

LESSON PLAN - Native American Economics  
Economic Contributions of Native Americans to Washington State

EALRS: (Economics) The student understands basic economic concepts and analyzes the effect of economic systems on individuals, groups, and society.

GRADE LEVEL: Secondary

BASIC CONCEPTS: Clearing up the misconception that Washington's Indian reservations are an economic "drag" on the state. Far from it.

ORGANIZING GENERALIZATION: In 1997, Governor Gary Locke and tribal leadership issued a call for facts to shed light on the relationships between the state and the 27 federally recognized Indian tribes within its borders. One of the working subcommittees, the Economic Study Group developed a report on the tribes' contribution to the state's economy. These findings are significant both in their scope and their implications.

CULTURE AREA: Washington State

TIME PERIOD: Present day

BACKGROUND: Consider the following findings:

Washington has 27 federally recognized Indian tribes with a combined population of about 91,000.

Washington tribes contribute \$1 billion annually to the state's overall economy.

Tribal enterprises in 1997 spent \$865.8 million for supplies, equipment and services.

In 1997, the tribal governments paid an estimated \$51.3 million in federal employment/payroll-related taxes.

The tribes paid an estimated \$5.3 million in state employment/payroll-related taxes in 1997.

Tribal enterprises currently employ 14,375 Washington citizens full time, including non-tribal employees.

More than half of these jobs are in the services sector.

Average annual wages for tribal employment amounted to \$18,800. This is about 40% lower than the statewide average of \$32,400.

OBJECTIVES:

Knowledge

**Students will:** (Economics 1.1) comprehend key economic concepts and economic systems, and (Economics 1.4) examine how government policies influence the economy.

Skills

**Students will:** Examine statistics, facts, and figures on economic contributions Native Americans make to Washington State, and state commonly held misconceptions that are disproved by the materials in this lesson.

Values

**Students will:** explain how the scarcity of resources (human, capital, technological, natural) requires the development of economic systems to make decisions about how goods and services are to be produced and distributed, and analyze how different governments influence their economies.

**ACTIVITIES:** State some of the misconceptions that many people have on the economic situation of Native American tribes and people:

Indians contribute very little to Washington State's economy in terms of employment, earnings, and tax revenues.

Native American's receive large amounts of money from federal and state programs.

Native American enterprises pay large amounts of wages to their Native employees.

Casino revenues are so large that all other services to Native Americans should be cancelled.

Native American's don't pay state or federal income tax.

Tribal governments and enterprises don't employ non-Natives.

Using the tables (included), make transparencies that students can copy down facts and figures from, to refute the stated above misconceptions. Students could possibly come up with more commonly held misconceptions to disprove. An oral presentation could culminate in this research and investigative project, or reports could be written in a journalistic style (focusing on who, what, when, where, and why).

**EXTENSIONS:** Other focuses for the material presented in lesson: Percentage of change in population by race, projected changes in racial population for the future, Washington State's ranking by American Indian total population figures, tribal enrollment figures, area in Washington State with highest percentage of American Indians, value of timber harvest from tribal lands, differences in salmon harvest of Indians and non-Indians, value of shellfish harvest, etc.

**EVALUATION:** Repelling common misperceptions and placing these reports in a public place (hall, office, library) may assist others in continuing dialogue. Student self-evaluations would be very revealing and highly individualized.

**MATERIALS/ RESOURCES:** *Economic Contributions of Indian Tribes to the Economy of Washington State* by Veronica Tiller and Robert Chase