

Day 1: Haudenosaunee Resistance and Resilience

Essential Question: When rules or laws are unfair, how can people fight for justice while still working for peace?

Guiding Question: How do Haudenosaunee traditions of caring for the earth and working together inspire better ways to care for our local community and environment today?



Learning Target: We will explore how geography, environment, and self-governance help shape the Haudenosaunee way of life and influence how we all live today.

Teacher Resources:

[Slide Deck](#)
ourlocalhistory.org

Student Handouts:

[3-2-1 Learning Experience Handout](#)

Lesson Overview: Students will explore how geography, environmental stewardship, and self-governance traditions shape Haudenosaunee resilience and continue to influence local communities today. Through a mystery map analysis, an introductory video with Trish Corcoran, and a 3-2-1 partner source study, students examine diverse artifacts reflecting past and present Haudenosaunee culture.

Learning Experience 1/5: Learning Target and Introduction

Introduction and Grounding Slides

Teacher directions are directly connected to the slides in the slide deck.

Essential Question (slide 1): Introduce the essential question: “When rules or laws are unfair, how can people fight for justice while still working for peace?”

Invite students to consider the question before beginning the lesson. Introduce Caroline Parker Mountpleasant, a leader from the Tonawanda Seneca Nation. Explain that they will explore how Caroline Parker Mountpleasant and others responded to unfair decisions and actions and worked to pursue justice while also seeking peace.

What to Expect: Today’s Lesson (Slide 2): Use this slide to orient students to the lesson and establish a shared purpose. Briefly preview what students will be learning and how they will learn together. Introduce the guiding question and invite students to share their thoughts (options for sharing could include a turn and talk, whole group sharing- aloud and captured on chart paper, whole group discussion, or individually written responses). Let students know they will return to this question at the end of the lesson.

SEL Inclusive Welcome (Slide 3): The inclusive welcome invites students to turn and talk about how they're feeling before the lesson and then share with the whole class using their fingers. CASEL (Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning) describes inclusive welcomes as “culturally and linguistically respectful, builds community, and connects to the work ahead. When planning and facilitating activities, educators are always thinking, “What’s my purpose?” The inclusive welcome is an opportunity to bring that purpose to life. What to a casual observer might appear to be an icebreaker or time-filler can be an intentional, effective educational strategy.”

Pre/Post Self Assessment (Slide 4): Invite students to think about what they know right now about the Haudenosaunee. Ask students to place themselves on the continuum (Pine Cone- “I’m just beginning” I know very little and am ready to learn; Sapling- “I know a few things” I can share some basic facts or ideas; Little tree- “I’m growing my knowledge” I know several important ideas and can explain some of them; Big Tree- “I have a strong foundation” I can explain important aspects of Haudenosaunee history, culture, traditions, and ways of knowing; Fully Grown Tree- “My knowledge runs deep” I can make connections, help others understand what I know, and use what I know to understand new ideas). Encourage students to be honest as there is no right or wrong and being honest will help them notice ways in which they are growing.

Learning Target (Slide 5): Introduce the learning target and give students a moment to make meaning of it before beginning the lesson. Invite students to identify words or ideas that stand out and briefly share what they think they might explore or learn.

- What words or ideas stand out to you? What do they tell us we will be doing as learners?
- Which ideas or phrases in the learning target seem most important, and what do you think they mean in your own words?

As students respond, listen for and clarify key ideas (geography, environment, self-governance, and way of life). Remind students that they will return to the target at the end of the lesson to notice how their thinking



Learning Target: We will explore how geography, environment, and self-governance help shape the Haudenosaunee way of life and influence how we all live today.

NYSED Connections (Slide 6): Share with students that this lesson uses the social studies practice of geographic reasoning (in the yellow table row). Explain that throughout this lesson they will have opportunities to learn about the geography of our region by analyzing maps, describing locations, and making connections between places familiar and possibly unfamiliar to them.

Educators can also use this slide to connect student learning to NYSED learning standards to help families understand why this learning matters. Invite families into considering how this lesson gives students opportunities to learn about Haudenosaunee history, culture, governance, and relationships with the environment while developing important skills and competencies.

Group Norms: Our Community is SAFE, KIND, and FAIR (slide 7): Introduce students to the following group norms and ask what else they need in order to feel supported, safe, and challenged during our inquiry. Let students know that these group norms will be followed throughout the entirety of the lesson and that the norms can be added to or adapted. Teachers might also choose to select the norms that are best suited for their classes; all norms are not necessarily needed. Students might want to set a goal for themselves today by holding onto or paying attention to their own practice with a specific norm of their choosing. Teachers can ask students to hold up fingers that correspond to the norm they are choosing to intentionally practice during this lesson. This builds community and helps the students own the ways in which they are choosing to learn together today.

Learning Experience 2/5: Mystery Source

Mystery Source Slides

Stop and Jot (slide 8) Students take about 2 minutes to jot down (or type if using digital slides) their thoughts and ideas to the following question. Read the question aloud to students and give them time to jot down their first 3 thoughts, ideas or phrases that come to their mind. There is no right or wrong answer to this question.

“What do you think of when you hear the question, “where are we right now?”

Map (Slides 9-13): Introduce students to Notices and Wonders by explaining that “notices” are anything they can see when looking at the source. Notices are anything they can see with your eyes. Wonders are the questions that you have before, during or after looking at the source. Model this protocol for students by showing slide 5 and reading the questions aloud.

“What do you notice about this picture?”

“What do you wonder?”

It is important to give students time to think before asking them to share-out. After a few moments, call on students to share a few of their notices, then call on a few students to share their wonders.

Finally, have students share some of their reflections. What about this map activity was disorienting, interesting, or challenging for them? What does it invite them to infer about where we are right now?

Teaching Tip



When students offer a guess or inference, it is wise not to affirm or correct any student participation. Preserving the mystery is essential as an instructional strategy. If students have trouble at this stage, emphasize that observations and looking carefully at the source is the right work and is hard work.

This activity can be viewed away from student desks (at the rug, for example) where there may be less distractions. Furthermore, students can bring sticky notes with them to make notes and observations away from their desks.

Language Introduction by Trish Corcoran (Slide 14): Share that they are about to meet Trish Corcoran who is part of the Tonawanda Onondowaga Nation and a member of the Bear Clan. She teaches Indigenous and Environmental studies at the Harley School, where she nurtures a love for the land and community service. She is also a member of the Rochester Indigenous Peoples Day Committee and a Friends of Ganondagan Board member.

Trish helped write this inquiry and wanted to offer students language to consider using when talking about her people, their history, and their present-day community. Then play the 5 minute video. Consider pausing throughout to ask questions and clarify the student's understanding.

Emphasized Vocabulary and Definitions

- **Onöndowa'ga:'** (phonetic pronunciation: Oh-none-doh-wah-guh) (Seneca)': The name of Trish's nation (often known as Seneca). It means **"People of the Great Hill"** or **"People of the Hill."** Trish prefers Onöndowa'ga. Note that the [Seneca Nation of Indians located in Allegany County](#) uses 'Seneca' in their name but also refer to themselves as the Onöndowa'ga. We encourage you to use **Onöndowa'ga**, but as Trish mentioned in the video if you meet a member of the nation ask them what they prefer.
- **Haudenosaunee:** The preferred name for what was historically called the Iroquois Confederacy.
- **Sovereignty:** The status that nations (like the Seneca) have, meaning they possess their **own governments and leadership separate from the United States government.**
- **Nation:** The preferred term (instead of "tribe") used by Trish and many Indigenous people because it indicates their **sovereignty.**
- **Clan:** Social structures within the nations, made up of people who are related. They are considered **family** and run through the **mother's side** of the family. Trish belongs to the **Bear Clan.**
- **Reservations:** The U.S. government term for land belonging to the nations. Trish and her people prefer to call them **territories.** Since the Onöndowa'ga have always lived here the term 'reservation' doesn't make sense.
- **Territories:** The preferred term for the land that belongs to the nations, instead of "reservations."
- **Mother Earth:** The term used to refer to the Earth, reflecting the Haudenosaunee people's history of **loving and respecting her and seeking to take care of her.**
- **Nya:wëh:** An O:nöndowa'ga' word that means **"thank you."**
- **Native Americans / Native People / Indigenous People / Indians:** Different terms for the people. Trish notes that most prefer to be called by their **nation** (e.g. Onöndowa'ga). **Indigenous** and **Native** are generally accepted, while **Indians** is largely considered inaccurate because Indigenous people are not from India though some Native people use the term. Again the best rule is to ask what a person prefers when talking with them.

Further Resources: Onondawaga Language [Guide](#) and Allegany Seneca Nation [youtube page](#) focused on teaching their language students interested in learning the language are able to watch

simple pronunciation videos to full conversations. Jaimie Jacobs is the Managing Curator of the Rock Foundation collections at the RMSC. Jacobs of the Seneca Nation has worked for years partnering with researchers to revive the Seneca language using tech and historical texts by Jesuit priests. In April of 2025 he appeared on [WXXI Connections](#) sharing more about the work he is doing around reviving the Seneca language.

Learning Experience 3/5: 3-2-1 Partner Exploration

Handouts Needed: [3-2-1 Partner Activity](#)

3-2-1 Directions (Slide 15): Explain to students that they will be exploring the diversity and richness of the Haudenosaunee people's past and present through a series of artifacts and images using the notice and wonder protocol (3-2-1 partner activity) to draw conclusions about the Haudenosaunee.

Notice-Wonder-Infer Modeling (Slides 16-17): Use the image on slide 14 to model what they will be doing. Students will work in partner groups during this time. Explain that they will be continuing this same protocol with their partner to write down notices, wonders, and what they can infer about the Haudenosaunee based on several images included in the student handouts. Remind students that they should have at least 3 notices, 2 wonders, and 1 inference about what they learn about the Haudenosaunee per group.

White Corn Project- Connecting Past to Today Discussion (Slide 18): After class discussion about the image including some guesses of what exactly they think they might be seeing in the image, reveal the answer as the "[Ganondagan White Corn Project](#)" and note the facts listed on the slide. Help the students consider connections between the past and present images emphasizing how the Haudenosaunee continue to pass their traditions and methods of survival down to each generation.

After you have modeled with slides 14 and 15, and discussed slide 16, students will work in pairs and explore the sources in the slides below. The following slides provide you with background information for each source.

3-2-1 Pairs Directions (Slides 19): ASSIGN [HANDOUTS](#) - Display the directions and assign each pair of students at least one of the nine (Source B through Source J) Handouts. Consider the time in class as well as student engagement when assigning Handouts.

Connecting Past to Today Images (Slides 20-46): Break students up into groups of two or three and give each group at least one image (Source A through Source J) to explore. **Note that there are links in the speaker notes to more information about each image.**

Learning Experience 4/5: Whole Group Share-Out, Discussion, and Reveal

Whole Group Share-Out:

1. Consider calling on a variety of students to share their work. Sharing could include NOTICES and WONDERS but could also jump right to INFERENCES to focus on what each group learned.
2. Having each group GUESS what they think the image is just before the reveal of the answer and quick facts can keep the engagement high.

Closing Standards Sort: This closing activity drives home the NYS Social Studies Standards connections for 4.2 a, b, and c. There are three categories that students can place their source into:

1. Care and Connection to the Environment
2. Cooperation and Community
3. Contributions Today

Some fit in more than one category. This could be done quickly with students raising their papers or as a sorting activity on the white board that students physically tape or magnet their handout under the corresponding column. Invite students to justify their thinking.

Care and Connection to Environment (Slides 47-48): Directions: Raise your handout if your image shows how the Haudenosaunee care deeply for the environment or how they are connected to the environment? (4.2.a)

Cooperation and Community (Slides 49-50): Directions: Raise your handout if your image shows how the Haudenosaunee cooperate and continue to use community organizations today. (4.2b)

Contributions Today (Slides 51-52): Directions: Raise your handout if your image shows a way that the Haudenosaunee impact the world today. (4.2c) Note that ALL sources align to this category.



Culturally Responsive Teaching Tip: Simone Gonyea, Onondaga Snipe, veteran teacher at the Onondaga Nation School for 28 years encourages educators to consider a variety of ways for students to share their answers, including standing up if able, or other movements.

This practice is culturally responsive because it:

Honors diverse ways of knowing and expressing understanding. By encouraging movement and nonverbal responses, it recognizes that learning and communication are not limited to speaking or writing.

Respects students' individual identities and reduces barriers to participation. Offering options such as standing or other movements allows students to participate in ways that feel comfortable and respectful of their abilities, backgrounds, and personal comfort levels. Multiple response options support students who may be hesitant to speak, are multilingual learners, or process information differently, promoting more equitable access to learning.

Builds community and collective learning. Movement-based responses emphasize shared participation rather than individual performance, reinforcing a sense of belonging and relational learning.

Learning Experience 5/5: Pre/Post Self Assessment

Intentional Close (Slide 53): <https://signaturepractices.casel.org/closing/>

Invite students to return to the pre/post self assessment image from the beginning of the lesson and consider after their learning today on a scale from a pine cone to a full grown Eastern Pine Tree how much do you know about the Haudenosaunee now? Teachers can consider how they would like to have students do this sharing

Extension Academic Circle (Slide 54): Use this slide to establish the purpose and structure of the Academic Circle. Introduce the guiding question and explain that students will use evidence and ideas from the lesson to explore how Haudenosaunee traditions and perspectives can inform thinking about caring for communities and the environment today.

Note: Circle conversations have been used by the Haudenosaunee for centuries with the talking piece or talking feather passed to right due to how plants grow in this part of the world. This is also connected to traditional Haudenosaunee dance movements. Only the person with the talking feather is allowed to share.



NYSED Connections

NYS Social Studies and ELA Frameworks

4.2 NATIVE AMERICAN* GROUPS AND THE ENVIRONMENT: Native American groups, chiefly the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and Algonquian-speaking groups, inhabited the region that became New York State. These people interacted with the environment and developed unique cultures. (Standards: 1, 3, 5; Themes: ID, MOV, GEO, GOV)

4.2a Geographic factors often influenced locations of early settlements. People made use of the resources and the lands around them to meet their basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter.

- Students will examine the locations of early Native American groups in relation to geographic features, noting how certain physical features are more likely to support settlement and larger populations.
- Students will investigate how Native Americans such as the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and the Algonquian speaking peoples adapted to and modified their environment to meet their needs and wants.

4.2b Native American groups developed specific patterns of organization and governance to manage their societies.

- Students will compare and contrast the patterns of organization and governance of Native American groups such as the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and Munsees, including matrilineal clan structure, decision-making processes, and record keeping, with a focus on local Native American groups.

4.2c Each Native American group developed a unique way of life with a shared set of customs, beliefs, and values.

- Students will examine Native American traditions; work specialization and the roles of men, women, and children in their society; transportation systems; and technology.
- Students will examine contributions of Native Americans that are evident today.

NYS Social Studies Practices

S.S. Practices: Geographic reasoning, Gather, Use, and Interpret Evidence

NYS Culturally Responsive Framework

Reflect, honor, value, and center various identity perspectives as assets in policies and practices
Practice mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from one's own

Portrait of a Graduate Competencies

Academically Prepared, Creative Innovator, **Critical Thinker**, **Effective Communicator**, **Global Citizen**, Reflective and Future Focused

Further Teaching Tips to Consider:

Social-Emotional Learning



Students may not be very familiar with the Haudenosaunee people, and what they have seen, heard or learned may not be accurate. Throughout this case study, students may unintentionally say something that is inappropriate and may cause harm to other students. It is important to monitor students by paying attention to their language and gently correct statements that can be hurtful. It is also important to emphasize the positive contributions, incredibly rich culture and history of the Haudenosaunee people as students examine these sources. These sources are designed to highlight these aspects of Haudenosaunee land, culture, and people.

[New York State SEL Benchmarks](#)

[2A.2a](#). Identify verbal, physical, and situational cues that indicate how others may feel.

[2B.2a](#). Identify differences among, and contributions of, various social and cultural groups.

Consider creating a Classroom Cultural Quilt: Each student decorates a square that represents their cultural background, and the class pieces these together into a "quilt" to celebrate diversity and belonging.

You can find more ways to integrate SEL into your classroom in our [SEL Toolkit!](#)

Culturally Responsive Instruction



It is important that we begin anyone's story from a place of strength. The goal of this lesson is to start with an asset and strength-based approach. "By making all cultures matter, our students' cultures can be positioned as strengths and as the foundation of empowering, rigorous, and innovative learning" [NYS CR-SF](#), 11. The lesson aims to show the resilience, joy, genius, and agency of the Haudenosaunee people, their continuing impact on our world today, and inspire students to explore both the history of injustice experienced by the Haudenosaunee and their centuries long efforts to work for peace in our region.

[Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#)

Reflect, honor, value, and center various identity perspectives as assets in policies and practices

Further Resources to Consider

Building Your Own Awareness Before Engaging Students

Before talking with students about a topic like Haudenosaunee culture and history in which students might raise stereotypes, unintentional bias, it is helpful to assess your own comfort level and implicit bias (see p. 20 of The Learning for Justice '[Let's Talk](#)' guide). The [NYS CRSE Framework](#) encourages

teachers to continuously learn about implicit bias, with attention to identifying and challenging your own biases, and identifying and addressing implicit bias in the school community (p.28). Reflect on the implicit and explicit messages you may have heard or been taught about Native peoples. It can be very powerful to tell students you do not know an answer, and that together we can explore an answer. Learning for Justice also has some very helpful strategies that can help students who may have big emotions and need a strategy to regulate their emotions. It is important to cultivate a classroom rooted in curiosity, of respectful listening and non judgmental questioning (TT Diversity 8). Lastly, the Rochester Museum and Science Center and EL Education created "Being Haudenosaunee Then and Now", an [excellent resource](#), that helps challenge stereotypes about Native people. There are also great educational resources at the [Rochester Indigenous People's day page here](#).

Additional Stories That Help Students Learn and Connect

The Our Local History Haudenosaunee inquiry is specifically designed to supplement and enrich your students' experience at both the [Hodinöšyö:nih exhibit at the RMSC](#) and the exhibits at [Ganondagan](#). Use it to guide students in making meaningful connections and fostering a deeper understanding of the resilience, innovation, and continuity of the Hodinöšyö:nih people.

Our Local History also recommends the use of stories to use in the classroom to help students see the beauty and rich diversity in Native American culture.

Book Recommendations to consider as pre reads:

The [Rochester Indigenous Peoples' Day Committee has compiled](#) an excellent list of book recommendations, ranging from picture books and middle-grade fiction to titles for adults.



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