American Indian Music: Navajo Culture
A Smithsonian Folkways Lesson
Designed by: Babette M. Wenerd

Summary:
Learn about Navajo music while gaining a cultural awareness. Learn to sing and dance to traditional melodies as well as compose and improvise to an American Indian Song.

Suggested Grade Levels: 6-8
Country: United States
Region: North America
Culture Group: Navajo
Genre: American Indian
Instruments: Voice
Language: English, Navajo
Co-Curricular Areas: Social Studies
National Standards: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9

Prerequisites: Basic notation and reading abilities

Objectives
• Give students a cultural awareness of American Indians and their music
• Learn about the Navajo Culture
• Sing and perform the song/story “I Walk in Beauty”
• Compose and improvise a rhythmic accompaniment to an American Indian song

Materials:
• “Let ‘em Talk” http://www.folkways.si.edu/heartbeat-voices-of-first-nations-women/american-indian/music/album smithsonian
• “The Corn Grinding Song” by Joe Lee from Navajo songs (SFR), 1992, Track Catalog no. SFW40403_107 http://www.folkways.si.edu/navajo-songs/american-indian/music/album smithsonian
Lesson Segments:
1. **An Overview of the American Indian National Museum** (National Standard 6)
2. **Second Lesson Title** (National Standards 7, 8, 9)
3. **Third if Applicable** (National Standards 1, 2, 4, 5, 6)

1. **Lesson Segment Title**
   a. Students view the movie on American Indians
   b. Students discuss the people and the music they heard, as guided by the teacher
   c. Students listen to the SFR of “Let ‘em Talk”; students determine the tone colors they hear in the music and discuss what they music may be used for in the culture

**Assessment:** Students will be assessed on their knowledge of the movie and music based on their ability to answer questions by the teacher.

2. **An Overview of the Navajo Indians**
   a. Students read the information presented in the “Navajo Indian Fact Sheet”
   b. Students work in groups and complete a graphic organizer
   c. Students create a partner/circle dance to “Let ‘em Talk”

**Assessment:** Students will present their 5 most interesting facts to the class. Students will perform their dance for the members of their class, based on a participation grade.

3. **Performing a Song and Composing an Accompaniment**
   a. Students will sing and perform “I Walk in Beauty’ as outlined in Nick Page’s book
   b. Students will improvise hand drum and shaker accompaniments
   c. Students will work in groups to compose an accompaniment based on standard musical notation after listening to the ‘Corn Grinding Song”

**Assessment:** Students performance of song. Students perform their accompaniments in groups to the class.