



# Abbe Museum

## CURRENT EXHIBITS

### People of the First Light

"People of the First Light", the Abbe Museum's core exhibit, introduces visitors to the Wabanaki universe, engaging them with the culture and history of a people that is unfamiliar to many. Bringing together oral traditions, personal stories, cultural knowledge, language, and historical accounts with objects, photographs, multi-media, and digital inter-actives. "People of the First Light" shares a wide variety of content and perspectives around more than 12,000 years of history, conflict, adaptation, and survival in Wabanaki homeland.

As part of the Abbe Museum's Decolonization Initiative, this exhibit was developed through close collaboration with Wabanaki people. The design of the space and the content of the exhibit are shaped by Wabanaki perspectives. Choices about what to include and how to talk about difficult topics reflect the importance of self-determination. These are the hallmarks of a decolonized exhibit. Decolonization is broadly defined as the process of reversing colonialism, both politically and culturally. It involves not only recognizing Indigenous perspectives and the ongoing colonization of Indigenous nations, but the devastating effects that colonialism has on Indigenous cultures. Through collaboration with Wabanaki artists and curators, "People of the First Light" strives to be a space for the presentation of Wabanaki history and culture from the perspective of Wabanaki people.



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### Waponahki Student Show

This is an annual exhibit collaborated in partnership with Maine Indian Education, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Border Towns, and the Abbe Museum. The show brings together a variety of art created by Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Mi'kmaq students from early childhood education through high school. Teachers select a student's work of art they want to submit for display from each grade level. None of the Native Nations in Maine have a high school on their reservation, hence all students attend high school off of the reservation. To include these students in the show, art teachers work with the regional high school teachers in the area to select works to include. The students write an artist statement that goes along with their piece. The Abbe Museum frames the works, which are returned to the students at the end of the exhibit, as well as a certificate of participation and an award kit of art supplies.





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### Wabanaki Modern: The Artistic Legacy of the 1960's "Micmac Indian Craftsman"

The “Micmac Indian Craftsman” were the first modern Indigenous artists in Atlantic Canada and developed an international following. Their work was inspired by traditional Wabanaki stories, and their visual language was often minimalist and contemporary. When looking at the exhibit it's staggering to see how beautiful and promising the studio was and the patronage, and to know that now, several generations later, what they created has become all but lost to time. In 1966, the government withdrew the financial support they were giving the Micmac craftsman. Without those financial resources the production of the Micmac crafters soon ceased, and their work faded from memory. There is almost no reflection or discussion about the Micmac Indian Craftsman in the current discussion of New Brunswick visual art of Indigenous Studies. What the Micmac Indian Craftsman created shows that in the early 1960s they were creating a bridge, or hybrid between modern and traditional visual forms that align with Mi'kmaq stories. “Micmac Indian Craftsman” designers ensured that future community members would have access to the stories they used in their artistic depictions. Colonization forces Native peoples to remake themselves, and their Nation's stories can aid in putting the pieces back together. The exhibit will be up until October 2024. The exhibit was organized by the Beaverbrook Art Gallery and curated by Emma Hassencahl-Perley and John Leroux.

