

Virtual Discovery Kit.

Be curious. GRAND
RAPIDS
PUBLIC
MUSEUM

Anishinabe Culture.

Learn how the Anishinabek have lived alongside the natural world through a variety of artifacts that tell the story of the first people of this place.

Explore the objects in the GRPM digital Collections at <https://grpmcollections.org/Detail/occurrences/344> then have fun with these activities.





Who are the Anishinabek?

Anishinabek is the name of the native people of Michigan who have lived in this area for hundreds of years before the Europeans arrived. In fact, Anishinabe means “first man lowered from above and placed on Earth.”¹

The Anishinabek believe in Seven Prophecies that have guided their people and will always guide them². The prophecies were given from Gitche Manido, the Creator/Great Mystery. The first of the Seven Prophecies instructed the Anishinabek to leave their home along the Great Salt Water, the Atlantic Ocean, on the Northeast coast of the country and follow the direction of the sun to the West. They set out using canoes and traveling along inland waterways of lakes and rivers. The Prophecy instructed that they would arrive at their new home when they found food that grows on water. This led them here to the Great Lakes region, where they found manoomin (wild rice) growing on lakes.³

The Anishinabek settled in this region and stretched from Northern Indiana all the way up to the Upper Peninsula and Canada. Did you know, the name of our state, Michigan, is adapted from an Anishinaabemowin word meaning “big water”?⁴ The Anishinabek are made up of three tribes: the Bode'wadmi (Potawatomi), who lived south of the Grand River into southern Michigan, Indiana and Illinois; the Odawa (Ottawa), who lived in the Grand Rapids area and further north; and the Ojibwe (Chippewa), who lived north into the Upper Peninsula and Canada.

Notes on these Materials

North American Indian tribes are very diverse. Cultural teachings, ideas and other dynamics vary greatly from one tribe to another. Even within one tribe, stories and teachings can differ between regions. The teachings shared in this program were developed in consultation with members of the Gun Lake Tribe, Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi and Pokagon Band of Potawatomi, Grand River Bands of Potawatomi Indians and the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. Concepts may be presented differently in other areas.

Please note that the language of the Anishinabek (Anishinaabemowin) is a spoken language. This leads to many spelling variations of the same word. For example, Anishinabe can also be spelled Anishinaabe as well as Anishinaabeg. Throughout this document, the spelling “Anishinabe” will be used as the singular form and “Anishinabek” will be used as the plural form.⁵ Similarly, pronunciations and spellings of words in Anishinaabemowin change regionally. We work to stay consistent with pronunciation and spelling and have made these decisions in consultation with partners listed above.

Image credit: MSU Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial sciences <http://geo.msu.edu/extra/geogmich/ojibwe.html>.

¹ Ziibiwing Center - Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe (education and collections team tour September 2019)

² <http://www.sagchip.org/ziibiwing/aboutus/pdf/DibaTour.pdf>

³ Ziibiwing Center - “Manoominikekamigak (Wild Ricing)” [Pamphlet, retrieved Sept 2019]

⁴ Ziibiwing Center - Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe (education and collections team tour September 2019)

⁵ Ibid.

Federally Recognized Tribes in Michigan

Over 560 tribal nations are recognized by the U.S. government as having rights of sovereignty, or self-government. There are currently 12 federally recognized tribal nations and four State historic tribes in Michigan.

Sovereignty is the power of a nation to make decisions on its own lands and for its own people. Sovereign tribes are independent nations, and they govern themselves in order to keep and support their ways of life. Sovereignty means each nation has the power to make important decisions on their tribal lands. They elect their own tribal governments and provide their own services such as police forces and judicial court systems.



References

- <https://www.ncsl.org/research/state-tribal-institute/an-issue-of-sovereignty.aspx>
- <https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/understandings.cshtml#eublock6>

Discover the Seven Grandfather Teachings

Through the Seven Grandfather Teachings, we can learn more about the philosophy that guides many Anishinabe people. These teachings are passed down from generation to generation and provide lessons on how to care for Aki (Mother Earth) and each other.

- Which of the Seven Grandfather Teachings do you think is the most important? Why?
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- Which of these Teachings do you think you represent the strongest in your own life?
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The Seven Grandfather Teachings

1. **Love:** Love your brothers and sisters and share with them.
2. **Truth:** Be true in everything you do. Be true to yourself and to your fellow humans.
3. **Respect:** You must give respect if you expect respect. Respect everyone, all persons and all the things created.
4. **Bravery:** To do what is right, even in the most difficult of times.
5. **Honesty:** Be honest in every action and provide good feelings in your heart.
6. **Wisdom:** We cherish knowledge; wisdom is used for the good of the people.
7. **Humility:** Know that you are equal to everyone else, no better, no less.

References:

- Graphic from Leech Lake Tribal College <https://www.lltc.edu/about-us/our-philosophy/>
- <http://www.sagchip.org/ziibiwing/aboutus/pdf/7Grandfathers.pdf>
- <https://www.nhbpi.org/seven-grandfather-teachings/>
- Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians of Michigan. "Seven Grandfather Teachings" [Pamphlet, retrieved October 2019]

The Seasonal Round

Traditional lifeways depended on the availability of game (fish and wildlife) the weather and the seasons. When animals and crops were plentiful, the village feasted. When animals were scarce or crops failed, people went hungry. The Anishinabek had immense appreciation for and knowledge of the resources in their environment. With this knowledge, they developed a work schedule called the seasonal round to make sure food was grown, picked and stored at the right time of the season.

13 Moons on Turtle's Back



To keep track of seasons and events, the Anishinabek used a turtle shell as a resource. ⁶The patterns on the turtle shell worked as a calendar, tracking each full moon cycle - 13 inner scutes for each moon cycle and 28 outer scutes for each day in a moon cycle. The moon completes 13 cycles during the year. On average, a cycle takes 28 days.

- $13 \times 28 = 364$ days in a year.

This is a sophisticated early calendar and closely resembles the 365 day Gregorian calendar the majority of people in the United States use today.

The turtle shell was also used as a resource to give guidance on seasonality and planting/gathering. The Anishinabek painted the scutes to track when to hunt, fish, plant and harvest crops. This was a tool that also taught members of the tribe the ways of the natural world and seasonal changes. For example:⁷

- End of winter - Time to collect maple syrup from sugaring trees
- Early spring - Time to spearfish for large species, such as Lake Sturgeon, that were returning to the rivers
- Summer - Time for planting important food crops
- Early fall - Time for harvesting manoomin (wild rice)
- Winter - Time to smoke and dry meat and fish to last through winter months

Image credit: Lancaster Public Library <https://lancasterpubliclibrary.org/event/13-moons/>

⁶Ziibiwing Center - Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe (education and collections team tour September 2019)

⁷<http://www.aihd.ku.edu/foods/Anishinabe.html>

Museum Artifact Study

Artifacts are all around us; they are the objects humans make and use. They frame our understanding of our world and the people in it. Everyday objects hold many stories and pieces of information that we can uncover! Take a shoe for instance. It can become the spark for a study of fashion or advertising; it can generate comparisons of human and animal feet; it could even spark questions about gender, sports and culture.⁸

'Reading' an Object

Museums tell the story of the past through objects or artifacts made by or used by people in those times. Learning to 'read' an artifact is a skill to be acquired through practice, just like reading a book. Artifact observation helps teach us how to really look at an object and make inferences. Some questions you can ask of any artifact are:

What is it?

- Describe or draw the object.
- What does it look like, feel like, sound like?
- How big is it?
- What materials is it made from?

What Was it Used For?

- What can you infer based on your observations?

Who Made the Object?

- Who used it? Owned it?

How Has it Changed Over Time?

- Do we use the same or similar object today? If yes, explain. If we no longer use the object, what has taken its place?

What is the Object's Social Significance?

- Why was it chosen for this collection?
- What story does it tell us? What can we learn from it?

Where Was This Object Created?

- Where was it used?
- What can we learn about this object based on where it came from?

When Was This Object Created/Used?

- What does this tell us about the time period in which the object was created?
- What can we learn about the world through this piece? How has the world changed?

Practice your artifact observations with the [Artifact Observations guide!](#) You can make a detailed observation of each item in the [Anishinabe Culture Discovery Kit Collection](#).



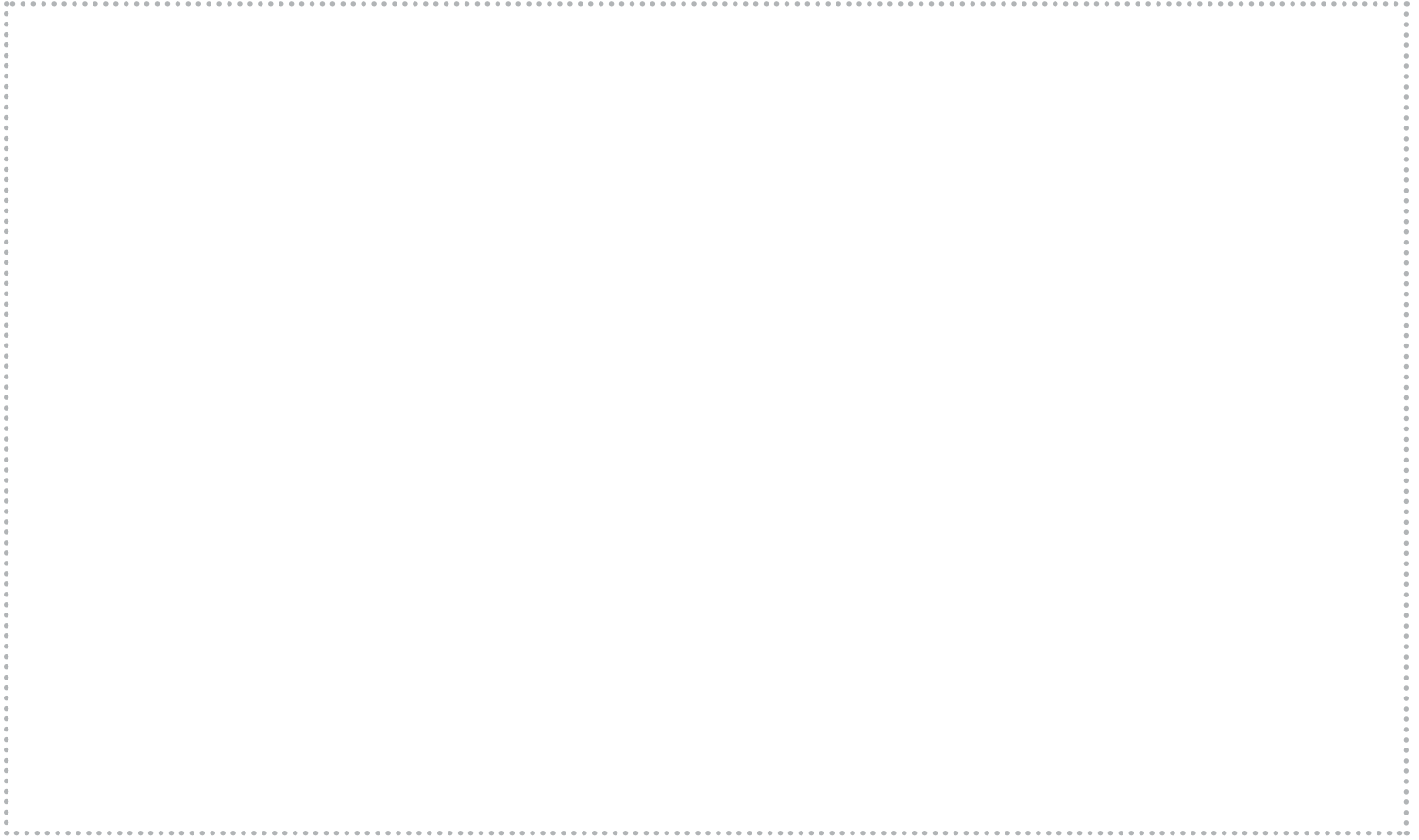
⁸A Teacher's Guide to Learning from Objects, Gail Durbin, Susan Morris, Sue Wilkinson, 1990, English Heritage.

Artifact Observations

Object Name: _____ Accession Number: _____

Describe and/or sketch your detailed observations of the object.

Consider its texture, appearance, shape, and size. Record labels, patterns, markings and anything else you think is interesting!



Record Measurements:

Don't forget the units!

Length: _____

Width: _____

Height: _____

Record Materials.

What is the object made from?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Other thoughts and wonderings.

What did you learn about this object?

What are you curious about?

Practice your Craftsmanship

The jewelry and personal decorations pictured below are some of many examples in the GRPM Collections of craftsmanship and design exhibited by Anishinabe artists. These items display techniques of beadwork, metalworking and weaving. Many of the designs on Native American jewelry indicate different plant or animal motifs and symbolic color patterns.

These items are worn by Anishinabe men and women on clothing, in a person's hair, as jewelry or as part of celebratory or ceremonial regalia.



Using these items as inspiration, design your own decorative pieces. Consider:

- What materials will your creation be made of? Metal? Fabric? Beads?
- What colors and designs will you include?
- How would your item be worn? Would it be used for special events?

A large, empty rectangular area defined by a dotted border, intended for students to draw or describe their own decorative designs based on the inspiration provided.

Nature Inspires Art, Music, and Storytelling

The Anishinabek have many teachings relating to animals and plants. It is believed that living things were placed on Earth by the Creator as teachers and examples of ways to live and coexist with others⁹. There are many lessons to learn by observing the roles and relationships of wildlife around us. Therefore, many pieces of artwork, music and stories are filled with messages and representations of living things.



An example of an important species is the Great Lakes region's largest and oldest fish, nmé (Lake Sturgeon). They can grow to be very large, taller and heavier than most adults. Lake Sturgeon were an important traditional food source for the Anishinabek because a single fish could feed many families. Lake Sturgeon can live to be 150 years old, and they are an ancient species that has been around since the time of the dinosaurs. Because of their special life traits, sturgeon continue to provide inspiration for Anishinabe art, music and storytelling. They appear in migration stories, ceremonies, family names and more.

Create your own nature-inspired art, music or story.

- Include at least one plant or animal that is important to you or that you feel connected to.
- What can be learned from studying this organism?

A large, empty rectangular area enclosed by a dotted border, intended for students to create their own nature-inspired art, music, or story.

⁹Ziibiwing Center - "Gdodemonaanik Do Knoomaageinawaan (Clan System Teachings)" [Pamphlet, retrieved Sept 2019]

What do you think?

- You learned that stories are passed down through the generations in Anishinabe culture. What are some of your favorite stories or lessons that have been passed down in your family?

- The Anishinabek made many tools and other objects using resources from the natural world - grass, wood and bark, animal hide, etc. What items in your house are made from natural resources?

- Plants and animals hold cultural significance for many Anishinabe people. You have learned that plants and animals are represented in many forms of Anishinabe artwork and stories. Can you find examples of things in your home that include depictions and references to animals and plants?

- What do you think is the coolest object in this kit? Why?

- What is the most interesting thing you learned in this discovery kit?

- What is one question you still have about the Anishinabek?

Learn more!

Explore the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Lifeways and Culture website.

<http://www.sagchip.org/ziibiwing/>

- The Ziibiwing Center is the premier Anishinabe museum in Michigan. Here you will find a brief history of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan as well as a variety of web resources to learn more about the Anishinabek.

Explore *The Ways* website.

<https://theways.org/>

- Learn the stories of native communities around the Great Lakes region. You'll find interactive maps, video clips, and other digital media that tell the stories of several tribes in their own words.

Discover the National Museum of the American Indian's Essential Understandings.

<https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/understandings>

- Native Knowledge 360° Essential Understandings about American Indians tells about the “rich and diverse cultures, histories, and contemporary lives of Native Peoples.”
- The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) is a Smithsonian Museum.