



Colonial Quest

Discover Your Place in History!



Session 1: Abenaki Homeland

Focusing Question: *Who lived here first, prior to colonization?*

Overview: Students learn Native American place names and connect these words to an ancient relationship with specific locations and qualities of the region. Then, they collaborate to create an Abenaki dictionary.

Topical Understandings:

- This region has been Native American homeland for thousands of years.
- Native words and place names are found across the region
- These words link to specific attributes of the region

Materials:

- Map(s) of Vermont (optional)
- - Abenaki Home land
<http://www.abenakination.org/pics/xlargemap2.jpg>
- Where the Great River Rises, p. 134
- <http://www.upne.com/1-58465-765-0.html>
- Native American place names (Handout A) / *Adapt to emphasize your part of the state*
- Colored pencils or crayons
- Lightly colored construction paper
- *Optional supplements:*
- Native artifacts...
- Foods, like fiddleheads, Jerusalem artichokes, wild onions, maple syrup
- Cultural artifacts, like pottery, projectile points, tools or basketry

Length of time to complete: One 30 - 40 minute period

Procedures:

A. Establish thousands of years of Native inhabitation

1. Students form a line, shoulder to shoulder, and then take steps back in time, to explore how transportation (movement) and culture (settlement) have changed in the region over time. *Take one step back with the reading of each statement:*

- Let's go back in time, **5 years** – there are no iPhones
- And now **25 years** – no personal computers
- Back **50 years** – no interstate highways, much less travel
- **75 years** – few have ever flown in an airplane
- **100 years** – very few have ever ridden in a car
- **150 years** – the 1st trains arrive here in the 1840's & 50's
- **200 years** – everywhere by foot, boat, "horse power"
- **250 years** ago – there are no European colonists or colonies in the Upper Valley; this is Abenaki home land
- **500 years** ago – Abenaki are living here
- **1000 years** ago – Abenaki are living here
- **2000 years** ago – Abenaki are living here
- **4000 years** ago – Abenaki are living here
- **8000 years** ago – Abenaki and their ancestors are here.
- Since the last ice age - **10,000 or so years** ago – native people have inhabited the Upper Valley. It is only very recently that European colonists arrived and called this place "home."
- Many Abenaki still reside here. Do any of you have Abenaki (or other) native ancestry? Abenaki friends? Or neighbors?

2. Introduce various clues to Native inhabitation

How do we know of this long Abenaki history?

- Through written documents (letters, histories, etc.)
 - *(Read from a local one, if available)*
- Through oral histories, both native & colonial
- Through the dating of artifacts – pots, arrowheads, etc.
 - *(Pass around, if available)*
- Through cultural heritage – native foods, etc.
 - *(Show and tell, if available)*
- Through native "place names" across the landscape

3. Introduce Native place names

Living here - and traveling by boat or on foot - over thousands of years, dozens of generations, Native people developed a deep sense of how wealth and wisdom “**sits in places,**” e.g.

Here is the best route between two valleys.

There are the falls – or a good place to fish

Down there is the best place to find clay.

B. Native Place Names Activity

1. Introduction

- Ask students if they know of any places in the area with Native American names.
- Each student receives a Native American place name from the region
- Students read these names aloud to the rest of the class, beginning to build their vocabulary.
- Students identify and highlight these names on a copy of a regional map. (*Any map will have some, like Connecticut, Sunapee, Ascutney; or you can use a more specialized map*)
- Discuss how Native Americans name places, (Descriptive of the site-specific qualities)
- Navigate a journey from one place to the next using Native place names. e.g. How might you get from Mt. Ascutney to Lake Sunapee? Travel east from Kaskakadenak (Wide Mountain) to Kwanitekw (Long River). Follow the river south to Senomoziktekw (Sugar Maple River); then east up the river to Seninebes (Rock Lake).

2. Main Activity – drawing places

- Students receive ½ sheet of construction paper
- At the top, they carefully write their native word
- At the bottom, they write the definition / translation
- In between, they imagine and then draw a picture of that definition, translation or action: e.g. someone gathering wild onions (Winooski) or making a pot from river bank clay (Mascoma). As they work on their drawings, ask the students to try to memorize both their word and its meaning.
- Students share their work
- Collectively, the drawings can be compiled into a dictionary of local Native American place names

3. Concluding Discussion

- Emphasize many Abenaki still inhabit this community

- Emphasize Abenaki folk-ways and food-ways still inform our lives: paved roads trace Abenaki trails; planted fields trace the floodplains; we enjoy and recreate in Abenaki sacred places; and honor the seasonal harvests (sap run, fiddleheads, berries ripening) with celebration.
- Native words - not always correctly interpreted or pronounced by Europeans – surround us today.
- As Europeans heard Native Americans say a name they would apply these words to name places more permanently by placing the names on maps; and different groups might spell these words in different ways: for example, the name Lake Winnepesaukee has over 100 spellings.