
EDUCATION NEWS

Where History is Shared and Stories Continue

Kunoopeam Netompaûog, Welcome Friends!

Continuing our series on the Thirteen Moons and their thanksgivings, we have reached the time of the Hunter's Moon which has begun its transformation from crescent to full around the end of October and into November. Now is the time to wear those neon orange colors to avoid being mistaken for prey as you enjoy the beautiful nature walks through the woods. Traditionally, hunters would ready for their task with bows, arrows, and knives made from sturdy tree limbs and saplings such as white cedar, joined to arrow points napped from quartz. With a quiver full of arrows and a lot of patience the hunter sets out into the swamps, through a tangle of laurel, to sit and wait behind a tree or high up on the limb of a tall pine where the view is perfect to snag a stag! Of course, this was not the only way to hunt. The hunter knows best what to do and where to go. One thing is for sure, he will not return home empty handed for the village depended upon his success! And he was not alone. Many hunters were needed to supply the deer that would feed, clothe, and provide technology for an entire village. To honor the sacrifice of our animal relatives, prayers of thanksgiving were said and tobacco was offered. Although today hunters use weapons of guns and crossbows, the same patience and skill are still needed and they continue to offer prayers for the sacrifice of life.



Robin Spears III (top left) w/handmade spears; Sequoia Mars (top right); Nikosis LaRose w/handmade bow & arrow by Ridge Spears

FROM TOMAQUAG'S EDUCATION DEPARTMENT...

The days are getting shorter and the weather is getting colder. Animals are foraging, gathering and storing up for the winter months ahead. Whitetail deer are in their breeding season. The time when does are in heat and bucks are in search of a willing mate is called the rut. During this time, deer are not paying attention to the

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many hunters perched quietly in their hidden spaces. There they wait for an unsuspecting buck to come along. If you take a walk you may come across some of the signs of their rut. This can include tree scrapings or shallow pits where they have urinated, creating a mud they roll in to coat themselves. If you happen to spot a whitetail deer, you may notice their coats are no longer a bright tawny color but a bit more gray. This is Creator's way of providing protection from the hunter's eyes as they blend in with the gray tree trunks of the surrounding woods where all the leaves have fallen to the ground providing a soft bed for more silent walking.



White tail deer

Deer are more than just a source of food. Some of Tomaquag's educators jokingly refer to them as the "Super Walmart" of the woods and here's why. The deer provides a variety of essentials necessary for daily living. From deer antlers, tools such as garden rakes or awls; playing pieces for games like hubbub; or even clothing adornments can be made. Indigenous artist Robin Spears Jr. makes beautiful earrings, buttons, and necklaces



from this resource which are sold in the Tomaquag Museum store. The tendons called sinew, from deer legs, are used as string. Deer toes (called dew claws) are used for rattles, adornment, and even glue! Bones are a great resource too. Shoulder bones can be attached to long sticks and used as hoes in gardening. Other bones are used as handles for tools and smaller bones as needles. Even the deer teeth can be used for adornment! Besides clothing, the hide is used for moccasins, blankets, and drums, to name just a few items. And don't forget the brain! The deer's brain has enough matter

to tan its own hide (a process called brain tanning). And so it goes with all the other animals of the woods, from the large moose (yes, there were moose in Rhode Island!) to the small squirrel. Each provides gifts to the first peoples of this region. In fact, Mooshasuck was the original name for Providence, meaning the place of the moose. And Moose is the Narragansett word for the animal itself!

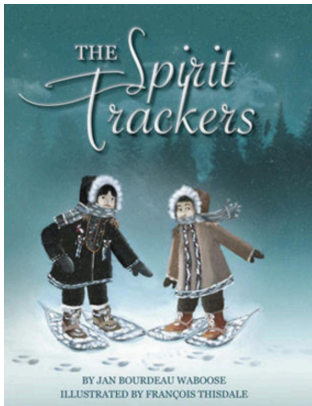
Today, with so many stores carrying so many products, its easy to forget the gifts of our animal relatives. All too often we see animals, "road kill," laying by the side of our roadways. Their deaths a result of the many vehicles traversing the highways and byways at great speeds. You hear animals spoken of as nuisances that invade yards, garbages, and feeders meant for domesticated animals. People complain of the overpopulation of certain animals, fearful and concerned by their presence in our living spaces. As our world becomes more and more congested with cars, homes, businesses, and people, we are pushing them out of their natural environments and known territories. Let me remind you, they were here first, a gift from Creator for our

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appreciation as well as our provision. Let us find new and better ways to live in balance with these animal relatives. Hunters today are connected to this ancestral knowledge and respect these gifts, showing honor to our animal relatives, and giving thanks for these blessings.

~Chrystal Mars Baker for November 2023

FOR THE CHILDREN:



It's the Hunter's Moon and time for tracking animals! There are so many animals roaming around. Are you able to identify any of them? Click [here](#) to take an online quiz for fun! And click [here](#) for directions to make your own animal track out of clay.

Jan Bourdeau Waboose, who also wrote "SkySisters" is the author of this month's story, The Spirit Trackers. In this book, Uncle who is Anishnaabe teaches Tom and Will, his nephews, the significance of the moose to their family clan and about the Windigo, the wandering spirit of winter. And the boys are determined to become trackers just like their uncle.

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 listen to a reading of The Spirit Trackers visit this [link](#):

To support Indigenous authors and purchase your own copy of The Spirit Trackers visit this [link](#): or this [link](#)

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