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**PALEY** EDUCATION @Home  
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What We're Watching



# Greetings from The Paley Center for Media's Education Department!

Welcome to the latest installment of “What We’re Watching.” Twice a month the education department reaches out to the community with tips and ideas for consuming media with kids by highlighting different themes that connect to two selected programs, one for younger viewers and one for older viewers, each with related activities and resources.

Watching media alongside your kids is a perfect jumping-off point to making media literacy a part of your everyday lives. Familiarizing yourself with the basics is a great first step. You can [view our first newsletter about media literacy best practices archived here](#). We also recommend the [National Association for Media Literacy Education's Parents Guide](#)—it's a terrific introduction!

## What We're Watching: Native Roots—An Origin Story of Democracy

Many stories that children hear about Indigenous people are folk tales and legends explaining how the earth was created, how a hero saved their people, how a beneficent God gifted their mortal children fire, or how they had to steal it for themselves. These fantastic origin stories animate aboriginal mythology using the wonder of fable to fascinate audiences. They are fairy tales, parables teaching how Native people rationalize mysterious phenomena. A quaint and naïve narrative, often for bedtime. However, how might origin stories showing Native Americans inspiring early framers of our U.S. democracy impact our children's understanding of law, leadership, and government? American children are taught to respect the gifts and contributions Native Americans gave European settlers: corn, beans, buckskin, maple syrup, canoes but how many young people know that our earliest understanding of democracy and federalism was also a gift from people native to this land? For this Native American heritage month, we look at two programs that demonstrate how the development of this country's democracy was deeply influenced by the Indigenous people already living here, and already governing themselves.

# This Week's Recommendations for Younger Viewers

## **Sacred Stories Shorts: Haudenosaunee's Legendary Founding (2018)**

*Recommended for Grades 4+*

*Available on PBS*

In this wondrous animated short, we meet the warrior Hiawatha, who's tragic and moving story is recorded in a sacred wampum belt. A disciple of the Peacemaker, Hiawatha works with the holy prophet to unite the five warring nations, the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk. However, one nation, the Onondaga, refuses to join, requiring Hiawatha and the Peacemaker to seek aid from Jigonsaseh, the first Clan Mother. A powerful ally, and strong indicator of the matrilineal society of these Indigenous nations, Jigonsaseh soothes the fearsome and dangerous Onondaga warlord, shifting his mind away from war so he can accept peace. Now, chiefs from each of the five nations bring wampum to the Peacemaker to be woven into one belt signifying a confederation of Haudenosaunee, "the world's oldest continuous democracy."

### **Viewing Questions**

- When Hiawatha was in deep grief, how were the white shells revealed to him?
- What is wampum?
- How is wampum used to bring clarity or clearness to a person?
- What happens when Hiawatha and the Peacemaker bring the chiefs of the Five Nations together?
- What is a confederacy or a federation?
- How do Hiawatha and the Peacemaker bring the sorcerer warlord, Tadodaho, into a unified government?
- To make peace, the first thing they do is put away their "weapons of war." Do you think this is a good way to begin peace? Why or why not?
- What do you think is the best way to live peacefully with different people?

## **Additional Resources**

**Read**

*Autumn Peltier, Water Warrior* by Carole Lindstrom, illustrated by Bridget George

*The First Woman Cherokee Chief: Wilma Mankiller* by Patricia Morris Buckley, illustrated by Aphelandra Messer

*Buffalo Bird Girl: A Hidatsa Story* by S.D. Nelson

## Watch

*Vistas: Little Thunder*



## This Week's Recommendations for Older Viewers

### **Native America: Nature to Nations (2018)**

*Recommended for Grades 8+*

*Available on PBS*

From the first season of the PBS series *Native America*, comes *Nature to Nations*, a documentary narrative spotlighting the leadership of indigenous people in the development of governments. The film illuminates the often overlooked history of how indigenous Americans organized and administered

their communities through a deep connection with nature and the laws and policies of grand councils, divine and dictatorial rulers, or a federation of villages and hunter-gatherer societies. One of the first nations of the Americas, the Chavin of Peru, used cutting-edge technology like carved stones, a conch shell, and a temple with deep, resonant acoustics to establish their hierarchy. In the Pacific Northwest, Kwakwaka'wakw carvers use cedar as "a portal to the past," molding moon masks for potlach ceremonies to welcome the new chief. And for the Haudenosaunee, a wampum belt carries a chronicle of unity, bonding tribes, embracing memory, and reminding us that the first great law, was a law for peace. These stories liberate and expand our country's textbook origin story, boldly asserting "the birthplace of American democracy" is not Washington DC, Philadelphia, or Boston but Onondaga Lake in Syracuse, New York.

### Viewing Questions

- How did the Haudenosaunee inspire American revolutionaries like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson as they framed the Constitution and Declaration of Independence?
- How do the Chavin of Peru use the architecture and acoustics of their temples to establish social order and lay the foundations for a government? And what kind of government is it?
- What are ways that wampum belts and totem poles are similar?
- How are totem poles often misunderstood?
- How does the cedar tree connect indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest with their ancestors and identity?
- What is a potlach ceremony? Is it like any ceremonies you, your family, or your country participate in?
- What do the Mayans do to show how important corn is in their lives?
- How is the three sister's cooperative approach in nature adapted by the Haudenosaunee into a cooperative approach for government?
- What core principle of the Haudenosaunee did leaders of the young American republic leave out of their guiding principles? Why do you think it was left out?

## Additional Resources

### Read

*An Indigenous People's History of the United States for Young People by*

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz; adapted by Debbie Reese and Jean Mendoza

*Fighter in Velvet Gloves: Alaska Civil Rights Hero Elizabeth Peratrovich* by Annie Boochever with Roy Peratrovich, Jr.

*The Birchbark House* by Louise Erdrich

*Firekeeper's Daughter* by Angeline Boulley

*America Reframed: Town Destroyer*

## **Watch**

*Native America*

*American Experience: We Shall Remain*, a five-part series

Indigenous-Made Animation Films

As always, if you have any questions, thoughts, or ideas, don't hesitate to reach out to us at [eduny@paleycenter.org](mailto:eduny@paleycenter.org).

Happy viewing,

**Rebekah Fisk**  
**Director of Education**

**Carlos Pareja**  
**Manager of Education**

Photos—*Haudenosaunee's Legendary Founding* and *Nature to Nations*: Public Broadcasting Service

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To help shape the next generation of  
visionary TV professionals

# The **Peter Roth Internship** Program @PALEY

Made possible by generous support from:

Ava DuVernay's ARRAY Alliance

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The Peter Roth Internship Program, named in honor of the legendary television executive, offers a paid internship for 20 talented undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds and underserved communities who are interested in a career in television.

Interns will work for the Paley Center where they will be provided practical experience and valuable understanding of the television and streaming industries. Using the renowned Paley Archive and unmatched collection of television programming, the Paley Center offers a comprehensive and inclusive course for students to recognize the value of diversity both in front of and behind the camera.

Spread the word to the students in your life!

**The deadline to apply is Tuesday, January 16, 2024.**

[MORE INFO](#)

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The Paley Center for Media | 25 West 52 Street, New York, NY 10019

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