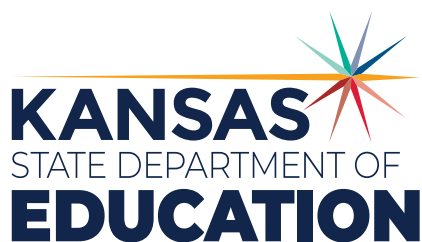


Indigenous Peoples and Nations of Kansas: Past, Present, and Futures

An Essential Understanding Framework for Educators



Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.



Kansas State Board of Education

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Vision

Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

SUCCESS DEFINED

A successful Kansas high school graduate has the

- Academic preparation,
- Cognitive preparation,
- Technical skills,
- Employability skills and
- Civic engagement

to be successful in postsecondary education, in the attainment of an industry recognized certification or in the workforce, without the need for remediation.

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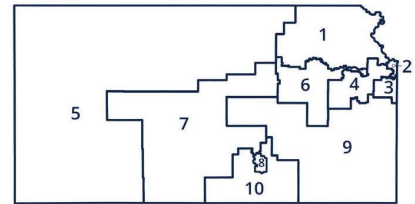


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Introduction

Collaborative Construction of this Framework:

Kansas is, and always has been, home to many unique Tribal Nations and peoples. Nevertheless, substantive Native representation is missing from many Kansas classrooms. Additionally, while there are four Federally Recognized Tribal Nations—Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska—within Kansas’ boundaries, a significant number of citizens of other Federally Recognized Tribal Nations also continue to live and migrate to this state.

This Essential Understanding framework, collaboratively developed with Federally Recognized Tribal Nations with relevant ties to Kansas, is intended to help educators improve teaching and learning about, for, and with these Tribal Nations, peoples, and communities. This document includes feedback collected from these Tribal Nations and partners concerning what Kansas students should learn about Indigenous pasts, presents, and futures. The framework and resources provided are a result of this partnership.

Moving forward, conversations with these Nations will continue through ongoing consultation, in recognition that Kansas is Indigenous land and there is a need for ongoing dialogue and collaborative learning.

Introducing the Framework: One Essential Understanding

This single Essential Understanding was collaboratively crafted to focus around one core concept. This Essential Understanding is layered and complex to help Kansas educators incorporate this material into all relevant aspects of their curriculum, not just social studies.

Specifically, while studying the past to understand the future is important, this Essential Understanding emphasizes how Tribal Nations **continue to thrive in the present**, as independent and diverse sovereign governments, communities, and people.

Introducing the Sub-Topics

While the Essential Understanding focuses educators on a single concept, it is divided into nine interdisciplinary sub-topics. The sub-topics—in no particular order—identify content that can be integrated into every part of the curriculum from Economics and Social Studies, to English Language Arts, Science, and beyond.

The subtopics include:

- Sovereignty and Governance
- Health, Wellness and Foodways
- Indigenous Languages
- Collaborative Citizenship and Co-Existence
- Literature and the Arts
- Histories and Geographies
- Urban and Inter-Tribal Communities
- Economics
- Indigenous STEM

Sovereignty and Governance

The inalienable rights of Indigenous Nations, particularly within the U.S. Federally Recognized Tribal Nations, to self-govern and to pursue self-determination. Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Tribal Nations retain sovereignty that predates European colonization of the continent, rooted in their long histories of self-governance.
- Today, U.S. Federally Recognized tribal Nations have a unique Domestic Dependent Nation status with the US government, often called Federal Trust Responsibility.
- Tribal sovereignty is connected to the Commerce Clause and Article Six of the U.S. Constitution, the Marshall Trilogy (U.S. Supreme Court cases), and further acknowledged through Nation-to-Nation treaties and compacts that are legally binding today.
- Each Tribal Nation has their own constitution, unique government structures, laws, policies, and citizenship requirements. As of 2024, there are 574 Federally Recognized Tribal Nations in the US, and four Federally Recognized Tribal Nations headquartered within Kansas boundaries (Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas, and Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska). Tribal Nations with historical ties to Kansas, now headquartered in other states, also own various parcels of land in Kansas.

Health, Wellness, and Foodways

Indigenous health, wellness, and foodways are foundational and directly connected to each Tribal Nations' culture and sovereignty. Historically, these foodways were complex networks of knowledge about and relationships to particular lands, lakes and waterways, plants, animals, and neighboring Nations pre-European contact. Indigenous Health, Wellness, and Foodways were severely disrupted by removals, boarding school systems, and urbanization policies of the United States. Non-Native incursions into land also led to overgrazing, overhunting, and the exploitation of resources. Indigenous peoples' forced relocations from their homelands were paired with the introduction of government commodity food programs that dramatically changed the health and wellness of American Indian communities. (For example, the rapid rise in Diabetes relates directly to introducing high flour and sugar diets obtained through commodity programs). Today, a multitude of Tribal Nations are putting

significant resources and energy towards rekindling these relationships with land and re-establishing trade networks and foodways. As a result, various health, wellness, and foodway programs in Tribal Nations are intertwined with the culture and future prosperity of these Nations. Often, this revitalization of Indigenous Health, Wellness, and Foodways is framed as *Food Sovereignty*.

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Indigenous Health and Wellness has a long history based on practices and beliefs based on the idea that health and wellness is a balance of the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of life. Indigenous communities also view health as directly related to the natural environment, community, and land, and is critical to understanding the individuality of each Tribal Nation.
- Land and culture are so intertwined that understanding this connectedness allows for a deeper understanding of Indigenous language learning.
- Each Tribal Nation has its own unique Health, Wellness, and Foodways. All four of the Federally Recognized Tribes in Kansas have specific food sovereignty efforts in motion, such as Bison programming, greenhouse production, honey production, hemp production, and regenerative agriculture programming.
- Some Tribal Nations with historic ties to Kansas but currently headquartered in Oklahoma have land in Kansas used for agricultural production.
- *Water Sovereignty*, a term frequently used in connection to health, wellness, and foodways, refers to Native Nations rights to manage the water that produces the life and food that translates to individual and community health. In many Tribal Nations, there are histories of water quality issues, such as in the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas. Additionally, throughout the 1900s, reservoirs were often created on tribal lands, further diminishing their reservations. (See, for example, the Kaw Nation and the flooding of Washunga.) Furthermore, visible protests such as the Dakota Access Pipeline Protest are rooted in historic treaty negotiations and water quality threats.

Indigenous Languages

Language bears culture, and Indigenous languages are the foundations of Indigenous cultures and identities.

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Each Indigenous Nation has its own or shared Indigenous languages and dialects.
- In North America, numerous Indigenous languages are divided into language families, with numerous nations possessing related dialects that share similar words and structures, which are often mutually intelligible (understood).
- Federal Assimilation programs, including Federal Indian boarding schools, attempted to systematically eradicate Indigenous languages, cultures, and identities. The first Federal Indian boarding school run by the U.S. government, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, founded in 1879, led to hundreds of federal boarding schools, including seven in Kansas. Church-run schools with similar goals of language eradication existed prior to the founding of the United States; many would eventually be funded in part by the U.S. government.
- Today, many Tribal Nations operate language revitalization programs to expand literacy and usage, promote cultural vitality, and undo the damage of assimilation policies. Other programs include Title III and the [Seal of Biliiteracy program in Kansas](#).

Collaborative Co-Existence

Like all civilizations, Tribal Nations have long and storied histories of conflict and cooperation with neighboring Nations. Today, Federally Recognized Native Nations each have their own criteria for enrollment and citizenship. Their Tribal Citizens live in and across complex multiracial social networks with non-Native peoples and communities. This is due to histories of 1) forced removals and relocations, 2) assimilationist policies and programming (i.e., Boarding Schools), 3) forced and voluntary relocations of other non-Native demographic groups through the development of what is now called the United States. As a result, in the present, Tribal Citizens are often multiracial and live in and/or near predominantly non-Native communities, meaning that they learn to exist and co-exist across different socio-cultural contexts and communities.

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- With so many efforts to assimilate and eradicate Indigenous cultures, it should be no surprise that many Tribal Citizens, or descendants of Tribal Citizens, are of mixed race/ethnicity. Many Tribal Citizens are also White, Black, and/or Latinx and Hispanic (among many other races/ethnicities or National citizenship). These Tribal Citizens are also often made invisible in “multi-racial” or “two or more races” demographic data systems.
- For many Federally Recognized Tribal Nations, the majority of their citizens do not live on the reservation, and therefore, Tribal governments work to build their government structures and programs accordingly. As an example, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, headquartered in Shawnee, Oklahoma, has approximately 3000 tribal citizens in Kansas and a representative in their government that specifically serves that demographic. Relatedly, many Nations have absentee mail-in ballots, while other Tribal Nations require in-person voting on the reservation.
- Many Tribal Citizens routinely commute or migrate back and forth between reservation-based home communities, events, and ceremonies to homes in different states.
- Over 90% of American Indian and Alaskan Native students attend public schools, most often in mixed communities with non-Native majorities.
- Federally Recognized Tribal Nations and their employees and citizens must often work with neighboring boards, municipalities, and state governments on projects related to education, infrastructure, business development, tourism, and more.
- Many non-Native people work for Tribal Nations and their affiliate institutions, and vice versa.
- Federally funded Urban Relocation programs, in the 1950s and ‘60s caused many Tribal Citizens to leave their reservations and move into cities. More on this in the *Urban and Inter-Tribal* section below.

Literature and the Arts

Indigenous stories, whether they be visual (from pictographs to contemporary television and film), written (from the Popul Vuh to the award-winning novels and poetry of contemporary authors), or oral (from traditional oral histories and songs to hip hop and slam poetry) are central to Native cultures and communities. Literature, music, film, and arts of all kinds offer a window to past and present Indigenous resilience, creativity, and joy.

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Visual, written, and oral literatures and arts have existed in the Americas since time immemorial.
- Indigenous literature in English has existed since the 1700s. The rise of these English language texts is tied to the imposition of Christianity and boarding schools; however, Native intellectuals used English to their own ends, telling the stories important to them.
- In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Indigenous artists and activists were widely published, producing best-selling stories, poems, non-fiction, and novels. In some cases, these creatives traveled from the U.S. to Canada and Europe on speaking tours.

- While Native peoples have always been writers, Kiowa author N. Scott Momaday's 1969 Pulitzer Prize win for his novel *House Made of Dawn* marks the start of what later would be termed the Native American Renaissance. Leslie Silko, Simon Ortiz, James Welch, Gerald Vizenor, Louise Erdrich, and U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo are some of the key writers to publish in this period.

Today, Indigenous writers, filmmakers, musicians, and artists are flourishing and there is an array of creative arts (literature, film, television, podcasts, video games, music and more) for children, young adults, and adults that are vital expressions of cultural and visual sovereignty.

Histories and Geographies

Tribal Nations have had communities in what is now called Kansas for thousands of years. Forced removals of these Tribal Nations as they relate to Kansas are complex.

There are three distinct complexities to consider:

1. Many Tribal Nations are Indigenous to what is now called Kansas
2. Over 40 Tribal Nations were forcibly moved into Kansas in the 1800s, and then later removed again (most to what is now Oklahoma)
3. There are four Federally Recognized Nations currently headquartered in Kansas—Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, and Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska—yet many other tribes have citizens, land, and sacred & historic sites within the state

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- The land known today as the state of Kansas encompasses the ancestral homelands of many Tribal Nations, including the Kanza (Kaw Nation)—for whom the state is named—the Osage, Wichita, Pawnee, Comanche, Kiowa, Apache, Cheyenne, and Arapaho.
- The US government also forcibly moved many Tribal Nations from East of the Mississippi River the central portion of “Indian Territory” (now known as Kansas) during the mid-1800s, including the Shawnee Tribe, Wyandotte Nation, Delaware Tribe of Indians, Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, Citizen Potawatomi Nation, and others, before another forced removal to the southern portion of “Indian Territory” (now known as Oklahoma). All of these Tribal Nations have citizens currently living in Kansas.
- The Four Federally Recognized Tribal Nations still headquartered in Kansas—Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas, Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska and, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation—have relative Tribal Nations that share their history and name (example: Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, and Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma), as many Nations experienced divisions and fracturing through the removal process.

Urban and Inter-Tribal Communities

While ongoing forced relocations and removals to isolated lands created the reservation system that created the complex geographic existence of Tribal Nations, the 1900s also saw large migrations from reservations into urban centers. This was amplified in the 1950s and 60s when the federal government was working to extinguish Tribal Sovereignty (often referred to as the Termination Era) and created urban relocation programs. This resulted in the growth of unique Inter-Tribal urban-based “Indian Centers” in cities such as Wichita, Kansas City, Chicago, Minneapolis, Phoenix, and more. While every Tribal Nation has its own language, and/or dialects, and culture, these unique and diverse inter-tribal communities are eclectic and produce a unique multi-generational community in which Tribal Citizens grow up “off-rez,” with varying degrees of connectedness to their home community, Tribal Nation, and affiliated cultures. Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Wichita Public Schools has more American Indian/Alaska Native students than any other school district in Kansas. Also, Wichita has the Mid-America All-Indian Museum (formerly the Mid-America All-Indian Center), which serves as a central gathering place for Tribal Citizens living in the Wichita Area.
- Lawrence, Kansas is an Inter-Tribal community that hosts many social gatherings, such as powwows and social dances. Lawrence is also the home to Haskell Indian Nations University, which serves Tribal Citizens of all 574 Federally Recognized Tribal Nations.
- Kansas City is home to the Kansas City Indian Center, which also serves as a hub for cultural events and social services.
- Topeka, which is just south of the four Federally Recognized Tribal Nations in Kansas, is an urban hub for Tribal Citizens who commute to/from those reservations for work, entertainment, ceremonies, and social gatherings.

Economics

Since time immemorial, Indigenous Nations have engaged in economic activities. These activities included extensive trade networks, adaptations to the environment and unique demands, and negotiations with Indigenous and Foreign nations. Tribal Nations, like all nations, engage in systems of production, consumption, and exchange. Tribal Nations continue to engage in innovative economic activities, vital economic development, and determine wealth distribution as an extension of sovereignty to fulfill their Nation's goals that benefit not only the Tribal Nation, local and state communities, the United States, and diverse global partners.

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Tribal Nations engage in a multitude of economic activities that are unique to each nation and its location.
- Tribal Nations engage in a diverse array of business enterprise efforts. Examples include agriculture, aquaponics, ranching, business and finance, hunting, eco-tourism, sports management, manufacturing, textiles, aeronautics research and technology development, gaming, etc.
- Tribal Nations are often the leading employers in their communities and states, and the largest drivers of economic development.

Indigenous STEM

Indigenous peoples have always engaged in science and research and worked to deepen their understanding of the world around them. This includes having an enlightened relationship with the lands that helped provide life and sustenance and exploring ways to ensure they could avoid hardships that threatened the health of individuals in their communities. This means that they were in an ongoing and evolving relationship with the resources found in their locale, and also exchanged resources and innovations with communities across the continent. This has not only continued to the present day but has expanded to include global partnerships.

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Historically, relationships with land have been a vital component of Indigenous cultures, and many cultural worldviews can be connected to the central cultural tenet. However, teachers should be cautious in oversimplifying this across diverse Indigenous cultures and actively try to avoid teaching an oversimplified “one-with-nature” stereotype. These cultural worldviews are much more complex, as described below.
- As evident by the old civilizations found in America’s (ex. Cahokia, Aztecs, Mayans, Incas), Indigenous Peoples and Nations used highly advanced Mathematics and Technology to build extensive earthworks, urban centers, and engage in complex trade networks across lands and waters. Examples include Mathematical and solar precision connected to earthworks (mounds) and pyramids, advanced watercraft and seafaring navigation, sophisticated land management and advanced agricultural practices such as terraced and island farming, planned burns and irrigation, fertilization, and storage, etc.
- As mentioned in the Economics section, many Tribal Nations are currently developing science and technology, as well as other forms of research and innovation. Examples include aeronautics, drone development, pipe manufacturing, aquaponics, software and database development, Indigenous language coding for Google and I-phone integration, etc.
- Many national organizations serve as professional communities relevant to STEM, such as the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS), Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA), etc.

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