

MUSIC

Cape Breton's Diversity in Unity

Songs from Cape Breton's Mi'kmaq Song Tradition

The following materials provide a teaching resource for elementary and secondary Music and Mi'kmaq Studies. The suggestions for teaching, learning and assessment have been adapted from Nova Scotia Curriculum documents, and they support the *Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Arts Education Curriculum* (1999), as well as the *Essential Graduation Learnings*.

The Activities described are directly related to the [Mi'kmaq song repertoire](#) found on the [Beaton Institute's Music: Cape Breton's Diversity in Unity](#), as well as the supplementary materials contained on the website. Although they are divided into elementary and secondary topics, they can be adapted to any grade level.

Included at the end is the list of Nova Scotia curriculum documents as well as additional materials that are contained on the Authorized Learning Resources list for Nova Scotia schools.

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Music

Foundation for Atlantic Canada Arts Education Curriculum (1999) articulates three understandings, or processes, that are evident in all arts disciplines: dance, drama, music and visual arts. These understandings/processes are:

- Creating, Making and Presenting
- Understanding and Connecting Contexts of Time, Place and Community
- Perceiving and Responding

General Curriculum Outcomes (GCOs) in each of these areas express those things that students must know and are able to do at the end of each grade level. The suggestions provided here give teachers ideas for using the [Mi'kmaq song repertoire](#) on this website to achieve these outcomes. While they are categorized according to elementary and secondary curriculum, it is understood that many of the ideas can be adapted to any age/grade level, depending on the background of the students.

It must also be noted that while this educator's resource concentrates on one arts discipline – music – it will become evident that extensions to other arts disciplines, such as dance, drama and visual arts, are inherent throughout. The list of resources that appear on [page 14](#) note those Nova Scotia curriculum documents and texts that will be helpful for teachers as they plan activities for their students.

Elementary

Creating, Making and Presenting

GCO 1: Students will be expected to explore, challenge, develop and express ideas using the skills, language, techniques and processes of the arts.

- Have fiddle students play the sheet music version of *The Old Man and the Old Woman*. Ask them to listen to Lee Cremona's French and Irish versions of the song and note any variations in rhythm or melody compared to the pdf version. Have students create their own variation to the B section of the song.
- Ask students to create a musical instrument (ie rattles, shakers, drums, rain stick, clappers) using materials from nature. Students can use these instruments to accompany Mi'kmaq songs and chants.

GCO 2: Students will be expected to create and/or present, collaboratively and independently, expressive products in the arts for a range of audiences.

- Have fiddle students perform *The Old Man and the Old Woman* in Rondo form, playing together through the repeated A section and individual students performing their own variation of the B section.
- In small groups, have students create a soundscape to accompany the reading of Rita Joe's poem, *I Am an Indian on This Land*. Have groups perform the soundscapes in class. Ask students to evaluate each group's performance.
- Ask students to write a response poem to Rita Joe's *I Am an Indian on This Land*. Have students evaluate individual responses. Create a soundscape to accompany each of the responses.
- Ask students to watch Rita Joe's video, *Mi'kmaq Lament for the Dead*. Ask students to transcribe the song and write an accompaniment for it.

Understanding Contexts of Time, Place and Community

GCO 3: Students will be expected to demonstrate critical awareness of and value for the role of the arts in creating and reflecting culture.

- Listen to Lee Cremo’s performance of *The Old Man and the Old Woman* several times. Ask students to compare the French and Irish versions played; identifying variations in rhythm, articulation, ornamentation, tone quality etc.
- Listen to Lee Cremo’s performance of *Paddy on the Turnpike*. Ask students to compare the Scottish and Irish versions played; identifying variations in rhythm, articulation, ornamentation, tone quality etc. Compare and contrast Lee’s performance with the downloadable pdf file of this Irish Reel.
- All Countries have an anthem. The Mi’kmaw Honor Song is the anthem for the Mi’kmaq Nation. When this song is sung, people should stand as a sign of respect. Put students into small groups and practice drumming 8th notes together (using hand drums or a large powwow drum). Some students can add an 8th note pattern using maracas, shakers, or rattles. Ask students to sing along with the recording during the chorus section.
- Read the link: **Lee Cremo Speaks** to students. Locate Chapel Island and Eskasoni on a map. Ask students to explain how other cultures may have influenced Lee Cremo’s style of fiddling.
- Powwows are social and spiritual gatherings where Mi’kmaw culture is celebrated through traditional chanting, drumming and dancing. The Mi’kmaq word for powwow is Mawiomi (mah-wee-oh-me). Ask students to listen to Sarah Denny’s performance of I’ko. It is a traditional chant and often performed at powwows. Arrange a field trip with students to attend a Mi’kmaq powwow. Mi’kmaq communities and schools often celebrate their culture with powwows in October and June; everyone is welcome to attend.

GCO 4: Students will be expected to respect the contributions to the arts of individuals and cultural groups in local and global context, and value the arts as a record of human experiences and expression.

- Ask students to choose from a list of Mi’kmaq musicians to research on the web. Students can work in small groups and prepare a poster on their chosen musician to share with class members.

- Attend a live Mi'kmaq-Scottish concert. Ask students to write a review of the concert.
- The Mi'kmaq people are said to have adopted Catholicism since Chief Membertou's baptism in 1610. Have students read through the lyrics of Harriet Denny and Annie Cremo's anthem honoring St. Anne. Have students listen to the recording. Ask students to discuss the important role that Harriet and Annie played in preserving the religious songs, hymns and prayers of their community.
- Have students listen to Sarah Denny perform the traditional chant, *I'ko*. This chant is believed to have been given to the Mi'kmaq as a gift from the Mohawk people following an inter-tribal social gathering. The chant is accompanied by a hand drum playing 8th notes. Listen to Michael Paul's version of the chant and ask students to compare the two recordings.
- Have students listen to Lee Cremo's composition, *Timothy Ryan's Reel*, identifying form, tonality, rhythm and melodic motifs used. What musical influences are heard in this song? Who was the song written for?

GCO 5: Students will be expected to examine the relationship among the arts, societies and environments.

- *Kulein* (Immaculate Mary) is performed by an unknown male singer. This hymn is sung during the Feast of St. Anne, the annual spiritual celebration of the Mi'kmaq held in *Potlotek* (Chapel Island) every July 26. St. Anne was adopted as the Patron Saint of the Mi'kmaq in 1628. *Potlotek* is known as the spiritual capital of the Mi'kmaq Nation and was declared as a national historical site of Canada in 2003. For more information on Mi'kmaq spirituality visit the online chapter, *Mi'kmaw Spirituality & Organized Religion from Kekina'muek: Learning about the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia*: <http://www.cmmns.com/KekinamuekPdfs/Ch6screen.pdf>
- The Mi'kmaw Honour Song was written by George Paul from the Big Cove Reserve, NB. This song is a patriotic song of great significance to the Mi'kmaq Nation, reflecting the importance of showing respect to their culture. It reminds them to help one another as the Creator would want them to do. People should stand up as a sign of respect when it is sung.

Perceiving and Responding

GCO 6: Students will be expected to apply critical thinking and problem-solving strategies to reflect on and respond to their own and others' expressive works.

- Lee Cremo compares the fiddle to the human voice. Ask students to describe what they think he meant when he said the fiddle "can speak any language to you".

- Have students listen to Jimmy Paul’s fiddling medley. Play a recording of Winston “Scotty” Fitzgerald playing the *Antigonish Polka #1 & #2*. Have students identify similarities and differences between the two fiddlers.
- Have students compare Jimmy Paul’s performance of *Antigonish Polka #1 & #2* to the pdf version of the song noting the variations in melody and rhythm.
- Invite a musician from a Mi’kmaq community to perform for your class. Have students prepare interview questions for the guest(s) ahead of time. Tape the performance (if permitted). Ask students to transcribe the songs.

GCO 7: Students will be expected to understand the role of technologies in creating and responding to expressive works.

- Mi’kmaq music has been traditionally passed down orally from one generation to the next. Ask students to consider how advancements in technology are able to help preserve the music of the Mi’kmaq.
- Students can use recording software to create their own composition in the style of Mi’kmaq chanting or drumming. Visit the site, www.audacity.com to download free audio for editing and recording.

GCO 8: Students will be expected to analyze the relationship between artistic intent and the expressive work.

- The Ko’jua is a traditional Mi’kmaq song and dance that is often played at powwows and other social gatherings. A simple phrase is repeated and the tempo of the piece accelerates throughout. The Ko’jua dance accompanies the song. Dancers compete to see which dancer can outlast the others as the tempo of the music increases. Ask students to compare and contrast Lee Cremona’s fiddle and vocal renditions of *Jukwa’lu’k Kwe’ji’ju’ow* (Bring Your Little Sister). Students can view a video of the dance. Lee Cremona sings and plays the *Ji’kamaqn* (a percussive instrument made of split ash) while three others perform the dance.
- Ask students to listen to *The Oka Song*, written by Rita Joe. The song was written in reaction to the Oka Crisis, which she claimed had a deep affect on her. Have students research the issues of the Oka crisis and then listen to Rita’s song of protest. Students can transcribe the song identifying form and tonality. What musical influences are heard in the song?

Secondary

As previously noted, many of the activities described in the elementary curriculum can be adapted for students in grades 7 – 12, depending on the background of the students. The following activities are specific to secondary music curriculum documents that are referenced in the resources list found on page 13.

Creating, Making and Presenting

GCO 1: Students will be expected to explore, challenge, develop, and express ideas using the skills, languages, techniques, and processes of the arts.

GCO 2: Students will be expected to create and/or present, collaboratively and independently, expressive products in the arts for a range of audiences and purposes.

- In the interview with Lee Cremo that accompanies *Fiddle Selections by Lee Cremo*, he discusses how music is a means of expression that can be understood in any language or dialect. In groups, have the students discuss this concept as it relates to the fiddle tune on the recording. Then have them find a similar example from another song tradition that is sung in two languages, eg, *O Canada* sung in French and English. Have them articulate how music is a language that expresses thoughts and feelings, and these are often evident despite the language or dialect.
- In *Fiddle Selections by Jimmy Paul*, Jimmy Paul is accompanied on the piano by Vincent Joe. This is a unique style of chording, simple in texture, but effective in enhancing the tune. Discuss with the students this style of accompaniment, and if possible demonstrate it on the keyboard. If there are students who have proficiency with keyboard, ask them to try it. Now have them show other students in pairs or small groups, how they too can accompany a simple melody. Show the chords as they relate to the printed music.
- For the printed score in *Fiddle Selections by Jimmy Paul*, show how the chords can be named as they are here, or printed in tab notation for guitar. Have them replace the chord names with tablature. If there are guitar players in the class, have them demonstrate how chording can be done on the keyboard or the guitar. You may consider having them play along with the recording to demonstrate this.
- For Rita Joe's poem, *I am an Indian on this Land*, have students in groups compose a melody that will capture the spirit of the words, and tell the story through song. If they consider the song to be in 4/4 time, there should be eight measures for each verse. The melody created is merely repeated for each verse, although they may need to alter the notes to make the words fit. For the last two lines, explain the idea of "coda" in a song, and have them use a motif from the verse to compose the melody for the coda. Have each group perform their song, and then for an assessment, have

them pass their notated score to another group to see if they can perform the work. You may wish to have them expand the score by including articulation marking, and dynamics. This is a good review of these concepts.

- In the selection, *I'Kò* by Sarah Denny, there is a strong rhythmic pulse played on the drum. Have the students research the significance of the drum in Mi'kmaw culture. Then have them find examples of the drum in other Mikmaw recordings on this website. *Wapikati'j* or *Ke'pmite'tmnej, Mi'kmaw Honour Song* are excellent examples for this activity.
- Compare the two selections of *I'Kò*. The one by Sarah Denny has a strong rhythmic pulse enhanced by the drum, whereas the one by Michael Paul does not. Compare and contrast the two. Why do you think the second would not include the drum beat.

Understanding and Connecting Contexts of Time, Place and Community

GCO 3: Students will be expected to demonstrate critical awareness of and value for the role of the arts in creating and reflecting culture.

GCO 4: Students will be expected to respect the contributions to the arts of individuals and cultural groups in local and global contexts.

GCO 5: Students will be expected to analyse the relationship among the arts, societies, and environments.

- Have the students research the cultural/historical background of Mi'kmaw music. Compare it to other types of music, such as Acadian or Gaelic/Celtic music. Research the cultural/historical background of songs from other cultures found in Nova Scotia.
- Discuss with the students the instrumentation used in selected songs on the website. If there are video clips or photos to accompany these recordings, discuss the various aspects of the Mi'kmaw culture that are evident, including dress, dancing, body ornamentation, settings, etc.
- Invite to the class members of the community who are active in Mi'kmaw music, and have them demonstrate and discuss aspects of their tradition. In preparation, have the students listen to/view appropriate recordings or videos and prepare questions. If students in the class have experience in performing Mi'kmaw music, have them join in with the demonstration by accompanying or playing with the guest.
- Videotape and watch segments of the East Coast Music Awards show that highlight Mi'kmaw music. Discuss the presentation regarding references to Mi'kmaw culture represented, categories, instrumentation, etc.
- Discuss with the class how music enhances the emotional context of ceremonial occasions, such as weddings, funerals, etc. Following up on this discussion, have

students review the Mi'kmaw songs on this website and discuss the ceremonies that would be appropriate for each, e.g. laments at funerals, jigs and reels at weddings, etc. Dance is an important component of Mi'kmaw music. Have the students listen to and watch the videos of *Ko'jua – Jukwa'lu'k kwe'ji'ju'ow* (or the *Ko'jua* video with Noel Marshall) and *Wapikatji'j*. Discuss each in relation to the movement patterns (circle, line, etc), the rhythm of the feet, the accompaniment, and the musical style. Both selections are ceremonial, and the dress of the performers indicate that each is performed at an important event. Have the students research the relationship between dance and music in Mi'kmaw culture, and then have them perform one of the dances as depicted on the two videos.

Perceiving and Responding

GCO 7: Students will be expected to understand the role of technologies in creating and responding to expressive works.

GCO 8: Students will be expected to analyse the relationship between artistic intent and the expressive work.

- Have students discuss interpretation in music. Consider composer's intent as it relates to a performer's interpretation. Relate this to the two recordings of *I'Ko* (one with the drum and one without). Discuss the concept of interpretation in relation to cultural styles of the same recording, such as *Paddy on the Turnpike*. Now look at the four examples of *Ko'jua*, and compare and contrast these in relation to composer's intent.
- Play for the students *God Save the Queen* as performed by Harriet Denny and Annie Cremo. Here the queen is the Blessed Virgin Mary, but the traditional English version of the same song is for the reigning monarch of the British Empire. Have them compare the two for melody, chordal progression, rhythm and beat, instrumentation. Have them articulate these differences, using guiding questions such as "Speculate on how the two selections evolved over time. Which one came first do you think?" Is there significance in the words of each?
- Select one of the songs and have groups of students perform it as a class. When rehearsing it, discuss and experiment with phrasing and contour in order to explore the expressive potential of the work.
- We know that different audiences influence a composer's work, and an artist's interpretation of it. Select five recordings from the website and discuss them in relation to whether the piece is ceremonial with everyone participating, or sung as a performance piece at a concert or dance.

- Have students use notation programs or sequencers to transcribe a work and change the instruments, tempo markings, dynamics, and articulations. They can describe the effect of these changes following the activity.

Mi'kmaq Studies 10

Introductory Unit, SCO C: Students will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the role of storytelling in First Nations cultures and an openness to listen to the voices of the First Nations peoples as they speak to the Mi'kmaq experience.

- Stories are passed from generation to generation through oral tradition. These stories are told using descriptive narratives, poetry and song, and depict a way of life or an event that has significance in First Nations culture. Listen to *The Oka Song* by Rita Joe. This poem tells of an important contemporary event in First Nations' history in Canada. Have the students research the Oka story, and discuss the poem of Rita Joe as it preserves that story.

Culture Unit, SCO B: Students will be expected to demonstrate an appreciation for the uniqueness of the Mi'kmaq language and its inherent world view and an understanding of the importance of language in defining and transmitting culture.

Culture Unit, SCO C: Students will demonstrate an understanding of values, customs, and traditions within Mi'kmaq culture and an appreciation of the role oral tradition plays in the maintenance of cultural continuity and identity.

Culture Unit, SCO D: Students will examine the evolving nature of Mi'kmaq culture and recognize the challenges it faces from dominant cultural beliefs and practices.

- In developing an appreciation for the Mi'kmaq language, it is important that students hear it. Students in the class who speak Mi'kmaq will be an invaluable resource. Members of the Mi'kmaq community may also be invited to class. This website provides videos of songs and spoken word and these can be viewed to give the students experience in hearing the language. Have them make conclusions about the uniqueness of the language.
- Have students listen to music of the Mi'kmaq people. The examples on the website will provide excellent examples, as will other recordings such as those by the Sons of Membertou. Have them discuss why groups such as these are important, both to First Nations peoples and to the dominant culture. Students can express an appreciation that the power of the words and music have to express thoughts and feelings.
- In her poetry, Rita Joe wrote of values, customs, and traditions, and by reading or listening to these, others can gain an understanding of them. The website contains two of

these poems: *I am an Indian on this land*, and *The Oka Song*. Read these poems as a class, and in groups have the students list all the values, customs and traditions that are mentioned or referred to.

- After completing several of the activities that focus on listening to a variety of music on this website, have the students discuss how popular culture and the tensions and pulls that exist between dominant cultural beliefs and practices affect the preservation of the music of that culture. How are cultures able to overcome this tension, and in some cases strengthen the cause for musics of a particular culture? How has the support for cultural preservation increased over the past several years?
- Institutions such as museums (community, provincial, national), archives, galleries, etc. continue to play an important role in the preservation of cultural identity as well as important artifacts that provide insight into history and culture. Have the students discuss why this is important for any society. Then have them identify institutions in their community, province and country that are doing this work. In advance, you may wish to invite to class a museum curator or archivist to discuss the work that they do in this field. If possible, plan a field trip to a museum, and discuss with the curator the workings of the institution. For this unit, you may want to look specifically at how the institution is preserving First Nations Culture.
- If there are Mi'kmaw students in the class, have them create a display of personal cultural artifacts that have played an important role in their lives. They should accompany the display with didactics that provide important information about the significance of each. From this display, you could assign a project for students to research their own cultural roots and include specific artifacts – real or photos – that tell their “cultural story.”

Culture Unit, SCO E: Students will demonstrate an appreciation for traditional and contemporary expressions of First Nations art, craft, music, and literature.

- Invite in a native Mi'kmaq speaker to the classroom, interview him/her about their life as a child growing up with Mi'kmaq. Was Mi'kmaw song a part of their life? Have the speaker sing a Mi'kmaw song and if possible, teach it to the class.
- Have the students create a profile of a Mi'kmaw singer or group; and gather information from the internet or by conducting an interview.
- Traditional Native arts are holistic. They are not separate from the practice of nature of everyday life. Have students research Mi'kmaw artistic expression.
- Many students are familiar with First Nations music. As teacher, select a variety of ways to have students share their knowledge of Mi'kmaw music. On a designated day (or portions of several class periods), students can bring in examples of Mi'kmaw music and/or performances by First Nations artists (chanting, drumming, singing, instrumental).

This website provides important beginnings for the project, but students should be encouraged to expand their research to other sources. For the presentations, they should introduce their selections and all students should have the opportunity to enjoy! Teachers may wish to encourage their school library to subscribe to *Aboriginal Voices: The Magazine of Evolving Native American Arts and Cultures*.

- Focus a lesson around the following videos on the website: *Wapikatjij*, and *O Come All Ye Faithful*. Have the students discuss the ceremonial dress as shown in each. Discuss ornamentation in dress and jewellery, including bead work, and design.
- This website contains two examples of Rita Joe's poetry. Have the students research other works that she created, and instruct them to look for universal themes that emerge throughout her journey in poetry writing. Have them identify other poets and writers from Mi'kmaw culture, and make comparisons to the work of Rita Joe. You may wish to use the following guided questions:
 - What are common elements or themes that emerge?
 - Is there a pattern or style to the writing, or are they more free form?
 - Are there songs or tunes that have the same name? If so, is there a relationship between the two?
 - Can you distinguish between poems written for spiritual ceremonies and those written to tell a story of the culture?

Additional Resources

Nova Scotia Curriculum

Music Primary – 6 (2000)
Music 7 and Music 8 – Implementation Draft (2009)
Music 10 and Music 11 (2008)
Music 12 (2008)
Advanced Music 11 and Advanced Music 12 (2008)
Mi'kmaq Studies 10

ALR Resources

Aboriginal Peoples: Building for the Future (22883)
Aboriginal Voices Series: You Took My Language (2113)
First Nations: This Land Was Theirs (17345)
Mi'kma'ki Maps of the Maritimes (132342)
Mi'kmaq Quillwork (22303)
Mystic Sky: Relaxing Native Flutes (25147)
Native Peoples (22134)
Roots and Branches (16650)
Stories of Six Worlds: Mímac Legends (25086)
The Art of Drum Circles (25660)
The Mi'kmaq (18476)
The Nova Scotia Atlas (23810)
The Peopling of Atlantic Canada (51337)
The Powwow (19175)
The Raven (19112)
The Raven Necklace (19138)
World Music Cultural Legacy (12970)
World Music Cultural Traditions (12833)
World Music Drumming (25663)