



September 28, 2025 – April 5, 2026

Teacher's Guide

Contemporary Anishinaabe Art: A Continuation Grades K–12

Introduction:

Anishinaabek call the Detroit area, Waawiyaataanong — “where the curved shores meet.” Waawiyaataanong and the expansive Great Lakes Region has been the home of Anishinaabek since time immemorial. The lands and waters of the Great Lakes Region are sacred. The Great Lakes Region continues to support Anishinaabek lifeways in a reciprocal relationship. Anishinaabek continue to be stewards of these lands and waters, as they have for approximately 15,000 years, according to oral histories and archaeological evidence.

Anishinaabek are often referred to as “The People of the Three Fires,” due to being composed of three groups of Anishinaabe that decided to expand into different groups for the betterment of their people. The Odawa/Ottawa — keepers of trade. The Ojibwe/Chippewa/Ojibway — keepers of faith. The Bodewadmi/Potawatomi — keepers of fire. Each of these three groups have multiple individual Nations throughout the Great Lakes Region that consist of their own bands, villages, and doodem or clan systems.

Around the 1600s, Anishinaabek were forced to change relations with their homelands due to European colonizers and settlers arriving in the Great Lakes. These newcomers brought disease, continuous conflicts and wars, and they wanted to remove Anishinaabek from their homelands. Some Anishinaabek were relocated to different regions due to the newcomers’ desire for land and resources.

Despite it all, Anishinaabek fought to remain in the Great Lakes Region. A key event in local Anishinaabek history is the 1836 Treaty of Washington that ceded or sold nearly 40% of what we now call Michigan. Anishinaabek leaders signed the treaty in hopes of avoiding removal westward and retaining their inherent sovereign rights to hunt, fish, and gather on their homelands and waters. Provisions of this treaty and many other treaties between the US and Anishinaabek Nations were and continue to be disregarded.

Removal from lands and waters often created loss of culture, language, and lifeways — many Anishinaabek are working every day to maintain and revitalize Anishinaabemowin and Anishinaabe culture and lifeways.

Contemporary Anishinaabe Art: A Continuation celebrates the enduring cultures and creative achievements of over 60 artists from the Great Lakes region. These artists represent a continuation of Anishinaabe creativity, which has been ongoing for centuries. One of the largest presentations of contemporary Native American art in the Midwest and the first major Native American exhibition at the Detroit Institute of Arts in 30 years, this exhibition challenges perceptions about what Native American art can be, how it should be seen, and how it can be interpreted.

The artists in this exhibition have all been impacted by US policy. Their work shows how Anishinaabe people flourish, thrive, and continue to create art.

Exhibit Themes & Topics:

- Stewardship of water and land
- Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), girls, and 2SLGBTQI+
- Boarding schools + forced assimilation
- Forced government sterilization
- Anishinaabemowin (language) revitalization
- Anishinaabe worldview of more-than-human relatives

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Michigan Standards Connections Examples (not exhaustive):

- ♦ MI Art: ART.D.IV.5.4, ART.D.IV.7.3

ART.T.IV.8.1, ART.D.V.HS.3, ART.VA.IV.5.1, ART.VA.IV.5.2, ART.VA.IV.5.3, ART.VA.V.5.1, ART.VA.V.5.2, ART.VA.V.5.4, ART.VA.III.6.3, ART.VA.IV.6.1, ART.VA.IV.6.2, ART.VA.III.1.1

ART.VA.III.1.5, ART.VA.III.2.5, ART.VA.IV.2.1, ART.VA.III.3.2, ART.VA.IV.3.1, ART.VA.IV.3.2, ART.VA.III.7.6

- ♦ MI Social Studies: 2 – G1.0.3, 2 – H2.0.6, 2 – G4.0.3, 3 – G1.0.2, 3 – H3.0.4, 3 – G4.0.4, 4 – H3.0.7, 5 – U1.1.1, 5 – U2.1.1, 5 – U2.1.3, 8.3.4, C – 6.3.2, C – 6.1.3, C – 6.1.2, C – 4.3.2.

- ♦ NGSS: K–LS1–1, K–ESS3–3, 5–ESS3–1, 5–ESS1–2, MS–ESS1–1.

Pre-Visit Awareness & Prep for Educators:

Stewardship of Water and Land

- ♦ Cook, Suzy, "[Harvesting 'First Water Protectors' Not about Gathering Plants, but Listening, Blood Memory.](#)" *Traverse City Record-Eagle*, 2020.
- ♦ Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC). "[Ogichidaa Storytellers.](#)" Stories website about Anishinaabek treaty rights & connection to nibi, 2021.
- ♦ Harbor Spring Historical Society, "[Odawa Connection to Water lecture by Eric Hemenway,](#)" 2021.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQI+ /Missing and Murdered Indigenous People/MMIW/MMIP/MMIWG2S+

- ♦ Nichols, Anna Liz, "[Michigan Leaders Call Attention to the Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People.](#)" *Michigan Advance*, May 5, 2025.
- ♦ Michigan Department of Attorney General. "[AG Nessel Announces Missing or Murdered Indigenous People Task Force.](#)" *Michigan.gov*, November 22, 2024.
- ♦ Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women. "[MMIWG2S — Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit.](#)" *Trainings and Education, Land & Body Violence.*

Boarding Schools + Forced Assimilation

- ♦ [National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.](#)
- ♦ NBC News Digital, "[Survivors Of Native American Boarding Schools Discuss Dark History in the US,](#)" 2021, features quillwork artist, Yvonne Walker-Keshick.
- ♦ Spirit Plate Podcast, [Allotment & Assimilation Pt. 2 with Eric Hemenway Interviewed by Shiloh Maples,](#) Whetstone Magazine/Media, 2022.
- ♦ Ziibiwing Center of Anishinaabe Culture & Lifeways, Museum of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe. [American Indian Boarding Schools: An Exploration of Global Ethnic & Cultural Cleansing, A Supplementary Curriculum Guide,](#) 2011.

Forced Government Sterilization

- ♦ "[1976: Government Admits Unauthorized Sterilization of Indian Women,](#)" *Native Voices*, National Library of Medicine.
- ♦ Blakemore, Erin. "[The Little-Known History of the Forced Sterilization of Native American Women.](#)" *JSTOR Daily*, August 25, 2016.

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Anishinaabemowin Revitalization

- ♦ Mutually Inclusive, “[Language of the Land: Michigan Natives’ Fight for Revitalization](#).” Season 5, Episode 3. WGVU/PBS, 2024.
- ♦ [Nishnaabemwin: Odawa and Eastern Ojibwe Online Dictionary](#), a project created by Algonquian Dictionaries and Language Resources Project.
- ♦ [Ojibwe People’s Dictionary](#), a project hosted by the University of Minnesota and the result of many partners.
- ♦ Sign up for Anishinaabemowin sound clips delivered to your email every day! Email: tech@ltbbodawa-nsn.gov with subject line: “Bibezhik Kidwin/word-a-day”. Courtesy of [Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Gijigowi Anishinaabemowin Language Dept.](#)

The Anishinaabe worldview of more-than-human relatives

- ♦ To the Best of our Knowledge/TTBOOK, [We’ve Forgotten How to Listen to Plants](#) with Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer (author of “*Braiding Sweetgrass*”) interviewed by Anne Strainchamps, Wisconsin Public Radio & PRX Public Media, 2020.

During Visit Activities:

Conduct a “Bioblitz” of the DIA Lawn!

Gather students near Jason Quigno’s *Bring Them Together* stone sculpture (corner of Woodward & Kirby) and spend 10–15 minutes exploring the space with a focus on water in all its forms — snow, rain, puddles, frost, ice, hail, etc. Ask students to record observations — such as weather conditions, how the air feels, plants, birds, insects, and other animal tracks — using words and sketches. Have students note how the water interacts with the land and more-than-human relatives around them.

Please consider doing this in all weather and seasons, as the theme of water is expansive and present year-round — be it rain, ice, or snow. This focus on water aligns with the student activities for the tour, offering a deeper connection to the themes. Students can share their findings in the best way that works for your class.

Anishinaabemowin Listening & Learning!

Encourage students to spend time with the first language of this land. Find the wiigwaas (birchbark) labels around the exhibition! They provide Anishinaabemowin audio.

Post-Visit Activities:

Encourage students to further think about their time at the exhibition & their findings on the DIA yard and then assign:

- Research assignment about the more-than-human relatives observed on the DIA yard & viewed in the exhibition.
- Art assignment inspired by time spent at the DIA in their preferred media or the medium currently being explored in class.
- Research the Anishinaabemowin names of the beings and water/weather found around the DIA yard.



Credits: In collaboration with DIA Education Programs staff, this resource was created by Amanda Weinert, Anishinaabe Educator, (Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa citizen & Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa descendant), and Kriya Gaillard, Michigan Department of Education’s Indigenous Education Initiative.