

American Literature
Against the Current
Projects

Directions: As a group select one of the following projects concerning issues raised in Chapter 9: *Against the Current*

1. Visit the Web site of the Indian Resource Law Center www.indianlaw.org in Helena, Mont., to identify some of the Native American issues that are currently being disputed in U.S. courts. Report your findings to the class.
2. Contact a Native American organization in your community, state or region. Explain what you have been studying and invite a representative from the group to visit your class. Be prepared to ask questions and discuss legal concerns of contemporary Native Americans.
3. Research the lives and careers of Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce tribe and Chief Seattle of the Duwamish, Suquamish and other Puget Sound tribes. Each of these 19th-century leaders is associated with a famous speech about Indian life. Locate these speeches on the Web. What aspects of Native American life do they address? What gives the speeches their wide appeal? Which speech is a fake - and what were its origins? Why do you think the fake speech took on "a life of its own"? What are the dangers of putting words into the mouth of a historical figure?
4. Divide your group into four or five and have each person research one of the following areas of Northwest Indian traditional life: a) religion; b) arts and crafts; c) government; d) shelter and clothing; and d) family life. Create a bulletin board or a computer presentation for each research focus.
5. Billy Frank's canoe that was returned to him in 1980 could be seen as a symbol of courage, perseverance or cooperation. Is there an object in your family that holds symbolic value because of how it was used? Investigate with family members and share your findings in a class "museum talk."