

NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS: RESOURCES ON THE INTERNET

by Margaret R. Dittmore



The growing body of information on the web by and related to American Indians certainly challenges the myth that Indian people no longer exist. Below are some recommended examples of the kinds of materials available for teachers and students alike. These sites offer a glimpse of the wealth of information on historical and contemporary culture and cultural achievements of Native North American peoples. As the Smithsonian has a long and rich legacy of research on this subject, a sampling of its online resources is provided first.

The Smithsonian Institution (<http://www.si.edu>) has unparalleled resources for the study and teaching of American Indian culture, art, and history. Its newest museum, the National Museum of the American Indian (<http://www.nmai.si.edu>), offers a wide range of programs and services, including a guide for teachers

Some of the Smithsonian's oldest American Indian collections are held by the Anthropology Department (<http://www.nmnh.si.edu/anthro>) from whose home page one can visit the Anthropology Outreach Office for its wealth of teaching aids and information; the Arctic Studies Center for information about northern Native populations; the Office of Repatriation to learn about its collaborative process of determining disposition of human remains and cultural objects; the National Anthropological Archives for its wealth of primary source material; and the Handbook of North American Indians for the latest publication in its authoritative series. Also, don't miss the Center for Folklife Programs and Studies' (<http://www.folklife.si.edu>) many documentary recordings of music and verbal arts; the Smithsonian's art museums' (e.g., <http://americanart.si.edu>) paintings, watercolors, photographs, drawings, and other images of Natives and Native life; the rich Native American collections of the Smithsonian Institution Libraries (<http://www.sil.si.edu>); and the Smith-



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sonian Center for Education and Museum Studies' (<http://scemsweb.si.edu>) vast array of teaching and professional development resources.

GENERAL RESOURCES

Subject directories on the web are important and useful tools for researching particular topics like this one. For the best results, choose a site that uses knowledgeable evaluators or subject selectors in building its indexes. Below are a few examples:

***First Peoples on SchoolNet** (<http://www.schoolnet.ca/aboriginal/menu-e.html>) is part of Canada's SchoolNet (<http://www.schoolnet.ca>), the primary point of access to online resources for students and teachers across that country. It features original content from throughout Canada, plus hundreds of links to other North American sites. First Peoples on SchoolNet includes curriculum and educational resources, an educator's circle, projects, teaching, and an Internet subject guide to resources on Native life and history in Canada. A "must" for educators and students alike.

***WWW Virtual Library: American Indians.** The WWW Virtual Library is one of the oldest subject directories on the web with many of its guides maintained by specialist selectors. This one is a gateway to a very wide range of topics concerning Native Americans. From its starting page, click on "education" and review curriculum materials and other teacher resources. Directory listings of Native American K-12 schools, colleges and related programs, and resources for Indian students are also included. (<http://www.hanksville.org/NAresources>)

***About.Com: Native American Culture** includes over 30 different topics on this subject. Click on "education." A great selection of resources is listed under "homework help" for those researching term papers or answering homework questions. See also resources under such topics as "history,"

"leaders/warriors," and "legends." (<http://nativeamculture.about.com>)

***Native Web** was conceived to represent and foster communication among indigenous people worldwide. At present this site is predominately about the Americas with selections indexed by broad subject, such as art, education and history, geographic region or by nation. See "education" for K-12 resources. (<http://www.nativeweb.org/resources/>)

***Nativeculture.com** includes information on tribes and nations, arts and expression, and learning/teaching as well as a search engine specially-tailored to yield results on American Indians only (e.g., a search on Cherokee will not bring up car dealers). One may also review a calendar of powwow and Native events, read and post messages on a bulletin board, join a real-time chat, participate in video-conferencing, shop, send an electronic postcard, or simply relax and listen to music. (<http://www.nativeculture.com>)

RECOMMENDED READING MATERIAL: BIBLIOGRAPHIES AND FULL TEXT

Although literature about American Indians is growing, it is not always easy to select sensitive, historically accurate sources for classroom use. The web now offers good evaluative bibliographies as well as a growing body of full-text material, ranging from stories to read aloud to young children to reference works for older students writing research papers. Examples are:

***A Critical Bibliography on North American Indians, For K-12** was compiled by the Smithsonian's Anthropology Outreach Office in response to concerns about choosing appropriate literature for this age group. Critical annotations and evaluations of each title reviewed are included. (<http://www.nmnh.si.edu/anthro/outreach/Indbibl/bibliogr.html>)

*Oyate is a Native American organization focused on evaluating, recommending and producing quality, non-biased resources—primarily books—about Native America for students and teachers. In addition to distributing children's, young adults' and teachers' books and materials, Oyate issues reviews of "books to avoid," conducts teacher workshops on how to evaluate this literature, and administers a small resource center and library. (<http://www.oyate.org>)

*Native Americans: Recommended Books and Resources, a page in the ERIC/EECE Resource List, lists nonfiction and fiction, including folktales from a contemporary perspective, books about the boarding school experience, and a short list of professional resources. Debbie Reese, the selector, is a Pueblo Indian interested in early childhood education. (<http://ericee.org/pubs/reslist/native00.html>)

*American Indian Library Association web site links to other good resources, such as "Children's Books with Native North American History, Themes & Characters" and a "Selective Bibliography and Guide for 'T' is Not for Indian: The Portrayal of Native Americans in Books for Young People." (<http://www.nativeculture.com/lisamitten/aila.html>)

*WWW Virtual Library - American Indians: Index of Native American Electronic Text Resources on the Internet includes a long list of links to full-text historical and contemporary books, articles, document archives, speeches, and the like. Noted among them is the "Early Canadiana Online" resource. Indexes to the site's poetry and short stories and access to the University of Virginia Electronic Text Center are also available. (<http://www.hanksville.org/NAresources/indices/NAetext.html>)

TEACHING STRATEGIES AND MATERIALS

The web has a wealth of teaching strategies and materials from a great variety of sources—such as educational institutions, American Indian organizations, governments, museums, and independent groups. Among them are:

*Cradleboard Teaching Project was born out of the experiences of American Indian singer, songwriter, and one-time teacher, Buffy Sainte-Marie. It provides curriculum and cross-cultural connectivity to children and teachers across the country. It offers a core curriculum from a Native perspective, a tribe-specific curriculum developed in Native American communities, and an interactive curriculum or online cultural exchange. The latter partners Indian and non-Indian classes (grades 5-12) to exchange information about themselves and their communities via written letters, email, Live Chat, and gifts of local goodies, etc.. (<http://www.cradleboard.org>)

*CanTeach is a non-commercial, Canadian-focused site created to assist teachers in finding and using online resources. Divided into two categories—elementary resources and links—it offers lesson plans and other resources under both "First Nations" and "Nunavut" headings. (<http://www.track0.com/canteach/>)

*Teaching Young Children about Native Americans, ERIC Digest, suggests positive strategies focusing on this age group. Discusses stereotypes children see and practices to avoid. References included. (http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed394744.html)



....<http://custer2.littlebighorn.com>

***Native American History Archive: A New Center for Native American Studies in Interneted Classrooms** is part of LiveText, the home page of K-12 education hosted by the Institute of Learning Technologies of Teachers College, Columbia University. The **Native American Navigator** (<http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/k12/naha/nanav.html>) is a tool for finding information about Indian history and culture in the United States, using geographical region, historical period, topic, or keyword. Note: this site has a number of broken links and needs to be updated. We are told that it will be in the near future. (<http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/k12/naha>)

***Reservation Controversies: Then and Now** is a classroom-tested lesson using problem-based learning and the primary sources of the Library of Congress (LC). Grades 7 through 12 are introduced to issues dealing with the late 1800s as well as with today. This lesson is part of the larger Learning Page (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/>), a web site designed to help teachers and students use the LC's American Memory digital collections. (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/97/reservation/teacher.html>)

INDIAN LIFE TODAY

A wealth of information about and for contemporary Indian groups and people is available on the web. The first two sites will lead you to many others:

***Native American Sites** includes access to home pages of individual Native nations and links to Native media, languages, music and art, powwows and festivals, etc. Teachers and students alike may find nearby reservations or cultural centers to contact or powwows and festivals to visit. Created by a Mohawk librarian and editor, this site is regularly updated and among the most widely cited. (<http://www.nativeculture.com/lisamitten/indians.html>)

***First Peoples** is a web site featuring the First Nations and the Inuit of Quebec with information about their communities, culture, economy, educational systems, environment, art, and handicrafts, and more. (http://www.nativetrail.com/en/first_peoples/start_first_peoples.html). Also visit **Kids' Stop**, a site by Indian and Northern Affairs, Canada, which features places, people, history, language, schools online, and a special section for teachers. Downloadable copies of information sheets (ages 8-11) and *The Learning Circle* with classroom activities (ages 4 to 14) are available. (http://www.inac.gc.ca/ks/english/4000_e.html)

***Indian Country Today** bills itself as the U.S.'s leading Indian news source. Although the online version does not include the full content, it does provide information about current events and issues from across the nation. (<http://www.indiancountry.com>)

***Code Talk** is a federal inter-agency web site that provides information for Native American communities. It includes current discussion topics in Indian country; information on housing, health, the arts, the environment, and children; a calendar of important events; a list of resources and tools for Native communities; and links to other useful web sites. (<http://www.codetalk.fed.us>)

INDIANS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Resources describing a region or particular past event offer teachers and students alike good material for teaching, research papers or projects, and field trip opportunities. Below are a few of the different types of sites available.

***Cherokee Trail of Tears, 1838-1839** is a collection of links to sites relating to this historic event. Included are the home page of the Trail of Tears State Park, the historic trail, a time line, and statistics regarding those who left under their own supervision as well as articles and stories about the event. (<http://rosecity.net/tears/>)

***American Indians in the Pacific Northwest** is a digital collection of over 2,3000 photographs and 7,700 pages of text relating to American Indians on the Northwest Coast and the Plateau. Many aspects of life are illustrated, including housing, clothing, crafts, transportation, education and employment. The materials are drawn from university, historical society and museum collections in that area. (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/wauhtml/aipnhome.html>) or (<http://content.lib.washington.edu/aipnw>)

***Research in the National Parks**, part of the National Park Service's **Links to the Past**, offers state-by-state access to archaeological and ethnographic sites—many of which relate to American Indians. From Colorado's Mesa Verde National Park to Tennessee's prehistoric mounds, a wide scope of American Indian history is represented. (<http://www.cr.nps.gov/aad/Npsites.htm>)

***Canadian Museum of Civilization** has a wealth of material for the real and the virtual visitors of all ages. Explore its First Peoples Hall and parts of its Archaeology Hall. Don't miss its exhibition on the "Inuit and Englishmen: The Nunavut Voyages of Martin Frobisher." See the Canadian Children's Museum for a host of intercultural activities. (<http://www.civilisations.ca>)



arctic studies center .com

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS

Lectures, workshops, seminars and the like for educators can be found on the web. In addition to the types of places listed below, local museums with American Indian collections and some American Indian organizations themselves are often good sources as well.

***Educators' Programs** listed on the **Library of Congress' (LC) Learning Page** show teachers, librarians, media specialists and other educators how to use primary resources—specifically American Memory sources—to enrich pre-college curriculum. Offered are hands-on professional development workshops in Washington, D.C.; facilitated and do-it-yourself workshops online; and year-long fellowships to work at LC. (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/educators/index.html>)

***D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian History**, part of the **Newberry Library**, offers short-term fellowships and summer institutes for teachers of Native American history and literature; and conferences, seminars, and workshops for those seeking more effective classroom integration of Native American and American history. Librarians and teachers of advanced courses in secondary school are invited to join the Newberry Library's link to schools, the **Newberry Teachers' Consortium**, which unites academic scholars and secondary school personnel. (<http://www.newberry.org/nl/mcnickle/darcyhome.html>)

***Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center** offers age appropriate tours and classroom programs for groups and a professional development workshop for teachers. The museum is a state-of-the-art, tribally owned and operated complex, a major resource for the tribe's history as well as that of other tribes in the region. (<http://www.mashantucket.com>)

*Smithsonian Institution offers a wide variety of opportunities. Explore them through the sites already listed for the National Museum of the American Indian, the Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies, and the Anthropology Outreach Office.

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