



NIA TERO



ILLUMINATIVE



# INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY LESSON PLAN

## REMOTE LEARNING

In honor of Indigenous Peoples' Day on October 12, we celebrate the millions of Indigenous people who are at the forefront of resistance. We honor those living with the land and of the land by facilitating conversations that lead to liberation.

Indigenous land stewardship is our past and it is our future.

In this lesson plan, youth will be guided through a project-based learning cycle answering the key question, *What are the impacts on human lives, the land, biodiversity, and air and water quality when we honor and restore land stewardship to Indigenous peoples?*

**Days: 3 Activity Length: 30-65 minutes**

# INTRODUCTION

**Youth will research and explore the work of Indigenous leaders Nicolle Gonzalez (Diné), Roxanne White (Yakama/ Nez Perce/Nooksack/Gros Ventre), Madonna Thunderhawk (Lakota), and Auntie Pua Case (Kānaka Maoli), who are committed to transformative, healing work reclaiming Indigenous ancestral knowledge to protect the sacred. Using artworks created by Indigenous artists Gregg Deal (Pyramid Lake Paiute), Mer Young (Hidalgo Otomí and Mescalero Chiricahua Apache), and Lmnopi, students will grapple with the tension between Indigenous land guardianship and racial capitalism, which is a term coined by scholar Cedric Robinson for an economic system dependent on violence, imperialism, and genocide against communities of color.**

**Through this lesson, youth will also explore themes around creating a community of care, and the relationship between Indigenous and Black organizing and resistance in the United States.**

**In this iterative learning cycle, youth will use a curated library of resources authored by Indigenous and Black leaders to begin to imagine the infinite possibilities of a land that has been restored. By honoring the past, a new way of being — one led by Indigenous futurisms — can emerge.**

# LEARNING GOALS WITH FEDERAL KEY STANDARDS

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

## CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

Youth will use and practice the following skills:

- Literacy Skills
- Annotation
- Reading informational text
- Synthesizing information from various forms of media
- Critical thinking
- Communication
- Learning U.S. Indigenous peoples' history

## MATERIALS

- Pen or pencil
- Device to access the Internet
- Art-making supplies of your choosing

## KEY VALUES

This project-based learning cycle engages youth in fundamental truths about Indigenous relationships to the land, water, plants, animals, sun, moon, stars and each other — all beings. These values help ground us throughout this learning cycle as we dream of a new, more equitable world.

**Interconnectedness** Indigenous communities use the phrase “All my relations” to express this understanding. This mindset reflects people who are aware that everything in the universe is connected. It also reinforces that everyone and everything has a purpose, is worthy of respect and caring, and has a place in the grand scheme of life.

**Land Stewardship** Indigenous peoples have the wisdom to protect the land. Land stewardship means drawing on the knowledge of Indigenous peoples and simultaneously safeguarding their rights. In case after case, the world's remaining strongholds of biodiversity remain intact thanks to the stewardship of the Indigenous peoples living there.

**Wisdom Keepers** Elders are wisdom keepers. They are deeply committed to sharing their knowledge, providing guidance, and teaching others to respect the natural world, to learn to listen and honor the elements and seasons. Elders are an essential part of Indigenous communities. We must protect them and care for them.”

# LEARNING GOALS CONTINUED

**Intergenerational Knowledge** Traditional Indigenous knowledge is passed orally from one generation to another. From early childhood, customs and natural laws regulate its learning and practice by Indigenous youth. Elders are responsible for intergenerational transmission of knowledge.

**Sacred** This means that everyone and everything has a reason for being, is worthy of respect and caring, and has a place in the grand scheme of life. All land and people are sacred and are entitled to be treated with respect.

**Ritual** Rituals are a way of carrying out a ceremony or event that preserve knowledge, beliefs, and traditions intended to preserve, communicate, and contextualize Indigenous relationships with culture and the land over time. Over the centuries, their communities have developed ancestral practices and worldviews that allow them to live with joy upon, and without causing harm to, our earth.

**Tradition** Traditional Indigenous knowledge can be defined as a network of knowledge, beliefs, and traditions intended to preserve, communicate, and contextualize Indigenous relationships with culture and the land over time.

**Sovereignty** Indigenous peoples' rights to utilize their homelands, whether for socializing, fishing, hunting, gathering, or visiting sacred/ceremonial sites, as well as the right to self-govern and sustain and renew their nations and cultures. Sovereignty is not a "gift" to Indigenous peoples, but is inherent.

**Intersectionality** Scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, professor of law at UCLA and Columbia Law School, coined the term intersectionality and defines it as "... a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things." Crenshaw also coined the term critical race theory.

## LANDMARKS OF THE JOURNEY

This project-based learning cycle is designed to be a journey towards healing and reconciliation. Each landmark will center reflection as that is a critical part of the process. As you move from one landmark to the next, we ask that you operate from a physical and emotional space of curiosity and wonder.

# LANDMARK 1 DAY 1 – 30 MINUTES

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Let's explore the concept of land acknowledgment.

A land acknowledgment is when individuals identify the original inhabitants of the land they are on. This step recognizes and acknowledges Indigenous peoples as the original stewards of the land. We reap the benefits of this enduring relationship when we enjoy an abundance of elements needed for our survival: food, water, medicine, and healthy air quality.

Land acknowledgements are a way that people create an awareness of Indigenous presence and land rights in everyday life. Here in the U.S., this is typically done at the beginning of workshops, fundraisers, or any public event. It is a subtle way to recognize the history of colonialism and a need for change in settler colonial societies.

However, these acknowledgements can easily be a token gesture rather than a meaningful practice. All settlers, including recent arrivals, have a responsibility to consider what it means to acknowledge the history and legacy of colonialism.

After watching this [TED talk by Zhaabowekwe](#), answer these questions:

What did you learn from Zhaabowekwe?	What memory surfaced while you were watching?

Land Acknowledgements are a good start, but not a comprehensive solution that offers restoration to Indigenous peoples. [Settler colonialism](#) is an ongoing system of power that perpetuates the genocide and repression of Indigenous peoples and cultures by settlers on the land. When we participate in the exploitation of land, culture, and resources, we are engaging in settler behavior.

# LANDMARK 1 CONTINUED

[Watch this video](#) for an example of a land acknowledgement as well as discussion from Dr. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz about the ongoing, violent agenda of conquest and how it persists today.

If you are unable to watch the video in its entirety, check out these segments:

Land Acknowledgement - The first 10 minutes

Settler Colonialism - 30:56 - 33:12

**What are examples from the TED talk about how settlers exploit the land?**

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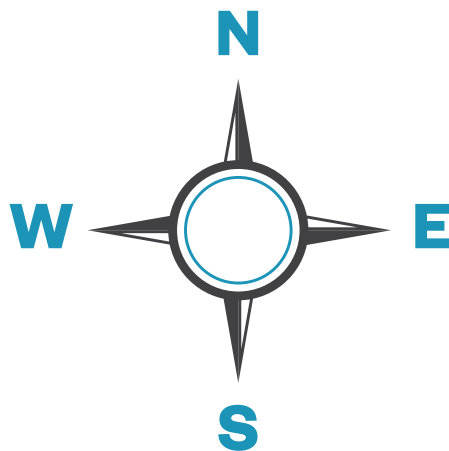
It is important to answer these questions honestly. Acknowledge how you are feeling as you work your way through them. Where in your body are you feeling discomfort, if at all?

- What does it mean to be a settler?
- What are some of the privileges settlers enjoy today because of colonialism?
- How can individuals develop relationships with peoples whose territory they are living on?
- Do you have an understanding of the on-going violence and the trauma that is part of the structure of colonialism?
- What might you be doing that perpetuates settler colonial futurity rather than considering more just, alternative ways forward?

# LANDMARK 1 CONTINUED

Think about this statement from Zhaabowekwe, in her TED talk video: “When you are viewed as real people, it’s a lot easier for your rights to be respected.”

- What are your immediate thoughts?
- Using the Compass Points graphic below, what excites (E) you about this idea?
- What worries (W) you about this idea?
- What else do you need (N) to know before accepting or denying the idea?
- Record your suggestions (S) for moving forward with the idea.
- Has your thinking changed throughout this process?



# LANDMARK 2 DAY 2 — 60 MINUTES

## THE DIGITAL GALLERY — A CURATED EXPLORATION OF INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP AND BLACK EXCELLENCE

Indigenous and Black communities have a unique relationship with the United States. These lands are our home. Indigenous people have been here since time immemorial. Black communities were forced here through the colonial institution of slavery and together, alongside surviving Indigenous people, have built what is currently known as the United States and the economy we all benefit from.

For that reason, we can't have Indigenous sovereignty without Black Liberation, and we can't have Black Liberation without Indigenous sovereignty. This lesson, and the types of work it facilitates, is an attempt to foster mutual healing, reconciliation, and solidarity.

As you explore the below gallery of Indigenous Leadership and Black Excellence, take notes using the See, Think, Wonder chart.

SEE	THINK	WONDER
What does the artwork show you about what activism and community organizing can look like?	We have to reconcile our past in our ability to move forward, and part of that is reconciling is healing the relationship that Indigenous and Black communities have with the land.	What does this make you wonder about building a multiracial movement for justice? What questions do you have?



# LANDMARK 2 CONTINUED

## ROXANNE WHITE

She is recognized nationally for her work on issues related to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People and for her work with Native families and communities seeking justice and healing.

Learn about the [disproportionate rates of homicide and missing persons cases](#) among American Indian women and what Roxanne is doing about it.



Artwork by [lmnop.com](https://www.lmnop.com)

# LANDMARK 2 CONTINUED

## BLACK AND INDIGENOUS SOLIDARITY

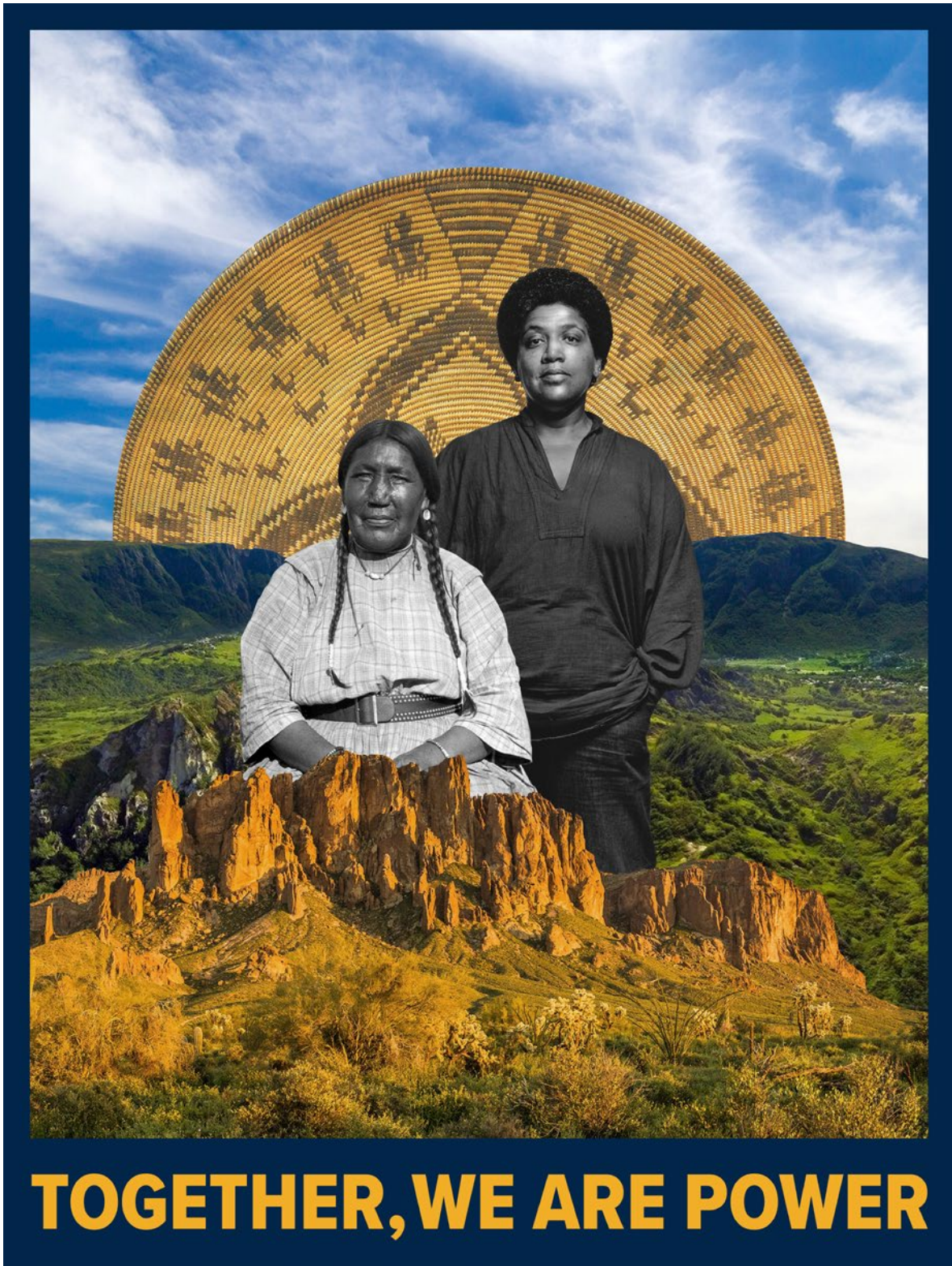
[Explore the Black Lives Matter movement home page.](#)

Learn how both Black and Indigenous communities have had to navigate centuries-long state violence and [why solidarity is essential](#).



Artwork by [meryoung.com](http://meryoung.com)

# LANDMARK 2 CONTINUED



Artwork by [meryoung.com](http://meryoung.com)

# LANDMARK 2 CONTINUED

## AUNTIE PUA CASE

Indigenous organizer and activist defending Hawaii's Mauna Kea.

[Auntie Pua Case talks to Democracy Now!](#) about her work to block the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope atop the summit of the sacred mountain Mauna Kea.



Artwork by [lmnopi.com](https://www.lmnopi.com)

# LANDMARK 2 CONTINUED

## MADONNA THUNDERHAWK

American Indian Movement activist and defender against the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Madonna Thunder Hawk talks about the traditional role of the grandmother in [Lakota matriarchal society](#) and in the NoDAPL movement at Standing Rock.

Madonna Thunder Hawk stands with [Black Lives Matter](#).

## NICOLLE GONZALEZ

Her work is about decolonizing our bodies, and ways of thinking, and trusting ourselves again. Sovereignty over the land, and healing ourselves, and our practices, coming back to ways of health and thriving.

[Watch and listen to Nicolle's interview](#) on Native Hope Podcast.

## LAND AND WATER PROTECTORS

[Read this article](#) to learn more about what it means to be a land protector. [Watch the film here.](#)

[Learn from water protector Grandmother Cheryl.](#)

## REFLECTION

Based on what you just read, watched, and listened to, what might Indigenous cultures want for themselves if allowed to be autonomous communities?

# LANDMARK 3

DAY 3 – 45 MINUTES

## SELF DETERMINATION

It is time to use your imagination for good. If you are able, work in teams of 3-4 in your classroom, whatever form that takes these days! That could be in person, via Zoom, or even outside!

Imagine that you are in an otherworldly community with similar experiences that Black and Indigenous communities experience in the contemporary United States.

There are only two rules to this thought experiment:

- You must make decisions based on the key values listed at the top of this lesson plan.
- You must use your imagination.

### 1. Choose a parameter in which your imaginary community has to overcome:

- **Ecological devastation** The deterioration of the environment through depletion and exploitation of resources such as air, water and soil; the destruction of ecosystems; habitat destruction and the extinction of wildlife.
- **Economic oppression** Forced labor, low wages, unequal pay, denial of equal opportunity in education, practicing employment discrimination, housing discrimination and economic discrimination based on gender, nationality, race, ethnicity, and religion.
- **Racial oppression** According to scholar Ibram X. Kendi, racial oppression is a set of institutional, cultural and structural factors that set up two or more racial groups to stand on unequal footing. These factors include higher exposure to environmental toxins, dangerous jobs, limited options for safe and secure housing, higher exposure to and more lethal consequences for reacting to violence, stress and racism, lower rates of and access to quality health care coverage, and the systematic refusal by the nation state to fix these things. All of these factors contribute to lower life expectancy for people of color - for Black and Indigenous people, in particular - compared to white people.
- **Cultural genocide** Coined by Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin in 1944, cultural genocide is the destruction of the practices that allow a community to continue as a community. Nation states that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next.

# LANDMARK 3 CONTINUED

**2. What question do you have about the parameter you chose?**

**3. Research how this reality impacts Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color in the United States today, based on the question you chose in number 2. What did you learn?**

**4. If your imaginary community was given a chance to determine for themselves how to restore and rebuild their culture, what actions will you take to restore the community?**

- **What changes do you think need to happen to improve the lives of the people in your community?**
- **Which key Indigenous values will help you achieve this?**
- **How could you emphasize these values, and what steps would you take to create the change you want?**

What is your imaginary community going to overcome?	What question do you have about this experience?	What did you learn?	What actions will you take to restore your community in a way that represents Indigenous key values?

**5. Now, create a visual of this restoration using a medium of your choice. For example, you could create a collage using old magazine cut-outs, or make a starter pack using digital clip art. The sky's the limit!**

# LANDMARK 4

DAY 3 – 20 MINUTES

## ACTIONS AS ACCOMPLICES

- Identify what issues Indigenous people in your community experience.
- Now that you have imagined a new way of being, what can we do to restore self-determination to Indigenous peoples who have suffered these types of problems due to the legacy of conquest?
- What are the impacts on human lives, the land, biodiversity, and air and water quality when we restore land stewardship to Indigenous peoples?

### CLOSING REFLECTION

Before this lesson, I used to think...	After this lesson, now I think...

**That's the end! Thank you for doing this lesson.**

**Please follow our work on social media at @NiaTero + @Amplifierart + @IllumiNatives, and join the conversation.**