

Make Native American Heritage Month a Success

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November is a popular time to teach students about Native peoples and brings a critical opportunity to ensure history is honestly portrayed and accurately balanced. Four thoughtful ways to teach respect for Native American Heritage Month are to:

1. Support organizations advocating for Native American communities.
2. Support the needs of your local tribes.
3. Take time to learn the indigenous history of where you live.
4. Follow the do's and don'ts below.

DO

- Do present Native peoples as appropriate role models with whom a Native student can identify.
- Do make sure you know the history of Native peoples, past and present, before you attempt to teach it.
- Do present Native peoples as separate from each other, with unique cultures, languages, spiritual beliefs and dress.
- Do use materials that show the continuity of Native societies, with traditional values and spiritual beliefs connected to the present.
- Do teach Native history as a regular part of American history and not just for Thanksgiving.

DON'T

- Don't do activities that trivialize Native dress, dance or ceremony.
- Don't assume that you don't have Native students in your class.
- Don't do or say anything that would embarrass a Native student.
- Don't have students dress up as "Indians," with papier-mâché "costumes" or paper-feather "headdresses" or "war whoops."
- Don't use books that show Native people as savages, primitive craftspeople or simple tribal people, now extinct.
- Don't refer to Native spirituality as superstition, make up Indian legends or encourage students to do "Indian" dances.