

Walking in Two Worlds



Leo Kipp After a Day Riding to Protect His Grandfather's Cattle, Browning, Blackfeet Reservation, Montana, 2016 by Sue Reynolds

Today, in the United States, thousands of American Indians live on over 300 reservations. Many travel off the reservation for school, work, shopping and recreation.

Leo, who lives on the Blackfeet Reservation in western Montana, spent most of his day with his grandmother, riding his horse around his grandparents' ranch to protect their cattle from wolves and grizzly bears. Ranchers on the Blackfeet Reservation have to protect their cattle from these predators, which follow the herd and kill calves.

Leo wears his hair in the three-braid style that is traditional for Blackfeet boys. His hair and light skin have created problems for him. At a school Leo was attending off the reservation, his classmates teased him, saying he was a girl because of his braids. Others said he was not Native American because of his light skin. Because of racial bullying, Leo hit himself and even told his mother he wanted to die. Leo and his family returned to the Blackfeet Reservation, where he attends a language immersion school that teaches in that indigenous language.

Discussion and Writing Questions

1. In small groups, make a list of what you think it means to walk in two worlds?
2. Do you think walking in two worlds would be difficult? Explain.
3. Imagine you were Native American and living on a reservation in the United States. What difficulties might you have both on the reservation and off?

Discussion and Writing Questions

1. How does Leo's situation make you feel?
2. Have you ever been teased or threatened because you looked, dressed, or talked differently from someone else?

Note: If they are willing, students can explain being discriminated against.
3. How did being discriminated against make you feel?
4. Is bullying a problem in your school?
5. Why do you think one or more students would bully another student?
6. Who typically gets bullied?
7. Who typically bullies others?
8. Ask students to think about their own actions. Without answering aloud, ask them to consider if they have ever bullied anyone. If they have, what was the reason? Then ask them to consider how they feel about this.
9. What can you do to help stop discrimination and bullying?

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Look at these photographs of life on Native Americans' reservations and find similarities to your own life.



Leo and Eagle Whistle Playing Etch A Sketch, Browning, Blackfeet Reservation, Montana, 2016 by Sue Reynolds

Leo and his cousin Eagle Whistle play in their grandfather's living room on the Blackfeet Reservation. The big drum behind them belongs to their grandfather, Joe, who leads traditional religious ceremonies for his Blackfeet community. The drum has been an important means of communicating and celebrating throughout American Indian history.

The family drum in this photograph, which has an elk hide drumhead, is used mostly to teach the next generation. Joe says that singing their family songs together at birthdays and other celebrations is one of their most enjoyable activities. Like many tribes, the Blackfeet regard their drums as living entities and respect them as such.

Discussion and Writing Questions

1. What, in this photograph, looks like a typical scene you might see in a house in your neighborhood?
2. What is different from a scene you might see in a house in your neighborhood? Why do you think the things that are different from what you might have in your own home are in this house on a Native American reservation?
3. If you attend religious ceremonies in a church, synagogue, mosque, temple or other location, who leads the mass or ceremony where your family worships? (A priest, rabbi, imam, etc.)
4. Why do you think religion is important to many people? Explain.
5. If you practice a religion, what do you like about it?
6. Is music part of your family's religious ceremony? If so, what musical instruments are used and is religious music played and are songs such as hymns sung?

Grandfather Joe did not take part in any traditional Blackfeet ceremonies until he was 17, because until passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) in 1978 it was illegal to practice many traditional Native American ceremonies. If discovered doing so, Native people often were punished, so many took their religion "underground," which is why some of their religion still exists today. After passage of AIRFA, the Crow tribe of Montana sent a representative three times to the Shoshone Sun Dance at Fort Washakie in Wyoming, to bring back this ceremony to the Crow community.

7. How would you feel if it was illegal to practice your family's religion? What does it mean to take a religion "underground?"

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Gigi Yazzie With Eagle Feather Fan, 2007 by Sue Reynolds

Discussion and Writing Questions

1. As a springboard for discussion, lead students through one or more of the [Interpretation Strategies](#).
2. What do you think this photograph is about?
3. What do you think about the fact that only American Indians can own eagles?

Gigi is Bitterroot Salish and lives on the Flathead Reservation. Her husband is Navajo – Yazzie is a common Navajo name. Gigi’s ceremonial dance fan is made of many eagle feathers. Under U. S. law, only Native Americans can own eagles and there is a three-year waiting list to acquire an eagle from the National Eagle Repository in Colorado. Eagle feathers can be gifted to another enrolled member of a federally recognized tribe and passed on to children who meet this requirement. For most American Indians, eagle feathers are sacred because they believe the eagle flies highest and carries prayers to the Creator, or Great Spirit.

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Devin Free Carrying His Little Brother Griffin, Wakpala, Standing Rock Reservation, South Dakota, 2016 by Sue Reynolds



Dork Diaries is One of Sarah's Favorite Books, Mobridge, South Dakota, 2016 by Sue Reynolds

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Family is important to Native Americans, both on and off reservations. Lakota teen Devin Free, above top, is very close to his brother. After school and on weekends, he often plays with Griffin, taking him around the family's yard to explore and play with their dogs and cats. Griffin was adopted as a newborn as his mother used drugs so she couldn't care for him. Devin's niece, Sarah, above bottom, lives with her parents and brothers across the Missouri River from the Standing Rock Reservation, where Devin lives. Before dinner, she enjoys reading, dancing to Wii and other video games, and playing with dolls, collectible animals and a big doll house.

Historically, many Plains Indians lived in small bands which included extended families so that they could quickly move to follow the buffalo herds which provided them with food, shelter and clothing. In these large family groups, there were many relatives to help raise the children while the men were away hunting or trading with other tribes. Older relations in the Crow Tribe sometimes adopted children so they could offer their wisdom and guidance to those who needed it. Blackfeet, Salish and Lakota people had permanent seasonal camps selected for the location of important foods and other resources, and they returned to these camps year after year.

While Native families today may not live with their extended family -- some live far from their reservations for work and school -- family ties are still strong. Grandparents and other older relatives often raise or help the children. Many extended families gather once a year or more "back home" on their reservations, with their tribe's powwow -- a gathering honoring heritage and life -- being a favorite time to celebrate. When they get together, the elders often tell stories about the family's ancestors so the younger relatives will know where they come from.

Discussion and Writing Questions

1. How important is your family to you? Why?
2. Who in your family takes care of you? Do you help care for anyone in your family? Explain.
3. Does your family gather for holidays, birthdays or other events with relatives whom you see only on these special occasions? What do you do at these gatherings and what do you like best about them?

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Journey

for Mary Charlo

To come this far would be worth a song
in any other time,

Ride this pass to open country,
country of my grandfathers, of Victor's dust.

This car makes this journey small.
Think of... grandmothers, of great grandfathers, of my children
who count boulders big as bison to headwaters, Three Forks,
on horse or on foot with dogs carrying days
for buffalo, sacred buffalo jump long ago.
Think of tipi like old, gray smoke in trees.

So, sing this time when time is ripe
to break camp, to sing this plain
to thunder again.

Discussion and Writing Questions

1. This poem includes elements of modern American life, historic Native American life and modern Native American life. Can you identify some of each?
2. Victor Charlo writes of his ancestors and where they lived. Who are some of your ancestors and where did they live?
3. Remembering ancestors is very important for Native people and taking one's family to visit places with tribal/ancestral history on and off reservations is part of Native life. Have you traveled with your family to visit places where your ancestors lived or live? If so, what did you learn about your ancestors? Did your journey make you feel more connected to them?
4. When you hear stories about your ancestors, what are your feelings about them? How do you feel you are connected to them?

Dirty Corner Poems and Other Stories, by Victor A. Charlo.

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Note: This photograph and discussion are suggested for older students.



Meth is Deth Sign on Lower Brule Reservation,
South Dakota, 2009 by Sue Reynolds

Alcohol and drug abuse are serious problems on reservations. Poverty, discrimination, unemployment and other hardships add to alcohol and drug use. Select from [Interpretation Strategies](#) to elicit responses to this photograph before continuing discussion.

Programs such as the new afterschool youth program seen in the photograph below help Blackfeet children develop skills and confidence as a way of preventing them from turning to alcohol and drugs. In Joseph's small community there is little to do after school and programs like this both engage and train them. Children in this program work with a colt over several months to get their horse used to a saddle blanket before putting a saddle on them and finally riding them.

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Joseph Chased by a Colt at Tom Crawford's Youth Program, Blackfeet Reservation, Montana, 2015 by Sue Reynolds

In this resource we describe the people we are discussing as Native American, American Indian, or by their specific tribal affiliations. Why?

American Indians usually have a name they prefer that describes their race. Elders grew up being called Indians by non-Natives and many use this term. Young people and those who have left their reservations for school or work often prefer to be called Native Americans or Natives. Most agree that they'd rather their own tribal name for themselves be used, whether within the indigenous community or outside it. For example, "Lakota" is preferred over "Sioux," which was given by French traders as an abbreviation of an offensive term used by the Cree tribe, who were traditional enemies of the Lakota people.

Discussion and Writing Questions

1. Are alcohol and drug use a problem where you live or go to school? Discuss.
2. While alcohol and drug use are present across the U. S., on many reservations they have become an epidemic. Why do you think alcohol and drugs are such big problems on reservations?
3. Are you aware of programs or organizations in your area that help combat alcohol and drug use? Discuss.
4. Do you feel that engaging children in worthwhile activities at an early age can help them avoid alcohol and drug use? Discuss.

Discussion and Writing Questions

1. What is your racial heritage? Which country(s) did your ancestors come from before they arrived in the United States?
2. What is the name you prefer that describes your race?
3. Have you heard people from other countries or races called derogatory names? How do you think it made the people being called names feel? Why do you think someone would call someone from another country or race a derogatory name?
4. Why do you think Native Americans want to be called by the tribal name they've given themselves?

Note: Older students can research the history of how and why names for American Indians have changed since 1492. Research can include the issues that contribute to the Native American naming controversy today.

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Other Sections Inside this Chapter:

Reservation Life Introduction
Then and Now
Standing Rock Controversy
Artist's Statement
Poet's Statement
Interpretation Strategies

Additional Chapters:

Mother Earth Introduction
Reclaiming Culture Introduction

Other Resources

"What the Arlee Warriors Were Playing For." *New York Times*, 8 April, 2018.

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, by Sherman Alexie. Available on Amazon.

"Cheyenne River Youth Project Supporting Traditional Lakota Arts." *Indian Country Today*, 13 February, 2017.