

This document aligns the Smithsonian's [National Museum of the American Indian Native Knowledge 360](#) Essential Understandings and Concepts with the Bodmer collection at the Joslyn Art Museum. The [Essential Understanding and Concepts](#) provide a framework for understanding the Native American perspective on the history, culture, and art of the Plains Indians as represented in the Bodmer collection.

Educators can use this document to identify the Bodmer work that will help them teach the themes and concepts.

Theme 1	American Indian Culture
Essential Understanding	Culture is a result of human socialization. People acquire knowledge and values by interacting with other people through common language, place, and community. In the Americas, there is vast cultural diversity among more than 2,000 tribal groups. Tribes have unique cultures and ways of life that span history from time immemorial to the present day.
Concept	Bodmer Collection Number
There is no single American Indian culture or language	1986.49.372 with 1986.49.270 , 1986.49.378 and 1986.49.277 , 1986.49.284 , 1986.49.285 , 1986.49.287 , 1986.49.289
American Indians are both individuals and members of a tribal group.	1986.49.275 ; 1986.49.268 ; 1986.49.279 ; 1986.49.371
For millennia, American Indians have shaped and been shaped by their culture and environment. Elders in each generation teach the next generation their values, traditions, and beliefs through their own tribal languages, social practices, arts, music, ceremonies, and customs.	1986.49.275 ; 1986.49.268 ; 1986.49.279 ; 1986.49.371
Kinship and extended family relationships have always been and continue to be essential in the shaping of American Indian cultures.	1986.49.244 ; 1986.49.375
American Indian cultures have always been dynamic and changing.	
Interactions with Europeans and Americans brought accelerated and often devastating changes to American Indian cultures.	1986.49.256 with 1986.49.66 ; 1986.49.228 ; 1986.49.207 ; 1986.49.26 with 1986.49.261 ; 1986.49.371
Native people continue to fight to maintain the integrity and viability of indigenous societies. American Indian history is one of cultural persistence, creative adaptation, renewal, and resilience.	1986.49.279 ; 1986.49.265A ; 1986.49.307 ; 1986.49.309 ; 1986.49.315
American Indians share many similarities with other indigenous people of the world, along with many differences.	1986.49.312 ; 1986.49.313 ; 1986.49.261.A ; 1986.49.68

Theme 2	Time Continuity and Change
Essential Understanding	Indigenous people of the Americas shaped life in the Western Hemisphere for millennia. After contact, American Indians and the events involving them greatly influenced the histories of the European colonies and the modern nations of North, Central, and South America. Today, this influence continues to play significant roles in many aspects of political, legal, cultural, environmental, and economic issues. To understand the history and cultures of the Americas requires understanding American Indian history from Indian perspectives.
Concept	Bodmer Collection Number
Many American Indian communities have creation stories that specify their origins in the Western Hemisphere.	1986.49.360 ; 1986.49.345
American Indians have lived in the Western Hemisphere for at least 15,000–20,000 years.	1986.49.185
The Western Hemisphere was laced with diverse, well-developed, and complex societies that interacted with one another over millennia.	1986.49.317 ; 1986.49.312 and 1986.49.314
American Indian history is not singular or timeless. American Indian cultures have always adapted and changed in response to environmental, economic, social, and other factors. American Indian cultures and people are fully engaged in the modern world.	1986.49.279 ; 1986.49.265A ; 1986.49.307 ; 1986.49.309 ; 1986.49.315
American Indians employed a variety of methods to record and preserve their histories.	1986.49.279 ; 1986.49.290
European contact resulted in devastating loss of life, disruption of tradition, and enormous loss of lands for American Indians.	1986.49.256 with 1986.49.66 ; 1986.49.228 ; 1986.49.207 ; 1986.49.26 with 1986.49.261 ; 1986.49.371
Hearing and understanding American Indian history from Indian perspectives provides an important point of view to the discussion of history and cultures in the Americas. Indian perspectives expand the social, political, and economic dialogue.	1986.49.371 ; 1986.49.290 ; 1986.49.319
Indigenous people played a significant role in the history of the Americas. Many of these historically important events and developments in the Americas shaped the modern world.	1986.49.175 ; 1986.49.338 ; 1986.49.213 ; 1986.49.224
Providing an American Indian context to history makes for a greater understanding of world history.	1986.49.309

Theme 3	People, Places, and Environments
Essential Understanding	For thousands of years, indigenous people have studied, managed, honored, and thrived in their homelands. These foundations continue to influence American Indian relationships and interactions with the land today.
Concept	Bodmer Collection Number
The story of American Indians in the Western Hemisphere is intricately intertwined with places and environments. Native knowledge systems resulted from long-term occupation of tribal homelands, and observation and interaction with places. American Indians understood and valued the relationship between local environments and cultural traditions, and recognized that human beings are part of the environment	1986.49.312 ; 1986.49.334 ; 1986.49.280 ; 1986.49.273A & 1986.49.273B
Long before their contact with Europeans, indigenous people populated the Americas and were successful stewards and managers of the land, from the Arctic Circle to Tierra del Fuego. European contact resulted in exposure to Old World diseases, displacement, and wars, devastating the underlying foundations of American Indian societies.	1986.49.219 ; 1986.49.261A ; 1986.49.387
Throughout their histories, Native groups have relocated and successfully adapted to new places and environments.	1986.49.382
Well-developed systems of trails, including some hard-surfaced roads, interlaced the Western Hemisphere prior to European contact. These trading routes made possible the exchange of foods and other goods. Many of the trails were later used by Euro-Americans as roads and highways.	1986.49.213 , 1986.49.214 , 1986.49.225
The imposition of international, state, reservation, and other borders on Native lands changed relationships between people and their environments, affected how people lived, and sometimes isolated tribal citizens and family members from one another.	1986.49.77 , 1986.49.37

Theme 4	Individual Development and Identity
Essential Understanding	American Indian individual development and identity is tied to culture and the forces that have influenced and changed culture over time. Unique social structures, such as clan systems, rites of passage, and protocols for nurturing and developing individual roles in tribal society, characterize each American Indian culture. American Indian cultures have always been dynamic and adaptive in response to interactions with others.
Concept	Bodmer Collection Number
For American Indians, identity development takes place in a cultural context, and the process differs from one American Indian culture to another. American Indian identity is shaped by the family, peers, social norms, and institutions inside and outside a community or culture.	1986.49.236 and 1986.49.238 ; 1986.49.222 , 1986.49.245 , 1986.49.234 , 1986.49.242 , 1986.49.263 , 1986.49.282A , 1986.49.372 , 1986.49.241
Historically, well-established conventions and practices nurtured and promoted the development of individual identity. These included careful observation and nurturing of individual talents and interests by elders and family members; rites of passage; social and gender roles; and family specializations, such as healers, religious leaders, artists, and whalers.	1986.49.319
Contact with Europeans and Americans disrupted and transformed traditional norms for identity development.	1986.49.81 , 1986.49.389
Today, Native identity is shaped by many complex social, political, historical, and cultural factors.	
In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, many American Indian communities have sought to revitalize and reclaim their languages and cultures.	

Theme 5	Individuals Groups and Institutions
Essential Understanding	American Indians have always operated and interacted within self-defined social structures that include institutions, societies, and organizations, each with specific functions. These social structures have shaped the lives and histories of American Indians through the present day.
Concept	Bodmer Collection Number
American Indian institutions, societies, and organizations defined people's relationships and roles, and managed responsibilities in every aspect of life—religion, health, government, diplomacy, war, agriculture, hunting and fishing, trade, and so on.	1986.49.386 , 1986.49.168 , 1986.49.259
Native kinship systems were influential in shaping people's roles and interactions among other individuals, groups, and institutions.	1986.49.265A , 1986.49.375
External educational, governmental, and religious institutions have exerted major influences on American Indian individuals, groups, and institutions. Native people have fought to counter these pressures and have adapted to them when necessary. Many Native institutions today are mixtures of Native and Western constructs, reflecting external influence and Native adaptation.	1986.49.245 , 1986.49.389
A variety of specialized agencies have been formed to interact with and serve American Indian individuals, groups, and institutions.	1986.49.371
Today, because of treaties, court decisions, and statutes, tribal governments maintain a unique relationship with federal and state governments.	1986.49.332 , 1986.49.241
Today, American Indian governments uphold tribal sovereignty and promote tribal culture and well-being.	1986.49.261A

Theme 6	Power, Authority and Governance
Essential Understanding	American Indians devised and have always lived under a variety of complex systems of government. Tribal governments faced rapid and devastating change as a result of European colonization and the development of the United States. Tribes today still govern their own affairs and maintain a government-to-government relationship with the United States and other governments.
Concept	Bodmer Collection Number
Today, tribal governments operate under self-chosen traditional or constitution-based governmental structures. Based on treaties, laws, and court decisions, they operate as sovereign nations within the United States, enacting and enforcing laws and managing judicial systems, social well-being, natural resources, and economic, educational, and other programs for their members. Tribal governments are also responsible for interactions with American federal, state, and municipal governments.	1986.49.252, 1986.49.248, 1986.49.230, 1986.49.241, 1986.49.245, 1986.49.257, 1986.49.259, 1986.49.260, 1986.49.272, 1986.49.281, 1986.49.282A, 1986.49.283, 1986.49.284, 1986.49.285, 1986.49.286, 1986.49.391, 1986.49.207, 1986.49.208, 1986.49.214, 1986.49.228, 1986.49.338, 1986.49.345
Long before European colonization, American Indians had developed a variety of complex systems of government that embodied important principles for effective rule. American Indian governments and leaders interacted, recognized each other's sovereignty, practiced diplomacy, built strategic alliances, waged wars, and negotiated peace accords.	1986.49.281, 1986.49.280, 1986.49.223, 1986.49.265A, 1986.49.268, 1986.49.271, 1986.49.311, 1986.49.280, 1986.49.270, 1986.49.230, 1986.49.241, 1986.49.245, 1986.49.257, 1986.49.259, 1986.49.260, 1986.49.272, 1986.49.281, 1986.49.282A, 1986.49.283, 1986.49.284, 1986.49.285, 1986.49.286, 1986.49.391
After 1492, American Indians suffered diseases and genocidal events that resulted in death on a catastrophic scale and the rapid decimation of Native populations. These episodes greatly compromised the continuity of existing tribal government structures.	
A variety of political, economic, legal, military, and social policies were used by Europeans and Americans to remove and relocate American Indians and to destroy their cultures. U.S. policies regarding American Indians were the result of major national debate. Many of these policies had a devastating effect on established American Indian governing principles and systems. Other policies sought to strengthen and restore tribal self-government.	
A variety of historical policy periods have had a major impact on American Indian people's abilities to self-govern. These include: Colonization Period, since 1492 Treaty Period, 1789–1871 Removal Period, 1834–1871 Allotment/Assimilation Period, 1887–1934 Tribal Reorganization, 1934–1958 Termination, 1953–1988 Self-Determination, 1975–present	

Theme 7	Production, Distrubtion and Consumption
Essential Understanding	American Indians developed a variety of economic systems that reflected their cultures and managed their relationships with others. Prior to European arrival in the Americas, American Indians produced and traded goods and technologies using well-developed systems of trails and widespread transcontinental, intertribal trade routes. Today, American Indian tribes and individuals are active in economic enterprises that involve production and distribution.
Concept	Bodmer Collection Number
For thousands of years American Indians developed and operated vast trade networks throughout the Western Hemisphere.	1986.49.283 , 1986.49.289 , 1986.49.263 , 1986.49.271 , 1986.49.253 , 1986.49.276 , 1986.49.131 , 1986.49.149 , 1986.49.151 , 1986.49.176 , 1986.49.185 , 1986.49.219 , 1986.49.273A , 1986.49.273B , 1986.49.365 , 1986.49.387 , 1986.49.283 , 1986.49.284
American Indians traded, exchanged, gifted, and negotiated the purchase of goods, foods, technologies, domestic animals, ideas, and cultural practices with one another.	1986.49.232 , 1986.49.241 , 1986.49.249 , 1986.49.267 , 1986.49.260 , 1986.49.286 , 1986.49.305 , 1986.49.207 , 1986.49.208 , 1986.49.214 , 1986.49.228 , 1986.49.338 , 1986.49.345
American Indians played influential and powerful roles in trade and exchange economies with partners in Europe during the colonial period. These activities also supported the development and growth of the United States.	1986.49.371 , 1986.49.211A , 1986.49.171 , 1986.49.163 , 1986.49.144 , 1986.49.137
Today, American Indians are involved in a variety of economic enterprises, set economic policies for their nations, and own and manage natural resources that affect the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services throughout much of the United States.	

Theme 8	Science, Technology, and Society
Essential Understanding	American Indian knowledge resides in languages, cultural practices, and teaching that spans many generations. This knowledge is based on long-term observation, experimentation, and experience with the living earth. Indigenous knowledge has sustained American Indian cultures for thousands of years. When applied to contemporary global challenges, Native knowledge contributes to dynamic and innovative solutions.
Concept	Bodmer Collection Num
American Indian knowledge can inform the ongoing search for new solutions to contemporary issues.	1986.49.377 , 1986.49.82 , 1986.49.75 , 1986.49.133 , 1986.49.134 , 1986.49.298 , 1986.49.313 , 1986.49.316 , 1986.49.317 , 1986.49.334
American Indian knowledge reflects a relationship developed over millennia with the living earth based on keen observation, experimentation, and practice.	1986.49.131 , 1986.49.149 , 1986.49.151 , 1986.49.176 , 1986.49.185
American Indian knowledge is closely tied to languages, cultural values, and practices. It is founded on the recognition of the relationships between humans and the world around them.	
American Indian knowledge allowed American Indians to live productive, innovative, and sustainable lives in the diverse environments of the Western Hemisphere.	
American Indian knowledge and related innovations, goods, and technologies (e.g., agriculture) have had enormous global impact.	1986.49.280 , 1986.49.334 , 1986.49.383 , 1986.49.375
Major social, cultural, and economic changes took place in American Indian cultures as a result of the acquisition of goods and technologies from Europeans and others.	
Much American Indian knowledge was destroyed in the years after contact with Europeans. Nevertheless, the intergenerational transfer of traditional knowledge, the recovery of cultural practices, and the creation of new knowledge continue in American Indian communities today.	

Theme 9	Global Connections
Essential Understanding	American Indians have always engaged in the world beyond the immediacy of their own communities. For millennia, indigenous people of North America exchanged and traded ideas, goods, technologies, and arts with other tribal nations, near and far. Global connections expanded and intensified after contact with Europeans. American Indian foods, technologies, wealth, and labor contributed to the development of the modern world.
Concept	Bodmer Collection Number
Interactions among American Indian communities across the Americas contributed to the change, growth, and vitality of Native nations.	1986.49.365 , 1986.49.312 , 1986.49.261 , 1986.49.375 , 1986.49.214
Global interactions with Europeans and others had both positive and negative consequences for American Indians.	1986.49.383 , 1986.49.260
The knowledge and perspectives of American Indians and other indigenous people around the world have the potential to inform solutions as global interdependence intensifies and change accelerates.	
As sovereign independent nations, American Indian tribes and their citizens are participants in global politics, economies, and other facets of contemporary life.	1986.49.276 , 1986.49.330 , 1986.49.285 , 1986.49.286 , 1986.49.388 , 1986.49.256

Theme 10	Civic Ideals and Practices			
Essential Understanding	Ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship have always been part of American Indian societies. The rights and responsibilities of American Indian individuals have been defined by the values, morals, and beliefs common to their cultures. American Indians today may be citizens of their tribal nations, the states they live in, and the United States.			
Concept	Grades K-2	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
As citizens of their tribal nations, American Indians have always had certain rights, privileges, and responsibilities that are tied to cultural values and beliefs and thus vary from culture to culture.	1986.49.260 , 1986.49.372 , 1986.49.246 , 1986.49.288 , 1986.49.231			
Not all American Indians today are citizens of their tribes.				
American Indians have acquired U.S. citizenship through a variety of means, including certain treaties and military service. Citizenship for all American Indians did not occur until the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924.				
Some American Indian people have neither desired nor accepted U.S. citizenship.				
American Indians today may be citizens of their tribes, the United States, and the states in which they live.				
As U.S. citizens, American Indians have often been denied the same rights and privileges as other U.S. citizens. They have formed movements to gain equitable rights and privileges.				
More than 560 tribal governments are recognized by the United States as having rights of sovereign self-government. Dozens of other tribes are recognized by various state governments, whose authorities and responsibilities differ according to the laws of the states.				