

Abenaki Interpretive Programs

Classroom & School Visits

Instructors: Melody Walker-Brook, Sherry Gould, Jeanne Morningstar Kent, Roger Longtoe Sheehan, Vera Longtoe Sheehan, Don Stevens or Jim Taylor

When presenting to a classroom or groups, we are happy to tailor our program to meet the needs of the Audience. Presenters will provide samples of our work or reproductions of historical artifacts to share with the audience so participants may get close up to the items and handle them. As a group, we encourage audience participation when and where possible. Most of our presenters have worked in educational settings previously, making them ideal resources for all age groups including teacher training or administrator and staff sensitivity training.

Performing Artists

The length of most of these presentations can be adjusted to fit into a showcase

Bryan Blanchette, musician and Abenaki linguist, delivers a dynamic performance of contemporary Abenaki songs accompanied by an acoustic guitar and rattle.

Chief Don Stevens of the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation combines a lesson about Abenaki culture, with traditional music accompanied by a hand drum and storytelling.

Chief Roger Longtoe Sheehan of the Elnu Abenaki Tribe gives a fascinating talk on Abenaki history, combined with traditional songs accompanied on a hand drum and storytelling.

Circle of Courage youth group delivers a program of traditional Abenaki songs on the large powwow drum. May also incorporate dancing if space allows.

Laughing Couple Interactive Story Telling deliver a delightful performance that is part storytelling and live action art. As Carolyn tells traditional Abenaki stories, Rick Hunt brings them to life on a four-foot tall Mural

Nulhegan Abenaki Drum Group performs traditional Abenaki music on a big powwow drum.

Willow Greene is a seasoned story teller who has a timeless repertoire of ancient and contemporary Abenaki tales.

Art Workshops

Twined Bag

Instructor: Vera Longtoe Sheehan

In this beginner level class, learn to twine by making a bag which you get to bring home. Several twining techniques will be taught. These skills can then be applied toward making a larger twined bag. It is strongly suggested that this workshop be done in 2 sessions or one whole day with breaks. 5 hours.

Quillwork

Instructor: Jim Taylor

Students will learn the Eastern Woodlands native art form known as Quillwork. Instruction covers porcupine quill collecting, processing/cleaning, sorting & dyeing of the porcupine quills. Participants will learn the line and zig-zag quill techniques. 5 hours

Wampum Bracelet (weekdays only) - Instructor: Linda & Roger Longtoe

Learn the historical significance of wampum. See samples of finished wampum belts and a demonstration of wampum weaving. Then make your own 2 row, glass wampum bracelet with step-by step verbal instructions. All materials included. 4 hours.

Lectures

The light behind our eyes - a perspective on Abenaki identity with Melody Walker-Brook

Identity is the heart of the human experience. Every person carries a different vantage point by which to experience the world and that experience is a testament to the diversity of the human condition. There are many paths to seeing the beauty in all things and changing our lens can bring new perspective. Indigenous people occupy a unique space and express themselves through the values they hold, the clothing they wear, the skills they possess, and the way they interact with all of the persons that exist, from the plant and animal people to all of the other types of persons. When the landscape itself it animate, the human experience changes. Come and listen to what it means to be an indigenous person

Curatorial Discussion

Guest curator Vera Longtoe Sheehan will explain some of the background history of the Abenaki community, how the exhibit was developed and how the collection of garments, accessories and photos connect to Abenaki identity in the twenty-first century.

Decolonizing Native American Art

Across academia, museums and Native American communities, who has the authority to determine what is art versus crafts and how to interpret it? Vera Longtoe Sheehan, Director of the Vermont Abenaki Artists Association explains inequities of law and other social justice issues that affect Native American artists. How have opportunities for Abenakis have changed now that four Abenaki tribes have obtained state Recognition? Presented by Vera Longtoe Sheehan, Director of the Vermont Abenaki Artists Association.

Library Series - Panel Discussions

Four panel discussions with different guest speakers will be moderated by Melody Walker Brook, member of the Elnu Abenaki Tribe who works at Champlain College and serves on the Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs. Discussions will be themed around the idea of Walking the Red Road from the Past to the Future. The materials in the panel discussions will tie into the exhibit, catalog and study guide materials and will encourage civil discussion among panelists and members of the audience.

Artists Panel - The past and present come to life in a lively panel discussion about traditional and contemporary art being created by living Abenaki artists. Some of the topics will include: The Indian Arts and Crafts Law of 1990; art informed by tradition and what it means to be a Native American artist in the 21st century; honoring the past through art, and how artists walk the Red Road recognizing our ancestors.

Youth Panel (approx. 13 to 20'ish) - Representatives of the first generation of Abenakis to know what is like to be state recognized from a young age will discuss their experiences living in the traditional and contemporary worlds. Topics may include school experiences, their roles in their communities their hopes for the future. There will be special safeguards in place for the youth group. Their names will not be advertised and the audience would not interact directly with them. Audience will be provided with cards to write their questions on and Melody will choose which questions to read.

Women's Panel - Native American women are perhaps the most marginalized group of people in Vermont. Discussion by a panel of Native women will address their struggles coming to terms with the dichotomy between the respected position of Abenaki women in our past and how society has lost respect for women, their roles as culture bearers, leaders and mothers; and how cultural traditions suggest possibilities for change in the future.

Wearing Our History – Contemporary Abenaki artists and tribal members talk about the meaning of garments, accessories and regalia in their own lives and in the expression of community and tribal identity.