



CHAPTER 5:

Indigenous ways of knowing

A Project of Learning for a Sustainable Future

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Supported by Natural Resources Canada's Building Regional
Adaptation Capacity and Expertise (BRACE) Program



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Chapter 5. Indigenous Ways of Knowing

This inquiry looks at how Indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge, skills and practices, passed down from generation to generation, play a vital role in understanding climate action. Indigenous peoples have been, and are leaders, of climate action; their roles in monitoring climate change impacts and the environmental effects on their traditional lands and waters play a critical part in our fight against climate change. (NRCan p.117)

There is a great deal that we can learn from how Indigenous peoples have lived sustainably with the Land for countless generations. Indigenous peoples have adapted by travelling throughout their Land in creating a balance with food sources and balancing resource use, depending on the season. We need to listen carefully to better understand how Traditional knowledge, and its application, contribute to environmental sustainability and planning for the future. According to the NRCAN report, incorporating diverse perspectives and sources of knowledge, such as Indigenous Knowledge Systems, is also imperative for effective adaptation (NRCan all chapters).



Illustration by Joanne Robertson, water protection activist, author & illustrator of [The Water Walker](#).

The National Issues Report identifies four key strengths of Indigenous and local knowledge systems (NRCAN p.118) in the context of understanding and responding to climate change, including:

1. understanding, monitoring and recording climate change impacts;
2. enhancing adaptive capacity and building resilience;
3. supporting sustainable risk reduction strategies; and
4. informing decision-making and policy change.

In this inquiry, we suggest activities, books, and resources that explore various examples of these Indigenous Ways of Knowing and how the teachings and learning is passed on from one generation to the next. Indigenous communities have their own experts, elders, knowledge keepers and ways of knowing; their knowledge is a valuable and essential resource for learning how to adapt to climate change (NRCan.p.131). Indigenous Ways of Knowing is knowledge that we need to value so we can learn what they understand to help the climate conversation and actively seek it to guide us (NRCan p.115).

Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall coined the phrase Etuaptmumk/"two-eyed seeing" this way: (2004)

"I, you and we need to learn to see from one eye with the best or the strengths in the Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing... and learn to see from your other eye with the best or the strengths in the (Western) knowledges and ways of knowing... but most importantly, I, you, and we need to learn to see with both eyes together, for the benefit of all." Elder Albert Marshall, [EdCan Network](#), May 29, 2018

View [Indigenous Knowledges and Two-Eyed Seeing: An In-Depth Conversation with Elder Albert Marshall](#) - A dialogue about the importance of Indigenous Knowledge and the Two-Eyed Seeing in addressing climate change and creating a resilient future. The webinar was organized by *Prairie Climate Centre at the University of Winnipeg*

General Introduction to the inquiries in this chapter:

Indigenous Ways of Knowing

This chapter offers three different structured and scaffolded inquiries to support Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Indigenous People have passed on traditional knowledge from one generation to the next to learn to live sustainably with the Land. These enquiries explore various examples of these Indigenous Ways of Knowing and how the teachings and learning are passed on from one generation to the next. Each of the three inquiries begins with a provocation followed by numerous strategies and examples. These explorations can be completed in their entirety as written; however, because we know inquiry is an organic and fluid process based on student input, educators may wish to take aspects of each of the ideas presented and adapt, modify or replace what's suggested to create their inquiry with their class. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers review the whole chapter first to determine and plan what works best with their particular group of learners.

The following three inquiries are connected to curricular concepts, as shown in this chart. These curricular concepts are applicable across Canada.

Curricular Connections	Concepts
Citizenship	Respect Foster Appreciation Cultural Awareness
Social Studies	Diverse perspectives - First Nations, Métis, Inuit Cultural Diversity Indigenous languages Indigenous Ways of Knowing Traditional Knowledge Balance Family and Community roles Elders
Language	Critical Literacy Oral Communication Retelling Storytelling Active Listening Responding Storytelling Speaking and listening activities to share ideas
Science	Ecosystems Seasonal Cycle Time and Place Experiential Learning Natural Environment Adaptations Environmental Sustainability Climate Change

The Arts	Creativity innovation interpretation colour space Media
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Inquiry 1: Indigenous Perspectives- Living in Relation with the Land

Students learn the importance of observing and living in relationship with the natural world through the wonders of the seasons. Relationship to the seasons and seasonal cycles are foundational to many Indigenous People. Indigenous knowledge passed from generation to generation is continuously shifting because of the changes in the seasons caused by climate change.

Resources:

- **Book** - Read aloud [Mii maanda ezhi-gkendmaah/This is how I know](#) or watch [online](#)

Inquiry 2: Indigenous Perspective - Environmental Sustainability

This inquiry will introduce students to environmental sustainability and present the Indigenous people's way of life and respect for the land. Students will learn how Indigenous knowledge teaches us about sustainable harvesting and how Mother Earth provides. This knowledge is passed from generation to generation and continues to change as time passes, and new learning occurs.

Resources:

- [Lessons from Mother Earth](#) by Elaine McLeod and Colleen Wood

Inquiry 3: Indigenous Perspectives - Connections To The Land

This inquiry examines Indigenous people's way of life and respect for the land. The activities explore the role of Elders and Knowledge Keepers and the importance of caring for Mother Earth.

Resources:

- Create a [provocation table](#) indoors or outdoors