



DREAM CATCHERS

EVENING ACTIVITY

Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center
6282 Cranberry Rd, Finland, MN 55603 • 800-523-2733 (MN, WI) • 218-353-7414



A student displays her dream catcher.

DREAM CATCHERS

WOLF RIDGE CLASSES:

Animals:

Animal Signs
Beavers
Birds
Small Mammals
Snowshoe Hare
White-tailed Deer
Wildlife Management

Plants:

Forest Ecology
Plant Study
Trees and Keys
Wetlands Ecology

Aquatics:

Lake Study
Stream Study
Fisheries Management
Frozen Lake Study

Earth Science:

Acid Rain
Geology
Weather

Human Culture and History:

Living Lightly
Nature's Timing
Ojibwa Heritage
Ojibwa Snowshoe
Seeds of Change
Voyageur Life

Personal Growth:

Adventure Ropes Course
Rock Climbing

Group Building:

Basic Survival
F.I.R.S.T. Games

Outdoor Recreation:

Beginning Orienteering
Competitive Orienteering
Canoeing
Cross Country Skiing
Superior Snowshoe
Superior View Hike

Evening Activities:

Astronomy
Block Printing
Creative Expressions
Creature from Wolf Lake
Dream Catchers
Lake Superior Game
Night Hike
Owl Pellets
Paper Making
Star Lab
Woodland Art
Volleyball

Naturalist Presentations:

Bats
Fur Trade
History of the North Shore
Logging Camp Life
Raptors
Wolves

Class Description: An Evening Activity

Students will construct a dream catcher. They will select a branch, shape it, weave a web with artificial sinew, decorate it with beads, and hang a feather on the completed project. Through completion of this craft students will practice patience and following directions, as well as learn about Ojibwe culture.

Total time: 1.5 hours

Audience: 4-20 students, 4th grade through adult

Activity: easy

Travel: none

Total uphill travel: none



About Wolf Ridge

Wolf Ridge is an accredited residential environmental education school for persons of all ages. We offers immersion programs which involve direct observation and participation in outdoor experiences. Wolf Ridge programs focus on environmental sciences, human culture and history, personal growth, team building and outdoor recreation.

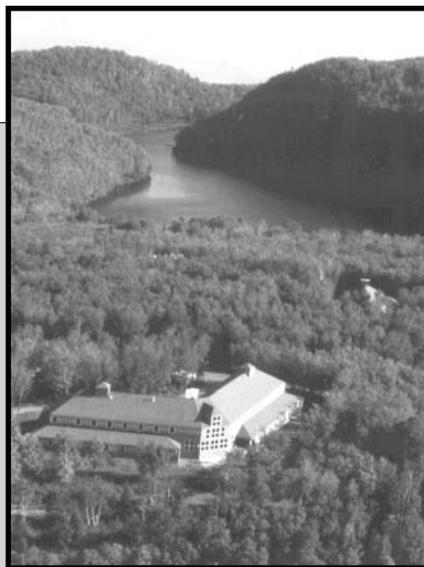
Our Mission

To develop a citizenry that has the knowledge, skills, motivation and commitment to act together for a quality environment.

What We Do

We meet our mission by:

- Fostering awareness, curiosity and sensitivity to the natural world.
- Providing lifelong learning experiences in nature.
- Developing social understanding, respect and cooperation.
- Modeling values, behaviors and technologies, which lead to a sustainable lifestyle.
- Promoting the concepts of conservation and stewardship.



Wolf Ridge Campus

Photo by Jim Brandenburg



Wolf Ridge

Environmental Learning Center

6282 Cranberry Road

Finland, MN 55603-9700

800-523-2733 (MN,WI)

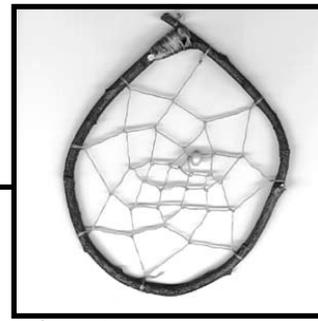
218-353-7414

Fax: 218-353-7762

www.wolf-ridge.org

Wolf Ridge is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

DREAM CATCHERS



OUTLINE:

I. Set-up (10 min.)

II. Introduction (5 min.)

- Greeting/Overview
- Learn names
- Behavior guidelines
- Assess learner level

III. History and Culture (10 min.)

IV. Creating a Dream Catcher (1 hr.)

- A. Selecting the Branch
- B. Tying the Hoop
- C. Weaving the Dream Catcher
- D. Adding Beads
- E. Attaching a Feathers

V. Closing (15 min.)

VI. Clean-up (10 min.)

VII. Appendices

- Equipment
- References
- Safety Management
- Glossary



CONCEPTS:

- Creating something by hand gives an appreciation for the process.
- Art is an expression of human thoughts and feelings.
- Crafts are a way to learn about a culture.



OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of the Dream Catchers activity students will be able to:

1. Describe the materials used in construction of a dream catcher.
2. Demonstrate the steps in making a dream catcher.
3. Explain the connection between dream catchers and Ojibwe history or culture.



MN GRADUATION STANDARDS:

Wolf Ridge has aligned the Center's entire curriculum to Minnesota Department of Education Academic Standards. The Center maintains a curriculum standards matrix for the following subject areas:

- Science
- History and Social Studies
- Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Arts

The Matrices are organized by grade level and subject area, listing Strand, Sub-Strand, Standards, and Benchmarks. Every class addressing a benchmark is also noted. As the primary student audience at Wolf Ridge is from 4th-12th grade, the matrices address these grade levels. Teachers may request that their students focus upon a specific benchmark while attending Wolf Ridge.

Copies of our matrices are available on the Wolf Ridge web site at www.wolf-ridge.org, found under the "Education" menu. If you cannot access the matrices via the website, request a printed copy by calling 218-353-7414 or e-mailing us at "mail@wolf-ridge.org".

Revised February 2009

CONCEPT:
Creating something by hand gives an appreciation for the process.

I. Set-up (10 min.)

Arrange tables and chairs around the room with a maximum of 6 students per table. On each table, place one bead container, two spools of sinew, and two scissors. Place the feather bucket on another table. Hang dream catcher poster on the wall. Bring black demonstration hoop into the room. Display example dream catchers around the room. Bring in enough willow branches from Room 12 for the class to use. Write the Ojibwe word for dream catcher on the board:

"izhioon = dream catcher"

II. Introduction (10 min.)

Greeting/grabber

Greet students as they enter. Give a quick overview of the evenings activity.

"For the next one and a half hours, we will be in this room learning about and making a dream catcher. You'll make your own dreamcatcher to take with you (hold up example), and learn a bit of Ojibwe culture and history through stories and through creating this craft."

Learn students' names

If you are unfamiliar with the students, take a few minutes to learn their names and welcome them to class. Repeat their names and strive to use them in every communication.

Set behavior guidelines

The Ojibwe culture values respect. Encourage students to practice respect this evening as they construct their dream catcher. They can show respect for one another by listening politely, sharing equipment, and taking turns.

Assess learner level

Ask students to share what they know about the Ojibwe culture, dreamcatchers, and crafts in general. Explain they will have the chance to try a new craft tonight. Learning anything takes focus, patience, and practice. Instruct students to pay attention to what they're learning about the Ojibwe culture as they participate in class.

III. History and Culture (5 min.)

Through a brief lecture or creative questioning, convey the following history of dream catchers to students:

The Ojibwe word for dream catcher is izhioon. The Ojibwe believe the night air is filled with dreams, both good and bad. These dreams play an important role in the life of each individual. Everyone is encouraged to remember their dreams as they can provide wisdom, knowledge, a glimpse into the future or the past. Young boys were sent into the woods to fast for days until they had a dream giving them further life instructions. Adolescent girls were also sent into isolation until they received some power from a dream. Charms were used to reinforce these dreams. Materials used to make the charms had significance as well. A piece of cloth from a great hunter's clothing might be used to bring good luck in the hunt. Hair from a knowledgeable person might be added to insure wisdom.

Ojibwe children were not given a name until after a person, designated as the “namer” of that child, had a dream as to what the child should be called. The namer might give that child a charm woven to look like a spider’s web in order to protect the baby’s dreams. Along with other toys, such as shells, bells, and leather pouches, the dream catcher was hung from the hoop on the cradleboard.

According to several native American peoples, spider web charms, or “dream catchers” are believed to trap the evil that is floating around in the air, much like a spider’s web snares everything in its path. The Ojibwe designed such charms to protect their babies from bad dreams drifting through the night air. These delicately woven ornaments would allow good dreams to pass through the web, but the bad dreams, not knowing the way, would get caught and be destroyed with the first rays of morning light.

The traditional dream catcher was three and a half inches across and made from a willow branch or ash splint. Before harvesting the materials, tobacco was traditionally sprinkled on the ground and it was explained to the plant how it would be used. Nettle stalk twine, dyed red from bloodroot juice or the inner bark of wild plum was used to weave the web. The web was woven to resemble a spider’s web with spokes radiating from the center. Feathers from a night-seeing owl were hung from the dream catcher frame.

Later dream catchers were laced with red yarn or sinew and given to married couples as well as babies. Modern dream catchers have been made from many kinds of wood, with a web made from artificial sinew and adorned with beads and feathers. A new pattern has also developed with scattered holes in a spiral pattern. This is the type of dreamcatchers we will be making today.

IV. Creating the Dream Catcher (1 hour)

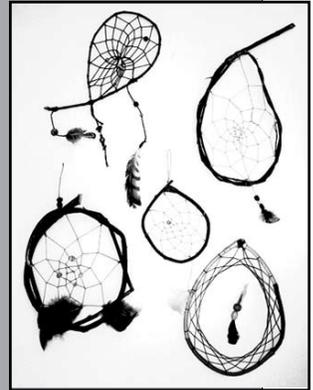
Tonight you will create a dream catcher and decorate it in your own special manner. Each dream catcher will be unique. We’ll go through the steps of making a dream catcher together. If you get done before others at your table, try to be helpful or just wait quietly. If you need extra time or help, politely ask for what you need.

A. Selecting the Branch

The Ojibwe word for willow is *oziiisigobiminzh*. The wood we use for dream catchers is from willow. These shrubs grow to a height of ten feet, with straight branches that bend without breaking, making them good choices for dream catchers. Their bark is green, yellow or red, providing colorful hoops. They are collected along the Wolf Ridge driveway, where they quickly grow back. Willows are important to the Ojibwe culture, and are used for medicine, tobacco, basket making and other uses.

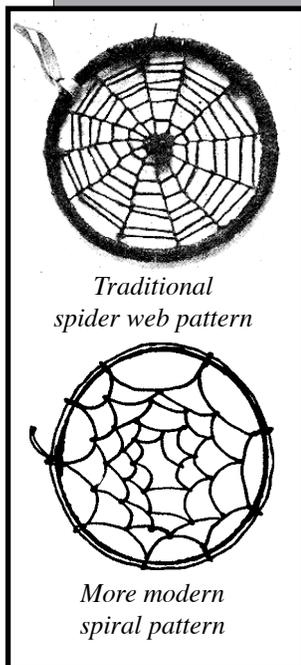
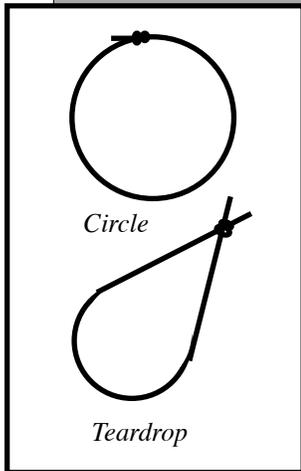
Practicing patience and taking turns, students can approach the branch pile and select a branch. Choose a straight, narrow splint about 2 feet long, 1/4 inch thick or less. The instructor will use the heavy pruners, NOT the scissors, to snip off the splint and to trim off side branches. Discard the extra leaves and side branches in the waste basket.

Once a branch has been selected, it can be bent into a circle or teardrop shape, by **SLOWLY** and **GENTLY** working the length of your splint, bending it inch by inch, a little at a time. If the branch resists bending, work the stubborn area



CONCEPT:
Crafts are a way to learn about a culture.





CONCEPT:
Art is an expression of human thoughts and feelings.

gently back and forth and try again. If you get impatient, the splint will break and you will have to begin again.

As the students work on their dream catchers, circulate around the room, offering encouragement and suggestions. If you are unavailable, often another student or adult can be of help. Ask for the group's attention and start the next section when the first few students are ready to begin the next step.

B. Tying the Hoop

The Ojibwe word for sinew is injiitad. Sinew is made from the ligaments of animals such as deer and moose. Ligaments attach muscle to bone. (See sinew sample in kit.) The sinew fibers are either split into thinner fibers when fresh or after drying and soaking. In order to soften sinew, it is moistened, often in the mouth, for use as a binding material. It can be used to sew together blankets, moccasins, and winter clothing made of deer skin.

We are using artificial sinew, or nylon fiber coated with nylon. It is designed to look and feel like real sinew.

Once your splint is shaped, cut a 1 foot length of sinew with the scissors and lash your dream catcher into the desired shape. Wrap the sinew around and around the hoop and tie it off with a square knot. Cut off loose ends of the sinew.

C. Weaving the Dream Catcher

Using the black hoop and rope, demonstrate for the class how to weave a dream catcher spiral. Tie the beginning knot, several loops around the hoop, and hoops inside the rope loops. Encourage students to watch the demonstration BEFORE they start weaving.

1. Cut a 3-4 foot long piece of sinew.
2. OPTIONAL: Sinew can be split lengthwise to make it finer.
3. Tie sinew in a knot at the top of your dream catcher.
4. About an inch from the knot, lay the sinew over the hoop. Reach through the hole created by the sinew and hoop and pull the sinew end through the hole. Tighten the sinew, but don't pull so hard you distort your hoop.
5. Continue around the hoop, making a knot every inch or so, pulling the sinew tight. Space these knots evenly for a more refined product.
6. As you approach the starting point, make the same knot, but use the sinew from the previous round instead of the hoop.
7. Continue until you want to add a bead in the web.

D. Adding Beads

The Ojibwe word for bead is manidoominen. Beads in the dream catcher can represent special dreams or wishes for the recipient of the dream catcher. Think about the person who will receive the dreamcatcher - you or someone else - and what dreams they have or wishes you have for them. Then carefully select 1-3 beads to represent each dream. **EACH STUDENT IS LIMITED TO THREE BEADS.**

As you weave your way around the circle, stop and slip a bead onto the sinew. Leave the bead between two knots as you tie. Continue weaving around the spiral until it is filled in as much as you like. When you want to stop, tie a square knot as your final knot. Leave the long end of the sinew attached.

E. Attaching a Feather

Bad dreams get tangled in the dream catcher and burn off in the first rays of sunlight. Good dreams find their way through the web and drip off the feather into our heads as we sleep. Since the feather carries the dreams to the recipient of the dreamcatcher, choose one that is special. Along the remaining length of sinew, attach a feather using a square knot. Snip off any remaining sinew and put in the waste basket.

The feathers provided today come from game birds, such as ducks, geese and pheasants; songbirds protected by law, and we cannot keep their feathers. The Ojibwe would typically use feathers from night seeing birds, such as owls.



IV. Closing (15 min.)

Congratulations! You have created (or are still creating) a dream catcher or izhioon, a craft that's been practiced for hundreds of years in many native cultures. For a story about dream catchers, read the book "Dreamcatcher" by Audrey Ososky.

Have a few students share their plans for their dreamcatchers. Raise your hand if you plan on keeping your dream catcher. Raise your hand if you plan on giving your dream catcher away.

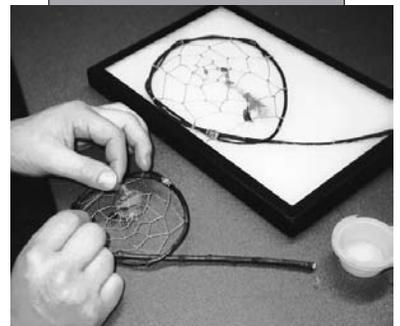
Assessment (Outcome 1 & 2): Pretend you are at home. Describe for your family or friend how to make a dream catcher. What materials would they need? What equipment would you collect? What skills would you practice?

Assessment (Outcome 3): Explain what dream catchers mean in the Ojibwe culture. Compare Ojibwe culture with students' culture(s). What is similar? What is different? Describe the role arts or crafts play in students' culture(s).

End with the following quote:

"My little dream net spoke of many things to me, of love for children, of tolerance and the intangible qualities which give warmth and meaning to life. When I accepted it, I did so with humility because for me it was a symbol not only of trust and acceptance by my Indian friend, but a hint of the long past and a world of dreams most moderns have forgotten."

Sigurd Olson
Runes of the North



CONCEPTS:

- *Creating something by hand gives an appreciation for the process.*
- *Art is an expression of human thoughts and feelings.*
- *Crafts are a way to learn about a culture.*

V. Clean Up (10 min.)

Have students clean up their work area by throwing splint and sinew scraps into the wastebasket, gathering any unused beads and return to bead baskets, and wiping off the tables. Dismiss students.

Return bead baskets, scissors and pruners, and sinew spools to the kit box. Replace kit box, demo hoop, and poster in kit room. Stack chairs and return tables to the edge of the room. Erase the chalkboard. Close windows and turn off the light.

VI. Appendices

A. Equipment

Branches for hoops (1 per student)
Pruning shears
Artificial sinew
Beads (3 per student)
Feathers (1 per student)
Scissors
Poster
Demonstration hoop and rope
Sample dream catchers
Dreamcatcher book

B. References

- *Chippewa Customs*. Frances Densmore, 1979, ISBN 0-87351-142-5.
- *Dreamcatcher*, Audrey Osofsky, 1992, ISBN 0-531-08588-0.
- *Runes of the North*, Sigurd Olson, 1963, LCCCN 63-18356.

C. Safety Management

Instructor will adhere to all safety practices designated by this lesson plan or updated by Wolf Ridge staff. Instructor will carefully monitor students for safe and responsible use of scissors and pruners. A first aid kit and telephone are available in the kit room. Any safety or risk concerns should be brought to the attention of the Wolf Ridge permanent staff.

D. Glossary

Injiitad: Sinew
Izhioon: Dream Catcher
Manidoominen: Bead
Miigwan: Feather
Oziisigobiminzh: Willow