

Resources for Teaching Indigenous Histories  
(in no particular order)

*Framework:* Good intentions are not enough. If you want to teach *about* Indigenous peoples, it's important to educate yourself through research but also by working/consulting *with* Indigenous people who are accountable to their communities. My teaching is grounded on the premise that critical thinking includes learning how to ask better questions about what may have been left out, rather than advocating a particular point of view. As a non-Indigenous person with settler-colonial roots, I do not teach Indigenous histories from guilt or pity. Rather, I want students to understand the legal and moral responsibility that our U.S. government has in the present to keep promises and legal agreements made to people who are still fighting for those rights today.

- Look for reputable Indigenous organizations in your state or region. Tribes (whether Federally-recognized or not) generally have websites with resources and contact info for their Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO). THPOs tend to be people who are knowledgeable about history and accustomed to dealing with the public. To some extent they are gatekeepers who can put you in contact with other people. They are busy, so keep the initial query short and try again if you don't hear back in a week or two.
- Read the **U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** for a statement of basic principles crafted jointly by Indigenous peoples and nation states around the world. These principles are not law, that is, not enforceable in nation-states, but they become effective when they are incorporated into legislation or agency guidelines.
  - U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ([UNDRIP](#)), adopted 2007.
  - U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues ([UNPFII](#)).
  - Indigenous Peoples and International Law – radio [Interview](#) (55 mins.) with Tonya Gonnella Frichner (Onondaga, Snipe Clan) on [Indigenous Politics: From Native New England and Beyond](#), hosted by J. Kehaulani Kauanui (Kanaka Maoli) of Wesleyan University. I once taught a class where I assigned interviews from this radio program rather than a textbook and required students to take notes, which were then graded. They learned a lot about “listening” that transferred to better reading skills as they learned to “listen” to the written text. For a print version, see J. Kehaulani Kauanui, editor, *Speaking of Indigenous Politics Conversations with Activists, Scholars, and Tribal Leaders* (University of Minnesota Press, 2018).
- Questions to ask yourself for every project (I still need this check-in after 30 years!):
  - How will you be accountable to Indigenous communities?
  - How does your work benefit them?
  - Are you teaching “histories that have futures” or histories that relegate Indigenous peoples to the distant past?
    - See D. Rae Gould, Holly Herbster, Heather Law Pezzarossi, Steve A. Mrozowski, editors, *Historical Archaeology and Indigenous Collaboration: Discovering Histories That Have Futures* (University Press of Florida, 2020). This book is expensive so ask your library to buy it.

Resources:

- NEH Teaching Native American Histories (Alice Nash and Linda Coombs)  
<https://teachnativehistories.umass.edu/>
  - [Key Concepts for Teaching Native American Histories](#)
  - [Ten Tips to Decolonize your Classroom](#)
  - [Teach Throughout the Year](#)
  - [Lesson plans](#)
- Recommended: *An Indigenous People's History of the United States, for Young People*, adapted by Debbie Reese and Jean Mendoza from the original book by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (Beacon Press, 2019).
  - Teacher's guide by Natalie Martinez (Laguna Pueblo)  
<https://iph4yp.blogspot.com/p/the-teachers-guide.html>
- TEDx talk on "Teaching Difficult Histories" by Susannah Remillard, a sixth grade Language Arts teacher at the Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School in Harwich, MA. [https://youtu.be/fwFp\\_FK1x0k](https://youtu.be/fwFp_FK1x0k).
- The Doctrine of Discovery resources
  - Background and lesson plans from the Upstander Project:  
<https://upstanderproject.org/firstlight/doctrine>
  - Statements from faith communities that have repudiated the Doctrine:  
<https://doctrineofdiscovery.org/faith-communities/>
- There are some wonderful children's books by Indigenous authors. For a good overview, see *American Indians in Children's Literature* by Debbie Reese (Nambe Pueblo) at <https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/>.
  - One of my favorites is *Jingle Dancer* by Cynthia Leitich Smith.  
[https://cynthialeitichsmith.com/kidbooks/kids\\_index/jingle/](https://cynthialeitichsmith.com/kidbooks/kids_index/jingle/)
- [Dawnland Voices](#) is both an online literary journal and an edited volume of writings by Indigenous peoples in the U.S. Northeast. The book includes older primary sources as well as poetry, prose, and autobiographical writing by contemporary writers.
- The short video, *Petaki*, by Blackfeet author, musician, storyteller and father Gyasi Ross, gives an Indigenous perspective on how the standard narrative of U.S. history impacts Indigenous students today.
  - [Petaki](#) (5 min. 24 sec.)
- Pay attention to word choice and grammar to convey your meaning with precision, and to identify problematic phrasing in what you read. *Elements of Indigenous Style* is worth keeping on your shelf. I include the Rockmore article because it helps students to understand the implications of their writing choices, especially the use of passive voice. Consider the impact of "He enslaved them," which tells us who is doing what to whom, versus the passive "Some people were enslaved," or how language works to normalize enslavement when we talk about "the slaves" rather than "the enslaved people."
  - Gregory Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples* (Edmonton, AB: Brush Education, 2018).
  - Ellen Bresler Rockmore, "How Texas Teaches History," New York Times 10-21-2015.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/22/opinion/how-texas-teaches-history.html>