

The First Blade of Sweetgrass

Written By: Suzanne Greenlaw and Gabriel Frey
Illustrated By: Nancy Baker

Synopsis: A modern Wabanaki girl is excited to accompany her grandmother for the first time to harvest sweetgrass for basket making.

Suggested Reading Date:

National Native American Heritage Month (November)

Also fits the PBIS themes of Gratitude (November) and Independence (June)

A note from the committee: We would strongly encourage you to read the back matter before sharing the story with students. The names and nicknames of the primary characters are used interchangeably; explaining how Musqon is also Tus and Uhkomi is the grandmother will help the kids to follow the story. Similarly, the first link in related websites below will help with pronunciations.

Activity Descriptions:

- Sweetgrass is used for making baskets; students might enjoy their own braiding projects with paper strips of different colors.
- Draw on our state resources in the Since Time Immemorial curriculum to talk about our own local tribes, and show the students example of local Native Art.
- If you're reading *Sweetgrass* during Native American Heritage Month this would be an opportune time for a guest speaker.

Related Websites:

- Passamaquoddy-Maliseet Language Portal: <https://pmportal.org/>
- Since Time Immemorial: <https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/resources-subject-area/time-immemorial-tribal-sovereignty-washington-state>
- Pacific Northwest Coast Native Art: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mz9OkG_BIRM
- Native American Basketry: <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/native-american-basketry/xgKCIVDR6UhdKQ>

Text to Text Connections:

Fry Bread, A Native American Family Story by Kevin Maillard

We Are Water Protectors by Carole Lindstrom (2021 Caldecott Medal Winner)

Baby Speaks Salish by Emma Noyes

Created By: Ryan Grant