Powwow Party!

Exploring Native American Traditions through the High Plains Powwow

Overview

Powwows are an important and integral part of modern Native American culture as they preserve and share traditional native art and customs. By comparing powwows to other large gatherings, students will identify the similarities and differences between this native event and others. Students will explore the role of custom and tradition in these events and be able to identify three parts of a powwow.

Age Group

Kindergarten – 6th Grade

Duration

45 – 60 minutes

Subjects

Social Studies
Language Arts
Fine Arts

Standards of Learning

Social Studies

- SS2.2.1: Students same the ways groups meet human needs and concerns and contribute to personal identity and daily life
- SS2.2.2: Students recognize ways in which expressions of culture influence people
- SS2.5.3: Use the human features of a community to describe what makes that community special and why others want to move there or move away from there
- SS5.2.1: Students identify and describe ways groups meet human needs and concerns and contribute to personal identity and daily life
- SS5.2.2: Students identify and describe ways in which expressions of culture influence people
- SS5.2.3: Students identify and describe characteristics and contributions of local and state cultural groups in Wyoming
- SS5.5.3: Describe the human features of an area, past and present settlement patterns, and how ideas, goods, and/or people move from one area to another

Language Arts

- W.4.3: Student uses reason and information supported by facts and details to introduce and support a point of view on a topic or text

- W.4.4: Student provides an organizational structure to convey ideas and information clearly, including transitional words and phrases and a conclusion related to the opinion presented
- W.4.5: Student uses facts, concrete details, quotations, illustrations, headings, definitions, precise language, and domain-specific vocabulary to introduce and develop a topic
- W.4.6: Student provides an organizational structure to convey ideas and information clearly, including transitional words and phrases and a conclusion related to the information or explanation presented
- SL.4.1: Student paraphrases information read aloud or presented in diverse media and formats
- SL.4.3: Student reports on a topic or text, or retells an event in a n organized manner
- SL.4.5: Student differentiates between contexts which call for formal or informal discourse
- W.8.3: Student provides a logical organizational structure to convey reasons and evidence clearly, including transitional words and phrases and a conclusion related to the argument presented
- W.8.2: Student establishes and maintains a formal style
- W.8.6: Student uses precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and information including facts, concrete details, quotations, and definitions to introduce and develop a topic
- W.8.7: Student provides an organizational structure to convey ideas and information clearly, including varied transitional words and phrases and a conclusion related to the information or explanation presented
- W.8.8: Student establishes and mains a formal style

Fine Arts

- FPA4.1.D.5: Students demonstrate a sequence of movements, remember them in a short phrase and identify the beginning, middle and end
- FPA4.2.D.1: Students observe and discuss how dance is similar to and different from other forms of human movement
- FPA4.2.D.2: Students observe or perform dance and discuss observations in relation to personal context
- FPA4.3.D.1: Students observe, practice, perform and respond to dances from their community and different cultures
- FPA4.3.D.2: Students observe or perform historical movements or dances
- FPA4.3.D.3: Students recognize that people create and perform dance differently. Observe or perform and compare multiple dance genres
- FPA4.4.D.4: Students are attentive and respond appropriately to vocal, musical, social, or observed cues
- FPA4.1.M.3: Students improvise simple rhythms, melodies and accompaniments using a variety of traditional and non-traditional sounds
- FPA4.1.M.4: Students create music using a variety of traditional and non-traditional sound sources
- FPA4.3.M.3: Students identify the purposes of music, roles of musicians, and environments in which music is performed in their daily lives and other world cultures

- FPA8.2.D.1: Students explain how different kinds of movement impact meaning and interpretation of artistic choices
- PFA8.2.D.2: Students observe or perform dance and discuss the main ideas of the dance, articulating emotional and kinesthetic responses in relation to personal context
- FPA8.3.D.1: Students explain how values and beliefs are reflected in dance in their community and in different cultures
- FPA8.3.D.3: Students compare and contrast choreography from a variety of styles of dance
- FPA8.3.D.4: Students recognize the role of dancers in their community and investigate how these artists create their work
- FPA8.4.D.4: Students recognize the role of dancers in their community and investigate how these artists create their work
- FPA8.3.M.3: Students compare the purposes of music, roles of musicians, and environments in which music is typically performed in a variety of world cultures
- FPA8.1.M.3: Students improvise rhythms, melodies and accompaniments within a consistent style, meter, and tonality

Objectives

Students will…

- Identify at least 3 components of a powwow
- Recognize the importance of traditions and customs in family and community gatherings
- Create their own powwow-related objects

Materials

Included

- Lesson Packet
- Bells
- Yarn
- Small sticks
- Button

Needed

- Paper
- Pencils
- Crayons

Key Terms

Custom - a repeated, long-established practice or procedure
Powwow – a large Native American gathering that involves dancing, singing, visiting, and art
Regalia – the special outfits worn by Native American dancers
Tradition – an established pattern of thought, behavior, and action; the handing down of information or beliefs
Vocable – special powwow songs that replace words with meaningless sounds

Sample Lesson Plan

1. Either as a class or individually, brainstorm different types of gatherings students have attended (i.e. Christmas, birthdays, family reunions, etc.). How many people attended? What types of people went? What happened at the event? What else was there (i.e. food, music, gift-giving). If done individually, have students pair up to share with each other before sharing with the class.
2. Introduce powwows as a Native American gathering that does many of the same things (use the *What's in a Powwow* sheet if needed.) Include the types of events, food, and arts included at a powwow, as well as touching on the ideas introduced by the students. Show a short video about a powwow and the dances included. Show photos of the dance regalia and drum groups at a powwow.
3. Have students draw a picture or write a brief paragraph describing what they remember most about what happens (or favorite thing about) at a powwow.
4. See how many students drew or wrote about the powwow dancers. Explain that many dancers wear bells or other noise pieces to add to the drumbeats and singing. Pass out the bells and yarn so students can make their own belled anklets or bracelets.
5. If time permits, play the *Stick Passing Game* (see instruction sheet) to experience moving to a rhythm.

What's in a Powwow?

What is a powwow?

Everyone has events, times, or ways of meeting together to renew old friendships and establish new ones. For Native Americans, this event is called a *powwow*. It is a time to join in singing, dancing, visiting, and sharing talents and crafts. But Native Americans also see it as a time to remember and preserve their rich heritage. Some Powwows are large, week-long events that bring thousands of people from different tribes together. Others are smaller, attracting only members of a particular community or tribe for one day

Some Native American families go "on the circuit" to many large Powwows which are held at different places every weekend from June until September. They travel to share native foods, beadwork, pottery, and other crafts. Many come to participate in competitive dancing and singing.

What happens at a powwow?

Powwows are a place for many people to get together. There is dancing, singing, special contests, and gifts given. For most powwows, native dancers from toddlers to senior citizens compete for prizes by dancing traditional dances or singing traditional songs. Powwows are also a place for vendors to sell their crafts or food.

Things to see

Singing - Songs are an important part of the powwow. They are usually traditional songs that have been passed down in the native tongue for generations. However, sometimes they are sung in English or using *vocables* or sounds that replace words. The singers are very important because without them, there would be no dancing. All songs hold special meaning; they remind the people of their old ways.

Dancing - Dancers have always been an important part of Native American culture. Powwows begin with a parade of dancers in a ceremony called "The Grand Entry." Dancers use bright feathers, beadwork, and hand-sewn cloth patterns to make "dance outfits", or regalia. There are many different dance categories: men's traditional dance, men's grass dance, men and women's fancy dance, jingle dance, and other dances for children of all ages. They dance to singing and the continuous beat of drums.

CARBON COUNTY MUSEUM

Stick Passing Game

Instruction Sheet

1. Arrange the children in a circle. Give one child a bone, and give each of the other children a stick.

2. Keep a beat with a drum or clapped hands. Players pass the sticks and bone in time with the beat in the following fashion: Tap the stick (or bone) on the ground (first beat), tap it again (second beat), pass it to the player on your right while receiving from the player on the left (third beat), change the new stick (or bone) from the left hand to the right hand (fourth beat).

3. When the music stops, the player holding the bone gives the bone to the player on his right, then leaves the circle, joining the rhythm makers and keeping beat with drums, bells, or hand clapping. The winner of the game is the last child to remain in the circle.