

-Tribes of Dakota- Pine Ridge: Spiritual

Economically, South Dakota has some of the poorest areas in the United States, but in terms of cultural resources, it could be argued that this state is one of the richest in the nation. The tribes of South Dakota are all alive and strong; their ancient languages and cultures remain vibrant. But, many of the keepers of the culture are passing on and with them goes a vast amount of wisdom and language.



Oglala Sioux Nation Pow Wow

In the early 1980s, two men stepped into a studio at Sinte Gleska College and shared a group of sacred songs. The *Lakota Ceremonial Songs* were performed by John Around Him and translated by Albert White Hat Senior. The recordings were made in order to help teach others who want to bring the spiritual practices back to all of the people. While this music is preserved on tape, many of the elders like John Around Him are being lost. After a battle with cancer, Around Him passed away. John Around Him had a dream that all Lakota youth would be able to freely learn and speak their language.



Listen to the following in your classroom.

[Spiritual \(10:57\)](#)

By Charles Michael Ray



Reflection, Research, and Discussion (Discuss one or all of the following)

1. What was so special about the *Lakota Ceremonial Songs* performed by John Around Him and translated by Albert White Hat Senior in the early 1980s? Why do you feel the ban on Native American religious ceremonies lasted so long? What effect, if any, did events like the 1973 Siege of Wounded Knee have on the living and cultural conditions found on Native American Reservations?

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[Lakota Ceremonial Songs](#)

[by John Around Him and Albert White Hat Senior.](#) (Sample)

Contact Tammy Scott, Manager, or Chad Whirlwind Soldier, Assistant Manager, at the Sinte Gleska University Book Store to acquire the entire collection of ceremonial songs.
1-605-856-8272

2. Little Thunder, an educator of Lakota language at Black Hills State University, estimates that the Lakota Language has about 20 years before it is too far gone to be saved. What do you feel has caused the near extinction of the Lakota language?

3. Currently, the American Government spends billions of dollars helping suppressed groups of people all over the world. Are Native American people still suppressed? Have all of the wrongs been corrected? Should the United States Government be responsible for saving the Native American language and culture?



Click on the following NPR Morning Edition story to learn more about one tribe's struggle to keep their native language and culture alive.

November 21, 2006

[Oneida Indian Nation Works to Recover its Language](#)

by David Chanatry



Oglala Sioux Nation Pow Wow

[Native American Education Resources](#)



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Try This

(Take home assignment)

"Modern Oral Tradition" All of your students have probably played the whisper game. One person whispers a message in a friend's ear. Then the message is passed on from one person to the next until it reaches the last person in the group. Then the original message is compared to the final message. The original message always changes drastically during this very short period of time. This is a fun game, which reinforces the importance of documenting historical information in written form.

Original Native American history was not documented in the written form. Stories were passed on orally from one generation to the next. Over the years, the stories changed and differences arose. There are different understandings and versions of Native American events based on the story passed on in a particular group or family. The following activity will reinforce the importance of recording oral history as a means of preserving culture.

Activity:

The activity involves the making of a class history book. This can be an annual project completed in your class, similar to a yearbook. I suggest keeping the original; your students may request a copy of the project in the future. Projects like these tend to mean more after a life-changing event occurs, like graduation or a death of a classmate.

Process: (This could be an audio or video project.)

1. The students must interview one of their oldest living relatives or friends. (I suggest brainstorming generic questions they should ask during the interview. This will ensure the students have enough information to write the paper.)

a. The student should document the saddest memory the person can recall. (The person being interviewed must know the information will be published for everyone to see.) This may be a family death, or an experience in a war, or maybe the loss of a farm due to drought.

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b. The student should document the happiest memory the person can recall. (The person being interviewed must know the information will be published for everyone to see.) This may be marrying the person of their dreams, having children, buying a new car or winning a battle in a war.

2. Each student should document personal information.

a. The student should document one of the saddest memories they can recall. (The student must realize the information will be published for everyone to see.) This may be a family death, an experience in which a parent is away at war or maybe the loss of a pet.

b. The student should document one of the happiest memories they can recall. (The student must realize the information will be published for everyone to see.) This may be receiving a horse, having a new brother or buying a new bike.

3. Documenting

- a. The students should have a minimum of one typed page for each story.
- b. The students should have a minimum of one illustration for each story.
- c. The student should hand in a total of at least eight pages.
- d. The student will receive a photocopy of the other stories.
- e. Each student should design an original cover.
- f. The history books should be assembled with paper fasteners or staples.

4. Some of the topics students write about may be too personal to include in this type of book. They may need to be reminded that this is not a personal journal. Use your own judgment on topics of concern.

