



# Native American Heritage

By Melody Staebner, Indian Education Program Coordinator

## November is Native American Heritage Month

This is Melody Staebner, your friendly Indian Education Coordinator for Fargo Public Schools. Did you know November is Native American Month? This is a time to recognize and celebrate the rich culture, tradition, and history of Native American people and to acknowledge the vast contributions we have made to the world.

### How about a quick language lesson?

Try it out and introduce yourself in Ojibwe today! This is the formal protocol for introducing yourself in the Ojibwe Language.

#### Ojibwe:

*Boozhoo*

*(Name) Indizhinakaas*

*Zoogipun Binesi'kwe Indigo*

*Turtle Mountain Ojibwe Nindaayaa*

*Fargo Nindoonjiibaa*

#### English:

*Hello*

*My name is (Name)*

*I am also known as Snowy Bird Woman*

*I am Turtle Mountain Ojibwe*

*I am from Fargo*

### Fun facts we should all know

Did you know there are five federally recognized Native American Nations in North Dakota: Mandan, Hidatsa, & Arikara Nation (Three Affiliated Tribes), the Spirit Lake Nation (Dakota), the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (Dakota), the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians (Ojibwe), and the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Nation (Dakota). The Trenton Indian Service Area is also recognized as a governed nation under Census.

### Be mindful of...

“One little, two little, three little Indians...” There are nursery rhymes that you should avoid teaching, unless you are specifically educating the *not so accurate things* on how Native Americans are portrayed by mainstream society, and, in particular, Hollywood. Even then, be mindful. The same is true with the all-too-familiar mascot Chief Wahoo, who supposedly represents what a chief should look like with his red feathers, big red nose, burley high cheekbones and of course his tomahawk chop. I would highly recommend you stay away from these cartoonish and misguided forms of educating the public and the children in your classrooms. I would highly recommend that you also avoid any type of projects related to “red eagle feathers” or mimicking “whooping sounds” purportedly made by Native Americans on the warpath. Be mindful of stereotypes or anything that would desensitize the true identity of our proud Native American



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people. If you have any questions or wonderings, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office phone number 701.446.3054 or by emailing [staebnm@fargo.k12.nd.us](mailto:staebnm@fargo.k12.nd.us) if you have any further needs or support.

## **Please check this out today**

I further implore you to check out the North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings (NDNAEU) webpage. You can find it at <https://teachingsofourelders.org/>. This is the greatest resource that every student and teacher in North Dakota can benefit from. The content is authentic and completely endorsed by Superintendent of Education in North Dakota Kirsten Baesler. There are many options to search for specific content, and that website was designed by its founders so you can relate the content to anything that you are teaching.

## **Lessons you can teach right now**

Here are some lessons that are available on the NDNAEU website that I created:

- 1) [Petroglyphs and Pictographs](#): This teaches you how to use Native American symbols. It also gives you an understanding of how symbols were used to tell the hierarchy of a tribe, herds of animals, where water was located, ceremonies, etc.
- 2) [Identity Shields](#): Identity shields were very important to Native Americans because they were strong symbols of good medicine. Representing both physical protection and spiritual protection, shields displayed the cultural identity of the Native American that used them.

## **Other things to be mindful of**

- There are over 30 different Native American tribes, cultures, languages in our district, so do not think that we are all one or we know all about other tribes.
- We have 532 Native American students in Fargo Public Schools.
- Americas Indigenous cultures are still living cultures.
- We say “regalia”, not “costumes.” Regalia is sacred.
- Be mindful of using metaphors/similes such as: sitting Indian style, Indian giver, we are going to have a pow-wow, acting like a bunch of wild Indians.

## **It's all good**

I am right there with you, and humbly continue to learn about my people. You don't have to be an expert to share in the experience of wanting to learn more. We teach what we know the best way we can with the greatest intentions. So I would encourage you all to learn with the students,



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go into the NDNAEU website, select lessons that have to do with Native American contributions to the world, perhaps COVID-19 lessons, or perhaps things that many people are familiar with such as dreamcatchers, identity shields, native medicines, or even pow-wows.

With that, let us continue the cultural recognition of the variety of peoples that are represented here at Fargo Public Schools. I am proud of all of you in advance for recognizing November as Native American Heritage Month!

Chi-Miigwetch (Big thank you!)

