**The Houston Museum of Natural Science**

Online Curriculum

**Hall of the Americas**

Knowledge Hunt

6th – 8th Grade

# **Dear Educator,**

Thank you for downloading the free online curriculum available at HMNS. We are thrilled you have included the world-renowned Houston Museum of Natural Science in your educational toolkit.

Our mission has always been to provide exemplary educational opportunities for the community. Providing educators like you with a free, fully editable curriculum is just one of many ways we are fulfilling that mission.

Thank you again, and we hope you enjoy your field trip to HMNS!

### How to use this guide:

1. Feel free to edit the questions to suit your student group.
2. The Knowledge Hunt is for the John P. McGovern Hall of the Americas.
3. Visitor services and security staff are posted around the Museum and will be happy to assist you in finding any of the locations or objects mentioned.
4. Please ensure that one chaperone is with every group of ten students at all times as they complete these activities.

For TEKS information or questions, contact us at [**curriculum@hmns.org**](mailto:curriculum@hmns.org%0d%0c)

Instructions: Read the information and answer the questions as you go through the *John P. McGovern Hall of the Americas.*

**We Are Here**

**Find the inuksuk (a big stack of stones) in the center of the exhibit.**

An inuksuk is a structure made by the Inuit people to mark important places and share messages. It can show locations like a river for fishing or a good spot for hunting caribou.

How do you think an inuksuk helped people find important places?

How do you think it worked?

What tools do we use to find our way around Houston?

Draw a simple sketch of an inuksuk below. It should look like a person made out of stones!

**The Arctic Nations**

**Find the map of the Arctic Nations.**  
Look at the map. The Arctic is the northernmost part of Earth, mainly water and ice. Native people have long lived in the Arctic regions of the United States, Greenland, and Canada.

What is the weather like in the Arctic?

How does living in the Arctic affect the way people live?

**Find the Arctic Hunting Diorama.**

People in the Arctic have been hunting and fishing for food for thousands of years. In this display, you can see two hunters: one using modern tools and the other using traditional tools.

Which person in the diorama is the modern hunter? How can you tell?

Does the ice look different under the hunters' feet? What do you think this difference reflects?

**The Andes**

The Andean culture area is on the western side of South America. About 5,000 years ago, people began to settle down in one place. These early people hunted animals, caught fish, and gathered food. In some places, they could stay for a long time. This means they only had to move around sometimes and didn't always live like nomads.

What oceans can people in this area use to get food?

**Find the reed boat.**Reed boats are found on Lake Titicaca, between Peru and Bolivia. Families make these boats from reeds and ropes collected from the lake. Fishermen use these boats, called balsas, for fishing. Making a reed boat can take many months.

Reed boats are used today for transportation, for example, to go to school (located on a floating reed island) or to go from one’s home (built on a floating island) to the shores of the lake to go shopping.

Why do you think people in this area chose reeds to build boats?

**The Northwest**

**Find the map of the Northwest Nations.**  
Look at the map. People have lived in this area for thousands of years. They relied on the ocean, rivers, and lakes for fish and whales. Salmon was their most important food, but they also hunted elk and deer. Cedar trees grow all over this area.

When you look at the Northwest Nations section of the exhibit, see how many things you can find made from cedar wood.

**Find the Salmon Packer tool.**  
People in the Northwest had plenty of salmon to eat. They used a unique stone tool to crush dried salmon into thin sheets and stored the pieces in baskets for the winter.

Why did people in the Northwest have so much salmon to eat?

Why did they need to store food for the winter?

**The Southeast**

**Find the map of the Southeast Nations.**  
Look at the map. A long time ago, many Nations lived in the Southeast. Before Europeans arrived, the people here lived in villages and grew food. When the Europeans came to the Atlantic Coast, native people started losing their land and homes.

**Find the carved shell display and then find artifact number 6.**  
The picture on this shell shows a Water Spider called Grandma Weaver. She gave fire to her people and carried it in a basket she made. The cross in the basket on her back stands for fire. The Muskogee Creek Indians believe having a spider in the house brings good health and luck.

What does a spider do that makes it a good choice for this story?

Imagine a new symbol for fire and draw it below.

**The Plains**

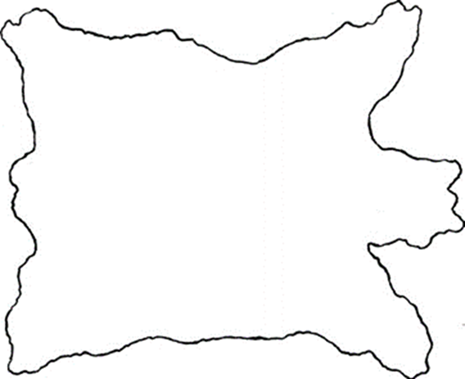
**Find the horse diorama.**  
The Spanish brought horses to the Southwest in the 1500s, and they spread to the Great Plains. People started using horses to travel and hunt bison. Since they moved a lot, they could only carry a few things, so they made artwork on necessary items like tipis and clothing.

Can you find these things in the horse diorama?

Saddle, beaded pouch, and bridle

**Find Lone Dog’s Winter Count.**  
American Indians used pictures and stories to remember events. The Lone Dog Winter Count is a special record with a picture for each year, counting from the first snowfall to the next. Each year is named after the most important event, like "The Year the Stars Fell" in 1833, which refers to a meteor shower.

Pick a year from your life and draw it on the buffalo hide below.



**The Maya**

**Find the donut-shaped eccentric flint.**  
The Maya thought flint was important because it could make fire. They believed flint came from lightning strikes. The Maya were very skilled at making flint into tools. They made a donut-shaped artifact out of flint, but we don’t know what it was used for.

Based on its size and shape, what do you think this donut-shaped tool was used for?

**The Mexica**

**Find the figurine of a ballplayer and the stone ballgame yoke.**  
Many years ago, people in Mexico, Central America, and the Southwest United States played ball games using rubber balls. The Maya people made rubber from a milky juice called latex.

The figure shows a ballplayer wearing a padded belt for protection. The stone ballgame yoke may have been a mold used to make a padded leather belt like the one on the figure.

Why would a rubber ball be better than a wood or leather ball?

How would the stone ballgame yoke have been used as a mold?