

Lesson: People of the Dawn

Grade Level: 6-9

Time: 80 minutes

Essential Question

How do different beliefs about land influence the way people care for it?

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain the difference between land stewardship and land ownership.
- Define foodways and describe how they connect people to the land.
- List the knowledge needed to gather, preserve, and prepare wild blueberries.

Materials

- Reading: [People of the Dawn](#)
- Video: [Wild Food Explorer Series: Maine Wild Blueberry](#)
- Handouts- [Stewardship and Ownership](#), [What is a Foodway?](#)
- [Wild Blueberry Hook/Anticipatory Set](#)

Optional:

- Recipe: [Blueberry Fruit Leather](#)
- Food Dehydrator, Hot Plate, Spoon, Parchment Paper
- Frozen wild blueberries

Extension Activities

- [Caring for the Land](#) - National Agriculture in the Classroom
- [The Interconnectedness of Water and Life](#) - Maine DOE Wabanaki Studies

Background

For thousands of years, the Wabanaki people have gathered wild blueberries as part of their seasonal foodways. Foodways include the traditions, knowledge, and practices that shape how people gather, prepare, preserve, share, and eat food. Wild blueberries were eaten fresh during the harvest season and dried for use throughout the winter. This knowledge was passed from one generation to the next and reflected a deep understanding of Maine's land, and waters. By exploring stewardship, ownership, and foodways, students will discover that every food tells a story and that every meal represents generations of knowledge.

Procedure

1. Engage (5 minutes)

- Project the [Wild Blueberry Hook/Anticipatory Set](#) and allow students to list on their own or discuss as a class.

2. Explore (25 minutes)

Read [People of the Dawn](#) independently or as a class.

Watch the [Wild Food Explorer Series: Maine Wild Blueberry](#) video.

As students read and watch, have them highlight or record examples of:

- stewardship
- ownership
- foodways
- blueberry harvesting
- food preservation
- knowledge passed between generations

Discuss:

- Why were wild blueberries important?
- Why were blueberries dried?

3. Explain (20 minutes)

Complete the [Stewardship and Ownership](#) worksheet.

Discuss:

- What is stewardship?
- What is ownership?
- Can someone be both an owner and a steward?
- How did the Wabanaki demonstrate stewardship of the land?
- How do farmers demonstrate stewardship today?

Introduce **foodways** using the second worksheet.

Explain:

A recipe is only one small part of a foodway. Before someone can prepare a food, they must first learn many skills and traditions.

Students complete: [What is a Foodway?](#)

Create a class list of the knowledge students identify.

4. Elaborate (10–15 minutes)

Optional Foodways Activity

Provide students with dried wild blueberries, blueberry fruit leather, or another simple blueberry snack.

Discuss:

- Why would drying blueberries have been useful?
- How does drying change the fruit?
- Why was preserving food important before refrigeration?

Connect the discussion back to foodways by emphasizing that preserving blueberries allowed families to enjoy this nutritious food throughout the winter.

If preparing blueberry fruit leather, discuss how modern food preservation methods compare to traditional drying practices.

5. Evaluate (5–10 minutes)

Have students answer the following exit question:

How did Wabanaki foodways connect people to the land?

Encourage students to recognize that **foodways are more than recipes**. They represent generations of observation, experience, and knowledge about the land. The lesson is not about recreating Wabanaki traditions but about understanding how knowledge, stewardship, and seasonal living shaped the relationship between people and food. This perspective also helps students connect historical foodways to modern agriculture, where farmers continue to rely on knowledge, careful land management, and long-term stewardship to produce healthy food.

MLR Standards

Social Studies: A.1, B.1, B.2, D.1

Science: MS-ESS3-1

ELA: R.1, R.2, R.7, R.11, W.1, W.3, SL.1

