



SOCIAL SCIENCES

Baskets

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- Since time immemorial
- Identity
- Lifeways

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student will be able to ...

- Understand the importance of upholding the traditions of basketry for cultural preservation
- Explain why seasonal gathering is important to basketry
- Identify traditional Siletz basketry designs

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Why is basketry important to the cultural preservation of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians?

LOGISTICS

- Where does the activity take place?
The classroom (virtual or in-person) with optional extension activities outside the classroom.
- How are the students organized?
 Whole class Teams: 2 – 4
 Pairs Individually

TIME REQUIRED

About two hours

Overview

This lesson provides students with the opportunity to learn about the basketry traditions of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. The activities will introduce students to basic basketmaking vocabulary, the concept of seasonal harvesting, and the role basketry plays in cultural preservation. In addition, students will have the opportunity to weave their own basket.

Note: *This lesson may pair well with the cultural fire lesson also included in this curriculum, which describes how weavers use fire to maintain gathering areas.*

Background for teachers

Key ideas

- The peoples who make up the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians have lived in Western Oregon, Northern California, and Southwest Washington since time immemorial.
- The Tribes of Siletz remain committed to preserving their heritage despite a long history of forced cultural assimilation perpetrated by the U.S. government, including federal laws and policies that criminalized and discouraged Native people from practicing their traditions and accessing their traditional homelands.



- Basketry is essential to the history and heritage of all the bands who make up the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians; understanding the ways in which traditional baskets are made and used is crucial for ongoing Tribal cultural preservation efforts that work to ensure these traditions will carry on into the future.

Background on basketry

“The survival of our traditions is proof of the resiliency of our community, and our traditions have always played a central role in our ability to remain Siletz people.”

– Alfred “Bud” Lane III, “The Art of the Ceremony: Regalia of Native Oregon Teachers Guide”, p. 11

The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians is composed of dozens of bands and Tribes from across Western Oregon, Northern California, and Southwest Washington—each with a unique cultural and linguistic background. One commonality among these diverse groups is the central role that basketry has in their cultural traditions. From utilitarian uses such as storage containers, floormats, and baby baskets to the highly decorative caps used for ceremonies, baskets are an essential part of the material culture of Siletz people. For many Siletz peoples, women were the sole masters of fine basketry such as cooking baskets and caps, while men made larger utilitarian basketry items such as huge cone-shaped traps to catch salmon.

¹ Oregon is in process of revising its social studies standards. This document references the draft 2018 standards for grade 2.

STANDARDS

Oregon social sciences standards¹

2.16 - Identify the history and narratives of traditionally included and excluded individuals, groups, and circumstances, that impact the local community including individuals who are American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian or Americans of African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicano, Latino, or Middle Eastern descent; individuals from all religious backgrounds; and individuals from traditionally marginalized groups.

MATERIALS

Prior to the lesson, teachers should prepare the following materials:

- Presentation slides
- White board
- Season station signs
- Student supplies for workstations
 - Paper cup
 - Cup cutting template
 - Marker, pencil, or pen
 - Scissors
 - Ruler or yard stick
 - (At least) two colors of yarn, each cut into 4- to 5-foot lengths
 - Beads, with holes large enough for yarn to fit through



Today, Siletz women and men alike are revitalizing traditional basket weaving, ensuring the art form is passed on to future generations.

The process for collecting and preparing basket materials is extensive and can take many months to complete. Collecting materials for baskets often involves the entire family, including children. Weavers carefully select natural fibers and materials from the surrounding landscape based on seasonal availability. To get the best materials, weavers also labor for years and even decades to improve their favorite gathering sites, using techniques such as pruning and burning.

The many different ecosystems and plant species in Western Oregon created a huge variety of basketry traditions, but this lesson will focus on the materials and techniques most common to the Dee-ni peoples who were removed to Siletz from Southwest Oregon and Northwest California. **Hazel sticks**—the “skeleton” or **warp** of the basket—are best collected in the spring and meticulously peeled and straightened one by one. **Spruce roots**—the **weft** of the basket—can be gathered year-round, but many prefer to do so in the spring or fall when the earth is moist and easily dug through with bare hands. **Bear grass** is used as an overlay design material and can be found above 2,000 feet in elevation. Weavers collect bear grass in the summer and lay the material out to bleach in the sun. **Maidenhair fern**, another overlay design material, is found on the north faces of damp, shaded areas and is responsible for the dark color design on baskets. Dee-ni people call the stalk of the fern the “blue jay’s shin” because of its dark color and slender shape.

VOCABULARY

Confederated Tribe – A federally recognized Indian Tribe that is composed of multiple Tribes and bands.

Since time immemorial – Tribal memories and history were shared via oral storytelling that goes back thousands of years, rather than printed texts, as in some cultures. This phrase indicates that the Tribe’s history goes back even farther than the oral histories themselves.

Seasonal gathering – The process of harvesting plants based on seasonal availability.

Basketry vocabulary

Warp – The skeleton or vertical (up and down) element that creates the shape and structure of the basket.

Weft – The element that is typically woven horizontally (left to right) through the warp.

Overlay – Additional design elements or patterns.



Resources

Tribal history

- Tribe website - <https://www.ctsi.nsn.us/>
- Video - The People are Dancing Again: The Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon by Charles Wilkinson <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEtAIGxp6pc>
- Video - Standing Strong the Tribal Nations of Western Oregon <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-43tfBzWfDE>
 - Tip - Information about the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians begins at 9:47 and ends at 16:54

Basketry

- Video - Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians enrolled member, Robert Kentta <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-d6zBchLrmE>
- Video - Alfred "Bud" Lane III, Confederated tribes of Siletz Indians <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=weOas5yN6q0>
- Article - Siletz basketmaker keeps the art alive <https://indiancountrytoday.com/archive/siletz-basketmaker-keeps-the-art-alive>
- Journal article - The social life of basket caps: Repatriation under the Native American graves protection and Repatriation Act, in hopes of cultural revitalization https://www.nativewomenscollective.org/uploads/2/7/4/0/2740039/social_life_of_basket_caps_-_vanessa_esquivido.pdf

ADAPTIONS FOR DISTANCE LEARNING



Activity 1

Conduct the history presentation virtually.

Activity 2

Move students into breakout groups to discuss their answers. Pull students back into the main group to share.

Activity 3

Consider omitting the season stations and focusing solely on the cup-weaving activity to support student learning in a virtual format. Provide directions for cup weaving in handout format and/or via a virtual presentation with small groups of two to four students.

Prior to the lesson, send students materials for yarn and paper cup basket making.

- Teachers Guide - Hallie Ford Museum of Art, Willamette University: The Art of the Ceremony: Regalia of Native Oregon <https://willamette.edu/arts/hfma/pdf/teacher-guides/art-of-ceremony.pdf>
- Chapter 16 of *The People are Dancing Again* by Charles Wilkinson (see appendix). Basketry information begins on page 378, but teachers may want to read from the beginning of the chapter to page 382, particularly if they plan to teach the Dance House lesson also included in this curriculum.
- Cultural fire lesson also included in this curriculum

References

- Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. (n.d.). *Our heritage*. <http://www.ctsi.nsn.us/introduction/>
- Hallie Ford Museum of Art, Willamette University. (2008, September 28–2009, January 18). *The art of ceremony: Regalia of Native Oregon* [Teachers guide to art exhibit]. <https://willamette.edu/arts/hfma/pdf/teacher-guides/art-of-ceremony.pdf>
- Smithsonian Folklife. (2013, June 25). Alfred “Bud” Lane III, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=weOas5yN6q0>
- Wilkinson, C. (2010). *The people are dancing again: The history of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon*. University of Washington Press.

Teacher preparation

1. Review all materials for this lesson, including the presentation slides and directions for setting up stations.
2. Write the key questions on a classroom writing surface, such as a whiteboard.

3. Sketch a seasonal gathering chart, like the one detailed below, on a classroom surface:

When to gather basket materials:

Spring —

Summer —

Winter —

Fall —

4. Prepare the cup-cutting template. The template will help students identify where on their cup they should make cuts for even weaving:
- Place a paper cup top-down on a blank sheet of paper.
 - Trace the cup's circumference with a marker.
 - Use a protractor to draw points on the circle. Points should be spaced widely enough for students to be able to weave yarn through the warp (a quarter inch to one inch apart, depending on the size of the cup).
- Note:** Draw points so that students can cut an even number of strips.
- Scan and print copies of the template to share with students.
5. Prepare the classroom with season stations that students will rotate through during activity 3 (see appendix). Season stations can be tables or groups of desks where students will work on the cup-weaving activity.
6. Prepare each season station with supplies for students to attempt the cup weaving one step at a time. For example:
- Spring station supplies: paper cups, markers, cup-cutting template, scissors
 - Summer station supplies: yarn, yard sticks/rulers, scissors
 - Fall station supplies: beads, paper, markers



Considerations for teachers

Assessment

- Students will engage in a substantial amount of discussion with partners and groups. The teacher should actively monitor student discussion for correct understanding and intervene when there are misconceptions or biases.
- Students will be able to identify the key features of basket design either verbally and/or in writing.

Practices

- Teachers must be prepared to activate engagement strategies such as think-pair-share and group discussion.
- Teachers should have experience in setting up stations/rotations that include clear roles and responsibilities for students.

Learning targets

Students will be able to say, think, or feel ...

- I understand the importance of upholding the traditions of basketry for cultural preservation
- I can explain why seasonal gathering is important to basketry
- I can identify types of Siletz basket design

Reflection/closure

Sum up the lesson by asking students the following questions:

- What did you learn about the materials needed to make traditional Siletz baskets?
- Do you think it's important to Siletz people to keep traditions like basket making alive? Why?
- Do you have traditions in your family or culture?

Appendix

Materials included in the electronic folder that support this lesson are:

- Slides_Siletz_Basketry.ppt
- Season station signs
- *The People Are Dancing Again: The History of the Siletz Tribe of Western Oregon*, chapter 16

Seasonal gathering chart key

When to gather basket materials:

Spring — Spruce roots, Hazel sticks

Summer — Bear grass, Maidenhair fern

Winter — None

Fall — Spruce roots



Activity 1

Orientation presentation

Time: 10 minutes

This opening presentation introduces students to key vocabulary and traditional Siletz basket designs.

Share slideshow (slides 1–9).

- Slide 1. Baskets
- Slide 2. Confederated Tribe
- Slide 3. Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians
- Slide 4. Why is this important?
- Slide 5. Simple and useful
- Slide 6. Baby baskets
- Slide 7. Heavy work
- Slide 8. Cooking
- Slide 9. Ceremonies

Slide 1. Baskets

Say:

I want you to think about all the things you carry around in an average day—your homework, your lunch, your water. What do you use to carry these everyday items? [Pause to give students time to answer.] We seldom think about the containers we use throughout the course of a day, nor do we think about how these items are made. Today, we're going to learn about the essential containers used by the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and how the Siletz people traditionally make and use baskets for many purposes.

Activity 1 (Continued)

Slide 2. Confederated Tribe

Vocabulary: Confederated Tribe

Say:

Let's learn a little more about the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. The Siletz Tribe is a "confederated Tribe," meaning a single government that is composed of multiple Tribes and bands. In the case of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, those Tribes and bands came from many different places, ranging from Northern California through Western Oregon and into Southwest Washington. About 160 years ago, soldiers from the U.S. government and settlers forced all of these groups to leave their homelands and live together on a reservation on the Central Oregon coast with headquarters at Siletz. Today, the descendants of those people make up the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.

Slide 3. Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians

Vocabulary: Since time immemorial

Say:

Each Tribe and band within what is now the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians had its own unique traditions and history and its own ancestral territory—the place its people had lived since time immemorial. What do you think that phrase means: since time immemorial? [Pause to allow students time to think and respond]. Tribal memories and history were traditionally told through oral storytelling that goes back thousands of years, rather than through printed texts, as in some cultures. This phrase means that the Tribe's history goes back even farther than those oral histories explain.

Slide 4. Why is this important?

Say:

Making baskets is an important part of this tradition. Making baskets takes a lot of skill, practice, and knowledge that must be passed down to each new generation. Before the Siletz people were forced from their homelands, people used baskets for

Activity 1 (Continued)

everything from moving goods to cooking—their way of life depended on baskets, and learning basketry skills was an important part of a child’s education.

Today, basketry remains an important part of the Siletz people’s history, culture, and daily life. Tribal weavers carry on the traditional weaving practices to ensure the knowledge is passed on and the traditional ways of living are maintained. Learning about Siletz basketry helps to preserve the Tribe’s heritage and way of life.

Slide 5. Simple and useful

Say:

Traditional baskets serve many purposes for the Siletz people. Some baskets are useful for everyday needs, such as storage containers or eating plates. One of the languages spoken at Siletz is Dee-ni Wee-ya’, a Dené (Athabaskan) language from Southern Oregon and Northern California. Let’s listen to the Dee-ni word for storage baskets.

Action:

Play the audio for “storage basket.”

Slide 6. Baby baskets

Say:

Tribes throughout Southern Oregon and Northern California make and use special baskets to help care for infants. They are such an important part of infant care that a common name for baby in Dee-ni is “gay-yuu-du,” meaning the “one in a baby basket,” or “gay-yuu-ne” meaning “baby-basket person.”

Action:

Play the audio for “baby basket” and “infant.”

Activity 1 (Continued)

Slide 7. Heavy work

Say:

Some baskets are much bigger and are used for heavy work, like trapping fish and transporting things like salmon, oysters, clams, or firewood. People traditionally carry these baskets with a strap around their forehead rather than looping them around their shoulders like a backpack. Let's listen to the Dee-ni word for "pack basket."

Action:

Play the audio for "pack basket."

Slide 8. Cooking

Say:

Siletz weavers can weave cooking baskets so tight they could hold water! Cooking baskets are also strong enough to cook food in, which is done by adding hot rocks to the bottom of the basket. In Dee-ni, cooking baskets are known as ...

Action:

Play the audio for "cooking basket."

Slide 9. Ceremonies

Say:

Some of the most intricate baskets were worn as caps for ceremonies, such as the Feather Dance ceremony. These caps take between 50 to 100 hours to make and can last for up to 150 years!

Action:

Play the audio for "ceremonial caps."

Activity 2

Think-pair-share and whiteboard activity

Time: 10 minutes

This activity introduces vocabulary and key concepts like seasonal gathering. Throughout the presentation, the teacher invites students to write the names of basket materials next to the appropriate harvesting season on the seasonal gathering chart. The teacher poses think-pair-share questions to engage student curiosity and understanding of the material.

Share slideshow (slides 10–24).

- Slide 10. What do you think this basket is made from?
- Slide 11. Hazel sticks
- Slide 12. Warp
- Slide 13. When to gather
- Slide 14. Spruce roots
- Slide 15. Weft
- Slide 16. When to gather
- Slide 17. Overlay
- Slide 18. Bear grass
- Slide 19. When to gather
- Slide 20. Maidenhair fern
- Slide 21. When to gather
- Slide 22. Let's review!
- Slide 23. Let's review!
- Slide 24. Your turn! You make a basket!

Activity 2 *(Continued)*

Slide 10. What do you think this basket is made from?

Vocabulary: Seasonal gathering

Say:

What do you think this basket is made from? Turn to a partner and discuss your ideas. [Pause to allow students time for think-pair-share.] Who wants to volunteer to share with the whole group?

Action:

Ask students to turn to a partner and share their ideas, then ask for volunteers to share with the whole class.

Say:

Great ideas! This basket is made of plants that are collected outside during particular seasons. This process is called seasonal gathering. Let's learn more about the types of plants used to make a cap like this.

Slide 11. Hazel sticks

Say:

Hazel sticks are used to create the warp—or the “skeleton”—of the basket.

Slide 12. Warp

Vocabulary: Warp

Say:

The warp element provides the shape and structure of the basket and is typically vertical (or up and down)—just like a skeleton! The arrows here are pointing to the warp of the basket.

Activity 2 (Continued)

Slide 13. When to gather

Say:

Hazel sticks are best gathered in the spring when the bark begins to slip, making it easier to peel. Weavers are careful about the number of sticks they collect because this determines the size of the basket. Once sticks are collected, members of the community—including children—help peel and straighten each hazel stick. This process is important for preparing the shape of the basket.

Action:

Who would like to write hazel sticks next to their harvesting season on the board?

Action:

Invite a student volunteer to write “hazel sticks” next to spring on the seasonal gathering chart.

Slide 14. Spruce roots

Say:

Spruce roots are another common material. As you can see, they are long and flexible but very strong.

Slide 15. Weft

Vocabulary: Weft

Say:

Because of this, Siletz weavers often use spruce root for the weft. The weft is the part of the basket that is woven through the warp.

Slide 16. When to gather

Say:

Spruce roots can be collected all year long but are easiest to gather in the spring or fall when the earth is moist and easy to dig. Can I have another volunteer to write spruce roots on the seasonal gathering chart?

Activity 2 *(Continued)*

Action:

Invite a student volunteer to write “spruce roots” next to fall on the seasonal gathering chart.

Slide 17. Overlay

Vocabulary: Overlay

Say:

The third main feature of Tribes of Siletz basketry is the overlay. The overlay materials are used to create an additional design element, like a pattern. Look at the overlay on this basket. This basket has a mark (or pattern) called a friendship design.

Action:

Ask students to look critically at the design of the basket to identify the friendship mark.

Slide 18. Bear grass

Say:

To create marks like this, Siletz weavers need to collect materials that can be used for the overlay. For example, bear grass. Weavers hike to areas that are higher than 2,000 feet to collect bear grass! Once they have harvested the bear grass, they prepare it for basket making by laying it out in the sun. This bleaches the grass white. Weavers then bundle and store the bear grass.

Slide 19. When to gather

Say:

Bear grass is usually collected in August. Who wants to write “bear grass” next to its harvesting season?

Action:

Invite a student to write bear grass next to summer on the board.

Activity 2 *(Continued)*

Slide 20. Maidenhair fern

Say:

Maidenhair fern is responsible for the dark color on the baskets. It is found on the north side of damp, shaded slopes. The Dee-ni word for the fern means “blue jay’s shin” because it is dark and narrow.

Action:

Play maidenhair fern audio.

Slide 21. When to gather

Say:

Similar to bear grass, maidenhair fern is best gathered in the summer before the stalks get too brittle. Weavers peel off the leaf and then bundle and dry the stalk to prepare the fern for basketmaking.

Action:

Invite a student volunteer to write “maidenhair fern” also next to summer on the seasonal gathering chart.

Slide 22. Let’s review!

Say:

All right students, let’s review what we’ve learned!

Action:

Read the slideshow bullets one by one.

Slide 23. Let’s review!

Action:

Read the slideshow bullets one by one.

Activity 2 *(Continued)*

Slide 24. Your turn!

Say:

Now it's your turn to make a basket! Or, as you would say in Dee-ni ...

Action:

Play the "you are basket making" audio.

Activity 3

Cup weaving at season stations

Time: 60–90 minutes

Assign students randomly to season stations by asking them to count off with numbers one through three. Students who count as “one” will go to the spring station, students who count as “two” will go to the summer station, and students who count as “three” will go to the fall station.

Provide directions for students at each station. Students will complete a basket-weaving step at each season station to strengthen their understanding of seasonal gathering and basket design.

Ask students about their design as they work at each station.

Once students have their supplies, they can work as a whole group to complete their weaving patterns during the “winter” season. Teachers may want to place the winter sign at the front of the classroom so that students understand winter is not a typical time for seasonal gathering, but rather for making the baskets.

Station 1. Spring

Supplies: Paper cups, markers, cup cutting template, scissors

Student directions

Step 1: Write your name on the bottom of the cup.

Step 2: Place the rim of your cup on the cup-cutting template to identify where to cut your strips. Using the cup-cutting template as a guide, draw a vertical line from the rim to the bottom of the cup.

Step 3: Cut strips along the drawn lines. Be careful not to cut all the way through! You need the bottom of the cup to remain intact for your basket.

Key question: Can you identify the basket element that you are preparing?

[Warp]

Activity 3 *(Continued)*

Station 2. Summer

Supplies: Yarn, yard sticks/rulers, scissors

Student directions

Step 1: Choose at least two colors of yarn you would like to use to design your basket.

Step 2: Use a ruler or a yard stick to measure five feet of one piece of yarn, then cut. Repeat this step again for your other yarn color.

Key question: Can you identify the basket element that you are preparing?
[Weft]

Station 3. Fall

Supplies: Beads, paper, markers

Student directions

Step 1: Choose up to 10 beads for your basket design.

Step 2: Try sketching out your basket! Where will you place the beads?

Key question: Can you identify the basket element that you are preparing?
[Overlay]

Whole group. Winter

Supplies: Beads, paper cups, yarn

Student directions

Step 1: Tie a loose knot (if the knot is too tight it will warp the shape of the strip) with the yarn around the bottom of one of the strips.

Step 2: Weave the yarn in and out of the strips, around and around the cup. Occasionally stop to assess your work and gently push the yarn down to keep even lines. Add your beads wherever you'd like—don't feel like you must stick to the pattern you drew in the fall!

Activity 3 *(Continued)*

Step 3: To change to a new color, snip your yarn, leaving a tail, and tie on a new piece of yarn, leaving another tail. You can trim these tails and tuck them in once you're done weaving.

Note: *This introductory method is much closer to "randing" and uses only one weaver (weft). Most Siletz baskets are produced by twining two weavers (wefts) around the warp.*