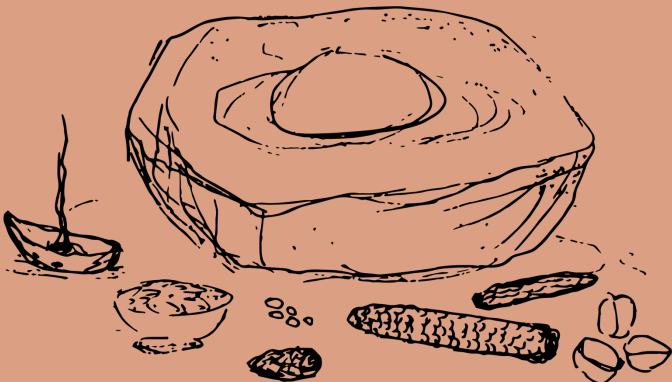


What can we learn from Indigenous technologies?

KAHEHTOKTHA JANICE BRANT





We can learn about Indigenous cultures and languages. We can learn about Indigenous food ways, their worldview and sacred ecology. We can learn about their technologies, tools and inventions.

This resource/booklet discusses an ancient stone mortar and pestle.

Let's explore this Indigenous technology together!

**Let's brainstorm
some questions...**



HOW ARE TOOLS MADE?



WHAT ARE THE MATERIALS?



WHAT ARE THE USES OR PURPOSES FOR
THIS TOOL?



HAS THIS TECHNOLOGY CHANGED OVER
TIME?



IS THIS TECHNOLOGY OR TOOL STILL
RELEVANT TODAY?



HOW WOULD YOU MAKE THIS TOOL?



WHAT TOOLS WOULD BE NEEDED TO
CREATE IT?

CAN YOU THINK OF SOME
QUESTIONS YOU'D LIKE TO ASK?



Where did the stones come from, and where are they now?

The grinding stones were found in Prince Edward County and donated to The County Museums in 1975. The stones live at the museum, but occasionally visit Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory to be used by the community.



This unique stone mortar and pestle set is a technology of Indigenous peoples. The top and bottom stone fit together and are a very good tool for grinding and cracking because of their weight.

The top stone (pestle) is hard, dense and black. The bottom stone (mortar) is granite and very durable. Both stone types are local to the region.

Due to their weight, they were likely created in the area and have remained here since. They have been used by Indigenous peoples for thousands of years and as recently as 2021.

How do we prepare to use these stones?

Indigenous cultures have a sacred and spiritual ecology or relationship with nature.

We understand that all living beings have a spirit and we acknowledge that these stones have had a journey and a long life.

They have seen many generations of human hands over such a long time. We communicate our respect by calling them Grandmothers. This is a term of kinship, endearment, and affection.

When we are preparing to use the grinding stones, we offer tobacco and express our greetings and intentions. We also smudge the stones with sacred cleansing medicines. We give gratitude and thanksgiving for our ancestors that used and created this tool, we give thanks to the spirit of these Grandmothers, and we thank them for continuing to teach us and share their ancient wisdom.

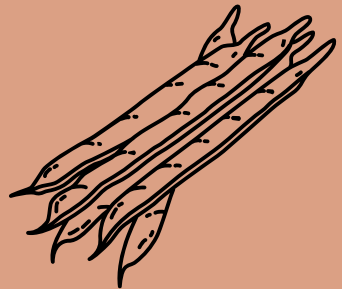


How were the stones used?

We can speculate about this tool and wonder about how it was used and for what. What practical purpose did it serve in the day-to-day lives of Indigenous peoples in this geographic region? What was this stone technology expected to do?

What we can safely say about this mortar and pestle is that it was used in food processing, and although ancient, this technology is still used today. Many kitchens have a mortar and pestle but often not of this size or weight.

In order to learn more about this tool, permission was granted to use the stones for hands-on research at the museum and in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. We introduced the stones to groups of participants and using our hearts, minds and Indigenous foods discussed and experimented with the grinding stones.



**What have we done with
the stone?**

**What have we observed,
learned, confirmed and
what questions do we still
have?**



Since Janice connected with the stones, she has led several participatory grinding experiences with different groups.

We began with grinding traditional maize, locally grown by Janice and Ken in Tyendinaga. They have been seed keeping a small selection of local varieties that have been a food source for the People of the Longhouse for many generations. Next, we tried grinding beans and then wild rice, nuts and also a dried cayenne pepper.

In each case the results were tremendous.

The weight and rotation of the stones together made easy work of grinding the maize, beans and rice into fine flour. We cracked walnut shells with this tool and ground the nut flesh to make a paste. We found the mortar had a small ledge which made it easy to remove the contents of the mortar into a bowl or basket. The stones were easily cleaned by grinding more flour, which created a spicy cornmeal following the cayenne pepper and walnuts.



In the video you will see us experimenting with Maize (Indigenous Corn), Beans and Wild Rice. These traditional Indigenous foods are still grown and harvested today.

Wampum Dent
Mohawk White Flour
Blue Flint
Cayuga Flint
Strawberry Popcorn
Pod Corn or Grandfather Corn
Black Sweet Maize
Hopi Black Bean
Wild Rice



The stones are once again being used as they were meant to be - and using them again is revitalizing them and bringing them back to life. In fact, they work better than any mechanical grinder in Janice's kitchen!







Please consider making a donation to the Kenhte:ke Seed Sanctuary and Learning Centre to help preserve and grow heirloom and Indigenous seeds for future generations.

www.kenhtekeseedsanctuary.com



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