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Hey there and welcome to episode 109 of Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast for music loving families. I'm your host, Carly Seifert, I'm the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano and I'm thrilled that you're here with me today as we embark on a wonderful journey to celebrate Native American Heritage Month.

Every November, we honor the rich and diverse cultures, traditions, and histories of Native American peoples. It's a time to listen, learn, and appreciate the contributions of Indigenous communities. On the podcast in Novembers' past, we learned about instruments in Native American music as well as the use of music in pow-wows, and I'll link to those episodes in the show notes. Today we'll be exploring the enchanting world of Native American musical storytelling.

Our adventure begins with the understanding that storytelling is at the heart of many Native American cultures. These stories are filled with lessons, legends, and the wisdom of generations. And what makes these stories even more magical is the way they are often told—with music!

Vocal chanting is an important element of musical storytelling in many indigenous cultures. The Hopi Tribe, located in the Southwestern United States, has many traditional chants accompanied by rattles. The songs are often used in storytelling to share the Hopi creation story or other stories about their ancestors. Let's listen for a bit!

This music connects the Hopi people to their origins and teaches important lessons about their culture and history. So, just like how we enjoy listening to our favorite songs, the Hopi people use music to share their favorite stories and keep their traditions alive.

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Vocal chants were an important part of Navajo storytelling as well. The chants might recount legends or myths or historical events about a certain tribe. The repetitive nature of the chants makes them easier to remember and pass down from one generation to the next. Do you think you might remember your history and social studies lessons better if they were chanted in an interesting and repetitive way?

The Navajo flute, often just called the “Native American flute” is one of the most iconic instruments used in Navajo storytelling. What are some words you would use to describe the way this flute sounds or makes you feel?

Navajo storytellers play the flute to accompany their stories because the sound can set the mood, describe emotion and really illustrate and enhance the events in a story. Imagine if your grown-up read a bedtime story to you and it was accompanied by this flute. What kind of story do you think it would be?

Next, we're headed to the Ojibwe Nation, where the drum plays a central role in their storytelling traditions.

Listen to the rhythmic beat of the Ojibwe drum. Ojibwe drumming songs are truly special. The Ojibwe people use big, round drums to create rhythmic and powerful music. These songs are not just about music; they tell stories of their ancestors, the land they love, and their deep connection to nature. Perhaps you think of your heartbeat – or of the heartbeat of the earth – as you listen to the music.

Ojibwe drumming songs are often sung during important ceremonies and gatherings, bringing people together in unity and celebration. The drum song you just heard was from the Crane River Pow-Wow in Canada. So, whether they are sharing stories of their past or celebrating their culture today, the Ojibwe drumming songs are a way for them to connect with their history and their community through the powerful language of music.

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The Cherokee people have a unique instrument called the 'water drum,' which is a special drum used in storytelling to communicate with the spirit world, because they believed it was important to have a connection with their ancestors. Made by hand when a deer's hide is pulled over a hollowed log or clay pot, water is added inside of the drum and can be tuned differently based on how much water is taken out of or added to the drum, meaning the sounds will be higher or lower.

Imagine always hearing stories filled with amazing adventures and important lessons, all brought to life by the power of music. Through the use of special instruments, Native Americans make their stories more exciting and memorable. The music adds feelings and moods to the tales, like making a sad story feel even sadder or a happy story even happier. Not to mention that it helps everyone remember these stories for a long time, so they can share them for generations to come. Music in indigenous culture isn't just something that makes the stories fun and more exciting, but it is also a super important part of sharing and celebrating their history, culture, and wisdom with each new generation. Cool, right? This month, and always, let's show respect and appreciation for Native American heritage.

You can head to this episode's show notes at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/109 where I've put together a playlist on YouTube of some of the music you've heard on today's episode. I've also shared the links to previous episodes about other aspects of Native American musical heritage that you may want to listen to during this month – or anytime, really! Again, you'll find all that at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/109.

Thanks so much for joining me for today's episode and I look forward to connecting with you again in 2 weeks when our next brand new episode of Busy Kids Love Music airs. Bye for now!