

CONNECTION TO THE LAND AND DEMOGRAPHICS

PRE-TEACH/PRE-ACTIVITY

Relationships with the land cannot be separated from human responsibility for the land. The land encompasses the wind, air, water, ice and land. These relationships are based on kinships and the responsibilities all humans have to all the animals, plants and other humans who rely on the Earth for survival. The processes involved in communicating and interacting with the land are based on reciprocity. The relationship to the land isn't one of "power over" but of "power with." This attitude of reciprocity in relationships also begets respect.

Have students review the Assembly of First Nations resource "It's Our Time" to get a better understanding of First Nations' connection to the land (education.afn.ca/toolkit/). Be sure to emphasize with your students that this is only one perspective and although there may be similarities among other Indigenous groups, there is not one homogenous view. Additionally, using the same resource, look at how the relationships to the land changed post-contact.

For another example, have students watch the [Inuit Nunangat Taimannganit videos and interactive map](#) made by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami to learn about the Inuit connection to the land.

Students can also be introduced to the Statistics Canada website, where they can view data based on geographic location (150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/geo?HPA=1) or population (12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm?HPA=1).

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Students will reflect on the differences in the world views that allow them to think in terms of private property and communal property.
- Students will reflect on why people live where they do, and how the land has determined this for thousands of years.
- Students will gain insight and respect for Indigenous Peoples' connection to the land and their inherent rights.
- Students will reflect on their own connections to the land and ways to strengthen that connection.

CONNECTION TO THE LAND AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Foundational knowledge and perspectives

FIRST NATIONS

“The land provided the people with all that was needed to exist. It contained a memory of activities that ensured life and survival. This is embedded with the names of the many landmarks. Manahcâ pânihk is ‘where the bows were harvested.’ Manawânis was ‘where eggs were gathered.’ Astahcikowin was ‘where food was cached.’ Pîponapiwin was ‘where the winter camp was established.’ Âsokanihk was a name given to areas ‘where rivers were crossed.’ Some names had animal or human connections — Kiseyinô Kâsâsakitisihk is the ‘old man lying on his back,’ while Kakwayohk is the ‘porcupine hills.’

As it is with other peoples and cultures, their ties, knowledge and association with the land meant the difference between life and death. An appreciation and special connection to the land led to the development of a bond that would remain even after settlement on reserves. The Elders would state that you must be a relative to the land.”

—from “Language” by Bruce Cutknife, in the *First Nations volume of the Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*

“My dad still looks fondly back on the carefree days of his youth and often reflects on his life. Back then, he recalls, every family had their own home. Once a person was married they would live in their own dwelling — mostly the Mihtukan, but also teepees or tents while on the move. But that all changed once the people moved off the land onto reserves. This had the effect of splitting

the families and, in turn, splitting the Cree Nation. From then on, everything was done according to Waamishtikushiiu — ‘the white man.’ After a while, our society became more materialistic. There was a shift from survival to gaining material things.

Before the relocation, people lived a more traditional way of life. Afterwards, people enjoyed modern amenities, like plumbing and electricity, and a hospital in town. But it also made people more dependent on these things. Before, people would spend up to six months out on the land, from the fall to the spring, hunting and trapping. Now, most people take just two weeks off for the ‘goose break’ every year. While there are other programs to teach children about our culture and language, it often seems like the solutions are just temporary bandages on a deeper problem.

My dad always said they survived so well before because they had my grandfather, David Pashagumskum. He used to tell them, ‘Take care of this land, and this land will take care of you.’ It really is important that we listen to the teachings of our Elders, or we risk losing everything we have and are.”

—from “Connection to the Land” by Jamie Pashagumskum, in the *First Nations volume of the Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*

The Elders would state that you must be a relative to the land.



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Foundational knowledge and perspectives

MÉTIS

“The Métis are one of Canada’s fastest growing demographic groups. According to Canada’s 2011 census, 451,795 people identified as being Métis. The Métis National Council represents the almost 400,000 self-identified Métis living in Ontario and the four western provinces. According to 2011 census data, about 85 per cent of self-identified Métis in Canada live in these five provinces. Alberta had the largest Métis population with 96,865 residents, followed by Ontario with 86,015, then Manitoba with 78,830, British Columbia with 69,475, and Saskatchewan with 52,450. It should be stated that there is not yet a proper Métis National Council enumeration of the citizens of the Métis Nation. Once that enumeration takes place, the numbers of Métis citizens will likely differ from the census numbers. The Métis primarily live in urban areas, including large cities, metropolitan areas, and smaller urban centres. Winnipeg has the largest Métis population in Canada, with 46,325 residents. Edmonton has the second highest Métis population, with 31,780 residents. Other centres with large Métis populations include: Vancouver (18,485), Calgary (17,040), Saskatoon (11,520), Toronto (9,980), Regina (8,225), Prince Albert, Sask. (7,900) and Ottawa-Gatineau (6,860). According to the 2006 census, Métis living in urban areas are twice as likely to live in smaller centres (populations of less than 100,000) than non-Indigenous people in urban areas. Approximately 41 per cent of urban Métis live in these smaller urban centres. Many Métis also live in rural areas, largely in or near Canada’s boreal forest in communities such as the Alberta Métis Settlements

(approximately 5,000 residents) and in numerous other communities such as Île-à-la-Crosse, Sask., Duck Bay, Man., and Fort McKay, Alta.”

— from “Communities” in the Métis volume of the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*

“A little known but important cultural concept relating to the traditional Métis worldview is *wahkohtowin*. In Cree, *wahkohtowin* means the act of being related to one another. It can also mean ‘relationship’ or ‘relative.’ To the Cree and the Métis, it means how family, community, societal interactions, the natural world, and the economy are all connected in a series of interlinked mutual relationships. *Wahkohtowin* is the basis of Cree natural law and is reflected in the teachings of Elders.

Wahkohtowin focuses on relationships within and between families, communities, the natural world, and all

living things. Relationships mean mutual and reciprocal obligations to all things and all people. These relationships are tied into the natural environment and to the Creator, who is responsible for creation. For these relationships to be in harmony, individuals have to act responsibly and respectfully to others. All social interactions have to be guided by a sense of mutual reciprocity, respect and openness to others. This means that all social interactions must be appropriate and reflect the spirit of *wahkohtowin*.”

— *Métis National Council*

“ **Wahkohtowin focuses on relationships within and between families, communities, the natural world, and all living things.** ”



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Foundational knowledge and perspectives

INUIT

“About 30 per cent of Inuit in Canada now live outside Inuit Nunangat. The trend toward urbanization among Inuit is growing, yet Canadian cities are not fully prepared to facilitate this transition from northern hamlets and communities to large southern urban areas. Many cities in Southern Canada have organizations established with First Nations in mind; however, the needs and realities of Inuit are unique among Indigenous populations.

In Ontario alone, the Inuit population has grown from less than 100 in 1987 to an estimated 3,800 in 2017. The vast majority live in the National Capital area, making it the largest Inuit community in Southern Canada. According to Statistics Canada, the Ottawa-Gatineau area had an estimated 1,280 Inuit in 2016. But agencies that provide services to the community estimate the Inuit population in the capital is at least 3,700 and possibly as large as 6,000. Establishing improved data on Inuit outside of Inuit Nunangat is a priority; it is expected

that the number of Inuit is much higher across Southern Canada than current data supports.”

—from *“Urban Inuit”* in the Inuit volume of the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*

“As in the past, today Inuvialuit draw strength from their cultural traditions and from their ties to the Land. Although many Inuvialuit work in the communities, the pull of the Land is always strong. ‘I’m going to the bush’ and ‘I’m going out on the Land’ are commonly heard phrases. Bush, fish and whaling camps are scattered across Victoria Island, Banks Island and the Beaufort Delta region. Some of these are close to the communities to provide a quick weekend getaway by snowmobile, boat or ATV. Others are located farther away and are used for extended visits.”

—from *“Inuvialuit Settlement Region”* in the Inuit volume of the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*

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CONNECTION TO THE LAND AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Points of inquiry and activation related to the Giant Floor Map



- **Begin by asking your students what makes somewhere a place.** Have students stand on a “place” on the map and explain why they picked this location. Discuss that even when a space is not populated by people, it is still considered to be important. For example, a place may be named because it can be important as a space to gather medicinal plants, forage for food, hunt, or meet and connect with other people, or as a space for reflection or vision. All of these examples qualify a space as a place. Using pylons, discuss how students see these concepts reflected on the Giant Floor Map.
- **Have students look at the 2016 Census Data card to gain insight into the demographics of Canada, specifically Indigenous Peoples in Canada.** Use the Giant Floor Map to map out the data and discuss why it is not complete or accurate for all populations. Discuss rates of census return, the history and current context around identifying as an Indigenous person, and other topics that may make the data less accurate.
- **Using the Métis Homeland Map card included in the teacher’s kit, have students use ropes to outline it on the Giant Floor Map.** Discuss what they have mapped and how the dispersal of the Métis and the lack of a land base affect the distribution of Métis across Canada.
- **Have students map their own connection to the land using the blank cards in the teacher’s kit.** Discuss whether this was easy or hard for them, and what that means with respect to their personal connection to the land. Identify places on the Giant Floor Map (using the associated Specific Places cards) that show long-standing Indigenous connections to the land, such as at Agawa Pictograph Site, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park, Cypress Hills, and The Forks. Have students research additional places that show an Indigenous connection to the land.
- **Relate the concept of having a connection to the land to students’ local knowledge.** Discuss how they would feel if one day they were forced to live in another part of the country and were given no explanation or assistance. What would they do without the use of technology? Would they know where to live, get food, get medical help, etc.? Have students research the relocation of Indigenous communities and find examples of where people were relocated to on the Giant Floor Map.

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Age appropriate application and experiential learning

ELEMENTARY

K-6

- **Explore the idea of personal connection to the land** with your students, asking them to draw or write examples of how they feel in connection to the land.
- **Take students for a walk** around your schoolyard or community, and have them do the same task, showing their connection to the land. Did they notice anything different after their walk?
- **Discuss with your class** what they know about their community — where are things located? Discuss how they would feel if the same services they have now (e.g., school, doctor, dentist) were not available in their community. What effect would a lack of access to these services have on their lives? How can they relate this to Indigenous communities historically and now?

INTERMEDIATE

7-9

- **Have students reflect** on their personal connection to the land. Have them consider if they grow or harvest any of their own food, if they spend time on the land, etc. Why do they or don't they do these things? When and how are these connections incorporated into their lives?
- **Have students discuss** how food connects us all to the land. Is your community able to grow and harvest food? Look at examples locally and globally, discussing how this may have changed over time.
- **Look deeper** at the 2016 Census Data card, paying particular attention to the data collected on the Métis. Discuss why the Métis data is incomplete and therefore inaccurate (and reasons why they may not participate in census gathering). How will this affect their access to services?
- **Consider how** people's connections to the land can shape the way that they see the same situation. Discuss the extraction of natural resources, development of infrastructure, and pollution. How might people see these issues differently based on their personal connection to the land?

SECONDARY

10-12

- **Discuss the forced relocation of Indigenous Peoples** and how this process affected their connection to the land. Use this excerpt from the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People to learn more about forced relocations: caid.ca/RRCAP1.11.pdf
 - ▶ Page 399: Discuss the difference between “need” and “want.” What options might have allowed Indigenous Peoples to remain on their ancestral lands?

Continued...

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Age appropriate application and experiential learning

- ▶ Page 446: Explore examples of how wildlife harvesting diminished after relocation.
- ▶ Métis examples: Page 450, or see “Métis Land Rights and Self-Government” by Leah Dorion, with Darren R. Préfontaine at metismuseum.ca/resource.php/00725
- ▶ First Nations examples: Pages 413, 400, 446
- ▶ Inuit examples: Pages 440, 405, 423
- **Make it personal:** Ask students about their connection to the land in their community and to land in general. How does your relationship with land affect your engagement with development, with decision-making and with voting and other acts of citizenship?

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DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING

- **Have students illustrate** the importance of having a sense of place, and how this highlights one's connection to the land.
 - ▶ **Ask students to share examples** of successful partnerships between Indigenous communities/groups and other organizations, such as the federal government, that highlight the importance of the Indigenous connection to the land. Consider the **recovery strategy for the boreal woodland caribou** as an example.
- **Have students create** a web-of-life diagram showing the interconnections among various species on Earth.
- **Conduct a descriptive analysis** of demographic characteristics for a selected region and compare it to Canada as a whole.



LEARNING TO ACTION

- **Connect with local Indigenous groups** and arrange for a nature walk with the entire class.
- **Create a school club** focusing on getting students outside and interacting with nature.