

Indigenous Peoples and Nations of Kansas: Past, Present, and Futures

Kansas Advisory Council for Education, Essential Understanding Framework for Educators





900 S.W. Jackson Street, Suite 600
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1212
(785) 296-3203
www.ksde.gov/board



SUCCESS DEFINED

A successful Kansas high school graduate has the

- Academic preparation,
- Cognitive preparation,
- Technical skills,
- Employability skills and
- Civic engagement

to be successful in postsecondary education, in the attainment of an industry recognized certification or in the workforce, without the need for remediation.

OUTCOMES

- Social-emotional growth
- Kindergarten readiness
- Individual Plan of Study
- Civic engagement
- Academically prepared for postsecondary
- High school graduation
- Postsecondary success



Kansas State Board of Education

BOARD MEMBERS

DISTRICT 1



Danny Zeck
Vice Chair
Danny.Zeck@ksde.gov

DISTRICT 2



Melanie Haas
Melanie.Haas@ksde.gov

DISTRICT 3



Michelle Dombrosky
Michelle.Dombrosky@ksde.gov

DISTRICT 4



Connie O'Brien
Connie.O'Brien@ksde.gov

DISTRICT 5



Cathy Hopkins
Chair
Cathy.Hopkins@ksde.gov

DISTRICT 6



Dr. Beryl A. New
Beryl.New@ksde.gov

DISTRICT 7



Dennis Hershberger
Dennis.Hershberger@ksde.gov

DISTRICT 8



Betty Arnold
Betty.Arnold@ksde.gov

DISTRICT 9



Jim Porter
Jim.Porter@ksde.gov

DISTRICT 10



Debby Potter
Debby.Potter@ksde.gov

MISSION

To prepare Kansas students for lifelong success through rigorous, quality academic instruction, career training and character development according to each student's gifts and talents.

VISION

Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

MOTTO

Kansans Can

COMMISSIONER OF
EDUCATION



Dr. Randy Watson
Randy.Watson@ksde.gov

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
Division of Fiscal and Administrative Services



Dr. Frank Harwood
Frank.Harwood@ksde.gov

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
Division of Learning Services



Dr. Ben Proctor
Ben.Proctor@ksde.gov

The Kansas State Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: KSDE General Counsel, Office of General Counsel, KSDE, Landon State Office Building, 900 S.W. Jackson, Suite 102, Topeka, KS 66612, (785) 296-3201.

Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

Jan. 25, 2025

Introduction

Collaborative Construction of this Framework:

Kansas is, and always has been, home to many unique Tribal Nations and peoples. Nevertheless, substantive Native representation is missing from many Kansas classrooms. Additionally, while there are four Federally Recognized Tribal Nations—Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska—within Kansas boundaries, a significant number of citizens of other Federally Recognized Tribal Nations also continue to live in and migrate to this state.

This Kansas Advisory Council for Indigenous Education (KACIE) Essential Understanding framework, collaboratively developed with Federally Recognized Tribal Nations with relevant ties to Kansas, is intended to help educators improve teaching and learning about, for, and with these Tribal Nations, peoples, and communities. This document was produced based on feedback collected from these Tribal Nations and partners concerning what Kansas students should learn about Indigenous pasts, presents, and futures. The framework and resources provided are a result of this partnership.

Introducing the Framework: The Essential Understanding

This single Essential Understanding was collaboratively crafted to focus around one core concept. This Essential Understanding is layered and complex to help Kansas educators incorporate this material into all relevant aspects of their curriculum, not just social studies.

Specifically, while studying the past to understand the future is important, this Essential Understanding emphasizes how Tribal Nations **continue to thrive in the present**, as independent and diverse sovereign governments, communities, and people.

Kansas Advisory Council for Indigenous Education's - Essential Understandings Task Force:

The Kansas Advisory Council for Indigenous Education's - Essential Understandings Task Force (KACIE - EUTF) was formed at the behest of the KACIE board to identify and create an educational framework for the educators of Kansas as they continue to improve and enhance the learning experiences for all their students. Moving forward, conversations with Tribal Nations will continue through ongoing consultation, in recognition that Kansas is Indigenous land and there is a need for ongoing dialogue and collaborative learning.

- Dr. Alex Red Corn (Osage), University of Kansas
- Raphael Wahwassuck (Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation), Tribal Council
- Kenneth St. Pierre (Yankton Sioux), University of Washington
- Jon Boursaw (Citizen Potawatomi Nation), Tribal Representative
- Olivia Brien (Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska)
- Dr. Lisa Tatonetti, Kansas State University
- Dr. Tai Edwards, Johnson County Community College
- Yale Taylor (Choctaw), USD 501
- Dal Domebo (Kiowa), USD 259
- Veronica Gillette, USD 259
- Aaric Davis, USD 337
- Rebecca Kramer, USD 430

Essential Understanding and Sub-Topics

The Kansas Essential Understanding:

*Indigenous Nations and Peoples affiliated with Kansas **CONTINUE TO THRIVE** despite forced removals, relocations, and assaults on their sovereign governments, cultures, and identities.*

While the Essential Understanding focuses educators on a single concept, it is divided into nine interdisciplinary sub-topics. The sub-topics—in no particular order—identify content that can be integrated into every part of the curriculum from Economics and Social Studies, to English Language Arts, Science, and beyond.

The subtopics include:

- Collaborative Citizenship and Co-Existence
- Indigenous Languages
- Economics
- Histories and Geographies
- Sovereignty and Governance
- Health, Wellness and Foodways
- Literature and Arts
- Urban and Inter-Tribal Communities
- Indigenous STEM



Collaborative Citizenship and Co-Existence

Like all civilizations, Tribal Nations have long and storied histories of conflict and cooperation with neighboring Nations. Today, Federally Recognized Tribal Nations each have their own criteria for enrollment and citizenship. Their Tribal citizens live in and across complex multiracial social networks with non-Native peoples and communities. This is due to histories of **1) forced removals and relocations, 2) assimilationist policies and programming (i.e., Boarding Schools), 3) forced and voluntary relocations of other non-Native demographic groups through the development of what is now called the United States.** As a result, in the present, Tribal citizens are often multiracial and live in and/or near predominantly non-Native communities, meaning that they learn to exist and co-exist across different socio-cultural contexts and communities.

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- With so many efforts to assimilate and eradicate Indigenous cultures, it should be no surprise that many Tribal citizens, or descendants of Tribal citizens, are of mixed race/ethnicity. Many Tribal citizens are also White, Black, and/or Latinx and Hispanic (among many other races/ethnicities or National citizenship). These Tribal citizens are also often made invisible in “multi-racial” or “two or more races” demographic data systems.
- For many Federally Recognized Tribal Nations, the majority of their citizens do not live on reservations, and therefore, Tribal governments work to build their government structures and programs accordingly. As an example, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, headquartered in Shawnee, Oklahoma, has approximately 3000 Tribal citizens in Kansas and a local representative in their government specifically serves that demographic. Relatedly, many Nations have absentee mail-in ballots, while other Tribal Nations require in-person voting on the reservation.
- Many Tribal citizens routinely commute or migrate back and forth between reservation-based home communities, events, and ceremonies to homes in different states.
- Over 90% of American Indian and Alaskan Native students attend public schools, most often in mixed communities with non-Native majorities.
- Federally Recognized Tribal Nations and their employees and citizens often work with neighboring boards, municipalities, and state governments on projects related to education, infrastructure, business development, tourism, and more. Many Tribal Nations are often the largest employers in the region.
- Many non-Native people work for Tribal Nations and their affiliate institutions, and vice versa.
- Federally funded urban relocation programs, in the 1950s and '60s caused many Tribal citizens to leave their reservations and move into cities. More on this in the Urban and Inter-Tribal section below.

Indigenous Languages

Language bears culture, and Indigenous languages are the foundations of Indigenous cultures and identities.

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Indigenous Nation has its own Indigenous language and dialects.
- In North America, Indigenous languages are divided into language families. Numerous nations possess related dialects that share similar words and structures, which are often mutually intelligible (understood).
- Federal assimilation programs, including Federal Indian boarding schools, attempted to systematically eradicate Indigenous languages, cultures, and identities. The first Federal Indian boarding school run by the U.S. government, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, founded in 1879, led to hundreds of federal boarding schools, including seven in Kansas. Many such Federally funded and religious -based assimilationist school operated in what became Kansas, include Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas.
- Today, many Tribal Nations operate language revitalization programs to expand literacy and usage, promote cultural vitality, and undo the damage of assimilation policies. Other programs include Title III and the [Seal of Biliteracy program in Kansas](#).

Economics

Since time immemorial, Indigenous Nations have engaged in economic activities. These activities included extensive trade networks, adaptations to the environment and unique demands, and negotiations with Indigenous and Foreign nations. Tribal Nations, like all nations, engage in systems of production, consumption, and exchange. Today Tribal Nations continue to engage in innovative economic activities, vital economic development, and determine services to citizens as an extension of sovereignty to fulfill their Nation's goals that benefit not only the Tribal Nation, local and state communities, the United States, and diverse global partners.

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Tribal Nations engage in a multitude of economic activities that are unique to each nation and its location.
- Tribal Nations engage in a diverse array of business enterprise efforts. Examples include agriculture, aquaponics, ranching, business and finance, hunting, eco-tourism, sports management, manufacturing, textiles, aeronautics research and technology development, gaming, etc.
- Tribal Nations are often the leading employers in their communities and states, and the largest drivers of economic development.

Histories and Geographies

Tribal Nations have had communities in what is now called Kansas for thousands of years. Forced removals of these Tribal Nations as they relate to Kansas are complex.

There are three distinct complexities to consider:

1. Many Tribal Nations are Indigenous to what is now called Kansas.
2. Over 40 Tribal Nations were forcibly moved into Kansas in the 1800s, and then later removed again (most to what is now Oklahoma).
3. There are four Federally Recognized Nations currently headquartered in Kansas—Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, and Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska—yet many other tribes have citizens, land, and sacred & historic sites within the state.

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- The land known today as the state of Kansas encompasses the ancestral homelands of many Tribal Nations, including the Kanza (Kaw Nation)—for whom the state is named—the Osage, Wichita, Pawnee, Comanche, Kiowa, Apache, Cheyenne, and Arapaho.
- The U.S. government also forcibly moved many Tribal Nations from East of the Mississippi River to the central portion of “Indian Territory” (now known as Kansas) during the mid-1800s, including the Shawnee, Wyandotte, Delaware, Miami, Potawatomi, and others, before another forced removal to the southern portion of “Indian Territory” (now known as Oklahoma). All of these Tribal Nations have citizens currently living in Kansas.
- The Four Federally Recognized Tribal Nations still headquartered in Kansas—Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas, Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska and, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation—have relative Tribal Nations that share their history and name (example: Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, and Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma), as many Nations experienced divisions and fracturing through the removal process.

Sovereignty and Governance

The inalienable rights of Indigenous Nations, as U.S. Federally Recognized Tribal Nations, include the right to self-govern and to pursue self-determination.

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Tribal Nations retain sovereignty that predates European colonization of the continent, rooted in their long histories of self-governance.
- Today, U.S. Federally Recognized Tribal Nations have a unique Domestic Dependent Nation status with the U.S. government, often called Federal Trust Responsibility.
- Tribal sovereignty is connected to the Commerce Clause and Article Six of the U.S. Constitution, the Marshall Trilogy (U.S. Supreme Court cases), and further acknowledged through Nation-to-Nation treaties and compacts that are legally binding today.
- Each Tribal Nation has their own constitution, unique government structures, laws, policies, and citizenship requirements. As of 2024, there are 574 Federally Recognized Tribal Nations in the U.S., and four Federally Recognized Tribal Nations headquartered within Kansas boundaries (Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas, and Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska). Tribal Nations with historical ties to Kansas, now headquartered in other states, also own various parcels of land in Kansas.

Health, Wellness and Foodways

Indigenous health, wellness and foodways are foundational and directly connected to each Tribal Nations' culture and sovereignty. Historically, these foodways were complex networks of knowledge about and relationships to particular lands, lakes and waterways, plants, animals, and neighboring Nations pre-Colonization. Indigenous Health, Wellness and Foodways were severely disrupted by removals, boarding school systems, and urbanization policies of the United States. Non-Native incursions into land also led to overgrazing, overhunting, and the exploitation of resources. Indigenous peoples' forced relocations from their homelands were paired with the introduction of government commodity food programs that dramatically changed the health and wellness of Tribal communities.

For example, the rapid rise in diabetes relates directly to introducing high flour and sugar diets obtained through commodity programs.

Today, a multitude of Tribal Nations are putting significant resources and energy towards rekindling these relationships with land and re-establishing trade networks and foodways. As a result, various health, wellness and foodway programs in Tribal Nations are intertwined with the culture and future prosperity of these Nations. Often, this revitalization of Indigenous Health, Wellness and Foodways is framed as *Food Sovereignty*.

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Indigenous Health and Wellness has a long history based on practices and beliefs based on the idea that health and wellness is a balance of the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of life. Indigenous communities also view health as directly related to the natural environment, community, and land, and is critical to understanding the individuality of each Tribal Nation.
- Land and culture are so intertwined that understanding this connectedness allows for a deeper understanding of Indigenous language learning.
- Each Tribal Nation has its own unique Health, Wellness, and Foodways. All four of the Federally Recognized Tribes in Kansas have specific food sovereignty efforts in motion, such as Bison programming, greenhouse production, honey production, hemp production, and regenerative agriculture programming.
- Some Tribal Nations with historic ties to Kansas but currently headquartered in Oklahoma have land in Kansas used for agricultural production.
- ***Water Sovereignty***, a term frequently used in connection to health, wellness, and foodways, refers to Native Nations rights to manage the water that produces the life and food that translates to individual and community health. In many Tribal Nations, there are histories of water quality issues, such as in the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas. Additionally, throughout the 1900s, reservoirs were often created on tribal lands, further diminishing their reservations. (See, for example, the Kaw Nation and the flooding of Washunga, Oklahoma.) Furthermore, challenges such as the Dakota Access Pipeline Protest are rooted in historic treaty negotiations and water quality threats.

Literature and Arts

Indigenous stories, whether they be visual (from pictographs to contemporary television and film), written (from the Popul Vuh to the award-winning novels and poetry of contemporary authors), or oral (from traditional oral histories and songs to hip hop and slam poetry) are central to Native cultures and communities. Literature, music, film, and arts of all kinds offer a window to past and present Indigenous resilience, creativity, and joy.

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Visual, written, and oral literatures and arts have existed in the Americas since time immemorial.
- Indigenous literature in English has existed since the 1700s. The rise of these English language texts is tied to the imposition of Christianity and boarding schools; however, Native intellectuals used English to their own ends, telling the stories important to them.
- In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Indigenous artists and activists were widely published, producing best-selling stories, poems, non-fiction, and novels. In some cases, these creatives traveled from the U.S. to Canada and Europe on speaking tours.
- While Native peoples have always been writers, Kiowa author N. Scott Momaday's 1969 Pulitzer Prize winning for his novel *House Made of Dawn* marks the start of what later would be termed the Native American Renaissance. Leslie Silko, Simon Ortiz, James Welch, Gerald Vizenor, Louise Erdrich, and U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo are some of the key writers to publish in this period.
- Today, Indigenous writers, filmmakers, musicians, and artists are flourishing and there is an array of creative arts (literature, film, television, podcasts, video games, music and more) for children, young adults, and adults that are vital expressions of cultural and visual sovereignty.

Urban and Inter-Tribal Communities

Ongoing forced relocations and removals to isolated lands created the reservation system that led to the complex geographic existence of Tribal Nations. The 1900s also saw large migrations from reservations into urban centers. This was amplified in the 1950s and 60s when the federal government worked to extinguish Tribal sovereignty (often referred to as the Termination Era) and launched urban relocation programs. This resulted in the growth of unique Inter-Tribal urban-based "Indian Centers" in cities such as Wichita, Kansas City, Chicago, Minneapolis, Phoenix, and more. Unique and diverse inter-tribal communities came together to produce an eclectic and multi-generational community in which Tribal citizens grow up "off-rez," with varying degrees of connectedness to their home community, Tribal Nation, and affiliated cultures.

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Wichita Public Schools has more American Indian/Alaska Native students than any other school district in Kansas. Also, Wichita has the Mid-America All-Indian Museum (formerly the Mid-America All-Indian Center), which serves as a central gathering place for Tribal citizens living in the Wichita Area.
- Lawrence, Kansas is an Inter-Tribal community that hosts many social gatherings, such as powwows and social dances. Lawrence is also the home to Haskell Indian Nations University, which serves Tribal citizens of all 574 Federally Recognized Tribal Nations.
- Kansas City is home to the Kansas City Indian Center, which also serves as a hub for cultural events and social services.
- Topeka, which is just south of the four Federally Recognized Tribal Nations in Kansas, is an urban hub for Tribal citizens who commute to/from those reservations for work, entertainment, ceremonies, and social gatherings.

Indigenous STEM

Indigenous peoples have always engaged in science and research and worked to deepen their understanding of the world around them. This includes having an holistic relationship with the lands that helped provide life and sustenance and avoiding hardships that threatened the health of individuals and their communities. This has not only continued to the present day but has expanded to include global partnerships.

Foundational information to know before teaching these topics includes, but is not limited to:

- Relationships with the land are a vital component of Indigenous cultures. However, teachers should be cautious in oversimplifying this across diverse Indigenous cultures and actively try to avoid teaching an oversimplified “one-with-nature” stereotype. These cultural worldviews are much more complex, as described below.
- Indigenous Peoples and Nations used highly advanced mathematics and technologies to build extensive earthworks, urban centers, and engage in complex trade networks across lands and waters, as As evident by civilizations found in America’s (ex. Cahokia, Huhugam, Aztecs, Incas, and Moundville). Examples include mathematical and solar precision connected to earthworks (mounds) and pyramids, advanced watercraft and seafaring navigation, sophisticated land management and advanced agricultural practices such as terraced and island farming, planned burns and irrigation, fertilization, and storage, etc.
- Many Tribal Nations are currently developing science and technology, as well as other forms of research and innovation. Examples include aeronautics, drone development, pipe manufacturing, aquaponics, software and database development, Indigenous language coding for Google and I-phone integration, etc.
- Many national organizations serve as professional communities relevant to Indigenous STEM, such as the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS), Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA), etc.

Resource Evaluation

Use the rubric below to evaluate current and potential resources.

Scoring Category	RESOURCE EVALUATION RUBRIC				Score
	1 Unacceptable	2 Developing	3 Acceptable	4 Exemplary	
Agency and Sovereignty	Resources DO NOT include, recognize, or acknowledge Indigenous perseverance, innovative and strategic decision making, sovereignty, and Indigenous resilience.	Resources vaguely reference or mention Indigenous perseverance, innovative and strategic decision making, sovereignty, and Indigenous resilience.	Resources passively imply or demonstrate Indigenous perseverance, innovative and strategic decision making, sovereignty, and Indigenous resilience.	Resources clearly and explicitly demonstrate Indigenous perseverance, innovative and strategic decision making, sovereignty, and Indigenous resilience.	
Representation, Tokenism, and Stereotypes	Resources ONLY include, recognize, or acknowledge Indigenous peoples or nations in stereotypical or tokenized ways who are not equals OR does not include Indigenous peoples or nations AT ALL .	Resources vaguely reference or mention Indigenous sovereignty, culture, and individuals as equals in all contexts.	Resources passively imply or demonstrate Indigenous sovereignty, culture, and individuals as equals in all contexts.	Resources clearly and explicitly demonstrate Indigenous sovereignty, culture, and individuals as equals in all contexts.	
Language Choices (past tense v. present tense)	Language used DOES NOT include, recognize, or acknowledge that Tribal Nations and Peoples still exist in the present tense.	Language used vaguely references or mentions that Tribal Nations and Peoples still exist in the present tense.	Language used passively implies or indicates that Tribal Nations and Peoples still exist in the present tense.	Language used clearly and explicitly indicates that Tribal Nations and Peoples still exist in the present tense.	
Language Choices (Specificity of Native Nations or Communities v. Generic Pan-Indianism)	Language used DOES NOT include, recognize, or acknowledge that Tribal Nations, communities, and regions are unique and distinct, and language reinforces stereotypes that “all Natives are the same” stereotypes.	Language used vaguely implies that Tribal Nations, communities, and regions are unique and distinct. (i.e. vaguely pushes back against “all Natives are the same” stereotypes).	Language used passively implies that Tribal Nations, communities, and regions are unique and distinct, as often as possible (i.e. passively pushes back against “all Natives are the same” stereotypes).	Language used clearly and explicitly demonstrates that Tribal Nations, communities, and regions are unique and distinct, as often as possible (i.e. actively pushes back against “all Natives are the same” stereotypes).	



For more contact information, Contact:

Nathan McAlister
 Humanities Program Manager
 History Government, and Social Studies
 Career, Standards, and Assessment Services
 785 296-3892
nathan.mcalister@ksde.gov



Kansas State Department of Education
 900 S.W. Jackson Street, Suite 102
 Topeka, KS 66612-1212
www.ksde.org