KEY MESSAGES

School tours at the First Americans Museum are centered on three key messages, which are emphasized throughout the exhibition experience. Consider reinforcing these as you facilitate the below activities.

• Oklahoma is home to 39 tribes that have diverse cultures, languages, and geographic origins.
• First Americans have demonstrated resilience in the face of adversity, including European arrival and United States policies. We are today reclaiming our beliefs and lifeways and exerting our sovereignty.
• In the past, non-Natives have told tribal stories and histories in history books, museum exhibitions and popular culture. At FAM, First Americans tell our own stories from our own perspective.

PRE/POST VISIT ACTIVITIES

These activities can enhance student learning by priming prior knowledge before the visit experience and prompting them to reflect on new ideas and information that they have encountered.

Know/Wonder/Learn

Prompt your students to diagram their prior knowledge and questions before their visit to FAM. Following the trip, ask students to revisit their chart to fill in what they learned.

Extensions:

• As age appropriate, prompt your students to revisit their “know” section and identify things they “knew” that are stereotypes, misconceptions, or generalizations (i.e., not all First Americans wear headdresses/warbonnets or live in tipis; tribal citizens make up a significant number of Oklahomans today).

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

The below activities will help raise awareness among your students of the historical significance and contemporary prevalence of the 39 tribes in Oklahoma today.

Beyond Stereotypes (Grades 8-12)

Relates to Social Studies Practices 3A-B and 4A-B

According to Merriam-Webster, to stereotype is “to believe unfairly that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same.” Since contact with European
settlers, First Americans have been stereotyped as uncivilized, violent, or lazy. These unfair generalizations have helped justify government policies toward First Americans, including forced relocation to Indian Territory or boarding schools.

The movies, TV, and media that we consume still includes many inaccurate representations of First Americans. Watch [this video together](#) and discuss:

- Have you ever been the target of a stereotype? How did it make you feel?
- How can stereotypes be harmful to a person or people group?
- How does “thinking like a historian” (close reading of primary sources, considering multiple perspectives, etc.) help diffuse stereotypes of past cultures and individuals?
- What are more reliable ways to learn about First American history, culture, and life today?

**Extensions:**

- Discuss with your students how they can stand up to stereotypes when they encounter them
- Share examples about positive stereotypes (i.e., girls are dependable and mature). How might seemingly positive generalizations be harmful and unfair?

**Classroom Land Acknowledgement**

*Relates to Oklahoma Academic Standards: K.1-3; 1.2-3; 2.2; 3.1-3; 4.1, 4.3; 6.1, 6.3, 6.5; 7.1; 8.7-8, 8.12; OKH.1-3, OKH.5, OKH.6, USG.3; USH.1)*

Land or People Acknowledgements are a way to raise awareness about the Indigenous people who have inhabited an area over time. Work with your students to identify the people for whom your site is ancestral land, and what tribal jurisdiction(s) your site resides in today. (If your school is on unassigned lands, as is in the case of most of the Oklahoma City metro, you may wish to cite nearby tribes in central Oklahoma). For information, you may reference:

- [Land Acknowledgement Guide (FAM)](#)
- [Current tribal jurisdictions in Oklahoma](#)
- [Native Land interactive map](#)

As appropriate, prompt your students to consider:

- Why is it important to understand who inhabited these lands before us?
- Where are these tribes located today in Oklahoma? Where are their capitals?
- Some Land Acknowledgements use the phrase “those who stewarded the land.” What’s the difference between live on, inhabit or steward?
- How can we acknowledge or honor the tribes in ways beyond just words?
- How do we steward the land today? How can we be better stewards?
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- What events in United States history led to the tribes’ presence in Oklahoma today?
- What does it mean for our tribal nations to be sovereign?

Extensions:

- Prompt students to research the original inhabitants of a place outside Oklahoma (i.e., a vacation destination, a hometown)
- Identify the ancestral lands of the tribes who were removed to Oklahoma

Double Exposure (Grades 8-12)

Relates to Social Studies Practices 3A-B and 4A-B

One of the key points of your tour at First Americans Museum is “We Are Still Here!” This message is important because of the “Vanishing Indian” fallacy still present in our books, movies, and TV (think *Last of the Mohicans* or John Red Corn from *King of The Hill*). During the 1800s and early 1900s, this myth suggested that First Americans’ land and cultures were tragically and nobly sacrificed to make the United States possible.

Many of the romanticized, historic images of First Americans you see were made by American photographer Edward Curtis, a key proponent of the “Vanishing Indian” myth. Curtis staged or added props to many photos to support his own agenda. Today, contemporary photographer Will Wilson (Navajo) uses traditional photography techniques to create portraits of First Americans that push back on the stereotypes that Curtis’s images promoted.

*Using our provided slides*, show your students the Curtis image and ask:

- What adjectives would you use to describe this image?
- What mood does the photograph evoke?
- What impressions does this image give you about the man represented? His culture?

Then, show your students the Wilson image and ask:

- What adjectives would you use to describe this image?
- What mood does the photograph evoke?
- What impressions does this image give you about the woman represented? Her culture?

Finally, show the last slide and ask students to compare the two images:

- Which image strikes you as more “authentic?”
- Who gets to decide what authentic is?
- What do you know about contemporary First American life? Where could you go to learn more?
What's in a Name?

Relates to Oklahoma Academic Standards: K.1-3; 1.2-3; 2.2; 3.1-3; 4.1, 4.3; 6.1, 6.3, 6.5; 7.1; 8.7-8, 8.12; OKH.1-3, OKH.5, OKH.6, USG.3; USH.1)

Oklahoma is home to twelve linguistic groups, including Algonquin, Athapascan, Caddoan, Iroquoian, Tanoan, Muskogean, Penutian, Jiwere, Dhegiha, Tonkawan, Uchean and Uto-Aztecan. Many place names in Oklahoma come from our diverse tribal languages.

Using a large-scale map and sticky notes, encourage students to identify place names that derive from First American languages and/or history. (Some place names, such as LeFlore country, might surprise learners as being of First American origin.) Students may draw on primary documents, such as historic maps of Indian Territory, and scholarly resources such as the online Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture.

Extensions:

- 27 of the 50 state names derive from a First American language. Encourage your students to explore the origin of the name and the culture from which it arose.

- When First American tribes came to Oklahoma, we brought our names with us. Can you find a connection between the shared place name across the United States, the tribe, and the lands they’ve inhabited? You can use this tool from the US Geologic Survey to find and identify concentrations of place names. Try looking up names such as Anadarko, Eufaula, Kaw/Kanza, Miami (not Florida), Ottawa, Pontotoc, Tishomingo, and Wyandotte.
POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

Reinforce your students' learning experiences from FAM by implementing a post-visit activity as appropriate and as time allows.

Exploring First American Contemporary Art (Grades 8-12)

Relates to Social Studies Practices 3 and 4

Contemporary art provides a lens into the political and cultural landscape of Indian Country today. Show your students an image by contemporary artists from the 39 tribes in Oklahoma (see our suggested image slideshow). Invite them to look closely and discuss:

- What’s going on in this picture?
- What is the setting or time period?
- What is the theme/mood?
- What do you think the artist is communicating here?
- What more can we find?

Instructors: refer the image details in the “notes” section of the PowerPoint slides before presenting to your class. You may wish to screen for age-appropriate images.

Act as a neutral facilitator and ask students to support their assertions with evidence from the image or from background knowledge they may have. Remind your students that art invites many different perspectives and interpretations. Try to spend at least five minutes on each image to build your students’ visual literacy. As you progress from image to image in our suggested sequence, you will find that the works become more abstract and challenging.

Contemporary Timeline

Relates to Social Studies Practices 2A-B, 3A and 4A-B

The OKLA HOMMA exhibition features a “Braided Nations” timeline of events that relate to the experiences of the 39 tribes in Oklahoma. However, our installed timeline concludes in 2021 with the completion of the museum.

Review our timeline together and invite your students to extend the timeline to include contemporary issues, topics and milestones that relate to tribal nations in the state. In addition to standard, reliable journalistic outlets, students may wish to access:

- High Country News Indigenous Affairs
- Indian Country Today
- Native Voice One
- Oklahoma StateImpact
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- Tribal newspapers (such as the Cherokee Phoenix or Cheyenne & Arapaho TV)

Extensions:

- We have color-coded our timeline elements to represent themes of Points of Power (red), Nationhood (black and red), and Game Changers/Federal Policy (black). Print out the PDF and assign small groups of students a selection of timeline pages and ask them to create their own themes to group their events.
- Present selections from the timeline of events without the graphics (i.e., just the event, date, and description on a PowerPoint slide) and ask students to assign it to Points of Power, Nationhood, Game Changers/Federal Policy and ask them to provide support for their answer.
- For younger students, you may introduce the idea of a timeline by passing out a selection of printed pages and challenge them to arrange in order. Ask: What is a timeline? What can we learn from timelines? What are the drawbacks of timelines? (i.e., they don't show cause and effect well, generally present one perspective, etc.) Students may wish to create their own timelines that relate to their own families.

Native Satire (Grades 8-12)

Relates to Social Studies Practices 2A-B, 3A and 4A-B

Screen First Contact, a short film by Oklahoma artists Steven Paul Judd (Kiowa/Choctaw) and Ryan Red Corn (Osage). The animation features an implausible, but comical, conversation between two Narragansett men witnessing the arrival of Pilgrims. You may wish to play it several times before you facilitate a student conversation with the following prompts:

- What message do you think the artists were trying to convey?
- How does this video contrast with the Thanksgiving myth of peaceful Pilgrims and First Americans sitting down to a turkey dinner popularized in American culture?
- How might satire make a message more effective? Name some contemporary examples of political or cultural satire (i.e., Saturday Night Live skits, political cartoons).