



From Treaty Rights to Cultural Sensitivity

New resources and programs are reenergizing American Indian studies in Wisconsin

Events in northern Wisconsin during the 1970s, '80s and '90s brought American Indian treaty rights to the forefront in the state. The treaty rights that were under question were those that allowed American Indians in Wisconsin to hunt, fish, or gather within reasonable limits off of the reservations. American Indians who were fishing or spearfishing were facing discrimination and, in some cases, criminal prosecution.

One case involving members of the Lake Superior Band of

Chippewas (or Ojibwe) went to a U.S. federal court. In 1983, the court made a ruling that reaffirmed the Ojibwe's treaty-based right to hunt, fish, and gather within the ceded territory of northern Wisconsin.

While treaty rights of the state's American Indians were reaffirmed, the lingering resentment and lack of knowledge on treaty rights made it clear that the state needed to do something. The fundamental misunderstanding of Ojibwe treaty rights and tribal sovereignty in Wisconsin ultimately led to development of

the statutory requirements in 1989 Wisconsin Act 31.

■ Addressing Educational Needs

Wisconsin Act 31 was adopted as part of the 1989-91 biennial budget bill. David O'Connor, American Indian Education consultant with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), writes that Act 31 "addressed several educational needs and included provisions requiring the study of the American Indian history, culture, and tribal

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sovereignty of the 11 federally recognized nations and communities in the state of Wisconsin.”

The act is actually composed of five state statutes, the fifth of which many consider to be the heart of Wisconsin Act 31 — it requires K-12 social studies instruction on American Indian history and culture.

When Act 31 was adopted, some school districts struggled to meet the educational requirements. While several school districts and educators did an exemplary job integrating American Indian studies into their classes, a number of school districts said they needed more resources. Fast forward 25 years later and a survey found that resources were still needed to help teach American Indian history. In 2014, teachers and administrators across the state were surveyed on how they teach American Indian history and culture. The survey found that most teachers were relying on textbooks, and about 7 out of 10 administrators said their school needed additional instructional materials and resources for teaching and learning about American Indian culture in Wisconsin.

Since that survey in 2014, the state has been working to connect Wisconsin educators with resources and programs on American Indian history and culture.

■ Integrating American Indian Studies

O'Connor emphasizes that schools that successfully teach American Indian history and culture don't necessarily create new lessons or classes. Instead, they are integrated into existing curriculum in a variety of subjects such as art, literature, history, math, music, science, and among others, sociology. However, this continues to be a challenge for some schools. According to the 2014 survey, only 4 out of 10 teachers said they integrate American Indian content throughout their curriculum.

Some current programs and resources include:

- **Native Knowledge 360 (NK360°)** nmai.si.edu/nk360 — From the National Museum of American Indian, NK360° provides educators and students with new perspectives on Native American history and

cultures. NK360° provides educational materials and teacher training that incorporate Native narratives, more comprehensive histories, and accurate information to enlighten and inform teaching and learning about Native America. “Each week we choose one day to talk about current events in ‘Indian Country’ and many times students will choose stories/articles from this site. The site has been very beneficial for students. It’s an excellent source,” says Jeff Ryan, social studies teacher at Prescott High School.

■ Lessons of our Land

lessonsofourland.org — Lessons of Our Land teaches the Native American story of this land from historical to modern times. The developed curriculum provides students with broader insight and understanding of land, cultures, inherent rights and tribal sovereignty. The larger goal of the initiative is to have people identify with the land they live on and be better prepared to solve the difficult issues that impact communities on or near reservations today. Although Lessons of Our Land positions

DPI and Lac du Flambeau Sign MOU

In May, the Department of Public Instruction and the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa signed an memorandum of understanding (MOU) committing both parties to work together to improve educational outcomes for students. Lac du Flambeau Tribal Education Department Director Ashley Maki told Wisconsin Public Radio that the goal is to improve communication and coordination of programs for tribal kids.

“The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction commits to providing ongoing cultural responsiveness training to all of its staff to ensure improved communication, service and understanding in working with the Lac du Flambeau tribe in serving our students,” Maki said.

In addition to supporting American Indian students, State Superintendent Tony Evers said the MOU is

meant to help recognize the sovereignty of the nation.

“Our MOU is one of the first of its kind between a state education agency and one of our state’s federally recognized American Indian nations and tribal communities,” Evers said. “Making sure we have the relationships and formal systems in place puts us in a better position to serve our students.”

The DPI hopes to establish similar MOUs with all 11 of the state’s tribes and help them continue making academic strides.

The state’s Indian students have seen improvements in graduation rates in recent years. For the 2009-10 school year, the four-year graduation rate for the state’s 799 American Indian students was 66.7 percent. That improved to 78.8 percent of 590 American Indian students for the 2016-17 school year. □



ONLINE RESOURCES

- **Department of Public Instruction**
dpi.wi.gov/amind/resources/lesson-planning
- **Wisconsin First Nations** – WisconsinFirstNations.org
- **Wisconsin Public Television Tribal Histories Project**
wpt.org/community/reel-to-real/collection/tribal-histories
- **Wisconsin Indian Education Association** – WIEA.net
- **National Congress of American Indians** – ncai.org

Native American tribal issues and values at the forefront, the curriculum emphasizes the fundamental relationship between land and people in general, not just Native Americans.

- **Guiding for Tomorrow (G-WOW)** *g-wow.org* — The G-WOW curriculum is a unique approach to increasing awareness of environmental issues impacting and affecting Lake Superior’s coastal environment, people, cultures, and economies. It is organized into four seasonal units corresponding to the traditional Ojibwe lifeways: Maple Sugaring and Birch Bark Harvesting (spring),

Fishing (summer), Wild Rice Harvesting (fall), and Respecting Our Culture (winter).

- **We Look in All Directions** *ojibwe.org* — “Waasa Inaabidaa — We Look In All Directions” is a documentary series showcasing the vibrant Ojibwe culture in six, hour-long episodes. Each episode spans nearly 500 years of history, from pre-contact to contemporary times. The six programs focus on Ojibwe language, leadership, economic development, education, health, and the Ojibwe relationship to the environment. Teacher guides for each episode are accessible through their

educational website. “This video series and the book are outstanding resources. We watch the entire series throughout the semester. I would argue it is a crucial resource for understanding the Ojibwe People of Wisconsin,” says Ryan.

- **Culture-Based Arts Integration** *intersectingart.umn.edu* — The Culture-Based Arts Integration Curriculum website seeks to enhance interest, understanding, enthusiasm, and performance in standards-based subjects among American Indian and non-American Indian students in grades K-8. The website supports student and teacher understanding of Ojibwe culture and art. Project staff designs lesson plans in order to assist teachers with integrating this knowledge into their existing curricula. The lesson plans are available on the link above.

Exemplary Teacher

The Menominee Indian School District is fortunate to have an exemplary teacher modeling best practices. Benjamin Grignon, one of the 2018 Wisconsin High School Teachers of the Year, is a traditional arts teacher at Menominee Indian High School in Keshena.

“I work with students not only on the art forms of our people, but the language and cultural practices that go along with these arts,” he said.

Grignon focuses on his native culture and language but also on helping other teachers integrate it into their classes. For instance, he

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AMERICAN INDIAN EDUCATION EVENTS

Wisconsin American Indian Studies Summer Institute

July 30 – August 3, Black River Falls

Wisconsin Indian Education Association (WIEA) Act 31 Celebration

August 9, Green Bay

National Indian Education Association Convention

October 10-13, Hartford, Connecticut

Wisconsin Indian Education Association (WIEA) Conference

Spring 2019

works with science teachers to incorporate plant and mushroom identification and the chemistry of mordants and plants for dying, weaving and basketry projects. Students learn geometry formulas as they design loom beadwork based on the geometric forms that are part of ancient Menominee aesthetics.

“I am constantly finding opportunities to use our culture to reinforce other subjects in our school,” he said.

As a traditional arts teacher, Grignon teaches a variety of classes covering beadwork, traditional pottery, basket weaving, and film. He introduced a new class this year that he describes as wood, stone and bone. “We look at some of the traditional artifacts and artifacts in museums, and we try to recreate them,” Grignon said. “It’s more of an experimental archaeology, where we try to figure out how it was done.”

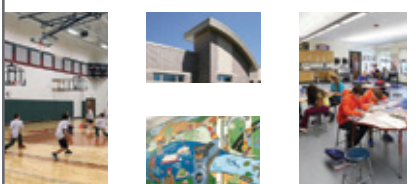
Grignon is also focused on language immersion not only in his

school but his community. As vice chairman of the Menominee Language and Culture Commission, he helps oversee immersion efforts at the Menominee Tribal Daycare, which is using a program based on the Language Nest idea developed by the Maori of New Zealand. The program starts the tribe’s youngest children out by learning English and Menominee. Only about five elders in the tribe still speak Menominee fluently.

Additionally, by working with the University of Wisconsin Extension, Grignon was able to establish a

Menominee Immersion Club at the high school that uses language to cook healthy foods.

“I’m really grateful to be a part of this school district and to be able to share the arts that I’ve grown up learning,” Grignon told *The Shawano Leader*. “I think that’s important for our people. I tell my students all the time that you need to go out and learn these things and bring them back to share what you’ve learned. That’s vital to keeping our community strong and resilient.” ■



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