Forging a Civic Relationship between Native Youth and Their Indigenous Nation: A Tribally-Specific, Tribally Formed Social Studies Curriculum.

Native students experience social reality through their indigenous nation/society, and this reality must be reflected in the school curriculum for education to be meaningful. Indigenous communities should consider the strategy of developing an organic social studies curriculum grounded in all the social science disciplines, centered in the indigenous communities, and taught in an interactive community-centered manner. An organic curriculum is one in which fundamental concepts are introduced in the first grade in an interdisciplinary manner. Student understanding develops in depth and complexity throughout the 12 years of public school. This organic, tribally-specific social studies curriculum is developed from the Community Social Profile (CSP), a written description of the community's physical environment, history, economic aspects, political structures, and cultural world view. The very process of developing the CSP brings elders, community leaders, educators, and youth together in a community-based learning enterprise. Much information can be gathered by students, under the guidance of an oversight committee composed of representatives of the schools, Nation, and community. The community's goals for its children should be articulated and incorporated into the curriculum as grade-specific objectives and competencies. A number of awarenesses, such as social awareness and cultural awareness, should be cultivated in the resulting curriculum. Activities appropriate to student grade levels should be developed to foster these awarenesses. (TD)
Forging a Civic Relationship Between Native Youth and Their Indigenous Nation:

A Tribally-Specific, Tribally Formed Social Studies Curriculum

Submitted By: Rosemary Ann Blanchard
University of Illinois
United States
FORGING A CIVIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATIVE YOUTH
AND THEIR INDIGENOUS NATION: A TRIBALLY-SPECIFIC,
TRIBALLY-FORMED SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

Prepared By:
Rosemary Ann Blanchard, J.D., M.A.
Graduate Assistant, Educational Policy Studies
University of Illinois, College of Education

Prepared for:
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International, National and Organizational
Statements of the Right to Culture, Right to
Culturally Appropriate Education, and
Responsibility to Nurture the Community:

"All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely
determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural
development." International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
Article I.1. Ratified January 3, 1976

"In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons
belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other
members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language. " International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 27. Ratified March 23, 1976.

"1. Each culture has a dignity and value which must be respected and preserved.  
2. Every people has the right and duty to develop its culture."

Declaration of Principles of International Cultural

"Recognizing the aspirations of [indigenous and tribal] peoples to exercise control over their own institutions, ways of life and economic development and to maintain their own identities, languages and religions, within the framework of the States in which they live, ... ...The peoples concerned shall have the right to decide their own priorities for the process of development as it affects their lives, beliefs, institutions and well-being and the lands they occupy or otherwise use, and to exercise control, to the extent possible, over their own economic, social and cultural development. ...Children belonging to the peoples concerned shall, wherever practicable, be taught to read and write in their own indigenous language... ."


"Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. ...Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies... . ...Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures... . ...Indigenous children have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State. All indigenous peoples also have this right and the right to establish and control their own educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning. ...Indigenous peoples have the right to have the dignity and diversity of their cultures, histories, traditions and aspirations

"We, the Indigenous people of the world, assert our inherent right to self-determination in all matters. Self-Determination is about making informed choices and decisions. It is about creating appropriate structures for the transmission of culture, knowledge and wisdom for the benefit of each of our respective cultures. Education for our communities and each individual is central to the preservation of our cultures and for the development of the skills and expertise we need in order to be a vital part of the twenty-first century." The Coolangatta Statement, Section 3.5.

"Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of [the] personality is possible." Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Adopted by the U.N. General Assembly, December 10, 1948.

INTRODUCTION

The international covenants and declarations, both adopted and proposed, presented in the introduction to this paper present a strong and unified call for education of indigenous children which reflects, supports and is congruent with the culture, values and priorities of their indigenous society. As the movement for international recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples has grown in the world community, the recognition has also grown that the education of indigenous children must be directed, guided and controlled by the indigenous societies themselves. Education that is academically rigorous, culturally grounded, and
controlled and guided by indigenous peoples themselves is an essential tool of cultural survival.

The school is a powerful agent of socialization. It is an environment to which students are sent to learn "real facts" about the "real world". Adult authority figures possessing knowledge of these "real world real facts" (i.e. teachers) transmit their "knowledge" of "reality" to students in an environment structured to make the transmission credible. If the realities which the students experience in their families and communities are ignored or excluded from these formal "knowledge transmission" sessions, or denigrated through ignorance or prejudice, students are often confused.

What is real? Consider a Native child growing up in a grass roots community or in a bordertown near the Native nation, attending any of a number of publicly supported schools within or outside the Native community, hanging out with his or her friends, returning home to take in the culture of cable or satellite television. How is such a child to construct an integrated sense of his or her self? How are the children living in such a world to incorporate into their developing world view the realities of their Native way of life?

THE NEED FOR NATIVE CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Children of indigenous peoples are more than "members" of their tribal group. They are more properly characterized as young citizens of their Tribal or Native nation as well as citizens of the larger nation-state within which their indigenous society is located. This concept of "citizen" is a matter of particular
concern to indigenous peoples in the United States because the various colonial European nations and later the United States entered into "treaties" with the Native people they encountered in the continental United States. In the 1830s the United States Supreme Court recognized that these treaties were made with nations and that these Native nations enjoyed a sovereignty which was impacted but not eliminated by the domination of the United States. Tribal citizenship is a correlate of the sovereignty which the U.S. Supreme Court recognized and which Native nations rightly claim for themselves on every continent.

Native peoples throughout the world are in the midst of an historic process of nation building and community development. The success of these efforts will ultimately rest on the strength of the commitment of Tribal and Native citizens to build up their communities, to establish new institutional arrangements, strengthen traditional institutions, to work with community leaders, to BECOME community leaders.

"Citizenship" is a concept that expresses a relationship between the individual and his or her nation. A citizen and a nation belong to each other. The citizen acknowledges participation in the life of the nation, embraces its fundamental values, relies upon its institutional framework and accepts a responsibility toward maintaining its integrity and continuity. This relationship is expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in statement in Article 29, quoted above, on the duty which all people have to their community.

The citizenship relationship grows up with the child. Ideally it is reflected in the home and neighborhood. Generally as a statutory mandate it is taught and modeled specifically in the elementary and secondary schools which a child attends.
By the time a young citizen reaches adulthood, many of the attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors of citizenship are, or at least the society hopes they are, automatic — a part of the self-concept and world view.

The above description of the social genesis of citizenship is admitted idealized. American children in general often do not receive the consistent education, experiences and guidance which is necessary to create a strong sense of civic belonging. Nonetheless, children educated in the public schools of the all nation-states do receive at least some civic education directed toward fostering these values. In addition, their social studies education reflects in its many topic areas and examples the reality of the child's participation in and relationship to the larger nation-state.

If attitudes, values and behaviors of citizenship are learned, how does the young citizen of an indigenous nation acquire this learning in regard to Native citizenship? Certainly in the home and community the child may be introduced to elements of the people's culture -- beliefs, values, interpersonal norms. Certainly, in many situations in the various societies adult conversation, radio and printed news, public statements, etc. will acquaint the child with the fact of a tribal or native government’s existence, the names of its leaders, some of the issues engaging that government in its dealings with the people and with the government of the larger nation-state. But what influences consciously prepare the child for "informed, responsible participation in [the] political life [of the tribal nation]"

or consciously inculcate in the child
"development of certain dispositions or traits of character that enhance [the child's] capacity to participate in the political process [of his tribe] and contribute to the healthy functioning of the [Native] political system and the improvement of the [Tribal] society."?

How does this education prepare the child to embrace those:

"duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible."?

COMMUNITY-BASED, ORGANIC SOCIAL STUDIES IN THE INDIGENOUS SETTING

One pedagogical strategy, presented in this paper as a tool for indigenous communities to consider employing is the development of an organic social studies curriculum, grounded in all the social science disciplines, centered in the communities of the various indigenous societies, taught in an interactive, community centered manner. Such a curriculum, particularly if it is developed with the community, with the family and with the students themselves, can offer Native children and young people the knowledge and skills and introduce them to the attitudes they will need as adult citizens in their growing, developing Native societies.

The concept of an organic social studies curriculum was developed in the 1960s by Dr. Lawrence Senesh, now Professor Emeritus of Economics retired from the University of Colorado, Boulder. Senesh's field was Economics. He suspected
that even young students were capable of grasping fundamental economic concepts if the concepts were presented in connection with realities with which the students were already familiar. To prove his theory, he prepared and taught some lessons in economics to a first grade class. The experiment was successful. The first graders grasped fundamental economic concepts when these concepts were presented in relation to the children's own experiences.

If students could grasp fundamental economic concepts in first grade, Senesh reasoned that other social science concepts could also be introduced at this level. Then the students' understanding could develop "organically", growing in depth and complexity throughout the 12 years of public school. By the time a student entered college and encountered the social science disciplines in separate courses, the underlying concepts would already be familiar.

This very fertile intermingling of social science disciplines eventually resulted in a textbook series for grades 1 through 8, Our Working World, published by Science Research Associates in 1973, and an accompanying methodology which involved much, much more than a series of textbooks. It is the methodology, rather than the textbook series which is presented here as a model for the development of tribally-specific social studies curricula.

The organic curriculum leads even young students to an interdisciplinary understanding of the social sciences. The lessons are grounded in the student's home community, its political, economic, cultural and social institutions and its natural environment. From the earliest school experiences, students can understand the economics of a family trip to the store or a decision between taking the family members to a movie or saving for a trip to see an out of town rodeo or
for support of a traditional healing ceremony for a family elder. They can understand the family dynamics involved in caring for an infirm grandparent, the interplay of economic and social issues in a parent's decision whether or not to take a job which requires moving the family or working away from the family. They can understand how the cultural values and traditional relationships of their native community affect the choices people make in addressing these issues.

In this way, young students come to understand the fundamental social science concepts which make up such diverse disciplines as Political Science, Economics, Sociology, Anthropology, Social Psychology and the new discipline of Ecology. When the young people encounter these disciplines as college students, the academic terminology may be new, but the fundamental concepts will be familiar – something they learned as children when they learned about their home communities.

These academic disciplines carry very strong hegemonic implications in their classical form. Often they present as "fact" and "truth" economic, social and political paradigms which are deeply intertwined with the dominant agendas and priorities of the larger nation-state. If Native children can first encounter these subject areas in culturally appropriate contexts, using models from the indigenous community itself and infused with the value orientations of the indigenous society, they will be better prepared to exercise critical consciousness in evaluating the "verities" of economics, political science, sociology and the like, when they encounter them in universities and other dominant-society settings. Indeed, Native educators increasingly call for a new indigenous pedagogy to challenge the paradigms which underlie so much of the standard curriculum which indigenous children encounter. A community centered, organic social studies curriculum could assist
in this process of an indigenous community reclaiming the education of its own children.

The Organic Social Studies methodology is a powerful tool, but it is ONLY a tool. Native peoples themselves, within their tribal nations and indigenous communities must use it or any educational strategy critically and with the guidance of their elders, their leaders, their own educators and professionals and, with the parents and young people themselves, to develop a social studies particular to their tribal nation or native community. Decisions on which elements of the community's social institutions are appropriate to discuss in a school setting and on how these subjects should be approached need to be made by the people of tribal nations and communities themselves.

Ideally, this social studies should be incorporated into the BASIC social studies curriculum of the schools where indigenous children are educated. A study of "American Civics", for example, should include the tribe's civics. A study of "The Family" should include family structures, values and norms developed and sustained within the tribe or community's culture. It is within the social studies offerings in the core curriculum of required courses in the school that such a social studies belongs. Students know that the academic core is the most "real" of the school's offerings. They need to see the life of their Native community reflected in this core curriculum.

The various international conventions quoted at the beginning of this paper, read together, clearly recognize the right of indigenous peoples to have their children's education reflect, express and perpetuate the values, perspectives,
priorities and way of life expressed in the Native culture. Only in this way can indigenous societies:

"exercise control over their own institutions, way of life and economic development, and ... maintain their own identities, languages and religions within the framework of the States in which they live."

In the United States, a number of Federal education laws and the laws of some states give American Indian nations power to incorporate their tribally-specific education needs into the basic education program of their children. Unfortunately these rights are too often ignored or trivialized by the various publicly funded schools educating Native American children. The development of a strong national Federal Indian Education Policy Statement, as proposed by the National Congress of American Indians and the National Indian Education Association could support Native American people's efforts to incorporate tribal social studies content into the basic social studies curriculum of schools educating their children.

THE COMMUNITY SOCIAL PROFILE

The essential tool for building an organic, tribally-specific social studies curriculum under the methods proposed in this paper is the Community Social Profile. This living document is developed within the student's community, reflects the community and infuses the social studies curriculum with community specificity.
As will be discussed in this paper, the development of the Community Social Profile does more than provide rich resources for the social studies curriculum. The very process of developing the profile brings elders, community leaders, educator and youth together in a community-based learning enterprise. Such a reintegration of education and life is long overdue in native communities. Cajete's recent work on the "Ecology of Indigenous Education" calls for a similar coming together:

"[The] access to, and revitalization of, the Indigenous bases of education must occur, not only in the contemporary classroom, but in Indian communities as well. All Indian people, young and old, professional and grassroots, should consider themselves participants in a process of moving forward to the Indigenous basics of education. ... Every community must integrate the learning occurring through modern education with the cultural bases of knowledge and value orientations essential to perpetuate its way of life."

Development of a Community Social Profile for a particular indigenous nation or community could be supported by a University-based program and developed in cooperation with undergraduate and graduate students, and with students at the community college or other postsecondary technical level. It would be particularly advantageous to utilize students from the particular Native society which was the subject of the profile. If there is a postsecondary institution under direct Native control, such as the tribally controlled community colleges in the United States, that institution should be enlisted in the effort. Much of the community-level data gathering could be undertaken as part of the social studies education of the indigenous community's own high school/secondary school students.
What is the Community Social Profile? It is a concise, clearly written description of the social system of the community, situating it within the social system of the Native nation and the surrounding nation-state and larger world community. Senesh's model for the Community Social Profile was developed to work in identifiable community units as diverse as rural counties and major metropolitan areas. I feel that an indigenous Community Social Profile, with room for more local, community-based content in the case of a larger Indigenous society with more than one community center, would be a powerful tool for developing a tribally-specific social studies curriculum. In some cases, smaller Native nations and communities, particularly those located in proximity to each other and with related historical or cultural features, might choose to combine and share the effort of developing a Community Social Profile, with each participating group incorporating its unique elements into the joint effort.

A CSP deals with five different dimensions of community life. The first dimension, the Physical Environment, describes topography, climate, natural resources. It indicates how these resources have shaped the life of the community. This dimension is also the place to consider the environmental and ecological issues which face the community both in regard to traditional land and resource use and the patterns of use which accompany various patterns of development.

The second dimension, the History of the People and the particular communities within their nation or society, considers those historical factors that have led to the particular patterns of settlement within the community, the development of the community's way of life, the changes in that way of life over time. The influence of science and technology on the history of the nation and community is an important aspect of this view of history. The impact of contact
with other cultures and the role of conquest, resistance and reemergence are important elements of this dimension of the CSP.

The CSP catalogs and explores the Economic aspects of the Nation/society and community, and describes their significance. This part of the CSP shows relationships between economic issues and the future development of the Nation and the particular community within the Nation. An important issue within this part of the CSP is a look at the economic ability of the nation and its communities to absorb youth into a local labor market. Another significant component of this part of the CSP could be to compare and contrast the economic norms, principles and practices which underlie the indigenous way of life and the way of life of the surrounding nation-state and to explore the economic repercussions of changes taking place in the community's way of life. The economic dimension of the CSP will often touch on areas addressed in the physical environment dimension as these consider economic and ecological impacts of various patterns of land and resource use.

The fourth dimension of the CSP addresses the Political Structures and Processes of the Nation and the community. This aspect of the social profile looks at the distribution of political power and its effect on policy making. A specific concern of this dimension is to identify the opportunities for involvement of youth in the political process and the significance of different levels of government in planning for the future. To the extent appropriate in the mores of the particular indigenous culture, this dimension can also consider the different sources of "political" authority in the community and the dynamic of the interaction between traditional indigenous "political" authority and the authority structures developed to interact officially with the surrounding nation-state.
The fifth dimension of the CSP is the Cultural View of the Nation/society and the community within the Nation. This aspect of the social profile provides a vehicle for identifying traditional and contemporary value commitments of the indigenous society, its communities and its members, and the impact of these value systems on the individuals, families, business, education, career choices, mobility and support for public life in the society and community. A significant element of this dimension is to explore the different sources of learning to which people within the Nation are actually exposed, such as family, extended family, religious groupings, school, peer groups, mass media, and the impact of these various influences in forming the culture which youth experience in their social environment as well as the personality-development aspects of these many cultural influences.

A Community Social Profile is an educational experience in its own right as it is developed, refined, and continuously updated. It is a living tool for educating children and young people about the social studies of their Nation/society and community. It is always an unfinished document. Much of the information for the Community Social Profile can be gathered by students, particularly high school and college students, under the guidance of university-affiliated researchers, community college or other postsecondary teachers or the social science department of a school district or community school.

Because the CSP must reflect the reality of the indigenous Nation/society and community as they are actually experienced by the people, the development of this tool should ideally take place under the guidance of a Community Oversight Committee. Since the document would be developed to provide a resource
underlying social studies education in the elementary and secondary level of schooling, an oversight body with some connection both to the schools and to the Nation or community would be an ideal body to provide a concerned committee of potential users to guide the effectiveness and accuracy of the document. Community based advisors, and advisors from the governing bodies, businesses and social sectors of the Native society would also be important guides in this process.

Persons recognized as holding traditional knowledge would be essential to guide the development of the CSP components dealing with traditional cultural practices, beliefs and values and their contemporary place in community life. Community entities from all contemporary religious and social groups present within the indigenous community would likewise be the appropriate guides to their own values, organization and activities.

As the Community Social Profile is developed, the one or more community oversight groups should review, and where appropriate, amend the document to assure its accuracy and appropriateness. The purpose here is not to gloss over realities but to assure that the document maintains its community level authenticity. During the development and refinement of the document, the oversight group will develop a comprehensive image of the evolution of the particular indigenous society and its communities and discover how the past, present and future in the Nation/society and its communities affect the personalities, world view, future plans and life choices of the society's youth.

With the CSP as a working tool, the oversight committee and the project staff could identify educational goals for the teaching of Social Studies in the schools serving the indigenous Nation/society and the particular indigenous community,
using the CSP as a basis for generating local curriculum guidelines and course materials. The goals which arise with the CSP and guide the social studies curriculum should be developed interactively and collaboratively. The oversight committee is clearly the facilitator of such a process.

It is important that the community’s and the society’s goals for their children and youth be articulated and specifically incorporated into the curriculum developed from the CSP. These goals and objectives which the community identifies as appropriate to its young citizens should be incorporated into grade-specific objectives and competencies. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum should include assessment of the achievement of the community’s identified objectives and competencies.

EDUCATING FOR SOCIAL AWARENESS

The approach to social studies education suggested here incorporates historical and traditional realities of an indigenous Nation/society and its constituent communities with the most contemporary elements of the community life - the changing technology of communication, the economic base and its development, the contemporary issues arising out of the native self-government. The students are guided to a wholistic, organic understanding of all the social and cultural elements of their world and the impact of all these factors on their Nation/People, their community and their own life choices.

Rather than compartmentalizing the students' introduction to the various dimensions of their social, political, cultural, economic and personal world, these
elements are introduced in grade-appropriate ways from the first social studies activities in the primary grades until the high school years, when students themselves participate in community-based research. The multidimensional social reality which the students experience is, throughout the curriculum, integrated into a wholistic world view. The microwave tower which brings the cable TV broadcast and the traditional ceremony performed for a sick younger brother, thus become part of ONE reality. Within that singular, but multifaceted reality, the students learn of the choices they will be making, the resources they can bring to making life choices, the environment in which their life choices work out and the values guiding their path. They become aware.

A goal of the organic social studies curriculum is to foster greater levels of awareness in students as they grow within the school, home and community environment. Senesh has identified a number of types of awareness which should be cultivated in children through their social studies education. These awareness, as they should be developed in a tribally-specific social studies, have been described in greater detail in an earlier presentation on this subject. In this paper, I will simply note them: Value Awareness, Social Reality Awareness, Problem Awareness, System Awareness, Spatial Awareness, Historical Awareness, Work Awareness, Leisure Awareness, Future Awareness, Knowledge Awareness and Cultural Awareness. These awarenesses are not themselves the subject matter of the social studies curriculum. Rather they inform and are expressed through the subject matter, underlying the examples, discussions, explanations and experiences of concrete social phenomena which students encounter in their social studies classes.

Activities appropriate to the various grade levels of the students should be developed within the context of the curriculum to foster these awarenesses. Some
of the activities designed to foster certain of these awarenesses could themselves contribute to the knowledge base underlying the Tribal/societal community social profile or the local community's social profile.

For example, high school student could learn from community sources about problems of change and adaptation faced by the community at different periods of its history. In such an exercise, students would study the community and identify periods when natural, technological and human forces challenged predictability. The period after the Navajo people returned from the Long Walk, the struggles of the Cherokee people to build viable communities after the Trail of Tears, the period immediately after World War Two as Native veterans returned to their home communities come to mind as fertile periods for such study. By researching together, an entire class could prepare papers on how generations of the past faced these challenges and adapted their lives. As part of their research, students might interview elders within the community. Thus the students themselves could become part of the team building the community social profile. Their work could be used in classes at other grade levels.

The methodology and general approach suggested here is just that, a suggestion. I have been fortunate enough to learn of a methodology for developing a community based social studies curriculum which I believe has much to offer indigenous peoples and their communities. Other people working in indigenous education, elders and holders of traditional knowledge, emerging native professionals, parents and young people have other ideas, experiences and theoretical and methodological preferences to bring to this discussion as well. The point is to start building a social studies that expresses the human environment in which Native students live. Educators in the social sciences must explore ways and
methodologies to incorporate the reality of the social, cultural, economic, political, historical experience of indigenous peoples into the world reality presented to students in their social studies classes.

Learning starts where we are, as the cognitive psychologist, L.S. Vygotsky, so persuasively demonstrated. To be effective, the teaching and learning enterprise must meet students on familiar ground and engage them there. Native students (and their non-Native peers living with them) are a part of their indigenous Nation/society. That society is the social reality they experience in their lives. It must become the reality they experience in their social studies classes.

Notes

Paulo Freire and others have presented a more interactive model for the education process. However, the typical elementary classroom (and too many high school classrooms as well) are closer to the model presented here than to Freire's ideal. See Paulo Freire, Education for Critical Consciousness, (Continuum Press, c. 1973).


In an effort to strengthen citizenship education in the United States, the Center for Civic Education has developed and proposed National Standards for Civics and Government, a voluntary set of national civics education standards for the K-12 grades. National Center for Civic Education, Calabasas, CA. (c. 1994)
National Standards for Civic and Government, supra., p. 1

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Supra.


International Labor Conference Convention 169, preamble.


Gregory Cajete, Look to the Mountain, supra, p.18.
It is particularly important in developing this aspect of the CSP to work with and under the guidance of the indigenous society's tradition keepers. These traditional experts can provide not only an understanding of these often subtle community relationships but also give guidance to the rest of the CSP team as to what information can appropriately be shared in a classroom setting, what information should be kept outside the curriculum altogether, what can be referred to in a general way but not portrayed in detail, and what can be shared with the students from the indigenous community or certain ones of them but only in the appropriate traditional setting and circumstances, and not in a classroom setting.

Robert W. Rhodes has noted that Native American students learn more effectively when classroom subjects are presented wholistically, incorporated into the reality the students experience outside the school. His recommendations for effectively teaching Native American young people reinforce many of the methodological choices found in the organic social studies curriculum model. Nurturing Learning in Native American Students, (Rhodes, 1994). See in particular pp. 28-32.

A description of the various awarenesses to be developed by the organic social studies curriculum is described in Senesh and Muth, (1977), supra. pp. 45-88.

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