



# EDUCATORS GUIDE

## Wabanaki Stories

This guide is geared toward teachers of grades 2 - 12.

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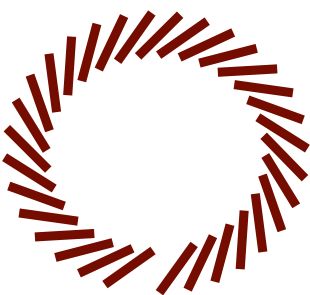
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## About This Guide

Use this guide to help your students anticipate, investigate, and reflect upon your live performance experience. This guide is geared toward teachers of grades 2 - 12.

## IN THIS GUIDE

3	About the Performance
3	About the Production
5	Introducing the Performance
7	Pre-Performance Lesson Activities
8	Post-Performance Lesson Activities
10	Additional Resources
11	About Portland Ovation
12	Student Response Form
13	Teacher Response Form



The great thing about the arts is that they can often evolve to meet their context. That means that many of the activities shared are flexible to a lot of different contexts depending on how you choose to frame them in your class. We know that you all are experts on your classroom and your students and so we invite you to use these lessons and activities as guideposts and adapt them to fit your classroom management style, range of student ability, and time constraints.

### COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ICON KEY



VISUAL &  
PERFORMING ARTS



21st CENTURY SKILLS



SOCIAL STUDIES



ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
ARTS

**Educators**, we invite you to share with us what you did in your classroom around this guide or the production. You can email [eschildkret@portlandovations.org](mailto:eschildkret@portlandovations.org) or reach us via [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#).

We love to hear and see what great learning is happening in your classrooms.



## About the Performance

The land and waters known as Maine have been home to Wabanaki peoples for over 12,000 years. Historically, there were over 20 distinct groups of people, named for their relationship to the lands and waters that shaped their lifeways, that we now call tribes. In 2022, there are five Wabanaki tribes: Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, and Abenaki. This vibrant exploration of Wabanaki histories and cultures spotlights Wabanaki storytellers and musicians coming several different nations and different storytelling traditions. Musician **Tania Morey** (Tobique) sings of the Wolastoq; **Jennifer Pictou** (Mi'kmaq) regales with spirit stories told in the company of a large puppet; **Dwayne Tomah** (Passamaquoddy) shares stories that showcase his native language, Passamaquoddy; and **Jason Brown aka Firefly** (Penobscot) electrifies with cutting-edge technology blended with ancient frequencies. Director, artist and author **Chris Newell** (Passamaquoddy) intersperses each with music and narration.



*Jennifer Pictou  
(Mi'kmaq)*



*Dwayne Tomah  
(Passamaquoddy)*



*Chris Newell  
(Passamaquoddy)*



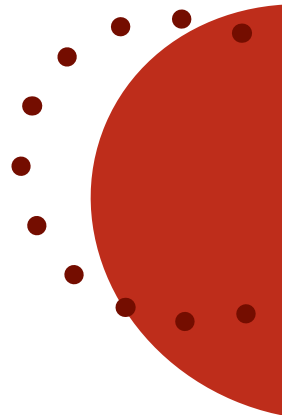
*Tania Morey  
(Tobique)*



*Jason Brown  
(Penobscot)*

## About the Production

This production is conceived as an equitable partnership between both Portland Oventions and the Wabanaki performers. In respect of Wabanaki ancestral knowledge and those that pass it on, the creation and direction of this production is led by Wabanaki artists and supported by Portland Oventions in bringing it to the stage. The intent is by allowing the best of both sets of knowledge to partner together we co-generate a rich and transformational experience for Portland Oventions, the performers, and especially the audience. The goal is to create a production that is both entertaining and educational to both Wabanaki and non-Wabanaki audiences. Each performer, recognized by their communities for their knowledge, decides and self-directs their own performance. By allowing the differences between Wabanaki cultures to be present in the same stage performance, we hope to enlighten audiences about the nuances between the living Wabanaki peoples and communities of today.



## Being an Audience Member

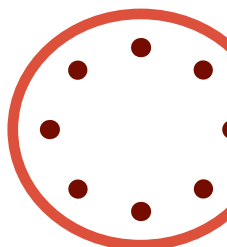
An audience member is a part of a larger community – an audience – and you all work together to create your theater experience. Audience members play a special and important role in the performance. The performers are very aware of the audience while they perform. Sharing their hard work and joy with you is one of the best parts of being a performer. Each performance calls for different audience responses. Lively bands, musicians and dancers may desire audience members to clap and move to the beat. Other performers require silent focus on the stage and talking from the audience can be distracting. A theater is designed to magnify sound and even the smallest whispers can be heard throughout the auditorium. The storytellers in Wabanaki Stories highly encourage clapping and laughing at the parts of the performance that you enjoy.

As you enjoy the show, think about being a part of the performance.

- What are the differences between attending a live performance and going to a movie or watching television?
- What are some different types of live performances? How many can you name?
- What kind of responses might an audience give to different types of performances?
- What are the different cues that a performer will give you so that you know how to respond? For example, might they bow or pause for applause?



*Students inside Merrill Auditorium*



## Introducing the Performance

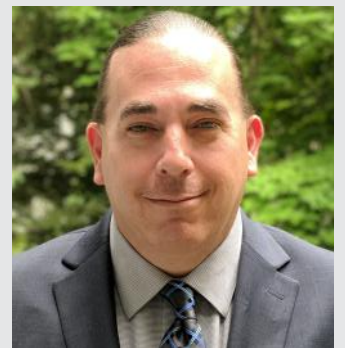
Share some context with your students before they attend the live performance with this introduction to Wabanaki storytelling and Wabanaki Stories by artist and author, Chris Newell (Passamaquoddy).

“All cultures around the world have storytelling traditions. This is true of Wabanaki peoples as well. In fact, Wabanaki stories are part of the identity of Wabanaki peoples themselves. Traditionally told during the cold months winter, the stories Wabanaki people tell in their communities are evidence of the cultural ties shared amongst different Wabanaki nations, but also their differences. All Wabanaki peoples begin their creation stories with the cultural hero Glooscap/Gluskabe/Koluskap (depending on the tribe) who is responsible for creating the peoples of this land and bestowing them with their name, known commonly today as Wabanaki, which roughly translates to “People of the Dawnland.”

But as with all things, people and arts evolve. Originally, a tool, not just for entertainment, but to pass on the knowledge of history, art, science, and the sacredness of all life. The lessons learned from the mistakes of the past become the stories that guide the future and existed this way for millennia.

However, with the disruption of colonization, traditional Wabanaki storytelling was discouraged by settler cultures who wished to convert Wabanaki peoples to their own cultures. For centuries, traditional Wabanaki storytelling occurred only in the communities. Well known storytellers were highly valued both for the wisdom they could impart, but also their ability to entertain. By combining both knowledge and entertainment together, storytelling, along with language and music, maintained and continues to maintain a dynamic link between Wabanaki peoples of today and their ancestors.

Some stories are sacred and are not for public consumption. But beginning in the 19th century Wabanaki and non-Wabanaki conservators began writing down versions of stories as they were told at that time to conserve them. Written in both English and Wabanaki languages those stories provide valuable insight into the ancestral knowledge possessed at those times.



*Chris Newell  
(Passamaquoddy)*

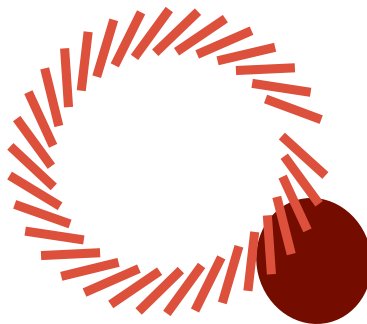
Within the communities, the art of storytelling survived through rapidly changing times. It came out of traditional wigwam homes and lodges and emerged in the stick-built housing of the time. This process preserved the art form in its purest sense. Stories were not told in English and by serving as tools of both knowledge and entertainment, consistently told in the language of the community, contributed greatly to language preservation. As a result, stories meant to entertain still hold a sacred value for Wabanaki peoples as they also stand in testament as resistance to forces that sought to eliminate our cultures.

In contemporary times, storytellers from all Wabanaki cultures inherit their stories through a legacy they often name. As if the story they tell is also a part of the ancestor they learned it from and so on. With modernized schools in the 1970s, stories expanded from the homes to the community schools. In very recent history, storytellers brought their stories to classrooms all over the region. Each storyteller interprets their art through their upbringing. Culturally, Wabanaki peoples speak different languages and have at times, different customs and beliefs. The history of the preservation of traditional storytelling and now the art of traditional frameworks in contemporary storytelling lives in each Wabanaki presenter. The artform continues to evolve as the world evolves. New ways of telling stories emerge. A new generation of Wabanaki storytellers are using the art passed down from their ancestors to tell their own stories and so the cycle continues.

In this experiment, Wabanaki storytellers bring their legacies and stories out of close intimate settings of homes and classrooms and onto the stage. You will hear stories of all kinds by each storyteller. They might talk of the past, or something that happened yesterday. They may tell their stories in English or in their own language. Yet each brings with them the legacy of ancestral knowledge passed down since time immemorial connected by the stories they tell. Each utilizes the tool of storytelling differently. Wabanaki stories are meant to entertain, but also to teach. Listen carefully, be respectful of what you hear, learn, and don't be afraid to smile as you do."

### Reflection

- What does "Wabanaki" roughly mean? where does the name come from?
- How has Wabanaki storytelling evolved over time?
- How does storytelling help maintain Wabanaki cultures and traditions?





## PRE-PERFORMANCE LESSON ACTIVITIES

Here are some ideas for lesson activities to help prepare and excite students for the performance of Wabanaki Stories.

### Glossary

Share these words with students prior to the performance so that they have a shared vocabulary of how to talk about what they watched..

**WABANAKI** – collective term for culturally related Indigenous peoples of the northeast roughly translating to “People of the Dawnland”

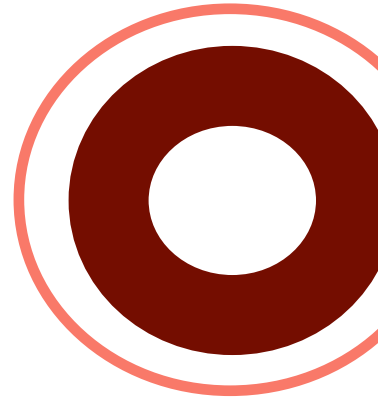
**PASSAMAQUODDY** –Wabanaki nation in the territory of Skutik (now known as the St. Croix River) derived from the word Peskotomuhkati or “people who spear pollack”

**PENOBSCOT** –Wabanaki nation located on their namesake Penobscot River derived from the term Penawapskewi which describes the “descending ledges” portion of the river near their present-day community in Indian Island

**MI’KMAQ** – the easternmost and largest present-day Wabanaki nation comprised of seven traditional districts in what is now Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec, and parts of northern Maine. The name is likely derived from the Mi’kmaq term “nikmaq” meaning “my kin/friends”

**MALISEET** –Wabanaki nation on their namesake river Wolastoq (present day St. John River). Maliseet peoples call themselves Wolastoqiyik or “people of the beautiful and bountiful river.”

**ABENAKI** – the westernmost Wabanaki nation, traditionally composed of peoples stewarding lands from present-day western Maine into Quebec. “Abenaki” is a derivation of a term that roughly translates to “people of the rising sun”.



### ACTIVITY: Whose land do you live and learn on?

- Historically there were more than five tribes or groups that identified as Wabanaki cultures. Use [Native-land.ca](https://native-land.ca) to zoom in on your hometown and identify which Wabanaki cultural group on whose homelands your town now resides
- Once you and your students have identified on whose homelands you live, visit the Abbe Museum’s [People of the First Light Interactive Map](#) to learn more about the geography, languages, and stories of Wabanaki cultural groups in your area.



### What to Look for When You Watch

- English is not the language these stories come from. English versions are translations
- Each storyteller navigates translation to English slightly differently
- Wabanaki storytellers often use tools and methods to keep the audience involved. What are some of those tools or methods?

## POST-PERFORMANCE LESSON ACTIVITIES

Here are some ideas for lesson activities that expand on the essential questions, topics, and themes of Wabanaki Stories.

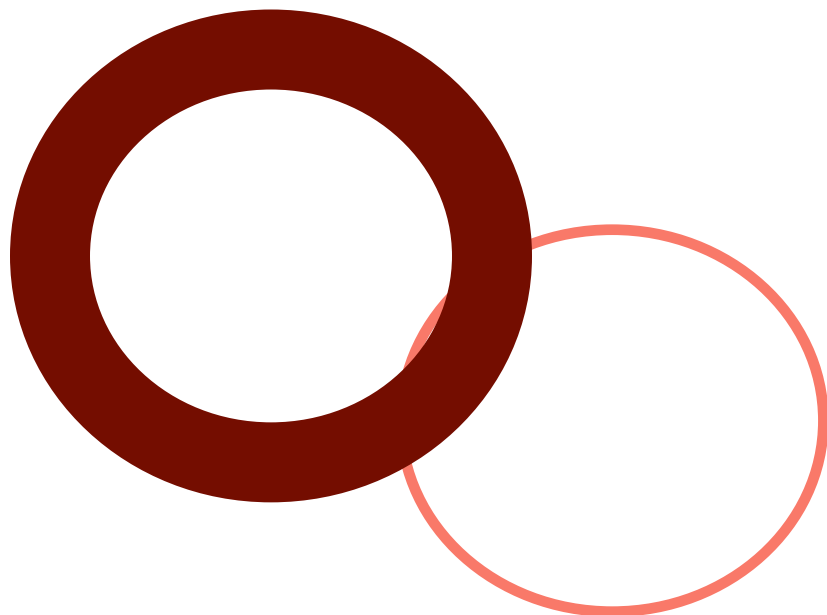
### Post-Performance Discussion Questions

#### *Questions to reflect on your experience:*

1. What lessons in the storytelling stood out for you?
2. Did you smile or laugh? What was fun or entertaining?
3. How does combining art and entertainment as a form of education work for you?
4. What can you take with you from this experience and apply to your life?

#### *Questions to reflect on your experience:*

1. Wabanaki stories are educational tools. Name a memorable character and what you learned by hearing a story about them.
2. What did you learn about the histories of Wabanaki peoples?
3. What did you learn about the Wabanaki peoples of today?





## ACTIVITY: Community Storytelling

Stories are often passed between generations. Use this activity to collect and tell stories from and about your community.

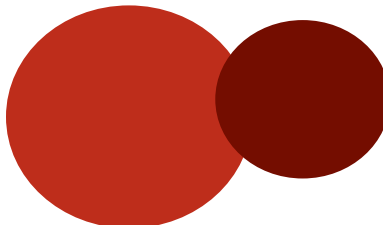
1. Instruct students to identify an elder they'd like to interview. The elder might be a teacher, a family member, or a close friend.
2. Plan questions for the interview: Help students identify what they'd like to learn and plan a list of interview questions around that topic. If students need help thinking of questions, these lists of questions from Story Corps are a great starting point.
3. Prep an interview kit with students including the list of questions and something to take notes on. The interview kit could also include something to record on. Make sure students ask for permission to record if using this!
4. When students are ready to interview, remind them to use their questions as a guide for a conversation—it's ok if the interview wanders off the initial topic. Take notes throughout the interview on answers to questions, interesting moments, and things that invite deeper investigation.
5. Once the interview is complete, students will review their notes. Ask them: What moments in your conversation made you laugh? What moments made you think?
6. Invite students to choose a moment from their interview that resonated with them to share with others. These moments can be shared in a wide variety of ways—as pictures, written narratives, short performances, etc. Consider with students the best way to tell their stories.



## CURRICULUM: Wabanaki People — A Story of Cultural Continuity

Created by the Abbe Museum, this complete curriculum focusing on cultural continuity pairs well with Wabanaki Stories. Each unit in this curriculum includes a page of “teacher background” for extra context on the lesson, a lesson plan with objectives, procedures, and “debriefing” questions for evaluation and assessment, and worksheets. The curriculum includes units on:

- Cultural Awareness
- Stereotyping
- An introduction to Wabanaki communities in Maine
- A discussion of Wabanaki culture and cultural continuity
- An opportunity for students to create their own short films based on the Abbe Museum's [Timeline of Wabanaki History](#)



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Abbe Museum Educator Hub (<https://www.abbemuseum.org/educatorhub>)
- [PassamaquoddyPeople.com](https://passamaquoddypeople.com) - Online Tribal Mukurtu Collection Site
  - Listen to the 1890 Passamaquoddy Phonograph Recordings: <https://passamaquoddypeople.com/collection/1890-passamaquoddy-phonograph-recordings>
  - Watch videos of elders listening to wax cylinder recordings: <https://passamaquoddypeople.com/collection/elders-listening-wax-cylinder-recordings>
  - Passamaquoddy language resources and lessons: <https://passamaquoddypeople.com/collection/lewestuhtine>
- Penobscot Nation Curriculum (<https://www.penobscotculture.com/curriculum>)
- Wabanaki Collection - part of the Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey Center UNB (<https://www.wabanakicollection.com/>)
  - A recording of the Wolastoq song with context by Sarah Francis: <https://www.wabanakicollection.com/videos/wolastoq-song-honouring-the-wolastoq-in-schools/>
  - Wabanaki Songs compiled by Dr. Imelda Perley/Opolahsomuwehs, Elder George Paul, Saqatay (Elder Gwen Bear): <https://www.wabanakicollection.com/modules/songs/>
- Passamaquoddy-Maliseet Language Portal video material (<https://pmportal.org/videos>)



**Portland Ovation**, founded in 1931, produces dynamic performing arts events including classical music, jazz, opera, dance, theater, and Broadway. We believe that cultural enrichment should be high quality and accessible to all. Ovation collaborates with other nonprofit organizations, education systems, and the business sector to promote lifelong learning while celebrating the power and virtuosity of the performing arts. We bring the exhilaration of the performing arts into our communities with free events as part of Ovation Offstage, connecting artists and audiences. Join us at unexpected “art happenings,” classroom workshops, masterclasses, community discussions, and pre-performance lectures to explore together the relevance and connection of the performing arts to our lives.

### **Land Acknowledgment**

Portland Ovation's programs are presented on Wabanaki land, home of the Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, Abenaki and Penobscot Nations, their elders past and present, and future generations.

We encourage you to learn more and take action in support of Maine's Indigenous communities through the following organizations

#### [Abbe Museum](#)

Maine's premier museum dedicated to indigenous history and culture. Their mission is to inspire new learning about the Wabanaki Nations with every visit.

#### [Maine-Wabanaki Reach](#)

A Native-led non-profit that supports the self-determination of Wabanaki people through education, truth-telling, restorative justice, and restorative practices in Wabanaki and Maine communities.

### **Cultivating Curiosity**

Ovation Offstage's Cultivating Curiosity places books in the hands of Maine students and provides young learners with a unique opportunity to make connections between literacy and performance. The program pairs reading opportunities with selected School-Time Performances, by providing each child who attends the performance a free book born from its title or themes to add to their home library. During the 2022-2023 season, Ovation is partnering with I'm Your Neighbor Books to curate diverse books and provide resources for young people, families, and educators to engage deeply in literature and story.

Created and written by Chris Newell and Dr. Liz Schildkret

Additional information provided by Starr Kelly, Fiona Hopper, and Sarah Coleman

Designed by Katie Day

© Portland Ovation 2023

We want to know what *you* thought about the performance. You can write your answers below or draw a picture on the back of this page. Thank you!

**PERFORMANCE:** *Wabanaki Stories*

**SCHOOL NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **TEACHER NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **GRADE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**YOUR NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ May we use your name when we share your comments?  
Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

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**What did you like about *Wabanaki Stories*? Why did you like that part?**

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**What was something that you learned during the performance?**

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**What would you like to tell other kids about *Wabanaki Stories*?**

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**What types of performance would you like Portland Oventions to offer in the future? (Feel free to share what type of art you are interested in (theater, dance, music), what cultures you might like to see, what topics the art might connect with, or specific artists.)**

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Please take a few moments to fill out this survey after you attend the performance. You can also fill it out [online here](#). Your response provides valuable insight on the impact, accessibility, and relevancy of the School-Time Performance Series and will allow us to improve and strengthen the program. Thank you.

**PERFORMANCE: *Wabanaki Stories* - February 3, 2023**

**TEACHER NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **GRADE(S) OF STUDENTS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SCHOOL NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **CITY/TOWN:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EMAIL ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. From your perspective as a teacher, how would you rate *Wabanaki Stories*?**

☐ Excellent    ☐ Very Good    ☐ Good    ☐ Fair    ☐ Poor

**3. What made this a valuable experience for your students? (If it wasn't, what can we do better?)**

**4. What was your primary reason for choosing to bring your students to *Wabanaki Stories*?**

- ☐ I wanted my students to experience the performing arts.
- ☐ The performance topic fit with my curriculum goals.
- ☐ The date and time of the performance fit our schedule.
- ☐ The ticket price is affordable.
- ☐ Other (please specify):

**5. How did this live performance connect to or enhance your curriculum?**

**6. Did you use the Educators Guide provided by Portland Ovation before or after attending the performance?**

☐ Yes    ☐ No

**7. Why or why not?**

**8. What improvements could we make to the Educators Guide to serve you and your classroom better?**

**9. How would you rate the following components of attending the School-Time Performance?**

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Reserving & paying for tickets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication about the day of the performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrival at the venue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Departure from the venue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**10. What types of performances would you like to bring your students to in the future?** (Feel free to share art forms, topics/themes, specific artists, etc.)?

**11. A number of generous individuals and organizations make it possible for Portland Ovation to offer these School-Time Performance tickets at extremely discounted rates. Is there anything you'd like them to know in terms of your experiences or its impact on your students?**