

Chapter 5: Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Inquiry 3: Indigenous Perspectives - Connections To The Land

- < **Provocations** – *Provocation Table*
- < **Question Generation** – *The answer is... Activity*
- < **Knowledge Building**– *Umbrella Questions, Community Expert*
- < **Determining Understanding** – *Doodling/Sketching*
- < **Pursuing Learning** – *Natural Inquirer, Walking Curriculum*
- < **Consolidation** – *Mapping/Neighbourhood Walk/Think-Pair-Share*
- < **Assessment** – *Poster/Assessment Suggestions*
- < **Take Action** - *Ideas for Taking Action*

Land Acknowledgement

Begin the inquiry by offering a land acknowledgment and discussing [why we acknowledge the land](#). It is essential to teach students that we must recognize the Indigenous land that the [school is on](#) to learn about and from it.

As educators, recognizing that these lands are the traditional territories of Indigenous people and that all Canadians benefit from the land plays an essential role in modelling reconciliatory behaviour with your students. Reciting your school's land acknowledgement helps create a foundation in students for learning about and from Indigenous people whose land we live on. A land acknowledgement reinforces that we benefit from the land, and we all have a responsibility to actively work towards honouring Indigenous Peoples as equal partners in sharing the land. Land acknowledgments are only one step in cultivating greater respect for and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples, with the understanding of the importance of our [Treaty](#) responsibilities.

Chapter 5 Indigenous Ways of Knowing recognizes the importance of Indigenous perspectives and connections to land and place as we work towards reconciliation to address the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, particularly the call to "integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms" (clause 62) and "build student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect" (clause 63).

Sharing stories is a way of sharing knowledge among Indigenous communities. Your classroom materials should be culturally diverse and inclusive of Canada's three distinct Indigenous groups. Here are a few examples of children's books that illustrate the importance of learning from our Elders and include the three Indigenous groups.

[A Day with Yahah](#) by [Nicola I. Campbell](#) (Métis, First Nations Salish), illustrated by [Julie Flett](#) (Cree-Métis)

[Call of the Fiddle](#) by [Wilfred Burton](#) and [Anne Patton](#) illustrated by [Sherry Farrell Racette](#) (Métis)

[The Giving Tree: A Retelling of a Traditional Métis Story](#) by [Leah Dorion](#) (Métis)

[Byron Through the Seasons](#) by [Dene Children](#) (First Nations Dene)

[The Elders are Watching](#) by [David Bouchard](#) and [Roy Henry Vickers](#) (Métis, Ojibway, Anishaabeg)

[Fishing with Grandma](#) by [Maren Vsetula](#) and [Susan Avingaq](#) illustrated by [Charlene Chua](#) (Inuit)

[niwícihâw / I Help](#) by [Caitlin Nicholson](#) (First Nations Cree)

[A Walk on the Tundra](#) by [Rebecca Hainnu](#) and [Anna Ziegler](#) (Inuit), illustrated by [Qin Leng](#)

[Sila and the Land](#) by [Shelby Angalik](#), [Araian Roundpoint](#) and [Lindsay Dupré](#), illustrated by [Halie Finney](#) (First Nations, Métis and Inuit)

Teaching and discussing controversial and sensitive topics is essential because it helps students think in-depth and fosters critical thinking. Many issues involving First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples are controversial (land claims, self-government, blockades, hunting and fishing rights) or sensitive (residential schools, worldview). Building in and addressing controversial or sensitive topics at an early age allows students to explore and question in the safety of the classroom. Teachers may use some of the suggested questions in this inquiry to introduce more sensitive issues regarding the inequalities faced by Indigenous People. Please keep in mind that Acts of Reconciliation and Reclamation are fundamental as we move forward as a country. Our acknowledgement, and inclusion of Indigenous literature and media helps to create an understanding of the history, diversity, and issues that many Indigenous peoples face.

It would be helpful for the learners to understand that traditional/cultural knowledge is passed as an: [I Do, We Do, You Do](#) model. This mentorship model provides the close watching and coaching of the learner by the teacher. This model would aid in learning from mistakes, as well as identifying areas of strength and need for reflection. This helps the person who is learning of how knowledge is passed on, to connect with the sacredness of our relationship with Creator, Mother Earth, the plants, animals, and all other animate and inanimate beings as part of the Creators making. Daniel Sylvestre



A. Provocation 3: [Provocation Table](#)

To hook student interest, use the following provocation to initiate student thinking.

Create a [provocation table](#) indoors or outdoors – Gather an assortment of Indigenous storybooks about Elders, including the three distinct Indigenous groups in Canada. Add natural objects such as sticks, leaves, feathers, pictures of edible plants, soil samples, photos of Elders, grandparents, uncles, aunts, teachers, fruit such as blueberries, strawberries, photos of the changing seasons, animals and cards with the names of the 3 Indigenous groups, First Nations, Métis and Inuit displayed on the table. Choose items that connect students to the land they can touch and explore.

- Allow students the choice to stay at the table or take what they need and engage in their inquiry. Some students will be more inclined to sit at the table and write, draw, record,

and observe, while others may prefer to walk around, explore, and inspect the items on the table.

Discuss with students the importance of the knowledge, information and guidance older people such as Elders, Knowledge Keepers, grandparents, teachers, uncles, aunts, or mentors can offer. Students should be made aware that one must earn the right to become an Elder or Knowledge Keeper in a First Nations community. Not all Elders or Knowledge Keepers are seniors, nor are all old people Elders, and some Elders are younger. Elders and Knowledge Keepers are honoured because they have gifts of insight and understanding and are willing to share their knowledge. Discuss the role Elders or Knowledge Keepers play in Indigenous communities, provide picture books and other media that illustrate the connection Indigenous People have with the land to enhance the learning.



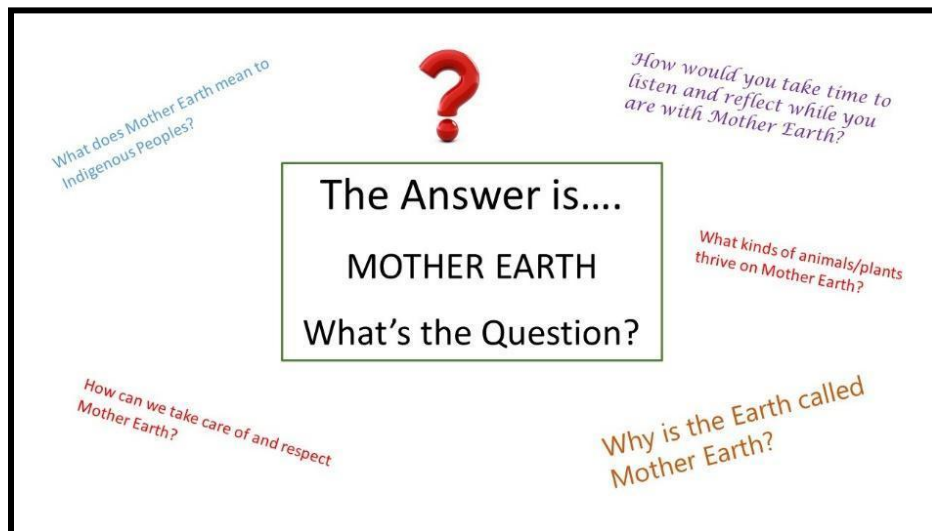
B. Question Generation

At this point in the inquiry, we want to harness students' curiosity and build off of the provocations that have captured their interest by generating meaningful questions to continue to drive the learning process. This section will outline several pathways for question generation depending on the provocation(s) that your class engaged with.

Choose one activity – complete with the students as a group activity

1. The Answer is....activity - Write the answer **Mother Earth** on the board and ask students to write a possible question or brainstorm questions together

- Why is the Earth called Mother Earth?
- What kinds of things live on Mother Earth? What kinds of animals/plants thrive on Mother Earth? What kinds of animals/plants are suffering on Mother Earth?
- What kinds of lessons might we learn from the Earth?
- How can we take care of and respect Mother Earth?
- How would you take time to listen and reflect while you are with Mother Earth?
- What does Mother Earth mean to Indigenous Peoples?



2. The Answer is....activity - Write **Indigenous Ways of Knowing** on the board and ask students to write a possible question or brainstorm questions together. If students are having difficulty generating questions about Indigenous Ways of Knowing, read one book about Elders for each Indigenous group.

- What did you notice about all the items on the table? How are they similar?
- Name three distinct Indigenous groups in Canada?
- How do you connect with the items on the table?
- Do you have an Elder, a grandparent, an uncle, an aunt or a mentor that shares knowledge with you about the land, family traditions, family recipes?
- How do you show respect to your parents or other adults? How do you think respect is shown in Indigenous cultures? Why do people not always respect Indigenous knowledge?

Cultural diversity within the Indigenous people is frequently misinterpreted. There is a misconception that Indigenous People are one group who share the same culture, traditions, language and knowledge. Take the time to identify the three distinct Indigenous groups—First Nations, Metis and Inuit—and their unique connections to the land. Understand that these 3 distinct groups are identified by the Federal Government, that each Indigenous group on Turtle Island is distinct and that they all have their own distinct culture, traditions, language, governance, education, laws, customs, and ways of knowing. A small step students can take in respecting Indigenous people, and their culture is learning the three Indigenous groups and their unique traditions and knowledge.



C. Knowledge Building

At this stage, students may be ready to engage in a group knowledge-building activity. It will encourage students to open their minds to many alternative ways of thinking about the provocations and the ideas generated thus far in the inquiry process.

[Umbrella Questions](#)

- Why are Indigenous peoples known as caretakers of the Earth?
- How can you become a caretaker of the Earth?
- What can you do to take care of the Earth around your home or school?
- What kinds of lessons might we learn from Mother Earth or Indigenous Ways of Knowing?
- How can we as students protect Mother Earth?
- Discuss why it is important to respect the land, the garden. Define "respect" to the class.
- Who do you have in your life that you would consider an Elder?
- What role does your Elder play in your community?

[Community Expert](#)

Deepen the learning experience for the students by inviting an Elder or Knowledge Keeper to share indigenous knowledge. Prepare questions to ask the Elder.

Connect with your school's Indigenous Education department to speak to an Indigenous education specialist and enquire about education or cultural programs available. Also, to inquire about who you can utilize in your classroom/school for the curricular concepts that you feel need connections to Indigenous ways of knowing that will enhance inquiry into environmental sustainability and relationships with Mother Earth.

Observe appropriate protocols and acknowledgements when including elders and knowledge keepers in your school/classroom.

Plan a field trip that fosters a greater understanding of Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

In Indigenous cultures, the Elder is highly regarded as a role model in their community and is considered the keeper of knowledge. A gift must be prepared by the person requesting the visit and offered to the Elder at the time of the request. For more information regarding [Elder Wisdom in the Classroom](#)



D. Determining Understanding

Use responses to inform and guide the learning process. They can provide insight into which concepts need clarity, what many students are already well informed about, and a general direction that many students want to pursue.

Doodling/Sketching strategy.

- Ask students to draw some of the significant people in their lives, including their connection in the community (an Elder, a grandparent, a teacher, a coach). Have students draw out their understanding using the doodle/sketching strategy
- Draw this significant person in their role in the community; how does this person help you?
- What do you know about why it is important to protect the land?
- Why is it important that we all share our knowledge about how we should protect Mother Earth?
- Draw what you have learned about Elders or Indigenous People to protect the land.



E. Pursuing Learning

At this stage, students may begin research to pursue their umbrella questions, or some of the following activities could be integrated into the process to ensure that students have an understanding of foundational climate science. The activities listed below will enrich the understanding of climate change.

Natural Inquirer – Ask students how climate change affects their local environment. Brainstorm with the students the plant's needs such as the sun, water, soil nutrients, pollinators, etc. Discuss how plants are affected by climate change. Discuss how animals and plants are adapting to climate change. Students use interview techniques to research and write about an animal or plant affected by climate change in this activity.

The Walking Curriculum provides the opportunity to take your students outdoors. The suggested walks introduce an indigenous perspective to the learning activities. For example, the What's Under Foot Walk relates the walk to Indigenous Peoples' sense of interconnectedness. There is an understanding of the importance of taking care of the land and it will take care of you. Indigenous knowledge tells of an understanding of life cycles, sustainable harvesting practices and only taking what you need.

(Walking Curriculum by Gillian Judson Indigenous connections are suggestions only – created by Nadine McSpadden & Heidi Wood)

- Discuss how we receive resources from trees.
- Discuss what will happen to other living creatures if we keep destroying forests.
- How can we protect the forest from the harmful effects of climate change and humans?



F. Consolidation

This step is designed to encourage students to integrate and synthesize key ideas. When students make connections and see relationships within and across lessons, this helps them to solidify knowledge and deepen understanding.

Mapping

Walk and explore the neighbourhood and have students use their senses to explore trees and plants. Have students create their own identification system. Draw a map with the students of plants, trees, shrubs in the schoolyard. Have students identify how they can take care of these trees and plants and respect the land.

Think/Pair/Share

Complete a nature scrapbook or collage – have students collect samples from the natural world that remind them of their connection to the land and living things. Do a think/pair/share and allow students to share their scrapbooks and explain why they chose those samples

Include activities to show appreciation when learning from the land. Write a thank-you note to the land, the water, elders, grandparents who teach you things about your culture or nature. Describe how and why you are thankful.

Say a word of thanks. Initiate a quiet moment of gratitude. Students can share individually or as a group.

Write thank-you notes to the Land, the Water, people who teach you things about your culture or nature. Also, take time to be with these plants, by the water, and close to the earth so you can give thanks for the sacrifices they make so we can be here on this earth. (prayers and intentions).



Assessment Ideas

- Poster - Have students create a poster informing how Mother Earth provides for them and what they can do to protect her. Share the posters with other students by posting them in the school hallway.
- Assess students' knowledge and understanding by inviting them to write a text about an Elder in their life
- Invite students to brainstorm the teachings that their elders have shared with them and how these teachings connect us with others, the land, histories, and our ancestors (to show we are accountable and that our decisions that we make affect others and the future generations).
- Assess students thank you letters to verify the learning between Elders and the land

- Gather evidence of learning with observations, thumbs up thumbs down, listening to conversations, anecdotal notes and comments, rough drafts
- Conference with students - conversations can also include written evidence such as journals in which educators can read what students have to say about their learning rather than listening
- Have older students complete a [What I Learned Today](http://efctoassessments.ca) self-assessment (*efctoassessments.ca*)
- Create a collective poster or concept web, depicting what students have learned from the Elders, stories and activities throughout the inquiry
- Have students create a poster informing how Mother Earth provides for them and what they can do to protect her. Share the posters with other students by posting them in the school hallway
- Have students express different ways to act in forests, parks, and other natural areas to show you respect the land in the medium of their choice.



G. Take Action:

Allowing time for students to take action is an essential part of the learning process on climate change, as it empowers students and eases their eco-anxiety. **Ask the students** what they want to do to positively impact climate change. List their ideas and come up with a plan to put their action in place. Remind students that even when things get hard and seem so big they can always do something by taking an action. Their actions will create an impact.

Ideas for Taking Action:

- Get outside and learn the names of the plants and animals in your area with local indigenous and non-indigenous groups. Look for plants that can be used for simple home remedies.
- Have students create a poster informing how Mother Earth provides for them and what they can do to protect her. Share the posters with other students by posting them in the school hallway
- Organize a Cleanup in your schoolyard or nearby park
- Bottled water-free day: educate your school about bottled water and its impact on the environment. Commit to reducing the use of bottled water at school and consider selling reusable water bottles for students to purchase as a fundraiser.
- Waste-free lunches: school lunches are a significant source of waste in schools. Reduce the amount of food and packaging waste heading to the landfill by hosting a waste-free lunch day. Take it a step further and host these days regularly on "Trashless Tuesdays" or "Wasteless Wednesdays".
- Have regular "No-Tech" days. Encourage the understanding of how tech usage has an invisible drain on our electric infrastructure. Also include the need for our reliance upon our local environments, as opposed to a virtual one. This will help our students mental and physical health, to ensure that they can "turn-off" to reflect and recharge without distraction.

- Participate in the [Planting for Change program](#), which helps your school create a schoolyard planting site that acts as a mini-climate change outdoor classroom/lab.
- Students can collect data on the health and yearly growth of their tree plantings as they explore issues surrounding climate change locally and globally.
- [Walk for water](#) - When senior students at Seven Oaks Met School learned that the local community of Shoal Lake 40 First Nation (the very community where most of Winnipeg's drinking water is sourced!) has been under a boil water advisory for over 20 years, they were inspired to take action. They organized speakers and elders from Winnipeg and Shoal Lake to educate the audience about the water crisis. The event raised over \$7,000 for the Shoal Lake 40 First Nation community and spread awareness across the region.
- The [Shaughnessy Medicine Wheel Garden](#) in Winnipeg was designed as a teaching garden, incorporating the medicine wheel's circle teachings, including fire, Water, air, and Earth. The plants and flowers reflect these elements and colours in each quadrant and feature Manitoba's traditional medicines and indigenous plants. Thirteen boulders encircle the garden to represent the 13 moons of the year, and seven cedar benches will represent the seven teachings. Providing an outdoor learning space for students and a natural setting to enjoy the environment for the local community.
- [MMHS Arboretum, Community, Indigenous and Medicinal Plant Gardens](#) Students, staff, community members and partners began planting trees, shrubs and wildflowers at Milliken Mills High School in 1994. Since that time, the arboretum and associated gardens have been enhanced and have flourished. This year we have made every effort to expand the nature of the gardens with an interpretive guide created by students across the curriculum. This, while the physical and plant make-up of the garden continues to evolve. This year, despite the challenges of face-to-face learning and participation, we established the indigenous medicinal plant garden and created a strong cross-departmental partnership in the school, which will see the roots truly become shoots as the project will become stewarded through teamwork.
- The Herb Campbell Public School has created a visual landscape plan for a [Medicine Wheel Garden Outdoor Classroom](#) on our school site, which includes: A centred medicine wheel garden with indigenous plants surrounded by stone seating and an outdoor classroom frame; 9 local food gardens including six raised-bed gardens (for herbs, vegetables, fruit, and edible flowers) and three in-ground gardens (a Three Sisters garden, an indigenous berry garden, and a pumpkin patch); 4 outer garden areas with indigenous plants, shrubs, and trees connected to the four cardinal directions of our centred Medicine Wheel Garden; A wildlife observation/inquiry area with feeders, water supply, and log stump seating; Interpretative learning signs; Pathways connecting to our natural forest, meadow, and wetland habitats and other planting areas.
- Watch [Plant for the Planet](#) and Meet Felix Finkbeiner whose organization has helped plant billions of trees, then create a schoolyard planting site that acts as a mini-climate change outdoor classroom/lab. Plant trees to create an urban tree canopy to absorb CO2 and reduce the need for air conditioning by shading your schoolyard
- [Oak Park Outdoor Indigenous Learning Place](#) created an outdoor Indigenous learning space that allows students, staff, and the community to connect with nature and celebrate Indigenous culture, tradition, and teaching. This project has many stakeholders, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, Indigenous knowledge keepers (academics, community members, Elders), and various divisional staff. To have

all staff and students embrace Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being; to enhance our Indigenous students' engagement and success in school. Having a teaching space in front of our school demonstrates our commitment to our school goal and reconciliation. It will also create endless opportunities for teaching and learning that honours, centres, and celebrates Indigenous culture.

- [Youth Climate Solutions](#) is a guide for making a difference for polar bears and their sea ice home. Visit Polar Bears and the Changing Arctic at [Polar Bears International](#) to learn more about the Arctic Ecosystem and how we can help protect this remarkable part of the planet.

Other Resources

- Visit [Our Canada Project](#) for many more action project ideas! This platform inspires youth to be responsible citizens and share their voice
- [A Toolkit for Schools - Climate Leadership](#) by EcoSchools provides many easy to implement action project suggestions