



Medicines between Two Worlds

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The field of medicine has progressed quickly within the past hundred years. For example, the advancement of technology has allowed medical researchers to analyze minute cells within the human body to look for reasons of why diseases and sickness happens. Also, new medical drugs are being developed to combat bad bacteria and viruses.

Although the advancement of medical healing has progressed in Western society, there is another side of medicine that has not changed substantially for a thousand years. Diné traditional healing herbal medicines have been utilized for many generations. Traditional medicine practitioners and herbalist have long practiced their arts, combining their art with healing songs and ceremonies to heal the ailing people.

With the discovery of the Americas and the encroachment of native lands, the native people encountered diseases that were foreign to them. Eventually Western medicine had to help the American Indian to combat these foreign diseases and illnesses.

This unit is designed for fifth and sixth graders. The unit will compare Western and Traditional Diné medicines. This will be accomplished by looking at specific healing herbs and comparing them to Western medicine. Activities, guest speakers, the scientific inquiry process, and individual projects to teach students about herbs and western medicine are all present. Instruction will be given to students in whole group, small group, and individual performance tasks. It will cover approximately four weeks for fifty-five minutes each day. At the end of the unit, students will be able to compare and contrast the differences of herbs, pills, creams, lotions, and liquid medicines. The unit will expand their knowledge of what medicines are available from Mother Earth as natural medicine as well as from the local clinics and hospitals.

(Developed for Science/Health/Diné Culture, grade 5; recommended for Elementary/Science/Health/Diné Culture, grade 5)

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