



Theme

National symbols tell a lot about what a culture values.

Wabanaki Symbols and Government

This activity works well in conjunction with a broader lesson on flags and an introduction to different forms of government.

Grade Level

Grade K-2

Engage:

Do all nations have their own flags? Are there any nations within the boundaries of Maine?

Time/Location

1 Class period

There are four Wabanaki nations inside the state of Maine and each one has its own flag.

Goals

- Introduce students to the four Wabanaki Nations.
- Introduce students to the Wabanaki governmental structure.
- Discuss the symbols found on Wabanaki Flags and determine why those symbols were chosen.

These other nations are the four Native American tribes who live in what we now call Maine. They are the Penobscot, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Maliseet nations. Each of these tribes is a sovereign nation recognized by the United States and Maine governments. The Penobscot, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Maliseet all have their tribal governments and flags.

Explore:

Let's look at where the different Wabanaki groups have their reservations or tribal headquarters.

- Penobscot Indian Nation: Reservation on the Penobscot River, tribal headquarters at Panuwapskek (Indian Island)
- Passamaquoddy Tribe: Reservations and tribal headquarters at Motahkomikuk (Indian Township) and Sipayik (Pleasant Point)
- Aroostook Band of Micmac: Tribal headquarters in Presque Isle
- Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians: Tribal headquarters in Houlton

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Correctly identify which flag matches a Wabanaki Nation.
- Explain why a certain symbol appears on a Wabanaki flag.
- Draw comparisons between the structure of tribal governments and the United States Government.

This web page has a map with each one of the tribal flags marking their locations in Maine: <http://www.wabanakitrails.org/>

Use these as guiding questions:

- Which tribes live near water?
- Which are by lakes or rivers, and which live near the ocean?
- What do you think the land looks like where each tribe lives?
- What kind of animals might live near the tribes?

It might also be helpful to pull up pictures of what the landscape around those reservations looks like, so students have some visual reference.



Essential Questions

- What can you tell about a society's values based on their flag?
- How are governments created, structured, maintained, and changed?

Academic Vocabulary

Symbol
Sovereignty
Government
Elected Officials
Values
Community

Materials

Pictures of each of the tribal flags
Teacher's guide of flag pictures and descriptions.

State Standards

- E. Listening and Speaking
- Students use speaking skills to communicate.
 - B1 Knowledge, Concepts, Themes and Patterns of Civics and Government
 - Recognize symbols, monuments, celebrations, and leaders of local, State, and national governments.
- 3-5 indicator
- Explain that the study of government includes how governments are organized and how

Explain:

When the different tribal groups created their flag they included things which represent tribal values and resources important to that particular group.

Explore:

Look at the flags and use the flag descriptions to discuss the flags. Once the flags have been described ask the following questions.

Are there symbols on the flags that represent water?

Are there symbols on the flags that represent animals or the land?

How many flags have the sunrise represented on them?

Why do you think that is important to the Wabanaki?

If we translate the word Wabanaki into English it means People of the Dawn, which is why many of the flags have a symbol which represents the rising sun.

Elaborate:

Along with having their own flags, they also have their own governments, which make rules and laws about what people can or cannot do on their reservations.

The tribal members elect a Chief and a Vice Chief every four years much the same way that we elect a president every four years, except that the Chief and Vice Chief are elected individually and currently do not have term limits. There is also a Tribal Council; the Penobscot council is made up of 12 tribal members, Passamaquoddy and Maliseet's council has six members, and Micmac council has five members. These tribal council members, half of which are elected every two years. There are some variations; Maliseet do not elect a Vice Chief and the Micmac also elect a treasurer and secretary.

The Chief and Vice Chief are the heads of the tribal administration, and are responsible for overseeing the day-to-day functions of the tribal government.

The Tribal Council (and for some of the tribes, committees appointed by the Council) are responsible for making rules and creating laws. Exactly how this process works varies from tribe to tribe. In the Penobscot Nation, for example, any major changes recommended by the Tribal Council and/or its committees must be voted on by all enrolled members of the tribe before becoming laws.

Explore

If you were to create your own personal flag what types of symbols would you



put on it to represent the values which are most important to you?

Have students think about things in their life that make them, their family, or their community special or unique, and have them write down five of these things. Examples might include their pet, their favorite thing to do, something they are really good at, or a building or natural feature in the community that makes it special. From these five things, have students choose three that they can draw or cut out a picture of to create their own personal flag. Students will design a colorful flag using card stock, crayons or markers, and cut out pictures of the things on their list from magazines or the newspaper to use on their flag. Once complete, students can either write a short statement about what the symbols mean to them, or they can share this verbally with the class.

Evaluate:

Review the lesson by choosing certain symbols from each of the tribal flags and having the students explain what they mean.

Recommended References:

Links to tribal websites with information on their governmental structure:

Penobscot Indian Nation:

http://www.penobscotculture.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18&Itemid=31

<http://www.penobscotnation.org/departments/chief-s-office>

<http://www.penobscotnation.org/departments/tribal-council>

Aroostook Band of Micmacs:

http://www.micmac-nsn.gov/html/tribal_government.html

Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkomikuk (Indian Township):

http://www.passamaquoddy.com/?page_id=9

http://www.passamaquoddy.com/?page_id=274 – About Tribal Councils

Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik (Pleasant Point)

http://www.wabanaki.com/wabanaki_new/index.html

Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians:

<http://www.maliseets.com/government.htm>