



the people of the willows

Teacher Study Guide K-6 Educators

Introduction

The People of the Willows program brings together both Native American and Non-Native performers whose performances demonstrate our shared connection to the land that we call home. Using the major rivers that stretch across the United States as threads that tie us together, this program seeks to establish the connections between people of different places, times and cultures.

The program combines traditional songs and stories as told by the Mandan-Hidatsa tribes, dating back to the time before the Lewis & Clark Expedition, with contemporary original compositions by featured artists, inspired by nature and traditional melodies.





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Lewis & Clark Expedition

The Lewis & Clark expedition of 1804-1806 is famous as a great American voyage of exploration. President Thomas Jefferson hired Captain Meriwether Lewis (Jefferson's personal secretary) and Captain William Clark to command 43 soldiers who made up the Corps of Discovery. They planned to start from St. Louis and travel up the Missouri River by boat to the Mandan villages (near Mandan, North Dakota). There, sixteen of the Corps would be sent back to St. Louis and the remainder would winter with the Mandans. In the spring, they would carry on up the Missouri. After going around the Great Falls of the Missouri, they planned to travel to the Missouri's source, which was thought to be in the Rocky Mountains. Somewhere along their travels, they hoped to find a Native to guide them through the Rockies and on to the Pacific Ocean. The expedition would return after wintering at the mouth of the Columbia River. The goal of this ambitious journey was to gather information that would help the United States establish trade routes across the country. Additionally, however, they were charged with studying the land, the wildlife, the plants, and the people they encountered along the way.

The Waters of the Lewis & Clark Journey

Two rivers were important to the Lewis & Clark exploration. The Missouri River carried them all the way to the Rocky Mountains, and the Columbia River took the Corps from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, another body of water that played an important role in the journey.

The rivers were important aspects of life for all the people who lived in the land. Along the Missouri River lived the Missouri, Oto, Yankton Sioux, Teton Sioux, Arikara, Mandan, Hidatsa, Assiniboin, and Blackfoot tribes. Along the Columbia River lived the Shoshone, Nez Perce, Walla Walla, Tillamook, Clatsop and Chinook peoples. Tribes of people who lived before the Lewis & Clark expedition are often called Native Americans, or "First Peoples" because they lived in the land first.

The Mandan People

With their Hidatsa friends and neighbors, the Mandan Indians lay at the center of trade along the Upper Missouri River, inhabiting what is now central North Dakota. The Corps of Discovery reached the Mandan villages in the fall of 1804 and stayed the winter in Fort Mandan, which they built along the river.



Photo Courtesy of Makoche Records



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The Mandan people were farmers, and built strong earthlodge homes that protected them from the severe winter weather. On average, 10 people lived in each lodge. Throughout most of the year, the Mandans lived in these permanent lodges. But in the winter, to avoid brutal storms, they constructed temporary lodges in wooded, low-lying areas adjacent to the river. In fields that surrounded the villages, the Mandans grew corn, beans, squash and tobacco. Many other tribes, even their enemies, traded with the Mandans for food.

Keith Bear, Photo Courtesy of Makoche Records

Keith Bear, one of the performers in *The People of the Willows*, is a Mandan Native American. His name in the Nu E'ta (Mandan) language is O'Mashi! Ryu Ta. It means Northern Lights or He Makes the Sky Burn with Great Flame.

Native American Flutes

Just as rivers tie the people of the United States together, the flute is an instrument that is common to many Native American tribes. Native flutes were used for many reasons, usually varying by tribe. The tribes of the Northwest Coast used bone and cedar whistles for different dances and spirit calling ceremonies. Flutes were used for



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entertainment by many tribes while traveling; many of these songs still exist today. The Lakota tribes used the flute for courting and love songs.

For the people who lived on the Plains of Dakota, hearing the sound of the flute on the wind meant that a village was nearby. One legend about the origins of the flute tells of a tree branch that had fallen to the ground. A woodpecker came and punched holes in the branch. The wind blew through the holes, creating a haunting melody sung by the voice of nature itself. The People of the Willows honors this instrument because it brings together many different tribes and cultures, and connects them to the natural elements from which the flutes are made – wood, clay and bone. The spirit of each place speaks and sings through the flutes created there.

Educational Resources

Circle of Stories

<http://www.pbs.org/circleofstories/>

Homeland

<http://www.pbs.org/itvs/homeland/>



Seth Eastman: Painting the Dakota

<http://www.pbs.org/ktca/setheastman>

Matters of Race

http://www.pbs.org/mattersofrace/essays/essay3_survival.html

The West

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest>

Lewis and Clark

<http://www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/>

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Hassrick, Royal B. (1982). The Sioux. University of Oklahoma Press: Norman.

Ronda, James P. (1984), Lewis and Clark among the Indians, University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln.

Walker, James R. Lakota Society. University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln.



About the Artists

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The People of the Willows is represented by Hosfeld & Associates Artist Management

www.hosfeldartists.com