INTRODUCTION

Spatial thinking is a powerful and useful geographic skill that strengthens student collaboration and communication and is key to active citizenship in our increasingly global and technological society. Spatial thinking allows students to identify, understand and analyze phenomena related to the spaces around them, recognizing location, scale, patterns, trends, and relationships.

Canadian Geographic Education, in partnership with the S.M. Blair Foundation, is proud to build on the success of their tiled map program and offer this instructional booklet. This resource provides teachers with the opportunity to strengthen their lessons plans and enrich their geography classes with hands-on interactive activities, centred on Can Geo Education’s tiled maps. Students will explore the basics of geography, mapping skills, and physical and human geography.

Spatial thinking remains a fundamental skill that underpins the geographic toolkit that we aim to impart onto our students over the course of their kindergarten to grade 12 or secondary 5 (Quebec) education.

Have students piece together the maps themselves. Printing off several copies of each tiled map and laminating them to write on with dry-erase marker can add to the learning.

MAP READING SKILLS

Print out the flags from all of the provinces and territories with the name written on the back. Using the Tiled Map of Canada, have students locate and name the province or territory and its capital according to the card that they have been assigned. To make this activity more challenging, students must not look at the name of the province or territory written on the back of the flag card. After correctly locating the province or territory and its capital, have students outline the border of the province or territory using ribbon, string or markers (if the tiles are laminated).

Using the Tiled Map of Canada as inspiration for a base map, encourage students to create their own thematic maps using this template. Assign themes if necessary (you can use this opportunity to make interdisciplinary links). Consider different themes, such as how land can be used for agriculture or urban development. Their maps should have the basic five components (title, border, legend, scale and compass rose).

Look at the various tiled maps for examples of different compass roses. Using them as inspiration, ask students to design their own compass roses. In small groups, have students construct a simple compass such as this one. Then assign one tiled map to each group and have them orient their map based on the compass. Select one student in each group and have them choose two different towns or cities on the map, revealing only one of the two to the rest of the group. The student can only provide cardinal and intermediate directions to help the group navigate from one location to the other on the map.
HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

Distribute a piece of the Tiled Map of Canada to each student, and have them stand up if they think that at least one of the top 20 most populated cities in Canada is located on their piece. Each student should justify their reasoning. Afterward, ask students to piece together the map. List the top most populated cities in Canada and have students mark them on the map. Give the students a minute to observe the map. Then ask them why they think that so many people live in those particular cities (close to the U.S. border, climate, variety of things to do, landscape, immigration pull, etc.).

As a class, identify different human activities that we might find across Canada (cattle ranching, fishing, hiking, mining, etc.). Using the Tiled Map of Canada, locate where these activities take place. Classify the activities into the four main economic sectors. Ask students to identify a trend among the locations of the different activities. Discuss the reasons for this.

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

Encourage students to find climate graphs online (climate.weather.gc.ca/) for Toronto, ON, Victoria, BC, Iqaluit, NU, and St John’s, NB. Ask them what the warmest and coldest months are. Discuss the quantity of precipitation that is observed in all four cities. Hand out the climate graphs and ask students to use the Tiled Map of Canada to locate an area that they think would have this climate. Ask students to justify their choice and share with the answers with them.

Have students choose two animals from the Wild Migrations Tiled Map and as a class track their migration route on the map. Discuss the path, duration, and threats to the animals’ migration routes. Have students choose a migratory animal not on the map and research the path of the animal’s route, its duration, and the threats to the route (climate change, human interference, etc.).

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