

STUDY GUIDE

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NOH KONG'S KNECK- KNACKS

*Written & Directed by
Barry Bilinsky*

Ages 6-12 (Elementary)

2026

2027

GEORDIE'S 2PLAY TOUR

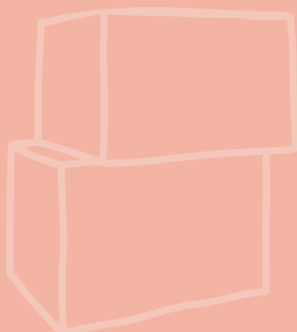


This study guide was created as a tool for teachers to help introduce young students to the world of theatre, as well as engage them more deeply with the themes and concepts developed in *Nohkom's Knick-Knacks*. The guide contains a synopsis, character information, a summary of the themes and concepts at play, as well as discussion questions and activities that can be implemented in the classroom before and after the performance.

While listed in a suggested order, we invite teachers to adapt activities based on the needs of their classroom and curriculum. The activities include presentations and handouts that are class-ready for easy distribution to students. Additionally, most activities can be adapted to an online-learning platform.

Over the course of eight months, our 2Play Tour travels to schools throughout Eastern Canada, from the Bruce Peninsula to the Magdalen Islands. The touring company has three actors and a tour manager, and is supported by our administrative team at our Montréal office.

Geordie Theatre is located on the unceded Indigenous lands of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) nation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Tiohtià:ke (known as Montréal) has existed as a meeting place of many First Nation peoples, including but not limited to the Abenaki, Anishinaabeg (Algonquin), and the Huron-Wendat. We extend our deepest respect to the elders of these communities and to all Indigenous peoples who carry the history of this island's land and waters – caring for it and calling it home. We are honoured and privileged to share stories on this land.



ABOUT THE SHOW

When Abby helps sort through the last boxes of her late Nohkom's belongings before her family moves, a crusty stuffed lemur named Mugz wakes up and insists that every object has a story.

As ordinary household items unlock memories of her Nohkom, Abby is drawn into a funny, heartfelt journey through grief, love, and Cree family memory. Full of imagination, humour, and warmth, *Nohkom's Knick-Knacks* is a moving celebration of what we inherit, what we hold onto, and how the people we miss continue to shape us.

Themes: Memory and Grief, Family, Imagination and the Power of Stories

CHARACTERS

ABBY

is a hardworking, outgoing nine-year-old who loves a good story. She is played by Samira Bergeron.

DENISE

is Abby's grandmother, she is playful, kind, and a major pack-rat. She is voiced by Darlene Auger.

NICOLE

also voices of
JELLO, RICK THE SPOON, RED & TEAL DABBER

Nicole is Abby's mom, she values her family's well-being above all else. She is played by Lamia Karam.

MUGZ

is a puppet character. He is played by Noah Deskin.



INSIDE THIS GUIDE

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

Three activities to prepare students before the show (no spoilers)

CROSSWORD: WORDS FROM NOHKOM'S WORLD

Printable student worksheet used before and after the show, plus teacher answer key and notes

HEAR THE GREE WORDS

A listening card with links to fluent-speaker recordings

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

Three activities for after the show

A NOTE ON GEORDIE THEATRE'S CARE PRINCIPLE:

Activities invite students to engage imaginatively and intellectually with the play's themes, but none require or expect students to share personal stories, grief, or private experience.

Reflection that touches personal territory is always optional and individual — never asked to be performed or disclosed to the group.

GLOSSARY

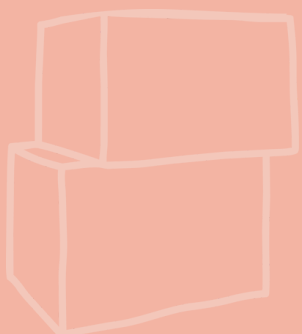
Check out the glossary of theatrical terms [at this link here](#).





PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

The activities in this section prepare students to meet the play with curiosity and emotional readiness.



PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES



ACTIVITY 1: OBJECT-MEMORY: MY OBJECT HAS A STORY

Format: Sharing circle / whole-class warm-up

Time: 20-30 minutes

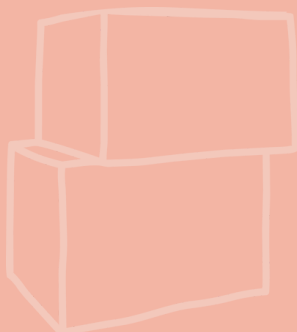
MARTA'S STORY:

When I moved far away, I couldn't bring everything with me. So, in my new city, I bought my kitchen things at a second-hand shop — including a sealed plastic bag labelled *"random things for the kitchen."* A mystery bag! When I opened it there was a surprise inside: a middle-sized spoon with a pretty pattern on the handle.

I knew that spoon. When I was little, I had a set just like it — the spoon was a queen, the fork was a king, and the knife was a dog. A sausage dog! My set got lost long ago, but my best friend had the same one, and at her house it was still in use, even when we were teenagers.

She drank her chocolate milk with that spoon. She would pour the cocoa powder into the cold milk — and then *not* stir it. First, she'd chase all the little bubbles around the rim of the cup and pop them in her mouth, one by one. It was so odd and so funny at the same time.

Now that spoon from the mystery bag is my favourite. I use it every day. And every time, it brings back my best friend, and our breakfasts together when I slept over at her house.



PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1.1:

THE TEACHER READS THE ABOVE STORY TO THE CLASS

The teacher invites a few volunteers to respond to the following:

- What is the object?
- Who, or where, does it connect to?
- What does she remember when she uses it?

ACTIVITY 1.2: THE TEACHER MODELS THE EXERCISE

The teacher modelling the exercise first with their own object lowers the emotional stakes and shows that objects can be mundane and meaningful at the same time. It could be a favourite spoon, a puzzle piece, a piece of jewellery.

ACTIVITY 1.3: STUDENTS ARE INVITED TO BRING TO CLASS A SMALL EVERYDAY OBJECT CONNECTED TO A STORY

Their object can remind them of someone or somewhere they care about: a grandparent, a family member, an older friend, a neighbour, or a place they have lived or moved away from. The object does not have to be precious or old. It can be anything that carries a story.

Important: If a student brings a photo, they might point to something inside the photo — a toy, a chair, a pair of shoes — and speak about that thing. The picture is a window to the object, not the object itself.

Options: If a student cannot or does not wish to bring a personal object, they may choose any object from their bag, lunch box or desk and invent a story for it — imagining who might have owned it, where it might have been, and what it might remember.

After each story the teacher prompts students to respond to the following:

- What is the object?
- Who, or where, does it connect to?
- What do you remember when you hold it?



PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 2: NARRATOR & ILLUSTRATOR: BRINGING A STORY TO LIFE

This activity is inspired by established drama-in-education practice (see Booth, 2005; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).

One student is the Narrator. They tell a short story inspired by their object from Activity 1.3. The story works better if it draws on movement: someone walks somewhere, picks something up, makes something, or reacts to something.

The other student(s), 3 or 4 depending on the story's needs, are Illustrators. They use their bodies building still images (tableaux) or performing silent movement to bring the story to life as the Narrator speaks.

At the start the Narrator is placed facing the audience at one side of the stage, leaving the main area for the Illustrators. Looking at the audience and trying not to get distracted by the Illustrators, the Narrator tells their story taking pauses and leaving time between images for the Illustrator(s) to compose the tableau (frozen image). If there are spoken lines, they can be said by the Narrator and mouthed by the Illustrators.

Purpose: for the Illustrator the goal is to improve their expressive abilities by being able to listen closely to the narration and embodying the story through actions and poses. For the Narrator, it is to practice storytelling in collaboration with the Illustrators, adapting the tale to the group's speed and creativity.

For younger students: keep it simple — one task at a time, the teacher can prompt them by calling out the story's needs as it goes.

For example:

Narrator – They crossed the forest.

Teacher – (side coaching) A forest... trees! We need trees!

Teachers choose the level that suits their group:

Level 1 = 4 - 5 tableaux (frozen images); students hold each pose for a few seconds then move on.

Level 2 = the illustrators move slowly through the action as the Narrator speaks.

What to select: choose stories that have lots of actions, are not too personal or emotionally raw, and leave room for the illustrators to do something physical.



PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

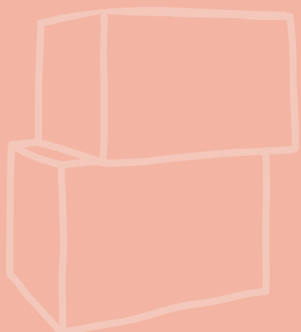
ACTIVITY 3:

CROSSWORD: WORDS FROM NOHKOM'S WORLD

A crossword follows this section as a printable worksheet, with its own teacher answer key and sources.

- The same puzzle sheet will be used twice.
- Before the show, students fill in the four Cree words used in the play.
- After the show, once they have met the characters, they finish the rest.

A grace note: Nohkom herself does crosswords, so the activity quietly echoes something from the play.



CROSSWORD: WORDS FROM NOHKOM'S WORLD

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PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 3: CROSSWORD CLUES

BEFORE THE SHOW — the Cree words:

- 4. **Down:** Cree for 'my grandmother' (it is in the play's title!)
- 8. **Across:** Cree for 'your grandmother'
- 7. **Down:** A Cree word meaning 'that is all' or 'the end'
- 11. **Across:** A Cree word meaning 'good job'
- 5 **Down:** is already filled in for you: SPOON.

AFTER THE SHOW — now that you've met everyone:

- 2. **Across:** A small object you love and want to keep safe
- 5. **Across:** Jello is this slow, cuddly, sleepy animal
- 6. **Across:** Mugz is this animal with rings on its tail — NOT a monkey!
- 1. **Down:** A number game, played with a dabber, that Nohkom loved
- 9. **Down:** A warm bread Nohkom bakes in a special bowl
- 10. **Down:** The ink stamper you use to mark your numbers in bingo
- 11. **Down:** A picture in your mind of something that happened before

Picture clues — who is this?

14. **Down:**



15. **Down:**



16. **Across:**

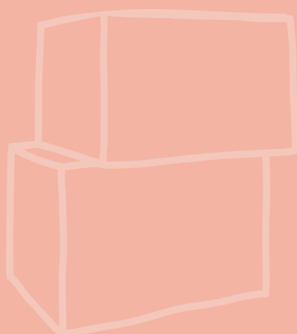


PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES



ACTIVITY 3: TEACHER ANSWER KEY & NOTES

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PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES



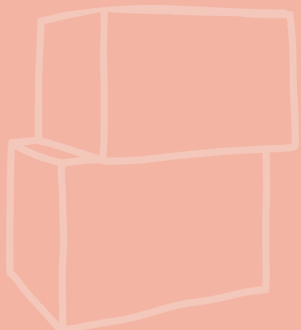
ACTIVITY 3: CROSSWORD ANSWERS

Across:

- 2. TREASURE — A small object you love and want to keep safe
- 5. SLOTH — Jello is this slow, cuddly, sleepy animal
- 6. LEMUR — Mugz is this animal with rings on its tail — NOT a monkey!
- 8. KOHKOM — Cree for 'your grandmother'
- 11. MIYAWSIN — A Cree word meaning 'good job'
- 16. RICK — The giant wooden spoon (picture clue)

Down:

- 1. BINGO — A number game, played with a dabber, that Nohkom loved
- 4. NOHKOM — Cree for 'my grandmother' (it is in the play's title!)
- 5. SPOON — Rick is a giant wooden one of these (pre-filled in the grid as the worked example)
- 7. EKOSI — A Cree word meaning 'that is all' or 'the end'
- 9. BANNOCK — A warm bread Nohkom bakes in a special bowl
- 10. DABBER — The ink stamper you use to mark your numbers in bingo
- 11. MEMORY — A picture in your mind of something that happened before
- 14. MUGZ — The lemur (picture clue)
- 15. JELLO — The sloth (picture clue)



PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

ABOUT THE CREE WORDS

These are Plains Cree (nēhiyawēwin — the Y dialect). The pronunciations below are rough guides only; for accuracy, use the listening card that follows.

Word in puzzle	Written in Cree	Meaning	Say it (approx.)
NOHKOM	<i>nôhkom</i>	my grandmother	NOH-kum
KOHKOM	<i>kôhkom</i>	your grandmother	KOH-kum
EKOSI	<i>êkosi</i>	that's all; the end	eh-KOH-sih
MIYAWSIN	<i>mîyâwsin</i>	good job	mee-WAH-sin
BANNOCK	<i>pahkwêșikan</i>	bannock / bread	pah-KWAY-si-gun

For teachers: going a little deeper

“My” vs “your.” Cree family words carry a built-in prefix: ni-/nô- means my and ki-/kô- means your. So nôhkom means my grandmother and kôhkom (the “kookum” many kids say) means your grandmother. The two spellings in the play are not a mistake.

êkosi closes the play. On the surface it just means “that’s all / the end.” It is also traditionally used in place of “goodbye” — and was often avoided as a final farewell, since that goodbye was felt to belong to death.

mîyâwsin is spoken at the play’s emotional turning point, as praise.



PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

HEAR THE CREE WORDS

A short listening guide for the vocabulary. Tap a link, to hear each word spoken by a fluent Cree speaker on the itwêwina Plains Cree dictionary.

Cree word	Scan, or tap to listen
nôhkom — my grandmother (<i>say it: NOH-kum</i>)	itwewina.altlab.app/search?q=nôhkom
kôhkom — your grandmother (<i>say it: KOH-kum</i>)	No audio recording available
êkosi — that's all / the end (<i>say it: eh-KOH-sih</i>)	itwewina.altlab.app/search?q=êkosi
mîyâwsin — good job (<i>say it: mee-WAH-sin</i>)	No audio recording available
pahkwêsikan — bannock / bread (<i>say it: pah-KWAY-si-gun</i>)	itwewina.altlab.app/search?q=pahkwêsikan
Pêyak — one (<i>say it: peh-YUCK</i>)	https://itwewina.altlab.app/search?q=Peyak
Nikotwâsik — six (<i>say it: nick-ah-TWA-sick</i>)	https://itwewina.altlab.app/search?q=Nikotw%C3%A2sik+

A note on accuracy:

These recordings are Plains Cree (Y dialect). Coverage varies word to word, and a few forms are computer-synthesised from a speaker's recordings rather than directly recorded.

Sources:

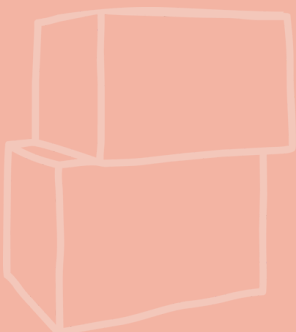
- Play: Nohkom's Knick-Knacks by Barry Bilinsky (Draft 8) — Geordie Theatre, 2026–27 season.
- Cree Literacy Network — creeliteracy.org (incl. work by Solomon Ratt).
- itwêwina, Plains Cree Dictionary — Alberta Language Technology Lab / First Nations University / Maskwacîs Education — itwewina.altlab.app
- Online Cree Dictionary — creedictionary.com. LearnAlberta — learnalberta.ca





POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

Pick whatever suits your class — each works on its own or run all three in order.



POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1: HOW A GROUP REMEMBERS: COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Format: Whole-class discussion, or small-group research + share-back

Time: 1–2 periods

The play keeps Nohkom present through stories that get retold. Communities do the same. Have students look at how groups — not just individuals — remember, and how they mark change.

Choose one: a 20–30 min class discussion, or small groups each take one tradition and share it back (poster, slide, or drawing).

Prompts: How does a community mark the year?

Start with the calendar everyone shares — New Year’s Day, Canada Day, harvest, the solstice — then move to days your own community knows: la Saint-Jean, Lunar New Year, Passover, Eid, Diwali... On Cree territory, some schools take moose week or goose week off so families can hunt together — that is an example of how a community marks its year.

- How do groups welcome someone in, or say goodbye?
- What story does a community tell about itself, and why might they repeat it?
- What do people offer or do together — food, light, song, words, cards?
- Pull it together: What similarities are there between these traditions? What is different?

For older groups (Gr. 5–6): you may add a strand on how cultures remember people who have died — Día de los Muertos, Obon. Research into culture, never personal disclosure.

Care:

Research into how cultures work, not personal grief. Students are never asked what their own family does — though they may offer it if they wish.



POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 2:

OUR CLASSROOM IS A UNIVERSE: WE ALSO HAVE OUR OWN RITUALS

Format: Observation + discussion (optional writing or drawing)

Time: 20–40 minutes

A class performs rituals every day maybe without even noticing it — just as the play finds meaning in repeated, ordinary actions. Have students spot and name the ones they already live.

ACTIVITY 2.1: PROMPTS (PICK A FEW)

- What do we always do to start the day? And at the end?
- What does the bell/music/PA system signal us to do?
- Why do we line up? What are the common rules we all follow at recess that nobody ever wrote down?
- What happens on the last day of the year? When someone new joins? When we move up a grade?
- What's a rule in this room that nobody ever says out loud?

ACTIVITY 2.2: PLAY THE NEW-GUEST GAME

Imagine if a new student — or an alien, or a substitute teacher — arrived tomorrow, what would we have to explain so they could get through recess, lunch, and home time? These are rules nobody says out loud — not because they're secret, but because everyone here already knows them.

Land the idea — empathy, showing kindness to strangers: being able to imagine yourself arriving at a new place, or a new country, where you don't know the unspoken rules until someone explains them to you.

What is obvious to us is not obvious to everyone — and a newcomer relies on our kindness the way we would rely on theirs.



POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 3:

WHAT WOULD YOU KEEP? WHAT'S THEIR STORY?

Format: Creative writing or visual art

Time: 20–30 minutes

In the play, Abby keeps only four things — chosen for their stories, not their value. In this activity students make their own imaginary keep box.

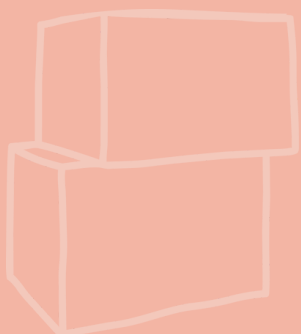
Prompt: If you were to help sort out the belongings of the group from the classroom or the school — which four objects would you keep?

Write one sentence of story for each: what it is, what it reminds you of, why it matters.

The keepsake doesn't have to be something you could actually carry.

It can be intangible — the sound of laughter in the hallway, the smell of the garden, the colour of the light that comes through the window in the afternoon. In the play, the objects are the trigger for the memories — but the memories live in much more than the objects.

Choices: They can hand it in as short writing, a drawing, or a labelled collage. These can become a lovely display of cherished memories.



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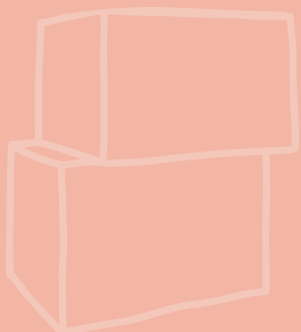
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