DEMOCRACY
A NATIONAL YOUTH SUMMIT
CIVIC EDUCATION SERIES

The Longest Walk, 1978
Student Guide
November 2022

“What happens when all or part of your identity is not included in the narrative of U.S. democracy?”
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Dear learner,

Welcome to Democracy: A National Youth Summit Civic Education Series! This case study is the first in a special series that will ask you to tackle the question: **How do the stories we tell about the past shape our democracy?** In these case studies we will probe examples of civic engagement that go beyond voting, where civic life means active involvement in building and strengthening our communities and civic participation can take on many forms.

This series invites you to examine history as a tool for understanding our present and for shaping our shared future. Each case study will highlight groups and individuals who have worked to create a stronger nation and democracy by widening our country’s historical narrative. Through inquiry and discussion, you will think critically about how history shapes who we are as a people and how we imagine and move toward a democracy that is inclusive and just for everyone.

The first case study centers on organized American Indian activism in the 1970s. Using the guiding question, “What happens when all or part of your identity is not included in the narrative of U.S. democracy?” we will examine themes of identity, visibility, and democratic values. Join us in learning more about the historical relationship between American Indian nations and the U.S. government and interrogating how our democracy is shaped by the stories we tell (or don’t tell).

From November 2022 through April 2023, teenagers in classrooms and in museums nationwide will participate in discussions about the same questions. You are invited to share your findings and reflections using the National Youth Summit Padlet.

The stories of the United States are complex, diverse, and vast. Join us in the important task of evaluating the different perspectives of our past and imagining the possibilities of a more inclusive future!

— The National Youth Summit team

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SECTION 1: PREPARING FOR THE NATIONAL YOUTH SUMMIT

Rules for Participation

The National Youth Summit brings together students from across the nation to discuss challenging issues in U.S. history that still resonate today. We invite you to join us and be challenged and inspired by the past, as well as to share, debate, learn, and make sense of the contemporary world. All of this will help us move toward a more just future together. Your conversations and dialogues will touch on complex and sensitive topics related to values, identity, and power relationships. To foster conversations that welcome all perspectives, we recommend creating a set of shared norms that will help guide the discussion. What actions and attitudes will help you have a productive dialogue? Some suggested norms include:

• Be respectful and open to new ideas.
• Share the floor.
• Stay on topic.
• Everyone participates.
• Seek first to understand, then to speak.

We also suggest taking time to brainstorm what each norm would look like in practice. What does being respectful to new ideas look like? How will we make sure we stay on topic? Think together as a class and add these practices to your norms. And don’t forget to reference the glossary of terms on page 15.

Moment of Reflection

Moment of reflection is based on Harvard University’s Project Zero thinking routine Who am I? Students are encouraged to reflect independently and this information does not have to be shared.

This case study asks you to consider the question: What happens when all or part of your identity is not included in the narrative of U.S. democracy? The case study provides a lens for tackling this question but, before you dive in, take a moment to privately reflect on the complexity of identity using the following prompts:

• Explore Who am I? How has my identity developed?
• Connect Who and what am I connected to?
• Identify If I wanted others to know who I am, what would identify me? Do we have more than one identity?
• Belong Where do I think I belong? Do I have a sense of belonging to more than one group, more than one place?
History Exploration

The Longest Walk, 1978

What happens when all or part of your identity is not included in the narrative of U.S. democracy?

Introduction

The Longest Walk occurred in July 1978. It was the last major event in a decade of American Indian activism. Part of a pan-Indian movement, the Longest Walk protesters continued a long history of resisting the U.S. government’s violations of American Indian culture and land rights. They aimed to raise national awareness of problems in their communities and to challenge congressional plans to abrogate Indian treaties. Though American Indian nations are diverse in their cultures, issues, and goals, the preservation of tribal sovereignty—or the right to self-govern—unites tribes and individuals in opposition to a long history of federal hostility and neglect.

Key Terms

Abrogate
Treaties
Sovereignty

Definitions of key terms are in the glossary at the end of the guide
Historical Context

After the establishment of the United States, American Indian nations negotiated hundreds of treaties with the federal government. These treaties established borders, dictated trade terms, and maintained diplomatic relations between the U.S. government and independent tribal nations. But as the United States grew in population and power, the government broke these treaties. Waves of European settlers arrived in the 1830s, increasing the demand for land. The federal government responded by forcing the removal of Native peoples living east of the Mississippi to contained reservations in the west.

U.S. government policy continued to evolve in the 1800s as settlers pushed westward. In 1871, Congress stopped recognizing individual tribes as independent nations, ending the practice of treaty-making between the United States and American Indian tribes. With the Dawes Act of 1887, Congress then created a new policy to break up reservations into individual allotments of land. Allotment was meant to force changes in land use—to push American Indians away from communal land practices and assimilate them into U.S. farming culture. The Dawes Act also banned traditional cultural and religious practices, resulting in broken cultural and family bonds.

Following World War I, the United States government began to address the negative effects of allotment and assimilation policies on American Indians. Although the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 ended allotment and restored tribal governments, Congress soon countered it by introducing bills to restrict American Indian rights and once again break up tribal reservations.

Activism in the 1960s & 1970s

The threat that Congress might terminate reservations and tribal-nation status led to the rise of national organizations formed to protest federal policies and programs. From local tribal activism to preserve hunting and fishing rights to the occupations by activists of symbolically significant locations, American Indians fought to keep access to resources and power over their own affairs.

The Red Power Movement took place during a time of social and political unrest in the United States. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and anti-war protests during the Vietnam War in the 1960s had added to a general increase in political awareness and student

Key Terms

Reservations
Allotments
Assimilate
Termination

Definitions of key terms are in the glossary at the end of the guide.
activism. The Red Power Movement organized to increase visibility and pride in being an American Indian. This movement declared that American Indians were not going to assimilate into mainstream America culture. It also campaigned to demand the U.S. government honor tribal sovereignty as guaranteed in over 200 years of treaties.

As part of this campaign, hundreds of American Indian activists left San Francisco and traveled across the country to Washington, D.C., in July 1978. Organizers chose this long journey to represent the federal government’s history of forcing American Indians from their homelands. The Longest Walk centered American Indian cultural and spiritual practices and drew attention to bills that would further restrict treaty rights. Upon arrival in Washington, D.C., thousands of protesters spent a week holding demonstrations, lobbying politicians, and hosting tribal ceremonies.

Ultimately the termination bills did not pass and legislation in the 1970s did address key issues. Congress passed bills that preserved American Indian rights to practice their religions and self-govern. The movement also inspired a cultural renaissance in American Indian nations to preserve their languages, cultures, and spiritual practices. More recently, we can see the long history of American Indian activism in the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) protests, where members of the Standing Rock Sioux and their allies demonstrated their opposition to the construction of an oil pipeline that challenged their sovereignty and threatened natural and cultural resources.


A poster featuring artist Ernesto Yerena Montejano’s artistic rendition of photographer Ayşe Gürsoz’s photograph of Helen “Granny” Redfeather (Lakota) protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock Reservation. The poster features the title “We the Resilient Have Been Here Before,” and was used during the Women’s March on January 21, 2017.

“We the Resilient” poster by Ernesto Yerena Montejano, 2017; General Manuscripts and Ephemera collections, map-case 14; National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Smithsonian Institution.
American Indian Movement (AIM) was formed to protect American Indian sovereignty. For more information see American Indian Movement | uga.edu.

The Native American Studies Program at San Francisco State College was established.

The Occupation of Alcatraz was a symbolic protest, calling for American Indian self-determination. Learn more about the meeting between federal officials and occupants of Alcatraz Island | docsteach.org.
Timeline (Continued)

1972

The Trail of Broken Treaties was organized to dramatize and present American Indian concerns at a national level; it escalated to a week-long sit-in at the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Explore more about the Trail of Broken Treaties, 1972 | nps.gov.

1973

The standoff at Wounded Knee between the Oglala nation and the U.S. military reflected simmering grievances and community tensions, which created an atmosphere of heightened confrontation. Read more about when the American Indian Movement occupied Wounded Knee | nlm.nih.gov.

1978

Hundreds of American Indians and their supporters traveled from San Francisco to Washington, D.C., as part of the Longest Walk.
THE LONGEST WALK, 1978

The thinking routines in this section were developed by Project Zero, a research center at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Observe

Start by looking closely at the poster. Take time to make lots of observations with See, Feel, Think, Wonder:

- What do you see in this poster?
- What feelings emerge for you as you look at the poster?
- What does this poster make you think about?
- What do you wonder about this poster?

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**Analyze**

Drawing on your observations, use these questions to dig deeper into the poster using Values, Identities, Actions:

1. **What values** does this poster invite us to think about? *(Values are principles or qualities that people find important—fairness, justice, safety, respect, traditions, etc.)*
   - Whose values are they?
   - Does the poster affirm, challenge, or raise questions about these values?

2. **Who is this poster speaking about? And who is it trying to speak to?** *(These aren't necessarily the same people!)*
   - Is anyone left out of the story that should be in it?
   - Do you fit in to this story? Why or why not?

3. **What actions** might this work encourage? *(Actions could include something concrete, refraining from doing something, learning more, etc.)*
   - Whose actions—yours, others, what others? Why?
Discuss

Time to discuss! Use the Think, Pair, Share structure to take time to think about your response to each question, then connect with a partner or small group to share your thoughts. Remember to listen carefully and ask questions of each other to understand different perspectives.

1. To which democratic values does the story of the Longest Walk connect? With which democratic values is the story of the Longest Walk in conflict? Brainstorm several thoughts.

2. What questions of our national history and identity does the story of the Longest Walk raise?

3. How does your identity/identities inform how you think about the history of the United States? How does your identity inform how you think about participating in civic life today? (Civic life can mean any actions you might take to build and strengthen your community.)
Process

Why is it important to include multiple identities and perspectives in the story of U.S. democracy? Review what you have learned from this case study, then go to the National Youth Summit Padlet and share the takeaways from your discussions.

Learn More

The Longest Walk demonstration aimed to raise awareness of American Indian identities and the challenges they faced because of those identities. To continue to learn about how American Indians, both past and present, have shaped who we are as a people and a country, explore the Native Land app: Native-Land.ca | Our home on native land and think about:

- What American Indian nations historically lived in your region? What nations live there now?
- What is the history of the land in your region?
- Are the nations in your region federally recognized?
- What challenges do the Native peoples of your region face today?
Key Milestones in American Indian History with the United States Government

1830 – Congress passed the Indian Removal Act requiring various American Indian nations in the southeast United States to give up their lands in exchange for federal territory in what is now Oklahoma. Trail Of Tears National Historic Trail | nps.gov

1832 – Worcester v. Georgia laid out the relationship between the United States and American Indian nations as that of nation to nation, acknowledging tribal sovereignty.

1835 – The Treaty of New Echota was negotiated by a minority faction of the Cherokee nation and agreed to cede Cherokee land in Georgia and move to Indian Territory west of the Mississippi.

Late 1830s – The Trail of Tears begins to forcibly relocate American Indians of the Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole tribes to Indian Territory west of the Mississippi. The Trail of Tears and other forced relocations displaced an estimated 100,000 American Indians and resulted in the deaths of thousands.

1876 – Battle of the Little Bighorn, or Battle of the Greasy Grass as it is known by the Lakota people, saw warriors of the Lakota Sioux, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes battle the 7th Regiment of the U.S. Cavalry in a rejection of the reservation system. It was a momentary victory for Lakota and Cheyenne but resulted in a renewed push by the U.S. government to conquer and contain the Northern Plains Indians. Story of the Battle | nps.gov

Indian Reorganization Act, 1934. Courtesy of National Archives, General Records of the U.S. Government

Allotment Map of Township 4 South of Range 10 East of the Indian Meridian in Indian Territory. Courtesy of the National Archives, Department of the Interior. Office of Indian Affairs. Office of the Commissioner to the Five Civilized Tribes. 1893–1914
1887 – The Dawes Act changed U.S. government policy to break up tribal lands and encourage individual farming, forcing assimilation in white American culture. Dawes Act (1887) | National Archives


1934 – Indian Reorganization Act abolished the policy of allotment, restored American Indian management of their land assets, and established tribal self-governance.

1953 – House Concurrent Resolution 108 sought to abolish tribes and encourage relocation from reservations to urban areas. Congress seeks to abolish tribes, relocate American Indians | nlm.nih.gov

1975 – Indian Self-Determination & Education Assistance Act passed, giving American Indian nations control over services like health care and education and authority to administer federal funds.

1977 – Native Americans Equal Opportunity Act introduced, threatening American Indian property rights and directing the president to abrogate all treaties. It did not pass.

1978 – American Indian Religious Freedom Act passed to “protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions.”

1978 – Indian Child Welfare Act passed, giving tribal governments jurisdiction over custody, foster care, and adoption cases for American Indian children.

Glossary of Terms

Abrogate: to abolish by authoritative action, annul.

Allotment: a plot of land let to an individual for farming.

American Indian: American Indian and Native American are both generally acceptable, although individuals may have a preference. It is usually best to refer to Native people by their specific tribe or nation, such as Navajo, Hopi, or Cherokee. Indigenous people in the United States were first referred to as Indians because Christopher Columbus believed he had reached the East Indies when he touched the shores of North America. Today, many Native people prefer to call themselves American Indian to avoid stereotypes associated with Indian.
Assimilation: Cultural assimilation is the process by which a person's or group's culture comes to resemble that of another group. The term is used to refer to both individuals and groups; the latter case can refer to either foreign immigrants or native residents that come to be culturally dominated by another society. Cultural assimilation may involve either a quick or gradual change depending on circumstances of the group. Full assimilation occurs when new members of a society become indistinguishable from members of the other group. Whether or not it is desirable for an immigrant group to assimilate is often disputed by members of both the group and the dominant society. Cultural assimilation does not guarantee social alikeness though, geographical and other natural barriers between cultures, even if started by the same dominant culture, will be culturally different.

Genocide: the deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group.

Indian Country: Indian Country is a legal term used in Title 18 of the U.S. Code. It broadly defines federal and tribal jurisdiction in crimes affecting American Indians on reservations. It also has popular usage, describing reservations and areas with Native American populations.

Reservation: Indian reservations are areas of land reserved by the U.S. government as permanent tribal homelands. The United States established its reservation policy for American Indians in 1787. In 2022 there were 324 reservations. About 56 million acres are in reservations and trust land. More than 60 percent of American Indians live away from reservations.

Sovereignty: the authority to self-govern.

Termination: the act of ceasing to exist.

Treaty: a contract in writing between two or more political authorities (such as states or sovereigns) formally signed by representatives duly authorized and usually ratified by the lawmaking authority of the state.

Tribe: Avoid. Use nation or ethnic group except for specific entities like a tribal council on a reservation. Within the United States, many Native Americans prefer the term nation because their people have signed treaties with the United States that recognize them as nations. Some Native Americans prefer their national affiliation instead of using the generic term Native American, e.g., Navajo, Hopi, Cherokee.
Supplemental Resources:

- National Museum of the American Indian teaching resource on the Dakota Access Pipeline: americanindian.si.edu/nk360/plains-treaties/dapl

- *Native Knowledge 360°* from the National Museum of the American Indian: americanindian.si.edu/nk360/


- Online resources on American Indian Removal that include lesson materials, videos, and articles from the National Museum of the American Indian: americanindian.si.edu/online-resources/trail-of-tears-removal

- Primary sources and ready-to-use teaching activities from the National Archives: docsteach.org/topics/american-indians