

THE USES OF MOOSE

For the Penobscot Indians the taking of the moose went far beyond a trophy kill. Penobscot understood there was a higher use and they respected this animal for its generosity. It is believed that when a hunted animal “allowed” itself to be killed, it willingly has given itself to the hunter and his family. Because of this belief Penobscot hunters would use every part of the animal to pay respect to them. The moose provided much more than a mounted head, points on a paddle or dressed out weight. The moose our ancestors hunted was used for many forms of sustenance and a variety of tools. The following list are the traditional uses of the moose:

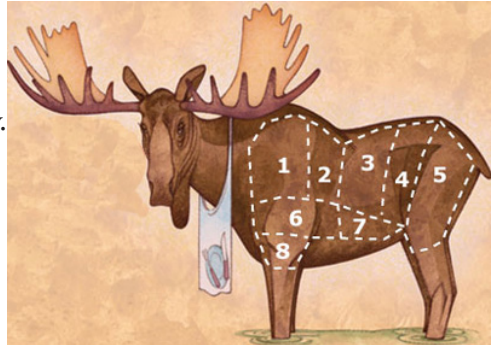
Food/Sustenance

Meat (including the blood, the liver, and the heart) can be eaten and it was prepared by boiling or roasting. It could also be dried or smoked and used to make pemmican.

The tongue and nose are considered a delicacy.

The bone marrow was eaten, and the bones crushed and boiled to bring the fatty marrow to the surface. The marrow was also used for seasoning.

The fat was eaten and used as seasoning.



Medicinal Uses

The small bone found in the heart was ground to powder, cooked in a broth and administered to the patient to ease the spasms of childbirth.

After marrow in leg and thigh bones was eaten, the bones were crushed and boiled; drinking the remaining trace of marrow that floated to surface was considered good for the chest.

Scratching behind one's ear with the left hind hoof of a moose was thought to be a cure for epilepsy.



Material Culture Uses

The tendon from the spine was used to string wampum and the other tendons used as sinew for general purposes such as bow strings and to lash arrowheads and fletching.

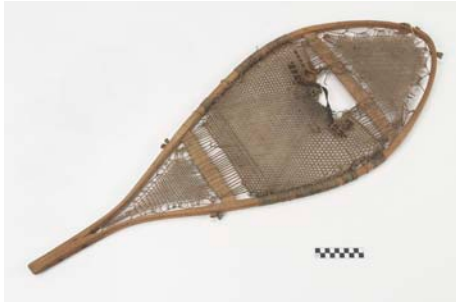
The skin was used to make clothing—especially winter robes, and bedding. Leggings and moccasins were made from the hind legs and the hair was left on for added warmth. For summer use tanned hides were used for clothing and moccasins. Skin was also used for bags and containers and at times a covering for wigwams.



Moose hair was used for embroidery thread. Pictured right is a small container with intricate dyed moose hair used as embroidery. Moose hair was also used to blow into the air to tell wind direction when hunting. It was also used to make ornamental fringe on the outside frame of snowshoes.

A well greased hide was used to make temporary canoes, seams were stitched with sinew and sealed with moose tallow boiled with pine pitch. Below is pictured a temporary canoe made from moose hide.





Moose wool was used to knit mittens and socks.

The brain of the moose was used to tan the hides.

The bladder was used as a sack for storing liquids

Thin strips of skin, known as raw hide, was used for the webbing and lashing on snowshoes. They also were used to make burden and drag straps for carrying loads on the back or pulling toboggans, and also to make shoulder straps for pack baskets.

The intestines were used as skins for sausages, snowshoe webbing and bowstrings.

The teeth (incisors) were used as pendants.

The bones had a variety of uses.

Needles

Awls

Spear points

Pipes bowls

Dice from shin bones

The antlers were used as tools such as a chisels. They were also used as art. Picture right is an antler carving by Penobscot SC Francis. This sculpture is called “Soaring Free” and is on permanent display at the Abbe Museum in Bar Harbor, Maine.

We also find many etched birchbark containers that have images of moose on them. Images of moose are also found in both petroglyph sites in Maine. These etchings in stone cannot be dated, but are presumed to be the oldest pictures of moose in Maine.

