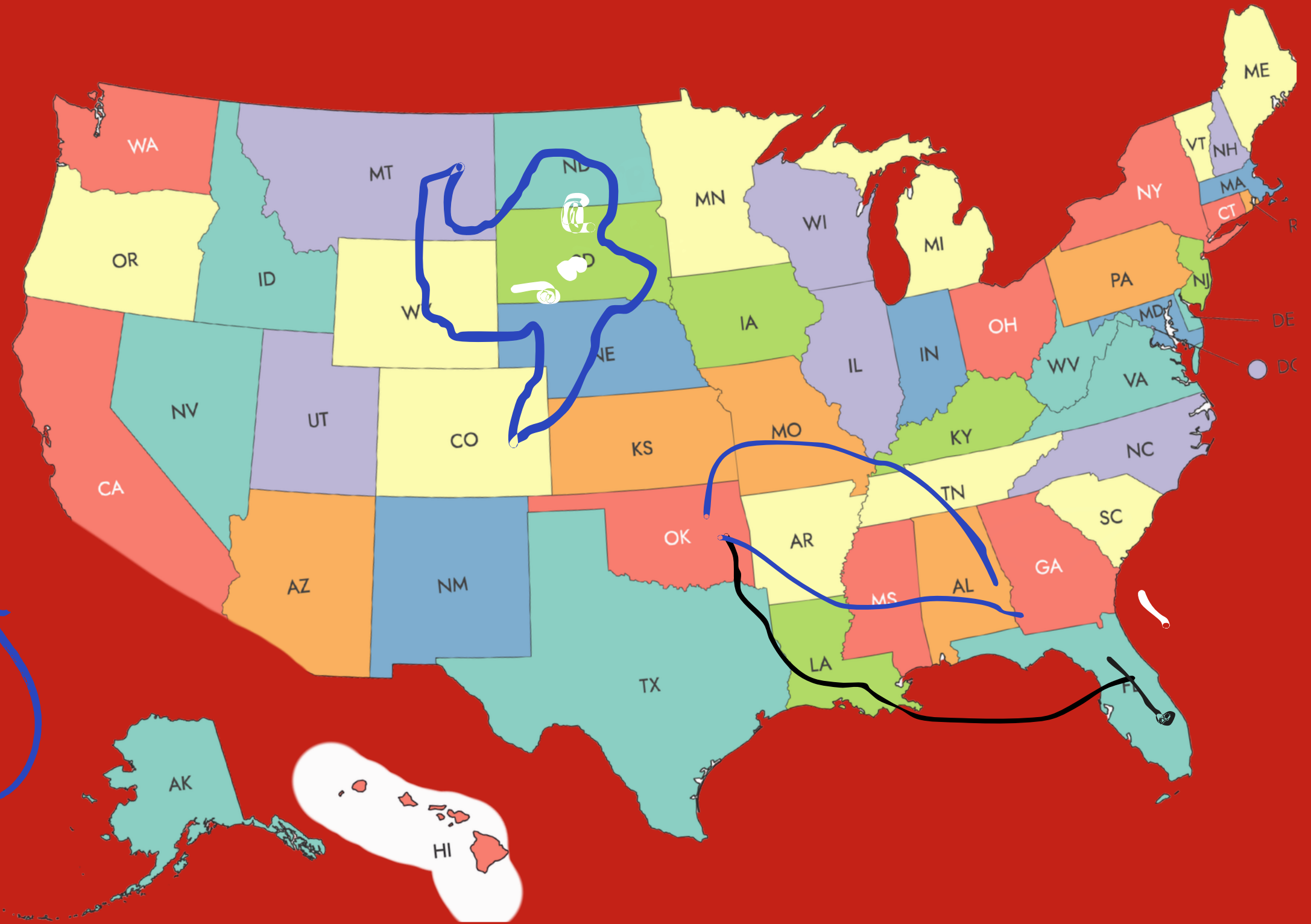


NATIVE AMERICAN DIASPORAS NCHE 2026



Stories of movement, identity, and
continuity across place and time

Kim Cunningham and Cypress Billie

MEET YOUR PRESENTERS



Kim Cunningham

Cypress Billie

- Shared perspectives on Indigenous education
- Collaboration between Tribal and classroom educators





UNDERSTANDING INDIGENOUS DIASPORAS

Definition

- Greek: to scatter
- Movement & scattering from a homeland
- People settle in new places
- Cultures adapt and evolve
- War, colonization, environmental change, economic pressures
- Colonial expansion & Government policies



UNDERSTANDING INDIGENOUS DIASPORAS

- Movement carries culture, language, and traditions
- Movement usually NOT voluntary
- Communities adapt to new environments
- Culture continues and grows across places
- Indigenous experiences show diaspora in action
- Resilience through movement and challenge

- ◆ Big takeaway
These histories show:
movement + disruption
BUT also, adaptation and
continuity.
Native identity continues
despite displacement



SEMINOLE DIASPORA:

War, Resistance, Removals, and Resilience

What Happened?

- Seminole formed from multiple groups including Muscogee
- The U.S. fought the Seminole (1817-1858)
- Seminole people resisted removal
- Many were forced to Oklahoma
- Others moved to Texas and Mexico
- Some remained in Florida and never surrendered

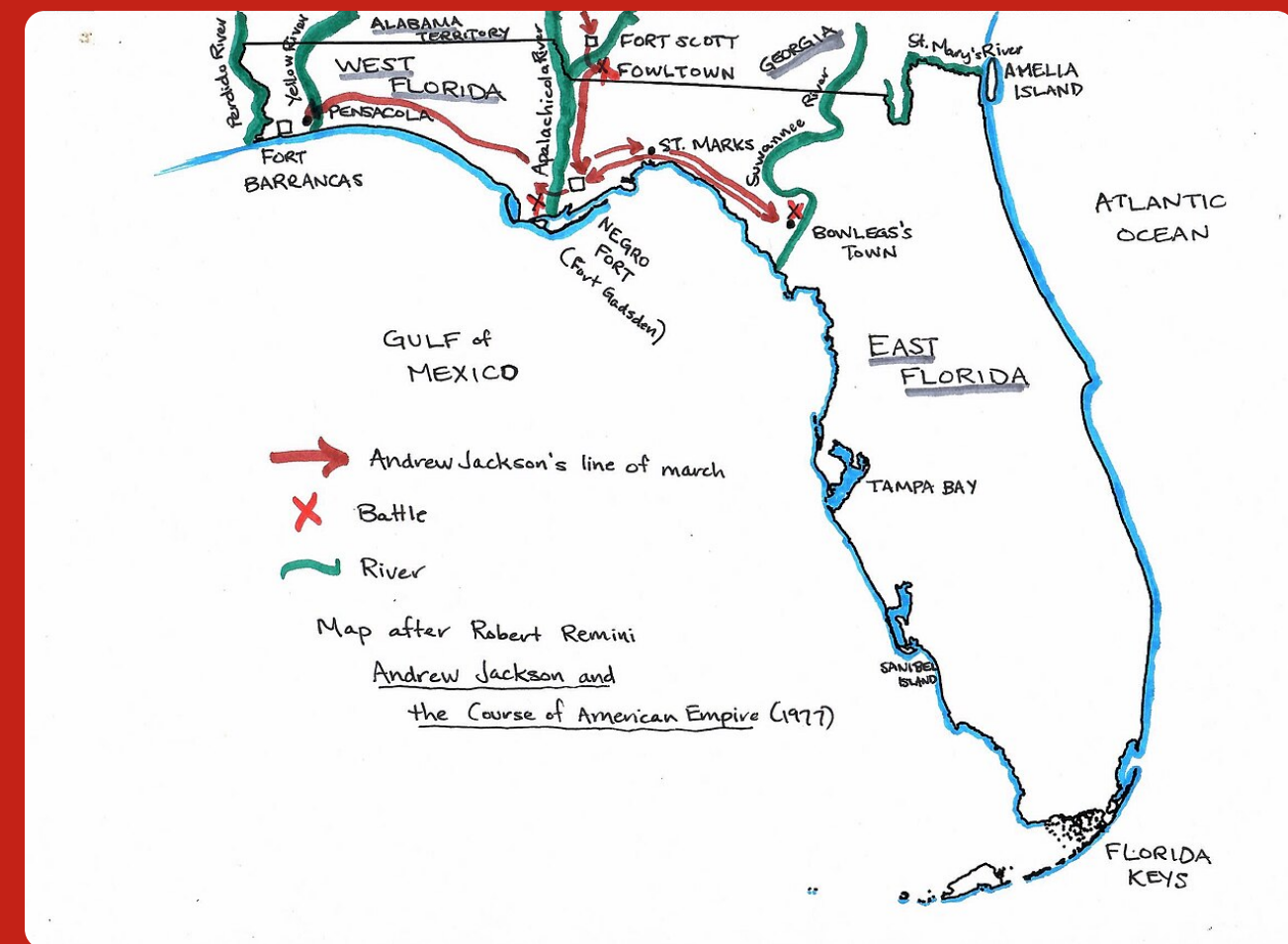


SEMINOLE DIASPORA:

War, Resistance, Removals, and Resilience

Seminole Diaspora:

- Seminole communities became geographically separated
- Communities became separated across Florida, Oklahoma, Texas, and Mexico
- Culture, identity, and traditions continued across distance

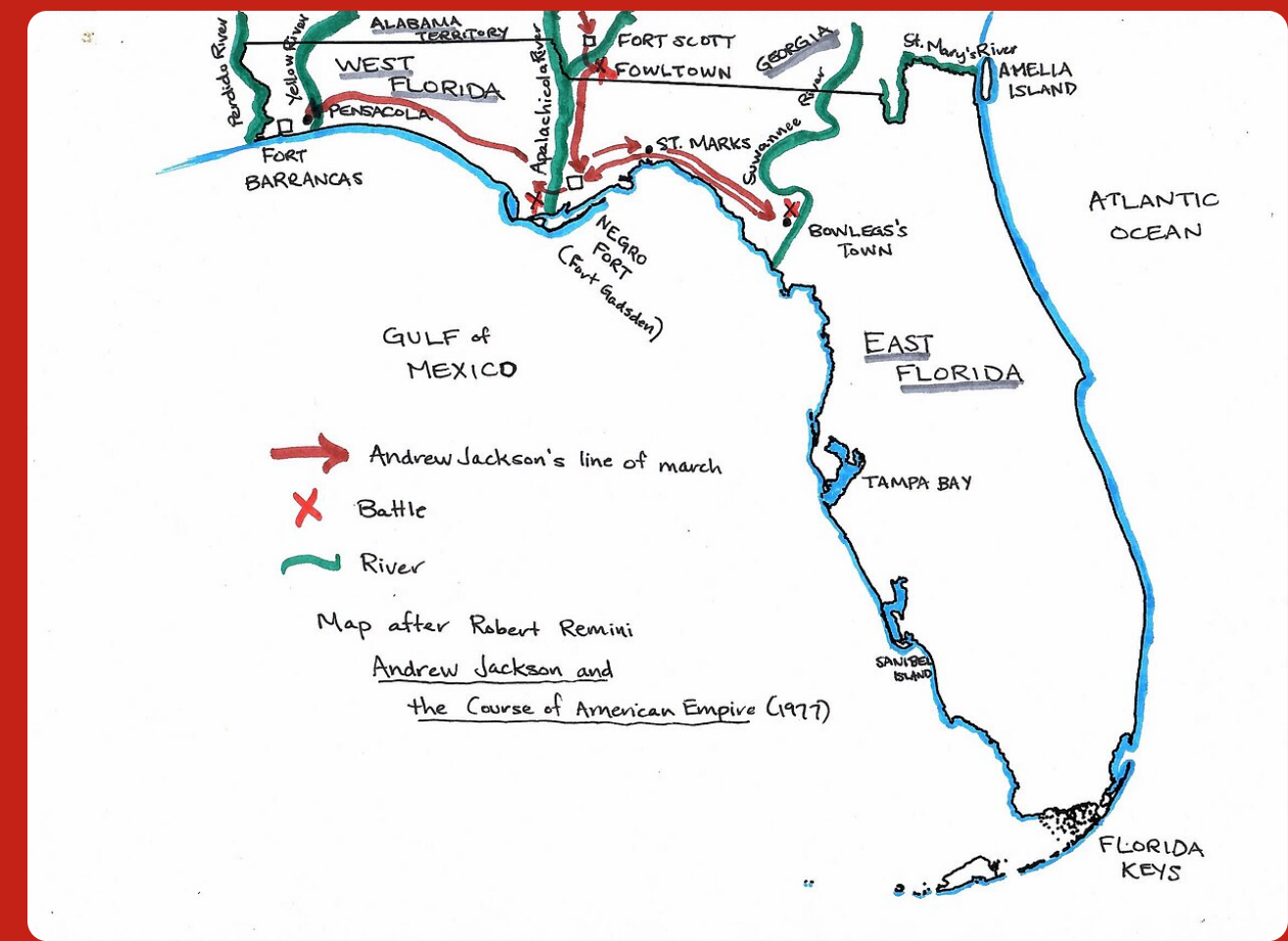


SEMINOLE DIASPORA:

War, Resistance, Removals, and Resilience

Resilience

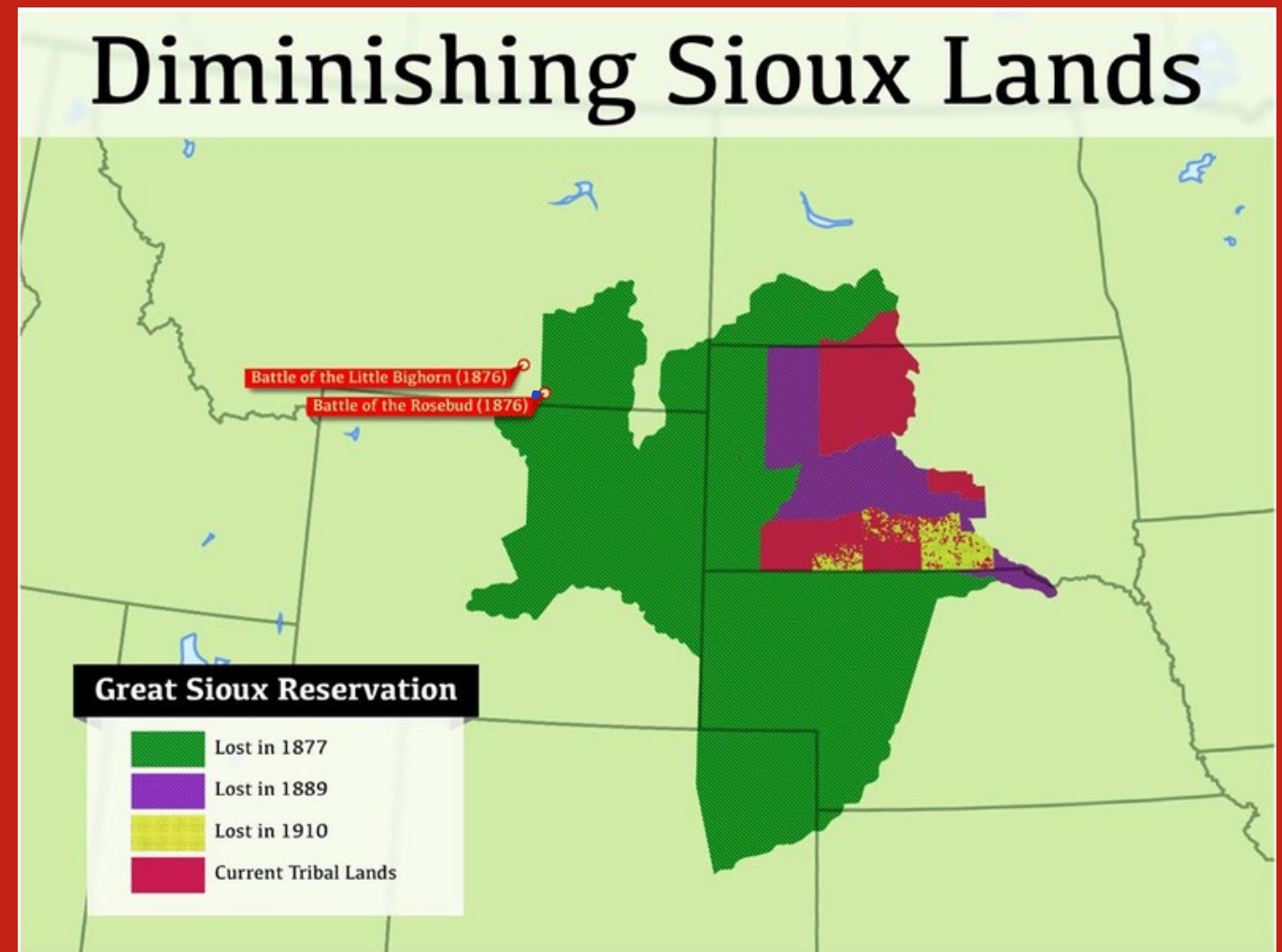
- Some Seminole never surrendered and remained in Florida
- Language, traditions, and community ties continued
- Seminole identity remained strong across locations



LAKOTA DIASPORA

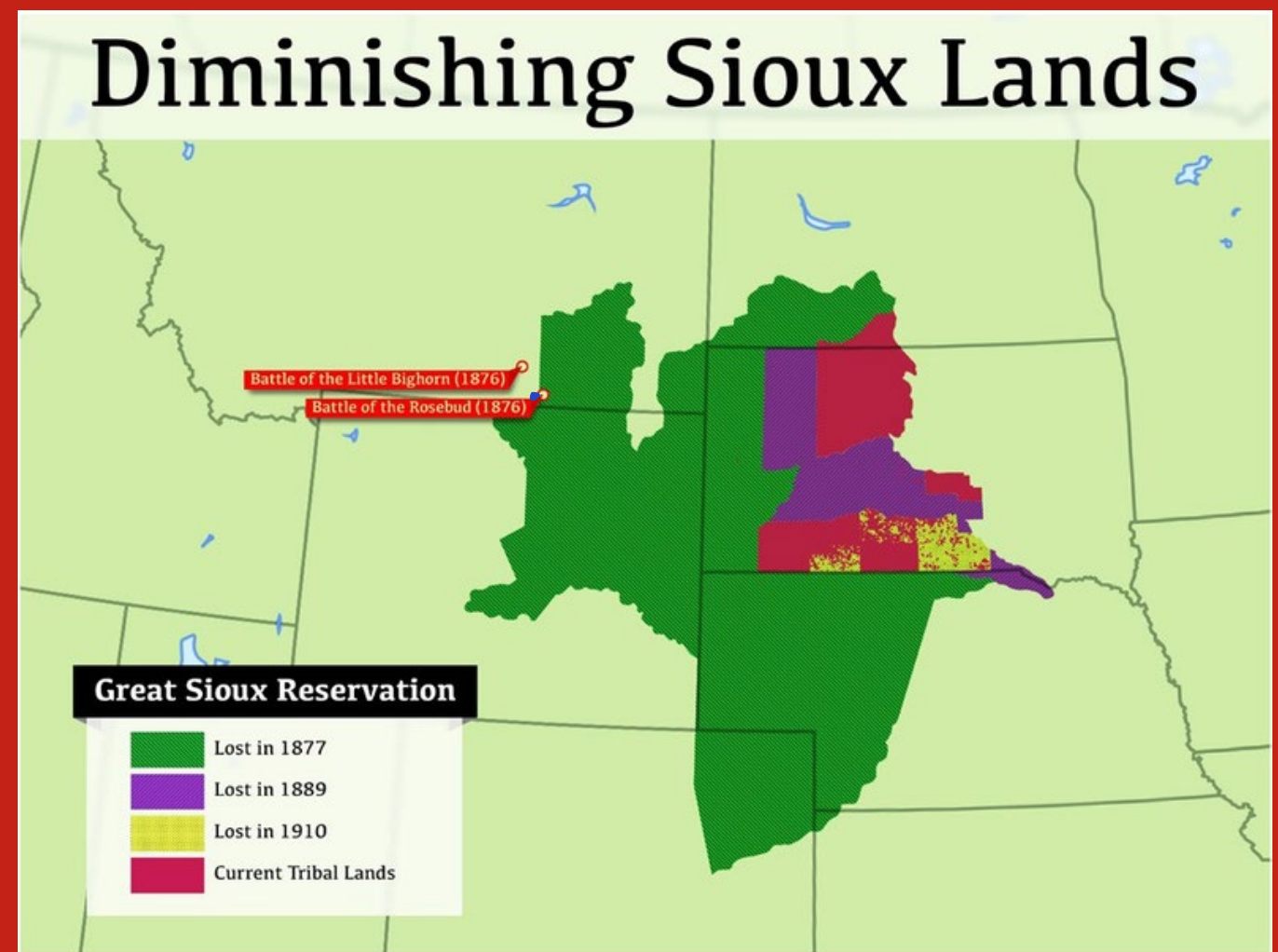
What Happened?

- Lakota people separated from sacred places
- Treaties and violations 1851: Defines boundaries, settler safety
- 1868: Recognizes Sioux Reservation boundaries, includes Black Hills
- Confined to reservations, shrinking
- Gold 1870s: Black Hills taken by 1877
- Termination Policy Era: Indian Relocation Act 1956
(Railway cities: Denver, Minneapolis, Chicago)
- Communities strained connections across reservations and urban areas



LAKOTA DIASPORA

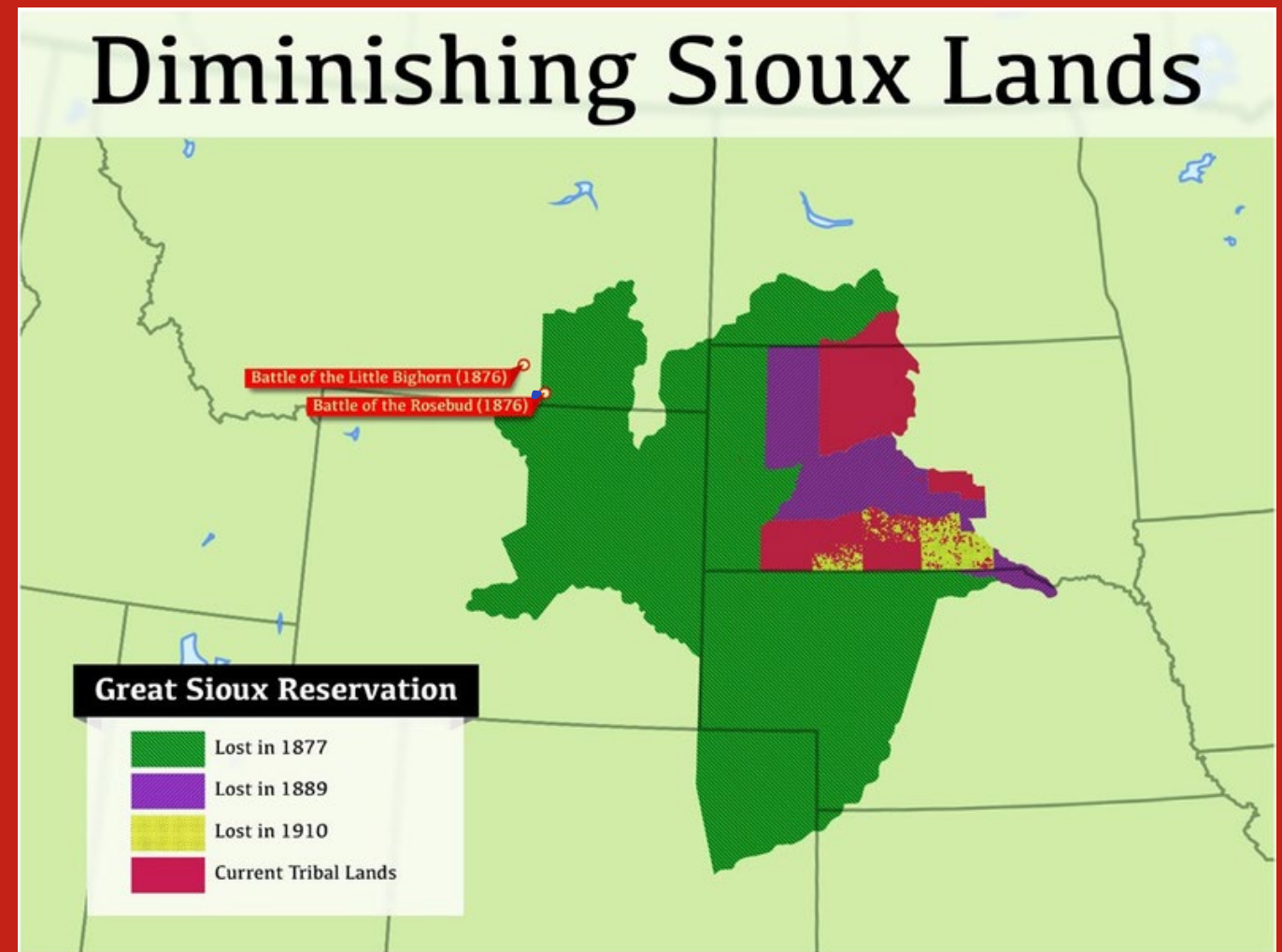
- Disruption of family networks and community life
- Limited access to Black Hills: resources, and traditional practices:
 - herbal medicines and healing knowledge
 - sacred sites and prayer locations
 - Connection to creation /origin stories
- Culture and Identity continue- ceremony, traditions, kinship



LAKOTA DIASPORA

Resilience:

- Language, ceremony, and storytelling continue
- Cultural identity remains strong across distance and generations



MODERN INDIGENOUS DIASPORAS

- Many live off reservation
- Movement for work, school, or policy
- Urban Native communities nationwide
- Culture and identity continue
- Living, modern, mobile
- Social Media: covid, tik tok



ARTIFACTS OF IDENTITY AND BELONGING

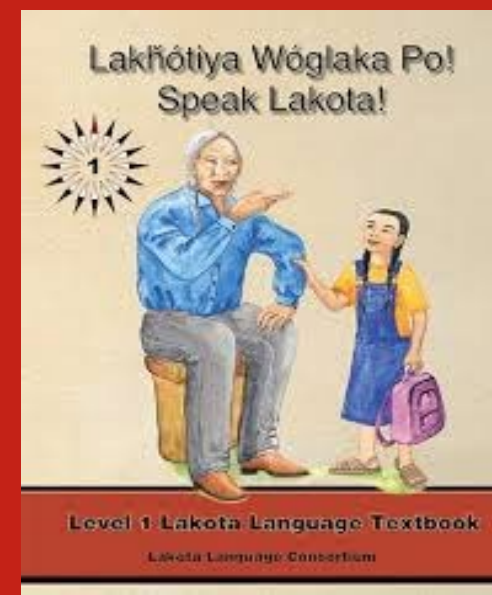
Objects make diaspora visible

Dolls → teaching tradition & identity

Beadwork → family & continuity

Baskets → daily life & home

Language → preserved across distance



WHY THIS MATTERS IN CLASSROOMS

- Past and present
- Lessons are few & Stop in 1800s
- Challenges stereotypes : gone, only on rez, all Natives = same,
- Materials support inquiry & empathy
- Connects to migration & identity



BRINGING INDIGENOUS DIASPORAS INTO THE CLASSROOM

Teach migration, identity, geography, and community through a more accurate and human lens.



Elementary

- Use migration maps to show Indigenous journeys
- Compare/Contrast different tribes
- Help students visualize where Native communities moved
- Ask: What travels with people?

Rigor-
deeper
thinking

BRINGING INDIGENOUS DIASPORAS INTO THE CLASSROOM

Teach migration, identity, geography, and community through a more accurate and human lens.



Middle School

- Investigate timelines of removal, resistance, and movement
- Compare the experiences of different Native nations
- Use artifacts, clothing, and images to build inquiry
- How do traditions stay alive?

BRINGING INDIGENOUS DIASPORAS INTO THE CLASSROOM

Big Idea

Teach migration, identity, geography, and community through a more accurate and human lens.

High School

- Compare Indigenous diasporas with other global migrations
- Discuss identity, sovereignty, resilience, and displacement
- Analyze maps, oral histories, and primary sources



BRINGING DIASPORAS INTO THE INDIGENOUS CLASSROOM

T - Time: When was the image created? What historical events or era influenced it?

•A - Action: What is happening in the picture (e.g., fighting, laughing, running)?

•C - Caption: What words, labels, or phrases are used, and what do they mean?


•O - Objects: What items or symbols are present, and what do they represent?

•S - Summary: What is the overall message, argument, or "so what" of the cartoon?

Name: _____ Date: _____

T.A.C.O.S. Primary Source Analysis – Lakota Diaspora

Understanding Diaspora
A diaspora is when a group of people moves away from their original homeland and lives in new places. This movement can be forced or chosen, but people carry their culture, traditions, and identity with them and stay connected across distance.



T – Time & Place

When was this image created?
☀️ What was happening to Lakota lands during this time?
☀️ How do treaties connect to this moment?

A – Action

What is happening in this image?
☀️ Does it look staged or natural?
☀️ What might this image NOT show about movement?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION



- How do Indigenous diasporas connect to migration stories you already teach?
- What stereotypes or misconceptions could this topic help challenge?
- How could you use maps, clothing, language, or artifacts in your classroom?
- What is one idea from today's session you could take back to your students?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Seminole Museum

<https://www.ahtahthiki.com>



About the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum opened in 1997 and is owned and operated by the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Situated in the Everglades on a 66-acre cypress dome on the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation, the museum offers more than 5,000 square feet of gallery space. Exhibits feature rare artifacts and lifelike dioramas that depict Seminole life at the turn of the century. In 2009, the Museum became the first tribally governed museum to be accredited by the American Association of Museums. For more information, visit www.ahtahthiki.com and follow the museum on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum is located at 34725 W. Boundary Road, Clewiston, Florida.