

Activity from Tolerance.org

## **Native Wisdom**

"These days people seek knowledge, not wisdom. Knowledge is of the past; wisdom is of the future," say Vernon Cooper, spiritual elder of the Lumbee or Croatoan tribe of North Carolina. The following activity is designed to help you measure your awareness of Native American influences in U.S. history and culture and, in so doing, expand your vision of a people whose wisdom marks generations of Americans from age to age. Be sure to share this information with others.

1. Before the European Conquest, approximately how many tribes inhabited what is now the United States?
  - a) 50, with a population of about 500,000
  - b) 500, with a population of about 22 million
  - c) 70, with a population of about 2 million
  - d) 225, with a population of about 900,000
2. The present population of Native Americans in the United States is:
  - a) about 6 million
  - b) about 800,000
  - c) about 2 million
  - d) about 300,000
3. In most Native American societies, women have traditionally played a central role in:
  - a) the care of home and children
  - b) community decision-making
  - c) governmental and ceremonial functions of the group
  - d) all of the above
4. Approximately how many words were contributed to the English language by Native American cultures?
  - a) about 50
  - b) about 600
  - c) about 2,200
  - d) about 4,000
5. When they began colonizing and exploring North America, Europeans encountered many animals, plants, weather phenomena and land masses that were

unfamiliar to them. Frequently the newcomers adopted and adapted Native American words to describe the environment, and many of these terms entered the English language. Below are just a few. See how many you can unscramble and discover.

\* Animals

uksnk  
ampu  
osoem  
gauraj  
pihckunm  
oocnarc  
sumosop  
ggrehci  
cudarrab  
uoriba

\* Trees and Plants

necap  
yhonamga  
ckihory  
ucacy  
semetuiq  
ccotbao  
minyoh  
hsuaqs  
zeima  
ovcdaao  
apitoac  
apyaap  
mtotao  
ottpao

\* Weather Phenomena & Land Masses

caurhiaen  
koohcin  
yuba  
vnnasan

6. Match the following Native American place names with their meanings. (Note: Four place names have the same meaning)

Nebraska

Massachusetts  
Michigan  
Ohio  
Minnesota  
Oregon  
Kentucky  
Iowa  
Alabama  
Mississippi  
North Dakota  
South Dakota  
Texas  
Oklahoma

- a) "good river"
- b) "friend"
- c) "dark and bloody ground"
- d) "beautiful land"
- e) "beautiful water"
- f) "waters that reflect the sky"
- g) "flat" or "broad river"
- h) "water flowing along"
- i) "I make a clearing"
- j) "big river"
- k) "long river"
- l) "green mountain"
- m) "great water"
- n) "rocky hills"

7. The concept of a unified, representative government for the people was recommended to the founders of the United States by:

- a) Canassatego, leader of the Iroquois tribe of the Northeast
- b) Sitting Bull, chief of the Sioux nation
- c) Powhatan, leader of the Leni Lanapi (Delaware) Nation and the father of Pocahontas
- d) Tisquantum (Squanto), the English-speaking member of the Wampanoag tribe who assisted the Pilgrims in their settlement in Plymouth, Mass.

8. The founders of the United States assumed the national symbol of the bald eagle from:

- a) The Apache Nation
- b) The Cherokee Nation
- c) The Iroquois Nation

d) The Ojibwa (Chippewa) Nation

9. The victory of the Allies over the Axis Powers in World War II was due, in part, to the use of a Native American language as a secret code. Which language served as that code?

- a) Cherokee
- b) Potawatomi
- c) Sioux
- d) Navajo

10. The U.S. Marine Corps Memorial Statue in Washington, D.C., honors a once-famous World War II hero of Native American descent. What is his name?

- a) Sequoia
- b) Chief Seattle
- c) Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell
- d) Ira Hayes

11. True or False

a) Pocahontas is the only Native American whose portrait is painted in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol building.

True or False

b) Many European colonists objected to the Native's use of water for bathing and drinking.

True or False

c) A sachem is a woman who represents her people as a leader in governmental or ceremonial affairs.

True or False

d) By 1993, Native Americans convinced President George Bush to sign an executive order declaring Native American tribes to be considered by the U.S. Government as sovereign "Domestic Governments" with the ability, among other state functions, to issue passports.

True or False

## ANSWERS

1. B Some 500 tribes inhabited what is now the United States, totaling about 22 million people.

2. C Census Bureau figures report that the Native American population in the United States is slightly above 2 million, or 1 percent of the total U.S. population.

3. D Native American societies are matrilineal, with family descent traced through the female line. Native women have traditionally performed central roles in both domestic and public decision making.

4. B Approximately 2,200 words from Native languages are contained in the English language.

5.

\* Animals

skunk  
puma  
moose  
jaguar  
chipmunk  
raccoon  
opossum  
chigger  
barracuda  
caribou

\* Trees and Plants

pecan  
mahogany  
hickory  
yucca  
mesquite  
tobacco  
hominy  
squash  
maize  
avocado  
tapioca  
papaya  
tomato  
potato

\* Weather Phenomena & Land Masses

hurricane  
chinook  
bayou  
savanna

6. G, N, M, A, F, E, C, D, I, J, B, B, B, B

7. A Exasperated by trading with the various separate colonies, Canassatego, the leader of the Iroquois Confederacy, urged Benjamin Franklin to encourage the other colonial leaders to form a unified, representative government, modeled after the government of the Iroquois Nation.

While the European founders had historical knowledge of the ancient Greek and Roman models of representative government, they were not familiar with this system in practice, as the countries of Europe were primarily monarchies. At Franklin's urging, the Continental Congress approved "a more perfect union" fashioned after the Iroquois model which was said to have been in existence for thousands of years.

8. C The founders of the United States adopted the Iroquois Nation's symbol, the bald eagle, instead of the turkey, as Franklin had proposed.

9. D The Navajo language proved to be an unbreakable code against the Japanese in World War II.

10. D Ira Hayes, a member of the Pima tribe, fought on the Pacific island of Iwo Jima during World War II. Despite heavy enemy fire, Hayes and five other marines raised the U.S. flag atop the summit of the island. An Associated Press reporter captured this moment on film. The film became perhaps the most memorable of World War II.

11. a) True

b) True. According to European religious beliefs prior to the time of the Crusades, bathing with water was considered an act of temptation causing sexual arousal. As a result, bathing was outlawed in many areas of Europe. When European colonists arrived in America and saw the Native Americans openly bathing with water, they objected to the practice and pronounced the Native Americans "heathens." The importance of bathing for hygienic purposes was foreign to Europeans until crusading soldiers, returning from the Middle East, adopted the idea of the public bath. However, use of public baths was not widespread; to the contrary, it was reserved for the elite, who were few in number.

c) True

d) False. President Clinton signed this executive order.