

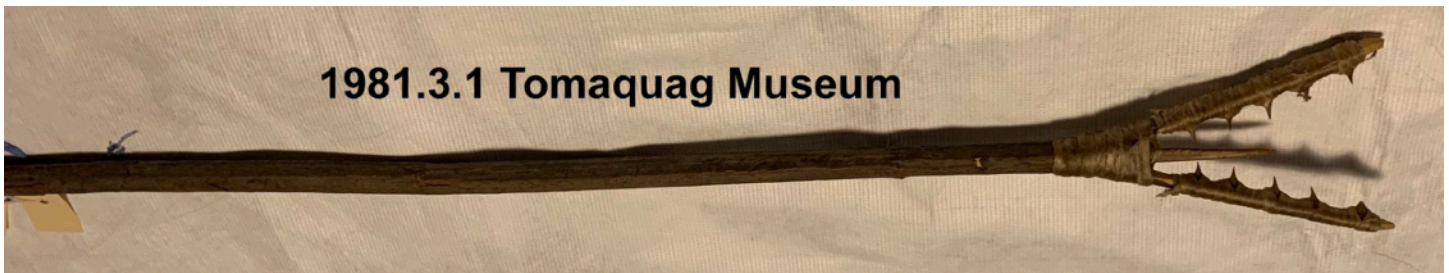
EDUCATION NEWS

Kunoopeam, Welcome Readers!

It's Séquan (Spring)! Yò Ockquitteunk paushésui (A new moon), the nanepaûshat namaùssuck (moon of fish), draws near, and during this moon Indigenous communities of this region moved from their inland winter camps to the coastline to ready themselves for the season! Fishing traps, nets, hooks, spears, drying racks, and smoking pits were prepared for the variety and abundance of fish and shellfish to be had. The centuries of knowing and utilizing these waters naturally turned many to commercial fishing as a new way of sustainability while adapting to the ever changing environment and laws around them. Reminiscing about times past, sharing fishing stories with youngsters and teaching the next generation has been how community, families and friends have kept their history alive while moving into the future.

FROM TOMAQUAG'S EDUCATION DEPARTMENT...

There are many fishing tools used by the Indigenous people of this region. Those featured here are from Tomaquag's Archives. The first spear was cataloged in 1981 (accession # 1981.3.1) and is likely much older than but was accessioned in that year. It was one used for fresh water fishing to catch trout and bass. Notice each assunnekóus (thorn) individually placed and wrapped with sinew with a middle projectile point of bone to hook the fish internally. This spear is about 5 and a half feet long. Amazing craftsmanship!



Click here to [Contact](#) the education department with any questions.



The fishing spear pictured here was crafted in 2006 by a then young Narragansett named Robin Spears III. Robin is an adult now and continues crafting these and other tools in the traditional manner.

Fishing was not just with spears. Large ashòp (nets) made of hemp would be hand crafted as well. Hemp and other plants would be gathered this time of year, and through a process of drying, stripping and twisting, cordage would be made. Imagine yards and yards of cordage being crafted by hand to make large nets about six feet in length or more and at least three to four feet high. The stone on the right is a weight. Notice the indentations which would be fashioned by hand using water and bone or other stone over a period of time until the right length and depth. The cordage of the net would be wrapped around it to weigh down the net to catch fish.



Robin Spears III (Narragansett) teaches other tribal children to make and use crabbing nets.

Harvesting opponenaūhock (oysters), and the variety of sickìssuog (clams) was generally done by hand by wading or diving in the water. Additionally, one could dig in the sand for soft shell clams when the tide was out for yet another source of food. Smaller nets for crabs and ashaūntteaūg (lobsters) would be made. Narragansetts and other southern New England nations depended upon these delicious foods, celebrating the unique gifts of each season. Can you imagine that some early colonists thought these foods were undesirable?!

The Narragansett were proficient at utilizing the suquahog to make beads. Suqui is the Narragansett word for dark or black. They derive their name because of the beautiful striations of dark to white color within them. The beads made from these shells are called “wampum”. However, wómpi is the Narragansett word for white, referring to the white part of the shell.

Meteaûhock (periwinkle) and whelk shell was most often used to make wampumpeage (white shell beads). The colonists misunderstood the intrinsic value of our wampum beads which were

given to sachems as a gift of honor and respect, used in belts which told stories, kept records of treaties and other very valuable information. They assigned them a monetary value in the form of

“fathoms” and used them to require reparations and payment for debt. This is how they became “money,” yet another historical inaccuracy that has been written and rewritten over the centuries and still persists today.

There are many Indigenous artists from this region who continue to work with these shells to make beautiful jewelry today. The art form has even spread to other parts of North

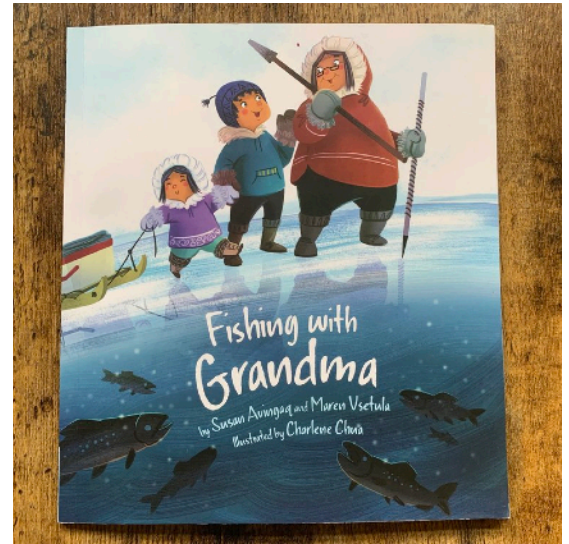
America, adopted by other tribal communities, and celebrated worldwide.



~ Chrystal Mars Baker for April 2023

FOR THE CHILDREN:

This month's book is written by Susan Avingaq and Maren Vsetula from the Inuktitut territory now known as Alaska and illustrated by Charlene Chua. It is an arctic adventure story about a grandmother and her grandchildren jigging (ice fishing). You will read how grandmother helped them prepare for the trip and gain an appreciation for the natural world around them to ensure success! Remember to spend time with your elders too. It provides important and meaningful opportunities to learn about traditions of their past and show respect for their knowledge and your love for them!



Craft: Gather these supplies and follow these instructions to make your own. Make one for a sibling or friend and time yourselves to see who can catch the most fish!

Supplies: Heavy paper like construction paper, card stock or cereal/kleenex box (for the fish); Coloring or decorating supplies like tissue paper (for colors); sequins (for scales); markers for coloring, etc.; Glue; Long stick or dowel (for rod); String (~24" long); paper clip

Instructions:

Prepare your fish:

1. Draw your fish onto your card stock or box into fish shape (use a template if you want); make more than one if you like!
2. Cut out your fish, and decorate! Be as creative as you like
3. Make a hole in the eye of the fish
4. Put a piece of string/yard through and tie a know creating a loop

Prepare your pole:

1. Tie a long piece of yarn or string (24"long) to one end of your stick
2. Attach your paperclip to the opposite end of the yarn/string making a knot; cut off excess
3. Open one side of the paperclip so it is shaped like a hook

Now go fishing! Try to "catch" your fish by getting the paperclip to hook the string on the fish! Make another set and more fish and have a fishing competition!!!

RESOURCES:

At Tomaquag we are continuously doing the work of educating new generations of children as well as the general public about the lives, traditions and life changes of the Indigenous peoples of Rhode Island and neighboring communities. Follow us on our website at tomaquagmuseum.org, [Youtube](#) and [facebook](#). Check out these resources!

To purchase your own copy visit this [link](#).

To hear the book read aloud, click on this [video link](#).

For More About Fishing:

Join us at the Tomaquag Museum on April 29 at 2:30 as guest panelists from southern New England tribal nations discuss the past, present and future of fishing and shellfishing. Learn more [here!](#)