

# Critical Orientations for Indigenous Studies Curriculum

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## PLACE

- ***You are always on Indigenous homelands***
- Acknowledge Indigenous peoples and homelands of the places where you teach
- Move beyond acknowledgements to anchor curriculum around issues that affect local Indigenous peoples, lands, and nations
- Seek out Indigenous place names when appropriate and possible



## PRESENCE

- ***Indigenous peoples are still here***
- Over 6 million people identify as American Indian/Alaska Native and there are >570 federally recognized Native nations in the US
- Focus on contemporary Indigenous leaders, changemakers, and issues to affirm Indigenous students, challenge erasure/stereotypes, and highlight the strengths/struggles of Indigenous peoples today



John Herrington,  
Chickasaw Nation,  
Astronaut



Susan Shown Harjo,  
Cheyenne &  
Hodulgee Muscogee,  
Writer and Advocate



Deb Haaland,  
Laguna Pueblo,  
Congresswoman

## PERSPECTIVES

- ***Indigenous perspectives challenge Eurocentrism and provide analyses to enrich curriculum more broadly***
- Curriculum often “faces West” (e.g., expansion, exploration); instead, consider how “facing East” (e.g., invasion, encroachment) (Richter, 2001) might reorient the curricula
- Move from teaching *about* Indigenous peoples to learning *from* Indigenous analyses



Karenne Wood, poet and citizen of the Monacan Indian Nation, from "Enough Good People: Reflections on Tribal Involvement andn Inter-Cultural Collaboration 2003-2006," Circle of Tribal Advisors and Lewis & Clark Bicentennial

Richter, D. (2001). *Facing east from Indian country: A Native history of early America*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Wood, K. (nd). *Homeland*. National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers. Retrieved from [http://www.nathpo.org/Many\\_Nations/mn\\_fiction.html](http://www.nathpo.org/Many_Nations/mn_fiction.html)

## POLITICAL NATIONHOOD (OR PEOPLEHOOD\*)

- ***“Indigenous Peoples are nations, not minorities” (Wilkins & Stark, 2010)***
- Indigenous peoples have *inherent* sovereignty and while protected by civil rights, they also have prior treaty rights
- Teach students about tribal sovereignty and the political status, rights, and issues that impact Indigenous nations and citizens as part of civics education
- Teach students that honoring the treaties is part of their democratic civic responsibility



Flags of the nine federally recognized tribal nations in Oregon

## POWER

- ***Challenge power dynamics within curricula and create space to highlight examples of Indigenous creativity and collective power***
- Beyond including Indigenous perspectives, challenge colonial power dynamics in curriculum (i.e., lands were “empty” or “free”)
- Share examples of Indigenous creativity, agency, and possibilities, and to avoid framing Indigenous peoples as “damaged” or as victims of oppression (Tuck, 2009; Vizenor, 2008)



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## PARTNERSHIPS

- ***Cultivate and sustain partnerships with Indigenous peoples, organizations, and nations***
- The federal government and State of Oregon recognize government-to-government relationships and engage in tribal consultation
- Move beyond token guest speakers to sharing power and developing meaningful partnerships
- Effective collaboration may include hiring a tribal liaison, creating an MOU, or consulting early and often on decisions that impact nearby Native organizations, nations, and/or students



Screenshot of USDA Forest Service "Tribal Engagement Roadmap," <https://www.fs.fed.us/research/tribal-engagement/roadmap.php>

\*Peoplehood is a framework that grounds Indigenous peoples' sovereignty and presence within the interrelated aspects of Indigenous life, including land, language, sacred history, and ceremonial cycles (Holm et al., 2003; see also Corntassel, 2012)

Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(3), 409-428.

Vizenor, G. (Ed.). (2008). *Survivance: Narratives of Native presence*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Wilkins, D., & Stark, H. K. (2010). *American Indian politics and the American political system* (3rd ed.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.