

# Dos and Don'ts for Teaching TEK

Below is a list of guidelines to be used when teaching the Traditional Ecological Knowledge lessons, or about other aspects of Indigenous history and culture.

- DO respect Indigenous science and customs as equal to Western science and customs.
- DO realize that while there is no one agreed-upon term, we recommend using "Indigenous," "Native," "Native American," or "Native peoples," or use the tribe or nation name (here, Yurok Tribe).
- Do NOT (generally) use "Indian." While some Indigenous people prefer this term, it is often considered offensive.
- DO talk about Indigenous people in present tense, in this and other lessons (unless you are referring to historic events).
- DO assume Indigenous students are in your class and teach accordingly.\*
- DO NOT single out Indigenous students, put them on the spot, or ask them to educate you or their peers.
- DO leave space for Indigenous students to express their views and experiences if they volunteer them.
- DO realize that, as with all communities, people in Indigenous communities have a variety of views. Indigenous students in your class may or may not connect with TEK, or other cultural elements described here.
- DO ensure students are treated with respect regardless of their knowledge of views on concepts being discussed here.

*\*You may be in an area with high or low numbers of Indigenous students. However, even if you believe your classroom to not have Indigenous students, consider that you might not know the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of all your students. It can feel uncomfortable to have people discussing your culture or a culture with similarities to yours if not done respectfully.*

## Dos and Don'ts for Teaching TEK

- DO feel comfortable being (respectfully) honest with students. If this material is new for you, tell students you are learning together! If students ask a question you don't know the answer to, tell them "I don't know!"

DO look up pronunciations for Yurok words and phrases as resources allow (see Yurok Language Dictionary). If you are not sure of a pronunciation and cannot access the correct one DO be honest with students that you are unsure of the correct pronunciation.

- DO NOT accompany this lesson with any sort of "dress-up" activities or cultural reenactments.
- DO discuss whose ancestral territory your school is located on and discuss this with students. You can use <https://native-land.ca/> to find this information.

If you have previously engaged in any of the "DO NOT" practices here please consider this a great chance to reform those practices and build a more culturally responsive classroom environment!

Please check [STEMTradingCards.org](https://STEMTradingCards.org) for links to more resources on teaching about TEK.