



SOCIAL SCIENCES

The Dance House

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- Identity
- History
- Lifeways

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will be able to ...

- Understand the historical and cultural significance of the Dance House to Siletz people.
- Build a replica of a Dance House and describe design elements of traditional structures.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- Why is the Dance House significant to the Siletz Tribe?

LOGISTICS

- Where does the activity take place?
Classroom with a variety of whole-class and partner work for engagement
- How are the students organized?
 Whole class Teams: 2 – 4
 Pairs Individually

TIME REQUIRED

90 minutes

Overview

This lesson teaches students about traditions and celebrations of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. Students will learn about the importance of the Dance House to Siletz people, attempts by the federal government to extinguish Siletz beliefs, and how Siletz people today maintain their traditions. Students will have the opportunity to build their own paper replica of a traditional Dance House and learn about design elements of traditional Indigenous structures of the Pacific Northwest coast.

Background for teachers

The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians is composed of dozens of bands and Tribes from across Western Oregon, Northern California, and Southwest Washington—each with a unique cultural and linguistic background. In the mid-1850s, the federal government forced these Tribes from their ancestral homelands onto the Coast (Siletz) Reservation headquartered at Siletz and attempted to force Native people to abandon their traditional languages, beliefs, and lifeways and assimilate into



European-American society. Despite these efforts, Siletz people today have managed to persevere and maintain their traditions and continue to practice many of their ancestral beliefs, ceremonies, and traditions to this day.

The Dance House is an important place for understanding this history of perseverance. Before American settlement, most Tribes and villages, especially along the coast, lived in permanent plank houses. These plank houses were built partially below ground from planks of cedar or redwood and housed extended, and sometimes multiple, families. Annual celebrations and ceremonies occurred indoors, either in the plank house of a village leader or sometimes in a specially designated “Dance House,” which were larger versions of everyday plank houses. When Native people were forcibly removed to the Coast (Siletz) Reservation, many Native people initially rebuilt these traditional structures on the reservation, despite pressure from federal officials to adopt American forms of housing, ways of life, and religion.

In the 1870s, the Warm House Movement reached the reservation. The Warm House tradition was an expression of a larger pan-Indian religious revival movement called the Ghost Dance that began in Nevada among Paiute people and quickly spread throughout much of California and Oregon. Warm House prophets believed that the dance would

STANDARDS

Oregon social sciences standards¹

2.13 - Identify cultural characteristics of the community. (*Geography*)

2.17 - Identify and describe community celebrations, landmarks, symbols, and traditions and explain why they are significant to the cultural heritage of members of the community. (*History*)

2.18 - Differentiate between events that happened in the recent and distant past.

Oregon English language arts standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.1 - Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text. (<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/2/1/>)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.2 - Recount stories, including fables and folktales, from diverse cultures and determine their central message, lesson, or moral. (<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/2/2/>)

¹ Oregon is in the process of revising its social sciences standards. This document references the draft 2018 standards for grade 2.



return dead relatives to life and reverse the horrors of colonization. Ripped from their homes and confined to the reservation, people at Siletz eagerly built no less than six Dance Houses for the Warm House Movement, spread throughout the reservation at Shasta Farm, Upper Farm, Lower Farm, Rock Creek, and two near Siletz Agency. Siletz peoples built more Dance Houses among relatives in communities located outside the remnant reservation—such as on the Siuslaw River near Florence, which was part of the original reservation that was opened to white settlement in 1875. Warm House dances continued until the late 1870s, when federal officials burned all the Dance Houses on the reservation and prohibited the practice.

In the aftermath of the destruction of the Dance Houses, Siletz people continued to practice their varied dances and ceremonies brought with them from their ancestral villages. Prohibited from reconstructing Dance Houses and with their children often shipped off to boarding schools, Siletz people were nevertheless able to pass traditions down in their American homes—often in secret. Even during the Termination Era in the 1950s when the federal government severed its relationship with the Tribe, individual families continued to pass along the songs, regalia, and knowledge necessary for ceremonies. In particular, the Nee-dash, or Feather Dance, from the Dee-ni people of Southern Oregon and Northern California, managed to survive in individual homes and hearts throughout this difficult period.

MATERIALS

Prior to the lesson, teachers should prepare the following materials

- **PowerPoint presentation** (available in lesson materials; load the slides prior to the lesson to ensure they are displaying properly)
- **Classroom writing surface** (i.e., blackboard, whiteboard, chalkboard, chart paper, and markers)
- **Student classroom internet access** to enable groups of students to conduct research online in the classroom
- **Classroom audiovisual technology** to display PowerPoint slides and videos (see next items)
- **Dance House Kit PDFs** (copies of each component for each student/group)
 - Dance house kit instructions - <https://www.siletzlanguage.org/docs/dancehousekitinstructions.pdf>
 - Dance house inside ends floor roof - <https://www.siletzlanguage.org/docs/dancehouseinsideendsfloorroof.pdf>
 - Dance house inside sides - <https://www.siletzlanguage.org/docs/dancehouseinsidesides.pdf>
 - Dance house outside roof back - <https://www.siletzlanguage.org/docs/dancehouseoutsideroofback.pdf>
 - Dance house outside roof front - <https://www.siletzlanguage.org/docs/dancehouseoutsiderooffront.pdf>

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The 1970s marked a period of Indigenous cultural revival and revitalization, both at Siletz and across the nation. Just one year after the Siletz Tribe was restored to federal recognition in 1977, the U.S. Congress passed a law guaranteeing the right of American Indians to practice their religions. Back in Oregon, Siletz leaders and elders recognized the need for a Dance House to be able to return ceremonies and dances to the entire community. They worked together with other Tribes in the region to restart the public celebration of ceremonies and do the work necessary to construct a Dance House. In 1996, after a collective community effort, the Siletz Tribe opened the Dance House on the reservation. The Dance House remains a central location for all types of community and ceremonial events including weddings, storytelling and other traditional teachings, funerals, and baby blessings, as well as annual ceremonies like Nee-dash.

To prepare for this lesson, teachers should

1. Review all materials for this lesson, including the PowerPoint slides.
2. Ensure students will have access to all printed and/or electronic resources needed to participate in this lesson (see the materials section and the online resources sections).
3. Prepare classroom audiovisual technology to display the PowerPoint slides.
4. Write the lesson objectives and key vocabulary on a classroom writing surface.

MATERIALS *(Continued)*

Prior to the lesson, teachers should prepare the following materials

- Dance house outside sides - https://www.siletzlanguage.org/docs/dancehouse_outside_sides.pdf
- Scissors
- Glue
- Construction paper
- Pencils/markers

VOCABULARY

Ancestors - Family members who have come before us.

Ceremony - When the community comes together to pray, sing, and dance.

Elder - A teacher or leader by virtue of age and experience.

Extended family - Family beyond your mom, dad, brothers, and sisters.

Indigenous peoples of Oregon - Peoples whose families have always been from what we now call Oregon.



Reference

Wilkinson, C. (2010). *The people are dancing again: The history of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon*. University of Washington Press.

Resources

Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians website:
ctsi.nsn.us

Wilkinson, chapter 9 (background information on the Warm House) and chapter 16 (more information about cultural revitalization) of *The People Are Dancing Again: The History of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon*

Considerations for teachers

Assessment

- Students will engage in a substantial amount of discussion with partners and groups. The teacher should actively monitor student discussion for understanding and should intervene when there are misconceptions or biases.
- Students should be assessed both formatively and summatively.
 - The formative assessment will consist of teacher observation of student participation in discussion, group work, and critical analyses.
 - The summative assessment will include the completion of a replica Dance House.

ADAPTATIONS FOR DISTANCE LEARNING



The lesson is primarily structured around small group and classroom discussion and exploration, but several pieces can be pulled out and used as standalone content and activities for distance or independent learning purposes. Following is a suggested sequence. Be sure all students have either print or electronic access to the materials described.

1. Use the PowerPoint slides provided to convene a virtual online class meeting, either synchronously or asynchronously.
2. Provide an opportunity for students to engage orally or in writing with the opening questions, either with one another or with the help of an adult at home.
3. Provide a synchronous lesson that demonstrates how to complete the mapping activity.
4. Provide a synchronous lesson that demonstrates how to complete the Dance House replica.
5. Review and select additional activities from the options/extensions section below that are conducive to distance or independent learning and have students complete them and submit their work.
6. Have students write and share a summary or reflection on what they learned.

Practices

1. *Classroom discussion* – Large group, whole class discussion allows students to express their thoughts and hear the thoughts of others. For the instructor, this practice is a good way to take the pulse of the group and see what general themes emerge. For students, large group discussion can be a way to express themselves or hear differing perspectives.
2. *Small group activities/discussions* – Small group activities allow students to share and analyze ideas with one, two, or three other people. This practice can be good for students who do not want to share their ideas with the whole class and/or who may be afraid of others' reactions. The teacher should monitor group discussions to determine the degree to which students understand the concepts.
3. The teacher must be able to read various maps of Oregon.
4. The teacher should read chapter 16 of *The People Are Dancing Again* (Wilkinson, 2010) to gain an understanding of cultural persistence at Siletz.

Learning targets

- I understand the significance of promoting cultural traditions to maintain connections to the past.
- I can understand the barriers that Siletz people have overcome to practice their culture and beliefs, and I can explain the importance of the Dance House for Siletz people today.
- I can construct a replica Dance House and describe some design elements of traditional structures.

Appendix

Materials included in the electronic folder that support this lesson are:

- Slides_Dance_House.ppt
- Siletz Agency Map
- Chapter 16 of "The People Are Dancing Again: The History of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon"

Activity 1

Building background and activating prior knowledge of celebrations and traditions

Time: 15 minutes

Step 1

Introduce the lesson by telling students that today they will be talking about Indigenous people groups of Oregon and some of their traditions. Ask students to select a partner for pair-share discussion or identify A/B pairs for sharing during the lesson.

Step 2

Share slide 1.

Say:

People come from many diverse backgrounds. The way we dress, the things we like to eat, the places we like to go, and the different ways we celebrate make us unique and are passed down to us from our family and our ancestors—the family members who have gone before. Let’s think together.

Step 3

Ask students to discuss with a partner the following question: *What are some celebrations you know about?*

Say:

Now, let’s talk with our partner. All partner A’s, raise your hands. Please share with partner B the celebrations you’ve experienced and the ways that important events are marked in your family and your community. Then it will be partner B’s turn to talk. (3 minutes each)

Now, let’s share with each other some celebrations or ceremonies that you have experienced in your community or family.

Activity 1 *(Continued)*

Step 4

Facilitate whole group discussion.

Say:

Awesome! Let's think together: Where do those ceremonies or celebrations take place? Are they held outdoors? Indoors? Are they held inside a special building?

Step 5

Share slide 2 and facilitate the following discussion and questions.

Say:

Let's recap by looking at the pictures on the slide. We found out that different people have different celebrations throughout the world and that these celebrations are often passed down by family and community. We also found out that many celebrations happen at special places. Sometimes those places are outside and sometimes they're inside.

Ask:

What do you notice about these pictures that matches up with what we have already discussed?

Activity 2

Siletz history and perseverance

Time: 30 minutes

Step 1

Share slide 3 and facilitate the following discussion and questions.

Say:

Indigenous people in Oregon are people whose ancestors come from Oregon and have always lived here. One Tribe in Oregon is called the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. Siletz people come from all over Western Oregon. Check out this map. Each Tribe and band are different and have different beliefs and ways of living. Today, Siletz people follow many different faith traditions. Still, Native people from Western Oregon all have special celebrations and ceremonies—songs, dances, and stories—that have been passed down for generations. Many of those celebrations and ceremonies happen in a special place called a Dance House. A Dance House is like a church for many Siletz people—it’s where they go to pray, pass on traditions, and celebrate important occasions like weddings, funerals, or baby blessings. Today, we’ll learn more about the Dance House and why it’s so important to Siletz people.

Step 2

Share slide 4 and facilitate the following discussion and questions.

Say:

Many years ago, only Indigenous people lived in Oregon. They had their own villages and towns and would visit each other to celebrate and for special ceremonies. In those days, these celebrations would often happen at a leader’s house or in a special place called a Dance House. Native people’s houses weren’t like houses in America today—look at this picture.

Activity 2 (Continued)

Ask:

What do you notice about the house in this picture?

Key point: The house is partially below ground, long, made from wooden planks, and has round doors.

Say:

Great discussion! These houses were big, long, and dug into the ground. They could fit a lot of people who all lived together. Siletz people call these “plank houses” but sometimes they are also called “longhouses.” The leader’s house was usually the biggest, and they would clear out their house to host all the people when it was time to come together to pray, sing, dance, or celebrate. Some villages even had special houses just for celebrating. They looked just like the other houses but were bigger so that they could fit everyone.

When European people came to North America, they wanted the land that Native people were living on, and they didn’t want to share. They fought with Indian people and made them leave their homes to stay on a small piece of land called a reservation. Native people didn’t want to go, but they had no choice. A lot of Native people in Western Oregon were forced to go to the reservation at Siletz.

Ask:

How do you think Native people felt when they had to leave their homes? Have you ever lost something very important to you? How did you feel? Share with your partner. (A/B partners, 2 minutes each)

Step 3

Share slide 5 and facilitate the following discussion and questions.



Activity 2 (Continued)

Say:

When Native people got to the reservation, there weren't any homes for them. The soldiers and government tried to make people build homes that looked like the small houses that most people live in today—houses that only fit one family. Siletz people thought this was a strange way of living. They were used to living in plank houses with lots of extended family like grandparents, uncles, and aunts. Siletz people knew that they needed a place to continue their traditions and those small American houses would not do.

Ask:

Would you like to live all together with your extended family? Maybe you already do? What do you think Siletz people did when the government told them to live in American-style homes?

Say:

That's right! Many of the people started building plank houses on the reservation. But it wasn't easy. The soldiers and government men were trying to control people and tell them how to live. They tried to stop people from living in traditional houses.

Ask:

Why do you think soldiers and the government didn't want Siletz people to live in plank houses?

Key points: Settlers thought their way of life and type of houses were better and wanted to force Siletz people to live the same way they did.

Step 4

Share slide 6.

Activity 2 (Continued)

Say:

Still, Siletz people were so sad about being forced to leave their homes that they really wanted to dance and pray together. So, even though they knew the government might not like it, Siletz people began to build Dance Houses. These houses looked pretty much like other plank houses but became special places on the reservation for celebrating, praying, and gathering. They got the English name of "Dance Houses" because that's where people danced. Here is a map. Look at all the Dance Houses that Siletz people built on the reservation.

Ask:

How many Dance Houses do you see on the map? How close and far apart are they? (A/B partners)

Step 5

Share slide 7 and facilitate the following discussion and questions.

Say:

The soldiers and the U.S. government really didn't like Dance Houses. They thought American ways of living were better than Native ways. They wanted to force Native people to give up their songs, stories, traditions, and even their language and to live like other European-Americans did. They burned down the Dance Houses and threatened to punish people if they rebuilt them. They also separated children from their families so that children would have a harder time learning their dances, songs, and language. The government wanted to stop Native people's way of life and make them live in the European-American way. Many children were sent away to boarding schools. That's a school where you live right on the school campus, away from your family.

Ask:

How do you think little kids felt when they had to live away from their families? What tradition or celebration do you have that you would feel really sad to be



Activity 2 (Continued)

forced to give up? (A/B partners or “walk and share” by finding someone in the room to share one thing they have learned so far)

Step 6

Share slide 8 and facilitate the following discussion and questions.

Say:

These attacks made Siletz people scared and ashamed to build Dance Houses, but they didn't stop dancing, singing, or practicing their traditions. They just had to do it in secret. Look at this picture. It's a picture of Siletz people dancing a traditional dance called Nee-dash or “Feather Dance” in their American-style home on the reservation. For a long time, Siletz people had to pass their traditions down this way, without a place to come together.

Step 7

Share slide 9 and facilitate the following discussion and questions.

Say:

Years later, things began to change. Indian people across the country started to fight for their rights to practice their religion and celebrate their traditions. They organized, and eventually in 1978 convinced the U.S. government to pass a law protecting Native people's rights to practice their religion. At Siletz, elders and leaders knew that to be a healthy community they needed a place to celebrate and gather together again. They needed a Dance House. They worked hard to teach everyone in the community about the importance of building a Dance House and continuing traditions. In 1996, after a lot of work, Siletz people officially opened a new Dance House on the reservation. Ever since, Siletz people of all ages have a place to learn and practice sacred traditions that are thousands of years old.

Activity 3

Building a Dance House replica

Time: 30 minutes

Step 1

Ask students to work with a partner to build their own traditional Dance House using the paper templates provided. Review the instructions with the class, modeling parts if necessary.

Say:

Thank you for listening to this story and thinking about why the Dance House is so important to Siletz people. It's a place to celebrate traditions and continue important religious beliefs. It's also a place that reminds Siletz people today how hard their ancestors had to fight to keep those traditions alive.

Say:

For the rest of the lesson, we will make a model of a Dance House. I'm going to pass out materials and give you instructions. Real Dance Houses are built from big strong trees, such as cedar, that don't rot in the damp climate and are strong enough to hold everything together. People must split the logs down into planks they can use to build the walls and roof. Today, we'll use paper to make a model.

Activity 4

Sharing and further learning

Time: 15 minutes

Step 1

Display the Dance Houses when they are completed and then wrap up. Consider setting up the Dance Houses in a way that will allow students to walk the room and observe each other's work.

Say:

We talked a lot about the meaning of the Dance House. Now that you have made the model, let's think a little bit about the design. These are amazing buildings, and these designs are thousands of years old. People figured out how to build these houses and passed that knowledge down to their families. These structures were designed to be just the right thing for people living in Western Oregon's weather. Isn't that so cool!

Step 2

Give students 5 to 10 minutes to walk the room and look at each other's work.

Step 3

Gather the whole class together and ask the following question: *Looking at the models around the room, why do you think the Siletz people designed their houses this way?*

Activity 4 *(Continued)*

Key points

- They are big, so people can live together and gather to celebrate.
- There is a place in the top for smoke from the fire to go.
- The slanted roofs help keep off the rain.
- The big supports (rolled paper) make the house sturdy and strong.
- They are built down in the ground, where the earth around the house helps keep the temperature warm in the winter and cool in the summer.
- Cedar and redwood are easily split into planks and naturally resistant to bugs, damage, and rot.

Activity 5

Reflection/closure

Time: 5 minutes

Step 1

Review the learning targets.

Step 2

Have students sit in a circle and “whip” around the room, each one quickly sharing something they learned from the lesson with the class. If there is time, have a few students share out how and where they celebrate their own culture and heritage.