

Curriculum Connections

An American Story: The Kearny Deed

- Background information for the educator

Learning by Doing: A Deed for New Jersey

- Classroom activities based on the object

Interdisciplinary Content Standards

- WR 3 - use critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- WR 4 - demonstrate self-management skills
- VPA 1.2 - refine skills through creating art
- VPA 1.3 - utilize arts elements to produce artistic products
- LA 3.1 - speak in a variety of contexts
- LA 3.2 - active listening, interpreting, responding
- LA 3.3 - compose texts for real and varied purposes
- LA 3.4 - respond to a diversity of texts
- SS 6.2 - learn citizenship through humanities
- SS 6.3 - acquire historical understanding of political ideas/forces
- SS 6.4 - acquire historical understanding of societal ideas/forces
- SS 6.5 - acquire historical understanding of varying cultures
- SS 6.6 - acquire historical understanding of economic ideas/forces
- SS 6.7 - acquire geographical understanding in spatial terms
- SS 6.8 - acquire geographical understanding through human systems
- SS 6.9 - acquire geographical understanding through environment/society

Learning Styles & Multiple Intelligences

bodily-kinesthetic
visual
linguistic
empathy
interpersonal point of view

Related Subject Areas

barter and trade value
concepts of land ownership
legal documents
handwriting vs. computers
recycling

An American Story

The Kearny Deed explained

This deed, for the land on which present-day Kearny, New Jersey is located, is one of the oldest New Jersey deeds of purchase of land from Native Americans that exists in its original document form. It represents one of many such transactions that took place in the early years of European colonization in North America.

Dated 1677, the deed is in English, even though it is written from the point of view of the Native Americans who are selling the land, and who themselves were unable to read, write, or probably, even speak English. Note how the Native Americans have marked an “X” alongside their printed names instead of signatures. This practice was quite common, as was the use of an interpreter in such negotiations. The deed states that the Lenape Indians, the Native Americans who lived in the area, some of whom are named here, have sold the land “about Woodbridge and Piscattaway” to the Honorable Philip Carteret, who was the first colonial governor of the province of New Jersey. They exchanged the land for such items as rum, blankets, axes, coats, and wampum. The document then defines the natural boundaries of the tract of land purchased.

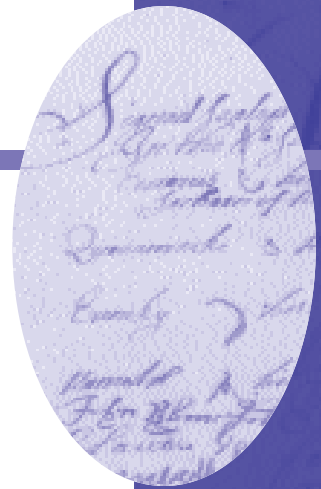
What does the Kearny Deed say about concepts of land ownership?

This deed suggests a fundamental difference between European and Native Americans concepts of ownership that would be at the heart of the conflicts between colonists and Native Americans – and later, between the U.S. government and the Native Americans over the next two centuries. Ownership of property was very important to the Europeans. Owning land meant being able to generate revenue from it, and, more importantly, to regulate who could be on it.

However, native people cultures generally did not acknowledge the concept of ownership of land in the same way the Europeans did. To them, the land was sacred; nature provided everything needed for survival, and these gifts should be shared by all. It did not make sense to them, therefore, that the land could be owned and used by a specific person to the exclusion of another. Furthermore, the fact that most Native Americans – the Lenape included – migrated seasonally made the idea of owning specific lands less of an issue. Thus, when the Europeans and the Native Americans signed such documents as deeds of purchase, they may not have understood them the same way.

How did land deeds shape the Native Americans' future?

Over time, the purchase of lands from the native peoples throughout the colonies forced their expulsion from their lands and drove many tribes farther and farther westward (see Powwow section page 2). Eventually, they were forced to live on reservations and to attend English-language schools in an effort to blend them into the dominant, European-based society. Some Native American cultural traditions, such as native languages, ceremonial dances, and religious practices, were suppressed until the 20th century. These events, in essence, forced Native Americans to reorganize themselves around the concept of an inter-tribal culture, which combined the many diverse and distinct cultures.



*Signed by the King and Parliament
 For the King's Service of
 Thomas & Benjamin
 Jackson of Newark
 Thomas & Benjamin
 Cook of Newark
 Daniel & Benjamin
 John Blumfeld
 Thomas Elliot
 Augustus Hill
 & John Blumfeld*

Benjamin Jackson

Cephaeus Jackson

*Augustus + Benjamin
 Blumfeld for Augustus
 Augustus Hill*

Signatures from the Kearny Deed, 1677
Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society, Newark

Learning by Doing

A Deed for New Jersey

OBJECT: *The Kearny Deed*

SUMMARY:

Students begin this activity by reading, observing, and analyzing the object – The Kearny Deed – one of the oldest New Jersey deeds of purchase of land from Native Americans still existing in its original document form. Students write and perform a short play or skit about the original purchase of New Jersey land from the Lenape by the English in 1677.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- Explore the history of Native Americans and the English in New Jersey through the study of an original 17th-century document.
- Practice observation, writing, oral communication, and performing arts skills.
- Gain a greater understanding of the different values of the English and the Lenape.

MATERIALS:

Paper

Pencils

Transparency of the Kearny Deed

Transcription of the Kearny Deed

Overhead projector

Assorted utensils and objects such as pencils, sticks, coffee stirrers, spoons, forks, plastic knives, and straws.

Learning by Doing

A Deed for New Jersey

PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

- LA 3.1 - speak in a variety of contexts
- LA 3.2 - active listening, interpreting, responding
- LA 3.4 - respond to a diversity of texts

Begin this activity with a discussion of the legal and social documents the students know. The following questions will prepare the students for the subsequent discussion of the Kearny Deed, an official document from 1677.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS:

- **A deed is an official document for the sale or purchase of land. A driver's license or a birth certificate is an official document. What other official documents do you know or have in your home or at school? (*Bus pass, passport, diploma, report card*)**
- **What does each of the following documents tell about you or your family members: a birth certificate, a driver's license, a diploma, and a report card?**
- **What official documents might be found hanging in school? What information do they give us? (*Fire inspection, elevator inspection, building occupancy*)**
- **Why do we need official documents?**
- **Why does the government issue us documents?**

READING AN OBJECT

The following discussion questions will help your students “read” (observe and analyze) the object – the Kearny Deed – in order to gather information about the purchase of land from the Native Americans by the English.

- WR 3 - use critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- LA 3.1 - speak in a variety of contexts
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- SS 6.2 - learn citizenship through humanities
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Handwritten Documents

These questions will help your students to understand that the deed was handwritten, labor intensive, and could not be reproduced by the technology we know today.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS:

- **The deed is an official document made in a time before computers, typewriters, and photocopy machines. How do we know this by looking at it?**
(Handwritten, script)
- **How did they make many copies of one document?**
(All documents were written by hand)
- **Choose two or more letters on the document. Copy the style (or shape) of the letter on a piece of paper. Notice the lines of each letter. During the time this document was written, ink was the writing medium. What might the writer have used with the ink to get those thick and thin lines?** *(Pens made of branches, quills or other feathers)*

This exercise can be used with the above discussion to learn about the time and effort required to produce a handwritten document. Experiment by writing letters and words with a variety of utensils and objects dipped in water-soluble black ink to compare the lines and their qualities – such as thick and thin, round and curved or thick and angular.

(See list of utensils and objects above in the Materials section)

The purchase of the land

These questions will assist students in gathering and analyzing the historical information about the sale of the land by “reading” the deed - when was it sold, who sold it, to whom, and the conditions under which it was sold.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS:

- **What is the purpose of the deed?** *(The deed is for the purchase of land in New Jersey from the Lenape to the English)*
- **The deed states the land “about Woodbridge and Piscataway.” Locate these words on the deed. The land was where the present-day town of Kearny is located. Where is Kearny, New Jersey?**
- **When was the land purchased? Find the date on the deed.**
- **Who was the first colonial governor? Find his name on the deed.** *(Philip Carteret)*
- **What are the names of the Native Americans? Find them on the deed.**
- **What did the English give to the Native Americans for the land? Look on lines seven to ten for clues.** *(rum, blankets, axes, coats, wampum, to name a few)*
- **How many of each item was given to them?**
- **In what language is the document written?**
- **The deed is written in English from the perspective of the Lenape who are selling the land. Why do we know that the Lenape did not write the deed?** *(At this time, Native Americans did not speak, read, or write English)*
- **Look at the signatures of the Native Americans. Why are Xs next to their names instead of signatures?**
- **Why do you think the British wrote the deed from this perspective?**
- **Do you think that the value of the land that was sold was equal to the value of the items received by the Lenape? Why or why not?**

Learning by Doing

A Deed for New Jersey

Differences in concepts of land ownership

Now, the students will be able to analyze the differences between European and Native American concepts of ownership of land and its value and use, as well as the impact of the sale of this land and other land on the history of the Lenape in New Jersey.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS:

- **The English felt ownership of property and land was very important. What did the English do with their land?**
- **How did the Native Americans use the land?**
- **Do you think the English knew that the Lenape had a different understanding than the British in regard to the concept of land ownership? Why or why not?**
- **Do you think that the value of the land that was sold was equal to the value of the items received by the Lenape? Why or why not?**

A DEED FOR NEW JERSEY – Playwriting and Drama Activity

WR 4	- demonstrate self-management skills
VPA 1.2	- refine skills through creating art
LA 3.2	- active listening, interpreting, responding
LA 3.3	- compose texts for real and varied purposes
SS 6.5	- acquire historical understanding of varying cultures

Students write a short play or skit about the Kearny Deed in separate groups or as a whole class. They will learn about the early history of New Jersey and the Native Americans through a performing arts activity.

The play may focus on the events that led up to the sale of the land and the impact it had on the Native Americans and the British. Focus the play:

- from the perspective of the English and/or
- from the perspective of the Native Americans

Students may use this opportunity to work on conflict-resolution issues. Focus the play on the fact that the English had very different plans of use for the land than the Lenape did, as well as a totally different understanding of control of the land. Have the students act out discovering the disparity of understanding, the result, and how these might have been resolved.

Students create characters, a narrator, and a story with dialogue, setting, and props. Costumes are optional. Students write, edit, and then rewrite their plays. The groups read them aloud to each other for feedback. Students practice performing their plays for each other.

A DEED FOR NEW JERSEY – Presentation

- WR 4 - demonstrate self-management skills
- VPA 1.3 - utilize arts elements to produce artistic products
- LA 3.2 - active listening, interpreting, responding
- SS 6.5 - acquire historical understanding of cultures

Students perform the plays or skits with other students, teachers, and administrators from their school as a final presentation. After the performance, a discussion with the audience can help students to understand New Jersey history from different perspectives.

ACTIVITY EXTENSIONS:

- Students research the daily life of the Lenape at school or the public library. Find out about and report on food, clothing, shelter, celebrations, community life, laws and governance.
- Refer to the following books for information:
 - Porter, Frank. *The Lenape*. USA: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989
 - Kraft, Herbert. *The Lenape: Archeology, History, and Ethnography*. NJ: New Jersey Historical Society, 1986
- For more information on Native Americans, call or write to the following institutions:
 - American Indian Community House, Inc.,
404 Lafayette Street
New York, NY 10003
(212) 598-0100
 - National Museum of the American Indian/Smithsonian Institution,
George Gustav Heye Center
One Bowling Green
New York, NY 10004
(212) 514-3700
- Make a map of New Jersey during the time period of the Kearny Deed, from the 1660s to 1700s. Label towns, rivers and other water bodies, and also the location of the Native American and English settlements. To create the map, use large poster board as the base of the map and then draw symbols for the map with colorful markers and pens. Collage materials may also be used—scraps of colored paper, magazines, and wrapping paper (to create areas of water, land and mountains, and symbols for towns and settlements).