

NATIVE NEW YORK

A Dialogue Toolkit for Educators

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Introduction

New York is and always has been a Native place. Long before the state existed, its lands encompassed Native towns, fields, and hunting territories. After European colonists arrived, Native people and nations persisted and adapted in the face of adversity and change.

The goal of *Native New York* is to change how everyone sees both New York State and Native people. The exhibition shows how Haudenosaunee, Lenape, and Long Island Native peoples have influenced the region, and how an understanding of New York and American history is incomplete without an understanding of the role of Native nations. The exhibition is organized as a journey through significant places in New York, from the shores of Long Island through New York City to Niagara Falls. Through stories of history and culture, and from the perspectives of contemporary Native people who call the region home, the show expands popular ideas about New York and answers the question: What makes New York a Native place?

Through dialogue—bringing people together to listen to one another and exchange ideas—educators can build on the exhibition’s goal of showing why and how New York is a Native place. This toolkit provides basic grounding in the practice of dialogue. It includes one 60-minute interpretive program model (focused on grades 4–7) that educators can use in the exhibition to facilitate dialogue with students. Through the intentional use of dialogue, educators can tap into the *Native New York* material to facilitate new conversations about the places students call home and their role in caring for those places.

This toolkit is rooted in methodology used by members of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, a worldwide network of places of memory dedicated to commemorating past struggles for justice and addressing their contemporary legacies. The coalition was founded on the idea that, as trusted educational and community spaces containing human connections to the past, museums and historical sites are ideal venues for fostering dialogue and civic engagement. Coalition members across the globe use dialogue as an interpretive tool in exhibitions, tours, programs, and social media to connect with audiences in relevant, personal ways and move them beyond passive learning.

What makes New York a Native place?

What is dialogue?

Dialogue is a mode of communication that invites people with varied experiences and differing perspectives to engage in an open-ended conversation with a goal of personal and collective learning. Facilitated dialogue is an intentional process “led” by a facilitator. Educators can use this toolkit to facilitate dialogue among students, and to combine shared experiences, questions, techniques, and ground rules to ensure that all participants can communicate with integrity.

Dialogue acknowledges that there are different ways of knowing about any given subject, drawn from both personal experience and formal study. Participants in dialogue accept that it is possible for two markedly different perspectives to coexist and that it is not necessary to be entirely correct or entirely wrong. Because dialogue attempts to be a non-hierarchical mode of communication, a facilitator’s primary role is to uphold equality among all participants.

Asking better questions in a better order

In developing dialogue models, Sites of Conscience members commonly employ a tool called the arc of dialogue.

Developed by Tammy Bormann and David Campt, the arc of dialogue structure pairs an experience shared by all participants—in this case the *Native New York* exhibition or its related materials—with a sequence of questions designed to build trust and communication.

Arc of Dialogue



PHASE I COMMUNITY BUILDING

Phase I of the arc encourages connectedness and relationship-building within the group. The work done here creates a space in which all participants can engage with one another. Phase I comprises four parts: describing the role of the facilitator, explaining the intent of the dialogue, establishing guidelines, and asking a question or questions that allow everyone to speak. Phase I questions are non-threatening and allow participants to share information about themselves. They are most commonly framed in the “you” mode, and they apply the idea of O.R.A.C.L.E: the Only Right Answer Comes from Lived Experience. In a *Native New York* dialogue program, facilitators might ask:

- ▶ What makes a place home for you?
- ▶ When people ask you where home is, how do you answer and why?
- ▶ What makes someone a New Yorker?

PHASE II SHARING OUR OWN EXPERIENCES

Phase II invites participants to think about their own experiences related to the topic and share them with the group. The facilitator helps participants recognize how and why their experiences are alike or different. Phase II questions welcome each person’s experience equally and place minimal judgment on responses, gathering more information than questions in Phase I. Possible Phase II questions for *Native New York* might include:

- ▶ What does it mean to be from a place you can’t go back to? How have you stayed connected to such a place?
- ▶ Can you have many homes, or only one?
- ▶ When have you helped people join your community? How have others helped you join theirs? When have you chosen not to let people join?

PHASE III EXPLORING BEYOND OUR OWN EXPERIENCES

Phase III questions explore the topic further to allow participants to learn with and from one another. Until this point, participants speak primarily from their own experience, on which they are the undeniable experts. Phase III questions provoke participants to dig deeper into their assumptions and to probe the underlying social conditions that inform the diverse perspectives in the group. Possible Phase III questions for *Native New York* might include:

- ▶ What makes a community resilient? How can we build more resilient communities?
- ▶ What is our responsibility to this shared place called New York?
- ▶ Can a home exist even after it is gone?

PHASE IV SYNTHESIZING THE EXPERIENCE

After dialogues have revealed differences as well as similarities among participants, it is important to end by reinforcing a sense of community. Phase IV questions help participants examine what they have learned about themselves and one another and express the effect the dialogue has had on them. Possibilities for *Native New York* could include:

- ▶ How will you look for the Native roots of your home? Who will you explore with?
- ▶ How will you care for your home?
- ▶ How will you care for our New York home?



Dialogue Model Living in Native New York

This program model identifies locations, topics, techniques, and questions to form the framework of a dialogue program. Each phase is identified with either one or two sections of the *Native New York* exhibition.

Time: 60 minutes

Grades: 4–7

Kahnawake Mohawk ironworker Wisa Diabo rides the Staten Island Ferry with his daughter Yvonne, 1957.

Photo by Ida Meloche Diabo. Courtesy of Reagan Tarbell (Kahnawake Mohawk)

PHASE I

Phase I helps build a learning community by allowing participants to share information about themselves.

WHERE TO GO Shinnecock/Shinnecock Nation

 Home and the identities connected with home help shape who we are.



Mary Augusta and Henry Cuffee, along with some of their chickens, stand in front of their cedar-shake house, ca. 1890.

The East Hampton Library, Long Island Collection

Suggested Content

The waters of Shinnecock Bay surround the small peninsula on the south shore of Long Island belonging to the Shinnecock Nation. This land is all that remains of a once-much-larger territory. The Shinnecock people continue to use and care for their land and water. They maintain an ongoing but uneasy relationship with the outsiders who have moved in around them. The Shinnecock have adapted to economic changes near and far, doing whatever it takes to maintain their culture and home.

Possible Technique

Pair share (turn and talk to someone next to you) with any Phase I question.

Questions

- ▶ What makes a place home for you?
- ▶ When people ask you where home is, how do you answer and why?
- ▶ What makes someone a New Yorker?

Diving Deeper

Phase I is about beginning to build trust with a high degree of safety. Making space for participants to talk about home and personal identity gives them a chance to reveal a little bit of who they are, feel seen, make personal connections, and build trust.

PHASE II

Questions in Phase II help participants recognize how and why their experiences are alike or different.

WHERE TO GO Shorakapkok/Inwood and Chonodote/Aurora

 New York is and always has been a Native place.



The Lenape (Delaware) wore shoulder bags like this one as an expression of pride and beauty.

Delaware bandolier bag, ca. 1850. Oklahoma. Hide, cotton cloth, silk ribbon, glass beads, wool yarn, metal cones. 21/3358

Suggested Content

Beginning in the 1600s, European traders and colonists migrated to New York, intending to stay. This forced some Native New Yorkers to seek safety elsewhere. Other Native people managed to remain, and their descendants live here today. Still other Native communities moved into New York, seeking alliances and new homes. The experiences of the Lenape (Delaware) and the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) illustrate this spectrum.

For the Lenape, the new Dutch and British colonies meant war, disease, tax demands, and farm animals destroying their corn. Over time, the Lenape were forced out of New York and settled among friends to the west. They are the ancestors of today's Delaware nations.

The Revolutionary War (1775–1783) tested the bonds of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy, an alliance of six nations that controlled most of the territory now known as New York State. The war drove many Haudenosaunee people to western New York, where they rebuilt their nations and the bonds of the confederacy. Today, the Haudenosaunee nations own small reservations that lie within the borders of the United States and Canada.

Possible Technique

Small group object share. Tell three or four people around you about a piece of your past that you carry with you. This could be an item, a photograph (printed or in your phone), a memory, a scar, etc.—anything that is regularly with you.

Questions

- ▶ What does it mean to be from a place you can't go back to? How have you kept your connection to such a place?
- ▶ Can you have many homes, or only one?
- ▶ How has your home changed over the years? How have the people there changed?
- ▶ When have you helped people join your community? How have others helped you join theirs? When have you chosen to not let people join?
- ▶ What is at the root of your community or home?
- ▶ Where do you feel you belong?

Diving Deeper

Both of these sections present different forms of persistence. This phase pushes participants to reflect more deeply on their own experiences of challenge and resilience, and to expand their understanding of Native New Yorkers' challenges, choices, and resilience.

PHASE III

Questions in Phase III help participants explore the dialogue topic in an effort to learn with and from one another.

WHERE TO GO Onoñda'gega'/Onondaga Lake

 We all have a shared responsibility to care for this place and each other.



Tadadaho Sid Hill (Onondaga) stands near Onondaga Lake holding the Hiawatha Belt.

Photo courtesy of Providence Pictures from the PBS series *Native America*, 2018.

Suggested Content

The Hiawatha Belt, shown in this photograph, symbolizes a promise made by the leaders of the five original Haudenosaunee nations. They pledged to lay down their weapons and join together in peace. Guided by the Great Law of Peace, the confederacy is a representative democracy. In resolving disputes and making decisions, the governing body strives for consensus, a type of agreement that reflects solidarity and unity. The Great Law of Peace also instructs Haudenosaunee people to take care of all things.

Possible Technique

Ask participants to write their answer to a Phase III question on a large index card. Let participants know that, while their responses will be shared with the group, no responses will be attributed to any one person. Collect the cards and place them on the floor, inviting participants to circle around, read, and reflect on everyone's responses.

Questions

- ▶ What makes a community resilient? How can we build more resilient communities?
- ▶ What is our responsibility to this shared place called New York today?
- ▶ Can home exist even after it is gone?
- ▶ What are our obligations in welcoming strangers?
- ▶ What are our obligations to our neighbors?

Diving Deeper

Phase III asks participants to step outside themselves and think of their larger social role. Learning about the solidarity and unity emphasized in the Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace can help participants consider their own community obligations.

PHASE IV

Questions in Phase IV help the group to reflect on the dialogue, and on what they learned.

WHERE TO GO: Manahatta/Manhattan

 Caring for home means continuing to learn and take action.



Modern Manhattan side by side with a computer rendering of the island as it probably looked in 1609.

Courtesy of Markley Boyer/Wildlife Conservation Society/
The Weilikia Project

Suggested Content

Manhattan's original residents, the Lenape (Delaware), knew it as Manahatta, meaning "place for gathering wood to make bows." Even in the distant past, you could find whatever you needed here. This image shows contemporary Manhattan next to a rendering of the island as it probably looked in 1609. A lot has changed since then. Native peoples have called the region home for thousands of years. By revealing what has been hidden, we can better understand how New York is and always has been a Native place.

Possible Technique

Written response. Have participants make specific promises in writing about people they will share with and other actions they will take. Responses can be given to others or kept as private promises to themselves.

Questions

- ▶ What story about Native New York will you share with someone?
- ▶ How will you look for the Native roots of *your* home? Who will you explore with?
- ▶ What surprised you today?
- ▶ How will you care for your home?
- ▶ How will you care for our New York home?
- ▶ Has your definition of what makes someone a New Yorker changed at all? What has stayed the same?

Diving Deeper

Phase IV prompts reflection about the experience and encourages people to take action based on what was learned. The suggested writing exercise helps participants make and keep promises about the specific actions they will take. Phase IV is where learning is crystalized and action is catalyzed.

Acknowledgments

This facilitated dialogue toolkit was created by the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in collaboration with the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience.

In partnership with Native peoples and their allies, the National Museum of the American Indian fosters a richer shared human experience through a more informed understanding of Native peoples.

The museum seeks equity and social justice for the Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere through education, inspiration and empowerment.

For other student and teacher resources produced by the National Museum of the American Indian, visit the museum's Native Knowledge 360 education portal: AmericanIndian.si.edu/nk360

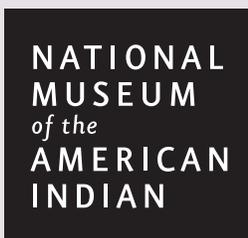
The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience is the only worldwide network dedicated to transforming places that preserve the past into spaces that promote civic action. The Coalition recognizes that the power of sites of memory is not inherent; it must be harnessed as a deliberate tactic in the service of human rights and citizen engagement. This conscious effort to connect past to present and memory to action is the hallmark of the Sites of Conscience movement. As a network of more than 275 Sites of Conscience in 65 countries, we engage tens of millions of people every year in using the lessons of history to take action on challenges to democracy and human rights today. Through powerful participatory programs that bring people together across difference, we advocate for every community's right to preserve places where struggles for human rights and democracy have occurred, to talk openly about what happened there, and to harness the strengths of memory, heritage, arts, and culture to build ethical societies that envision and shape a more just and humane future (www.sitesofconscience.org).

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