

Note: For a Guided Exhibit Exploration, ask for “Native American Environments & Cultures.” Guided Exhibit Explorations include hands-on materials and activities led by a museum educator.



Educator's Guide

The second floor exhibits will help you explore the varied Native American lifestyles as expressed through material culture and environmental concerns.

Students will see, compare, and contrast traditional clothing, art, housing, and food of the Iroquois, Plains, Southwest, Northwest Coast, Inuit (Eskimo), and Algonquin groups.

Suggested connections: Visit At the Western Door; Visit Expedition Earth; See Native American Skies.

Grades K-8

NYS Learning Standards:

A 4

ELA 1, 4

LOTE 2

SS 1, 3

Exhibits

- Seneca Village Life
- Indians of the Plains
- Pueblo Indians of the Southwest
- Indians of the Northwest Coast
- Peoples of the Arctic
- Algonquin Indians of Canada

Curriculum Focus:

Grade K:

- What are some of the basic needs and wants of families and how can these be satisfied through the community?
- What are some of the changes that occur in the natural world and what is their effect on wild animals, humans, and seasons?
- What are some ways art is expressed on both personal and cultural levels?

Grade 1:

- What are some characteristics which all people share?
- How do family structures, customs and traditions differ and how are different roles fulfilled by family members?
- What tools do you observe? What different kinds of jobs do you think were done with these tools?

Grade 2:

- How do you think weather affects human activities?
- How do you think geography and climate affect members of communities?
- How do you think people in each community play various economic roles as producers and consumers of goods and services?

Grade 3:

- How do you think cultures around the world compare to North American Indian cultures?
- How do you think communities exhibit different cultural characteristics?
- How do you think people of each community have adapted to and/or changed their environment in order to survive?
- How might families in other communities exhibit some similarities and differences in organization, responsibilities, and customs?

Grade 4:

- Focus on study of local history and local government.
- Compare/contrast local communities, histories and governments.

Grade 5:

- How do their physical environments affect these people as they attempt to fulfill their basic needs in life?

Grades 6-8:

- Expanded to provide a more global and multi-cultural perspective.

Basic concepts

- There are many different Native American groups. They are quite distinct from each other. Be aware of similarities and differences.
- There are many Native Americans living today. Some live in more traditional ways than others.
- Native Americans (Indians) are the people who lived in America before the Europeans "discovered" it (Columbus, pilgrims, etc.).
- Concentrate on the food, clothing, shelter and traditional art of each group.
- Contemporary materials can be used in traditional ways (sneakers beaded in traditional designs, dental floss to string beads instead of porcupine quills).
- All cultures change and continue to change through time.
- As cultures change many traditional elements are retained.
- This affects attitudes and philosophy as well as material things such as housing and clothing.
- Seasons and weather affect when things can or must be done.

Suggested Questions to Increase Observation and Attention:

- If you meet someone, what do you want to find out about them? Make a list of questions and things you want to learn before coming to the museum.
- Have students describe what they see: colors, shapes, designs, objects, etc. Have them try to guess what the objects are and what their meaning might be before reading the label copy.
- What's for lunch? What kind of "stew" do you think you would eat in each of these cultures? In what, do you think, would it be cooked? Why?
- Which clothing type do you think would be most comfortable?
- If you could visit one of these groups, which and why?
- Divide the students into different groups which look for different things in each diorama (clothing, food, house, art, etc.). Share findings back in the classroom.
- Tell one of the traditional Indian stories before or after your visit to the museum.