

Musical Instruments: Rattle Craft

Subject	Grade Level	Time
Coast Salish Culture	3 rd -8 th	2-3 hours

Based on research by Whatcom Museum intern Joy Davies, 2017



Images (l): Scott Jensen, carved wood rattle, (r) Edradine Hovde, hide drum, Whatcom Museum Education Collection

Overview

Music is a very important aspect of Pacific Northwest Coast Native People's culture. As powerful and personal hereditary property, songs are treasured by individuals and the community. Special songs may be used as tools for celebrations, hunting, battle, games, or even protection from harm. Ancestral songs are passed down from generation to generation, often dating back thousands of years.

Pacific Northwest Coast Native People use dance and drumming in addition to other musical instruments such as rattles, clappers, whistles and flutes. Traditionally, Coast Salish people would make rattles out of wood, shells, deer hooves, animal teeth, beaks or claws. Flutes would often be made out of bone or wood; drums and clappers were made out of cedar wood and elk or deer hide.

For this activity, students will be asked to create and decorate their own rattles, experiment playing different sounds and rhythms with the rattles, and reflect—through discussion and journaling—on what they have learned.

Objectives/Standards

Arts

- 1.3: Understands and applies arts genres and styles of various artists, cultures, and times.
- 2.1: Applies a creative process to the arts (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts).
- 3.2: Uses the arts to communicate for a specific purpose.
- 4.1: Demonstrates and analyzes the connections among the arts disciplines (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts).
- 4.4: Understands how the arts influence and reflect cultures/civilization, place, and time.

Since Time Immemorial (grades 3-6)

1.1 Understands how physical geography affects Northwest Tribes' culture, economy and where they choose to settle and trade.

Social Studies (grades 3-6)

4.1 Understands historical chronology and themes in local, tribal and Washington State history.

Vocabulary

Ancestral song: A song passed on through families or tribal groups

Drum: A percussion instrument sounded by being struck with sticks or the hands, typically cylindrical, barrel-shaped, or bowl-shaped with a taut membrane over one or both ends.

Rattle: A rattle is a type of percussion instrument which produces a sound when shaken.

Clapper: A clapper is a basic form of percussion instrument. It consists of two long solid pieces that are clapped together producing sound.

Flute: A flute is an aerophone or reedless wind instrument that produces its sound from the flow of air across an opening.

Whistle: A short flute having a stopped lower end and a flue that directs the player's breath from the mouth hole at the upper end against the edge of a hole cut in the whistle wall, causing the enclosed air to vibrate.

Materials and Resources

- Natural branch
- Buttons, shells, beads
- Wire or string
- Paint or other decorative materials (optional)



Rattle, Coast Salish, early 20th century, Collection of Glenbow Museum, R1108.10.JPG



Lesson Body

1. Harvest assorted branches with forks (1 per student to group).
2. Students experiment with sounds made by buttons, bells, shells (will need holes drilled), and beads.
3. Wrap wire or twine around one fork of the branch.
4. Attach rattle material(s) to the wire or twine leaving space for the rattle material to move and shake.
5. Wrap the wire or twine to the other forked branch.
6. Experiment shaking the rattle to create a variety of sounds and rhythms

Assessment

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the role that music and musical instruments play in Coast Salish culture. Students will design and construct a unique rattle and practice creating a variety of rhythms with their instrument. Have students reflect, in writing, what they learned about Pacific Northwest Coast Native music traditions, making a musical instrument by hand, and using it to create sound and rhythm.

Resources

Bohan, Heidi. [The People of Cascadia: Pacific Northwest Native American History](#). 2009.

Suing, Michael. "Northwest Coast Indians Musical Instruments." In *Helibrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-.
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/nort/hd_nort.htm (January 2009)