



**EDUCATOR
GUIDE**

Wìgwàs Chìman

The Birch Bark Canoe



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Wìgwàs Chìman - The Birchbark Canoe

Educator Guide

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About Ottawa Riverkeeper

Ottawa Riverkeeper, a charitable organization, is a champion and collective voice for the Ottawa River watershed, providing leadership and inspiration to protect, promote and improve its ecological health and future.

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Foreward: Action Towards Reconciliation

Ottawa Riverkeeper acknowledges and honours that we operate on the unceded territories of the Anishinābeg Algonquin Nation, whose people are the traditional and ongoing stewards of these lands and waters.

The TRC's Calls to Action in Education (#62 and #63) ensure that all students learn about residential schools, Treaties, and how Indigenous Peoples have shaped Canada, both in the past and today. It ensures that relevant learning resources are created to teach these topics. The *Wigwàs Chimàn* – Birchbark Canoe video and this Educator Guide respectfully address TRC Calls to Action #62 and #63, furthering the journey toward reconciliation.

Introduction: How the Canoe Came to Be

The *Kichi Zībī* (Ottawa River) watershed is deeply interwoven in the Anishinābeg Algonquin's oral history (stories), cultural practices, and way of life. As original stewards of this territory, their kinship relationship with the land and water is reflected in their ongoing interactions with the natural world.

The *wīgwàs chīman*, or traditional birchbark canoe, is one example of the Anishinābeg Algonquin's ingenuity and deep respect for the natural world and its resources.

Kitchi Zībī: the original name in Anishinābemowin (Algonquin language) for what is now known as the Ottawa River.

Starting in October 2023, urban Indigenous youth had the opportunity to participate in traditional canoe-building workshops at Ottawa Riverkeeper's Learning Lab at the NCC River House in Ottawa. The canoe build was led by Anishinābeg Algonquin knowledge keeper Pinock Ish (also known as Pinock Smith) from Kitigan Zībī Anishinābeg First Nation. Indigenous youth from the Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G) gathered to connect to culture and build the *wīgwàs chīman* using traditional knowledge and techniques. The youth involved in the canoe build were from many Indigenous nations communities across Turtle Island, including Inuit, Cree, Ojibwe, Métis, Mi'kmaq and Salteaux.

Turtle Island: For some Indigenous peoples, Turtle Island refers to the continent of North America. The name comes from various Indigenous oral histories that tell stories of a turtle that holds the world on its back. It is used by many Anishinābe and Haudenosaunee peoples in the northeastern part of the continent.

It took nearly two years of field trips to Pinock's workshop, the forests of Kitigan Zībī and building workshops at Ottawa Riverkeeper to complete the canoe. For many of the youth, this was their first time reconnecting to these traditional practices. Under Pinock's guidance, the youth followed the traditional and sustainable methods of harvesting spruce roots and birchbark, splitting cedar for sheathing and ribs, and sealing with pine gum.

On July 1, 2025, Ottawa Riverkeeper and A7G launched the canoe at the NCC River House, alongside community members from Kitigan Zībī and local Indigenous organizations. Youth paddled out on the *Kichi Zībī* and shared their experiences

building the canoe. The canoe is now housed at Ottawa Riverkeeper's Learning Lab at the NCC River House to be used and shared with guests.

The sharing of traditional knowledge between generations was documented in this Educator Guide and accompanying video, highlighting the resurgence of cultural ways and our collective responsibility to protect the *Kichi Zibi* watershed.

Using this Guide and Video

Designed for Grades 5 and up, this Educator Guide and accompanying video can also be adapted for use with Grades 1 to 4. The Guide integrates Anishinābeg Algonquin perspectives and history throughout all subjects and grade levels (see [Curriculum Connections](#) for examples). Educators can tailor the inquiry questions, discussion prompts, and activities to fit their teaching style and student needs.

The Educator Guide is organized into sections to guide your learning. Lesson 1 is recommended as a starting point, or if you only have a short time to work with the video. Educators can choose to use Lessons 2 through 5 based on your curriculum focus, grade level, available time or other considerations. Lessons 2 through 5 are not sequential; they can be taught in any order or combination. The Extension Activities and Resources for Further Learning sections offer more possibilities to supplement the Lesson Plans.

Each Lesson is organized with inquiry questions, discussion prompts, and learning activities with the video as the main resource:

- Ask questions to activate students' background knowledge before watching the video
- **Wonder/Question:** Introduce the guided inquiry question(s) and discussion prompts
- **Discover/Explore:** Watch the video to explore the topic; Document thinking and reflections; Engage in learning activities

- **Reflect:** Share understanding by answering the inquiry question(s); Offer choices and options for students to demonstrate their understanding and skills in ways that align with their strengths
- **Take Action:** Extend learning with additional provocations and learning resources

Together, the Educator Guide and accompanying video serve as starting points for a guided inquiry process that is best explored over several days, or even weeks.

Learning Intentions for this Educator Guide and Video

Educators will:

- Be aware of local [Cultural Protocols](#) to follow when learning from and interacting with Indigenous Peoples.
- Be supported in weaving Anishinābeg Algonquin perspectives and history throughout various subjects – see [Curriculum Connections](#).
- Create a culturally responsive and relevant learning environment, including the option to introduce some [Anishinābemowin Language](#).
- Recognize and value students' knowledge, cultures and experiences.
- Offer choices and options for students to demonstrate their understanding.

Students will:

- Start to learn the histories of this territory, the Anishinābeg Algonquin and the *Kichi Zībī* watershed.
- Develop an understanding of the importance of sharing intergenerational knowledge.
- Appreciate the value of Indigenous land stewardship.
- Recognize how our actions impact the health of the *Kichi Zībī* watershed and therefore the health of all living things within its territory.
- Identify our collective responsibility to build reciprocal relationships with Anishinābeg Algonquin communities, and to protect the *Kichi Zībī* watershed.

Cultural Protocols

Indigenous cultural protocols are rooted in traditional knowledge, worldviews that reflect a profound understanding of the world and guide our interactions with each other as well as all living things. These protocols, which vary by Nation or community, are not just things of the past, they remain vital today and need to be followed.

This Educator Guide and video reflect the traditional knowledge of an Anishinābe Algonquin knowledge keeper from Kitigan Zībī First Nation. It's important to remember that knowledge may vary among other Algonquin communities within the watershed, as well as other First Nations.

Recognize that Indigenous traditional knowledge, ways of knowing, languages, and stories are not universal across all First Nations, Inuit or Métis peoples. Each distinct Nation, community, or Indigenous group possesses its own unique protocols, histories, languages, ceremonies, and governance structures. Therefore, a pan-Indigenous approach often overlooks these vital distinctions.

The cultural information in this Educator Guide and video has been vetted for you to share in a respectful and meaningful way in your classrooms. You may wish to extend your learning and are encouraged to learn more about protocols in your community. Indigenous knowledge and oral histories provide information and insights into the region's history and explain changing environments.

For more information on sharing traditional knowledge, cultural practices, stories and songs, please see [Cultural Protocols for Continued Learning](#).

Indigenous and Western Knowledge Systems

Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall explains *Etuaptmumk*, Two-Eyed Seeing, as respecting diverse ways of knowing and being. This Educator Guide and accompanying video share traditional knowledge from an Anishinābeg Algonquin knowledge keeper of Kitigan Zībī First Nation. They also integrate Western

knowledge from Ottawa Riverkeeper and other sources, fostering a balanced understanding of Two-Eyed Seeing.

This resource shares Anishinābeg Algonquin knowledge and highlights its distinct ways of understanding our relationship with and responsibility for the Ottawa River watershed. Both Indigenous and Western knowledge systems are equally valid, with no need for one to validate the other. By appreciating multiple perspectives, we will have a more complete and meaningful understanding of the world.

Share Your Feedback

This Educator Guide has been designed for use by teachers and educators. We want to know what worked and what didn't so we can continue to improve our educational offerings.

If you use this guide in your classroom or another educational setting, please fill out our short [feedback form](#). By sharing what you found helpful and what could be improved or refined, you'll help us make sure our educator resources are the best they can be.

All responses are kept anonymous. Thanks in advance for your input.

Before Viewing the Video: Setting the Context

"Gbeyiing dzhitaa zhitoot wiya wiigwaas-jiimaan; gchi-nakiwin wi."

"It takes a long time for someone to make a birchbark canoe; that's a big job."

Dr. Mary Ann Naokwegjig-Corbier, co-editor of *Nishnaabemwin: Odawa and Eastern Ojibwe Online Dictionary*

Description of the Video:

This video takes you through the process of building a birchbark canoe, or *wigwàs chìman*, from harvesting materials in the forest to paddling the finished canoe on the *Kichi Zìbì*. This canoe build took over 600 hours and nearly two years to complete.

Indigenous youth worked alongside Anishinābeg Algonquin knowledge keeper Pinock Ish (also known as Pinock Smith) at the Ottawa Riverkeeper Learning Lab. Their learning also extended to [Kitigan Zìbì Anishinābeg First Nation](#), where they took part in traditional and sustainable methods of harvesting natural materials from the forest. At Ottawa Riverkeeper's Learning Lab, they continued the hands-on learning of traditional techniques involving observation, trial and error, conversations and lots of laughter.

Exploring the traditional canoe build video will provide an example of First Nations ingenuity, stewardship, and cultural resurgence. It is intended that through guided inquiry (and viewing the video more than once for different purposes), students and educators will develop a sense of responsibility to learn more about the Anishinābeg Algonquin and ways to care for the *Kichi Zìbì* (Ottawa River) watershed.

Discussion Prompts and "Minds On" Activities

Educators should preview the video's content for appropriateness. While designed for older students (Gr. 5+), it can be adapted for use in Grades 1 to 4 as well. Tailor the inquiry questions, discussion prompts, and activities to best suit student needs and teaching styles.

Before introducing the video, assess students' prior knowledge of:

- the Anishinābeg Algonquin
- the *Kichi Zibi* (Ottawa River)








The discussion prompts and activities in this section will help students develop an understanding about our collective history, and to acknowledge and value Indigenous ways of knowing and doing that have sustained the watershed. Choose to complete all or select from the following to activate prior knowledge.

Encourage students to brainstorm and share their initial ideas or experiences through group discussions. Then students can document their thoughts by writing, drawing in a journal or using any other suitable method.

Activate Prior Knowledge: The Anishinābeg Algonquin

What do you know about the Anishinābeg Algonquin?

You may wish to share one or more of these videos to help introduce the Anishinābeg Algonquin to your class. There are many others available (see [Additional Resources for Student Learning](#)). Please view each video before screening to ensure it is a good fit for your students:

-  The Story of Turtle Island as guarded and shared by Jacob (Mo...
-  Kwey Indigenous Language Series - Anishinàbe Algonquin Nation
-  Art to Heart - Kitigan Zibi Cultural Centre
-  Mamandagokwe (CBC Short Doc)
-  Kitigan Zibi - Art and Culture Camp 2023 (Long version)
-  Algonkin: The Algonquin People - History, Culture & Affiliations - ...
-  Who are the Anishinabek? by Isaac Murdoch, Anishinabek Nation

How long have the Anishinābeg Algonquin lived in the Ottawa River Watershed?

- Anishinābeg stories recall living here since time immemorial
- **Kabeshinàn** is an ancestral meeting place of the Anishinābeg Algonquin. Archeological records provide evidence that Anishinābeg Algonquin (and other First Nations) have been meeting along the Ottawa River for over 8,500 - 12,000 years. Kabeshinàn is the home of 13 recognized pre-contact archaeological sites. The oldest site, where the *Tenàgàdin Zibi* (Gatineau River) meets the *Kichi Zibi* (Ottawa River), is approximately 8000 years old.

- [Anishinàbe Odjibikan](#) is an Anishinābe-led archaeological field school and a joint effort between the communities of Kitigan Zībī Anishinābeg and the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation. The group was founded after a pre-contact stone *mòkòman* (knife) was discovered on Parliament Hill during the rehabilitation of Centre Block in 2019. The field school conducts archaeological excavations within the heart of Anishinābeg Algonquin territory, better known today as the “National Capital Region” which encompasses the present-day Ottawa/Gatineau area.

▶ **Anishinabe Odjibikan – Retelling Anishinabe History through an Anishinabe Al...**

Why did they historically live along the rivers and lakes of the watershed?

- Rivers and lakes and their ecosystems provided many essentials (food, drinking water, transportation)
- Confluence of rivers: the area that is Ottawa/Gatineau today is situated at the confluence of the *Kichi Zībī* (Ottawa River), the Gatineau and Rideau rivers, creating a link for travel and trade between the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River system.
- Anishinābeg Algonquin people controlled the trade along the waterway as it was a primary highway connecting to other waterways.

Who is Pinock Ish? (Also known as Pinock Smith)

- Anishinābe Algonquin knowledge keeper from the Kitigan Zībī Anishinābeg Nation near Maniwaki, Quebec.
- Builds Algonquin birchbark canoes, also toboggans, cradleboards, paddles, drums and other traditional items.

▶ **Pinock Smith | WPBS Weekly: Inside the Stories**

▶ **The Art of Making Snowshoes – Ágimike with the Nagadjitòdjig Akì Gua...**

Activate Prior Knowledge: The Kichi Zībī (Ottawa River) Watershed

Educators may want to use a graphic organizer, like a “Know/Want to Know/Learned” (KWL) chart, for students to record what they already “Know” about the watershed, what they “Want” to know about it, and what they have “Learned” after the activity. Students can complete their KWL charts independently, in pairs or as a group or class. Students can list as many ideas as they can think of, adding to the chart as they learn.

Prompts:

- ***What do you know about The Kichi Zibī watershed?***
- ***How much area does the watershed cover? (square kilometres)***
- ***How many provinces does it border or go through?***
- ***How many municipalities are located in the watershed?***
- ***In what direction does it flow?***
- ***Who lives in the watershed?***
- ***Why is this watershed important?***

Once you have given them time to respond to what they know, you can use Ottawa Riverkeeper's [Watershed Facts](#) page to verify and supplement their knowledge.

Some facts to share might include that the *Kichi Zibī* is:

- A border for what we now call the provinces of Ontario and Quebec,
- A uniting factor for many nations, serving as a traditional highway for not only Anishinābeg Algonquin but also other nations and people as it was the primary transportation route to the western interior.
- An essential source of sustenance (food, drinking water, travel)
- Home to many native species of plants and animals
- A significant part of our shared history with Anishinābeg Algonquin and other Indigenous peoples, and the shaping of Canada.

Explore Ottawa Riverkeeper's [Map Gallery of the Watershed](#).

Options to continue your inquiry and answer the questions above:

- **Guided Exploration:** Educator chooses a map and guides exploration with students.
- **Jigsaw strategy:** In small groups, students explore and become experts of an assigned map. In new groups, consisting of members from each expert group, students share what they have learned about the maps and the Ottawa River Watershed.
- Keep the [interactive puzzle of the map of the Ottawa River watershed](#) as a tool for all students to explore.

Lesson Plans for Viewing the Video

This traditional canoe build video is best watched multiple times across several days, as it will enable students to deepen their understanding of Anishinābeg Algonquin people, culture and knowledge. It will also help them understand our relationship with the *Kichi Zībī* (Ottawa River) watershed, and the importance of protecting it. Multiple viewings will enable students to listen for a variety of purposes and develop their listening skills.

Lesson 1 is designed for the first time your students watch the *Wigwàs Chìman* video. Lessons 2 through 5 provide additional opportunities to work with the video. Depending on your curriculum focus, the grade level of your students, and your available time, you can use all of these lessons, or select the most appropriate ones. Lessons 2 through 5 are not sequential; the content overlaps to reinforce key concepts. You can teach them in the order that works best for you.

Lesson 1: Building a Wigwàs Chìman

First Viewing

Right before you view the video, ask the following question and brainstorm answers together:

What materials from the Kichi Zībī watershed are used in the traditional Anishinābeg Algonquin canoe build?

- Students can answer popcorn style
- Educators and students may even want to be outdoors when asking this; students can look around for clues (especially if the yard has trees)
- Remind students that all answers are accepted, even if they are not correct.

During Viewing

Watching and listening the first time:

Provide the following questions to students as they watch and listen for the answers. Students can use their journals or a question sheet to jot notes:

1. What material is used for the shell of the canoe?
2. What material makes up the ribs, frame and caps?

3. What material makes up the thwarts, components that run horizontally across the width of the canoe, connecting the two sides and keeping it from collapsing inward?
4. What material is used to bind the canoe (holding its parts together for structural integrity)?
5. What material is used to seal the canoe?

After Viewing

Discuss the answers with students

Educators can discuss answers with students or use an interactive tool (e.g., Kahoot, Mentimeter), to assess understanding and engage students in active listening and learning.

Answers:

1. Birchbark is used for the shell of the canoe.
2. Cedar makes up the ribs, frame and caps.
3. Ash makes up the horizontal thwarts that connect the two sides and keep the canoe from collapsing inward.
4. Spruce roots bind the canoe together.
1. Spruce gum makes the resin to seal the canoe.

Additional Questions

Ask further questions to deepen the group's understanding of the traditional methods used to build the canoe. If needed, watch portions or all of the video again to answer the questions.

What is the name for a birch bark canoe in Anishinābemowin, the Algonquin language?

Wìgwàs Chìman. See [Language in the Educator Guide](#) for more examples of Anishinābemowin words and phrases related to the video, plus additional language resources.

How did they make the birch bark flat to work with?

Put boiling water on it.

How did they clean the spruce roots and remove the outer bark?

Once you harvest the spruce roots from the ground, you need to boil the roots to soften them. Then, remove the outer bark by carefully peeling it off. Remove any small twigs or branches and split the roots lengthwise into thin strands for lashing.

Take Action

Extend student learning with any of these additional provocations and learning resources. Consult the Supplemental Resources at the end of this Guide for many more videos, articles, books and opportunities to explore.

- Read the following article from Canadian Geographic (June 26, 2025): [Peeling back the impact of climate change on traditional birch crafts in Kitigan Zibi](#). (By Jacksen Friske, Julia Stratton, Sarah St-Pierre and Trent Misev)

After reading, discuss this quote from the article: “Algonquin artist Pinock Smith is keeping the tradition of building birchbark canoes alive. But, as harvesting birchbark becomes increasingly difficult because of climate change, how will artists like Smith adapt to an uncertain future?”

- What would you like to ask or share with Pinock? What would you like to ask the Indigenous youth who took part in building the canoe? Students can brainstorm questions, create a video reflection/message or write a letter.

Overview of Lessons 2 Through 5

This section provides an overview of Lessons 2 through 5. Click on each heading to jump to the full Lesson Plan.

Lesson 2: Respect

Learn about respecting Anishinābeg Algonquin peoples and their traditional knowledge, including the value of Indigenous land stewardship in caring for the *Kichi Zībī* watershed. The concept of respectful harvesting is introduced.

Lesson 3: Relationship

Understand the Anishinābeg Algonquin's vital relationship with the land, water and all inhabitants of the *Kichi Zībī* (Ottawa River) watershed. Students will explore ways to deepen their own relationships with the Anishinābeg Algonquin community, as well as with the living and nonliving elements of the ecosystem where they live.

Lesson 4: Responsibility

In learning about the Mi'kmaq principle of *Etuaptmumk* (Two-Eyed Seeing), validating both Indigenous and Western knowledge, students will reflect on how human actions impact the health of the river and the watershed. Discuss our shared responsibility to learn about, care for, and protect the *Kichi Zībī* watershed and all of its inhabitants.

Lesson 5: Reciprocity

Explore the concept of reciprocity and how to create reciprocal relationships with Anishinābeg Algonquin or other Indigenous groups, as well as with the land, water and all living things. Consider how reciprocity leads to sustainability in terms of protecting the *Kichi Zībī* (Ottawa River) watershed.

After Viewing the Video

These sections provide ideas and resources to continue your students' learning around the concepts introduced in the video and this Educator Guide. Click on each of the headings below to jump to the full section.

Extension Activities: Project Ideas to Demonstrate Learning

This section provides options for students to showcase their understanding after having watched the video and explored concepts and activities in the Lesson Plans. Activities to demonstrate learning could include a bigger project to advocate for the *Kichi Zibi* (Ottawa River) watershed, or opportunities to learn more about the Anishinābeg Algonquin.

Additional Resources for Student Learning

Explore these complementary resources to deepen student learning and understanding.

Educator Learning Resources

Explore these resources to deepen your own understanding as an educator.

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- **Ottawa Community Foundation**



- **TD Friends of the Environment Foundation**



- **Leacross Foundation**



Lesson 2: Respect

In this lesson, students and educators will learn about respecting Anishinābeg Algonquin peoples and valuing their traditional knowledge, including their ways of knowing and doing. We will also learn about respecting all living things on the *Kichi Zibi* (Ottawa River) watershed. Students will discover why sharing knowledge across generations is incredibly important. They will also begin to understand the value of Indigenous land stewardship in caring for the *Kichi Zibi* watershed.

Minds On

Before watching the video, ask students the following questions to activate prior knowledge:

- **What is Respect?** What does respect look like, sound like, feel like?
- **What innovations or inventions are attributed to the Anishinābeg Algonquin or other First Nations?**
 - Answers might include canoes, baskets, maple syrup, and Wampum Belts.

Some of the answers might be attributed to other First Nations or Indigenous Groups; it is important to recognize those Nations or Indigenous Groups and explain that traditional knowledge can vary between communities.

Wonder/Question

Introduce the guided inquiry question(s) and discussion prompts that will be used as you watch the video.

- **Describe respectful harvesting and why it is important.**
 - The youth learn about nurturing respect and caring for the land, as each material is carefully selected, harvested and then prepared with respect and gratitude.
 - By leaving the area as undisturbed as possible, it minimizes environmental impact. Respectful harvesting ensures that we maintain a harmonious relationship so the resources will be sustained for future generations.
 - Draw attention to how, in the video, Pinock harvests roots from a tree.

Discover/Explore

Watch the video to explore the following question(s). Students can document their answers in the way that best suits their learning needs.

- **Why do you think birch, cedar, spruce, ash and pine have been and are still used today by Anishinābeg Algonquin?**
 - Watch the video closely as Pinock gives examples of other uses for these materials.

Post-video Discussion:

- A brief class discussion to share their answers before continuing their research
- Working individually, with a partner or in groups, students will research other uses for birch, cedar, spruce, and ash. (e.g., birch moose call, birch baskets, medicine)
- Students can research and display their answers in a spider bubble chart, a slide show or a booklet.

Reflect

Students share their understanding by responding to the following inquiry question(s). This can be done through group discussion (Think-Pair-Share; Jigsaw, World Café) or journal entries.

- **REVISIT THE QUESTION: Why is respectful harvesting important?**
- **How do you respect the *Kichi Zībī* watershed?**
- **Discuss sustainability vs stewardship**
 - Sustainability is the goal, and stewardship is the method of achieving it.
- **How are stewardship and cultural resurgence connected?**

Take Action

Extend student learning with any of these additional provocations and learning resources.

Explore the concept of respectful harvesting through Indigenous art and sculptures.

Birchbark Basket – By Simon Brascoupe YouTube (2016, Oct 23)

The sculpture was designed with the input of Kitigan Zībī Anishinābeg elders. The gathering basket sculpture symbolizes the deep respect that Algonquin communities hold for their territory. It pays respect to their traditional hunter-gatherer ways and to the territory by embodying the vital relationship between family, women, and the sacred elements of the land, water, plants, and animals. The steel structure is painted to imitate birchbark, a key material used in baskets. The images, depicting traditional stories, are in red as reminders of the pigments used long ago.

Appreciation activity:

Watch the short video. Then ask the following discussion prompts:

- What do we learn about Anishinābeg Algonquin communities and their connection to the land through this piece of art?
- What does this artwork teach us about the past?
- If this sculpture had a soundscape, what might it sound like?
- If you could ask the artists a question, what would you ask them?
- Who do you think this artwork was created for? Why do you say that?

Explore other public Indigenous artwork in the Kichi Zībī watershed, such as the installations at the Pimisi LRT Station in Ottawa. These works celebrate Anishinābeg Algonquin culture and pay respect to the Anishinābeg Algonquin relationship to the land, the eel, and the birch, reminding us of the fragile ecosystem we inhabit.

Invite a knowledge keeper or community partner into the classroom to create appropriate cultural items or discuss their cultural significance.

Connect with the Indigenous Education Lead/Advisor at your school board, local Indigenous agencies or Indigenous communities (e.g., [Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition](#), [Kitigan Zībī Anishinābeg](#) or [Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn](#)), as these relationships are already established. They will guide you on protocols, appropriate honorarium or giving tobacco and/or

gifts for the Elder, Traditional knowledge keeper, Helper or Community Partner.

Lesson 3: Relationship

In this section, students and educators will explore their relationship with the Anishinābeg Algonquin community, and with all living beings in the *Kichi Zibi* (Ottawa River) watershed. Through watching the video of the traditional canoe build, they will understand the Anishinābeg Algonquin's vital relationship with the land, water and the larger community. The video demonstrates how traditional knowledge keepers are sharing knowledge with the youth as they learn from each other.

Minds On

Discuss one or all of the following questions to activate students' background knowledge before watching the video

- **What Indigenous cultural events, activities or celebrations do you attend on Anishinābeg Algonquin territory? Why is it important to attend?** (e.g., Pow wows, Summer Solstice, Round Dances)
- **This traditional canoe build demonstrates the intelligence and ingenuity of the Anishinābeg Algonquin to transform natural material into items or tools they need. What other inventions or innovations originated from First Nations, Métis or Inuit?** (e.g., snow goggles, diapers, the game of lacrosse, technologies like the abacus, suspension bridges, birchbark baskets, and medicine)

Wonder/Question

Introduce the guided inquiry question(s) and discussion prompts.

The video not only captured the intricate canoe-building process but also offered Indigenous youth a unique opportunity for critical thinking as they engaged in hands-on learning while connecting with their culture.

- **Why is it important to connect to your culture? To your language?**
- **What skills, other than the traditional canoe build, did the youth learn through this process?** (e.g., language, stewardship, respect for knowledge, pride in their ancestors)

Discover/Explore

Watch the video to explore the question(s) and ask students to document their thinking and reflections.

- **How do Pinock and the youth show their relationship with the natural materials used for building and the canoe itself?**

Some answers may include:

- Taking pride in their work
- Respectful harvesting - Using only what they need
- Expressing gratitude for the Land and the water
- Knowing that the canoe will return to the land because it is made with natural materials

Reflect

Share understanding by answering the inquiry question(s)

- Offer choices and options for students to demonstrate their understanding and skills in ways that align with their strengths

Share this quote by Potawatomi botanist and author Robin Wall Kimmerer, from her book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*:

"Most people don't really see plants or understand plants or what they give us, so my act of reciprocity is, having been shown plants as gifts, as intelligences other than our own, as these amazing, creative beings... they can photosynthesize, that still blows my mind!"

Connect what you have learned so far in the video with the quote from Potawatomi botanist and author, Robin Wall Kimmerer. How can you build a relationship with the land? With the water?

Encourage students to learn about the interconnections between various species in the *Kichi Zībī* watershed. You might ask: What other living things rely on the birch?

Birch and cedar trees teach us about generosity because of all they provide (baskets, medicine...).

Take Action

Extend student learning with any of these additional provocations and learning resources.

Connect with the land, around the school yard and in your community, and observe all living things around you.

- Do you know the names of the plants, animals, and waterways?
- Start learning about and building relationships with all living things.
- Create a tree/plant journal, including characteristics and pictures to help you identify them (field guides are very useful).
- Go on a walk to locate the trees in your school yard, local park or backyard
- Visit them regularly to observe the changes and the other living things that depend on the trees.

Classify local plants and animals into categories “flyers, crawlers, swimmers, four-leggeds” (you can use the [Ottawa iNaturalist webpage](#) as a guide). How are those animals and plants connected to each other and to you?

Algonquin Language Learning (Kitigan Zībī Anishinābeg)

[Anishinābemowin words and phrases related to the Earth and Earth Day](#)

Learn the Algonquin names for animals:

- [Algonquin Language - Lesson #19 - Animals](#)
- [Algonquin Language - Lesson #21 - Animals part 2](#)
- [Algonquin Language - Lesson #22 - Animals part 3](#)

Use the following Field Guides/Resources to identify animals, plants, endangered and invasive species in the area:

- [City of Ottawa - information on native plants in English](#) and [French](#)
- [The disappearance of the eel](#)
- [THE HICKORYNUT - the one-legged sand surfer](#)
- [Community-Based Monitoring INVASIVE SPECIES MONITORING](#)
- [Species at Risk Guide](#) (Northern Ontario)
- [Ontario spiders](#)
- [NCC Blog: “It’s important to leave what you find in the Capital”](#)

Lesson 4: Responsibility

In this section, students and educators will explore the concept of responsibility by learning the history of this territory, the Anishinābeg Algonquin and the *Kichi Zībī* (Ottawa River) watershed. They will build understanding of some of the worldviews and sustainable land stewardship practices of the Anishinābeg Algonquin.

In learning about the Mi'kmaq principle of *Etuaptmumk* (Two-Eyed Seeing), validating both Indigenous and Western knowledge, students will reflect on how human actions impact the health of the water and therefore the health of all living things. This will foster a responsibility to learn, care for, and protect the water and the entire *Kichi Zībī* watershed.

Minds On

Ask questions to activate students' background knowledge

- **Why is it our responsibility to learn about the history, the worldviews and the sustainable practices of the Anishinābeg Algonquin?**

Wonder/Question

Introduce the guided inquiry question(s) and discussion prompts before watching the video

- **What is *Etuaptmumk* or Two-Eyed Seeing?**
 - Option to read the picture book **Walking Together with the [Educator Guide](#)**. Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall explains that *Etuaptmumk*, Two-Eyed Seeing, is respecting diverse ways of knowing and being. We can integrate Indigenous ecological knowledge with scientific research, sharing, collaborating and co-learning between individuals and communities with different knowledge systems. We understand that one system is not more important than the other.
- **How does the following quote from Elder Albert Marshall connect to the birchbark canoe build video? What does the quote mean to you?**

"Two-Eyed Seeing refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing and from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing and to using both of

these eyes together” ([Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, Journal of environmental studies and sciences](#), 2012, p.335)

- **Why is it important to value both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing?**

Discover/Explore

Watch the video to explore the question(s) and ask students to document their thinking and reflections.

- **How do Pinock and the youth show care for the materials? Why does that matter?**

Some answers may include:

- Only harvesting what they need
- Take their time when splitting cedar, let the cedar show you
- Gratitude, laughter and love put into the making of the canoe

Reflect

Share understanding by answering the inquiry question(s):

- **How does the health of the *Kichi Zibi* watershed impact your health?**

Students might identify the negative impact humans have on the Ottawa River watershed and, in turn, the ecosystems. They might explain that all living things are connected to the environment and to water. We rely on the river for our drinking water, for recreation, and as habitat for fish and other foods that we eat.

- **What are some of the threats facing the *Kichi Zibi* watershed?**

- Dams affect wildlife’s ability to move throughout the river and watershed.
- Pollutants – eg, road salt, microplastics, PFAS (“forever chemicals”).
- Nutrient pollution – from agriculture, sewage overflows.
- Invasive species – affects the ability of native species to thrive.

Take Action

Extend student learning with any of these additional provocations and learning resources.

Learn more about the history of this territory, as well as the worldviews and sustainable land stewardship practices of other Indigenous Groups.

[Exploring Art as Inspiration For Change Based on Artwork by Isaac Murdoch](#)

- Bombgiizhik Isaac Murdoch (with audio clips from Isaac).
- Explore the artwork, learn about roles and responsibilities to all living things and take action.

[Akikodjiwan](#) from the [NAC Indigenous Cities Stories](#)

- Akikodjiwan, also known as Chaudière Falls, is an Algonquin ceremonial site.
- Listen to storyteller Craig Commanda's interpretation of Algonquin Elder Albert Dumont's poem [Akikodjiwan](#), translated into Anishinābemowin, about the sacred Akikodjiwan waterfalls (Chaudière Falls).

[The origin of the canoe, a Cree perspective, shared by Wilfred Buck](#), YouTube Honouring Our Bundles (2021)

- Wilfred Buck is from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation of Northern Manitoba.
 - His teachings and traditional knowledge are rooted in his nation and territory and may be similar to or differ from Anishinābe and other First Nations' perspectives.

Lesson 5: Reciprocity

In this section, students and educators will explore the concept of reciprocity, to create better relationships with Anishinābeg Algonquin or other Indigenous groups as well as the land, water and all living things. They will develop an understanding of how reciprocity relates to sustainability in relation to protecting the *Kichi Zibi* (Ottawa River) watershed.

One way the Anishinābeg Algonquin and other First Nations communities give thanks and express gratitude is by offering *semaa* (tobacco) before, or after, harvesting any living thing.

Semaa: (or tobacco) is known as the first medicine that the Creator gave to the Anishinābe people. Semaa is offered as a way to show thanks and respect, or to request help.

To learn more about Semaa please refer to these resources:

- <https://mushkiki.com/programs-services/the-four-sacred-medicines/>
- [Anishinābe Teachings Of The Four Sacred Medicines](#)

Minds On

Ask questions or read a passage to activate students' background knowledge before watching the video.

- **Discuss the term reciprocity (if you haven't already)**
- **What does Living in Reciprocity with All Our Relations mean?**
 - "All Our Relations" is a worldview and a way of life that guides relationships with each other and the world around them. This includes a kinship to all living things, extending beyond our human family to include all living things (e.g., water, moon, sun, plants, animals, rocks...). Treat everything and everyone with respect and care.
- Learn about the different Treaty relationships, the original treaty (natural law), Treaties between Nations (before European arrival), and Treaties with the Crown

Wonder/Question

Introduce the guided inquiry question(s) and discussion prompts.

- **What evidence of environmental or ecological impacts can be observed in the traditional canoe build video?**

Answers might include:

- It is difficult to harvest high-quality materials. Pinock can't find what he needs (Pinock at 1:16).
- The impact one generation can have on future generations.
- Birch trees are not big enough anymore (or do not exist); used to be able to have one sheet of birchbark for a 14-foot canoe, now Pinock needs two sheets and to splice or sew them together.
- Many of the plants our ancestors used are gone.
- Respectfully harvesting and gathering materials is more difficult due to climate change.

Discover/Explore

Watch the video to explore the question(s) and ask students to document their thinking and reflections.

- **Near the beginning of the video (start @1:16), Pinock says that when he walks in the forest to harvest high-quality materials, he can't find what he needs.**
 - Why is that?
 - How does this impact the passing of or teaching of traditional knowledge?

Educators may wish to stop the video at this time to discuss.

Option to read the book: [“Treaty Words: For As Long As the Rivers Flow” By Aimée Craft](#). (Ottawa Riverkeeper has 20 copies of this book available to borrow for free through our [Learning Library](#).)

Summary: The first treaty was made between the earth and the sky. It was an agreement to work together. We build all of our treaties on that original treaty.

Consult the [“Treaty Words” online Educator Guide](#) for discussion prompts.

Reflect

Share understanding by answering the inquiry question(s):

- **How can you create a better relationship with Anishinābeg Algonquin or other Indigenous groups?**
- **How do the Anishinābeg Algonquin create and maintain relationships with all living things, including the watershed?**

Students might share:

- The worldview that we belong to the land. We are all connected.
- Concepts of Kin, our All our Relations - we are all related.
- Anishinābeg Algonquin used and still use sustainable harvesting, only taking what is needed.

The *Kichi Zibi* watershed provides not only for us but also for all living things.

- **Are humans in a reciprocal relationship with the natural world?**
- **Do humans take only what is needed? (Reflect on waste)**
- **Are you in a reciprocal relationship with the natural world?**
 - Reflect on the ways in which you live in reciprocity with the water
 - Are there any changes you wish to make to foster more reciprocity?
- **What environmental changes or human actions specifically impact the cultural practices of Indigenous communities?**

Think-Pair-Share:

- Students discuss ideas with a partner before sharing with the larger group. (answers might include overconsumption of food, fast fashion, pollution from cars, salting roads, forest fires and unsustainable forestry practices)

Take Action

The following action tasks will give students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of a reciprocal relationship with all living things along the *Kichi Zibi*

watershed, as well as how knowing this will lead to caring for and protecting this ecosystem.

Student Choice:

- **Create a list of daily actions that foster a reciprocal relationship with the territory.** (e.g., picking up garbage, not wasting water, growing a garden, learning the name of a new bird/plant/animal, walking in your neighbourhood, and noticing seasonal changes.)

- **Create a community web that displays reciprocity with water, more specifically with the *Kichi Zībī*. This community web will demonstrate our interdependence on the *Kichi Zībī* and explore how a healthy water system is needed.**
 - This community web can be created as a classroom art activity
 - Students can also use multimedia to create this web
 - Students can explain through their web what actions they will take to protect their community web of life

- **Students can explain their relationship with the *Kichi Zībī* through written text, oral presentation, visual art, or other medium of their choice.**

Extension Activities: Project Ideas to Demonstrate Learning

This section provides options for students to showcase their understanding after having watched the video and explored concepts and activities in the Lesson Plans. Activities to demonstrate learning could include a bigger project to advocate for the *Kichi Zibi* (Ottawa River) watershed, or opportunities to learn more about the Anishinābeg Algonquin.

Mapping Activities (Geography, Science, Social Studies, Visual Arts)

Students demonstrate their relationship with the *Kichi Zibi* watershed.

Inspired by [\(re\)Mapping Place by Barry Ace](#)

- Using a map of the watershed, create ways to acknowledge your relationship with the land and water. See Ottawa Riverkeeper's online [Map Gallery](#) for a variety of watershed maps.
- Create a map (individual or group mural) with the Anishinābeg Algonquin names for the rivers and significant places along the watershed around Ottawa.
- Create a map with the water, trees and animals in your community, in your school yard or in your back yard.

Advocate

- For better waste management practices and stricter regulations to protect the *Kichi Zibi* from potential contamination.
- For policies and solutions that [prevent radioactive waste](#) from coming into contact with water.
- Raise awareness by organizing an exhibit for your school community art or talent show with student creations (songs, art, photography, etc.).

Explore

[Akikodjiwan](#) from the [NAC Indigenous Cities Stories](#)

- Akikodjiwan, also known as Chaudière Falls, is an Algonquin ceremonial site
- Listen to storyteller Craig Commanda's interpretation of Algonquin Elder Albert Dumont's poem [Akikodjiwan](#), translated into Anishinābemowin [sacred Akikodjiwan waterfalls](#) (Chaudière Falls). Read using audio stories and songs.

[Algonquin Wayfinding Symbol](#) – Simon Brascoupe (video)

- Choose one animal from the video and explore how the *Kichi Zibi* watershed plays a vital role in its life.
 - Why is this animal important to the Anishinābeg Algonquin?
 - What impact do humans have on the animal you chose?

[Kiwēki Point](#) – This public site in downtown Ottawa is situated on the traditional unceded territory of the Anishinābeg Algonquin Nation, overlooking the *Kichi Zibi*. Since time immemorial, the Anishinābeg Algonquin have cared for the land of what many now call the “Ottawa River Valley.” The low-lying shores of the *Kichi Zibi* were ideal places for seasonal encampments along one of Canada’s original water-based highways.

[Ottawa Riverkeeper’s Learning Library](#)

- Access Videos, Digital and Physical resources, including the [Watershed Map Puzzle](#).

Literacy

Read “Treaty Words: For As Long As The Rivers Flow” by Aimée Craft, published by Annick Press.

- [Educator Guide for Treaty Words](#) by Kareena Butler includes lesson plans, pre-reading activities, discussion questions, and extension activities.
- Ottawa Riverkeeper has a class set of the “Treaty Words” book to lend to classrooms through our [Learning Library](#).

Personalize your Land Acknowledgement

With the new information you have learned about the Anishinābeg Algonquin and the *Kichi Zibi* watershed through the birchbark canoe build video, describe your relationship to this territory and incorporate the action you will take to advocate for Indigenous communities and the Ottawa River watershed.

- [Starting from the Heart *Going Beyond A Land Acknowledgement](#) – Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario Resource
- [University of Ottawa’s Indigenous Affirmation](#) – developed with members of the local Indigenous community. Includes audio of local elders reading the affirmation in Anishinābemowin.

Procedural writing activity

- Create a how-to guide or step-by-step instructions for the canoe build.
- Write poetry or song lyrics to demonstrate your gratitude for water.

Visual Arts

- Create art, using water colour, expressing your relationship with and gratitude for water, for the canoe.
- Photograph water in your everyday life (can also include plants and other living things).
- Compose a soundscape to accompany your poem, pictures or art.
- Dance to represent the movement of water in the watershed during each season.
- For all of the above activities, brainstorm ideas or themes with students (e.g., the importance of water, gratitude for water, your relationship with water, show water in a variety of ways).
- Learn these water songs:
 - [Wishita](#) by Bev Williamson (Anishinābe) (from the [ONWA Virtual Drum Book](#))
 - [Niibi](#) by Doreen Day (Ojibwe-Anishinabe) from Bois Forte Bois Reservation in northern Minnesota (from the [ONWA Virtual Drum Book](#))
 - [Algonquin Water Song](#) from Kitigan Zībī
 - [Water Song](#) by the Akwasasne Women Singers
**refer to the song protocol in the Cultural Protocol section*

Additional Resources for Student Learning

Explore these complementary resources to deepen student learning and understanding around the concepts introduced in this Educator Guide.

Digital Resources

[Biinaagami](#) and [Interactive Map](#)

Resource to learn about healthy relationships between wildlife, people and place in the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence watershed. Students will have the opportunity to trace the steps of an Anishinābe Water Walker. See how the *Kichi Zibi* watershed is connected.

<https://www.biinaagami.org/giant-floor-map/giant-floor-map-augmented-reality>

[Birchbark Basket – By Simon Brascoupé](#) YouTube (2016, Oct 23)

The birchbark basket sculpture was designed with the input of Kitigan Zibi Anishinābeg elders. It represents family, women, animals, and canoes and their connection to the land and water.

[Exploring Art as Inspiration For Change Based on Artwork by Isaac Murdoch](#)

Bombgiizhik Isaac Murdoch (with audio clips from Isaac)

Explore the artwork, learn about roles and responsibilities to all living things and take action.

[Ontario Native Women's Association \(ONWA\) Virtual Drum Book](#)

- [Wishita](#) by Bev Williamson (Anishinābe)
- [Niibi](#) (pronounced Nee-bee) by Doreen Day (Ojibwe–Anishinabe) from Bois Forte Bois Reservation in northern Minnesota
**refer to the song protocol in the Cultural Protocol section*

[Ottawa Riverkeeper Invasive Species Quiz](#)

Learn to identify invasive species in the Ontario regions of the *Kichi Zibi* watershed. Understand how these invasive species harm the health of the watershed and acquire the skills to identify and report them to improve the health of the waters.

[The disappearance of the eel](#) (Eel/anguille is Pimisi – Look at the art at the Ottawa Pimisi LRT station)

[The origin of the canoe, a Cree perspective, shared by Wilfred Buck](#) YouTube Honouring Our Bundles (2021)

- Wilfred Buck is from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation of Northern Manitoba.
 - His teachings and traditional knowledge are rooted in his nation and territory and may be similar to or differ from Anishinābe and other First Nations' perspectives.

[The power of a tree: why birch and its bark are so important to important to Anishinābe culture | Wiigwaasabak](#) YouTube The Nature of Things Mar 19, 2021

In this 22-minute video, Anishinābe women share how the birch tree is the tree of life and a teacher for Anishinābe. They discuss how the bark, the medicine and the traditional innovations that come from the birch have transformed their lives.

**Appropriate for Gr. 4-8, you know the students in your classroom the best*

Community Experiences/Resources

Field trips or classroom guests

Ottawa Riverkeeper

- [Book a River School Workshop](#) - available at your school, or at our Learning Lab at the NCC River House.
- [Borrow educational materials from our Learning Library](#)

[Kitigan Zibi Cultural Centre](#)

[The Algonquin Way Cultural Centre](#)

[Reconciling History Tours with A7G](#)

[Experiences - Mādahòkì Farm](#)

Educator Learning Resources

Explore these additional resources to deepen your own understanding as an educator. Please share with others.

"Anishinabe Odjibikan – Retelling Anishinabe History through an Anishinabe Algonquin Lens." *YouTube*, uploaded by National Trust for Canada / Fiducie nationale du Canada, 9 Dec. 2022,

https://youtu.be/9gdJ62vWr-4?si=m2pEqOeWWHciO_9U

Archipel Research & Consulting. (2021). *Where Sussex Meets the Kichi-Sibi*. Global Centre for Pluralism.

<https://www.pluralism.ca/where-sussex-meets-the-kichi-sibi/> (2021)

The Global Centre for Pluralism commissioned historical research from an Indigenous perspective on the river and lands surrounding our Ottawa headquarters.

Andrews, B. (2023, April 2). A global movement is granting rivers legal personhood. Could the Gatineau River be next? *CBC News*.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/gatineau-river-legal-person-1.6794975>

Fennario, T. (2024, October 18). Algonquins say proposed nuclear waste site near Ottawa River prioritizes money over safety. *APTN News*.

<https://www.aptnnews.ca/investigates/algonquins-say-proposed-nuclear-waste-site-near-ottawa-prioritizes-money-over-safety/>

First Nations, Métis & Inuit Education Association of Ontario. (2021). *Before engaging with Indigenous knowledge, consider...* FNMIEAO.

https://fnmieao.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ik_guidelines.pdf

Friske, J., Stratton, J., St-Pierre, S., & Misev, T. (2025, June 26). Peeling back the impact of climate change on traditional birch crafts in Kitigan Zībī. *Canadian Geographic*. Retrieved from

<https://www.biinaagami.org/peeling-back-the-impact-of-climate-change-on-traditional-birch-crafts-in-kitigan-Zibī>

Hein, Amber. "Connecting to the Land and Algonquin History: Amber Hein." *Come Wander - Ontario's Highlands*, 23 June 2022, <https://comewander.ca/story/3-day-indigenous-trapping-experience>.

Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. (2020, October 4). *Why cultural appropriation is disrespectful*. ICT Inc. <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/why-cultural-appropriation-is-disrespectful>

Kirkness, V. J. and R. Barnhardt (2001). *First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R's - Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility. Knowledge Across Cultures: A Contribution to Dialogue Among Civilizations* <https://opl.educ.ubc.ca/values/>

Ontario Arts Council. (2016, October 23). *Indigenous Arts Protocols*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6VuHJi6O0Q> and [English transcript](#)

Marshall, A. D. (Elder Dr.), & Zimanyi, L. (2023, June 6). *(Re)connecting to nature through Etuaptmumk/Two-Eyed Seeing* [Webinar]. The Outdoor Learning Store. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/lokmgiskGw>

Plenty Canada. (2024, April 4). *American Eel Symposium*. Plenty Canada. <https://www.plentycanada.com/news/american-eel-symposium>

American Eel Symposium hosted by the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne.

Williams, J. (2020, December 2). *Exploring Indigenous Knowledge Systems through Story in the Elementary Classroom* [Video]. YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNmy0_H3OTU

Bombjiizhik Isaac Murdoch explains the meaning and importance of stories to the Anishinabek. The webinar is 54 minutes.

Curriculum Connections

As Ottawa Riverkeeper is located in Ontario, alongside the *Kichi Zibi*, this Educator Guide was initially developed with Ontario Curriculum expectations in mind. To maintain relevance for all educators, other provincial curricula and future changes, we've outlined general learning ideas, subject areas and strands rather than specific expectations. Students can apply the skills they acquire in one subject to various other contexts and subjects.

Supporting Indigenous Education

"It is essential that learning activities and resources used to support Indigenous education are authentic and accurate and do not perpetuate culturally and historically inaccurate ideas and understandings. It is important for educators and schools to select resources that represent the uniqueness of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories, perspectives, and worldviews authentically and respectfully. It is also important to select resources that reflect local Indigenous communities [...]"

(Cross-Curricular and Integrated Learning, p.32 Ontario Social Studies, History, and Geography 2023)

Arts

- Using the [creative process](#) and [critical analysis process](#) to express and communicate ideas and concepts by connecting their current understanding in art forms (dance, drama, music, and the visual arts), including media/multimedia forms.

Geography

- Explore where people live and why they live there, and the impact of human settlement and land use on the environment.
- What makes a community sustainable? Why is it important that communities be sustainable? What can happen if a community is not sustainable?
- Use new types of maps and graphs.

Health and Physical Education (Environmental Education)

- Understand our fundamental connections to each other and to the world around us through our relationship to food, water, energy, air, and land, and our interaction with all living things.
- Some First Nations, Métis, and Inuit medicines come from the land, and are considered a gift.
- Demonstrate an understanding of factors that contribute to their personal enjoyment.
- Being active: “I like outdoor activities, where I feel connected to the land. I can breathe fresh air, listen to the water ripple, and hear the birds.”

Language

[E.g., Strand C. Comprehension: Understanding and Responding to Texts (Gr. 1-8)]

- Apply foundational knowledge and skills to understand a variety of texts, including digital and media texts, by creators with diverse identities, perspectives, and experiences, and demonstrate an understanding of the patterns, features, and elements of style associated with various text forms and genres.
- Students will evaluate how images, graphics, and visual design create, communicate, and contribute to meaning in a variety of texts.

Language

Gr 7, 8 and 9

- Evaluate the use of the various forms, conventions, and techniques of digital and media texts, consider the impact on the audience, and apply this understanding when analyzing and creating texts.
- Apply language and literacy skills in cross-curricular and integrated learning, and demonstrate an understanding of, and make connections to, diverse voices, experiences, perspectives, histories, and contributions, including those of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals, communities, groups, and nations.
- Analyze themes explored in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures to demonstrate an understanding of the varied identities, perspectives, relationships, legacies, truths, and ways of knowing, being, and doing.

- Apply listening, speaking, and non-verbal communication skills and strategies to understand and communicate meaning in formal and informal contexts and for various purposes and audiences.
- Connect, compare, and contrast the ideas expressed in texts and their knowledge and lived experiences, the ideas in other texts, and the world around them.

Language

[E.g., NBE3U Gr. 11 English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices]

- Centring local and regionally relevant voices and building inquiry skills to explore the brilliance and ingenuity of Anishinābeg Algonquin.
- Draft and revise their writing, using a variety of literary, informational, and graphic forms and stylistic elements appropriate for the purpose and audience.
- Identify various contributions of individuals, organizations, and initiatives, including technological initiatives, to the development of contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit media production, analyzing the social and cultural influence of those contributions and the role of media literacy.

Math and STEM Education

- Develop transferable skills that are needed to meet the demands of today's global economy and society.
- Learning to integrate and apply concepts, processes, and ways of thinking associated with these subjects to design solutions to real-world problems.
- Develop economical and sustainable solutions to technical and complex societal problems to meet human needs.

Sciences

Students learn about the importance of water as they practise and promote environmental stewardship in their communities. Fundamental Concepts: Systems and Interactions, Sustainability and Stewardship, Change and Continuity.

[E.g., Strand B. Life Systems - Needs and Characteristics of Living Things]

- Identify the basic needs of living things and describe the characteristics of a healthy environment, including water.

- Describe the basic needs of plants, including the need for water, and identify environmental conditions that may threaten plant survival.

[E.g., Strand E – Earth and Space Systems]

- Explore various aspects of water systems and their importance both locally and globally.
- Stewardship and sustainability of Earth’s resources.
- Assess ways the actions of humans impact the quality of water, taking various perspectives into consideration, including those of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, and create plans to protect these resources.
- Use water responsibly.
- Demonstrate an understanding of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge and values about water.
- Demonstrate an understanding of a watershed, and explain its importance to water management and planning. (Gr.8)

Social Studies/History Gr. K – 8

[E.g., Inquiry: Ways of Life and Relationships with the Environment]

- Use the inquiry process to investigate ways of life and relationships with the environment in a few early societies (to 1500), including at least one First Nation and one Inuit society, with an emphasis on aspects of the interrelationship between the environment and life in those societies.
- Explore how people in the past related to the environment and to each other.
- Analyze and construct simple maps as part of their investigations into places that are significant to them or to their family; into the interrelationship between people and significant natural and built features in their community.
- Demonstrate an understanding that it is important to treat other people and the environment with respect.
- What impact do human activities and different land uses have on the environment? How can we reduce their impact?

Social Sciences and Humanities Gr. 9 – 12

- Understand our fundamental connections to each other and to the world around us through our relationship with water and our interaction with all living things.
- Practising and promoting environmental stewardship, both in the school and in the community.
- Assess the equity and social justice implications of major environmental issues (e.g., the privatization of water; the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources; the impact of global warming, and policies to reduce global warming).

Cultural Protocols for Continued Learning

When sharing traditional knowledge, cultural practices, songs, and stories, it's vital to follow established protocols by community. It's important to remember that these protocols differ across various Indigenous Nations and communities, which is precisely why building relationships with them is vital. Be responsible and authentically highlight Indigenous knowledge without tokenizing, minimizing, imposing personal interpretations and avoiding stereotypes.

- [Before Engaging With Indigenous Knowledge Consider...](#) from First Nations, Métis & Inuit Education Association of Ontario. (2021)

A common worldview among Indigenous communities is their profound, interconnected relationship with all living things, specific to their distinct geographical locations. Focus on highlighting the rich Indigenous knowledge systems and valuing traditional knowledge, moving beyond simplistic and romanticized labels like 'protectors' or 'saviours.'

Build Relationships

Building trusting relationships with local Indigenous communities demonstrates a long-term commitment that requires patience and dedication. Prioritizing Indigenous voices, content, knowledge, and ways of knowing, even when these perspectives differ from our own, fosters genuine understanding and respect. This lays the groundwork for meaningful and lasting partnerships.

Inviting Indigenous Guests

Engage with trusted community members, rather than relying on websites, marketing or cold calls. This is important to ensure legitimate traditional knowledge is shared. Connect with the Indigenous Lead at your school board, local Indigenous agencies or Indigenous communities (e.g., [Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition](#), [Kitigan Zibi Anishinābeg](#) or [Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn](#)), as these relationships are already established. They will guide you on protocols, appropriate honorarium or giving tobacco and/or gifts for the Elder, Traditional knowledge keeper, Helper or Community Partner.

Cultural Items

If wanting to create cultural items like birchbark baskets, hand drums, rattles, or beaded works, it's essential to do so in collaboration with an Elder, Traditional Knowledge Keeper, Helper or Community Partner. They will provide invaluable insight into the historical, cultural, and spiritual significance and purpose of these items. Connect with the Indigenous Lead at your school board or local Indigenous agencies, as these relationships are already established and can give you proper protocol for inviting them.

Don't assume that it's okay to "borrow" aspects from another culture. In many Indigenous cultures, strict and ancient protocols dictate who can sing certain songs, perform certain dances, tell certain stories. We don't just take from one another.

ictinc.ca

Song Protocol

When using Indigenous songs, it is important to share the song's name, the person who introduced the song to the community and their Nation (if known).

For example: In class today, we will be listening to and learning a river song called Wishita by Anishinābe Bev Williamson. I am not sure what First Nation community she is from. We have been given permission to learn and sing this song to help the water.


It is vital to understand the appropriate context and reason for each song. Some songs are sacred and reserved for ceremonial use, making them unsuitable for a general classroom setting unless presented directly by a Knowledge or Song Holder from the relevant community. Additionally, be mindful of specific cultural protocols, such as not singing songs about Bears during the winter months, respecting their hibernation period.

Oral Tradition – Stories

Indigenous Worldviews have been conveyed through stories for thousands of years, reflecting distinct ways of thinking, knowing and perceiving the world around us and our place within it. These stories represent historical, geographical and scientific accounts and records. They are used as entertainment, communicating important warnings or delivering lessons. Understand that they have multiple layers of meaning, and we should not impose personal interpretations.

Listen to and read a variety of stories from different First Nations, Inuit, and Métis cultures. Always identify the specific Indigenous group or Nation each story comes from. Focus on stories from your territory before exploring others. Value these stories as essential expressions of Indigenous Worldviews, not whether these stories are real or fiction. As Indigenous stories hold deep significance, avoid asking students to rewrite them or create their own. Focus instead on respectful engagement through discussions, drawing connections, and expressing appreciation through art or poetry.

Indigenous Visual Art

Appreciate and celebrate First Nations, Inuit and Métis artists in your classroom. Include Indigenous art, as text, in your lessons to teach a variety of subjects. Understand  [Indigenous Arts Protocols](#) or [Indigenous Arts Protocols](#). As most Indigenous artwork is rooted in culture, traditional teachings and ways of knowing, **avoid recreating or copying in the style of an Indigenous artist.** It is not appropriate to have non-Indigenous art teachers teach students to copy an Indigenous work. It would be preferable to use the opportunity to talk about what is appropriation, and learn the roots of that Indigenous art style, rather than copy it. Learn about the artist and where they are from. Use elements of the [creative process](#) integrated with the [critical analysis process](#) from the curriculum to avoid appropriation. Discuss the Fundamental Concepts, elements and principles to guide your exploration.

- ★ *For more information on specific protocols in your region, connect with the Indigenous Education Lead at your school board or your local Indigenous Friendship Centre.*

Language in the Educator Guide

As Language reflects culture and worldviews, take the time to learn the following Anishinābemowin words and place names. The table provides a phonetic English pronunciation. For accuracy, listen to and practice with a fluent Algonquin speaker or video.

Please note words, spelling, and meanings can differ across communities. Vocabulary pronunciation can also vary slightly between dialects and individual speakers.

Anishinābemowin words for key terms in this guide and video:

| English | Anishinābemowin | Pronunciation |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Birch | wìgwàs | wee gwas |
| birchbark Canoe | wìgwàs chìman | wee-gwas chee-mun |
| Cedar | kìjik | kee - jik' kìjik (Listen at 0:08 of video) |
| Eel | Pimizi | Pih - mee - see |
| Ottawa River ("Great River") | Kichi Zìbī | Kih-chee Zee-bee Listen- Kichi Zìbī |
| Pine | shingwàk | Shingwàk Listen |
| Spruce | minahig | mee-nah-hig |

Algonquin names for the rivers and specific locations in the Kichi Zìbī watershed surrounding Ottawa:

| English | Anishinābemowin | Pronunciation |
|-----------------|-----------------|---|
| Chaudière Falls | Akikodjiwan | Ah-kee-KOD-jee-wan Listen: Akikodjiwan |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Sacred ceremonial site for Anishinābeg Algonquin people. | Meaning "the place of glare rock" or "pipe bowl falls" | |
| Ottawa | Adàwe Ottawa is connected to the word adàwe meaning "to trade". | Kwey Indigenous Language Series - Adawe |
| Ottawa River ("Great River") | Kichi Zībī Meaning "The Wedged River" | Kih-chee Zee-bee Kwey Indigenous Language Series - Kichi Zībī |
| Gatineau River | Tenàgàdin Zībī Meaning "rippled river" | Teh-nah-gah-DEEN Zee-bee |
| Madawaska River | Madaoueska Zībī Meaning "River with rapids at its mouth" | Ma-da-wass-ka Zee-bee |
| Rideau River The section of the Ottawa River near Parliament Hill in Ottawa | Pasapkwedjiwanong Zībī Meaning "where the river bends" or "the river that turns back on itself," | Pa-sap-kwe-dji-wa-nong Zee-bee |

Language Resources:

Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation

- [Omamiwinini Pimadjiwovin – The Algonquin Way Cultural Centre](#)

Kitigan Zībī Anishinābeg Algonquin First Nation.

- [Learning Anishinābemowin \(Algonquin\)](#)

Learning basic Algonquin language words and sentences with Algonquin Pocket Dictionary, YouTube Channel, Sound Clips and Videos

- [Adjodamò Interactive Video](#)
Storybook that allows you to follow, listen and learn Algonquin.
- [Kwey – Indigenous Language Project](#). Algonquin College. (2025)
Anita Tenasco, Director, Indigenous Initiatives, is sharing vocabulary, phrases and information to familiarize learners with traditional Anishinābe Algonquin language.