



Nez Perce Spirituality

The National Park Service [NPS] *Teaching with Museum Collections* provides lesson plans for teachers to use NPS museum collections in student-centered educational activities. Collections tell the story of America; its peoples, cultures, varied habitats, significant events, and ideas that continue to inspire the world. *Teaching with Museum Collections [TMC]* emphasizes the links between the 'real things;' the collections, and the sites where those collections were found, collected, or used. NPS collections include cultural objects, natural history specimens, archival documents and photographs. Lesson plans link to national education standards.

A. Header

- ❑ **Lesson Unit Plan Title:** Nez Perce Spirituality: an integrated arts; literature, visual art, music and dance unit.
- ❑ **Developers:** Michelle Gallardo, Gr. 7-9 Art Teacher, Jenifer Jr. High School, Lewiston, ID; Teresa Rains, K-12 Music Teacher, Nezperce School District, Nezperce, ID; Lupe Sims – 6th Grade, Kamiah Middle School, Kamiah, ID.
- ❑ **Grade Level:** Grades 6-8
- ❑ **Length of Lessons/Lesson Unit:** 5-7 (45 minute) class periods; Teacher may need to adjust time according to activity.

B. Overview of this Collection-Based Lesson Plan

- ❑ **Park Name:** Nez Perce National Historical Park
- ❑ **Description:** The goal of this lesson is to inform students how spirituality plays an important role in the daily lives of the Nez Perce. Through the use of project-based, inquiry-based, and other engaged learning designs, students will gain a better understanding of the use of these objects: photographic portraits, drum, wolf talisman, eagle fan, medicine pouch, ceremonial tomahawk, and the wéyekin.
- ❑ **Essential questions**
 - What is spirituality?
 - What is the role of spirituality in the Nez Perce culture?
 - How is spirituality connected to objects in Nez Perce tradition?
 - How does this compare to spirituality in our everyday life?

C. Museum Collections Used in this Lesson Plan

NEPE 304	War Drum
NEPE 8833	Wolf Talisman
NEPE 34565	Necklace-Whistle
NEPE 1632	Tomahawk or Hoe
NEPE 1133	Bonnet
NEPE 8790	Headdress
NEPE HI-1904	Nez Perce Men in Regalia
NEPE HI- C9713	Nez Perce Drummers at the Long House, Spalding, Idaho
NEPE HI-2283	Nez Perce Drummers on the Colville Indian Reservation. 1901

D. National Educational Standards

Visual Arts Standards (5-8)

Content Standard #1 Using knowledge of structures and functions

Content Standard # 3 Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas



Content Standard # 4 Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

Content Standard # 5 Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others.

Content Standard #6 Making connections between the visual arts and other disciplines.

Dance Standards (5-8)

Content Standard #1: Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance

Content Standard #3: Understanding dance as a way to create and communicate meaning

Content Standard #5: Demonstrating and understanding dance in various cultures and historical periods

Content Standard #7: Making connections between dance and other disciplines

Music Standards (5-8)

Content Standard #2: Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music

Content Standard #3: Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments

Content Standard #4: Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines

Content Standard #6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

Content Standard #8: Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts

Social Studies Standards (Middle Grade)

I. Culture

b. explain how information and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.

c. explain and give examples of how language, literature, the arts, architecture, other artifacts, traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviors contribute to the development and transmission of culture.

English Language Arts Standards

Content Standard #7: Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, and people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

E. Student Learning Objectives

Activity #1: Students will examine, analyze, compare and contrast the photographs of the medicine pouch and the ceremonial tomahawk using museum and art identification questions.

Activity #2: Students will be able to discuss and identify the items in the photo.

Activity #3: Students will be able to:

1. Discuss, examine and explain the purpose of pursuing a *wéyekin*.
2. Design and draw a model of a personal *wéyekin* of their choice.
3. Write a descriptive paragraph about the animal of choice to represent their personal *wéyekin*.

Activity #4: At the end of this activity students will be able to:

1. Tell how drums are used in Nez Perce society.
2. Construct a playable drum from household materials.
3. Demonstrate the appropriate way to play their drums.
4. Discuss how drums relate to spirituality.

Wrap-up: Students will be able to:

1. Work in a group.
2. Compose a song within their group.



F. Background and Historical Context

Spirituality was present in all aspects of the life of the Nez Perce. They believed that all objects had a spirit. The circular nature of things is present not only in the designs but in the daily life of the Nez Perce: the seasonal circle, the circle of life, circular dances, drums,

When a Nez Perce child was between the ages of seven and thirteen they went on a vision quest for their “wéyekin” or guardian spirit. These children went out into the surrounding country side for days at a time, without food or weapons. They would go to a sacred place and wait for their vision. This vision would tell them what their wéyekin would be and what powers it gave them. Depending upon the gift, the wéyekin could be used for protection or provide guidance on what was right and wrong. Once the person had their vision they were not to tell any one about it for a certain length of time. Many people only revealed their vision on their death beds. It was a very personal experience. In his biography, Yellow Wolf remarked to the author L.V. McWhorter that he would not reveal how he got his wéyekin, “I will not tell just how I obtained that Power. I should not express it. I can not, must not tell.” These guardian spirits were usually in the form of animals, or other forces encountered in the environment such as the wind or the seasons. Each wéyekin has its own innate powers and was expressed in objects such as amulets, charms, or feathers.

Drums

Drums have been important to many civilizations both ancient and modern. The drum beat, in many cultures, is likened to a human heartbeat. Just as the heart is the life line of the body, in many cases the drum is the life line of many songs. The Nez Perce, along with the other Tribes of the Columbia River Plateau, had their own musical traditions. Drums were an important part of that tradition. What may have began as rhythmic drumming of a log or stick evolved into something that we would recognize today as a drum. Drums first appeared as hand drums, to be played by one person. Beginning around 1890, larger drums came into being that could be played by four to eight individuals. Hand drums varied in size and were made of wood and hides. The hide of a deer, elk, or buffalo was used as the head of the drum. To prepare the hide, the remaining flesh and all of the hair was scraped off. The hair side of the hide then became the top of the drum. A wet skin was stretched over a wooden frame and laced with hide thongs on the underside of the drum in the fashion of a wheel with spokes. As the drumhead and lacing dried, the head grew taught, giving the drum its voice. The surface of the drum was frequently painted.

In Euro-American musical traditions, the drum is often used to produce a distinct rhythm that is supplemented by other musicians. For the Nez Perce the drum continues to be an important instrument in ceremonies and is often considered a sacred object. Drum music often accompanies specific songs, whether they are prayers, dances or celebrations.

G. Materials Used in this Lesson Plan

□ Similar items [objects]

Similar in meaning/use: Cross necklace, rosary, rabbit’s foot, copper jewelry, medical alert bracelets or necklaces, wedding or birthstone rings, zodiac signs, tattoos, heirloom jewelry, family photos, candles, saint cards or medallions.

Similar in appearance and texture: manufactured drum, recorder, metal whistle or bone awl, beaded necklace, animal fur or hide, feathers, wool fabric, smooth round stones, fish bones, leather strips or



shoelaces, axe, beaded bag or barrette, old family photo or postcards of photos of Native American people.

❑ **Other materials**

Forms and Charts: Visual Graphic Organizer, How to Read an Object chart (<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/tmc/index.htm>), List of Native Animals

Art-making materials: **Drum Exercise:** Tape, construction paper, coffee cans (one for each student), colored pencils, marking pens.

H. Vocabulary

Ceremonial – actions relating to formal rituals or customs.

Kiwkiwilec kiw (n) – Drum in the Nez Perce language.

Ochre – a mineral, usually in shades of red or orange used in the making of paint

Talisman- an object marked with magical signs used for protection

Tomahawk – an ax used as a tool or weapon

Regalia – magnificent attire, emblems and symbols of status.

Wéyekin – guardian spirit

I. Teacher Tips:

- * Please try these activities before you present them to the class.
- * Some activities may require more time than listed.

J. Lesson Implementation Procedures

- ❑ ***Activity 1: What can you tell us about this picture?***

Objective: Students will be able to -

Discuss and identify the items in the historic photographs.

Materials used for this activity:

- Overhead or other projection type of equipment
- Transparency of photo item to be displayed on overhead
- Transparency overhead marking pens

Procedure:

1. Use historic photographs of Nez Perce men in traditional dress, to be displayed on the overhead.
2. Prior to lesson presentation make copies of photo no. 1 for each student to view closer.
3. Laminate copies of photo no. 1 for later use if necessary.
4. Start the exercise by asking the question: “What does this photograph tell us about the Nez Perce?”
5. Using an overhead or other projector type, the teacher will write the students’ responses from their visual observations onto a transparency which is to be used as a visual concept organizer (see example). The purpose of using this strategy will demonstrate what the students already know and understand.



6. After the items have been identified in the photo; the teacher and students may discuss or write down any other identifying elements before moving on to Part II.

□ ***Activity 2: How to Read an Object***

Objective: Students will be able to -

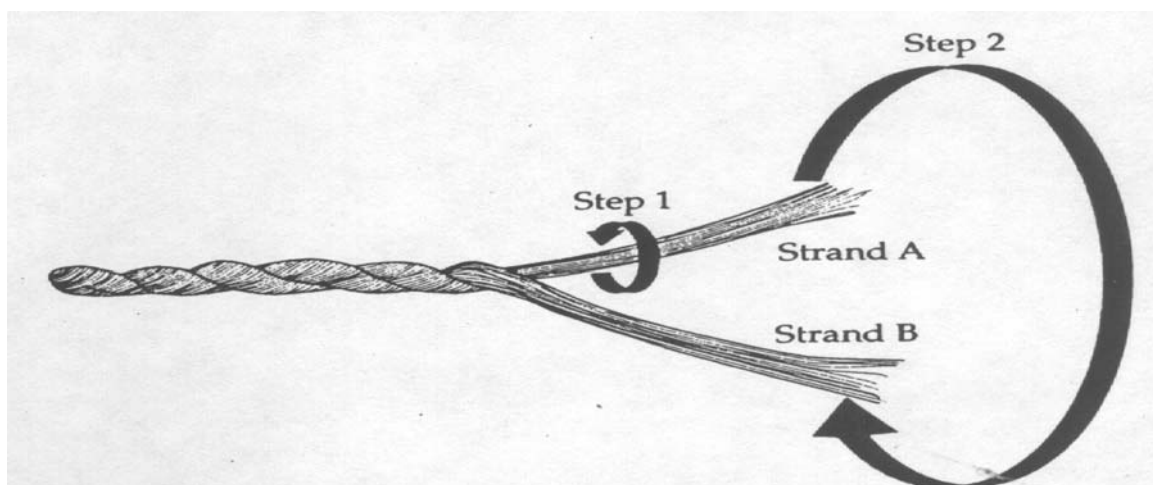
Students will examine, analyze, compare and contrast the photographs of the necklace and the tomahawk/hoe using museum and art identification questions.

1. Divide the class into an even number of groups of three or four students. Each group should be given a copy of the “How to Read an Object” and one color copy of the photos of the necklace and the tomahawk/hoe.
2. Have each group choose a recorder to write answers to the questions.
3. Each group should work together to answer the questions on the form. Allow the groups about 15 minutes to complete this activity.
4. After the groups have completed the questions have each of the group’s recorders share their answers to the compare/contrast portion of the form with the class.
5. Have the students turn in the completed How to Read an Object sheets and use them to evaluate the student’s performance. Additionally, use teacher observation of each student’s participation in the group for evaluation.

Extension:

Have the students create their own personal necklace or medicine pouch to wear for protection. Use paper grocery bag to imitate rawhide. Crumple the bag then iron wax paper over the surface (front and back) with an old iron. The wax melts on to the surface and strengthens it. Cut the paper into circles (use a coffee can lid to trace). The students will then fill the pouch with something of their choice – this could be spices, a stone or dried flower petals, etc. Fasten the pouch with a rubber band and create a necklace with purchased hemp, artificial sinew, or have the students use raffia to make cordage in the technique of the Nez Perce.

To make cordage with raffia, give each student two 15 inch long pieces of raffia. Tie one end of Strand A and one end of Strand B together. Hold both strands side-by-side, in your left hand between your forefinger and thumb (if right-handed, vice-versa if left-handed). Pick up Strand A between your right forefinger and thumb, and twirl the strand away from your body (clockwise), Step 1 on figure.





Take the twisted Strand A and bring it toward your body, over and then under Strand B, Step 2 on figure.

Hold Strands A and B between your left forefinger and thumb about where you crossed A over B. Repeat the twirling and crossing sequence: pick up Strand B, twirl it away from your body, and cross it over and under Strand A.

Continue these steps. The twirling in one direction and crossing in another direction forms an interlocking pattern like that of machine-made rope. If the cordage looks all twisted in the same direction, then the locking twist is not taking place, and usually the strands are being twirled in the wrong direction.

Extension Activity: Ask students to voluntarily bring in an object from home which is similar to one of the objects studied. Have the class compare and contrast that object with the museum sample using the questions on the “How to Read an Object” sheet.

❑ **Activity 3: Journey of the Wéyekin Vision Quest**

Objective(s): Students will be able to-

1. Discuss, examine and explain the purpose of pursuing a wéyekin.
2. Design and draw a model of a personal wéyekin of their choice.
3. Write a descriptive paragraph about the animal of choice to represent their personal wéyekin.

Materials used for this activity:

- ❑ Wolf’s Talisman, NEPE 8833
- ❑ Bonnet, NEPE 1133
- ❑ Headdress, NEPE 8790
- ❑ Regular pencils and colored pencils
- ❑ Legends to read from *Welcome to Kaya’s World: Growing Up in a Native American Homeland*: “A Spiritual Brother”, pg. 21; “How Bear Helped Nimiipuu” pg. 22.

Procedure:

1. Teacher will read the legends mentioned above as an introduction to how the Nez Perce Native Americans viewed and valued the role of the wéyekin.
2. Teacher will discuss the following with students:
 - ❑ What is a wéyekin?
 - ❑ The role of wéyekin among the Nez Perce.
3. Students will choose their wéyekin (animal) from a teacher made list to use in their drawing and descriptive paragraph writing.
4. Students will draw, color, and write their paragraphs describing their wéyekin.
5. Students will present and display their wéyekin for public viewing.

Assessment:

Observation assessment – discussion, examine, explain

Descriptive Paragraph Rubric:

Chose animal for wéyekin-yes/no



Draw and color wéyekin-yes/no

Paragraph completed-yes/no

□ **Activity 4: Drums**

Objective(s): Students will be able to-

1. Tell how drums are used in Nez Perce culture
2. Construct a playable drum from household materials
3. Demonstrate the appropriate way to play their drums

Materials used for this activity:

- NEPE 304 War Drum
- NEPE HI- C9713 Nez Perce men drumming/singing
- NEPE HI-2283 Nez Perce men drumming/singing in Nespelem, c. 1901
- Tape
- Construction paper
- Coffee cans (one for each student)
- Colored pencils
- Marking pens

Procedure:

1. Have the class look at the two photographs (NEPE HI-C9713 and NEPE HI-2283). These photographs are of drums being used by Nez Perce. Ask the students what are the actions do they see in the photographs? What does this tell us about the Nez Perce?
2. Show the picture of the War Drum and ask the students some questions about what they are seeing. Such as:
 - a. What is this?
 - b. What is it made of?
 - c. What are some things you notice about this drum?
 - d. What do you think the images on the drum stands for?
3. To understand the meaning of the drum, write the following quote for the students to read: “a tale in a book is like a drum in a museum; it’s silent; it’s dead, it’s just there doing nothing.” Ask the students what they think this means? Explain the meaning of the drum.
4. Have the students think about what they would decorate their drums with. Remind them of the wéyekin they picked earlier.
5. Have each student make their own drum.
 - a. Start with students decorating the construction paper with their design. Remind them to integrate their chosen wéyekin into their decorations.
 - b. Encourage the use of geometric shapes, reminding the students that these designs were simplified and stylized. Native American drawings did not look like pictures, they were more abstract.
 - c. After they are done decorating their construction paper tape it around the coffee can with the design side out.
 - d. Their drum is now complete.



National Park Service
Teaching ^{with} **MUSEUM** Collections
Management Program
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum>

6. After they have all completed their drums have about three minutes for them to play around with them and make-up different rhythms. Give the students' free reign to do what they like but remember to keep the time limit short.

Drum Exercise Evaluation Guidelines:

1. Make sure their design reflects their individual wéyekin.
2. Make sure their designs reflect things that are very important in their lives. They do not want just arbitrary images on their drum.
3. Make sure that they worked diligently and that they tried their best to make a great drum.

□ ***Wrap Up Activity and Discussion***

Title: Song and Dance

Objective(s): Students will be able to:

1. Work in a group.
2. Compose a song within their group.

Procedure:

1. Take about 10 minutes to review what you have talked about the Nez Perce spirituality.
2. Break the class into groups of 3 or 5 people.
 - a. One or two people will play their drums.
 - b. One or two people will be the dancers.
3. Give the groups two minutes to decide who will be doing what.
4. Give the groups ten minutes to compose their song and to figure out what they will do for their dance.
 - a. Make sure you stress that they will not be graded on the difficulty and they need to just have fun with this.
 - b. They should limit their creation to less than 3 minutes.
 - c. They will have to repeat the same verse 3 times to mimic the style of the traditional Nez Perce songs.
5. When everyone is done have them start to present their projects to the class.

Composition Grading Guidelines/Grading Guidelines for the Composition:

1. Make sure they repeat the verse three times.
2. Make sure that everyone participates equally.
3. They look like they tried their best.

K. Evaluation/Assessment for Measurable Results

Activity #1: Observation of students work.

Activity #2: Answers on "How to Read an Object" sheet, groups reports.

Activity #3: Observation assessment – discussion, examine, explain

Descriptive Paragraph Rubric: Chose animal for wéyekin-yes/no

Draw and color wéyekin-yes/no

Paragraph completed-yes/no

Activity #4: Drum Grading Guidelines:

1. Make sure their design reflects their individual wéyekin.



National Park Service
Teaching with **MUSEUM** Collections
Management Program
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum>

2. Make sure their designs reflect things that are very important in their lives. They don't want just arbitrary images on their drum.
3. Make sure that they worked diligently and that they tried their best to make a great drum.

Wrap-up: Grading Guidelines for the Composition:

1. Make sure they repeat the verse 3 times.
2. Make sure that everyone participates equally.
3. They look like they tried their best.

L. Extension and Enrichment Activities

- The students will compose their own song on their drums and perform it for the class
- Each student will need to come up with a way to write their songs down so other people could play them.
- Invite a local Native American group to play some of their music for your class.
- Choose a random object from the classroom and pass it around to each person in the class as you sit in a circle. When each person is given the object they should say something about what the object means to them personally or reflect/respond to what another person in the class said about the object. This activity helps demonstrate how we assign meanings to objects in a personal way.
- Ask students to bring in an object from home which is similar to one of the objects studied. Have the class compare and contrast that object with the museum sample using the questions on the "How to Read an Object" sheet.

M. Resources

□ **Bibliography**

- Aoki, Haruo. *Nez Perce Dictionary*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994.
- Clark, Ella E. *Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest*, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1953.
- Raymer, Dottie. *Welcome to Kaya's World 1764: Growing Up in a Native American Homeland*. Middleton, Wisconsin: Pleasant Company Publications [American Girls Collection], 2003.
- Takacs, Stefanie. *The Nez Perce*. New York: Children's Press, 2003.

□ **Web Sites**

- Cultural information on the Nez Perce: <http://www.fs.fed.us/npnht/culture>
- Nez Perce Tribe: <http://www.nezperce.org>
- Nez Perce National Historical Park: <http://www.nps.gov/nepe>
- Colville Confederated Tribes: <http://www.colvilletribes.com/>
- Umatilla Confederated Tribes: <http://www.umatilla.nsn.us/>

N. Site Visit

- **Pre-visit:** Before the visit have the students visit the Nez Perce National Historical Park website (www.nps.gov/nepe). Have a few brochures from the park to let the students familiarize themselves with how the park is laid out and its operations. Call the park and schedule a visit. They will have a park ranger specifically for your group.
- **Site visit:** At the Nez Perce National Historical Park have each student pick on object and analyze it. You may use the "How to Read an Object" sheet or create your own version of this. For younger students you may develop a scavenger hunt list where they need to find certain objects.



National Park Service
Teaching ^{with} **MUSEUM** Collections
Management Program
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum>

- ❑ ***Post-visit:*** See extension activity list for ideas for post-visit student presentation ideas.
- ❑ ***Virtual visit:*** Assign an activity that requires a virtual tour of the park, similar parks and museums.