INTERWOVEN POWER:

NATIVE KNOWLEDGE/ NATIVE ART

UNIT 1: WE'RE STILL HERE!

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ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What are examples of Lenape resilience?



Installation view of *Interwoven Power: Native Knowledge / Native Art*, 2024
(Jason Wyche/Montclair Art Museum)

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

Students will understand that Lenape artists continue to pass on cultural knowledge, and also comment on history as well as modern-day issues.

Native American Art embodies Indigenous knowledge as well as highlights the resilience of Lenape communities within the theme “We’re Still Here!”

Students will understand the significance of the Montclair Art Museum’s location in Lenapehoking and the continuance of Lenape communities and culture in both New Jersey and North America.

SETTING AN INTENTION

Before beginning the unit, students can set an intention for what they might learn, feel, or do while learning about the Lenape. Try to be mindful while you are learning this information that the place where you learn has been walked on by the Lenape since the beginning of time.

Native American thought indicates that all experiences are important and have meaning if we make the time to see and feel them. When we experience Native art, we are learning what the artist learned and experienced. Living with intention helps us learn and grow.

READ THE POEM

To the American People, was written more than 100 years ago by Richard Calmit Adams, member of the Delaware Tribe of Indians, a federally recognized tribe of Lenape people.

As we learn about Lenape people, land, and resilience, think about how this may impact your understanding of your community and history.

To the American People

Richard Calmit Adams

1864 –1921

With your kind permission, your attention I will claim,
I am only just an Indian, it matters not my name,
But I represent my people, their cause and interest, too;
And in their name and honor, I present myself to you.
They have your sacred promise, your pledge of friendship warm,
That you would always aid them and protect them from all harm,
And in my humble efforts, as I briefly state their case,
Will you pardon my shortcomings, and my errors all erase?

I do not come with grandeur, or boast of any fame,
Rank in politics, society, or wealth I cannot claim,
I never went to college, have no title of LL. D.,
As the Great Spirit made me, is all that you may see.
With the forces that oppose me, I certainly should pause,
If I were not depending on the justice of my cause.
I am only just an Indian, who here represents his band;
With this simple introduction, I extend to you my hand

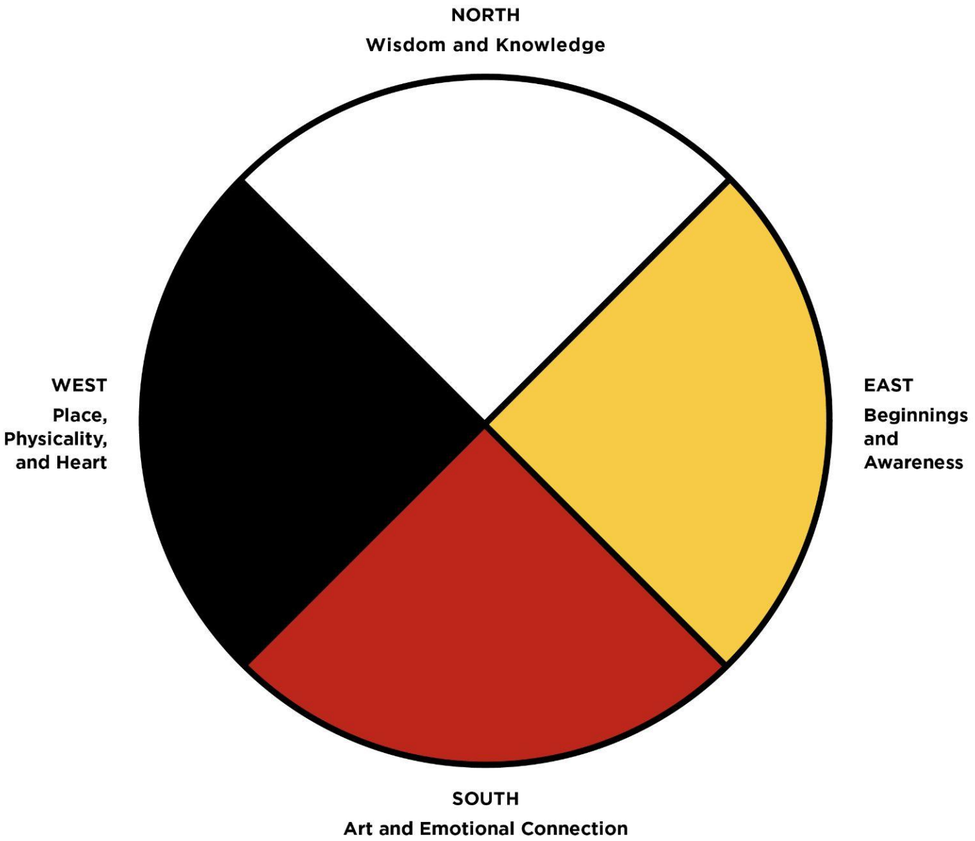
Adams, Richard C. “To the American People.” Poets.org, October 24, 2017. https://poets.org/poem/american-people.

MEDICINE WHEEL

The medicine wheel is a way of understanding and reflecting on life and learning.

Used by many Native people, the medicine wheel uses four quadrants to symbolize a journey through life or learning that is marked by a connection to the internal, physical, and spiritual world.

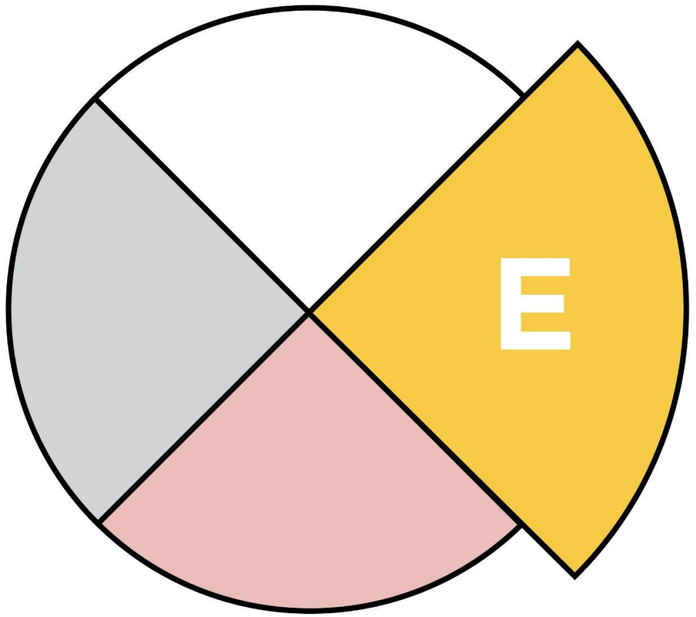
The medicine wheel is oriented in the four directions—East, South, West, North. It marks a journey of discovery that guides us to balance and self-reflection.



THE EAST: BEGINNINGS AND AWARENESS

Learn about the Lenape People

Goal: For students to experience a connection to themselves, their location, and the material spiritually



The East represents our infancy and the beginning of a journey that will take us around the medicine wheel. The East is associated with the rising sun and the spring season reminds us that we are spiritual beings. Consider how learning can help us grow intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

While the medicine wheel is being used here to guide our learning journey, it is important to understand it was not originated by the Lenape people, but with Indigenous peoples of the Great Plains and Canada.

LEARN LENAPE LANGUAGE

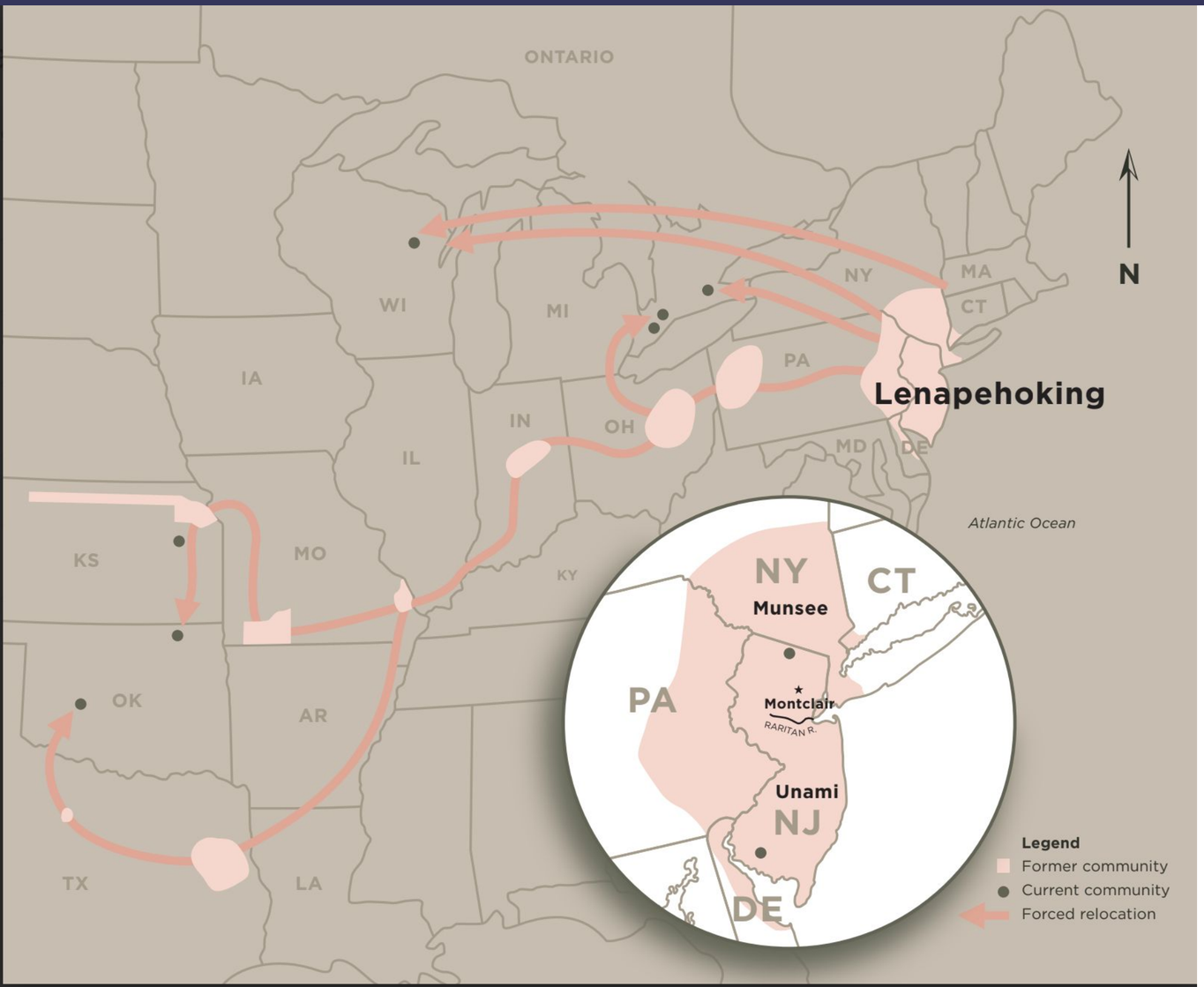
Language is an important part of Lenape culture.

Munsee is one of the languages (or dialects) of the Lenape people.

Learn how to introduce yourself in Munsee.



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LENAPEHOKING

This map shows Lenapehoking, the homelands of the Lenape people, and the places where the Lenape were forced to relocate by European settlers.

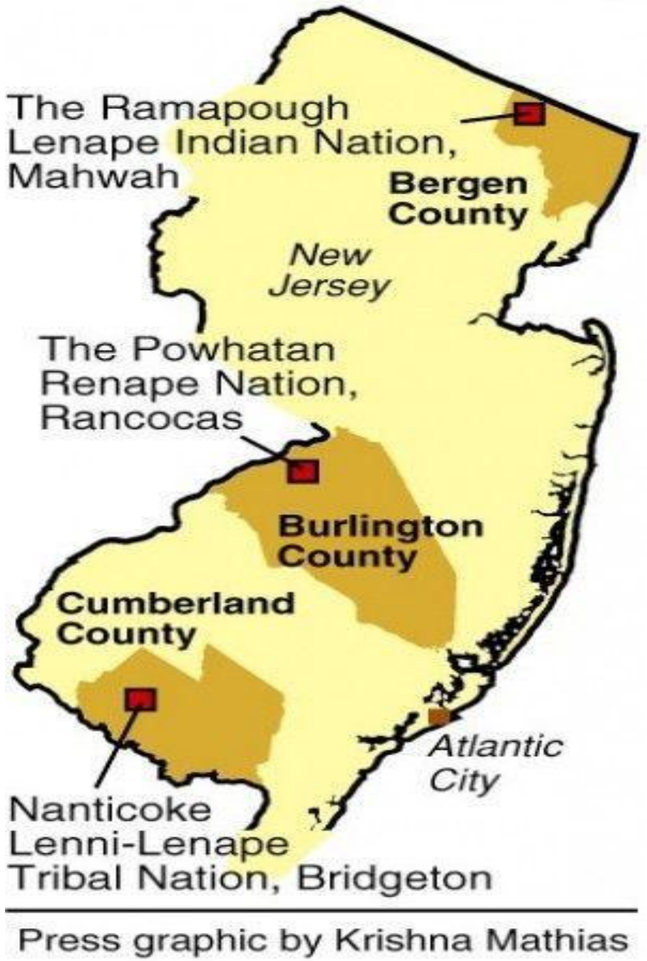
The Montclair Art Museum is on Lenape land. We honor and affirm Lenape people and their ongoing ties to this place as well as the many Indigenous people living in the region today.

Use https://native-land.ca/ to examine the original tribal territories in New Jersey.

NEW JERSEY STATE-RECOGNIZED TRIBES

Indigenous people continue to live and work in New Jersey Today.

This map shows the location of the three tribes officially recognized by the state of New Jersey.



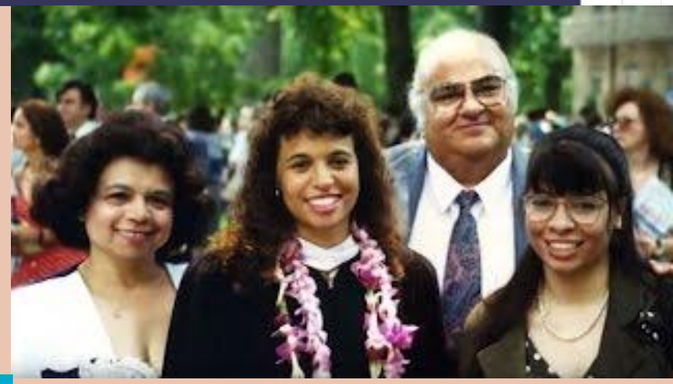
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EXPLORE

Watch a video to learn about efforts to preserve Native cultural knowledge and sovereignty, or the ability to self-govern, in New Jersey, New York and beyond.

Dance With Me: The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Indians of New Jersey

- This video focuses on the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape in Southern New Jersey





The Lenape Nation (The Delaware): History, Society and Culture

- This video focuses on the Lenape (Delaware)

Back to Manahatta: The Return of the Lenape People by Stewart Huntington

- This video focuses on addressing erasure in NY (and NJ)

https://vimeo.com/646162755



REFLECT

As you begin your journey learning about the Lenape people, consider the following questions:

- What conclusions can we draw about the forced displacement of the Lenape from their homelands?
- Think about where you live. Has your family lived anywhere else? What makes those places important to you?

Complete the Medicine Wheel Worksheet East Quadrant

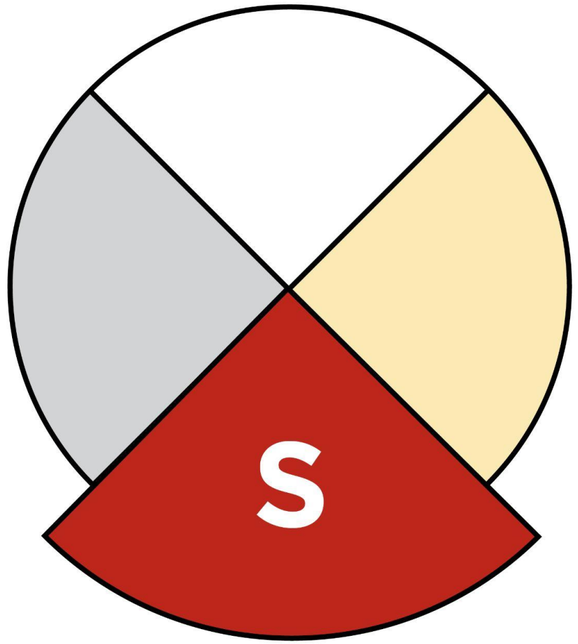
- What personal connections do you have when you are learning about the Lenape people?
- Do you have special memories about the landscape and geography of New Jersey?
- How does it feel to be outside in these special spaces?

Write or draw your response.

SOUTH: EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS

Explore contemporary art by Lenape artists

Goal: For students to experience an emotional connection to the material and explore their own feelings related to their experiences



The South represents our youth in the cycle of life and is symbolized with the growth associated with summer. The South reminds us of our emotional selves and the ability to connect with others.

The South emphasizes emotional connectedness and creativity and is associated with the creation and viewing of art.

MEET LENAPE ARTIST HOLLY WILSON (DELAWARE NATION)

Artist Holly Wilson, member of Delaware Nation, is making a new artwork for the Montclair Art Museum.

- What surprised you about Holly's artwork?
- Why does the artist work with clay and glass?
- What does she hope to communicate through her artwork?



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LOOK

- What do you notice about the pieces below?
    - Why does the artist use glass as her medium for these portraits?
        - Do they remind you of anything you have seen before?





Detail of rondels for
What Was, What Is, What Will Be
Holly Wilson (Delaware Nation,
b. 1968). Glass, bronze, stainless
steel. Montclair Art Museum,
Museum purchase, Acquisition
Fund. Photos courtesy of the artist.

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EXPLORE

In this photo artist Rebecca Haff Lowry, member of Delaware Tribe of Indians, is wearing her artwork, *Cape of a Matriarch*.

- What do you notice about this artwork?
- Does it remind you of anything you've seen before?
- What materials do you think were used?
- When do you think someone might wear this cape?

This cape is made from turkey feathers and is inspired by capes worn by Lenape ancestors. The artist has said “this cape is dedicated to Lenape people returning to Lenapehoking, in greater numbers, to reconnect and shine with our homeland.”

Rebecca Haff Lowry (Delaware Tribe of Indians) wearing *Cape of a Matriarch*, 2021. Photo by Kim Mettler, courtesy of the artist.

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Rebecca Haff Lowry wearing *Cape of a Matriarch*, 2021. Photo by Kim Mettler, courtesy of the artist.

CONNECT

Rebecca Haff Lowry (Delaware Tribe of Indians) is also a poet.

- What similarities can you find between her poetry and her artwork?
- Why do you think she creates both?

Continuous

nahi nta
I go downriver,
    collect memories;
tàkhòne
confluence of rivers,
    course and
    currents, pèmhanèk,
    never dammed.
shaunke
At the bank
    a woman washes roots;
nahi
downriver,
    speaks Unami, weaves with feathers.
psikahëna
We wear feathers;
    they reflect our light.
èhènta wehikiyànkw
At our old homeland
    the headwaters replenish themselves.

Copyrighted to Rebecca Haff Lowry. This poem can only be reproduced for instruction with students.

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COMPARE

- What similarities do you see?
- How are they different?
- How do they both show Lenape knowledge?
- How do they show resilience?



Cape of a Matriarch, 2021. Rebecca Haff Lowry (Delaware Tribe of Indians, b. 1972). Turkey feathers, glass beads, dentalium shells, hemp string. Courtesy of the artist.



Detail of rondels for *What Was, What Is, What Will Be*, Holly Wilson (Delaware Nation, b. 1968). Glass, bronze, stainless steel. Montclair Art Museum, Museum purchase, Acquisition Fund. Photo courtesy of the artist.

REFLECT

As you continue to learn about Lenape people today, consider the following questions:

- What do you believe are the motivations of the artists?
- What motivates you to make art? What emotions do you experience?
- What emotions do you experience while you are learning?

Complete the Medicine Wheel Worksheet South Quadrant

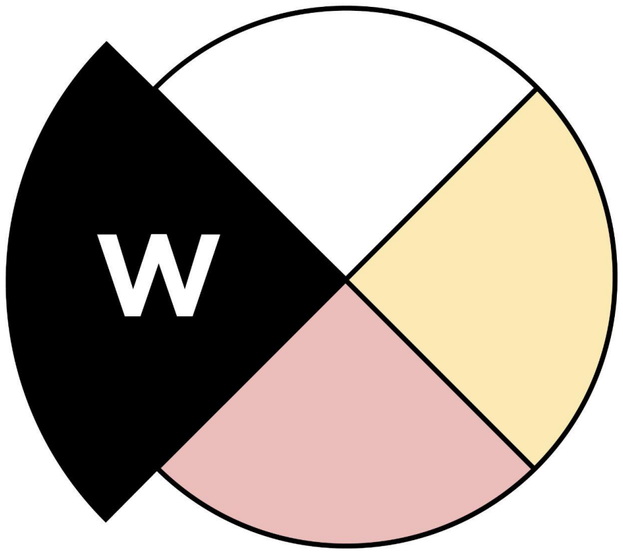
- What motivates Holly Wilson and Rebecca Haff Lowry to create their artwork?

Write or draw your response.

WEST: PLACE AND LENAPE RESILIENCE

Explore Lenape voices through their own histories

Goal: For students to connect to the land through Lenape and personal stories



The West represents the fall season and grounding ourselves in our physical reality. The West is represented by adulthood where we acknowledge our relationship with our bodies and the places we live. The teachings of the West remind us that the mind and body are connected and we, in turn, are connected to each other and the Earth. The West reflects perseverance, awareness, and the respect for other people and their experiences.

LOOK

- What do you notice about Holly Wilson’s glass castings below?
    - What colors the artist use? What plants do you see?
        - Why do you think the artist includes plants from both Lenapehoking and Oklahoma?







Detail of rondels for
What Was, What Is, What Will Be
Holly Wilson (Delaware Nation, b. 1968).
Glass, bronze, stainless steel. Montclair Art Museum, Museum purchase, Acquisition Fund. Photos courtesy of the artist

REFLECT

As you continue to learn about Lenape history, consider the following questions:

- What about the histories that you read surprises you?
- How do these stories help you understand current tribal locations, and impacts of removal?

Complete the Medicine Wheel Worksheet West Quadrant

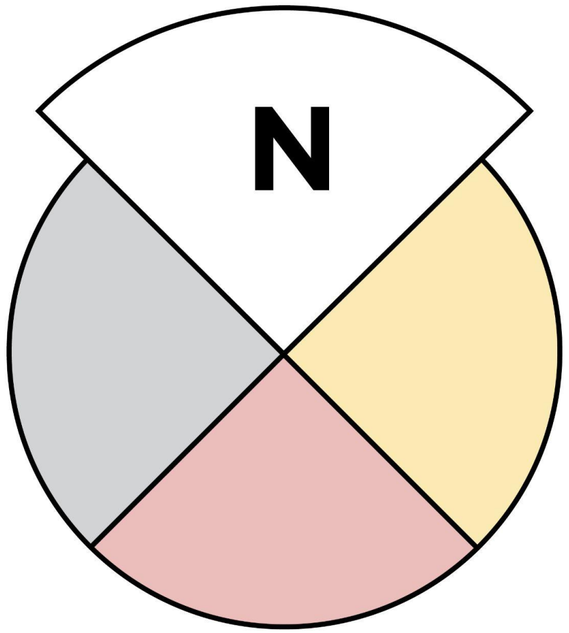
- List plants and animals that are local to your region.
- What plant or animal would you use to represent your home?

Write or draw your response.

NORTH: WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

Explore Lenape Culture

Goal: For students to reflect on their growth in understanding of Lenape culture



The North represents the winter, our elders, and the intellectual side of our life. The North lessons help us use our wisdom and engage our thinking and problem solving skills. The North helps us see how things fit together and reflect at the end of our journey.

WATCH

Learn about Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape regalia.



WATCH

Powwows celebrate Native cultures.



REFLECT

As you continue to learn about how Lenape artists pass on cultural knowledge consider the following questions:

- How does contemporary regalia demonstrate resilience and the idea “We’re Still Here”?
- How do powwows demonstrate resilience and the idea “We’re Still Here”?
- Refer back to the artwork of Holly Wilson and Rebecca Haff Lowry. Why might it be important to see art done by Lenape people today?

Complete the Medicine Wheel Worksheet North Quadrant

- What is your family proud of that is similar to what you have learned in the North quadrant?

Write or draw any lessons or “wisdom” you have learned from this unit.

CREATE

Watch two artists from the Ramapough Munsee Lenape Nation, Marcey Tree in the Wind Langhorn and Charlene Quiet Thunder Defreese, demonstrate how to make a personal bag.

Follow the steps to create your own personal bag.



REFLECT

Reflection is an important part of Indigenous learning. Taking time to think about your experiences and appreciate the knowledge that has been shared across generations helps deepen your understanding and strengthens the lessons you carry forward.

- How did you personalize your bag to make it special to you?
- What will you put inside your bag that is meaningful to you?
- Why do these artists want to share their knowledge?
- How do their teachings represent Lenape resilience?



Marcey Tree in the Wind Langhorn and Charlene Quiet Thunder Defreese, photo courtesy of the artists.