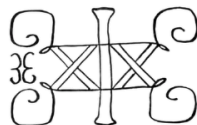
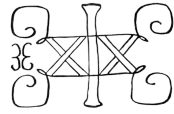


# Wabanaki Medicine & Moons

## Educators Guide



## Introduction

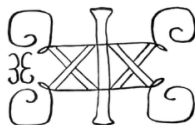
The Wabanaki Nations which include Panawahpskek (Penobscot) Nation, Peskotomuhkati (Passamaquoddy) Tribe, Mi'kmaq Nation, (Wolastoqiyik) Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, and Abenaki have lived for thousands of years in the land we now call Maine. They are known collectively as the Wabanaki, or "People of the Dawnland." The Wabanaki have a deep connection to and understanding of the natural world around them. One way this connection is reflected is in their ancestral knowledge of moons and medicines. The Wabanaki understand that the phases of the moon bring with them a deep change to all life around them. This knowledge helps them with planting, gathering, and making healing medicines. This unit focuses on Wabanaki medicines and under which moons to collect various plants. Throughout the lessons, learners will journey through various Wabanaki moons and gain knowledge on some of the most common plants used by the Wabanaki.

## Guiding Questions

1. What is medicine for the Wabanaki? What medicines do the Wabanaki gather and use during the different moons?
  - See Lessons 'Food is medicine, medicine is food: Peskotomuhkati Healing'
2. How are moons related to the medicinal plants of the Wabanaki?
  - About being present, slowing down to what is provided in nature; patience
  - Are there stories about the moon(s)? Everything relates back to the language
  - The moons told time for people
3. How can today's learners show understanding of Wabanaki teachings?
  - Creating a classroom Wabanaki lunar calendar
  - Showing students the meanings of each moon phase (egg-laying moon)
4. How do the moon phases in the Wabanaki lunar calendar reflect the interconnectedness of culture and environment? In what ways can visual arts be used to express and honor these cultural and natural cycles?
  - See Lessons 'Many Faces of the Moon: inspired by James Francis and his Moon Drum Project,' 'Botanical Art and Cultural Exploration: The Wabanaki's Sacred Plants,' and 'Wabanaki Medicines and Moons.'

## Background

The Wabanaki have lived in close relationship with nature and its rhythms, especially the moon cycles. The seasons of the moons told them what plants to gather for their health, well



being, and survival. The names of the full moons may differ among the Wabanaki Nations because each nation's environment varies. Each moon is named according to what is happening in the natural world and what is available for medicine and food. Food is also seen as medicine as most food comes from plants. In the process of working together to gather, hunt and cook, people are healed.

In the modern world we tend to think of "medicine"<sup>1</sup> coming from a bottle and made by a large company in a laboratory. However for tens of thousands of years Indigenous peoples have listened to Mother Earth for wisdom on how to heal themselves and how to survive. They see plants, animals, insects, and even rocks and water as living, as their non-human family or kin. When in kinship with the natural world relationships are formed and strengthened through care. In other words, families take care of each other, if only we are observant and listen.

The principle of the Honorable Harvest is common among many Indigenous peoples. This idea asks us to offer something in return, in reciprocity, for what we have been given by the earth. It is customary to provide an offering of something valuable when you harvest something from the earth and only take what you need.

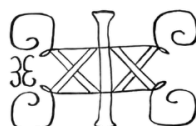
Today, the harvesting and preparation of plant medicines is still vital to health and to bringing together First Nation communities in the continuation of their lifeways. It is not only connecting with the plants but connecting with ancestors. Plant uses and preparation methods continue to be shared among different indigenous communities. In this way, practices are sustained and knowledge grows. Customarily, the Wabanaki passed on knowledge orally, not in written form, through families, and community gatherings. Today, they need to reclaim this knowledge and nurture it in any way possible, including in writing, oral teachings, in classrooms, and out in nature.

In the Wabanaki communities of what we now call Maine and Northeastern Canada, the natural state of the people was healthy. However, after contact with European traders and colonists as early as 1000 AD, the Wabanaki suffered from illnesses brought with the Europeans. Harvesting their medicines became even more important, but as the settlers invaded and stole Wabanaki homelands with violence, many had to secretly practice their medicinal remedies for fear of retaliation. Today Wabanaki continue to face barriers to harvesting.

Many medicine makers believe we should only take what is needed at the time and not store up a lot of medicine, as this leads to illness. This practice is in harmony with living sustainably

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<sup>1</sup> "The term 'medicine', as it applies to Native American traditions, tends to sound a bit misleading. Its origin is actually a corruption of the word 'Midewiwin' (mih-day-i-win), the name for the Grand Medicine Society of the Anishinabe. From this corruption, we derive the word 'medicine', which refers to traditional healing herbs and to many aspects of spiritual practices." [Mi'kmaw Spirit. Mi'kmaw Spirituality Medicines](#)



with Mother Nature, and honors the seven generations of life that will come<sup>2</sup>. During winter months when there are not as many green plants, medicine can be found in such places as inner tree bark, labrador tea, and gold thread.

## Classroom Lessons and Resources

### ☰ Exploring the Four Sacred Plants of the Wabanaki - G4-12

- recognize the four sacred plants of the Wabanaki and identify their cultural significance.
- describe how each of the sacred plants is used in Wabanaki tradition and culture.
- identify each of the sacred plants based on their appearance and relate them to Wabanaki cultural significance.

### ☰ Many Faces of the Moon<sup>9-12</sup>

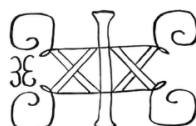
- explore Wabanaki and visual arts through the lens of the New Moon Drum project.
- learn to use acrylic paint to create an image that represents an activity or celebration that occurs under the moon of a specific month.
- enhance their understanding of cultural significance related to moon phases and months of the year.
- develop their artistic skills in composition, color mixing, and acrylic painting techniques.

### ☰ Botanical Art and Cultural Exploration: The Wabanaki's Sacred Plants - G9-12

- analyze and appreciate the cultural significance of the four sacred plants of the Wabanaki
- create detailed and artistically expressive representations of these plants
- engage in critical thinking and discussion about the intersection of art and culture

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<sup>2</sup> “The Seventh Generation Principle is based on an ancient Haudenosaunee (Iroquois)\* philosophy that the decisions we make today should result in a sustainable world seven generations into the future.” Joseph, B. (2020, May 30). [What is the Seventh Generation Principle? Ictinc.ca; Indigenous Corporate Training Inc.](#) “\*Terminology note: Called the Iroquois Confederacy by the French, and the League of Five Nations by the English, the confederacy is properly called the Haudenosaunee Confederacy meaning People of the long house.”



### ☰ Food is medicine, medicine is food 9-12

- Learn how the Peskotomohkatiyik are reclaiming and reevaluating their relationship to food and medicine
- Understand that medicine began as a relationship to the earth, and can still be
- Be more present, slow down to see what is going on and provided in nature. Have patience for the right time to harvest and plant based on what nature is telling you

### ☰ Wabanaki Medicines and Moons Lesson 1-12

- Explore the moon calendars of the Wabanaki Nations
- Learn the difference between the Wabanaki moon cycle and the Gregorian calendar, and between ancient indigenous rhythms and more modern ones
- Reflect on your own relationship to the natural world and the moons

### ☰ Science - moons - Grade 3

### ☰ Wabanaki and the Universe Lesson - 1st Grade - grade 1

## Additional Resources

### ☰ Wabanaki Language Calendar

▶ **Our Stories: Healing Woods (1998)** Created in the 90's interviews with Wabanaki in which many topics are discussed and shown. Here is a relevant clip in the form of an edpuzzle

[Ed puzzle on Healing stories about medicinal plants](#)

### ☐ New Moon Drum Project

[Make a Moon Phases Calendar and Calculator – Science Lesson | NASA JPL Education](#)

## MOON RESOURCES

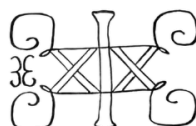
### Peskotomuhkatiyik

- <https://pmportal.org/taxonomy/term/398>
- <https://www.wvu.edu/astro101/indianmoons.shtml#Passamaquoddy>

### Panawahpskek

<https://www.penobscotculture.com/index.php/calendar-references?id=100>

### Mi'Kmaq

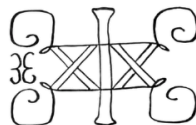


- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/mi-kmaw-artist-beaded-calendar-1.6636545>
- <https://skynews.ca/mikmaw-moons-connects-astronomy-and-culture-with-two-eyed-seeing/>
- <https://www.portlandmuseum.org/magazine/jordanbennett>
- [Artist shows meaning of Mi'kmaw months with beaded calendar](#)
- [Mi'kmaw Moons: A Two-Eyed Seeing Project](#)
- [Cosmos From Your Couch - Connect with Mi'kmaw Moons](#)
- [Jordan Bennett's 13 Moons: Full Suite](#)
- [Winslow, D. \(2022, January 18\). Mi'kmaq Culture. ArcGIS StoryMaps; Esri.](#)

### **Wolastoqiyik**

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/4484453/>

[Mi'kmaq history and culture with Gerald Gloade - 13 Moons](#)



# Wabanaki Moons

# 2024

## January 11 – February 8

**opolahsomuwehsuwi-kisuhs** whirling wind moon (Pa.)  
**oplahsomuwehs kisuhs** whirling wind moon (Wol.)  
**akalo-ssaməwhsit-kisohs** moon that provides little food grudgingly (Pen.)  
**punamuiku's** tomcod runs moon (Mi'k.)  
**alamikos** the month of greetings (Aben.)

## February 9 – March 9

**piyatqonisuwi-kisuhs** when the spruce tips fall (Pa.)  
**pyatqonisuwi kisuhs** when the spruce tips fall (Wol.)  
**tak<sup>ask</sup>ayi-kisohs** moon of crusts of ice on the snow (Pen.)  
**apuknajit** snow blinding moon (Mi'k.)  
**piaɔdagos** the month of boughs shedding (Aben.)

## March 10 – April 7

**siqoni-kisuhs** first spring moon (Pa.)  
**toqasqoni kisuhs** first spring moon (Wol.)  
**penataməwi-kisohs** moon of laying eggs (Eagles & Owls) (Pen.)  
**si'ko'ku's** forerunner of spring moon (Mi'k.)  
**mozokas** the month of moose hunting (Aben.)

## April 8 – May 6

**ponatomuwi-kisuhs** egg laying moon (Pa.)  
**ponatomuwi kisuhs** egg laying moon (Wol.)  
**aməssəwi-kisohs** moon of smelts (Pen.)  
**penatmuiku's** egg hatching moon (Mi'k.)  
**sigwanikas<sup>\*</sup>** spring moon (Aben.)

## May 7 – June 5

**siqonomeqi-kisuhs** alewife moon (Pa.)  
**siqonomeqi kisuhs** alewife moon (Wol.)  
**kkihkayí-kisohs** moon of planting and sowing (Pen.)  
**sqoljuiku's** frog croaking moon (Mi'k.)  
**sogalikas** the month of sugar making (Aben.)

## June 6 – July 4

**niponi-kisuhs** summer moon (Pa.)  
**niponi kisuhs** summer moon (Wol.)  
**nohkkahikani-kisohs** grubbing hoe moon for harrowing soil (Pen.)  
**nipniku's** leaves are budding moon (Mi'k.)  
**kikas** month of crops (Aben.)

## July 5 – August 3

**accihtewsiket kisuhs** ripening moon (Pa.)  
**apsqe kisuhs** feather shedding moon (Wol.)  
**ačihtayi-kisohs** moon of ripening berries & corn (Pen.)  
**peskewi** animal fur shedding moon (Mi'k.)  
**nokahig**

## August 4 – September 1

**amoniyač kci kisuhs<sup>\*</sup>** let this moon pass by (Pa.)  
**kopuwachi kisuhs** moon when leaves begin to fall (Wol.)  
**"inserted moon"<sup>\*\*</sup>** (Pen.)  
**kisaqewiku's** fledglings take flight moon (Mi'k.)  
**tmaskikos** month of hay mowing (Aben.)

## September 2 – October 1

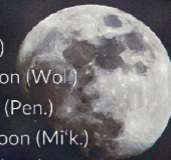
**apsqewi-kisuhs** feather shedding moon (Pa.)  
**mustewi kisuhs** moose calling moon (Wol.)  
**wikkehsəwi-kisohs** moon of fall fish or white chubs (when they complete stone houses in shallow water) (Pen.)  
**wikumkewiku's** mate calling moon (Mi'k.)  
**wtmez8was** month of harvesting (Aben.)

## October 2 – October 31

**matsehkiyewi-kisuhs** rutting moon (Pa.)  
**wikewi kisuhs** salmon spawning moon (Wol.)  
**mačewatohkí-kisohs** moon of rutting moose and caribou (Pen.)  
**wikewi'ku's** animal fattening moon (Mi'k.)  
**skamonkas** month of corn harvesting (Aben.)

## November 1 – November 30

**amilkewi-kisuhs** harvest moon (Pa.)  
**kuwaqonihkewi kisuhs** harvest moon (Wol.)  
**tak<sup>akəwi</sup>-kisohs** moon of autumn (Pen.)  
**keptewiku's** frost on the ground moon (Mi'k.)  
**pnibagos** month of falling leaves (Aben.)



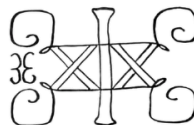
## December 1 – December 29

**kolotonuhkewi-kisuhs** freezing moon (Pa.)  
**kci kisuhs** long moon (Wol.)  
**asəpəsk<sup>acəss</sup>-kisohs** moon when ice forms on margins of lakes & streams (Pen.)  
**aqatiwikus<sup>\*</sup>** winter solstice moon (Mi'k.)  
**mzatanos** the month of ice formation on the river (Aben.)

## December 30 – January 28

**punamuwi-kisuhs** frost fish moon (Pa.)  
**skicinuwi kisuhs<sup>\*</sup>** sacred earth moon (Wol.)  
**kčí-kisohs** old moon (Pen.)  
**kesikewi'ku's** winter moon (Mi'k.)  
**pbonkas** the month of winter (Aben.)

<sup>\*</sup>denotes the 13th moon for that tribe



## References

*\*See individual lessons for additional references*

1. *Mi'Kmaq Medicines: Remedies and Recollections*, Laurie Lacey. 2012. Nimbus Publishing, Revised Second Edition.
2. [Mi'kmaw Spirit, Mi'kmaw Spirituality Medicines](#)
3. Daigle, J.J., Michelle, N., Ranco, D.J. et al. Traditional Lifeways and Storytelling: Tools for Adaptation and Resilience to Ecosystem Change. *Human Ecology* 47, 777–784 (2019).  
<https://doi-org.wv-o-ursus-proxy02.ursus.maine.edu/10.1007/s10745-019-00113-8>
4. [Land & Sea: Mi'kmaw medicines in today's world](#)

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