

**Title**

Power of words: nomads.

**Grade Level**

Language arts: advanced high school or lower level post-secondary.

**Theme**

Movement and family structure in Lakota culture.

**Duration**

45 minutes.

**Goal**

Students will be able to evaluate the use of the word "nomad" in relation to Lakota ideas of family.

**Objectives**

Students will be able to:

1. Diagram Lakota family structure.
2. Collectively define *nomad* and *family* as well as individual family members (e.g. *brother* and *tiblo*); consider connotations.
3. Compare and contrast Lakota and Euro-American ideas of family, and explain how these are impacted by language and cultural expectations.

**South Dakota Standards**

N/A.

**Cultural Concept**

- Lakota and Euro-American family structures.
- Movement.

**Cultural Background**

"Nomad" is a common word used to describe Lakotas and other tribes of the North American Plains. Lakota communities tend to move with natural events, which are often done in cycles. According to Euro-American culture, Lakotas are without a home; they are a nomadic society.

Historically, Lakotas had an extended, well-defined, and closely-knit family structure. Their families extended easily through various "making of relative" ceremonies. Much of the basic concepts and the historic rules governing families can be found in old Lakota stories. The familial connection between two people strictly determined their behavior.

Euro-Americans tend to have relatively small and well-defined family structures. Becoming a part of another's family can be difficult and has very specific paths to take. This is reflected by the formal definitions of family, and the paths to extending families in law. Familial connection does determine behavior as well, but not in as strict of a manner as in Lakota families.

To Euro-Americans, all others are friends or like family. Each family must move on to new places for new jobs and careers due to non-cyclical, or even capricious events; they are a nomadic society. Their communities hold fast in a physical place and the families move and change with events.

### **Student Activities**

Previous session:

1. Assign the reading for Lakota family structure under Student Resources.

Current session:

1. In small groups, students are to define the word *nomad*.—10 min.
2. As a class, come to a consensus about this definition and write it on the board. Have students keep that in the backs of their minds as the class progresses.—5 min.
3. Small group activity: Chart out Lakota relationships, and the nature of the relationships by completing a blank family tree.—10 min.
4. Large group discussion: Compare and contrast Euro-American and Lakota family structures by drawing a large Venn diagram on the board and having members from each small group contribute at least one bullet point. Have students explain their contributions.—10 min.
5. Back in small groups, consider how their definition of *nomad* applies to the family structures previously discussed.—10 min
6. Questions for students to consider:
  - What was the motivation for traditional Lakota migration?
  - What is the motivation for present day Euro-American migration?
  - Who was/is involved? The whole community, or a small part? When and to where?
  - What are the consequences in regard to familial and communal relationships?
7. As an exit activity, have each group hand in a sheet answering these questions.

### **Resources**

- Maynard, E., & Twiss, G. (1970). [Excerpt from Kinship system]. In *Hechel lena oyaate kin nipi kte: That these people may live* (pp. 115-118). Community Mental Health Program, Pine Ridge Service Unit, Indian Health Service, U.S. Public Health Service. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

### **Assessment**

1. Student participation in small group activities.
2. Lakota family relationships chart.
3. Compare-contrast Venn diagram.
4. Exit activity questions.

### **References**

- Deloria, V., Jr. (1999). Reflections and revelation: Knowing land, places and ourselves. In *For this land: Writings on religion in America* (pp. 250-260). New York: Routledge.
- Maynard, E., & Twiss, G. (1970). [Excerpt from Kinship system]. In *Hechel lena oyate kin nipi kte: That these people may live* (pp. 115-118). Community Mental Health Program, Pine Ridge Service Unit, Indian Health Service, U.S. Public Health Service. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

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