



HEALTH

Tribal Health (Part 1)

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- **Since time immemorial**
- **History**
- **Lifeways**
- **Genocide, federal policy, and laws**

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain how Indigenous people in western Oregon historically maintained healthy communities
- Describe the impact of colonization on the health of Siletz people and the Tribal community

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What factors contribute to good health for individuals and communities?
- What role does culture play in health and healing?

LOGISTICS

- Where does the activity take place?
Classroom
- How are the students organized?
 - ☑ Whole class
 - ☑ Teams: 3 – 4
 - ☑ Pairs
 - ☑ Individually

TIME REQUIRED

90 minutes

Overview

The health of Native communities today cannot be separated from the history of foreign disease, removal, reservations, and forced assimilation that separated Tribal people from places, foods, clean water, and plant medicines that they depended on for health and wellness. This traumatic history has left significant barriers to individual and community health that Tribal governments, leaders, and members work together to confront through modern scientific methods guided by traditional values and ways of being. In this lesson, students will examine the history of these unique health barriers to build an appreciation for challenges facing Tribal health practitioners and community members as they work together to ensure a healthy community. A subsequent lesson—“Tribal Health (Part 2)”—will expose students to the way that the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians (CTSI) incorporate these traditional values into the modern and up-to-date health care facilities and services offered by the Siletz Community Health Clinic.

Background for teachers

The homelands of the Indigenous peoples who make up CTSI today span western Oregon as well as parts of southwestern Washington and northern



California. These groups speak different languages and traditionally lived lives uniquely adapted to their ancestral homelands, including beliefs and practices about health and well-being. While certainly not free of disease and hardship, Tribal societies and lifeways generally created healthy environments for human people. Traditional diets built on a foundation of salmon provide nutritious reliable food sources recognized today by nutritionists as healthier than many mainstream American diets. Tribal cultures value personal and community hygiene and Tribal people chose to set up societies that gave everyone access to food and shelter, ensuring a healthy and resilient population. As a result, by practically every metric, the health of Tribal people in the Americas far exceeded the health and wellness of people in places like Europe at the time of contact.

Along with warfare and violent dispossession, disease had among the most significant impacts on Native health during colonization—decimating Indigenous populations. Diseases like smallpox, influenza, measles, malaria, cholera, typhoid, and pertussis (whooping cough), endemic in filthy and crowded European cities, exploded into deadly pandemics in the Americas. Outbreaks of these diseases often killed large percentages of the Native population before the arrival of settlers, running ahead of colonists along well-established Indigenous trade networks. Lewis and Clark noted that many of the communities they passed in the Pacific Northwest bore scars from an earlier smallpox outbreak and some scholars today posit

STANDARDS

Oregon health standards

HE.1.12.2 - Describe the interrelationships of physical, mental, social, emotional, and environmental health.

HE.1.12.3 - Explain how environment (both physical and social) and personal health are interrelated.

HE.2.12.6 - Analyze how race and ethnicity influences health beliefs, behaviors, and outcomes.

HE.2.12.1 - Analyze how culture influences health beliefs, behaviors, and outcomes.

Oregon social sciences standards

HS.59 - Analyze and explain the history of the American Indian/Alaska Natives/Native Hawaiians in Oregon and the United States regarding their culture, Tribal sovereignty, and issues of concern, past and present.

HS.65 - Identify and explain strategies of survivance, resistance and societal change by individuals and traditionally marginalized groups confronting discrimination, genocide, and other forms of violence, based on race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and gender.



that smallpox outbreaks traveling north from Mexico may have ravaged the Pacific Northwest as early as the 1500s. Because Indigenous people lacked immunity to these introduced diseases and had no experience treating them, outbreaks had catastrophic mortality rates—sometimes destroying entire villages.

However, while disease has played a major role in Indigenous history it is a mistake to attribute the decline in Indigenous population and general health after colonization solely to microbes.

Mortality from disease outbreaks had an uneven impact on Indigenous populations across western Oregon, with Tribes living nearer to areas of early European settlement often facing much more significant rates of mortality from introduced diseases than those living farther away. Tribes living along the Columbia River and in the Willamette Valley for instance (sites of early fur trade activity and farming settlement) faced estimated mortality rates up to 90 percent and 80 percent respectively from malaria outbreaks in the 1830s. Meanwhile, peoples living in more remote areas along the southern Oregon coast lost more like two-thirds of their populations from similar outbreaks. As historians have begun to point out, Indigenous populations across the United States almost surely would have recovered from pandemics if they had not faced the oncoming rush of violent dispossession at the hands of American settlers and the federal government.

MATERIALS

- Slides (PowerPoint slide deck).
- Classroom audiovisual technology and internet access to display PowerPoint slides.
- “Traditional Siletz Health Practices” handout (one copy per student).

VOCABULARY

Colonization – The process of settling among an Indigenous population and exerting control over the land and people.

Dimensions of wellness – Different aspects of our lives, such as physical health, emotional well-being, and social connections, that contribute to a state of health and balance.

Health – A state of physical, mental, and social well-being in which an individual is free from illness, injury, and disease.

Health disparity – Preventable differences in the rates or impact of disease, injury, violence, or opportunity to achieve wellness experienced by socially disadvantaged groups.

Holistic health – A definition of health that includes a person’s entire well-being, including the body, mind, emotions, social connections, and spirituality.

Trauma – 1) A physical injury (e.g., “blunt-force trauma”). 2) An emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, crime, or natural disaster.

Protective factors – Conditions, characteristics, and relationships that shield individuals from the negative consequences of exposure to risk.

Wellness – A state of optimal well-being in which an individual actively pursues and achieves a balanced and fulfilling life.



Tracking the health of Native people as they were removed to the Coast (Siletz) Reservation beginning in the mid-1850s provides a good example of the way that federal policy and disease combined to decimate the health of many people in the Tribal community. Removal to the Coast (Siletz) Reservation meant not just the loss of homes but also the complex food networks that Tribal people had relied on for food and health. With the government providing only a portion of the rations that they had promised in treaties, Tribal people suffered from severe malnutrition—creating a population vulnerable to diseases like tuberculosis, trachoma, and influenza that ravaged the reservation in the first decades after removal. Even after the supply of food stabilized, the government’s insistence that Tribal people farm for a living, the ongoing theft of Tribal lands, and the denial of access to important hunting and fishing areas came to represent a slow-motion assault on Tribal health as people were slowly coerced into abandoning the healthy traditional diet built around salmon for unhealthier alternatives.

The single-minded push for assimilation undermined Tribal health in other ways. Frantic to sever the relationship between Tribal children and their families, federal officials insisted on shipping children to underfunded and overcrowded boarding schools. In doing so, these officials manufactured the ideal environment for ongoing disease outbreaks. So many children died of disease at boarding schools that Native families came to consider sending children to school as a death sentence.

ADAPTIONS FOR DISTANCE LEARNING



The lesson is primarily structured around group discussion and exploration, but much of it can be adapted for distance or independent learning purposes. Be sure all students have either print or electronic access to the materials described. A suggested sequence follows:

1. Hold a class meeting online and, using the PowerPoint slides and the steps in Activity 1 (“Warm-Up”), have students respond to the discussion prompts provided on slide 2 (“Warm-Up”). Follow this with a “mini-teach” on the definitions of health and wellness and the dimensions of wellness provided (respectively) on slides 3 and 4. Alternatively, you can post the discussion prompt, definition, and dimensions of wellness slides in your school’s online classroom platform or an online document and have students review and respond to them asynchronously.
2. Have students complete Activity 2 (“Traditional Siletz Health Practices”) in small groups working synchronously (e.g., via web-conference breakout rooms) or asynchronously through your school’s online classroom platform or other online document or collaboration tool. Alternatively, you can direct students to complete the activity independently or as homework. Ensure students have access to any information, documents, or links they need to complete the work. This may mean providing print or electronic copies of lesson materials and/or reformatting documents so students can work with them virtually.

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Meanwhile, the government brutally suppressed Indigenous health practitioners, replacing millennia of knowledge with underfunded government physicians steeped in notions of the racial inferiority of Native bodies, cultures, and people. The early years of the reservation saw the murder of several important traditional doctors as Tribal people struggled to make sense of the violence and suffering around them. The pain and disruption of removal and the ongoing suffering of the reservation greatly harmed Tribal people’s health and wellness both physically and spiritually.

The result of all these pressures was a variation of a common dynamic that played out on reservations across the nation—a stunning population loss that saw the approximately 2,700 survivors on the Coast (Siletz) Reservation in 1857 reduced to only around 500 people by 1900. Since that low point, Tribal people have rebounded and today CTSI has over 5,000 members. Yet the history of colonization continues to impact the health and bodies of Tribal communities to this day. Siletz people still lack access to many traditional hunting and fishing areas that make it difficult to subsist on traditional foods. Access to alternative healthy foods like fresh fruits and vegetables can also be limited in areas where many Siletz people live. As a result, like many other Tribal communities, Siletz Tribal members have a diabetes rate far in excess of the general American population and are at higher risk for many other diseases.

ADAPTIONS FOR DISTANCE LEARNING



(Continued)

3. Hold a class meeting online and, using the steps in Activity 3, provide a mini-teach and facilitated discussion of the impact of colonization on the health and wellness of Siletz people in Oregon.
4. Convene one or more follow-up online class meetings to review and debrief student group (or individual) work, reflect on the lesson together (see steps in Activity 4, “Reflection”), and answer any remaining questions.



Overcoming health disparities and establishing adequate health services for Siletz Tribal members was one of the primary motivations behind the Restoration movement of the 1970s.¹ The preamble to the Siletz Tribal Constitution defines the purposes of the Tribe as a government, one of which is to “Help our members achieve their highest potentials in education, physical and mental health, and economic development.” Among many pressing community needs, Tribal leaders and staff members have worked tirelessly to build and expand health services that are managed by Siletz people themselves, rather than by the U.S. government. In February 1991, those efforts culminated in the construction of the Siletz Community Health Clinic (SCHC) on Swan Avenue in downtown Siletz, Oregon. Today, the SCHC operates in an expanded facility completed in April 2010 that offers comprehensive and holistic healthcare and public health services to Siletz Tribal members, members of other federally recognized Tribes, and non-Tribal members of the surrounding community. The lesson “Tribal Health (Part 2)” provides more information about the SCHC and an opportunity for students to explore its services.

To prepare for lesson teachers should

- Review all handouts for this lesson.
- Ensure students will have access to all materials (printed and/or electronic) and audiovisual resources needed for this lesson (see “Materials” section above).
- Prepare classroom audiovisual technology to display the slides.

References

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¹ For more information about Restoration see CTSI Grade 10 Lesson: “The Restoration Movement, 1956–1977.”

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

Resource

Website of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians: <https://www.ctsi.nsn.us/>

Considerations for teachers

Assessment

The core activity of this lesson is focused on student discussion and engagement with primary texts. Teachers can assess student learning by monitoring pair and small group discussions. In addition, the “Traditional Siletz Health Practices” handout used in Activities 2 and 3 can serve as a formal or informal summative assessment for individual students and/or student groups. Teachers can collect and review it for level of effort and completion.

Practices

- *Small groups* – Small group activities allow students to share and analyze ideas with three to five other people. This practice can be good for students who do not feel comfortable sharing their ideas with the whole class. The teacher should monitor group discussions to determine the degree to which students are understanding the concepts and contributing to the group.
- *Classroom discussion* – Large group, whole class discussion allows students to share their thoughts with each other. For the instructor, this practice is a good way to take the pulse of the group and see what general themes are emerging. For students, large group discussion can be a way to express themselves or to hear differing perspectives from others.

Learning targets

- I can explain how Indigenous people in western Oregon maintained healthy communities.
- I can describe the impact of colonization on the health of the Siletz people and Tribal community.

Appendix

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

- Slides_Tribal Health_Part_1.pptx
- Handout_Traditional Siletz Health Practices.pdf

Activity 1

Warm Up

Time: 15 minutes

Overview

Students engage in a discussion to activate their prior knowledge and prepare for the lesson.

Step 1

Display slide 2 (“Warm-Up”), review the prompts with the class, and then have the students discuss the prompts with a partner. The prompts engage students in reflecting and articulating their thoughts on what it means and what is needed to be healthy and well.

Step 2

Ask for a few volunteers to share what they discussed in their pairs. Encourage students to think deeper about different dimensions of and contributors to good or poor health, using such prompts as:

- *What are some habits we know help keep our bodies in good health (e.g., balanced diet, physical activity, good hygiene)?*
- *What are some habits or practices that can help us manage emotions and think clearly (e.g., reducing stress, writing in a journal, talking about problems with people you trust)?*
- *Can the connections you have with other people affect your health? In what ways?*
- *What about spirituality, such as attending a religious service or connecting to something bigger than yourself? How might that affect your health?*

Activity 1 (Continued)

Step 3

Ask for a few volunteers to define what they think the words “health” and “wellness” mean and what the difference is between the two.

Step 4

Display slide 3 (“Defining Health and Wellness”) and review the definitions provided.

Say:

Health is a state of physical, mental, and social well-being in which an individual is free from illness, injury, and disease. It includes factors like physical fitness, mental health, and the absence of medical issues. Wellness is a state of optimal well-being in which an individual actively pursues and achieves a balanced and fulfilling life. Wellness includes physical health, mental and emotional well-being, social connectedness, and a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Health and wellness are essential because they enable us to lead happier, longer, and more fulfilling lives while giving us the tools to cope with life’s challenges and opportunities.

Step 5

Display slide 4 (“Dimensions of Wellness”) and use the following to summarize the many variables that influence health and wellness for both individuals and communities.

Say:

People who study and teach health and wellness often speak of many different things that contribute to people feeling healthy and well or unhealthy and unwell. These are called dimensions of health or dimensions of wellness. There are different ideas about how many dimensions there are; the example on the slide provides eight dimensions, but other models include seven, or six, or even fewer dimensions. The general idea is that different aspects of our lives—physical health, emotional well-being, social connections, and more—work together to make us feel happy

Activity 1 (Continued)

and balanced. Health and wellness are holistic. Being healthy and well means taking care of your entire being, including your body, mind, emotions, and social life, as they all affect your overall health and happiness.

Step 6

Give students a few minutes to study the image on the slide and ask if they have any questions about any of the dimensions of wellness. The following explanations of each dimension may be helpful:

Emotional – *Knowing how you feel, what’s important to you, and how to deal with your feelings in a good way; being happy and excited about your life.*

Spiritual – *Discovering what gives your life meaning and importance, whether it’s connected to a religion or not, and doing things that align with what you believe in and care about.*

Intellectual – *Keeping your brain growing by being curious and learning new things, responding positively to challenges, and using what you know to help and teach others.*

Physical – *Taking good care of your body so you can be healthy both today and in the future.*

Environmental – *Knowing how the places you live, nature, and the things people build can impact how you feel and how healthy you are; trying to do things that help keep our planet healthy.*

Financial – *Handling your money wisely by spending what you have and making smart choices, planning for things you want sooner and later, and knowing that everyone’s money situation is different.*

Occupational – *Using your special abilities and talents to do work that matters a lot to you and makes you feel great.*

Social – *Having good friendships and relationships, getting along with others, being kind to people, and helping in your community.*



Activity 1 *(Continued)*

Step 7

Review the learning targets and any other vocabulary words for the lesson not already discussed.

Step 8

Pause to take any questions from students before continuing.

Activity 2

Traditional Siletz Health Practices

Time: 30 minutes

Overview

Students learn about traditional health and wellness practices of Siletz ancestors.

Step 1

Sort students into groups of three to four using the sorting method of your choice and have them move with their groups to a table or other space in the room.

Step 2

Distribute copies of the “Traditional Siletz Health Practices” handout to students.

Step 3

Give students instructions for the activity.

Say:

For thousands of years, Native people in western Oregon used Indigenous health practices to promote individual and social health and well-being. Varied and healthy diets, local knowledge of healing plants, an active lifestyle, cleanliness practices, ceremonies and social gatherings to mark harvests and the changing of seasons, and spiritual beliefs that emphasized harmony with nature helped Tribes survive and thrive for generations. You will work with your groups to read the information in the handout and discuss and answer some questions on the last page about what you read. Be prepared to share what your group discussed with the whole class.

Step 4

Give student groups about 15 minutes to read the information in the handout and answer the discussion questions together.

Activity 2 (Continued)

Step 5

Circulate among groups to answer any questions, make sure students are staying on task, and verify that groups are discussing and answering the discussion questions on the last page of the handout.

Step 6

After 15 minutes, or earlier if groups look like they have completed the task, gain students' attention.

Step 7

Facilitate a whole class debrief of the activity using the discussion questions the groups responded to, inviting the groups to take turns sharing what they discussed and wrote on their handouts. A copy of the discussion prompts follows for reference:

- *What is the relationship between diet and health?*
- *The article talks about rituals playing a role in health. How might ceremonies impact individual health?*
- *How can paying attention to the ways that we are connected to the environment improve overall health and well-being?*
- *How does the article compare with your previous understanding of how Indigenous people lived before the arrival of Europeans?*
- *Which of these health practices are best suited to the lifestyles that people live today? Which might be harder to maintain?*

Activity 2 (Continued)

Step 8

Facilitate a whole group discussion of the role of culture in health and wellness using the following suggested prompts:

- *How does cultural background influence health and wellness beliefs and practices?*
- *Based on your reading, what differences do you see between Siletz health and wellness beliefs and practices and those of mainstream American society?*
- *Why is it beneficial to understand the health and wellness practices of other cultures?*

Step 9

Pause to take any questions from students before moving on.

Activity 3

Consequences of Colonization

Time: 30 minutes

Overview

In this activity, students will learn about colonization's impacts on Siletz health and wellness and the Tribes' current work to overcome them.

Step 1

Provide the following information to set up the segment.

Say:

Traditional health and wellness practices helped Indigenous people survive and thrive for thousands of years. People were not immune to diseases, injuries, and stresses, but their lifestyle arguably was healthier than the lifestyles of many other people in other parts of the world. That changed radically when Indigenous peoples encountered European and later American explorers and settlers.

Step 2

Review the definition of colonization provided in the vocabulary list.

Step 3

Display slide 5 ("Colonization in Oregon") and provide an overview of the process of colonization in western Oregon.

Say:

During colonization, Siletz and other Native Americans experienced dramatic changes to their lifestyles that harmed the overall health of both individuals and the larger population. I'm going to explain a little bit about what happened to Siletz people and then we'll work together to anticipate the ways that colonization impacted the health of Indigenous peoples based on the learning that we've done so far.

Activity 3 (Continued)

First, let me tell you a little bit about colonization in western Oregon. One of the biggest impacts of the arrival of settlers was diseases brought from Europe. Often, these diseases decimated Indigenous communities before Europeans had even arrived—travelling along Indigenous trading networks that connected large parts of the continent. Because many of these diseases were unknown to Native people, death rates were extremely high—sometimes as high as 90 percent—and caused large population drops in many places in the country.

However, new diseases alone don't explain the entire story of the impact of colonization on Native health and wellness. Typically, human populations can recover from the introductions of new diseases—even very virulent diseases. For example, the European population quickly rebounded after the Black Death in the fourteenth century. In the United States, diseases were accompanied by state policies of removal, extermination, and warfare in ways that compounded and magnified the impact of the diseases and combined to devastate Indigenous community health.

In Oregon, settlers fought a series of total wars against Native people—attacking men, women, and children in ways that we would term ethnic cleansing today. When Native people fought back, the U.S. Army joined the fighting, eventually crushing Indigenous resistance and forcing Native people onto reservations like the Coast Reservation headquartered at Siletz. People removed to reservations were forced to leave their homelands with little more than they could carry—often encountering a drastically different climate and way of life. Once arriving at the reservation, federal officials worked to force people to abandon their traditional ways of living and assimilate to the ways that settlers worked and lived. This meant encouraging farming, discouraging communal living, and removing children from homes to be educated in boarding schools.

The government promised that it would provide food, education, and shelter. But through fraud and mismanagement, it often failed to provide enough food for people to live. In later years, federal officials compounded the problem through a series



Activity 3 (Continued)

of illegal reductions to the reservation land base, further alienating Native people from the places they could rely on to make a living.

Step 4

Invite students to work together in their groups to review the handout of traditional Siletz health practices and identify ways they think colonization impacted the health practices, health, and wellness of individual Tribal members.

Step 5

Display slide 6 (“Consequences of Colonization”) and share the following to deepen student understanding of the ongoing consequences of colonization that linger even to this day.

Say:

Even though Native Americans have shown a lot of resilience, many Tribal communities still face disproportionate rates of health problems today that are linked to the history of dispossession. Siletz people still lack access to many traditional hunting and fishing areas, making it difficult to subsist on traditional foods. Access to alternative healthy foods like fresh fruits and vegetables can also be limited where many Siletz people live. As a result of these and other pressures, national statistics tell us that Native American Indian and Alaska Native people experience lower life expectancy and increased susceptibility to diseases like diabetes compared to other Americans. They are also more likely to experience injuries and death from accidents and violence that are often related to the effects of poverty, discrimination, and trauma caused by colonization.

Activity 3 (Continued)

Step 6

Display slide 7 (“Reclaiming Health and Wellness”) and use the information below to explain the images on the slide.

Say:

While this is a sad and frustrating history, the Siletz people and other Native people survived and found ways to thrive over the decades. Today, they are actively working to improve the health and wellness of their citizens through a variety of initiatives.

Siletz Community Health Clinic – Like other Tribes, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, or CTSI, established its own health care facilities and programs to provide culturally sensitive and community-centered care. We’ll learn more about the Siletz Community Health Clinic in a subsequent lesson. CTSI’s desire to make its own choices in how it supports the health and wellness of its citizens was one of the reasons it pushed for restoration in the 1970s and is also why caring for community health was written into the Tribes’ constitution.

Education and Culture Programs – CTSI sponsors multiple programs to (re)connect Tribal members with their cultural heritage and help them feel pride in it. Being proud of yourself and where you come from has been shown to be a “protective factor” that helps people stay healthy and well.

Garden Program – Like other Tribes, the CTSI has established a garden program to help Tribal citizens reconnect with traditional foods and their preparation. In this way, CTSI seeks to “de-colonize the diet” and support members to make healthier food choices as well as providing a place to gather traditional foods and medicines.

Fitness Activities – CTSI sponsors multiple activities that promote physical fitness for Tribal members. This includes offering a fitness center and fitness programs. CTSI also hosts “Run to the Rogue,” which promotes both physical fitness and a connection to Tribal history as members walk the route some of their ancestors took when they were removed from southern Oregon and force-marched to the Coast (Siletz) Reservation.

Activity 3 (Continued)

We'll learn more about how Siletz people are working to secure their health in an upcoming lesson.

Step 7

Take any questions from students before moving on.

Activity 4

Reflection

Time: 15 minutes

Overview

In this activity students reflect on and summarize what they learned in the lesson.

Step 1

Restate learning targets for the lesson and review them with students. Ask if they have any questions about what they learned.

Step 2

Ask students to share with the whole group what stood out or surprised them the most in the lesson.

Step 3

Collect “Traditional Siletz Health Practices” handout from students, if using it for assessment purposes.