

Native American Ministries Sunday

Preparation: Bring a box that has been gift-wrapped. (It can be empty; it just must look like a present.) Also, bring a bowl of candy (have enough for each child to get the same number of pieces).

Good morning! How is everyone today?

Show the box.

What do I have here?

Allow children to respond.

When do we give gifts?

Allow children to respond.

That's right. We give and receive gifts at Christmas and on our birthdays and sometimes on other special days. Do any of you have friends who give and get gifts on different days or for a different reason?

Allow children to respond. Children may speak of friends getting gifts at Hanukkah, for getting good grades or for graduation. Affirm their answers.

Many Native Americans in the northwest of the United States had a special time for gift giving, but it wasn't a holiday like Christmas, and it wasn't for a specific person like a birthday. The gift-giving time was called a "potlatch." Can you all say that new word with me?

Allow children to repeat "potlatch."

That's right. When you get gifts at Christmas, do your parents try to make sure you get the same number of gifts as your brothers or sisters?

If children say "no," redirect the question to parents in the congregation.

Do you have the same number of toys as your friends? Do you have the same number of toys as children in other parts of the world?

If children focus on friends having more than they do, encourage them also to consider children who have less than they do.



In the Native American potlatch, the people made sure everyone had the same amount of the things they needed and wanted. Not everyone would get the same number of gifts at first, but when the potlatch was all over, everyone would have the same number. Let's see if we can try with this candy.

Hand out enough candy so that it can be evenly divided among children, but hand it out unevenly so it will have to be redistributed.

If we were to have a potlatch, how could we give gifts of candy so everyone would have the same number?

If children are too young to do this, invite youth to help or tell the children how many pieces each should have.

Today is a special day at our church. It's called **Native American Ministries Sunday**. Today we celebrate Native Americans and their traditions. We can learn a lot from them, just as we learned just now a new way to think about gifts. The offering will help Native American grownups who want to become pastors like (insert your pastor's name) or will help the people in the community. It's another way of giving.

Let's pray.

God, thank you for the many gifts you give us every day. Help us to learn to share our gifts with others so everyone has enough to live, learn and grow in your love. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.