

# Mini Aurora Symphony

### *Overview:*

Students use a variety of instruments to perform a Mini Aurora Symphony to musically represent the nighttime progression of the aurora. The musical representation of elements in nature is a common theme in Native Alaskan and Native American dancing.

### *Objectives:*

The student will:

- use music to represent shapes and other visual images; and
- discover that Native Elders and other Native dance groups use music to represent occurrences in nature.

### *Materials:*

- Sand blocks
- Tambourine
- Cymbals
- Triangle
- VISUAL AID: “Quiet Arcs”
- VISUAL AID: “Rayed Bands”
- VISUAL AID: “Patches”
- VISUAL AID: “Long Aurora Rays”



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### *Activity Procedure:*

1. Explain that music is often used to represent elements in nature, especially in Native Alaskan and Native American dancing. Instruct students to use different instruments and rhythms to represent the four shapes of the aurora as it occurs throughout the night.
2. Ask students to recall the correct sequence of shapes as they occur throughout the night (quiet arc, rayed band, patches, and long aurora rays). Remind them that the corona shape is actually the rayed band shape seen from underneath.
3. Show VISUAL AID: “Quiet Arcs.” Remind students that the quiet arc looks soft and still in the sky as it stretches from horizon to horizon. Ask students how they would play sand blocks to simulate an aurora quiet arc. Demonstrate or ask students to demonstrate.
4. Show VISUAL AID: “Rayed Bands.” Remind students that rayed bands look like vertical bars of light that swirl and move quickly across the night sky. Ask students how they would play the tambourine to simulate rayed bands. Demonstrate or ask students to demonstrate.
5. Show VISUAL AID: “Patches.” Remind students that patches are seen in the early morning. They look like faint puffy clouds that pulsate, or blink on and off, in the night sky. Ask students how they would play the cymbals to simulate patches. Demonstrate or ask students to demonstrate.
6. Show VISUAL AID: “Long Aurora Rays.” Remind students that long aurora rays are seen after all other shapes disappear. They appear as single, isolated columns of light that disappear themselves as the morning sun rises. Ask students how they would play the triangle to simulate long aurora rays. Demonstrate or ask students to demonstrate.
7. Ask for four volunteers to play in a Mini Aurora Symphony: one to represent each of the four aurora shapes. Explain that students will play instruments to represent each shape one after the other, in the sequence the aurora performs each night.
8. On cue, the conductor (teacher) will indicate when the student representing the quiet arc should begin playing sand blocks. This volunteer should continue until the conductor points to the tambourine representing rayed bands, the cymbals representing patches, and the triangle representing long aurora rays.
9. Ask for new volunteers and repeat this activity as interest warrants.

