

Sovereignty – an Introduction

a Wabanaki Studies Lesson

Upper Elementary Or Middle School

Elizabeth Sky-McIlvain
Freeport Middle School
2008

mcilvaine@coconetme.org

Lesson Plan

Overview – Students should be introduced to Worldview before completing this activity. A lesson for this is available from <http://www.leasttern.com/Wabanaki/Lessons>. This lesson is an introduction to the concept of Sovereignty / Self-sufficiency for upper elementary and middle school students. It assumes that students are comfortable in small groups. Classrooms where this is not true should do preliminary group-building activities. It is not possible, of course, to fully develop in one activity a concept as complex, and important, as sovereignty and its relationship to economics. However, the premise of this activity is that students must base understanding on knowledge, ideas and experiences that are "real" for them. Few students have, at this point, a knowledge of history or the wide experiences with "ownership" and independent decision-making that would help them to understand the concepts of sovereignty and economic self-sufficiency. This activity is designed to provide a common experience – a common platform for discussion.

This lesson is designed to be followed by lessons in Wabanaki studies, which might include:

- fur trade,
- ancestral lands – reservation lands – tribal lands [mapping],
- settlement/land grants,
- wars,
- treaties,
- land sales,
- the Land Claims Settlement,
- tribal governance,
- contemporary issues of economic and political/social sovereignty

The Passamaquoddy Kit contains a good short lesson called "Talking Politics" that could follow this one.

Time Frame – This activity requires parts 2 or 3 class periods. Activities 2 and 3 can take place in the same class period, but there should be a break in between them.

Maine Learning Results

Social Studies:

B3: Students understand political and civic aspects of unity and diversity in Maine, the United States, and various world cultures including Maine Native Americans

C2: Students understand economic aspects of unity and diversity in Maine, the United States, and various world cultures, including Maine Native Americans

LD 291 Essential Understandings

Unequal power relationships have led to historical injustice, stereotyping, prejudice, racism, and genocide of Wabanaki people.

Essential Questions

1. What does it mean to "have space of my own" and why is this important?
2. Why is it important to be able to make your own decisions about what activities and objects will best help you to meet your goals and needs?
3. When one's space is taken by a strong "power" or authority, what are possible responses and actions?
4. Is it ever fair or OK for one group to claim the space of another group?

Objectives: At the end of this lesson students will understand:

1. Why space can be highly valued by an individual and a group;
2. That Maine's Native Americans lost to Europeans most of the space [ancestral lands] that was originally held by the tribe or group;
3. That in losing this "space" the Natives lost more than land;
4. That "Sovereignty" is a powerful IDEA that is not dependent on "space" – but it does require that all parties play by the same rules.
5. That in Maine, the State and the Wabanakis have not always followed the same rules.

Student Activity:

You will find in this envelope the following:

- A sheet of graph paper
- Post-its
- A sheet of lined paper

The graph paper is YOUR SPACE. You should fill it with post-it notes naming the activities and objects that are **most important** to you and/or that you consider **necessary** or **desirable** for a good life.

Rules:

- Do not include people or pets
- Label post-its clearly
- All members must contribute
- Leave narrow passageways between shapes so that each one can be accessed easily (like hallways or roads)
- Arguments within the group must be resolved.

Directions: 25 Minutes

1. Put the names of your group members on the envelope and on the back of the graph paper.
2. You have 15 minutes to decide upon the activities and objects to include in your space. On the lined paper, write a list of everyone's ideas – check off the ideas you select for post-its.
3. You have 10 minutes to write labels on the post-its and attach them to the graph paper.
4. When all members agree on the final layout, you are done.
5. When you are done, put all materials in the envelope and close the clasp.
6. You will get the next set of directions from your teacher.

Teacher Directions:

Preparation:

1. Divide students into groups of 3-4.
2. Prepare a manila envelope for each group (see Student Activity).
3. Read through all directions and the Lesson Plan.
4. Provide pencils or pens for each group - 1 for each student
5. Prepare a Teacher Envelope #1 containing:
 - a. One large "T" cut from red or black paper for each group, plus a few extra – this should be thick enough to cover a large part of the graph paper.
 - b. Envelope #1 directions
6. Prepare a Teacher Envelope #2 containing:
 - a. One "cut out sheet" for each group, plus a few extra: using a plain piece of graph paper, cut out a small random hole of any shape, or a few holes closely spaced. You should do this so that the "T" shape will NOT be under the hole/holes.
 - b. Envelope #2 directions

Activity 1: 25 Minutes

1. Seat students in groups
2. Distribute envelopes
3. Announce: "You are going to do the 1st part of a short group activity. You will have only 25 minutes to complete your task, so you will have to work together efficiently. Open your envelope and remove its contents. We are going to read the general directions together."
4. Read the Directions in the BOX on the Student Activity sheet. Answer questions.
 - a. Yes, post-its can overlap the edges of the paper
 - b. Yes, post-its can overlap as long as there is a path to **each** post-it.
5. BEGIN.
6. Announce time intervals so that students stay on task.
7. Move around the room so that you interact positively with each group, commenting on the value of their choices of activities and objects. Listen for **disagreement**.
8. At the end of the allowed time, collect the envelopes.
9. **Debrief:** students should both discuss and write/record
 - a. What are some of the objects and activities you put in your space? How were they chosen?
 - b. Would you like to have this space? How important would it be to you?
 - c. How does it feel to be able to provide for your own needs?

- d. Would I [the teacher] be welcome in this space? Would I be comfortable? Would I be successful? Why or why not?
- e. What are some of the things you disagreed about (you might have to prod this)?

Activity 2: 15 Minutes – This should be done during the NEXT class.

1. Distribute Student Envelopes
2. Announce: "Please take out your Space diagrams. Spend a few minutes reviewing the decisions you made yesterday. Make any changes you need to make." [pause] "Now I am going to open my envelope and read the Teacher Directions."
3. Open Teacher Envelope #1 and take out Directions.
4. Read directions to the class.
5. Walk to each group and place a T over the diagram. Glue or tape it down. Comment on some of the objects and activities you are covering up. As you do this, listen to student talk – engage in dialogue:
 - a. Will students have access to their post-its? [yes, but limited – they may not be able to get to what they want or need]
 - b. Can students move their post-its? [only the ones that are showing]
 - c. Can students add more post-its? [yes, as long as they follow the Rules]
 - d. Can students "cut" the T? [no, but some may try it – that is why you have some extras]
 - e. How do students feel about this intrusion into their space?
 - f. Do they still have everything they need to live a good life? What do they no longer have free access to? What problems might this cause?
6. Put diagrams back in student envelopes – put them aside.
7. **Debrief/reflect** – have student write briefly about what just happened.

Wait at least 30 Minutes

Activity 3: 20 Minutes or more

1. Announce: "We are now going to complete this activity. I have another set of teacher directions. Take out your diagrams."
2. Open Teacher Envelope #2 and take out Directions.
3. Read directions to the class.
4. Walk to each group and place a sheet of cut-out graph paper on each group diagram. Tape or glue it down. As you do this, engage students in discussion:
 - a. What are some of the things you have totally lost?
 - b. How will your life change?
 - c. What are your options for living a good life now? [anticipate: die, move, give up, be creative about making do, take small jobs, make deals, beg]

- d. What does it feel like to have your space taken by someone in power – with no explanation? If this were for real, do you think you would have these feelings for a while?
 - e. Could you have stopped what happened?
 - f. Is there anything you can think of doing to get some space back?
 - g. Does this activity remind you of anything in Maine? [prompt students – they should connect this activity to the loss of Native lands, reservations, maybe the Land Claims Settlement – they may also connect this to current global events]. Provide a brief historical timeline.
 - h. **Whose space is this? Who has the authority over it?** Discuss the meaning of the word "sovereignty" and how it can be interpreted differently by different "parties."
 - i. Point out to students that several of these lost items related to **economic success or survival**. Discuss the meaning of this.
 - j. Point out to students that several of the lost items related to well-being. Discuss the importance of this.
 - k. Ask: Is it ever fair or OK for one group to just take the space – and the opportunities for a good life – from another?
5. Students should do a final reflection on this activity.

Teacher Directions #1

Read: The Rules have changed. I need to use your space for my own purposes. I am going to put my own shape on top of yours. This is the space that I claim. You may still access your objects and activities, but I will have access to them also. Thank you for letting me use them.

Teacher Directions #2

Read: Another change in Rules. My needs have grown – now I need the rest of your space [pause – response expected]. Because I know you want to keep something, I have given each of you a small space to keep as your own. The objects and activities in this space are yours to use as you will. But everything else is mine.