

# The Densmore Repatriation Project



*Densmore and Mountain Chief 1916*

The Densmore Repatriation Project is named for ethnomusicologist Frances Densmore of Red Wing, Minnesota, who made her first visit to the Standing Rock Reservation in 1911.

She recorded traditional songs on a hand-cranked, wax cylinder recorder and spoke with dozens of tribal elders. The songs she recorded, many over 100 years old, had been passed down for generations. Densmore documented this work in her book *Teton Sioux Music*, which contained additional stories and insights into Lakota/Dakota life and became a touchstone for learning about the culture.

This work of Densmore's has been in storage for over 100 years. The purpose of the Densmore Repatriation Project is to re-introduce these songs and stories and make them easily accessible for a new generation of Native singers and educators.

In 1927 Densmore wrote, "Research work is only worthwhile when its results are transmitted to others." That's the purpose of this project: to transmit what she called research work to others, particularly the people who it belongs to.

# Densmore Repatriation Unit Plan

## GRADE 9-12

This unit plan provides an opportunity to deepen understanding and appreciation of Native American history by cutting across subject-matter lines and emphasizing unifying concepts. Based on [The Densmore Repatriation Project](#), this integrated unit of study takes root in the enduring/overarching understanding that relations between differing cultures can elicit both conflict and cooperation, and that music and/or other forms of cultural expression can be a vehicle for developing knowledge, understanding and cultural appreciation.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- Watch videos explaining more [about the project](#).
- Hard copies of Study Guides referred to in this unit can be downloaded at <https://www.lakotasongs.com/book>
- Large resolution files of images used in lessons one, two, and three can be found on provided thumb drive.
- Hear more than [70 songs from the collection](#) re-recorded in 2022.
- [Watch 30 videos](#) providing context and history for individual Lakota songs.
- Watch videos explaining more [about the project](#).
- Download an updated e-book version of [Teton Sioux Music](#).

## ENDURING UNDERSTANDING:

Relations between cultures can mean both conflict and cooperation.

## NORTH DAKOTA NATIVE AMERICAN ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING:

**Learning & Storytelling:** Traditional teaching and the passing on of knowledge and wisdom was done through storytelling, song, ceremony, and daily way of life, often incorporating specific gender and age specific responsibilities. These continue to be some of the best modes for learning for both Native and non-Native learners.

## NORTH DAKOTA SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

**Standard ND 6-12.4: Analyze the historical and current events and their impact on the development of North Dakota.**

ND 6-12.4.1 Identify the Native American groups in North Dakota before European contact and describe their culture.

ND 6-12.4.2 Analyze European exploration and early settlement of North Dakota and its impact on Native American groups

## NORTH DAKOTA STATE MUSIC STANDARDS

### Secondary Music - Connecting

**Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding**

MU:Cn11.2.E.I.a Explain how the arts reflect cultural trends and historical events across the world and how new directions in the arts have emerged.

## NORTH DAKOTA STATE VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS

### K-12 - Responding

**Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work Enduring Understanding: People gain insights into meanings of artworks by engaging in the process of art criticism.**

VA:Re8.HS.1.a Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and enough evidence found in the work and its various contexts.

### KEY CONCEPTS:

- Native Americans were stripped of their lands, beliefs and cultural practices as a result of westward expansion, European migration, and forced acculturation.
- For millennia, Native Americans have shaped and been shaped by their culture and environment. Elders in each generation teach the next generation their values, traditions, and beliefs.
- Music is intertwined with the life of every race. We understand the people better if we know their music and we appreciate their music better if we know the people. (From *The American Indians and Their Music* by Frances Densmore, 1926)

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- What do stories, legends, spiritual practices, and music tell about the culture of the Native Americans who created them?
- How did Native Americans suffer from colonization?
- Why are some cultural/spiritual practices viewed as threats?
- How are Native American traditions kept alive?
- What benefits does repatriation bring to Native American people? Culture?

### CRITICAL THINKING PROMPTS AND STRATEGIES

Critical Thinking prompts and strategies suggested in this Unit Plan have been adapted from various sources, including:

- [Visual Thinking Strategies](#)
- [The Responsive Classroom Discussion: The Inclusion of All Students. Mainstreaming Digest. University of Maryland, College Park, MD.](#) Lyman, F. (1981).
- [Making Thinking Visible, How to Promote Engagement, Understanding, and Independence for All Learners](#), Ritchhart, R., Church, M., Morrison, K. (2011)

**VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES** (Refer to VTS website at <https://vtshome.org/about/> )

Throughout this unit teachers will be asked to begin several of the lessons by introducing an image through a process called Visual Thinking Strategies. [Visual Thinking Strategies \(VTS\)](#) is an inquiry-based teaching strategy for all grade levels. You do not need any special art training to use this strategy. The goal of VTS is not to teach the history of a work of art but, rather, to encourage students to observe independently and to back up their comments with evidence.

**How to do VTS:**

1. Project artwork. Choose a work that is not abstract. (Images will be provided for each lesson within this unit of study.)
2. Ask students to look closely and silently at it for a minute or two.
3. Three questions guide the discussion.

**Open with: “What’s going on here?”** Summarize student responses using conditional language (“Markus thinks this could be...”). This keeps the conversation open to other interpretations by other students. Avoid judgements or assumptions.

**If appropriate: “What do you see that makes you say that?”** This encourages students to back up their statements with things they see in the work of art.

**Ask the group: “What more can we find?”** This continues the conversation.

**Tips for doing VTS:**

- During discussion, link responses together—compare and contrast what other students have said.
- Avoid inserting information or using phrases such as “that’s right/wrong”. Let students look closely and reason out their responses, rather than discussing the facts. If a student comes to a factually incorrect conclusion, gently correct if absolutely necessary during your classroom lesson, *not during the VTS conversation*.
- Allow the conversation to go where it will, even if it gets off topic. Remember, the goal is not to share information, but to encourage critical thinking.
- At the end of the conversation, continue with your lesson, linking the content with comments that students made.

For more information about Visual Thinking Strategies, visit their [website](#).

**THINK, PAIR, SHARE** (Refer to pages 109-113 in *The Responsive Classroom Discussion: The Inclusion of All Students. Mainstreaming Digest.*)

In an activity based on the Think, Pair, Share strategy, students write and discuss their ideas with a partner before sharing them with the larger group. This format gives students the opportunity to thoughtfully respond to questions in written form and to engage in meaningful dialogue with other students about these issues. It is a helpful way to give students time to compose their ideas before sharing with them with the class.

**Steps for Implementation:**

1. **THINK:** Have students reflect on a given question or write a response in their journals
2. **PAIR:** Have students pair up and share their responses.

3. **SHARE:** When the larger group reconvenes, ask pairs to report back on their conversations. Alternatively, you could ask students to share what their partner said. In this way, the strategy focuses on students' skills as careful listeners.

**TUG-OF-WAR** (Refer to pages 199-206 in the book *Making Thinking Visible: How to Promote Engagement, Understanding, and Independence for All Learners.*)

**A routine for exploring the complexity of fairness dilemmas.**

**Purpose:** This routine builds on familiarity with the game of tug of war to help students understand the complex forces that “tug” at either side of a fairness dilemma. It encourages students to reason carefully about the “pull” of various factors that are relevant to a dilemma of fairness. It also helps them appreciate the deeper complexity of fairness situations that can appear black and white on the surface.

**Steps for Implementation:**

The routine works well as a whole class activity.

1. **Set up:** Present the dilemma to the class.
2. Draw or place a rope with the two ends representing the opposing sides of the dilemma and ask students to think about what side of the dilemma they would be on and why.
3. Students can write their justifications on post-it notes. Encourage students to think of other reasons or “tugs” for both sides of the dilemma, and then have students add their post-it notes to the rope.
4. Stand back and ask students to generate “What if’s:” questions, issues, factors or concerns that might need to be explored further to resolve the issue. Write and post these above the rope.
5. **Conclusion:** Finish the lesson by asking students to reflect on the activity. What new ideas they have about the dilemma? Do they still feel the same way about it? Have they made up minds or changed their minds?

The display of the tugs and What if’s? on the rope helps to make students’ thinking visible. Most importantly, their ideas are displayed in a way that shows their interconnectedness. The collaborative thinking process of the group as a whole is represented through the “action” of the tug of war. This is a key point about making thinking visible: It shows the dynamic interaction of people’s thoughts in a context of a shared inquiry. [https://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Tug%20of%20War\\_0.pdf](https://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Tug%20of%20War_0.pdf)

**HEADLINES** (Refer to pages 111-118 in the book *Making Thinking Visible: How to Promote Engagement, Understanding, and Independence for All Learners.*)

**A routine for capturing core ideas.**

**Purpose:** The Headlines routine asks students to reflect and synthesize as they identify the essence or core of a situation or learning experience. This helps to build understanding of big ideas and core principles. Teachers send the message that taking notice of big ideas is critical to understanding. Documenting the group’s headlines allows students to consider a topic from multiple angles. It provides the teacher with useful information that can be used to plan future instruction.

**Steps for Implementation:**

1. **Set up:** After the learning experience, ask students to consider what they think some of the core ideas in what they've been learning seem to be.
2. **Write a headline:** Ask the students to "Write a heading, or headline for this topic or issue that captures an important aspect or core idea that they want to remember.
3. **Share the thinking:** Once students have an opportunity to draft a headline, ask them to share with students around them. It is important that student not only share their headlines but also the story and reasoning behind their choice.
4. **Invite further sharing:** Once small groups have had the opportunity to share their headlines and tell the stories of the headlines with each other, you can create a class collection of the headline that document the group's thinking.

## Lesson One – Setting the Stage

### Introduction to Frances Densmore and the Densmore Repatriation Project



Image 1 - Frances Densmore and Mountain Chief  
Commissioned ledger art by Telsa Belcourt

**Estimated Time:** two, 50–60-minute class periods

**Lesson Overview:** This lesson begins by introducing students to historical events surrounding westward expansion, namely the Dakota Conflict of 1862 and work of Frances Densmore. Introducing awareness of the historical significance and ramifications of efforts to forcibly remove the Dakota People from their homelands sets the stage for understanding the future impact of Frances Densmore’s work which focused on the study and preservation American Indian music.

### Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Use historical context and prior knowledge to describe and analyze works of art and primary source photos.
- Recognize and describe the negative impacts of western expansion on Indigenous Peoples, culture, and communities.
- Discuss and examine the purpose and goals of Frances Densmore’s work encompassing the study and preservation of American Indian music.

## Materials:

- Image 1 (image should be enlarged and projected on either a screen or white board)
- Copies of Study Guide 1 – About Frances Densmore
- Computer with internet access
- Student journals, notebooks, or virtual discussion board site where students can share their reflections.
- Large chart paper

## Vocabulary:

- Repatriation - the return of someone or something to their own country.
- Ethnology - the study of the characteristics of various peoples and the differences and relationships between them.
- Methodology - research methodology is a way of explaining how a researcher intends to carry out their research. It's a logical, systematic plan to resolve a research problem. A methodology details a researcher's approach to the research to ensure reliable, valid results that address their aims and objectives.
- Acculturation – Often tied to political conquest or expansion, the process of change in beliefs or traditional practices that occurs when the cultural system of one group displaces that of another.
- Sun Dance - *Wiwányang Wačipi*, was the most important ceremony practiced by the Lakota (Sioux) and nearly all Plains Indians. It was a time of renewal for the tribe, people and earth. The village was large, as many bands came together for this annual rite.

## Learning Activities:

### Part One – Day One

#### Activity One – **Setting the Stage** (approximately 15 min.)

#### **Project Image 1 on screen or white board and implement the Visual Thinking Strategy**

*This image contains many clues and elements that will stir students' curiosity thereby enabling them to ask good questions and actively seek out answers.*

- Instruct students to observe the image silently for two-minutes
- Following two-minutes of silent observation, open the discussion through the Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS) process:
  1. **“What’s going on here?”** Summarize student responses using conditional language (“Markus thinks this could be...”). This keeps the conversation open to other interpretations by other students.
  2. **If appropriate: “What do you see that makes you say that?”** This encourages students to back up their statements with things they see in the work of art.
  3. **Ask the group: “What more can we find?”** This continues the conversation.

#### Activity Two – **Background Knowledge and Introduction of the Dakota Conflict of 1862**

(approximately 20 min.)

#### **Background**

Following the VTS exercise, share the following information with students:

*“The image you have been discussing was created as part of a historical project called the Densmore Repatriation Project. The Densmore Repatriation Project is named for ethnomusicologist Frances Densmore of Red Wing, Minnesota, who made her first visit to the Standing Rock Reservation in 1911 where she recorded traditional songs on a hand-cranked, wax cylinder recorder and spoke with dozens of tribal elders.”*

*As students begin this unit of study, we encourage you to create space for sharing information concerning time, place and historical events prior to and surrounding Frances Densmore’s research, in particular westward expansion and the Dakota Wars of 1862. For six weeks in 1862, war raged throughout southwestern Minnesota. There were many causes for the war. The war and its aftermath changed the course of the state’s history and descendants of those touched by the war continue to live with the trauma it caused. Viewing the following historical documentaries will create a foundation for understanding the significance of westward expansion and revolutionary work of Frances Densmore.*

**As a class, view the following video to provide insight regarding time, place, and historical events prior to and surrounding Frances Densmore’s research.**

- The Očhéthi Šakówiŋ: A History of the Lakota/Dakota Tribes <https://vimeo.com/786725353> (running time 6:39)

If time remains, the following videos may also be viewed as a class or independently.

- U.S.-Dakota War - War <https://youtu.be/Y1uwsqT2Kkc> (approximately 3 min.)
- Internment <https://youtu.be/BS-Gelkjhgh> (approximately 3 min.)
- U.S.-Dakota War – Aftermath <https://youtu.be/-sm1ITspWig> (approximately 3 min.)

**Activity Three - Think, Pair, Share Activity** (approximately 10 -15 min.)

1. **THINK:** Have students reflect on the following question and record their response in their journals, notebooks, or virtual discussion board site:
  - *Who were the Sioux tribes and where did they live prior to westward expansion?*
  - *How did westward expansion and the Dakota War of 1862 impact Indigenous peoples and their communities?*
2. **PAIR:** Have students pair up and share their responses.
3. **SHARE:** When the larger group reconvenes, ask pairs to report back on their conversations. Alternatively, you could ask students to share what their partner said. In this way, the strategy focuses on students’ skills as careful listeners.
4. **LIST:** List responses to this question on large chart paper and save as a review and/or refresher for part two.

## **Part Two – Day Two**

Before you begin, review the question and responses created during previous day’s Think, Pair, Share. Ask students if they have more to share or would like to add more to the list.

**Activity Four - Read Study Guide 1 – About Frances Densmore** (approximately 5 min.)

- Ask students if they have more to share or would like to add more to the list.

- Ask students to read Study Topic 1. This may be done independently or as a class.

**Activity Five – Video: The Densmore Repatriation Project** (approximately 17 min.)

- View at <https://vimeo.com/730825306> or <https://youtu.be/iCcEnzzEXTw>

**Activity Six – Think, Pair, Share Activity** (approximately 15 -20 min.)

1. **THINK:** Have students reflect on the following questions and record responses in their journals, notebooks, or virtual discussion board site:
  - *How/why did acculturation take place?*
  - *Why was music so important to Indigenous Cultures?*
  - *What made Frances Densmore’s research so extraordinary?*
  - *What challenges did she face?*
2. **PAIR:** Have students pair up and share their responses.
3. **SHARE:** When the larger group reconvenes, ask pairs to report back on their conversations. Alternatively, you could ask students to share what their partner said. In this way, the strategy focuses on students’ skills as careful listeners.
4. **LIST:** List responses to these questions on large chart paper and save as a review and/or refresher for lesson two.

**Lesson Extension:**

- The Sun Dance <https://vimeo.com/786099379> The meaning and history of The Sun Dance
- The Dakota Conflict <https://video.tpt.org/video/tpt-documentaries-dakota-conflict/> Explores the causes, events and aftermath of the fierce fighting that broke out in 1862 between Minnesota’s white European settlers and the native people of the state.

## Lesson Two – Choosing the Songs

*Music and song are an important method for passing on a culture's knowledge and wisdom*



*Image 2 - "The Birthing of Our Seventh Generation Children"  
Contemporary Lakota/Hidatsa traditional artist D. Joyce Kitson.  
Photo courtesy of ND Council on the Arts, photographer Troyd Geist.*

**Estimated Time:** One 50–60-minute class period

**Lesson Overview:** This lesson introduces students to the challenges and ways in which Frances Densmore chose and recorded her collection of songs. Students will also learn about ceremonies, beliefs, and customs of the Sioux tribe and their efforts to retain and revive these important traditions.

### Learning Objectives

**Students will be able to:**

- Use historical context and prior knowledge to describe and analyze works of art and primary source photos.
- Identify the tribes living in the upper Missouri and the challenges they faced due to western expansion.
- Explain how music was used by the Sioux tribe to express historical events and cultural beliefs.

**Materials:**

- Image 2 (image should be enlarged and projected on either a screen or white board)
- Copies of Study Guide 2 – Choosing the Songs
- Computer with internet access
- Student journals, notebooks, or virtual discussion board site where students can share their reflections.
- Large chart paper

### **Vocabulary:**

- Methodical - done according to a systematic or established form of procedure
- Accordance - conformity or agreement
- Contemporary - belonging to or occurring in the present

### **Learning Activities:**

**Activity One** – **Setting the Stage** (approximately 15 min.)

**Project Image 2 on screen or white board and implement the Visual Thinking Strategy**

*This image contains many clues and elements that will stir students' curiosity thereby enabling them to ask good questions and actively seek out answers.*

- Instruct students to observe the image silently for two-minutes
- Following two-minutes of silent observation, open the discussion through the Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS) process:
  1. **“What’s going on here?”** Summarize student responses using conditional language (“Markus thinks this could be...”). This keeps the conversation open to other interpretations by other students.
  2. **If appropriate: “What do you see that makes you say that?”** This encourages students to back up their statements with things they see in the work of art.
  3. **Ask the group: “What more can we find?”** This continues the conversation.

**Activity Two** – **Read Study Guide 2 – Choosing the Songs** (approximately 5 min.)

- Review vocabulary words with students prior to reading.
- Ask students to read Study Topic 2. This may be done independently or as a class.

**Activity Three** – **Video: The Story and Meaning of the White Buffalo Calf Maiden** (approx. 12 min.)

- View at <https://vimeo.com/731077978> or <https://youtu.be/iCcEnzzEXTw>

**Activity Four** – **Think, Pair, Share Activity** (approximately 15 -20 min.)

1. **THINK:** Have students reflect on the following questions and record response in their journals, notebooks, or virtual discussion board site:
  - *Why did Frances Densmore begin her collection of 240 songs with Song of the White Buffalo Calf Pipe? What was the significance of this song to the Sioux people?*
  - *How was this belief preserved by the Sioux in the face of acculturation?*
  - *How did Frances Densmore’s recording of this song and her research assist in preserving this knowledge for future generations?*

2. **PAIR:** Have students pair up and share their responses.
3. **SHARE:** When the larger group reconvenes, ask pairs to report back on their conversations. Alternatively, you could ask students to share what their partner said. In this way, the strategy focuses on students' skills as careful listeners.
4. **LIST:** List responses to these questions on large chart paper and save as a review and/or refresher for lesson three.

## Lesson Three – The Challenges of Culture

*Traditional teaching and the passing on of knowledge and wisdom often incorporated specific gender and age specific responsibilities.*



*Image 3 - Group in Front of the Dance Arbor  
Photo by Frank B. Fiske  
Courtesy of State Historical Society of North Dakota*

**Estimated Time:** One 50–60-minute class period

**Lesson Overview:** This lesson expands upon the ceremonies, beliefs, protocols, and customs of the Sioux tribe in pertaining to the role/importance of elders, gender, and race.

### Learning Objectives

**Students will be able to:**

- Use historical context and prior knowledge to describe and analyze works of art and primary source photos.
- Identify and describe protocols and/or customs of the Sioux Tribe and the impact they had on Frances Densmore’s research.
- Analyze and evaluate the processes and/or approach by which Frances Densmore gained access to tribal knowledge and ceremonies.

### Materials:

- Image 3 (image should be enlarged and projected on either a screen or white board)
- Large chart paper or access to white board
- Copies of Study Guide 3 – The Challenges of Culture

- Computer with internet access
- Sticky notes (3 different colors)
- Student journals, notebooks, or virtual discussion board site where students can share their reflections.

### **Vocabulary:**

- Interpreter – a person who interprets, especially one who translates speech orally
- Intercessor – a person who intervenes on behalf of another, especially by prayer
- Exploited – make full use of and derive benefit from (a resource), use (a situation or person) in an unfair or selfish way

### **Learning Activities:**

**Activity One** – **Setting the Stage** (approximately 15 min.)

**Project Image 3 on screen or white board and implement the Visual Thinking Strategy**

*This image contains many clues and elements that will stir students' curiosity thereby enabling them to ask good questions and actively seek out answers.*

- Instruct students to observe the image silently for two-minutes
- Following two-minutes of silent observation, open the discussion through the Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS) process:
  1. **“What’s going on here?”** Summarize student responses using conditional language (“Markus thinks this could be...”). This keeps the conversation open to other interpretations by other students.
  2. **If appropriate: “What do you see that makes you say that?”** This encourages students to back up their statements with things they see in the work of art.
  3. **Ask the group: “What more can we find?”** This continues the conversation.

**Activity Two** – **Read Study Guide 3 – The Challenges of Culture** (approximately 5 min.)

- Review vocabulary words with students prior to reading.
- Ask students to read Study Topic 3. This may be done independently or as a class.

**Activity Three** – **Video: Whenever the Tribe Assembles** (approximately 4 min.)

- View at <https://vimeo.com/723370113> or <https://youtu.be/FcphiOyWgwU>

**Activity Four** – **Tug-of-War** (approximately 20-25 min.) Tug of War is a thinking routine

#### **1. Set Up**

Lead students in a discussion to identify and frame a particular dilemma for examination.

*NOTE: In this situation the dilemma centers around Densmore’s adoption into the tribe and how this event enabled her to gain access to tribal knowledge and culture. Could this be viewed as a form of exploitation or manipulation? Or was this a sincere event that allowed Densmore to complete her work thus preserving traditional music and culture? Did the means justify the end?*

#### **2. Framing the Issue**

Ask students to follow along as you share the following statement from Study Topic 3: *“In Study Topic 3, you may recall the following statements, “Densmore was still faced with the awkward cultural issue of being a single white woman recording the testimony and singing of tribal men. The origin of the solution is unclear, but at a council meeting in July of 1911 Tǎokála Lúta (Red Fox) declared his intention to adopt Densmore as his daughter. Red Fox had the right to do this as he had lost his own daughter and it was the accepted custom to “adopt” a new one. This made Densmore a member of the tribe, a position she exploited to her own advantage. Densmore later wrote: “My adoption into the tribe will be of the greatest help in this study as it is widely understood that I am entitled to anything which a member of the tribe is entitled to...old men would not hold back anything from me.””* Follow up with, “Just what seems to be the issue here?” “What is the dilemma, or where might we find tension, cause for concern?” “What is this issue really about?”

### **3. Consider the Tugs/State the Opposing Views**

Once the dilemma has been clearly defined and written as a statement, draw a line on the whiteboard or chart paper representing the tug-of-war rope. Ask students to name the two ends of the rope. What are the two opposing views around this dilemma? Write the opposing views on either end of the “rope”.

### **4. Generate the Tugs**

Ask students generate as many “tugs” or statements in support for each point of view. Have the students write these statements on sticky notes (example: blue colored notes for pro, pink colored notes for con) so that they can be attached and moved to either end of the rope.

### **5. Place the Tugs**

Ask students to place their “tugs” along the rope. Discuss placement of each “tug” with the group moving the “tugs” that capture the strongest arguments closest to the corresponding point of view.

### **6. Ask What if? What About? Questions**

Questions may arise as students place their “tugs”. These issues may be framed as additional questions, written on different color sticky note and placed above the line.

### **7. Share the Thinking**

Ask students what new ideas emerged for them about the dilemma. Do they still feel the same as they did prior to the tug-of-war? If not, what changed their mind or added to their thinking?

### **Activity Five – I use to think..., Now I think...** (approximately 5-10 min.)

Have students reflect on the following prompts and record responses in their journals, notebooks, or virtual discussion board site, I used to think...Now I think...

## Lesson Four – Densmore’s Primary Informants & Singers

*Elders in each generation teach the next generation their values, traditions, and beliefs.*



*Participants in Sun Dance Densmore  
Photo Courtesy of State Historical Society of North Dakota*

**Estimated Time:** 30-50 minutes. This lesson has been designed to be assigned as homework of as independent study.

**Lesson Overview:** This lesson provides background information on Tribal leaders who sang and provided Densmore with important cultural details concerning the songs used in her research, along with an overview of the singers chosen to recreate these historic recordings.

### Learning Objectives

**Students will be able to:**

- Compare and contrast the common traits/characteristics/beliefs of Densmore’s primary informants and contemporary Indigenous/ Native American singers.
- Evaluate the impact of acculturation on Native American tribes past, present, and future.

### Materials:

- Copies of Study Guide 4 – The Primary Informants
- Graphic of North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings found at <https://teachingsofourelders.org/>
- Internet access

- Student journals, notebooks, or virtual discussion board site where students can share their reflections.

### **Learning Activities:**

**Activity One** – Read Study Guide 4 – The Primary Informants (approximately 10 min.)

Ask students to read Study Topic 4. This may be done independently or as a class.

**Activity Two** – Video: About the Singers (approx. 7 min.)

Ask students to view <https://youtu.be/pe4oplG195M>

**Activity Three** – North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings (approx. 5 min.)

Ask to students to review graphic of North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings found at <https://teachingsofourelders.org/>

**Activity Four** – Independent Journal/Blog Activity (Approximately 15 – 20 min.)

Ask students to reflect on the following prompts and record responses in their journals, notebooks, or virtual discussion board site:

- *What common characteristics, qualities, or norms did you notice between Densmore’s Primary Informants and the contemporary singers? What was different?*
- *To what extent has living between two worlds impacted the contemporary singers’ ability to maintain traditional values and cultural practices? What has changed or newly emerged?*

## Lesson Five – Collaborative/Culminating Activity

Stories, legends, music and spiritual practices can inform us about the norms, beliefs, and way of life of those who created them.



**Estimated Time:** Four, 30-50 minutes sessions or as long as needed to complete tasks one – three.

### Lesson Overview:

Culture can be identified as one’s world view which includes “experiences, expressions, symbols, materials, customs, behaviors, morals, norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs created and communicated among individuals,” and past down from generation as cultural traditions. This lesson provides students with an opportunity to work collaboratively to explore Indigenous/Native American culture through the story, or lens, of one or more Primary Informants presented in Lesson Four. When students learn collaboratively, they are responsible for solving a problem, finishing a task, or creating a project with a group. In addition, they are responsible for not only making sure the entire group succeeds but also managing their own role within the group to facilitate that success.

The following links provide valuable information, tools, and resources for designing and implementing effective collaborative learning experiences:

- 5 BENEFITS OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES & HOW TO GET STARTED  
<https://www.nshss.org/blog/5-benefits-of-collaborative-learning-strategies-how-to-get-started/>
- STUDENT-COLLABORATION TOOLS  
<https://www.common sense.org/education/top-picks/best-student-collaboration-tools> A list of digital, on-line, collaborative tools that can be used to promote productivity and creativity, getting students to share and collaborate on projects, give and take feedback, annotate, brainstorm, and/or make media.

### Learning Objectives

**Students will be able to:**

- Form and maintain a team.
- Collaborate in a project setting.
- Identify and describe the social norms and practices shared by Densmore’s Primary Informants.
- Examine the purpose and impact of identified social norms and practices.

- Demonstrate understanding by synthesizing findings into a single statement which can be supported by evidence.

### **Materials:**

- Internet access
- Four large poster boards (one for each group) or virtual discussion board/collaboration tool.
- Large chart paper (two for each group)
- Assorted drawing materials such as markers and colored pencils
- Copies of the following:
  - Study Guide 5 – Testimony regarding the Sun Dance
  - Study Guide 6 – Testimony treatment of the Sick
  - Study Guide 7 – Old Buffalo’s War Narrative
  - Study Guide 8 –The Testimony of Eagle Shield

### **Vocabulary:**

- Culture – the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group
- Norms – a standard or pattern, especially of social behavior, that is typical or expected of a group
- Beliefs – a state or habit of mind in which trust, or confidence is placed in some person or thing; something that is accepted, considered to be true, or held as an opinion; something believed
- Values – something (such as a principle or quality) intrinsically valuable or desirable

### **Lesson Introduction:**

- Break students into four groups and assign each group a Study Guide.
- Tell the students that each group will create a news story centered around their assigned topic which will then be shared back to the class at large.
- Ask students to complete the following tasks:

#### **Task One**

- Read the Study Guide and listen to the audio recordings assigned to your group.
- Respond individually to the following statements/prompts on sticky-notes:
  - What did this story, legend, and song(s) tell you about the Primary Informant and/or culture of the Native Americans who created them?
  - What cultural practices, norms, beliefs and/or values did you notice?
- Add your sticky notes to your group’s poster board or virtual discussion board.

#### **Task Two**

- As a team, group together the common cultural practices, norms, beliefs and/or values that have emerged.
- Place these in order of importance.
- As a team, ask yourself the following:

- In which ways did these cultural practices, norms, beliefs and/or values sustain or support Indigenous/Native American culture?
- Could these cultural practices, norms, beliefs and/or values be viewed as threats by other cultures? Why?
- What perceived impact did Frances Densmore’s research have on the Informant(s) and/or Indigenous/Native American culture. Include both positive and negative.

### Task Three

- Tell the students that each group must work together to create a news story about their study topic.
  - **Write a headline:** Using the large chart paper, ask each group to write a heading, or headline for their study topic that captures an important aspect or core idea that they want to share out with the rest of the class.
  - **Include Evidence:** Under their headline, ask each group to provide evidence/statements that supports their headline. Prompt the students by asking to them reflect on their headline and respond to, “What makes you say that?”
  - **Summarize:** Ask each group to provide a brief statement summarizing their thoughts on Frances Densmore’s research.
  - **Illustrate:** Students may include drawings and/or illustrations to support their headline and/or demonstrate understanding of the study topic.

### Task Four

- **Share the thinking:** Once each group has had an opportunity to draft a headline and supporting evidence, ask them to share their headline with the class. It is important that students not only share their headlines but also the story and reasoning behind their choice.
- **Invite further sharing:** Once each group has had the opportunity to share their headlines and tell the stories of the headlines with each other, you can create a class collection of the headlines that document the group’s thinking.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional Songs related to the Sun Dance can be found at [Songs — The Densmore Repatriation Project \(lakotasongs.com\)](http://Songs—TheDensmoreRepatriationProject(lakotasongs.com))

- #4 Courtney Yellowfat and Cody Wasinzi – Ceremonial Song (Song 3)
- #8 Spencer Little Owl – Painting the Sacred Pole (Song 14)
- #11 Wakan Tanka Pity Me (Song 22)
- #14 Cody Wasinzi – Song in Time of Danger (Song 39)
- #19 Kendall Little Owl – A Wind (Song 41)
- #22 Kendall Little Owl – Weapons Song (Song 45)