

Then and Now



Crossroads Where Tribes Traded, Round Valley, California, 2015 by Sue Reynolds

Reservations promised to Native Americans recall the history of conflict between tribes and the U.S. Government and Army. Reservations are lands reserved by tribes through treaties, Congressional Acts and Executive Order. They are permanent tribal homelands that represent a small fraction of the tribe's original territory. The United States Constitution in Article VI declares treaty law as the "Supreme Law of the Land."

The United States government passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830, which approved a systematic removal of American Indians from their ancestral lands and sacred sites in order to make the areas safe and available for expanding numbers of European settlers. Before the Spanish and later other Europeans came to claim the part of Northern California seen in the photograph above, it was a crossroads where different tribal groups traded and socialized.

At that time, indigenous tribes and civilizations spanned the continent. As European settlers moved further and further into lands occupied by indigenous peoples, conflicts arose. A complex history of un-ratified treaties resulted in the displacement of tribes from their homelands, sometimes peacefully and sometimes by force. Many tribes resisted and were forcibly removed by the U.S. Army.

Note: Older students can research the Sioux War and the Battle of Little Bighorn in advance to expand the conversation.

Discussion and Writing Questions

1. Who are indigenous peoples?
2. What does "ancestral home" mean?
3. Why did the United States Government feel it was necessary to remove American Indians from their ancestral homes and sacred sites?
4. What are your reactions to this program of removal?
5. How would you feel if you and your family were forced out of your home and moved to a location you were unfamiliar with? What problems might you face in this situation? How do you think you and your family might respond?
6. Why would Native Americans rather fight than lose their ancestral and sacred sites?
7. What is a treaty?

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Little Big Horn River, Little Big Horn National Battlefield, Crow Reservation, Montana, 2011 by Sue Reynolds

The Sioux, among others, refused the relocation and confinement orders at first and stood ready to fight. The economy of the Sioux nation – Oceti Sakowin, which means "Seven Council Fires" – depended on the ability to hunt in a large area. Reservation confinement severely limited Plains tribes' ability to feed themselves. One of the best known conflicts was the Sioux War, between 1876 and 1881, which included the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876.

The Little Big Horn National Battlefield -- now a National Monument -- was once the site of fierce fighting between the combined forces of the Lakota, Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes and the 7th Cavalry Regiment of the U. S. Army, led by General George Armstrong Custer. The battle, commonly referred to as Custer's Last Stand, was a huge victory for the Natives. Custer and over 300 of his 700 soldiers and scouts were killed or severely wounded and went on to become folk heroes in American history for some while Chief Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse became heroes for others.

Discussion and Writing Questions

8. What do you think about the United States government breaking the promises -- in the form of legal agreements -- it made to tribes?

9. Why did the government break its promises to Native Americans? Explain why such actions were or were not justified.

10. Why do you think the Lakota, Arapaho and Northern Cheyenne tribes joined forces to fight the U. S. Cavalry?

11. How do you feel about the victory of Native tribes over the U. S. Cavalry at the Battle of Little Big Horn?

12. Many lives on both sides were lost in the forced removal of American Indians from land the U. S. Government wanted to control. How do you feel about this?

13. How does the photograph below evoke the history of conflict between American Indians and the United States Government?

Then and Now



Evening Sky Over Bear Butte, Black Hills, South Dakota, 2008 by Sue Reynolds

Bear Butte, as well as all of the land comprising South Dakota's Black Hills, is a spiritual home – a place reserved for prayer and ceremony - for many tribes across the northern plains, including the Lakota. This area traditionally was neutral ground, where even if members of different tribes were in conflict, here they treated each other peacefully.

The Black Hills were part of the original Great Sioux Reservation created by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, but a few years later the U.S. Government violated that treaty and took them back. Today, Bear Butte is a State Park with a portion reserved solely for Native people to use for their traditional ceremonies. In addition, the Bear Butte visitor center exhibits excellent displays of historic religious and related artifacts to help explain the spiritual beliefs and traditions that have been part of this landscape for hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

One summer, while hiking near Bear Butte, photographer Sue Reynolds met a group of teens from the Ft. Berthold Reservation in North Dakota. Their leaders explained that the teens were learning about Lakota star knowledge, apparently a fairly sophisticated astronomy discipline. A video on Lakota astronomy is included in the [Sites, Readings and Videos section of this Resource](#).

Then and Now



Rebecca Rider, *In Our Home Always Be Honest, Heart Butte, Blackfeet Reservation, Montana, 2016* by Sue Reynolds

In her home on the Blackfeet Reservation, Rebecca's kitchen white board lists the important rules she wants her family to live by: be honest, forgive, be kind hearted and thankful, keep promises, work hard, and, most important, love one another. Rebecca teaches her grandchildren these Christian values, which she says are the same as traditional Blackfeet teachings. She explains that life is hard on the reservation and that she and others work to prevent bullying, alcoholism and drug use and to focus on education. She practices spelling, vocabulary and writing with her grandson every day.

Discussion and Writing Questions

1. What do you think of Rebecca's life rules?
2. Are they similar to how your parents and teachers ask you to live? Explain.
3. Rebecca feels education is important to her family. Do you agree? Explain.
4. How does your family help you with your schoolwork?
5. What is a stereotype? How do you think stereotypes are formed? Where have your ideas about Native Americans come from? What American Indian stereotypes have you seen in movies or on television, on the Internet or read in books?
6. How might Rebecca Rider's world, and the world of her children and grandchildren, look today had her traditional Blackfeet religious practices and ways of learning and living been left unchanged?
7. Rebecca's family is rather poor in material wealth. What is material wealth and what other kinds of wealth are there?
8. Rebecca's house and belongings are simple and often old. Sometimes non-Indians living near reservations make fun of or look down on Native Americans because reservations appear shabby or rundown. Do you think this is fair? Discuss.
9. Do you think Rebecca's is a positive home? Explain.

Then and Now



Left: Michael Shoots Hoops with Lo LaPlant in the After-School Program at Wakpala Public School, Standing Rock Reservation, South Dakota, 2015 by Sue Reynolds



Right: Jacob Piapot Learns Salish at Nkwusm, Flathead Reservation, Montana, 2014 by Sue Reynolds

Discussion and Writing Questions

1. Describe what looks similar to your school in these photographs of children at school on the Flathead Reservation in Montana and Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota.
2. What looks different from what you see at your school?
3. On the left, Michael is demonstrating his basketball shot to Lo in the cafeteria. What sports do you like to play?
4. Behind Jacob, on the right, are images of wildlife along with their Salish language names. At Michael's school, on the left, English is taught as well as the Native Lakota language. Are non-English or bi-lingual classes offered at your school? If so, what languages are spoken in those classes?

Dixon Direction

Directions are simple here.
Geese know where to go
and eagles fly. Yet sometimes
you get lost on wrong roads.

Then
when you come to school,
you seek from this high window
and find living river, red willow,
white aspen, old Juniper and pine.

This is you.

And bright, clay cliffs fix the stars.

Put Sey (Good Enough), by Victor A. Charlo. Available on Amazon.

Group Exercise

To begin discussion of this poem take students through this exercise:

Ask students to choose a word or two to describe what the poem communicates to them as if they were creating a #. Have students share their # with the group or class. Each # description becomes an opportunity to ask leading questions, such as "What about the poem suggests this # to you?" Student should cite specific details seen within the work to support their responses. It's fine for more than one student to have the same #. One-by-one have students say their # aloud to create a group or class poem inspired by Victor's poem.

Discussion and Writing Questions

1. Nature is often a place where we go to relax and ease our minds. Some people find it a place of spirituality and thinking about the bigger picture in our lives such as our beliefs and our place in the world. In this poem Victor Charlo relates nature to instinct and learning. What things would Native American children learn about themselves from nature? How does the natural world relate to their history and culture?
2. What do you think Victor Charlo means when he opens his poem with the line, "Directions are simple here," and then goes on to share his experiences with geese and eagles?
3. What could he be referring to when he states, "Sometimes you get lost on wrong roads?" How could this relate to learning?
4. How could this line relate to attending school? Who is Victor Charlo writing to when he states you are "living river, red willow, white aspen, old Juniper and pine?" What is he telling the reader by this line?
5. Does your school teach about how cultural traditions and nature are related? Does your family have traditions rooted in nature? What are they and what do they mean to you?
6. Do you think you would benefit from having your personal cultural traditions and nature incorporated as part of the learning process in your school?

Then and Now



Tiyapo Campbell with a River Fishing Net, Nez Perce Reservation, Idaho, 2017 by Sue Reynolds

Tiyapo lives on the Nez Perce Reservation in Idaho. He enjoys fishing and gathering other traditional foods including deer, elk and berries with his family. Sue Reynolds photographed Tiyapo getting his fishing net ready in both black-and-white and color. Fishing is a huge activity in this and other parts of Indian Country, giving kids a source of pride and opportunity for fun on reservations where there often isn't much else for youth to do, though that is changing.

Discussion and Writing Questions

1. Which do you prefer, the color photograph or the black-and-white one? Explain.
2. What do you notice first in the color photograph? Why do you think you noticed this first? What in the photograph invites your eye to move around and take in the details? Explain.
3. What do you notice first in the black-and-white photograph? Why do you think you noticed this first? What in the photograph invites your eye to move around and take in the details? Explain.
4. Did you notice something in the color photograph that you did not see in the black-and-white version? Explain.
5. Did you notice something in the black-and-white photograph that you did not see in the color version? Explain.

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Other Sections Inside this Chapter:

Reservation Life Introduction
Walking in Two Worlds
Standing Rock Controversy
Artist's Statement
Poet's Statement
Interpretation Strategies

Additional Chapters:

Mother Earth Introduction
Reclaiming Culture Introduction

Other Resources

The Surrounded, by D'Arcy McNickle.

"A Dark Day." This history of the 1890 Wounded Knee massacre explores the factors that led to this tragedy in South Dakota during the period when Native Americans were moved on to reservations.

"Seeking Justice: '100 Years' Traces Cobell's Frustrating Fight with the Feds." *The Missoulian*, 7 February, 2017.

"Tribal Nations," Map of Montana's Indian Reservations. *Montana Office of Public Instruction*.

"Tribal Territories in Montana," Map of Montana Indians' Ancestral Homelands and Reservations. *Montana Office of Public Instruction*.

"Montana Indians: Their History and Location." *Montana Office of Public Instruction*.

"Reservation Maps and Prairie Turnips," Map of South Dakota's Indian Reservations. *The Wolakota Project*.

"Sioux Treaty Lands and Surrounding Area," Map of original South Dakota Indian Reservation. *North Dakota Studies*.