

## Part One

### *Learning and the Relationship with the Land*

#### **Summary**

This section provides an opportunity for cross-curricular teaching of both prescribed learning standards for Grade 5 Language Arts and Social Studies. It is adaptable to your lesson organization and time frame, but the key component is the first activity using the picture book *Shi-shi-etko*.

The traditional and enduring relationship First Nations people have with the land is central to this section. It provides a contrast for understanding much of what was lost in the Indian Residential School experience. This includes loss of language and culture.

#### **Essential Questions**

- In what ways are First Nations cultures connected with the land and the natural environment?
- In traditional First Nations communities, how was education integrated into daily life?

#### **Key Concepts**

- Education was integrated into daily, ceremonial and spiritual realms of life.
- Education focussed on respect and the relationship with the ancestors and the land.
- Knowledge, skills and beliefs were passed on from generation to generation.

#### **Resources**

##### **Literature:**

*Neekna and Chemai* by Jeanette Armstrong

*Shi-shi-etko* by Nicola Campbell

*The Secret of the Dance*, Andrea Spalding and Alfred Scow

Additional books you may consider using are *Fatty Legs* and *When I Was Eight* by Margaret Pokiak-Fenton and Christy Jordan-Fenton

##### **Blackline Masters**

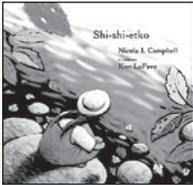
Blackline Master 1 Sort and Predict, page 21

Blackline Master 2 Learning from Generation to Generation, page 22

## Activity 1.1

### Remembering the Land

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#### Resources

- *Shi-shi-etko* by Nicola Campbell
- Video: Shi-shi-etko
- Blackline Master 1 Sort and Predict, page 21

#### Vocabulary

fragrant  
gesturing  
kinnikinnick  
patchwork quilt  
rhythmic  
sinew  
sprig  
tanned deer hide

#### Summary

Introduce the unit with the story of *Shi-shi-etko*. A young girl spends the last three days before leaving home for school with different members of her family who teach her about the significance of the land. She collects various plants to put in a memory bag, to hold her remembrances of the land while she is away. Remembering the past is a major theme in the story of Indian Residential Schools, and this element of the story serves to introduce it in a poetic way.

The type of school she is going away to is not specifically mentioned, but there are some clues that can help students create questions about where she is going and why.

The story is rich with sensory imagery, and so offers opportunities for an English Language Arts study of the use of language.

#### Key Concepts

- Respect for the land is at the centre of First Nations culture and education.
- In traditional First Nations culture, education was a family matter.
- A writers' use of sensory imagery enhances the meaning of a story

#### Key Questions

- In what ways can people show respect for the land?
- What are different ways that we learn?
- Why is remembering the past important for understanding the present and the future?
- How do writers use the five senses to bring meaning to their stories?

#### Background

- The presence of family is very significant in this story. In the three days before her departure, Shi-shi-etko's mother, father and grandmother take her out on the land to reinforce their teachings. Mother takes her to the creek and teaches her to remember the land and the ways of her people. Father takes her out in his canoe and also tells her to always remember the land – the trees, mountains and water; he also sings her grandfather's paddle song. Her Yayah (grandmother) takes her into the forest where they gather plants to put into a memory bag.
- An important theme to be found in the story is the strength of the elders, and the community's desire for survival by holding on to their culture and beliefs.
- The number four is significant in many Aboriginal cultures, and in some is considered sacred. Many aspects of the natural world can be divided into four divisions, such as the four seasons and the four directions.

- When Shi-shi-etko leaves her memory bag at the base of the big fir tree, she also leaves a pinch of tobacco. Students may not be aware that tobacco is a traditional offering used by many First Nations people. It has several sacred uses, including giving thanks to the land, expressed by Shi-shi-etko as Grandfather Tree.

## ***Suggested Activities***

### 1. Reading Shi-shi-etko

#### *Reading Strategies*

- Before reading you may want to begin with a sort and predict activity using the word list on Blackline Master 1.
- As a purpose for listening while you read the book aloud, ask students to listen to find out what the family members teach Shi-shi-etko.

#### *Video*

A 12 minute video of Shi-shi-etko was produced in 2009. You may be able to borrow it locally. It is available for purchase at [http://movingimages.ca/store/products.php?shi\\_shi\\_etko](http://movingimages.ca/store/products.php?shi_shi_etko). (Note: there is also a 6 minute segment of the video available on Youtube.)

### 2. Sensory Images

Ask students to recall some of the descriptions of different senses Shi-shi-etko experiences. You may want to re-read the book for students to listen for the sensory images, or have them work in groups with copies of the book to construct word lists of the five senses.

- Lead a discussion about how the use of sensory images adds to our appreciation and understanding of the story.
- Use a writing activity to allow students to use imagery, such as
  - given a topic, write a word or phrase for each of the five senses that describes it (e.g swimming in a pool; recess time; cooking dinner)

### 3. Memory Bag

Lead a discussion about Shi-shi-etko's memory bag. Ask students:

- Why did she put different plants in her memory bag?
- What plants that grow in their neighbourhood could be put in their own memory bag?
- If possible, take the class for a walk in a park or wooded area to observe and record different types of plants growing in the area. It wouldn't be respectful to the land if the whole class gathered samples as Shi-shi-etko did. Instead, students can record the plants by taking digital photos or sketching them.
  - You may want to tie in the sensory imagery activity with this walk. Ask students to observe examples of the five senses.

### 4. Questions From Clues in the Book

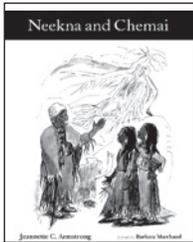
Lead a discussion about what kind of school Shi-shi-etko is going to. Ask students, "What do we know about Shi-shi-etko's school from the story?"

- Have students work in pairs or small groups to create questions about the school Shi-shi-etko is going to.
- Share the questions with the whole class and write them on a chart to post in the classroom.

## Activity 1.2

### Learning from Generation to Generation

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#### Summary

Students continue to learn about the importance of intergenerational learning and the relationship with the land through the book *Neekna and Chemai* by Jeanette Armstrong. Students also have the opportunity to extract information from textual material.

#### Key Concepts

- Respect for the land is at the centre of First Nations culture and education.
- In traditional First Nations culture, education was a family matter.

#### Key Questions

- In what ways can people show respect for the land?
- What do we learn from our families?
- How do people pass on cultural knowledge from generation to generation?

#### Resources

- *Neekna and Chemai* by Jeanette Armstrong
- Blackline Master 2, Learning from Generation to Generation, page 22

#### Background

- Neekna and Chemai are two young girls growing up in the Okanagan Valley before contact. The friends learn about their people through interactions with elders. The story is told in the first person, from Neekna's point of view. It is organized around the seasonal cycles, focussing on traditional activities carried out in each season.
- See page 75 for a summary of each season of the book.

#### Suggested Activities

##### 1. Learning in your Family

Lead a discussion about how and what we learn at home. Ask students:

- Is everything you know learned at school?
- What kinds of things do we learn at home?
- Who are your teachers?

Have students consider different types of knowledge, skills and beliefs they learn at home.

- Students work together in pairs or groups to list different things they learn at home in their families.
- Students may then classify the things they learn in to groups (*e.g. skills, behaviours, beliefs, morals.*)
- Ask students to share ways that they learn cultural knowledge today through families and community. (This is meant to include students of all cultural backgrounds in your class.)

- Where appropriate, discuss the importance of learning and using languages other than English.

## 2. Reading *Neekna and Chemai*

### *Reading Strategies*

- Read the story *Neekna and Chemai* to the class. Ask students to listen for ways that the girls in the story were taught in the days before contact.
- Some possible reading activities to use with *Neekna and Chemai* include:
  - Jigsaw: In groups students could read about one of the four seasons, and share what they learned about things the girls were taught.
  - Concept map: Students could diagram the relationships between learning and the land.
  - Reader’s Theatre: Students could write short scripts based on one of the seasons, focussing on what the girls were learning.

## 3. Reading Textual Material

Use the “Learning from Generation to Generation” article (Blackline Master 2) to learn more about traditional First Nations education.

- Read the article aloud to the class. or have them read silently.
- Ask students individually to use the mapping strategy to graphically represent the information.
- Ask students to compare the two types of texts – fiction and nonfiction – they have read to learn about learning from generation to generation.
  - What ideas were present in both texts?
  - How were they different?

## Activity 1.3

### Local Relationship with the Land

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#### Resources

- *A Traveller's Guide to Aboriginal BC* by Cheryl Coull

- Information about local First Nations, such as pictures and stories about locally significant physical features.

#### Summary

Students reflect on the importance of the traditional and contemporary relationship First Nations people have with the land.

#### Key Concepts

- First Nations people's connections to their lands are deeply rooted.
- First Nations people remember their connections to the land through important landmarks and names.

#### Key Questions

- What are some ways First Nations people remember their relationship with the land?
- In what ways can people show respect for the land?

#### Background

- There is a great diversity of First Nations people and societies in British Columbia. For example, many different languages are spoken, and people traditionally lived in different types of houses. Different First Nations have varying protocols about land usage and respect.
- Each unique culture is based very much on the territories where the people lived. For many groups, salmon is the main harvest, and the areas where they are caught were, and still are, important community gathering areas. Some people traditionally lived very mobile lives as they travelled with their main resources, such as caribou. Many First Nations also cultivated additional resources, such as camas bulbs or clam beds.
- Locate information about your local region. There may be locally developed curriculum materials available. A starting point for understanding local communities is *A Traveller's Guide to Aboriginal BC* by Cheryl Coull (Whitecap 1996). For each cultural group in BC, a brief history, local landmarks and individual bands and communities are detailed. Note, however, that it was published in 1996 and some information may need to be updated.
- You may be able to find locally developed posters showing traditional land use studies.
- Additional resources that have origin stories of landmarks and physical features include:
  - *People of the Land*. Theytus Books 2009.
  - *Yamohza and His Beaver Wife (Yamoózha Eyits'ò Wets'èkeé Tsá)*. Theytus Books, 2007.

## ***Suggested Activities***

### 1. Landmarks

Investigate prominent landmarks in the local region, or farther afield in British Columbia. These are physical features on the landscape that have an ancient explanation. Often they have an origin story or legend associated with them.

- Start with the example of the Rock Mother mentioned in *Neekna and Chemai*. How does this show the Okanagan peoples connection to the land?
- Find out if there are any similar physical features in your local areas that have origin stories connected with them. Show pictures, or possibly take a field trip to visit it. (Some are noted in *A Traveller's Guide to Aboriginal BC*.)
- Read traditional narratives and legends that explain the origin of landmarks. See, for example, *People of the Land: Legends of the Four Host First Nations*, Theytus Books 2009.

### 2. Connecting to the Land Through Names

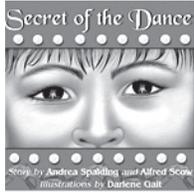
How do First Nations people remember their relationship with the land through names?

- Investigate how names connect people with the land. Some areas of inquiry are:
  - Words that First Nations people use to refer to themselves in their own language. For example, Gitksan means “People of the Skeena River,” Sekani means “People on the Rocks,” Nuu-chah-nulth means “all along the mountains” and Pascheenaht means “people of the sea foam.”
  - Place names. Find sources that show traditional place names for the local area. Many communities have developed maps or lists of traditional place names. Some are being reintroduced as the official name. For example in 2010, the traditional name Haida Gwaii (meaning Islands of the People) officially replaced Queen Charlotte Islands. Kuper Island, where an Indian Residential School was located (the setting for *No Time to Say Goodbye*) has been officially changed to Penelakut Island.
  - Street Names. In many First Nations communities, streets have been given names in the local language.
  - Traditional and hereditary names often have a connection with the land and territories as well.
- Invite an Elder or knowledgeable community member to the class to discuss the connections between the land and landmarks, place names and personal names.
- Have students collect a variety of place names names from as many sources as possible.
- As an art activity, students could illustrate some of the names and make a class display.

## Activity 1.4

### The Secret of the Dance

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#### Summary

This story tells of a time when ceremonial dancing and the wearing of regalia and masks were forbidden by Canadian law. It is based on Judge Alfred Scow's boyhood story. A young boy witnesses the last secret potlatch of his community before the threat of imprisonment caused them to stop dancing. It reinforces the ceremonial and spiritual aspects of traditional education, and the relationship with the land. As well, it introduces the Indian agent and the restrictive laws of the Indian Act that were imposed on First Nations people.

#### Resources

- *The Secret of the Dance* by Andrea Spalding and Alfred Scow

#### Key Concepts

- Ceremonial and spiritual teachings are part of traditional education for First Nations cultures.
- Government regulations damaged First Nations cultural practices.

#### Key Questions

- In what ways did First Nations people respond to government regulations?

#### Vocabulary

defied  
regalia  
authorities

#### Background

- In the past the Canadian government passed a special law that controlled the lives of First Nations called the Indian Act. It only applied to Aboriginal people, not to the rest of Canadians. The laws included sending children away to school, banning dancing, feasting and wearing traditional regalia, and restricting their land to small parcels called reserves.
- The laws against potlatching, dancing and wearing regalia are gone.
- Judge Alfred Scow was the first Aboriginal Judge in Canada.
- More background information for this story can be found at the publisher's website, [www.orcabooks.ca](http://www.orcabooks.ca)
- Additional resources on the topic of feasts and potlatches include:
  - *Potlatch, A Tsimshian Celebration*. Diane Hoyt Goldsmith, 1997.
  - *Potlatch*, by Dawn Adams, Pacific Educational Press, 1985.

#### Suggested Activities

##### 1. Reading *The Secret of the Dance*

Here are some suggestions for questions and discussion points as you share the book with the class.

- Show the first page of the story. What information can students tell from the photograph of the boy and his dog? (*The story probably takes place in 1935, about 80 years ago. The setting is on the ocean or a large lake. The boy has a traditional name, Watl'Kina.*)

- Read the sentence under the picture. Discuss the meaning of defy. Ask students to predict how his family defied the government.
- As you read the story, point out the illustrations that show the connections with the land, particularly the Northwest Coast representations of the animals that emerge out of the landscape.
- Talk about ways that stories were told. (*Told when children restless on the journey; special family stories enacted in the dances with masks.*)
- Why was the boy allowed to stay and watch the dancers?

## 2. Indian Agent

Ask students who they think the Indian Agent was.

- What clues are there to his role in the First Nations community?
- In what ways did the people respond to the Indian Agent?

## 3. Keeping Memories

Recall with students Shi-Shi-etko's memory bag. How was this similar to the action of the people in this story who stored away their regalia?

- Ask students the question: How are stories like memory bags?  
Refer to Activity 1.3 and the stories that were told and dramatized in this book.
- Ask the question: How is learning about the past like opening a memory bag?
- Have students create a Memory Bag to store memories of their learnings in this unit. (See Part One Assessment Activity, Number 2.) Depending on time and resources, this could be an Art activity sewing a fabric bag, or students could bring a bag from home. Alternatively, a manila envelope could be used.

## Part One Assessment Activities

### ***1. Education and Daily Life***

Ask students to support this statement:

*In traditional First Nations cultures, education was integrated into daily life.*

Ask them to find evidence in the books and other materials they have studied.

The responses may take a variety of formats:

- written response
- oral presentation
- picture book
- poster

### ***2. Memory Bag***

Ask students to identify four important ideas they remember or learned from this section. Create objects that represent these ideas to them. They may be pictures of an object, or an actual item. For example, the connection to the land might be represented by a small colourful stone.

- Students should be able to explain the significance of their objects.
- Ask students to put these items in the memory bag created in Activity 1-4.