



How does Language Mirror and Shape Our Relationship to Land?

Organization:

Title: How Does Language Mirror and Shape Our Relationship to Land?

Summary: Students explore how language affects and mirrors our relationship to land, by learning Anishinaabemowin and Kanyen'kéha words. Students also learn the Indigenous origin of many local place names.

Inquiry Question: Inquiry Question 3: Teacher Language: How Does the Culture of a Group of People Impact the Biodiversity of a Place?

Duration: 40 minutes

Curriculum Links: Science and Technology: A3.3, B1.2, B1.3, B1.1

Learning Environment: Indoor or outdoor classroom

Season: All

Materials:

- Indigenous Languages.pdf
- Writing Tools
- Outdoor Learning Journals
- Indigenous Place Names.pdf

Meta Data:

Content Type: Activity, language learning

Bundle: Gifts of the Earth, IK

Theme: Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Biodiversity Crisis

Subject Area: Biology, Science, Social Studies, Geography, History, Language Arts,

Curriculum Focus: 7

We recommend inviting an Indigenous language speaker into the learning space when teaching about Indigenous languages.

Instructions:

1. Teacher discusses with students how the English language separates us from the land while Indigenous languages connect us to the land. For instance, in the English language many words, phrases, idioms and sayings with negative connotations are connected to nature. Teacher can brainstorm with students a list of English words associated with nature that have negative connotations. (I.e: Dirty language/jokes, a soiled reputation, a seedy neighbourhood, watering things down, going nuts, being a guinea pig, freak of nature, etc.) Teacher then challenges students to think of English words, connected to nature, that have a positive association (force of nature, a ray of sunshine, down to earth, reach for the stars, tip of the iceberg, etc.)



2. In contrast in many Indigenous languages, words can be found that honor and create relationship with the land. Teachers uses **Indigenous Languages.pdf** to introduce this concept to students.

Extension Activity: Place Names

There are at least 30,000 place names in Canada whose names come from anglicized versions of Indigenous languages.

1. For this activity, teachers start by having students brainstorm in small groups any city or province names that have Indigenous language origins and discuss as a class.

Resource for a starting point:

- <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/largest-cities-in-canada-with-an-indigenous-name>

2. Next, students in pairs can look at **Indigenous Place Names.pdf**. In pairs, or small groups, student determine what the anglicized name for each place is. Teacher can next lead a discussion with students about how place names in Canada commonly come from anglicized versions of Indigenous words.

3. Teachers can lead a discussion with students about what the place names reveal about what land looked like prior to colonization. For example, Katarokwi means place of mud and sticks. This name points to what the land Kingston was built on looked like prior to colonial changes.

Resource to explore as an extension:

- <https://rb.gy/54c9v>

Please note that the learning represented in these activities reflects Big Idea A. in the Indigenous Knowledge Learning Bundle: “Indigenous knowledge is contained in language and storytelling”. To help your students learn more about this Big Idea check out the Learning Activities titled: *Ohèn:ton Karihwatéhkwén (The Words that Come Before All Else)*, *The Importance of Storytelling*, and *Creation Stories and Language* found in the *Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being with the Natural World* Learning Bundle (Grades 7-10).