

Title

Ceremonial Lesson Plan.

Theme II

The ceremonies are related to the universe (star knowledge).

Goal

The student will understand that the movement of the constellations and the Lakota ceremonies are related.

Lesson Goals

Students will:

1. Acquire knowledge of some star constellations and understand that ceremonies are observed when these constellations occur.
2. Acquire knowledge of the fifth direction (the stars and the heavens above are sacred) and the sixth direction (the earth is sacred).

Lesson Plan

Using the model from *Understanding by Design*, Grant Wiggins, J. McTighe, my lesson plan for middle school aged students is as follows:

1. Prior Knowledge: Understanding that the placement of the stars determine when ceremonies should be performed. Storytelling by elders or others with star knowledge.
2. Inquiry: Use of telescopes to observe the cluster of stars commonly called Tayamnipa (the group) or the Pleiades. Study of sky charts and other resources and relating other constellations to ceremonies.
3. Concept Development: When specific clusters of stars rise at a sacred site, the ceremony will be performed. Whatever is overhead (sacred above, the fifth direction) will be performed on earth (sacred below, the sixth direction). A diarama could be created by students to understand this concept, with natural topography, a representative ceremony and stars created.
4. Application: Observing constellations of stars called the Tayamnipa. The student will be able to share with another group of students their knowledge of this constellation and its relationship with a ceremony. Technology of the stars utilized with computers.

Cultural Background

”It is already well known, that most Lakota activities were time-factored. There was a proper time to gather cansasa, to sew tipi covers, to tell certain stories, to make the major buffalo hunt, etc.” from *Lakota Star Knowledge* quoting Neola Spotted Tail. The story below is about the Pleiades constellation, or Tayamnipa, Seven Little Sisters.

From *Lakota Star Knowledge*, Studies in Lakota Stellar Theology, Ronald Goodman:

Long, long ago, two young Lakota women were out one night looking at the stars. One young woman said, “See that big beautiful star. I wish I could marry it.” The other woman said the same about another star. Suddenly, they are transported into the star

world, and there these two stars become their husbands. The wives become pregnant. They are told this star world is theirs, but also warned not to dig any wild turnips.

Eventually one of them does, and as she pulls out the turnip, a hole opens in the star world. She is able to look down and see the earth, and even her own village. She becomes homesick and decides to return to earth. She braids more and more turnips to make a rope and lets herself down through the hole. But the braid doesn't reach the earth and she falls. The crash kills her, but her baby is born. The baby is raised by a meadowlark. Since meadowlarks speak Lakota, the baby, now named "Fallen Star," grows up speaking it too.

Fallen Star matures rapidly - in days rather than years. He is taller than normal and a light emanates from him. The meadowlark grows old and takes him to a Lakota band where he settles for awhile.

Fallen Star, the protector, the bringer of light and higher consciousness, travels from one Lakota band to another, and everywhere he is recognized, expected, and revered.

At one point, a band is camped near Harney Peak in the Black Hills. Every day a "red eagle" swoops down and steals a girl-child, carries her to the mountain top and kills her. The men try to shoot the "red eagle," but fail. They pray for Fallen Star and after seven days (and after seven girls have been killed), he arrives. He shoots the eagle, and places the spirits of the seven girls in the sky as a constellation - pleiades - in Lakota, wicincala sakowin - "seven little girls."

Developer

Sheila McLeod