

Violet Duncan

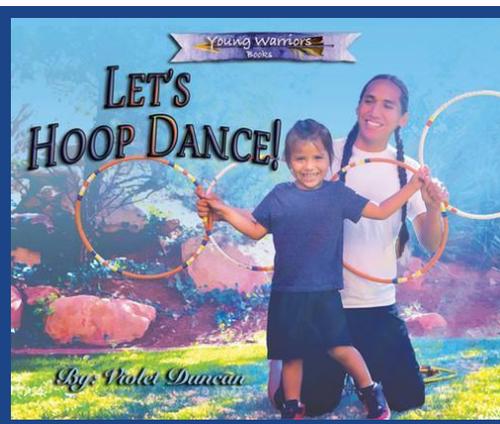
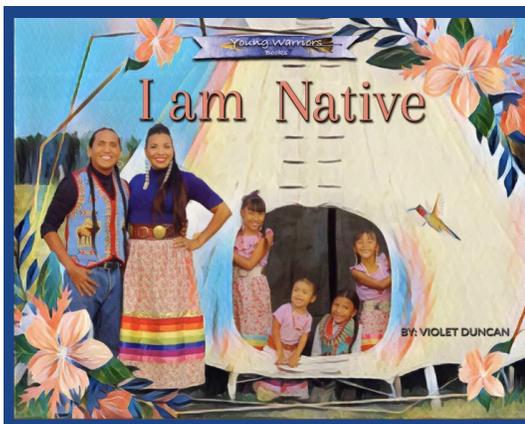
Teacher Resource Guide

Lotus Blossoms 2022



About Violet Duncan

Native American hoop and powwow dancer Violet Duncan is known for her storytelling and performances across the world. Violet, who splits her homes between Arizona and Alberta, Canada, facilitates workshops to promote spiritual wellness and cultural education across the US, Canada, and Europe. Violet is a proud member of the Plains Cree of Kehewin Cree Nation and Taino. She held the title of Miss Indian World in 2006 and was featured in Nelly Furtado's music video *Big Hoops*, as the Native American Fancy Dancer. After becoming the mother of four children, Violet saw a need for Native American representation in literature. Violet took it upon herself to author the children's books *I am Native* and *Let's Hoop Dance!*.



Hoop Dancing

Hoop dancing is a form of storytelling through dance that is practiced by many Native American tribes. Hoop dancers use handmade hoops to represent different things like butterflies, snakes, or eagles.¹



We do not know how long hoop dancing has been around, but it is safe to say that hoop dancing has been practiced by Native American people for hundreds of years. An **Anishinaabe** (*ah-nish-ih-NAH-bay*) folktale tells the story of a boy who didn't like to hunt or fish but who loved to watch animals in their natural environment. Eventually, the boy began copying their movements, spinning like an eagle and fluttering like a butterfly. He added the hoops and created what would become hoop dancing.²

During hoop dancing and other traditional dances, Native American dancers wear specially made **regalia** (say "re-GAH-lee-ah") or clothing. The regalia is colorful and often matches the specially made hoops the dancers use.³

Hoop dancers do not buy their hoops in a store. Instead, hoop makers learn the skill from someone who wants to pass the knowledge on. It's a great honor to make hoops for dancing. Originally, hoops were made of willow, soaked in water until they could bend. Some dancers still use wooden hoops, but today it is common for hoops to be made of reed and plastic because they last much longer.⁴

Just like any other traditional dance, children learn hoop dancing and can even compete at powwows.⁵

¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/kidscbc2/the-feed/do-you-know-what-hoop-dancing-is>

² <https://www.cbc.ca/kidscbc2/the-feed/do-you-know-what-hoop-dancing-is>

³ <https://www.cbc.ca/kidscbc2/the-feed/do-you-know-what-hoop-dancing-is>

⁴ <https://www.cbc.ca/kidscbc2/the-feed/do-you-know-what-hoop-dancing-is>

⁵ <https://www.cbc.ca/kidscbc2/the-feed/do-you-know-what-hoop-dancing-is>

Plains Cree of Kehewin Cree Nation & Taíno

Violet Duncan is of Plains Cree of Kehewin Cree Nation and Taíno descent.

Kehewin (*keh-HEE-win*) is a Native American reserve located in Alberta, Canada that is governed by a First Nations band government known as **Kehewin Cree Nation**.⁶

The **Cree** are a Native American tribe that lives primarily in Canada. There are more than 200,000 Cree living in Canada today. A small group of Cree also live on a reservation in Montana in the United States.⁷

The Cree are often divided into two major groups: the Woodland Cree and the **Plains Cree**. The Plains Cree live in the Northern Great Plains of Western Canada and the Woodland Cree live in the forested portions of central and eastern Canada.⁸

An indigenous people of the Caribbean, the **Taíno** (*tie-ee-no*) were the main inhabitants of Cuba, Hispaniola (the Dominican Republic and Haiti), Jamaica, Puerto Rico, The Bahamas, and the northern Lesser Antilles when Europeans first visited North America. The Taíno were the first people encountered by Christopher Columbus during his voyage in 1492.⁹

The **United Confederation of Taíno People** was formed in 1998. It was created as a way to affirm and restore Taíno culture, language, and religion. The Taíno are not officially recognized as a group by any governments, but those who consider themselves Taíno claim the right to self-determination.¹⁰

Helpful Links & References

- www.violetduncan.com
- [Violet Duncan on Facebook](#)
- [Violet Duncan on Instagram](#)

⁶ <https://data.nativemi.org/tribal-directory/Details/kehewin-cree-nation-1308287>

⁷ https://www.ducksters.com/history/native_americans/cree_tribe.php

⁸ https://www.ducksters.com/history/native_americans/cree_tribe.php

⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Taino>

¹⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Taino>

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