



CRAFT IN AMERICA

BISKAKONE GREG JOHNSON: WHAT MAKES A PLACE HOME? EDUCATION GUIDE

Worksheet #1: Exploring Traditions and Home

Artists often choose to be inspired by cultural traditions and materials because of their personal connections and associations with those traditions and materials. Use the following prompts to explore your own personal connections with materials and the idea of Home.

1. Exploring Family/Cultural Traditions

Greg Johnson has strong connections to his Ojibwe culture and the tradition of making functional objects such as woven mats, baskets, canoes, beaded moccasins, and other objects. Many of the images from the natural world go back to his ancestors. Think about some traditions of making things in your own family or community.

- Who makes something in your family or local community?
- Has someone taught you or others how to make it?
- Is this a family or community tradition?
- What family or community “making” traditions can you think of?

2. What can Home mean?

“Home is where we harvest our fish. Home is where we knock the rice. Home is out there in the canoes. Home is when we are out there with our families and we’re picking those berries, getting scratched up in the thorns, you know, that’s home.

Home is also above the clouds where our ancestors go into the stars, into the northern lights. That’s our other home—where we come from and where we go in the end.

Home is where we raise our children.

Home is where we make our life with our partner.

Home is all those things, you know. That means home is a huge range, you know, a huge range, and within it we can find all the things that will give us the good life.”

– Biskakone Greg Johnson

The artist Greg Biskakone Johnson thinks of “home” in terms of certain places (“...where we harvest fish”), special times (when “...we’re picking those berries...”), and significant people (families, ancestors, children, partner). What places, times, and people connect with your idea of “home”? Complete the sentences below with the places, special times, and people who are important to your idea of HOME.

PLACES - Home is where:

SPECIAL TIMES - Home is when:

PEOPLE - Home is with:



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3. Exploring Associations and Images

Choose at least one from each of your lists of places, special times, and people that represent the idea of home to you. List feelings and ideas that come to mind with each. In addition, sketch an image or symbol to represent your associations. You may later wish to return to these sketches for ideas in your art making.

Places, Special Times, and People:	Ideas, Feelings, and Images:

4. Planning Your Scratchboard Etching

You will use a process similar to birch bark etching to create an artwork with images or symbols that in some way connect with your ideas about Home.

- Review the ideas, feelings, and images that you recorded above.
- Choose one or combine more of those to create a design that represents your ideas about Home.
- Sketch some ideas here or in your sketchbook. Work out details as you imagine creating your artwork.