**Folksongs from Virginia**

Native American

In 2006, I decided to research the music of Virginia’s Indian tribes, as part of my fourth grade music studies and the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown. I contacted the Virginia Council on Indians in Richmond, and received the sad news that there was no record of music that would have been known by the Indians at Jamestown in 1607. In fact, they could not even say with authority that these Indians used drums, because there was no record. This was confirmed again in the summer of 2011 when I began to research the music of Virginia.

In 2012, the contact for information about Virginia’s Indian tribes became:

<http://www.naturalresources.virginia.gov/virginiaindians/>

I told my students that we were going to study Native American music, but that it will come from tribes further west of Virginia. There are some assumptions that we will be able to make, based on observations of music from cultures around the world, and assumptions we can make, based on the music used in other Native American tribes.

Activities for Native American music:

Accompany Native American song, **I Walk in Beauty**, on xylophone and drums; sing in a round. Given that we do not have any existing examples of songs from Virginia’s Native Peoples, what is it about the text of this particular song that makes it probable that something similar may have existed among the Virginia tribes? Knowing the strong connection that Native Americans have to the earth, for what purpose could a song with this text have been used?

**Source:** “Piggyback Planet” CD by Sally Rogers; a different version is also available in the Spotlight on Music series, Grade 3, CD 15.

Accompany Native American **Stomp Dance Song** using drums and recorder; view Stomp Dance video performed by Native Americans; dance with ankle bells. Given that we do not have records of dances from Virginia’s Native Peoples, what is it about the energy and patterns of the Stomp Dance that make it probable that a similar dance may have been done by Virginia’s tribes? For what occasions may this dance have been used?

**Source:** Voices of the Wind by Bryan Burton; YouTube video footage also available.

Learn a Native American stick game, **Ma Ku Ay**. Given that we do not have any records of games from Virginia’s tribes, why do you think that it is possible that children in Virginia’s tribes would have played games using sticks? What skills could be practiced by playing this game? (some sources believe this is a game from the tribes in the Pacific Northwest while other sources believe it originated with the Maori people in New Zealand!)

**Source:** Singing Games Children Love volume 4 published by Theme and Variations

Although not an “authentic” Native American song, my students also sang the Pocahontas choral medley available from Hal Leonard. The first song in this medley, **Steady as the Beating Drum**, provided opportunity for my students to sing and drum along.

**Source:** “Pocahontas Choral Medley” published by Hal Leonard; available from

J. W. Pepper

Learn the **Haliwa-Saponi Canoe** dance. According to this resource, Native Americans in eastern Virginia/North Carolina would have done this dance with ankle bells. This dance most likely was used to teach children skills associated with paddling a canoe.

**Source:** “Dances of the 7 Continents” DVD/CD/Book by Sanna Longden; www.folkstyle.com