Indigenous Updates - December

In Dine' December is Nilch'ítso (Big Wind)
December shiwi'ma is called I:kopbu Yachunne the month of the turning moon signifying the solstice.

APS-Indian Education Department would like to share with you our monthly messaging flier in building connections and relationships with our Native American students, families, and communities. Taking this time to celebrate and empower your Indigenous students will create harmonious and supportive schools.

Dehts'ina; a season of honor.

As A:shiwi transitions into "quiet time," of Deshkwi (fasting), we reflect on the past year and honor what our ancestors have done since time immemorial. The life which each of us are blessed with is one to always honor those who have come before us. There has been no other time like the present, to truly think, pray and revere our livelihoods. The pandemic which some may remark is "over," but we still have people who are leaving this world. It makes sense to honor our breath life and continue to pay homage to the ancestors for the life we live.
Recently I asked students, what do your families do for the holidays? Some students spoke of returning home to Zuni and spending time with their families, some have cultural obligations and speak of how the village is dark. Many families have cultural rituals and practices since time immemorial. For example, in the frog clan we have a responsibility to care for the Patron Saint, Santo Niño de Atocha. This is my mother's kin and during deshkwi, families make effigies of hope or earthly desires with clay. They are then brought to Santo Niño's. These clay wishes then sit with the Sandu until deshkwi (fasting) is over. Families will receive blessings sometime thereafter. Yanikchiya:we are blessings which are granted in prayer and again, we acknowledge the blessings from our ancestors and all those who have departed this earth.
Dehts'ina (winter) is when our people return to delapna:we (story). The origin story of how our people came into this world and journeyed to get to the middle place is called "Halona I:diwana,". Zuni classes will retrace their ancestor's journeys and why it is important to know this. We have many sacred spaces and ancestral lands where students will learn the Shiwi (Zuni)names for these geographical places. Everyone learns the origin story sometime in our lives as A:shiwi. Students will learn these important accounts of A:shiwi (Zuni) tribal history, and it will create reverence for these cultural spaces. Zuni continues to hold onto cultural traditions of the past and it is the language that keeps it going. Elahkwa don dehts'ina kettsanishhi a:deya du! - Mila Padilla (Shiwi'ma Bena:we Yanikk'e:ona).

Dowa Yalanne dehts'inapba- (Corn Mountain during winter)
photo credit : Mila Padilla

As many Native Students and their families celebrate traditional events this season please note attendance as an excused absense.
Tribal Obligations Excusal
A student maybe excused from school to participate in tribal obligations with the written consent of the student's parents/guardians.

The winter solstice holds deep cultural and spiritual significance for many Native American communities, marked by ceremonies, rituals, and community events. Historically, indigenous peoples, like those at Cahokia, revered the sun as a life-giving deity, integrating their knowledge of the solar system into their architecture, such as the Woodhenge structure aligned with solstice sunrises. The Zuni Pueblo in New Mexico continues to honor the solstice with the Shalak'o festival, a private multiday event where deities embody blessings and balance for the agricultural year. Meanwhile, the Blackfeet tribe in Montana traditionally marked the solstice with games and dances, emphasizing community over formal ceremonies. Though some traditions have shifted, these practices reflect ancient understandings of the sun's cycles and the interconnectedness of life on Earth.

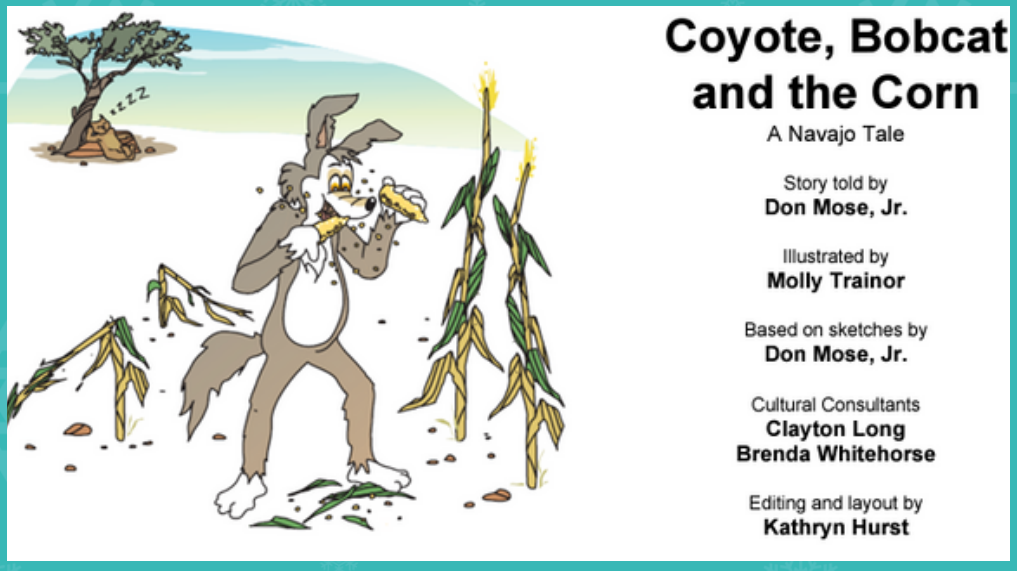
Pueblo of Zuni Shalak'o date: November 30

Winter Solstice: Sat, Dec 21, 2024, 2:19 AM

Consider participating in our free Dine' Winter Immersion Camp over holiday break. Information and registration.

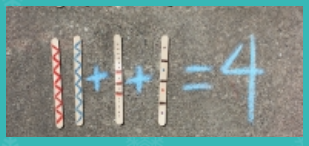
Tis' the Season

- Stories by the Fireside
- Stories by the Fireside ep2
- Keshjee,' the Navajo Shoe Game
- Stick Games
- String Games
- Grandpa's Canes Story
- Grab: A Documentary about Laguna Grab Day PBS Grab Day: Educational
- Guide to Laguna Pueblo Traditions and Insights
- 12 Days of Christmas: Red Christmas A Round Dance Christmas Celebration
- Jana Mashonee-Winter Wonderland American Indian Christmas (sung in Ojibwe)
- National Parks Service Telling Indigenous Stories



Kind Reminder: Coyote Stories and Winter Stories/ Games are ONLY told during the winter months

Stick Games



Shoe Game

Na'atl'o String Game

Indigenous FOOTBALL Season

Jim Thorpe (1887–1953), a Native American of the Sac and Fox Nation, was one of history's most versatile and accomplished athletes, excelling in football, baseball, basketball, and track and field. A football legend, he starred at Carlisle Indian Industrial School under coach Pop Warner, leading the team to major victories in 1911 and 1912. Thorpe became a founding member and first president of the NFL in 1920, playing for several teams and showcasing unmatched athleticism by excelling at multiple positions. As a trailblazer, he broke racial barriers and inspired marginalized communities. Inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame's inaugural class in 1963, Thorpe's legacy as a symbol of excellence and resilience endures, further cemented by his Olympic triumphs and multi-sport dominance.

Teaching Resources

- Carlisle Indian School Resource Center
- Pro Football Hall of Fame
- Jim Thorpe Native American Athlete Lesson
- Reading through HIstory: Jim Thorpe
- Break the code: JIm Thorpe

Did you know?

The Hominy Indians, an all-Native American football team founded in the early 1920s by Osage man Ira Hamilton and supported by local Osage backers, became one of the first great teams in American football history. Starting with local games, they quickly rose to prominence, winning 28 consecutive games and earning the nickname "The Terrors of the Midwest." Featuring talented players like Johnnie "Pepper" Martin and John Levi, hailed by Jim Thorpe as the greatest athlete in the world, the team's fame culminated in a historic victory on December 26, 1927, when they defeated the NFL champion New York Giants 13-6 in Pawhuska, Oklahoma, solidifying their legacy as world champions.

Focus on: Belonging

"Be related, somehow, to everyone you know." -Ella Deloria (Yankton Dakota)

Kinship in tribal settings is not strictly a matter of biological relationships, but rather a learned way of viewing those who share a community of residence. The ultimate test of kinship is behavior, not blood: you belong if you act like you belong.

The sense of belonging extends to nature as well. Animals, plants, people, and streams are interdependent. From childhood, children are taught through stories that if this harmony was upset, tragedies could result.

Maintaining balanced ecological relationships is a way of ensuring balance in one's own life.

The presence of a strong sense of belonging makes young people more receptive to guidance from other community members. Native youth have learned to listen and reflect on advice from concerned adults who approach them in a caring manner. Peer-group controls are also highly effective with Native youth; if a youngster is not responsive to group influence, this is a sure sign that the person doesn't feel he or she (or they) belongs.

Tiyospaye (tee-yo'-shpah-yay) is a Dakota word that captures the idea of larger and extended families that are connected.

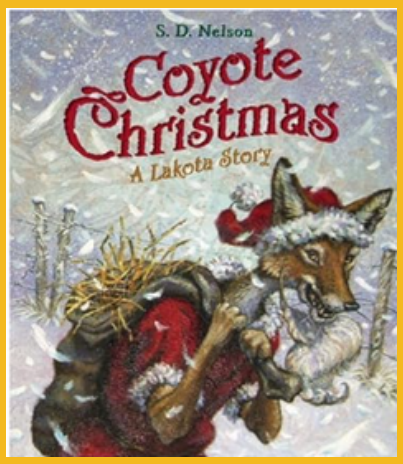
Culturally Responsive Resources

Helpful reflections to consider when selecting Native American lessons or activities.
Be mindful of where and by whom resources have come from. Is it written in past tense?
Is the creator a Native person?
Are othering or stereotypical terms used?
Be critical of sites like TeacherspayTeachers.

When in doubt check out: American Indians in Children's Literature by Debbie Reese

Books make Great Stocking Stuffers, too!

- The Sea in Winter
- Winter's Gifts
- Coyote Christmas
- We Are Still Here!: Native American Truths Everyone Should Know
- Be a Good Ancestor
- Dancing With Our Ancestors (Sk'ad'a Stories Series)
- Wisdom Weavers: Explore the Ojibwe Language and the Meaning of Dream Catchers
- Roth: Wheetago War
- What Your Ribbon Skirt Means to Me: Deb Haaland's Historic Inauguration
- It's Powwow Time!
- Every Child Matters
- Warrior Girl Unearthed
- Apple: (Skin to the Core)
- The Pueblo Food Experience
- Sacred Land, Sacred View: Navajo Perceptions of the Four Corners Region
- Native Defenders of the Environment (Native Trailblazers, 3)
- Teaching Where You Are: Weaving Indigenous and Slow Principles and Pedagogies
- Native America from 1890 to the Present
- An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States
- Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States: A Graphic Interpretation
- Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples
- Reclaiming Youth at Risk (Native Values/ Circle of Courage)



This Holiday Season Support Indigenous Creators

- OLD TOWN {Walk Way Jewelers) 2021 Old Town Rd NW East Sidewalk, Albuquerque, NM 87104
- The NTVS: a clothing and accessories business
- ATGG Books & Comics (Red Planet)
- Nizhoni Soaps
- Isleta Indian Pueblo Store
- Indian Pueblo Cultural Center Gift Shop
- Native Art & Food Market
- Bookworks (supports local Indigenous Authors)