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# Great Lakes Regional Advisory Lodge



**Help Papers Series**  
**Support Materials for Parent/Child Programs**

**TOPIC:**

**Responsible Use of the  
North American Indian Theme**

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## NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN THEME

*The use of the North American indigenous culture in the Native Sons and Daughters Programs™ MUST be handled with respect and understanding.* It can be an effective means of not only helping parent and child appreciate the First Nation people of today, but to also help parent and child bond together and learn from each other.

**The Indian (First Nation) Theme** of the Native Sons and Daughters Programs™ is significant, but not simply because a North American Indian provided the inspiration for them. Deeply rooted in North American Indian culture is a profound appreciation for the Creator, or Great Spirit, as well as an understanding of the independence of the forces of nature. The importance of these values is becoming increasingly accepted in modern urban society which, until recently, had failed to recognize their significance. Also ingrained in North American Indian culture are honesty, dignity, and a feeling of responsibility for the well being of others. Perhaps most important is the genuine concern among North American Indian parents to teach these ethics to their children and to guide them to an adulthood of integrity. Emphasis on family values, respecting your elders and respect for each other is desperately needed in today's society. These traits, which permeate the way of life for the North American Indian, are the essence of parenting and the foundation of this program.

**Sensitivity to Indian Cultures** is a key element within the program. Ceremonies and rituals are performed with honor and respect to the Creator, all things in nature, key elements of Indian cultures. Ceremonies are designed to further the bond between parent and child. Feathers are worn only to honor these things. The Native Sons and Daughters Programs™ do not wish to perpetuate the stereotypes of Indian cultures that have existed for many years. We discourage "war-whooping" and the use of any demeaning words such as "ugh," "how," "squaw," "tom-tom," and all other conduct that is not respectful and sensitive to the positive aspects of Indian cultures, in which this program was designed to reflect and honor.

### **Researching Tribal History**

When creating "Indian themed" property for your tribe or yourself, keep in mind that designs should honor the spirit and tradition of the Native peoples. One way to do this as a tribe is to actually research the name of your tribe. If your tribe is named after a real North American Indian tribe, see what traditions, customs, and history can be applied. The children would also enjoy learning about the people for which their tribe is named after. Again, the intent is to learn about and honor the tribe namesake. Libraries are a great source for this information.

**Incorporate the “A” List**

The First Nation way of life can provide many exciting learning experiences. Each Native Sons and Daughters™ tribe will determine the extent to which it uses this program focus in its activities. However, it is essential for the tribe to remember the following "A"-List when borrowing from First Nation culture:

**Be Appropriate**

Make sure that the artifact, attire, or project you are duplicating is proper for your activity. Avoid using religious items for games and other secular activities. Likewise, avoid using secular or war items for Sunday Worship Services or other religious activities.

**Be Authentic**

When practical, always try to be as genuine and realistic as possible when duplicating First Nation artifacts and attire.

**Be Accurate**

Ensure that your authentic articles or use of cultural references are correct and factual by verifying with books, scholars, or reliable Web sites.

**Be an Asker**

Seek the advice of First Nation people, scholars, or organizations to aid you in your projects.

**Be an Acknowledger**

Appreciate and ascribe to the fact that historical culture is only a small part of First Nation culture of today. Be able to differentiate between the past and the present and understand that First Nation culture is still an ongoing process. Remember that each tribe, band, or clan of First Nation people had and still have their own distinct and unique culture within the First Nation community.

**Be an Advocate**

"Help yourself by helping others." Lend assistance and provide support to First Nation organizations and causes that benefit the basic needs and rights of our indigenous people.

**Positive Practices to Employ in Your Program:**

1. Portray Native Americans as they are today. Children need to know First Nation people are alive and well and living in our communities.
2. Find a balance between the First Nation culture of the past and the present.
3. When adopting Indian names, do so with respect. Be authentic and sensitive, make sure names are selected that reflect strong character and set goals. Carefully read the section entitled “Choosing an Indian Name” in the Native Sons & Daughters™ Tribal Members Handbook.
4. Continually work toward a consensus in which all participants agree to be respectful, sensitive, and authentic in their use of the theme.
5. Regularly review current materials such as flyers, brochures, activities, and ceremonies. If an item is questionable or inappropriate, rework it or remove it.
6. Monitor your program. Make sure the theme continues to be used appropriately.
7. Assign someone in each tribe to assume responsibility for the tribes’ actions. Ensure that the tribe’s are respectful to the First Nation culture and monitor the authenticity of themes, stories, costumes, and ceremonies.