



amō ōsapotawan

# AMŌ'S Sapotawan

BOOK TWO



By William Dumas  
Illustrated by Rhian Brynjolson



**Teacher's Guide**

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Please visit [sixseasonsproject.ca](http://sixseasonsproject.ca)

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# Contents

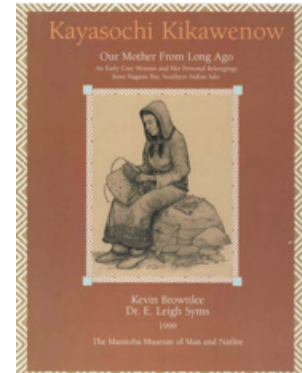
|   |           |   |            |
|---|-----------|---|------------|
| <b>Foreword</b>   | <b>4</b>  | <b>Module 3: Askihkwak: Pottery</b>                 | <b>57</b>  |
| Amō's Sapotawan and the Six Seasons Book Series                   | 4         | The Asiniskaw It̄hiniwak Creation Story and Pottery | 58         |
| The Story Behind the Story  | 4         | Food Gathering                                      | 60         |
| Who Are the Rocky Cree?   | 6         | Wapatanask (Clay): Pottery is Made of Earth         | 63         |
| When and Where Does Amō's Story Take Place?                       | 7         | Rocky Cree Technology and Tools                     | 65         |
| Six Seasons of Rocky Cree   | 8         | Pottery Design and Style                            | 66         |
| Using the Teacher's Guide   | 8         | Module 3 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources    | 70         |
| Modules and Suggested Learning Activities                         | 9         | <b>Module 4: Kotawān and Kapisitihk: Fire</b>       | <b>85</b>  |
| Indigenous Pedagogy   | 10        | Campfires   | 86         |
| Revitalizing the Rocky Cree Language                              | 12        | Forest Fires  | 89         |
| <i>Amō's Sapotawan</i> Picture Book App                           | 12        | Climate Change and Traditional Knowledge            | 93         |
| Maps  | 14        | Module 4 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources    | 95         |
| <b>Module 1: P̄itokiwin ('entering in'): Introducing the Book</b> | <b>17</b> | <b>Cree Glossary</b>                                | <b>105</b> |
| Reading a Picture Book  | 18        | <b>Appendix</b>                                     | <b>109</b> |
| Placing the Book in Context                                       | 19        | Curriculum Connections                              | 109        |
| Discovering Picture Book Design                                   | 19        |   |            |
| Exploring Rocky Cree Language                                     | 20        |   |            |
| Introducing the Characters  | 20        |   |            |
| Introducing the Big Ideas   | 22        |   |            |
| Creating a Sapotawan Journal                                      | 22        |   |            |
| Module 1 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources                  | 24        |   |            |
| <b>Module 2: Sapotawana: Rites of Passage</b>                     | <b>39</b> |   |            |
| Rites of Passage  | 40        |   |            |
| Gifts & Responsibilities  | 42        |   |            |
| Ceremony  | 44        |   |            |
| Celebration   | 46        |   |            |
| Module 2 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources                  | 48        |   |            |

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# Foreword

## Amō's Sapotawan and the Six Seasons Book Series

*Amō's Sapotawan* (2022) is part of the Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Īthiniwak historical picture book series. There are six books planned for the series, one for each of the six seasons of the asiniskaw ĩthiniwak (Rocky Cree People). Set in the mid-1600s, the books follow the daily seasonal lives of one family group of asiniskaw ĩthiniwak who live in northern Manitoba's Rocky Cree territory along the Churchill River. Accompanied by a picture book app and teacher's guide, the award-winning *Pisim Finds Her Miskanaw* is the first book in the series. It was first published in 2013 and reprinted in 2020 with new maps, updated Cree spellings, and an expanded glossary (Portage & Main Press). *Amō's Sapotawan* is the second book in the series. It is set in nĭpin, or midsummer.



A central goal of the Six Seasons project is to create easily accessible resources for middle-years teachers so they can use these important materials in the classroom. Although it belongs to a series, *Amō's Sapotawan* can stand alone, both as a story and as a teaching resource. We welcome teachers to explore this book and its app in their classrooms, using this guide to help them. Of course, *Amō's Sapotawan* can also be taught in conjunction with *Pisim Finds Her Miskanaw*. Whichever approach teachers take, we hope the series and its resources offer educators an exciting and productive way to teach historically and culturally accurate materials on a specific Indigenous group – the asiniskaw ĩthiniwak – to their students.

## The Story Behind the Story

### The Archaeology

The Six Seasons series was inspired by an important archaeological find in northern Manitoba. In 1993, the remains of a Rocky Cree woman who lived in the mid-seventeenth century were found at Nagami Bay (Onākaāmiĥk) by two South Indian Lake fishermen, Bruce Tait and Bob Moose. Nagami Bay is on the west shore of Southern Indian Lake, Manitoba. The next year, community members from South Indian Lake and archaeologists from the Manitoba Museum worked together to recover the find in a manner respecting and honouring Rocky Cree spirituality and traditions. The story of this woman's life was pieced together based on her remains and her possessions and was captured in the book *Kayasochi Kikawenow, Our Mother from Long Ago* by archaeologists Kevin Brownlee and E. Leigh Syms.

👉 [See Map: The Nagami Bay Site](#)

After *Kayasochi Kikawenow* “shared her teachings” – the words used by archaeologist, Kevin Brownlee, a member of Kinosao Sipi Cree Nation – she was respectfully brought home for reburial in South Indian Lake in 1997.

Rocky Cree Elders told the archaeologists that artifacts found at ancient campsites, like the one where Kayasochi Kikawenow was found, are gifts from the ancestors. The Elders also believe that the woman from Nagami Bay allowed herself to be found so that today's Rocky Cree might gain a better understanding of their heritage.

## Author William Dumas

Author William Dumas is Rocky Cree from South Indian Lake. He is a long-time educator and a renowned storyteller. He always wanted the story of Kayasochi Kikawenow and her community to be accessible to Rocky Cree young people so they could learn about their own history and to all young people so they too could learn about the Rocky Cree. He decided historically based picture books would be the right form. He uses a number of sources, including his own experiences of his Rocky Cree culture and territory and the oral stories he has heard and told throughout his life, to tell his stories. Other people, including Rocky Cree Knowledge Keepers and community members and researchers from The University of Winnipeg, help him to draw from other source materials, including from oral history, linguistics, and archaeology.

### TEACHER TIP

South Indian Lake refers to the community, while Southern Indian Lake refers to the lake. South Indian Lake is on the southeast shore of Southern Indian Lake and has a current population of approximately 800 people. It is the main settlement of O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation. Southern Indian Lake is a vast expanse of water and is the fourth largest lake in Manitoba.

More information on Kayasochi Kikawenow can be found in the Foreword to the Teacher's Guide for *Pisim Finds Her Miskanaw*, which can be downloaded for free at: <https://sixseasonsproject.ca/files/Final-Teachers-Guide.pdf>.

In *Pisim Finds Her Miskanaw*, Dumas imagines what Kayasochi Kikawenow was like and what she was doing as a 13-year-old girl. He calls this girl Pisim. Amō is Pisim's younger sister, and as the title of the second book highlights, she is the main character of *Amō's Sapotawan*. In *Amō's Sapotawan*, Amō must decide which gift/talent, or mithikowisiwin, she will seek to master because her sapotawan ceremony is fast approaching. One of the most important asiniskaw ithiniwak tools for survival is sapotawana: the rites of passage that acknowledge each person as they attain certain skill levels at particular stages of life. Sapotawana encourage people to discover their gifts, learn about their responsibilities, and find their life's purpose. Amō has always loved making things, and through her encounter with a bear and a forest fire and with the help of her family, she comes to understand that making askihkwak, clay pots, is right for her.

## Historical Fiction

Historical fiction is a literary genre that presents a story set in the past, typically during a significant period in time or era. The era and setting are the crux of historical fiction. Because the author is writing about a particular time in history, the information about the time period and locale must be accurate and authentic. Authors must know how people lived, what clothes they wore, what they ate, how they organized their family lives, what their cultures and beliefs were, and what material goods were a common part of their lives.

Historical fiction may include fictional characters, well-known historical figures, or a mixture of the two. Characters often deal with actual events that occurred but are depicted in a way that has not been fully recorded in history. Oftentimes, the time period complements a story's narrative, forming a

framework and background for the characters' lives. Sometimes, historical fiction can be for the most part true, but the names of people and places have been in some way altered. The genre can be applied to many types of narratives, including novels, plays, film, television, video games, graphic novels, and, like with the Six Seasons series picture books.

Historical fiction brings the past alive in ways that differ from history or social studies. Based in a wealth of historical and cultural details, Dumas creates memorable characters – including what they think and feel and how they interact with each other – so that students today can understand the complexity of asiniskaw ithiniwak life ways in the seventeenth century. The hope is also to bring some of these life ways into the present as part of the cultural resurgence of Rocky Cree culture and language.

## Who Are the Rocky Cree?

The asiniskaw ithiniwak, or Rocky Cree, are a distinct group of Cree-speaking people living in the northern boreal forest of western Canada. In Manitoba, they share borders with the Dene to the north, the Muskego Cree to the south and the Inuit to the east. The Rocky Cree speak the *th* dialect of the Cree language, which differentiates it from the *y* dialect of the Plains Cree and the *n* dialect of the Muskego (Swampy) Cree. They are the most northern Cree in western Canada. The traditional territory of the Rocky Cree is found in the boreal forest located within the Canadian Shield. The boreal forest region is a mix of deciduous and coniferous forest – white and black spruce, jackpine, trembling aspen, and some birch – marshes, rocks, and muskeg extending from British Columbia through Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and eastward to Ontario and Quebec.

The Misinipi, or Churchill River, is the lifeline that connects the Rocky Cree people within their territory from Manitoba to northern Alberta. It has been home to the Rocky Cree since time immemorial. Drawing upon their knowledge of the environment, they carefully planned their movements to hunt, trap, and fish following the seasons. Possessing an intimate knowledge of their physical geography, they have survived by living off the land.

All of the necessities of life were provided for the Rocky Cree in their territory. Alongside the rich forests are berry-producing shrubs like saskatoon, pincherry, raspberry, blueberry, and gooseberry. Moose and woodland caribou are found throughout the area, as are bear, wolf, wolverine, lynx, fox, marten, weasel, otter, and fisher. Though totally self-sufficient in their territory, they traded for items not found locally.

The Rocky Cree maintained their livelihood by collecting nature's bounty during their seasonal travels. Their primary transportation was the birch bark canoe and they travelled their territory via countless waterways. Trading was an integral part of Rocky Cree culture and trade networks were well-established prior to contact with Europeans. Camps were set up on the trade routes near waterways with tents constructed around a main fire. Because families were on the move most of the time, women in childbirth often had their babies on the trail.

### TEACHER TIP

Asiniskaw means 'plentiful rock/rocky' and ithiniwak means 'human beings/the people'. The preferred English term for the asiniskaw ithiniwak in Manitoba is Rocky Cree although sometimes Rock Cree has been used. The Rocky Cree have also been called Woodland Cree or Woods Cree. You might still come across these names for the Rocky Cree in textbooks or on websites.

There were seasonal gatherings to communicate, to share food, to trade, to harvest birchbark, to participate in ceremonies, games, and dancing, and to recognize courtship, arrange marriages, and acknowledge rites of passage.

Storytelling and oral tradition were centrepieces of Rocky Cree culture and served a range of purposes from entertainment to the teaching of social norms, history, kinship patterns, and moral lessons. These stories embody the experiences of the Rocky Cree and their ways of knowing.

#### Rocky Cree communities in Manitoba today:

- South Indian Lake / piponapiwin
- Brochet / kisipikamāhk
- Nelson House / nisicawayasihk
- Granville Lake / okawi mithikananihk
- Mathias Colomb - Pukatawagan /pakitawāhk anik
- Marcel Colomb - Black Sturgeon Falls /kahkitināmiw

 [See Map: Rocky Cree Communities in Manitoba](#)

## When and Where Does Amō's Story Take Place?

*Amō's Sapotawan* is set in what archaeologists identify as the proto-contact period for the Rocky Cree, which was roughly between 1654-1682. Proto-contact means the period just before direct contact with Europeans, when traditional Indigenous culture was not yet subject to great change due to European influence. Proto-contact and contact time frames differed across Canada, depending upon European trading and exploration patterns. In northern Manitoba, for example, there was a different and earlier contact period for the coastal Cree on Hudson Bay than for the inland or Rocky Cree. By the early 1600s, the asiniskaw ithiniwak would have begun to hear stories about European foreigners and the strange objects they brought with them to trade. Around the mid-1600s, some European items would have started to appear in Rocky Cree territory: metal knives, axes, copper kettles, needles, beads, thread, and cloth. These artifacts may have been traded among several First Nations in the Great Lakes or the northern coastal areas before finally arriving in the camps of the Rocky Cree. By the 1680s, the Rocky Cree began to have direct contact with European furtraders.

Amō's story takes place at mikisiwi pawistik, or Eagle Rapids. Eagle Rapids is located east of Southern Indian Lake with Gauer Lake to the north and Uhlman Lake to the south.

There are two Rocky Cree spellings of Eagle Rapids in the glossary in *Amō's Sapotawan*.

The difference in spelling reflects the proximity of the speaker in relation to the rapids:

- mikisiwi pawistikōhk – Eagle Rapids (the rapids are further away from you, “over there”)
- mikisiwi pawistik – Eagle Rapids (the rapids are right beside you)

 [See Map: Eagle Rapids, Manitoba](#)

## Six Seasons and Moons of the Rocky Cree

Rocky Cree traditional culture has a model of the weather cycles based on generations of observing environmental conditions and surviving in rhythm with seasonal changes. *Amō's Sapotawan* takes

place in nīpin, or midsummer. Nīpin translates to “gifts from the water” (nipi = water; in = to give) because this is the season of the raspberry rains followed by the blueberry rains. It is the time of berry picking, fish harvesting, making pottery and baskets, gathering medicines. It is also the time of big thunderstorms which bring forest fires.

In the Rocky Cree seasonal calendar, each season has two moon cycles of 28 days, and each moon is named to describe the natural conditions. The chart below identifies all the Rocky Cree seasons. The moons for nīpin are paskahawī pīsim (egg hatching moon) and paskowī pīsim (moulting moon). Amō’s Sapotawan takes place during paskowī pīsim when birds lose their flying feathers. At this time, the birds are not hunted because they are raising their young.

## Six Seasons of Rocky Cree



## Using the Teacher’s Guide

*Amō’s Sapotawan*: Teacher’s Guide is intended to aid educators in exploring the picture book and picture book app in class. It presents four thematic modules that include teaching strategies with suggested connections to Manitoba middle-years curricula in Social Studies, Science, English Language Arts, Health, and the Arts as well as Rocky Cree culture and language. Many of the suggested scenarios are readily linked to cross-curricular themes in Indigenous studies, land-based education, and education for sustainable development. Each learning activity is linked with an icon indicating a curricular



entry point. Those addressed in the learning activity are highlighted in orange. Even if teachers print the guide in black and white, they will still be able to recognize which curricular links apply as they will appear darker.

|     |                           |     |
|-----|---------------------------|-----|
| SS  | Social Studies            | SS  |
| ELA | English                   | ELA |
| RC  | Rocky Cree                | RC  |
| A   | Arts                      | A   |
| S   | Science                   | S   |
| H   | Heath/ Physical Education | H   |

The Foreword includes historical, archaeological, geographic, cultural, and linguistic information about *Amō's Sapotawan*. It also includes maps to help set the context to Amō's story. The Appendix: Curriculum Connections offers teachers curricular links to Manitoba learning outcomes and supporting pedagogical information. The Guide is also supplemented by a picture book app with visual and audio supports in English and Cree. The app is described further below.

## Modules and Suggested Learning Activities

*Amō's Sapotawan*: Teacher's Guide offers four thematic modules:

1. *Pitokīwin* ('entering in'): Introducing the Book
2. *Sapotawana*: Rites of Passage
3. *Askihkwak*: Pottery
4. *Kotawān and Kapasitihk*: Fire

An Enduring Understanding describes the essential learning to be explored in each module. Key Concepts, Key Words in Rocky Cree, and Guiding Questions are provided to help frame the teaching strategies and focus student learning.

Each module provides a guiding suite of learning activities organized by sub-theme. Teaching strategies are linked to extracts from the book and fortified with printable Blackline Masters which appear in-text in bold green font (and again will still be easily identifiable in black and white). Blackline Masters and additional Teacher Resources are located at the end of each module.

## Indigenous Pedagogy

“Before the introduction of European-style education, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children acquired knowledge, skills, and values by observing, by listening, by doing, and by dreaming. Education did not take place in classrooms at a particular time of the day but was an integral part of community life that occurred where and as needed. Education meant teaching children to function within the community and to prepare for their adult lives as contributing members of their societies. Adults were role models from whom children learned practical necessities as well as respect for traditional ways and the laws of relationship that governed life. The wisdom of Elders was particularly esteemed. Through the retelling of stories, values and traditions were affirmed. All life was part of a great whole. Humans were related to, interacted with, and shared interdependency with all of nature: plants, animals, water, stars, rocks, and the very earth itself. Teachings were holistic and addressed all aspects of a child’s being: mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual.”

*Current Topics in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Studies*, p. 3-8

[https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/abedu/foundation\\_gr12/cluster3.pdf](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/abedu/foundation_gr12/cluster3.pdf)

Historically, public education in Canada has played a significant role in the colonization of Indigenous people by its failure to meaningfully include Indigenous knowledge, history, and worldviews in curricula. The story of Kayasochi Kikakenow, a Rocky Cree woman who had never met Europeans, is a gift from the past. The story is best approached using the holistic principles of traditional Indigenous teaching and learning. The following principles may be useful to guide teachers’ lesson planning:

*Balance*: planning lessons so that they address the whole person, including the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions of learning. This means offering opportunities to share, reflect on and celebrate personal growth.

*Respect for oral tradition*: including opportunities for telling stories, active listening, singing songs, learning by sharing, and learning by mentorship. This may include prepared visits with Elders or knowledge keepers in the community.

*Learning by experience*: incorporating hands-on learning, visual learning, arts-based and place-based activities inside and outside the classroom, including land-based learning experiences.

*Building relationships and cultural identity*: offering many occasions to practice, talk about, and celebrate their culture so as to build identity and nurture harmonious relationships.

**Manitoba curriculum documents are organized into three phases of learning:**

- Activating: connect to previous knowledge, awaken curiosity, consider interests and needs
- Acquiring: observation, guided practice, building autonomy, visioning, struggling, collaborating
- Applying: acting, sharing, doing, connecting, preserving

These three phases of learning are implicit in the suggested teaching strategies presented in each module and are consistent with Indigenous approaches to teaching and learning. In Rocky Cree pedagogy, the learning process also involves a fourth phase: the formal recognition of achievement through shared celebration. This may be employed as a culminating experience at the end of a module or learning project.

## Module 2: Sapotawana: Rites of Passage

### *Sipi nisitohtamowin: Enduring Understanding*

“One of the most important asiniskaw ithiniwak tools for survival is sapotawana: the rites of passage that acknowledge each person as they attain certain skill levels at particular stages of life. Sapotawana encourage people to discover their gifts, learn about their responsibilities, and find their life’s purpose.” AS, p. 2

#### Key Concepts

Rites of passage, coming of age, gifts, life’s purpose, responsibilities, community and family

#### Key Words

sapotawan (sah poh tah wahn) – rite of passage

ototimihitowin (oh toh teh mee hee toh win) – family group based on mother’s lineage

mīthikowisiwin (MEE the koh weh seh win) – gift

atāmiskātōwin: (ah TAA mi skah toh win) – gift-giving ceremony for acknowledging a person

#### Guiding Questions

What is a rite of passage?

What is a coming of age?

What are examples of tangible and intangible gifts?

What is the role of

In what ways are a

ed?

How are ceremonis

Module theme

Enduring Understanding

Key Concepts, Key Words, Guiding Questions

Module sub-theme

## Kiskinwahamakiwin: Teaching Strategies

“In this book, you will learn about Amō’s sapotawan as she is recognized for her skill as a pottery maker. You’ll see how her minisiwin uses the community’s kakānohkimowina, their guiding principles, to help prepare her for this metamorphosis.” AS, Introduction, p. 3

Extract from *Amō’s Sapotawan*

Teaching Strategy

Blackline Master

### SS ELA RC A S H Reading a Picture Book

Picture books represent a distinctive literary form that blend stories with art. In a picture book like *Amō’s Sapotawan*, the illustrations are as important as the text, and both work together to tell the story. To read a picture book, students need to learn to attentively observe and interpret all the images in the book.

Focus students’ attention on the double-spread image on pages 4-5. Guide students to look carefully at the image, talk about what they observe, and discuss different ways of interpreting the picture. Use open-ended questions as discussion starting points:

- *What is going on in this picture?*
- *What do you see that makes you say that?*
- *What more would you like to learn based on the illustration?*

Explain that printing images is costly, so if a publisher decides to include certain illustrations in a picture book, it is a purposeful decision. They must be key to the story. Before you begin to engage your students in the text of Amō, take a moment to have your students pay close attention to the images by completing Student Resource **1.1**

**Going on a Picture Walk.** This activity is meant for students to work together in pairs and engage in a lively discussion about what they see, think, and wonder as they look at the images. Encourage chatter and banter! Consider running a timer and guiding the students through the book, page by page. See the Teacher Backgrounder **1.11 Visual Thinking Strategies** for questions to ask to set up the concepts of see, think, and wonder.

#### Teacher Tip

*Amō’s Sapotawan* is the second book in the Six Season Series. The first book is *Pisim Finds her Miskanaw*. Amō is Pisim’s younger sister.

## Source:

Information on Indigenous ways of teaching and learning described above is drawn from the following documents on the website of the Indigenous Inclusion Directorate of Manitoba Education and Training:

- *Current Topics in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Studies*  
[https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/abedu/foundation\\_gr12/introduction.pdf](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/abedu/foundation_gr12/introduction.pdf)
- *It's Our Time: First Nations Education Tool Kit*  
<https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/its-our-time/index.html>

## Revitalizing the Rocky Cree Language

Revitalizing the Rocky Cree language is an essential part of revitalizing Rocky Cree culture and identity. This guide teaches the Rocky Cree language by developing an in-depth understanding of several key words for each module pertaining to the module theme. In focusing on vocabulary depth, students will learn what each key word means in English and how to pronounce it. Students will also develop a greater understanding of the key words through sub-module activities, which reinforce their connections to the Rocky Cree worldview.

Sīpi nisitohamowin and kiskinwahamakiwin are two words users of this guide will see at the beginning of each module. We have used these words as equivalents to concepts with which teachers will be familiar: Enduring Understanding and Teaching Strategies.

Sīpi nisitohamowin means enduring knowledge that stays with you a long time.

The word is broken down as sīpi (long); nist (cognitive processes); ohta (act of doing); mo (feeding or eating); win (mastery)

Kiskinwahamakiwin means how we teach.

The word is broken down as kiski (remembering something); nwaha (the existing route); maki (giving or teaching); win (mastery)

We hope that by beginning each module with Sīpi nisitohamowin and kiskinwahamakiwin we encourage teachers to practice the Rocky Cree key words included in each module with their students.

For schools and programs seeking greater language instruction than this guide or the picture book can offer, the *Amō's Sapotawan* picture book app is fully available to readers/players in Rocky Cree (both through the oral narration and in written Roman orthography and syllabics), making them a substantial resource for immersion programs.

### TEACHER TIP

Depth of vocabulary knowledge refers to how well a language learner understands the nuances of individual words of a language, while vocabulary breadth refers to the number of words of which a learner has at least some superficial knowledge.

## Amō's Sapotawan Picture Book App

Amō's Sapotawan has been published as a picture book app as well as a picture book. The app can be used as a stand-alone version of the story or as a supplemental text to accompany the picture book.

It has been designed for use on devices with an iOS operating system or an Android operating system and is ideally viewed on a tablet, although it is also formatted to be playable on a phone. It is free to download from either the Apple store or the Google Play store.

Before using the app in your classroom, spend some time exploring the material and the options outlined in the menu. You will notice that the Introduction, a diagram of the characters in the story (with both their names and their relationships to Amō noted), a glossary of many of the Cree terms used in the book, maps of the story's settings, and a description of the Six Seasons project are all available as supporting information for the story itself. You will also notice that you can choose to turn the narration on or off: when the narration is turned on, you will hear Jennifer Williams reading the story and the notes aloud; when the narration is turned off, you can read the story and the notes at your own pace. You also have the choice to turn the sound effects on or off. Finally, you have the option to listen to the story read aloud in English or in Cree, and to read the story either in Roman orthography or in a syllabics translation.

The app differs from the picture book version in that the screen that replicates each double-page spread of the picture book shows readers only the illustration. The text for each spread appears when you tap on the right side of the screen, where you can see a shadow of part of the text box; the spoken narration begins at this point, too, if you have the narration turned on. The story notes that appear in the margins of the picture book are available to readers of the app through hotspots embedded in the illustrations that shimmer from time to time until readers have located and tapped on them. Readers can check to see whether they have found all of the story notes by clicking on the Knowledge Album button at the bottom of the screen: the notes they have discovered will appear in colour; the ones they have yet to discover will be greyed out. Readers can also see how the notes can be organized into different categories by sorting them through the various options listed on the bottom left of the Knowledge Album screen.

#### TEACHER TIP

The written Cree language does not generally use capital letters, so *Amō's Sapotawan* mostly follows this practice. For the sake of clarity and ease of reading in English, however, we have chosen to capitalize people's names and the first word of each sentence.

There are two games that readers can choose to play as they move through the app:

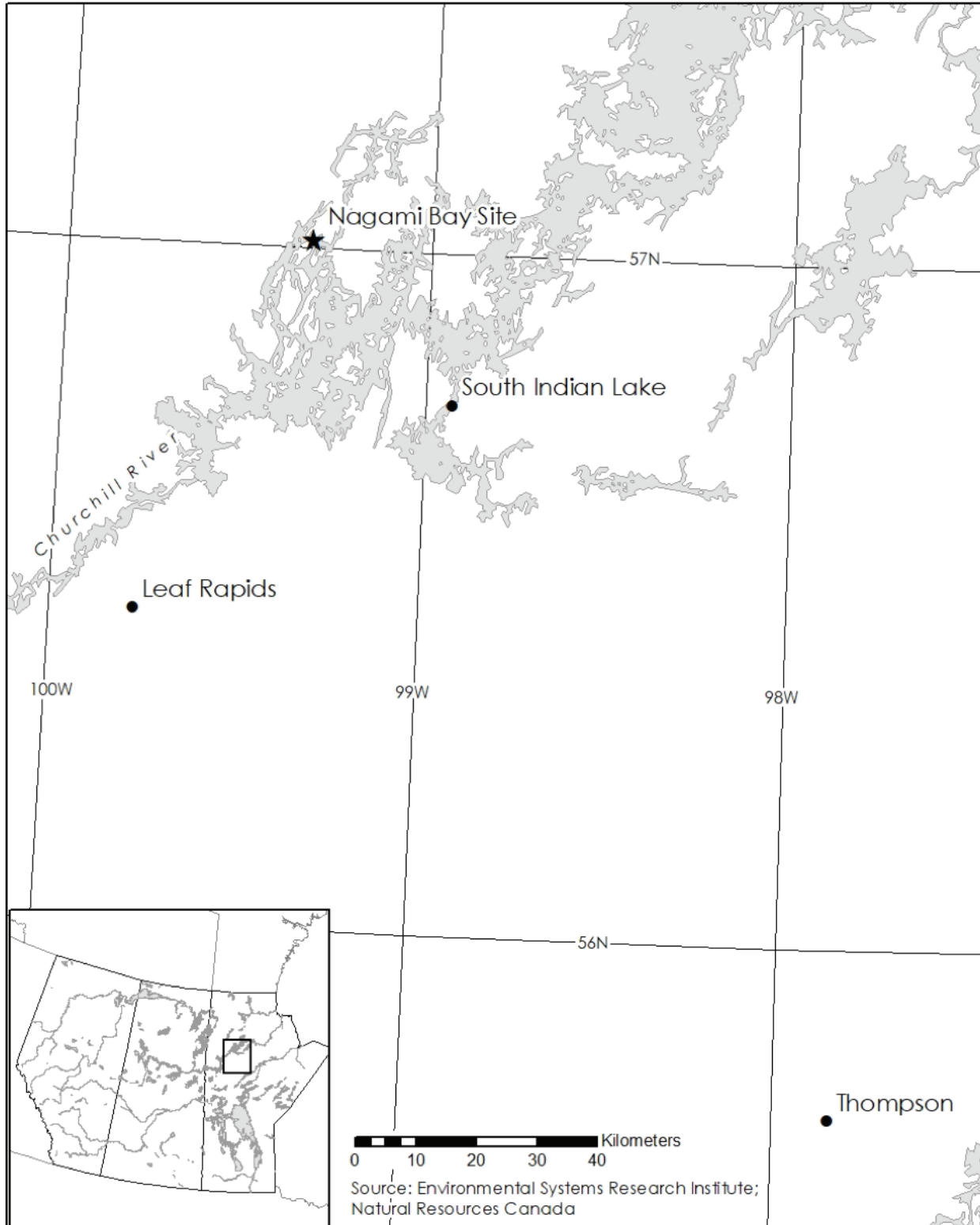
**Askihk Maker:** This game gives readers the opportunity to create their own personalized askihk (pot) in traditional Rocky Cree design. In a guided step-by-step process, readers can choose between various materials, shapes, patterns, and firing methods. Once their virtual pot is completed, they will have the opportunity to save an image of their work to their device or share it with others.

**Fishing Game:** In this game, readers are given the opportunity to catch different types of fish in different locations close to the various camps where Amō and her family stay in the story. The readers will be presented with an image of the location, where ripples in the water indicate a fish. By tapping on the spot quickly enough, another window is opened, presenting a hand-eye-coordination activity involving a moving bar to catch the fish. Upon a successful catch, the reader receives facts about fish and fishing methods. This game is playable in two different modes: a free mode in which the reader simply chooses locations and fishing tools themselves and an instruction mode where the reader follows instructions from the family's grandmother that tell him which fish to catch with which methods.

# Maps

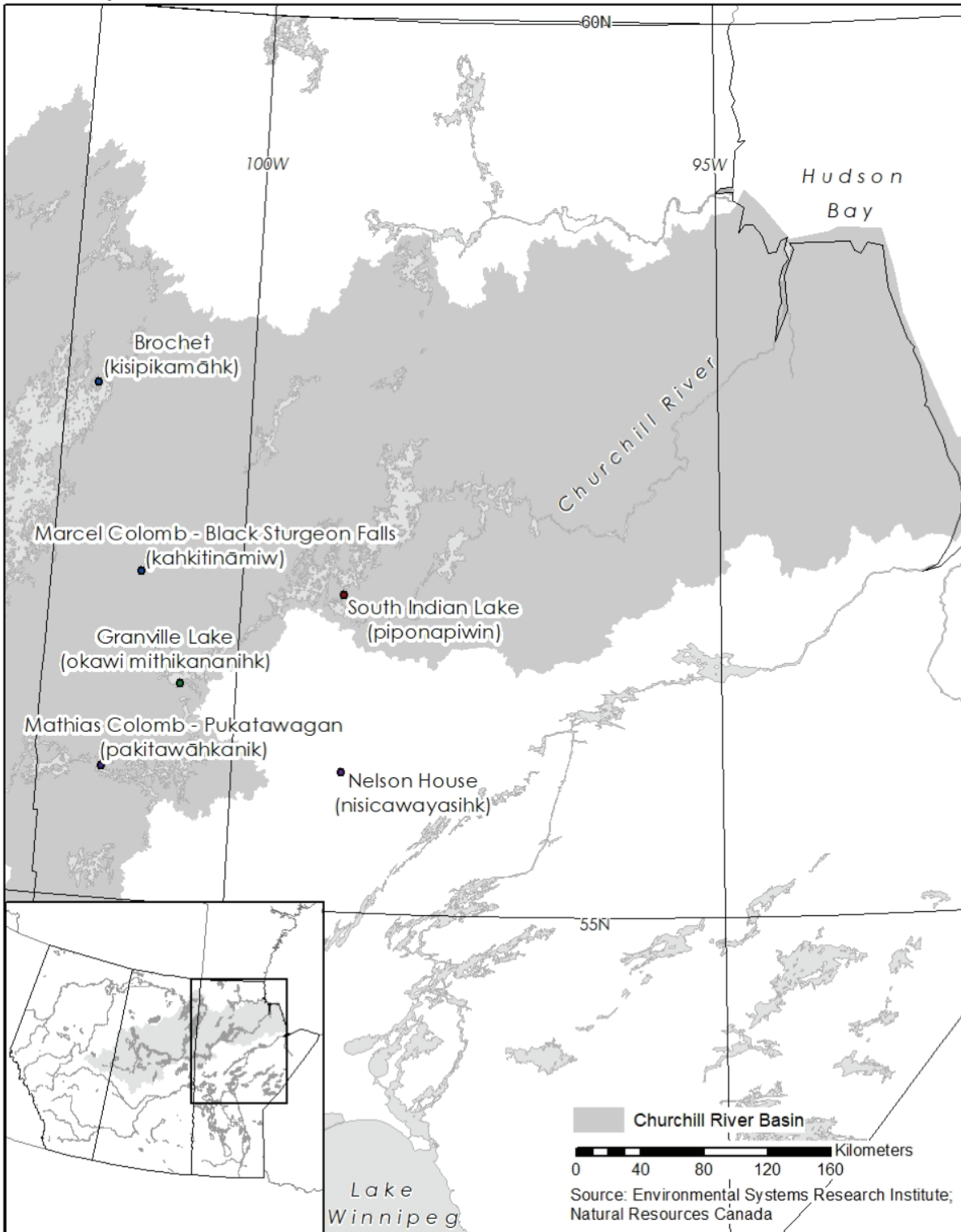
## Map: The Nagami Bay Site

### The Nagami Bay Site



Map: Rocky Cree Communities on Churchill River

# Rocky Cree Communities on Churchill River



Map: Eagle Rapids





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## Module 1: Pītokīwin ('entering in'): Introducing the Book



### ***Sipi nisitohtamowin: Enduring Understanding***

*“Generation after generation, the asiniskaw īthiniwak, the Rocky Cree, lived according to the cycle of the six seasons and thirteen moons. Each season posed unique challenges that tested the asiniskaw īthiniwak and required them to develop survival skills—physical, emotional, spiritual and mental.”*

AS, p. 5

### **Key Concepts:**

Picture books, Rocky Cree culture and language, survival skills

### **Key Words:**

minisiwin (meh neh seh win) – family group or clan

nīhithaw (NEE he thow) – coming from the four directions; corresponding to the physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental realms

awasis (ah wah sis) – child

oskatis (oh skah tes) – young adult

kisi aya (keh seh ah yah) – adult

kīhty amaya (KEE tee yah mah yah) – an elder

kakānohkimowina (kah KAA noh keh moh weh nah) – a community’s guiding principles

### **Guiding Questions:**

How is a picture book laid out?

How do the pictures help tell the story in this book?

Who are the important characters in this book?

How can characters be understood wholistically, including spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional aspects?

What are the big ideas in this book?

## *Kiskinwahamakiwin*: Teaching Strategies

“In this book, you will learn about Amō’s sapotawan as she is recognized for her skill as a pottery maker. You’ll see how her minisiwin uses the community’s kakānohkimowina, their guiding principles, to help prepare her for this metamorphosis.” AS, Introduction, p. 3

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### Reading a Picture Book

Picture books represent a distinctive literary form that blends stories with art. In a picture book like *Amō’s Sapotawan*, the illustrations are as important as the text, and both work together to tell the story. To read a picture book, students need to learn to attentively observe and interpret all the images in the book.

Focus students’ attention on the double-spread image on pages 4-5. Guide students to look carefully at the image, talk about what they observe, and discuss different ways of interpreting the picture. Use open-ended questions as discussion starting points:

*What is going on in this picture?*

*What do you see that makes you say that?*

*What more would you like to learn based on the illustration?*

Explain that printing images is costly, so if a publisher decides to include certain illustrations in a picture book, it is a purposeful decision. They must be key to the story. Before you begin to engage your students in the text of Amō, take a moment to have your students pay close attention to the images by completing Student Resource **1.1**

**Going on a Picture Walk.** This activity is meant for students to work together in pairs and engage in a lively discussion about what they see, think, and wonder as they look at the images. Encourage chatter and banter! Consider running a timer and guiding the students through the book, page by page. See the Teacher Backgrounder **1.11 Visual Thinking Strategies** for questions to ask to set up the concepts of see, think, and wonder.

#### Teacher Tip

*Amō’s Sapotawan* is the second book in the Six Season Series. The first book is *Pīsim Finds her Miskanaw*. Amō is Pīsim’s younger sister.

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## Placing the Book in Context

This picture book tells the story of Amō as she is guided by her family, community, and the land to seek her gift as a pottery maker through sapotawan - the rites of passage that acknowledge each person attaining a certain skill level at each age.

The book begins in midsummer – nīpin – at a place called mikisiwi pawistik, Eagle Rapids. Amō’s family has set up their summer camp and after a series of adventures, including meeting a bear and escaping a forest fire, Amō is formally acknowledged as a pottery maker in an important and sacred ceremony.

Read aloud the introduction to *Amō’s Sapotawan*. Present and discuss the historical context of the book by referring to the background information included in the Foreword to this guide. Focus on history, geography, and archaeology.

### Teacher Tip

Take a look at the *Pisim Finds Her Miskanaw* Teacher’s Guide. It engages learners in themes focused on midwifery, miskanaw, journey making, and storytelling.

See: <https://sixseasonsproject.ca/resources/for-educators>

Choose an activity to introduce students to the book. Pique their interest by having them complete Student Resource **1.2 Meet the Book by Exploring the Cover**. Instruct them to work on the task alone and then share and compare with a partner.

Ask students to work in pairs to complete Student Resource **1.3 Observer Questions: 5 W’s and 1 H**, answering as many questions as they can at this point. They may keep the sheet to fill in the answers as they move forward in their study of the book.

As students move forward in their reading of *Amō’s Sapotawan*, have them reconsider or revise any of their answers for **Meet the Book by Exploring the Cover** and **Observer Questions: 5 W’s and 1 H**.

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## Discovering Picture Book Design

Page through the book with the students and gather their observations about the form of the book: its pictures, colours, fonts, subtitles, border designs. Engage in a discussion about how the elements of design help them to better understand the content of the book. See Teacher Backgrounder **1.12 Analyzing Picture Book Design**.

Draw students’ attention to the sidebars. Explain that a sidebar is a typographically distinct section of a page that highlights or sets context for the main text.

Invite students to explore the sidebars in the book by completing the Student Resource **1.4 Studying the Sidebars**.

### Teacher Tip

The terms *typeface* and *font* are often used interchangeably to refer to a set of printable text characters in a specific style and size. Have the students explore the different fonts in *Amō’s Sapotawan* paying attention to how they help the reader differentiate between the main text, subtitles, and the sidebars.

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## Exploring Rocky Cree Language

Key to engaging with the story of *Amō's Sapotawan* is the Rocky Cree language. The language is interwoven throughout the picture book in a series of inset boxes/sidebars and in the main narrative text. There is also a glossary of Cree terms at the back. Play the game **1.5 Exploring Rocky Cree Vocabulary** with the class. Be sure to read the setup, instructions, and gameplay beforehand. As an extension activity, have the students create visual representations of their Cree terms and a class bulletin board with their terms and images.

As outlined in the Foreword, the picture book app can also supplement exploring the Rocky Cree language. As a class, listen to the first several pages read aloud in Rocky Cree. Be sure to have the narration turned on and set to play in Cree!

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## Introducing the Characters

Family or minisiwin is the centre of Rocky Cree culture. Laws of kinship of the asiniskaw īthinīwak hold that everyone is related and connected: everyone and everything in the human world, the spiritual world, the animal world, and the natural world. Extended family – ototimīhitowin – includes a circle of multigenerational connections beyond the family unit, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, as well as wāhkotowin, adopted relatives.

In the time that *Amō's Sapotawan* is set, members of the community would be dispersed in small family groups for most of the year due to food availability. However, the summer meant warm weather, good fishing, and easy travel. People would gather in large groups to share information, arrange marriages, harvest foods, and participate in ceremonies. This story takes place in the summer season – nīpin.

The main characters of the story are members of Amō's immediate family group, who belong to the moswak or Moose clan. But there are many other characters, members of the extended family group, who play a role in the story.

Ask students to explore the diagram of the Story Characters on p. 3 of the Introduction to *Amō's Sapotawan* to see how characters in the story are connected. Ask them to identify any of the characters they may recognize from reading the first book in the series,

### Teacher Tip

This would be an excellent entry into a discussion about poetry. A poem uses language in creative ways to paint a picture or express an idea. Often, a poem uses rhythm and rhyme to give the language a musical feel.

*Pīsim Finds Her Miskanaw*. As a class, practice reading aloud the name of each character identified in the chart found in Student Resource **1.6 Characters in Amō's Sapotawan**.

Place the students in pairs and assign one character to each pair, or have each pair select one of the characters as their focus. Ask them to read through the story to find key mentions of their character and to write down notes and page numbers. What do they do or say in the story? How do they respond to others? How do we know what this person feels?

### Teacher Tip

In the previous section, Discovering Picture Book Design, students learned to distinguish the narrative text from the explanatory information in the sidebars. For this task, ask students to focus on reading the narrative text for ideas about the characters and to use their imagination to supply a full and creative description of the character they have selected.

Once the students have gathered together all their clues from the story, tell them that they will be putting all these ideas together to create a poem that describes their character using the concept of *nihithaw* defined on the final page of the picture book:

“On this *miskanaw*, we are becoming *nihithaw* again, spiritually, mentally, physically, and emotionally, *mithwayāwin*.” AS, p. 49

This teaching means that students should understand a character (and themselves) as a whole person, with mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual characteristics. A person is what they think, how they feel, what they do, and what they value.

As a class group, lead the students to develop a four-line poem or quatrain to describe the whole person of one of the characters. This short video (2 m.) may be useful to explain the task: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6T3UhVs9zE4>

Invite students to decide on a rhyme pattern and a steady rhythm to recite their poem. They may choose to use a drum to beat out the metre of their poem. The poem should have one line devoted to each aspect of the character:

1. Emotion (what the person feels)
2. Physical (what the person does)
3. Mental (what the person thinks)
4. Spiritual (what the person values or shares)

Here is an example:

*Maskiki Kapimotatat (Medicine Carrier)*

Quietly and so kindly  
She roams in the woods and the plants  
Knows the right herbs for tea  
Making us well, and we dance

#### Teacher Tip

To help the students before they write their poem, review examples of adjectives as descriptive words and verbs as action words. Depending on the students' level, you may want to also look at how figures of speech (simile, metaphor) can enhance their poems.

In pairs, have students create a biopoem about a character. In this case, students may use free verse instead of rhyme patterns. Student Resource **1.7 Writing a Biopoem about a Character** may be used to outline and model this task.

Invite each pair to share their poem with the class, without including the name of the character (the first line). Invite the class to guess which character the poem depicts.

Following the sharing, invite students to write a reflection on the characters in the story in their journal from Student Resource **1.10 Creating a Sapotawan Journal**. Here are some guiding questions they might consider:

*Which of the characters in the story do you identify with the most and why?*

*Does one of the characters remind you of someone in your life and why?*

*What might you learn from these characters to guide you in your own life?*

Students may choose to include in their **Sapotawan Journal** a sketch of their chosen character(s) that represents their Rocky Cree name or their role in the story.

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## Introducing the Big Ideas

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Divide students into five groups and assign one of the following main ideas/teachings of *Amō's Sapotawan* to each group:

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- sapotawan, sapotawana (sah poh tah wahn) – rite of passage, rites of passage
- mīthikowisiwin (MEE the koh weh seh win) – gift
- mithāwayāwin (me THAA wah YAA win) – to be in a positive state of being
- aniskotapiwin (ah nee sko tah pee win) – strengthening connections with ancestors and their teachings
- kakānohkimowina (kah KAA noh keh moh weh nah) – a community's guiding principles

Tell students they will be gathering knowledge about the important idea/teaching assigned to them and related ideas in Rocky Cree culture. Ask each group to read silently the definition of the idea/teaching they've been assigned (use the glossary in the picture book) and then to read it aloud, practice pronunciation, and discuss as a group. Once they feel they understand the concept, ask them to set aside the definition and work together to rewrite it in their own words. Next have them find examples in *Amō's Sapotawan* that relate to their main idea/teaching. Finally, ask that they supplement their explanation of the teaching with their own modern-day examples and references. Use the Student Resource **1.8 Exploring Big Ideas Worksheet** to help students organize and guide this work.

Using their worksheets, have groups present their big idea to the class and encourage those in the audience to ask questions.

As a closing activity, ask each student to write up an exit slip using the model provided in Student Resource **1.9 Exit Slip on Big Ideas**. Which teachings do they feel are the most significant to their own lives and why?

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## Creating a Sapotawan Journal

“Amō crawled into her bed, and as she was falling asleep, she imagined herself someday mastering her mīthikowisiwin, her gift. But what would her mīthikowisiwin be? How would she know what was right for her?” AS, p. 12

In this story, Amō is encouraged to discover her special talent with the help of her family. In the story's conclusion, she is recognized for her potential as a pottery maker through a rite of passage: sapotawan. In the same way, students will grow in cultural knowledge and come to know themselves as they read and respond to the book. Each student will create a personal **Sapotawan Journal** to record ideas, experiences, and understandings.

Introduce the Student Resource **1.10 Creating a Sapotawan Journal** by reading this passage from the book:

“Sapotawana encourage people to discover their gifts, learn about their responsibilities, and find their life’s purpose .... At each sapotawan, you are going through a metamorphosis, like many of our relatives the animals do. Think of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly, or a bird moulting so that its new wing feathers can grow in.” AS, p. 2

#### Teacher Tip

Play the song “Good Riddance (Time of Your Life)” by Green Day. Tell the students that since its release in 1994, it has become the hands-down favourite at graduation ceremonies and parties. Ask: Why do you think the song is popular at graduations? What other songs would you pick? What song/s would you choose for other important rites of passage like a wedding, anniversary, or birth? Make a song collection in your **Sapotawan Journal**. Include the song lyrics and why you chose the song.

Our understanding of rites of passage has changed over time but the main idea is still the same: celebrating a person’s milestones as they go through life. Examples today might be advancing to the next grade level, graduating from school, getting married, starting your first job, retiring.

Invite the students to begin their journal with a personal exploration. Ask them to respond to:

*What are examples of rites of passage that you have experienced as an awasis, child?*

*What ones do you imagine you will experience at later stages of your life: oskatis (young adult), kisi aya (adult), kihti Amiya (an elder)?*

Encourage further understanding by having the students draw a representation of sapotawan as a process of metamorphosis (a slow transformation). Use this drawing as the cover of their **Sapotawan Journal**. What did they draw? A butterfly? A bird? A flower or plant? Engage in a sharing circle.

## **Module 1 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources**

### **Reading a Picture Book**

1.1 Going on a Picture Walk

### **Placing the Book in Context**

1.2 Meet the Book by Exploring the Cover

1.3 Observer Questions: 5W's and 1H

### **Discovering Picture Book Design**

1.4 Studying the Sidebars

1.5 Exploring Rocky Cree Vocabulary

### **Introducing the Characters**

1.6 Characters in *Amo's Sapotawan*

1.7 Writing a Biopoem about a Character

### **Introducing the Big Ideas**

1.8 Exploring Big Ideas Worksheet

1.9 Exit Slip on Big Ideas

### **Creating a Sapotawan Journal**

1.10 Creating a Sapotawan Journal

### **Teacher Backgrounders**

1.11 Visual Thinking Strategies

1.12 Picture Book Design



## 1.1 Going on a Picture Walk

Let's go on a 'Picture Walk' through *Amō's Sapotawan*. Follow the instructions below step-by-step. The activity is meant to be a guided conversation between you and a partner.

Turn to the first illustration and begin a conversation.

What do you see?

What do you think?

What do you wonder?

Turn ahead to the next illustration. Continue the conversation.

What do you see?

What do you think?

What do you wonder?

Keep flipping the pages while looking at the illustrations. Use these questions to guide your conversation.

When is this story taking place?

What do you think will happen next?

What does this word mean?

Who are the main characters in this scene?

What do you think is happening in this picture?

What are these called?

Have you seen this before?

What is the character doing here?

How do you think this character is feeling?

What would you do if this was you?

What does this remind you of?

How do you think the story will end?

## 1.2 Meet the Book by Exploring the Cover

Carefully study the image on the front cover of the book *Amō's Sapotawan*. (Don't flip the pages and cheat!) Answer the questions below based on your skills of observation.

What is happening?

Does it look like the story will be fiction or non-fiction?

Explain what the illustration shows.

What are some important images in the illustration? Choose two or three and explain why you think they are significant.

Does the illustration seem to match the title of the story? Why or why not?

What does the title tell us about the story?

Does the image remind you of anything you have experienced? How does it make you feel?

Write one question you have about the book based on the cover illustration.

## 1.4 Picture Book Scavenger Hunt

Flip through *Amō's Sapotawan*. Choose 3 sidebars and answer the following questions for each.

Sidebar

1. Is there a title? If so, write it down.

### What is a sidebar?

In books, a sidebar is a shorter piece of text that appears next to the main text.

It is often graphically separate but related to the main idea.

2. What information does the sidebar provide?

3. What is the purpose of the sidebar?

### What is the purpose of a sidebar?

A sidebar can be used to **encourage the reader** to read the more detailed main narrative.

A sidebar can **provide additional information** that relates to the main story but doesn't quite "fit" in the main text itself.

A sidebar serves to **make the main text easier** and faster for the reader to read.

Sidebars can feature **supplementary resources** like key vocabulary terms, real-life examples, or expert viewpoints.

4. How does the sidebar complement the main story?

## 1.5 Exploring Rocky Cree Vocabulary

### **Set up**

- Print and cut out the Rocky Cree vocabulary cards. Each student should have a card (either individually, in pairs, or in groups).
- On four large sheets of paper write the following categories: CULTURE, PEOPLE, NATURE, OBJECTS.
- Tape them in the corners of the room.
- Have copies of the book *Amō's Sapotawan* for each student or each pair/group.

### **Instructions**

- Distribute copies of *Amō's Sapotawan*.
- Hand out the Cree vocabulary cards.
- Instruct them to locate their Cree word in the book's glossary and write the English translation and pronunciation on the card.
- Invite them to practice saying their word out loud.

### **Gameplay**

- Draw students' attention to the four large sheets taped on the wall. Read them aloud and explain each one.
- Invite them one group at a time to stand near the category that best aligns with their card.
- Invite them to read their cards aloud to the class and give the English definition.

### **Consolidation**

- Why does your term fit this category?
- Are there cards that could fit into more than one category?
- What can we learn about Rocky Cree culture from the terms?
- If we were to create another category, what might it be?

## Exploring Rocky Cree Vocabulary

Print, cut, and distribute.

| Culture Cards              |                       |                         |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>sapotawan</b>           | <b>apiscithīniwak</b> | <b>aniskotapiwin</b>    |
| <b>īwīthinohit</b>         | <b>pīcīsīmōwin</b>    | <b>nīhithaw</b>         |
| People Cards               |                       |                         |
| <b>asiniskaw īthiniwak</b> | <b>Kisi aya</b>       | <b>kisithiniw Pison</b> |
| <b>iskwīsisak</b>          | <b>nikāwī</b>         | <b>onistamokiw</b>      |

**Nature Cards****aski māskīkiya****athoskanak****misinipi****kapasitihk****maskwa****wīthin****Object Cards****askihko****askihkwak****apwanāsk****mitihikan****pimiwāta****kwakwāywata**

## 1.6 Characters in *Amō's Sapotawan*

| Members of the immediate family or minisiwin |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| Name   | Description   | Role in the story  |
| Amō  | Thirteen-year-old girl  | Main character or protagonist who finds her gift as a pottery maker and is recognized by the community.        |
| Pisim  | Amō's sister. In Book 1 of the Six Seasons series, she is recognized by the community as a midwife. | She sits with Amō watching the stars the night before the ceremony (p. 39).                                    |
| Kiwitin Kānimit                              | Amō's mother  | She guides Amō to discover her gift (p. 12).   |
| Ācapi Okimaw                                 | Amō's father  | He encourages Amō to always move forward when she encounters a problem (p. 22).                                |
| Mwakwa                                       | Amō's little brother  | He sings with a lovely voice and plays drum (p. 7). At the celebration he is called upon to sing (p. 44).      |
| Pipon  | Amō's grandfather   | He warns the family about the fire and leads them out of danger (p. 29).                                       |
| Nōcokisīw                                    | Amō's grandmother   | She is a maker of birchbark baskets. She leads the sapotawan ceremony in which Amō receives her tools (p. 42). |

| Members of the extended family group or ototitomihitowin |                                 |   |
|--|---------------------------------|---|
| Name   | Description                     | Role in the story   |
| Tawipāsim  | Amō's aunt                      | She is a pottery maker and responsible to teach Amō her craft (p. 12). In the sapotawan, she helps to pass a bag of pottery tools to Amō (p. 42). |
| Maskiki Kapimotatat                                      | Medicine carrier                | She is always wandering by herself, searching for medicines (p.8).  |
| Nikik  | Amō's uncle                     | He is a maker of willow baskets (p. 12).  |
| Napiw  | Amō's uncle                     | He catches a large sturgeon (p. 19). He loads the food in canoes to create caches as the forest fire approaches (p. 29)                           |
| Kāmisakāt  | Amō's aunt                      | She makes fish oil and prepares fish with other members of the clan (p.15)  |
| Piponasiw  | Amō's young cousin, 2 years old | He was recently acknowledged in the walking-out ceremony, his own sapotawan (p. 42)   |



## 1.7 Writing a Biopoem about a Character

A biopoem is a free verse poem that uses adjectives and verbs to paint a picture of who a person is. Here is a suggested structure for writing a biopoem:

Character name  
Three adjectives that describe the person  
Name an important kinship link (brother/sister/son of/daughter of)  
Name two things or ideas the person loves  
Name two emotions the person feels  
Name two things the person does  
Name two things the person wants  
Name his or her favorite place  
Name his or her gift or special talent.

Adapted from [https://www.readwritethink.org/sites/default/files/resources/lesson\\_images/lesson398/biopoem.pdf](https://www.readwritethink.org/sites/default/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson398/biopoem.pdf)

Here an example of a biopoem about the main character in this story:

Amō, the Bee  
Happy, caring, inspired  
Daughter of North Wind Dancing  
Loves family and laughter  
Sometimes fearful, often courageous  
Busy hands, shaping pots  
Problem solver.

Work in pairs to create a biopoem about a character in the story. Following the structure above, including at least 7 of the 9 areas listed.

## 1.8 Big Ideas Worksheet

You will be gathering knowledge about an important idea/teaching that has been assigned to your group by filling in this worksheet. Be prepared to present your findings!

**Names of your group members:** \_\_\_\_\_

What is the big idea you've been assigned? Be careful to spell the word correctly, including any accents on letters:

Write down the definition of your big idea from the glossary at the back of the picture book. Include its pronunciation and practice pronouncing the word out loud together:

Put the definition into your own words:

What are three examples from *Amō's Sapotawan* that relate to your big idea (include page numbers):

1.

2.

3.

What are two modern-day examples that relate to your big idea:

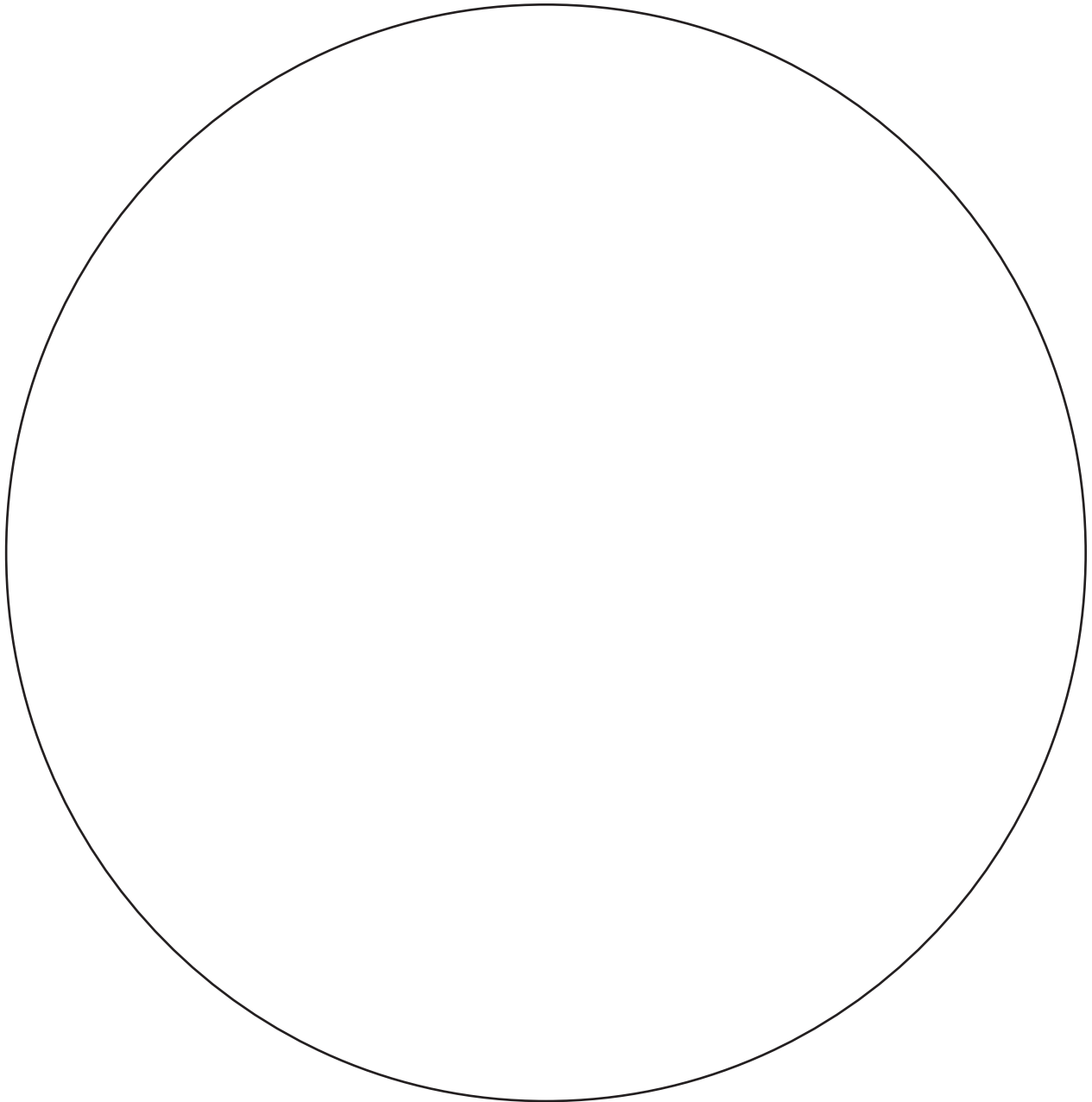
1.

2.

## 1.9 Exit Slip for Big Ideas

Through your own presentation and the presentations of other groups, you have learned about several teachings/big ideas for *Amō's Sapotawan*.

In the circle below, list the two that you feel are most important to you and explain why. These are teachings that you will take with you and not forget in the next part of your learning journey.



## 1.10 Creating a Sapotawan Journal

“Sapotawana recognize that you are always learning throughout different times in your life, and that you have new things to offer the world as you gain these skills.” AS, p. 2

Use your Sapotawan Journal to record your ideas, experiences, and understandings of reading and studying *Amō’s Sapotawan*, including how they connect to your own life and own gifts. Start by creating a cover design for your journal that depicts the idea of metamorphosis (a slow transition).

Below are some suggestions for writing in your journal. At various times, your teacher may also suggest questions for you to respond to as you proceed on your learning path.

1. **Diagram** or write one or two main ideas that emerge as you read the story. You may organize your thoughts in connection to these key ideas.
2. **Organize** your ideas or responses into four areas: physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental. You may want to use symbols or colours to represent each of the four paths.
3. The Rocky Cree believe all people are born with **gifts** and it’s the family’s role to help young people discover theirs so they can find their **life’s purpose/miskanaw**. The Greek philosopher Aristotle believed that it is the intersection of people’s **gifts, talents, and abilities** that lead them to discovering their **purpose**. Use your journal as a personal exploration your gifts, talents, abilities, and purpose.
4. In your journal **you may include** sentences, words, pictures, maps, stories, dialogues, letters, opinions, questions. You may want to include reflection pieces that link to your own gifts and stages in life.
5. With each journal entry, **record** the day, season, moon, weather, and the place where you are working. Use Rocky Cree words wherever you can.
6. As you work on your journal, find ways to **personalize** your journey of learning.
7. From time to time, **be ready to discuss** your journal entries in a small group in a sharing circle. You may decide to share some ideas and others you may wish to keep private.

## 1.11 Teacher Backgrounder: Visual Thinking Strategies

*Visual literacy involves learning to interpret images by analyzing how they are designed and presented to communicate ideas and feelings. It includes asking questions about the author's intended message and evaluating his or her decisions about how to best convey this message.*

These types of guiding questions may be used to prompt students to enrich the details of their observations of images.

### **See**

Observe the physical details in the image: persons, objects, location, size, relation, and the perspective or angle from which they are seen.

Describe the colours in the scene: tones, textures, effects of light and shadow.

What is happening in this picture?

What is closest to you, furthest away?

### **Think**

What is the subject? Does the image depict people, a place, or an event?

What stands out the most in this image? What makes it stand out to you?

What visual clues help you understand who the people are, when and where it takes place?

Describe the motion in the image. Is there a lot of energy, or does it feel still? What visual clues support this?

Describe the framing of the image. What is included in the image, and what may have been left out by the artist?

### **Wonder**

Describe the style of this image. Is it photographic, abstract, expressive?

What words would you use to describe this image? Why?

Describe the sounds suggested by this image.

What message do you think this image communicates? Why do you think this?

Describe your feelings about the scene: what mood does it create?

Why do you think the artist chose to depict this scene of the story? Would you have chosen a different scene?

## 1.12 Teacher Backgrounder: Analyzing Picture Book Design

*In a picture book, all the visual and written elements combine to express the message.*

*Amō's Sapotawan* is not simply a picture book: it contains text and images that tell an imagined story as well as providing factual information about Rocky Cree culture, language, and history. This approach reflects the Indigenous holistic approach of passing on knowledge through the integration of storytelling, visual art, and history.

The design or form of a book can help readers interpret and navigate its content. Content is what a text says, or its message. Form is the way in which the message is presented or arranged. Everything from a subtitle to a paragraph to a punctuation mark is a way of arranging the content of a text. Form and content can't be disconnected from one another because they influence one another. Consider how the use of certain colours, or particular font styles, can change the character of a message and influence the reader.

Analyzing the design or form of a book can help students develop visual literacy and distinguish various genres of texts. Readers can learn more about the story by paying attention to elements such as the cover, the size of the book, the paper, the illustrations, the titles and subtitles, the fonts, the layout or page arrangement, the borders and spaces.

Guide students to observe the “look” of the text and images in the book: colours, scale, patterns, lines, contrast, shapes, spaces, font and text styles, image styles. Ask them to notice how the body text and the subtitles differ, helping them to distinguish their different purposes. As students observe these characteristics of how the book is presented, they will better understand its message.

### Suggested Guiding Questions

- How is this picture book different from a graphic novel? From a biography?
- What are its distinguishing features? How do the images help convey information?
- How does the arrangement of text on the page help you to read and understand the story? How does the layout help you distinguish the documentary parts (non-fiction) from the story of Pīsim (fiction)?
- If this book were to be made into a movie, which images and scenes would you would begin with? Would you choose to make a documentary film or a drama?

For further information about the interaction of text and images in picture books, refer to the following article: <https://www.nrm.org/2013/05/imagination-interacts-with-text-words-and-images-in-childrens-picture-books-by-lynn-chen/>

Students may also be guided to notice the elements of the picture book's **peritext**. Peritext refers to the images and text that are secondary to the main body of the book, such as the glossary, cover pages, preface or introduction, source notes, acknowledgements, indexes, chapter titles, bibliographic and publication details, maps and timelines and diagrams. The peritext serves several functions and often discloses many unique elements about the genre, purpose, character and setting of a published work, which can enhance the reader's understanding of the book.

For further information about the various roles of peritext in helping readers navigate and interpret a book, refer to this article: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1125289.pdf>

## Module 2: Sapotawana: Rites of Passage



### ***Sipi nisitohtamowin: Enduring Understanding***

*“One of the most important asiniskaw ithiniwak tools for survival is sapotawana: the rites of passage that acknowledge each person as they attain certain skill levels at particular stages of life. Sapotawana encourage people to discover their gifts, learn about their responsibilities, and find their life’s purpose.” AS, p. 2*

### **Key Concepts**

Rites of passage, coming of age, gifts, life’s purpose, responsibilities, community and family

### **Key Words**

sapotawan (sah poh tah wahn) – rite of passage

ototimihitowin (oh toh teh mee hee toh win) – family group based on mother’s lineage

mithikowisiwin (MEE the koh weh seh win) – gift

atamiskatowin: (ah TAA mi skah toh win) – gift-giving ceremony for acknowledging a person

### **Guiding Questions**

What is a rite of passage?

What is a coming of age?

What are examples of tangible and intangible gifts?

What is the role of mentorship in the coming of age process?

In what ways are a person’s gifts, responsibilities, and life’s purpose connected?

How are ceremonies performed and celebrated?

## Kiskinwahamakiwin: Teaching Strategies

“Although the understanding of these rites of passage has changed over time, the underlying concept is still the same: celebrating a person’s accomplishments as they go through life. Today we might think of advancing to the next grade level as a sapatowan, or graduating from school, getting married, or starting your first job.” AS, p. 2

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### Rites of Passage

Examples of life cycle events include birth, puberty, the transition to adulthood, and marriage. Ceremonies and initiations to mark these may be sacred, secular, or both. Most often they include special practices or rituals that signify changes in status.

The transition from childhood to adulthood – coming of age – is a significant stepping stone in the lives of many young people. The transition is often marked by a rite of passage, a formal or informal ceremony, that honours and celebrates the milestone.

In *Amō’s Sapatowan*, Amō is led through a sapatowan, a formal rite of passage that helps her discover her gifts, learn about her responsibilities, and find her life’s purpose.

A rite of passage is designed to acknowledge and celebrate the stage or specific skills of a child as they relate to family and community values. It prepares the child, their family, and their community for the next stage of development and the changes that will occur. In Amō’s case, her sapatowan reflects that she is connected to the land and creation, that she is loved, valued, and supported by her family and community, and that she has responsibilities to help her community thrive. As part of the formal ceremony she undergoes, she is given gifts to help her in her next life’s stage as an apprentice pottery maker.

In their journal, **1.10 Creating a Sapatowan Journal**, have the students create an invitation to a modern rite of passage. They may add details such as a title and description of the event, name of hosts, time and date it will take place, location, and other pertinent information such as dress code, cultural and/or religious notes, and etiquette on gifts. The event can be formal or informal, large or small. Use art supplies to embellish the invitation.

“Wow, I don’t look like a little girl anymore! [Amō] said to herself, remembering that she would soon be in her fourteenth winter.” AS, p. 7

#### TEACHER TIP

Rites of passage tend to have three distinct phases:

Separation: leaving the familiar

Transition: a time of testing, learning, and growth

Return: incorporation and reintegrations



At the conclusion of *Amō's Sapotawan*, Amō is formally recognized as an apprentice pottery maker. Her sapotawan/coming of age process consists of a series of event and stages.

Throughout the story, Amō is on a journey, both figuratively and literally. A key aspect of her journey is discovering the area in which she will apprentice. She is faced with other challenges, including encountering a bear and fleeing a forest fire. Finally, Amō is honoured in a community ceremony and is gifted with an askihko bundle, a formal acknowledgment of her new role within the family and community.

"Tomorrow there will be the minisiwin ceremony to acknowledge the apprenticeships coming up. Amō will be getting her askihko bundle and others will be given additional gifts for their existing bundles." AS, p. 36

Have students explore the three common phases that make up a rite of passage by completing **2.1 Amō's Rite of Passage**. Consider using the template to have them explore their own experiences with rites of passages and capture these ideas in their **Sapotawan Journal**.

Amō's family plays an integral role in her sapotawan. Read aloud this extract from the book:

"Each sapotawan is acknowledged and celebrated by our minisiwin, our immediate family, as well as by our ototitomihitowin, our grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, and our wāhkotowin, our adopted relatives." AS, p. 2

Write the three familial terms on the whiteboard:

- minisiwin: our immediate family
- ototitomihitowin: our grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins
- wāhkotowin: our adopted relatives

As a whole group, create an emoji or pictogram for each term. For example, minisiwin might be a blueberry cluster following the family diagram in the introduction to the book; ototitomihitowin might be a heart; wāhkotowin might be a circle. Draw these on the board.

Guide students in exploring the roles various family members play in Amō's coming of age throughout the story and at the minisiwin ceremony in the story's conclusion. List examples on the whiteboard under the appropriate heading.

Lead students through a silent thinking exercise – no talking or sharing, just silent contemplation. Ask:

*Who are your minisiwin? ototitomihitowin? wāhkotowin?*

*What roles do they play in your life?*

They may wish to capture their thoughts and ideas in their **Sapotawan Journal**.

## Gifts & Responsibilities

There is more than one meaning of the word gift, including something given to someone and a person's natural ability or talent. Gift giving is done without the expectation of payment or receiving anything in return.

Help students differentiate between tangible and intangible gifts. Tangible gifts are physical or material items. In Amō's time, they would have been handmade or found in the natural environment but in modern times, they tend to be purchased at stores and wrapped in wrapping paper or put in gift bags. Intangible gifts are things that are not physical and typically cannot be purchased. They include advice, guidance, time, a listening ear, compassion, mentorship, and so on. Intangible gifts are often invaluable to their receivers.

### Tangible Gifts

"Everyone had gifts to give. Pīsīm gave Amō a piece of the special red stone that was used for making beads. Nikik gave her a chert knife with a beautiful moose hide case. Tawipīsīm gave her a kwakwāywat, beautifully decorated with an etching of a flower. Napiw gave her a small birch paddle that she could use to shape her pottery." AS, p. 44

Think about the gifts Amō receives during her sapotawan. What tangible gifts does she receive? Have students explore p. 44 to discover what Amō is given in her bundle and the other gifts her family gives her as well.

Ask students:

*What does Amō know, without even looking, is in her bundle of tools for becoming a pottery maker?*  
[Answer: pieces of hide for kneading and rolling the clay, a clamshell for smoothing it, a birch-bark cup for carrying water, some fire-cracked rocks for tempering, a twisted cord bag, a collection of ocistasiyapiy, sinew, sticks, and small bones to decorate the pottery.]

*Who gifted Amō with a special red stone?* [Answer: Pīsīm]

*Who gifted Amō with a special kwakwāywat /birchbark basket?* [Answer: Tawipīsīm]

*Who gifted Amō with a birch paddle for shaping pottery?* [Answer: Napiw]

*Who gifted Amō with a chert knife?* [Answer: Nikik]

Invite students to raise their hands and offer a response.

### Intangible Gifts

"Ācapi Okimaw calmly looked at his daughter and said, 'Get another askihk, Amō. Carry it back up the hill. They must be thirsty up there by now.' It is the way of the asiniskaw īthiniwak: always move forward." AS, p. 22

Amō receives a number of intangible gifts throughout the story. For example, after she encounters the bear and breaks her askihk, her father calmly tells her to get another one and take water to the berry pickers. He offers her an invaluable gift: the teaching that it is important to always moving forward even when one experiences a challenge or hurdle. Draw students' attention to the sidebar note called

'Always Move Forward' on p. 22 for more detail. Discuss this scene with students and why this teaching is such a valuable gift for Amō, her family, and the Rocky Cree people, both past and present. Also ask students:

*Why is this teaching a gift for them today?*

*Can they think of a time they had to move forward in the face of a challenge or disappointment?*

Ask students if they can find other examples of intangible gifts in the story whether they are for Amō or other characters.

Finally, draw connections to students' lives by leading an all-group discussion about tangible and intangible gifts they've received and given.

Ask:

*What kinds of tangible and intangible gifts have they given or can they give and to whom?*

*What kinds of tangible and intangible gifts have they received or would they like to receive?*

*How does it feel to give? To receive?*

Gift-giving occasions can be an expression of love or friendship, of gratitude, and/or of solidarity or community. Gift giving may also accompany a celebration or rite of passage.

Instruct the students to capture their understandings in their **Sapotawan Journal**. Ask them to write the word GIFT in the centre of a page and write down recent tangible and intangible gifts they have received or given.

## Gifts as Talents

*"When she was having her midday meal, Tawipīsim walked up to her and said, 'I heard you broke the askihk when you met the maskwa, Amō. But remember that you know how to make new askihkwak. Today we will kasaskahānawak, fire, the ones we made two days ago.'*

*Suddenly Amō understood the sign she had been given. This was her proud day. Now she knew she would be a pottery maker."AS p. 24*

Another meaning of gift refers to a person's talents and passions. Explore how Amō's coming of age is about discovering and nurturing her gifts, taking on greater responsibilities within her community, and reinforcing links with the land and nature.

Ask students:

*What are your personal gifts?*

*What people in your life have helped nurture your personal gifts?*

*How do your personal gifts help better your family and your community?*

Distribute **2.2 Mithikowisiwina: The Gifts You Are Given**. Instruct the students to complete. Guide and assist as necessary.

“I wonder what the future will bring?” Amō thought. “Will my relatives who come after me continue to practice our asiniskaw ithiniwak sapotawana?” AS, p. 47

Marking Amō’s change of role within the community helps her to form a new identity relative to that change; create a cultural continuity through the passing down of traditions; and strengthen a sense of connection among community members that contributes to everyone’s well-being and survival. The acknowledgment of Amō’s gifts is a gift not only to her, but to the community and the community’s future.

*Ask: In what ways are a person’s gifts, responsibilities, and life’s purpose connected?*

Define each term as necessary.

Invite students to complete **2.3 Gifts + Responsibilities**. As an alternative, you can instruct them to plot Amō’s journey on the fishbone diagram rather than their own.

Amō is not the only person who is acknowledged for her gifts, other members of the family are as well. Have students read through *Amō’s Sapotawan* and make a list of characters who are also being recognized by the community. Instruct them to write the character’s names in their **Sapotawan Journal** along with their acknowledged gifts.

#### TEACHER TIP

Defining ‘life’s purpose’ is not an easy task. Most basically, your life purpose consists of the central motivating aims of your life. Purpose can guide life decisions, influence behavior, shape goals, offer a sense of direction, and create meaning. For some people, purpose is connected to vocation – meaningful, satisfying work. For others, their purpose lies in their responsibilities to their family or friends. Others seek meaning through spirituality or religious beliefs.

Questions that may come up when you reflect upon your life purpose are:

Who am I?

Where do I belong?

When do I feel fulfilled?

Adapted from: <https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/what-life-purpose>

“One of the most important asiniskaw ithiniwak tools for survival is sapotawana: the rites of passage that acknowledge each person as they attain certain skill levels at particular stages of life. Sapotawana encourage people to discover their gifts, learn about their responsibilities, and find their life’s purpose.” AS, p. 2

#### TEACHER TIP

Apprentice

[ uh-pren-tis ]

Noun: a person who works for another in order to learn a trade

Share a dictionary definition of the word apprentice and research the types of apprenticeships that exist in Canada today (eg. electrician, mechanic). Instruct the students to create a Venn diagram in their **Sapotawan Journal** comparing the modern version of apprentice with the Rocky Cree concept of apprentice detailed in the sidebar note on p. 13 of the picture book.

## Ceremony

“Ceremonies are performed for many reasons, such as to heal, to honour the dead, to learn and receive guidance, and more. Strict protocols, sets of rules that determine how

a ceremony should be performed, are followed when conducting ceremonies. There are also important teachings connected to ceremonies and protocols, reasons for doing things that teach important lessons for how to live a good life.” AS, p. 40, sidebar

Ceremony is essential to traditional Rocky Cree culture and to the story of *Amō’s Sapotawan*. In the narrative, the culminating event is a gift-giving ceremony of acknowledgement, atāmiskatowin, of Amō’s coming of age, when she takes on her identity and responsibilities as an apprentice pottery maker within the community. Have students explore Amō’s ceremony on pp. 40-44 of the book closely by completing resource [2.4 Amō’s Minisiwin Ceremony](#).

## Contemporary Ceremonies

Initiate a discussion with the students about ceremonies today and ask them to share their ideas about these questions:

*What is the role of ceremony in our modern lives?*

*How has it changed from the past?*

*Can you think of examples of ceremonies or formal observances that you know today? (For example, graduations, marriages, school openings, tournament prizes, etc.)*

Encourage students to think about the idea that contemporary western society seems to place less emphasis or importance on the role of ceremony and to write a reflection in their [Sapotawan Journal](#) about why ceremony is (or should be) important in life today.

Draw students’ attention to two contemporary examples of ceremony – or a formal rite of recognition – in our society today. Both of these examples collectively honour and remember Indigenous peoples in our community/province/nation’s shared past. See [2.5 Teacher Background: Land Acknowledgements and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation](#) for further information.

**Indigenous land acknowledgements:** Invite students to launch a web search on this topic to gather information about recent developments in the formal acknowledgement of Indigenous lands by various organizations in Manitoba. Ask students to find other formal land acknowledgements by Manitoba organizations. Encourage them to share orally with the class the land acknowledgements they have found. Following this sharing, place the students in small groups to discuss and respond to the questions in student resource [2.6 Ceremony and Indigenous Land Acknowledgement](#).

**National Day for Truth and Reconciliation:** September 30, 2021 marked the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, enacted by the Parliament of Canada. Ask students to launch a web search to gather details about the historical significance of this event. This event involves the formal recognition and honouring of all Indigenous persons who have been forced to attend residential schools in Canada. Invite students to share what they have found.

Ask students:

*What is the historical significance of this event?*

*Why are Indigenous activists asking Canadians not to see this day as just another ‘day off’?*

*How might Canadians show proper respect in honouring the Indigenous people who had to attend residential schools?*

## Ceremonial Places and Objects

Ceremony is a formal and serious proceeding that follows established rules or protocols. Often the recognized protocols **involve sacred places or objects** and use symbols to represent meaning (for example, a wedding band symbolizes eternal commitment in a marriage ceremony).

Together as a class, ask students to make an inventory of the ceremonial objects, symbols, and places involved in the traditional Rocky Cree ceremony described in *Amō's Sapotowan* (refer to **2.4 Amō's Minisiwin Ceremony**) and in the modern-day ceremonies they have researched above (land acknowledgements and National Day of Truth and Reconciliation).

Ceremonial objects, symbols, and places to consider:

- *mistīkiwahp*: the lodge where the ceremony is held is a sacred place
- *kotawān*: the ceremonial fire pit around which everyone gathers to pray
- *tobacco and moose hide*: offered to the elder leading the ceremony
- *askihko bundle*: presented to the person being honoured in the ceremony
- *residential school buildings*: some former schools have become National Historic Sites in Canada
- *orange shirts*: worn on Orange Shirt Day as symbols of children who attended residential and who are not forgotten.

When the students have completed their list, invite them to choose one object or symbol to illustrate in their **Sapotowan Journal**. Have them share their illustrations with students sitting next to them.

### TEACHER TIP

In Manitoba, the former Portage La Prairie Indian Residential School was designated as a National Historical Site in 2020. It is located on the urban land of the Long Plain First Nation, adjacent to the city of Portage La Prairie. It is now known as the Rufus Prince Building and contains the National Indigenous Residential School Museum which takes bookings for public visits.

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## Celebration

In Rocky Cree culture, defining moments or landmarks in a person's life are first marked by a ceremony and then celebrated by their family and their community. As with the ceremony, the celebration afterwards is important not only to the person being honoured, but also to the entire community.

"After the atāmiskatowin, everyone was ready to dance. 'Haw, nimitān, let's celebrate!' Kisithiniw called. 'Mwakwa, nikamō, sing!'

The dancing went on long into the night, song after song. The people danced until the wāwāhtiw, the northern lights, came out. They moved together in the same rhythm as the spirits in the sky.

After a while, Amō stepped out of the dancing circle into the night, feeling the rush of energy through her body from the dancing and celebration. She stood beside the water and took in all the sensations of the night, watching the wāwāhtiw and the stars dancing around her." AS, pp. 44-47

Ask the students to read the description of the community celebration aloud. Then place them in small groups to create a short skit or improvisation of the celebration, using gesture, movement, dance, singing, or music. Encourage them to create a scene of collective elation or happiness in their own way. Following this exercise, they should be warmed up to engage in a brainstorming session about celebration.

Ask students to engage in a rapid-fire brainstorm to gather all the words that come to mind when they think of “celebration.” This can be done by going around the circle and having each student write a word that comes to mind on a sticky note or cue card. Students keep moving around the circle, one at a time, adding a sticky note/cue card to the centre so that all the ideas are visible. Starter ideas: cake, candles, dancing, singing, gifts, graduation, wedding, birthday, fancy dress, gala, festivity, laughter, decorations, powwow, fireworks, sparklers, happy, friends, family.

When the ideas slow down, invite students to group the sticky notes together under headings and come up with the three or four Big Ideas that emerged from their brainstorming.

Ask students to include two of these Big Ideas in a written response to this question:

*What is the main purpose of the celebration? Is it to bind a group together? To be happy? To have fun? To link us to the past? To establish a group identity? Other purposes?*

If the students are struggling to respond to this question, encourage them to consider the idea that all cultures include some form of celebration, though the specific cultural practices vary widely. Throughout much of Canadian history, there have been many examples of the suppression of traditional Indigenous celebrations by the Government of Canada. For example, Sundance and the Potlatch celebrations were banned by the Indian Act until 1951, when an amendment to the Act removed sections that restricted cultural customs. Some students may wish to carry out a mini-research project on this topic.

To conclude this theme, ask students to consider the Canadian celebration of National Indigenous Peoples Day, which takes place on June 21st each year. Using the ideas they have gathered about the theme of celebration, invite them to complete the task described in the student resource **2.7 Celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day**.

## **Module 2 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources**

### **Rites of Passage**

2.1 Amō's Rite of Passage/Sapotawan

### **Gifts and Responsibilities**

2.2 Mithikowisiwina: The Gifts You Are Given

2.3 Gifts + Responsibilities

### **Ceremony**

2.4 Amō's Minisiwin Ceremony

2.5 Teacher Backgrounder: Land Acknowledgements and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

2.6 Ceremony and Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

### **Celebration**

2.7 Celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day

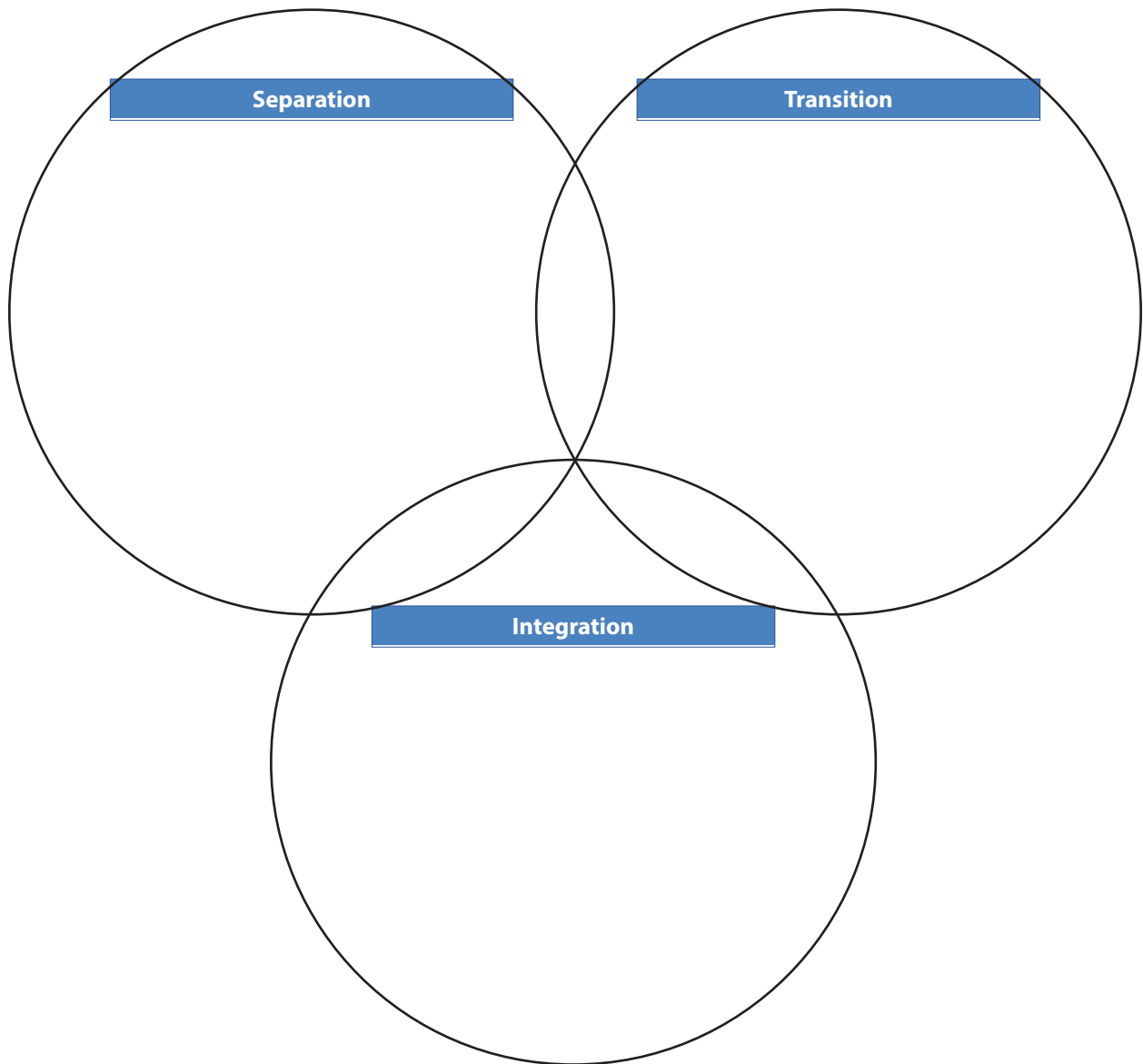


## 2.1 Amō's Rite of Passage/Sapotawan

Rites of passage have acted as an important tool of personal growth and community unity. Celebrations, milestones, and ceremonies act as rituals to help young people transition into the responsibilities of adulthood.

At their most basic, rites of passage tend to have three phases: separation (leaving the familiar), transition (a time of testing, learning, and growth), and integration (creating a new identity).

Use the graphic below as a starter and outline Amō's sapatowan from girlhood to pottery maker. You may also add colour, drawing, and quotes from the book.



## 2.2 Mithikowisiwina: The Gifts You Are Given

**Step 1:** Write the names of people whom you admire and appreciate and who have supported you and have been important in your life.

**Step 2:** Imagine that in the future (10, 20, 30 years!) there is an event in which you are being honoured and recognized. Now imagine that each of the people you named is giving a toast to you. Fill in the blank what you hope most they would say about you ...

**Person A:** "The quality I have come to admire most about you is \_\_\_\_\_.

I have seen you time and time again live this out by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_."

**Person B:** "The thing I most respect about you is \_\_\_\_\_.

It challenges and inspires me to: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_."

**Person C:** "This is what you mean to me. I have come to see that no matter what, you are

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. I will always remember when you

\_\_\_\_\_."  
\_\_\_\_\_."

**Person D:** "Let me tell you about a couple of ways that I have seen you grow and develop:

\_\_\_\_\_.

I am most proud of the fact that you have \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_."

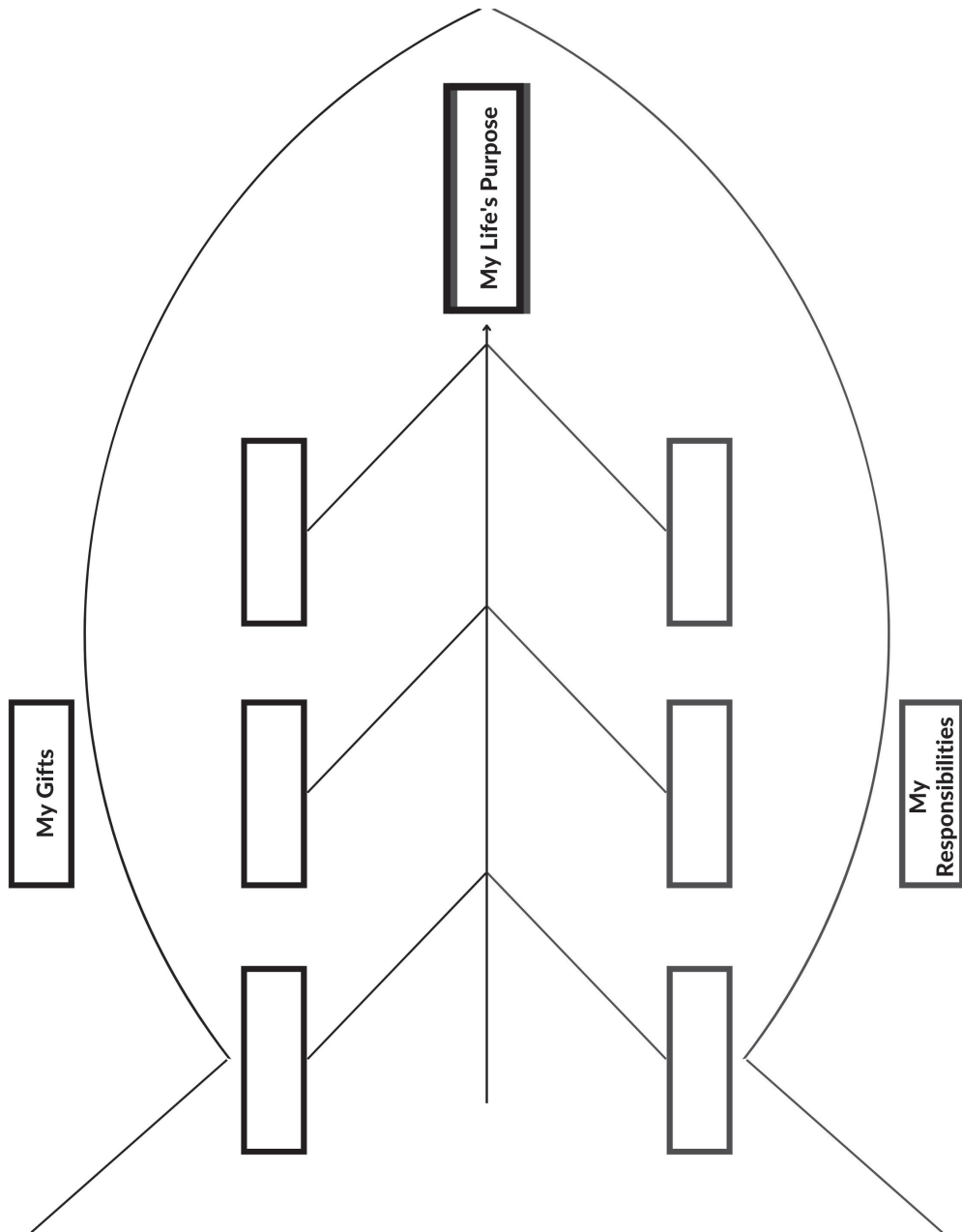
Adapted from: : Trinity University (TX) Reflections Program

## 2.3 Gifts + Responsibilities

### **Instructions:**

Use the fishbone diagram to illustrate the connection between your gifts, your responsibilities, and your life's purpose.

You may add the names of mentors and important people along the spine of the fishbone.



## 2.4 Amō's Minisiwin Ceremony

Carefully read over the description of Amō's ceremony on pp. 40-44 in *Amō's Sapotawan*. Read over the parts of Amō's ceremony listed on the table below. Place them in the order they occurred, numbering them from 1 to 14 in the left-hand column titled 'Step'.

| Step | Event  |
|------|--|
|      | Amō's Auntie, Tawip̄sim presents the bundle to Nōcok̄is̄iw, then it is presented to Amō.   |
|      | Gather wood for the kotawān, fire.   |
|      | Everyone gathers around the firepit.   |
|      | The rest of the minisiwin give gifts to Amō, the person being honoured.                    |
|      | The offering of tobacco and moosehide to the matriarch of the family.                      |
|      | Those being honoured stand up.   |
|      | The feast begins (includes foods like sturgeon, moose meat, berries) and stories are told. |
|      | Women work on the feast.   |
|      | Celebratory dancing begins   |
|      | Minisiwin prepare gifts for the people being celebrated.                                   |
|      | Men work to build the mist̄ik̄iwa – the lodge where the ceremony is held                   |
|      | Nōcok̄is̄iw leads the ceremony.  |
|      | The matriarch, Nōcok̄is̄iw, says the opening prayers and lights the fire.                  |

**Teacher Resource:** Amō's Minisiwin Ceremony – KEY

| <b>Step</b> | <b>Event</b>   |
|-------------|--|
| <b>10</b>   | Amō's Auntie, Tawipīsim presents the bundle to Nōcokīšiw, then it is presented to Amō.     |
| <b>3</b>    | Gather wood for the kotawān, fire.   |
| <b>6</b>    | Everyone gathers around the firepit.   |
| <b>13</b>   | The rest of the minisiwin give gifts to Amō, the person being honoured.                    |
| <b>1</b>    | The offering of tobacco and moosehide to the matriarch of the family.                      |
| <b>9</b>    | Those being honoured stand up.   |
| <b>12</b>   | The feast begins (includes foods like sturgeon, moose meat, berries) and stories are told. |
| <b>4</b>    | Women work on the feast.   |
| <b>14</b>   | Celebratory dancing begins   |
| <b>5</b>    | Minisiwin prepare gifts for the people being celebrated.                                   |
| <b>2</b>    | Men work to build the mistīkiwa – the lodge where the ceremony is held                     |
| <b>8</b>    | Nōcokīšiw leads the ceremony.  |
| <b>7</b>    | The matriarch, Nōcokīšiw, says the opening prayers and lights the fire.                    |

## 2.5 Teacher Backgrounder: Land Acknowledgements and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

### Formal Indigenous land acknowledgements:

Invite students to launch a web search on this topic to gather information about recent developments in the formal acknowledgement of Indigenous lands by various organizations in Manitoba. Here are some examples:

- Land acknowledgement of Manitoba Legislature, adopted November 2021. Listen to the opening of the Manitoba legislature:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LW-X9vCo0WY>
- True North Sports, owners of the Winnipeg Jets, include a land acknowledgement as of 2016:
  - <https://www.tnse.com/our-company/land-acknowledgement/>
- University of Manitoba officially acknowledges Indigenous territory occupied by the campus:
  - <https://manitobastart.com/land-acknowledgement/>
- Winnipeg Blue Bombers, the first CFL team to include an acknowledgement before every game:
  - <https://www.bluebombers.com/indigenous-community/>
- Government of Manitoba Shared Health Services acknowledge Indigenous territory:
  - <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/about/land-acknowledgement/>

Invite students to find other formal land acknowledgements by Manitoba organizations.

Refer to this article for further information on the significance of Indigenous land acknowledgements:

<https://locallove.ca/issues/what-are-land-acknowledgements-and-why-do-they-matter/#.YaLJpdDMLDc>

### National Day for Truth and Reconciliation:

September 30, 2021 marked the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, enacted by the Parliament of Canada. This event involves the formal recognition and honouring of all Indigenous persons who have been forced to attend Residential Schools in Canada. To explore the significance of the day, ask students to explore websites/articles such as the following:

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/national-day-truth-reconciliation.html>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/first-national-truth-reconciliation-day-1.6188540>
- <https://globalnews.ca/news/8223639/sept-30-day-off-national-day-for-truth-and-reconciliation-winnipeg-indigenous-activist/>

## 2.6 Ceremony and Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

“We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations.

We acknowledge part of Manitoba is located on the homeland of the Red River Métis.

We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit.

We remain committed to working in partnership with the Indigenous peoples in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration in accordance with their constitutional rights and human rights.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LW-X9vCo0WY>

Listen to the Manitoba Government’s formal acknowledgement of Indigenous lands as you follow the text above. Read the acknowledgement aloud and check on any words you do not understand.

What makes a ceremony a ceremony?

Think of the elements in the ceremony of Amō’s sapotowan:

- the ceremony is **formal**: it follows certain rules and **protocols** established in advance.
- the ceremony has a **spiritual** element: it involves prayer and is **respectful** and **serious**.
- the ceremony is carried out by community **leaders** and is approved by the **Elders** of the groups involved.
- the ceremony recognizes **guests of honour** and community leaders.
- the ceremony involves the participation and acceptance of **the entire community**.

Which of these elements are part of the land acknowledgement you listened to?

What elements does a land acknowledgement have that are not part of Amō’s ceremony?

Can a land acknowledgement be considered a ceremony?

## **2.7 Celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day**

For more than 25 years, Canada has been holding a national celebration of the heritage, diverse cultures, and outstanding achievements of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada. It is celebrated on June 21 each year.

How will your family and friends celebrate the next National Indigenous Peoples Day?

This is your task:

- Design a poster inviting your family and friends to participate in a celebration for National Indigenous Peoples Day. Your purpose is to encourage all the people invited to contribute in some way to the event. A celebration is a festive and uplifting event: it is not as formal as a ceremony. It is the collective expression of joy and shared happiness. Often, it involves gifts, special dress, speeches, dance, music. What things will you include to make this a special day for your family and friends and honour the significance of the day?
- Your poster should be illustrated and should include all the main details of the planned celebration. It should have clearly identified symbols and should be laid out in an organized way so that the events are clear to everyone. Will you invite special guests? Will a special song be performed? It can be modern, but it should include a respectful connection to the past and Indigenous peoples and should appeal to all generations.

Here are some sources you may consult:

<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013248/1534872397533>

[https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-CIRNAC-RCAANC/DAM-PPLCOM/STAGING/texte-text/nIPD\\_activity\\_guide\\_2018\\_1528380426091\\_eng.pdf](https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-CIRNAC-RCAANC/DAM-PPLCOM/STAGING/texte-text/nIPD_activity_guide_2018_1528380426091_eng.pdf)

<https://zeroceiling.org/national-indigenous-peoples-day-2020/>



## Module 3: Askihkwak: Pottery



### ***Sipi nisitohtamowin: Enduring Understanding***

*“Pottery was an amazing invention that took people many years to perfect. Once that happened, thousands of years ago, the use and manufacture of pots spread across the boreal forest of Canada.” AS, p. 31*

### **Key Concepts**

creations stories, food gathering, medicine, interconnectedness, health and wellness, mindfulness

### **Key Words**

aniskotapiwin (ah nee sko tah pee win) – strengthening connections with ancestors and their teachings

māskikīy (MAA SKEE KEEY)– medicine

maskihkiya (mah SKEE keh yah)– knowledge of medicine

wapatānask(wah pah taah nahsk) – clay

askihkwak (us kee wuk) – clay pots

kasaskahānawak (kah sah ska HAA nah wuk) – the process of firing pottery

### **Guiding Questions**

In what ways is the traditional making of pottery linked to Rocky Cree creation stories?

How did Rocky Cree culture embody healthy lifestyle practices?

What are the four dimensions of holistic health?

What soil is good for making pottery?

What technology did the Rocky Cree use?

How is a pot made?

# Kiskinwahamakiwin: Teaching Strategies

“Pottery is connected to the asiniskaw ithinwak creation story because the creation story is about the beginning of the land, which is what pottery vessels are made from. In the Cree word for pottery, askhikwak, the prefix ‘aski’ means land or earth.” AS, p. 25

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## The Asiniskaw İthiniwak Creation Story and Pottery

### TEACHER TIP

Expand the links between pottery making and creation stories by exploring the role of allegories, parables, analogies, and metaphors.

Creation stories describe the creation of the world and how First Peoples came to live in it. They are more than just a story. Creation stories embody worldviews, ways of knowing, and traditional knowledge. Oftentimes they mark key geographical, spiritual, and life events.

The Rocky Cree creation story tells us about the history, culture, and beliefs of the asiniskaw ithiniwak, and the environments in which they live.

*Amō’s Sapotawan* clearly connects pottery and the creation story of the Rocky Cree:

“Making pottery involves bringing together the four elements—water, earth, fire, and air—to create something new. It’s a miniature version of the way everything was created and a reminder that all things come from the land.” AS, p. 25

Read aloud the sidebar on page 25 of the picture book titled ‘The Asiniskaw İthiniwak Creation Story and Pottery.’ Reinforce the importance of creation stories and their role in Rocky Cree culture. Point out for students the significance of land and how the word recurs throughout the description and is linked to creation, to pottery, and to medicine.

Invite the students to complete **3.1 Creation Stories + Pottery: Venn Diagram**. Take time to explain a Venn diagram. Instruct them to label the circles ‘Pottery’ and ‘Creation Stories’. When finished, consider expanding the activity into an art lesson. Have them colour their diagrams. Post them on a class bulletin board.

In the same way creation stories help us gain a richer understanding of Indigenous cultures, worldviews, and ways of knowing, so does language.

There are roughly 6,500 languages in the world today. Rocky Cree is one of the more than 70 Indigenous languages spoken across Canada. Language is the vessel that contains Indigenous knowledge. Learning through oral language – which includes storytelling and story sharing – is part of the experiential nature of language appreciation.

### TEACHER TIP

Reading out loud is one of the best parts of sharing storybooks with your students. Not only does it bring the story to life, it dovetails with Rocky Cree oral traditions and oral methods of passing on culture, knowledge, and tradition.

Check out these 10 tips for reading aloud from Scholastic: <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/teaching-tools/articles/resources/read-aloud-tips.html>

All languages are a collection of words; each one is unique, both in its structure and in the way it reflects the culture of the people who speak it.

Draw students' attention to the sidebar notes throughout *Amō's Sapotawan* that feature Cree vocabulary. Read several of the words aloud and connect their meanings to what is going on in the illustration on the same page. For example, on the spread found on pp. 10-11, we see the Cree word *kāmikwaskwak* (pronounced KAA MEE kwahs kwahk) which means a red sky at sunset. Ask students to find the red sky in the illustration and point out where the glow from the sky is reflected onto parts of the landscape below. Read the story that accompanies the illustration.

*Ask: How does Amō feel about the sunset?* If students do not mention it, point out the word gift and discuss why Amō might think of the sunset as a gift.

## Medicine

'The Asiniskaw Īthiniwak Creation Story and Pottery' note also focuses on medicine.

"When someone works the land and receives gifts from the land, this is called 'taking in medicine.' All good things are thought of as medicine. Medicine is used to feed people and gathering medicine from the land and using it to create new things is thought of as a labour of love. Pottery can be a form of medicine because it is used as a vessel from which to eat and drink." AS, p. 25

Return to the spread on p. 10-11 and focus students' attention on the pot over the fire and how Amō dips her birchbark cup into it to take some *māskihkiwapwi*, medicine tea. Discuss how the tea is described as beautiful and how Amō savours it.

*Ask: How does the Rocky Cree understanding of medicine differ from a typical English dictionary definition of the word 'medicine'?*

*What does the Rocky Cree meaning of the word tell us about their culture and worldview?*

Invite the students to complete **3.2 Write a Dictionary Definition**. Guide and assist as necessary.

"Maskihiki Kapimotatat had the gift of finding aski *māskikiya*, herbal plants for medicine, tea, and food. She was always wandering away by herself, searching for and picking the various aski *māskikiya* that were available for cures and *māskikiwapwi*." AS, p. 8

The use of medicinal plants has been a part of Indigenous people's wellness traditions since time immemorial. Tobacco, sage, cedar, and sweetgrass are some of the traditional medicines and are often used in ceremony for healing, blessing, and gift-giving.

Turn to p. 8 of *Amō's Sapotawan* with the students and read the part of the story about the character Maskihiki Kapimotatat. What is she carrying? Where is she coming from? What is the mint used for?

Also read aloud the sidebar note called 'Maskihikiya' on p. 9.

### TEACHER TIP

**kāmikwaskwak:** the reddish-coloured sky at sunset. *Mikwa* means red and *waskō* is the cloud. When the sky is reddish in the evening, it means there is good calm weather coming the next day.

Ask: *What other medicines are gathered in Rocky Cree territory in midsummer?*

Do internet searches on wikis (rat root), waskatamo (water lily root), and aski askatask (cow parsnip). Use the white board to gather information. Have students sketch pictures of these plants in their **Sapotawan Journal**.

Ask: *Do they know anyone who uses plants for medicine?* (Prompt as necessary: aloe vera for cuts.)

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## Food Gathering

For the Rocky Cree and other Indigenous peoples, the land is sacred. It is both a life-giver and a healer. First Nations used their knowledge of their environments and traditional food systems to survive off of land; these were fundamental skills, not only for sustenance but for overall health and well-being.

Traditional foods consisted of wild meats, fish species, bird species, plant species, and berries. They were acquired through activities such as hunting, fishing, and gathering during different seasonal periods.

Ask students to explore *Amō's Sapotawan* paying attention to the food that is being collected by the community both for eating now and for storing for the winter. Capture the list on the white board. Before they start, remind them of the season: nīpin. Turn to the left-hand side of title page spread in the picture book (the circle with the seasons) and read aloud the information on this season which we call summer. Note how nīpin translates to “gifts from the water.” Ask them to connect the food they find throughout the story to water (eg. rain for berries, rivers for fish).

### TEACHER TIP

In 2005 Alisa Smith and James MacKinnon launched a series called The 100-Mile Diet. Their aim was to challenge themselves to eat things that were produced within a 100-mile (160-kilometer) radius of their home. This included all food: fruits, vegetables, farm produce, grains, meat, fish, etc.

The idea behind the 100-Mile Diet grew as more and more people sought to eat local and sustainable foods.

### TEACHER TIP

Social connections are the relationships you have with the people around you. These include family, friends, co-workers, classmates, teammates, or people you know casually.

Social connectors are the things that bind social groups together. Food is a social connector. As a matter of fact, research suggests that communal eating increases social bonding and feelings of wellbeing and enhances one's sense of contentedness within the community.

Check out this article: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2017-03-16-social-eating-connects-communities#:~:text=Research%20has%20revealed%20that%20the,and%20satisfied%20with%20their%20lives.>

Ask: *In Amō's Sapotawan, where does the community's food come from?*

*Where do our foods come from? How do we get our food?*

*In what ways is this similar and/or different from the ways in which Amō and her family sourced their food?*

Introduce the '100-Mile Diet'. Engage the class in a discussion. Check for understanding and encourage reflection.

Ask: *What are the pros and cons of a '100-Mile Diet'?* (think environmental, health, local economy, culture and traditions, etc.)

Invite the students to complete **3.3 My 100-Mile Diet**. Guide and assist as necessary.

Food gathering and harvesting activities contributed to physical fitness and health, cultural identity and values, and knowledge of the land and way of life. Sharing food and eating together creates strong social bonds and strong feelings of connectedness.

“When she came back into the mīkiwāhp, her mother had already set māsikīwapwi for her to drink and food to begin her day. Kīwitin Kānimit and Tawipisim were sitting by the kotawān, the fire, drinking their share of māsikīwapwi, telling each other stories, with teasing and laughter between the stories.” AS p. 15

There are a number of scenes in *Amō’s Sapotawan* in which the family and community bond over food. Work together as a class to gather examples of scenes of social bonding over food such as the one above.

Ask the following questions and gather information on the white board:

*Who is eating together?*

*Is it a regular meal or a special occasion?*

*What are the characters doing?*

*What are the characters talking about?*

*What is the mood like?*

Have students think about meals and special occasions in their family. Ask: *How does food act as a way to create bonds in your family?*

Invite the students to capture their understandings in their **Sapotawan Journal**.

“The thunderbirds had arrived, bringing with them the roaring thunder and lightning but also the raspberry rains. It had cooled off now, and the athoskanak, the raspberries, had begun to ripen.” AS, p. 6

Prepare and set up the activity outlined in **3.4 Learning Activity: Harvesting Berries**. Lead the activity in class.

As a follow-up to the learning activity, read aloud the following extract:

“Berries ripen and are picked at different times of the year, mostly from late summer into fall. Strawberries are the first to ripen, then raspberries and blueberries; by fall the cranberries ripen. Occasionally, cranberries that have not been found by humans or animals earlier are even picked in winter. During Amō’s time, berries were dried and stored in birchbark baskets. Dried and pounded berries were also mixed with dried whitefish to make thiwahikānik, a kind of pīmikan made of fish.” AS, p. 29, sidebar.

Ask students to compare the order of their berries and answers about harvesting to this information.

## Healthy Lifestyle Practices

“We are in the era of aniskotapiwin, the reawakening of our connections with our ancestors. On this miskanaw, we are becoming nihithaw again, spiritually, mentally, physically, and emotionally, mithwayāwin.” AS, p. 49

Before settlers arrived, Indigenous peoples enjoyed good health due to an active lifestyle and healthy traditional diets. These diets were balanced and included protein, healthy fats, and some fruits and vegetables. Many oral histories suggest good health and longevity for traditional pre-contact Indigenous communities. For the Rocky Cree the idea of good health is captured in the Rocky Cree concept of nihithaw, which includes the spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional aspects of a person.

Copy on the white board:

“Nihithaw: coming from the four directions. The directions correspond to different aspects of the self: physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual. When you embody all of the four directions it means you are holistically healthy in the way that you speak and act.” AS, p. 49, sidebar.

### TEACHER TIP

The opening of the first book in the Six Seasons series, *Pisim Finds Her Miskanaw*, also focuses on the health of the community: “Long ago, my grandchildren, long ago, it was beautiful the earth, it was peaceful. The people were well, and we were healthy,” says the frame storyteller on p. 4.

Draw four columns labelled MENTAL, PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, and SPIRITUAL. Work with students to collect examples from *Amō’s Sapotawan* which fall in each of these categories.

### TEACHER TIP

Among the Rocky Cree and other First Nations, health exists as a balance among the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual elements of life.

Today, best practices for health care involve a spectrum of community services, from traditional medicine by recognized traditional healers to services available from the health care system.

An alternative to working as a class to find examples for each category is to have them complete the guided free writing activity described in **3.5 Nihithaw: Coming from the Four Directions**.

In today’s terms, we might say that Amō’s community followed healthy lifestyle practices.

*Ask: How would you define healthy lifestyle practices today?*

*What are examples that we see around us in our families and communities, in the news, in popular culture?*

Continue the class discussion by explaining that traditional Rocky Cree health and wellness is called ‘holistic’ today. This means that health concerns the whole person -- body, mind, spirit, and emotions. Wellness is about gaining a healthy balance of all these elements in life.

Instruct students to copy the four columns MENTAL, PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, and SPIRITUAL in their **Sapotawan Journal**. Have them work individually to include items in each column that they do already or would like to do in the future to become nihithaw. Remind them this is a lifelong practice that will continually change and grow.

Link the concept of mindfulness to emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical health.

*Ask: Why do people need mindfulness?*

Explain that being mindful helps you:

- pay attention better
- be less distractible
- learn more
- stay calm under stress
- avoid getting too upset about things
- slow down instead of rushing
- listen better to others
- be more patient
- get along better
- feel happier and enjoy things more

If this sounds like a superpower, it is! Being mindful helps people in just about every part of life. Learning how to be mindful when you're young gives you a chance to get really good at it and use it always.

Engage the students in a mindfulness activity. Refer to **3.6 An Exercise in Mindfulness: Mindful Eating**.

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## Wapatanask (Clay): Pottery is Made of Earth

“Making pottery involves bringing together the four elements—water, earth, fire, and air—to create something new.” AS, p. 25

### TEACHER TIP

Encourage students to think about what they know about modern western science and technology and to contrast this view with aspects of the traditional world view that is expressed in the story.

In the Rocky Cree worldview, humans are a part of nature, and they learn about nature so that they can live in harmony with all of nature. In the traditional view, nature is composed of earth, air, fire, and water, and includes all the plants and animals – including humans. This holistic view is not the same as the modern western scientific approach, which focuses on classifying parts of nature into distinct groups (for example *Kingdoms*, *Species*, etc.).

Use Student Resource **3.7 Discussion Starter: What is Science?** to gather and record students' prior knowledge and thoughts about science. To help them, have them think about how they are taught science at school and about discussions of science they have heard in the news (e.g., the message to follow 'the science' during the COVID-19 pandemic). Ask students to keep this record with them as they seek examples of Rocky Cree knowledge in *Amō's Sapotawan* that are science related.

### TEACHER TIP

Anchor charts are created by teachers with their students to “anchor” classroom learning by making visible key ideas and material from a lesson. <https://www.weare-teachers.com/anchor-charts-101/>

Create and post an anchor chart called SCIENCE to help students keep these key ideas in mind as they proceed in their learning, asking students to contribute images or drawings.

Asikhwak, pottery vessels, were made in northern Manitoba by pre-contact Indigenous people, who experimented with clay sources. They added water and temper (fine rocks or sand) to the clay to

produce vessels. After drying them for several days, they were fired carefully in an open hearth and became useful artistic items. The first pots were made during the Middle Woodland period (about 2500-1000 years ago) and are called “Laurel” ware by archaeologists. They were made by coiling ropes of clay together and were cone-shaped, with a smoothed exterior and many complex stamped decorations. During the Late Woodland period (about 1000-150 years ago), when Amō lived, people made pottery with rounded bases with minimal decoration around the top of the pot. Archaeologists call these Blackduck ware and Winnipeg Fabric-impressed ware. This globular shape made the pot stable on flat surfaces and within the hot coals of a kotawān, a fire. They were made inside bags that were constructed from twisted plant or animal fibres finger woven together. People also used these vessels to store food and carry things. See also ‘Askihkwak,’ AS, p. 9, sidebar.

The Rocky Cree people used earth, water, fire, and air to create pots. Students will learn about the process as it is described in the story and discover how it shows knowledge of the natural world and how to use tools or technologies to live in the natural world.

Share with students the above information on the changes in pottery design in northern Manitoba from Middle to Late Woodland periods. Ask: *What does pottery look like in the time when Amō lived?*

Have students find illustrations of pots in the picture book and take note of their shape and design. Have them sketch a pot or two in their **Sapotawan Journal**.

Also have students play the Askihk Maker game in the picture book app for *Amō’s Sapotawan*. This game gives readers the opportunity to create their own personalized askihk (pot) in a traditional Rocky Cree design. See the Foreword to this Teacher’s Guide for information on the picture book app, which is available for free.

Introduce the idea that all pottery is made of earth. Use Student Resource **3.8 What is the Best Clay for Pottery?** to have students predict what qualities the earth used for making pottery should have.

After students make their predictions, introduce them to clay by reading the sidebar note ‘Clay Pit’ on p. 14 of the picture book and to the Rocky Cree words wapatānask and wathaman found in the ‘Cree Vocabulary’ sidebar note on p. 25.

To further explore this topic, have students watch a short science video about the description of various types of soils to allow them to check whether they have written down an appropriate description of the characteristics of clay for the 3.8 Student Resource. Here are some suggested videos:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQiFYBShDwg> What is in soil? (3m 47s)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sxJvIR\\_tA9k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sxJvIR_tA9k) What is clay? (2m. 17 s.)
- <https://youtu.be/5b9o7yM7YGE> Where does soil come from? (5m)

If this learning is taking place in a season that permits on-the-land outings, go on a walk with students to collect samples of soils or invite students to bring samples to class to compare characteristics. What are the characteristics of the soils they found (colour, grain size, inclusions)? How does it feel when you rub it between your fingers? Did they find any clay that could be used to form pots? What might the other soils they found be good for? As a hint, clay sources are usually found along river banks, cut banks, and lake bottoms, or are exposed by trees falling over. Again have students play the Askihk Maker game in the *Amō* picture book app, this time to reinforce where clay sources can be found.

#### TEACHER TIP

This learning experience offers opportunities to explore STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) learning from an Indigenous point of view, in which the arts are also included (STEAM): <https://www.indigesteam.ca/>



Clay is the smallest particle size in the sedimentary grain size scale. The grains cannot be viewed without a microscope, which is why it becomes a plastic medium when mixed with water, so that it can be malleable. Sediments with larger grain size, such as silt or sand, will not hold their shape. Thus, selecting for good clay sources in the landscape takes time and experimentation. When wet, true clays will form and hold a coil shape when rolled between your palms.

Return to Clay Pit sidebar note on p. 14. Ask the students to pick out all the elements in this description that relate to the organic components of pottery making. Today people are concerned about reducing the use of plastics and other non-biodegradable materials in the making of containers. What kinds of containers do they use to prepare and store food at home?

Make a link from past to present by inviting students to observe that even today, many of our modern teacups and dishes are made from clay. Can they find some examples of dishes in their home marked stoneware, earthenware, or porcelain/china? These labels indicate different types of clay minerals that have been fired at different temperatures.

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## Rocky Cree Technology and Tools

“Pottery was an amazing invention that took people many years to perfect. Once that happened, thousands of years ago, the use and manufacture of pots spread across the boreal forest of Canada through people sharing this information with each other. After a clay pot is fired, it becomes a durable vessel that may also be waterproofed. Like modern dishes, some were broken accidentally from dropping them. They were often used for long periods of time, however, and passed on to other people. Pots were sometimes left in caches at camping locations, so that there would be vessels ready for the next time someone stopped there.” AS, p. 31, sidebar.

### TEACHER TIP

In this brainstorm, encourage students to think of modern and traditional tools across many areas:

Transportation, shelter, building, cooking, preserving, gathering, clothing, childbirth

In this learning activity, students will map out the pottery-making process and find examples of Rocky Cree technology and tools based on their reading of *Amō’s Sapotawan*. Initiate by discussing the meaning of the term technology. Ask them for examples of technology in their own lives. Create an anchor chart of the term TECHNOLOGY that includes sub-categories such as tools, function, natural, and human-made.

This short video opens the topic by asking students to consider a broad definition of technology: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Giiz81\\_uzK8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Giiz81_uzK8)

Introduce the idea that the pots depicted in *Amō’s Sapotawan* are pieces of technology (but also artistic) by reading aloud the quotation above found on p. 31 of the picture book. Ask: *What are the different uses of pots in the story?* Have students find examples and share them with the class.

The process of making pots also involves a number of steps and other pieces of technology. Use Student Resource **3.9 The Process of Making Pottery** to help them draw a flow-chart that summarizes the pottery-making process Amō learns and puts into practice. Be sure to include the Rocky Cree words for all the tools used in each step of the process.

Search the story for other kinds of technology (from birchbark cups and baskets, canoes, fish weirs, fish oil containers, and so on). Ask students to record their lists in their **Sapotawan Journal** and to note the materials used to make these items. Invite students to compare this list of traditional items to some modern tools.

Now that students have looked at the process of pottery making as an example of Rocky Cree technology, invite the class to brainstorm other examples of Rocky Cree inventions that helped them carry out the tasks of everyday life. Compare this list to the anchor chart and modern tools and technologies they have in the classroom, at home, and in their community today.

End this sub-theme with an exit slip about how their view of science and technology may have changed through this study of the Rocky Cree pottery-making process. Also, what can we learn from traditional societies to help us deal with the environmental concerns of our time, such as the excess use of plastics in many of our modern devices?

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## Pottery Design and Style

“Indigenous potters like Amō were taught skills for decorating vessels over many years. Each step of the process was transmitted from family members. The distinctive clay, manufacturing technique, shape, finish, and decorations were all chosen by the potter and reflected longstanding practices. In the area where Brother Lou found these sherds, and where Amō lived, the pots were decorated with punctates (round holes made with wood or bone tools) and sometimes with cord-wrapped sticks. These markings and patterns persisted for about 2,500 years in northern Manitoba.” AS, p. 49, sidebar.

The distinctive pottery design and markings on Rocky Cree pottery are a link to their ancestors. At the end of *Amō’s Sapotawan*, we are told the story of Brother Lou’s discovery of pottery artifacts some 350 years later. Read this passage of the story to learn how this discovery of the distinctive Rocky Cree pottery can bring *aniskotapiwin*, the reawakening of our connections with our ancestors:

“With his keen eye, he looks down and spots an odd-shaped rock in the burned soil at his feet. He kneels down and picks it up, and he realizes by its weight and colour that it is not a rock at all, but a piece of broken askihk. He turns it over and sees the designs left by his ancestors. This shard of askihk in his hand was made many generations ago. He looks around his surroundings and says, ‘My ancestors who have gone ahead, it is good to meet again.’” AS, p. 48

From a traditional Rocky Cree view, pottery uses elements of the earth to create useful tools for gathering, storing, and cooking food. But these items do not only have a practical purpose, as they are also artistic and decorative. Pottery is created using a distinctive style that connects with the past and expresses who the Rocky Cree are. The impressions left behind by the textile bags in making the pots and the impressed designs on the Rocky Cree pottery belong to a traditional community that spans many generations. People did not paint their pottery but instead used tools to create permanent designs (once fired). Have students complete Student Resource **3.10 Function and Style**.

During the Late Woodland period, in the traditional Rocky Cree style of pottery manufacturing techniques, textile bags were used as moulds to help shape the clay into round vessels. Pots from this timeframe have a variety of weave pattern imprints from these bags on the exterior but also some on

the interior, which is unknown to other areas of central Canada. There are decoration patterns on the surface of each askihk made by sticks, cord wrapped sticks, small bones, and wooden tools. This decorative part of the process can be seen as the distinctive style taught across generations, as a sort of enduring “signature” or identity. In particular, the single row of punctuates (from round tools) appears on pottery from the earliest Laurel pots until a few hundred years ago. Encourage students to note that this may be seen as similar to, for example, traditional dress.

The use of clay to make pottery for practical and artistic purposes is a long-standing Indigenous tradition. We can explore an example of using clay to create a finished artwork in a large pottery creation by Anishinaabekwe artist Rebecca Belmore, installed in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg. Read aloud the description of this work to the students, and show them some images of the work to help them visualize it:

“With the creation of the large ceramic blanket, Trace, Belmore honours the original inhabitants of the land upon which the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is built. This land bears evidence of over 6,000 years of Indigenous presence where 500,000 artifacts were excavated from the ground beneath the museum, including thousands of ceramic shards. Using clay from beneath the city of Winnipeg, thousands of small “shards” will be formed by hand. The action of squeezing a small lump of clay in one hand will produce an organic shape that will be pierced through the centre to become a “bead”. These shapes, although unique, will identify as being similar due to the hand-made process and because of their vast number. The beads will then be fired and woven together to produce the large-scale blanket-like form. The use of clay, the earth itself, imbues the artwork with a sense of timelessness. The modest gesture of forming these beads is a reminder of how precious and universal the bond is between humans and the earth.”

Lee-Ann Martin, “Rebecca Belmore’s trace: Hands of generations past and those that will come”, 2014.

<https://www.rebeccabelmore.com/trace/>

<https://humanrights.ca/news/renowned-canadian-artist-create-major-original-piece-cmhr>

Ask students to write a reflection in their **Sapotawan Journal** about the significance of this art installation in connecting present generations to the past.

## Pottery Activity

Students can create a pot or other item with bought or natural clay. Commercial clay can be purchased at specialty pottery stores or general craft stores. They can use natural objects (sticks, cordage like jute, shells), popsicle sticks, or small kitchen tools to imprint a design that expresses their family identity. Actual pottery tools are sold at pottery stores and craft stores for a modest cost. Smooth pebbles can be also used for smoothing clay. If the classroom does not have access to a kiln for firing the pottery, the class can use air-dried pottery.

## Preparing the Classroom

Making clay items is inherently messy, so some preparation is necessary for a classroom activity. Depending upon the surface of the tables, it might be easier to cover them with plastic, brown paper, or old plastic table cloths to help with clean up. Have small plastic containers (e.g., for yogurt, sour cream, cottage cheese) with water on each table, so that students can add some water to their clay when necessary. Students have a tendency to add too much water to their clay creations, so assist them by explaining that a little goes a long way. The small decorating tools can also be placed on the tables ahead of time; also have paper towels at the ready.

For each student, provide a small amount of clay (about a small handful) in a plastic sandwich bag, so that it does not dry out too quickly. You can use a thin wire cutter (available in pottery tool sets) to piece out the clay from the larger amount.

## Air-dried or Commercial Clays

Many different air-dried clays are available for purchase at pottery or clay stores. Once these clay items are air-dried, they will keep their shape, whereas regular commercial and natural clays require firing to harden them (i.e. if they get wet, they will become soft again). Commercial clays are designed specifically to be fired in gas or electric kilns to certain specifications (see the details on the outside of the clay box). If you have access to a kiln, that may be a good choice.

## Natural Clays

It is fun to have both commercial and natural clays for students to experiment with but this is not always possible. Natural clays require that they are collected from an outdoor setting. The most successful way of processing natural clays is to let it dry out, then hit it with a hammer, and then grind the particles into a powder. If you have access to a screen, putting the pulverized clay through it helps to screen out the inclusions (roots, larger rocks, etc.). After this, you can add water and have a very consistent clay.

## Exercises

The easiest way to teach people about making pots is to show them the pinch pot technique. After kneading the small lump of clay on the table, students can form a cylinder. Then, using a thumb, a hole is placed in the centre of the cylinder. That is expanded and a round pot can be formed. The walls of the pot can be made by expanding the original hole in the middle. It can then be smoothed and shaped how by the students.

Another easy method of pottery manufacturing is called coiling, whereby clay is rolled into ropes. These coils are then stacked up and joined together by smoothing them together to make a vessel.

Have small plastic bags and paper plates ready for students to carry their creations home (or hopefully you can fire them as a class project).

## Firing

Indigenous people fired their pots after drying them for several days. This was likely done in the warm months, so as to lessen thermal shock with the pottery. A small pit would have been dug and a fire built inside the pit. Once it had burned down, the coals would be spread out. Pots would be placed

around the pit to gradually warm them and drive the remaining moisture from them. Then, pots would be placed in the coals and another fire (with small pieces of wood) would be built on top of the pot to roaring hot. Pots should be fired for about a half hour or so and then left to cool.

## **Module 3 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources**

### **Asiniskaw Īthiniwak Creation Story & Pottery**

3.1 Creation Stories + Pottery: Venn Diagram

3.2 Write a Dictionary Definition

### **Food Gathering & Medicine Picking**

3.3 My 100-Mile Diet

3.4 Learning Activity: Harvesting Berries

### **Healthy Lifestyle Practices**

3.5 Nihithaw: Coming from the Four Directions

3.6 An Exercise in Mindfulness: Mindful Eating

### **Wapatanask: Pottery is Made of Earth**

3.7 Discussion Starter: What is Science?

3.8 The Best Clay for Pottery

### **Examining Traditional Rocky Cree Culture**

3.9 The Process of Making Pottery

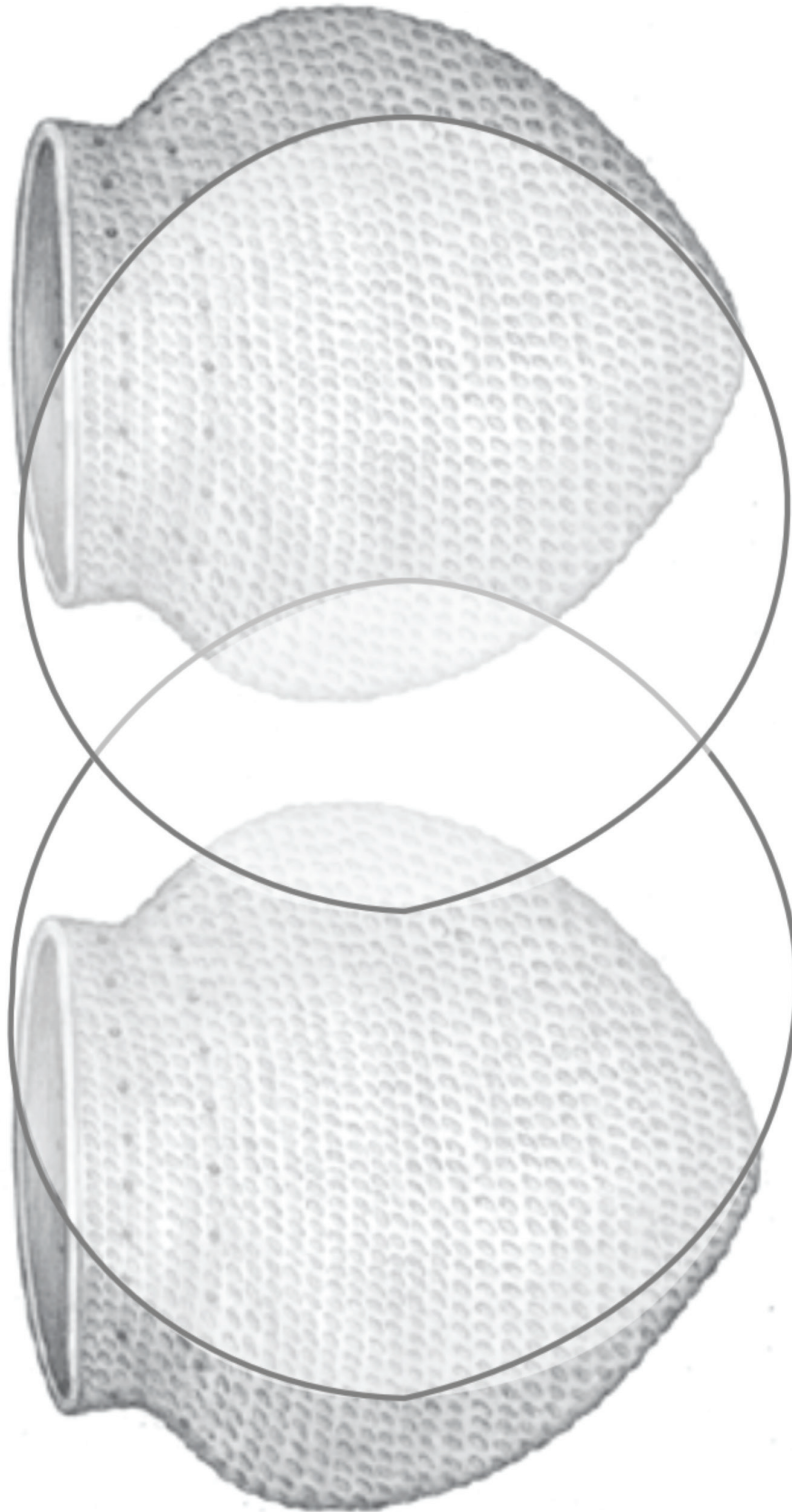
### **Examining Traditional Rocky Cree Culture**

3.10 Function and Style

### 3.1 Creation Stories + Pottery: Venn Diagram

A Venn diagram shows the relationship between two (or more) different things in a visual way. Each circle represents something that you want to compare and contrast. Where the two circles intersect, you write characteristics that the two things have in common.

**Instructions:** Title one circle 'Creation Stories' and the other 'Pottery'. Complete the Venn diagram as instructed above.



## 3.2 Write a Dictionary Definition

**Background:** Throughout *Amō' Sapotawan* there are small sidebar notes with Cree definitions like the one to the right. Have you ever asked yourself how definitions are written? Words carry additional information beyond the definition. They provide us with deeper meaning about a culture's worldview.

This assignment has two parts.

**PART 1:** Look up the word 'medicine' in an English dictionary. Write the definition here:

### CREE VOCABULARY

**kāmikwaskwak:** the reddish-coloured sky at sunset. Mikwa means red and waskō is the cloud. When the sky is reddish in the evening, it means there is good calm weather coming the next day.

**PART 2:** Carefully read the sidebar note on p. 25 of *Amō's Sapotawan* which describes the word 'medicine' and then continue with the next steps.

1. Consult and/or re-read other parts of the picture book to gain a greater understanding of Rocky Cree culture, especially ties to the land.
2. On a scrap piece of paper, write a draft definition of the word medicine from a Rocky Cree perspective.
3. Check your definition: does it avoid describing the word by what it is not and focus instead on describing what it is?
4. Check your definition again: does it avoid circular definitions? (that means, don't circle back to the word or use the word in the definition.)

Once you have checked and edited your definition, write your final draft here:



### **3.3 My 100-Mile Diet**

In this activity you will create your own 100-Mile Diet. Follow the steps as outlined. You will need a map and access to an atlas (hard copy or digital).

1. Write a definition of 'local food'.
  
2. Using a map, determine where your 100-mile (160-kilometre) limit is. Describe the natural environment.
  
3. What kinds of food could you gather/harvest from the natural environment? Make a list. (Note: write 'pickerel' not 'fish'; write 'saskatoon berries' not 'berries')
  
4. Are there farms and/or market gardens nearby? What do they produce?
  
5. Are you able to plant a vegetable garden? If so, what could you grow?
  
6. How can you travel? Are there roads? Highways? Railways? Rivers? Will you have to hike? Travel by ATV or snowmobile? Can you boat? Canoe?
  
7. What will you do for food in the winter?
  
8. Choose one of the following activities (templates to follow):
  - a) Create a one-week, 7-day menu using only local foods. Plan for breakfast, lunch, and dinner each day. Offer snacks for at least 4 days. Try your best not to repeat foods more than three times.
  - b) Create a recipe card for one dish. All ingredients, including spices, oils, etc. have to be locally sourced. The dish must have at least 6 ingredients and have a step-by-step preparation guide on how to prepare, cook, and serve it.

# Weekly Meal Plan

| <i>Monday</i>    |       |        |
|------------------|-------|--------|
| Breakfast        | Lunch | Dinner |
|                  |       |        |
| <i>Tuesday</i>   |       |        |
| Breakfast        | Lunch | Dinner |
|                  |       |        |
| <i>Wednesday</i> |       |        |
| Breakfast        | Lunch | Dinner |
|                  |       |        |
| <i>Thursday</i>  |       |        |
| Breakfast        | Lunch | Dinner |
|                  |       |        |
| <i>Friday</i>    |       |        |
| Breakfast        | Lunch | Dinner |
|                  |       |        |
| <i>Saturday</i>  |       |        |
| Breakfast        | Lunch | Dinner |
|                  |       |        |
| <i>Sunday</i>    |       |        |
| Breakfast        | Lunch | Dinner |
|                  |       |        |

# RECIPE CARD

**RECIPE NAME:** .....

**SERVES:** .....

**TIME:** .....

## INGREDIENTS

## INSTRUCTIONS

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## NOTES

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### **3.4 Learning Activities: Harvesting Berries**

**Note:** This teacher-led activity may be approached as an activating/ hand's on activity or a lesson launcher. Before class, you will need to assemble the materials.

**Materials:** container of strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, cranberries. Each student should get a napkin and a minimum of one berry of each type. Optional: small bowls and more berries if you opt to give the class a snack.

**Process:**

1. Instruct the students to draw on a sheet of paper the following:



2. Hand out one of each berry (for a total of 4) to each student. Don't eat (yet!).
3. Ask the students to identify the berries.
4. Explain that harvesting berries was an important part of Rocky Cree food gathering. Berries ripen and are picked at different times of the year, from late summer to fall.
5. Ask the students to arrange the berries in the order in which they were picked. Which one do they think was picked first in late summer? Which one was picked last?
6. Ask: How do you think berries were preserved and stored for later use?
7. Check their berry harvesting timeline – are they correct? The order should be strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, cranberries.

### 3.5 Nihithaw: Coming from the Four Directions

“Nihithaw: coming from the four directions. The directions correspond to different aspects of the self: physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual. When you embody all of the four directions it means you are holistically healthy in the way that you speak and act.” AS, p. 49

**Note:** This is a guided free writing activity. Explain the activity in advance.

**Materials:** Copies of *Amō's Sapotawan*, 1 per student; paper; writing utensils.

**Process:**

1. Hand out copies of *Amō's Sapotawan*. Give them several minutes to quietly page through the book.
2. Instruct students to divide the paper into four sections. Label the sections: physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual. Title the graphic 'Nihithaw'. Explain the terms and title. Guide and assist as necessary. Tell them to refer to p. 49.
3. Explain that you are going to set a timer (decide in advance how long the activity will be, suggested time between 10 – 20 minutes).
4. Outline that during the set time they are to page through *Amō's Sapotawan* to find examples of physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual health and/or activities. Tell them not to worry about spelling, grammar, and punctuation – this is a free write, a spontaneous gathering of understandings and ideas.
5. Explain that the activity is silent, no talking. Begin the timer. Let them know when there is a minute left.
6. Once completed, have the students share with a partner.
7. Bring everyone together for a group sharing session. Focus on the overlap between the four dimensions. Focus on the idea of holistic health and well-being.

### **3.6 An Exercise in Mindfulness: Mindful Eating**

Adapted from <https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/mindful-exercises.html>

**Note:** This is a teacher-led activity. Before class, you will need to assemble the materials. Check for food allergies/sensitivities.

**Materials:** One orange per student. (Or any other type of healthy food. You may consider a traditional Rocky Cree food.)

**Process:**

The idea is to lead students to really pay attention to what they are eating.

Explain to the students that they will practice mindfulness by eating an orange. Tell them that their job is to eat the orange slowly, without rushing. They can do this mindful eating exercise with their eyes open or closed.

1. Start by holding your orange. Roll it in your hand. Notice how it feels.
2. Hold the orange near your nose. What does it smell like? Take a whiff of the bittersweet smell of the orange peel.
3. If you have your eyes open, notice how the orange looks. Pay attention to whether the skin is smooth or bumpy. If you hold it firmly, is it squishy?
4. Slowly peel your orange, paying attention to how it feels in your fingers. Notice the juiciness, and whether the inside of the orange smells different from the outside.
5. Is your mouth watering? Go ahead and taste your orange. Notice how it feels on your tongue, and against your teeth. Notice the flavour, the texture, and the juiciness as you chew each piece slowly. Take your time as you chew, taste, smell, and feel each bite of your orange.

### **3.7 Discussion Starter: What is Science?**

In groups of four, brainstorm all the ideas that come to mind when you think of science. Here are some questions to get you started:

*What is science?*

*What does science try to explain?*

*What can science teach us?*

*What are some of the methods that western science uses?*

*What examples are there in Amō's story that resemble or differ from western scientific explanation?*

***Be sure to include as many of these words as possible in your discussion:***

Observe  
Ask questions  
Explain  
Nature  
Technology  
Experiment  
Theory (hypothesis)  
Predict  
Test  
Conclude

### 3.8 The Best Clay for Pottery

In this activity you will be predicting which characteristics the best clay for making pottery has.

Here are some questions to get you thinking before you make your prediction below.

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <b><i>Where do you think good clay for pottery making is found? (garden, lake or riverbed, forest floor)</i></b>       | <b><i>What colour do you think good pottery clay is? (very dark or light or somewhere in between)?</i></b> | <b><i>What is the texture of good clay? Does it stick together or is it crumbly? Does it get hard when it dries out?</i></b> | <b><i>Is clay smooth or does it have a lot of sand or small rocks in it?</i></b> |
| <b><i>Does it seem to include organic content or humus such as needles, leaves, insects, or vegetable compost?</i></b> | <b><i>How dense is clay? Is it heavy or light? Does it hold its shape or fall apart?</i></b>               | <b><i>Does it dry out quickly or slowly? What does it smell like?</i></b>  | <b><i>Do you think this clay would be good to use for growing plants?</i></b>    |

My Prediction:

Here are four adjectives or expressions to describe the characteristics of good clay:

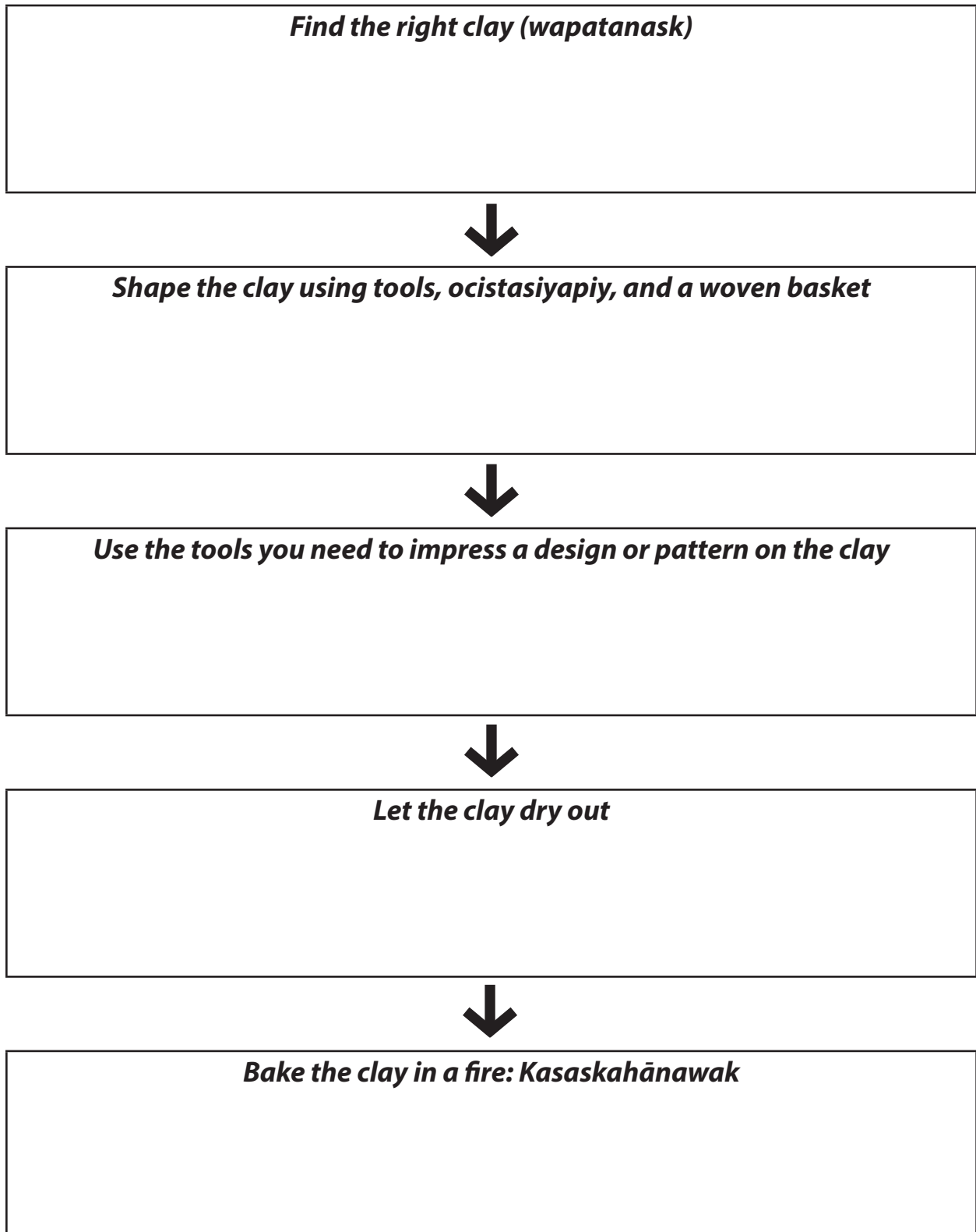
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Your teacher will now show you a short video or two to check your answers. How well did you predict the qualities of the best clay for pottery?



### 3.9 The Process of Making Pottery

Create a flow chart that shows the steps of the pottery-making process in order. You may add images to illustrate the process. For each step, find at least one quotation in *Amō's Sapotawan* that explains how it was done, if you can.



Answer Key:

### ***Find the right clay (wapatanask)***

“Amō and Tawip̄sim walked down to the clay pit and started taking what they would need for the day’s work.” AS, p. 15

“Potters search for clay with the right characteristics. Such deposits can be rare, and good locations are revisited. In Amō’s time, suitable clay was dug up, cleaned of plant roots and rocks, pounded, and mixed with water to test its quality. Potters then mixed the clay with pulverized rock, sand, or other temper to improve its ability to maintain a shape. This step also helped release steam from the clay to reduce breakage during firing.” AS, p. 14



### ***Shape the clay using tools, ocistasiyapiy, and a woven basket***

“Amō already knew what would be in the bundle: pieces of hide for kneading and rolling the clay, a clamshell for smoothing it, a birchbark cup for carrying water, some fire-cracked rocks for tempering, a twisted cord bag for making the pot inside, a collection of ocistasiyapiy, sinew, sticks, and small bone and wooden tools to decorate the pottery.” AS, p.42

“Globular-shaped vessels, made during Amō’s time, were manufactured inside woven bags made of twisted plant fibres, bags that could also be used for carrying items. We know that this was the method used because the negative impression of the bag is preserved on the exteriors of many pottery sherds or pieces. Unique to Amō’s region, some pots also have fabric impressions on the interior. It took countless hours to collect, process, and then twist willow or cedar fibres together into a fine textile bag. These articles undoubtedly were cherished items after they were crafted. Since they were made from organic materials, they are not preserved in archaeological sites in the boreal forest.” AS, p. 13

“Wooden paddles, shaped from local birch branches, would likely have been used to create the smooth interiors and to thin the walls of the Late Woodland period pots that were manufactured inside fibre bags. Birch paddles, like their larger counterparts used in canoeing, are another example of gifts manufactured from that tree.” AS, p. 45



### ***Use the tools you need to impress a design or pattern on the clay***

"Pisim gave Amō a piece of the special red stone that was used for making beads. Nikik gave her a chert knife with a beautiful moose hide case. Tawipīsīm gave her a kwakwāywāt, beautifully decorated with an etching of a flower. Napiw gave her a small birch paddle that she could use to shape her pottery." AS, p. 44, Tools.

"Indigenous potters like Amō were taught skills for decorating vessels over many years. Each step of the process was transmitted from family members. The distinctive clay, manufacturing technique, shape, finish, and decorations were all chosen by the potter and reflected longstanding practices. In the area where Brother Lou found these sherds, and where Amō lived, the pots were decorated with punctuates (round holes made with wood or bone tools) and sometimes with cord-wrapped sticks." AS, p. 49



### ***Let the clay dry out***

Air-dried pottery will harden but will not be as durable as baked pottery because it remains more porous.

"Tawipīsīm walked up to her and said, 'I heard you broke the askihk when you met the maskwa, Amō. But remember that you know how to make new askihkwak. Today we will kasaskahānawak, fire, the ones we made two days ago.'" AS, p. 24



### ***Bake the clay in a fire: Kasaskahānawak***

"Saska means to light a fire. Kasaskahānawak refers to the process in which the clay is hardened by placing it in a specially prepared fire." AS, p. 25

After firing, the clay vessel becomes impermeable and durable, and can be used to carry liquids.

### 3.10 Function and Style

In Rocky Cree pottery function and style are combined so that many of their tools are both useful and decorative. Can you find some examples in the Amō story and in modern life of tools that combine function and style?

| <b>Tool</b>               | <b>Function</b> | <b>Style</b> |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Traditional chert knife   |                 |              |
| Traditional pottery bowl  |                 |              |
| Traditional birchbark cup |                 |              |
| Traditional woven basket  |                 |              |
| Modern cell phone         |                 |              |
| Modern dishware           |                 |              |
| Modern backpack           |                 |              |
| Modern notebook           |                 |              |

## Module 4: Kotawān and Kapasitihk: Fire



### ***Sipi nisitohtamowin: Enduring Understanding***

*“Night came, and Amō and Pīsim sat outside their mikiwāhp. For the first time in a while, they could see the stars and the moon. They both loved to watch the night skies. Others from the camp were sitting outside by their kotawāna, their campfires, happily visiting.” AS, p. 39*

### **Key Concepts**

campfire, storytelling, forest fire, renewal

### **Key Words:**

kotawān (koh ta waan) – campfire

saska (sus kah)– to light a fire

apiscithīnīwak (ah pis chi thee nee wuk)– little people

aniskotapiwin (ah nee sko tah pee win) – strengthening connections with ancestors and their teachings

kapasitihk (kah pah seh tehk)– forest fire

kwiskītikī (kwee SKEE TEE KEE)– if the wind turns

mamawīwin (mah mah WEE win) – gathering

### **Guiding Questions:**

In what ways is fire a living thing?

How do fires provide a place for gathering and storytelling?

How does weather influence forest fires?

How are forest fires destructive?

How are forest fires part of a process of renewal?

# Kiskinwahamakiwin: Teaching Strategies

“Before they knew it, it was time to begin. Nōcokīsiw gathered everyone together around the ceremonial firepit. She said the opening prayers before kneeling to light the kotawān for the ceremony. Everyone stood in silent prayer until the kotawān was burning well.” AS, p. 42

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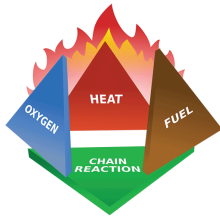
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## Campfires

Fire – both human made and natural – is featured in *Amō’s Sapotawan*. Amō and her Rocky Cree family use firepits for warmth, light, and food preparation. They also use fires to make pottery and other tools as Module 3 covered. Campfires are also a place for immediate and extended families to connect, tell stories, as well as hold ceremonies.

Fire is a chemical reaction that occurs when fuel and a heat source combine with oxygen to create flames and give off light, heat, and smoke. Twigs, branches, paper, and logs are examples of fuel. A heat source can be a match, a lighter, or, in Amō’s time, flint. Lightening is a natural heat source that can spark a fire. Typically, oxygen is free and readily available in the air around us.



Invite the students to sketch a diagram similar to the one to the right in their Sapotawan Journal, **1.10 Creating a Sapotawan Journal**.

Tell the students that these three elements are called the “fire triangle,” and if they are kept in balance, a campfire will burn evenly and thoroughly.

### TEACHER TIP

The Western scientific view of the characteristics of living things may be in conflict with other views. Encourage students to discuss and respect other views and recognize that individuals can hold multiple views. Explore the views of the Rocky Cree.

Adapted from: [https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/science/found/5to8/full\\_doc.pdf](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/science/found/5to8/full_doc.pdf)

## Campfires as a Place to Connect

In *Amō’s Sapotawan*, kotawāna, or campfires, reinforce familial ties and social networks.

“Kiwitin Kānimit and Tawipisim were sitting by the kotawān, the fire, drinking their share of māskikiwapwiw, telling each other stories, with teasing and laughter between the stories.” AS, p. 15.

“Night came, and Amō and Pīsim sat outside their mikiwāhp. For the first time in a while, they could see the stars and the moon. They both loved to watch the night skies. Others from the camp were sitting outside by their kotawāna, their campfires, happily visiting.” AS, p. 39.

There are several campfires portrayed in *Amō’s Sapotawan*. Work together as a class to gather examples of scenes with campfires such as the two above. Ask the following questions and gather information on the whiteboard:

*Who is gathered at the fire?*

*What time of day is it?*

*What are the characters doing?*

*What are the characters talking about?*

*What is the mood like?*

Even today, outdoor fires are often lit in the evening to allow people to extend the day by providing warmth and light. They allow people to relax, unleash their imaginations, and share stories.

#### TEACHER TIP

Fire pits and campfires may be the very place where humans developed some of our abilities to understand one another, cooperate, and internalize culture.

Use this article from Smithsonian Magazine as a discussion-starter with your students.

See: [How Conversations Around Campfire Might Have Shaped Human Cognition And Culture | Smart News | Smithsonian Magazine.](#)

*Ask: Have you ever sat around a campfire/firepit at night?*

Brainstorm with the class: *How does sitting around a campfire/firepit make you feel?* (Examples might include relaxed, calm, loved, happy, excited, grateful, empathetic, understanding, curious, etc.)

Instruct the students to create a word cloud in their **Sapotawan Journal** that captures the feeling associated with gathering around a firepit. Explain that a word cloud is an image composed of words. It is a word collage, and the importance of the words determines their size and placement in the collage. The most important words in a word cloud are the biggest, and they are surrounded by words in various smaller sizes. Set a minimum number of words for the activity.

## Campfires as a Place for Stories

Storytelling, past and present, occurs in every culture. It was a primary way of passing along information, long before the written word even existed. For the Rocky Cree, stories were meant to entertain, to inform, and to reinforce cultural traditions and values.

*Ask: What are the elements that make up good storytelling?*

Good stories are often easy to follow and understand. Memorable ones may have humour, pain, or joy (sometimes all three). If stories simply stated the facts, one after another, we would likely stop listening and forget details. Storytelling may embed an element of truth. A story does not have to be true in a scientific, objective, or factual sense, but true insofar as the teller believes in what they are saying and an emotional, psychological, or other truth arises from the details.

There are many stories told in *Amō's Sapotawan*. Several relate to daily events such as the one Ācapī Okimaw tells on p. 18 about Napiw spearing a big sturgeon that almost pulled him into the river. Others are inspired by an event such as the sidebar note 'Close Encounters with Bears' on p. 22. In that note, William Dumas tells several stories about bear encounters which were inspired by Amō's experience with the charging bear. Have students choose a scene from the picture book and write a short story inspired by it and based in something they've heard or experienced themselves. Brainstorm ideas to get students thinking:

*Have they or someone they know gone blueberry picking? Caught a big fish? Seen a forest fire? Paddled a canoe?*

*What happened? Who was involved?*

*Did they hear this story secondhand or did the events happen to them?*

Stories may be passed on generationally and there are a number of references to such stories in *Amō's Sapotawan* including those told about apiscithīniwak, little people, and those about Thunderbirds.

#### Teacher Tip

Read the Six Seasons book, *The Gift of the Little People*, with students. In this story which is set after contact, William Dumas recounts how the little people help save the asiniskaw īthiniwak from a plague through the gift of medicine.

<https://www.portageandmain-press.com/Books/T/The-Gift-of-the-Little-People>

Read aloud the 'Thunderbirds' sidebar:

"Thunderbirds represent powerful forces in asiniskaw īthiniwak culture, manifested in many aspects of the natural world, for example, in thunderstorms and lightning strikes. The appearance of the Thunderbirds marks the beginning of particular activities on the land. When the Thunderbirds are heard in the spring, it is the signal for people to pick medicine plants. They also take their medicine bundles out to have them blessed by the Thunderbirds. Later in the season, the Thunderbirds signal the beginning of the ripening periods and the start of the forest fire season." AS, p. 7, sidebar.

Ask: *What kinds of stories could we tell about the Thunderbirds?*

Lead a brainstorming session and distribute Student Resource **4.1 Be A Storyteller**.

"The asiniskaw īthiniwak are born into ototimihitowin, the group of your blood relatives, sometimes loosely called clans in English, which are determined by your mother's lineage. Each ototimihitowin is represented by an animal, such as the bear or the wolf. By observing animals, the people learn important lessons for survival, such as what plants to eat or use as medicine, how to be good leaders or community members, and the attributes of their ototimihitowin. Members of the mahikanak minisiwin, the wolf family group, for example, are teachers, storytellers, and protectors. Wolf people were also good at hunting, travel, and raising children, and are seen as a model for social organization. Members of the masko minisiwin, the bear family group, are the medicine people and healers. Members of the moso minisiwin, or moose family group, are artists, inventors, and craftspeople." AS, p. 34, sidebar.

Read the above sidebar on ototimihitowin with students. Divide the class into groups of at least three and assign group members to one of the Wolf, Bear, or Moose clan so that each of these clans is represented in each group. Read over the worksheet and check for understanding. Tell the students to develop an oral story about a character's encounter with a Thunderbird or a little person. Encourage them to shape their characters, plot, and actions according to their assigned clan's characteristics. Have them use the tips on the student resource to guide them. Invite them to tell their stories in their groups.

Have students sketch their Thunderbird or little person in their **Sapotawan Journal**.



## Campfires as Part of a Ceremony

“First, Nōcokīsīw was offered tobacco and moosehide to conduct the ceremony. Then the men worked at building the mistikīwahp – the lodge where the ceremony would be held – and after that, they gathered wood for the kotawān.” AS, p. 41.

In Rocky Cree, mamawīwin means gathering for a specific reason, such as a feast time, the celebration of the birth of a baby, spring ceremonies, fall ceremonies, or midwinter ceremonies. Fires are often at the centre of such gatherings which also help reawaken connections with ancestors, aniskotapi-win. *Amō’s Sapotawan* concludes with northern lights and dancing that connects the people to their ancestors.

Read as a class the sidebar on wāwāhtīw, northern lights, on p. 46 of the picture book. Ask:

*Who do the asiniskaw ithiniwak believe northern lights are?*

*What is the significance of the round dance in connection to the northern lights?*

*Why shouldn’t you whistle toward the northern lights?*

Consolidate the students’ comprehension of the gathering by having them complete [4.2 Mamawīwin: Gathering – Wordsearch](#).

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## Forest Fires

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Forest fires can start intentionally or unintentionally. Intentional fires include controlled burns which are used in many areas of the world for a wide range of positive and negative reasons. Unintentional forest fires can start through human negligence such as a cigarette butt but they can also start via a natural heat source such as lightning. Not all fires are the same: there are low-severity and high-severity burns. While they can be destructive, they are also an important part of forest renewal.

Read together and discuss the Rocky Cree understanding of forest fires found in a sidebar of *Amō’s Sapotawan*:

“A natural part of a forest’s lifecycle, fires renew plant life. Often caused by lightning strikes, they can also be intentionally set by humans in isolated areas, such as meadows and islands, in the springtime when the ground is still wet and cold. When done correctly, these environments can be burned with little risk of fire spreading beyond the chosen location. Such burns lead to the growth of wild berries and other plants that attract animals such as moose, who will raise their young in these areas. Controlled fires can also be used to create meadow lands for campsites. During Amō’s time, the frequency and location of lightning strikes allowed people to predict the locations of forest fires, which were often allowed to run their course. While considered a blessing in renewing the forest, fires were also understood to be dangerous. They could spread against the wind, over the tops of trees, or even through the root systems. Quickly spreading fires sometimes caught people off guard, and they would then try to take refuge on rivers or islands.” AS, p. 17, sidebar.

The forest fire that puts Amō's family in danger is caused by lightening. When they first see it at a distance, they keep a watchful eye on it. As it grows bigger and moves in their direction, they pack up and leave their campsite to move to a safer area.

One of the most important factors affecting the behaviour of a fire is weather. The three most important components of weather are: temperature, wind, and humidity.

## Weather

Review with students the difference between climate and weather. **Climate** refers to the general weather patterns of a region over a very long period. **Weather**, on the other hand, changes daily and can be extremely variable in a short period of time and is impacted by humidity, temperature, and wind movement.

Generate a discussion about the weather – What is it? How can you describe it? Guide students to notice that weather includes factors such as temperature, wind or air movement, and humidity or precipitation.

“A sun that looks blaze-orange is a sign that there is a large amount of smoke in the air from a forest fire. Even when flames or smoke plumes are not clearly visible, natural signs such as this indicate danger and the need to keep an eye out. Learning to observe and interpret what is taking place in the surrounding landscape is an important skill for life on the land. Signs in nature may serve as warnings, foretell the weather, or indicate what plants are safe to eat or use as medicine.” AS, p. 17, sidenote.

Outline that all explanations of natural events begin with careful observation of physical signs and changes. In Amō's story, the weather influences the coming wildfire. Being able to “read” the weather is an important part of preparing how to respond to wildfires, especially in Amō's time when weather satellites were not available.

“Amō gazed upward and noticed she could look directly at the sun, which was a big red ball in the sky. ‘Nikāwī, Mom, look! Why does the sky look like that?’ Kīwitin Kānimit looked up and said, ‘Nitānis, my girl, it is the season when thunder and lightning come, and the lightning starts forest fires. Look in the distance at that big plume of smoke that's rising. It is the smoke, high up in the sky, that makes the sun look like that. We have to keep an eye on iti kapasitihk, that forest fire. Kwiskītīkī, if the wind turns, it will quickly burn towards us and we'll be in trouble. For now, we are safe.’” AS, p. 16.

Read the above excerpt from the picture book with students and ask:

*What season is it?*

*Why is this season a common time for forest fires?*

*What does the sun look like and why?*

### Teacher Tip

Share with students this child-friendly video (3 min.) about modern-day weather forecasting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3J1r8rWWzZc>

Ask students to share their experiences with observing weather and create a collective chart that groups together the elements to observe in three categories: air movement (wind speed and direction), temperature, and humidity (clouds, precipitation).

Ask students to observe local weather conditions carefully over the period of a week using Student Resource **4.3 Observing the Weather**. Encourage them to describe and predict how the weather will change based on what they observe each day. After they gather this information, ask them to prepare and present their own local weather forecast based on their gathered observations using Student Resource **4.4 Preparing a Local Weather Forecast**.

Explain that students will carry out research about the incidence of forest fires in Manitoba and the causes of these fires. This may give occasion for students to discuss their own experiences or knowledge about forest fires in their community or region. Ask:

*Has your family ever had to evacuate because of a forest fire?*

*Do you have an uncle or a family member who works as a local volunteer firefighter?*

*How have forest fires affected the natural areas in or around your community?*

*What do you know about forest fires in Manitoba?*

To complete their research, students may consult the Manitoba Conservation and Climate data on Wildfires in Manitoba at: [https://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/wildfire\\_program/](https://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/wildfire_program/)

Using the Student Resource **4.5 Mapping Activity**, ask them to map the fires in their region over the last two years and indicate on their map any details of the cause, spread, and weather conditions on the wildfires reported.

The sharing of this research may lead to a class discussion about whether every wildfire should be extinguished through human action or whether there are times when the fire should be allowed to run its course. This will lead to the next sub-theme about the dual role of fire as both regenerative and destructive.

## Preparing for and Responding to Forest Fires

*“The wind has shifted and the fire is making its way very quickly to our camp. The smoke will be upon us soon and we will have a hard time breathing. Pack all our belongings and food. Move everything across the portage to the other side, to the mouth of mikisiwi pawistik.” AS, p. 31*

The effects of a forest fire or wildfire on humans can be worsened or relieved by weather conditions and by human actions. Because natural conditions influence fires, they are never wholly within human control. This means that we need to know how to respond to danger in a fire (for example, fire drills and evacuation plans). We also need to limit the destructive effects of fire by responding effectively to a threat of fire.

In Amō’s story, the community is threatened by an approaching wildfire. The entire community responds effectively and calmly to the danger. Read these excerpts aloud to the class:

“When they were eating the evening meal, Kisithiniw Pipon, the Old Man, talked about the fire not far from their camp. ‘It is getting to be a huge fire. Kwiskītihkī, it’s only a matter of time. It will hit our camp. By tonight, we will see the flames shooting out of the hills. We must start preparing.’” AS, p. 29

“Nōcokīsīw turned to Napiw and instructed him, ‘Take three canoes and load up all the food that has been harvested. Take it to the middle of kinosi sakahīkan, Fish Lake. There’s a place to keep the food cold over there for the next little while. Then make tisipicikana, caches, to hang up the smoked fish and fish flakes. We are going to be heading there for the atihkamik, the whitefish run, anyway, after we are done here. Take the berries, too. Many have been harvested, but there will be many more where we are going.’ She turned to the other women and said, ‘Tomorrow morning, as soon as we’ve had our morning meal, start packing our belongings and take them to the river’s edge. We will take our mikiwāhpa down too. All the mikiwāhpa will be set close to the shore and, if need be, everything can be loaded into the returning canoes very quickly and we can move to safety.’” AS, p. 29

“The fire was getting closer and closer. Amō turned to her mom and said, ‘Nikāwī, all our beautiful askihkwak are going to be burned.’ Her mom looked at her and smiled calmly. ‘Amō, we can make new askihkwak. We cannot make new lives. The fire has reached our place. You can hear the flames crackling. It will be upon us very quickly.’ Amō looked at her mom with panic. ‘Nikāwī, what are we going to do if the fire gets here?’ Her mom answered, ‘We will load the little ones into the canoe and get them away from danger. Some of us will wade into the river and pray that the smoke and fire don’t get us.’” AS, p. 31

Place the students in small groups and ask them to reread the excerpts, paying attention to the steps followed to deal with the threat of the forest fire. Ask them to prepare and present a short two-minute role play to represent the actions of the community and the roles of each of its members. Ask students to be sure to include some Rocky Cree words in their re-enactment of the scene, such as tisipicikana, mikiwāhpa, and askihkwak. Use the pronunciation guide in the glossary.

## Destruction and Regeneration

“The thunderbirds had arrived, bringing with them the roaring thunder and lightning but also the raspberry rains. It had cooled off now, and the athoskanak, the raspberries, had begun to ripen.” AS, p. 6.

Engage students in a general discussion about the positive and negative aspects of fire as seen in *Amō’s Sapotawan*. In previous parts of this module, students have discussed the idea of fire as a gathering place for storytelling and fire as an important element in traditional ceremonies. They may also consider the practical uses of fire in pottery making, cooking, and preserving food as outlined in Module 3. They have also read about how Amō’s family has to flee the forest fire that threatens their camp. Based on this discussion, ask students to gather a list of words to describe the positive (regenerative) and negative (destructive) aspects of fire.

### Teacher Tip

The source consulted for details about forest fire in this section is:

<https://thriving-withfire.org/>

When viewed as part of the cycle of nature, forest fires are not always destructive. Think of a forest of new green growth following a forest fire. Think of the creation of new habitats for wildlife after the clearing of accumulated old forest growth. Forests are part of the carbon cycle in nature, consuming carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen into the environment. Forest fires can be a natural way of cleansing an area of dead or diseased trees and preparing for the growth of new plants and new habitats for wildlife. In the cycle of nature, plants and animals have always lived alongside fire. Nature is resilient: a young forest quickly emerges after a wildfire, animals adapt and move away, and other animals move into the changed habitat. The value of forest fires is recognized in the process we call a controlled burn. Explore this website with students to discuss the difference between controlled fires and wildfires and the benefits of controlled burns: <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/controlled-burning/>.

The spread and duration of a wildfire are influenced by weather conditions, fuel sources, and topography. As we have seen earlier in this module, weather includes wind, temperature, and humidity. Wildfires are driven by these factors, particularly by drought conditions (dryness) and wind. Topography refers to the natural features on the surface of the land, such as mountains, rivers, lakes, valleys, forests, glaciers etc. Human structures such as roads, dams, and cities are also part of topography.

Ask students to read the article cited in Student Resource **4.6 The Value of Wildfire**. Ask them to work in pairs to create a cyclical diagram using words, images, and pictograms to illustrate the restorative role of fire in the cycle of nature and the many factors that influence the spread of fire.

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## Climate Change and Traditional Knowledge

“Napiw looked around at the fish harvest and said, ‘We have always made sure we only harvest enough to sustain us, and, once we have enough, we move to the next camp.’” AS p. 19

Rocky Cree traditional knowledge is based on the relationship between the community and their natural surroundings. The concept of acting as caretakers of the land and its resources is a fundamental part of this traditional knowledge, as illustrated in this excerpt about the fish harvest.

Amō’s home is in the northern boreal forest region. Remind students of the meaning of the word topography and ask them to take note of the illustrations in the book that show the natural features of the landscape in which Amō’s community lived. Students may be invited to select a particular image to share with the class that they feel best represents the natural landscape and how the Rocky Cree communities lived within it.

### Teacher Tip

Refer to this article about traditional Indigenous knowledge and sustainability:

<https://naturecanada.ca/news/blog/indigenous-leadership-for-est-restoration/>

The boreal forest is Manitoba’s largest ecological community and its largest forest zone. It covers about one-third of the province, stretching in a broad band across the north central and central part of the province. Today, industrial development in this region such as mining, hydro-electric projects, and forestry continue to have an impact on the topography of the region. In Amō’s time, this development had not yet begun, and the region remained largely in its natural state with little human interference.

Today, with increasing evidence of the impact of human development on climate change by the disruption of the carbon cycle, there is an increasing interest in traditional knowledge as a more

sustainable approach. Human actions interfere with the natural cyclical processes. Logging, for example, interrupts the natural cycle of the forest. Fires in tree plantations are more likely to spread out of control because the trees are densely packed, all the same age, and all the same height. Older trees in a natural forest have branches higher off the ground, so their shade keeps the forest floor cooler and traps moisture. Traditional knowledge supports less invasive practices that do not interfere with the carbon cycle and the natural replenishment of forests.

Grade 5 students are likely aware of contemporary concerns about the role of increasing carbon emissions in climate change. Review the carbon cycle as a class using a diagram such as the example in Student Resource **4.7 The Carbon Cycle**.

Explore the following website with students. <https://climateatlas.ca/indigenous/first-nations>

The importance of traditional knowledge, including ideas of renewal and regeneration, is also captured visually *Amō's Sapotawan*. Focusing on the illustrations, have students compare the parallel spreads found on pages 24-25 and 48-49 of the book. Ask:

*Which details in the illustrations are similar?*

*Which ones are different?*

*Why would the illustrator and author want the two spreads to mirror each other?*

*Read aloud the text found on pages 48-49. How do the words reinforce the ideas of renewal and regeneration?*

*Why is it important that the young boys in the foreground of both spreads look similar?*

## **Module 4 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources**

### **Fires: Storytelling and Gatherings**

- 4.1 Be a Storyteller
- 4.2 Mamawīwin: Gathering – Wordsearch

### **Weather and Wildfires**

- 4.3 Observing the Weather
- 4.4 Preparing a Local Weather Forecast

### **Role of Forest Fires: Regenerative and Destructive**

- 4.5 Mapping Activity
- 4.6 The Value of Wildfire

### **Climate Change and Traditional Indigenous Knowledge**

- 4.7 The Carbon Cycle

## 4.1 Be a Storyteller

You are going to tell a story about a character who belongs to the clan (circle one):

**WOLF      MOOSE      BEAR**

This clan has the following key characteristics (see sidenote p. 34 of the picture book):

My story will include this theme/ these themes (choose 1 or more themes):

- Heroism
- Friendship
- Good vs. evil
- Love
- Redemption
- Courage
- Coming of age
- Revenge
- Teachings/ morals/ values
- Seasons/ nature/ land
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Think about your story:

- When did it happen? Season? Time of Year?
- Who is your character?
- Where was your character?
- Who else was there?
- What happened?

Your story should have a beginning, middle, and end. Write some notes to prepare what you are going to say:



## 4.2 Mamawīwin: Gathering – Wordsearch

**PART 1:** Find and circle each of the words from the list below. Words may appear forwards or backwards, horizontally, vertically or diagonally in the grid.



ancestors   storytelling   apprentice   ceremony   protocols  
mamawīwin   sapatowan   aniskotapiwin   acknowledgment  
mistikiwa   kotawan   firepit   tobacco

**PART 2:** Complete the following:





1. Choose one word and provide a definition.

2. Choose one word and write a sentence using it.

3. Find an example of one word in *Amō's Sapotawan*. Write down the page number. Copy the sentence and underline the word.

### 4.3 Observing the Weather

Use this chart to record your observations of the weather over the period of a week. Be as detailed as you can in your description. Be sure to notice temperature changes, the wind, clouds, sun, sounds, colours, animal behaviour, and precipitation

| Date and Time   | What I see<br> | What I feel<br> | What I smell<br> | What I hear<br> |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| Day 1:  |   |  |   |  |
| Day 2:  |   |  |   |  |
| Day 3:  |   |  |   |  |
| Day 4:  |   |  |   |  |
| Day 5:  |   |  |   |  |
| Day 6:  |   |  |   |  |
| Day 7:  |   |  |   |  |
| *Be as detailed as possible as you will use these observations to prepare a weather forecast for your community. (See Student Resource 4.4) |   |  |   |  |

## **4.4 Preparing a Local Weather Forecast**

**Now, use your observations to prepare a one-minute weather report for your community predicting the next day's weather.**

For an idea of how to begin, watch these sample weather forecasts by children:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2aWQgp8zy4>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lp5Pf5in4lQ>

**Here are some elements to include in your weather forecast:**

1. Introduce yourself and state your location, the date, and time.
2. Describe the community or region you are reporting on.
3. Have a map or a picture of the local area ready to point to during your forecast.
4. State the date and approximate time for any predictions (morning, afternoon, evening).
5. Predict the high and low temperatures for the day in degrees Celsius.
6. Answer these questions in your forecast: Will the day be mostly cloudy or sunny? Will it be windy? Will it rain or snow? Will it be humid? Will there be a change in temperature or wind at some point in the day?
7. State what you based your predictions on.
8. Give a bit of advice to listeners about how to prepare for the coming weather.
9. Sign off with a friendly goodbye or joke.

## **4.5 Mapping Activity**

### **Instructions:**

1. Go to the Conservation and Climate Manitoba website to find information about wildfires in your region over the past two years.

Manitoba Conservation and Climate Wildfire: [https://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/wildfire\\_program/](https://www.gov.mb.ca/sd/wildfire_program/)

2. Record the location and the cause of each fire: Was it caused by human action, or by lightning? What communities did it affect? What area did it cover? How long did it last?

3. Using the map of Manitoba on the following page, draw in each wildfire in the correct area and create a legend to indicate whether it was started by humans or by natural causes.

4. If you can, find information about the weather conditions that continued to affect the spread of the fire: wind, temperature, humidity. Indicate this on your map by using a colour code.



Source: <https://www.freeworldmaps.net/northamerica/canada/manitoba/manitoba-map.jpg>

## **4.6 The Value of Wildfire**

Fire plays a very important role in the health of our forests. Fire cleans up the forest when it begins to get very old, infested with insects or diseases, or when strong winds blow down trees in large areas. Following the fire, nutrients from burnt trees and other vegetation are released back into the soil and the open areas allow the sun to warm the ground, making it a perfect site for a new forest to grow. Several tree species need the heat of a fire to open up their cones in order to release the seeds that are locked up inside them. Other trees grow new shoots from the unharmed root system to start a new forest after a fire. Plants like fireweed take advantage of a burned site where few other plants are growing. They can flourish until new trees slowly take over the site.

Many species of animals seek out recent and older burn sites to eat the berries, mushrooms, and lush grass that they can't find in areas that have not burned in recent years. Humans are attracted to these sites for the same reason!

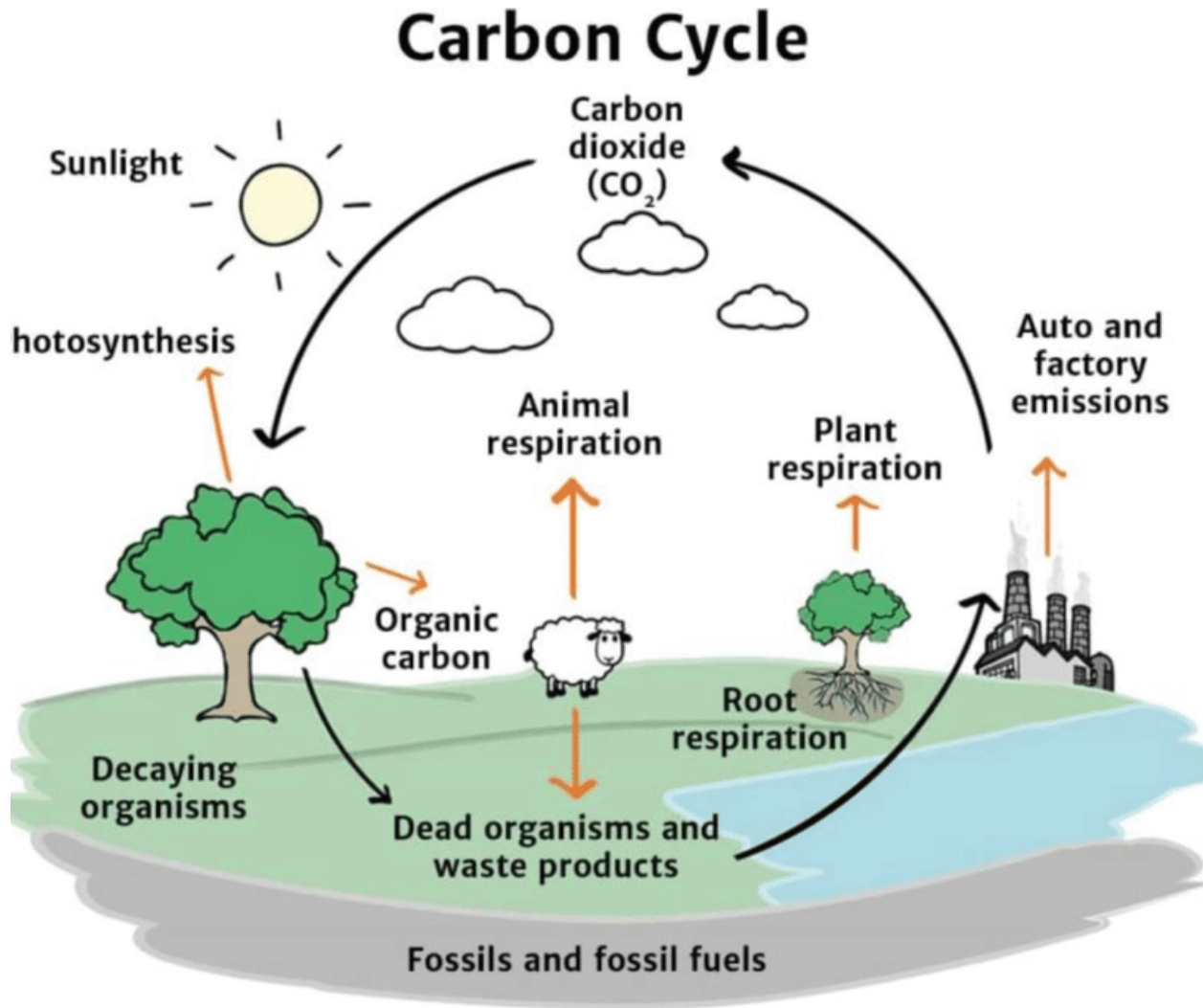
Canada's northern forest is part of the boreal forest that grows all over the northern portion of the earth. If you looked at all the fires that have occurred in this forest over the past 200 years, you would have a hard time finding any portion of the forest that has not burnt. Fire naturally occurs in our forests and it plays a very important role in keeping them healthy.

Source (p. 4):

[https://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/sites/enr/files/fire\\_ambassador\\_booklet\\_-\\_web\\_dc\\_edits.pdf](https://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/sites/enr/files/fire_ambassador_booklet_-_web_dc_edits.pdf)

Work with a partner to create a cyclical diagram that shows how wildfires are restorative. Use words, images, and pictograms. Start by brainstorming key ideas you want to include in the space below. Use a new sheet of paper to draw your diagram.

## 4.7 The Carbon Cycle



The Carbon Cycle. Source: Alamy (2020) The Carbon Cycle [8]

[https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Carbon-Cycle-Source-Alamy-2020-The-Carbon-Cycle-8\\_fig2\\_343185753](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Carbon-Cycle-Source-Alamy-2020-The-Carbon-Cycle-8_fig2_343185753)

### Instructions:

Study this diagram in the light of what you know about climate change in today's world. In a group of 4 to 5 students, plan and create a tableau or freeze frame that tells the story of the carbon cycle and represents the impact of modern human activities on this cycle. Begin by identifying all the key elements in the diagram and choosing who will represent each of them. Your group may choose to add to the tableau other elements that are relevant to your community, such as forest fires, logging and mining operations, or hydro-electric developments.



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## Cree Glossary

**akwayan (ah kwah yan)** – tent for smoking food

**aniskotapiwin (ah nee sko tah pee win)** – strengthening connections with ancestors and their teachings

**anoc ka nipihk (ah noch kah nee peek)**– this summer

**apiscithīniwak (ah pis chi thee nee wuk)**– little people

**apwanāsk (up whan NAASK)** – handmade tool made of willow or birch used for roasting fish over a fire

**asiniskaw īthiniwak (uh si nee scow EE thi ni wuk)** – Rocky Cree People

**aski sakatask (us kee sah kah tusk)**– cow parsnip

**aski māskīkiya (us kee MAA SKEE KEE yah)**– medicinal herbs

**askihk (us kehk)** – clay pot

**askihko (us kee koh)** – tools for making pottery

**askihkwak (us kee wuk)** – clay pots

**atāmiskatowin (ah TAA mi skah toh win)**– gift-giving ceremony for acknowledging a person

**atihkamik (ah TEE kah mihk)** – whitefish run

**atihkamikwak (ah TEE kah mihk wuk)** –whitefish

**athoskanak (ah thoh skah nuk)**– raspberries

**awasis (ah wah sis)** – child

**iskwīsisak (is KWEE seh suk)** – young girls

**isohkistitat (eh soh kehs teh tut)** – fresh water

**ithinimīna (eh thi neh meh nah)**– blueberries

**lthinisakahikan (eh thin nee sah kah hey kun)** – Southern Indian Lake

**itī kāpasitīk (eh TEE KAA pah seh TEEK)**– “A forest fire is there.”

**ītōmikathwāstik (EE TOH meh ka THWAAS tehk)** – mirror calm

**īwīthinohit (EE WEE thin oh HEET)** – skinned black bear; sacred ceremony for preparing bear carcass

**kakānohkimowina (kah KAA noh keh moh weh nah)**– a community’s guiding principles

**kakītiwi (kah KEE teh weh)** – black or dark

**kāmīkwaskwak (KAA MEE kwahs kwahk)** – red-coloured sunset sky

**kapasitīhk (kah pah seh tehk)**– forest fire

**kasaskahānawak (kah sah ska HAA nah wuk)** – the process of firing pottery

**kīkawinaw (KEE kah weh now)** – our mother (root word: nika, the first teacher)

**kīhty amaya (KEE tee yah mah yah)**– an elder

**kinosiwi pimī (keh noh seh weh peh MEE)**– fish oil

**kinosi sākahikan (keh noh seh SAH kah HEE kun)** –Fish Lake (Uhlman Lake)

**kisi aya (keh seh ah yah)**– adult

**kisithiniw Pipon (keh seh thi new pee pon)** – the old man

**kotawān (koh ta waan)** – campfire; kotawāna – many campfires

**kwakwāywata (kwa QUIY wah tu)** – birchbark baskets

**kwiskitīkī (kwee SKEE TEE KEE)**– if the wind turns

**mahikanak minisiwin (mah HEE kah nuk)**– wolf family group

**mamawīwin (mah mah WEE win)** – gathering

**māskihkiwapwiw (MAA skeh keh wah pwey)**– medicine tea

**maskihkiya (mah SKEE keh yah)**– knowledge of medicine

**māskikiy (MAA SKEE KEEY)**– medicine

**masko minisiwin (mus ko meh neh seh win)**– bear family group

**maskwa (mus quah)** – bear

**mikisiwi pawistikōhk (meh keh seh weh pa weh steh KOHK)** –Eagle Rapids

**mikisiwi pawistik (meh keh seh weh pa weh stick)**– Eagle Rapids

**mikisiwi waci (meh keh seh weh)**– Eagle Hill

**mikiwāhp (meh keh WAAP)** – dome-shaped dwellings made of trees growing in season or animal skins, often referred to as wigwams in English

**minisiwin (meh neh seh win)**– family group or clan

**Misinipi (mih sih nih pi)** – Big Water, specifically the Churchill River

**miskanaw (meh skaa now)** – one’s individual life journey

**mistikīwahp (me STEE KEE wahp)** – a long lodge, with doors on either end, made of bent poles covered with spruce branches with doors on either end

**mithāwayāwin (me THAA wah YAA win)** – to be in a positive state of being

**mīthikowisiwin (MEE the koh weh seh win)**– gift

**mitihikan (meh te hee cun)** – hand drum

**moso minisiwin (moh soh meh neh seh win)** – moose family group

**moswak (mos wuk)**– moose family

**niciwām pawistik (neh chi WAAHM)**– Brotherly Love Rapids

**nīhithaw (NEE he thow)**– coming from the four directions; corresponding to the physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental realms

**nikāwī (neh KAA wee)** – my mother

**nimitān (neh meh TAAN)**– let’s dance

**nīpin** – summer

**nipisiwata (nee pee see wut uh)** – willow baskets

**nitānis (neh TAAH nes)**– my girl

**nōhcawī (noh CHA wee)**– uncle

**ocistasiyapiy (oh chis tah tey hah pee)** – sinew

**onistamokiw (oh neh stah moh kew)**– person in the front of the canoe

**opahkwaci (oh pah kwah chi)**– swim bladder, a gas-filled sac found in the body of some fish that controls buoyancy.

**osakihakana (oh sa kee hah kah nah)** – loved ones

**oskatis (oh skah tes)** – young adult

**otakwahamo (oh tah kwah hah moh)** – person at the back of the canoe

**ototimihitowin (oh toh teh mee hee toh win)** – family group based on mother’s lineage

**otawīya (oh TAH wee yah)**– her father

**paskowī pīsim (pa skoh wee pee sim)**– feather moulting moon

**pīcīsīmōwin (pee chi see moh win)**– round dance

**pīhcipothākan (peh che poh thaa cun)**– fish weir (plural: pīhcipothākana)

**pīmikan (pee meh kahn)** – preserved food composed of dried berries, dried moose or caribou, and fat

**pimiwāta (peh meh waah tah)** – fish oil containers

**pitapan (pee tah pahn)**– light is coming

**sapotawan, sapotawana (sah poh tah wahn)**– rite of passage, rites of passage

**saska (sus kah)**– to light a fire

**takwākin (tah KWAH kin)**– fall: takwā means gathering

**thiwahikānik (thee wah he kaah nek)**– pounded meat or fish

**tisipicikana (teh seh peh chi kah nah)**– food caches

**wāhkotowin (WAH koh toh win)**– adopted relatives

**wāniska (WAH neh ska)** – “Get up.”

**wapatānask(wah pah taah nahsk)** – clay

**wasipistān (wah seh peh staahn)** – morning lark

**waskatamo (wah ska tah moh)**– water-lily root

**wathaman (wah tha mahn)**– clay with temper added used for making pottery

**wāwāhtiw (waah waah tew)** – Northern Lights

**wihkaskwa (weh kah skwah)** – wild mint

**wihkaskwa (weh kah skwah)**– mint tea

**wīkis (WEE kis)**– rat root

**wīthin (wee thin)** – animal fat

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# Appendix

## Curriculum Connections

### Social Studies

SS

#### Grade 4 Social Studies

##### Cluster 4: History of Manitoba

- Give examples of Aboriginal contributions to the history of Manitoba
- Recognize that their identities are connected to the history of their Aboriginal community

##### Cluster 5: Canada's North

- Give examples of Aboriginal languages, cultures, and communities in the North
- Locate on a map and describe physical features of the northern territory studied
- Identify natural resources in the North
- Give examples of changes to place names in the northern territory studied
- Give examples of stories and traditions of the northern territory studied
- Describe changes in ways of life in the last century in the northern territory studied
- Value the contributions of the North to the Canadian community.

#### Grade 5 Social Studies

##### Cluster 1: First Peoples

- Value oral tradition as an important source of knowledge about First Peoples
- Locate on a map of North America the traditional territories of First Peoples
- Describe practices and beliefs that reflected First Peoples' connections with the land and the natural environment
- Describe characteristics of diverse First Peoples cultures before contact with Europeans
- Relate First Peoples' stories of their pre-contact and early contact with Europeans
- Compare types of leadership in diverse First Peoples communities
- Describe various ways in which First Peoples communities interacted with each other

##### Cluster 2: Early European Colonization

- Relate stories of European explorers and traders in their search for new lands or the Northwest Passage
- Identify factors that influenced the movement and settlement of Europeans in early Canada (natural environment, fur trade, military posts)
- Give examples of the impact of interactions between First Peoples and European explorers, colonists, and missionaries
- Compare First Peoples' and European approaches to natural resource use in early Canada
- Appreciate the contributions of First Peoples to the development of Canada

- Be willing to consider diverse approaches to resource and land use

### **Cluster 3: Fur Trade**

- Describe factors that led to the development and expansion of the fur trade into the west and north of Canada
- Give examples of ways in which the fur trade operations were influenced by the land
- Describe the historical significance of Canadian place names
- Appreciate the significance of the land and natural resources in the development of Canada
- Give examples of the impact of interactions between First Peoples and European traders and settlers
- Describe how the fur trade was dependent on the men and women of the First Nations and Métis Nation

## **Grade 6 Social Studies**

### **Cluster 1: Building a Nation**

- Give reasons for the establishment of treaties and reserves and describe their impact on individuals, families, and communities
- Value the diverse stories and perspectives that comprise the history of Canada
- Appreciate the efforts of people in early Canada to overcome environmental hardships

### **Cluster 3: Shaping Contemporary Canada**

- Identify changes and developments regarding Aboriginal rights in Canada from 1867 to the present
- Value their First Nation, Inuit, or Métis language, heritage, and culture
- Give examples of ways in which industry and technology have changed life in Canada since 1945

### **Cluster 4: Canada Today**

- Describe factors that shape personal and national identities and explain how they may coexist
- Identify First Nations, Inuit, and Métis perspectives regarding self-determination.

## **Science**

## **S**

## **Grade 4 Science**

### **Cluster 1: Habitats and communities**

- Investigate alternate explanations of plant or animal adaptations based on traditional knowledge from a variety of cultures
- Recognize and appreciate how traditional knowledge contributes to our understanding of plant and animal populations and interactions.

### **Cluster 4: Rocks minerals and erosion**

- Investigate and describe ways in which soil erosion is controlled or minimized in their community and in communities around the world.

- Describe effects of wind, water, and ice on the landscape
- Identify natural phenomena and human activities that cause significant changes in the landscape.

## Grade 5 Science

### Cluster 1: Maintaining a healthy body

- Describe the types of nutrients in foods and their function in maintaining a healthy body
- Identify and describe factors necessary to maintain a healthy body.
- Explain how human health may be affected by lifestyle choices and natural- and human-caused environmental factors.

### Cluster 2: Properties of and changes in substances

- Use appropriate vocabulary related to their investigations of properties of, and changes in, substances (characteristic, property, substance, matter, volume, state, solid, liquid, gas, reversible and nonreversible changes, physical change, chemical change, chemical product, raw material)

### Cluster 3: Forces and Simple Machines

- Identify and describe types of simple machines. Include: levers, wheel and axle, pulley, gear, inclined plane, screw, wedge. Describe the advantage of using simple machines to move or lift a given load.

### Cluster 4: Weather and Climate

- Describe how weather conditions may affect the activities of humans and other animals
- investigate various ways of predicting weather, and evaluate their usefulness (e.g., traditional knowledge and observations of the natural environment)
- Describe the key features of a variety of weather phenomena.
- Provide examples of severe weather forecasts and describe preparations for ensuring personal safety during severe weather and related natural disasters.
- Differentiate between weather and climate. Weather includes the atmospheric conditions existing at a particular time and place; climate describes the long-term weather trend of a particular region.
- Identify factors that influence weather and climate in Manitoba and across Canada and describe their impacts.

## Grade 6 Science

### The Solar System

- Explain, using models and simulations, how the Earth's rotation causes the cycle of day and night, and how the Earth's tilt of axis and revolution cause the yearly cycle of seasons
- Explain how the relative positions of the Earth, moon, and Sun are responsible for moon phases and eclipses
- Identify and describe how people from various cultures, past and present, apply astronomy in daily life
- Identify points of reference in the night sky and recognize that the apparent movement of celestial objects is regular, predictable, and related to the Earth's rotation and revolution.

## English Language Arts

ELA

### General Learning Outcomes:

- Students will listen, speak, read, write, view, and represent to explore thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences.
- Students will listen, speak, read, write, view, and represent to comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, literary, and media texts.
- Students will listen, speak, read, write, view, and represent to manage ideas and information. Students will listen, speak, read, write, view, and represent to enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.
- Students will listen, speak, read, write, view, and represent to celebrate and build community.

## Aboriginal Languages and Cultures (Rocky Cree)

RC

### General Learning Outcomes in Rocky Cree culture and language learning:

- Students will use the Rocky Cree language effectively and competently in listening, viewing, speaking, reading, representing, and writing.
- Students will develop and use strategies to enhance the effectiveness of learning and communication in the Rocky Cree language.
- Students will use the Rocky Cree language in a variety of situations and for a variety of purposes at home, at school, and within and outside the community.
- Students will explore and value cultural and linguistic diversity and gain intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be respectful and contributing members of society.

## Arts Education (Visual Arts, Drama, Music, Dance)

A

### General Learning Outcomes:

- Students connect the arts (visual arts, drama, music, dance) to contexts of time, place, and community, and develop understanding of how the arts reflect and influence culture and identity.
- Students individually and collaboratively generate, develop, and communicate ideas in creating original works (visual arts, drama, music, dance) for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Students demonstrate understanding of and facility with artistic elements, principles, and forms (visual arts, drama, music, dance).
- Students analyze, reflect on, and construct meaning in response to art (visual arts, drama, music, dance) created by themselves and others.

## Physical Health/Health Education

H

### General Learning Outcomes:

- Movement: The student will demonstrate competency in selected movement skills, and knowledge of movement development and physical activities with respect to different types of learning experiences, environments, and cultures.



- **Fitness Management:** The student will demonstrate the ability to develop and follow a personal fitness plan for lifelong physical activity and well-being.
- **Safety:** The student will demonstrate safe and responsible behaviours to manage risks and prevent injuries in physical activity participation and for daily living.
- **Personal and Social Management:** The student will demonstrate the ability to develop self-understanding, to make health-enhancing decisions, to work cooperatively and fairly with others, and to build positive relationships with others.
- **Healthy Lifestyle Practices:** The student will demonstrate the ability to make informed decisions for healthy living relating to personal hygiene, active living, healthy nutritional practices, substance use and abuse, and human sexuality.

Note: These learning outcomes will be particularly relevant in the planning of any land-based learning activities

## Career Development Education

CD

### Preparation for career-life planning in Middle Years:

- Students will reflect on their values, interests, abilities and gifts.
- Students will practice setting goals and planning actions to attain their goals.

