

## **Spirit of a Nation** History to Know Before You Play

*Before the class begins MISSION US: “Spirit of a Nation,” your students should be familiar with five important pieces of historical context. If you have not already taught this material in your class, introduce it to your students before they begin their journey as Nicki Seward.*

1. **The history of the Apalachees and the Spanish was distinct.** The interactions between Apalachees and Spanish soldiers and friars, as well as between Apalachees and other Indigenous polities, reveal a politically complex process of colonization during which both the Spanish and their Indigenous counterparts played active roles.
2. **The Apalachees were a politically powerful agricultural society with extensive trade and political relations with other Native polities in the southeastern U.S.** Before Spanish explorers arrived in the early 1500s, Apalachees lived in more than forty towns, each with its own political leadership. Their territory included strategically important coastland and waterways and supported productive farming. The Apalachees maintained military and political alliances with Timucuans, Potanos, Yustagas and other Indigenous groups, and they participated in trade networks extending as far as present-day Oklahoma. These relationships with other Native groups remained central to Apalachees even after Europeans arrived in the region.
3. **The Apalachees were not passive victims of Spanish settlements but some chose to ally with Europeans in order to protect and expand their political power.** In 1633, Franciscans established Mission San Luis, which expanded into the city of Anhaica. Some Apalachee leaders supported the opening of the mission and a nearby port, realizing that the Spanish would more reliably provide them European goods which, in turn, would gain them an advantage with neighboring Indigenous polities. Eventually, some Apalachee leaders agreed to be baptized as well, in order to guarantee strategic relations with the Spanish.
4. **Few documents survive that were written by the Apalachees, but it is still possible to tell this history putting Indigenous experiences at the center.** Most of the evidence for Spanish-Apalachee interactions in the 16th and 17th centuries was recorded by Spanish friars and political leaders. However, findings from archaeological research can be used, along with a critical reading of Spanish records, to reconstruct the activities and worldviews of many Apalachees, including some of their spiritual beliefs and cultural practices.
5. **The history of the Apalachees includes repeated displacement and persecution, as well as cultural persistence and political organizing.** Apalachees were pushed out of Florida when English settlers and their Creek allies attacked missions and villages in Apalachee territory. Many fled to remote areas of present-day Alabama and Louisiana where they were persecuted by settlers, including the Ku Klux Klan. Since the early 1990s, the Talimali Band of the Apalachees have organized politically and applied for federal and state recognition. Currently the U.S. federal government recognizes the sovereignty of 574 Indigenous nations, acknowledging past treaties and recognizing their sovereignty and status as a "nation" within a nation. To date, the Talimali Band of the Apalachees' applications for official federal and state recognition have been denied.