



# Mi'kmaq Culture Instant Meeting



Did you know October is Mi'kmaq history month in Nova Scotia? The Mi'kmaq people were the first people on the land in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island as well as parts of Newfoundland, Quebec and Maine. This instant meeting will help you bring in parts of the culture into your unit and remember this can be used anytime, not just October.

### **Opening Activity**

What do you know about the Aboriginal People in Nova Scotia? As a unit, discuss what you think you know, addressing any stereotypes they may have. Ask the girls how could stereotypes be dangerous?

Here is a website to get you started: <http://mikmaqhistorymonth.ca>

For Younger girls: You can adapt the discussion portion by having them draw a picture of what they think. This can also work for older girls.

### **Traditional Crafts**

Younger Girls: Talking Stick

Do you know what a talking stick is? Did you know Talking sticks have been used by the Mi'kmaq people for hundreds of years as part of their ceremonies? Make one with your unit, some suggested materials are below but talking sticks can be made from anything. After you have made them, test them out the next time your unit is having a discussion

#### Materials:

- Toilet Paper roll/or piece of dowel
- Felt
- Elastic band
- String or leather cord (optional)
- Beads (optional)
- Feathers (optional)
- Glue gun

#### Directions:

1. Give each girl a toilet paper roll and one piece of felt, slightly larger than the end of the toilet paper roll.
2. Wrap the elastic band around the end of the toilet paper roll and felt to secure it. Longer elastic bands may have to be wrapped twice
3. Tie a piece of string around the end of the toilet paper roll with the felt, leave excess
4. Attach the beads to the string or cord with a knot.
5. Attach the feather to the beads by adding hot glue to the end and then putting the end inside the beads

6. Using Markers, girls can decorate the toilet paper roll to their liking.

Cultural Lesson: In the Mi'kmaq culture, the goal much like in Girl Guides, is for everyone to feel respected and heard. This is why when the Mi'kmaq people have discussion they always sit in a circle, so that everyone can see each other. The talking stick is used to ensure everyone has equal chance to speak and is always passed clockwise.

#### Older Girls: Dream Catchers

Do you know what a dream catcher is? Did you know they came from the Aboriginal Culture? Why not make your own?

#### Materials

- Metal or plastic Hoop (can be found at craft stores)
- Fishing Twine
- Yarn or leather cord
- beads
- Feathers
- Glue gun

#### Directions:

1. Give each girl one metal hoop and 1 arms span of yarn or cord. Less if their hoops are small.
2. Have the girls tie or glue one end of the yarn or cord to the hoop, and begin wrapping the cord all around until the whole hoop is covered, then have the girls glue the end and cut off the excess
3. Next give the girls fishing twine and have them begin by wrapping it to one part of the hoop then crossing to the other side, creating a web on the inside.
4. Once the girls have made four crossings, have them cross half way (having their string stop in the center) and tie on one bead. Then continue crossing again, until the web is complete.
5. Give the girls 2-4 pieces of cord, and have them attach them to the bottom of the dream catcher. The cord should be long enough so it dangles.
6. Have girls then tie on 4 beads on each cord.
7. Finally, add one feather on the end of each cord by adding a small amount of glue to the feathers end and sticking it into the beads.

Cultural lesson: The dream catcher is created in a specific way so that it may do its job, catching the bad dreams and washing them away. This is done through the circle and web. The bad dreams get caught in the web and cannot reach the sleeping person, when the suns morning light touches the web in the morning it washes them away. The good dreams are wise, they can fit through the bead placed in the middle of the dream catcher, then slide down the feather to the sleeping person. So when you hang your dream catcher at home, make sure it is placed above your head and in a spot where the morning sun may reach it.

## **Traditional Foods**

The Mi'kmaq people originally lived off the land, taking only what they needed. So their traditional diet would be of things that have always grown natural in Atlantic Canada, such as berries, fish, deer, moose meat. Now they eat similar foods to everyone else, but traditional foods are still cooked.

Bannock is probably a food that you have had at camp, but did you know it was the traditional bread for the Aboriginal people. They did not use flour, instead they used other dried and crushed up plants. Why not try making it in a modern way!

### **Bannock**

#### Ingredients

- 3 cups of all-purpose flour
- 1 tea spoon salt
- 2 Tablespoons baking powder
- 1/4 cup butter
- Approx. 1 ½ cups of water
- Cooking oil or spray

#### Directions

1. Measure all of the dry ingredients to a bowl. Mix together
2. Add in the butter and mix
3. Slowly begin adding in the water, mixing very well. Using your hands to knead the dough. The dough should feel similar to bread but sticky.
4. Press the bread down i to small circles, similar to the size of pancakes
5. Use Cooking oil or spray to coat the pan, when the pan has heated up add in the bannock. It should take approx. 10 minutes per side and the outside should be golden brown

Cultural Connection: Enjoy your bannock similar to how the Mi'kmaq used to by adding fresh berries, or even maple syrup.

## **Traditional Songs**

Did you know the Mi'kmaq people have their own language? Their language is traditionally an oral language meaning it was never originally written down. It wasn't until more recently that this came into practice. A great way to hear and experience the language is through music.

Here is one everyone should be familiar with in English or French, Oh Canada! But have you ever heard it in Mi'kmaq?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOBbvkhZRSM>

Mi'kmaq Gathering song, it is used to open ceremonies and start school in Mi'kmaq communities across Canada, just like we use Oh Canada.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybMbw6EaSU4>

## **Traditional Games**

Do you know any games that the Mi'kmaq people may have played? Use this section to learn and play some traditional games.

### **Lacrosse**

Lacrosse was originally played by the Aboriginal people across Canada, especially in Atlantic Canada and was later taken up by the settlers.

### **Snowshoeing**

Snowshoes were originally crafted by the Aboriginal people to help them travel in the winter. They were traditionally crafted out of flexible materials and laced with deer hide. When it snows, why not try snowshoeing with your unit.

Did you know that NS Girl Guides Office has snowshoes units can borrow?

Walters

Materials:

-Large Sturdy bowl, approx. 12 inches in diameter, It does not need to be overly deep.

-Six flat rocks or disk, with the two sides painted or use markers, Or six red and yellow math counters

(For Example: all of one side of the disk may have a red circle, then the opposite side may have a yellow circle )

-24 Wooden Skewers (can be purchased at the dollar store)

-1 wooden Spoon

-Pillow or throw cushion

Directions:

-This game is normally played in pairs, but can also be done in small teams.

-The bowl with six disks is placed on a throw pillow in between the two girls, all with the same face up.

-The girls then pick up the bowl and hit it down on the pillow, with enough force so the disks will flip.

-She then scores points based off of how many disks she managed to flip and points are awarded with the skewers. Two points for each disk flipped, (Example: if she flipped over three disk she receives six skewers)

-The girls take turns back and forth.

-If a girl manages to flip all disks, she scores six points and is given the wooden spoon. Which is referred to as the grandmother. She can lose the Grandmother if the opponent also scores six points.

-The game is over once all the skewers have been awarded. The winner is the girl who has the Grandmother, if neither girl have the grandmother the winner is the girl with the most points (skewers)

**Closing Activity:**

Close your meeting, by bringing the girls back into a circle. Now is a great opportunity to test out a talking stick. Once in the circle, ask the girls what they now know about the Mi'kmaq people in Nova Scotia? Did they learn anything new, were their stereotypes true?

Again, the girls can also draw a picture or write a short statement. The goal is simply to have them reflect on their experience.

**Program Connections:** Suggested program connections can be found below, you may do more than you think so feel free to add to the suggested.

### **Sparks:**

- **The World Around Me**
  - **Aboriginal Crafts**
- **Going Outside**
  - **Outside Active Games**

### **Brownies:**

- Key to My Community: Celebrations
- All of the Aboriginal People in Canada Badge

### **Guides:**

- Discover Your Community: #1 #6
- Try New Things: #6
- Discover Your Creativity: #2
- Culture Awareness: #1 #2 #3 #4 #5

### **Pathfinders:**

- **Be a Model Citizen:**
  - **What Being Canada Means to Me**
  - **Multiculturalism in Canada**

### **Rangers:**

- **Program connections are dependent on which activities the Rangers choose, lead and reflect upon.**