



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
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## **Agents of Change: How American Indians Helped Change the World in Only Seven Years**

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### **Introduction**

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From the time I was a young student, I have always loved learning about our nation's history. From Paul Revere's midnight ride to Thomas Jefferson's eloquently defiant Declaration of Independence, just the mention of these exciting events has, and continues to, make my heart beat just a little faster. And yet, as much as I love our nation's history, a few inconvenient truths beckon from the darkened corners, calling for resolution. And, although America has endeavored to continually make strides towards Jefferson's lofty ideals that "all men are created equal," one of the more enduring paradoxes has been the treatment of American Indians from nearly the first European footfalls upon the shore of the "New World".

Growing up towards the end of the golden age of television, like many in our society, I was programmed to see Indians not as people but as stereotypes. I can still hear the ominous music that played whenever an Indian menacingly appeared onscreen in a Western. Moreover, the iconic pop culture props, such as toy bow-and-arrow sets, feather-adorned drums, and the ever present cigar store Indian, certainly did not help to arrest the objectification of Native Americans. According to Seminar Leader, Ned Blackhawk, "Arguably at no other point in the nation's history had such methods of visual communication so heavily impacted everyday life."<sup>1</sup> Clearly, Native Americans are not only the most enduring pop culture icons but also the least understood. In fact, this fascination with Indians can be seen at almost all epochs of American history and iconography, from rioting colonists masquerading as Indians at the Boston Tea party, to elements of Boy Scouts of America, to the shockingly racist portrayal of Native Americans in Disney's Peter Pan. And so as harmless as my toy drum may seem, as Blackhawk asserts, by characterizing Indians as relics of the past, it has become easier for mainstream society to marginalize them as part of a vanishing era.

The Seven Years' War is the main focus of this unit. It completely restructured the balance of power, disrupting not only the European power structures, but those in North America as well. This conflict loosened the grip on regional power held by Native Americans, especially the Iroquois Confederacy (also known as the Five or, later, Six Nation Iroquois). This war ultimately resulted in the ushering of Indians to the margins of American society and consciousness, an outcome that obviously had deleterious effects across the past few centuries of American history and culture, the effects of which continue to this modern age.

In our seminar, and through related readings, I have learned to see American Indian history in an entirely new

light. It is a more realistic light in which one sees Native Americans as highly individualistic and, especially in the case of the Seven Years' War, quite skilled in diplomacy. This conflict, and the ensuing policies and sentiments that followed, would serve to deny Indians their right to ascendant progress, an unthinkable development in a society that prides itself on freedom. Through the study of this unit, my students will come to see Indians as people with many of the same hopes and dreams as they themselves possess. They will learn that Native Americans were not the inherently "evil warriors," nor the helpless "noble savages" portrayed across the American cultural landscape. Instead what will emerge is a vision of Indians as a vibrant people directly in the center of a global conflict that not only affected the North American continent, but the entire world.

It must also be considered that, given so many instances of conquest in all times and places across the arc of human history, conflicts over the North American continent seem inescapable. While not condoning this aspect of human nature, the unit will equip students to continually ask the deeper questions of how all inhabitants might have found a way to peacefully and equitably coexist, and how to chart a more favorable course for all parties as we continue to move forward through the modern era.

## Rationale and Background Information

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This unit, *Agents of Change: How American Indians Helped Change the World in Only Seven Years*, will use the far-reaching impact of the Seven Years' War to provide students with the context and evidence to better understand the history of early Indian and European relations. Although the scope of Indian and federal government relations is far too vast to incorporate, this unit, sequenced early in the instructional year, will not only help students grasp how we arrived at the current state of affairs with the continent's indigenous populations, but also leave them better equipped to more deeply consider these issues when they encounter the related subject matter in subsequent units.

Andres Castillero Middle School (grades 6 through 8) is located in the heart of Silicon Valley and the third-largest city in California (and the 10th largest in the U.S.). A performing arts magnet serving the Almaden Valley neighborhood of San Jose, the school's numerous elective course offerings draw students from across an array of neighborhoods. The student body of approximately 1,222 students, mainly comprised of white (43%), Hispanic (36%) and Asian (13%), (with thirty-three percent of the student body identified as low socioeconomic), is a blend of white- and blue-collar families.<sup>2</sup> Performing arts positively impact the school culture, as students from all economic backgrounds recognize the value of these social, educational, and extracurricular opportunities, and widely embrace them as they develop into well-rounded individuals.

## Objectives

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In my unit, *Agents of Change: How American Indians Helped Change the World in Only Seven Years*, I want my students to appreciate Native Americans not as helpless victims anxiously watching from the sidelines but rather as keen pragmatists who placed themselves squarely in the middle of the conflict for control of the North American continent. It is vitally important that they grasp the political and cultural implications resulting

from the first major conflict, The Seven Years' War. Subsequent units such as *The March to Civil Rights* and *Manifest Destiny*, will incorporate the voices of the disenfranchised into our national consciousness.

Central to the teaching of these issues will be to incorporate Seixas' Historical Thinking Concepts<sup>3</sup> which include historical significance, cause and consequence, historical perspective, primary sources, continuity and change, and ethical dimensions. Under this umbrella lay the important tenets of agency (the Indians were not passive victims but pragmatic participants, fully at the center of the struggle for control of the continent), and presentism (that historians must not judge events of the past by today's standards.)

This curriculum unit will enable me to teach seventeenth- and eighteenth-century American Indian history at a much deeper and objective level. It is expected, even hoped for, that students will have to grapple with these issues, for the highest level of mastery comes as a result of the productive struggle, and this is subject matter with which the students will most definitely struggle. By navigating the complexities of relations between Native Americans and European settlers through close readings of particular passages from primary and secondary sources, students will analyze readings both individually and in table groups. They will also consider period paintings such as West's *The Death of General Wolfe* to round out their understanding.

By the end of this unit, students will further develop their skills in historical inquiry and expository writing. Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of historical inquiry is that, because they have researched the subject in depth, students will realize that they know more about the topic than most anyone of which they can think. Armed with this assurance, they soon find their voice as they write from that confident, authoritative perspective. (See the Resources for Students and Teacher section for a more complete presentation of the historical inquiry process as well as the unit focus questions associated with this unit, and possibly, subsequent units.)

This unit, *Agents of Change: How American Indians Helped Change the World in Only Seven Years*, will consider the Seven Years' War through a new lens, considering the factors affecting colonists and Native Americans that ultimately hampered peaceful cohabitation. By recasting it as a more foundational event, students will come to appreciate that it is more important than the Revolutionary War.

## Early Contact: Diplomacy and Trade Relations

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To most observers, it is undeniable that the Thanksgiving portrayals projected across Americana are decidedly inaccurate. From Currier and Ives prints to Charlie Brown feasting with smiling Native Americans, this notion has become so pervasive that today's students know very little about the complex nature of Indian and colonial relations. In seminar it was discussed how this misconception has been propagated through various cultural representations such as the stoic, noble savage, the vanishing Indian, or the menacing barbarian. Such portrayals do violence to authentic Native America as it reduces the Indian experience to broad stereotypes that can easily be dismissed or marginalized as quaint or insignificant. Before these fallacies can be successfully put to rest, the competing viewpoints with regard to pre-1492 Native America must be understood.<sup>4</sup> In one camp there is a tendency to view Indians as peacefully coexisting with their neighbors and their surroundings. From this perspective comes the "noble, vanishing Indian", hapless victims of European exploitation, lacking any trace of agency. Yet the alternative extreme, armed with the distorted lens of presentism, rushes to the equally skewed perspective that Indians regularly engaged in violent acts, human

sacrifice, and environmental devastation, as if this somehow suggests some level of hypocrisy. It is lamentable that this constructed interpretation often leads to justification for the indefensible original European view, which portrays Native Americans as “menacing barbarians” in need of rehabilitation meted out under the guise of civilization.

In order to eradicate these fallacious notions, it is important for students to appreciate the rich culture and society enjoyed by the continent’s indigenous peoples prior to European contact. Largely missing from most narratives are such aspects as Native American views on land ownership, sustainable living, and the individualistic nature of their societies. As is characteristic of many civilizations across history, especially those of European descent, some tribes lived in peace while others were at war numerous times throughout their existence. Yet divergent views of property ownership certainly contributed to the conflicts with European settlers. Many Native American peoples saw their relation to the earth not so much as possessors, but as inhabitants, and therefore served as stewards of the land. These views, when juxtaposed with the jarringly different European views that eventually led to the destabilization of tribal sovereignty, provide context for how this vision differed radically from the European perspective. Coming from a time not too far removed from feudalism, where land ownership was difficult to attain, colonists in the new world perceived property, namely land, as something to be possessed at any cost. This struggle for land came at a great cost, indeed.

Fostering a more realistic sense of American Indians is most helpful to the narrative. To better understand and dispel the erroneous notion of Native America in the intervening years after 1492, it is important to begin with an understanding of the central role the Indians played in the colonists’ physical and economic survival. According to Jace Weaver, “Indians of the Americas were engaged in diplomacy from the moment of first contact. Every parlay between Natives and Europeans was in some sense a diplomatic meeting, be it major or minor.”<sup>5</sup> As traders showed up on their shores and lands with increasing regularity, Native Americans soon learned the intricacies of managing the relationship with their European business partners. For instance, while they were open to trade, their hospitality did not include extended European visits.

For the Europeans, it is quite possible that at first, technology played a major role in a skewed perception of strength. To be sure, the Indians were initially taken aback by the perceived superiority of European weaponry, but soon the Native Americans discovered that firepower lost its advantage if the shooter lacked accuracy, which most Europeans did.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, taking into account the time constraints of reloading a musket versus a long bow, if the colonists had any technological advantage, it was slight at best. In fact, as John Smith was being captured, he disabled his pistol to hide that it lacked the range of an arrow. This parity of weaponry quickly leveled the playing field and greatly affected early diplomacy and trade, two seemingly separate forces which were inextricably interwoven.

As the fur trade became more lucrative, multiple colonizing empires converged on North America with an eye on building a powerful base of trade. In 1608, within a year of the founding of the British colony at Jamestown, the founding of New France increased Native American power in unexpected ways. As Allan Greer suggests, in the eyes of the Indians, the French came “not as conquering invaders, but as a new tribe negotiating a place for itself in the diplomatic webs of Native North America.”<sup>7</sup> Both Iroquoian- and Algonquian-speaking nations quickly recognized the advantages of playing one European power against the other, avoiding a total commitment to either European power and thereby compelling those nations to compete for their attention like suitors pursuing the same beau. If either New France or the British colonists were to make any headway with their trade partners, both their knee and will would have to bend, to ensure they were obtaining a most favored status.<sup>8</sup>

Because the fur trade emanating from the Ohio River Valley was so vital to European economic interests, Indians, like the Iroquois, clearly had the upper hand. According to Anthony Wallace,

...the Six Nations were able to use the Ohio country as the fulcrum in a game of playing off one side against the other that kept both the French and British perpetually off balance...In the summer of 1701 the Iroquois confederacy...made two treaties, almost simultaneously, at Albany [British center of operations] and Montreal [French]. These treaties together inaugurated a new era of Iroquois policy...that required of the Iroquois as much duplicity in diplomatic dealings with the Europeans as was practiced towards them; its success is measured by the fact that both the British and the French alternated constantly between the conviction that the Iroquois were on their own side and the conviction that they had turned to the enemy. In consequence, the basic policy of both French and British toward the Iroquois was to secure Iroquois neutrality by making political and economic concessions to them.<sup>9</sup>

The Iroquois Confederacy masterfully leveraged this “playoff system” pitting the Anglo versus French in disputes that played one side against the other. In doing so, they not only benefitted from the currying of favor from one side and then the other, but they could disrupt both sides from gaining any true dominance over the region. What was left was the “covenant chain,” an alliance forged between the Iroquois and the British settlers in 1677.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the Iroquois Confederacy, making sure to maintain strict control of trade in the region, jealously guarded their role as brokers between British suppliers on one side and their customers, the western tribes on the other.<sup>11</sup> These alliances were important to the power structure in the region. According to Alan Taylor,

By framing an alliance to control the east-west trade, the Montagnais, Algonkin, and Huron excluded and alienated the Five Nation Iroquois...Determined to take trade goods, captives, and revenge, the Five Nation Iroquois frequently raided northward to afflict the Montagnais, Algonkin, and Huron – which hurt the French trade...In making Indians friends, however, Europeans almost invariably made other Indians their enemies. As their price of business and protection, the

Montagnais, Algonkin, and Huron expected the French to help them fight the Five Nation Iroquois. Compelled to choose, the French embraced the northern alliance and made southern enemies.<sup>12</sup>

These bonds, however, proved quite expensive to maintain. Even though the English thought themselves superior to the indigenous peoples, the chain retained its strength only through maintaining the illusion of acceptance.<sup>13</sup> Matters became rather complicated when the Indians, sensing their lower status, pressed for an audience with England's King William III. To indulge such a request was fraught with peril and expense. Yet, in 1696, a cadre of Mohawk representatives were brought to London with the intent of dazzling them with a show of English might on all fronts, from culture to governance, and most certainly, firepower. However, on the heels of this excursion, came another Native American contingent receiving similar adulation in the courts at Paris and Versailles. According to Weaver, "England had to outdo its adversary in wooing the Iroquois."<sup>14</sup> From the astute management of these contending forces in the "beaver wars", one can appreciate the degree of political power, and yes, agency, that the Native Americans possessed, a reality that their European counterparts failed to fully comprehend.

Perhaps the largest obstacle to harmonious relations was the prejudice of which both sides were guilty. According to Charles Mann, "ethnocentrism seems to be a near-universal human quality."<sup>15</sup> With greed, or at least self-interest, being a common human trait, then it is understandable that when the two sides first met, both sought the best outcome for themselves. Regrettably, in most cases, each party was blinded by its own perceived superiority, believing that it had the upper hand and could manage the negotiations to a successful, if decidedly one-sided, advantage. For instance, the British tended to look down upon Indians as primitive peoples. This arrogant outlook eventually alienated not just the native populations, but their own kin in the American colonies as well. And the Indian view of their English counterparts could be equally skewed. As Mann also illustrates, Native Americans perceived the English in the following way.

They were irritatingly garrulous, prone to fits of chancery, and often surprisingly incompetent at what seemed to Indians like basic tasks. But they also made useful and beautiful goods - copper kettles, glittering colored glass, and steel knives and hatchets - unlike anything else in New England. Moreover, they would exchange these valuable items for cheap furs of the sort used by Indians as blankets. It was like happening upon a dingy kiosk that would swap fancy electronic goods for customers' used socks - almost anyone would be willing to overlook the shopkeeper's peculiarities.<sup>16</sup>

The superior attitude of the British also distracted them from the realities of commercial and political alliances. Rather than recognizing that they were not just entering into a business venture, but a political, and

if need be, military, alliance, the British often tried to treat the interwoven motivations as separate, which was decidedly different than the Indian point of view. Taylor adds,

In Indian diplomacy, words were cheap and meaningless unless accompanied by the ceremonial delivery of valued presents. Because Europeans thought of trade as purely commercial and distinct from diplomacy, they initially balked at the Indian notion that trade sealed an alliance between equals...(Native Americans) learned never to trade with the first vessel to come their way but to await several to compete for their furs. The natives became adept at driving a hard bargain, to the dismay of the Europeans, who preferred to think of Indians as perpetual children."<sup>17</sup>

Although the access to European products such as textiles, metal tools and weapons, and, regrettably, alcohol, built a dependence among the Indians, it was the Europeans who became captives to this process.<sup>18</sup> Once the Indians valued these trade goods, any decrease or cessation of trade was seen as a threat to Native American survival and therefore an act of war. Isolated as they were in this strange new land, and surrounded by alliances that were temporal and unstable at best, colonial settlers could ill afford to make enemies. They had little choice but to adhere to Native American trade practices. The entangling nature of alliances meant that not only were goods exchanged but military assistance as well. And once again, the native populations were first to the party and well in control of their destiny.

Alan Taylor places Native American history in a more informal perspective in surmising that "Instead of lurking beyond the colonies in a 'wilderness,' Indians have come back into the story as central and persistent protagonists...The biggest difference was the unprecedented mixing of radically diverse peoples - African, European, and Indian - under circumstances stressful for all of them."<sup>19</sup> Seen from the right perspective, in this new light of agency, one can appreciate the diplomatic skill employed by Native American peoples as they navigated the changing tides of the late seventeenth century.

## The Seven Years War

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Paramount to these changing tides was an encounter involving a young George Washington, who inadvertently started a vitally important conflict in 1754. Not surprisingly, trade relations were a central factor. Although the conflict initially began as a squabble over control of a relatively small corner of the North American continent, it quickly expanded in scope to become what Fred Anderson has suggested was, in a sense, the first world war.<sup>20</sup> Given that Europeans prized the warm and luxurious North American beaver above all other pelts, this war became a battle between age-old rivals France and Britain competing for

primacy in the lucrative fur trade radiating from the Ohio River Valley. With the French looking to extend their influence beyond their Canadian land holdings, Washington, a surveyor by trade, was chosen as one who could traverse the woods and back roads and deliver a simple “No Trespassing” message to New France. Although rebuffed in his first attempt, he returned a year later to disastrous results. When a French diplomat was brutally killed by Tanaghrisson, a Native American ally from the Iroquois Confederacy and one supposedly under Washington’s command, the young commander soon found himself at the center of a global conflict that had far-reaching implications. For the next seven years, wherever France and England came in contact, be it North America, Europe, Africa or Asia, they would be at war.

It is important to note that the Seven Years’ War, a global conflict, began with the Battle of Fort Duquesne, near present-day Pittsburgh and ended, with Pontiac’s Rebellion, on the outskirts of Detroit. Following a pragmatic diplomacy policy of playing New France against the British crown, the Iroquois Confederacy thrived for the better part of a half century. As Fred Anderson states, “The story of the Anglo--French colonial war begins, therefore, not with Britain or France, nor even with their American colonies, but with the Six Nations of the Iroquois and indeed with a single chief: Tanaghrisson.”<sup>21</sup>

In this light, the Indians were anything but passive pawns in a larger story; they were the central protagonists in perhaps the most significant conflict the world had yet encountered.

An important outcome of the war was that it damaged British relations both with the Native American populations and equally, if not more so, with their colonists. While not the optimal foundation on which to build a bright future, British incredulity over the colonists’ strong reactions is somewhat understandable. However, as is so often the case, an underlying issue, perceived insults, had long been eroding the colonists feelings of goodwill towards their original home. Stemming from this conflict was a nagging sense for the colonists that somehow their provincial ways were looked down upon by those in the highly stratified British society. According to Gordon S. Wood,

In comparison with prosperous and powerful metropolitan England, America in the middle of the eighteenth century seemed a primitive, backward place, disordered and turbulent, without a real aristocracy, without magnificent courts or large urban centers, indeed, without any of the attributes of the civilized world. Consequently, the colonists repeatedly felt pressed to apologize for the crudity of their society, the insignificance of their art and literature, and the triviality of their affairs.<sup>22</sup>

The attitudes and treatment of the British army during the Seven Years’ War only served to further alienate the colonists. General Edward Braddock, perhaps the epitome of British arrogance, summarily rejected the military and cultural advice of his provincial aides in how to engage an enemy that refused to fight in the Napoleonic style. When Washington urged him to consider that the absence of red in the forest strongly suggested a uniform modification among his troops, Braddock did nothing to hide his contempt for both Indians and provincials. He once said “These savages may, indeed be a formidable enemy to your raw American militia, but upon the king’s regular and disciplined troops, sir, it is impossible to believe they should



make any impression.”<sup>23</sup> The years of snide comments, sideways glances and repeated slights experienced among the British regulars only served to reinforce what the colonists had feared all along - that although they were British subjects, that did not mean they measured up, and perhaps never could, to the upper reaches of British society to which they aspired. This nagging sense of inadequacy would hound the founding fathers in the post-war years as Britain brought an end to over a century of salutary neglect and exerted greater control over its American colonies. In light of this treatment, the transformation of many colonists into revolutionaries--as Parliament imposed taxes upon them without their consent--becomes much more understandable. Such treatment played right into a long simmering inferiority complex.

British successes early in the war were hard to come by under the enigmatic leadership of Braddock and a host of others. Largely at issue was the British high command’s refusal to recognize that, in the Native American forces, they were facing an enemy like none that they had previously encountered. As noted above, Washington and others tried to convince the high command that a significant change in battle tactics was in order. However, their pleas and proposals fell on deaf ears. Instead, they steadfastly stuck to their tactics and demanded that the enemy react to the tone that they set. And yet, the Indians, and their French allies were only too glad to wait and ambush the British as, in their bright red coats with brass buttons shining and drums beating a cadence, they noisily and colorfully marched through the close confines of the forest.

Despite their early tactical blunders, British fortunes turned for the better with two great victories in 1758. Of course, the Ohio country would be key to their success. At the mouth of the St. Lawrence River sat the French fortress of Louisbourg, from which all navigation into the interior of Canada and the Ohio River Valley was controlled. After a protracted siege by British naval and ground forces, Louisbourg finally fell in July of 1758, clearing the way for British forces to pressure the interior of New France. The pivotal battle came at the French fortifications at Quebec, situated on a lofty perch overlooking the St. Lawrence River. In 1759, General James Wolfe directed a surprise attack on the French forces commanded by General Louis-Joseph de Montcalm. Sailing under the cover of darkness, Wolfe’s troops overpowered the few sentries watching the cliff approaches, and mobilized forces for an attack the next morning. Unlike the hit-and-run guerilla fighting at which the Indian forces excelled, Quebec’s open ground at the Plains of Abraham offered the perfect chess board for Wolfe to direct a strategic campaign to capture the last significant French stronghold. Although mortally wounded as depicted so dramatically in Benjamin West’s masterful painting, Wolfe’s victory was, in many ways, the turning point of the war.<sup>24</sup>

After the victories at Louisbourg and Quebec, it seemed all that remained was for England and Spain to dictate the terms of capitulation and for France to sign away all its North American holdings with the Treaty of Paris of 1763. Yet, instead of a slow fade to a happy ending, from a Eurocentric perspective, it may be easy to overlook what now seems the next obvious phase of the conflict. It is quite telling that the Seven Years’ War, although fought on nearly every continent, would begin and end in the Ohio River Valley. Because the Indians were and had always been the central protagonists, the French presence receding from the North American continent, certainly did not mean that the Indians accepted this as the end of the line for their fortunes. Although the end of a French presence in North America created the vacuum that eliminated the play-off system so vital to Native America’s control of the continent, this absence also left England solely responsible for managing the lucrative fur trade and forging a lasting peace between the Indians and colonists. With Parliament hastily making policy decisions that affected a land half a world away, this would prove to be a monumental task. In previous dealings with British traders where they had been swindled of both their land and furs, the Indians experienced nothing to give them any hope of better days ahead. So, in the absence of their French allies, the Native Americans turned to full-scale war. Anderson states,

The native peoples of the interior were the first to react negatively to changes imposed from above. They did it by launching attacks that grew into the most successful pan-Indian resistance movement in American history...Pontiac's Rebellion.<sup>25</sup>

Instead of a peaceful end to the war, the escalating violence had an astounding effect on stability in the region. The next three years, from 1763 to 1766, saw allied Indian forces sack all but three of the British forts west of the Appalachians. Across the backcountry of Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, more than 2,000 colonists perished.<sup>26</sup>

It was a matter of considerable pride that all British subjects, no matter where they might reside, could sleep safely in their beds. Therefore when word reached London of the latest mayhem occurring at the hands of the Native Americans, they understandably sought to bring about an expedient end to the hostilities by returning to the diplomacy that had so fragily held Native American relations intact. In response to General Thomas Gage re-instituting the granting of gifts and accommodations, the Indians gave control of the forts back to the British yet not without the following admonition from Chief Pontiac,

We tell you now [that] the French never conquered us, neither did they purchase a foot of our Country, nor have they a right to give it to you. We gave them liberty to settle for which they always rewarded us & treated us with great Civility...[I]f you expect to keep these Posts, we will expect to have proper returns from you.<sup>27</sup>

In their rush to respond to the violence of Pontiac's Rebellion, the British instituted policies that were not only less than equitable for all parties involved, but incredibly short-sighted as well. Many British policy makers presumed that only a standing army could guarantee a lasting peace in this remote yet troublesome corner of their empire.<sup>28</sup>

Ill-judged measures continued to pour forth from London, leading to colonial frustration in the short-term, and rebellion in the long run. Those in Parliament, far removed from the colonies, failed to grasp the intricate political web that had developed so far from their legislative reach. Therefore, a likely supposition was that, if the cause of all this violence was the Ohio River Valley, then a land grant would quell the ill will and restore order. Paul Johnson notes that the Royal Proclamation of 1763 which forbade Americans to settle past the Appalachians,

...was anathema to the colonies -- it destroyed their future, at a stroke...The Proclamation was one of Britain's cardinal errors, just at the moment when the expulsion of the French had entirely removed American dependence on British

military power, and any conceivable obstacle to the expansion of the boundless lands of the interior, the men in London were proposing to replace the French by the Indians and deny the colonies access. It made no sense, and it looked like a deliberate insult to American sensibilities.<sup>29</sup>

To the colonist mindset, Parliament's decision to return the Ohio country to the Indians--the land for which they had just spent seven years fighting, and the enemy whom in their minds they had just defeated--was absurdly insulting. However, few could foresee that with these fiscal and military policies, the seeds of revolution had been sown.

## **Aftermath: The Revolutionary Era**

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Through a patriotic lens, there has been a tendency to see the American Revolution as the paramount event on the road to freedom. Yet, when one considers how the Seven Years' War set events in motion that profoundly shifted the balance of power between the colonizing powers, this conflict takes on much more preeminence. In the settling post-war dust, England emerged as the world's superpower, while France was largely non-existent in the Western Hemisphere. Alan Taylor keenly points out that,

...within thirteen years of the treaty of peace, thirteen Atlantic seaboard colonies would revolt to wage a long war for their independence. That shocking conflict between the colonies and the mother country developed from strains initiated by winning the Seven Years' War. The conquest of Canada deprived the mainland colonists and the British of a common enemy that had united them in the past. Victory invited the British to redefine the empire and to increase the colonists' burdens. But victory also emboldened colonists to defy British demands because they no longer needed protection from the French.<sup>30</sup>

This conflict resulted not only in France's support of the fledgling revolution, but also in New Spain's securing of its empire via the advent of the mission system around the time of Lewis and Clark's expedition (1804 - 1806). The aftereffect of all this strife was a "world turned upside down" where England and Spain had the lion's share of North America and France was left with a few Caribbean holdings such as Haiti, Martinique, and St. Barts. These escalating incendiary events would lead to the American Revolution. Moreover, the outcome of the Seven Years' War drove France to avenge its losses by supporting the patriots in their quest for

freedom. And as is so often the case, it began with taxes.

The colonists had started this costly engagement that led to a crushing post-war debt of 137 million pounds. Moreover, since some felt a standing army was required to keep peace after the suppression of Pontiac's Rebellion, Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Grenville, felt the burden of colonial defense must be shared by the colonists.<sup>31</sup> However, they were never party to whether the soldiers should be stationed among them or how they should share in the cost of their own defense. According to Taylor, "Instead of seeing the new permanent army in North America as a source of protection, colonial leaders felt threatened as those troops became both the pretext for raising new taxes and the means for enforcing them."<sup>31</sup>

And yet, as "repeated usurpations" pushed both sides towards war, France later resurfaced in North American affairs, this time in the role of colonial ally. Considering that France's monarch had much to lose by stirring up public foment, France's involvement in the Revolutionary War obviously had considerably less to do with freedom than revenge. As Alexander Hamilton astutely pointed out in his usual acerbic style,

The primary motives of France for the assistance which she gave us was obviously to enfeeble a hated and powerful rival by breaking into pieces the British Empire...He must be a fool who can be credulous enough to believe that a despotic court aided a popular revolution from regard to liberty or friendship to the principles of such a revolution.<sup>32</sup>

## **Dangerous Misconceptions, Oppressive Policies**

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The outcome of the Seven Years' War set the stage for massive Indian civil rights violations as the power of the United States government greatly expanded over the next two and a half centuries. As discussed in seminar, greed, prejudice and misguided notions eventually gave rise to such atrocious federal programs as assimilation, allocation and termination. Assuming that policy makers' had sincere intentions for the welfare of Native Americans--which, in many cases is debatable, given the general lack of compassion displayed in their actions--these directives have led to broken treaties, destruction of culture, relocation of tribes, and a staggering amount of death and violence. Today these effects are manifest in a sense of hopelessness and distrust among many Native Americans, especially those living on reservations. Sherman Alexie brilliantly captures this sense of despair in his novel, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*:

But we reservation Indians don't get to realize our dreams. We don't get those chances. Or choices. We're just poor. That's all we are. It sucks to be poor, and it sucks to feel that you somehow *deserve* to be poor. You start believing that you're

poor because you are stupid and ugly. And then you start believing that you're stupid and ugly because you're Indian. And because you're Indian you start believing you're destined to be poor. It's an ugly circle and *there's nothing you can do about it*. Poverty doesn't give you strength or teach you lessons about perseverance. No, poverty only teaches you how to be poor." (Italics added by author)<sup>33</sup>

The U.S. ascendancy to global superpower in the post World War II years led to an economic boom that left Indians, many of whom had proudly fought in the U.S. forces, on the outside looking in at all of this prosperity. Even worse, as a new rugged American identity emerged, forged in the crucible of a war fought against clearly discernable evil, Congress set into action the termination program. While not the purely genocidal program that the name might suggest, this policy nonetheless robbed Native Americans of their political autonomy and legal standing by dissolving all vestiges of "Indian-ness" in an attempt to make them more "American." This sentiment was nothing new. From the very beginnings of our nation, our founding fathers pondered how to deal with this clash of cultures. In fact, just prior to issuing his Farewell Address in the waning months of his presidency, George Washington reached out to the Cherokee nation with a well-intended, if somewhat misguided plea for them to join white society.<sup>34</sup>

Although, to his credit, Washington's views did not demand forced assimilation, his somewhat gentle and naive treatment is sadly in stark contrast to the rugged individualism inherent in the post-World War II national identity. It is somewhat ironic that, while seeking to "whiten" Native Americans, this same era also romanticized the "cowboys and Indians" of the Old West, establishing many of the aforementioned negative stereotypes. Through the wholesale removal of tribal sovereignty and all inherent Indian civil rights and land holdings, termination sought to force the Indians to "stand on their own two feet." Speaking of this program and other federal attempts to force Native Americans to assimilate, Charles Wilkinson noted,

...termination stems from deep impulses long lodged in American views towards Indians. The United States negotiated treaties, after all, in order to reduce Indian landholdings and political power. Allotment was designed to hasten Indian assimilation, which Congress also promoted through the far-ranging and coercive BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs] and church activities. Termination offered full and final relief from the centuries-old weariness with the refusal of Indians to abandon their political and cultural identity.<sup>35</sup>

In an attempt to explain away imperialization and restrictive governmental policies, an all-too-convenient rationale echoing across humanity has been that "to the victor go the spoils of war", and that therefore history

is written by the “winning side.” In the case of Native American relations, two erroneous assumptions have prevailed. First, that the Native Americans were helpless, passive participants virtually lacking in agency, and second, in light of this, that they simply had to accept their fate as a conquered people. Allowing for perceived advantages in economics and weaponry, one might be compelled to accept this proposition. However, as one takes into account the numerous treaty violations and disingenuous dealings of the federal and state governments, justice demands a closer look. This is certainly a painful history that touches a great many people. However, as we continue to evolve socially, I have a deep and profound hope that the time is finally right to chart a course to meaningful and lasting progress for all parties involved. By challenging these misconceptions, this unit seeks to put forth the first step on the journey to understanding, compassion, and ultimately, true and lasting progress for all Americans, both native and naturalized.

## Strategies

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The process of historical inquiry will be used in conjunction with a variety of primary and secondary sources to consider how the events set in motion during the colonial period resulted in a significant shift in the global balance of power in the late eighteenth century. Sequenced near the beginning of my instructional year, this unit comes under the umbrella of the Colonial America unit of study. See the Resources for Students and Teacher section for a more complete presentation of the historical inquiry process.

## Collaborative Learning and Groupwork

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One of the basic tenets of my district’s lifelong learning standards stresses the synergistic benefits of collaborative learning. It is imperative that students learn how to work together to accomplish goals, both those set by me and even more importantly, themselves. Because each group member is accountable to, and dependent upon each other, all are expected to share their strengths and help others to develop their skills.

## Essential Vocabulary

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There are content-specific concepts and terms that will need to be front-loaded prior to delving into the subject. While most of these terms may not be entirely new to the students, I will connect these terms with their prior knowledge to help place them in the context of U.S. History. As mentioned previously, the concepts of **agency** and **presentism** will be introduced in this unit. I’m quite certain that these concepts will be new to most in my class. The ideas of **confederacy** and **siege** seem to show up with some regularity in many popular video games, so some students should have more than a passing acquaintance with them. These terms will re-occur in subsequent units throughout the year.

## Google Classroom and Google Apps for Education

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Technology continues to evolve as an essential part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century classroom. For those of us who have not grown up with a tablet or smartphone in our hands, Marc Prensky has coined two new terms that can be used to describe both ourselves and the students under our tutelage.<sup>36</sup> He essentially suggests that, if the digital world were an actual land, those that use technology would be either natives or immigrants. Having grown up surrounded by technology, most of our students are the digital natives. Their interaction with electronic devices greatly impacts how they relate to their world and enables them to easily master new technologies. However, many teachers can be seen as the digital immigrants. As Prensky states, they are

...the latecomer in the technology revolution and as with any immigrant, there is a certain “accent” that is readily apparent to the native speakers. Examples of this “accent” are things like calling and asking if a recipient received the email that was just sent, typing out text messages with full words rather than the standard abbreviations (OMG ur my bff!), or going to the library before searching the Internet.

In short, if technology was a foreign language many teachers would always speak it with an accent. However, this should not deter our efforts to bring technology into our classrooms. Rather than sending the message “Welcome to school. Prior to takeoff, please stow all electronic devices”, we should take comfort in the fact that since our students adapt to new technologies so readily, all we usually need do is provide the most basic of introductions. In short order most of our students will be utilizing the technology far beyond what we imagined. Moments like this can provide empowerment and inspire far beyond our limited abilities in this arena.

To this end, the Google Apps for Education is a suite of products that promote collaboration and accessibility for our students. In line with San Jose Unified’s 21<sup>st</sup> century and lifelong learning strategies, students will use the Google Classroom environment to access assignments that involve close reading and annotation of primary and secondary sources, group and individual analysis of available evidence, structured academic conversations (such as Socratic seminars), and historical interpretations (written responses to the Unit Focus and Lesson Focus questions).

Google Classroom allows me to create and distribute a Google Doc or Slides presentation for each student. I can also post source documents, video clips and graphic organizers under the same assignment. Moreover, I can provide comments while students are working on their assignments, which streamlines the feedback and grading process. I want to ready my students for all that will be expected of them when they enter high school next year. Since this unit is early in the year, students will have ample time to master these strategies across the year.

## Primary and Secondary Source/Document Analysis

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Textual analysis is not only a basic tenet of Common Core, but a major focus of historical inquiry as well. The level of learning and subject mastery in my class deepened exponentially when my students started analyzing primary source documents. Students need to interact and yes, even struggle, with a document before they can uncover its true meaning. Given that most documents that we will be studying were written well over two hundred years ago, this activity presents an even greater challenge. Therefore I will provide excerpted documents at an appropriate length and complexity for a middle school audience. By the time that we arrive at this unit, students will have learned how to do close readings of primary sources to engage the historical narrative and extract the crucial information while deciding how they will use it as evidence to support their position.

Two of the main primary sources that I will use will be the Treaty of Paris of 1763 and in response to Pontiac's War, the Proclamation Act of 1763. I will also employ texts from George Washington, General Edward Braddock, General Louis-Joseph de Montcalm, and Chief Pontiac. (Public Domain)

In terms of secondary sources, I will draw from the sources of my research for this unit, namely Fred Anderson's *Crucible of War*, Anthony Wallace's *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca*, Alan Taylor's *American Colonies*, and Charles Mann's *1491*. Obviously these texts are above a middle school audience and will have to be heavily excerpted, scaffolded, and supported with graphic organizers.

## Visual Aids

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Learning Through Art is an important activity that helps the subject matter come alive through interaction with an historical painting or political cartoon. As if visiting an art gallery, students observe the image for two minutes without speaking, allowing it to reveal itself. Students then share their observations and impressions, asking increasingly complex questions of the art and of the artist. Helpful questions to ask students towards the end of the analysis are "What is missing?" or "What don't you see?"

The image for this unit will be Benjamin West's epic painting *The Death of General Wolfe*. (Public domain) Students should note the emotion of the participants depicted in the painting, from Wolfe's fallen state, to his emotional staff, to the Mohawk warrior placed near the center. His pose suggests any number of emotions, perhaps pondering whether to stay or to gather his prizes of war and leave for home.

I will also employ maps. Adapted from the Anderson text, the first will feature a series of callouts placed at the majority of the battles that touched most every continent in the Seven Years War. This map illustrates how this conflict, that started with the French trying to expand their trading empire in North America, soon became not just a turf battle in the Ohio River Valley, but a conflict stretching from nearly one end of the globe to the other. In tracking the various battles of the war, students will see that hostilities began at Pittsburgh and concluded near Detroit. In so doing, they will come to see that the Native Americans were anything but helpless bystanders in this conflict, as they skillfully played the French and British against each other for political, economic and military advantage. It is important that students come to see how this war moves the Indians from the margins of history as we have previously perceived them, to the very center. By doing so we



will come to see that Indians are central to not just U.S. history, but all of world history. Another set of maps before and after the Seven Years' War will illustrate the land holdings of the three primary colonizing powers, illustrating how the North American empire lost by France fueled their desire for revenge.

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## Appendix A: Implementing District Standards

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To ensure compliance with state initiatives, this unit will integrate some of the focus questions found in the California Department of Education's Curriculum Framework for History-Social Studies.<sup>37</sup> The following objective is taken from that framework:

### *History-Social Science Framework, Chapter 12*

The eighth grade course of study begins with an intensive review of the major ideas, issues, and events that shaped the founding of the nation. In their study of this era, students will view American history through the lens of a people who were trying—and are still trying—to fulfill the promise of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Throughout their eighth grade United States history and geography course, students will confront the themes of freedom, equality, and liberty and their changing definitions over time.

The unit will follow the teaching thesis that Europeans colonized the Americas in order to gain the economic, religious, and political freedoms that they did not have at home by subjugating the rights of Indigenous people. Stemming from this thesis, the overarching unit focus question will be "How did the European pursuit of freedoms in the New World impact the different groups' definitions of being American?" Supporting this inquiry will be a series of four lesson focus questions. A more complete discussion of the hierarchical structure of these focus questions can be found in the next section.

## Student and Teacher Resources

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The entire course is oriented towards answering the course level question (CLQ), “How has the pursuit of freedom impacted the differing definitions of the American Identity?” Each unit breaks the CLQ down into a unit focus question (UFQ) that helps to guide our study across the entire year. And, to provide support and context for the UFQ, each lesson is broken down further into lesson focus questions, each of which in turn seek to answer part of the UFQ. At the end of each unit, students answer the UFQ in a two to three paragraph “historical interpretation” in which they take a position in response to the UFQ and defend it by citing evidence discovered in the analysis.

Through the iterative process of answering these UFQs, by the end of the year, students will be well on their way to producing a far ranging summative assessment essay covering all they have learned about freedom and the American identity as a result of being in my class this year. The following are focus questions that will help frame the students’ historical inquiry in this unit and as they encounter Native American civil rights issues later in the year.

**Course Level Question:***How has pursuing freedom impacted the differing definitions of the American Identity?*

**Colonial America Unit Focus Question:***What were the freedoms that drove people to migrate to the New World, and, to what extent did these motives have a positive or negative impact on all parties involved?*

**Lesson Focus Questions:***What factors led to the deterioration of relations between western Europeans and Native Americans over the course of our history?*

*To what extent did the settlers coming to North America positively and negatively impact the Native Americans?*

*How important was the payoff system with regard to relations between Native Americans and the European colonizing powers they encountered?*

*What factors caused the French and Indian War and what was the most important lasting impact of this conflict?*

**March to Civil Rights Unit Focus Question:***How has the quest for equality in America helped shape a new American identity?*

**Lesson Focus Question:***To what extent did the African American civil rights movement impact the American Indian Movement’s activities and objectives?*

**Manifest Destiny Unit Focus Question:***In their quest for freedom, were Americans justified in pursuing Manifest Destiny?*

**Lesson Focus Questions:***How did the Native American perspective on land ownership differ from those of white settlers?*

*To what extent did Jackson’s Indian Removal Policy impact the lives of Native American peoples today?*

*Given the history of dishonest dealings by the American government, what reasonable and meaningful remedies can we as a nation expect to implement to help build a lasting equitable peace with American Indians?*

The inescapable question that should come from *Agents of Change: How American Indians Helped Change the World in Only Seven Years* is “where do we go from here?” Some have taken the position that that abandoning our homes and cities is much akin to trying to put the genie back in the bottle. But one must acknowledge, in light of the stated goals of the Declaration and the Constitution, that we can at least try to get the genie to play fair. With a hopeful eye towards a higher level of societal evolution, the unit could later be used to leverage the power of various civil rights movements to help students brainstorm how to bring meaningful and equitable solutions to this persistent shortcoming of our national story.

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