



Lesson 3.3 “Who Owns the Land?”

Unit 3: Settling New Hampshire

Lesson Objectives

- Students will brainstorm and organize needs and uses of land long ago and today.
- Students will compare the cultural values that informed the signing of a 17th-century land deed signed by New Hampshire colonists and Abenaki, identify points of misunderstanding and the potential for conflict.
- Students will analyze the deed signed by New Hampshire colonists and Abenaki and reflect on the meaning of writing one’s signature.

Lesson Competencies

- I can locate, organize, and analyze information from print and non-print sources to support my development of central ideas and subtopics. (ELA 2)
- I can explain that historical perspectives vary based upon the time period in which the person lived and that those perspectives shaped the historical sources they created. (Moose SS)
- I can analyze primary and secondary sources and draw appropriate conclusions. (Moose SS)

Essential Questions

How has New Hampshire come to be the way it is?
How has New Hampshire been shaped by many voices?

Focus Questions

How were the Abenaki impacted by the arrival of the Europeans?
Why did the English settle New Hampshire?

Estimated Time

Three 40-minute class sessions

Materials & Equipment

Class set of “Land Use” Venn diagram worksheet
Class set of “Two Cultures: One Land” worksheet
Class set of “Who ‘Owns’ the Land?” worksheet, as desired
“Wheelwright Deed” for projection or printing
Class set of “Analyzing Documents: Wheelwright Deed” worksheet
“Detail of Wheelwright Deed” for projection or printing



Educator Introduction & Rationale

By the early 1600s, more than 24,000 Abenaki were living in the area that is known today as New Hampshire, most of them located in its southern region. The Abenaki and their ancestors had been living on this land, which they called N'dakinna, for roughly 12,000 years. The arrival and settlement of English colonists during the 17th century would in many ways define the area and its people, both indigenous and colonist, for generations to come. The first four English settlements established during this time reflect the main objectives of the English colonists. Portsmouth and Dover were founded by adventurers hoping to make their fortunes in fish and furs. Exeter and Hampton were founded by Puritans from Massachusetts who migrated north seeking greater opportunities for wealth and more religious freedom. During this same time, the Abenaki's deeply rooted ways of life were completely disrupted. They first were decimated by disease as European illnesses spread along the seacoast. Then, the profound differences in the two cultures made it difficult to communicate effectively and build mutually beneficial relationships. The Abenaki were pushed off their lands to make way for the colonists' ventures. Reference the [Educator Overview](#) for more information.

This lesson is the third in Unit 3: Settling New Hampshire. Achievement of the learning objectives in lesson 3.1 "Explorers" and lessons 2.1 "People of the Dawn" and 2.2 "Using the Land" in Unit 2: The Abenaki Before 1600 is recommended before engaging with the activities in this lesson so that students understand the different goals of land use. Please note, lesson vocabulary and definitions are at the end of the document. You may wish to preview these with your students.

In this lesson, students examine the two extraordinarily different sets of cultural values that came into contact when colonists began to arrive in New Hampshire. After activating their schema about land use long ago and today, students learn that the Abenaki and English colonists had very different ideas of what it meant to "own" land and that, in fact, the concept of ownership was not part of the Abenaki way of life. The idea that a single person could own land and have special rights to it was brought to the New World by European colonists; it was a completely alien idea to those already living here, a crucial understanding for studying the colonists and the Abenaki. The land, according to the Abenaki, was a gift meant to be cared for and shared in return for its resources.

The learning activity continues with a guided analysis of the "Wheelwright Deed," a document central to the founding of Exeter, New Hampshire. This deed is a remarkable example of the kinds of deeds that colonists presented to indigenous people throughout the colonies; they applied their English tradition of legal land ownership to a new situation, often with little thought or concern about how the other signing party (the Abenaki) interpreted the terms of the deed. Although this lesson does not delve into the conflict experienced by Abenaki and colonists due to the differences in their cultural thinking, it does challenge students to identify and reflect on the misunderstandings that would rise from the clash of these differences. Two reinforcement activities are suggested for students who will benefit from more time with the concepts of the lesson. Two extension activities are recommended for students ready to expand upon the concepts of the lesson. Please adapt all the material in this lesson, as necessary, to meet the needs of the students in your classroom.

Learning Activity

Activation

Why do people need land? Ask students, in pairs, small groups, or individually, to brainstorm all the reasons they can think of why people need land and how they use it. Consider compiling these into a whole group list and then having students sort them into a Venn diagram divided between Long Ago and Today. They may discover some needs and uses have not changed for people while other needs and uses today were not present long ago. A Venn diagram template is provided.

Ask students to share what they know about how people get to use land. Do they have to buy it, rent it, borrow it? What do they know about who is in charge of this kind of exchange? Do they think it has always been that way for people in New Hampshire?

Direct Instruction

Compare cultures. Remind students that beginning in the 1600s, two main groups of people had needs and uses for the land in New Hampshire: the Abenaki and the English colonists.

- The first people to live on the land we call New Hampshire were the Abenaki and their ancestors. They had been living in this area for more than 12,000 years before anyone from Europe arrived. They had deeply ingrained traditions and complex ways of life that depended on the land.
- When people from Europe decided to colonize what they called the "New World," they did so for two main reasons: making money and religious freedom. The area we call New Hampshire was mostly colonized by Europeans seeking to establish businesses and make money by processing products that people in Europe needed: fish, furs, and timber. They needed land to build communities and their business operations.

Student Reading

Two cultures interact. Before continuing with Direct Instruction, have students read Unit 3: Learn It! "[Abenaki Response](#)," pages 1-11. Reinforce student comprehension with the infographic "[Trade Between English Settlers and the Abenaki](#)" on page 7.

Teaching tip: This is a good place to pause if you will divide the lesson between several teaching periods.

**Direct
Instruction**

Distribute copies of "Two Cultures: One Land." Take a few moments to discuss the concept of cultural values. What do students think that term means? Reinforce that cultural values are the big ideas that a community relies on to work and live together. Traditions, rituals, and beliefs all contribute to a culture's values.

Read the chart on the page together as is best for your class. Remind students that when the Abenaki and the English colonists came into contact with each other in New Hampshire, the two groups had starkly different cultural values. These differences sometimes led to misunderstanding and conflict, particularly in the case of how land was used. These conflicts were sometimes violent. The Abenaki thought the colonists would join in their way of life. The colonists wanted the Abenaki to follow their way of life. Many of the Abenaki who survived the devastating diseases brought by the colonists were eventually forced to leave their homeland in New Hampshire (N'dakinna) and seek new places to live in Canada.

**Independent
Practice**

Thinking through land use. Put students in pairs or have them work individually and support students as they work through the questions on the sheet. Review as is best for your class.

Teaching tip: This is a good spot to pause if you will divide the lesson between several teaching periods.

**Direct
Instruction**

Changing "ownership." Share the following information with students to build their understanding about the difference between how English colonists and Abenaki thought about land:

- A problem for the English in New Hampshire in the mid-1600s: there was no colonial authority who could grant them land to use. So, they did what they would have done if they were still in England: they wrote documents called deeds and went to the people who they believed owned the land (the local Abenaki) and said they wanted a certain amount of land for their own use. If the Abenaki signed the deed, the English felt they now owned that land. This was done throughout the colonies.
- However, the idea of land "ownership" was not part of Abenaki culture at all. The concept that a single person would have special and exclusive rights to land simply did not exist in their world view. The land they lived on, hunted and fished on, and cultivated for crops needed to be shared and cared for so that it would provide resources for future generations. So, when the Abenaki agreed to these deeds, they generally expected that the English were asking to share the land for space and resources, too.

Teaching Tip: If you feel your students need more practice with the difference in how the Abenaki and English thought about the land, use the "Who 'Owns' This Land?" worksheet and discuss together.

**Student
Reading**

Exeter and the Wheelwright Deed. Before moving into Guided Practice, direct students to read Unit 3: Learn It! "[The First Four Towns](#)," pages 8 and 9.

Guided Practice

Examine a land deed. Explain to students that they will "Wheelwright Deed." Project or distribute copies of "Wheelwright Deed."

Teaching tip: It may be useful to identify the location of Exeter on a map of New Hampshire, in case students are not familiar with the town.

Distribute copies of the "Analyzing Documents: Wheelwright Deed" worksheet to guide student observations and thinking about the purpose of the document, the meaning of the signatures, and who is represented by those signatures. Consider having students work in pairs to answer the questions in the Encounter and Investigate sections and then review responses as a whole group. The Build questions will be addressed later in the lesson.

Possible outcome: Students will observe many things about this document, from the difficult-to-read handwriting, to the varying types of signatures including two that look like human figures. Students may be able to decipher some of the words and may be able to determine that two different groups of people signed this document to show that they agreed with what it said. They will likely conclude that the document is from long ago.

Enrich students' understanding of the document by sharing more about its story and its significance in New Hampshire history:

- Some European people ended up in New Hampshire because of their religious beliefs. The Massachusetts Bay colony was mostly settled by Puritans. Some of their residents were not felt to be religious enough and were forced to leave the colony to find somewhere else to live. One of these individuals was a man named John Wheelwright. He decided to create a settlement a bit further north in the area known today as Exeter, New Hampshire.
- He took the approach that many Europeans took throughout the colonies. He drafted a document like those used in his home country of England and presented it to Wehanownowit, the sachem (chief) of the Abenaki living in the area, who called themselves the Piscataqua.
- Wehanownowit, Wheelwright, and other English and Abenaki witnesses signed the document, on April 3, 1638, which deeded a 30-acre-square tract of land to Wheelwright and others, with the exception of the "ground w[hi]ch is broken up" (for planting) and the right to "hunt and fish and foul in the said limites."

Reflection

Significance of a signature. As a whole group, look at the “Detail of Wheelwright Deed,” a closeup of the document. Ask students what they think is the difference between just printing your name and signing your name. When have they needed an adult’s signature on a form? Why?

Direct students to look at the questions in the Build section of “Analyzing Documents: Wheelwright Deed.” Give them time to independently think about and respond to the two questions. One focuses on the significance of signatures. The other asks them to predict possible misunderstandings about signing this document based on what they already know about the differences between Abenaki and colonist ways of life. Review as is best for your class.

Reinforcement

1. **Similarities and differences.** Try this activity adapted from a curriculum created by Jamestown Settlement and American Revolution Museum at Yorktown. Remind students that all cultures at all times share basic human needs. How each culture meets its needs may vary based on geography, available resources, and its technology. It is because of these differences that cultures may clash when they come into contact with each other. Return to “Two Cultures: One Land.” Remind students about the three basic needs every community has: food, shelter, and clothing. Read the two columns of information and highlight, circle, or underline details that relate to those basic needs. Consider using a different color for each need category. A sample for educator reference is provided.
2. **Creating a new dialogue.** Remind students that we cannot change what happened in the past, but we can use our understanding of the past to make different choices in the present. Ask students to imagine that a group of people has arrived in their town. They don’t know anything about this group or understand the language the new group is speaking, but they can tell that the new people want to stay and set up their own communities. What would the students say or do to help the new people understand them and how their community works? What would the students say or do to better understand the new people? Ask students to write, independently or in pairs, a description of how they could interact with the newcomers. Alternatively, students can create brief skits showing how they might interact together.

Extension

1. **Comparing maps.** Project or provide students copies of “N’dakinna and New England States” and the 1625 map “New France, New England, New Scotland and New Foundland.” Explain to students that the map of N’dakinna shows where different Abenaki groups lived around 1600, based on data collected by archeologists and historians. The other is a historic map, created in 1625 by William Alexander who proposed a plan of settlement of the New World that would divide land among a group of 20 English lords. Have students discuss the two maps, using guiding questions such as:
 - a. What is different about how the land is represented on these maps? Why might that be?
 - b. What is different about how the map is labeled? What does that tell us about how the two different cultures thought about land use?
2. **Land acknowledgement.** The Strawberry Banke Museum as well as other organizations and groups today have a land acknowledgment statement noting they are on N’dakinna, the ancestral homeland of the Abenaki. Go to www.strawberrybanke.org/dawnland.cfm and scroll down. What is the purpose of their land acknowledgement statement? Why are these messages important? Should New Hampshire officially adopt the practice of land acknowledgement?

Supporting Materials

New Hampshire Historical Society Resources

N'dakinna and New England States map created by New Hampshire Historical Society staff with information from Native Land at Native-land.ca as well as informed by list of sources in lesson 2.1 "People of the Dawn."

Charles H. Bell, *John Wheelwright: His Writings*

Other Resources

New France, New England, New Scotland and New Foundland, 1625.
<https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:3f462s66f>

People of the Dawnland from the Strawberry Banke Museum.
www.strawberrybanke.org/dawnland.cfm

Frey, H. and Wilson, T. *Stuff You Missed in History Class*, "King Phillip's War," February 19, 2020. Minutes 0:00 to 9:45.
www.iheart.com/podcast/stuff-you-missed-in-history-cl-21124503/episode/king-philips-war-57842315/

Khan Academy, "Comparing European and Native American Cultures," accessed July 9, 2020. www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/precontact-and-early-colonial-era/spanish-colonization/v/comparing-european-and-native-american-cultures

Jamestown Settlement Museum at Yorktown. "Cultures at Jamestown: Comparing Cultures." www.historyisfun.org/lesson4/

Wheelwright Deed, 1638; Courtesy of the Exeter Historical Society

Standards

“Moose on the Loose” Content:

- ✓ Students will understand that the Abenaki had a unique way of life characterized by customs, beliefs, and values. (3-5.T1.3)
- ✓ Students will understand that European exploration led to the colonization of the region that became New Hampshire. They will understand that, beginning in the early 1600s, colonial New Hampshire was home to people from different areas of the world. (3-5.T2.1)

“Moose on the Loose” Skills:

- ✓ Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence (3-5.S1.1, 3-5.S1.2)
- ✓ Effective Historical Thinking (3-5.S3.1, 3-5.S3.2)

New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ Geography: The World in Spatial Terms (SS:GE:4:1.5)
- ✓ Geography: Human Systems (SS:GE:4:4.4)
- ✓ US / NH History: Political Foundations and Development (SS:HI:4:1.2)
- ✓ US / NH History: Contacts, Exchanges & International Relations (SS:HI:4:2.1)
- ✓ US / NH History: Social/Cultural (SS:HI:4:5.5)

NCSS Themes:

- ✓ Theme 1: Culture
- ✓ Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change
- ✓ Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- ✓ Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Human-Environment Interaction: Place, Regions, and Culture (D2.Geo.4.3-5)
- ✓ Change, Continuity, and Context (D2.His.2.3-5)
- ✓ Perspectives (D2.His.4.3-5, D2.His.6.3-5)
- ✓ Historical Sources and Evidence (D2.His.11.3-5)
- ✓ Causation and Argumentation (D2.His.14.3-5)

Common Core ELA Grade 3:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Informational Text (RI.3.3)
- ✓ Craft and Structure in Informational Text (RI.3.5, RI.3.6)
- ✓ Text Types and Purposes in Writing (W.3.2)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration in Speaking and Listening (SL.3.1c)

Common Core ELA Grade 4:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Informational Text (RI.4.2, RI.4.3)
- ✓ Text Types and Purposes in Writing (W.4.2d)
- ✓ Research to Build and Present Knowledge (W.4.9)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration in Speaking and Listening (SL.4.1c)

Common Core ELA Grade 5:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Informational Text (RI.5.3)
- ✓ Craft and Structure in Informational Text (RI.5.5, RI.5.6)
- ✓ Text Types and Purposes in Writing (W.5.2d)
- ✓ Research to Build and Present Knowledge (W.5.9)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration in Speaking and Listening (SL.5.1.c)

Lesson Vocabulary

Abenaki	(noun) Name used to refer to the indigenous people of the land now called New Hampshire
colonist	(noun) A person living in an area governed by another, often distant, country
colony	(noun) An area governed by another, often distant, country
culture	(noun) The beliefs, values, and practices learned and shared by a group of people from generation to generation
deed	(noun) A signed legal document that passes ownership of property from one person to another
indigenous people	(noun) The first people who lived in an area before people from other cultures arrived
natural resources	(noun) Something found in nature that is used by people, such as animals, plants, or fossil fuels
perspective	(noun) The point of view expressed through writing, speech, photographs, and other sources of information
sachem	(noun) Respected elder in a tribe who guides decision making
settlement	(noun) A place where people establish a community