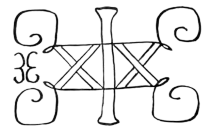


Wabanaki Studies

Birch Bark Educator Guide



Background:

The Wabanaki have lived in the area that is now known as Maine, New England, and Eastern Canada for thousands of years. During this time they developed their own culture and traditions. Their connection to the land, and interaction with the plants, and animals are unique to their culture. Preserving and learning about these practices is a way to ensure that their culture continues.

The Wabanaki have traditionally utilized birch bark for cultural and practical purposes. The use of birch bark illustrates the connection between the Wabanaki and the environment. Birch bark is harvested in the spring, and used in the creation of moose calls, baskets, canoes, and housing structures. Birch bark is a renewable resource, where skilled harvesters can remove the outer layer of bark without killing the tree, allowing for the tree to regenerate bark to be harvested again. Birch bark is flexible and was used to create moose calls for hunting and baskets and containers for storage of necessary items.

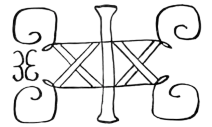
Introduction: This educator's guide is designed to teach about the sustainable and cultural uses of birch bark by the Wabanaki, focusing on how modern craftspeople are keeping the traditional use of birch bark alive.

Guiding Questions:

- What is the cultural and practical significance of birch bark for the Wabanaki?
- How does the modern use of birch bark as a building material by the Wabanaki reflect and contribute to the preservation of their cultural heritage and significance in the present day?
- How does the use of birch bark reflect on ongoing commitment to traditional ecological knowledge and environmental stewardship?
- How can birch bark be sustainably harvested to ensure survival of the tree?
- How are modern craftspeople continuing the tradition of using birch bark moose calls, baskets, containers, canoes and dwellings?
- How is the bark canoe an example of Indigenous ingenuity?

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Curriculum Lessons

Lesson Titles:

1. [Identifying and Harvesting Birch Bark](#)
2. [Birch Bark- Moose Calls, Baskets, and Containers](#)
3. [Birch Bark Canoes](#)
4. [Birch Bark Dwellings](#)

Materials:

- [Slidedeck: Wabanaki Studies- Birch Bark](#)
- [Student Worksheet: Response to Discussion Questions \(formative\)](#)
- [Student Handout #1: Who are the Wabanaki Timeline](#)
- [Student Handout #2: Geography of the Wabanaki People](#)
- [Extension Activity: Birch Tree Inspired Art](#)
- [Extension Activity: Build Your Own Birch Inspired Container](#)
- [Extension Activity: Nature Inspired Dwelling Construction](#)

Preparation:

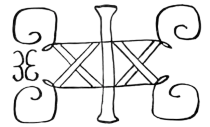
- This resource is designed to explore the uses of Birch bark by the Wabanaki. Prior to this lesson it is important for students to learn who the Wabanaki are, the four nations, and where they are located in the area that is now known as Maine. Please see the [Wabanaki Studies Moose Modules](#) and [Wabanaki Studies homepage for further resources](#).
- Tree identification and survey. If possible, bring students outside to complete the tree identification survey activity to get a scope of the types of trees in their learning environment.

Vocabulary List:

- **Wabanaki** - the term means "People of the Dawnland". When used in context, the term Wabanaki refers to the Indigenous nations in what is now known as Maine – the Abenaki, the Panawahpskek (Penobscot), the Peskotomuhkati (Passamaquoddy), the Mi'kmaq (Micmac), and the Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet).
- **Paper Birch:** Scientific Name: *Betula papyrifera*. Also known as the White Birch. This tree species is native to Northern and central America.

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- **Sinew:** the tendons and ligaments of animals used a thread or rope to bind things together.
- **Elder:** a person of greater age
- **Portage:** carrying boats of goods over land from one body of water to another.
- **Ingenuity:** The quality of being clever, original, or inventive.

Essential Questions:

1. What is the cultural and practical significance of birch bark for the Wabanaki?
2. How does the modern use of birch bark as a building material by the Wabanaki contribute to the preservation of their cultural heritage and significance in the present day?
3. How does the use of birch bark reflect on ongoing commitment to traditional ecological knowledge and environmental stewardship?
4. How can birch bark be sustainably harvested to ensure survival of the tree?
5. How are modern craftspeople continuing the tradition of using birch bark moose calls, baskets, containers, canoes and dwellings?
6. How is the bark canoe an example of Indigenous Ingenuity?

Learning Objectives:

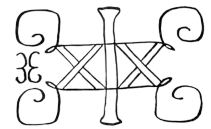
- Identify Paper birch trees
- Explain how birch bark is harvested without killing the tree.
- Describe the cultural significance of birch bark for the Wabanaki.
- Describe the cultural and practical significance of birch bark for the Wabanaki, including moose calls, baskets, containers, canoes, and dwellings.

Resources:

- [Birch Bark Slidedeck](#)
- [Student Discussion Questions Handout](#)
- **Lesson One: Harvesting Birch Bark**
 - [Paper Birch Identification Card](#)
 - Ripley, Darren "Moose" (2023) "Birch Bark Harvesting with Dale Dana" Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness. <https://wabanakiphw.org/birch-bark-harvesting-with-dale-dana/>
- **Lesson Two: Birch Bark Products: Moose Calls, Containers, and Baskets**
 - [A Penobscot Elder Keeps the Tradition of Birch-Bark Moose Calls Alive](#)
 - [Butch Phillips- Birch Bark Items- Hudson Museum](#)
 - Hudson Museum: Moose Calls
 - [HM2530- Penobscot birch bark moose call](#)
 - [HM2531- Pebonscot moose call](#)
 - [HM7062- Penobscot Birch Moose Call](#)

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- [HM 8458- Penobscot moose call](#)
- **Birch bark baskets and containers:**
 - Contemporary Creator: [David Moses Bridges: Video](#)
 - [Available on Hudson Museum-](#)
 - Activity: [Hudson Museum- Activity- Directions- Make a birch bark inspired container](#)
 - [PDF TEMPLATE](#)
 - Example: [Mocuck- Abbe Museum](#)
 - Example: [Box-birchbark box- Abbe museum](#)
- **Lesson Three: Birch Bark Canoes**
 - Image: [Hudson Museum Birch Bark Canoe](#)
 - [ARCGIS Stories: Bark Canoes. \(#10 & #12\)](#)
 - [Youtube: Canoes, Penobscot Marine Museum](#)
 - [Atlas Obscura: Reis Education Canoe- Abbe Museum, Bar Harbor, ME- The first handmade birch bark canoe in over a century.](#)
- **Lesson Four: Birch Bark as a Building Material**
 - Penobscot Nation restores history with traditional birch bark village, Bangor Daily News https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPZBDnp77G0&ab_channel=BangorDailyNews
 - <https://davidmosesbridges.com/birch-bark-canoes-and-wigwam-projects/>
 - [Wabanaki Birch Bark, Baskets, Canoes, Wigwams and more](#)
 - [Hudson Museum Wigwam Time Lapse](#)
 - [Barry Dana-Hudson Museum Wigwam Construction](#)
 - [B.Dana Video & Discussion Prompts via the Hudson Museum](#)

Standards

Science (Draft)

LS2: Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of how and why organisms interact with their environment and what are the effects of these interactions.

LS3.B: Variation of Traits

- Individuals of the same kind of plant or animal are recognizable as similar but can also vary in many ways. (1-LS3-1)

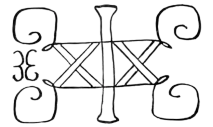
LS3.B: Variation of Traits

- Individuals of the same kind of plant or animal are recognizable as similar but can also vary in many ways. (1-LS3-1)

Social Studies (Draft)

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Geography: Students understand how physical and human geographic characteristics of place as well as culture and experience influence people’s understanding of places and regions in Maine, the Wabanaki Nations, the United States, and the world.

History: Students draw on concepts and processes using primary and secondary sources from history to develop historical perspective and understand issues of continuity and change in the community, Maine, Wabanaki Nations, the United States, and the world.

Updated: August 2024