



SOCIAL SCIENCES

Not a Costume!

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- Since time immemorial
- Lifeways

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will understand the historical and cultural significance of ceremonial regalia to the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.
- Students will understand the role traditions play in maintaining connections to the past.
- Students will reflect on the harm that can be caused by imitating Native culture and will use art to construct a message of social change.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why is regalia important to Tribal communities?
- How might dressing up as another culture impact that community?

LOGISTICS

- Where does the activity take place?
Classroom
- How are the students organized?
 Whole class Teams: 2 – 4
 Pairs Individually

TIME REQUIRED

60 – 90 minutes

Overview

Regalia is an important part of Indigenous culture and identity. This lesson provides students with the opportunity to learn about the regalia of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. Students will learn about different types of regalia and their cultural importance and value. Students will then use this understanding to consider the impact of faux-regalia or costumes—sometimes used by non-Natives to dress as Indians—and design a public relations campaign to persuade their community to respect Native culture and regalia.

Background for teachers

The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians comprises dozens of bands and Tribes from across Western Oregon, Northern California, and Southwest Washington—each with a unique cultural and linguistic background. In the mid-1850s, the federal government forced these Tribes from their ancestral homelands onto the Coast (Siletz) Reservation headquartered at Siletz and attempted to force Native people to abandon their traditional languages, beliefs, and traditions and assimilate into mainstream society. Despite these efforts, Siletz people have managed to maintain their traditions



and continue to practice many of their ancestral ceremonies to this day. Making regalia is a vital part of this inheritance.

Each of the bands removed to the reservation at Siletz has its own unique traditions, beliefs, and regalia. The regalia in this lesson features the artistry of contemporary Siletz regalia-makers whose families are Dee-ni (a Dené or Athabaskan-speaking people removed to Siletz from the Southern Oregon and Northern California coast). This regalia is made for the Nee-dash, or “Feather Dance,” a ceremonial dance held twice a year to give thanks for the gifts and blessings that sustain the people and ensure that those relationships continue for future generations.

Nee-dash regalia is specific to the dance and often belongs to the dancemaker or family organizing the event. Nee-dash regalia highlights the wealth of the community by emphasizing the relationships with the natural world around us. Regalia is made from things in the natural environment in Western Oregon and Northern California and shows the ability of the people to care for the land and sea around them and maintain good relationships with their neighbors. Materials in Nee-dash regalia come from all over the landscape—from tall hills and mountains where people gather beargrass to make ceremonial basket caps, to the near-shore ocean environment where abalone shells are found to give beautiful iridescent color

STANDARDS

Oregon social sciences standards¹

5.14 - Analyze the distinct way of knowing and living amongst the different American Indian Tribes of North America prior to contact in the late 15th and 16th centuries, such as religion, language, and cultural practices, and the subsequent impact of that contact. (*History*)

Oregon English language arts standards

5.RI.4 - Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

MATERIALS

- **PowerPoint presentation** (available in the appendix; load the slides prior to the lesson to ensure they are displaying properly)
- **Classroom writing surface** (i.e., blackboard, whiteboard, chalkboard, chart paper and markers)
- **Classroom audiovisual technology** to display PowerPoint slides and videos
- Nee-dash Introduction Sheet
- Sticky notes
- Construction paper
- Drawing paper
- Colored pencils and markers
- Lined paper for writing

¹ Oregon is in the process of revising its social sciences standards. This document references the draft 2018 standards for grade 5.



to necklaces and dresses. It takes years of work to gather the materials for regalia and assemble each individual piece—and once completed, most Siletz people think of regalia as having a life of its own.

Anthropologists and non-Native observers often characterize regalia from Western Oregon as displays of wealth. This lesson invites students to interrogate this concept by examining their own notions of wealth and value and comparing them to the significance and importance of regalia to Siletz people.

To prepare for this lesson teachers should

- Review all materials for this lesson, including the PowerPoint presentation and the Nee-dash Introduction Sheet found in the appendix.
- Ensure students have access to all materials (printed and/or electronic) needed to participate in this lesson (see the materials section above).
- Prepare classroom audiovisual technology to display the PowerPoint presentation.
- Write the lesson objectives and key vocabulary on a classroom writing surface.

VOCABULARY

Regalia – The traditional or ceremonial clothing, accessories, and artifacts worn at sacred events.

Dentalium – Long, narrow mollusk shells used as beads adorning the regalia created for important ceremonial dances.

Costume – Dress meant to imitate a certain person, type of person, animal, or thing.

Value – The worth, importance, or significance of something.



References

Dobkins, R. J. (2009). "Exhibit essay: Life stories for new generations—the living art of Oregon Tribal regalia." *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 110 (3), 420–439. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20615987>

Hallie Ford Museum of Art, Willamette University. (2008, September 28). *The art of ceremony: Regalia of Native Oregon* (teachers guide). <https://willamette.edu/arts/hfma/pdf/teacher-guides/art-of-ceremony.pdf>

Wilkinson, C. (2010). *The people are dancing again: The history of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon*. University of Washington Press. (Note: This lesson specifically draws on chapter 16.)

Considerations for teachers

Assessment

- Students will discuss the lesson content with partners and groups. The teacher should actively monitor student discussion for correct understanding and intervene when there are misconceptions or biases.
- Students should be assessed both formatively and summatively.
 - The formative assessment will consist of teacher observation of student participation in discussion, group work, and critical analyses.

ADAPTATIONS FOR DISTANCE LEARNING



The lesson is primarily structured around small group and classroom discussion and exploration, but several pieces can be pulled out and used as standalone content and activities for distance or independent learning purposes. A suggested sequence follows. Be sure all students have either print or electronic access to the materials described.

1. Use the PowerPoint slides provided to convene a virtual online class meeting, either synchronously or asynchronously.
2. Provide an opportunity for students to engage orally or in writing with the opening questions, either with one another or with the help of an adult at home.
3. Review and select additional activities from the options/extensions section below that are conducive to distance or independent learning. Have students complete them and submit their work.
4. Have students write and share a short summary or reflection on what they learned.

- The summative assessment will include the completion of a poster, including messaging chosen by the student and an explanation of its significance.

Practices

- *Classroom discussion* – Large-group, whole-class discussion allows students to express their thoughts and hear the thoughts of others. For the instructor, this practice is a good way to take the pulse of the group and see what general themes emerge. For students, large-group discussion can be a way to express themselves or hear differing perspectives.
- *Small group activities/discussions* – When students or student groups report what they have discussed or provide a brief presentation on their poster assessment, it is important to have clear norms and expectations they can use to ensure their success. The teacher should be prepared to explain to the class how to listen respectfully when a classmate is reporting. The teacher should also be prepared to help students gather their thoughts and explain main ideas if students are struggling to do so.

Learning targets

- I am beginning to understand the significance of regalia to Siletz people and culture.
- I can explain how making and caring for regalia is an important part of cultural identity for Native people.
- I can identify how dressing up in faux regalia might affect Indigenous peoples, and I know how to discourage this practice among my peers and community.

Appendix

Materials included in the electronic folder that support this lesson are:

- Slides_Not_a_Costume.pptx
- Making a Poster Rubric (https://www.readwritethink.org/sites/default/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson1076/rubric.pdf)
- Nee-dash Introduction Sheet

Activity 1

Engaging learners and building background

Time: 15 minutes

Step 1

Introduce the lesson by telling students that we will be talking about Native American groups in what is now Western Oregon, including important traditions that are still in practice today.

To prepare for learning, place students in pairs so they can discuss the prompts (A/B partners).

Step 2

Share slide 2, along with the following key ideas.

Say:

We're going to start today by learning a new word: regalia. Raise your hand if you have heard this word before. Regalia is a sort of fancy word that means special ceremonial dress. For most non-Native people, the word regalia comes up most often when talking about royalty or formal military attire. Indigenous people use the word regalia to talk about traditional clothing they wear during dances, ceremonies, and prayers. While the word regalia is rarely used in general society, it's a common word to hear in the Native community.

Step 3

Share slide 2 and facilitate discussion of the question below, regarding common examples of regalia in American society.

Say:

Many cultures have special ways of dressing for different events, ceremonies, and traditions.

Activity 1 *(Continued)*

Ask:

Can anyone think of any common examples of regalia in American society?

Key points

- What about when people graduate from school?
- What do people often wear when they get married?
- How about different kinds of dress you may have seen during religious ceremonies?

Step 4

Share the content of slide 3 and facilitate a pair-share discussion activity.

Say:

Maybe you have an example of a tradition shared with you by your family, care-givers, or community. What are some of the traditions or events that are important in your family or community? Are there special ways people dress at those events? Starting with partner A, please share with partner B a tradition or celebration you've experienced or seen others participate in, or ways important events are marked in your family and your community. Then it will be partner B's turn to talk. (Allow two or three minutes for each student to share.)

Step 5

Be sure to monitor students as they share their stories. If you notice a student is resistant to sharing, you can combine the partner group with another or you can step in and share your own story.

Activity 1 *(Continued)*

Step 6

Bring the class together for a whole class discussion.

Say:

Thank you for sharing about yourself with your partner. Let's come back together and share with the group some different traditions and regalia that we may have seen in our community.

Activity 2

Learning about regalia and wealth

Time: 30 minutes

Overview

This activity includes opportunities for students to periodically (and strategically) share their ideas with a partner prior to whole-group discussion. The pair-share is used a lot to keep students engaged.

Step 1

Share slide 4 and discuss the map of the ancestral homelands of the Siletz people.

Say:

We're going to learn more about the importance and meaning of regalia for people of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, which is a confederation of many different Tribes and bands from across Western Oregon.

Ask:

Look at this map. Can you find where our town is in relation to the homelands of the Siletz people?

Say:

In the 1850s, the government forced all these different Tribes onto a reservation at Siletz and made it difficult for people to continue their traditional beliefs. But Siletz people are strong and continue to carry on their traditions to this day. As part of those traditions, Siletz people continue to make beautiful regalia that is an important part of ceremonies and dances held each year. Siletz people helped to provide the information in this lesson so that you can learn a little bit about their traditions and beliefs.

Activity 2 (Continued)

Step 2

Share slide 5 and facilitate discussion on the key question below.

Say:

People who talk about and study Native cultures often view regalia as a form of wealth and sometimes even refer to certain pieces of regalia as “Indian money.” Here are some pictures of dentalium. Dentalium is a rare shell that has been traded up and down the West Coast for thousands of years. Native people string dentalium on long strands to make beautiful necklaces.

Ask:

Some types of dentalium were more valuable than others. Which of these examples do you think was the most desirable?

Answer: Bigger dentalium is “worth” more than long strings of shorter shells. Decorated and engraved dentalium are worth more than plain.

Say:

One reason that people sometimes refer to dentalium as Indian money is because in the old days, Native people used it to pay debts, arrange marriages, and resolve disputes. Things are different today, but Siletz people still exchange dentalium as ways to honor and repay each other. Even today, dentalium’s value is recognized by Natives and non-Natives alike, and it can fetch 50 cents to \$2 per shell—and even more for larger shells.

Step 3

Share slide 6 and facilitate discussion on the key question below.

Say:

Other types of regalia are also sometimes talked about as money. Beautiful head-dresses made from woodpecker scalps, beads made from clamshells, and strands

Activity 2 (Continued)

of beads made from pine nuts are also sometimes referred to as money. Together, regalia of all sorts is a form of wealth for Siletz people—and has been for thousands and thousands of years. But even though many people use English words like “money” and “wealth” to talk about regalia, that meaning is different than how the Tribe usually thinks of wealth.

Ask:

What comes to mind when you think about the word “wealth” in American society?

Expected answers: Money, jewelry, fancy cars, stocks, gold.

Step 4

Share slide 7 and facilitate discussion on the key question below.

Ask:

Those are all good answers about what wealth means in American culture. Would you say that this picture pretty much sums up the meaning of wealth in American culture?

Step 5

Share slide 8 and key points below.

Say:

Thanks for sharing your ideas about wealth in the larger society. For many Native people, the meaning of Indian money or Indian wealth is different. That’s because regalia is not just something beautiful, something rare, or something that takes a lot of skill to make (although it is that, too). Most Native people think of wealth differently because regalia is tied to—and necessary for—ceremonies and dances



Activity 2 (Continued)

that Siletz people believe keep our world strong and healthy. Regalia is a vital part of Siletz ceremonies. Having lots of regalia means being able to provide for the community by hosting these ceremonies. A wealthy person is a leader who can lend regalia to people who don't have any so that they can participate in Siletz traditions, songs, and dances.

Step 6

Ask students to get up out of their seats, walk around the room, and find a new partner (someone they haven't already talked with today). Tell students to share what has surprised them or interested them most about today's discussion of regalia. Give students two or three minutes and then have them return to their seats.

Step 7

Share slide 9 and facilitate the discussion question below.

Say:

Let's think a little more about the idea of value. Look at this beautiful dance dress made by Dee-ni families—one of the groups removed to Siletz from the Southern Oregon and Northern California coast.

Ask:

How would a non-Native museum or collector value or put a price on this dress?

Possible answers: How old, who made it, how desirable, how much to buy another one, materials it's made from, how much to replace.

Say:

Great discussion! In American society, value often comes from how rare and desirable something is. That can be true for Native people, too. It takes a lot of work to make these beautiful dresses. But value is more about the connections with the

Activity 2 (Continued)

land and other Native people that regalia shows. To make a dress like this means collecting materials that can be hundreds of miles apart and may only be found in certain places and times of year. All these materials rely on a healthy, functioning ecosystem. You cannot make this regalia without natural resources.

Step 8

Share slide 10 with the content and questions.

Say:

Take a look at this regalia for a young man. This was also made by Dee-ni people and, like the dress in the last slide, is a big part of Nee-dash, or Feather Dance—an important dance and ceremony for people whose ancestors are from the Southern Oregon and Northern California coast. See if you can identify any of the things used to make this regalia. What ecosystem do you think it might come from?

Answers: Shiny abalone shells come from a healthy ocean, otter pelts comes from healthy rivers, a bow (made of yew) and arrows (made of ocean spray) come from the right kind of forest, deer hide comes from open meadows, hawk feathers mean trees to perch on, and a mallard scalp means healthy bird migration.

Say:

Being able to make regalia like this shows that you know where to find the materials and how to care for the land, plants, and animals around you. The same is true for items that Siletz people might trade for. Beads and shells traded from afar show that Siletz people are connected to other Native people and are maintaining good relationships. I want to ask you about another thing.

Step 9

Share slide 11 and facilitate discussion.



Activity 2 (Continued)

Ask:

Now that we've learned a little about the importance of regalia, how do you think that Siletz people take care of regalia?

Say:

That's right! Siletz people believe they have a responsibility to take care of regalia and keep it safe. This picture is of a special purse made from elkhorn that people have used to keep their dentalium safe for thousands of years. Part of taking care of regalia is making sure that it participates in ceremonial dance. When Siletz people talk about regalia, they recognize that the regalia itself needs and wants to dance. If you ever visit Siletz, you might hear, "This quiver danced last year." Or, "That necklace needs to dance this winter." Regalia are not just things to Native people.

Hopefully, you are starting to see that while people sometimes call regalia "money," no one today would ever try to use it to buy everyday things or services the way we use a dollar bill. Regalia is a form of wealth, but a special form of wealth that stays in families for generations. Wealth for Siletz people is about relationships and responsibilities to the community and ancestors. Regalia is about showing the finest things to connect the people today to an unbroken tradition that ties Siletz people to the land—now and for future generations.

Activity 3

Not a costume!

Time: 45 – 60 minutes

Overview

As you go through this activity, you may want to encourage movement, engagement, and interaction by inviting students to stand up or come to the carpet to brainstorm together. Or you can invite students to find a partner to stand next to as you ask the questions, or put them in small groups and have them talk to one another before continuing the discussion with the whole group.

Step 1

Share slide 12 and discuss the content and questions.

Say:

This often happens around Halloween, but that isn't the only time. Sometimes even adults dress up in fake regalia at places like music festivals or sports games. Dressing up in pretend regalia hurts most Native people and makes them feel bad. To understand why this might be, let's do some more thinking about what we've learned about regalia.

Ask:

Why would it be harmful for a Native person to see a non-Native person dressing up like a Native American?

Activity 3 (Continued)

Step 2

Give students five minutes to independently write or draw a journal response to this question. When all students have had five minutes to reflect, ask students to share their ideas first with a partner, then with the whole group. Write answers on the board or paper so students can review during the upcoming activity. Continue discussion (prompting as needed) to get a good list, perhaps including the following examples:

- Someone showing they don't understand how important regalia is.
- Using something sacred and important to make a joke or have fun.
- Treating all Native people as the same and not realizing that each Tribe has unique regalia and traditions.
- Assuming Native people don't exist anymore.
- It's not OK to mock another culture.

Say:

Thank you for sharing your thoughts—I heard lots of good ideas! One way to think about this is that regalia is not a costume.

Step 3

Fade in the second question on slide 12.

Say:

Let's think about the difference between regalia and a costume. A costume is something that you dress up in to pretend to be something you're not. We now know that regalia is an important part of the Siletz people's—and other Indigenous people's—cultural and spiritual identity. And we know that dressing up in a costume and pretending to be Indian means ignoring that history and identity and pretending that it doesn't exist. It makes Native people feel like they are being mocked and disrespected.

Activity 3 (Continued)

Step 4

Share slide 13 and describe the poster activity.

Say:

For this next activity, we're going to design ways to educate other people about the harms of dressing up as Native American or pretending to be part of another group of people to have fun. I want you to look at these examples. These are posters that some college students made trying to convince people not to dress up as people from other cultures.

Ask:

What do you notice about these posters? How do they convey their message?

Say:

Now you'll design your own poster using the information we've learned today. If you need ideas to get started, check out our brainstorm on the board.

Step 5

When finished, students will share their work with their partner or small group, talking about the message they chose and its significance. In addition, ask students what they would do if they saw someone in a Native American "costume." Provide language supports (for example, sentence stems) to help students practice approaching people who are causing harm by appropriating Native culture. Sample language supports for discussion are below:

- "One thing I've learned about cultural appropriation is . . ."
- "When a person from one culture adopts something (fashion, trends, dress) from another culture that's not their own, it can be harmful."
- "Although it may be fun to dress up, sometimes you may be using something sacred to another culture."
- "One stereotype you might be perpetuating is . . ."

Activity 3 *(Continued)*

Step 6

As they wrap up, ask for volunteers to share with the whole group.

Activity 4

Reflection/closure

Time: 10 minutes

Overview

Students reflect on what they learned in the lesson.

Step 1

Review the learning targets for the lesson.

Step 2

Hold an informal debrief on what stood out to students in the lesson and why. This can be done as a pair-share or group discussion with a report out, or as a whole class discussion.

Revisit the following essential questions:

- *Why is regalia important to the Siletz people?*
- *Why are traditions important in contemporary life?*

Step 3

Answer any final questions students may have.