

1. Collect examples from Sherman Alexie's book:

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian:

What are the most serious problems Native Americans have to face today?

→ alcoholism: _____

→ family problems: _____

→ no economic/career perspectives: _____

→ poverty: _____

→ white people's prejudices and discrimination against Indians: _____

2. Read the five texts on the next few pages and work on the tasks you find there.

TASK 1:

Create a mind map of important facts about POVERTY on Indian reservations in the United States.

Reservation poverty

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

[American Indian reservations](#) face unique conditions and challenges of [poverty](#). Income, employment, and educational attainment in these areas are considerably lower than national averages.^[2] Reservations are areas of land within the [United States](#) that are managed by a tribal government in cooperation with the federal [Bureau of Indian Affairs](#), which is a branch of the [Department of the Interior](#), located in [Washington, DC](#). There are 334 reservations in the United States today.^[3]

Currently, almost a third of [American Indians](#) in the United States live on reservations, totaling approximately 700,000 individuals.^[2] About half of all American Indians living on reservations are concentrated on the ten largest reservations.^[4]

Reservations vary drastically in terms of their size, population, proximity to urban centers, and cultural beliefs and practices. Despite such variation, reservations share a similar history and face similar contemporary challenges. At the forefront of these challenges is poverty. In 2010, the poverty rate on reservations was 28.4 percent, compared with 22 percent among all American Indians (on and off reservations), and 15.3 percent among all Americans^[citation needed]. In addition to poverty rates, reservations are hindered by low education levels,^[5] poor healthcare services, low employment, substandard housing, and deficient economic infrastructure.

Background

The official [poverty rate](#) on reservations is 28.4 percent, compared with 15.3 nationally. Thirty-six percent of families with children are below the poverty line on reservations, compared with 9.2 percent of families nationally.^[6] These figures are [absolute poverty](#) rates as determined by the [US Census](#). In 2010, the [poverty threshold](#) for a family of four with two children was \$22,113.^[6] Some reservations in [Washington](#), [California](#), [Wisconsin](#), [Georgia](#), [Michigan](#), [North Dakota](#), [South Dakota](#), [Arizona](#), and [New Mexico](#) fare worst, with more than 60 percent of residents living in poverty.^[7]

Income levels on some reservations are extremely low. Five of the lowest [per capita incomes](#) in the country are found on reservations. [Allen, South Dakota](#), on the Pine Ridge Reservation, has the lowest per capita income in the country, at \$1,539 per year.^[7] Overall, the per capita income of American Indians on Reservations is half that of all Americans.^[4] The [median income](#) on reservations is \$29,097, compared to \$41,994 nationally.

Poverty rates on the ten largest reservations

Reservation	Location	Poverty Rate (Families with Children)	Poverty Rate (Individuals)
Navajo Indian Reservation	Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah	46.5	42.9
Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation	Utah	54.4	20.2
Tohono O'odham Indian Reservation	Arizona	44.3	46.4
Cheyenne River Indian Reservation	South Dakota	42.3	38.5
Standing Rock Indian Reservation	South Dakota and North Dakota	41.2	40.8
Crow Indian Reservation	Montana	31.5	30.5
Wind River Indian Reservation	Wyoming	22.6	20.9
Pine Ridge Indian Reservation	South Dakota	52.8	53.5
Fort Peck Indian Reservation	Montana	38.5	35.3
San Carlos Indian Reservation	Arizona	52.6	50.8
National Average		9.2	12.4

Figures from the 2000 census.^[7]

Extreme poverty

The [extreme poverty](#) rate of a population is the percentage of families earning less than half of the poverty threshold. For a family of four in 2010, the extreme poverty threshold was approximately \$11,000, or less than \$3,000 per person.^[6] On large reservations, the extreme poverty rate is as much as six times the national rate. On average, the extreme poverty rate on the largest reservations is almost four times the national rate. A breakdown is provided in the following table.

Extreme poverty rates on the ten largest reservations

Reservation	Location	Extreme Poverty Rate
Navajo Indian Reservation	Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah	14.9
Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation	Utah	4.2
Tohono O'odham Indian Reservation	Arizona	20.7
Cheyenne River Indian Reservation	South Dakota	14.6
Standing Rock Indian Reservation	South Dakota and North Dakota	16.6
Crow Indian Reservation	Montana	9.7
Wind River Indian Reservation	Wyoming	13.4
Pine Ridge Indian Reservation	South Dakota	20.9
Fort Peck Indian Reservation	Montana	10.1
San Carlos Indian Reservation	Arizona	25.1
National Average		4.0

Figures from the 2000 census.^[7]

Changes over time

Historic data on poverty on reservations is extremely limited, because of the tumultuous history of gathering data in these areas. American Indians were not included in census counts until 1840. Reservation-specific data was only produced following 1870.^[8]

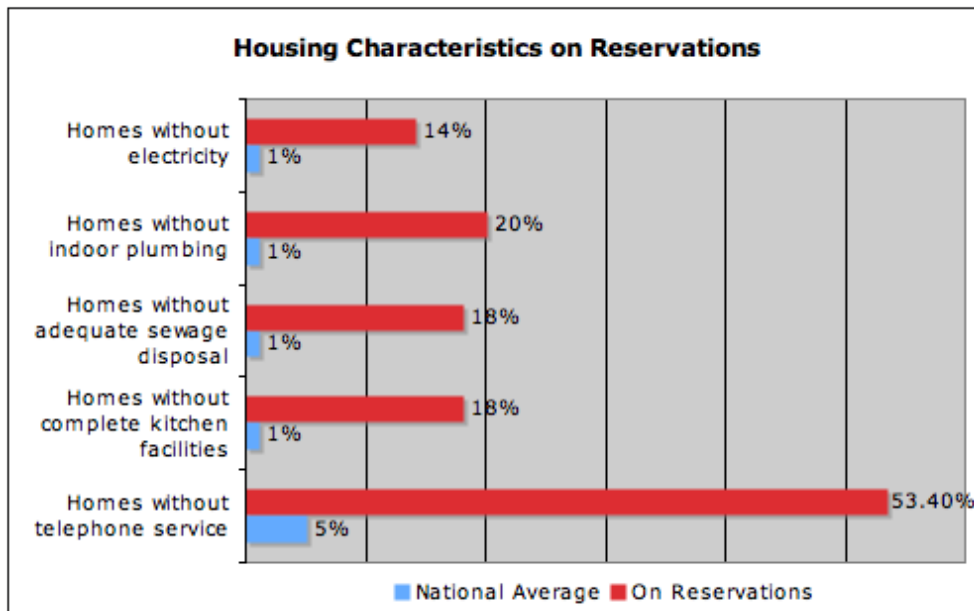
In the 1970s, poverty on reservations decreased by as much as 20 percent on many reservations. In the 1980s, however, these gains were lost, and rates rose to levels comparable to those in the 1860s. Through the 1990s, though, rates again rose, and rates in 2000 were very close to those in 1969. Explanations for these fluctuations suggest a need for further research, and careful consideration of how data was gathered, to ensure that figures reflect true changes in poverty rates rather than changes in reporting.^[9]

Changes in poverty rates on largest reservations

Reservation	Location	1969	1979	1989	2000
Navajo Indian Reservation	Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah	62.1	47.3	54.2	46.5
Cheyenne River Indian Reservation	South Dakota	54.8	47.5	57.2	42.3
Standing Rock Indian Reservation	South Dakota and North Dakota	58.3	44.2	54.9	41.2
Crow Indian Reservation	Montana	40.0	29.6	45.5	31.5
Wind River Indian Reservation	Wyoming	42.0	35.2	47.8	22.6
Pine Ridge Indian Reservation	South Dakota	54.3	48.4	59.5	52.8
Fort Peck Indian Reservation	Montana	46.7	26.8	42.8	38.5
San Carlos Indian Reservation	Arizona	62.3	45.9	59.8	52.6

Historical data not available for Uintah and Ouray and Tohono O'odham Reservations. Figures from Trosper (1996).^[9]

Material hardship



In addition to high poverty rates, many reservation residents must confront conditions of material hardship. Nearly ten percent of families on reservations are homeless. Many of these rely on friends or relatives for temporary housing.^[10] A vast majority of reservation residents live in what were built to be single-family homes.^{[7][11]}

The average household size is 3.08, but there is much variation. In [Oregon](#), some reservations average more than ten people in each home. In [Wisconsin](#) and [California](#), large households are also common.^[7] In many cases, households take in relatives and friends for extended periods, but do not report this on official [census](#) records because of the fluidity of the arrangements. There is a need for further research on housing situations on reservations, as the decennial census does not provide reliable data.^[8]

[Homeownership](#) on reservations is relatively high, despite the high poverty rates. Sixty-two percent of reservation residents own homes.^[12] However, the land these homes are on is owned by the tribes, the value of homes is less than half the national average, and the quality of housing is often substandard. According to the National American Indian Housing Council, nearly half of housing on reservations is inadequate shelter.^[10]

At over 14 percent, the rate of homes without any [electricity](#) on reservations is ten times the national average. On the [Navajo Reservation](#), nearly 40 percent of homes are without electricity.^[13] Furthermore, reservations are often the last to receive updated electrical infrastructure, and are the last places to which service is restored following an outage.^[14]

One fifth of reservation households lack running water, compared with one percent of households nationwide. Nearly one half of Navajo and Hopi Reservation residents lack plumbing.^[15] Nearly 20 percent of reservation homes lack basic kitchen facilities, including piped water, a range or cookstove, and a refrigerator. On the [Navajo](#) Reservation, nearly half of all households lack these necessities. This is compared to three percent of American Indians nationwide and only one percent of all households in the country.^[16]

Modern telecommunications are also extremely lacking. More than half of households on reservations do not have phone service, compared with five percent nationally, and nine percent among nonmetropolitan areas.^[16] Fewer than 10 percent of reservation residents have internet access.^[17] Furthermore, many larger, rural reservations are without cell phone reception.^[18] The lack of telecommunications infrastructure severely limits the potential for economic exchange.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reservation_poverty, July 12th, 2015)

TASK 2:

Create a mind map of important facts about ALCOHOLISM on Indian reservations in the United States.

Alcohol affects generations on Indian reservations

[Issues Tom Robertson](#) · Bemidji, Minn. · Oct 22, 2007

It's no secret that alcohol has had a devastating impact on American Indians.

But what many in Indian communities are less comfortable talking about is the damage caused when pregnant women drink alcohol. Some call fetal alcohol exposure the No. 1 problem in Indian Country. It's causing a literal brain drain in tribal communities. [...]

'INCREDIBLE DENIAL' ABOUT ALCOHOL

Public health nurse Mary May, who works for the Leech Lake Health Division, educates women on the dangers of drinking while pregnant. May believes most women know alcohol can damage their fetus, and many quit drinking as soon as they discover they're pregnant. But May says alcohol is so engrained into the fiber of many tribal families, education isn't always enough.

"Even though we have educational efforts, I still think they take their cues from their family, from the society they're living in," says May. "And it may be one thing to say you know alcohol damages a fetus. But if everybody is drinking around you and you want to be a part of that unit, then I think that inclusion is going to be a higher need. I think there's just an incredible level of denial about alcohol affecting babies, and I'm not sure how you break through that denial."

Alcoholism is a big problem among American Indians. A U.S. Civil Rights Commission report says Indians are 770 times more likely to die of alcoholism than any other group. Indian Health Service data shows the alcoholism rate for Indians is more than 600 times the national average.

Mary May says addiction makes it difficult to stop fetal alcohol damage.

"Women tell me that if they're drinking, they don't get prenatal care, because they'll be confronted by the facts that alcohol does affect their fetus," says May. "And they just don't want to deal with the hassle of it."

Alcohol is not only harming babies, it's destroying families. On the White Earth Reservation in northwestern Minnesota, there were around 350 new child protection cases in tribal court last year -- not counting cases that go through state courts. And there may be many more kids outside the court system who are being raised by someone other than their biological parents.

A GENERATIONAL PROBLEM

Tribal Judge Anita Fineday says she suspects fetal alcohol damage is behind much of the family dysfunction.

"My guess is that 90 percent of those cases include a parent or a grandparent who has fetal alcohol effects or syndrome, and I think the children, as well," says Fineday.

What that means is that fetal alcohol damage is two and three generations deep. Brain-damaged parents and grandparents are trying to raise brain-damaged kids -- and they're often failing. The fetal alcohol problem is complicated. It's often intertwined with mental illness and depression. Fineday says it's all being overshadowed by widespread poverty on many reservations.

Anita Fineday MPR Photo/Tom Robertson

"All of those things kind of tie in," says Fineday. "What I see with our young moms is a sense of, 'What difference does it make? It doesn't matter whether I drink or not. Things are so bad that it couldn't be any worse.' They don't have any sense of hope, either for themselves or their children."

Fineday has seen 10-year-old alcoholics in her courtroom. She's had 16-year-old pregnant girls roll their eyes at her when she lectures them about drinking. She's civilly committed a few pregnant women to treatment programs, but she says that's rare.

Many American Indians have overcome alcoholism. Pat Moran has been in recovery since 1985. Now she heads the chemical dependency program at White Earth.

Moran says she drank while she was pregnant. Moran knew in her heart her daughter was damaged by the exposure. The girl struggled all through school. She'd sometimes go into unexplained rages.

Pat Moran MPR Photo/Tom Robertson

It wasn't until her daughter's senior year in high school -- the year Pat Moran quit drinking -- that she was diagnosed with fetal alcohol damage.

Moran says she and many other women live with the shame and guilt of hurting their children. She says that stigma holds many women back from seeking help.

"Many years I denied the fact that my family or anyone else was hurt by my using," says Moran. "And that's a big thing to have to admit, that you caused harm to someone else. Not intentionally, because I was addicted. I'm not justifying. I was addicted and I could not stop."

The fetal alcohol problem is not just about alcoholism. The U.S. Surgeon General says there's no safe level of alcohol for a pregnant woman. Even just a few drinks can potentially cause harm to a fetus. Moran says that's an important message for all women of childbearing age.

"A lot of times when young people are out partying and drinking and pregnancy occurs, girls don't even know they're pregnant until maybe a month later, or two or three months later," says Moran. "In the meantime, they may keep drinking. That's a big problem for our young people, because that's a lot of times when the pregnancy happens. Alcohol causes promiscuous behavior, and our kids are out there more and more drinking with the opposite sex. Alcohol is a big factor in a lot of the unplanned pregnancies."

(<http://www.mprnews.org/story/2007/10/17/indianfasd>, July 12th 2015)

TASK 3:

Create a mind map of important facts about NATIVE AMERICAN ECONOMY in the United States.

Casinos Not Paying Off for Indians

SAN CARLOS, Ariz., Aug. 31

The plaque outside the Apache Gold Casino declares the \$40 million hotel, golf and gambling resort has “helped enable the San Carlos Apache Tribe to give a better quality of life to its tribal members.”

But seven years after the casino opened — and four years after the debut of a glittering new complex — many Apache families still crowd in small apartments or mobile homes.

The reservation’s unemployment rate has climbed from 42 percent in 1991 to 58 percent in 1997, the latest year available. The number of tribal members receiving welfare has jumped 20 percent. And the tribal government still grants home sites without water and sewer connections.

“We get no help from the casino, no money, nothing,” said Pauline Randall, 75, a lifelong resident of San Carlos.

\$8 Billion and Little Change

Similar complaints echo across the 1.8 million acre reservation in east Arizona, but they could just as easily be heard on many other Indian reservations across the country that have built casinos in the past decade.

Despite an explosion of Indian gambling revenues — from \$100 million in 1988 to \$8.26 billion a decade later — an Associated Press computer analysis of federal unemployment, poverty and public assistance records indicates the majority of American Indians have benefited little.

Two-thirds of the American Indian population belong to tribes locked in poverty that still don’t have Las Vegas-style casinos.

And among the 130 tribes with casinos, a few near major population centers have thrived while most others make just enough to cover the bills, the AP analysis found.

Despite new gambling jobs, unemployment on reservations with established casinos held steady around 54 percent between 1991 and 1997 as many of the casino jobs were filled with non-Indians, according to data the tribes reported to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

“Everybody thinks that tribes are getting rich from gaming and very few of them are,” said Louise Benson, chairman of the Hualapai Tribe in northwestern Arizona, one of two tribes with casinos that failed during the 1990s.

Of the 500,000 Indians whose tribes operate casinos, only about 80,000 belong to tribes with gambling operations that generate more than \$100 million a year.

The Ring of Success

Some of the 23 tribes with the most successful casinos — like the Shakopee Mdewakanton Dakota Tribe in Minnesota — pay each member hundreds of thousands of dollars a year.

In Scott County, which includes the Shakopee reservation south of Minneapolis, the poverty rate declined from 4.1 percent in 1989 to 3.5 percent six years later. The reservation’s unemployment rate also plummeted from 70 percent in 1991 to just 4 percent in 1997.

Such success stories belong mostly to tribes with casinos near major population centers.

The tiny Mashantucket Pequot tribe of Connecticut reported more than \$300 million in revenue in the first five months this year from its Foxwoods Casino, located between New York and Boston.

And the Seminole Tribe’s Hollywood Gaming Center on Miami’s Gold Coast generates more than \$100 million a year with pull-tab slot machines. The unemployment rate on that reservation, however, still was 45 percent in 1997, and the average poverty rate in the two counties it touches rose from 10.4 percent in 1989 to 12.1 percent in 1995.

Poverty Rate Rises

For many of the 130 tribes with Las Vegas-style casinos, like the San Carlos Apaches, gambling revenues pay for casino operations and debt service, with little left to upgrade the quality of life.

In counties that contain reservations with casinos, the poverty rate declined only slightly between 1989 and 1995, from 17.7 percent to 15.5 percent, the AP analysis finds. Counties with reservations with no gambling saw their poverty rate remain steady at slightly more than 18 percent.

Nationally, the poverty rate hovered at near 13 percent during the period.

In California, the Tachi Yokut Tribe in the San Joaquin Valley brags on its Web site that its Palace Gaming Center has provided employment for tribal members, helped raise education levels and upgraded housing.

But the poverty rate in Kings County, which includes the tribe's small reservation, climbed from 18.2 percent in 1989 to 22.3 percent in 1995. The reservation's unemployment rate dropped slightly to 49.2 percent in 1997.

Jonathan Taylor, a research fellow at the Harvard University Project on American Indian Economic Development, said many investments gaming tribes have made in social and economic infrastructure don't translate into immediate improvements in quality-of-life indicators like poverty.

"You see investments arising out of gaming taking hold slowly in greater educational success, greater family integrity, greater personal health, greater crime prevention," he said.

Signs of Hope

There are some optimistic signs that tribes hope to build on when the casino construction loans are repaid. The analysis indicates casino gambling has slowed, though not reversed, the growth of tribal members on public assistance. Participation in the Agriculture Department's Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations increased 8.2 percent from 1990 to 1997 among tribes with casinos, compared with 57.3 percent among tribes without them.

And economic development has been spurred in communities near tribal casinos, according to an analysis of county business patterns.

The Oneida Indian Nation in central New York has become the largest employer in Oneida and Madison counties, thanks to a casino that's generating more than \$100 million in annual revenues. A championship golf course and convention center are under construction.

Unemployment Stays High

But the new jobs have not reduced unemployment for Indians. Tribes with established casinos saw their unemployment rate rise four-tenths of a point to 54.4 percent between 1991 and 1997, the AP analysis found. Jacob Coin, former executive director of the National Indian Gaming Association, said that's because 75 percent of jobs in tribal casinos are held by non-Indians.

At the Fort Mojave Indian Reservation along the California-Arizona-Nevada border, the unemployment rate climbed from 27.2 percent in 1991 to 74.2 percent in 1997.

Tribal administrator Gary Goforth acknowledged few of the 675 jobs at the tribe's two financially troubled casinos are filled by tribal members. "Not everybody wants to be a dealer, or a housekeeper or even a manager in the restaurant," he said.

San Carlos Apache Tribal Chairman Raymond Stanley said about 80 percent of the 360 casino resort employees are tribal members. He said the casino also provides a \$65,000 monthly dividend to the tribe that has paid for seven new police cars and small clinic.

But Stanley said it's not enough to meet the needs of the 10,500 tribal members, 6,000 to 7,000 of whom remain on public assistance. Because the tribe's unemployment rate remains above 50 percent, it is exempt from the 1996 welfare reform law that limits recipients to five years.

"We really don't have a lot to show for it at the moment," he said. "The real benefit right now is employment.

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=95944&page=1>, July 12th 2015)

TASK 4:

Create a mind map of important facts about SOCIAL PROBLEMS on Indian reservations in the United States.

Social problems

To get a realistic impression of an ethnic community, it is absolutely necessary to look at its seamy side and to analyze its problems. Due to the fact that the reservations in the USA are on a different level of development, their problems are varying and of different graveness. But in many cases one problem produces the next, so there is definitely no shortage of worrying aspects among the American Indians in the reservations as well as outside.

Bad job conditions at the reservations, exploitation and environmental destruction

Today there are only 52 million acres left from the original American Indian homeland of the about 6.1 billion acres that form North America and this trust land is mostly of inferior quality: the BIA took an investigation about the erosion on American Indian tribes land and considered the state of 12 million acres crucially, 17 million gravely, 24 million gently affected as to that. So for many Native Americans there is no possibility to make a living by farming without the use of chemicals and in some reservations commercial hunting and fishing are prohibited.

Furthermore the lack of infrastructure (e.g., often no electricity, telephones or Internet connectivity) makes life difficult in the reservations and these drawbacks and the insufficient or partly missing links to the traffic system keep most foreign industry from installing sites in the reservations. The bad conditions complicate the foundation of American Indian businesses like casinos and tourism for some tribes, too, because they are not within easy reach from the next big city and the potential customers.

Considering these circumstances, it is not surprising that the rates of unemployment are between 50 and 70% (in some reservations they are higher than 80%), and that the American Indians have the lowest average income in the USA.

The government in the 1990s promised high financial and economic rewards to the tribes who would agree to the storage of toxic and radioactive waste on their reservation land for several decades. Many American Indians (mainly those of the poorer reservations like the Mescalero-Apache) were tempted by the money and were not aware of the consequences for their health, their environment and life base, which makes the barriers to the reservations' development even more unbreakable.

Lack of education and poverty

The percentage of citizens with less than a High School graduate was leveled 19.6% among the total US population, about 10% higher for the American Indians outside the reservations and again by 10% more for those in the reservations. The rate of students with more than a Bachelors' degree also proves the underdeveloped state of education among the American Indians, for it ranges between 8 and 13%, with an total USA average of 24%.

Furthermore the reservation schools have the highest rate of teacher turnover and they often lack the means for school supply and sufficient staff. Even those Native Americans students who could attend secondary education are inhibited by bureaucracy and the great distances to the universities.

This lack of formal education fuels other social problems like unemployment, poverty, teenage pregnancy, criminality and drug abuse and it forces the Native Americans to accept badly paid jobs. Therefore an improve of their life standards is not easy since they are also inhibited by the costs for food (which in reservations are absurdly enough higher than outside the reservations) and the financial burdens especially on City Indians, such as high rents and taxes (which they have to pay in full amount, unlike the Native Americans in the reservations).

As a result there are 24 to 25% of all American Indians who live below the poverty line and in the reservations the figure sometimes exceeds 40% of the residents. Especially poverty among children is an urgent problem, because for example in the Pine Ridge reservation (South Dakota) 46% of the American Indian children are considered poor, which is higher than the poverty rate among adults.

Social challenges

In the reservations but also outside the Native Americans have to deal with further worrying social developments: of all ethnic groups in the USA the American Indians have the:

- highest rate of school drop outs (about 54%),
- highest rate of child mortality,

- highest rate of suicide
- highest rate of teenage suicide (18.5 per 100,000),
- highest rate of teenage pregnancy,
- lowest life expectancy (55 years)

Drug abuse and alcoholism have become mass problems among the American Indians (in some reservations eight families out of ten have problems with alcoholism) and unfortunately among their children, too. For those the confrontation with unemployment, environmental destruction, the decay of the reservations and the lack of positive future prospects and leisure time activities to distract them situation, are probably hard to bear.

Caused or at least promoted by drug abuse, there is a lot of crime in the reservations and outside of which the American Indians (especially children) are victims and offenders (especially young adults) at the same rate: Domestic violence, rape, child abuse and child neglect are reported to take place very often in the reservations, with the estimated number of unknown cases being very high.

Furthermore in the recent years gang violence in the reservations has increased, fueled by weak law enforcement, youth unemployment and the lack of activities for young Indians and with the results of vandalism, theft, assaults (also sexual) and street fights.

https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/American_Indians_Today/Current_problems, July 12th 2015)

Problems Facing American Indian Children and Families

Today, 5.2 million American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) live in the United States—making up 1.7 percent of the total population. The AI/AN population is young, with 31.6 percent under the age of 18, compared with 24 percent of the total population (SOURCE: 2010, Census). There are alarming statistics on AI/AN youth in almost every risk area:

- American Indian children have the third highest rate of **victimization** at 11.6 per 1,000 children of the same race or ethnicity. In 2009, 7,335 AI/AN children were victims of child maltreatment (SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).
- American Indian/Alaska Natives have the highest rate of **poverty** of any other racial group in the nation. In 2009, data tells us that the poverty rate of AI/AN alone peoples was 27.3%, almost twice the national poverty rate of 14.2. (SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, 2009).
- In 2006, **suicide** was the leading cause of death for AI/AN males ages 10-14. For AI/AN young adults ages 15 to 24, one-fifth of them died by suicide in that same year. (SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control, 2010).
- A 2006 study found that, compared to other groups, AI/AN youth have more serious problems with **mental health disorders**. Specifically, AI/AN youth have higher rates of anxiety, substance abuse, and depression. (SOURCE: Olson, L.M. & Wahab, S.; 2006 American Indians and Suicide: A Neglected Area of Research).
- **Alcohol-use disorders** were more likely among American Indian youths than other racial groups. In 2007, 8.5% of all AI/AN youth were struggling with an alcohol use disorder compared to 5.8% of the general use population. (SOURCE: Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration).
- The AI/AN youth population is more affected by **gang involvement** than any other racial population. 15% of AI/AN youth are involved with gangs compared to 8% of Latino youth and 6% of African American youth nationally. (SOURCE: Glesmann, C., Krisberg, B.A., & Marchionna, S. National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2009).

http://www.nicwa.org/children_families/, July 12th 2015)

TASK 5:

Create a mind map of important facts about STEREOTYPES concerning Indians and their reservations in the United States.

Common Native American Stereotypes Debunked

[...] Negative Stereotypes

1. All Native Americans are alcoholics.

One of the stereotypes ascribed most commonly to Native Americans is that they are all alcoholics.

This is simply untrue.

According to [a study published by the National Institute On Alcohol Abuse And Alcoholism \(NIAAA\)](#), white people — specifically, white men — are more likely than any other demographic group to drink alcohol on a daily basis, start drinking at a younger age, and drive while under the influence of alcohol.

Furthermore, this same study acknowledges that the alcoholism that does exist within Native American culture is linked to the culture's history of economic disadvantages and racial discrimination.

In other words, those that *do* suffer from alcoholism within the Native community may be trapped in a cycle of oppression and hardship that's difficult to break free from.

2. Native Americans are lazy.

As a whole, the term “laziness” is difficult to define.

However, in U.S. culture, we tend to say people are lazy if they lack concrete goals, fail in their education, or lack what is known as “work ethic.”

If we use this [ethnocentric](#) definition of laziness in examining the Native population, we see that they are far from lazy.

[77 percent have a high school degree](#), and although only 13 percent have a bachelor's degree, this percentage has doubled within the last ten years.

In addition, of those 25 and older with a bachelor's degree, [78 percent are within the fields of science and engineering](#), traditionally higher-paying occupations.

3. All Native Americans live on reservations.

Actually, there are only [324 federally recognized reservations and as of 2010, only 22% of Native Americans live on them](#).

4. American Indians receive special benefits and privileges from the government.

Okay, here's the deal on this one: Yes, Native Americans often receive educational benefits like reduced tuition and Pell Grants, but so do other historically disadvantaged people, like the disabled and war veterans.

Why are American Indians called out for the “special” benefits they receive, while others are not?

Besides, **the government took their land.**

By giving Native people educational and monetary advantages, we are simply fulfilling a legal contract in exchange for the cessation of their land.

This “special treatment” is not, in fact, special treatment at all, but rather, part of an agreement that still stands today.

5. Native Americans overreact to their likenesses being used in school celebrations or as team mascots.

When I was in high school, a Native American student petitioned the school to stop using the term “Arikara” (in reference to the [Native tribe of the Dakotas](#)) as the name of its homecoming celebration.

She also petitioned to stop the use of the terms “Chief” and “Princess” and to ban the “ceremonial Arikara dance” (which included a bunch of white Midwestern teens dressed in Indian costumes doing their version of a rain dance to tribal drumbeats).

And people. Flipped. Out.

“Don’t you get it? We’re *celebrating* your culture, not demeaning it!” we said.

Riiiiight.

Because white people smearing war paint on their faces and donning headdresses is *soo* different from dressing in blackface and performing slapstick comedy in front of a crowd.

Here’s the thing: If we want to celebrate Native culture, we must *respect* it.

And this means not making a mockery of it in the name of “school tradition.”

Positive Stereotypes

Some people don’t understand the problem with positive stereotypes.

After all, who wouldn’t want to be like the wise, strong Native American [shaman](#) (which isn’t even a term Natives use in their culture, by the way — it originated in Europe) from the movie *Poltergeist II* — yes, I’m dating myself here — who uses his supernatural Indian powers to save the Freeling family from the evil forces invading their home — and using cool Indian animal metaphors while doing it?

But the thing about positive stereotypes is that they [set the bar unrealistically high](#).

And it’s *still* problematic when you assign one idea to an entire group of people.

1. Native Americans are spiritual and wise.

While it’s true that Natives have a [history threaded with cultural traditions](#), it would be inaccurate to say that every one of them is spiritual and brimming with vats of wisdom ready to be dispensed at any time.

It’s just like saying that all Canadians are super laid-back, all New Englanders are punctual, and all Southerners are hospitable.

Just because you see it portrayed on TV or read about it in a book doesn’t make it accurate for every individual, *even if* it’s accurate for some.

Having these pre-conceived “positive” notions of qualities that people of certain cultures or ethnicities are supposed to possess only places undue pressure on those who don’t “measure up.”

2. American Indians are animal lovers, tree-huggers, and sun-worshippers.

When we think of the Native culture, often the first thing to come to mind is their supposed love of animals — especially eagles and wolves.

We also tend to think of Natives as being extreme environmentalists who worship nature and the earth.

[According to this great resource](#), Native Americans worship a Supreme Being just like other cultures do.

The stereotype of the nature-worshipping Indian comes from early European settlers in America who observed Native peoples raising their hands to the sky in the form of prayer, which they misinterpreted as “sun-worshipping.”

The animal-loving stereotype may also have its roots in early European colonization. Early Native Americans observed the behavior of animals to learn how to hunt and survive in undeveloped land, similar to what other hunter/gatherer societies did.

So just because Native American ancestors observed the behavior of animals and tried to understand their environment, doesn't mean they are tree-worshippers or extreme environmentalists.

And even if some are, who are we to judge?

3. Native Americans are all dancers and storytellers.

Again, some traditional dancing and storytelling is part of Native culture — just like the tango and merengue are part of Latin culture and gospel music is part of African culture.

But to say that all Natives are rain-dancers is just like saying that all Latin Americans dance like Ricky Martin, all Africans have great singing voices, and that all Jewish people are good with money.

And therein lies the problem: If we already believe something about someone, what motivation do we have to get to know them as individual people?

[...]

[\(http://everydayfeminism.com/2013/06/common-native-american-stereotypes-debunked/](http://everydayfeminism.com/2013/06/common-native-american-stereotypes-debunked/), July 12th 2015)