

Self-Guided School Tour

GRADES 4–6

NATIONAL
MUSEUM
OF THE
AMERICAN
INDIAN

TEACHERS: These activities are intended to help you facilitate conversation with students as you explore the museum.

People, Places, and Environments: For thousands of years, Indigenous peoples have observed, survived in, interacted with, and developed diverse cultures and cultivated deep, abiding relationships with their homelands. These foundations continue to influence American Indian relationships and interactions with the land today.

4th LEVEL: Our Universes—Yup'ik

LOOK

Have students spend time looking at the objects in the exhibition. Then gather the students and ask the following questions:

ASK

- + What animals did the Yup'ik people use the most?
- + What are some of the ways the Yup'ik used marine mammals?
- + Why would you make a parka out of fish skin or seal gut? Is all the clothing they wear made from animals?
- + What type of home do the Yup'ik live in? Why is it built this way?
- + What types of environmental changes might affect the Yup'ik people?
- + Why do you think the Yup'ik still rely on the animals in their environment?
- + Why do you think the Yup'ik teach their children to care for natural resources?

EXPLAIN

The Yup'ik live in an area of western Alaska known as the Yukon-Kuskowim Delta. There are 56 villages in the region today, with Bethel being the hub of the communities. The land is tundra (flat plains where the soil is frozen) and the people rely on the birds, caribou, marine mammals, berries, and grasses for food, clothing, and materials. The Yup'ik continue to use resources from the land because transporting everyday items would cost the majority of what a family makes in a month. For example, a 24-pack of Aquafina bottled water costs \$90 in the Arctic, while in Virginia it costs approximately \$4; a bag of Lay's potato chips costs \$10 for Yup'ik people, but approximately \$4 for Virginians.



Seal gut imamitek (man's raincoat), 2003. Made by Theresa Moses (b. 1928), Yup'ik. Toksook Bay, Alaska. Seal gut, grass, sinew, 120 x 147 x 23 cm. NMAI 26/2568.

Yup'ik qasperlluk (parka), ca. 1910. Dog-salmon skin, sinew, hide, grass, 110 x 94 x 20 cm. Mouth of the Yukon River, Alaska. NMAI 09/7029.





4th LEVEL: Nation to Nation: Treaties between the United States and American Indian Nations

LOOK

Take students to the area titled “Bad Acts / Bad Paper” and have them look at the boarding school section.

ASK

- + What does it mean to be “civilized”? How are civilized people different from uncivilized people?
- + Who decides who is civilized and who is not?
- + What is a boarding school? How is it different from public school?
- + What do you think it would be like to go to a boarding school?
- + How would you cope with being separated from your parents and forced to speak a foreign language?
- + What do you think it would have been like to go to an American Indian boarding school?
- + How do you think boarding schools affected American Indian cultures?

EXPLAIN

American Indian peoples never thought of themselves as uncivilized. They had governments, religions, and social systems, and they wanted to stay civilized in their own way. However, the United States believed that in order to prevent American Indian parents from raising their children in their own cultures, it was important to send them far away to boarding schools. At the boarding schools children could be shut off from Indian languages, values, and traditions. The Carlisle Indian Industrial School used military discipline to train children in mainstream American culture. Children would be punished if they were caught speaking their languages or practicing their traditions. At these schools, boys were taught farming and trades, and girls were taught sewing and cooking. Today, as a result of these schools, not all Native people speak their traditional languages or practice their traditional religions.

Photos taken of Chiricahua Apache children upon arrival at Carlisle Indian Industrial School in 1886 (at left) and four months later, in 1887 (at right), for purposes of publicizing the school's progress in transforming Indian children and fulfilling its mission to “civilize” them. Photos by J. N. Choate. NMAI P06848, P06847



Iroquois lacrosse stick, ca. 1890.
Carved and bent wood, hide, 135.3 x
18.6 x 5.4 cm. NMAI 00/8792.

3rd LEVEL: Window on Collections—Toys & Games

LOOK

Have the students take a moment and look at the toys and games in the case. Next, bring their attention to the snowsnake (long pole in the farthest right case) and the lacrosse stick.

ASK

- + What toys and games do you see that are familiar to you? Which is most interesting to you? Why?
- + What do you think this long pole is? (Point to the snowsnake.)
- + How do you think people played with this? (It's named the snowsnake.) Does that give you any idea of how the game is played?
- + Do you think all tribes played snowsnake? Why or why not?
- + What do you think this object is? (Point to the lacrosse stick.) How do you think people played with it?
- + Do you think all tribes played lacrosse?
- + What might be the benefits of playing these games?



Seneca snowsnake. Cattaraugus Reservation, New York. Wood, lead, paints/pigments, 224.2 x 2 x 1.8 cm. NMAI 00/1685

EXPLAIN

Games have always been, and still are, an important part of American Indian cultures. Not only are they fun to play but many of them teach the importance of physical strength, well-being, and team building. Team sports also offer opportunities for communities to socialize. Not all American Indian nations played the same games; it depended on where they lived. Snowsnake is a winter sport traditionally played by teams of men and boys in many northeastern tribes. Teams compete by throwing a long, wooden, spear-like stick down the length of a track made with snow. The person with the stick that travels the farthest wins. The name snowsnake comes from the way it looks traveling down the track. Sticks can travel more than a mile down a track. Lacrosse is a modern game that originated with the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois). It was a game that was played on a field as short as one hundred yards or as long as two miles. It was played to resolve disputes and to bring families, communities, and nations together.



Located at the Apurimac River, Canas Province, Peru, the Q'eswachaka suspension bridge is the last remaining bridge of its kind in the Andes.

3rd LEVEL: The Great Inka Road: Engineering an Empire

LOOK

Take students to the Chinchaysuyu region and have them look closely at the suspension bridge.

ASK

- + What do you think this bridge is made of?
- + How do you think the rope is made?
- + What are some examples of modern suspension bridges today?
- + How do you think a suspension bridge works? What is tension?
- + How do you think the very first cables were brought across the river to build the Q'eswachaka bridge?
- + Do you think this type of bridge was helpful to the Inka? In what way? How about today?

EXPLAIN

In Chinchaysuyu, the Q'eswachaka suspension bridge has been in use for over 500 years. Every year, the communities on each side of the river rebuild the bridge. Everyone works together to gather and braid the tall grasses into ropes. These ropes are then braided together to make larger ropes, called cables, about the size of a man's upper arm. Once the new bridge is finished, the bridge master takes the new bridge across the ravine and cuts away the old bridge. The bridge works by creating tension to hold weight. Tension is a force that pulls in the opposite directions. Suspension bridges were used to cross deep canyons and ravines. They also protected communities from invaders. The Q'eswachaka bridge is the only suspension bridge still maintained today in the Andes. Some modern suspension bridges are the George Washington Bridge, between Manhattan and New Jersey, and the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco.