

# Celebrating Indigenous Culture

What is culture?  
How can we celebrate indigenous cultures?



**Teaching Channel**

A K12 Coalition Company

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will be able to identify and define examples of Indigenous culture.

**GRADES:** K-5

**MATERIALS:** Copies of the "[Cherokee Culture](#)" activity; paper copy of the book "We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga" by Traci Sorell or [digital copy of the book](#); markers/colored pencils/art supplies for the Cherokee Culture activity; whiteboard to write ideas about culture

## Directions

### INTRODUCTION

1. Write the word indigenous on the board. Ask students what it means.
2. Ask students to share their ideas about what indigenous means. Write student ideas on board or screen.
3. Show students this video about what the word indigenous means. Explain that this video takes place in Canada, which is in a different country, but that indigenous means the same thing all over the world!

[The word Indigenous — explained | CBC Kids News](#)

4. After watching the video, ask the following questions:
  - a. What does indigenous mean?
  - b. What should we call indigenous people?
  - c. What shouldn't we call indigenous people?

### DIRECT INSTRUCTION

1. Ask students if they know what holiday is coming up. Ask students if they have heard of Indigenous People's Day before. Explain that you will be watching a video explaining what Indigenous People's Day is.
  - a. Prediction question: based on the definition of "indigenous," what do you think Indigenous People's Day is about?
2. Show students [this video](#).
3. The end of the video asks students if they know who the indigenous people are native to their region. Use one of the following two resources to help them find out!
  - a. <https://native-land.ca/> (interactive map—would be best suited for older grades!)



([Image source: Ancient Origins](#)) (may be helpful to compare this map to a U.S. map for younger elementary students)

## GUIDED PRACTICE

1. Write the word culture on the board. Ask students, “One thing the video said was that Indigenous People’s Day is a great day to celebrate Indigenous people’s culture. What does culture mean?”
2. Students share ideas about what culture is while the teacher writes them on board (possible ideas: art, food, music, activities, clothing, languages, celebrations, etc.)
3. Explain to students that you will be reading a book about an Indigenous group called the Cherokee Nation to learn more about their culture. Ask students to notice or observe any examples of culture they hear in the book.
4. Read the book “We are Grateful: Otsaliheliga” by Traci Sorell or play a read aloud version for students:  
[Read Aloud: We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga by Traci Sorell | Stories with Star](#)
5. After reading, ask students to share out any examples of culture they noticed from the book. Write their ideas on a whiteboard or screen, or use this list and display it in your classroom:

- a. Food:
  - i. Buttery bean bread
  - ii. Steamy hominy soup
  - iii. Wild onions and hen’s eggs
- b. Celebrations:
  - i. Great New Moon Ceremony
  - ii. Cherokee New Year
  - iii. Green Corn Ceremony
  - iv. Cherokee National Holiday
- c. Activities:
  - i. Elders sharing stories
  - ii. Sewing pucker-toe moccasins
  - iii. Plant ani (strawberries)
  - iv. Catch crawdads
  - v. Play stickball
  - vi. Shell shakers
  - vii. Buckbrush honeysuckle collecting
  - viii. Basket weaving



- ix. Corn-husk dolls
- x. Cane flutes
- xi. Making pottery with coil clay
- d. Language:
  - i. Tsalgi (Cherokee language)
  - ii. Otsaliheliga: we are grateful
  - iii. Uligohvsdi: fall/autumn
  - iv. Elisi: grandmother
  - v. Gola: winter
  - vi. Tsalagi: Cherokee
  - vii. Gogeyi: spring
  - viii. Ani: strawberries
  - ix. Gogi: summer
  - x. Nulistanidolv: history

## INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

1. Pass out the “Cherokee Culture” activity as well as art supplies to students.
2. Explain to students that they will select one item from each category (food, language, celebrations, activities) to draw a picture of and write about on their worksheet.
  - a. It will be helpful to have the list of examples on the board for students to refer to while they work on this!
3. Modify the activity as needed for students: they can focus on drawing for each example or short or extended writing.

