

# NIKWÔBi: An Accompanying Study Guide

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum  
lcomm.org  
Photo by Kris Jarret.



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**Links to** indigenous peoples, Vermont history and land, traditions and culture, storytelling, music, community.

*This guide and live interaction with Abenaki culture bearers meets the following educational standards: CC ELA: RL 1-10, SL 1-4, RH 7, WHST 7-8 & C3. D2. Geo. 2,3,6,7, His. 2-4,7.*

**This guide is meant to deepen the experiential learning for students participating during the Vermont Abenaki Artists Association's performances on December 17th and 18th, 2019.**

# 1. The Abenaki of Vermont and Their Art

“Abenakis can be classified into two categories: the Western and Eastern Abenaki. Historically the Western Abenaki people lived in what is today known as Eastern New York, Northern Massachusetts, Southwestern Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, and north toward Quebec, Canada. As members of the Seven Nations and Wabanaki Confederacy, Abenakis interacted with their Native American neighbors to the North, South, East, and West on a regular basis.

By the late 18th century prejudice and the embattled situation in surrounding areas forced the Abenaki to break up into smaller family bands or clans in order to survive. In the 18th century the British burned our long-standing villages of Mission des Loups at the Koas, Missisquoi along the Missisquoi River and St. Francis – which the Abenaki people know as Odanak – in Quebec. Little is recorded of the Abenaki in historical accounts during the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. However, our families maintained oral histories and strong traditions from this time. Since the 1970s, the Abenaki have been experiencing an interest in cultural revitalization.

Today there are two provincially recognized Western Abenaki tribes in Canada: Odanak and Wolinak. In the

United States, four Abenaki tribes received State Recognition in Vermont in 2011 and 2012: the Elnu, Koasek, Missisquoi, and Nulhegan tribes. It’s estimated that there are 2,100 recognized Abenakis in Quebec and 3,200 in Vermont and New Hampshire. That’s a conservative figure because it doesn’t include non-recognized and unaffiliated Abenakis.”

— excerpt from *Alnobak: Wearing Our Heritage panels and study guides* (Vermont Abenaki Artists Association, 2017; Sheehan, 2017)

“Vermont and New Hampshire have a vibrant but little known artistic tradition stretching back over 10,000 years.”

— Excerpt from *The Historic Indigenous Arts of Vermont and New Hampshire* (Wiseman, 2013).



Abenaki citizens celebrate recognition with singing and drumming. © Vera Longtoe Sheehan. 2011.

## 2. Abenaki Singer and Song Writer

Bryan Blanchette studied music at the world-renowned Berklee College of Music. He started pow wow drumming in 1996 and soon after began writing Abenaki language songs in 1998. His group, The Blackhawk Singers are extremely popular and have performed internationally to critical acclaim. They have released two CDs. His contemporary music has also played to critical acclaim throughout New England.

Bryan Blanchette is a 21st-century Abenaki musician who brings over 10,000-years of tradition into his music and performance in a 21st-century setting. A contemporary song may be sung in an Algonquian language, or a traditional powwow song might be fused with a Euro-American musicology. His music is the continuation of millenniums of music tradition of the land that flourished before America was America. Beautiful music and Abenaki heritage combine to create one of New England's most original artists.

Blanchette's musical talent is unquestioned. Whether singing at a powwow with the Blackhawk Singers or performing solo at Vermont's Flynn Theater, his voice makes listeners stop and take notice. He plays multiple instruments, writes his own music and lyrics, and sings with a powerful, captivating voice of an Abenaki warrior.

Bryan has three children and is currently living in N'dakinna, the Abenaki homeland, Graniteville, Vermont.

— Bio from [abenakiart.org/artists/bryan\\_blanchette](http://abenakiart.org/artists/bryan_blanchette)



Bryan Blanchette with Grammy Award-winning artist Joanne Shenandoah. Image by Joanne Shenandoah.

### Etiquette for Live Performances: The Essentials

(Used with permission from the Flynn Performing Arts Center)

- Listen, experience, imagine, discover, learn!
- Give your energy and attention to the performers.
- Please do not eat or drink in the theater.
- Talk only before and after the performance.
- Turn off wireless devices.
- No photos, videos, texting, or listening to music.

\*These are guidelines... We understand that some students may need to experience the performance in their own way, and we are here to support all students and their unique needs.

### 3. Sneak Peak! Abenaki Music Lesson

Below is the chorus to a new song that Bryan Blanchette is currently in the process of recording. Like many of his songs, it incorporates the traditional Abenaki language. The English translation for each line is offered below

#### Water is Rising - Chorus Lyrics

*“Basabaghan  
Water is rising*

*N’namitobena basabagoikil  
We can see the tides*

*Basabaghan  
Water is rising*

*N’debastamzibena konksozi  
We can hear the lies”*

*Water is Rising © 2019. Bryan Blanchette. All rights reserved. Used with the permission of the artist.*

**Did you enjoy today’s performance?** Bryan’s music, as well as the music of the Black Hawk Singers, is currently available through iTunes, Spotify and Amazon

**Abenaki man plays an Abenaki guitar with help from his ancestors.** If you look inside Bryan’s guitar you can see a label that says Lutherie Waban-aki which is the name of an Abenaki guitar manufacturer. Bryan’s guitar was made by Mario Pellerin of the Odanak Abenaki community. You can learn more about his guitars by visiting his website [lutheriewabanaki.com/](http://lutheriewabanaki.com/). Image courtesy of Bryan Blanchette.



*“Nikwôbi in the Abenaki language means ‘now.’ It is also the name of the CD that I’m working on. By naming the CD and show *Nikwôbi*, I’m helping people to learn an Abenaki word they can use often. I’m also trying to raise awareness of the fact that our culture is alive. I believe the new language songs show our culture is alive. I also believe our music can be a seamless integration of contemporary and traditional instruments. *Nikwôbi* is a way of showing just that.”*

— Bryan Blanchette, 2019

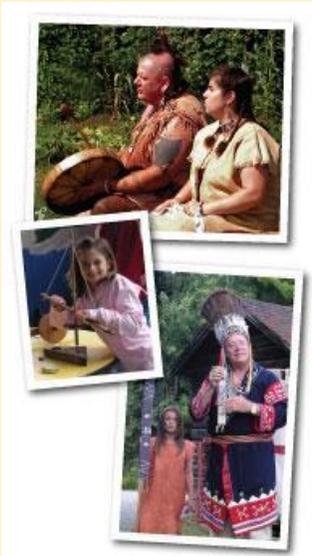
## 2. Learn Abenaki

The Abenaki show will include the use of the Abenaki language. We would like you to be able to communicate with the performers! The words on the left are in Abenaki with the English translation written on the right.

Abenaki	English
Kwai*	Hello
Wliwini*	Thank you
Wligen	It is good
Wlibamcani	Travel well

### Additional Resources

In school, you may use extra resources like a library, textbooks, or the internet in order to find additional information about a topic. When practicing the Abenaki language, an online website that may help is one that was created by Abenaki author, linguist, and Vermont Abenaki Artists Association artist, Jesse Bruchac. Please visit [www.WesternAbenaki.com](http://www.WesternAbenaki.com) for help with pronouncing any of the words that you see in this study guide.



Another great resource for learning about Abenaki culture, language, and art is the annual Abenaki Heritage Weekend. This event is organized by the Vermont Abenaki Artists Association (VAAA) and invites the public to engage with members of the four Recognized Tribes of Vermont. *Admission is free to any Native American.* Join us for a Native American Arts Marketplace, an art exhibition gallery opening, children's make and take activities -- and more!

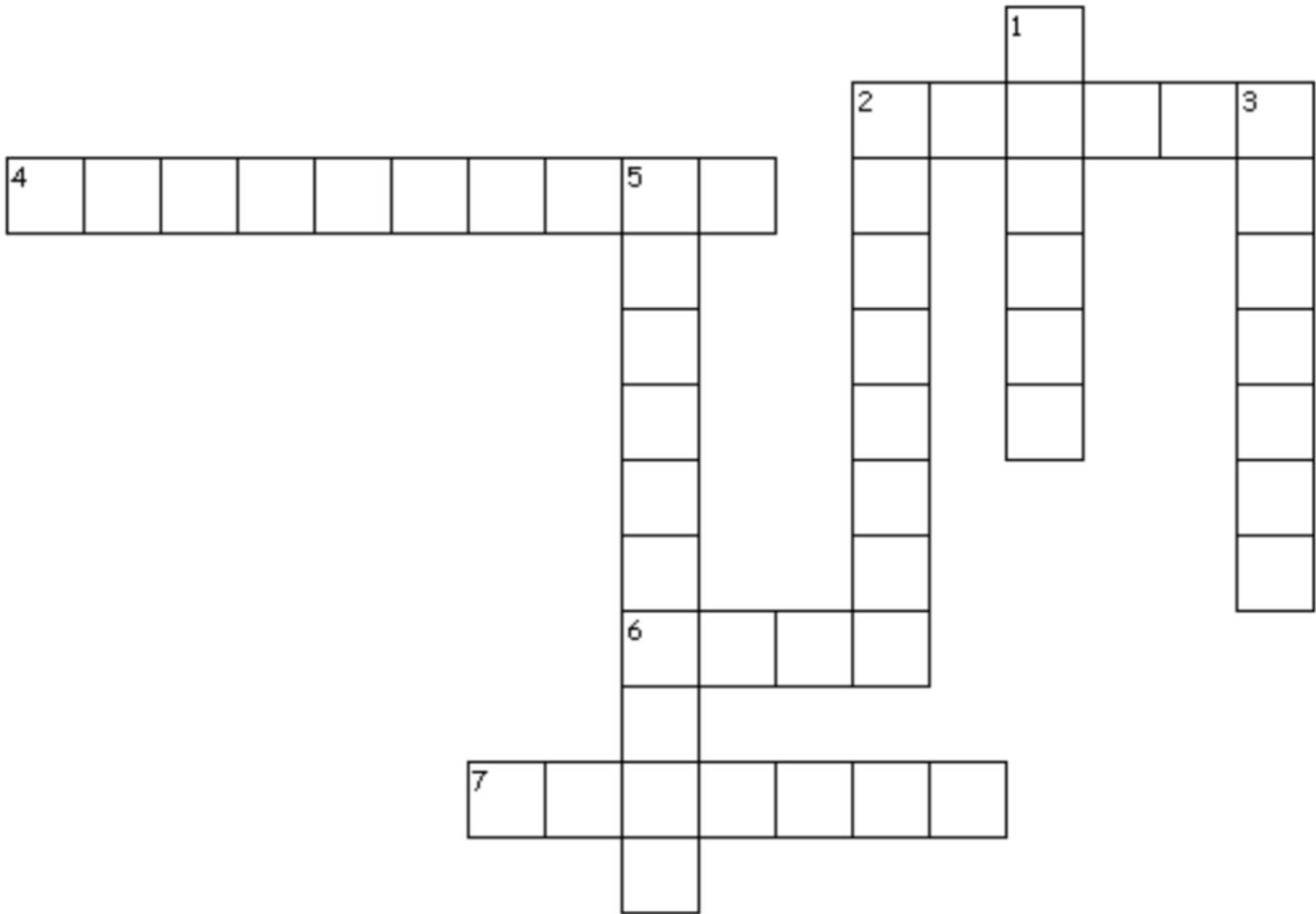
### 2020 Abenaki Heritage Weekend

June 20th and 21st 2020

4472 Basin Harbor Rd, Vergennes, VT 05491

### 3. Reinforcing Abenaki Vocabulary

Complete the puzzle using the hints at the bottom of the page. Correct answers are listed on page 9 of this booklet.



**HINTS:**

Across

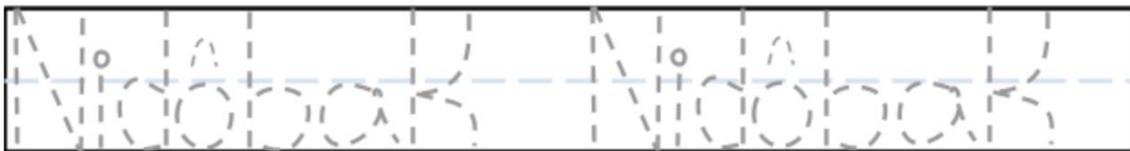
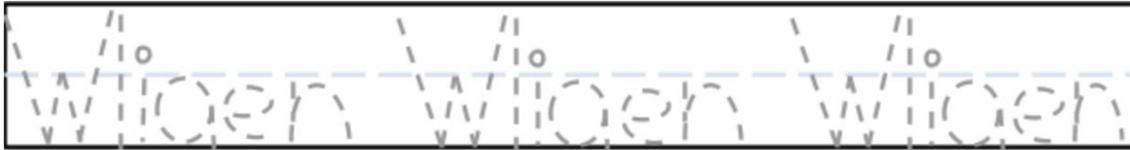
- 2. "It is good."
- 4. How to wish someone good travels
- 6. An Abenaki greeting\*
- 7. How to thank someone in Abenaki\*

Down

- 1. How to address one friend\*
- 2. "Be very well"
- 3. How to address multiple friends\*
- 5. How to address younger friends

## 4. Practice Writing in Abenaki

In the boxes below, trace the grey letters and then practice writing one of the words on your own.



Now try writing one of the words all by yourself!



### References

Photographs courtesy of Bryan Blanchette, Joanne Shenandoah/Official website, Deb Reger/Podomatic, Kris Jarret/Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, and Vera Longtoe Sheehan. *Do not reproduce any private photos without permission from the copyright holder(s) and accurate citations.* \*Content with this marker is featured on other educational resources developed by the Vermont Abenaki Artists Association and Abenaki Arts and Education Center.

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## 5. Abenaki Education Team

**Francine Poitras Jones** retired from a thirty-year career in marketing and copy editing to pursue a second career as a substitute elementary school teacher. For the past five years, she has been teaching grades K through 5th grade, and she presents educational programs to elementary students. Additionally, she is a painter that finds inspiration in her culture and everything around her. Francine s a beadworker and a craftsperson.

**Lina Longtoe** is an environmental scientist and Fulbright Scholarship alumna. She has received academic international awards and scholarships while her research has received presidential praise. She holds several *Project WILD* certifications, a program which is sponsored nationally by the EPA and Fish and Wildlife Department. Lina has served her Abenaki community for over a decade, as the official documentarian of the Elnu Abenaki Tribe, VAAA volunteer, and intern, and now as the Program Coordinator for VAAA.

**Vera Longtoe Sheehan** has a background in Museum Studies and Native American Studies. She has been developing and implementing educational programs and consultation with museums, schools, and historic sites for over twenty-five years. As the Director of the Vermont Abenaki Artists Association, she leads the education team in the development of study guides and educational programs. Additionally, she also has training in the Wilson Reading Program. The focus of Vera's art is in traditional clothing and twined woven plant fiber bags.

**Thank you to the Flynn Friends at Wake Robin  
for sponsoring this performance.**

**Thank you to the Flynn Matinee 2019-2020  
underwriters:**

Northfield Savings Bank, Andrea's Legacy Fund, Champlain Investment Partners, LLC, Everybody Belongs at the Flynn Fund, Forrest and Frances Lattner Foundation, NRG Systems, Consolidated Communications, TD Charitable Foundation, Vermont Arts Council, Vermont Community Foundation, New England Foundation for the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts. Additional support from the Bruce J. Anderson Foundation & the Walter Cerf Community Fund.

## 6. About Us

***This study guide was produced as a companion to Abenaki performances and classroom visits made possible by a partnership between the Vermont Abenaki Artists Association and Flynn Performing Arts Center.***

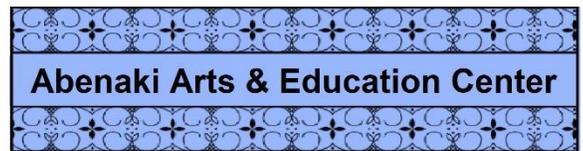
The Vermont Abenaki Artists Association embodies the history, culture, and art of the Abenaki people. Our mission is to promote regional Indigenous arts, artists, culture, and to provide an

**VERMONT ABENAKI ARTISTS ASSOCIATION**



organized central place to share creative ideas. We accomplish this by creating engaging cultural events, educational programs, exhibitions, and curriculum materials. For more information, please visit [www.AbenakiArt.org](http://www.AbenakiArt.org).

Our mission is to share Abenaki education resources with classrooms across *N'Dakinna* (our homeland). We do this by making Abenaki curriculum materials and resources available so Abenaki history and living culture can be taught throughout our homeland. Our vision is that Abenaki culture will be integrated into the curriculum across all content areas. For more information, please visit [www.Abenaki-Edu.org](http://www.Abenaki-Edu.org).



The Flynn Center is a full-service home for the performing arts in the region; offers a wide range of cultural and educational experiences; and nurtures the creative development of performing artists. The Flynn is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization. For more information please visit [www.FlynnCenter.org/](http://www.FlynnCenter.org/).



This study guide was made possible by the generosity of our community and viewers like you.

### Crossword puzzle answers

down 1. Nedoba = Molowoz 3. Nedoba 5. Nidobaksis  
Across: 6. Migen 7. Mibamcani 8. kwai 7. Miwini