

## Unofficial and Unwritten Rules Assignment

### Guiding Questions:

- What unspoken rules does your subculture follow?
- How can you use words to convey *why* they follow these rules?

### Directions:

Step 1: Mentor Text – read Sherman Alexie’s “The Unofficial and Unwritten (but you better follow them or you’re going to get beaten twice as hard) Spokane Indian Rules of Fisticuffs”

“Where are you from?” she asked.

She was so pretty and her eyes were so blue.

I was suddenly aware that she was the prettiest girl I had

“Hey,” she said. “I asked you where you’re from.”

Wow, she was tough.

“Wellpinit,” I said. “Up on the rez, I mean, the reservation.”

“Oh,” she said. “That’s why you talk so funny?”

And yes, I had that stutter and lisp, but I also had that

singsong reservation accent that made everything I said sound

like a bad poem.

Man, I was freaked.

I didn’t say another word for six days.

And on the seventh day, I got into the weirdest fistfight of my

life. But before I tell you about the weirdest fistfight of my

life, I have to tell you:

### THE UNOFFICIAL AND UNWRITTEN

(but you better follow them or you’re going to get beaten

twice as hard)

### SPOKANE INDIAN RULES OF FISTICUFFS:

1. IF SOMEBODY INSULTS YOU, THEN YOU HAVE

TO FIGHT HIM.

2. IF YOU THINK SOMEBODY IS GOING TO INSULT

YOU, THEN YOU HAVE TO FIGHT HIM.

3. IF YOU THINK SOMEBODY IS THINKING ABOUT

INSULTING YOU, THEN YOU HAVE TO FIGHT HIM.

4. IF SOMEBODY INSULTS ANY OF YOUR FAMILY

OR FRIENDS, OR YOU THINK THEY’RE GOING TO

INSULT YOUR FAMILY OR FRIENDS, OR IF YOU

THINK THEY’RE THINKING ABOUT INSULTING YOUR

FAMILY OR FRIENDS, THEN YOU HAVE TO FIGHT

HIM.

5. YOU SHOULD NEVER FIGHT A GIRL, UNLESS

SHE INSULTS YOU, YOUR FAMILY, OR YOUR

FRIENDS, THEN YOU HAVE TO FIGHT HER.

6. IF SOMEBODY BEATS UP YOUR FATHER OR

YOUR MOTHER, THEN YOU HAVE TO FIGHT THE SON

AND/OR DAUGHTER OF THE PERSON WHO BEAT UP

YOUR MOTHER OR FATHER.

7. IF YOUR MOTHER OR FATHER BEATS UP

SOMEBODY, THEN THAT PERSON’S SON AND/OR

DAUGHTER WILL FIGHT YOU.

8. YOU MUST ALWAYS PICK FIGHTS WITH THE

SONS AND/OR DAUGHTERS OF ANY INDIANS WHO

WORK FOR THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS.

9. YOU MUST ALWAYS PICK FIGHTS WITH THE

SONS AND/OR DAUGHTERS OF ANY WHITE PEOPLE

WHO LIVE ANYWHERE ON THE RESERVATION.

10. IF YOU GET IN A FIGHT WITH SOMEBODY WHO

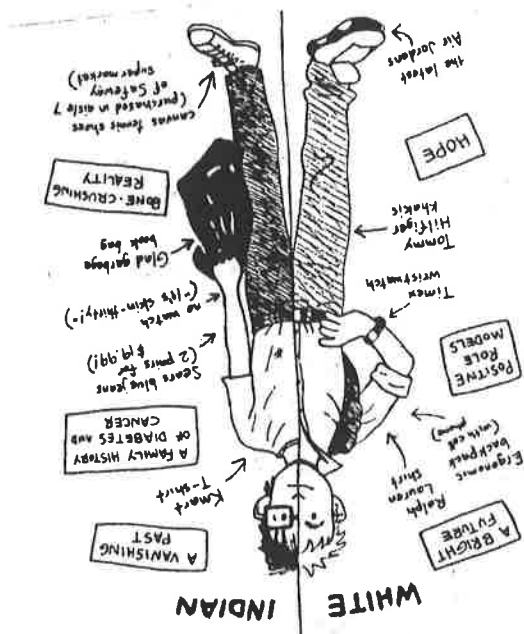
IS SURE TO BEAT YOU UP THEN YOU MUST THROW

THE FIRST PUNCH, BECAUSE IT’S THE ONLY PUNCH

YOU’LL EVER GET TO THROW.

11. IN ANY FIGHT, THE LOSER IS THE FIRST ONE

WHO CRIES.



- Have a title “Unofficial and Unwritten Rules of \_\_\_\_\_”. Number each rule. Include a cover page with a summary of your rules.
- 1 page for rules
- 1 cover page with explanation of how you’ve seen these rules function during your observations.
- 12 point font
- 1.5 spaced
- 1 inch margins

### Format:

- Step 6: Extra points: Compare yourself to a member of your subculture. See picture of Arnold Spirit in mentor text.
- Step 5: Summarize – on a cover page, give a summary of how you have seen these rules play out during your observations.
- Step 4: Redraft – make sure that each rule is written in complete sentences and is uniform. You will notice that in Alexie’s text he starts each rule with either “if” or “you”.
- Step 3: Draft – decide on at least 10 unofficial and unwritten rules about your subculture.
- Step 2: Brainstorm – make a list of unofficial and unwritten rules of your subculture.

The Unofficial and Unwritten (but you better follow them or you're going to get beaten twice as hard) Spokane Indian Rules of Fisticuffs Cover

Letter

February 19, 2013

Dear Audience,

Attached you will find a list of 11 rules regarding fisticuffs (fighting) that the Spokane Indians know but don't talk about. This set of rules comes from growing up as part of the Spokane tribe. I have learned these by watching kids at school and my elders. Even though I grew up on the Rez and went to school with other Indians, I am now the only Indian at the white high school I attend. When I first got to my new high school, I felt out of place and was challenged to fight.

I recalled what I had learned about fighting from the Rez. I knew I had to throw the first punch, because the kid I was fighting was HUGE! And, I also know I couldn't run away - rule number three says, that if someone is thinking about insulting you, then you have to fight him - if you don't fight, you'll be targeted forever as a sissy. So, I had to stand up to the bully; I defended my honor.

Those white kids must not have the same rule. Because I did that everyone, respects me now, and I think they must be a little afraid of me. These rules connect to Indian sense of honor. We are not allowed to back down. Maybe this is because we have so little and are so poor that all we have, sometimes, is our reputation. Another example of this is rule number six: "If somebody beats up your father or your mother, then you have to fight the son and/or daughter of the person who beat up your mother or father." This shows how important family is to our culture. Many of my rules demonstrate the family bond. Because people off the Rez often misunderstand us or lie to us, our clan sticks together. Our family and tribe are the only people who truly understand. I guess that's why I didn't think it was weird when the white kids didn't know our rules for fisticuffs.

Sincerely,

Arnold Spirit

Example