

Video 2: Property and Sovereignty: Native Americans and the United States

Featuring Dr. Jimmy Sweet (Lakota-Dakota), Rutgers University, Department of American Studies

In [Property and Sovereignty: Native Americans and the United States](#), Dr. Jimmy Sweet explores the how the concepts of property and Native American sovereignty were grappled with in the formation of the United States and New Jersey more locally.

Key Concepts

- Property vs. Sovereignty [01:35-03:12]
- The Doctrine of Discovery and Manifest Destiny [03:13-04:41]
- U.S. government and tribal relations [04:42-14:36]
- Case Study: the Lenape people in New Jersey and Lenape Diaspora [14:37-20:56]
- Ongoing fights over Native American land and sovereignty [20:57-23:47]

**The term "Native Americans," is used by Dr. Sweet throughout his talk and we use the same here in our review questions and activities however, many historians and tribal communities use different terms such as Indigenous American, American Indian, and/ or First Nation (particularly in Canada).*

New Jersey Student Learning Standards

Grades 6-8

6.1.8.CivicsDP.3.a: Use primary and secondary sources to assess whether or not the ideals found in the Declaration of Independence were fulfilled for women, African Americans, and Native Americans during this time period.

Grades 9-12

6.1.12.HistoryCC.1.a: Assess the impact of the interactions and conflicts between native groups and North American settlers.

6.1.12.HistoryCA.2.a: Research multiple perspectives to explain the struggle to create an American identity.

Review Questions

1. How did the Doctrine of Discovery and later Manifest Destiny change the concept of “property”?
2. Cite one example offered by Dr. Sweet of how the concept of sovereignty was disrupted by a U.S. treaty.
3. The Indian Removal Act was in place for 60 years, at which time the majority of tribal people had been relocated to designated “Indian land.” What was lost by the tribes that were moved? What was the impact on the tribes in Oklahoma and Kansas when other tribes were moved in?
4. What was the intent of the Allotment plan? What were the consequences for the tribes involved?
5. What were some unexpected consequences when termination policies intended to end tribal loyalties and connections were enacted by the U.S. government?
6. A common issue in U.S. history is the question of property and ownership. Describe one issue of property that relates to an environmental concern and how it impacts the Native American tribes that live there.
7. Native American reservations have their own criminal code. How are Native American criminal codes impeded by federal or state agencies? How does it impact the people on the reservation?

Activities

1. Research current case studies of eminent domain and how they reflect battles over property and sovereignty (pipeline projects, casinos on tribal land, access to clean water, taking and repatriating cultural items, etc.). Considering Dr. Sweet’s concepts of property and sovereignty, define the issue and provide context on what methods were used by opposing sides to affect property and sovereignty. What was the outcome?
2. Pick a tribal government and explore how it is set up and functions. What is the relationship of this government to the U.S. federal government?

Note to teacher: This can be done as a jigsaw activity where groups of students investigate one tribal government each. Students compare the issues that each tribal government experiences in their expert groups and then report back to their group. After comparing each group's issues, have students come together as a class to list common themes between them.

Resources

NYC Stands with Standing Rock Collective. 2016. "#StandingRockSyllabus." <https://nycstandswithstandingrock.wordpress.com/standingrocksyllabus/>.

"Notice of Intent to Repatriate Cultural Items: New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, NJ." A Notice by the National Park Service on 2/22/2018 <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/02/22/2018-03633/notice-of-intent-to-repatriate-culturalitems-new-jersey-state-museum-trenton-nj>

Jon Hurdle. "PennEast shelves plan to build pipeline on public lands in New Jersey." WHYY PBS. Sept 23, 2021. <https://whyy.org/articles/penneast-shelves-plan-to-build-pipeline-on-public-lands-in-new-jersey/>

Cheyenne Haslett and Laura Romero. "For tribes, casinos fund what the government doesn't. Now, they're closed." ABC News. Apr 29, 2020. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/tribes-casinos-fund-government-doesnt-now-closed/story?id=70371212>

Simon Romero and Jack Healy. "Tribal Nations Face Most Severe Crisis in Decades as the Coronavirus Closes Casinos," The New York Times. May 11, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/11/us/coronavirus-native-americans-indian-country.html>

Alex Hager. "Many tribal homes don't have clean water, and the road to getting it is lined with hurdles." NPR for Northern Colorado, Dec 8, 2021. <https://www.kunc.org/environment/2021-12-08/many-tribal-homes-dont-have-clean-water-and-the-road-to-getting-it-is-lined-with-hurdles>