



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

**“The Great Spirit is our Father, but the
Earth is our Mother.”**

*Learning from Native American Approaches to a Sense of Place
and Sustainability*

Ritgerð til BA-prófs í ensku

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B.A. Essay

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Abstract

“The Great Spirit is our Father, but the Earth is our Mother” (Support Native, 2010). This is one of many great Native American sayings that give us a reason to believe that Native Americans had great respect for the land they lived on. To have this kind of respect it is essential to have some kind of connection with nature. First of all, every human being needs to belong somewhere and have a sense for a place called home, a *sense of place*. Then it is essential to know what makes that place unique for the individual as well as having things in common with others. Native Americans had as good a sense of their land as possible as they lived solely with nature and from it, developing sustainable methods of cultivating it and passing their knowledge on from one generation to the next.

To develop a strong lasting sense for one’s place it is essential to know what place means to us personally as well forming a common connection through history. Each place has its unique story with heroes and heroics; and having strong historical figures and learning from their vision can play a major role in developing identity. Bringing this knowledge back to life and teaching children of all ethnic backgrounds a sense of respect for their certain place (it can be their state, city or town) along with practicing sustainability from early on, is a very important aspect for their future welfare as well as our planet’s self-sufficiency. Through examining how indigenous peoples treated nature efficiently and with respect, by looking at some of their ancient agricultural techniques still partly practiced today, and by pointing out the importance of history, can all provide us with valuable data to work with in a search for a more sustainable and joyous sedentary lifestyle in connection with the natural surroundings that for each and every one of us is our particular home.

Keywords: Native Americans, Sense of Place, Sustainability.

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1. Introduction

Trying to force the natives of a land into adapting to certain lifestyle that is perceived to be the only correct one by a different group of people has proved to be devastating all over the world and can only serve oppressors with no intention of being fair to the oppressed. In this study I will focus on Native Americans and the heritage their story brings us today and consider what their techniques and way of living can bring to today's society. Of course it would have been more beneficial for the settlers to learn from the Natives and to have tried to understand the land, and nature with its benefits and limitations from first hand in total harmony but that was not to happen. Therefore we must use what history tells us and take great care of the stories and traditions for the benefit of taking care of our land as well as the priceless treasure that a variable culture brings to society.

My main reason for selecting this topic is my background in studying Landscape Planning. While studying this I discovered the field of Environmental Psychology and in my B.Sc. thesis I looked into outdoor experiences as a means of helping troubled individuals, using the nature as a form of healing and a way of exploring their potential, strength and weaknesses. Although this is another angle it has the same basics in the form of using a sense of nature and history as a strong factor in personal development. Native Americans had a very clear sense of their natural surroundings and by exploring their harmony with nature it is possible to learn to respect it and to try and understand what it really means to us. Discovering a sense of place or *genius loci* as it has been called in Latin, gives everybody a better understanding and compassion for the land; if you learn and become aware of what the land means to you, you learn to respect it and you become entwined with its entity. Native Americans used their land accordingly and

one of their ten commandments is: “Take from the Earth what is needed and nothing more” (Support Native, 2010). If children in the United States are taught as a part of a middle school – high school program, the importance of our natural surroundings and successful ways of practicing sustainability through an acceptance of their background and sense of place, their connection with nature should be closer intact with the ones that first inhabited the continent. Not to mention the healing powers of outdoor activities in the otherwise complex and technologically driven lifestyle of today.

2. Sense of Place

A definition of the term sense of place in a broad sense is what makes the place special and unique from other places. According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation it is “Those things that add up to a feeling that a community is a special place, distinct from anywhere else” (Stokes, Watson & Mastran, 1997, p. 192). As well as the uniqueness of the place it can also be what makes the place special in relation to people feeling they are a part of a larger community, with shared experiences in the present as well as in an historical context. John Brinckerhoff Jackson, a well known publisher and writer on landscape-related material, comes up with this definition: “It is place, permanent position in both the social and topographical sense that gives us our identity” (Jackson, 1984, p. 152).

2.1. Developing a Strong Sense of Place

To be able to assist future generations to develop a strong sense of place, it is essential to understand how a sense of place develops and changes over time. This must be done by observing how people interact with their environment in general. Human geographers and social psychologists have studied how a sense of place develops; they

have done so by comparing places, learning from the ways of the elders and by observing natural disasters and other major events. And last but not least, they have studied childhood experiences that play a very significant role in any development of a sense of place (Measham, 2006). The importance of family and direct experience as well as culture and community are key determiners in shaping children's sense of place and their understanding of nature (Spencer, 2002). It is therefore essential to make good use of this information and help children by inspiring them with a strong sense of place, by providing them with experiences related to their surroundings and helping them to respect and cherish their land for the benefit of themselves and future generations.

2.1.1 Uniqueness

Each and every place has its own uniqueness and it is vital to point that out as a positive trait, although it is often scary to go away from the norm; with the right attitude, however, uniqueness can become strength. Take for example the people of Austin Texas and their unique culture. Their love of its landscape and their city's "soul", has made city planners well aware of avoiding any development that threatens the local, the "iconic," or the uniquely Austin. Austinites are determined to maintain the city's unique sense of place. Austin should be a reflection of its uniqueness not just a copy of some other place. "Keep Austin Weird" is their slogan that represents their will to let their city landscape be representative of a cultural, economic, ideological, and ecological character that is unique to Austin and to protect it in the face of large-scale development and homogenization (Long, 2010). As this example shows uniqueness can be a factor in uniting people and helping them understand their culture by cherishing their special place-related character. The place does not have to be obviously unique to be special in people's lives, Native Americans all cherish their land for its uniqueness and know all

the hills and valleys in their surroundings by heart. All places are special to someone, even common places, and in the end it is commonness with others about their surroundings that really brings people together.

2.1.2 Shared Unity

Vital though it is that a place has its own uniqueness, everybody needs to feel comfortable at home somewhere in unity with others. According to Native American views of home, it is not only a place; it is a past, a set of values and parents: “Home is an ongoing character in our lives. It serves as elder, as a friend, as reference, as a point of origin and return, as haven” (Valaskakis, 2005, p. 114). Natives realize the importance of relation, or to belong somewhere in the world and often symbolize this relation with concentric circles. The first circle is the inner circle, representing our spirit, the next circle is family/clan, the third one is the natural environment, and the fourth circle consists of the spirit world. In these circles all life exists in an involved system of interdependence and a dynamic state of harmony and balance (Garrett & Carroll, 2000). Community contribution, sharing, cooperation, being, noninterference, community and extended family, harmony with nature, a time orientation toward living in the present, and a deep respect for elders are all very important values to practice and cherish (Garret, 1999). It is each person’s responsibility to keep this protective shield strong and beautiful, not only for his own well-being but for the well-being of the tribe. Harmony in body, mind and spirit is the basis of the core person. One has to be in a state of wellness in order to be able to relate to self and environment (Locust , 1985). For Native Americans their home is nature itself wherein they find the common ground that brings their tribes together, for example Plains Indians living and laughing sharing

experiences and telling stories in their tipis after an eventful day of hunting, gathering food or taking care of their camps.

2.2. Sense of Place in Practice

With historical connections of places, e.g. town/cities/state related to ancient Native American homelands, heroic events, as well as role models with virtues to admire, the sense for that particular place can become even greater. By cherishing these parts as well as the importance of uniqueness and commonness from early on, a set of virtues and respect for the homeland and past generations will be developed and individuals can be proud of their origins and family. This must be done in a controlled manner; each and every place, could select reading material for children that brings out fitting material for their natural surroundings, historical heritage, things that happened in their neighborhood. This is ideal when put into practice in a well-planned middle – high school educational program, for bringing a stronger sense for their particular place. A few examples of strong historical characters that can bring a stronger sense for the place of their homeland can be found in chapter 4.1 and their homeland is covered in matching chapters of 4.2

3. Sustainability in America

Many factors need to be considered when looking at the currently popular topic of sustainability. By examining a few of them, such as how cultivation developed in America's pre-industrialized era, it is possible to get some kind of understanding and feeling for what can be done to make learning the value of sustainability and of practicing it from early on an efficient and joyful lifestyle, while also feeling a harmony with our unique place-related landscape.

3.1. History of American Cultivation

Christopher Columbus' arriving in America stands in some sense as the beginning of American recorded history. America was then discovered by Europeans and therefore civilization and cultivation should have followed. But that is not entirely the case for the numerous people living on the land before his arrival; they had full, rich cultures long before that. And they played a key role in the history of America. Native Americans had been tilling the soil seven thousand years prior to the arrival of English colonists at Jamestown, Virginia. Also when a Spanish expedition arrived in northern Florida in 1539, semi-permanent farming settlements were found. Variations in farming in the east was different for each Native ethnic group and ecological settings, but it had its common factors such as a diverse mix of crops planted in intercropped fields, extensive methods in maintaining soil fertility through fallowing, reliance on human labor and simple tools. The relationship between the spiritual wellbeing of the group and the farming enterprise was important, and so was the division of labor by gender, and some combination of farming, hunting, fishing and gathering. The primary tillers in what is now the United States were women. Tillage was mostly based on intercropped maize, beans, sunflower, potatoes and squash and planted in mounds which retarded erosion more effectively than contemporary approaches that are monocropped parallel rows. Crop diversity was very important and wild varieties of domesticated plants were gathered so they could cross-pollinate those in the gardens. Fertility was maintained through the annual burning of weeds that provided essential nutrients in the ash prior to planting, as well as practicing shifting in cultivation based on various periods of fallow. Many farms were based in bottomlands that flooded annually and thus fertilized naturally (McIssac, 1994).

After this brief overview of how cultivation has been practiced in America for centuries before the arrival of Christopher Columbus and later European immigrants, it is safe to say that knowledge of suitable places and ways of using the land without exploiting it exists. Learning from those with a natural sense of the land creates possibilities for bringing back into use some of the traditional ways of ancient sustainability and contemporizing them.

3.2. Sustainability in Practice

It must be a vital goal to practice sustainable agriculture suitable for each state, and from early on it can be implemented as a mandatory part of middle – high school programs. This will help children develop a strong sense for sustainability and connectedness with nature. By using simple agricultural techniques and marking their value, they can learn to respect nature and learn its importance for coming generations, something that an industrialized form of agriculture can never do. Chapter 4.2 will cover different ways of sustainable practices that can be brought to life for this purpose.

4. Native Americans' Sense of Place & Sustainability

4.1. Historical Role Models & Heroes

Looking into historical context for historical figures that can become role models for individuals living in an area close by historical events can have strong effect on individuals in strengthening their sense of place. Since the intention here is to form a stronger identity with true American history through a development of sustainable practices in related areas (covered in 4.2 in matching order) in this instance a Native American hero can rightfully represent people of all origins. A few ideal characters that all had great love and respect for the welfare of their people and homeland are: the

Great Peacemaker, founder of the Iroquois confederacy and the present-day New York State representing the Northeast; Osceola, who was a symbolic figure of the Seminoles fight for their homeland in Florida, representing the Southeast; Sitting Bull, Sioux leader on the Great Plains and a great warrior who lead his followers protecting the Black Hills from gold rushers and winning the famous battle of Little Bighorn; Chief Joseph, Nez Percé chief in the Plateau region, who managed to outmaneuver white troops on a long trail protecting his people on the way to a refuge in Canada; Chief Seattle, peaceful Suquamish leader in the Northeast; and Geronimo, Apache leader and a great warrior in the Southwest.

4.1.1 The Great Peacemaker (Deganawida)

The Great Peacemaker or Deganawida along with Hiawatha, was the founder of the Haudenosaunee, commonly called the Iroquois Confederacy, a political and cultural union of several Native American tribes located in the current state of New York. The union created a powerful alliance of five nations (Seneca, Cayuga, Onondagas, Oneidas, and Mohawks) of related Iroquoian peoples around the Great Lakes. Peacemaker was considered a prophet among his people spreading the message of peace uniting the five tribes under the Great Law of Peace. He taught a powerful spiritual message which can be summed up as peace, unity, and the power of a good mind. Peace that was more than just an absence of war but a state of mind. Power, which can easily be thought of as military strength, but can more appropriately mean that one heart, one mind, one head, and one body allow them to remain united in the face of many enemies. The Haudenosaunee (People of the Longhouse) imposed an order and a structure on their world. They envisioned the combined territory of the five nations as a gigantic long house that stretched 400 km across the present state of New York. The central aisle of

the Great Longhouse was the principal route of communication between different members of the league. The eastern end was guarded by the Mohawks, who were declared the keepers of the eastern Door. The Senecas watched over the western door, and the Onondagas, located in the center, were the keepers of the Fire for all five member nations of the Great Longhouse. In each nation women of every clan selected the most respected woman to be the clan mother. The clan mothers then appointed the male chiefs to represent the clans at the Grand Council. This system worked and ensured that men most trusted by their people for wisdom, integrity, fairness and oratorical abilities were given the responsibilities of the Great Law. This Iroquois Confederacy envisioned by the Peacemaker, enlightened 18th century white philosophers and writers in the colonies and Europe who were seeking ways for their own people to be governed. In 1754 Benjamin Franklin's Albany Plan of Union for the British colonies drew inspiration from the example of the Iroquois League and later it influenced the government of the United States constituted in 1789 (Josephy, 1994).

A lesson in unity can be drawn and admired from the ways the Great Peacemaker taught his people to practice. He taught that people should be chosen for their potential and qualities, everyone having equal opportunities to impact their society. This form of equality has been a struggle all to this day in American society, as Benjamin Franklin and the founding fathers did not include equal rights to all men and women in forming the constitution – something that the People of the Longhouse did centuries ago. This is something that children of the Northeast can look up to and admire.

4.1.2 Osceola

Osceola, a young Creek warrior assumed leadership of the Seminole tribe in an attempt to prevent government possession of Native American land. One of Osceola's most

defiant acts took place in 1835 when he was asked to sign a treaty forcing the Seminoles to leave their homeland for the Indian Territory west of the Mississippi, in Oklahoma. Osceola refused, plunging his knife into the paper (Atkins, 2002) and officials threw him in jail. Once freed, he disappeared with his forces into the swamps, where he conducted raids on settlers and earned the nickname 'Snake of the Everglades' and began a struggle recorded in the annals of history as the Second Seminole War. This war started with his killing of a rival chief who favored removal and by ambushing and killing a US Army detachment under Major Francis L. Dade. The US Army then sent a force of 10,000 men into the Florida jungle in search of the 4000 man army of Osceola, and by March 1837 and over a year of fighting, the Seminoles were largely defeated and Osceola was captured and sent first to Fort Marion (known today as Castillo de San Marcos Fort in St. Augustine) and later to Fort Moultrie in South Carolina, where he died a year later at age 34 (Yenne, 2004). Although defiant and rebellious his acts prove that it is natural to feel strongly for the unrighteousness of one's people and his unique bravery when asked to sign the peace treaty and trying to fight for his homeland are something that can easily be admired in the pursue of true sense of place.

4.1.3 Sitting Bull

Sitting Bull was a Lakota Sioux medicine man, from the Teton group of Hunkpapa and became a leader of his tribe. Sioux were the masters of the North American Plains and Prairies, feared by other tribes from the Great Lakes to the Rockies. With a population of 30,000 they were one of the largest tribes in the Western Hemisphere. The Sioux wars which lasted for 38 years were the bloodiest of all the Indian wars. Although the war with the whites ended with the treaty of Ft. Laramie in 1868 and a reservation that was at that time larger than the state of Pennsylvania and any of the nations established

in the Indian Territory (Yenne, 2004), the discovery of gold in the Black Hills 1874 which is sacred to the tribe, caused continued tensions. In 1875 the government decided to sever the Black hills from the reservation, and ordered the Sioux to leave their western hunting grounds by the end of January 1876. Sitting Bull refused to leave, in fact he never accepted the treaty that Red Cloud of the Oglala had signed on behalf of the Sioux. In June 1876 in the valley of Little Bighorn, General George Armstrong Custer and a regiment of the Seventh Cavalry attacked and tried to drive the unwilling Lakota people back onto the reservation (Feest & Bender 2000). Unknown to them, over 3000 people were present at tribal council and it only took 45 minutes from their initial attack for Custer's whole regiment of 215 men to be wiped out (Yenne, 2004). Sitting Bull led his followers into exile in Canada the following year. Queen Victoria's subjects were not pleased to see this political asylum seeker, however, and limited his freedom of movement without supplying him with rations. In 1881, after selling all their possessions and having even eaten their horses, Sitting Bull, and those of his group who were still with him, finally gave themselves up to the Americans at Fort Buford North Dakota. Sitting Bull was held prisoner for two years before he was moved to the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota, where he died in 1890 when being arrested by Native American police after being wrongly suspected of enforcing the Ghost Dance religion which prophesied the return of both bison and ancestors and the disappearance of whites (Feest & Bender 2000). Sitting Bull being one of the most famous Native Americans can serve as a reminder of the importance of respecting each one's place. When asked to leave something as sacred as the Black hills was to the Sioux there must be a valid reason and understanding for that to go through. Avoiding cruelty and showing respect for different opinions is the factor to be learned from his story.

4.1.4 Chief Joseph

Chief Joseph was a Nez Percé chief. The Nez Percé tribe was one of the most powerful in the Pacific Northwest and in the first half of the 19th century one of the friendliest to whites. In 1877 the United States Army had forced them to move to a small unattractive reservation in Idaho, Chief Joseph found out that few of his young men had massacred a band of white settlers so he decided to lead his 200-300 followers on a long trek to Canada to meet with Sioux Chief Sitting Bull and his people who had fled to Canada in 1876. For more than three months Chief Joseph led his followers on a retreat of about 2,575-2,735 km across Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana, always one step ahead of the pursuing troops. Joseph's warriors were outnumbered by a ratio of at least ten to one. His men did nevertheless beat the U.S. troops on more than one occasion and took prisoners but treated them humanely resulting in the admiration of many whites. His concern for women, children, and the aged and any honest form of business also made him admirable (Chief Joseph, n.d.). When about a day's ride from Canada the exhausted Nez Percé still moving their cattle and dependants along with the fighting force camped in the Bear Paw Mountains unaware of another force following them. During their rest a sizable cavalry force under General Nelson Appleton Miles managed to sneak up to them within striking distance. The force took a large number of casualties and finally, after a devastating five-day battle during freezing weather conditions with no hope left, Joseph was forced to surrender and addressed his popular speech to General Oliver Otis Howard, who led the initial US army following them and a man that he knew, and between whom there was a mutual respect (Yenne, 2004):

Tell General Howard I know his heart. What he told me before I have in my heart. I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking Glass is dead.

Toohoolhoolzote is dead. The old men are all dead. It is the young men who say yes or no. He who led on the young men is dead. It is cold, and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children, and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs! I am tired; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever. (Yenne, 2004, p.116)

Few of his Nez Percé followers managed to get across the border and meet Sitting Bull. But Chief Joseph and his captured followers were sent at first to a barren reservation in present day Oklahoma far from their homestead. Chief Joseph therefore fought for the right of his people to return to where they belonged and pleaded for them to return to their ancestral home in Wallowa Valley to present to President Theodore Roosevelt. This worked and he and his followers were allowed to move to a reservation in the Pacific Northwest, Joseph and 150 of his men went to the Colville Reservation in northeastern Washington to live a life of travelling like old times. Joseph kept on standing up for and speaking on behalf of his people. He preferred the old way of living in tepees and mat lodges instead of log cabins that were also available. He and his followers became permanent residents of the Colville Reservation living in the traditional manner and following his vision for living with nature free of boundaries to the extent possible (West, 2009). Chief Joseph was a great leader who showed tremendous vision and love for his fellow beings, being peaceful himself it was unwanted actions of his followers that led him to seek protection for his people and attempt to bring them to safety in Canada. His heroics acts and humane nature as well as how the ability to read the land gives great advantage over the ones that don't, make him a true Native American hero to admire.

4.1.5 Chief Seattle

Chief Seattle was a leader of the Suquamish Tribe born in 1786 at the Old Man House fishing village in Suquamish. Seattle in his early twenties achieved his status as chief after he planned and executed an aggressive strategy that saved his people from a sneak attack from upriver tribal forces. His strategy made falling trees across the White river capsize the enemy, allowing for Seattle's forces to attack and capture them. People were so impressed that he was promoted to Chief and the former leaders became his sub-chiefs. Chief Seattle witnessed the transition of his people from their traditional ways of living to the ones imposed on them by the United States Government, which wanted to clear the land of Native Americans and their claims to allow for settlement via a new transcontinental railroad. The federal government accomplished this and Treaty of Point Elliot was signed by Chief Seattle in 1855, agreeing to live on the Port Madison Indian Reservation and give up title to the remainder of Suquamish lands. The U.S., led by Governor Isaac Stevens, agreed to provide health care, education and recognize fishing and hunting rights. Some other tribes resisted and eventually attacked the settlement on Elliott Bay. Chief Seattle kept his forces out of the battle and remained at Suquamish. For this action, other acts of kindness and long friendships with early Seattle residents, the founders of the city named the settlement after Chief Seattle. Chief Seattle's people, the Suquamish Tribe, continue preserving their ancestral lifestyles to this day (The Squamish Tribe, n.d.). Chief Seattle was a peaceful leader and his vision is admirable, he knew that at this point nothing could be achieved by war and therefore accepted the fact and managed to provide his people with benefits that made their life easier. He was respected for this sake, both by his people and the settlers, naming the City of Seattle after him making Chief Seattle a strong marker on a sense of place in Seattle.

4.1.6 Geronimo

Geronimo was one of the fiercest Apache Chiefs that ever lived. Once a peaceful Indian, he became a bold warrior after Mexican troops had raided his camp, killed some of his men and even women and children, among them his wife and three kids. In his autobiography he understood that his creator had a certain place for his people and a need for home was imprinted in their heart:

“We are vanishing from the earth yet I cannot think we are useless or Usen would not have created us. He created all tribes of men and certainly had a righteous purpose in creating each. For each tribe of man Usen created he also made a home. In the land created for any particular tribe he placed whatever would be best for the welfare of that tribe... Thus it was in the beginning the Apaches and their homes each created for the other by Usen himself. When they are taken from these homes they sicken and die. How long will it be until it is said; there are no Apaches? (Barrett, 1905 p.16)

For a decade the Apache surmounted overwhelming odds, but by 1886, Geronimo’s tiny band was being hunted across the mountains by 8000 troops from Mexico and the U.S. Being so greatly outnumbered, General Miles induced Geronimo to surrender once again, promising him that, after an indefinite exile in Florida, he and his followers would be permitted to return to Arizona. The promise was never kept. Geronimo and his followers were put to hard labor. Several years later, in 1894, he was moved to Fort Sill in Oklahoma Territory where he attempted to “fit in”, he farmed and joined the Dutch Reformed Church, which expelled him because of his inability to resist gambling. He tried to plead with President Roosevelt; “Great Father,” he said, “my hands are tied as with a rope. My heart is no longer bad. I will tell my people to obey no chief but the

great White Chief. I pray you cut the ropes and make me free. Let me die in my own country, an old man who has been punished long enough and is free.” But to no avail he would not live to be a free man and died a prisoner of war in 1909 (Smithsonian, 2012). Geronimo acknowledged that since the Creator created different “tribes” of people different ways of living should be accepted, this form of thinking is great in cherishing healthy way of looking at peoples of all origins as equals and realizing that we all have our traditional view and sense of the particular place we call home.

4.2. Vast Cultural Heritage

Different climates call for different means of living, and since Native American cultures expand over several climate zones, not all covered here (like the Inuit and Aleut) it should show some variables in sustainable practices. The common ground for Native American tribes in the present United States was that they only hunted what they needed for themselves for essentials and then some for trade amongst tribes. By looking into matching cultures/location of the Native American chiefs and leaders from chapter 4.1 and comparing it to archeological findings from the times of European settlers, along with some vital information that has been maintained from one generation to another by first hand teaching from elders, different aspects of sustainability can be explored, for coming generations to be implemented, modernized and practiced in the form of suitable mandatory educational programs for each place.

4.2.1 Northeast

The whole region between the East Coast and the Mississippi Valley was once covered with forest. The humid continental climate of the region between the Subarctic in the north and the subtropics in the south brought summer temperatures ranging from

moderately hot, and, particularly in the north, winters characterized by a heavy snowfall. This environment suited many animal species, deer, wapiti, black bear, raccoon and beaver all suppliers of vital proteins but also of furs and leather for clothes and containers. In the early 20th century, the Menominee of Wisconsin still knew about 130 plants that could be used for medicinal purposes, as well as nearly 50 plants that boasted edible fruits, roots, or leaves. More recently the Iroquois from different reservations have been credited with knowledge and use of some 450 medicinal plants. With intensive timber industry, the draining of marshes and the introduction of plants from Europe, along with urbanization, lasting changes were made to the original landscape. When white settlers advanced into the region beyond the Appalachians, they discovered prehistoric mounds and ridges variable in size, but most of them gave no thought to their archeological value and destroyed the monuments when laying out their fields. Nevertheless Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States, had a mound on his country estate in Virginia carefully excavated, layer by layer making him a pioneer in American archeology. Results from these findings showed that early ancestors of Native Americans in the area had lived from hunting, fishing and gathering 3000 years ago and showed signs of a sedentary lifestyle. Grave goods also testify to a wide range of trading connections. On this basis the main cultures of what is known as the Woodland period of the Northeast, Adena and Hopewell grew native plants such as sunflowers, goosefoot, and marsh elders along with squash and corn, cultivated crops originating in Central America (Feest & Bender 2000). By practicing knowledge of various medicine plants and making use of early archeological findings by President Thomas Jefferson to the extent that students understand what these findings mean, can provide a better look into sustainable practices of the past in the Northeast region. The

Ojibwe tribe and their practices, still practiced to this day, provide some details how they have been able to live in harmony with nature.

Ojibwe (Chippewa)

Each year began when the snow and ice had melted, by which time the Ojibwe had moved their camp into the forest to gather maple sap for making sugar. The whole family participated in the work using birch bark baskets to gather the sap. At night time they went fishing in the shallow waters and used a burning torch to see the fish in the lakes. Today, tribal members still harvest maple syrup in spring time like in the old days but they use metal or plastic containers for gathering instead of birch-bark baskets. In the summer time the original people peeled birch bark from the trees to make baskets, houses, and canoes. They also fished, picked berries, gardened, and gathered the food needed. Summer tasks included; working in the cornfield, gathering and drying of berries, crushing berry cakes which was the main source of all winter nutrients, especially vitamin C. There were raspberries, cranberries, blueberries, sarsaparilla vine, rabbit root and butternuts. The Elders were the teachers of the children and were respected in the community. Today, Elders continue to teach young people how to gather the birch bark and how to make baskets. Summer is the time for celebrations and families gather for powwow, to dance and visit with relatives. When the leaves turn red and orange, the original people of the Great Lakes region moved their camp to lakes and rivers to gather wild rice. The men would harvest wild rice and the women would process the rice. They would dry, roast, and winnow the rice for food throughout the year. It was also the time to dry deer meat and fish to store for the long winter months ahead. The children helped with these activities and also gathered firewood to stay warm. They still had time to play games like Lacrosse. Today, Ojibwa families still

participate in the wild rice harvest and go deer hunting together. In winter, when the lake freezes and the snow falls, the original people of the Great Lakes region struggled to survive through the long winter. People left the large summer villages and moved into smaller family groups. They moved to their winter camp by using snowshoes to walk on top of the snow. Winter wigwams were covered with bark, mats, with brush insulation or a thick cover of dirt. The men hunted, fished, and trapped to get food for the community. The women's main winter activities was scraping and tanning the hides of animals to make clothes. The elders would be telling stories and legends to the children (White Earth Nation, n.d.).

4.2.2 Southeast

Sluggish rivers flow in the lowlands of the coastal plain that covers more than three quarters of the region. It stretches around the Gulf and Atlantic Coasts and includes the lower Mississippi Valley and the Florida peninsula. To the north, the area reaches to North Carolina and large parts of Appalachians. The region west of the Mississippi was inhabited by agricultural people and forms a transition to the Great Plains. The rivers, whose deposits have built fertile alluvial floodplains, feed the innumerable swamps of the lowlands, whose vegetation supplied the local populations with valuable raw materials. The rot-resistant wood of the cypress proved to be useful material for house posts and dugouts, while cane was used for making mats, baskets, sieves, weirs, and many other items. In the hilly region south and east of the Appalachians, the rivers descend onto the plain along a marked shelf known as the fall line, an area settled by populous tribes who knew how to make use of the natural resources of the lowlands as well as the uplands, and knew all about ideal fishing conditions at the waterfalls. The natives also created grassy clearings by burning the underbush in the densely forested

southern Appalachians, in order to make deer hunting and the occasional bison hunting a lot easier. Other animals in these regions were wapitis, bears, opossum, beaver, raccoon and muskrat. Turkeys were all around and provided Natives with meat and feathers and archeological findings have supported the importance of this food source. The long growing season in the subtropical and temperate climate and the fertile red soil provided the Natives with great agricultural opportunities. People settled in scattered villages and compounds along the river valleys which would give them the best access to exploiting the resources in land and animals. Cahokia was the largest Mississippi metropolis, located east of present day St. Louis, and had a population of over 10,000 people. Other important urban life centers were Etowah in Georgia, Spiro in Oklahoma and Moundville in Alabama. Moundville is well known for its high quality pottery wares, which were distinguished at the time not only for the innovative shape of their bottles, dishes, and stirrup-shaped vessels, but also for new decorative techniques such as polychromy and negative painting. Etowah artisans produced embossed copper objects of choice quality, while engraved shells were Spiro's hallmark. As elsewhere in Native North America there was a gender division of labor. Hunting and fishing were the responsibilities of the men, agriculture and food gathering that of the women. Men did however help out in the fields during the planting and harvesting seasons (Feest & Bender 2000). The ability to make use of the rot-resistant cypress wood and make from it useful material as well as understanding how to spot ideal fishing conditions and practicing ancient form of pottery can be implemented into a educational program for the Southeastern region in a broad sense, and the Seminoles, the tribe of Osceola, provide a more narrow example of what children residing in the State of Florida can be taught to practice.

Seminoles

The Seminole tribe, once a branch of the Creek nation, is relatively young in its current form as the dominant tribe in Florida or dating back from the early 18th century. The tribe grew larger when runaway slaves from the Creek war joined them in 1813-14 (Yenne, 2004). Seminole developed their own local traditions, such as the construction of open air thatched-roof houses known as chickees. The last few Florida Indians of the beginning of the 20th century managed to live off the land, maintaining minimal contact with the outside world, just hunting, trapping, fishing and then trading with the white man at frontier outposts. Even in the untamed wilderness of the Seminole, man's social and ecological pollution had dire effect as well as poor crops, shrinking numbers of fish and game, droughts and serious hurricanes. The people of the Gulf Coast and of southern Florida hunted alligators and sea cows and occasionally whales. Alligators are now a protected species and some Seminole wrestle with them as a form of entertainment (The Seminole, n.d.).

4.2.3 Prairies and Plains

The Prairies and Plains region, also known as the Great Plains extend over an area of one million square miles with one of the largest areas of grassland on earth, extending from the Mississippi valley to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, and from the central Canadian province almost as far south as the Rio Grande in Texas. The Prairies with their dark almost black very fertile soil, the eastern part of this region, originally had abundance of herbs and flowers. People of the prairies planted corn and beans along rivers in the alluvial soil there and this became the basic form of subsistence for the Prairies in about 1000 AD. Today this area is considered as the breadbasket of North America. The western part or the Plains with its extremities in landscape and wheatear

were almost deserted before the introduction of horses by the Spanish in the 17th century, but the horses allowed people to make bison hunting as the basis of their livelihood. But the culture of the bison hunters was short lived, for only 150 years later the culture collapsed when white hunters exterminated the bison herds around 1885. Trading had taken place between the peoples of the Prairies and Plains even before the arrival of the white man. But with the arrival of horses everything went easier and spread even further, more than goods was traded, also ceremonies, songs and dances. Arikara, Mandan and Hidatsa, all farming villages, became important trade centers. They exchanged the products of their fields, corn, beans, squash and tobacco, for the goods produced by the hunters of the Plains such as bison hides, bows made of the horn of the bighorn sheep, and nutritious dried meat. Differences between the two groups were reflected in their types of housing, the bison hunters of the Plains lived throughout the year in conical tents, or tipis while the corn farmers on the Prairies dwelled in permanent settlements that they left only to go on hunting trips (Feest & Bender 2000). Ideal for the students living in the breadbasket of North America is practicing non-industrialized forms of corn growing as well as making use of cowhides and horns to get the feeling of how the bison hunters of the Plain used their pray to the fullest. A brief overview of Sitting Bull's Lakota tribe living with nature follows.

Lakota

This association of seven tribes was known as warriors and buffalo-hunters, sometimes called the Tetons or prairie dwellers. The Lakota were located in Minnesota when Europeans began to explore and settle the land in the 1600s. Living on small game, deer, and wild rice, they were surrounded by large rival tribes. Conflict with their enemy, the Ojibwa, eventually forced the Lakota to move west. By the 1700s, the

Lakota had acquired horses and flourished for decades hunting buffalo on the high plains of Wisconsin, Iowa, the Dakotas, and as far north as Canada. The Tetons, or western Sioux, the largest of the Lakota tribes, dominated the region. They dwelled generally on semiarid plains of the western half of the Dakotas and in the parts of present day Nebraska, Kansas, Wyoming and Montana (Josephy, 1994). In relation to chapter 4.1.3 on Sitting Bull, The Lakota people still regard the Black Hills as sacred land and themselves as their guardians, so that the Black Hills are an important point of reference for their cultural identity, and they continue to be a source of dispute between the Lakota and the United States government to this day (Feest & Bender 2000).

4.2.4 Plateau

The Plateau extends over the states of Montana, Idaho, Oregon, Washington and the Canadian province of British Columbia. The most northern part is covered by coniferous woods; the south is hilly dry country of open steppe. Because of the continental climate summer temperatures can reach 46°C, while the winters can bring icy storms. There is a long story of habitation in the region, archeological research having shown that stone arrowheads from the big-game hunters as well as sandals made of sagebrush found near Fort Rock, Oregon, and remains of salmon caught near the Columbia River are from the BC era. People of the Plateau lived in permanent settlements during the winter and camped in various locations during the summer to hunt, fish, and gather plants. As in the neighboring Plains region to the east, the advent of horses around 1730 decisively changed the life of Plateau people who could now travel longer distances and transfer larger quantities of goods. During spring time the Plateau people began to gather the first vegetable foods; these were mostly roots, wild Indian celery, Indian carrots and bitterroots. After that they would gather a variety of

lilaceous plants, for example, camas in the south and common dogtooth violets and Indian potatoes. These plants were only allowed to be extracted once the “first root ceremony” had been performed, in which they gave thanks to the Creator for making these foods available. This also goes for all the other food they gathered or animals caught, and this ceremony is still practiced. Digging up the roots with a digging stick was the task of the women; they were the ones who knew where to find large quantities of these plants. They not only extracted the plant, but also washed and either pared and cooked it or cooked it in a hole in the ground for a period of several days before it was edible and could be dried and preserved, but some of it was eaten raw while still fresh. And one of the favorites is Indian stick celery that grows in many areas and is peeled and consumed raw. In early summer salmon season starts and the men used to gather in throngs on the slippery rocks wielding dip nets and spears to catch the salmon in midair when they tried to jump up natural obstacles in the rapidly streaming river. The largest specimen of Chinook salmon weighed up to 50 kg and the local rainbow trout as much as 20 kg, but in the Snake River they caught sturgeon that could weigh up to a staggering 130 kg. They had no natural fishing platforms at these locations; wooden platforms were constructed to get closer to the fish, and the men would then use nets to catch the fish and wriggle it up to the platforms where other members of the family would process it. Other places like by Kettle Falls, the Colville and Spokane people would use woven fish fences and fish baskets from which the salmon could not free themselves once they had jumped into them. It is estimated that people of the Plateau region consumed around 250 kg of salmon each year. The fish appeared in such huge numbers that the fishermen were able to dry and pound them, and sell and barter them in bundles. This product is referred to as salmon pemmican, a term from the name of the process by which the

Plains peoples dried and pounded bison meat, before mixing berries into it. Berry harvest started later in the summer, the most popular berries were fruits of the elder tree in the northern part and cranberries in the south. They would preserve the berries by smoldering them over a fire, while today's method is to freeze them or preserve in jars and bottles. When horses spread throughout the Plateau during the first half of the 18th century, summertime bison hunting became part of the annual food cycle of eastern Plateau groups such as the Flathead, and Nez Percé who dwelled beyond the Rockies. And the bison hides became a sought-after trade item within the region (Feest & Bender 2000). Practicing digging up roots with a digging stick and learn how to cock it, dry it and then preserve it as well as harvesting berries, and various methods other than the traditional fishing pole in catching salmon can all be a part of an education program for children in the Plateau region. Chief Joseph's tribe the Nez Percé is a tribe that provides an example of this kind of lifestyle in harmony with nature.

Nez Percé

The Nez Percé lived in an area of spectacular mountains, canyons and grasslands of the interior plateau country, where present day Idaho, Washington and Oregon meet. Nez Percé had always been friends of the Americans, and in 1805 they helped save the Lewis and Clark Expedition whose member would otherwise have starved in the Idaho Mountains. They were a democratic people made up of many villages, each led by a headman, but no overall tribal political leader, each village or band grouping of villages was independent and ruled itself. The people lived largely on salmon and the villages were located at or near good fishing stations along the rivers. In addition the people followed a seasonal round, hunting deer, elk, bears, mountain sheep and other game and gathering many kinds of roots and wild foods as quamash, which tastes like sweet

potatoes when boiled. After acquiring horses they became excellent horsemen and were known to go as far east as the Great Plains of Montana to hunt buffalo, and as far west as Celilo Falls to fish for salmon on the Columbia River (Joseph, 1994). Inside the houses of the Nez Perce, young and the old gathered around warming fires to hear storytellers' tales. In an animated, melodramatic style, using all the narrative means at their disposal, they would tell of the origin of the world, the advent of the animals, and the appearance of humans on earth (Feist & Bender 2000).

4.2.5 Northwest

This region includes the entire stretch of coast from the Copper River delta in southern Alaska down to the mouth of the Chetco River in Oregon. Its eastern border is marked by the Rocky Mountains, the coastal mountains of British Columbia and the Cascade Range in the northwestern United States. Narrow stretch of land covered by dark forest countless islands and fjords, has allowed the unique culture to mature in relative seclusion. Even without agriculture the population density was high and they developed a structure of social classes, and were the only North Americans to produce a group of professional artists, woodcarvers and painters who worked to commission for noble families. Timber is available in abundance and is of great importance for the culture of the Northwest Coast. For the coastal people the red cedar called "tree of life" is truly a tree of life because it was just as important a source of raw material as the bison was for the peoples of the Plains. They used lightweight timber to make houses, canoes and various other things for everyday life and the inner bark was used for clothing, and root fiber for basketry. The summers are cool and wet with mild winters in the maritime area, and for the people of the coast the arrival of salmon in their waters in late spring marks the beginning of the year for it was salmon they based their overall well being on.

In winter they lived in shed-roofed, cedar plank houses assembled in the large villages located in the sheltered fjords, while in summer they took the planks of their houses with them leaving only the heavy frames behind and scattered their residence around their fishing grounds. On the point of return back they stacked the planks over two boats and the platform used to transport household goods also provided seating for the children.

While catching fish, they partially or totally blocked the riverbeds with wooden fish weirs to catch abundant supplies. In tidal regions stone walls were built near estuaries; at high tide the salmon would pass the submerged wall and then be trapped on his point of return, making it easy prey for the fishermen. When the Salish tribe fished salmon in the salt waters they also used large nets stretched out between two canoes to haul in plenty of fish, several thousand when it went well. The fish was then roasted, added to stews or cooked in earth ovens, it was also preserved for winter either by being cut into thin strips and laid out dry or by being smoked. The heads of the fish were and still are a favorite food, and there are many recipes for popular head dishes. The great halibut was also caught but was not as desirable as the salmon because it isn't as fat. In tidal regions women equipped with digging sticks and large carrying baskets extracted shellfish, including limpnecks, mussels and gooseneck barnacles and broke them off the rocks in the mud. Algae and seaweed were also part of the diet and even today dried seaweed is used in many house holdings as a salty snack. Berries including cranberries, blackberries, strawberries, black currants and gooseberries were the most important plant food gathered by the coast people. These were dried and pressed into small cakes, and stored for the winter or traded. Wild onions, the root of the ferns and edible tree bark also supplemented the diet (Feest & Bender 2000). Using the red cedar to the

fullest, to make canoes, clothes and basketry can serve as a great sustainable practice for the children in the northeast. Also building stonewalls and making use of the tides is ideal for older high school children and can give them a feeling of accomplishment that can help them in developing their interest in future studies, be it engineering, carpentry, or other related fields. The Suquamish tribe once led by Chief Seattle has lived on nature in this area for centuries and provides examples of various sustainable practices.

Suquamish

The major Suquamish winter village was at Old Man House on the shoreline of Agate Passage, the home of Chief Seattle. The Suquamish name translates into the “people of the clear salt water.” And that is fitting because they depended on salmon, cod and other bottom fish, clams and other shellfish located in the salty waters of the shoreline. They also plucked berries, roots, hunted ducks and other waterfowl, deer and other land game for food for family use, ceremonial feasts, and for trade. The Suquamish took their family in canoes to travel to their fishing camps, hunting and berry grounds, and are best known for their traditional basketry used for gathering berries. These hard baskets were made from coiled cedar roots, and were also watertight, which made them ideal for carrying water and also for cooking smoked salmon soup, after heating stones and putting them into water filled baskets along with wild potatoes. They decorated the berry baskets with colored barks in various designs. Suquamish mostly traveled by water in dugout cedar canoes, the canoe maker fashioned the canoe from a single cedar log, which after carving required steaming and spreading to make the canoe wider for buoyancy and greater cargo space (The Squamish, n.d.).

4.2.6 Southwest

The Southwest cultural region reaches over the states of New Mexico and Arizona and reaches deep into northern Mexico, down the coast of the Gulf to California to the Tropic of Cancer. The southern boundary runs through the Mexican provinces of Colima and Aguascalientes, and its eastern border along the Sierra Madre Oriental and across the province of Coahuila. The climate is mainly dry with cold winters and extremely hot summers. Large scale agriculture was possible in the valleys of the Colorado and Gila rivers, and along the Rio Grande. In other regions the inhabitants of the land had to exploit ecological niches in order to grow corn and beans. The prehistoric people of Hohokam farmed the desert where they developed clever network of canals they channeled from the rivers and by that watering their fields. More than 500 km of major canals and 1500 km of secondary canals have been discovered in the valley of the lower Salt River alone. The Mogollon people lived in the mountains and deserts and they hunted and gathered wild plants and became famous for their spectacular cultural achievement the Mimbres ceramics, they lived in the area between AD 900 and AD 1200. For 500 years peoples of the Southwest held their own culture and were the latest part of the country to become “civilized”. And to this day the Southwest is characterized by a diversity of indigenous cultures and ways of life not found in other cultures in North America. Six culturally different groups can be distinguished in the region, the Mohaves, who were farmers, the Pueblos who cultivated corn with the help of irrigation canals, the Papago who lived in the desert hunting, the Navajos and Apaches who lived in the uneven mountains farming though conditions were harsh and the Seri preserving the archaic way of life focused on gathering food and catching fish (Feest & Bender 2000). Practicing this various cultures and learn how they could live

with nature often in conditions that do not seem very agricultural friendly and learning the ancient Mimbres ceramics decoration can all serve as a factor in bringing sustainable practices into action in education for the area in the Southwest. Geronimo acknowledged the presence of various cultures and knew that this was the way it was meant to be from the beginning of times. This reflected itself in the ways Apaches respected each tribe member.

Apache

The Apache referred to the course of the year as a harvest. They were raiders and hunters, but primarily food gatherers, or at least the women were. During the entire growing season women gathered fruit and plants that grew at various altitudes. As soon as there was news of cactus fruit, pinyon nuts, mulberries or wild grass seeds ripening in a particular area, they would set off either alone or in larger groups with an armed escort of warriors, depending on how far they would have to travel. Family groups often traveled to suit the women's food gathering calendar, and the men, who followed the women, would make themselves useful by hunting in the area where food was being gathered. Altruism and generosity was the prime duty of every Apache hunter when they caught a prey everyone in the camp expected to have a share (Feest & Bender 2000).

5. Considerations

When looking at the history of Native American culture one cannot ignore the question as to why Europeans could not have used a different and more kindly approach in their settlement. Knowledge could have been shared between all the various cultures, instead of which much of it got lost in time. There is no doubt we would have a different, more culturally rich America today. Perhaps this is just wishful thinking and what happened

was inevitable in relation to the world events of those times. But at least a valuable lesson can be learned from this: the need to respect our fellow human beings however different they are. It is also important to respect our mother nature, and all its creatures, if they are not to become extinct, as nearly happened to the American Bison, as well as practicing sustainable harvesting methods instead of thinking of exploiting all crops to the fullest. Winona LaDuke a well-known Native American environmental activist explains this well:

The practice of passing down land for future generations has vanished. Elders used to tell younger generations how to live in one location for 1,000 years without destroying the land. Today, preserving the land for future generations is nearing impossibility because mass consumption has become a necessity, she said. Mass consumption results in mass production, which in turn results in climate changes that could become irreversible, she explained. (Grinely, 2008)

6. Conclusion

Sustainability and sense of place are ways of thinking and being that go very well together. If sustainability is a major part of one's sense of one's place it can have a tremendous influence on future generations and become the norm rather than the exception that it is in today's society. Developing a strong sense of place from early on with the help of mandatory programs in middle school and high school that focus on developing a strong sense of sustainability for that place is a worthy goal for all places. A great way to reach that goal is by forming these programs on Native American history and culture and their various ways of living in great respect and harmony with nature and Mother Earth.

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