

Where
the past
is present

DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TEACHER RESOURCE LESSON PLAN

EXPLORING ANISHINABEG CULTURE



INTRODUCTION

This lesson helps third grade students understand the life and culture of the Native Americans that lived in Michigan before the arrival of European settlers in the late 17th century. It includes a comprehensive background essay on the Anishinabeg. The lesson plan includes a list of additional resources and copies of worksheets and primary sources needed for the lessons.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What are key cultural traits of the Native Americans who lived in Michigan before the arrival of Europeans?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Learn what Native American groups traveled through and lived in and near the Detroit area before European settlement.
- Learn which Native American groups lived and still live in Michigan.
- Analyze information about natural resources and how the Anishinabeg use them.

MI GLCES – GRADE THREE SOCIAL STUDIES

H3 – History of Michigan Through Statehood

- 3-H3.0.1 - Identify questions historians ask in examining Michigan.
- 3-H3.0.5 - Use informational text and visual data to compare how American Indians and settlers in the early history of Michigan adapted to, used, and modified their environment.
- 3-H3.0.6 - Use a variety of sources to describe interactions that occurred between American Indians and the first European explorers and settlers of Michigan.

G5 - Environment and Society

- 3-G5.0.2 - Describe how people adapt to, use, and modify the natural resources of Michigan.

COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS - ELA

Reading

- 1 - Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it.
- 7 - Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Speaking and Listening

- 2 - Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

LESSON PLAN: EXPLORING ANISHINABEG CULTURE

BACKGROUND ESSAY

The banks of the Detroit River have been a natural gathering place for over six thousand years. People began visiting the Detroit area thousands of years ago, but not much is known about them because they left no written evidence of their lives.

Several Native American groups lived in Michigan over three hundred years ago when the first Europeans arrived in Detroit. At that time, Detroit was an open land of rich soil, forests and grasses. Large fruit trees like crabapple and black cherry grew wild. Animals such as squirrels, muskrats, beavers, deer and bear roamed free and fed on grass, while swans, turkeys, quail, geese, doves and other birds travelled in flocks. The Detroit River was a clear flowing waterway, and schools of fish jumped in and out of the water.

Michigan's rich land, beautiful water and bountiful wildlife created the perfect land for the Anishinabeg – the people who were living here in the 1600s. The Anishinabeg were also called the People of the Three Fires because they included three different groups, the Ojibwa (Chippewa), the Ottawa, and the Potawatomi. The groups spoke the same language and shared a similar heritage. The Anishinabeg people were devoted to passing on the belief system, legends and culture of their ancestors. They also moved in groups with their families from place to place. They lived in different places for each season, depending on what natural resources were available, to hunt, plant, gather and fish.

It is not known how the People of the Three Fires came to live in Michigan. They may be the descendants of pre-historic peoples who lived here thousands of years ago, or they may have traveled from another place. Native American oral histories

say that the groups came from the northeast coast of North America, from present day Canada and New England.

When Europeans arrived in the 1600s, they found that Michigan's Anishinabeg were split into three groups. The Ojibwa first settled on the eastern shore of Lake Superior. They were good hunters, fishers, and gatherers of maple syrup and wild rice. The Ottawa lived on the eastern shore of Lake Huron, and they were primarily trading people. They sometimes travelled hundreds of miles to exchange goods

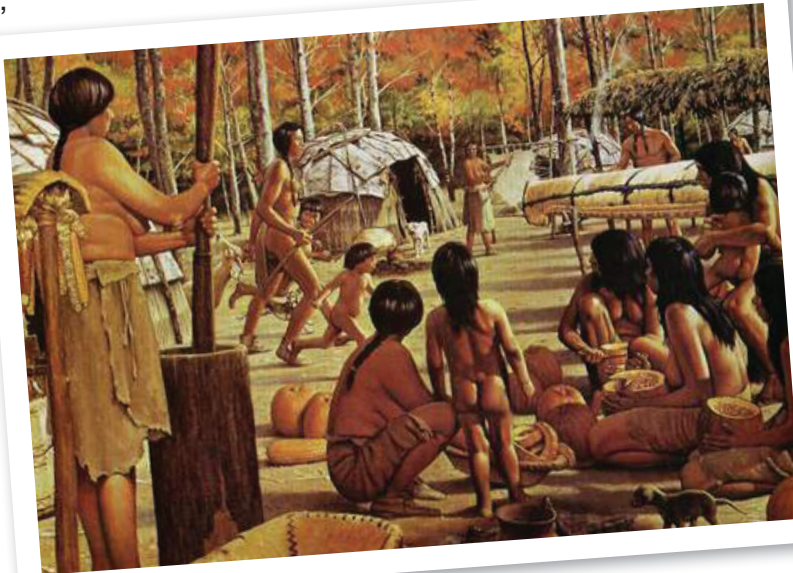
with other tribes. The Potawatomi lived in southwestern Michigan. They were known for their hospitality and good relations with other Native American groups.

All of the Anishinabeg groups were fishers and hunters and gatherers. They hunted for animals such as deer and beaver. They gathered fruits, nuts, wild rice and roots. Sometimes they grew corn, gourds, squash, beans and

rice. They had great respect for animals and plants and learned all they could about them. The Anishinabeg believed that they should only use from nature what they needed to live.

Since they had such great respect for nature, the Anishinabeg never let any part of an animal go to waste. They used animal bones to make needles, weapons and beads. Skins were used for clothing, moccasins, shelter coverings, sacks, box hinges and rope. Tendons of the animals, called sinew, made very durable thread.

The Anishinabeg also used plants in many different ways. Cornhusks made good bedding, while cobs made pegs and pipes. Birch tree bark was used to make canoes or to cover their homes, which were called wigwams. Wigwams were built by placing birch bark over a rectangular dome-



LESSON PLAN: EXPLORING ANISHINABEG CULTURE

shaped structure. They also used birch bark to make containers by sewing together pieces that then could hold water, food or supplies. Branches of trees made frames for canoes, wigwams and snowshoes, as well as bows and arrows. Sweet grass was woven into baskets and sometimes used as a thread. The earth was also used. Rocks were made into arrowheads, farming tools and mallets. The clay earth made pots.

Anishinabeg children did not receive formal schooling. Instead, they learned by watching and listening to adults and elders. Children joined their families to help make or repair tools for hunting and gathering food or to prepare it for storing and eating. They participated in daily activities depending on their age and gender. It was very important for children to pay attention to what they could learn from adults. They learned to have respect for, and knowledge of, the world around them. They admired adults, elders, storytellers and others with special talents and skills.

Children also listened to stories and legends that the elders told. Elders could be anyone in the group or band recognized as being important, respected or skilled. These stories sometimes took the form of myths. They were a very important part of the ethic system of the group, and described how they understood the world. Today, we may call an ethic system “religion,” but the Anishinabeg and other Native American groups did not have the same vocabulary and way of looking at their world.

Instead of looking through picture albums or reading history books, the children learned about the past through the elders’ stories. These stories taught lessons and helped children develop life skills. The children loved to hear the stories over and over. Soon they knew the stories from memory

and told them to others who were younger. This way of learning about the past is called an oral history tradition. Oral history is important for passing down information from one generation to another. Oral history was crucial to learn of life lessons and to develop the skills needed to survive. Oral history is still practiced by many cultures today.

Native American children also learned through trial and error. If something worked, they did it again. If it didn’t work, they might have tried again or done something different. Anishinabeg children and young adults also learned through intense training. Many activities in the groups called on special

skills and required years of training. These included making tools, decorations, and learning how to administer herbs and other natural resources for healing.

The Detroit area was very important to the Anishinabeg and other Native American groups (including the Wyandot, Iroquois, Fox, Miami, and Sauk) because it was a natural gathering place that was easy to reach. Tribes could reach Detroit

from Lake Huron in the north, Lake Erie from the south, and from several other rivers and streams that emptied into or near the river. For thousands of years before the Europeans arrived, many Native American groups came to the river to gather, hunt and fish and to trade with each other. They also gathered to discuss important matters or share news.

The Anishinabeg called the area that is now Detroit the “Bending River.” In the 1600s, there weren’t Native American settlements along the river. Instead, it was a meeting and hunting ground.



LESSON PLAN: EXPLORING ANISHINABEG CULTURE

MATERIALS USED

Data Elements:

- *Detroit Descriptions*
- *Artifacts: Birch Bark Baskets with Quill Work*
- *Artifacts: Snowshoes and Wampum Belt*
- *Artifacts: Birch Bark Container, Tomahawks, Bone Horsehead Awl and Moccasins*

Pencils and paper

LESSON PREPARATION

- Make enough copies of each data element so each pair or small group of students have a set.

LESSON SEQUENCE

1. Read *Detroit Descriptions*. Place students in pairs or small groups, and have them think about what specific items are mentioned in the description. Ask them to brainstorm uses for the different natural items in the list. In other words, what could trees, plants, and animals be used for to make life easier for Native Americans who lived at this time?
2. Ask the students what ideas they have for using the resources available to Native Americans for making tools, clothing, food and other products from nature.
3. Pass the remaining Data Elements to the students and discuss the following questions:
 - What resources are used to make the objects you see?
 - What were they used for?
 - Who would have used them? Men, women, children?
 - Do we still use items similar to these today? If yes, what are they? If no, why not?
4. Explain that the items in the pictures represent tools and items the Anishinabeg needed to use in their daily lives. However, they also made items from natural resources that were meant to be beautiful and to express their beliefs.
5. Ask them if they see any markings that are meant to be decorative or pretty in the object photos.

(e.g. moccasin beads, horsehead awl, quill work in baskets, etc.)
6. Explain that some of the items also show how Europeans influenced the Anishinabeg. For example, the beads on the moccasins and the metal point of the awl were brought from Europe.
7. As a group, brainstorm a list of materials that are used to make clothing and household goods today. Have them consider their clothing, school supplies, games and toys. Write their answers on the board.
8. Lead a discussion about the differences and similarities of production between Anishinabeg personal items and items today. For example:
 - How did the Anishinabeg make most of their items?
 - How are most of our personal items made today?
 - What materials do we use today that the Anishinabeg also used?
 - What new materials do we use that the Anishinabeg didn't have?
9. Conclude the lesson by having the students draw a picture or write a paragraph about how they use natural resources in their lives every day.

LESSON PLAN: EXPLORING ANISHINABEG CULTURE

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books:

Arbic, Bernard. *Sugar Island Sampler*. Allegan Forest, Michigan: The Priscilla Press, 1992.

Bourgeois, Arthur P., editor. *Ojibwa Narratives of Charles and Charlotte Kawbawgam and Jacques LePique, 1893-1895*. Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1994.

Burgess, Marilyn and Gail Guthrie Valaskakis. *Indian Princesses and Cowgirls, Stereotypes from the Frontier*. Montreal, Canada: Litho Acme, 1992.

Cleland, Charles E. *Rites of Conquest*. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1992.

Eastman, Seth. *A Portfolio of North American Indians*. Afton, Minnesota: Afton Historical Society Press, 1995.

Hele, Karl S. *Lines Drawn Upon the Water: First Nations and the Great Lakes Borders and Borderlands*. Waterloo, Ont: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008.

Hickerson, Harold. *The Chippewa and Their Neighbors*. Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 1988.

Kohl, Johann Georg. *Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway*. Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1985.

McCarthy, Cathy. *Indian Nations, The Ojibwa*. Austin, New York: Raintree Steck-Vaughn Publishers, 2001.

Morriseau, Norval. *Legends of My People, The Great Ojibway*. Toronto, Canada: The Ryerson Press, 1965.

Nies, Judith. *Native American History*. Random House, Inc., 1996.

People of the Lakes. TimeLife Books, The Indians Series, 1994.

Peyton, John L. *The Stone Canoe and Other Stories*. Blacksburg, Virginia: The McDonald and Woodward Publishing Company, 1989.

Vizenor, Gerald. *The Everlasting Sky: Voices of the Anishinabe People*. St. Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota Historical Society Press. 2001.

Wyman, Walker D. *The Chippewa, A History of the Great Lakes Woodland Tribe Over Three Centuries*. River Falls, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-River Falls Press, 1993.



Links:

- Ojibwe Waasa-Inaabidaa: www.ojibwe.org
- News From Indian Country: www.indiancountrynews.com
- National Museum of the American Indian: www.nmai.si.edu
- Great Lakes Intertribal Council: www.glitc.org
- National Congress of American Indians: www.ncai.org
- Ojibwe Language Society: www.ojibwemowin.com

For more information about the **Detroit Historical Society**, or to schedule a field trip to the **Detroit Historical Museum** or **Dossin Great Lakes Museum**, visit detroithistorical.org

DETROIT DESCRIPTIONS

DETROIT RIVER DESCRIPTION

“The islands are the finest in the world. They are covered with forest of the nut and fruit trees, and with wild vines loaded with grapes. From these we made a large quantity of wine. The banks of the Strait [Detroit River] are vast meadows, and the prospect is terminated with some hills covered with vineyards, trees bearing good fruit; and the groves and forests so well arranged that one would think that Nature alone could not have laid out the grounds so effectively without the help of man, so charming was the prospect.

“The country is well stocked with stags, wild goat, and bears, all of which furnish excellent food, and they are not at all fierce as in other countries. There are herds of buffaloes that trample down the flowers and grass as they rush around in their clumsy motion. There are great numbers of moose and elk, which in the size of their horns almost rival the branches of the great trees. Turkey cocks sweep along like clouds overhead.”

- Father Hennepin

From *The Ambassador Bridge: A Monument to Progress* by Philip P. Mason, Wayne State University Press.

MISHOMIS EXCERPT

“From here, the people move to a place identified by one of the earlier prophets as “a place where two great bodies of water are connected by a thin, narrow river.” This river was described as a “deep and fat ribbon of water that slices through the land like a knife.” Many lives were lost crossing this river. This third stopping place was very likely the shores of the Detroit River that connects Lake St. Clair and Lake Huron in the North to Lake Erie in the South.”

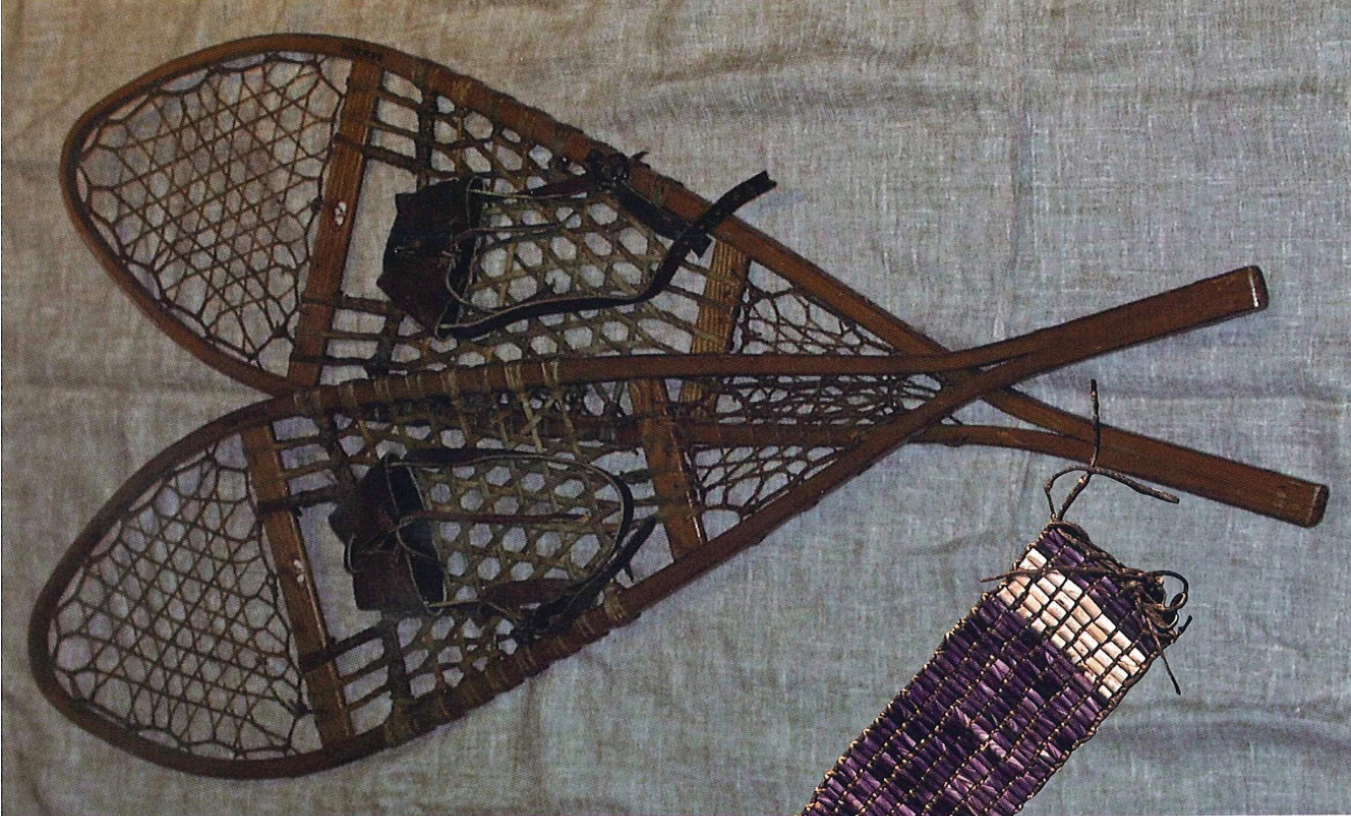
From *Mishomis: The Voice of the Ojibway* by Edward Benton Benai, Indian Country Communications, Inc.



ARTIFACTS: BIRCH BARK BASKETS WITH QUILL WORK



ARTIFACTS: SNOWSHOES AND WAMPUM BELT



ARTIFACTS: BIRCH BARK CONTAINER, TOMAHAWKS, BONE HORSEHEAD AWL & MOCCASINS

