

Title

Everything is related: Lakotas and the buffalo.

Grade Level

College level introductory course.

Theme

Everything is related.

Goal

Students will learn the significance of the Lakota concept *mitakuye oyasin* or all things are related.

Lesson Goals

Students will:

1. Acquire knowledge of Lakotas' changing relationship with the buffalo.
2. Learn the parts the buffalo and their traditional (pre-reservation) Lakota uses.
3. Learn the ceremonial significance of the buffalo in Lakota life.

Objectives

Students will:

1. Be able to demonstrate an understanding of Lakota metaphysics.
2. Be able to summarize the traditional stories of Lakota emergence, the Great Race, and White Buffalo Calf Woman and discuss how they represent the changing nature of Lakota-buffalo relationships.
3. Learn at least ten ways Lakotas used buffalos for material and ceremonial purposes.
4. Draw connections between the gift of the sacred pipe and the Lakotas' concept of *mitakuye oyasin*.

Cultural Concept

Lakotas' relationship with the buffalo represents a key manifestation of their concept *mitakuye oyasin* (all my relations) and its underlying principles of mutual respect and obligations.

Cultural Background

According to traditional Lakota thought, the universe constitutes one vast kinship system in which all beings are in (or have the potential for sharing) kinship relationships defined by mutual rights and responsibilities. This principle is expressed in the phrase, *mitakuye oyasin*, or all my relations, and is based on the assumptions that: 1) all beings share the same metaphysical components (*nagi*, *niya*, *sicun*, *nagila*); 2) share a portion of *Inyan*'s original blood; and 3) possess the *ton* (or sacred power) present in this blood. Lakota sacred narratives recount how the Lakotas' ancestors were part of the *Pte oyate*, or Buffalo people; how these ancestors alienated themselves from their kin by choosing to seek a life of material wealth in the above world; and how this original alienation was overcome in stages: first through a primordial great race between two-leggeds and four-

leggeds in which the two-leggeds proved victorious, therefore winning the right to hunt buffalo (in a respectful manner) and the buffalo were obligated to sacrifice themselves for the Lakotas' physical and spiritual welfare; and second, through the coming of *Pte San Win*, White Buffalo Calf Woman, who as representative of the buffalo people reinstated the kinship relationship with Lakotas by bringing them the *canunpa wakan* (sacred pipe), their key instrument of prayer.

Student Activities

Students will:

1. Take the role of one of the four metaphysical principles, speaking about its nature and functions.
2. Write and perform one-act plays for key events in the emergence, Great Race, and White Buffalo Calf Woman narratives.
3. Be shown various western implements and be able to answer which part of the buffalo would supply the Lakota equivalent.
4. Plot spatially White Buffalo Calf Woman's gift of the sacred pipe.

Evaluation Activities

1. Students will be given a quiz that asks them to:
 - a. Identify the basic qualities and powers of the four metaphysical components.
 - b. Describe the changing relationship between Lakotas and buffalo.
 - c. Match parts of the buffalo with uses.
 - d. Describe White Buffalo Calf Woman's role as mediator between the Lakotas and the Buffalo people.
2. Write journal entries that reflect their command of Lakota metaphysics, Lakota-Buffalo People narratives, and the physical and spiritual uses of the buffalo. These will be turned in the Monday following the final unit presentation. These entries are part of a term-long class journal that will cover all the course units and which serves as the basis for both teacher evaluation of students' and a student study guide.

Resources

Lectures, illustrated with Powerpoint images.

Video: *Sacred buffalo people*. (1991). St. Paul: Red Eye Video.

Guest Speakers: Arthur Amiotte on mitakuye oyasin and Lakota metaphysics; Albert White Hat on cosmic origins, Lakota emergence, and White Buffalo Calf Woman; Craig Howe on the material and ceremonial significance of the buffalo.

Museum tour if possible (NMAI).

Readings:

Walker, James. (1917) Narratives. In *The sun dance and other ceremonies of the Oglala division of the Teton Dakota* (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. 16 pt. 2, pp. 164-182). New York: American Museum of Natural History.

_____. Secret Instructions for a shaman. In *The sun dance and other ceremonies of the Oglala division of the Teton Dakota* (Anthropological Papers of

the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. 16 pt. 2, pp 164-182). New York: American Museum of Natural History.

Arthur Amiotte (1982), "Our other selves," *Parabola Magazine* 7(2), 26-32.

Ella Deloria. (1944). A scheme of life that worked. In *Speaking of Indians* (pp. 24-74).

Black Elk, N. (1980). The gift of the sacred pipe. In J. E. Brown (Ed.), *The sacred pipe: Black Elk's account of the seven rites of the Oglala Sioux* (pp. 3-9). Norman: University of Nebraska Press.

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