



## Nez Perce Flutes

The National Park Service [NPS] *Teaching with Museum Collections* provides lesson plans for teachers to use NPS museum collections in student-centered educational activities. The collections tell the story of America; its peoples, cultures, varied habitats, significant events, and ideas that continue to inspire the world. *Teaching with Museum Collections [TMC]* emphasizes the links between the ‘real things,’ the collections, and the sites where those collections were found, collected, or used. NPS collections include cultural objects, natural history specimens, archival documents and photographs. Lesson plans link to national education standards.

### A. Introduction

- ❑ **Lesson Unit Plan Title:** Nez Perce Flutes
- ❑ **Developers:** Michelle Gallardo, Gr. 7-9 Art Teacher, Jenifer Jr. High School, Lewiston, ID; Teresa Rains, K-12 Music Teacher, Nezperce School District, Nezperce, ID; Lupe Sims – 6<sup>th</sup> Grade, Kamiah Middle School, Kamiah, ID.
- ❑ **Grade Level:** Grades 6-8
- ❑ **Length of Lessons/Lesson Unit:** At least two or three forty-five minute sessions.

### Overview of this Collection-Based Lesson Unit Plan

- ❑ **Park Name:** Nez Perce National Historical Park
- ❑ **Description:** The goal of this lesson is to inform students how flute music plays an important role in the lives of the Nez Perce by constructing and decorating a flute.
- ❑ **Essential questions**  
What role does the flute play in historic Nez Perce culture?

### C. Museum Collections Used in this Lesson Unit Plan

- ❑ [NEPE 8804B Dance Stick](#) (originally used as a flute with additional materials added after marriage)
- ❑ [NEPE-HI-C6934](#) - Photograph of James Blackeagle
- ❑ [NEPE-HI-1904](#) - Photograph of Nez Perce Man in Regalia
- ❑ [NEPE-HI-C9687](#) - Photograph of Nez Perce Women

### D. National Educational Standards

#### Music Standards (5-8)

Content Standard #2: Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music

Content Standard #3: Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments

Content Standard #4: Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines

Content Standard #6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

Content Standard #8: Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts



### Social Studies Standards (Middle Grade)

#### I. Culture

- b. explain how information and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.
- c. explain and give examples of how language, literature, the arts, architecture, other artifacts, traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviors contribute to the development and transmission of culture.

### English Language Arts Standards

Content Standard #7: Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, and people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

### **E. Student Learning Objectives**

Students will be able to:

1. Construct a flute which makes a variety of sounds.
2. Decorate the flute with both offered and found materials of personal significance to the student.
3. Describe and self-evaluate their finished flute

### **F. Background and Historical Context**

The flute was the only melodic instrument played by the Nez Perce. Young men used the flute in courting rituals. Each flute had its own unique sound due to the various sizes, shapes, materials, and placement of the holes. Flutes were generally made of hollowed elderberry although many flutes were created out of metal by re-using old gun barrels. The young male suitors invented their own songs and the girl being wooed could recognize the sounds of her suitors flute.

Other musical instruments, such as drums and rattles are featured in the virtual exhibit at [www.nps.gov/nepe](http://www.nps.gov/nepe).

### **G. Materials Used in the Lesson Plan**

- Materials needed to make a flute:
  - ½” PVC pipe cut to 12” – 18” lengths
  - ¼” dowels (each student needs two – one that is approximately the same length as the flute and a short one to use as a tamper)
  - 150 grit sandpaper
  - Chewing gum
  - Hand drills with ¼” bit
  - Awls or long nails
  - Dremel tool (speed rotary tool)



Leather strips, shoelaces, or string  
Plastic milk bottles  
Pencil with eraser – each student needs their own  
Ruler  
Rubber Bands  
Ribbon in various colors or sizes  
Beads, buttons, shells with holes  
Feathers  
Strips of fake or real fur  
Markers, watercolor or acrylic paint

- ❑ Nez Perce Flute Self-Evaluation, see page 8.

## H. Vocabulary

*Tsa-puun-mas* – Flute in the Nez Perce language  
*Tsa-puun/miute* – To play the flute for someone else  
*Tsa-puun/mii-u-wat* – A flute player  
*Tsa-puun-mas/hanyawaat* – A flute maker

## I. Teacher Tips

- \* Please try these activities before you present them to the class.
- \* Some activities may require more time than listed.

## J. Activity: Make a Flute

*Objective(s): Students will be able to-*

- Examine photographic evidence of the use of Nez Perce flutes
- Construct a flute which makes a variety of sounds.
- Decorate the flute with both offered and found materials of personal significance to the student.
- Describe and self-evaluate their finished flute.

*Materials used for this activity:*

Together with the dance stick and historic photos in the Nez Perce museum collections [see Section C, page 1]:

- ❑ Materials needed to make a flute:
  - ½” PVC pipe cut to 12” – 18” lengths
  - ¼” dowels (each student needs two – one that is approximately the same length as the flute and a short one to use as a tamper)
  - 150 grit sandpaper



- Chewing gum
  - Hand drills with ¼” bit
  - Awls or long nails
  - Dremel tool (speed rotary tool)
  - Leather strips, shoelaces, or string
  - Plastic milk bottles
  - Pencil with eraser – each student needs their own
  - Ruler
  - Rubber Bands
  - Ribbon in various colors or sizes
  - Beads, buttons, shells with holes
  - Feathers
  - Strips of fake or real fur
  - Markers, watercolor or acrylic paint
- Nez Perce Flute Self Evaluation, see page

***Procedure Part I:***

- Show the photograph of James Blackeagle with his flute (image no. HI-C6934). Indicate to the students that the objects and clothing shown on the photo give information about the subject. Point out that the flute is plain and tell the students that this represents the fact that he is single. His hair is not braided, also an indication that he is probably single.
- Have the students examine the photo and look for more clues about James Blackeagle (HI-C6934). The photograph was taken in a studio. Some of his clothing was store bought – the vest, shirt and blanket.
- Compare the photograph of James Blackeagle with the photo of the three women (image no. C9687). Have the students examine the photograph and compare and contrast the clothing with Blackeagle. Is their anything to indicate their status as married or single? No.
- Next show the photograph of the Nez Perce men in full regalia (image no. 1904) and point out the flute held by Swan Necklace. Indicate that the decorative elements were added by his wife.
- Last show the photo of the dance stick/flute. This object was originally a flute which over the years was embellished by the owner’s wife with her hair ties and other decorative pieces, making it no longer playable as a flute. Point out the variety of materials used to decorate the flute – otter fur, rawhide, beaded wool.

Make students aware that many materials use for embellishments were recycled from old clothing or blankets much in the way that quilts were made from old clothing.

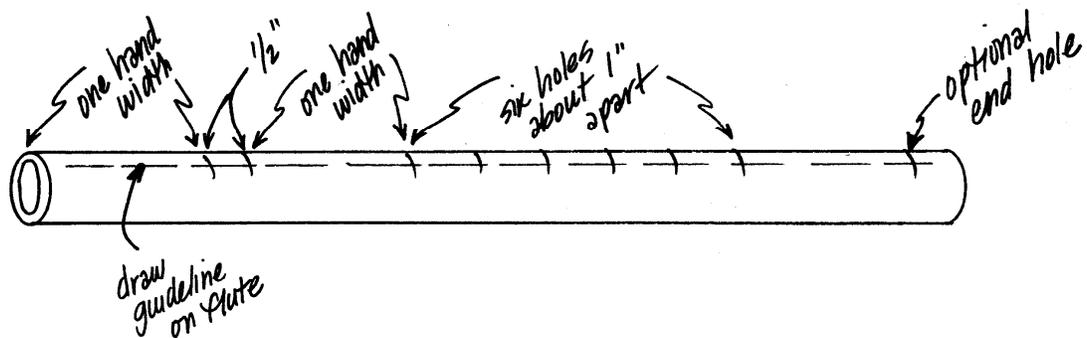


**Procedure Part II:**

The best way to teach the flute construction to a large group of students is to have the students in small groups with a set of tools and one helper – either adult or student who has experience making the flute. Another way to do this is to first teach the lesson to a small group of students and then take advantage of their new skills and use them as helpers.

Each Group should have PVC pipes and dowels cut for each student, one hand drill, one milk bottle (cut into rectangles approximately 1”x 3”), ruler and pencil, rubber bands and sandpaper for each student and decorative materials.

1. Give each student gum to chew – one piece of Bubble Yum works well for ½” PVC.
2. Have the students sand the ends of the PVC pipe and dowels with a small piece of sandpaper.
3. Draw a straight line down one edge of the PVC pipe by laying it on a flat surface with a dowel alongside and drawing a line in the crevice between the two.
4. Have each student mark the location of the holes in the following way: First hole is one hand width from the end, next mark a spot about ½” from the first mark (this is the whistle part), next mark another hand width (this is the first of six holes – space them approximately an inch apart) *Optional* – a seventh hole can be made approximately 1” from the end.

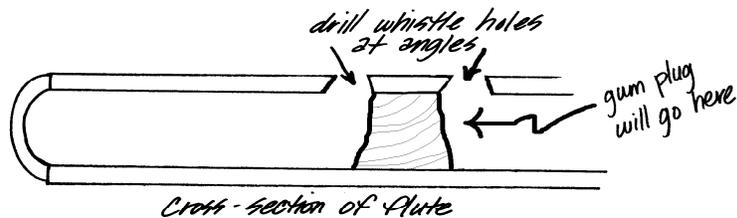


*Illustration 1*

5. Have each student create a guide hole for the drill on each mark with a sharp tool to help guide the drill. Large nails or awls work well for this step.

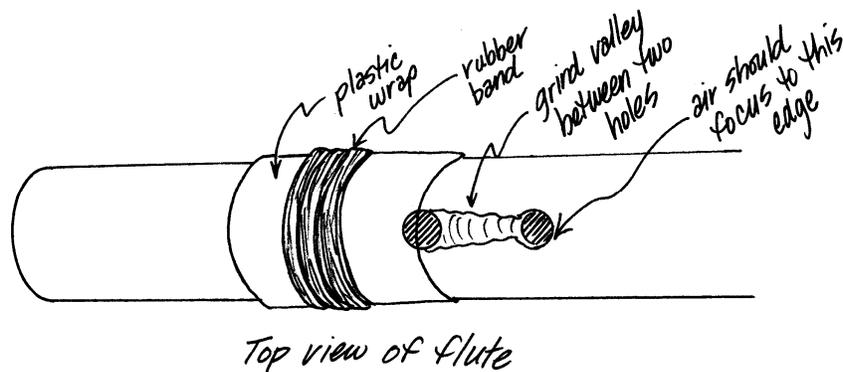


6. Use the drill to drill the first two holes that will create the whistle. Drill them at an angle facing toward each other – this is particularly important for the second hole which will create the whistle sound. Sand the holes when finished.



*Illustration Two*

7. Next each student will need to create a plug between the first and second hole. Do this by inserting the dowel into the bottom end of the flute and hold the end of it slightly above the second hole. Have each student form their gum into a long football shape and drop it into the top end of the flute until it hits the end of the dowel. Hint: the wetter the gum the easier it falls. Now have the students wet the eraser end of their pencil and use it to tamp the gum from the opposite end of the flute while holding it in place with the dowel. Do this until the gum completely covers the inside of the flute –you can check this by covering the two holes with your fingers and looking inside one end to make sure no light is visible.
8. To create the whistle use the dremel tool to grind a valley between the first and second holes, gradually going lower towards the first hole. Now you can check your whistle by wrapping the piece of the plastic milk carton around the first hole with a rubber band to hold it in place. If your flute doesn't whistle adjust the plastic wrap to direct the air towards the second hole or grind the valley a bit deeper.



*Illustration Three*

9. Once the flute whistles, the students can now continue drilling the remaining six (or seven) holes. These holes are drilled straight down. It helps to have a partner hold down the flute while drilling. Sand the holes when finished.
10. Now each student can experiment with playing their flute and creating a song. This can be assigned as homework.
11. Decoration of the flute can be done in many ways. Students can sand all over the surface in order to paint with watercolor or acrylic. Designs can then be carved in with the nails. Ribbons, leather or fur strips can be added (leather shoelaces are an inexpensive alternative). Each student should bring something from home to add a personal touch to their flute – this can be anything they can tie or glue on to the strips. Encourage them to look for things they can recycle or reuse as personal embellishments for their flute.
12. When the flutes are finished – have each student fill out a self-evaluation form [see page 8] for their flute – use the information on the form along with teacher observation to evaluate the students on the project.

#### **K. Evaluation/Assessment for Measurable Results**

**Flute Activity:** Grade on finished product as well as the self evaluation form.

#### **L. Extension and Enrichment Activities**

- The students will compose their own song on their drums or flutes and perform it for the class



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<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum>

- Each student will need to come up with a way to write their songs down so other people could play them.
- Invite a local Native American group to play some of their music for your class.

### M. Resources

Maintain an updated of the references such as books, materials and sources you use in developing the lesson to include in the resources section: These include the following:

***Annotated related web sites with url addresses***

Nez Perce National Historical Park: <http://www.nps.gov/nepe>

Cultural information on the Nez Perce: [www.fs.fed.us/npnht/culture](http://www.fs.fed.us/npnht/culture)

How to make flutes: [www.cwo.com/~ph\\_kosel/designs.html](http://www.cwo.com/~ph_kosel/designs.html)

Nez Perce Tribe: <http://www.nezperce.org>

Colville Confederated Tribes: <http://www.colvilletribes.com/>

Umatilla Confederated Tribes: <http://www.umatilla.nsn.us/>

### N. Site Visit

- ❑ ***Pre-visit:*** Before the visit have the students visit the Nez Perce National Historical Park website ([www.nps.gov/nepe](http://www.nps.gov/nepe)). Have a few brochures from the park to let the students familiarize themselves with how the park is laid out and its operations. Call the park and schedule a visit. They will have a park ranger specifically for your group.
- ❑ ***Site visit:*** At the Nez Perce National Historical Park have each student pick on object and analyze it. You may use the “How to Read an Object” sheet or create your own version of this. For younger students you may develop a scavenger hunt list where they need to find certain objects.
- ❑ ***Post-visit:*** See extension activity list for ideas for post-visit student presentation ideas.
- ❑ ***Virtual Web visit:*** Have students visit the virtual web exhibit at [www.nps.gov/nepe](http://www.nps.gov/nepe). Assign an activity that requires a virtual tour of the park, similar parks and museums.

