GIKINOO AMAADIWIN: “We Gain Knowledge"

Teaching and Research Viewer Guide

*PBS eight’s* landmark series, *Ojibwe/Waasa Inaabidaa: We Look In All Directions*, celebrates an extraordinary Native American nation, the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe of the Great Lakes region. We hope that the *Ojibwe/Waasa Inaabidaa: We Look In All Directions* television series, and teaching/discussion guides for each program reflect the richness and resiliency of the past, present and future *Ojibwe* life. These guides were constructed for use in middle school and high school social studies classes, but they are very usable and appropriate for adult viewers as well. The series illuminates a vibrant, important, indigenous nation of the Great Lakes region with much to share and teach.

**Episode Five, Gikinoo amaadiwin – “We Gain Knowledge”** examines the connection between traditional family structures and gaining knowledge--from the clan system through the four phases of life: child, adult, middle age, and elder. Education is a life-long process and knowledge is a gift that carries specific responsibilities for the Ojibwe and most tribes. One of the roles of the Elders in indigenous communities is to pass on knowledge, wisdom, and understanding to the younger generations. This intergenerational link continues the circle of knowledge. It is the foundation of both family and of education. The Elders have a duty to impart their wisdom and the young have a corresponding responsibility to learn. Cultural identity and survival from generation to generation is thus ensured.

Traditionally, an Ojibwe child is born into two mutual and interlocking relational systems: the biological family and the tribal kinship network. The Elders taught about life through stories, parables, allegories, songs, and demonstrated ways of doing things. A well-told story has at least four levels of meaning: enjoyment, moral teaching, philosophic meaning, and metaphysical significance. To honor the individuality and self-growth of each person, children and youth are encouraged to interpret stories according to
their own situation and experiences. The individual learned according to his own capacities and according to the gifts given to him by the Creator.

Contact with European culture, however, altered the family and educational systems. This affected cultural identity and continuity. Competing value systems from fur traders, missionaries, and officials caused traditional methods and systems to change. The introduction of alcohol was especially destructive. Beginning as early as 1793 with the Trade & Intercourse Act, the United States made a national commitment to assimilate the indigenous population. The 1819 Civilization Fund provided support for educational institutions designed to assimilate Native American children. Boarding schools for indian children were operated in a militaristic fashion that often included drills, harsh punishment, physical abuse, and poor nutrition. It became government policy to coerce families into sending children to these schools. The boarding school experience had an immense impact on Ojibwe communities. In addition to the mental and emotional trauma, hundreds of students died from disease and maltreatment. Surviving students and families experienced extreme grief and anger in many cases.

The 1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act, and the Johnson O’Malley Act finally permitted families to participate in decisions about their children’s education. These laws gave legal sanction to a resurgence of cultural identity and a return to traditional Ojibwe priorities and practices within the context of modern America.

**The teacher guide for Gikinoo amaadiwin consists of:**

- Discussion questions and related activities to engage students and other viewers with program-specific concepts **prior** to viewing the program.
- Guide questions to help focus the viewing experience.
- Discussion questions and related activities to reinforce or extend learned concepts **following** the student viewing experience.
- Assessment suggestions for learning activities.
The following themes are central to using *Gikinoo amaadiwin* as a learning activity:

- Traditional Ojibwe education is based on gifts and responsibilities within the extended family. The presence of teachers and the ability to learn are gifts. The duty of the wise to pass on their wisdom and the duty of the young to learn are responsibilities. This arrangement created bonds between the elderly and the young that helped to unite families within clans and bands.
- Learning has at least two dimensions: to prepare the boy and girl with skills for their physical life and needs and to enlarge the inner-being or soul-spirit. This learning begins at conception and continues throughout life.
- Wisdom is imparted in indigenous communities through stories, legends, demonstrations of skills, and other traditional means. These have multiple levels to be enjoyed and explored by people of all ages and all abilities.
- Cultural contact with foreign groups altered Native American life styles and, as a result, the traditional means of transmitting the knowledge.
- Culture shock has resulted in severe detriments to tribal health, education, economic well-being, and cultural identity.
- A tribal resiliency and key laws have finally evolved so that once again, Native American parents determine their children’s education and teach the traditional culture in schools and communities today.

**Suggested Discussion Questions and Activities Before Viewing the Program**

1. Students are asked to briefly write (one page) how their culture and family values were transmitted to them. This should be done at least one night before viewing the program. The students can share the basic responses, which the teacher writes on the chalkboard. If possible, have students share family celebrations, ceremonies, holidays, etc., that help to create a sense of family. Also share how students have learned about household chores and skills.
2. Either as a separate dialogue or part of the one listed above, have students think about how it would be different if they left home and went to a school far away when they were five years old. Ask how they would feel if the State required them to leave home to go to school and changed their name and cut their hair.

3. Students are asked to share what they know about Indian boarding schools. If students have information, this should be shared. If they don’t, read some short accounts of boarding school experience.

A partial glossary of terms, words, and names significant to the program

- Clan
- Elder
- Extended family
- boarding school
- 1924 Citizenship Act
- Johnson-O’Malley Act
- 1975 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act
- 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act
- Indian Child Welfare Act
- Civil Rights Movement
- Tribal School

Guide Questions to Focus Viewing

1. How did the Ojibwe traditionally pass on knowledge about the culture and a sense of belonging to their children?
2. How did a young adult begin the search for wisdom in the tribe?
3. Why did the missionaries and fur traders create cultural conflict for the Ojibwe?
4. What did the United States do to try and assimilate the indigenous people into the mainstream society?
5. What laws and movements changed policies to allow indigenous people to determine their children’s education, to maintain traditional culture and identity?

6. What options do indigenous people in America have today for their children’s education?

7. How do many individual tribal members struggle and succeed despite these historical difficulties?

8. What opportunities exist in higher education for Native Americans today?

Discussion Questions and Activities Following Viewing the Program

1. The students will explain how the different levels of understanding for a traditional story or legend provide learning opportunities for the listener. Select a story told in the program as a model to demonstrate these different levels of meaning and knowledge.

2. Using the Indian boarding school examples in the program ask students to describe how this educational experience was designed to eliminate the cultural identity of the Native American students. Be very specific.

3. Working in small cooperative groups of 4 or 5 students, create a project (not a written paper) that illustrates how Native Americans are revitalizing the traditional means of transmitting their culture today. This could focus on family structure, reservation services, reservation structure, cultural events, and tribal education.

Assessment suggestions

1. The student preview activity about the transmission of their own family values should be graded according to the guiding rubric.

2. The group work should be scored according to the individual's work. The group project should be the ultimate grade, but each student should also be graded for what they accomplished.
RESEARCH PROJECT RUBRIC

5  The paper/project is clear and focused. A central theme is clearly identified and supporting details demonstrate the purpose of the research. Grammar and form are correct and appropriate. All required components have been meaningfully included in the paper/project.

4  The paper/project is clear and focused. A central theme has been identified and some supporting details help to demonstrate the purpose of the research. Grammar and form are correct and appropriate. All required components have been meaningfully included in the paper/project.

3  The paper/project has a central theme with some supporting detail. Grammar and form are correct and appropriate. All required components have been included in the paper/project.

2  As yet, the paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. Grammar and form are basically correct. Most required components have been included in the paper/project.

1.   The paper/project is incomplete and unacceptable.

COOPERATIVE GROUP SELF-SCORING RUBRIC

1.   To what extent did other members of the group listen to, respond to, and include your ideas in the group's work?

   (not at all)  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  (completely)
2. The group worked well together and produced a good product?

(agree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (disagree)

3. To what extent are you satisfied with your group's performance?

(Very dissatisfied) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (Very satisfied)

4. How much did you learn about the issue under discussion?

(nothing at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (A great deal)

5. Write two adjectives describing the way you feel about your group's work.

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