

Let's Explore the Past



#SilaandtheLand
Activity
Grade Level: 1-6

About This Activity

Learners get to explore local Indigenous history and are also given opportunities to inquire about and learn their own family histories.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this activity, learners will:

- Develop an understanding of the importance of intergenerational knowledge that is passed down
- Learn what artifacts are, and their importance to historical and cultural values
- Reflect on their own family histories, and share with the class something of great historical or cultural significance within their own family

Curriculum Connections

Ontario

Grade 1 Social Studies: Heritage and Identity: Our Changing Roles and Responsibilities (A2.6, A3.2)

Grade 2 Social Studies: Heritage and Identity: Changing Family and Community Traditions (A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, A2.1, A2.2, A2.4, A2.5, A2.6, A3.4, A3.6, A3.7)

- People and Environments: Global Communities (B3.8)

Grade 4 Social Studies: Heritage and Identity: Early Societies To 1500 CE (A1.2, A1.3, A1.4, A2.1, A2.2, A2.5, A2.6, A3.2, A3.3)

Grade 6 Social Studies: Heritage and Identity: Communities In Canada, Past and Present (A1.2, A2.6, A3.1, A3.8)

Length of Activity

120 minutes

Materials List

Internet-enabled device

Two objects of cultural and historical value (e.g., an eel spear, and spruce root basket are used here)

KWL Chart Let's Explore the Past

Learners' object from home

Step 1: Preparation

Prior to beginning this lesson, if possible, try to consult an Indigenous Elder or Knowledge Holder. Explain the intent of this lesson and ask if they would be open to sharing Traditional Knowledge with learners. This conversation will help inform the content and flow of the lesson as well as the most appropriate way to present the lesson material. If asking an Elder or Knowledge Holder in the Mi'kmaq culture, it is appropriate to offer a tobacco tie before asking for guidance or help.

- a. Through this conversation with an Indigenous Elder, identify two culturally and historically significant items that will be used for classroom discussion based on a specific Indigenous community. For the purposes of this lesson, an eel spear and a spruce root basket will be used. However, any two culturally significant items may be used! Videos on these objects can be found here, and shown to the learners:

- i. Making an Eel Spear:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5LEz8_UNsU (2:39 minutes)
- ii. Weaving Spruce Root Baskets:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1s2rQIU7fqs> (13:30 minutes)

Step 2: Land Acknowledgement

Educators are encouraged to introduce the lesson with a land acknowledgement and to explain its importance to the class.

- a. More information about the importance, and how to do this can be found here:
<https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>
- b. Educators should go over what the *Rock* and the *Salmon* taught Sila in the book titled, *Sila and the Land*.

Step 3

Ask learners if they know what an artifact is. Further explain that we can learn about the past through artifacts by asking:

- a. Where was the artifact found?
- b. What is its age?
- c. Who created it?
- d. What was its purpose?

Step 4

The two artifacts utilized in this activity are from the Mi'kmaq people. Some resources are below for educators and even learners to familiarize themselves with the Mi'kmaq people:

- a. Land & Sea: The Mi'kmaq Journey:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WU25FefT9U0> (21:53 minutes)
- b. <https://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/aboriginal/mikmaq-history.php>

Step 5

Educators can now explain that the class will be shown two items (via video links if you do not have these items) that can provide valuable information about the history of the Mi'kmaq people.

- a. In a sharing circle, learners will have the opportunity to hold each item and share their

- thoughts about the items.
- b. They can attempt to answer some of the questions stated above or even a story to share.
- c. If no physical artifacts are used, an object such as a talking stick can be utilized in the sharing circle so that everyone knows whose turn it is to speak.
- d. Two rounds for each item in the sharing circle is needed so that every learner can speak to each item. It is important for the educator to facilitate the sharing circle and look for the connections between what each individual contributes.
 - i. Note: It is essential that learners understand the purpose of the sharing circle. The educator should explain that it provides a safe and respectful space where everyone has equal opportunity to listen and to share.

Step 6: KWL Chart Activity

After each item has been discussed and shared, the educator can explain the purpose of a KWL chart, and distribute the chart called, "KWL Chart - Let's Explore the Past".

- a. Learners will be asked to complete the "What I Think I Know" section of the KWL chart using what they know about the items and what they have learned through the sharing circle. They may also work on the "What I Wonder" section to identify any questions they may have. The remaining section, "What I Learned" will be completed later.
- b. Encourage learners to bring their KWL charts back home to continue the discussion at home. They can ask members of their household if they would like to contribute information to any section of the chart. This will encourage dialogue, foster intergenerational learning, and create deeper connections with the lesson content. The KWL chart will also help learners raise important questions about how we learn about the past.

Step 7: Connection

If an Elder or Knowledge Holder is able to join the class, advise the learners that they are here to share their knowledge about the traditional uses of the two culturally significant items (in this case an eel spear and the spruce root basket). Learners will begin to make connections between the cultural and historical components of the items and the perspective from which the history and stories about these items are told.

- a. Learners are encouraged to ask questions to clarify some of their questions from the “What I Wonder” section of their KWL charts.
- b. After, learners should reflect on everything they have learned by completing the last section called, “What I Learned” of their KWL charts. They can also share this section in a classroom discussion.

Step 8: Conclusion

Allow learners to bring their completed KWL charts back home to share what they have learned about the two culturally significant items. Get them to ask their family to help them identify an object that carries history or tells a story about their own family.

- a. Ask learners to prepare a demonstration, depiction, or description of an object of their choosing after discussion with their family to share with the class in a sharing circle. Family members need to be able to assist learners in selecting an object and explain to them its historical and cultural values. This will help learners be able to express to the class why this item is important to their family.
- b. If learners are able, ask them to bring the object into class during the sharing circle discussion. This exercise will encourage conversations about how objects relate to ancestry, culture, language, values, traditions, etc. Learners will be able to make connections to the character Sila, and how the Rock and Salmon teaches us to honour our history that was given by our ancestors, and that we should carry it with pride and pass it down to future generations. Learners may find similarities and/or differences between their objects and histories.