmental ethics learned from these indigenous cultures to the students. Following is a list of

resources, in the form of books, video films and articles that give a broad view of the indigenous cultures of the Native Americans.

### **Where are the resources?**

Some resources on different *approaches to environmental education by indigenous cultures in North America* are available for educators, and can be found in the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and Eisenhower National Clearinghouse (ENC) collections. To read about these resources and learn where to get them, search the ERIC or ENC collections on line or at a local library or university. On line, the material can be accessed by typing <http://eelink.umich.edu>. Page down to EDUCATION AND INFORMATION directory, EDUCATION directory, ASKERIC or ENC, and click on either home page. You will then be able to search ERIC and ENC databases by following the appropriate pointers.

### **Print Resources**

#### ***From ERIC***

Coates, Ned. "Teaching about American Indians". *Nature-Study*, v 46, (March 1994): p 3-4 (EJ 487 001)

Presents aspects of American Indian culture that the environmental education teacher should understand when teaching ecology in a Native American context.

Quinn, -W-J. "Native American Hunting Traditions as a Basis for Outdoor Education". *Journal of Outdoor Education*, v 26 p 12-18, 1992-93 (EJ 467 628).

Discusses Native American hunting practices and beliefs applicable to an outdoor education curriculum, focusing on respect and reverence for the earth, animals, and the natural world. Suggests that Native hunting rationales could form a philosophical foundation for environmental education and outdoor

education programs.

Cajete, G. *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education*. U.S.; Colorado, 1994 (ED 375 993).

Explores the nature of indigenous education outlining key elements of American Indians perspectives on learning and teaching. Chapters explore the spiritual, environmental, mythic, visionary, artistic, affective and communal foundations of indigenous education.

Gough, N., Kesson, K. *Body and Narrative as Cultural Text: Towards a Curriculum of Continuity and Connection*. Australia: Victoria. 1992. (ED 347 544)

Suggests that deconstructing the modern metaphors of nature cultivated by modern science and industrialism is the first step towards reconstructing a relationship with the earth. Environmental educators can learn much from the narrative strategies of pre-modern cultures like Australian Aborigines and Native Americans about the assimilation of language to the world.

Barreiro, J. "The Search for Lessons". *Akwe:kon-Journal*, v 9, no 2, (Summer 1992) P 18-39 (EJ 460 200)

Contrasts the expropriation and misrepresentation of Indian beliefs by "New Age" gurus with the respectful application of indigenous values to environmental ethics. Discusses indigenous models of ecosystemic adaptation in North and South America, the convergence of conservation efforts and Indian land rights, and issues in Native community-based development.

#### *From ENC*

*Completing the cycle - it's up to you: responsibility for the environment*. Indiana Department of education, Center for School Improvement and Performance, School Assistance Unit. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Department of Education. 1993. (ENC-000 099)

This instructional module has activities designed to provide students with a variety of concrete ways to study the relationships between behaviors and consequences. Hands-on activities focus on development of many content areas such as language

arts, social studies, mathematics, science, fine arts, and health. Investigations also look at how the people, events, and decisions of the past influence the present and future by examining Native Americans, pioneers, and people of today.

*Project Willow: understanding Native American culture through environmental education*. Developed through a partnership between the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California and school districts in Douglas and Carson Counties (Nevada) and Alpine County (California). Minden, NV: Douglas County Schools, Science Resource Center, 1995. (ENC-002 744)

Ecological concepts such as resources, carrying capacity, competitions, niches, habitats, ecosystems, food webs, home range, flow of energy, and ecological change are highlighted. The effect of Euro American settlement on Washoe lands along with how the loss of traditional lands has had a profound effect on Washoe people are examined.

*The Mohawk Legacy: a matter of survival* [videotapes]. Project Future, Potsdam College of the State University of New York . Potsdam, NY: Potsdam College of the State University of New York. 1992 (ENC-000 231)

Produced by the Indians themselves, the video is designed to be a teaching tool for middle school curricula related to biology, environmental studies, technology, culture or history. After discussing the Akwesasne cultural and historical settings, a Mohawk artist and story teller talks about the creation story, Mohawk tradition, symbolism, and their matrilineal social structure.

*The Restless Earth* [videotapes]. Cardias Production Inc., Chicago, IL: WTTW, 1993 (ENC 001 188)

This series of videos focuses on the research of several new explorers who are on the cutting edge of scientific discovery, extending the frontiers of science, nature, and environmental conservation.

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