



ELA Common Core Content Standards:

Speaking and Listening Standards 1, 3, 4, 5, 6
Language Standards 5, 6

Estimated duration: one 45-min.
session, with extra time for art activities

Goal: Students will learn about some of the bird used by local Natives to make ceremonial regalia.

Teacher Background: The cultural heritage of most Native American and Alaska Native peoples, including the Karuk, incorporates sophisticated Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into all components. The well-known ecologist, M. Kat Anderson, defines TEK as “rich knowledge of how nature works and how to judiciously harvest and steward its plants and animals without destroying them” and describes its development as “the product of keen observation, patience, experimentation, and long-term relationships with plants and animals...built on a history, gained through many generations of learning passed down by elders about practical as well as spiritual practices.”¹

Despite these strong cultural traditions, Native People are the most under-represented minority in scientific disciplines overall, especially in the natural sciences. While many people would agree that Native scientists would be likely to bring new perspectives and potential insights to environmental science and resource management, it appears that most Native American students, as well as many students from other cultural traditions, are intimidated by science and math courses. Native American students also come up against an additional barrier--the tendency of western cultures to either ignore or make light of the principles and knowledge of indigenous peoples. This lesson will help students understand that these two forms of science – Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and western science – can augment each other when properly understood.

With content focusing on birds associated with medicinal and ceremonial practices, this lesson will help students understand the cultural beliefs underlying the use of their feathers and body parts: Birds and animals used in traditional ceremonies retain their spirits. Their spirits dance with the people as one; the physical and spiritual join together to set the world in order, to create a balance between all things. Balance can be lost when bad things happen – when someone or something causes harm to someone or something. A person does not kill birds or animals for ceremonial use without first fasting and praying. These are integral aspects of the process of obtaining and preparing regalia items. Thanks are always given to the bird, animal, or plant for sacrificing their lives for “fixing the world,” which is to bring the world back into balance.

¹ Anderson, M. K. (2005). *Tending the Wild*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press

Theme/Big Idea:	We will make the world better
Big Questions:	Why is it important for people to continue their cultural practices?
Vocabulary:	identity, ceremony, regalia, respect (<i>repeated from earlier lessons</i>)

Materials:

Photo cards of birds, feathers and ceremonies (included, also in the Karuk Culture Card box)
Bald Eagle – Coloring Worksheet
Flicker – Coloring Worksheet
Pileated Woodpecker – Coloring Worksheet
Jump Dance Basket – Coloring Worksheet

Preparation: Copy the photo pages. Write the following sentence on the board: *what bird is that*

Discussion and Vocabulary: Tell students that many cultures use plants and animals around them for many different purposes. For example, people use cows for their meat, milk, and hides. Today we will talk about birds used to make special items people use during Karuk and other local tribe’s ceremonies. Ask students what if they know what a ceremony is (*Suggested definition: **ceremony** - a formal act or event that is a part of a social or religious occasion*). Ask for examples of ceremonies (wedding, graduation, award banquet, homecoming, Brush Dance, Flower Dance, and World Renewal Ceremony). Pass around the “special item” for students to use in taking turns to talk.

Tell them that at these ceremonies, people often dress up in special clothes. For example, a person who is graduating from high school, college, and sometime even Head Start (!) will wear a cap and gown. Sometimes, and especially when talking about tribal ceremonies, we think of regalia. Ask if they understand what the word “regalia” means (*Suggested definition: **regalia** – special clothes, items and decorations for ceremonies*). Tell them today they are going to learn about regalia items that are used in traditional ceremonial dances of the Karuk Indians, and also by the other local Tribes, the Hupa and Yurok. Bird feathers are used in the regalia students learn about today.

Daily Language Practice and Vocabulary: Have children correct the sentence: *what bird is that*

Discussion and Vocabulary: Ask students: How can you tell what kind of bird you might be seeing? Tell them that the special coloring, feathers and way they fly, for example, can tell you the bird’s identity. **Identity** means the characteristics, qualities, beliefs, etc., that make a particular person/animal, etc. or group different from others. Sometimes we wear certain things to show who we are or what we believe in. For example, some of you might wear t-shirts with your favorite sports team on them, or a place that you visited. Understanding who we are is very important, and it helps people to have a strong identity. Ask students if they can think of why this is true.

Tell students that Native people who have strong tribal identities not only help their own people keep their culture strong, but they also help themselves stay healthy. They can build a strong tribal identity by going to ceremonies, wearing regalia, learning their Native language and about their culture, and eating foods that their ancestors ate.

One aspect of tribal identity for most Native peoples is showing proper respect to people, especially Elders, and to all things in the natural and spiritual world. Ask students if they know what respect means (*Suggested definition: **respect**— a feeling of admiring someone or something that is good, valuable, important, etc.*). When people make regalia and attend ceremonies, they are very careful to show respect to the animals and birds they use, and to honor them by wearing or showing them. Local tribal people believe that birds and animals used in traditional ceremonies keep their spirits. Their spirits dance together with the people to create a balance between all things. Balance can be lost when bad things happen. For this reason, tribal people don't kill birds or animals for ceremonial use without first fasting and praying. Thanks are always given to the bird, animal, or plant for sacrificing their lives for "fixing the world," which is to bring the world back into balance.

Activity and Discussion: Show the first two color photographs of the **bald eagles**. Ask them if they know what bird they are seeing and why the two look a little different. Tell them that most birds look different when they are young: young birds are often called "juveniles." Ask them if they know something about Bald Eagles. Use any or all of the following bulleted information to support the knowledge shared:

- Female bald eagles are a bit bigger than males. Their bodies can be three feet long, and their wingspan can be eight feet across.
- Eagles build their nests at the very top of tall trees so the eggs will be safe. Some parents come back year after year to the same nest, adding more sticks, twigs and grass each time.
- Bald eagles are birds of prey, meaning they eat meat.
- A bald eagle isn't bald at all. They are called that because of their white heads.
- Bald eagles can soar over 10,000 feet high; their great eyesight lets spot fish up to a mile away.
- When they attack, they drop down at up to 100 miles an hour! Then they glide just above the water, snag a fish with their feet, and fly off to eat it.
- During courtship they lock their talons and spin cartwheels in the sky. They let go before they hit the ground and soar back into the sky.
- Once they are a couple, the two birds will mate for life. Only in the case where one eagle dies or disappears will the other one find a new mate.

Ask students if they know how the feathers of bald eagles are used traditionally (*Suggested answers: men/boys wear them in the Brush Dance, Jump Dance, and White Deerskin Dance*). Show students photographs of the eagle pair, eagle plume, and the Jump Dance Headdress. Tell them that both the eagle plume and the Jump Dance Headdresses also feature the red scalp feathers of another bird.

Now show students the color photographs of the **woodpeckers**. Ask them if they know what it is (*pileated woodpecker*) and something about it. Use any or all of the following bulleted information to support the knowledge shared:

- The pileated woodpecker is one of the largest woodpeckers in North America.
- The sound of its hammering carries a long distance. They drum to attract mates and to establish the boundaries of their territory—warning other males away.
- Their beaks help them peck and dig under bark for ants, beetle larvae and other insects.

- A nesting pair of pileated woodpeckers usually makes a nesting hold in a large, older tree.
- During the day, both parents take turns incubating, or sitting on, the eggs to keep them warm. At night, only the male incubates the eggs. They generally lay four eggs at a time, which take about two weeks to hatch

Point out their brilliant red scalp and ask them if they can find an identity marker that tells you whether it is a male or a female (*Suggested Answer: Males have a red stripe on their cheeks*). Ask students if they know how the feathers of pileated woodpeckers are used traditionally (*Suggested Answers: Jump Dance headdress, Brush Dance head roll and over the eyes, ears and as a tongue on the animals used in many ceremonies*). Show them the three photos, and explain that the white deerskin shown is used in the World Renewal Ceremony.

Finally, show the **flicker**. Ask if they know what it is (Northern Flicker) and anything about it. Use any or all of the following bulleted information to support the knowledge shared:

- Flickers are actually a type of woodpecker! Northern Flickers are the third largest woodpecker species in North America but still smaller than the Pileated Woodpecker.
- Northern Flickers spend lots of time on the ground, eating mainly ants and beetles, digging for them with their unusual, slightly curved bill. They use their long barbed tongue to lap up ants.
- Northern Flickers generally nest in holes in trees like other woodpeckers.
- Like most woodpeckers, Northern Flickers drum on objects as a form of communication. When defending their territory, the object is to make as loud a noise as possible.
- When they fly, you'll see a flash of color in the wings – yellow if you're in the East (Texas and the Great Plains), red if you're in the West – and a bright white flash on the rump.
- In our region, we have what is called "Red-shafted" flickers. They have a black "bibb" under their throats, gray faces, and brown crowns - with males showing a red mustache stripe.

Traditionally, flicker feathers are used in the Jump Dance at *ameekyáaraam*, the woven mesh that goes over the top of the men's head and down their back, and also on the Jump Dance basket that the men hold. Ask what color the feathers would be at the bottom of the Jump Dance basket (orange/yellow and brown). Show these photos.

Then ask them if they know that the flicker is one of the "doctor birds" in traditional Karuk culture. Medicine people often use their feathers on their doctor-specific regalia. Show students the final photograph, which is a special hanger that a healer/doctor must have worn when performing medicine. Ask if they notice another type of "doctor bird" feathers (*Answer: the hanger's fringes are made with Blue Jay feathers*).

Activities: Assign Coloring Worksheets.

Optional: Arrange for a guest speaker who has knowledge about ceremonies and regalia. Encourage them to bring regalia items and explain the cultural and/or ceremonial uses of feathers. Before the speaker arrives instruct the students to respect the speaker, as well as their views, interpretations, and their willingness to share. All information is valuable. Remind them of the appropriate classroom behavior and protocol for active listening and possible interaction during the presentation.

References: For information about birds; photos, sound bytes of birds; and maps showing their habitat ranges, see:

Cornell Lab of Ornithology: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org>

Guide to North American Birds, National Audubon Society: <https://www.audubon.org/bird-guide>



Bald Eagle



Juvenile



Nesting Pair



Feather Plume



**Jump Dance
Headdress**



Pileated
Woodpecker
(male)



Pileated
Woodpecker
(female)



Brush Dancer with Head Roll



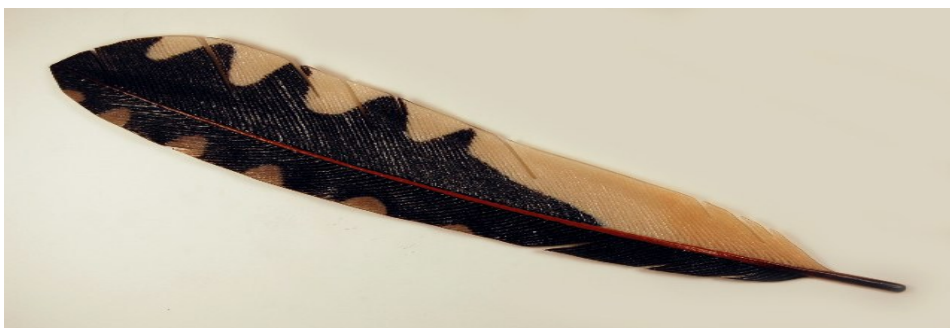
White Deerskin, head



Northern Flicker
(Red-shafted
Female)



Northern Flicker
(Red-shafted
Male)



Flicker Feather



Medicine Person's Hanger
(worn around and hanging from the neck)

Name _____



Bald Eagle

The bald eagle's feathers are used in making head dresses.

Name _____



Flicker

Flicker has colorful feathers used in dance regalia.

Name _____



Woodpecker

This pileated woodpecker's brilliant red scalp is highly prized among tribes. It takes many scalps to make a single dance headdress.

Name _____

Color the Jump Dance basket.

