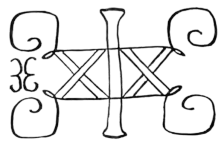


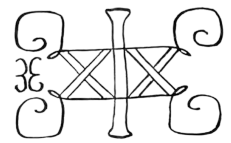
PreK and Life Skills Educators Guide



Start your students off learning about and connecting with the land, people, and animals who have lived in the Dawnland for thousands of years! In this guide students will explore Wabanaki Studies through nature and hands on activities!



Resources at a Glance



Wabanaki Studies - Framework

This resource is an excellent starting point for anyone beginning their journey with Wabanaki Studies, as well as for educators looking to deepen their understanding. It supports teachers in connecting the curriculum they already use with Wabanaki perspectives in meaningful ways. It's a resource worth returning to whenever you want fresh ideas, stronger connections, or continued growth in your Wabanaki Studies practice.

Wabanaki Nations and Community Pronunciation Page

This is a wonderful resource to revisit whenever you need a quick refresher or want to practice correct pronunciations with your students. It's an easy way to model respectful language and give children the opportunity to hear and begin to say Wabanaki names accurately.

Wabanaki Studies | Department of Education

Check out the Wabanaki Studies homepage where you can find frameworks, lesson materials, pronunciation tools, and best-practice guidance that educators can use across all grade levels. You can find cross curricular guides for grades k-12 here!

Wabanaki Studies - Resources | Department of Education

This page offers extra resources to support the PreK-2 module and all other grade-level modules, providing valuable materials you won't find within the modules themselves.

Wabanaki Studies-Culturally Responsible Art Education

PreK and Life Skills classrooms naturally include many art experiences, and this resource helps ensure that the lessons you plan or adapt are culturally responsible and respectful of Wabanaki artists and traditions.

Why Wabanaki Studies should be taught in Pre K and Life Skills Classrooms!

Inclusion means everyone learns the full story of where they live.

Teaching Wabanaki Studies in every classroom shows that Indigenous history and knowledge are not an “extra unit” they essential for every student to understand. When even our youngest and most diverse learners engage with these ideas, it strengthens community understanding for generations to come.

Wabanaki Studies builds belonging and connection from the start.

Introducing Wabanaki knowledge in early and special education settings helps every child see that *they belong to this place*. Through stories, songs, and nature-based exploration, students learn to care for the land, animals, and one another, values central to Wabanaki teachings.

It follows Maine law and honors authentic community partnership.

Maine statute (LD 291) requires that all students learn about the Wabanaki Nations. Including Pre-K and Life Skills classrooms ensures *all learners* participate in that shared civic responsibility, not just those in upper grades or general education classes.

Using Respectful Images that Honor Indigenous People

The images we share with children send powerful messages about how we see and respect the people and cultures they depict. When showing images or using resources that represent Indigenous Peoples, it's essential to ensure that those images are respectful and accurate. Be mindful not to unintentionally teach students that Indigenous people are caricatures or stereotypes.

What to use	What to Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Images of notable Wabanaki Citizens● Images of Wabanaki in Regalia and every day clothing● Resources created by Indigenous people and communities OR have been reviewed by a Wabanki Advisor (like this guide has been!)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Images that generalize "Native Americans"● Images that stereotype traditional clothing● Resources, illustrations, and images that portray Native Americans<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ in exaggerated ways (physical appearances or particular socio-economics) that perpetuate stereotypes○ as caricatures○ speaking primitively- if looking at these types of resources with students critically try showing someone like Geo Neptune a wonderful speaker in comparison

For a more indepth resources on what to avoid check this out!
[General Things to Avoid When Teaching Wabanaki Studies.docx](#)
and
[Lessons learned about Wabanaki Studies](#)

Lesson Directory

Maps and Me: Exploring Our Connections

Students will locate their town on a map of Maine and identify the Wabanaki homelands nearby, creating icons to represent themselves. They will learn about the Wabanaki Confederacy, including the Pənawáhpškewi, Peskotomuhkati, Wolastoqiyik, and Mi'kmaw Nations, and their enduring connection to the land. This lesson builds map skills while fostering respect for the Wabanaki peoples and their cultural and historical significance.

Water and Stones: How Rivers Shape the World

This Pre-K lesson helps students make connections between their town, local rivers, and Wabanaki homelands. Using a map of Maine, students locate where they live and identify the nearest Wabanaki Nation, recognizing how rivers connect communities. Through discussion and hands-on activities, they explore the importance of waterways in Wabanaki culture and history, fostering respect for the land and its original caretakers.

Leave No Trace, Take a Picture The lesson introduces Wabanaki land stewardship, highlighting the deep connection to the environment that the wabanaki have developed over the past 11,000 years.. Through discussion and reflection, students learn that they can appreciate nature without taking from it, fostering a sense of responsibility for the world around them.

Lesson Plan: Earth's Family – More Than a Natural Resource

The lesson introduces the Wabanaki perspective on respecting all living things and encourages students to consider how they can help care for the environment. By reflecting on their impact, students begin to see trees as living beings rather than just resources, fostering a sense of stewardship for the land.

Who is an Elder? In this lesson, students explore the meaning of an Elder as someone who shares wisdom, stories, and life experiences to help others learn. Through storytelling, class discussions, and a collaborative mural celebrating their own teachers and Elders, students practice listening with respect and showing gratitude. The lesson concludes with a creative reflection, as students make thank-you cards to honor the people who have taught them something meaningful in their own lives.

Numeracy and Wabanaki Studies

Everyone Gets What They Need

In this lesson, students explore the Wabanaki principle of reciprocity through a hands-on math activity about sharing and fairness. Using bear and fish cutouts, students practice counting, comparing quantities, and determining “more,” “less,” and “enough” as they work together to make sure every bear gets the number of fish it needs. Through guided discussion, students learn that having extra does not help the group, but sharing so that everyone has enough creates balance and care within the community.

Nature Walk Counting

In this lesson, students practice observation and counting skills while exploring the Wabanaki principle of stewardship and respect for all living beings. During a guided nature walk, students count and describe what they see in the natural world, such as leaves, acorns, or birds, while learning to notice relationships between plants, animals, and their surroundings. Through modeling and discussion, students begin to understand that being part of nature means caring for it, leaving what they find outside, and recognizing that even small actions can make a big difference for future generations.

Ideas for Beginning Math Skills Through Wabanaki Studies

Planting

Planting activities offer natural ways to explore math concepts such as counting seeds, comparing quantities, and measuring plant growth over time. Students can track how many days it takes for sprouts to appear, graph growth changes, or sort seeds by size and shape. Connecting math to Indigenous plants and responsible harvesting makes the learning meaningful and place-based.

Snowsnake

This simplified version of the traditional game supports measurement and comparison. Students slide their “snakes” (sticks) and measure how far each one traveled, using either standard units (inches/feet) or nonstandard units (blocks, hands, steps). They can compare distances, order results, and discuss what variables might change the outcomes.

Recycling: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Recycling connects naturally to math through sorting, counting, and comparing different materials, but it also supports Wabanaki Studies by emphasizing responsibility to the land and mindful use of resources. Students can sort items by shape, weight, size, or material, then count and graph how much the class recycles each week. These activities help children practice early data skills while reinforcing the Wabanaki principle of caring for the Earth and only taking what is needed.

Water Awareness (with real-world connection to Sipayik)

Tracking classroom water use, by tallying each time students drink, wash hands, or flush, builds math skills through counting and graphing, while also fostering awareness of how precious water is. This activity becomes especially meaningful when students learn that at Sipayik, many residents have faced decades-long struggles with unsafe tap water.

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/31082025/passamaquoddy-tribe-drinking-water-problem-s-maine/>

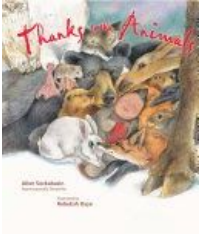
By connecting the data they gather in class to those real community experiences, students can begin to understand water not just as a resource for everyday use, but as a shared, sacred resource, one that deserves respect, protection, and conscious stewardship.

Learn about the Wabanaki Though Books

Young learners benefit from seeing Indigenous children and families represented in stories, reinforcing a sense of belonging for Wabanaki students and providing all children with a broader understanding of the diverse cultures that shape what we now call Maine's history and present.

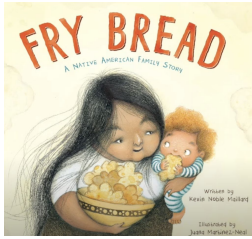
To ensure the books in your classroom are respectful and authentic, educators can refer to **Debbie Reese's website, "American Indians in Children's Literature" (AICL)**, which provides reviews and recommendations for accurate and culturally appropriate Indigenous books. Start now with reviewing your current classroom library and thoughtfully ask yourself if these books represent what is truthful and respectful. An example of a book I decided to no longer have in my classroom is (INSERT.) I choose to no longer put this book out for my students because the images that show indigenous people promote racist stereotypes that do not reflect how I hope my students will view people.

Books to add to your classroom Library



Thanks to the Animals, Allen Sockabasin

In this Peskotomuhkatiyik story, a young boy falls off his family's sled, and the forest animals keep him warm until his father finds him. The tale highlights Indigenous relationships with nature and themes of kindness and gratitude. It connects to lessons on storytelling, seasonal changes, and caring for others.



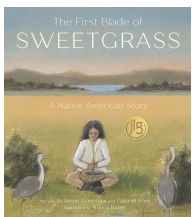
Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story, Kevin Noble Maillard

This rhythmic book celebrates frybread as a symbol of history, family, and culture in Indigenous communities. With engaging illustrations, it introduces Pre K students to Indigenous traditions and the importance of food in bringing people together. It's perfect for lessons on family traditions, and sensory experiences like cooking.



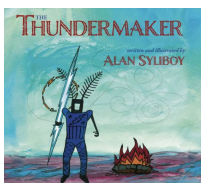
Kunu's Basket: A Story from Indian Island, Lee DeCora Francis

Kunu, a young Pānawahpskewəyak boy, learns patience and perseverance while making his first basket with his grandfather's guidance. This story introduces Wabanaki craftsmanship and the importance of passing down traditions. It connects to lessons on storytelling, resilience, and hands-on weaving activities.



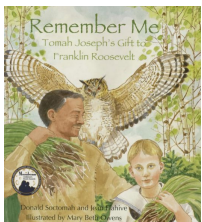
First Blade of Sweetgrass, Suzanne Greenlaw & Gabriel Frey

Musqon, a young Wabanaki girl, learns from her grandmother how to gather sweetgrass respectfully. The story teaches Indigenous ecological knowledge and reciprocity with nature. It pairs well with lessons on plants, seasons, and environmental stewardship.



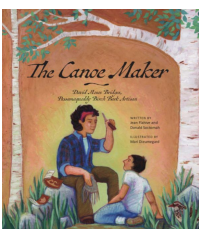
The Thundermaker, Alan Syliboy

This Mi'kmaq story follows Little Thunder as he learns his role in creating storms. Rich in oral tradition, it introduces Indigenous perspectives on nature and storytelling. It connects to science lessons on weather and cultural storytelling traditions.



Remember Me: Joseph Toma's Gift to FDR, Donald Soctomah & Jean Flahive

This true story follows Peskotomuhkatiyik elder Joseph Toma, who gifts a walking stick to President Roosevelt. It highlights Wabanaki history and the importance of Indigenous contributions. The book supports discussions on storytelling, meaningful gifts, and historical connections.



The Canoe Maker, Jean Flahive & Donald Soctomah

This story shares how Peskotomuhkatiyik canoe maker David Moses Bridges teaches his son to build a traditional birchbark canoe. It emphasizes Indigenous knowledge, craftsmanship, and intergenerational learning. The book connects to lessons on transportation, family traditions, and hands-on exploration of natural materials.