

Teacher's guide

A detailed illustration of a woven bracelet, likely made of natural fibers, shown in a diagonal orientation across the center of the cover. The bracelet has a complex, textured pattern of interlocking lines.

OBJECTS TELL THEIR STORIES

Indigenous cultures
education kit

PROJECT

EXPLORING INDIGENOUS UNIVERSES THROUGH OBJECTS AT THE McCORD MUSEUM

The **Indigenous cultures education kit** project is a resource for elementary school teachers that is mainly geared toward cycles 2 and 3 students, who will learn about Indigenous societies through the words of members of First Nations communities. This pedagogical tool will enable students to explore various facets of Indigenous societies and hear how members of different groups view their traditions, values and thriving cultures.

What sets this kit apart is the emphasis it places on multifaceted Indigenous voices. Each testimonial sheds new light on the past, present and future of Québec's Indigenous nations. Indigenous people of different ages and from a range of communities and backgrounds contributed to every step in the project's development.

Through inquiry learning, students will watch the video testimonials of members of First Nations and discover the objects in the McCord Museum's Indigenous Cultures collection to find out more about them and what they mean to the society from which they emerge. The testimonials will place students in contact with contemporary Iroquoian and Algonquin societies.

DISCOVER THE OBJECTS FROM OUR ENCOUNTERS!

USING THE KIT

With the **Indigenous cultures education kit**, teachers can broaden their social sciences, science and technology and French curriculums by using the content to spark reflection and consolidate learnings.

For each object from the McCord Museum, two types of video resources explore different points of view: three firsthand testimonials and a video by a young Indigenous woman or man created as part of the Wapikoni Mobile workshops. The videos each reveal facets of historical objects from the McCord collection in the current context. The series includes an information sheet on the community to which the object belongs, an object record and an image of the object. Additional external resources are listed in the appendix.

The teacher's guide supports the content of the videos and proposes tracks to engage students in approaches to build their knowledge based on their learnings on observation, listening, contextualization, exploration and analysis. The model fosters holistic working based on the overarching themes of Québec's education program. Topics including living environments, tools, technical objects, territory, lifestyles and traditions are also explored. This comprehensive perspective highlighting Indigenous cultures is in line with First Nations' circular thinking.

ALIGNMENT WITH QUÉBEC'S EDUCATION PROGRAM

The context touches upon broad areas of learning: environmental awareness and consumer rights and responsibilities and citizenship and community life through science and technology and social sciences.

In science and technology, the focus is on skills 1 and 2:

- Propose explanations for or solutions to scientific or technical problems
- Make the most of scientific and technological tools, objects and procedures

Content knowledge:

- Materials
- Material (properties and characteristics)
- Techniques and instruments

In social sciences, the focus is on skills 1 and 3:

- Perceive the organization of a society on its territory
- Be open to the diversity of societies and territories

Content knowledge:

- Territories occupied by societies
- Characteristics of Indigenous societies

In French, the focus is on skill 3:

- Oral communication

Content knowledge:

- Interactive situations in oral communication
- Particular features of speech (spontaneous and prepared)

TEACHING SCENARIO

Students will think about and analyze the roles of objects in Algonquian and Iroquoian societies (how they are made and used, what they symbolize, etc.). The following objects are featured in the kit:

- Basket
- Drum (to come)
- Canoe (to come)
- Wampum (to come)

Time: 2 60-minute periods per object

Materials:

- 3 video testimonials
- 1 documentary directed by an Indigenous person for a Wapikoni Mobile workshop
- Student kit
- Community sheet
- Map of the nation
- Photo of the object in the McCord collection
- Record of the object in the McCord collection

Work plan:

- Phase 1: Preparation
- Phase 2: Action
- Phase 3: Integration
- Phase 4: Further activities (optional)



Basket, possibly Abenaki, 1865-1910. M12623 © McCord Museum

Drum, Innu, Ovila Fontaine, Artist collection

Model canoe, Algonquin, 1930-1960. Gift of the Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée, M2006.48.85 © McCord Museum

Wampum belt, Huron-Wendat, about 1760. Gift of Mrs. Walter M. Stewart, M20401 © McCord Museum

LEARNING ACTIVITY: BASKET

PHASE 1: PREPARATION

INTRODUCTION

Place the desks in a circle.

Objects reveal the past, present and future of the communities that made them. They are witnesses that help us understand a community's different aspects. We will explore their importance in several Indigenous cultures.

By asking questions, analyzing the testimonials and exercising your listening skills, you can learn more about Indigenous cultures.

Indigenous peoples believe that listening and observation are essential to understanding and learning. Knowledge is shared through the spoken word.

Students will discover objects—a basket, a drum, a canoe and/or wampum—from the McCord Museum's Indigenous Cultures collection through testimonials by members of First Nations communities from across Québec who discuss the objects, their significance and their role within the groups that made them.

CONTEXT

Proposed starting point: Watch these videos and have students **discover the object** featured in the activity. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnFZ_p73s90

Additional questions:

At the grocery store, in what do you place the items you want to buy as you walk through the aisles?
Where do you put your dirty laundry?
What would you need if you were picking fruit, mushrooms or vegetables or going fishing?
What do you use to carry a picnic?

Questions to guide students on the basket's materials and features:

What can you tell me about baskets or basket-making? Do you have baskets at home?
Have you ever seen a basket? What do people use baskets for? How are baskets made?
With what types of materials?

Note students' responses and perceptions.

Instructions:

Present the **student kit** to collect information.

Drawing a basket: ask students to draw a basket during **workshop 1**.



STEP 1: UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM

DEFINE THE PROBLEM

In Indigenous cultures, baskets are more than just objects meant to carry things.

DRAW UPON PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND ASK QUESTIONS: THEMATIC CIRCLE OF CONCEPTS (WORKSHOP 2)

Today's object will be considered through different concepts that characterize Indigenous societies.

Instructions:

Present the thematic circle of concepts in the students' workbooks. Work with students to define each theme: technical objects, economy, religion/spirituality, community, territory, natural resources and way of life. Students can note keywords in workshop 2 of the **student kit**.

STEP 2: PLAN THE RESEARCH

The research will be carried out through videos and sources provided by the museum. The videos include testimonials to discover the different ways in which the basket is significant for Indigenous communities.

Instructions:

Explain how the class will engage in the activity. Students will work in teams. Each team will be assigned one or two of the themes covered earlier (technical objects, religion / spirituality, community, territory, natural resources and/or way of life). Students will then watch four videos to learn more about the importance of baskets in Indigenous communities. Students will gather information from each video and take notes in their **student kit**.

After each video, team members will work together. Then, there will be a class discussion and another team task. Afterwards, teams will draw up a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which the object is significant. Finally, they will present their research to the class.

Divide the class into teams of 3 or 4 students and assign each team up to 2 concepts among the following:

Technical objects, economy, religion / spirituality, community, territory, natural resources and way of life.

PHASE 2: ACTION

STEP 3: CONDUCT RESEARCH GATHER AND PROCESS INFORMATION

Instructions:

Ask the class to observe the image of the basket in the museum's collection. Read the object record for the **basket** and the information sheet on **Abenaki** communities. Locate the Abenaki nation's territory on the map. Explain to the students that they will hear living testimonials on Abenaki baskets.

Watch the videos in the order listed below. Allow time between videos so teams can complete workshop 3 in the student kit. If necessary, use the prompts in the teacher's guide to help students collect the information they need. As a class, complete workshop 4 (observations). Then, watch the next video.

Video 1: *My Father's Tools*, Wapikoni Mobile

Video 2: Jonathan Lainey, curator and member of the Huron-Wendat Nation

Video 3: Jacques T. Watso, member of the Odanak Band Council

Video 4: Barbara Watso, Abenaki basket weaver

If time permits, broaden the research to other external sources.

Organize the information:

Each team will create a presentation (oral presentation, drawing, diagram or written text) to share what they learned about basket-weaving based on the themes they were assigned (**workshop 5**).

PHASE 3: INTEGRATION

STEP 4: COMMUNICATE THE FINDINGS

Instructions:

Bring the class together. Ask each team to share their learnings and findings based on their analyses of the video testimonials and discuss the significance of the object for the Indigenous communities. Ask students to discuss the links between the different themes and how they relate to each other.

Reflect on all themes and learnings related to baskets and their importance to Indigenous cultures.

STUDENT KIT: ANSWER KEY AND TEACHING CUES

WORKSHOP 1 – DRAWING A BASKET

Instructions: Draw a basket you've seen before. What is it used for?



What materials is it made from? What characterizes your basket?
What makes a basket a basket?

DRAW UPON PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND ASK QUESTIONS

WORKSHOP 2 – DEFINING THE TERMS IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Instructions: Write down key words for every term in the thematic circle of concepts.

What is a territory?

An area of land that makes up a coherent physical, administrative and human unit.

A national ancestral territory is a relatively well-defined area that an individual or group claims or uses and over which it has some authority. For example, a child's room is her territory.

What is an economy?

An economy is a system of human activities to produce, exchange (buy or sell), transport and distribute (retail) good and services.



What is a community?

A community is a group of people who live in the same place or share common interests, like a territory, family or religion. Examples of a community include the Abenaki and the women and men of a particular group.

What is a way of life?

The customs of a person or group of people who share characteristics through their economy, culture and social habits (e.g., sedentary, nomadic).

What is a natural resource?

Natural resources are found in nature. Mineral or biological, they sustain human life and economic activities. Some natural resources are renewable, like water, agricultural land, forests and animal and plant species.

What is a religion / spirituality?

There was and still are many religions on Earth. They each have their own characteristics and mythologies.

A religion is a system of human beliefs in a sacred value. There are specific rituals related to each belief.



What are tools and techniques?

A tool is an object used to carry out a particular function. Different groups have their own skillful ways of creating their own tools.

GATHER AND PROCESS INFORMATION

WORKSHOP 3 – GATHERING INFORMATION FROM VIDEO TESTIMONIALS

Instructions: Colour in the thematic concepts your team was assigned. Write down all the important details you hear in the video testimonials in the thematic circles of the concepts.

Note: You won't hear every concept in all the videos. Each story is different!

| | |
|-----------|-------------|
| TERRITORY | ECONOMY |
| COMMUNITY | WAY OF LIFE |

BASKET



NATURAL RESOURCES

RELIGION / SPIRITUALITY



TECHNICAL OBJECTS

IDEAS FOR TEACHERS TO SPARK DISCUSSIONS AFTER WATCHING THE VIDEOS

VIDEO 1: MY FATHER'S TOOLS

Technical objects: What techniques and tools are used to make the object?

Natural resources: What natural resources are used in each step of the object's design? How are they obtained? Are the resources still available? Who finds them?

Territory: Where are the materials used to make the object found?

Community: Does everyone in the community make the object? Does everyone in the community use one?

VIDEO 2: JONATHAN LAINEY

Technical objects: Did some resources need to be transformed before they were made into baskets? What other objects did women make using ash? (eyeglass cases, cigar cases, fans, trays, centrepieces and chair seats made with porcupine that the Mi'kmaq were especially skilled at making).

Economy: In the 19th century, basket weaving was central to the Abenaki economy. Why? What was the Abenaki economy based on before basket weaving? (use of the territory to gather resources, hunt, fish and trade furs).

Explain how the Abenaki economy shifted in the 19th century (more limited access to resources on the territory). Who purchased Abenaki baskets?

Religion: We learned from the video that women had a lot of power. Besides basket-weaving, what did they do? (led several ceremonies and possessed knowledge).

Community: What role did women play in basket-making? (weaving and selling) How did basket-making impact the role and position of women in the community? (helped them reclaim some of their traditional power).

Territory: How did the community's relationship with the territory change? (increasingly limited access due to colonization).

Natural resources: What resources were used to make baskets? (ash, vanilla sweetgrass, birch bark, moose hair that could be dyed for embroidery and porcupine quills).

Way of life: Did the way of life remain the same over time? What changed? How did the community adapt? (Because settlers limited access to the territory, the Abenaki became sedentary and blended some of their traditions with foreign practices.)

VIDEO 3: JACQUES T. WATSO, MEMBER OF THE ODANAK BAND COUNCIL

Economy: Does basket-making play the same economic role today as it did in the past? (Basket-making was once an economic driver. Today, it is more of an artistic practice and a means of cultural transmission.)

Religion: Is the object used to mark significant life events such as birth, marriage or death? Does the object have religious significance? (It is used during religious ceremonies to hold the tobacco that is offered to the creator.) Is it part of a myth? (Ash, which is the raw material used to make it, is part of the Abenaki creation myth.) What role does the material play in the community's spiritual life? (Abenaki consider themselves to have been created out of ash trees.)

Community: Do all members of the community make baskets? (women only) What were the women's basket-making tasks? What were the men's? (Abenaki women and men had very different social roles. Women wove baskets. Men selected, harvested and prepared the raw materials.) Besides the Abenaki, did other communities make ash baskets? Which? (Mi'kmaq).

Territory: In what type of environment does the ash tree grow? (wetland forests) What is the land currently used for? (agriculture).

Natural resources: Who selects the resource? (male members of the community) What do they look for and what do they try to avoid when choosing trees? What are the risks to the resource's survival? (human and emerald ash borer, which Jacques calls *tordeur*).

Way of life: How did the ways of collecting ash change? (It grows much further away from where the community lives. Members no longer hear men cutting down ash because the trees are in another municipality.)

VIDEO 4: BARBARA WATSO, ABENAKI BASKET WEAVER

Technical objects: What tool is used to thin the wood? (crooked knife) What part of the basket is made first? (base).

Economy: How much were the baskets sold for? (\$10 for a dozen) Did children contribute to the community's economy? (Children helped weave baskets and sometimes sold them. This was a way to pass knowledge down to them.)

Religion: What was the funeral basket for Barbara's son made from? (only vanilla sweetgrass).

Community: How did the community sell baskets? (Men sold them outside the community in the United States and women made them within the community.) Were baskets ever given to family members as gifts? (Baskets were likely gifted to family members to mark events such as weddings, funerals, etc.)

Territory: On what territory were the baskets sold? (in the United States and Québec).

Natural resources: What materials were used to make baskets? (ash and vanilla sweetgrass).

Way of life: Who passed on basket-making knowledge? (It was traditionally passed on within families, from mother to daughter or grandmother to granddaughter.)

WORKSHOP 4 – OBSERVING THE TESTIMONIAL

VIDEO:

OBSERVATIONS ON THE TESTIMONIAL

Where was the video filmed?
(description)

WHERE?

What do you see in the video?

WHAT?

Who is featured in the video?

WHO?

When was the testimonial filmed?

WHEN?

ANALYSIS OF THE TESTIMONIAL

MY IMPRESSIONS

Share your impressions after watching the testimonial.

What information do you remember most?

What questions come to mind as you watch the video?

Past:

Present:

ANALYSIS OF THE TESTIMONIAL

CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE TESTIMONIAL

WHERE?

To what nation does this person belong? Where does her/his community live?

WHAT?

What do we learn about the object?

WHO?

Who is giving the testimonial? (name, role, profession, etc.)
Who is the video about?
Who are the members mentioned?

WHEN?

What periods does the video refer to?

Past:

Present:

ENVIRONMENT, MATERIAL AND TRANSFORMATION

Instructions: Answer the following questions.

Where is the material used to make the object sourced from?

Who transforms the material to create the object?



How is the material transformed and assembled?

What do makers use to transform the material?

WORKSHOP 5 – INTERPRETING THE TESTIMONIALS AND SUMMARIZING YOUR WORK

INTERPRETING THE TESTIMONIALS

What does the object teach us about the concept(s)?
Circle the concept(s) your team was assigned:

TECHNICAL OBJECTS • ECONOMY • RELIGION / SPIRITUALITY
COMMUNITY • TERRITORY • NATURAL RESOURCES • WAY OF LIFE

Take notes to present what you have learned about baskets to the class.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Discover how other Indigenous communities make baskets: Iroquoians use corn husks; Inuit use marine mammal pelts and hay; Mi'kmaq use other materials. Compare Iroquoian and Abenaki basket weaving.

Mi'kmaq baskets: <http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/1980.78.34> or <http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/ACC5450A-B>

Iroquoian baskets: <http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/M978.86.1-2> or <http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/M992.7.192.1-2>

Inuit baskets: <http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/ME982X.187.1-2>, <http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/M999.105.38> or <http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/M999.105.40>

Art class: Make baskets using different materials
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NZpheZXuTk>

- Take the class to see American black ash trees, discuss the emerald ash borer and how it impacts the environment and related cultural practices.
- Compare the maps of the ancestral territory of the Abenaki and those of the two villages of Odanak and Wolinak today to understand how the land changed over time. Identify waterways, agricultural areas, forested areas, etc.
- **Ancestral territory:** <https://gcnwa.com/en/history/>
- **Odanak :** https://caodanak.com/wp-content/uploads/carte_odanak.jpg
- **Wolinak :** <https://cawolinak.com/codefoncier/carte-wolinak-couleur/>
- Create a timeline to understand the chronology of the key events that marked Algonquin societies and the Abenaki in particular.
- Read the creation myth that links the American black ash and Abenaki: https://www.histoiresdecheznous.ca/v1/pm_v2.php?id=story_line&lg=Francais&fl=0&ex=804&sl=8885&pos=1&pf=1
- Explorer the vast resources of the Musée des Abénaquis: <https://museeabenakis.ca/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Abenaki history:

<https://gcnwa.com/en/history/>

https://www.nfb.ca/film/waban-aki_en/

https://www.fort-odanak.ca/abenakis_quebec-abenaki_quebec-eng

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/abenaki>

<https://www.lafabriqueculturelle.tv/capsules/11780/abenakis-la-langue-qui-ne-voulait-pas-mourir>

Baskets:

http://www.humainaucoeurdulacst-pierre.com/lac_saint_pierre-lake_saint_pierre/industries/vannerie_abenakise-abenaki_basket_weaving-fra.html

<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/premiere/emissions/facteur-matinal/segments/entrevue/128093/abenakis-maine-documentaire-niona-histoire>

<http://veritablesexperts.com/Contenu/ressvegetalesmenupr.html>

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