

# How to Prepare for Your Visit to



THE INSTITUTE FOR  
**AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES**  
*museum & research center*

We are a museum of many exciting things! We have real and replicated artifacts, animal furs, an outdoor village and indoor longhouse, along with many activities to explore during your visit. Our mission is to educate people about Native American culture, Connecticut's history, and to help develop empathy and understanding of the world's many indigenous cultures.

With all of this in mind, IAIS presents a guide to help you get the most out of your time at our facilities!

## Vocabulary Words

We are going to introduce many new terms to children over the course of the program. It may save time or help reinforce your lessons by going over these before your visit!

- ◇ Algonquian
- ◇ Eastern Woodlands
- ◇ Resources
- ◇ Village
- ◇ Tribe



- ◇ Chief
- ◇ Wigwam
- ◇ Longhouse
- ◇ Three Sisters
- ◇ Ancestor



- ◇ Wampum
- ◇ Trade
- ◇ Region
- ◇ Plains
- ◇ Reservation



- ◇ Tipi
- ◇ Regalia
- ◇ Powwow
- ◇ Religion
- ◇ Timeline



- ◇ Colonists
- ◇ Pilgrims
- ◇ Artifact
- ◇ Exhibit
- ◇ Museum



## Culture

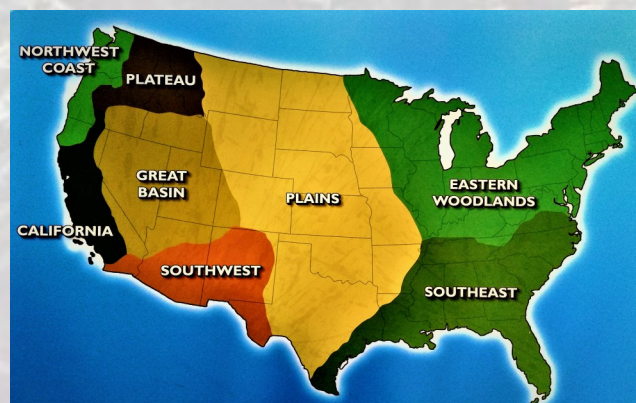
Culture is a tough but important word for kids to understand. Ask your children what cultures they practice at home, where those cultures come from, and how their cultures are similar and different from each other.

## Relate to your Connecticut Predecessors!

When reading about Native history, it is easy to use otherizing language. Rather than creating discussion from an us vs. them and then vs. now perspective, have students explore how Native lifestyles are similar to their own! Have students think about what they do to get ready in a morning, and what a Native would do to get ready in the morning a thousand years ago. The materials are different, but the actions are the same!

## Native Communities are Not All the Same

The Plains cultures are most commonly depicted on TV, but not all tribes ride horses, wear headdresses, and live in tipis. Connecticut Natives traveled by boat, wore different regalia, and lived in wigwams (also called wetus) and longhouses. Let students compare and contrast regional differences!



## Native Culture and Contributions

did not stop, they are all around you! Let students see the continuation of culture in the names of towns, schools, rivers, and in our English language! Connecticut was originally called Quinnetukut, roughly translated to Land of the Long Water, and our US Constitution was partially inspired by the Iroquois League of Nations!



Hammonasset

Raccoon

Husky



Housatonic



Kayak

Chipmunk



Quinnipiac

Norwalk



Moose



## Do not be afraid to confront stereotypes!

Natives are alive and well today, and not all look the same. There are African American Natives, Caucasian Natives, Taino, and more! Show diverse images of who Natives are, what they do, and what their different backgrounds are!



## Terminology/Naming

There are many terms used to refer to the tribes that have inhabited the Americas for thousands of years. You may have heard **Native American**, **American Indian**, and **First Nations** used interchangeably. If you meet multiple Native people, they will most commonly wish to be referred to by their **tribe name**. What may be most helpful is learning about the tribes that live in your area! These are the five recognized tribes in Connecticut today.



## Clothing versus Regalia

Clothing that the general public commonly associates with indigenous people are referred to as Regalia. **Regalia** such as the feather headdress is worn by important people for special occasions. A headdress is treated like a Purple Heart medal—it is considered disrespectful for someone to wear it who has not earned it.

We wear special outfits for Halloween, dress all in black for funerals, and many cultures have clothing that is sacred to them. Discuss how certain clothing is appropriate at specific times, and inappropriate for other times.



## Go over Museum Rules!

It is important to recognize that a museum is a public space. It can be confusing for a child to understand how a museum differs from their home and even their school, especially when activities in some rooms are touch and feel, and others are writing and discussion. Ask your students how they might act if standing in front of one of these exhibits. What might they be able to do, what might they be unable to do?



## Reservation Review

It is difficult to explain all of what a **reservation** is during a program, and difficult to explain to children in general. An overview of what a reservation is before the program would be very helpful.

We like to explain it as similar to the concept of a dinner reservation—a location that is reserved for use by certain people. Except in this case, Native people did not make the reservation for themselves, so they got some pretty bad tables.

## Explore What You Want to Know Before you Arrive

While our educators would love to discuss the history of famous Native American figures such as Sacagawea, Tanto, and Pocahontas (whose actual name was Matoaka), it takes up a lot of time during a program. So, make it a class activity to look up these well-recognized persons before you arrive! That way, students can also prepare more specific and engaging questions.