Iowa History Connections Lesson Plan

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Lesson grade level: grades 2-4, depending on readers’ abilities

Lesson title: Learning About Indian Life

Essential Question: What was life “on the prairie” like for Native Americans?

Lesson Abstract: Laura Ingalls Wilder described the Osage Indians several times in Little House on the Prairie. Teachers often use excerpts from this novel, but they rarely teach about Native American perspectives and ways of life. This lesson is designed to help children appreciate Native American cultures and make connections to Iowa.

Learning Objectives:
Students will
• Understand how Native Americans fulfilled their basic needs.
• Use digital archives and multiple resources to develop an appreciation for the traditions and skills of Native Americans.
• Compare and contrast pioneer and Native American ways of living.

Iowa Core Standards, Grade 3:
Literacy
Key Ideas and Details
• Employ the full range of research-based comprehension strategies, including making connections, determining importance, questioning, visualizing, making inferences, summarizing, and monitoring for comprehension.
• Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

Craft and Structure
• Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.
• Explain how specific aspects of a text’s illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).
• Compare and contrast the themes, settings, and plots of stories written by the same author about the same or similar characters (e.g., in books from a series).

History
• Essential Concept and/or Skill: Understand the role of culture and cultural diffusion on the development and maintenance of societies.
• Essential Concept and/or Skill: Understand cause and effect relationships and other historical thinking skills in order to interpret events and issues.

Materials: access to computers or tablets, writing materials.

**Equipment:** computers or tablets, digital projection capabilities, SmartBoard technology

**Websites:** (major websites listed here; others listed in each lesson)
- National Park Service http://www.nps.gov/fosc/learn/historyculture/osage.htm
- Library of Congress http://www.loc.gov/
- National Museum of the American Indian http://nmai.si.edu/

**A cautionary note to teachers:** this unit of study is intended as an accompaniment or a follow up to *Little House on the Prairie* by Laura Ingalls Wilder. Its goal is to help children understand and appreciate the culture and traditions of Native Americans. Many stereotypes have lingered for generations about Native Americans. All of the digital archives recommended in this unit were screened for their appropriateness at the time this was written (March 2015). **When using the digital archives mentioned in this unit, the teacher is advised to preview them first and to monitor students’ use.** Some websites have links to photos, artwork or print resources that are too graphic for young students or that preserve unwanted stereotypes.

**Detailed procedures/Question/Activities:**
1. **Basic Needs.** Ask students to describe the basic needs we need must have to live. Have them share some ways the Ingalls family got food/water, clothing, and shelter. Expand the discussion to how the Ingalls children learned about things that were around them: things in nature, how to do tasks, etc. Explain that students will learn about American Indians’ lifestyles during the time of Little House on the Prairie.
2. **The Osage Indians.** Students will learn about various Native American Indians, with an emphasis on Osage Indians. Introduce students to the Osage Indians, that also lived in eastern Kansas where Pa Ingalls built the little house on the prairie http://arkarcheology.uark.edu/indiansofarkansas/index.html?pageName=The Osage Indians. For older students, these may also be appropriate http://www.nps.gov/fosc/learn/historyculture/osage.htm or http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/433704/Osage.
3. **Storytelling.** Pa often told the Laura and her sisters stories that helped them learn about life. Ma had a Bible and the girls learned bible stories. Native Americans also told stories that helped children learn about Indian ways, and they told their stories to each new generation. The Osage had a story about creation. Refer to Indians of Oklahoma Study Guide Storytelling Lesson: Osage Creation Story, pages 14-19.
4. **Indian Languages.** Laura knew that Indians spoke a different language than English. However, some Indians spoke English and some pioneers understood Indian languages. We teach children by helping them learn the language of their family. Refer to Indians of Oklahoma Study Guide Storytelling Lesson: Language Activity, Do You Speak My Language?, pages 51-52. Additional information about the Osage language can be found at http://www.nativelanguages.org/kansas.htm.
When Indians and officials sent by President Thomas Jefferson met to discuss peace treaties, they often had interpreters who spoke English and Indian languages. Have students view a painting of the peace treaty, Southern Plains Indians at the Medicine Lodge Treaty Council, 1867 http://www.sil.si.edu/DigitalCollections/BAE/Bulletin164/plate24.htm

a. When the Ingalls family lived in their house on the prairie, they were living on land the government had not yet purchased from the Native American tribes. Pa and Ma Ingalls were waiting for Indian Territory to become available for pioneers to buy. But the family left Kansas and returned to Wisconsin. View this map with students and identify the part of Kansas where the Ingalls lived (the Osage territory) http://www.native-languages.org/kansas.htm.

b. When U.S. government representatives met with American Indian tribes they discussed peace treaties. Brainstorm what may have been discussed at a peace treaty. What did “peace” and “treaty” mean to the American government and to the Indians? Depending on the age of the students, view and discuss the terms of Treaty with the Comanche, Etc., 1835 http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/com0435.htm.

c. The Osage Indians were included in this treaty and were removed from Kansas to Oklahoma by the U.S. government as part of the Indian Removal Act in 1830. They created their own Constitution in 1881 and 1882 http://www.loc.gov/law/help/american-indian-consts/PDF/28014187.pdf. Depending on the age of the students, the class may want to explore the Constitution and compare it to the U.S. Constitution by making a Venn diagram or a compare/contrast chart.

5. **Stereotypes.** Laura Ingalls knew very little about Native Americans. She felt cautious or frightened of them because of what she learned from her parents or other adults. Many times we base our opinions on what we hear from those around us. Refer to Indians of Oklahoma Study Guide Stereotypes: Who is an Indian?, pages 53-56. In addition to the photographs of Indians in this lessons, have students view and discuss the following archived images:

a. What does an Indian look like? The Osage men were very tall and they were skilled hunters and warriors. The following images help us know what the Native Americans looked like

   - Navajo family http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2011648555/
   - Cheyenne girl http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001695814/
   - Ogalala girls http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/93502625/
   - Bear Legs http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/92521970/
   - Oh-lo Hah-wal-lah Osage chief http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2014647404/

(Catlin site should be screened for links to other images)

b. **Family Life.** Family life was very important to the Indians. Just as Laura respected her parents, Native American children respected their elders. Laura and Mary helped care for baby Carrie. Near the end of Little House on the Prairie, in the chapter called Indians Ride Away, Laura’s family stood by their cabin and watched the Indians ride past on horseback. Laura wanted the papoose riding with one of the Indian mothers. Discuss the Squaw and Papoose images, and compare them with Laura’s experiences of Ma and baby Carrie

   - Squaw and papoose http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/97511898/
Native American woman with baby on her back
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/96501569/
Apsaroke mother http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002722302/
Sioux mother and baby
http://www.georgecatlin.org/Sioux-mother-and-baby,-c.1830.html (Catlin site should be screened for links to other images)

7. **Lodging.** Pa built the log house to keep his family safe. Ma and the girls helped make it a cozy home. Indians also built homes to keep their families safe. Most of the time families lived in dwellings they built from materials they gathered nearby. When the Osage men went hunting for buffalo or other large animals they stayed in teepees. View and discuss these images showing Osage dwellings http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3c18787/ and http://www.hmdb.org/PhotoFullSize.asp?PhotoID=152723. Refer to Indians of Oklahoma Study Guide Living Ways—Dwellings, pages 81-84.

8. **Food.** Laura respected Pa and Ma and knew they would take care of her family. This included providing a home to live in and food to eat. Indian families had similar values. Many Indian tribes had farmed for generations. They were wise farmers who knew how to grow crops that preserved the nutrients in the soil. The women did most of the farming while the men hunted for food

   The Harvest http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/96501823/
   Refer to Indians of Oklahoma Study Guide Living Ways—Food, pages 57-64.

   Buffalo were very important to Native Americans. They used all parts of the animal. Buffalo meat provided food year round. It was cooked when it was fresh or it was preserved by drying. The hide provided shelter, clothing, saddles and shields. Bones were carved for tools, weapons, ornaments and toys. Horns were carved for utensils. Hair was braided for rope. Other animal parts were used for bow strings, cooking bags, oil for cooking and for medicine, and for ceremonies. Have students examine the following digital archives, both the images and accompanying printed information

   Crying to the spirits http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/89707033/
   Geronimo’s Last Buffalo
   http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001695439/
   An Osage Indian Lancing a Buffalo by George Catlin
   http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=4302
   (Catlin site should be screened for links to other images)

9. **Celebrations.** The Ingalls family had traditional celebrations for Christmas and their birthdays. They didn’t have much money but they enjoyed their family. Pa played the fiddle and the girls danced. Laura and Mary used their imagination and pretended objects were toys. The Indians also had celebrations and traditions. Many of their celebrations were related to nature. They often dressed in special clothing for these celebrations, sometimes called pow-wows. Examine these images with students that represent Native American ceremonial traditions

   Jicarilla girl in feast dress http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003652712/
   Lucille http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002719689/
Assessment(s)

Option A
Students can demonstrate their understanding of Native Americans’ rich tradition of storytelling through this activity. Read *When Turtle Grew Feathers* by Tim Tingle. This is an adaption of Aesop’s fable, *The Tortoise and the Hare*. Have students select another fable or legend and write their own version that reflects an Indian story.


Option B
Create a booklet or PowerPoint or an Animoto video demonstrating a topic they learned from this study. The teacher can create a rubric for evaluating students’ projects.

A final note
This lesson plan was created to give students a better understanding of the similarities between American Indians and pioneer settlers during the latter half of the 1800s. The setting of Little House on the Prairie was Osage Indian territory in Kansas. For information about Iowa Indian tribes, please check the following websites


Children and teachers posed outside of Mesquakie Day School, near Toledo, Iowa [http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/93502783/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/93502783/)