

māskīkīy miskanaw

The Medicine Way

BOOK THREE



By William Dumas
Illustrated by Rhian Brynjolson



Teacher's Guide

Authors:

Audrey Barkman-Hill (PhD), Margaret Dumas (BEd),
Latika Raisinghani (PhD), and Connie Wyatt Anderson (MEd),
With Genevieve Field (M.A.) and Brooke Buchan (B.A.)

Research Assistants/Formatting:

Brooke Buchan and Genevieve Field

Project Manager and Research Coordinator:

Tyra Dunits

Six Seasons Project Director:

Mavis Reimer

Six Seasons Curriculum Team Leader:

Doris Wolf

Special thanks to the following:

O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation Knowledge Keepers: Bernard Dumas Jr. and Felicia Baker

Nisichawayasihk Cree Knowledge Keeper: Larry Tait

Jill Taylor-Hollings, Lakehead University

Alexis Greener-Ironside

Melanie Braith

The Six Seasons team leader group for feedback and help along the way.

The Six Seasons partnership project is supported in part by funding from the Social
Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Contents

Foreword	4	Module 3: Kinanaskomitin: Hunting and Gathering	88
The Story Behind the Story	4	1: Hunting and Gathering Protocols	90
Who are the Rocky Cree?	6	2: Waterways	92
Where does the <i>Māskikīy Miskanaw</i> Story Take Place?	8	3: Orienteering	94
Six Seasons of Rocky Cree	9	4: Respect, Reciprocity, and Sustainability	96
Using the Teacher Guide	9	5: Learning with Nature and Rocky Cree Women	100
Modules and Suggested Learning Activities	10	6: Environmental Stewardship	105
Indigenous Pedagogy	12	7: Gifts from the Water	109
Revitalizing the Rocky Cree Language	13	A Rocky Cree Water Party Celebration	113
<i>Māskikīy Miskanaw</i> Picture Book App	14	Module 3 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources	115
Maps	15		
Module 1: Pītokiwin: Introducing the Book	18	Module 4: Kinistinow: Earth and Sky	131
1: Placing the Book in Context	20	1: Rocky Cree Constellations and Star Stories	133
2: Reading a Picture Book	20	2: Music is Sacred Medicine	136
3: Discovering Picture Book Design	22	3: Wāwātiw - Painting the Northern Lights	139
4: Exploring Rocky Cree Language	23	4: Exploring Cyclical and Linear Time	144
5: Introducing the Characters	24	5: Rocky Cree Star Teachings	146
6: Introducing the Big Ideas	27	6: Life Beyond Death	150
7: Creating a Miskanaw Journal	29	7: Sacred Stories and Beliefs	151
Module 1 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources	30	A Rocky Cree Star Celebration	155
		Module 4 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources	158
Module 2: Māskikīy: Medicines	47		
1: Othasowina - Guiding Principles	49	Cree Glossary	175
2: Mamitonicikan - Holistic Health	56	Appendices	179
3: Plants as Medicine	58	A: Introduction to Rocky Cree Medicinal Plants	179
4: Tipiskaw the Medicine Dog	60	B: Rocky Cree Star Chart and Syllabics	182
Walking the Medicine Way - <i>Māskikīy Miskanaw</i>	61	C: Curriculum Connections	186
Māskihkiwapwiy - Medicine Tea	63		
A Rocky Cree Medicine Celebration	67	Note: Cree translation and narration will be published in a revised version of the app in fall 2026.	
Module 2 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources	69		

Foreword

Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way and the Six Seasons Book Series

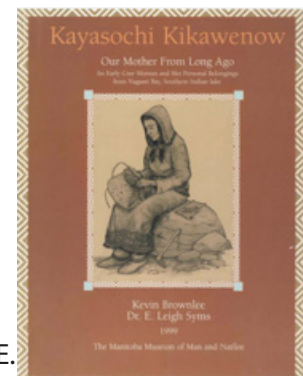
Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way (2026) is part of the Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Īthiniwak historical picture book series. There are six books planned for the series, one for each of the six seasons of the asiniskaw Īthiniwak (Rocky Cree people). Set in the mid 1600s, the books follow the daily seasonal lives of one family group. Accompanied by picture book apps and teacher's guides, the series includes *Pīsim Finds Her Miskanaw* (2013, reprinted 2020), *Amō's Sapotawan* (2022), and *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way* (2026).

A central goal of the Six Seasons project is to create easily accessible resources for middle-years teachers so that they can use these important materials in the classroom. Although it belongs to a series, *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way* 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, *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way* can be taught in conjunction with *Pīsim Finds Her Miskanaw* and *Amō's Sapotawan*. 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 Īthiniwak, to their students.

The Story Behind the Story

The Archaeology

In 1993, the remains of a Rocky Cree woman who lived more than 350 years ago were found at Nagami Bay (Onākaāmihk) by two South Indian Lake fishermen, Bruce Tait and Bob Moose. Nagami Bay is on the west shore of South 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 believed that the wom-

an from Nagami Bay allowed herself to be found so that today's Rocky Cree might gain a better understanding of their heritage. Brownlee and Sims used the science of archaeology to explore and learn about the ancient ways of the Rocky Cree.

Kayasochi Kikawenow

Brownlee and Sims determined that Kayasochi Kikawenow lived in the region of Southern Indian Lake in northern Manitoba around 1665. They could not determine how she died, but through scientific analysis they could gather information and clues about how she lived. Kayasochi Kikawenow wore a simple dress overtop knee-high leggings and a belt around her waist. Her moccasins were pointed with a seam up the middle. Several thousand pin cherry seed beads were sewn onto her hood, and her dress was decorated with porcupine quills. In her hair, she had beads made from glass, red pipestone, and rabbit and bird bone tubes.

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.

Brownlee and Sims determined that Kayasochi Kikawenow and her family were camping at Nagami Bay during a warm period of the year. Her death would have been a great loss to her family. She was placed on her right side facing the water with her head to the north. She was buried with tools she used every day: awls for sewing, scrapers for working hides, knives for cutting meat, and whetstones for sharpening her tools. Her shallow grave was covered with earth and a cairn of rocks. After her burial and ceremony, the family would have left and continued their seasonal round.

Both Kayasochi Kikawenow's remains and her possessions give us an insight into her life and that of the Rocky Cree. Although she lived in an area rich in natural resources, she had lived through several food shortages as a child. She was thought to be 25-years-old at the time of her death, was about 5'1" and had given birth a number of times. She was in general good health.

The goods buried with her mostly consisted of traditional tools and materials from local sources. Some of the goods came from farther away; for example, the red pipestone beads came from Minnesota and the glass beads came from the Great Lakes area to the east which had contact with European traders. The goods tell a story of a healthy existence within and reliance on the natural world and of long-distance, established trade networks. In the period in which Kayasochi Kikawenow lived, Europeans had not yet arrived in the Rocky Cree territory of northern Manitoba even though some of their trade goods arrived via these trade networks.

Author William Dumas

Author William Dumas is Rocky Cree from South Indian Lake. He is a long-time educator and a renowned storyteller. He wanted the story of Kayasochi Kikawenow 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 a historically based picture book would be the right form. Inspired by the archaeological find and building on his own experiences of his Rocky Cree culture and territory and the oral stories he has heard and told throughout his life, Dumas developed the first story for the series, *Pisim Finds her Miskanaw*. Together with Mavis Reimer from the Centre for Research in Young People's Texts and Cultures (CRYTC) at The University of Winnipeg, he built a team of Knowl-

edge Keepers and academic researchers who could help him to communicate the contexts for this story and the others that would follow, using the resources of lived experience, oral history, archaeology, anthropology, and picture book studies. These contexts appear in the books as the marginal story notes.

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. In the second book, *Amō's Sapotawan*, Pisim's younger sister, Amō, is the focus of the story. Mwakwa, the brother of Pisim and Amō, is the main character of *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*. In *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*, Mwakwa receives an invitation to become an apprentice to the stargazer and must decide the path or miskanaŋ he will follow.

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 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 the Six Seasons series picture books.

Historical fiction brings the past alive in ways that differ from archaeology and history. 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 īthiniwak lifeways in the seventeenth century. The hope is to also bring some of these lifeways into the present as part of the cultural resurgence of Rocky Cree culture and language.

Who are the Rocky Cree?

The asiniskaw īthiniwak, 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

TEACHER TIP

asiniskaw means 'plentiful rock/rocky' and īthiniwak means 'human beings/the people'. The preferred English term for the asiniskaw īthiniwak 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.

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 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, martin, 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.

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.

The Rocky Cree were one of the first Indigenous nations west of Hudson Bay to engage in trade with European fur traders. While European trade goods arrived in the area in the mid-1600s, likely from the region around the Great Lakes, fur traders from the Hudson's Bay Company arrived shortly after 1680.

Rocky Cree communities in Manitoba today:

- South Indian Lake / opiponapiwin
- Brochet / kisipikamāhk
- Nelson House / nisichawayasihk
- Granville Lake / okawi mithikananihk
- Mathias Colomb - Pukatawagan / pakitawāhkanik
- Marcel Colomb - Black Sturgeon Falls / kahkitināmiw

👉 See Map: Rocky Cree Communities in Manitoba

When and Where does *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way* Take Place?

Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way 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 Rocky Cree. By the early 1600s, the asiniskaw īthiniwak would have begun to hear stories about European foreigners and 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.

Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way takes place at sowaki sakahikan, which refers to the heartland, a location in northern Manitoba surrounding Suwannee Lake. The word sowaki alludes to the sound that birds' wings make when they are landing on water. Sowaki sakahikan has been known to generations of Rocky Cree people as a place where thousands of birds gather.

👉 See Map: Sowaki Sakahikan

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.

While mainstream Canada follows four seasons, the Rocky Cree follow a cycle of six seasons based on moon cycles and changing landscapes. *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way* takes place in tākwākin, or autumn. Tākwākin is a busy time for asiniskaw īthiniwak as they focus on hunting moose and bear, gathering late season berries and medicinal plants, preparing hides to make winter clothing, and making other preparations for the long, cold winter that is coming.

In the Rocky Cree seasonal calendar, each season has two moon cycles of 28 days. The name of each moon is derived from the natural conditions of the season and from necessary seasonal activities. The moons for tākwākin are hopahamowī pīsim, the flying moon, named for the time when migrating birds gather and begin to fly south, and pimahamowī pīsim, flying back moon, when the migration of seasonal birds is complete and moose mating season begins.

TEACHER TIP

The Gregorian calendar is used in most parts of the world today, including Canada. It went into effect in 1582 and uses a solar cycle that follows 12 months of 28-31 days with a leap year every four years. The Rocky Cree follow a lunar model of 12 moons of 28 days each.



The six seasons of the asiniskaw ithiniwak

Using the Teacher's Guide

Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way: 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 connectons 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 for the teacher about *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*. It also includes maps to help set context to the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story. The Appendix includes an *Introduction to Rocky Cree Medicinal Plants* and an explanation of Rocky Cree syllabics and the Rocky Cree Star Chart. The Appendix also includes Curriculum Connections that offer 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.

Modules and Suggested Learning Activities

***Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way: Teacher's Guide* offers four thematic modules:**

1. *Pitokīwin* ('Entering In') : Introducing the Book
2. *Māskikīy*: Medicine
3. *Kinanaskomitin*: Hunting and Gathering
4. *Kinistinow*: Earth and Sky

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. A **Best Practices** suggestion is given in each module highlighting a teaching strategy which an educator using Six Seasons materials has found to be particularly successful.

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 underlined bold black 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.

Module 1: Pītokīwin: Introducing the Book



Module Theme

Enduring Understanding

Extract from
Māskikīy Miskanaw
Text

Sipi nisitohtamowin: Enduring Understanding

"If we follow and practice the medicine way, we become good people. We can create beautiful energy that will bring health and joy to our families and our communities. We can all gather medicine, and we also possess that medicine in ourselves, through the way we relate to the people around us" (MM, p. 2).

Key Concepts:

- The Good Life

Key Concepts,
Key Words, Guiding Questions

Module Sub-Theme

Teaching Strategy

1: OTHASOWINA - GUIDING PRINCIPLES

"Medicine is the way we treat each other..." (MM, p. 1).

The Great Laws of the Rocky Cree

Many Indigenous groups have a set of laws or values that provide a strong framework for interacting with one another in good and healthy ways. They can be understood as good medicine for the way we should treat all our relations so we can live in harmony. The 7 Sacred Laws or 7 Grandfather Teachings are one example teachers may already have encountered and include love, respect, obedience, kindness, truth, sharing, and humility. The Rocky Cree follow what they call The Great Laws. There are many, including caring, cooperation, courage, determination, forgiveness, honesty, humility, patience, kindness, joyfulness, respect, and thankfulness.

Create

Write the Great Laws of the Rocky Cree list from above on the white board. Invite students to complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.1 GREAT LAWS OF THE ROCKY CREE** using drawing and text to illustrate what each law means to them.

"Othasowina are the rules of conduct within a family that lives together. These rules ensure that there is a healthy rhythm to family life, and that māskikiy is being shared to ensure well-being for all. Ceremony is very important in determining where you are in your miskanaw and where you need to travel" (MM, p. 1).

Wikinanaskiwa - Gathering Places

"Medicine is the way we treat each other, the stories we tell, and how we orient ourselves on on miskanaw" (MM, p.1).

For groups to get together and for family, social, or ceremonial events to happen, people need a place to gather. A gathering place must be suitable for the occasion.

Blackline Master

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

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 Kikawenow, 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.

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
- *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 break it down into its sound components to find root words. Understanding the roots within each word helps Rocky Cree language learners to see both the nuances of the word, which the English translation cannot capture, and the connections among words. Students will also develop a greater understanding of the key words through sub-module activities, which reinforce their connections to the Rocky Cree worldview.

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.

Sipi nisohtamowin 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. Here are the breakdowns for each word:

Sipi nisohtamowin means enduring knowledge that stays with you a long time.

The word is broken down as sipi (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 sipi nisohtamowin and kiskinwahamakiwin we encourage teachers to begin practicing and thinking in Rocky Cree and help inspire them to teach their students key words in Rocky Cree.

For schools and programs seeking greater language instruction than this guide can offer, the *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way* 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.

Māskīkīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way Picture Book App

Māskīkīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way 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 the Apple store or the Google Play store.

Before using the app in the 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 Mwakwa noted), a glossary of many of the Cree terms used in the book, a map of the journey that takes place in the story, 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 Virginia Moose 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 music and sound effects on or off. Finally, you have the option to listen to the story and the notes read aloud in English or in Cree, and to read the story and notes 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 that accompanies the story in the picture book. 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.

There are two ways to move through the story. The default mode is to experience the story chapter by chapter, as the picture book is organized. This is done by tapping on the buttons representing each screen from left to right on the navigation bar. Readers can, however, also choose to move around among the chapters of the story without moving through the story in sequence using the drop-down menu. This feature will likely be particularly useful for readers who want to re-read sections of the story.

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

The Hunting Game: This game features three mini games (Precision Aiming, Print Tracking, and Animal Trapping) where students will use Rocky Cree hunting tools and traps and identify animal tracks.

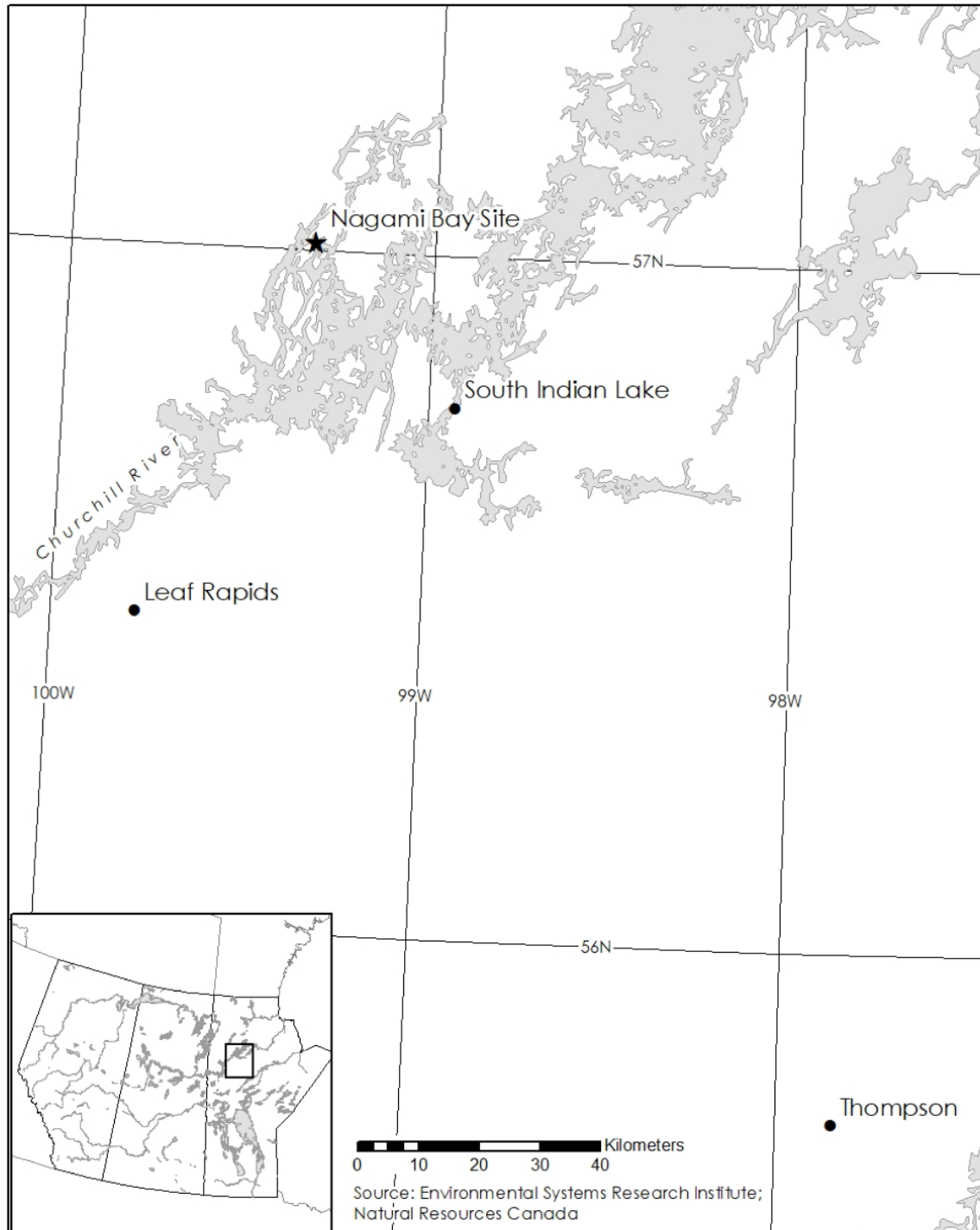
Music of the Land: This game features three categories (Lakeside, Forest Interior, and Under the Stars) where students will identify the sounds of the Rocky Cree territory.

Path of the Stars: This puzzle-like game invites students to match Rocky Cree constellations onto a constellation map.

Maps

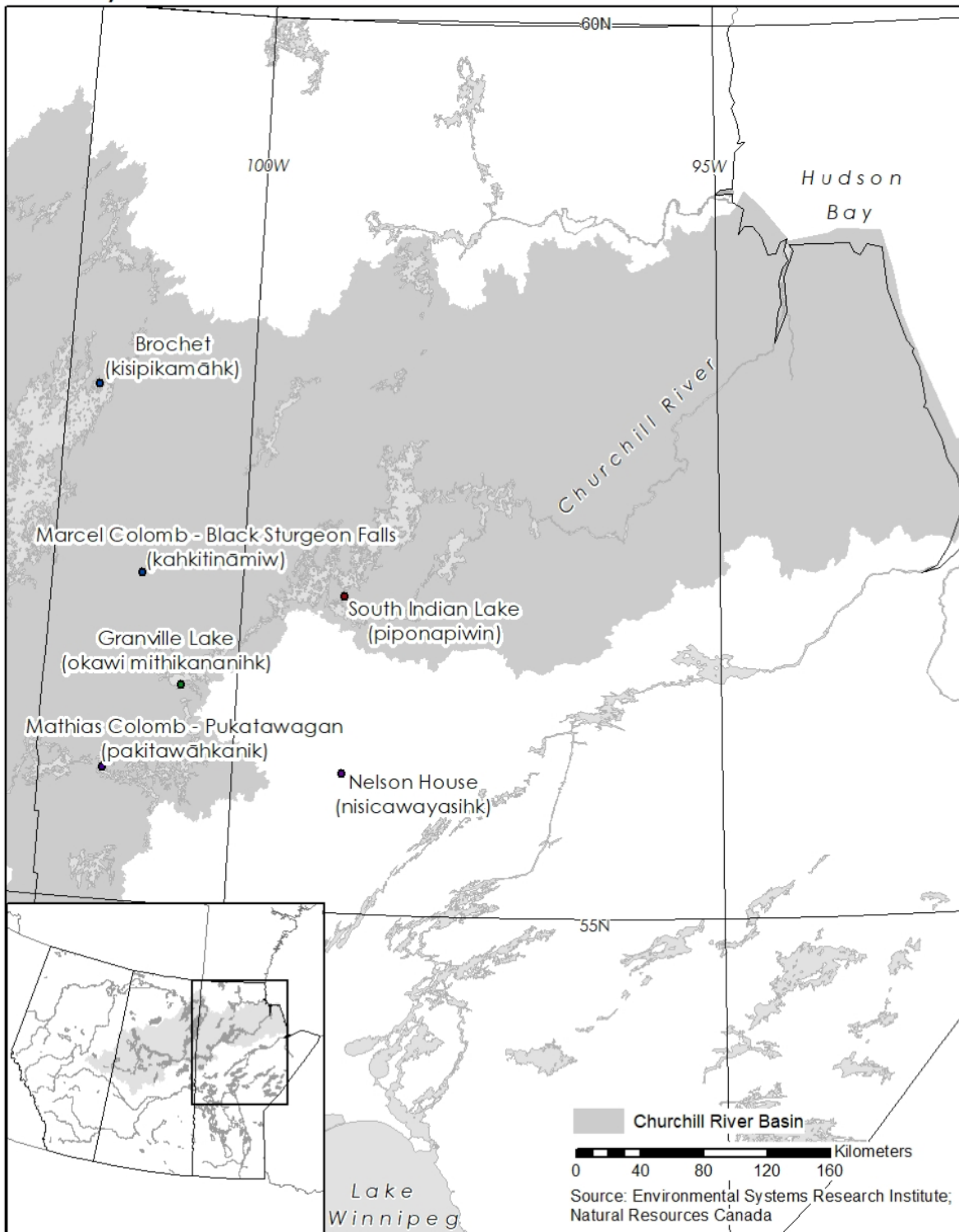
Map: The Nagami Bay Site

The Nagami Bay Site

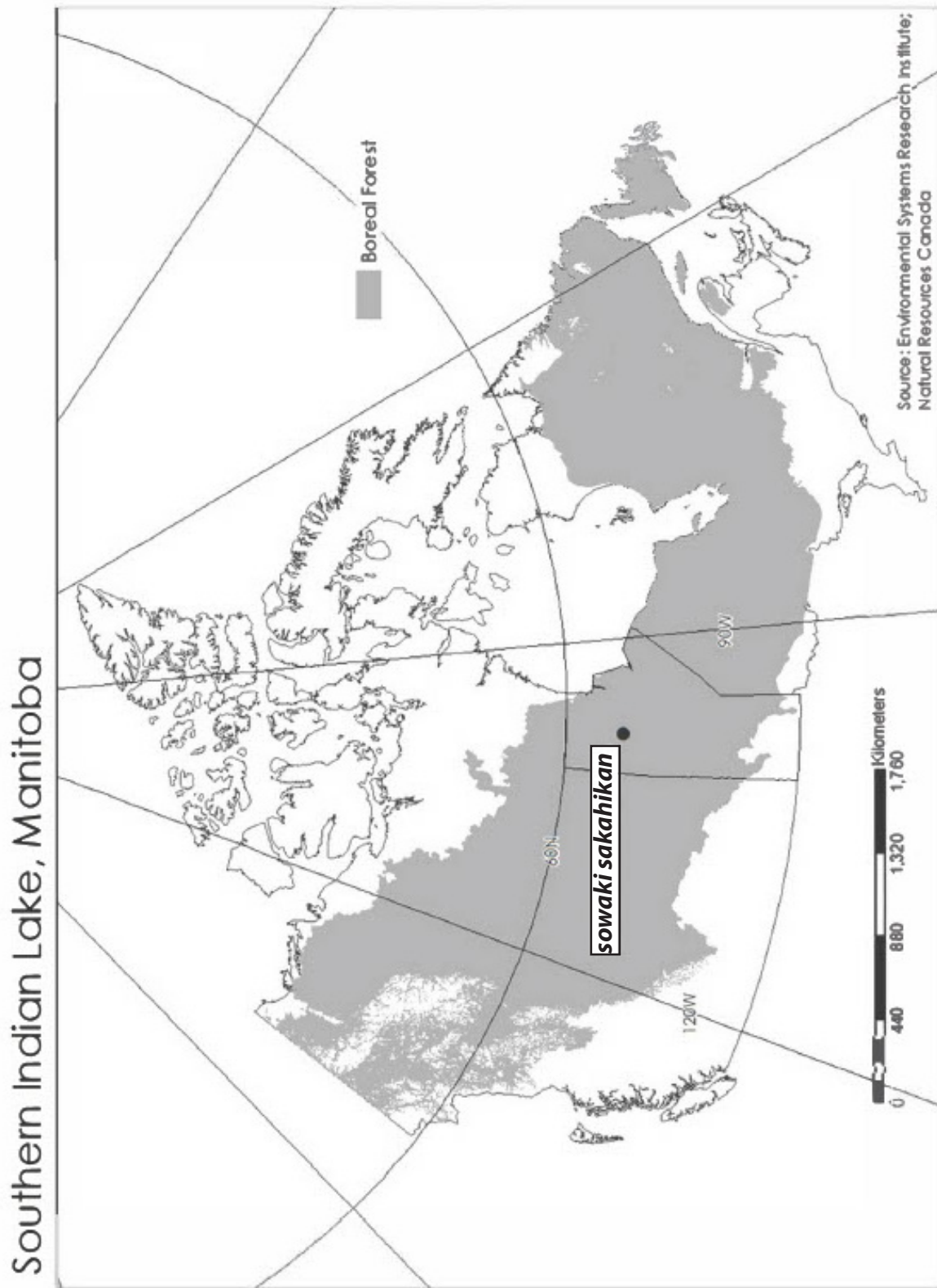


Map: Rocky Cree Communities on Churchill River

Rocky Cree Communities on Churchill River



Map: Southern Indian Lake, Manitoba



Module 1: Pītokīwin: Introducing the Book



Sipi nisitohtamowin: Enduring Understanding

"If we follow and practice the medicine way, we become good people. We can create beautiful energy that will bring health and joy to our families and our communities. We can all gather medicine, and we also possess that medicine in ourselves, through the way we relate to the people around us" (MM, p. 2).

Key Concepts:

- The Good Life
- Rocky Cree Culture and Language
- Healthy Living
- Medicine
- Rules of Conduct
- Hunting and Gathering
- Teaching and Learning
- Finding One's Life Path
- The Star Chart
- Beliefs about Life, Death, and the Afterlife

Key Words:

- māsikīy
- miskanaw
- othasowina
- pītōkīwin

Guiding Questions:

- How is a picture book laid out?
- What are the big ideas in this book?
- Who are the important characters in this book?
- How do the pictures help tell the story in this book?
- What is the medicine way?
- What are some examples of walking the medicine way?
- How do you find your path in life?
- How are things interconnected?
- What is sacred?

Kiskinwahamakiwin: Teaching Strategies

“In this book, you will see how travelling the *māsikīy miskanaw* will support you in your life’s journey” (MM, p. 2).

BEST PRACTICES SPOTLIGHT

Margaret Dumas – Nelson House

Margaret says it is vital that her Cree students see themselves and their home in Manitoba’s boreal forest in the pages of the Six Seasons books. She teaches the narratives in the season they are set and her first challenge to her students is to draw or paint what they actually see in the world around them. Once their artwork is done, she leads her students to view the illustrations and read the text to find out how the things they know play a part in the storyline.



1: PLACING THE BOOK IN CONTEXT

This picture book tells the story of Mwakwa as he travels with his family to the heartland, sowaki sakahikan, where the teachers live, and is given an unexpected opportunity to become the stargazer's apprentice. The story is set in tākwākin, or fall, the season in which the birds and people prepare for the coming winter.

As the story begins, Mwakwa's family travels the waterways to the heartland to meet their relatives. In the heartland, Mwakwa meets a puppy, finds a new singing partner, helps with hunting and harvesting activities, celebrates his cousin's first moose hunt, learns about medicines, and is introduced to the mystery of the stars.

When his family leaves the heartland early because they hear the news that a relative is very sick, Mwakwa must decide whether to go with them or to stay with the stargazer for the winter that is coming.

Māskikīy Miskanaw is the third book in the Six Seasons series. In the first book, *Pisim Finds her Miskanaw*, Mwakwa's oldest sister, Pisim, accepts her life path of becoming a midwife. In the second book of the series, *Amō's Sapotawan*, Mwakwa's second oldest sister, Amō, discovers she is gifted as a pottery maker. In this third book of the series, Mwakwa ponders what it means to walk the medicine way and what it might mean for him to become the stargazer's apprentice.

In the first book of the Six Seasons series, *Pisim Finds her Miskanaw*, Pisim takes responsibility to help a new mother deliver a baby during a dramatic spring storm. Now in *Māskikīy Miskanaw*, the family hears of the impending death of a beloved Elder, a favorite uncle, just as Mwakwa is learning about the sacred stories associated with the sky. When taken as a set, the first three narratives of this series carry the reader through an experience of the Rocky Cree cycle of life.

2: READING A PICTURE BOOK

SS

ELA

RC

A

S

H

Picture books are a distinctive literary form that blends stories and art. A reader will draw on a variety of senses when reading a picture book and will find that the story is told through both the illustrations and the text. Learning to slow down and pay attention to the images, and observing how text and image support each other, will extend the meaning of the story and help to bring the text to life.

Talk About It

Read the pictures first! Before reading the words of the story, ask students to do the following picture walk exercises. Direct them first to look at the illustration on the cover. Asking open-ended questions, talk about what they observe.

- *What do you see on the cover?*
- *What do you notice about the characters?*
- *What expressions do you notice on characters' faces?*
- *What do you think is going on in the picture?*
- *What is happening in the background?*
- *What colors are used? What do the colors suggest to you?*
- *What size is the illustration? What details are bigger or smaller?*

TEACHER TIP

Picture books are a relatively new form of book, originating in the early twentieth century. Wanda Gag, an American author and illustrator, is widely considered an early pioneer in the development of the picture book form.

- *What does the size of objects suggest to you?*
- *How do you think the cover illustration and the title of the book might fit together?*
- *What do you wonder about after looking at the cover illustration?*
- *What do you think might happen in this story?*
- *How does the cover of this book make you feel?*

After your discussion, ask students to complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 1.1 COVER STORY** to capture their initial response to the cover of the book and to articulate the questions and predictions they might have about the narrative before they read further.

Next, ask students to do a picture walk through the text, examining the illustrations and paying attention to details. Remind them that printing images is costly so if a publisher decided to include certain illustrations in a picture book, it is a purposeful decision.

Visual Literacy

These ways of looking at pictures help us to improve our visual literacy:

- **Observation:** What catches your eye? What seems to be the focus? Visual elements like bright colour, sharp contrasts, and greater size can draw our first attention, making these images seem most important.
- **Identifying Characters:** Are there faces visible? Whose? Faces also attract our attention so the more closely we are shown a face, the more we pay attention to it and the more importance we give to the character.
- **Use of Colour:** What colours are used most? Bright, vibrant colours usually make us feel light-hearted, upbeat, in a party mood, happy. Darker, muted colours may suggest sadness, difficulty, or loneliness.
- **Use of Shading:** How are dark and light used? Things that are lit up suggest a spotlight, clarity, something that is revealed. What is in shadow may be mysterious, unknown, dangerous, or threatening.
- **Use of Spacing:** How is white space used? Are there big chunks of white space? Does it seem that something is missing? Or is there white space around a character or object that seems to highlight it? Is there just enough white space to give a feeling of spaciousness and breathing room or is there so much white space that there is a feeling of vastness, emptiness, or loneliness?
- **Texture:** What types of textures are used for objects in the picture? Do these make you feel comfortable or uncomfortable? Why?
- **Placement:** Where are objects placed? Objects or people in the forefront of the illustration will seem important. Objects or people in the background will seem less important. Objects or people grouped together will seem to have a relationship to one another.
- **Page Setup:** Because of the tradition in Western cultures to read from left to right, top to bottom, characters moving from left to right or facing right seem to be moving forwards or making progress. When characters face left or seem to move from the right to the left, the reader will feel there is a problem and the character is making a mistake. Take note that Indigenous or other cultural norms may alter these expectations.
- **Gravity:** Because of our experience of gravity, we expect images on the top to be light and images on the bottom to be heavy. When this pattern is reversed, we are concerned and we sense danger.
- **Gutters:** Look at the gutter spaces. Those are the empty spaces on the margins of pages and along the binding in the middle of the book. Gutters set the story's speed; readers have to bridge gaps in

time, space, and motion as they “read” across gutters. Thin gutters imply rapid, continuous action while wider gutters imply a slower, more deliberate pace. Sometimes artists remove panel borders or gutters completely and let the illustration bleed into the gutter or extend through the gutter to the next page. This technique invites us to see multiple scenes as one cohesive idea or to assume that multiple situations have the same emotional tone.

The most important instruction? **Look at the pictures very slowly and carefully.**

And think about your emotional response to the illustrations: does anything make you laugh, feel puzzled, sad, afraid? Why might that be? What might be happening in the way the image is presented that leads you to feel the way you do? The **BLACKLINE MASTER 1.2 GOING ON A PICTURE WALK** could be completed by individuals or pairs after a class discussion about the visual walk through the picture book.

Based on the methods of visual literacy above, assign a two page spread and ask students - in pairs - to talk about what they see and how the illustrations make them feel by completing the **BLACKLINE MASTER 1.3 JUST IMAGINE!** Some interesting two page spreads in *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way* can be seen on pages 14/15, 16/17, 22/23, 26/27, 34/35, 36/37.

3: DISCOVERING PICTURE BOOK DESIGN

Talk About It

Turn student attention to the form of the book as a whole. How do the cover, pictures, colours, fonts, title, chapter headings, borders, and sidebars work together to form the content of this particular book? And how might these elements of design help readers to understand the meaning of the story that is told?

Walk through the book together as a class

- Which pages are front matter? What seems to be the purpose of these pages placed in the book before the story actually begins?
- Check the end of the book. Are there endpages after the story is finished? What function do the endpages seem to serve?
- Which pages tell the core story?
- Find a sidebar. What type of information does the sidebar you have found provide?
- Look at the font on a particular page. Why might this particular style and size of lettering have been chosen for this book?

TEACHER TIP

The dance between image and text

A good picture book won't explain everything in either the words or the pictures. Instead, the reader will need to look at the pictures and compare what is in the pictures to what is said in words to understand the story more completely.

When you have finished your introductory exercises and have read the story, you might discuss whether students can find examples of how the text sets up or introduces a situation that the pictures complete.

Can students find any contradictions between what is said in the story and what is shown in the picture? If so, they are discovering that the story occurs on multiple levels and there can be many interpretations of meaning. Or perhaps they are finding an example of comedy or irony.

SS

ELA
RC

A
S
H

- In general, as you page through the book, what colours seem to be used most often? To what effect? When and how does the use of colour change? How does the change in colour lead you to anticipate a change in the story?

4: EXPLORING ROCKY CREE LANGUAGE

SS
ELA
RC
A
S
H

Key to engaging with the story of *Māskikīy Miskanaw* is the Rocky Cree language. The language is interwoven throughout the picture book in the body of the main narrative and also in the sidebars. Cree terms important to each thematic study are included at the beginning of the "Entering In", "Medicine", "Hunting and Gathering", and "Earth and Sky" modules. There is also a glossary of Cree terms at the back of the book.

Students who are learning the Cree language can listen to the full narrative in Cree on the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* app. For all students engaged in a study of this historical fiction picture book, it would be advantageous to listen to a page or two of the story as it is read in Cree. There are irreplaceable understandings of cultural nuance, rhythm, and resonance that come from listening to the Cree reading.

Every language possesses a unique cadence. The meter and pacing of a language heavily influences the mood of a story and are often impossible to replicate in translation.

An understanding critical to the Six Seasons project is that language and culture are deeply intertwined. The Cree language reflects historical, social, and religious contexts. Using Cree vocabulary within the storyline and in the sidebars and resource material creates cultural associations that embody Rocky Cree ways of knowing.

TEACHER TIP

Decades of assimilationist policies suppressed and deliberately eradicated Indigenous languages. [The Assembly of First Nations](#) reports that today, most of more than 70 distinct Indigenous languages and dialects in Canada are considered critically endangered.

Learning key Cree vocabulary as part of this picture book study can play a part in the recovery of Indigenous languages in Canada. For Rocky Cree students, learning the Rocky Cree vocabulary of this text can work to restore natural, intergenerational Cree language transmission in homes and communities. For students who are not Rocky Cree, learning the key Rocky Cree vocabulary of this text can provide a deeper understanding of Indigenous histories, traditions, and cultures that are native to the land in which they live.

Here are a few suggestions for practicing the Cree vocabulary in *Māskikīy Miskanaw*.

- Play Balloon Volleyball: Divide students into pairs - give each pair a balloon to keep in the air. Choose two Cree words of the day to practice. As each student hits the balloon, he or she must say one of the two Cree words. Cree words must be alternated. If a student has said one word, the partner must say the other. Variation: Once several Cree terms have been learned, this activity could be repeated with a variation. Students could say a Cree word when they hit the balloon and the partner could provide the translation. Roles should be reversed at various points in the balloon volleyball exercise.
- Role playing and Pictionary: Divide students into teams. Cree words to learn are printed individually on cards. Taking turns by team, a player from each team picks a card and uses actions and/or images drawn on the whiteboard to provide clues to the Cree word on the card. Their teammates

have one minute to correctly guess the Cree word and earn a point. Then the second team takes a turn and so the game continues until all of the vocabulary cards have been used and one team is announced the winner.

- **Mistik, Mistik, Sewan (Stick, Stick, Sweet):** Play a version of Duck, Duck, Goose by asking students to sit in a circle. Choose any two Cree words to use for your game. Tell students that when they are tapped on the head by the Tapper and the first word is said, they are to remain seated. When they are tapped on the head and the second word is said they must jump up and run around the outside of the circle in the opposite direction that the Tapper takes in order to reach the empty spot in the circle first.
- **Kahoot:** If students have access to their own devices, the teacher or students can design an online kahoot game. Hosts need to create a game and project vocabulary questions to the group. Vocabulary questions could give a Cree word and possible definitions of the word in multiple choice. Alternatively, questions might ask which Cree word in a multiple choice list is the correct answer to the definition given. To create a game, hosts can sign up for free or log in at [Kahoot!Home](https://kahoot.com/).
- **Kahoot Offline:** The host - teacher or student - will display Kahoot questions on a screen. The four multiple choice answers could be designated by a colour or shape (ie. red/triangle, blue/diamond, yellow/circle, green/square). Assign each corner of the room with the same colours and shapes. As the questions are displayed, ask students to physically walk to the corner of the room that indicates the answer they think is correct. Alternatively, as either a game or an assessment of learning, display the questions on the main screen and have students use printed kahoot answer sheets to mark down their answers and tally their scores.
- **Make Flashcards:** Assign a Cree word to each student. Ask them to create a flashcard with the Cree word at the back of the card and to draw an illustration for the Cree word on the front of the card. You could use the **BLACKLINE MASTER 1.4 ROCKY CREE FLASHCARDS** for making cards. Once created, use the flashcards in pairs to practice vocabulary or divide the class into teams and give points to the team who first correctly identifies the Cree word on the displayed flashcard.
- **Word Hunt:** Give students the **BLACKLINE MASTER 1.5 ROCKY CREE WORD HUNT** and ask them to find and circle the listed Cree words.

5: INTRODUCING THE CHARACTERS

Get to know the characters before reading the narrative.

Talk About It

Introduce the characters of the story by viewing the berry cluster family groupings on page 3 of *Māskikīy Miskanaw*.

Note the word “minisiwin”. Minisiwin is the Cree word for family. Family or minisiwin are the center of Rocky Cree culture.

In the berry cluster diagram, four particular family groupings are highlighted. Three are named: the Moose Family (Moso Minisiwin), the Wolf Family (Mahikanak Minisiwin), and the Bear Family (Masko Minisiwin). The fourth family grouping are the relatives who live in the heartland and the text does not name their family group.

Ask students to look for the four family groupings. What colours have been given to identify each family group?

SS

ELA

RC

A

S

H

While the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story is organized somewhat around the relationships between three brothers of the Wolf Family - Ācapi Okimaw, Wasko, and Miko Pisim, and a fourth brother, Napiw, who is very ill and is named at the end of the story - Rocky Cree culture was/is matrilineal. Children belong to the family grouping of their mothers. Female Elders are the foundational pillars of family structure and cultural transmission. Mothers, grandmothers, and great grandmothers carry the history, stories, and songs that give children a sense of identity (Cree Literacy Network).

Who are the three matrilineal leaders of the family groups illustrated on the berry cluster diagram? (Kiwitin Kānimit, Nīpin, and Kitosis Tawipīsīm). In the story, Wāpos, the well-known and respected medicine woman of the group of relatives from the heartland, frequently speaks first in the family circle.

- Who are Kiwitin Kānimit and Ācapi Okimaw's three children? (Pisim, Amō and Mwakwa)
- Who are Mwakwa's two older sisters? (Pisim and Amō)
- Who are Mikisiw's parents? (Kitosis Tawipīsīm and Miko Pisim)
- What is the relationship between Mwakwa and Mikisiw? (They are cousins).

TEACHER TIP

The Cree language reflects matriarchal influence. For instance, the word for "mother" (nikawiy) shares a root with the word for "in front" (nikan) illustrating that women were traditionally placed at the front of societal leadership.

Laws of kinship of the asiniskaw īthiniwak encompass a world-view of universal connectedness. In this understanding, everyone is related. Aunts, uncles, and cousins are addressed with the same weight as immediate parents and siblings. Female Elders organize community care and step in naturally to help raise children, support new mothers, and adopt relatives who have joined their group. Kinship involves treating others with the highest form of respect.

The asiniskaw īthiniwak laws of kinship hold that people are related not only to one another but to everything within the human world, spiritual world, animal world, and natural world.

In Western culture, family tree diagrams are often used to illustrate family relationships. By nature of the diagram itself, the relationships often appear hierarchical. In Rocky Cree culture, the berry cluster plays a similar function to the family tree but the cluster graphic may give less of a hierarchical sense and greater opportunity to demonstrate a person's sense of interconnectedness with others and the world around them.

In exercises of drawing one's own berry cluster, workshop participants have often included good friends, pets, or other aspects of the natural or spiritual world. Ask students to complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 1.6 BERRY CLUSTER**. Ask them: to whom are you related? To whom do you feel related? Who do you include in your family grouping?

Talk About It

Ask Blackline Master questions about characters as students read the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* narrative. Questions could be prompts for an oral discussion or students could be asked to answer the questions individually or in pairs by completing the **BLACKLINE MASTER 1.7 GETTING TO KNOW THE CHARACTERS**.

View and Talk About It

Watch a short clip from an animated film to talk about how the director showed a character's personality through their actions rather than telling the audience what the character is like. Explain that a written narrative like *Māskikīy Miskanaw* develops characters in a similar way by showing rather than telling.

Create a Character Gallery

Create a Character Gallery or a Wall of Fame for the main characters of *Māskikīy Miskanaw*.

Divide students into pairs or groups and assign a character to each pair or group. Here are some of the main characters of the text:

Young People:

Mwakwa

Mikisiw

Acakos

Elders:

Ācapi Okimaw

Kīwitin Kānimit

Opimotiho

Ask each group to prepare a character card/poster for their assigned character. The character cards may be physical posters to display on a wall in the classroom or digital cards to be collated for an on-line gallery. Students might design their cards as character webs by placing the character's name and picture in the center of their poster and creating branch out lines for character trait information.

Students' character cards, posters, and webs should answer the following questions, as applicable:

- What is the name of your character in Rocky Cree and in English?
- What does your character look like? (the picture/representation of the character will probably be based on inferences based on the activities of the character or on illustrations from the text as the narrative does not generally focus on - and tell about - physical appearance)
- How old is your character? (approximately)
- What skills and abilities does your character have? What does he or she do well?
- How does your character speak to others?
- What interests and goals does your character have?
- What inspires or motivates your character?
- What do others say about your character?
- What problem does your character face?
- What decisions does your character make in the story?
- What changes occur to your character in the story?
- Does your character fit into any common character types? (See the list in the Teacher Tip box for ideas about common characters).

Interviewing *Māskikīy Miskanaw* Characters

Ask the class to prepare a set of interview questions - perhaps 5 questions - for each of the characters in the Character Gallery. Ask students to focus on questions about thoughts, feelings or motivations in regards to major events in the story.

Hot Seat!

During the interview, students who have researched a particular character will represent them. Remind students that there are no strictly right or wrong answers here. Answers to questions will be an educated guess based on the student's inferences, imagination, and understanding of the character they are representing.

TEACHER TIP

Common Character Types: Common character types are recognizable roles that drive storytelling. The most common character types are adopted from psychological archetypes broken into categories based on their function in the story.

Here are a few characters a story may include:

- the Hero (or questor or seeker)
- the Mentor (or guide, wise man/woman)
- the Shadow (or villain or antagonist)
- the Trickster (or disrupter)
- the Protagonist (often the hero, through whom the readers experience the story)
- the Helper, Ally, or Confidant (who is a loyal companion to the hero)
- the Love Interest (an engaging character who usually helps to push the protagonist to make a choice)
- the Foil (with opposite characteristics to the hero or protagonist, highlighting opposing traits)
- Note that Indigenous stories may challenge or break with these conventions. Discuss this with students.

6: INTRODUCING THE BIG IDEAS

Setting

Discuss the 5 W and 1 H Questions below as a class or assign the **BLACKLINE MASTER 1.8 SETTING OF THE STORY** for individuals or pairs to complete before discussing class responses.

Plot

Follow the action of *Māskikīy Miskanaw* by cutting out the events listed on the strips of paper on the **BLACKLINE MASTER 1.9 AS IT HAPPENED**. Students will arrange the strips in the order that the events happened by placing them on a table top or by gluing them onto a sheet of paper. Ask students to retell the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story to someone else. What are the key elements of the story when it is orally retold?

Themes

Māskikīy Miskanaw develops several big ideas that have significance for the asiniskaw īthiniwak and are important for all readers of the story to ponder. Many of those big ideas are explored in the three teaching modules that follow this introductory module and revolve around the concepts of medicine, hunting and gathering, and the relationship between earth and sky.

Teach students that a single word is not a theme or a big idea. It is only a topic. A theme or big idea should be expressed as a sentence that explains a belief or an argument about the topic.

For example:

A topic might be: Medicine

A theme or big idea might be: Medicine is not just what we take to get well, but our relations with everything in this life that keep us well.

A topic might be: Death

A theme or big idea might be: Death is leaving this life and going ahead to a life beyond.

A topic might be: Respect

A theme or big idea might be: Respect is the basis for the reciprocal relationships with other people, plants, animals, the land, and the sky that keeps us healthy.

Ask students to keep a record of the topics they encounter as they read or discuss this story and the themes or big ideas they draw from those topics. The class may decide to keep a master list of topics and associated big ideas on a bulletin board or on a digital chart and add to this collection of ideas periodically throughout the study of this historical picture book.

As one of the concluding exercises in this book study, ask students to explore one of the big ideas or themes. You might suggest that students move away from a traditional summary of a theme or big idea by taking up one of these writing or presentation projects:

- Write a eulogy for one of the characters of this story after he or she has grown old and has eventually left this life and gone ahead. Think about the values and purposes expressed by the character in this story. Imagine how those values were expressed in the later years of the character's life.
- Write an additional short chapter to this story (one page in length) which develops one of the big ideas of the story and fits in with the tone that the author uses in telling the story.
- Find a modern song, movie, or news article that relates to a big idea or theme of this story. Think about how the big idea you are seeing is taken up by both. Explain the similarities you find in a power point presentation for the class.
- Create a thematic evidence collage. Print your theme on the top or in the middle of the page. Find examples of things said and done in the story that demonstrate the truth of your theme or big idea. Draw pictures and use key words to illustrate the proofs you find. Connect your illustrations and words with a string to show how the theme is "threaded" through the story.

Are these ideas of exploring a theme new to your class? Consider modelling a thematic exploration by taking up one of the concluding thematic exercises as a class project and assigning specific tasks to individual students or pairs of students. Celebrate your final project by presenting it to another group of students.

7: CREATING A MĀSKĪKĪY MISKANAW JOURNAL

Ask students to keep a journal throughout this book study. The journal may be a notebook dedicated for this study or a collection of loose papers bound at the end of the study as a record of the ideas and understandings that come from reading *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*.

Ask students to begin by designing a cover page for their journal that shows the idea of a road or pathway to health and happiness.

Throughout the lessons in this teacher's guide, there are suggestions for exercises that can be completed in the **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal**.

Here are some additional ways students can use the journal to express their questions, explore their thoughts, and summarize their understandings:

- 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.
- 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.
- The Rocky Cree believe all people are born with gifts and it's the family's role to help young people discover theirs so that they can find their life's purpose/miskanaw. Use your journal as a personal exploration of your gifts, talents, abilities, and purposes.
- With each journal entry, record the day, season, moon, weather, and the place where you are working. Use Rocky Cree words wherever you can.

8: A LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE

A lesson plan template is like a road map. Teachers use lesson plan templates to ensure curricular standards are met and to keep themselves organized during instruction. We include this particular template **TEACHING RESOURCE 1.10 A LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE** for reference because it is being used by practicing teachers at University College of the North.

You will notice that the template asks teachers to plan for assessment. Guiding principles under the Manitoba Education Curriculum Framework for Learning instruct teachers to plan learning experiences and assessment practices to meet the learning needs, abilities, and interests of each student. Assessment *for* learning aids teachers in planning for instruction and assessment *as* learning involves student self reflection and peer feedback. Assessment *of* learning measures final outcomes. The exercises and activities of this teaching guide can be used as assessments *for* and *as* learning. There are also several summative exercise assignments that a teacher might use as an assessment *of* learning.

The key aspects of a learner-centered assessment according to Manitoba Education are:

- Integrating diverse perspectives, lived experiences, and worldviews
- Supporting learning that is authentic, social, and purposeful
- Engaging in Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing to strengthen the process of Truth and Reconciliation
- Infusing multiple literacies and technologies through diverse pedagogical approaches within various disciplines
- Embracing self-efficacy and encouraging autonomy and responsibility

Module 1 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources

Placing the Book in Context

Reading a Picture Book

- 1.1 Cover Story
- 1.2 Going on a Picture Walk
- 1.3 Just Imagine!

Discovering Picture Book Design

Exploring Rocky Cree Language

- 1.4 Rocky Cree Flashcards
- 1.5 Rocky Cree Word Hunt

Introducing the Characters

- 1.6 Berry Cluster
- 1.7 Getting to Know the Characters

Introducing the Big Ideas

- 1.8 Setting of the Story
- 1.9 As it Happened

Creating a *Māskikīy Miskanaw* Journal

Lesson Plan Template

- 1.10 A Lesson Plan Template

1.1 Cover Story

Before you read *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*, "read" the pictures first, starting with the cover illustration.

1. What do you see on the cover?
2. What do you notice about the characters?
3. What expressions do you notice on the characters' faces?
4. What do you think is going on in the picture?
5. What is happening in the background?
6. What colours are used? What do the colours suggest to you?
7. What size is the illustration? Which details are bigger or smaller?
8. What does the size of the objects suggest to you about what is important in the story?
9. How do you think the cover illustration and the title of the book might fit together?
10. What do you wonder about after looking at the cover illustration?
11. What do you think might happen in this story?
12. How does the cover of the book make you feel?

1.2 Going on a Picture Walk

Let's go on a 'Picture Walk' through *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*. 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?

1.3 Just Imagine!

Working with a partner, look at a two page spread in *Māskīkiy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*. Talk about what you see, and think about how the illustrations make you feel, in order to answer the questions below.

Your attention to detail, your awareness of how you feel, and your imagination can help you “read” the picture!

1. What catches your eye? What seems to be the focus of the picture?
2. Are faces visible? Whose?
3. What colours are used most?
4. How are dark and light used?
5. How is white space used?
6. What types of textures are used for objects in the picture? Do these make you feel comfortable or uncomfortable? Why?
7. Where are objects placed?
8. What directions are character's facing or moving?
9. What objects look heavy or light? Where are they placed?
10. Look at the gutter spaces. Those are the empty spaces on the margins of pages and along the binding in the middle of the book. Are the gutters thin or wide? Does the illustration stop before the gutter or spill across it?

1.4 Rocky Cree Flashcards

Instructions:

Assign a Rocky Cree word to each student from the *Māskīkīy Miskanaw* story. Ask them to create a flashcard with the Rocky Cree word on the front and an illustration for that word on the back. Use the blank template to photocopy as many flashcards as needed and cut them out to distribute to students.

Once the student flashcards are created, divide students into pairs to practice Rocky Cree vocabulary. Divide the class into teams and award points to the team who first correctly identifies the Rocky Cree word on each flashcard.

Materials:

- Printed copies of the blank flashcard template
- Scissors
- Drawing utensils, like pencils, pencil crayons, markers, etc.

Steps:

- Read the *Māskīkīy Miskanaw* narrative with students.
- Assign a Rocky Cree word from *Māskīkīy Miskanaw* to students.
- Instruct students to create a flashcard, using their Rocky Cree word, with an illustration embodying that word.
- Divide students into pairs to practice their Rocky Cree flashcards with a partner, demonstrating their Rocky Cree word and illustration.
- After ten minutes of practice time, bring the students together forming teams of four.
- Hold a small game/competition where student teams will select a team name using a Rocky Cree word they have learned. Teams will then compete to identify Rocky Cree vocabulary based on the flashcards from the story. Collect the Rocky Cree flashcards from students to use in the game/competition.
- Using the Rocky Cree flashcards, present a Rocky Cree word. The team that identifies the Rocky Cree word first will be awarded one point.
- Continue until you have run out of Rocky Cree flashcards. The team with the most points will win.

1.4 (Continued) Rocky Cree Flashcards

1.5 Rocky Cree Word Hunt

Find and circle each of the words listed below. Words may appear forwards, backwards, horizontally, vertically, or diagonally on the grid. Definitions can be found in the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* glossary.

a	k	a	s	k	k	t	j	e	m	l	o	ī	d
b	g	h	ō	p	f	s	b	t	w	x	y	q	e
t	r	a	j	i	c	ā	ā	d	a	e	o	j	n
i	ā	d	w	m	x	k	l	t	k	b	t	v	c
p	q	e	b	k	w	k	ā	m	w	n	h	d	f
i	y	ī	s	ā	s	z	t	l	a	i	a	i	o
s	p	l	k	b	c	a	y	h	g	w	s	l	m
k	z	i	o	c	e	a	k	r	f	o	o	h	a
a	n	s	ō	m	r	n	p	ī	e	t	w	p	t
w	m	ī	h	r	c	l	p	i	w	ī	i	r	a
w	a	c	ō	x	m	r	k	ā	j	m	n	u	k
q	t	w	w	ī	k	i	s	u	g	i	a	v	s
a	w	s	ō	m	y	e	k	g	f	k	n	h	a
p	u	l	z	i	ā	s	y	q	u	s	z	a	w
a	ō	e	b	f	w	ī	k	i	x	i	w	t	f
a	w	i	k	s	a	n	a	n	ī	k	ī	w	n
ā	s	h	m	e	y	ī	k	ī	k	s	ā	m	p

māskikīy mōswa wīkīnanaskiwa kiskimitowin wīkis
waskatamo othasowina wīkaskwa tipiskaw ācapī
akask mwakwa tākwākin

1.5 (Continued) Rocky Cree Word Hunt Answer Key

Find and circle each of the words listed below. Words may appear forwards, backwards, horizontally, vertically, or diagonally on the grid. Definitions can be found in the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* glossary.

a	k	a	s	k	k	t	j	e	m	l	o	ī	d
b	g	h	ō	p	f	s	b	t	w	x	y	q	e
t	r	a	j	i	c	ā	ā	d	a	e	o	j	n
i	ā	d	w	m	x	k	l	t	k	b	t	v	c
p	q	e	b	k	w	k	ā	m	w	n	h	d	f
i	y	ī	s	ā	s	z	t	l	a	i	a	i	o
s	p	l	k	b	c	a	y	h	g	w	s	l	m
k	z	i	o	c	e	a	k	r	f	o	o	h	a
a	n	s	ō	m	r	n	p	ī	e	t	w	p	t
w	m	ī	h	r	c	l	p	i	w	ī	i	r	a
w	a	c	ō	x	m	r	k	ā	j	m	n	u	k
q	t	w	w	ī	k	i	s	u	g	i	a	v	s
a	w	s	ō	m	y	e	k	g	f	k	n	h	a
p	u	l	z	i	ā	s	y	q	u	s	z	a	w
a	ō	e	b	f	w	ī	k	i	x	i	w	t	f
a	w	i	k	s	a	n	a	n	ī	k	ī	w	n
ā	s	h	m	e	y	ī	k	ī	k	s	ā	m	p

māskikīy mōswa wīkīnanaskiwa kiskimitowin wīkis
 waskatamo othasowina wīkaskwa tipiskaw ācapī
 akask mwakwa tākwākin

1.6 Berry Cluster

Family is the centre of Rocky Cree culture. Extended family - *wāhkotowin* - is important to understanding family. Everyone older than you is an aunt or uncle, or a grandmother or grandfather. As well, people do not have to be related by blood to be considered family: everyone is connected and related. In Rocky Cree culture, if a person moved to another territory or was an orphan, the people there would adopt them into a specific *minisiwin* and recognize them as a part of the family.

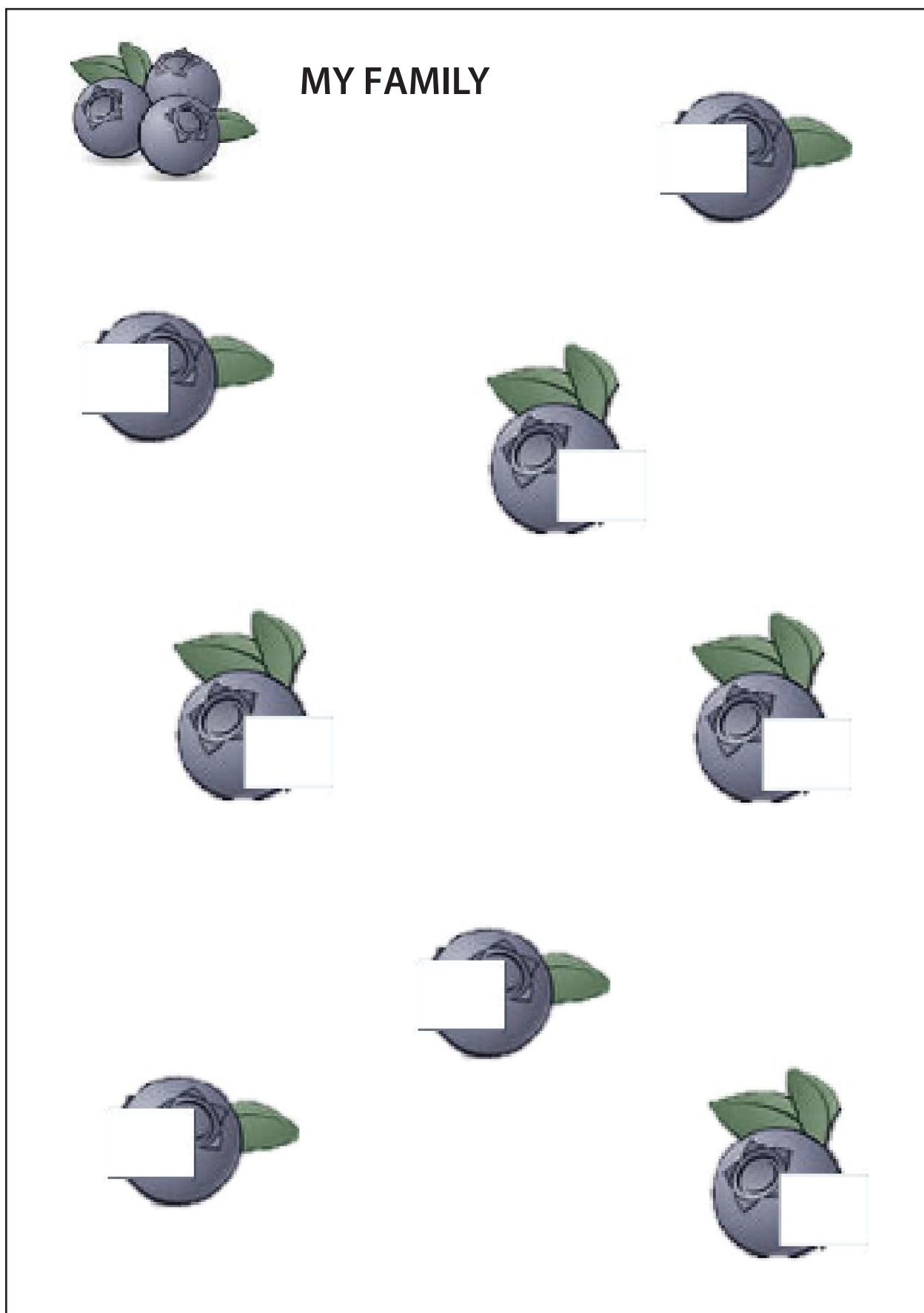
1. How do you define family?

2. Who are the members of your family?

3. In *Māskikīy Miskanaw*, we learn that the berry cluster demonstrates a person's interconnectedness with others and the world around them.

On the following page fill in the berries with your family members. Draw vines to connect the berries and/or add more berries as needed.

1.6 (Continued) Berry Cluster



1.7 Getting to Know the Characters

As you read through the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story, answer the following questions about the characters.

1. As the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story begins, seven people begin a canoe trip into the heartland. Who are they?
2. Whose thoughts and words begin and end the story?
3. Why are the three young people, Pīsim, Amō and Mwakwa, excited about the trip to sowaki sakahikan? What do each of them hope to do while there?
4. What does Miko Pīsim do when he sees the canoes of his relatives arriving in the bay at sowaki sakahikan?
5. Who gives the medicine way teachings at the first meal that relatives share? And who responds to the teaching?
6. What is the first thing that Mwakwa notices about the stargazer, Opimotiho?
7. What does Mwakwa think is beautiful about Acakos before he even meets her?
8. What animal helps Mwakwa meet Acakos?

1.7 (Continued) Getting to Know the Characters

9. What activities keep the men and women busy during the day time?
10. What is one difference between the two cousins, Mikisiw and Mwakwa?
11. Approximately how old do you think Mikisiw and Mwakwa are, based on the information given about them on this page?
12. What does Mikisiw do for the first time?
13. Where does Mwakwa go in the evenings?
14. What decision is Mwakwa being asked to make?
15. Whose example inspires Mwakwa to begin his apprenticeship to the stargazer?
16. What gift does Acakos give Mwakwa? Why?
17. Who leaves the sowaki sakahikan by canoe? Who stays behind?

1.8 Setting of the Story

Questions to introduce you to the setting of the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story.

WHO - Who are the Rocky Cree?

WHAT - What is the dominant mood or atmosphere of the story?

WHEN - When did this story take place?

WHERE - Where did this story take place?

WHY - Why was this story written?

HOW - How are past, present and future connected in this story or by this story?

1.9 As It Happened

Cut out each description of events that occur in the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story into strips. Arrange the strips in the order that the events happened by placing them on a table top or by gluing them onto a different sheet of paper.

.....

Miko Pīsim paddles his canoe into the bay to meet his relatives halfway and the welcoming ceremonies begin.

.....

Mwakwa's parents and Opimotiho exchange gifts as a sign of their commitment to each other in extending Mwakwa's education.

.....

The stargazer asks Mwakwa to become his apprentice.

.....

Mwakwa is introduced to Acakos and Acakos introduces Mwakwa to the puppy, Tipiskaw.

.....

Two families - a group of seven - launch their canoes to begin the day's trip on the river which is bordered by colorful autumn trees.

.....

Acakos gives her puppy to Mwakwa to be his medicine dog.

.....

The camp of relatives holds Mikisiw's First Take Ceremony.

.....

As they settle into their mīkiwahpa for the night, Mwakwa hears a beautiful song and learns that the singer is Acakos.

.....

Mwakwa decides to follow his mother's interest in learning and to begin the apprenticeship that will teach him the knowledge of the stars.

.....

Mwakwa becomes curious about the Elder sitting in the family circle who has a strange haircut.

.....

Mwakwa and Acakos make a plan to exchange songs.

.....

1.9 (Continued) As It Happened

.....
Pīsim, Amō and Mwakwa wake up to the sound of a puppy smuffling at their doorway.
.....

Mwakwa wonders whether to continue to develop his interest in music or to become the stargazer's apprentice.
.....

In the evenings, Mwakwa follows the stargazer in the canoe or on a walk in the forest as the Opimotiho teaches him how the stars can guide them to the place they are looking for.
.....

Mikisiw makes the first shot with his bow and arrow, before the rest of the group of hunters brings the moose down.
.....

The women begin to harvest medicines while the men go moose hunting or fishing.
.....

The relatives receive word that their beloved brother and uncle, Napiw, is very sick and is dying.
.....

After praying for a good hunt, Mikisiw leads the hunters along the water to a low area with many wil-lows where moose like to eat.
.....

Miko Pīsim asks Ācapi Okimaw to be the lead hunter as Mikisiw plans to take his first moose.
.....

Opimotiho shows Mwakwa the sacred star chart of the Rocky Cree.
.....

Ācapi Okimaw and Kīwitin Kānimit make medicine tea as they begin to prepare for the last part of the journey to the heartland.
.....

As they sit down to feast, Elder Wāpos teaches the group about medicine food, medicine talk and walking together well on the medicine way.
.....

1.9 (Continued) As It Happened Answer Key

1. Ācapi Okimaw and Kiwitin Kānimit make medicine tea as they begin to prepare for the last part of the journey to the heartland.
2. Two families - a group of seven - launch their canoes to begin the day's trip on the river which is bordered by colorful autumn trees.
3. Miko Pīsim paddles his canoe into the bay to meet his relatives halfway and the welcoming ceremonies begin.
4. As they sit down to feast, Elder Wāpos teaches the group about medicine food, medicine talk and walking together well on the medicine way.
5. Mwakwa becomes curious about the elder sitting in the family circle who has a strange haircut.
6. As they settle into their mikiwahpa for the night, Mwakwa hears a beautiful song and learns that the singer is Acakos.
7. Pīsim, Amō and Mwakwa wake up to the sound of a puppy smuffling at their doorway.
8. Mwakwa is introduced to Acakos and Acakos introduces Mwakwa to the puppy, Tipiskaw.
9. Mwakwa and Acakos make a plan to exchange songs.
10. The women begin to harvest medicines while the men go moose hunting or fishing.
11. Miko Pīsim asks Ācapi Okimaw to be the lead hunter as Mikisiw plans to take his first moose.
12. After praying for a good hunt, Mikisiw leads the hunters along the water to a low area with many willows where moose like to eat.
13. Mikisiw makes the first shot with his bow and arrow, before the rest of the group of hunters brings the moose down.
14. The camp of relatives holds Mikisiw's First Take Ceremony.
15. In the evenings, Mwakwa follows the stargazer in the canoe or on a walk in the forest as the Opimotiho teaches him how the stars can guide them to the place they are looking for.
16. Opimotiho shows Mwakwa the sacred star chart of the Rocky Cree.
17. The stargazer asks Mwakwa to become his apprentice.
18. Mwakwa wonders whether to continue to develop his interest in music or to become the star-gazer's apprentice.
19. Mwakwa decides to follow his mother's interest in learning and to begin the apprenticeship that will teach him the knowledge of the stars.
20. Mwakwa's parents and Opimotiho exchange gifts as a sign of their commitment to each other in extending Mwakwa's education.
21. Acakos gives her puppy to Mwakwa to be his medicine dog.
22. The relatives receive word that their beloved brother and uncle, Napiw, is very sick and is dying.

1.10 A Lesson Plan Template

Topic:

GLOs:

SLOs:

Date:

Activating:

Acquiring:

Applying:

Closure:

Indigenous Perspectives

Materials

Accommodations

Notes:

Module 2: Māskikīy: Medicine



Sipi nisitohtamowin: Enduring Understanding

“Māskikīy in Rocky Cree means medicine, but it is much more than that word suggests in English. For people on the māskikīy miskanaw, medicine is not simply a pill you take when you are sick. Medicine is in every plant-and asini-skaw īthiniwak use certain plants to bring healing-yet it is more than that. It is a way of keeping ourselves healthy by making good relations with everything around us” (MM, p.1).

Key Concepts

- Māskikīy/Medicine
- Healthy Relationships
- Othasowina/Rules of Conduct
- Kindness
- Ceremonies and Celebrations
- Story-telling
- Plant-based Medicines
- Mamitonickan/Balance

Key Words

- Māskikīy means medicine, a way of keeping healthy by making good relations with everything around us.
- Miskanaw means guidance or life journey.
- Othasowina means rules of conduct that ensure a healthy rhythm to family life and well-being
- Mamitonicikan means the physical, emotional, spritual, and mental concepts that come together for good decision-making.

Guiding Questions

- What does it mean to live a good life?
- What is health?
- What are the “rules” for being healthy?
- What plants can be used for medicine?
- How does taking care of the natural world make life better?
- What does it mean to live a balanced life?
- How do we become good people who bring joy to our families and communities?

Kiskinwahamakiwin: Teaching Strategies

“Ever since we were children, we have been told that we have a miskanaw to travel. All the sacred laws govern us. They tell us how to walk together in a good way and to share medicines with each other. If we do this, we travel a healthy road” (MM, p.13).

BEST PRACTICES SPOTLIGHT

Monica Andreas - Prairie Rose Public Schools

Monica teaches Grade 5 and 6 students. She has found that reading the Six Seasons books as a script introduces characters quickly, helps students to instinctively follow the action, and reinforces the conventions for writing dialogue. She plays the role of the narrator; students who have been given character cards watch carefully for the cues that it is their turn to read the dialogue. Classmates are quick to help each other when someone misses their cue to speak!



1: OTHASOWINA - GUIDING PRINCIPLES

"Medicine is the way we treat each other..." (MM, p. 1).

The Great Laws of the Rocky Cree

Many Indigenous groups have a set of laws or values that provide a strong framework for interacting with one another in good and healthy ways. They can be understood as good medicine for the way we should treat all our relations so we can live in harmony. The 7 Sacred Laws or 7 Grandfather Teachings are one example teachers may already have encountered and include love, respect, obedience, kindness, truth, sharing, and humility. The Rocky Cree follow what they call The Great Laws. There are many, including caring, cooperation, courage, determination, forgiveness, honesty, humility, patience, kindness, joyfulness, respect, and thankfulness.

Create

Write the Great Laws of the Rocky Cree list from above on the white board. Invite students to complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.1 GREAT LAWS OF THE ROCKY CREE** using drawing and text to illustrate what each law means to them.

"Othasowina are the rules of conduct within a family that lives together. These rules ensure that there is a healthy rhythm to family life, and that māskikīy is being shared to ensure well-being for all. Ceremony is very important in determining where you are in your miskanaw and where you need to travel"
(MM, p. 1).

Wikīnanaskiwa - Gathering Places

"Medicine is the way we treat each other, the stories we tell, and how we orient ourselves on our miskanaw" (MM, p.1).

For groups to get together and for family, social, or ceremonial events to happen, people need a place to gather. A gathering place must be suitable for the occasion.

"For thousands of years in Rocky Cree territories, people have met together at wikīnanaskiwa, gathering places. At these locations, there could be fish spawns, berries, plentiful waterfowl, in the warm seasons, mathomin (wild rice) or other plant medicines and animals nearby making themselves available for hunting. People share food and stories, solve issues, look for marriage partners, and plan ahead for the next gathering"
(MM, p. 9).

Talk About It

With your students, talk about places where they gather or get together with friends or extended family members. Brainstorm a list of possible gathering locations. These might include schools, community centers, halls, churches, homes, parks, recreational facilities, restaurants, resorts, vacation locations etc.

Ask Students

- How do you know where and when to get together with a group of your friends or family?
- Who chooses the location of your gathering or get together?
- How do the locations of gathering places change with the seasons?
- What are your favorite gathering places? What makes them your favorite places?
- What is the purpose of getting together?
- What does your group of friends or family do when they get together?
- Who is invited? Who is not? How large are your gatherings?
- How long do your gatherings last?
- Are there some types of gatherings you enjoy and others that you do not? Why might you enjoy some gatherings more than others?

Background Information for Teachers

TEACHER TIP

Pre-contact ideas of place and space will differ from understandings of place and space under colonization. In post-colonial theory, it is understood that taking ownership occurs through naming.

Quotes for teachers to consider how ownership occurs through naming:

“the dynamic of ‘naming’ becomes a primary colonizing process because it appropriates, defines, captures the place in language” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, p. 392).

“Yet the process of naming...becomes a groping step into the reality of place, not simply reflecting or representing it, but in some mysterious sense intimately involved in the process of its creation, of its ‘coming into being’ (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, p. 392).

“Place is also palimpsest, a kind of parchment on which successive generations have inscribed and reinscribed the process of history” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, p. 392).

“There is a “complex way in which history is embedded in place...the map is the crucial signifier of control over place ...” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, p. 392).

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H (Eds.). (2024). *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, (3rd ed.). Routledge. <http://doi.org/10.4324/9780429469039>

Extended Questioning

Who owns the land? What places and spaces do students claim as their own or as shared spaces or as sacred places? How has ownership of special places changed and been marked over the years? Have the names of places changed?

Listen to stories about changes that students know about to family places or community spaces.

Create

Students can be given a map of their community, and asked to sketch and mark the places on it that are currently significant to them.

Write About It

A Gathering I Will Never Forget

Ask students to write an entry in their **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal** about a get-together with family or friends that stands out in their memory.

Ask students: What makes this gathering memorable for you? Did any unexpected things happen at this event? Did you learn anything new about yourself or others at this particular get together? How did the space or place in which you met shape the occasion?

Invite students to share their stories, either by reading their entries to the class or to a partner or a small group. Once the stories have been shared, ask students to think about how their stories are similar or different from one another.

Extension - Planning Ahead

The lesson to follow includes role-playing activities. By extension, students might learn about writing scripts and turning their anecdotes about memorable gatherings into a script that could be read or acted out by small groups for the class. Scripts could be published as a collection to share with other student groups. A number of scripts could be practiced, produced, and performed for a wider audience of peers or family members. Once the work of this module has been done, students might turn a portion of the narrative *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way* into a script to publish or perform. These scripted performances could become part of a celebration to mark the completion of the study of the medicine module.

Think About It

Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way describes a gathering of Rocky Cree family members at sowaki sakahikan.

TEACHER TIP

For tips on how to teach students the basics of script writing, refer to [How to Write a Script](#) by PBS Learning Media.

“...the family was going to the heartland, known as sowaki sakahikan. This was where their teachers lived, the ones who shared knowledge with those who came to learn” (MM, p. 3).

Ask Students

- What is the purpose of the gathering described in the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story?
- How do the family members know where and when to get together?
- Where is the gathering place? Can you describe the special features of this place? Why do the family get together here?
- In what season does this gathering take place? How do you know?
- How do people travel to the gathering place?

- What do they do when they get there?
- Is this an enjoyable gathering for the family members? How do you know?
- Does anything unexpected happen at this event?
- How long does the gathering last?
- Does the family make any plans to get together again?

Write About It

Ask students to complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.2 WĪKĪNANASKIWA, COMPARE AND CONTRAST** by describing where, when, and why their own special gathering took place. Who attended? What happened at the event? How did they and their friends or family travel to the event and how was the event organized? What made this event important or memorable? Then ask them to find similar information about a gathering described in the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* narrative.

Greetings

"Going Out to Meet Incoming Canoes"

When relatives who have not visited a community arrive by boat or canoe, asiniskaw īthiniwak often go out and meet them on the water. This is still done today. Its purpose is to show welcome. This greeting on the water is just the beginning of the welcoming process which continues when the visitors arrive on land and then when a feast is held in their honor" (MM, p. 5).

"We've prepared a feast to welcome you."

'Thank you, my relatives' (MM, p. 4).

"They sang a few songs and danced to welcome one another" (MM, p. 7).

Talk About It

How do we greet our friends and family members when we get together?

How do we make people feel welcome?

Explain to your students that if we use the example of the Rocky Cree characters in the story, we will discover at least four important ways to greet friends and relatives when we get together.

1. Meet your friends and guests halfway. (How does this happen in the story? How might we use the same principle when we greet people?)
2. Demonstrate your welcome through words and gifts. (How does this happen in the story? How might we use the same principle when we greet people?)
3. Show appreciation for the attendance of your guests by saying thank you. The same principle applies to guests who are welcomed. (How does this happen in the story? How might we use the same principle when we greet people?)

TEACHER TIP

Introduce students to the [Tānisi Song](#) by Brian MacDonald.

Have students think about the following lyrics: "Come on in. pihtikwē.

"Have some tea. maskihkiw āpoy minihkwē.

How do these lyrics connect to greeting and welcoming in the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story?

4. Celebrate. Spread joy and happiness and show that you are happy to have guests. (How does this happen in the story? How might we use the same principle when we greet people?)

Pair and Share

As you discuss the greetings within the story, ask students to work in pairs to search through the text of the narrative for specific examples of each of the four welcoming gestures above. These examples can then be shared with the class.

Write About It

Ask students to write a short script that incorporates all four elements of greeting (1. Meet halfway 2. Welcome through words and gifts 3. Say thank you 4. Celebrate).

This might be a good writing exercise to work on with a partner. Student scripts might be based on the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story and use characters and events from the narrative, or the script could be based on a social event in their own lives.

When scripts are completed, assign speaking roles and read them to the class.

Welcome Comic

Using the **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.3 WELCOME COMIC**, produce a comic or graphic that scripts the four elements of greeting as described in *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*. Draw the actions of at least two characters and write what they say in comic bubbles to show the four elements of welcoming a guest in the Rocky Cree way. Where does the welcome take place? What will you draw in the background to suggest that location?

Do we welcome our friends and family members in a way similar to this four step Rocky Cree greeting? If not, should we?

Games and Activities for Welcoming Celebrations

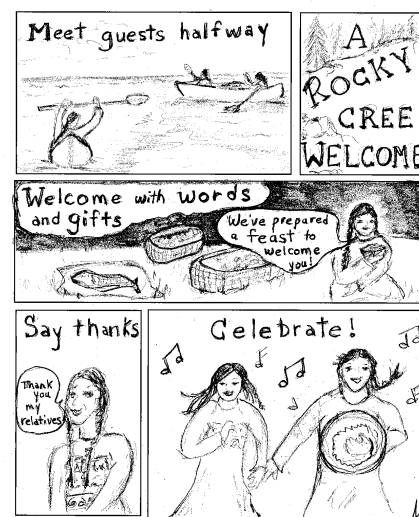
Students might play:

- **Human Bingo:** Students get a bingo card from **2.4 BLACKLINE MASTER: HUMAN BINGO** with statements like “has built a lean-to” or “has paddled a canoe” and must find classmates who match the statements to get a bingo. Make a rule that students can only initial one space on any one card. Perhaps offer a small prize to the first student to fill their whole card. If some of the statements are unlikely for your students, change them or let students call bingo with two or three empty spaces.

2.3 Welcome Comic:

Option 1: Pull three role playing cards and one place card and draw a roleplay comic using Rocky Cree principles of welcome. You can make your comic serious or humorous.

Option 2: Choose a place and three characters of your own choosing to draw a roleplay comic using Rocky Cree principles of welcome. You can make your comic serious or humorous.



68 Module 2: Māskikīy: Medicine

TEACHER TIP

Games and activities that suggest ways for students to introduce themselves to the class would be good activities to use as welcoming celebrations or to play during the final celebration of this module of study.

- Would You Rather? Teacher divides the room into two groups. Let students chat/mix/mingle for a few moments before beginning the questions. Questions might include: Would you rather do math homework or go for a 2km run? Read a book or watch a movie? Wrestle a gorilla or swim with an alligator? Paddle a canoe or hike through the woods? Go hunting or paint a picture?
- Blobs and Lines: Make a list of ways for students to organize themselves in lines or blobs. Lines: in order by height, birthday, alphabetical first or middle names etc. Blobs: grouped by type of shoes, hair color, favorite type of ice cream flavor etc.
- The Alphabet Name Chain: Players state their name and a word describing themselves that starts with the same letter. The next person repeats all names and words in order and adds their own.
- Three Things in Common: In groups of three, students spend a few minutes finding one interest or characteristic they all share. When the signal to stop talking sounds, they will share their one common interest with the rest of the class. The teacher might suggest categories such as food, recreational activities, families, etc.
- Candy Share: Pass around a bowl of small individually - wrapped pieces of candy. Allow everyone to take as many as the teacher deems appropriate - encourage everyone to take at least one. But tell students not to eat any of their candy until instructed to do so. Once everyone has taken candy, tell students that for each piece of candy that they took, they must share an interesting fact about themselves or answer a question from a list of conversational starters etc. Conversational starters could be:
 - What is your favourite holiday and why?
 - What is one totally random fact you know?
 - If money was not a limited factor what would be your favourite vacation?
 - What food could you eat everyday for the rest of your life?
 - What is your most treasured thing?

Introductions

There is an important moment in most social gatherings, when people who are unknown to each other are introduced to one another by a third person who knows them both.

“Introducing Yourself:

In *askiniskaw ithiniwak* society, people introduce themselves gradually, and often they do not share names at all on first meeting. It takes time to know one another. In the traditional way, people do not shake hands but instead hold one palm outward, facing the other person. This enables them to sense each other’s energy from a distance” (MM, p. 10).

Talk About It

Ask your students:

- How do you feel at a gathering when you do not know some of the other people who are there?
- What can you or others do to make yourself or other people feel more comfortable?
- How are introductions made in informal situations?
- How are introductions made in more formal situations?
- Explain to your students that there are some general expectations when making introductions.

If you are making the introductions:

1. Use the names of both people you are introducing to one another.
2. First introduce the older or more well-known person to the younger and less well-known person and then vice versa.
3. Associate each person you are introducing with a relationship or role.

If you are the person who is being introduced to someone new:

1. Acknowledge the person to whom you are being introduced with a physical gesture such as a smile, a handshake, or as in Rocky Cree culture, an upraised hand with the palm out.
2. Follow up the introduction with some conversation. You might ask a question or make a welcoming or hospitable comment or gesture.

Examples from *Māskikīy Miskanaw*:

Ask your students to look for ways in which the characters of this story make introductions. Here are some examples:

- “‘Nikosis, my son,’ Kiwitin Kānimit said, ‘This is my teacher Wāpos, and this is the singer I told you about last night. Her name is Acakos’” (MM, p. 8).
- “The elder nodded in recognition to Mwakwa and the girl smiled” (MM, p. 8).
- “He went to introduce himself in the Rocky Cree manner. She welcomed him to sit with her and offered him some tea” (MM, p. 9).
- “‘Maybe we can learn together and exchange songs,’ she added. ‘I’ve been told that you are a gifted singer. I’d like to learn your songs.’ ‘That’s exactly what I was about to say!’ Mwakwa responded. ‘I look forward to it’” (MM, p. 9).

Role Play

Activity 1

Divide students into groups of three. Assign one group member to introduce the other two to one another, using their real identities and the principles of introduction discussed above. Practice in groups, then perform for the class.

Activity 2

A. Prepare (or ask students to help you prepare) two sets of role-playing cards or use the role playing cards provided in this guide. If possible photocopy the two sets of cards in different colours. Have students complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.5 CHARACTER CARDS**. One set of cards will be character cards, listing a few characteristics of each character (i.e. name, age, occupation, special interest or hobby). Another set of cards will name a gathering place. Ask students to use the **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.6 PLACE CARDS**.

B. Play- Working in groups of 3, students will pull one gathering place card and three-character cards. Ask them to decide who will be making the introductions. Then role-play, making introductions as fictional characters in a particular gathering place. Practice and then perform these for the class.

Example: Place: At the mall.

Student: “Hi Ben! Hey Ben, I’d like to introduce you to my mother. Mom, this is Ben, from my volleyball team.”

Ben: “Hi, it’s nice to meet you”.

Mother: “Nice to meet you too, Ben. It looks like you are shopping for gym shoes too! Have you been playing volleyball for a while or is this your first year on the volleyball team too?”

Discuss the Role Plays

Were the introductions formal or informal? Were the introductions effective? Did they provide enough information so that the people who were introduced to each other could continue building a relationship? How did the gathering place make a difference to how introductions were made?

2: MAMITONICIKAN - HOLISTIC HEALTH

Rocky Cree well-being or health is holistic, emphasizing the interconnectedness of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, as well as the importance of balance within an individual and with their environment. This approach recognizes that health is not just the absence of disease but a state of overall wellness that is deeply rooted in cultural practices, community, and connection to the land.

“Medicine is holistic, too. It works to balance all aspects of life-physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. We call this concept mamitonicikan: the medicine gives you the energy and the direction to travel on your miskanaw in a good way” (MM, Introduction).

Three key principles of this holistic approach to well-being are community, culture, and connections to land. Healing is often seen as a community endeavor, recognizing that the well-being of individuals is linked to the well-being of their families and communities. Cultural practices, traditions, ceremonies, rites of passage, and beliefs are recognized as vital components of health and healing. The relationship with the land is also seen as essential for all aspects of well-being because it is tied to place, culture, and identity as well as sustenance and medicine.

Write About It

Invite the students to complete a Four Square Vocabulary exercise in their **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal** using the Rocky Cree term and concept mamitonicikan as introduced in the quote above. Instruct the students to draw a square in their journal and divide it into four quadrants. Using the quadrants, provide a definition of the word mamitonicikan by labelling each quadrant with one aspect of life - physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Write a sentence using the word, draw a picture, and make a list of English synonyms for each aspect of mamitonicikan.

“In this book, you will see how travelling the maskikīy miskanaw will support you in your life’s journey. If we follow and practice the medicine way, we become good people. We can create beautiful energy that will bring health and joy to our families and communities. We can all gather medicine, and we also possess that medicine in ourselves, through the way we relate to the people around us” (MM, Introduction).

Talk About It

Read aloud the above extract from *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*. Re-read the sentences: "If we follow and practice the medicine way, we become good people. We can create beautiful energy that will bring health and joy to our families and communities."

Lead a class discussion. Capture the students' thoughts on the whiteboard. Ask students:

- What does the sentence mean?
- What is the medicine way?
- How can following the medicine way bring 'health and joy' to our families and communities?

Have you heard the phrase 'pay it forward'? Explain that 'paying it forward' means when someone does a kind deed for another, instead of returning the favour to them, a good deed is, in turn, done for another person. Some examples include buying a coffee for the person behind you in a line, leaving a positive note on someone's locker, offering a genuine compliment to a classmate. These small gestures can have a big impact and create a ripple effect of kindness.

Consolidate the class discussion by revisiting the whiteboard and the idea of spreading kindness.

Ask: What can you do to pay it forward?

Create: Make a Kindness Chain

Overview: A kindness chain is an activity where students make a paper chain of kindness. On each strip, students write words associated with being kind or actions on how to be kind.

Materials: Construction paper, scissors, tape

Steps:

Minds On

- Ask: How does kindness make you feel? How does it feel to be kind to others? How is kindness contagious?
- Ask: What different forms of kindness are there? [kind words, kind actions, kind hands, and kind thoughts.]
- Ask: What forms of kindness do we see in *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*?

Hands On

- Explain that they will be making a paper chain of kindness.
- Cut several pieces of construction paper into equally-sized strips.
- On each strip, write words associated with being kind or actions on how to be kind.
- Students might write promises of how you will be kind in the future or how you feel when someone does something kind to you.
- Encourage students to add Rocky Cree language words and concepts as well.

Consolidation

- Ask students: What do you feel like doing when someone does something kind to you? Does it help you to want to do something kind for another person? That is how the chain of kindness can be extended.

Extension

- Make a kindness chain / mamitonicikan chain capturing the acts of kindness that helped Mwakwa on his journey. Kindness chains can be used to decorate the classroom for the Rocky Cree Tea Party suggested at the end of this module.

3: PLANTS AS MEDICINE

“Medicine is in every plant – and asiniskaw īthiniwak use certain plants to bring healing” (MM, p. 2).

Rocky Cree culture values plants as relatives. This value evolves from deep understandings about nature and living beings. Rocky Cree people know that just like humans, plants are living organisms and that certain plants have special chemical substances that can work as medicines.

Rocky Cree Knowledge Keepers who understand medicinal plants know that each plant species requires a specific habitat and season to grow.

Medicines are made from different plant parts.

In winter, asiniskaw īthinawak people drink tea made from different plants and their different parts. Read about medicine tea in the story.

“wīkaskwa (mint), wīkis (muskrat root), waskatamo (water-lily root), napakasiht (balsam), and kakikpakwa (Labrador tea)” (MM, p. 19).

Talk About It

Find pictures of wīkaskwa (mint), wīkis (muskrat root), waskatamo (water-lily root), napakasiht (balsam), and kakikpakwa (Labrador tea) to show to students.

As they experience the pictures of the plants, ask students to practice using the key science vocabulary in this lesson. Ask them to identify the parts of the plant and their functions and

TEACHER TIP

Key parts of a plant and their functions:

- Roots: anchor the plant and absorb water and nutrients from the soil.
- Stem: supports leaves and flowers and transports water and nutrients to all parts of the plant.
- Leaves: take in sunlight, water, and air, and through photosynthesis, produce food for the plant.
- Flowers: modified leaves that attract pollinators so that the plant is able to reproduce through fruit and seeds.
- Fruit: the material that develops from a flower to protect the developing seeds
- Seeds: contain the plant embryo, which grows into a new plant

For additional information reference the Manitoba Education Curriculum and [ScienceFacts.net](https://www.sciencefacts.net/).

TEACHER TIP

Refer to Appendix 'A', *Introduction to Rocky Cree Medicinal Plants* for more information on Rocky Cree medicines.

to learn the plant's name in English, Rocky Cree, and other languages that your students speak. Students might be asked to draw a plant with which they are familiar and label the parts (i.e. daisy, corn, tomato, etc.).

“Wāpos laid out the medicines and told them what each one was good for. ‘All medicines serve a specific purpose in healing,’ she explained” (MM, p. 30).

Extention: A Field Trip

If you are able to do so, invite an Elder and take your class on a land-based learning activity to observe habitats of various medicinal plants in a specific season. Learn with the Elder about the parts of a plant that are used as medicines and what are the health benefits of these medicines. If you are not able to take an Elder or Knowledge Keeper with you on your field trip, you can use the Plant Snap App to identify specific plant parts.

Key Science Vocabulary

- Organisms: are living things that have autonomous growth, reproduction, and metabolism.
- Species: is a group of living organisms that are similar and are capable of interbreeding.
- Habitat: is a place and environment in the nature where a plant or animal grows and lives.
- Seasons: result from the earth's changing position in relation to the sun. In most parts of the world there are four seasons: Spring, Summer, Fall, or Autumn, and Winter. Each of these seasons is marked by weather patterns and daylight hours in a year. The asiniskaw īthinawak, however, see the annual climate cycle in six seasons: pipon, sikwan, mithoskāmin, nīpin, tākwākin, and mikiskaw.

My Plant and its Habitat

Ask students to use their cameras to take pictures or ask them to draw the plants in their natural habitat. Each student should choose a particular plant to observe. Complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.7 MY PLANT AND ITS HABITAT**. Ask students to share the details about their plant and its medicinal value with their classmates.

TEACHER TIP

Teachers can find local places that will serve as great observational spaces for land-based learning activities. Some examples across Canada include:

- [FortWhyte Alive](#)
- [Wanuskewin Heritage Park](#)
- [Riverbank Discovery Centre](#)
- [Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park](#)

Connecting Back with the Environment

“...when humans have lost their way and wandered into the darkness, disrespecting one another and forgetting their responsibilities...a cleansing comes in the form of fire, snow, or flood.

TEACHER TIP

Discuss the importance of responsible environmental actions as humans. Connect this with Rocky Cree teachings and with [“Mino-Pimatisiwin—The Good Life”](#) and “citizenship” as discussed in Global Competencies of the Manitoba Framework of Learning.

This is nature's way of showing us we are on the wrong path. When the cleansing is finished, humans have been guided back to the good road, following the natural law of how to treat one another in a good way" (MM, p.1).

Rocky Cree culture emphasizes taking care of the natural habitat and the gifts of nature which include plants and animals. If we do not fulfill our responsibilities by taking care of nature and the gifts of nature, we may destroy our own lives.

Talk About It

Relate the importance of nature's health with the health of plants and human dependence on plants for food and medicines.

- What do plants need to be healthy?
- What makes the natural environment healthy?
- What negatively impacts or destroys the natural environment?
- How are human beings dependent on healthy plants and healthy natural environments?

Connect with Scientific Inquiry: Scientific Inquiry is a key aspect of scientific literacy. Engaging in inquiry helps students in understanding processes through which scientific knowledge is discovered and communicated.

Set up an experiment to demonstrate the impact of environmental factors such as water, sunlight, and air on the growth of a medicinal plant. Discuss the dependent and independent variables to highlight the role of humans as experimenters/scientists. Invite students to observe the growth of plants in both the controlled and experimental group, collect data and write a lab report on the **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.8 LAB REPORT.**

TEACHER TIP

Writing a lab report is a key skill in scientific communication. A lab report helps in identifying the key focus of an inquiry, methods used to conduct the inquiry and outcomes of an inquiry. Prior to setting up the experiment, discuss the main elements of a lab report with the students.

Key Science Vocabulary

- Experiment: A scientific process carried out under controlled conditions to discover or to test a hypothesis or already known facts.
- Independent Variable: The variable that is controlled by the experimenter.
- Dependent Variable: The variable that changes because of manipulation of independent variables by the experimenter.
- Control Group: A group for which the independent variable remains constant, and it does not receive the treatment in an experiment.
- Experimental Group: A group that experiences a treatment or change in the independent variable.

4: TIPISKAW THE MEDICINE DOG

"The Elders teach us that dogs are medicine people. They make us feel good when they play with us. They lie beside us when we're sick. It's powerful, the medicine they carry" (MM, p. 8)

Mwakwa and his asiniskaw ithiniwak relatives have a special place in their family for dogs. Dogs are often regarded as more than just companions or working animals; they are seen as having spiritual and healing roles, sometimes referred to as “medicine dogs.” This connection stems from a deep understanding of animals’ spirits and their ability to provide teachings and guidance to humans.

Additional to acting as guardians and protectors, dogs lead individuals on a spiritual path of healing and self-discovery. This journey of exploration is foundational for a youth like Mwakwa.

Talk About It

Explore the role of dogs as care givers by having the students complete the, **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.9 DOGS ARE MEDICINE PEOPLE: ACROSTIC PUZZLE.** Once the students have completed the task, organize a sharing session.

In modern society, dogs still play an integral role as companions and caregivers. Scientific studies show that dogs offer companionship, reducing stress and loneliness and contributing to the overall well-being of their human partners. The presence of dogs can be particularly beneficial for people struggling with mental health challenges, offering emotional support and reducing feelings of isolation.

“Tipiskaw has become very close to you. I can see that he wants to look after you. Take him. He will be your medicine dog. It will be extra work to feed him and keep him healthy, but he will comfort you when you miss your family”(MM, p. 43).

Write About It

Invite the students to write a paragraph or a design a graphic in their **Māskikiy Miskanaw Journal** outlining the support that Tipiskaw can play as Mwakwa explores his miskanaw.

To this day, community dogs continue to play a critical role in Indigenous culture, mental health, and public health and safety. Their well-being remains tied to the spiritual and emotional balance of Indigenous families.

Ask students about the character traits that their dogs or dogs they know possess. Make a list of these traits on the board. Hand out the **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.10 MY MEDICINE DOG.** Read over for clarification. Instruct the students to complete.

5: WALKING THE MEDICINE WAY - MĀSKĪKĪY MISKANAW

Rocky Cree peoples’ stories tell us to value our relationship with the land. Connecting our past with our present and our present actions with the future, these stories provide guidance to care for Mother Earth and all its natural resources. In current times, we are experiencing more frequent forest fires, flooding, and severe weather patterns due to rapid climate change caused by human actions. These teachings remind us to watch our actions as humans because if we do not stop hurting nature, nature has its own way of cleansing. As Rocky Cree culture emphasizes, we must learn to walk the medicine way or the māskikiy miskanaw.

News Flash! Socio-Scientific Issues

To extend students’ understanding of how human actions are affecting nature invite students to share recent news stories about climate change. Focus on developing critical scientific literacy through

promoting critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. You can establish a daily/weekly “News Flash” to invite students to share these socio-scientific issues or SSIs on a rotating basis individually or in pairs. Discuss SSIs such as access to clean drinking water, balanced diet, healthy sanitation, etc. that are related to these news stories to highlight the impact of extreme weather patterns on humans, plants, animals, and natural landscape. You can also design a research project to extend learning around specific SSI’s.

Emphasize the importance of walking “*the māsikīy miskanaw, the medicine way*”!

Research suggests that talking about climate change and related SSIs may cause anxiety, fear, and a sense of hopelessness about the future amongst students. To address these negative emotions, and to ensure holistic teaching that not only involves mental and physical aspects but also touches emotional and spiritual domains of learning, highlight the critical teachings of Rocky Cree culture. Rocky Cree culture emphasizes that it is important to keep good relationships with each other and with nature for a balanced, healthy life because good relationships are medicines.

“For people on the *māsikīy miskanaw*, medicine is not simply a pill you take when you are sick... It is a way of keeping ourselves healthy by making good relations with everything around us. Medicine is the way we treat each other, the stories we tell, and how we orient ourselves on our miskanaw... Medicine is holistic, too. It works to balance all aspects of life – physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual” (MM, p. 2).

Compare and Contrast: Cultural Understandings of Medicine

Ask students to complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.11 VENN DIAGRAM MEDICINES** to distinguish Rocky Cree understandings of medicine and Western Euro-Canadian understandings of medicine. Discuss which aspects of life are addressed through each perspective.

Cultivate Critical Consciousness and Sense of Self

Invite students to consider what connections they can make with Rocky Cree understandings of medicines. Ask them to write a paragraph capturing their thoughts in their **Māsikīy Miskanaw Journal**.

“We call this concept mamitonicikan: the medicine gives you the energy and the direction to travel on your miskanaw in a good way” (MM, p. 2).

Journal Reflection

As you discuss the SSIs, use reflection prompts to invite students to respond to four key questions that Indigenous Elders call “the great questions of life” (Mino-Pimatisiwin—*The Good Life*, p.1-3.)

- Who am I? (identity & belonging)
- Where do I come from? (history & meaning)
- Why am I here? (purpose)
- Where am I going? (destiny & hope)

Ask students to choose a specific socio-scientific issue and to make a chart in their **Māsikīy Miskanaw Journal** to answer the following.

Socio-Scientific Issues (SSIs)	Who am I?	Where do I come from?	Why am I here?	Where am I going?
Name and describe the SSI	Identify yourself and the knowledge that you hold about the SSI and its impact.	Identify your positionality and relationship to the SSI and the community that is facing this SSI.	Identify your intentions and emotions as they relate to the SSI.	Identify your learnings and possible actions that you can take to address negative impacts of the SSI.

Build Community to Promote Student Agency

Rocky Cree teachings emphasize relationships as medicines. Hold a weekly sharing circle to invite students to share key aspects of their responses to their SSI and four key questions as evident in their reflection journals. This sharing will create opportunities for students to learn from each other and identify the environmentally responsible actions that they can take at an individual, collective, and communal level to care for nature.

“The Creator, the land, and our relatives all worked together on being healthy with one another, through our family life and community activities. In the times when food was short, the people rallied together for their survival. The medicine teachings oriented us in our miskanaw, our path in life. We moved forward as healthy people” (MM, p. 4).

TEACHER TIP

For your sharing circle, consider inviting Rocky Cree or other Indigenous Elders and community members to inform students’ understandings of SSIs and their impact on Indigenous communities.

Share your SSI Information

Plan and organize a class or school event where students can share their learnings and actions that they took regarding a socio-scientific issue. Assess all aspects of scientific literacy i.e., the knowledge, skills, science, technology, society, and environmental interconnections and decision making, global competencies, and the processes of communal actions and agency that are informed by Rocky Cree teachings and Manitoba Education's Framework for Learning.

6: MĀSKIHKIWAPWIY - MEDICINE TEA

“Throughout the day, the women would stay along the edge of the water, picking wīkaskwa, mint. Over the next few days, they would pick wīkis (muskrat root), waskatamo (water-lily root), napakasīht (balsam), and kakiki-pakwa (Labrador tea) – all the medicines they would need for their medicine tea in the winter” (MM, p. 19).

Tea has a special place with Mwakwa and his asiniskaw īthiniwak relatives. Tea is more than just an enjoyable beverage but also functions as a medicine referred to as māsikhkiwapiy. Medicines that nourish us emotionally, spiritually, physically, and mentally adhere to the Rocky Cree concept of nīhithaw.

Different plant species can be harvested throughout each of the six seasons among the Rocky Cree for māsikhkiwapiy, or medicine tea. Harvesting medicines and understanding their properties is foundational to the Rocky Cree way of life. There are many uses of tea in Rocky Cree culture. For instance, tea is offered to visitors. Mwakwa and his family are welcomed with a feast by their relatives where tea is gathered for māsikhkiwapwiy.

TEACHER TIP

Nihithaw means coming from the four directions and corresponds to the physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental realms of well-being.

Talk About It

As a part of the Indigenous Summer Scholars Program at the University of Winnipeg, a student developed a research question within the Six Seasons Project about the function of tea in Rocky Cree culture. To conceptualize the function of tea in Rocky Cree culture, the student first thought about how tea functioned in their own culture. Were there similarities? Were there differences? How did understandings of tea in their own culture help them understand tea in Rocky Cree culture? Have students think and talk about how tea functions in their lives.

Write About It

Ask students to tell some of their “tea stories” to the class. Have students write their answers to these questions in their **Māsikīy Miskanaw Journal**.

- How does tea function in your culture?
- How does tea function in your family?
- Where do you drink tea?
- Why do you drink tea?

TEACHER TIP

As an alternative activity, have students reflect on how tea is used in different cultures around the world. This allows students an additional research opportunity to contrast and compare the use of tea in Rocky Cree culture.

Alternatively, if students do not drink tea or identify a connection with tea, have them interview someone who does drink tea. Students can write the results of their interviews in their **Māsikīy Miskanaw Journal** instead of their own reflection.

Additionally, have students survey where tea is used in the *Māsikīy Miskanaw* text. Have students list the page numbers where tea is mentioned in their journals and record any questions they may have about the use of tea at this point in the story. This is to help students conceptualize how tea functions in the story and how it is used within Rocky Cree culture.

Talk About It

To enhance students' learning and perspectives on medicines and māsikhkiwapwiy, consider inviting an Elder to the classroom who is knowledgeable on medicines. This can develop students' understandings of medicinal knowledge, sustainable harvesting, and traditional protocols in relation to *Māsikīy Miskanaw, the Medicine Way*.

Explore the significance of tea and its medicinal properties.

- What makes tea significant to the Rocky Cree?
- How is tea used in the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* text?
- Where can medicinal plants for tea be found?
- What might different types of tea be used for?
- What do you know about medicinal plants and tea?

TEACHER TIP

For medicinal information on these medicines listed on the activity, refer to Aboriginal Plant Use in [Canada's Northwest Boreal Forest](#). Teachers can also use the Introduction of 'Rocky Cree Medicinal Plants' in Appendix A for reference.

As a collective, discuss the different medicines that would be harvested in tākwākin, or fall, as illustrated in the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story. This is demonstrated in the eighth spread of the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* text. Ensure that students are introduced to Rocky Cree terminology as they learn about these medicines. Teachers may use the **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.12 MĀSKIHKIWAPWIY** as a resource for introducing students to five of the medicinal plants mentioned in the story. Have students take notes about their learnings in their ***Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal***.

Following your lesson with the **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.12 MĀSKIHKIWAPWIY** have students complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.13 MATCH THE MĀSKIHKIWAPWIY**

Making Māskihkiwapwi

Have students interact with māskihkiwapwi. Lead a classroom activity where students can make their own māskihkiwapwi using five Rocky Cree medicines. Teachers can bring these medicines into the classroom for students to select, steep, and enjoy. Teachers may choose to bring in traditional loose leaf tea or teabags. Suggested steeping time for the māskihkiwapwi is 5-10 minutes.

Alternatively, teachers could plan a field trip by partnering with an Elder or Indigenous-led organization to have students experience harvesting these medicines for tea to be made in the classroom.

TEACHER TIP

Sources for purchasing medicinal teas:

Mint Tea: Available commercially, and can be purchased in most grocery stores.

Labrador Tea: [Boreal Heartland](#) or [Raven and Hummingbird Tea Co.](#)

Balsam Tea: [Anokian.](#)

Muskrat Root Tea: [Bear Den Native Crafts](#) or [Turtle Lodge Trading Post.](#)

Water Lily Root Tea: [Aunty Collective.](#)

Talk About It

After either activity, review with students why each medicine is harvested, where and how it is harvested, and the medicinal properties it contains which make it perfect for māskihkiwapwi.

After drinking the tea, have students think about the traits that each different tea possesses. Have them record their thoughts in their ***Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal***.

What would the Rocky Cree have used to drink their māskihkiwapwi? Have students write an answer in their ***Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal***. When we think of drinking tea, we think of cream, sugar, and teacups. The Rocky Cree would not have used English-style teacups to drink their māskihkiwapwi. In fact, English-style teacups are a colonial artifact. For instance, on the Canadian prairies bison were hunted and their bones were sent to England to make English-style tea cups, often referred to as bone china.

Have students complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.14 MĀSKIHKIWAPWIY 'TEACUPS'** by having student decorate an English-style teacup and a Rocky Cree māskihkiwapwi 'tea cup'.

TEACHER TIP

'Pile of Bones' was the original name for the area that would become Regina, Saskatchewan. It referred to the massive pile of bones left on the banks of the Wascana Creek which were visible to settlers, hunters, and fur traders in the late 19th century. The Cree referred to this area as Oskana-Ka-Asateki, or 'the place where bones are piled'. In the late 1800's these bones were collected and shipped East for industrial use and to make bone china. The name 'Pile of Bone's reflects the immense and tragic transformation of the prairie landscape during the years in when the bison were slaughtered.

To drink their medicine tea, the Rocky Cree would have either used birch bark cups or small pottery vessels.

Birch bark cups would be waterproofed. Waterproofing could have been done with grease or birch bark sap/resin.

Designs could be decorated on the birch bark via the etching method or painting. Patterns used might include flowers, animals, or the minisiwin (family group).

It is also possible that the Rocky Cree used smaller pottery vessels to drink their māskihkiwapwi. The vessels would be decorated like larger pots used for everyday use. The vessels could also be decorated by making impressions into the clay. Different types of clay can be used to make the vessels.

- Riverbend clay, grey in colour.
- Overturned tree clay, brown in colour.
- Stream bank clay, dark grey in colour.

Different types of temper are used to prevent the vessels from cracking or shrinking.

- Grit temper are tiny rock fragments produced by heating and cooling rocks via fire.
- Sand temper is created by erosion and is loose and rounded.
- Grog temper are crushed pieces of previous vessels, an early form of recycling!

Rocky Cree vessels can have many shapes.

- The Laurel shape are coils of clay joined and shaped into cones and smoothed on the outside.
- The Blackduck shape involves woven plant fibres used as molds that leave markings on the clay.
- The Selkirk shape uses weaving techniques that leave knot marks on the clay.

Rocky Cree vessels can have many designs.

- Plain vessels remain undecorated.
- Punctuate vessels have a row of small holes.
- Cord wrapped vessels involve a twisted cord impressed into partially hardened clay.

TEACHER TIP

Refer to module 3 and the [Askikwak: Pottery](#) lesson from the Amo's Saptowan Teacher's Guide to lead a demonstration on making Rocky Cree pottery vessels. The Amo picture book app also features a askihk (pot) making game!

Have students complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 2.11 MĀSKIHKIWAPWIY 'TEACUPS'**. Students will decorate their own small pottery vessels for māskihkiwapwi. Students will select a Rocky Cree pottery design provided on the page to create their own vessel.



A ROCKY CREE MEDICINE CELEBRATION

Celebrations and ceremonies are fundamental aspects of asiniskaw īthiniwak community life. In many ways the terms “celebration” and “ceremony” operate as synonyms in Rocky Cree community practice.

In the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story, there are various celebrations that occur:

- A feast is made to welcome relatives
- The community gathers to receive teachings from the Elders
- The hunters meet in the Sweat Lodge to pray for a good hunt
- A tobacco offering is made to thank the mōswa for their gift
- The community gathers to celebrate Miskisiw's successful hunt
- Mwakwa is accepted as an apprentice to the stargazer
- The stargazer explains the sacred fire ceremony
- A relative leaves this life

"As part of the ceremony the women offer their medicines for tea. Then Wāpos laid out the medicines and told them what each one was good for" (MM, p. 30).

Shared aspects of most celebrations and ceremonies are the sharing of food and tea, teachings from the Elders, storytelling by members of the community, and games or songs.

As a concluding activity for the medicine module, invite your class to plan a Rocky Cree tea party.

- Organize your classroom space so that there can be circular seating which maximizes opportunities for sharing tea, food, and stories.
- Plan food and tea for your celebration.
- Think of some Indigenous foods that might pair well with drinking tea i.e. bannock with berry jam.
- Bring in any artifacts created in the Medicine Unit. For instance if pottery teacups were made they should be used, or the illustrations of tea cups can be displayed. Kindess chains can decorate the classroom space.
- Plan to play the welcome games or getting acquainted games referenced in the early part of the module.
- Plan for a time when students can share their stories about how tea plays a role in their own life or family life. Alternatively, students can share which tea they liked best from the Māskihkiwapwi lesson, what they remembered about the uses of each tea, and what each tea does for health and well being.
- In Rocky Cree culture, tea is generally served by a host or hostess. Plan for protocols on how tea will be served in the class room.
- Take pictures of your tea celebration to share with parents, in a school newsletter, or to display on a bulletin board.

TEACHER TIP

Explanations for brewing medicine tea can be found in the Māskihkiwapwi - Medicine Tea lesson, including teas such as wild mint, balsam, labrador tea, muskrat root, and water lily root.

Module 2 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources

Othasowina - Guiding Principles

- 2.1 Great Laws of the Rocky Cree
- 2.2 Wikīnanaskiwa, Compare and Contrast
- 2.3 Welcome Comic
- 2.4 Human Bingo
- 2.5 Character Cards
- 2.6 Place Cards

Mamitonicikan - Holistic Health

- 2.7 My Plant and its Habitat
- 2.8 Lab Report

Tipiskaw the Medicine Dog

- 2.9 Dogs Are Medicine People
- 2.10 My Medicine Dog

Walking the Medicine Way - *Māskikīy* *Miskanaw*

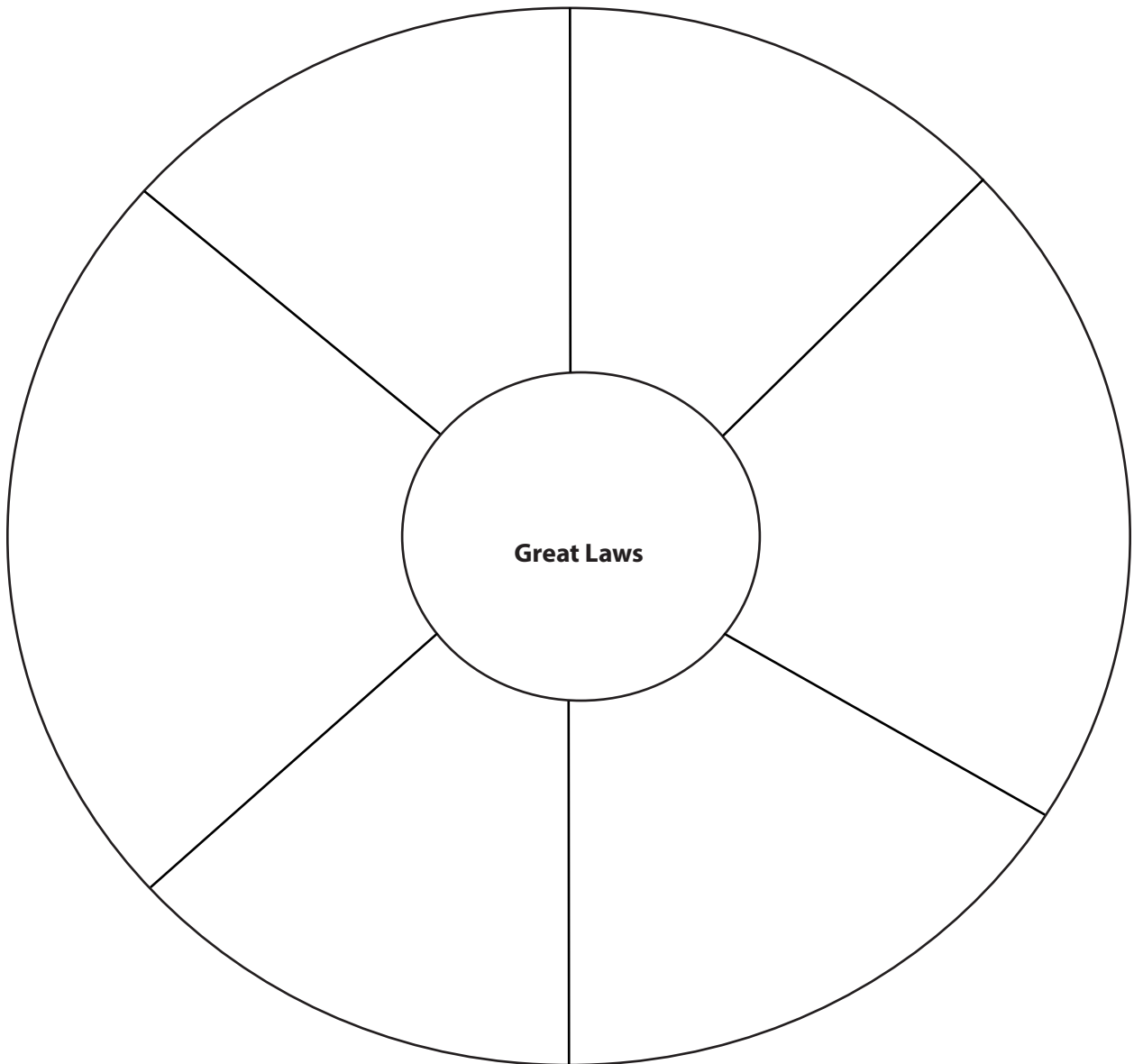
- 2.11 Venn Diagram Medicines

Māskihkiwapwiy - Medicine Tea

- 2.12 Māskihkiwapwiy
- 2.13 Match the Māskihkiwapwiy
- 2.14 Māskihkiwapwiy 'Teacups'

2.1 Great Laws of the Rocky Cree

Choose six different laws of the Rocky Cree. Illustrate and label them through words and pictures to show your understanding of each principle.



2.2 Wīkīnanaskiwa : Compare and Contrast your special gathering with one of the Rocky Cree gatherings of Mwakwa's family.

	My Special Gathering	Rocky Cree Gathering
Where?		
When?		
Why?		
Who?		
What?		
How?		
Importance?		

2.3 A Rocky Cree Welcome Comic

Instructions: Think of a place and two or three characters - perhaps from your own life - to draw a comic using the four Rocky Cree principles of welcome. 1. Meet guests halfway. 2. Welcome with words and gifts. 3. Say thanks. 4. Celebrate! (Don't know what to draw? Pull two or three role playing cards, a place card, and imagine a welcome sequence to draw.) You can make this comic serious or humorous!

[illegible]

2.4 Human Bingo

Instructions: Find someone who has done each of the following things. Ask them to sign inside of the square that corresponds to the activity that they have done. You may collect a person's signature only once! This is Blackout Bingo. When all of your squares are filled, call BINGO!

I have seen a waterfall in nature.	I have paddled a canoe	I have built a campfire.	I have cooked a meal for my family without anyone else's assistance.
I have built a lean-to.	I have helped raised a dog from puppy to adult.	I have had a cup of mint tea.	I have gone berry picking.
I have seen wild rice growing in a lake or pond.	I have scooped up a fish in a net.	I know how to shoot with a bow and arrow.	I have seen a moose in the wild.
I can point out a constellation in the night sky.	I know how to speak at least two languages.	I have made something out of birchbark.	I have gone on an overnight hiking and camping trip.

2.5 Character Cards

Bryce 13 Years Old Student who loves playing video games on their PS5	Amy 15 Years Old Takes guitar lessons from your neighbour
Mother Middle aged likes gardening	Mr. Nault Elderly Ride his bicycle around town nearly every morning
Parker 4 Years Old Plays in the park near your house most afternoons	Mrs. Rowland Young mother refinishes antique furniture
Darlene 20 Years Old Works at Subway	Dennis 18 Years Old Your cousin who is great with mechanics
Brooke 11 Years Old Your sister who is planning her birthday party	Genevieve 14 Years Old Likes to hang out with friends playing computer games or watching movies
Boyd 28 Years Old Works in the local cross-country ski shop	Mr. Eagleton Middle aged Your social studies teacher
Cory Your best friend who likes quadding	Father Middle aged Likes to go deer hunting

2.6 Place Cards

Mall	Home
Arcade	Pet Store
Restaurant	School
Local Park	Beach
Birthday Party	Backyard
Grocery Store	Amusement Park
Train	Street Corner

2.7 My Plant and Its Habitat

Draw a picture of a medicinal plant and label the different parts of the plant. Research information about your plant and fill out the table below.

Name of plant in Rocky Cree:	Name of plant in English:	Botanical name of plant:
Medicinal value of plant:	Plant part used as medicine:	Type of medicine made from the plant i.e. tea, salve, etc:
Habitat of the plant:	Growing season of the plant:	Harvesting season of the plant:

2. 8 Lab Report: How does water, sunlight, or air impact the growth of a medicinal plant?

- **Objective:** To study the impact of (select specific environmental factor) on growth of a plant (identify specific medicinal plant that you want to study).
- **Materials:** List the materials that you will need for your experiment.
- **Hypothesis:** Write a statement that clearly states your educated guess regarding the outcome which you can test by your experiment.
- **Method:** Write the procedure of how you would conduct the experiment. Clearly identify independent and dependent variables and control and experimental groups. What period of time will the study take?
- **Data:** Make a table to record data. Write the characteristic that you would like to observe to measure plant growth and the measurements for both control and experimental group. Take readings of at least three plants in each group for each plant characteristic measured.
- **Analysis:** Explain the data you collected and what you think.
- **Conclusion:** Write the result of your experiment. What does the data tell you? What does this tell you about the growth of your plant? Was your hypothesis correct? If not, then what will you do next?

Lab Report

1. What medicinal plant is being studied?
2. What materials are required to conduct this study?
3. What is the hypothesis for this study?

2.8 (Continued) Lab Report: How does water, sunlight, or air impact the growth of a medicinal plant?

4. What method is being followed for this study?

5. Create a table to record the data for this study.

6. What type of data was collected in the study? What does it mean?

7. What did the data indicate? Was the hypothesis correct? Why or why not?

2.9 'Dogs are Medicine People': Acrostic Poem

An acrostic is a poem in which the first letters of each line spell out a word or phrase. In our case, we are using the name of Mwakwa's dog, Tipiskaw.

Instructions: Use the letters in Tipiskaw's name to write an acrostic. Each line could be a simple word, several words, or a sentence. Make sure that the words connect to Tipiskaw and his role as a medicine dog.

T

I

P

I

S

K

A

W

2.10 My Medicine Dog

Literature and pop culture have given us many memorable dog characters. Some famous dogs and their traits are listed. Using this chart, complete the questions below.

Lassie: The heroic collie known for his loyalty.

Goofy: A close friend of Mickey Mouse, Goofy is known for his goofy antics, distinctive laugh, and positive outlook.

Pluto: Mickey Mouse's loyal companion, Pluto is known for his loyalty and playful nature.

Lady (Lady and the Tramp): An elegant American Cocker Spaniel, Lady is known for her grace, innocence, and loyalty to her family.

Scooby Doo: A cowardly but loyal and lovable Great Dane.

Clifford: The Big Red Dog who is larger than life with a friendly and loyal personality.

Old Yeller: A classic farm dog who is courageous and protective of his family.

Questions to Answer:

1. An adjective is a word or words used to describe a noun. (Remember that a noun is a person, place, thing, or idea.) Underline the adjectives used to describe each of the dogs above. Copy out the adjectives here:

2. What adjective is the most commonly used? Why do you think this is the case?

3. Based on the adjectives used to describe the dogs, which dog would you like to take home? Explain why.

2.10 (Continued) My Medicine Dog

4. How do you think Mwakwa would describe Tipiskaw? Write a description using the ones above as an example.

5. What character traits would your ideal medicine dog possess? List at least three.

1.

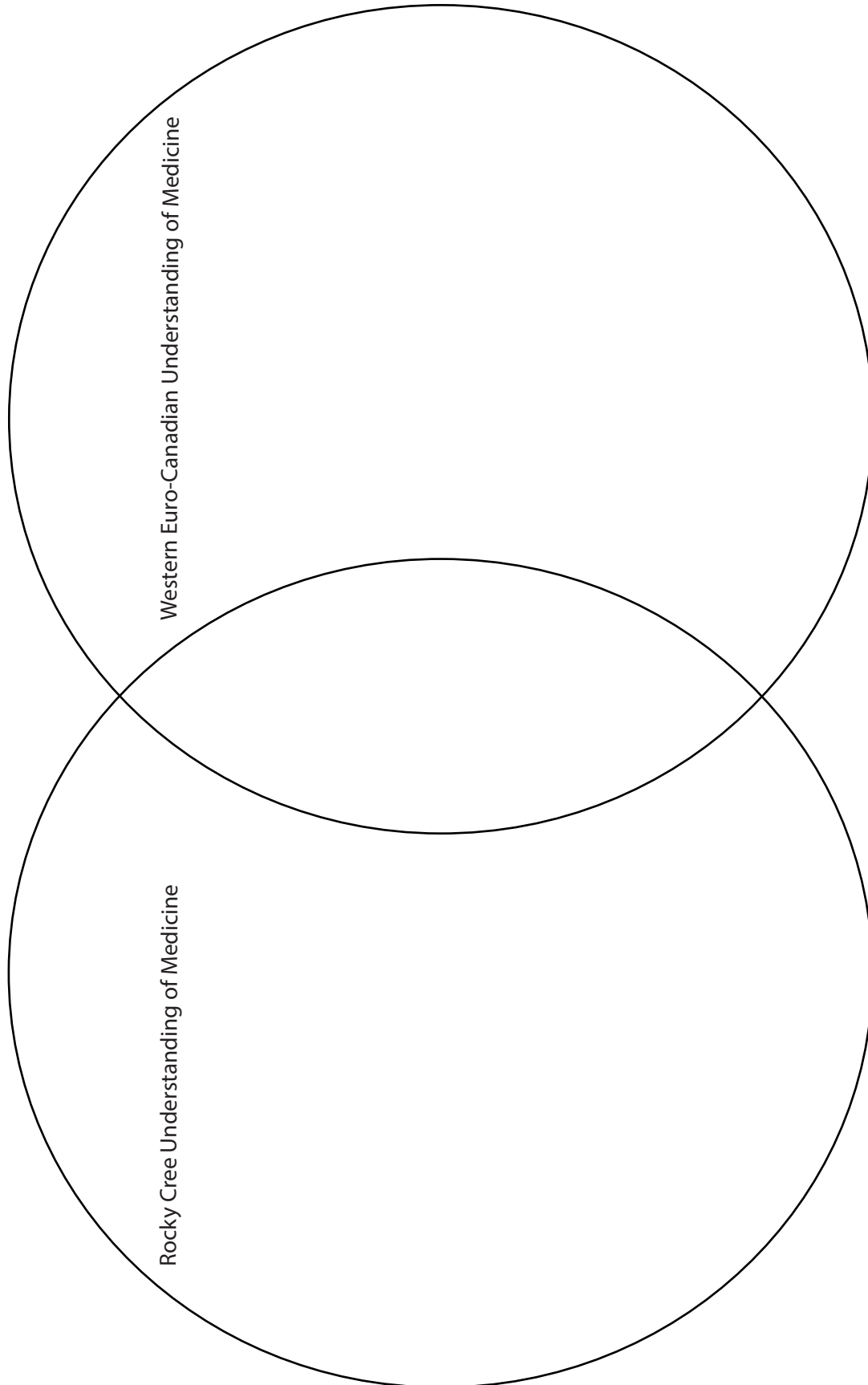
2.

3.

6. In the Rocky Cree language Tipiskaw means 'night' or 'it is nighttime'. Why do you think the author named them this?

7. What would a medicine dog look like to you? What kind of dog would you like as your companion?

2.11 Venn Diagram Medicines



2.12 Māskihkiwapwi

Name	Description	Sketch and Colour
Labrador Tea kakikipakwa (KAH ke ke pah kwah)	Labrador Tea is a stout shrub found in muskegs, bogs, and wet coniferous woods. The leaves can be chewed or made into tea to treat stomach/flu ailments. It can also be used to strengthen heart health, treat arthritis, and help migraines.	
Muskrat Root wīkis (WEE kees)	Muskrat Root gets its name from muskrats chewing on its white fleshy roots. It is found in wet, marshy areas near ponds, or in bogs. It has tall green leaves with a greenish yellow point. The tea can treat colds and coughs, and be used to treat dental pain, muscle pain, or headaches.	
Water Lily Root waskatamo (Wah SKA tah mo)	Water Lily Root is an aquatic plant found in ponds or shallow lakes. It has a fleshy texture that is brown in colour. Water Lily Root tea has anti-inflammatory properties aiding in digestion and upset stomach.	
Wild Mint wīkaskwa (WEE kah skwah)	Wild mint is found in moist or wet areas. It has green pointed leaves with purple flowers where the leaves meet the stem. It has a fresh smell. It can treat coughs and fevers and prevent bleeding.	
Balsam napakasiht (na pah KAH seet)	Balsam is found in the boreal forest. It is tall and narrow with soft evergreen needles. A tea from its sap can treat high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, and skin conditions like eczema and psoriasis.	

2.13 Match the Māskihkiwapwiy

Many medicines can be made into māskihkiwapwiy. Draw lines to match each description and Rocky Cree medicine name with the English name of the plant.

kakikipakwa ●

Found in muskegs, bogs, and wet
coniferous woods. Leaves can be chewed
or made into tea to treat stomach/flu ailments.

● **Wild Mint**

wikis ●

Found in wet, marshy areas near
ponds, or bog. Tea can treat colds, dental pain,
and headaches.

● **Balsam**

waskatamo ●

Found in ponds or shallow lakes. Anti-inflammatory
properties aiding in digestion and upset stomach.

● **Labrador Tea**

wikaskwa ●

Found in moist or wet areas. It has
green pointed leaves with purple flowers. Tea can treat
coughs and fevers. Wild mint is also known to slow or stop bleeding .

● **Water Lily Root**

napakasīht ●

Tall and narrow with soft evergreen needles
and grey and white bark. Its sap can be made into a tea to
treat high blood pressure, asthma, and diabetes.

● **Muskrat Root**

2.13 (Continued) Match the Māskihkiwapwiw Answer Key

Many medicines can be made into māskihkiwapwiw. Draw lines to match each description and Rocky Cree medicine name with the English name of the plant.

kakikipakwa ●

Found in muskegs, bogs, and wet coniferous woods. Leaves can be chewed or made into tea to treat stomach/flu ailments.

wikis ●

Found in wet, marshy areas near ponds, or bog. Tea can treat colds, dental pain, and headaches.

waskatamo ●

Found in ponds or shallow lakes. Anti-inflammatory properties aiding in digestion and upset stomach.

wikaskwa ●

Found in moist or wet areas. It has green pointed leaves with purple flowers. Tea can treat coughs and fevers. Wild mint is also known to slow or stop bleeding.

napakasīht ●

Tall and narrow with soft evergreen needles and grey and white bark. Its sap can be made into a tea to treat high blood pressure, asthma, and diabetes.

● **Wild Mint**

● **Balsam**

● **Labrador Tea**

● **Water Lily Root**

● **Muskrat Root**

2.14 Māskihkiwapwiy 'Teacups'

What do we think of when we hear the word tea? We may think of a teacup! Draw and decorate your own English-style bone china teacup. In Canada this type of teacup is a colonial artifact.



Stock Image canva.com

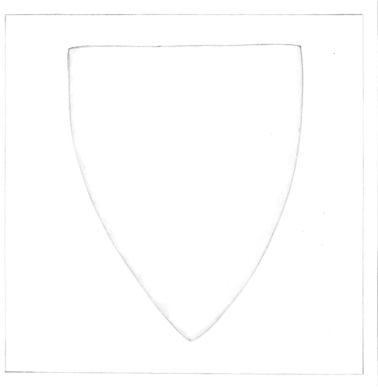
2.14 (Continued) Māskihkiwapwiw 'Teacups'

Create your own Rocky Cree vessel from which to drink māskihkiwapwiw. Using the attached chart, draw and design your own Rocky Cree vessel.



2.14 (Continued) Māskihkiwapwi 'Teacups':

Use the following styles and designs to draw a Rocky Cree vessel to drink māskihkiwapwi. These illustrations were created by Alexis Greener-Ironside.

Laurel	Selkirk	Blackduck
Plain Design 	Plain Design 	Plain Design 
Punctuates Design 	Punctuates Design 	Punctuates Design 
Cord Wrapped Design 	Cord Wrapped Design 	Cord Wrapped Design 

Module 3: Kinanaskomitin: Hunting and Gathering



Sipi nisitohtamowin: Enduring Understanding

"As the women began the medicine harvest, some of the men went the other way to hunt for moose, and others went fishing...The fish were plentiful and the harvest was good...this would keep them alive and healthy for a long time" (MM, p. 22).

Key Concepts

- Respect
- Reciprocity
- Sustainability
- Protocols
- Observation of Nature
- Wayfinding
- Ecology
- Gratitude

Key Words

- kinanaskomitin - word of thanks meaning "I return the nourishment to you"
- pastahowin - breaking sacred laws of respectful behaviour
- nipī - water, understood as a sacred, living entity

- nipiṣ - plant life, filled with water
- nipiṣ - “he or she dies”; the water goes out of a person
- sowaki sakahikan - heartland
- Misinipi - “big water”; the Churchill River

Guiding Questions

- What is the source of our food?
- What does it mean to live sustainably?
- How does reciprocity play a role in giving and receiving gifts?
- What gifts do we get from nature? What gifts do we give to nature?
- What skills are needed to be a hunter?
- What does it mean to follow protocol?
- How can we find our way, and keep from getting lost, in nature?
- What is a web of life in an ecosystem?

Kiskinwahamakiwin: Teaching Strategies

"The animals eat the medicines from the land. When we eat those animals and the birds that we have harvested, we are eating that medicine too. And as we give each other medicine food, we should be speaking māskikīy acimowin, medicine talk" (MM, p.13).



BEST PRACTICES SPOTLIGHT

Jennifer Williams - Director, Languages and Cultures

Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre Inc.

Jennifer is the Cree narrator of *Amō's Sapotawan*. MFNERC is one of the partners with the Six Seasons project. Jennifer has provided books and teacher's guides to member schools to use in their classrooms. She finds that the historical fiction presented in a picture book format can be adapted by teachers for any grade level.

1: HUNTING AND GATHERING PROTOCOLS

Harvesting activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering wild plants have been part of the Rocky Cree way of life for thousands of years. Hunting and gathering were fundamental, providing food, medicine, and materials for tools and clothing. These practices were deeply intertwined with the local environment and spirituality. This way of life required a profound respect for the land and animals that included prayer and giving thanks and understanding humans as part of the natural world.

Methods varied by region and included hunting with spears, bows, arrows, or traps, and fishing using nets and spears, while also gathering plants, berries, and wild rice.

"The next day, the women went out with their birchbark baskets to fill them with mossberries, and the men hunted. They all came back in the evening, successful once again" (MM, p. 39).

Read Aloud

"For thousands of years in Rocky Cree territories, people have met together at wīkīnanaskiwa, gathering places. At these key locations, there could be fish spawns, berries, plentiful waterfowl in the warm seasons, mathomin (wild rice) or other plant medicines, and animals nearby making themselves available for hunting. People share food and stories, solve issues, look for marriage partners, and plan ahead for the next gathering" (MM, p. 9).

Write About It

Write the following words on a flip chart. Tell the students that all the words come from the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* book. Instruct them to draw two columns in their **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal**. Title one column HUNTING and the other column GATHERING. Copy and sort the words into the correct column. Arrange a Think-Pair-Share once completed.

- Geese
- wīkaskwa (Mint)
- Moose
- Fish
- Weasel
- Mink
- Berries
- wīkis (Muskrat Root)
- waskatamo (Water Lily Root)
- Duck
- napakasīht (Balsam)
- kakikipakwa (Labrador Tea)

TEACHER TIP

Think-Pair-Share is a collaborative learning strategy where students reflect on a question independently (think), discuss their reflection with a partner (pair), and then share their reflection with a larger group (share).

Reread the quote on page 22 of *Māskikīy Miskanaw*. Ask: Other than the materials gathered at wikīnan-askiwa, in what ways were these gathering places important to Rocky Cree society and culture? Lead a class discussion about the importance of gathering places in Rocky Cree life and culture.

"Over the several days, a community formed as they hunted and harvested together. The men went out fishing, tracking moose, and hunting the fall ducks that had stayed around when all the larger birds had flown away" (MM, p. 22).

Traditionally, Rocky Cree men were the hunters and women were the gatherers although women also did hunt and trap, especially smaller game.

Divide the class into pairs. Give each pair of students five sticky notes. On each note have them write one of the main facts of hunting and gathering:

- Hunting: Most hunting was done by men. They worked together in groups.
- Gathering: Most gathering was done by women. They gathered foods like wild plants, berries, roots, etc.
- Fire: People used fire to cook, warm, and preserve food.
- Art: People used plant dyes to paint on rocks and decorate themselves, their clothes, and other items.
- Tools: People made tools like arrows, nets, and baskets to hunt, fish, and gather.

Pass each student pair a copy of *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*. Instruct them to skim/scan the text and images. Ask them to place their sticky notes on images or text in the book that matches the definition they wrote. Ask the whole class to share which images they picked for each fact.

"Here, nikōsis, my nephew," Ācapi Okimaw said. "Take this tobacco and make an offering. Thank the mōswa for his gift. Your father is proud of you, and so are we all!" (MM, p. 29).

The Rocky Cree people believed that the animals were created to feed and nourish them. It was very important for the hunter to pray and give thanks when taking the life of an animal, as taking that life meant that he could feed his own family. Giving thanks meant placing sacred medicines, such as tobacco, when an animal life was taken for the survival of the community. Giving tobacco was an act of reciprocation, showing gratitude for the gift given and demonstrating that the Rocky Cree people were in a respectful trading relationship with the land.

The Rocky Cree, like other Indigenous peoples, have protocols (a set of rules) associated with hunting. These hunting protocols are rooted in a holistic worldview of respect, responsibility, sustainability, and reciprocity with the natural world. These practices are guided by community laws, spiritual beliefs, and a profound understanding of the local ecosystem.

Key parts of these protocols are:

TEACHER TIP

Invite the students to explore and cultivate a personal practice of gratitude. How? Take a few minutes each day to write down things you're grateful for. You could write down these thoughts in your **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal**. Make it a habit to verbally thank those around you, whether it's for a small favour or their ongoing support.

- Respect and reciprocity: Animals are considered relations or gifts that give themselves to the hunter. Hunters offer thanks, often by leaving a gift of tobacco, to acknowledge this sacrifice and maintain a balanced relationship.
- Take only what is needed: This ensures the sustainability of animal populations for current and future generations.
- Waste nothing: Every part of the harvested animal is used for food, clothing, tools, or other necessities. Wasting a harvest is considered a sign of disrespect for the animal's spirit.
- Sharing with the community: Hunting is often a communal activity and the harvest is shared, especially with Elders and those who cannot hunt for themselves. This practice strengthens community bonds and interdependence.
- Seasonal and conservation awareness: Traditional laws often specify when to hunt and when to avoid hunting during critical life stages, such as calving season.

Invite the students to read *Māskikiy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way* and write examples of how each of these five protocols show up in the story in their **Māskikiy Miskanaw Journal**.

TEACHER TIP

Taking the Manitoba Hunter Education Course is mandatory to purchase a hunting licence; the course focuses on wildlife management, conservation, firearms safety, and ethical behaviour. The course can be completed either online-only (for those 12 and older) or via an in-class format (for those 10 and older). The primary goals of the course are to promote: (1) safe use and handling of firearms (2) ethical and responsible behaviour, and (3) understanding the hunter's role in wildlife management and conservation. Have students compare and contrast these 3 primary hunter education goals to Rocky Cree traditional hunting protocols. Refer to the [Official Manitoba Hunter Safety Course](#).

"Throughout the day, the women would stay along the edge of the water, picking wīkaskwa, mint. Over the next few days, they would pick wīkis (muskrat root), waskatamo (water-lily root), napakasīht (balsam), and kakikipakwa (Labrador tea) – all the medicines they would need for their medicine tea in the winter" (MM, p. 19).

Focus the students' attention on the topic of medicine tea. Explain that to the Rocky Cree and other Indigneous groups, "medicine tea" refers to beverages brewed from various plants for their healing properties, such as labrador tea for respiratory issues and sage to soothe gastrointestinal spasms. These teas are not only medicinal but also integral to spiritual ceremonies and social gathering. Refer to the "Māskih-kiwapwi - Medicine Tea" lessons in Module 2 and the "Respect and Reciprocity Lesson" in this module and

lead a class discussion about medicinal plant gathering protocols. Invite the students to complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 3.1 MAKING LABRADOR TEA**.

SS

ELA

RC

A

S

H

2: WATERWAYS

Connections to Waterways

Waterways, rivers, and lakes are of paramount importance to the Rocky Cree. Water (nipī) is considered a sacred, living entity rather than merely a resource. This deep connection is holistic, intertwining spiritual, cultural, physical, and economic well-being, and is central to Rocky Cree identity and traditional ways of life.

Nipiw: This word means he or she dies. It is also connected to the word *nipī*, which means water. A related word is *nipiy*, which means plant life. When people (and plants) are alive, most of their bodies are water. When they go ahead to the spirit world, the water leaves them. When we *nipiw*, our *nipī* leaves us and we pass across.

Read the Cree definitions of *nipī*, *nipiw*, and *nipiy* aloud. Write the three words and their definitions on the whiteboard. Divide the class into pairs. Instruct each person to draw ONE of the words based on its definition. Afterwards, invite pairs to compare their drawings and understandings.

Bring the class together as a whole group. Lead a discussion around the three terms. Share the visuals the students drew. Instruct students to draw a three-circle venn diagram in their **Māskikiy Miskanaw Journal**. A venn diagram is a visual tool that uses three overlapping circles to compare and contrast three different items or concepts. The overlapping sections represent elements that are common to two or all three items or concepts, while the non-overlapping parts show elements unique to one of the items or concepts. In the three circles, instruct them to write *nipī*, *nipiw*, *nipiy*.

“When relatives who have not visited a community for a long time arrive by boat or canoe, asiniskaw *īthinīwak* often go out to meet them on the water. This is still done today. Its purpose is to show welcome. This greeting on the water is just the beginning of the welcoming process, which continues when the visitors arrive on land, and then when a feast is held in their honour” (MM, p. 11).

In Manitoba today, there are six Rocky Cree/ asiniskaw *īthinīwak* communities on the Churchill River. Invite the students to explore their Rocky Cree place/names and their meanings:

- South Indian Lake / *opiponapiwin*: “winter camp along the shores of South Indian Lake”
- Brochet / *kisipikamāhk*: means “the water ends”. Brochet is located at the northeast end of Reindeer Lake
- Nelson House / *nisichawayasihk*: “where three rivers meet”
- Granville Lake / *okawi mithikananihk* / *Okaw* is the Rocky Cree word for pickerel
- Mathias Colomb - Pukatawagan/ *pakitawāhkanik*: *pukatawagan* is a variation of a Cree word that makes reference to an abundance of fish in the area
- Marcel Colomb - Black Sturgeon Falls / *kahkitināmiw*: “black sturgeon falls”

Share these place names with the students. Ask:

- What names are related to water?
- In what ways?
- What do these place names tell us about Rocky Cree culture and ties to the water?

TEACHER TIP

Check out the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre’s map [Traditional First Nation Community Names](#).

Explain that the Churchill River was named after John Churchill, first duke of Marlborough and governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company from 1685 to 1691. Ask:

- Do you know the traditional Rocky Cree name for the river? It is *Misinipi*, meaning “great waters” or “big water.”

“As they pushed off and began to paddle toward home, everyone on shore and in the canoes was quiet. The water was calm, and a thin mist hung in the air. Soon the sun would warm them, and the paddlers felt sure they would make good progress in their travels ...” (MM, p. 48).

Along the Churchill River’s course are rapids, falls, narrow chutes, long stretches of smooth water perfect for canoeing, and a chain of interconnected lakes. The river itself forms the Churchill River basin (sometimes called a watershed).

Invite the students to draw the Churchill River/ Misinipi in their **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal**.

Instruct them to include key map elements like a title, orientation (compass rose), and a legend explaining symbols. Once the base map is complete, hand out **BLACK LINE MASTER 3.2 EXPLORING THE CHURCHILL / MISINIPI RIVER WATERSHED**. Consider making a class bulletin board displaying the students’ finished maps.

Discuss what new facts they learned about the Churchill River and its watershed. Ask students to complete the mapping instructions given on **BLACK LINE MASTER 3.2 EXPLORING THE CHURCHILL/ MISINIPI RIVER WATERSHED**.

TEACHER TIP

To learn more about Indigenous place names in Canada and to explore an interactive digital storymap, visit [Natural Resources Canada's Stories From the Land: Indigenous place names in Canada](#).

3: ORIENTEERING

Orienteering & Wayfinding

The Rocky Cree traditionally navigated and oriented themselves across vast, diverse landscapes—characterized by the Churchill River watershed, rocky terrain, and sub-arctic boreal forest—using an intricate understanding of the natural world, oral traditions, and celestial observation.

“Mwakwa thought about this. He was always amazed by the hunters like his dad who could navigate by the stars, and he’d heard there were many stories to learn about the night sky” (MM, p. 14).

Talk About It

Lead a brainstorming session with the students by posing this question: In what ways do humans navigate (find their way across the earth’s surface)?

Capture their responses on the whiteboard. Potential responses include memory, mental maps, external tools (GPS, maps), compasses, landmarks, stars, etc.

Humans navigate using a combination of innate spatial cognitive abilities (cognitive maps, memory) and external tools ranging from the sun and stars to magnetic compasses and GPS. Methods include dead reckoning (calculating position from a known past position), pilotage (using landmarks), and celestial navigation.

TEACHER TIP

Orienteering is a sport that combines map reading, decision-making, and physical endurance (running or walking). It is a structured activity with a start, finish, and specific control points to visit in a set order. It relies on using highly detailed topographical maps and a compass to navigate.

Write About It

Instruct students to draw a circle with five slices in their **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal**. Have them title the slices:

- External Tools
- Maps, GPS
- Landmarks
- Celestial Navigation
- Memory

Explain the title of each category as needed.

Instruct the students to imagine a trip from their school to another place – the place could be a local sporting area, a city, park, etc. Once they have determined the place to which they would like to travel, ask students to write an explanation in each slice of the circle telling how they could use the navigational tool to get there.

Talk About It

Ask students to share the strategies they could use to navigate from one place to another.

Introduce the terms orienteering and wayfinding. Ask:

- How are they alike?
- How are they different?
- Which one more closely aligns with the journey undertaken in *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*?

Explain that the Rocky Cree, like other Indigenous peoples, use key aspects of wayfinding that include:

- Celestial Navigation: using the North Star and constellations to determine direction.
- Environmental Indicators: using water, snow, wind, etc to identify directions.
- Landscape Knowledge: deep understanding of landmarks, water routes, as well as songs, and dreams that map territory.
- Trail Marker Trees: trees were deliberately manipulated when young to create permanent, unusual shapes; intentional cuts or scarring on trees was used to mark paths or important locations.
- Fire: used as a method of communication between distant groups; fire could signal one's presence, location, or intention to neighbouring clans or family members, particularly when travelling.

TEACHER TIP

Wayfinding is a general skill used to navigate from one place to another, involving understanding where you are, identifying a destination, and determining a route. It utilizes environmental cues, signs, maps, landmarks, and spatial memory to guide movement.

TEACHER TIP

Play a soundbite from the animated film [Moana](#).

DWAYNE JOHNSON: (As Maui) "It's called wayfinding, princess. And it's not just sails and knots. It's seeing where you're going in your mind - knowing where you are by knowing where you've been."

Write About It

Invite the students to read *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way* and find examples of Rocky Cree way-finding in their **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal**. Ask them to write a brief description of each example of wayfinding.

Talk About It

Read aloud the excerpt below from page 47 *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*. Emphasize the sentence: "Remember that we always look for the one star that stays still while the others move".

"That fire is for navigation, just as we use the stars to navigate here on the land.
Remember that we always look for the one star that stays still while the others move?
This is the star that will help us find our way. For our relatives, we create something like a star for them, so that they can navigate their way on the māskikīy miskanaw when they go ahead of us" (MM, p. 47).

TEACHER TIP

Refer to the CBC News article and video called [Cree Mythology Written in the Star](#) featuring star knowledge from Wildfred Buck.

Ask: What star always stays in one place?

Response: The North Star. Explain that the North Star, or Polaris, is a special, reliable star located almost directly above the North Pole. It acts like a stationary compass in the sky that always points north. While other stars appear to move, Polaris stays put because it sits directly over Earth's rotational axis.

The North Star has several names in Cree. It is sometimes called Keewatin, which means Going Home Star, or Ekakatchet Atchakos, which translates to English as It stands Still.

Write About It

Invite students to capture their understandings of the Polaris by completing the **BLACK LINE MASTER**

3.3 FINDING THE NORTH STAR. Invite students to summarize their understandings of Rocky Cree navigation, orienteering, and wayfinding by creating a calligram poem. Calligrams are visual forms of poetry where the shape and layout of the letters and words on the paper relate to the poem's meaning. Calligrams encourage students to weave together their understanding of the written word with their understanding of visual art. Calligrams are also commonly called Shape Poems. Invite the students to complete the **BLACK LINE MASTER 3.4 MY CALLIGRAM POEM**.

TEACHER TIP

Refer to [Calligram](#) from Toronto Metropolitan University for visual examples of calligram poems.

4: RESPECT, RECIPROCITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

"Over the next several days, a community formed as they hunted and harvested together. The men went out fishing, tracking moose, and hunting the fall ducks that had stayed around when all the larger birds had flown away" (MM, p. 22).

SS

ELA

RC

A

S

H

Respect & Reciprocity

The Rocky Cree lived a subsistence-based lifestyle, hunting animals and gathering plants. The Rocky Cree have an extensive seasonal calendar that informs hunting and gathering. Rocky Cree hunting and gathering practices are rooted in reciprocity and sustainability.

Talk About It

When the Rocky Cree talk about hunting an animal, the animal is recognized as a gift. The animal offers itself to the people for their survival. This is why respect is demonstrated. Offerings are left in exchange for the gift of the animals, and the whole animal is used; nothing is ever wasted. These respectful practices demonstrate reciprocity. There is an inherent relationship between the Rocky Cree and their animal relations. When a gift is received, a gift is also given.

"The animals eat the medicines from the land. When we eat those animals and the birds that we have harvested, we are eating the medicine too" (MM, p. 13).

TEACHER TIP

Reciprocity is a relational ethical principle fostering relationships between plants, animals, and humans. Through reciprocity, there is a recognition that all things in the natural world are interconnected. The asiniskaw īthiniwak understand that animals give their lives to help the people survive; in response they offer thanks, gifts, and respect to the animals. In a similar way, plants that are gathered for food or medicine are seen as gifts and are handled respectfully and responsibly. All parts of the plant and animal are used if possible. The parts that are not used are carefully returned to the land or water that gifted them.

In demonstration of reciprocity, the Rocky Cree never waste any part of an animal that is hunted. For instance, one stage of cleaning moose hide is using moose brain to soften the hide. Moose hides can also be used to make snowshoe webbing. Sustainability is an integral element of Rocky Cree hunting and gathering.

Write About It

Ask students to think about how they see and practice sustainability in their own lives. In their **Māskikiy Miskanaw Journals**, prompt students to reflect on these questions:

- Why is it important to protect wildlife?
- How can our waste affect the natural environment?
- What are some examples of sustainability in your everyday life?
- What are ways we can become more sustainable?

TEACHER TIP

Sustainability is relational stewardship of the land. It is rooted in reciprocity, ecological knowledge, and protection of the natural world for future generations.

Talk About It

The Rocky Cree use various animal species for sustenance, and food. Some examples include rabbit, muskrat, beaver, moose, caribou, bear, and deer.

- Rabbit: Hunted throughout each season. Can be hunted with a slingshot or blunt arrow or can be snared. Rabbit can be baked, boiled, roasted, and cooked in stews. Rabbit lungs, head, eyes, brain, liver, kidneys, paws, and marrow are consumed.
- Muskrat: Hunted in the winter or spring. Can be hunted with traps, nets, spears or bows/arrows. Muskrat can be baked, boiled, roasted, or smoked. Muskrat eyes, brain, tongue are delicacies, especially the meat found in the tail of the animal.
- Beaver: Hunted in the winter or spring. To hunt beaver, the Rocky Cree cut a hole at the top of the lodge and once the beaver pops its head outside, it can be caught. Beaver can be roasted or boiled, and its tail is also considered a delicacy.
- Moose: Hunted in the late summer to early fall. Can be hunted with spears. Moose meat can be eaten fresh, dried, or smoked. Dried moose meat can be eaten as is, or can be boiled first.
- Bear: Hunted in the fall or winter. Can be hunted with spears or bows/arrows. Hunters would locate bears in their den during the winter. Bear can be roasted, boiled, or smoked.
- Deer: Hunted in the fall. Can be hunted with bows/arrows, spears, nets, or traps. Deer meat can be smoked and eaten in its dried form or can be soaked in water overnight to prepare for boiling.

TEACHER TIP

Conservation of animal and plant species is very important. Never take more than what is needed. Colonial overhunting has altered the populations of many animal species in Canada, like the beaver. Have you heard the phrase "mad as a hatter"? It relates to the poisoning by the mercury used to make beaver felt hats. Explore the history of beaver felt hats in the fur trade to emphasize the impacts of overhunting.

Group Research/Hunting Presentation Activity

To engage students with hunting, divide students into groups of four and give each group the name of an animal listed above. Students can do research and prepare a display for the rest of the class or the school.

In their groups students will research and

- Describe the habitat and characteristics of the animal.
- Describe the life cycle of the animal.
- Describe how the animal is hunted, what tools are used, and what skills are needed to hunt the animal.
- Describe the season the animal is hunted.
- Describe how the animal is used for sustenance.
- Describe how sustainable practices are employed to ensure all parts of the animal are used to meet material needs.
- Describe ceremonies demonstrating respect for gift of the animal.
- Prompt students to share any personal stories, memorabilia, relics, or recipes that relate to the animal (this is where students can demonstrate their creativity).

In their presentation students will

- Use the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story or other online resources for their research.

- Create a PowerPoint presentation or display to present their information to their classmates.
- Produce presentations that are ten to fifteen minutes in length.

Write About It

Prompt students to reflect on the foods they eat. In their **Māskikiy Miskanaw Journal**, have them write a response to these questions. Share the answers with the class.

- What foods do you like best to eat?
- What foods are common to your culture?
- Where does your food come from?
- How is your food sourced? Is it hunted? Harvested? Purchased from a grocery store? Explain.
- Why is access to cultural foods important? What significance do specific foods have in your culture?

Animal Tracks

TEACHER TIP

Over several days in Thompson, Manitoba, Rocky Cree Knowledge Keepers shared teachings about ecology and relationships with the land, plants, and animals. Are there Indigenous Knowledge Keepers in your school area to whom you and your students could talk about respect and sustainability? The explanations about Rocky Cree hunting and harvesting in this lesson come from meetings of the Six Season's Curriculum Team and Rocky Cree Knowledge Keepers.

Tracking is a vital skill the Rocky Cree use when hunting. It is important to know what tracks belong to certain animals. It is also important to know the types of noises certain animals make. Being able to recognize animal tracks and sounds is a vital skill for hunters to identify animal species, determine the age of tracks, and understand animal pathways.

Think About It

Have students think about what animal tracks they can identify. Ask them where they learned about these tracks and where they have seen them. Show students pictures of animal tracks in your area and discuss to which animal they belong.

Write About It

Prompt students to observe animal tracks within their own community. This can be in their yard or a park or greenspace in their neighbourhood, etc. Ask students to take a photograph of the tracks they observe or to draw a picture. Ask students to answer these questions in their **Māskikiy Miskanaw Journal**.

- Where did you see the tracks?
- What did the tracks look like?
- Where do you think the animal was going?
- What animal do you think made the tracks?

TEACHER TIP

Familiarize students with animal tracks of the boreal forest. Refer to [*NB Nature's Pocket Guide to Animal Tracks*](#) to show students images of boreal forest animals and their tracks.

Have students complete the **BLACK LINE MASTER 3.5 ANIMAL TRACKS**.

Material Culture

The Rocky Cree use every part of the animals that are hunted. Some animals used as sustenance can also be used for clothing, tools, or for wellbeing.

- Rabbit: Fur is used for making blankets and can also be used for trim on moccasins and mittens.
- Muskrat: Fur is used for clothing or as trim on moccasins and mittens.
- Beaver: Fur is used to make robes and blankets.
- Moose: Hides are tanned to create soft and durable leather for moccasins, jackets, and mittens. Leg bones can be made into tools used for processing hides during tanning.
- Bear: Fur is used to make rugs. Bear grease, rendered from fat, is used as a medicine treating skin rashes and is used as a cough medicine.
- Deer: Hides are tanned for leggings, moccasins, jackets, and mittens. Deer fat is used as a healing balm for irritated skin.

Medicine Bag Workshop

A medicine bag is a living spiritual tradition amongst Indigenous cultures across Turtle Island. Medicine bags are often made of leather or cloth containing artifacts of spiritual significance, including sacred medicines. Invite an Elder, Knowledge Keeper, or experienced Indigenous artisan to the classroom to lead a medicine bag workshop with your students. This will introduce students to using leather, sinew, and beads. This workshop will also introduce students to concepts of relationality and sustainability highlighted in Indigenous material cultures. The workshop may require a

few sessions.

TEACHER TIP

Sources for Medicine Bag Supplies:

Sinew: [4 Generations Creations](#), [Aunty Collective](#), [Sundaylace Creations](#), [Bill Worb Furs](#).

Leather: [BESSeeze Leather & Beads](#), [Bill Worb Furs](#), [Tandy Leather](#).

Elders, Knowledge Keepers, or Indigenous artisans should be treated with respect. It is important to note that not all Elders practice the exchange of tobacco, therefore a discussion with the Elder regarding their Nation specific protocols will ensure your request is made in a respectful way. Elders and Knowledge Keepers carry different gifts. It is important to discuss what gifts and teachings specific Elders and Knowledge Keepers can share with your students.

Never ask an Elder what they charge. Offer an honorarium instead. Giving honorariums and following Nation specific protocols is an important extension of respect and reciprocity.

5: LEARNING WITH NATURE AND ROCKY CREE WOMEN

Harvesting and gathering medicines are important parts of Rocky Cree living. These practices require keen observations of nature to notice changes in weather patterns and in characteristics of plants and animals. Noticing these changes in nature and making sense of these observations on a day-to-day basis is one of the key cultural teachings of Rocky Cree people.

Talk About It

Read the following excerpt aloud with the students:

"The river was calm when they got into their canoes. The leaves had fallen now, and the growth along the river had turned bright yellow, like the wings of the swallowtail butterfly. It would take the better part of the day to reach the camp where their relatives were living at the time" (MM, p. 8).

Ask students what words in the excerpt indicate an observation of a natural element or phenomenon.

Write About It

Complete the following table with the students by inviting them to tell when they may have observed a natural phenomenon and the related action they performed.

Natural Element Observed	Characteristic/Change in Nature Noticed	Related Action
River	Calm	Safe to Ride in Canoe

Ask students to write an anecdotal paragraph in their **Māskikiy Miskanaw Journal** to describe a time when their plans had to change because they noticed a change in nature.

Talk About It: Connections with Scientific Inquiry Processes

Processes of making observations and inferences are important steps of a scientific inquiry. Using the information that follows, discuss with students how women in Rocky Cree culture were and are culturally attuned to make observations of natural phenomena to identify medicinal plants for harvesting medicines.

Generally in Rocky Cree culture, men took the role as hunters and women took the role as gatherers. Respected medicine women passed their teachings along to other women who were eager to learn. Medicine women held special knowledge about the plants and their natural habitat. They looked at the weather patterns, seasonal changes, and plant characteristics such as colour, shape, smell, size, and texture of plants that were used as a medicine. This knowledge allowed them to identify the right time to pick the medicine plants. They knew which plant part could be used as medicine. They also knew how this medicine could be stored over a period of time and how and for what purposes a specific medicine could be used.

Read aloud the following excerpt from the book:

"Throughout the day, the women would stay along the edge of the water, picking wīkaskwa, mint. Over the next few days, they would pick wīkis (muskrat root), waskatamo (water-lily root), napakasīht (balsam), and kakikipakwa (Labrador tea) – all the medicines they would need for their medicine tea in the winter" (MM, p. 18).

TEACHER TIP

Revisit the previous module on medicines and review lessons that talk about medicinal values of specific plants. Further information can be found in the Appendix A: "Introduction to Rocky Cree Medicinal Plants".

Medicine Tea

Medicine teas are made using certain plant parts and usually warm water, sometimes steeped for hours. Over generations, Indigenous people have developed the knowledge of what parts of specific boreal forest plants help to heal a particular illness.

Drinking medicine teas daily help to keep the Rocky Cree healthy and hydrated. Sharing teas with family members -- for example, in the morning before the day's work begins or at a rest midday -- also provide soothing medicines and communal togetherness.

Wikis

Wikis (Muskrat Root) is a root that is collected along riverbanks in the shallow water, dried, and then used to treat sore throats and coughs. The dried root is often ground up and put in a tea with Labrador tea and wild mint.

Waskatamo

Waskatamo (Water Lily Root) is the edible root growing underneath the water of the floating yellow pond-lily pad, which itself provides food and shelter for fish and insects and is a key food for moose, beaver, and muskrat. As with all medicines, knowledge is required for careful harvesting and preparation of waskatamo as a food source or as a treatment for a variety of ailments. The roots are roasted or boiled in soups, dried and ground into a powder (flour), or cut for use as a wet poultice to be applied on sores.

TEACHER TIP

Connect with your school's Learning Resource Teacher for Indigenous Education who may help you in learning about cultural protocols of inviting an Elder and finding a possible site for a medicine walk. Seek prior administrative approval and in advance arrange for funding and parents' permission and provide detailed guidelines to students about this visit and medicine walk with the Elder.

Medicine Walk with a Knowledge Keeper

Invite a Rocky Cree Elder or Knowledge Keeper (preferably a woman) to learn the traditional role of women in picking specific plant parts and making medicines in Rocky Cree culture. If possible, request that the Elder take the students for a medicine walk where students can observe how medicines are harvested. Talk about how medicines are prepared.

Ask questions to learn about cultural protocols that are followed while harvesting medicines. Ask the Elder to share what observations they have made in regards to weather, plant growth, colour, texture, and other characteristics of the plant parts that are picked for medicine, and the techniques they used for harvesting, preserving, and preparing medicines. How do people learn which medicines should be used to treat particular illnesses?

How have practices for picking medicines changed over time?

In advance, prepare questions that students can ask the Elder or Knowledge Keeper.

- Who holds the knowledge about Indigenous medicine and under what circumstances can it be shared?
- What is the name of the medicinal plant in both English and Cree?

TEACHER TIP

If a medicine walk with an Elder or Knowledge Keeper is not possible, refer to [Wild About Plants for Future Generations](#), an Indigenous business that conducts in-person and virtual workshops on medicinal plants.

- Key characteristics of the medicinal plant: How is the plant identified?
- Where is the plant found? Ask about geographical region and about ecological habitat.
- What kind of soil and climate is favorable for plant growth and for its medicinal value?
- What part of the plant has medicinal value?
- How and when is the medicine harvested?
- How is the medicine prepared?
- What are the health benefits of using this medicine? Are there any side effects?
- What happens to the parts of the plants that are not used for medicine?
- What cultural protocols are followed to respect nature?
- What cautions should be taken when using medicinal plants?

Talk About It

Create a Sharing Circle after the Elder's or Knowledge Keeper's visit: Invite students to share what they learned about women's role in picking, preserving, and preparing medicines in Rocky Cree culture. Use the diagram of the Medicine Wheel in the **BLACKLINE MASTER 3.6 NIHITHAW** to gather key aspects of the student's learning in all four domains of the self: physical, emotional, spiritual and mental. The following prompts may help generate ideas for students to include.

- Mental: What knowledge about picking, harvesting and/or preserving medicines can you describe/explain?
- Emotional: How do you feel about this experience of learning about picking, harvesting and/or preserving medicines with the Rocky Cree Elder/Knowledge Keeper?
- Physical: What physical activities such as looking at/touching/smelling/picking plant parts etc. did you participate in while having a medicine walk with the Rocky Cree Elder/Knowledge Keeper? What inquiry skill did you use?
- Spiritual: What cultural protocols and values did you learn from the medicine walk with the Rocky Cree Elder, or Knowledge Keeper?

TEACHER TIP

Connect this intergenerational learning of medicinal plants with a woman Elder/Knowledge Keeper of Rocky Cree culture with the following two key strands of the new Manitoba science curriculum: [Indigenous Peoples within the Natural World and Science Identity](#).

Extend the Learning: Women in Science

Reinforce the important role women play in Rocky Cree culture for picking, harvesting and/or preserving medicines to emphasize that women play an important role in science. As medicine gatherers and healers, Rocky Cree women play an important role in everyday life and in all cultural celebrations to ensure well-being of all.

"As part of the celebration, the women offered their medicines for tea, and then Wāpos laid out the medicines and told them what each one was good for. All medicines serve a specific purpose in healing she explained" (MM, p. 30).

An emphasis on women's roles in science and science identity is critical for many young girls and students from diverse cultural and Indigenous backgrounds who may not see themselves as scientific persons.

Talk About It

Many articles point out that women's contributions in science that have not been properly acknowledged. Use the links below to think and talk more about the importance of identifying as a scientific person.

- [Why more women don't win science Nobels](#)
- [Lise Meitner – the forgotten woman of nuclear physics who deserved a Nobel Prize](#)

Thoughtful Human Actions

Extend the learning about Indigenous peoples within the natural world by discussing respectful harvesting and cultural protocols to connect the importance of thoughtful human actions with "mithō pimatisiwin—The Good Life" and "citizenship" as discussed in the global competencies of the Manitoba curriculum.

Talk About It

Draw students attention back to the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story by asking:

- How do you think Rocky Cree people learned which plants were useful to treat each specific disease or illness? What clues does the story give us about how young people learned about medicinal plants?

Read the following excerpt. Highlight the natural observations made and respectful attitudes to living with nature.

"Medicine is in every plant – and asiniskaw īthiniwak use certain plants to bring healing" (MM, p. 2).

"One morning in the season of tākwākin, the time of pimahamowī pīsim, the moon called the flying-back moon, Ācapi Okimaw woke up just before dawn. Light was coming and, as he lay in his bed, he noticed that something was missing. There was no sound from the land. The geese that had been moving for weeks now were gone. The summer birds that had awakened him all summer by singing "light is coming"— their song was no longer in the air this morning. He didn't hear the robin's prayer. Ācapi Okimaw was thankful that grandmother whisky jack would stay the winter with him, and brother kakakiw too. They would look after each other over the winter months" (MM, p. 4).

- Why do you think Ācapi Okimaw was grateful for grandmother Whisky Jack's presence during the winter?
- How might the people and the birds who did not migrate south look after each other through the winter?

Indigenous people and winter-resident birds survived harsh Canadian winters through vital, reciprocal relationships. Birds like jays, ravens, and chickadees are highly sensitive to sudden drops in barometric pressure and can provide warnings about winter storms through erratic behaviour and changes in vocalization. Similar behaviour alerted people to predators. Flocks of birds feeding signalled a food source or open water. In cultures across Turtle Island, birds were seen as spiritual guides connected to

the creator. In return, people helped wintering birds with food scraps left from processing game, by clearing ground for encampments which promoted growth of berry bushes and seed-bearing plants, and by ensuring a sustainable balance through seasonal movement so that specific flocks in specific areas were not over harvested. (Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), Manitoba Education).

SS

ELA

RC

A

S

H

6: ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Hunting and gathering are important parts of Rocky Cree ways of living that are rooted in environmental stewardship and inquiry of nature and its elements in a respectful manner. Rocky Cree hunting and gathering practices are guided by the seasonal changes in land, weather, cycles of moon, and stars, and making sense of these observations on a day-to-day basis. Based on careful observations and changing patterns in nature, practices involve making predictions. Rocky Cree hunters and gatherers would observe the cycles of the seasons, weather patterns, and moon cycles to understand the life, migration, and mating cycles of various organisms with the aim of living in harmony with nature.

Write About It

"Over the next several days, a community formed as they hunted and harvested together. The men went out fishing, tracking moose, and hunting the fall ducks that had stayed around when all the larger birds had flown away. Even though in most places the birds were gone now, sowaki sakahikan was always the place they stayed the longest - right until the lake froze. In fact, the name of the lake, sowaki, refers to the curved shape of the bird's wings when they come in for a landing. At times, there were clouds of ducks in the sky at sowaki sakahikan" (MM, p. 22).

TEACHER TIP

Environmental stewardship means responsible use of the planet's natural resources which Rocky Cree people and other Indigenous people recognize as Mother Earth's gift. It requires living sustainably to ensure the health and resiliency of the environment and care for all natural elements. Rocky Cree Ways of Knowing explain that the current generation of human beings should live in harmony with nature so that Mother Earth can remain a habitable place for all beings for the next generations.

Like many other Indigenous people, Rocky Cree cultural practices of hunting and gathering involved disciplined understanding of time, of natural elements, and of plants and animals characteristics and habitat. Cultural protocols show the value placed on gifts of nature.

"They woke long before sunrise the next day and went to the sweat lodge with the elders to pray for a good hunt. Then they paddled quietly to one of their best moose-hunting places, where a river flowed in from a neighbouring lake. When they got out of their canoes, Mikisiw led the way along the water to a low area with lots of willows, the kind the moose like to eat. They crouched down in a clump of tall grass and called the moose for a long time. Sometimes, they rubbed a paddle against the branches to make a sound of antlers. Finally, a young bull moose came toward them, its body dark against the bright yellow tamarack trees in the distance" (MM, p. 26).

Have students complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 3.7 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP** to demonstrate their understanding of cultural protocols and understanding of patterns in nature.

TEACHER TIP

A sweat lodge is a place of ceremony. Sweats are practiced in various Indigenous nations across Turtle Island. Refer to page 26 of the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* text to understand the sweat lodge from a Rocky Cree worldview.

TEACHER TIP

An ecological pyramid is a graphical representation that illustrates the flow of energy from producers at the base to top predators or consumers at the apex. A good example of an ecological pyramid related to the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story comes from the description of the moose hunt. For further information, refer to [Ecological Pyramids](#).

Extend the Learning

The Cultural Protocols: Talk about the sweat lodge ceremony and prayer to highlight the importance of ceremonies and Elders' teachings. Consider inviting a Rocky Cree Elder to learn more about cultural practices that Rocky Cree people follow prior to hunting.

Observing and Understanding Nature: Discuss the importance of time and the understanding of natural habitats such as moose-hunting places, the path along the river, and the low water area with willows to highlight the Rocky Cree peoples' understandings of geographical location as well as habitat and habits of animals. Connect the discussion of hunting moose with food chain and energy flow in an ecological pyramid.

Ask students to make a food chain or draw a food chain as follows in their **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal**.

Willow Plant → Moose → human

Introduce the terms producers and consumers. Invite students to turn their food chains into an ecological pyramid in their **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal**. Discuss the definitions of producers and consumers and energy transfer in these trophic levels. Highlight that this is a Eurocentric way of understanding the relationship between humans and natural elements i.e., plants and animals. The placement of humans at the top indicates an anthropocentric approach that validates human's control and use of natural resources for the benefit of humans.

In contrast to this, Indigenous peoples, including the Rocky Cree, consider all things as their relations. What nature provides is a gift for which the Rocky Cree offer thanks to their relations and take only what is needed in consideration of nature and upcoming generations. The understanding that everything is interconnected leads to respectful and sustainable harvesting practices.

TEACHER TIP

Producers: organisms like plants and algae that create their own food using sunlight for photosynthesis. Producers are the base of the food chain.

Consumers: organisms or predators that gain energy by eating producers or other consumers.

Trophic Levels: the hierarchal positions that organisms occupy on a food chain or in an ecological pyramid. Only 10% of the energy from one trophic level is transferred to the next.

Anthropocentric: places humankind as the central most important element of existence. It is a human-centred worldview that positions humanity as superior to nature.

"Here, nikōsis, my nephew," Ācapi Okimaw said. "Take this tobacco and make an offering. Thank the mōswa for his gift" (MM, p. 29).

Sustainability in Hunting and Gathering

Sustainable practices were evident in the use of specific tools that Rocky Cree peoples used to hunt and trap animals, to harvest fish and other aquatic creatures, and to gather and pick medicines from specific plants. Both women and men participated in the respectful harvest of medicine and animals and in the use of specific tools.

TEACHER TIP

Discuss the importance of living sustainably and becoming an environmental steward. Connect the intergenerational learning of medicinal plants with the following two key strands of the new Manitoba science curriculum: [Indigenous Peoples within the Natural World and Science Identity](#).

Talk About It

Read these two excerpts together from the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story:

"As the women began the medicine harvest, some of the men went the other way to hunt for moose, and others went fishing with a special type of net called mistiko pakitahawin, a willow basket shaped like a funnel the fish swim into. The fish were very plentiful, and the harvest was good" (MM, p. 22).

Mistiko pakitahawin, means "wooden net".

"This funnel-shaped device is made with willow branches and rawhide, with rocks used to weight it down. The mistiko pakitahawin is most often used during the spawning season, when the fish are close to shore. It is sometimes also used in winter: the people create a hole in the ice by using hot rocks from the fire, lower the mistiko pakitahawin into the water, and later pull it back up" (MM, p. 23).

TEACHER TIP

Discuss critical science concepts of distance, speed, velocity, and mathematical concepts of angles that Rocky Cree peoples would have had to use to successfully hunt land animals and harvest fish. Connect these concepts to the use of specific tools for hunting. Refer to [Tools as Simple Machines](#) from *Pisim Finds Her Miskanaw* Teacher's Guide on page 80.

Distance: represents the magnitude of separation between multiple points, whether objects, humans, or ideas.

Speed: represents how fast an object moves.

Velocity: represents how fast an object moves and the direction the object is going.

Angles: represent where two lines meet at the same point.

Ask students the following questions:

- How do you think the mistiko pakitahawin caught fish?
- Would some fish escape from the funnel?
- How does using a funnel - shaped net with a wide hole on one end and a narrow hole on the other end contribute to sustainable harvesting practices?

The Science Behind a Successful Hunt

Rocky Cree peoples used bows and arrows to hunt moose. Read the following excerpt:

“Mikisiw moved forward, gripping his bow tightly. Ācapi Okimaw followed, along with the rest of the men. When the moose got close enough, the boy raised his bow and released his arrow” (MM, p. 29).

Even though Mikisiw might not have consciously thought about distance, speed, velocity, and angles, all of these scientific principles would be needed to use a bow and arrow to successfully take down a moose. Ask students to work with a partner to try to imagine what kinds of things Mikisiw might need to think about as he aims his bow and arrow at the moose and prepares to shoot. Ask students to explain their ideas to the class.

Ask students to look for pictures or descriptions of bows and arrows being used for hunting in the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story.

Talk About It

Invite student's attention to biodiversity. Using the whiteboard, create a circular web of biodiversity for a specific ecosystem as a class.

- Choose an ecosystem (desert, pond, prairie, etc.)
- List or draw the producers of the ecosystem (soil, water, sunshine, plants, etc.)
- List or draw the herbivores, omnivores, carnivores, and decomposers.
- Draw arrows between organisms to show the flow of energy in the ecosystem.

TEACHER TIP

Biodiversity is the term used to describe the variety of different species in an ecosystem.

An ecosystem is a community of living organisms that interact and interconnect with each other.

Working alone or in partners, ask students to draw a web of biodiversity for the boreal forest ecosystem in the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story in the **BLACKLINE MASTER 3.8 BIODIVERSITY WEB**.

TEACHER TIP

To create a web of biodiversity, refer to [What is Biodiversity?](#)

To demonstrate biodiversity in the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* text, show students a picture of a moose. Ask students to research the characteristics and life cycle of a moose. Ask them to create a presentation in small groups to:

- Show the life cycle of a moose.
- Describe the characteristics of a moose.
- Describe the part a moose plays in the web of biodiversity in the boreal forest.
- Describe how the Rocky Cree people depended on moose for survival.

Hunting Tools

Review the information in the **TEACHER RESOURCE 3.9 ROCKY CREE HUNTING** table to share some of the teachings about animals, hunting tools, and games received from Rocky Cree Knowledge Keepers. Many of the informational items on this table could form the basis of a research project for individual students, partners, or small groups.

Ask students to research how to make a bow and arrow. On a poster or PowerPoint presentation, ask the students to explain the following:

- The parts of a bow (including the neck, the grip, the back, the belly, and the bowstring) and different materials needed to make a bow and why these materials would be used.
- The parts of an arrow and different materials needed to make an arrow and why these materials would be used.
- How to shoot with a bow and arrow.

Display the posters or present the PowerPoint presentations for the class to review and discuss.

7: GIFTS FROM THE WATER

"...others went fishing with a special type of net called mistiko pakitahawin, a willow basket shaped like a funnel the fish swim into. The fish were very plentiful and the harvest was good" (MM, p. 22).

Think and Write About It

Ask students to make a list of all of the ways in which water has been part of their lives from the time they woke up to the time of this lesson. Brainstorming lists will probably include water to drink, brush teeth, wash, bathe, cook, clean, perhaps exercise, care for plants and pets, and experienced in various ways, through regulated water systems, pools, lakes, rain, snow etc.

The asiniskaw īthiniwak live along the Churchill River in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. The waterways are like highways and, especially during the pre-contact period, much of daily life was oriented toward the water. Much work had to be accomplished during the short warm seasons of the Canadian North and much of the work involved water. Completing the tasks of the summer, bringing in a harvest, and preparing for the cold weather ahead made the season of tākwākin a very busy time for the people.

Talk About It

What are the important topics, issues or concerns about water that affect your community? How is water being responsibly managed and enjoyed? What problems are associated with water? Who is dealing with these problems,

TEACHER TIP

"Advocacy" means speaking up to express, support, or encourage specific changes that will recognize the rights and meet the needs of individuals or groups. Is there an issue or concern that matters to your students? Advocacy generally happens through research, public speaking, and media campaigns. Students can advocate for ways to solve problems (water resource problems, for example) through posters, letters, online posts, speeches, and creative writing that is shared.

and how? Are there ways in which individual citizens can help? Are there water issues that need to be brought to administrative or government attention? Is there an advocacy role that students could play?

Have students complete **THE BLACKLINE MASTER 3.10 DRAFT OF AN ADVOCACY LETTER** to write a letter of advocacy about an important issue regarding water management, access to clean drinking water, or how to protect the water as an act of reciprocity and responsibility. Help students identify the names of government officials and departments to whom letters should be sent.

An advocacy letter should include:

- Your name, address, date, title, and contact info of the government official or decision maker.
- The first paragraph should explain your concern to the reader
- The second paragraph should highlight the importance of your concern and the impact your concern may have at a community level
- The third paragraph should thank the reader for reading your letter and re-state your concern.
- Provide a way for the reader to respond to your letter and add that you look forward to their response.

TEACHER TIP

For tips on writing advocacy letters refer to [Self Advocacy: A Guide for Young Scholar Families](#).

Think About It

After having read *Māskikīy Miskanaw* - or during reading - ask the class to make a list on the whiteboard or a classroom chart of the many ways the people use water or things (plants and animals, for example) that come from the water -i.e. "gifts" from the water

What is a gift? When are gifts given in our culture and in our families? What meaning do we attach to giving and receiving gifts? How do our notions of love, care, responsibility, and reciprocity impact our gift-giving?

Ask students to choose one gift from the water mentioned in the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story. Using online sources and reference materials, ask them to find out more about the gift using the 5W and H questions and record their answers in their **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal**.

- What is the gift? Describe it.
- Where is the gift found? Provide as many details as possible.
- When does the gift appear? Or when is it most noticeable or most widely used?
- Who accepts or uses the gift?

TEACHER TIP

Here are some of the references students should be able to find (with page numbers):

- p.1 mist, cleansing
- p.2 geese, musical sounds
- p.3 river transportation, pounded fish, drinking water
- p.5 painting along the water
- p.8 mint, muskrat root, water-lily root
- p.9 tea
- p.10 fish, ducks

There are many more!

- Why is this gift of importance to the people?
- How is this gift received, honored and used?

The Gift of Mathomin

This activity presents an opportunity to research one of the gifts of the water as a whole group.

Teachers might choose to focus on mathomin, or wild rice, as a gift from the water. Ask students to complete **THE BLACKLINE MASTER 3.11 MATHOMIN** as they learn about the life and harvesting cycle of wild rice.

What is Mathomin?

Mathomin, or wild rice, with its distinctive flavour and texture is more than a culinary object as it also represents cultural and ecological knowledge among many Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island. The Rocky Cree refer to wild rice as mathomin. Its growth cycle is deeply intertwined with the natural rhythms of the land and its seasonal changes.

Mathomin is a part of the grass family. It is an annual plant, meaning it lives and dies each year. It is an aquatic plant; it grows along the shores of lakes, streams, or rivers rather than in stagnant water. It can only grow in areas where the water level does not change. Mathomin has various benefits.

- **Ecological benefits:** Mathomin beds maintain the health of aquatic ecosystems. Mathomin provides shelter and food for wildlife species like birds, fish, and insects. Mathomin also filters pollutants in the water and reduces erosion of shorelines.
- **Health benefits:** Mathomin is packed with anti-oxidants and protein. It boosts the immune systems, strengthens heart health, and can prevent the development of cancer and diabetes.

Life Cycle of Mathomin

Mathomin has an extensive life cycle.

- **Germination:** In late summer to early fall, seeds begin to fall from mature mathomin plants. Seeds will sprout in the spring.
- **Submerged leaf:** In the spring, seeds will start to grow underwater.
- **Floating Leaf:** In the summer, mathomin leaves will begin floating on top of the water.
- **Aerial Leaf:** Further in the summer season, mathomin will begin to grow out of the water and flower.
- **Harvest:** Mathomin ripens in the fall and will continue to grow until harvest.

TEACHER TIP

[Manoomin: The Food That Grows on Water](#) and [Manoomin \(Anishinaabe\) or Manomin \(Cree\) Wild Rice](#) and [Northern Wild Rice "The Food That Grows on Water"](#) are excellent resources on the life cycle and harvesting cycle of mathomin with supporting diagrams, photographs, and background information.

Harvesting Wild Rice

Harvesting mathomin is linked to the lunar calendar and the changing seasons. The ideal time for harvesting mathomin is late summer, *nipin*, or early fall, *tākwākin*. The grains turn from green to a deep brown, reaching full maturity for harvest. The steps to harvesting wild rice are:

- **Knocking:** the mathomin stalks are hit to release the kernels. The stalks are often hit with paddles if harvesting is done by canoe.
- **Drying:** mathomin kernels are dried immediately after harvesting.
- **Parching:** mathomin kernels are slowly roasted in fire to destroy non-edible buds.
- **Hulling:** mathomin kernels are detached from shells done by stepping or dancing with clean moccasins.
- **Winnowing:** small batches of mathomin are placed into a smaller tray to be thrown into the air to disperse the shells/hulls into the wind.
- **Eating:** processed grains can be boiled or baked into various recipes.

Mathomin Recipes

Divide the class into groups to prepare one of the mathomin recipes below:

Mathomin & Berries:

- **Ingredients:** 1 cup of mathomin, 3 cups of berries, 3 cups of water, 1/2 cup of real maple syrup, 1/2 a teaspoon of cinnamon.
- **Directions:** cook mathomin in water until soft; take mathomin off heat and let it sit for 5 minutes until the water is absorbed; mix in berries, maple syrup, and cinnamon.
- **Suggestions:** use any type of berries; avoid artificial syrups with added flavours. Remember that cooked mathomin will triple in volume.

Popped Mathomin:

- **Ingredients:** 1 teaspoon of vegetable oil, 1/2 a cup of mathomin, salt to taste
- **Directions:** heat a heavy bottom saucepan with a tight-fitting lid over high heat. When the pot is hot, add the vegetable oil and swirl the pan to thoroughly coat it with oil. Add the mathomin into the saucepan and swirl to coat it in the oil. Cover the pan and reduce the heat to medium-high and shake the pan until you hear the mathomin popping, about three minutes. Once you hear the popping sounds, reduce heat to medium-low and keep shaking the pan until the popping slows. Once the popping has stopped, or roughly after seven minutes, turn off the heat, remove the saucepan from the stove, and sprinkle on salt to taste.
- **Suggestions:** mathomin will not make the same popping noises as popcorn and will not fly up to the lid of the pan like popcorn. Listening carefully for the popping sounds is an important step in preparing this recipe.

Write About It

Write a story about a memorable experience with water. Did you find yourself in a storm or flood or drought? Too much water? Too little water? Just the right amount of water at the right time? Was your experience frightening or funny? Are you advocating for a change regarding the use of water resources by telling this story? Perhaps students will recall events and tell stories orally before they begin to write.

TEACHER TIP

Teachers can find wild rice at these locations or online.

- [Kookum's Pantry](#)
- [NWC Wild Rice Company](#)
- [Tea Horse](#)



A ROCKY CREE WATER CELEBRATION

Celebrations are important in asiniskaw ìthinìwak culture to mark understandings, achievements, and responsibilities. Celebrations are times of joy that build community relationships as people walk the *Māskikīy Miskanaw*.

Create a class celebration that expresses gratitude for gifts of the water. Here are some ideas of how your class might shape such a celebration.

Decorate your classroom with water-related art projects (watercolor paintings, paper mache sculptures of water creatures perhaps), hydro-gardening projects, bouquets of marsh grasses or bulrushes (collected on a field trip), photograph collections of water-related memories, placemats woven from reeds.

Plan and prepare a meal that acknowledges the gifts from the water. Your menu might include any aquatic food or seafood (also known as “blue food”) such as white fish, pickerel, trout, cod, salmon, tuna, or shellfish, waterfowl (such as duck or goose if available), rice, particularly mathomin, and algae. You might also decide to include water-based foods that are high in water content. Top examples include cucumbers, lettuce, tomatoes, watermelon, and strawberries which are composed of over 90% water. Serve water - or tea!

Play water games! Here are some ideas:

- Water Bucket Race

Treat water as a precious, finite resource. The person whose bucket remains most full wins the race!

- Sponge Bull’s Eye

A pan beneath the bull’s eye could collect the wet sponges that are thrown so that the water can be reused.

- Water Balloon Toss

Toss water balloons at one another or into a bucket on a hot day. Play on a surface that needs to be watered!

- Water Limbo

TEACHER TIP

In preparing the menu for this event, teachers might like to talk about the health benefits of a “blue” or aquatic diet or water-based diets of fruits and vegetables.

Research has found that swapping red and processed meat with fish and seafood can lower the risk of diseases and premature death. One reason may be differences in types of fat: mostly saturated fat in red meat versus unsaturated fat in seafood. Eating fruits and vegetables that are high in water content not only contributes to our vitamin and mineral intake but helps us to stay hydrated.

TEACHER TIP

Can you and your class find a sustainable source for water used in the water celebration games? Sustainable water resources focus on recycling, collecting, and minimizing waste. These types of water resources might come from rain water collection, greywater systems, and re-circulating systems like water fountains.

Use a garden hose to water plants or gardens. Students line up and take turns walking or dancing under the water stream without getting hit. If a player gets wet, they are eliminated for that round. Play upbeat music to keep the energy high.

- Drip, Drip, Drop

Like "Duck, Duck, Goose". Players sit in a circle while "it" walks around dripping water from a cup on player's heads and saying "drip". When "it" says "drop", they dump the remaining water. The chosen person chases "it" to win the empty spot in the circle.

- Memory Game: Paddling Down the Misinipi

Ask students to sit in a circle. Beginning with the teacher, say the sentence "Paddling down the Misinipi, I see..." and add a word for an object or entity that the paddler of a canoe might see as she or he travels through the boreal forest on the waters of the Churchill River. This is a good time to recall details from the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story or from the discussions that came from this module of study. Each student should list the items named before his or her turn before adding a new one. Since the game is not competitive, classmates can help to jog each other's memories. This might be a good "settling down" game to play to transition between active play and storytelling or feasting!

Finally! Share your water stories. The end of the water celebration might be a good time for students to read the stories they have written to share with their classmates.

Module 3 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources

Hunting and Gathering Protocols

3.1 Making Labrador Tea

Waterways

3.2 Exploring the Churchill/Misinipi River Watershed

Orienteering

3.3 Finding the North Star

3.4 My Calligram Poem

Respect, Reciprocity and Sustainability

3.5 Animal Tracks

Learning with Nature & Rocky Cree Women: Harvesting & Gathering Medicines

3.6 Nihithaw

Environmental Stewardship & Inquiry in Rocky Cree Practices of Hunting & Gathering

3.7 Environmental Stewardship

3.8 Biodiversity Web

3.9 Rocky Cree Hunting

Gifts from the Water

3.10 Draft of an Advocacy Letter

3.11 Mathomin

3.1 Making Labrador Tea

Labrador Tea (*Rhododendron groenlandicum*) is an evergreen shrub. The leaves are thick and leathery and have woolly hairs on the undersurface. The white flowers have five petals and appear in May or June.

The Rocky Cree used Labrador Tea leaves for a vitamin C-rich beverage and for various medicinal purposes to treat ailments like colds, headaches, and rheumatism.

Instructions: Your task is to write a recipe for Labrador Tea.

The essential parts of a recipe include:

- Recipe Title: A clear, descriptive name for your dish.
- Servings: Specify how many people the recipe will serve or how much it makes (e.g., "Makes 12 muffins" or "Serves 4").
- Prep and Cook Time: List the preparation time separately from the cooking/baking time so the cook can plan accordingly.
- Ingredients List: List all ingredients in the order they are used in the instructions.
- Ingredient Preparation Details: e.g., "1 cup nuts, chopped" vs. "1 cup chopped nuts"—the comma placement changes the measuring technique.
- Instructions: Start each instruction with a strong action verb (e.g., "Preheat," "Mix," "Sauté"). Mention specific equipment or pan sizes when necessary.

Write a rough draft of your Labrador Tea recipe and then copy your final recipe on the recipe card.

Recipe Card	
Recipe Name: _____	
Serves: _____	
Time: _____	
Ingredients :	Instructions:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Notes:	

3.2 Exploring the Churchill/Misinipi River Watershed

The Churchill River watershed is a large North American basin. A watershed is an area of land where all the water—whether from rivers, creeks, snowmelt, or springs—drains into a common water body, such as a river, lake, or ocean.

Location: The watershed covers a vast area of approximately 250,000 square kilometers, spanning northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Its headwaters are in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

River system: The river is characterized by a series of interconnected lakes with numerous rapids, chutes, and falls.

Major lakes: include Southern Indian Lake, Peter Pond Lake, Churchill Lake, Granville Lake, and Lac Île-à-la-Crosse.

Instructions: locate and indicate the following on the map:

- Churchill/Misinipi River
- Lakes: Southern Indian Lake, Peter Pond Lake, Churchill Lake, Granville Lake, and Lac Île-à-la-Crosse.
- The six Rocky Cree/asiniskaw īthiniwak communities

Bonus!

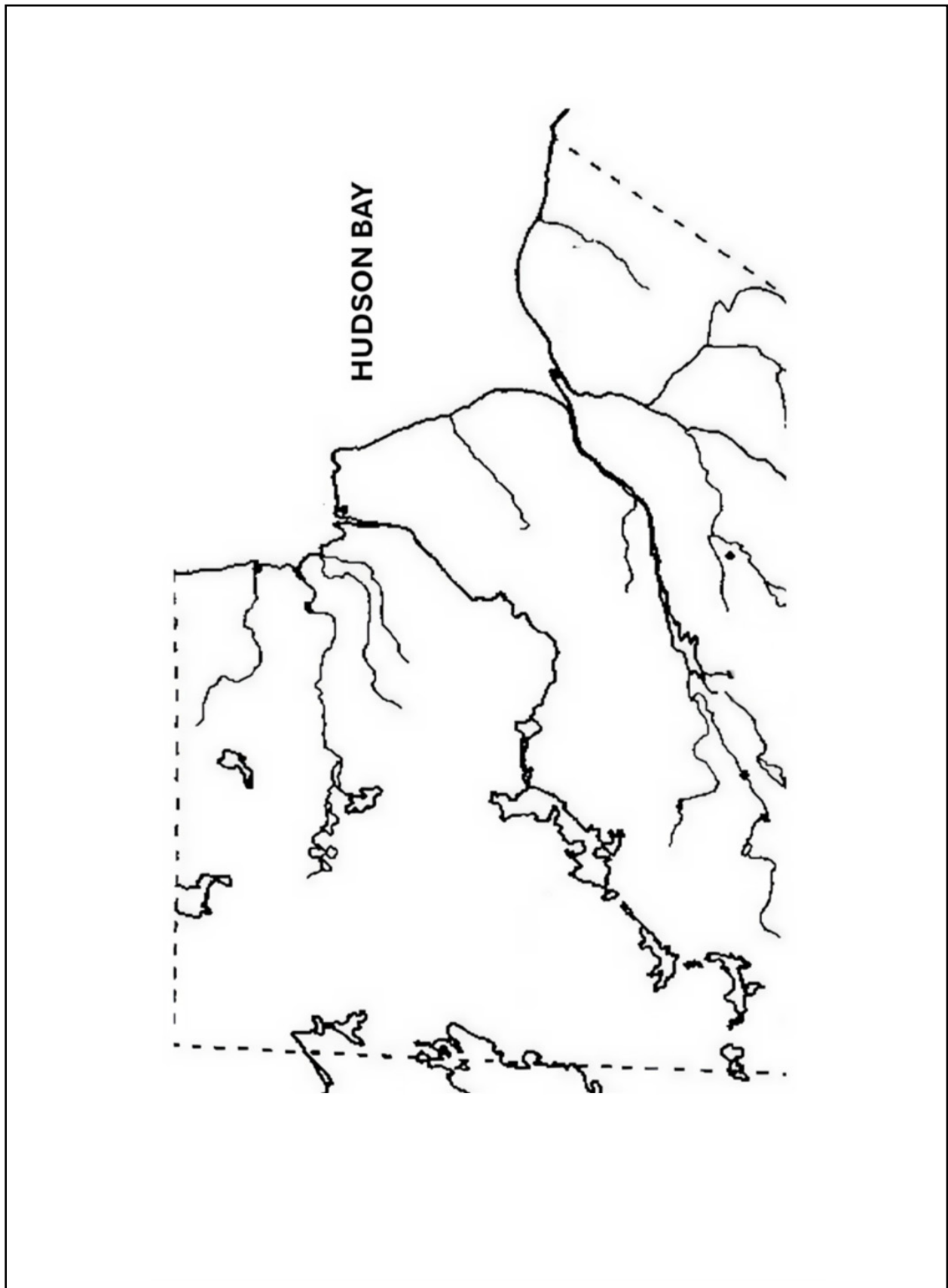
Read this section from *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*:

Sowaki sakahikan refers to the heartland, a location in northern Manitoba surrounding Suwannee Lake. The word sowaki in the name of this lake refers to the shape and sound that birds' wings make when they are landing on water. The birds curve their wings downward as they descend, and this makes a rustling sound in their feathers. Sowaki sakahikan has been known for generations as a place where thousands of birds land (MM, p. 7).

On the map, draw and locate Suwannee Lake.

- What does sowaki sakahikan refer to?
- Explain the meaning behind the name of Suwannee Lake.

3.2 (Continued) Exploring the Churchill/Misinipi River Watershed

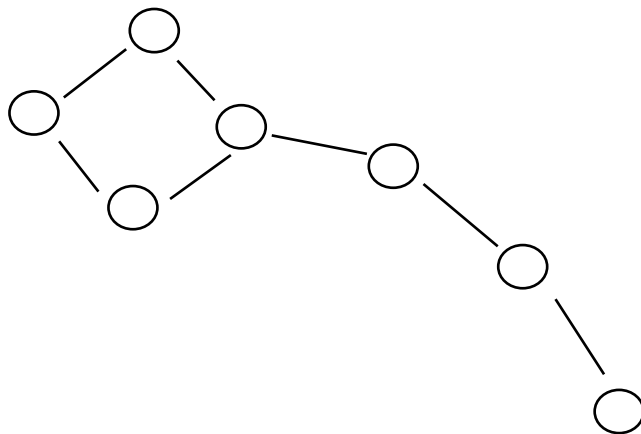


3.3 Finding the North Star

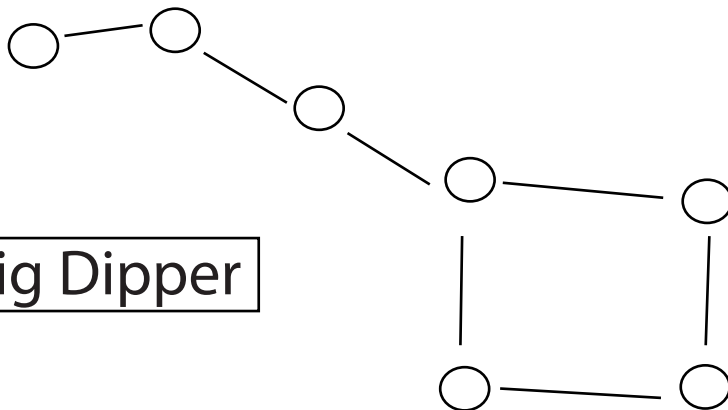
Finding the North Star, also known as Polaris, can be a rewarding experience in stargazing and celestial navigation. Locate and label the following to find the North Star.

- The Big Dipper: Appears as a group of seven bright stars in the shape of a ladle or a question mark.
- The Little Dipper: A group of seven stars.
- The two outer stars of the Big Dipper: The two stars on the outer right edge of the Big Dipper's bowl. Colour and label them in blue.
- Imagine a line: Trace your finger along an imaginary line connecting the two blue stars and extend it towards the handle of the Little Dipper.
- This is the North Star! These blue "pointer stars" guide you directly to Polaris, which is the last star in the handle of the Little Dipper. Colour the North Star yellow.

Little Dipper



Big Dipper



3.4 My Calligram Poem

Calligrams are visual forms of poetry where the shape and layout of the letters and words on the paper relate to the poem's meaning. They are also commonly called Shape Poems.

Your task is to create a calligram poem that summarizes Rocky Cree navigation, orienteering, and wayfinding.

Follow these steps:

- Choose a subject/theme: You've done this already!
- Brainstorm words: Jot down a list of words, including Rocky Cree words - nouns, adjectives, or short phrases - related to the subject.
- Choose a shape that reflects the subject. Lightly sketch the shape in pencil on paper. This acts as a guide.
- Add words/text along the outside of your shape: Write your text, following the pencil outline and then filling the shape. Turn the paper as you write to align with the shape.
- Experiment with typography: Vary the size, direction, and weight (boldness) of the letters to create fonts that reflect the mood.
- Trace and erase: Trace the words in ink. Erase the original pencil lines to leave only the words forming the image.
- Add detail and colour: Use coloured markers or crayons to enhance your image, add shading or patterns.
- Talk about the shapes that might represent Rocky Cree navigating, orienteering, and wayfinding. What are methods in transportation, land formations that serve as transportation routes, and/or wayfinding guides or features of the sky on which travellers could depend.



3.5 Animal Tracks

Draw a line to match the tracks of the following animals in the boreal forest.

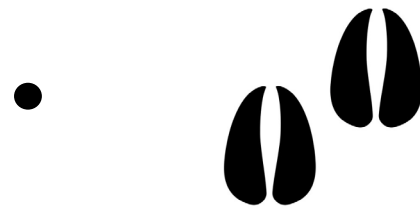
Rabbit ●



Muskrat ●



Beaver ●



Moose ●



Bear ●



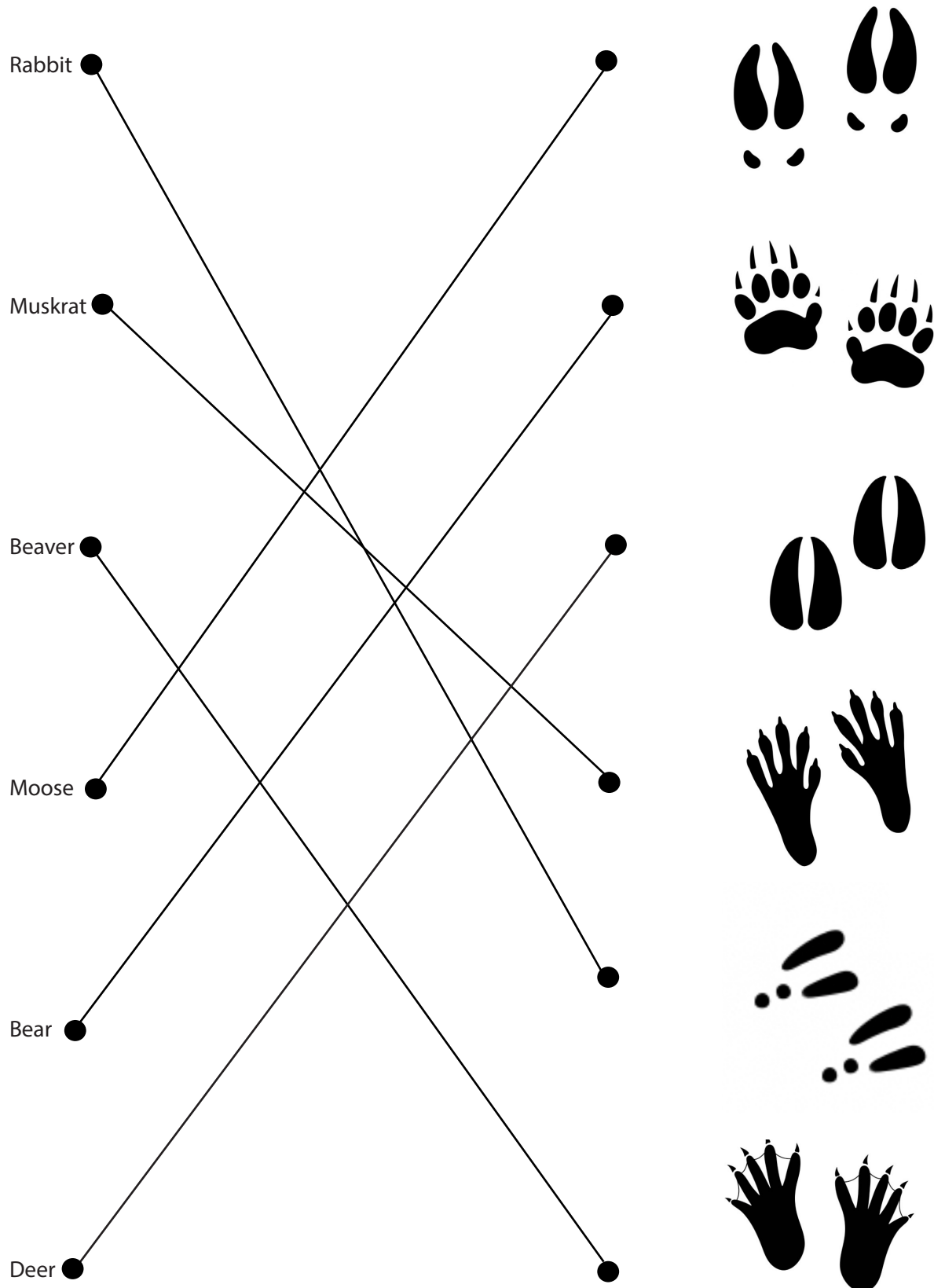
Deer ●



Stock Images from Canva.com

3.5 (Continued) Animal Tracks Answer Key

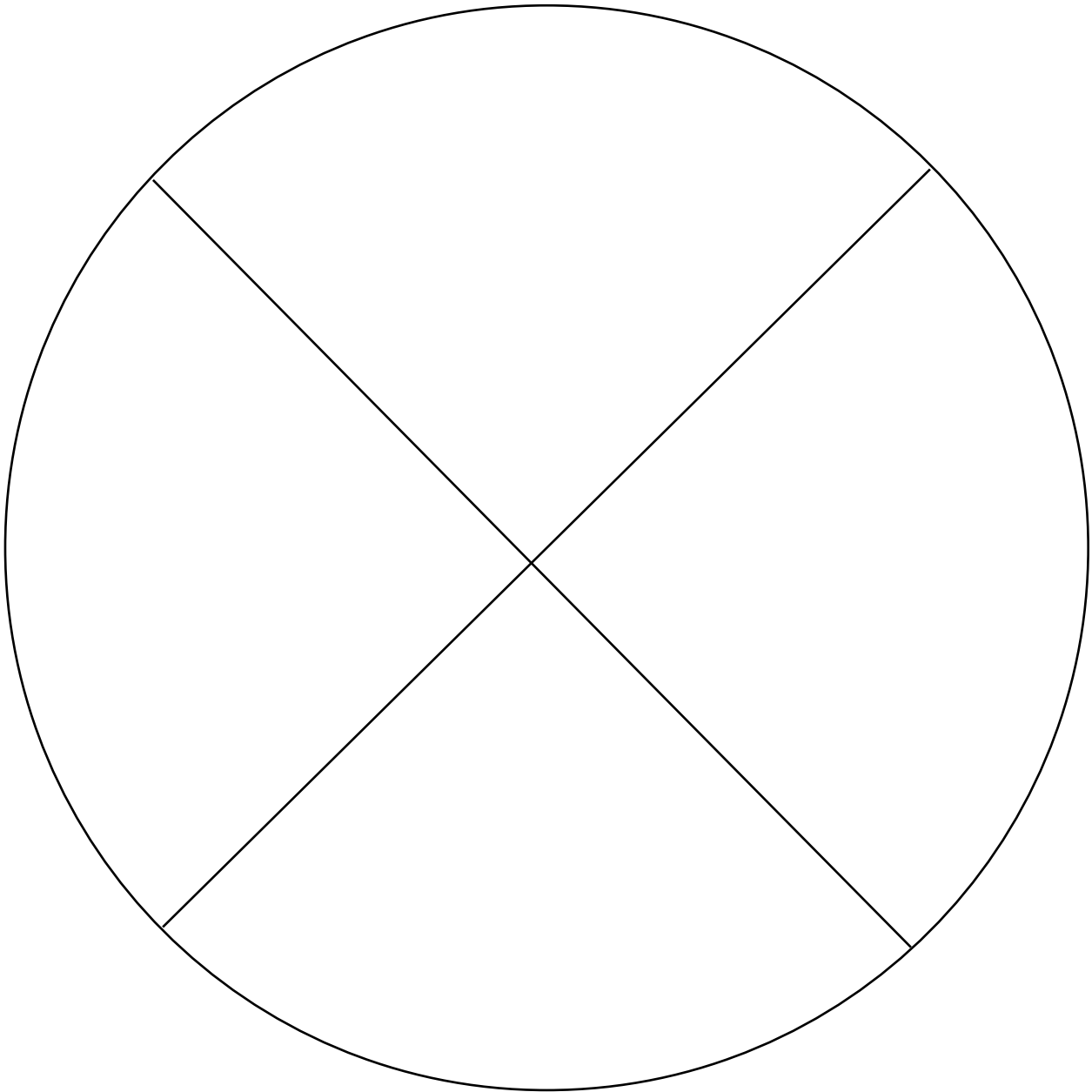
Draw a line to match the tracks of the following animals in the boreal forest.



Stock Images from Canva.com

3.6 Nihithaw

Summarize what you learned about medicines in all four domains; mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual.



3.7 Environmental Stewardship

Like many other Indigenous people, Rocky Cree cultural practices of hunting and gathering involve disciplined understanding of time, of natural elements, and of plants and animal's characteristics and habitat. Cultural protocols show the value placed on gifts of nature. Read the following excerpts and answer the questions to demonstrate your understanding.

"Over the next several days, a community formed as they hunted and harvested together. The men went out fishing, tracking moose, and hunting the fall ducks that had stayed around when all the larger birds had flown away. Even though in most places the birds were gone now, sowaki sakahikan was always the place they stayed the longest - right until the lake froze. In fact, the name of the lake, sowaki, refers to the curved shape of the bird's wings when they come in for a landing. At times, there were clouds of ducks in the sky at sowaki sakahikan" (MM, p. 22).

1. What observations about nature are made in this excerpt?

2. How are concerns about sustainable living shown in the excerpt?

3.7 (Continued) Environmental Stewardship

"They woke long before sunrise the next day and went to the sweat lodge with the elders to pray for a good hunt. Then they paddled quietly to one of their best moose-hunting places, where a river flowed in from a neighbouring lake. When they got out of their canoes, Mikisiw led the way along the water to a low area with lots of willows, the kind the moose like to eat. They crouched down in a clump of tall grass and called the moose for a long time. Sometimes, they rubbed a paddle against the branches to make a sound of antlers. Finally, a young bull moose came toward them, its body dark against the bright yellow tamarack trees in the distance" (MM, p. 26).

3. What cultural protocol is described in this excerpt? Why do you think it was considered important?

4. What understandings of time, geography, and moose habitat and habits are demonstrated in this excerpt?

3.8. Biodiversity Web

Draw a biodiversity web for the boreal forest ecosystem based on the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story.



What if one of these species was removed from the boreal forest ecosystem? What do you think would occur?

What species are producers and consumers in this biodiversity web?

How do plant species in this biodiversity web obtain energy?

3.9 Rocky Cree Hunting

Animal	Hunted How?	Extensions
Waterfowl: Ducks, Geese, Swans, Grouse, Ptarmigan, Partridges, Spruce Hens, Loons.	-Small snares are used. -Today, Loons are taken only when caught accidentally in nets. Loons are a sacred gift.	-In the past loons were hunted in spring and summer; they migrate, if at all, in autumn. -Loon bags carried sacred medicine bundles; these were banned and burned during the residential school era.
Birds: Jays, Crows, Ravens, Robins.	-Owls and Eagles are never hunted. -Hunters hide behind blinds and use their voices (with sounds coming from their throats) to call birds. -Birds are caught with pole snares or blunt arrows.	- Rocky Cree people throat sing. - A contemporary practice that traps eagles only to sell their feathers for dancers' regalia (leaving the rest of the bird to waste) is highly offensive to the Rocky Cree.
Small Mammals: Rabbits, Minks, Beavers, Squirrels, Chipmunks, Weasels, Muskrats, Porcupines, Wolverines, Otters, Martens, Skunks.	-Snares: Used for Rabbits and Mink. -Funnel Traps: Used for Squirrels and Chipmunks. -Bow and Arrow/Small Dead-falls: Used for Weasels and Wolverines. Blunt headed arrows prevent blood loss and wastage of meat. -Entrances and exits of beaver lodges are blocked and a hole cut at the top of the lodge to catch beavers as they try to escape.	-Wolverine hats are worn by the okimaw, the community leaders. -Otter hats are worn by the oki-wawa, the self-made men. -Bear hats are worn by the okin-ikawk. -Muskrat hats are worn by teenage boys. -Rabbit hats are worn by children. -Squirrel hats are worn by lead women and fire keepers.
Medium Sized Mammals: Fox, Wolf, Lynx, Coyote.	-Pole Snares and Smaller Dead-fall: Used for trapping fox and lynx. -Bow and Arrow is also used .to hunt fox, lynx, and wolves	-Fox, Lynx, and Wolf are typically hunted for their fur. -Coyotes are not common in Rocky Cree territory.
Large Sized Mammals: Moose, Bear, Caribou.	-Moose, woodland caribou can be hunted with bow and arrow, deadfalls or snares -Hunters positioned above a caribou trail can drop a net from above. - Heavy deadfall traps are used for bear.	-Bears are hard to find but valuable; their furs are used for sleeping rugs, fat is used for medicinal grease, and bear meat is good to eat. -woodland caribou is hunted in fall.

3. 10 Draft of an Advocacy Letter

3.10 (Continued) Draft of an Advocacy Letter

[illegible]

3.11 Mathomin

Name of Life Cycle Stage	Sketch of Life Cycle Stage	Description of Life Cycle Stage

Module 4: Kinistinow: Earth & Sky



Sipi nisitohtamowin: Enduring Understanding

"The stars are linked to our language and our teachings. They help us make connections to the past, the present, and the future" (MM, p. 34).

Key Concepts:

- Stars
- Constellations
- Northern Lights
- The Milky Way
- Time
- Sacred Stories
- Beliefs about Life and Death

Key Words

- acako īthiniw - stargazer
- acācko pimotiho miskanaw - the spirit road in the sky
- kinistinow - what we are guided by
- nīhithaw - coming from the four directions; corresponding to the physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental realms
- Wāwāhtiw

Guiding Questions

- How are the earth and sky connected?
- What stories do people tell about what they see in the sky?
- What is time?
- What are sacred stories?
- What environmental concerns relate to the sky?
- How are maps of the sky created?

Kiskinwahamakiwin: Teaching Strategies

"This (Star) chart shows how our language and our stories are linked to the stars. It helps us to communicate to those who are far away and it gives us a way of understanding the messages our wākomakanak, our ancestors, have left for us on the land" (p. 34).

"The stargazer showed him our the stars could guide them...Mwakwa would recognise the main constellations and planets when they arrived in the sky. He learned that one star stayed perfectly still while the others moved around it... He learned about the phases of the moon and the travels of the planets...And the spirit road in the sky that the spirits travelled when their time had come" (MM, p. 33).



BEST PRACTICES SPOTLIGHT

Royce Murray - Frontier School Division

Royce uses *Pisim finds her Miskanaw* and *Amō's Sapotawan* in his Grade 11 Canadian History class to provide information and stories of the pre-contact lives of Indigenous people. He uses a series of questions (partially inspired by the teaching guides) as students review the book. He also lets them know about the free Six Seasons online apps, which they are welcome to download for themselves. He asks his students to reflect on their own life journeys so far and to predict where they might be in 10 years.

Acknowledgement

This module is built on knowledge shared with the writing team by Star Knowledge Keepers Larry Tait and Wilfred Buck, including material Wilfred Buck has published in print and online. We thank them for their generosity as teachers.

1: ROCKY CREE CONSTELLATIONS AND STAR STORIES

The night sky is a source of awe and wonder for all stargazers. Every culture on Earth has its own theories and stories about the stars. For the asiniskaw īthiniwak, who sat under the starry skies, not only on warm summer nights but also through the long dark days of a northern winter, it became clear that “what is above is mirrored below” (Wilfred Buck, *Tipiskawi Kisik*, p.3). Traditional knowledge and sacred teachings about how we got here, about why things are the way they are, and how everything fits together are told through stories about the stars that can be seen in the night sky.

Talk About It

Display pictures of the night skies in the classroom (constellations, northern lights, meteors, moon etc.) to spur discussion based on the following questions.

- What do you see in the night sky?
- Are there familiar stars or constellations that you can name?
- Where do the names of stars and constellations that you know come from?
- Have you seen things moving in the night sky?
- What changes do you see in the night sky? Throughout the month? From season to season?

Write About It

Ask students to think about what it might be like to paint the night sky (and perhaps, in a parallel art assignment, have them do so!) But they can also paint the night sky canvas of light and shadows with words. Have students complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 4.1 SENSORY WORDS**. For each of the five senses (sight, taste, touch, smell, sound), ask students to write two descriptive words in their **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journals** for the following night sky elements. Ask students to answer the following questions about each element:

- What do you see?
- What might you hear?
- What might you taste?
- What might you smell?
- What might you feel if you touch?

The Night Sky Elements

- The Sky
- The Stars
- The Northern Lights
- The Moon
- A Meteor Shower
- A Constellation

TEACHER TIP

A simile is a direct comparison of two unlike things using the words "like" or "as."

Examples: The stars sparkled like glitter sprinkled all over my black hoodie.

Helping me find my way, the North Star crackled like static on a two-way radio.

A metaphor is an indirect comparison of two unlike things by saying one thing “is” the other or acts or behaves like the other. Write a metaphor for one or more of your sensory word descriptions.

Examples: The Big Dipper is a square-bottomed boat sailing precariously over the waves of the sky.

Metaphor & Simile Magic

Great writing makes the familiar seem magical. That's what using figurative language can do! Have students write a simile and write a metaphor for one or more of their sensory word descriptions.

Turn your simile and metaphor into a story!

Students can write a short story of a paragraph or two based on one of their similes or metaphors.

Remember that something needs to happen in the story so that the end is different from the beginning. A story often follows this pattern:

- A problem: There is a problem for the main character.
- A conflict: A conflict occurs while trying to solve the problem. (The conflict can be: inside the main character's mind, between two characters, between the main character and another object, between the main character and nature or the supernatural.)
- A resolution: The conflict ends when someone wins or figures something out or something changes in the environment. The main character changes too because of the struggle involved in solving the problem. Often there is something learned by the main character that matters to the storyteller and to the person hearing the story.

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star

- Have you ever wondered why it seems that stars twinkle? Try this!
- Crumple a square of foil, then open it up, and place it on a table or on the floor.
- Fill a clear bowl with tap water and place it on top of the crumpled foil.
- Darken the room by turning off the lights. Hold a flashlight about 12 inches above the bowl.
- Look at the foil through the undisturbed water. What does the refracted light look like?
- Now using your finger or a pencil, tap the surface of the water gently. Still shining the flashlight, look at the foil through the moving water. What does the refracted light look like now?
- When there is movement in the water, the light rays refracting from the foil when appear to blur or twinkle.
- Why? The movement of the water causes the depth of the water to vary. The light rays twinkle because they bend or refract in different directions when passed through different depths of water.
- This is similar to the light rays from the stars. They appear to be twinkling when you are observing from Earth because they refract differently as the light rays move through different thicknesses of air in the atmosphere.

TEACHER TIP

The scientific word for the twinkling phenomenon we see in stars is called scintillation.

Imagining Constellations

Many people think of constellations as a group of stars. From our point of view, a group of stars may look like a particular shape in the sky and often that group of stars has been given a name. These stars are far away from Earth. They are not connected to each other at all. Some stars in a constellation might be close while others are very far away. But, if you were to draw lines in the sky between certain stars like a dot-to-dot puzzle – and use lots of imagination – the picture you draw could look like an object, animal, or person.

Try It

Ask students to complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 4.2 AN IMAGINARY SKY**. Students will create their own imaginary constellations. Ask students:

- What stories might you tell about your stars?
- Do the shapes you see tell you something important about your life?
- Display student's creative constellations. Ask them to explain their imaginary sky to their classmates.

Constellations and Mythology

Cultures around the world have had different names and numbers of constellations depending on what people imagined or saw in the sky. Most of the widely-known constellation names we use today originate from ancient Middle Eastern, Greek, and Roman mythologies.

TEACHER TIP

Mythology is a collection of traditional stories or sacred narratives that a culture uses to explain the origins of the world, natural phenomena, and its moral and social values. These stories often revolve around things done by heroes and supernatural beings.

In modern astronomy, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) officially recognizes 88 constellations, which divide the entire night sky into specific geographic regions. This list includes a mix of ancient classical star patterns and sky groupings mapped during the Age of Discovery (spaceplace.nasa.gov).

It is important for us to remember that the Age of Discovery (or Age of Exploration) was also an age of colonialism and exploitation of Indigenous people. From the early 15th to the 17th century, European navigators charted unmapped oceans, looking for new trade routes and new sources of wealth. While the Age of Discovery massively expanded European knowledge of the world, geography, and science, and in some ways can be said to have connected the world, it also caused profound and devastating impacts worldwide. The books in the Six Seasons series describe the culture and lifestyle of the Rocky Cree people before European powers claimed their lands and brought widespread displacement, disease and genocide to Indigenous populations.

Just like all other cultures, Rocky Cree people have seen the star patterns and they, too, have named the constellations. The names of the constellations are connected to mythological stories. The Rocky Cree consider the stories - or tellings and teachings - of the stars as sacred.

Here are the names and basic storylines of some of the Rocky Cree constellations:

Atima Acakosuk: The Dog Stars - Because humans needed protection from huge bears, hungry or sick animals and invading nations, the people's older brother, the Wolf, sent two puppies to live among the people. These dogs became companions, protectors, and an early warning system against harm. Seeing what their brother, the Wolf, had done, the Coyote and Fox each sent two puppies of their own. The Creator placed a reminder in the heavens of the dog who would forever be a guardian for humans. In the Dog Stars Constellation (also known as the Little Dipper) you can see Polaris or the North Star that anchors the dogs' leash and the two dogs that were sent by the Wolf. The four "bowl" stars are the four pups sent by Coyote and Fox to the Four Directions of humankind (Wilfred Buck, Tipiskawi Kisik, pg 5,6).

Mista Muskwa: The Great Bear - Long ago, large bears roamed all through the land. But one bear, Mista Muskwa, was the biggest and strongest, and people honored him with gifts of every kind. It came to the point where the Great Bear demanded more and more gifts and when he did not receive enough acknowledgement, he grew angry and destructive, using brute strength to destroy and kill. Finally, the people sent seven of the best hunters **Tepakooop Pinesisuk: the Seven Birds** also known as the Corona Borealis) to track and kill the Great Bear. They tracked him around the world four times, moving so quickly that eventually they all flew up into the sky. Mortally wounded, the Great Bear shook his fur and droplets of blood fell on leaves and grass and on the lead bird, Pipiciew, the Robin. That is why the leaves and grass change color in the fall and the robin has a red breast. We see Mista Muskwa, the Great Bear (also known as The Big Dipper) in the night sky to remind us to avoid abusing power, and not to be a bully, but to learn to work together (Wilfred Buck, *Tipiskawi Kisik*, pg 15-17).

Niska: Goose - When migratory birds were flying, hunters would go out and hunt them for food. It took much patience and skill and long hours of preparation to successfully hunt birds. Because geese and ducks flew in great numbers in spring and fall, the hunters dedicated much of their time to hunting them. Sometimes paddling their canoes along the waterways after a long day's hunt, they would hear the whistle of wing tips through the evening air. When they looked up, they could see the silhouette of Niska, the Goose (also known as the Northern Cross) across the backdrop of the Milky Way. This, say the hunters, marks the path the birds follow as they head South and return North during the migratory seasons (Wilfred Buck, *Kitchikisik* [Great Sky], pg 17).

Research and Presentation

Perhaps students would like to know more about one of the Rocky Cree constellations and the story it tells. They can research Rocky Cree constellations using online resources.

What does the constellation story tell you about people, animals, or the land? What does it tell you about how to live well? Thinking about how to live well is the overall theme of *Māskikīy Miskanaw*.

Have students write about their findings or present their research information to the class.

TEACHER TIP

Give students the opportunity to play the *Path of the Stars Game* on the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* app. In this game, students will be asked to place Rocky Cree constellations into the night sky.

ROCKY CREE CONSTELLATION MAP

Use the **BLACKLINE MASTER 4.3 ROCKY CREE CONSTELLATIONS** to find four Rocky Cree constellations in the night sky.

2: MUSIC IS SACRED MEDICINE

For the Rocky Cree, as other Indigenous nations, music served multiple purposes. Music conveyed historical narratives; creation stories and legends passed from one generation to the next. Traditionally, music also accompanied important life events such as birth, initiations, partnerships, and crossing over into the spirit world. Music also created sacred and transformative spaces, particularly during ceremony.

SS

ELA
RC

A

S
H

Singing held deep significance in traditional Rocky Cree culture, serving as a means of storytelling, cultural preservation, and spiritual connection. Songs were not just for entertainment; they were and are living records of history, values, and beliefs, passed down through generations and often intertwined with ceremonies and daily life.

"For asiniskaw ithiniwak, the land is the source of music because the people listen to the rhythms of the natural world, such as the sound of the wind in the poplar trees or the sound of waves on the shore. People understand that the land is always composing music that they can learn if they listen carefully. The land also holds the people's stories and teachings" (MM, p. 20).

Invite the students to create and design a sound map in their **Māskikiy Miskanaw Journal**. Explain that a sound map is a map that depicts sounds associated with a particular area. For this exercise: (1) students find a spot in their yard or other outdoor space, (2) draw a cartographic representation of their yard, including boundaries, features like trees, shrubs, flower beds, etc., (3) create a map key/legend with symbols to represent the different sounds they hear (for example, use a musical note for

bird songs, a leaf for rustling leaves, or a car for traffic sound). Once the map is complete, ask the students to write a paragraph on the different sounds, whether they were nature sounds or human made sounds and how each sound made them feel.

TEACHER TIP

Check out this documentary from The Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages (OCIL) called '[Rhythms of the Land](#)'. It features Indigenous artists singing in their mother tongues, recorded in landscapes of deep personal significance.

There are many types of traditional songs. Ceremonial songs are used in naming ceremonies, feasts and giveaways, and other important community events. Healings songs are designed to promote

healing and well-being. Honour songs are used to honour individuals, families, or special events like births, weddings, and achievements. Prayer songs are used to communicate with the spiritual realm and express gratitude, requests, or intentions. Storytelling songs incorporate narratives, sharing historical events, cultural knowledge, and moral lessons.

"Acakos smiled. "As a little girl, my first memories were the lullabies that were sung to me as the day ended. They were family songs, and I always sang along. But music is everywhere. Listen to the poplar tree during the summer. When the wind blows on it, a rattle is playing. The waves on the water, the sound of wind as it travels across the land—everywhere is a teaching, Mwakwa! I want to share it" (MM, p. 20).

Acakos mentions family songs. These songs often reflect the interconnectedness of family, community, and the natural world, and can be used to celebrate significant life events, honour ancestors, or convey moral teaching.

Acakos also talks about lullabies. Lullabies - quiet, gentle songs sung to send a child to sleep – play

TEACHER TIP

'Music is medicine' is a metaphor. Studies show that music can positively influence brain chemistry, potentially reducing stress, pain, and anxiety, and even boosting the immune system. Music is a powerful tool for teenagers' mental health, acting as a form of medicine by providing emotional expression, regulation, and social connection. It can help them cope with stress, anxiety, and low mood, while also fostering self-confidence and social skills. Ask your students what their favourite music is and why.

several roles as well. They are a way to calm both mother and baby and pass on important lessons. Beyond calming, singing newborn lullaby songs can also support their development in several important ways.

When you sing a lullaby and gently rock a baby, you might:

- Promote early language development.
- Promote a strong connection between the baby and home culture and environment.
- Foster bonding and secure attachment.
- Enhance the baby's spatial awareness.
- Promote self-soothing skills.

Your singing voice doesn't have to be perfect! The sound of your voice, combined with the rhythm of a familiar lullaby song, can bring comfort and reassurance, regardless of your vocal skills.

Introduce the students to [The Lullaby Project](#), a project of Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute, that pairs new and expecting parents and caregivers with professional artists to write and sing personal lullabies for their babies. Ask: What makes a good lullaby? What lullabies do you know or remember from when you were little? What do these lullabies have in common?

Write the following on the board:

- Aaaaare you sleeeeeeepingggggg,
- Broooooother Johnnnnn?
- Morning bells are rinnnngingggg,
- Dingggg dingggg donggg.

Ask the students what they notice? Have they heard this lullaby before? Explain that lullabies typically contain short, rhyming sentences that are easy to recall. Lullabies are often simple with a repeating melody and lyrics, giving a circular structure rather than a 'verse, chorus' structure like a pop song would have. Although content differs from lullaby to lullaby, there is often an underlying theme of love, care, and tenderness.

Invite the students to write a lullaby in their **Māskikiy Miskanaw Journal**. Four lines should be sufficient as they can be repeated endlessly. Once finished, invite the students to sing their lullabies aloud. Consider making a playlist of the class lullabies for sharing.

As Mwakwa begins to learn the sacred stories of the skies, he sings the Star Traveller Song to the stargazer.

"One evening, they sat together at the edge of the water, waiting for darkness to come. To pass the time, Opimotiho asked Mwakwa to sing a song. Mwakwa chose the Star Traveller Song that he had learned from his mother. He heard his voice carrying across the calm water, and he wondered if it also reached up into the sky" (MM, p. 34).

Read the above quote to students. Ask: what do you think a travelling song is? [Travelling songs are traditional songs used to send people off on a journey, often sung with vocables - syllables without a specific meaning - or with lyrics in the Indigenous language.] Travelling songs are often sung as people pass from this life to the next. Many artists are inspired by the stars to write lyrics for their songs.

"Dreamers never stop dreaming,
Believers keep on believing....
I look up and remember,
I was made for the stars" (Song by Anne Wilson)

Suggest that students do a quick search to make a collection of songs that reference the stars in the sky. Ask them to create a list of ten songs in their **Māskikiy Miskanaw Journal**.

Play the song "[Travelling Song](#)" by Cree Confederation.

Explain to the students that Cree Confederation is a Plains Cree musical group. Their song "Travelling Song" is featured on their album, *Travelling Home*. The album is a collection of round dance songs.

Hand out copies of the **BLACKLINE MASTER 4.4 TRAVELLING SONG ALBUM COVER**. Draw students' attention to the artwork featured. Explain that this is the album cover for Cree Confederation's album *Travelling Home*. Ask: Based on the artwork, what do you think the group's message is? What and who do they represent? What emotions are presented?

Read over for clarification. Instruct the students to complete.

3: WĀWĀHTĪW - PAINTING THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

The Northern Lights are known across the world for their beauty, featuring various colours that paint the night's sky. Wāwāhtiw, or the Northern Lights, have great significance in Rocky Cree culture. The Rocky Cree believe that the Northern Lights are their departed ancestors. Rocky Cree protocols direct the people to respect the Northern Lights when they visit and dance in the sky.

Talk About It

Ask students the following questions and have them record their answers in their **Māskikiy Miskanaw Journal** and share their answers with the class.

- Have you ever seen the Northern Lights?
- Can you describe your experience of seeing the Northern Lights?
- How did you feel when watching the Northern Lights?
- What are the Northern Lights?

TEACHER TIP

To learn more about Rocky Cree worldview and the Northern Lights, see page 46 of the *Amō's Sapotowan* text to learn about important protocols and teachings.

Science Behind the Northern Lights

The colourful displays in the night sky that we call the Northern Lights, or Aurora Borealis, are caused by charged sun particles colliding with atoms of the Earth's atmosphere. Solar flares release sun particles into space. This is known as solar wind. The Earth's magnetic field directs the solar wind around our planet. As the solar wind is directed around Earth, the Earth's magnetic field lines are dragged and stretched, and sun particles are funnelled toward the North Pole along the magnetic field lines. When the charged particles launched along Earth's magnetic field collide with gases in Earth's upper atmo-

sphere, billions of light flashes occur at once causing shimmering, moving curtains, rays, or spirals of light usually seen in colors of green, red or purple. The billions of flashes of light cause the Northern Lights, or the Auroras, to appear to be dancing in the sky.

The most common color, pale green, is produced by oxygen in the air which is near to the earth. High altitude oxygen, which is rarer, produces a red color and nitrogen in the air produces either blue or purple colours. Wilfred Buck says that when the lights fill the sky you can hear static and even smell the ozone.

While the Northern Lights can be seen at any time of the year, they are most often seen around the spring and fall equinoxes in March and September.

Solar flares are also directed by magnetic fields to the South Pole where the light displays are called the Southern Lights or Aurora Australis.

The Northern Lights In Indigenous Cultures

Ask students to find examples of the Northern Lights in the illustrations and text of *Māskikīy Miskanaw* and record the examples in their ***Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal***. Ask students to write a statement about their response to the Northern Lights descriptions and illustrations.

In Cree culture, the Northern Lights are believed to be the spirits of ancestors dancing in the sky. The Northern Lights are also seen as a bridge between the world of the living and those who have passed on. The Northern Lights are both a way of passage and a connection between worlds. In a Rocky Cree worldview, everything is connected.

"Knowledge Keepers teach that we are all interconnected, including with other beings, the land, the stars, and knowledge itself. Nothing is separate" (MM, p. 37).

In many Cree communities, children are told they should never whistle at the Northern Lights. This is a sign of disrespect to the ancestors. Children are taught that whistling at the Northern Lights may cause the lights to come and "get" whoever whistled at them and take them away. In earlier times, the warnings may have helped to prevent children from wandering too far away in the dark during long winter months when there was little daylight. There were many dangers involved in wandering too far from the camp; for example, children could fall prey to larger animals such as wolves.

The Northern Lights in Art

The Northern Lights appear in various works of art. Show students the following images of art featuring the Northern Lights. In their ***Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal***, ask students to record what they see in both pieces and what they think the artist is trying to portray.

TEACHER TIP

Explore Indigenous stories and legends about the Northern Lights. You might read and talk about these together or assign specific stories to individual students and ask them to retell them to the class. Oral storytelling is considered an important communal, even sacred, skill in Indigenous culture. Refer to [Legends and Stories Behind the Northern Lights in Manitoba](#).

TEACHER TIP

Play Wilfred Buck's the [Story of the Northern Lights](#) in the classroom to familiarize students with Indigenous connections to the Northern Lights.

Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900) depicts the SS United States frozen in a pack of ice at the base of a cliff. *Aurora Borealis* shows the auroras above as they illuminate a dogsled below, hinting at a rescue for the frozen ship. American artists did not depict the violence of the civil war the same way that European artists depicted wars. They preferred not to glamorize the hero on the battlefield. Instead, American artists such as Frederic Church illustrated the impact of the war through landscape paintings.

During the American Civil War, the auroras in the north were sometimes taken as signs of God's displeasure with the confederacy for advocating slavery. To these thinkers, the Northern Lights represented the high moral stakes attached to a union victory.



Figure 1: Frederic Edwin Church, *Aurora Borealis*, 1865, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum

Another example of the Northern Lights in art history is *Northern Lights. Study from North Norway*, by Swedish artist Anna Katarina Boberg (1864-1935). Her piece is a study, meaning that she may have created a larger piece later based on this image. In creating this, she visited the Lofoten Island in Northwest Norway in the summer of 1901 and returned around thirty times during the summer and winter months. The scenery of the Northern Lights and the midnight sun made a great impression on her work.



Figure 2: Anna Katarina Boberg (Swedish 1864-1935) *Northern Lights. Study from north Norway*, no date. Oil on canvas.

Teaching Art History

Teaching art history is more than teaching an aesthetic. It is less about memorizing dates and understanding the complexities of cultural movements and more about encouraging students to see art in a new way. One good teaching practice to encourage your students to talk about art is to show them examples and talk about what they see in the images.

Write about it

TEACHER TIP

For some tips in talking about art with your students check out this YouTube Video from The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). "[Five Tips for Teaching Works of Art | MoMA VIDEOS FOR TEACHERS](#)".

To begin teaching students about art history, start by introducing the terms below to help students understand how to look at images in a different way. Explaining that this is a way to read a painting sometimes makes it easier for students to understand what they are being asked to do.

Introduce terms such as:

- **Iconography:** this term refers to the meaning behind symbols, people, clothing, animals, colours, or anything depicted in the piece that might hold meaning
- **Subject:** this term refers to what is depicted in the scene. Ask your students, "What is happening?"
- **Medium:** this term refers to what material the artist used to create this piece. Eg. Oil on canvas, watercolour, acrylic, etc.
- **Context:** this term refers to the social, historical, or personal circumstances of the work.

TEACHER TIP

Refer to the [Canadian Art Inspiration Contest for K-12](#) by the Art Canada Institute. In 2021, competing students submitted artwork inspired by the images in this resource. No matter the grade level you are teaching there is something in this resource for all-ages. Use the images in this resource to introduce the Art History terms and use these images to complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 4.5 WHO, WHAT, WHY.**

Water Colour Lesson

Have students create their own version of the Northern Lights using watercolour paints. This is a great activity to see their own interpretation of what they have learned. This is also a chance for them to express their knowledge on a topic in a creative way. Below are techniques that students can use to paint their version of the Northern Lights. Teachers may wish to practice these watercolor technique before students begin to work on their Northern Lights Project.

Wet on Wet

- Wet the paper where you want to paint with clean water
- With the wet brush, select the colour you would like to use and apply it to the wet areas of the paper
- the paint will stay where the paper is wet unless the artist pushes it out
- To create a bolder colour simply add more paint to the area
- This technique can be used to create a soft glowing area such as a sky

TEACHER TIP

Refer to [9 Watercolour Techniques for Beginners](#) to visually assist students in learning how to use watercolour paints and skills.

- Don't over brush the area; the aim is to gently move the paint around the wet area and allow time to dry

Wet on Dry

- This is very important when adding detail to a painting
- Take a clean paintbrush, select your colour and use the paint to apply it to the dry paper
- The paint will stay exactly where you place it

Dark to Light

- Collect paint on the brush
- Start at the top of the page and pull the paint from left to right
- As you continue to do this the paint will gradually fade as you go
- To help the paint spread, clean off the brush of excess paint and move it across the previously existing paint

Blotting

- Removing colour from the paper which can be done with a Q-Tip, paper towel, or clean paintbrush (easiest with paper towel)
- Wet the surface with water and apply a generous amount of paint
- Then use a paper towel to remove the paint from the paper
- Use a small section of the paper towel at a time to have more control over the area
- This is often used to create clouds or in this lesson could be used when painting the Northern Lights

Resist

- Using a white crayon or oil pastel, draw your intended image on the paper
- Press hard
- Once you are done gently paint on the wax resist and the image will come through

Bleeding

- Wet the area thoroughly; this is a similar technique to wet on wet
- Paint one colour and gradually add another colour next to it
- Softly mix the two together in the centre

Graded

- Can be done like Wet on Wet or Wet on Dry
- Begin adding one colour and bringing it down the page about a quarter of the way; slowly add a colour directly touching the previous colour to blend them together
- This can be done with multiple colours
- Works very well with Wet on Wet

Glazing

- This creates a translucent effect through the paint

- After painting a section, you must allow the paint to completely dry before continuing

Layering

- Form of colour mixing
- Begin with one colour and let it completely dry
- Add another layer over top, again allowing it to dry completely
- When the colour is dry you will be able to see the colour underneath

TEACHER TIP

Refer to [15 Revolutionary Art Show Tips to Put On a Remarkable Show This Year](#) for tips on preparation, display, and community engagement to organize an art exhibition in your school or classroom.

Display students' watercolour paintings in the classroom. Perhaps you can organize an art exhibition at your school to feature the students' paintings to showcase to pupils, parents, and community!

To organize your art exhibition ensure you complete these key steps:

- Plan a Theme: You have already completed this step, which will be the Northern Lights!
- Select a Time: For a great turn out, consider organizing the exhibition during an event on the school calendar such as an open house or parent-teacher conference, for example.
- Select a Location: Select a space in the school to display the students' artwork. A multi-purpose room, a gymnasium, or hallway bulletin board function as great locations to feature student work.
- Select a Display Method: Choose a method to display student's artwork. You can use tables to display trifold boards, or use a removable adhesive like tape or sticky tack to attach student's artwork to a wall, bulletin board, etc, without damaging the art.
- Label the Artwork: Beneath student's artwork create a label that lists the student's name, title of their piece, year it was created, and the medium used.
- Promotion: Spread word about the exhibition in your school's newsletter, social media, or posters.

4: EXPLORING CYCLICAL AND LINEAR TIME

The Rocky Cree concept of cyclical times represents a worldview where time is not a linear, rigid, or accelerating line, but rather a fluid, recurring, and interconnected cycle linked to nature, the stars, and seasons. It integrates past, present, and future as one, and is centered on Rocky Cree ways of knowing and connections to the earth.

As a class, brainstorm a definition of the word TIME. Capture students' ideas on the whiteboard. Eventually, come to an agreed upon definition.

Time can be defined simply as the continuous, one-way progression of existence from the past, through the present, and into the future. It is the fundamental framework that allows us to order events, measure how long they last (duration), and track changes in the world around us.

If you set up a class Word Wall, add the word TIME to it.

TEACHER TIP

Set up a Word Wall in your classroom. Steps: (1) choose a central, easily seen, and reachable spot; (2) prepare word cards connected to the theme of cyclical and linear time using bold, black, legible lettering on durable cardstock; (3) introduce words gradually to avoid overwhelming students; (4) arrange the words in alphabetical order from A to Z to make them easy to find; (5) optional - add pictures or definitions to the cards to help with comprehension.

Time Activity

- Give each student a long piece of string and have them stretch it out horizontally.
- Ask them to mark events from left to right (e.g., birth on the far left, childhood in the middle, present day on the right). You might attach notes on cards to your string with tape. Guide and assist students as necessary.
- Ask: How does this string represent our definition?
- Explain that the string has a clear beginning and end, showing that time moves forward and is not connected and cannot be repeated.
- Introduce the concept of LINEAR TIME and add it to the word wall.

TEACHER TIP

Did You Know?: According to a study conducted by psychologists at the University of California, Berkeley, individuals who view time as cyclical tend to be more optimistic and less stressed than those who view it as linear. This suggests that our perception of time can have a significant impact on our overall well-being. By recognizing the cyclical nature of life's ups and downs, we may be better equipped to handle challenges and appreciate the good times when they come around again. Refer to [Time Quiver](#).

Explain that Western, industrial perspectives see time in a linear fashion; time moves forward in a straight line, like a ticking clock, flowing consistently from the past through the present to the future. It implies that moments pass once, cannot be repeated in the same way, and occur in a direct, sequential order.

Note that Indigenous perspectives emphasize long-term continuity, resilience, and harmony. Living as a connected part of Mother Earth, observing the cyclical patterns of the natural world affirms that human life on this planet is much more like a circle than a line.

Read the excerpt from Spread 19.

"Of course!" Ācapī Okimaw said. "We will meet again soon, at wapāsi during the hoarfrost moon for the caribou hunt, and at makosiwi kisikaw, the season of the midwinter feast. There will always be more visits" (MM, pg. 40).

Introduce the concept of CYCLICAL TIME and add the phrase to the Word Wall. Lead a class discussion focusing on the key aspects of cyclical time, including:

- Connection to nature and land: rather than artificial clocks, time is measured by seasonal changes, lunar cycles, animal behaviors, and the position of the sun.
- Interconnectedness: past, present, and future are not strictly separated; ancestral stories are continuous, living aspects of the present.
- Spiral time: time is viewed as a spiral, where, as generations pass, they return to similar points in the cycle but with new experiences.
- Relationality: time is determined by relationships and responsibilities to the community, environment, and future generations.

Activity

Instruct students to reshape their pieces of string to represent the idea of cyclical time. [The string will go from being stretched into a horizontal line to being shaped like a circle.]

Lead a class sharing session. Ask: Which concept of time more closely aligns with Rocky Cree understandings as depicted in *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*?

Invite the students to write examples of the Rocky Cree concept of cyclical time in their **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal**.

Read aloud the excerpt below from Spread 17.

"The way that asiniskaw īthiniwak teachings relate to one another is captured by the English word "holistic". Knowledge keepers teach that we are all interconnected, including with other beings, the land, the stars, and knowledge itself. Nothing is separate. When people try to organize knowledge into separate categories, they can lose their way" (MM, p. 37).

TEACHER TIP

Connect students' understandings to the entire Six Seasons of the asiniskaw īthiniwak project. Focus on the the six seasons: pipon, sikwan, mi-thoskāmin, nīpin, tākwākin, and mikiskaw. What are the main Rocky Cree activities during each season? In what ways are they connected to the natural world? Refer to the [Six Seasons Project](#). Add seasonal Rocky Cree words to the Word Wall.

Ask: How does this help us to understand the concept of Rocky Cree and cyclical time?

Invite students to consolidate their understandings by completing the **BLACKLINE MASTER 4.6 LINEAR VS CYCLICAL SORTING CARDS**.

5: ROCKY CREE STAR TEACHINGS

In Rocky Cree culture, people who are gifted with the observational skills and knowledge to read and understand the teachings of stars are called stargazers. Stargazers are skilled in noticing the locations of various stars, and they can interpret the meanings of movement and change in relative location of stars in the sky and predict how these stars will influence the direction of wind and flow of water and thereby the weather and the seasons.

The younger generation is encouraged to learn about these star teachings by learning the star songs and by developing the skills to observe and interpret the star movements in the sky with the guidance of Elders and Knowledge Keepers. This intergenerational learning is reflected in this story, as Mwakwa's mother encourages him to learn from Opimotiho, who is the stargazer, acako īthiniw.

"That's Opimotiho, their acako īthiniw, stargazer. You should go talk to him some time and see what you can learn from him. Maybe that's what you'd like to be, a stargazer. You're a good singer, but we need the stargazer's teachings too" (MM, p. 14).

Mwakwa thought about this. He was always amazed by the hunters like his dad who could navigate by the stars, and he'd heard there were many stories to learn about the night sky. But he loved music. His mother had often told him that all humans are born with four gifts. Could these be two of his?" (MM, p. 34).

Discuss with students the importance of learning from Elders and the importance of recognizing one's own gifts/abilities to identify one's career goals and path in life. Discuss the importance of four direc-

tions in the Rocky Cree culture, and the songs and teachings that these stars hold. Complete the **BLACKLINE MASTER 4.7 FOUR POINT STAR**. Ask students to write one or two gifts each of them holds on each ray of the star.

As you create these stars, invite students to identify the shapes (and folds, if using origami) that they are making, and discuss with their peers the reasons for their moves. Think about how these activities and build visual-spatial thinking, reasoning, communication skills while also building identity and connections with self. These global competencies are emphasized in the [Manitoba Mathematics curriculum and the Framework of Learning](#).

Let the students know that pre-contact Rocky Cree people used birch bark to draw the star chart. The star chart holds cultural teachings that guide one's path during various stages of life. In this *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story, Mwakwa is curious to learn about the star chart, and requests that the stargazer, Opimotiho, teach him how the stars can help us in learning about our past, present, and future. Opimotiho tells Mwakwa:

"The stars are linked to our language and our teachings. They help us to make connections to the past, the present, and the future" (MM, p. 34).

The Rocky Cree Star Chart

Show the Rocky Cree star chart (in Appendix B) and share with students that for Rocky Cree peoples, the meanings hidden in the star chart involve understanding the cycles of nature including the type and flow of wind, waterways, and even the relationships and the path that one traverses while going through different stages of life.

"When night came, Mwakwa followed the stargazer to different places...the stargazer showed him how the stars could guide them to a place they were looking for. After a few nights, Mwakwa could recognize the main constellations and the planets when they arrived in the sky. He learned that one star stayed perfectly still, while the others moved around it. The stargazer told him that the stars changed their positions as the seasons passed. He learned about the phases of the moon and the travels of the planets" (MM, p. 33).

TEACHER TIP

Alternatively, you can also give students different coloured papers and use drawings or origami to create their own stars and add their gifts to this star. For oragami directions to create a four point star, refer to [origami pages](#). While making origami stars, ask prompting questions to promote visual-spatial learning of transforming a 2D shape into a 3D shape. Highlight how mathematics can help utilize knowledge present in cultural ways of knowing such as the four quadrants reflected in the Rocky Cree start chart and use this information to create an object like a four-point star. It is also important to mention that creating this four-point star is not a representation of any specific religious beliefs, but it is a symbolic representation of cultural teachings that signifies interconnections among four directions, four seasons, and four elements (earth, air, fire, water) that Rocky Cree and many other cultures value. Making an origami star is an example of building these cross-cultural understandings.

Guide students to the Rocky Cree star chart teachings shared by Knowledge Keeper Larry Tait. As students study this chart, encourage them to explore the meaning of symbols on the chart and the teaching associated with each of these symbols. To learn about the Rocky Cree star chart about the Rocky Cree language, culture, relations, changes in constellations, seasons, journey of life, and more.

“Opimotiho said, “Nikōsis, you have gained so much knowledge already. You know the Star Traveller Song, and you’ve also learned a little about how we can use the stars to navigate, and some of the stories they hold. But they can tell us so much more, if we know how to look for it” (MM, p. 34).

Ask students to read the excerpt above and draw their attention to the statement that mentions that Mwakwa's observation of the star that stays perfectly still in the sky.

On the star chart this fixed star is indicated by the central point which represents both the North Star and Earth because we observe the stars from Mother Earth. It is also representative of the self, demonstrating that the star chart can be read and understood on many levels.

Invite students to reflect on their prior learning about North Star and constellations in the sky and draw their attention to the symbols and patterns of the Rocky Cree star chart.

TEACHER TIP

Consider inviting a Rocky Cree Elder or Knowledge Keeper to help students in learning to make the star chart and Rocky Cree teachings. To establish connections with language, let the students know that the symbols that are used to make the Rocky Cree star chart are the alphabet of the Rocky Cree language. To extend the learning further, refer to a Standard Roman Orthography (SRO), Cree Syllabic chart and use the Cree-SRO syllabic converter (link for online converter: <https://syllabics.app/>) or Six Seasons App to teach students the sound and meaning of each symbol of the Rocky Cree star chart.

TEACHER TIP

Refer to Appendix B: *Rocky Cree Star Chart and Syllabics* to demonstrate the Rocky Cree star chart to students.

Rocky Cree Star Chart and Mathematics

Talk About It

Discuss the parallels among the symbols used on the Rocky Cree star chart and mathematical shapes such as triangle and rectangles. Consider making a graph. Talk about four quadrants and four directions and extend this learning further by asking students to calculate the area of shapes using graphing. You can use graph papers, the Six Seasons App, or [GeoGebra](#) to calculate area. Teachers can use [CueMath](#) to create mathematical shapes for students to calculate area.

TEACHER TIP

Talk about the types of symmetry in the Rocky Cree Star Chart as students make this chart and add each symbol. For example, the flower on the Star Chart presentation reflects point symmetry, reflection/line symmetry, and rotational symmetry.

Extend the learning

Discuss the importance of understanding the sky and stars and how these understandings benefit humans. As you discuss the successful human efforts to learn more about the moon, the stars, and other planets of our solar system, draw students' attention towards space explorations and the socio-scientific issue of polluting the sky. Discuss the socio-political-economic factors related to artificial satellites, space junk, and light pollution, and their negative impact on humans, animals, and plants. Share the value of Rocky Cree teaching of learning from sky and stars and the importance of respecting nature. Connect this learning with the Manitoba Science Curriculum strand of [Indigenous Peoples within the Natural World](#) to highlight the importance of thoughtful human actions with "[Mino-Pimatisiwin—The Good Life](#)" and "[Citizenship](#)" as discussed in the [Global Competencies](#) section of the Manitoba Curriculum to ensure a healthy sky and stars and the "good life" for current and future generations on our planet, the Mother Earth.

Rocky Cree Moon Teachings

The moon plays a significant role in Rocky Cree understandings of earth and sky. In the Rocky Cree seasonal calendar, each season has two moon cycles of 28 days. Each moon is named to describe the natural conditions observed by Knowledge Keepers. The *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story takes place during the pimahamowī pīsim moon.

"This is the moon when the waterfowl are flying south. Pima means moving forward. This is also a time when the asiniskaw ithiniwak are often moving, as they travel to visit and to harvest in preparation for winter" (MM, p. 5).

The moons of each of the six seasons are:

- tākwākin: hopahamowī pīsim (flying moon) and pimahamowī pīsim (flying back moon).
- mikiskaw: kaskatinowī pīsim (freeze up moon) and thithikopiwi pīsim (hoar frost moon).
- pipon: kīsi pīsim (elder moon) and opāwacakwanasis (wind clearing moon).
- sikwan: mikisiwi pīsim (eagle moon) and *niski pīsim* (goose moon).
- mithoskāmin: athīki pīsim (frog moon) and wāwī pīsim (egg laying moon).
- nīpin: paskahawī pīsim (egg hatching moon) and paskowī pīsim (moulting moon).

TEACHER TIP

Very recently the Artemis II mission completed its orbit around the moon, returning to earth. This is the first crewed lunar mission since the Apollo missions over 50 years ago! Canada also made history when astronaut Jeremy Hansen became the first Canadian to participate in a lunar mission. For more information on the Artemis II mission refer to [The Canadian Space Agency](#).

Write About It

Each culture around the world has specific teachings and understandings of the moon. Ask students to think about their own understandings of the moon. Ask them to write a paragraph or poem that illustrates a personal experience with the moon. Have students record their answers in their **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal**.

Think and Talk About It

Lunar exploration, for example, has greatly developed human understanding of the moon and its connection to earth and sky. Lunar exploration has led humans to understand what the moon is made of, its effect on tides, and how eclipses occur. What benefits have humans gained through lunar exploration? What possibilities still lie ahead? What cautions should we exercise in lunar exploration?

6: LIFE BEYOND DEATH

"This [star] chart shows how our language and our stories are linked to the stars," Opimotiho said. "It helps us to communicate with those who are far away, and it gives us a way of understanding the messages our wāko-makanak, our ancestors, have left for us on the land" (MM, p. 34).

Traditional Rocky Cree philosophy views death not as an end, but as a transition—a continuation of the life cycle or *miskanaw*/journey where the spirit returns to the Creator and reunites with ancestors. Death is often accepted as part of a natural process, and it is believed that the deceased remains present, guiding and protecting their loved ones.

Death is sacred, just like birth, and Rocky Cree stories often interweave birth and death as twin journeys that every spirit will take.

Kīwitin Kānimit replied. "The medicine road is revealed to us in our *acathokiwina*, our mist-of-time stories, and the paintings that our ancestors made on the rocks. They help us to walk in the medicine way" (MM, p. 13).

Talk About It

Lead a class discussion posing the question: "If life is a journey, what things help someone travel well?" Students might suggest kindness, helping others, courage, curiosity, learning, family, etc.

Connect students' understandings to Rocky Cree beliefs that emphasize that one must live in a good way so that at death the spirit's journey continues well.

Invite the students to capture their understanding of life beyond death in their ***Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal***. Instruct them to respond to examples from *Māskikīy Miskanaw* that talk about death and the life beyond.

Invite the students to expand their thinking with this journal prompt: "If death is a journey instead of an ending, how might that change the way people feel about it?"

TEACHER TIP

The film *The Lion King* (1994), can be used to raise discussion about death and dying. Consider:

- **The Circle of Life:** The film teaches that death is a natural part of life and that life continues, exploring the idea of a natural order or a journey.
- **Afterlife and Legacy:** Through Mufasa's guidance, the film presents the idea that loved ones live on in our memories and in the stars, watching over us and guiding us from the afterlife.
- **The Grief Process:** Simba experiences several stages of grief: denial (refusing to believe his father is gone), guilt (blaming himself for the stampede), and depression, before finally accepting the loss.
- **Honouring the Past:** The message "remember who you are" helps learners understand that loved ones remain part of their identity even after death.

In Rocky Cree culture, death, or the spirit journey, has protocols, ceremonies, and rites associated with it. Some help the spirit on its journey: a four-day mourning period followed by a feast; a round dance to commune with those who have passed on; and a sacred fire which was often lit after a death to give comfort and allow the community to offer food and tobacco to the spirit for its journey.

Invite students to draw a sacred fire in their **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal**. Use their sketch to create an infographic that captures the Rocky Cree protocols and ceremonies associated with death and dying. As an alternative, use the **BLACKLINE MASTER 4.8 SACRED FIRE**. Consider making a bulletin board display to share students' work.

"Yes, to light the way, because the spirit takes four days to get home, and it might get disoriented as it travels towards the star world. That fire is for navigation, just as we use the stars to navigate here on the land. Remember that we always look for the one star that stays still while the others move? This is the orienteering star that will help us find our way. For our relatives, we create something like a star for them, so that they can navigate their way on the māskikīy miskanaw when they go ahead of us" (MM, Spread 22).

For the Rocky Cree, the land is a relative. Teaching students that our bodies return to the earth creates a sense of belonging even after death. Relationships with the land and the ancestors are everlasting.

Activity: Memory Stone

Explain to the students that they will be creating a 'memory stone'. Explain that the rock itself reminds us of our connections to Mother Earth. Use crayons, paint, etc. and decorate the stone:

- As a symbol or memory of a person (who is here or passed on),
- And a lesson that that person taught them.

Lead a class sharing session when completed.

TEACHER TIP

The following activity requires advance set-up and considerations for delivery. You will need smooth stones (one per student) and art/colouring supplies. Some of the subject matter around death and dying may be difficult for students. Keep this in mind.

7: SACRED STORIES & BELIEFS: A MISKANAW FOR THIS LIFE & BEYOND

"Even for those who go ahead, it is not the end. It is a beginning" (MM, p. 48).

One way to begin a discussion of the sacred stories and beliefs that are raised by *Māskikīy Miskanaw* might be to ask students "What is religion"? Take note of their responses on a whiteboard. Connect the ideas they raise to construct a shared definition. One such generalized definition, or explanation, of religion is provided below.

SS

ELA

RC

A

S

H

Religion, or a spiritual tradition, is a way of explaining the mysteries of life such as how the world was created, why there is life and death, and what happens when people die. It is a way in which people explain a spiritual dimension beyond the physical world, how to lead a good life on Earth, and how to worship the Creator who is believed to have power over the world and people's lives. These spiritual beliefs and practices are often written in the form of sacred stories or passed down through oral tradition.

Ask students to write a journal entry in their **Māskikīy Miskanaw Journal** to describe how they or their families are involved in religious experiences, traditions, or celebrations.

Sacred Stories in Māskikīy Miskanaw

In the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* story, Mwakwa meets the Stargazer, Opimotiho, and begins to learn about teachings from the stars that help to provide guidance for how to live on earth. He starts to think more deeply about Rocky Cree understandings of the cycle of life from birth to death, about the people's beliefs of life after death, and about the connections between the earth and the sky. He hears from the Stargazer that our miskanaw continues after we leave this life.

Talk About It

The Spirit Road

Opimotiho tells Mwakwa about the spirit road in the sky where, he says, spirits travel from earth when their time to leave has come.

"As asiniskaw ithiniwak," he says, "we don't believe you die. We say "inīkanotit" - he has gone ahead" (MM, p 47).

The Rocky Cree call the spirit road "atakopimotihomoskanaw" and we call the same white band of stars in the sky "The Milky Way". Modern astronomy tells us that "The Milky Way" is a spiral galaxy that contains our own Solar System and that we see billions of stars from our own galaxy when we look at the hazy white band in the night sky. In China, "The Milky Way" is called the "Silver River" and in the Kalahari Desert it is called the "Backbone of the Night."

Ask students: What is a spiral galaxy and where is Earth located in The Milky Way?

- How big is The Milky Way and what is at its center?
- Does The Milky Way move? How?
- How might the appearance of The Milky Way help us to understand Rocky Cree beliefs about the spirit road?
- How do Rocky Cree beliefs about "inikanotit" compare or contrast with your beliefs or the beliefs of other groups with whom you are familiar?

The Spirit Fire

Mwakwa learns that the North Star, kiwītin acak, is also known as "kiskowowiiskotiw" or spirit fire because it is both the guiding star for travellers on earth but also the guiding star for spirits who are making their way to their otherworldly home. Opimotiho explains that just as the North Star or the

TEACHER TIP

Refer to [Milky Way Galaxy](#) or [Milky Way Galaxy: All you Need to Know](#) for additional information.

spirit fire provides orientation for travellers on earth as well as after death, the Rocky Cree people also build a sacred fire when someone in the family has died. For four days the sacred fire is kept lit to help the spirit stay oriented as it travels toward the star world.

TEACHER TIP

Refer to Learn How to [Find Polaris, Our North Star](#), or [What is the North Star?](#) for additional information.

Ask students

- What makes the North Star, also known as Polaris, so reliable for navigation?
- Where can the North Star be seen in the night sky?
- What makes the North Star seem to be fixed and unmoving?
- Is the North Star actually only one star?
- Astronomy tells us that stars are massive “fires”. They are enormous spheres of plasma held together by gravity that produce light and heat through nuclear fusion and will shine for millions to billions of years. How does the Rocky Cree practice of lighting a sacred fire after someone dies, help to connect thoughts about the earth and the sky?
- What ceremonies or traditions are commonly practiced in your community when someone dies?

The Star People

The traditional Rocky Cree story of Acakos Iskwiw tells the asiniskaw ithiniwak that they are star beings of energy, light and spirit. It explains how they travel to earth and how they depart from it, how all things are interconnected, how to live well, and how to travel successfully on their miskanaw in this life and into the life beyond. Sacred teachings like this are called “kinistinow” or “what we are guided by” (MM pg. 33)

Mwakwa is reminded that one of the most basic teachings is that there are four aspects of being human - physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Stargazers know how to pass along the knowledge of the stars to the members of the Rocky Cree community, helping them to understand who they are and how to travel their miskanaw. Mwakwa is awed by the knowledge and responsibility of being a stargazer and makes the decision to become an apprentice to Opimotiho. Perhaps, in time, he also will become a stargazer able to pass along sacred star stories and their teachings to members of his community.

Read and Write About It

Ask students to:

- Read “The Story of Star Woman” on the **BLACK LINE MASTER 4.9 THE STORY OF STAR WOMAN** and complete the questions on the sheet.
- Review their answers to the questions with their classmates. Did everyone in the class understand the story in the same way? What similarities and differences were there in interpretations?

Talk About It

Ask students:

- What is a sacred story?

- Who are the people in your community that help others understand sacred stories and their applications for daily living? Are you aware of different ways of interpreting sacred stories?
- Do you think sacred stories are helpful for figuring out how to live well? Why or why not?
- What are some of the traditional sacred stories in your community? Are there ways that traditional sacred stories are being changed by modern culture?

The Star Chart

Opimotiho shows Mwakwa a beautiful drawing called the star chart. The star chart is sacred because it shows how Rocky Cree language and stories are linked to the stars. Opimotiho explains that the chart helps those who study it communicate with those who are far away and to understand the messages the ancestors have left on the land. It is a graphic representation of a vast collection of knowledge about Rocky Cree stories, traditions, teachings, and culture. Mwakwa learns that the star chart is like a map to orient yourself in a good way on your miskanaw (MM, pg 34 -35).

TEACHER TIP

Sacred stories touch on the meaning of our existence; they are the stories we live by. They are important stories that tell us who we are and what we can become. They are the narratives of a community that explain the origin of humanity and the universe, the purpose of life, and what happens after death. They provide moral guidance, preserve cultural identity, and act as a link between human experience and understandings of the divine.

Read, Draw, and Talk About It

Ask students to:

- Read the explanation of the Rocky Cree Star Chart as provided by the Rocky Cree Knowledge Keeper, Larry Tait.
- Re-create the star chart as they read (or hear) the explanation and look at the illustration on page 35 of the *Māskikīy Miskanaw* storybook. Does drawing the star chart graphic help to understand its symbolism better? What does it help us to understand about the Rocky Cree way of life and about Rocky Cree sacred stories and beliefs? How might the chart be helpful to answer questions from Rocky Cree young people about how to live well? How does your own way of life compare or contrast to the traditional Rocky Cree way of life?

Ask students to:

- Design symbols that illustrate how they live and important beliefs that they hold by following the guiding questions on **BLACKLINE MASTER 4.10 MY LIFE AND BELIEFS**
- Create a colorful graphic piece of artwork that is meaningful to them by using the symbols they have designed. Students can be given a large piece of poster paper, felt pens or paints to create this piece of artwork. Alternatively, students might be given the opportunity to work in other mediums - building three dimensional models with found objects, clay, or wood, for example. Building a 3D model, however, might become a more time-consuming exercise in creativity!

TEACHER TIP

Ensure discussions of sacred stories, beliefs, and spiritual traditions are respectful and foster empathy. Manitoba Education Resources provides a comprehensive Narrative Webquest unit - www.edu.gov.mb.ca Religious Education Guidelines. Other valuable links: [PBS Religion & Ethics News-Weekly Lessons](#), [URI Kids World Religion](#), [Crash Course Religions](#)

- Host an Interactive Gallery Walk. Display the Life and Beliefs Artworks that each member of the class has created. Post a blank piece of poster paper below each piece of art. Give each class member a fine tip felt marker and ask them to view the class artworks in the gallery and write comments below on at least six different pieces. The comments should focus on what the viewer found interesting, surprising, eye-catching, or attractive about the piece of art. Make sure that some comments are left below each piece of art. Remind each other of the importance of being thoughtful and considerate of each other's work, remembering to value the diverse ways that people bring meaning to life.



A ROCKY CREE STAR CELEBRATION

Astronomy - or stargazing - is a fascinating and rewarding hobby. It allows us to see beautiful sights, such as misty whirlpool galaxies and glittering star clusters, and witness incredible events, such as meteor showers and eclipses. Studying the stars and wondering about the universe gives us a sense of perspective, too, about the life each one of us is living.

A great way to celebrate the knowledge the class has gained through the study of this module and to continue the learning journey is to take a field trip to a planetarium for an immersive star show presentation. Wilfred Buck's Star Stories program is a must-see for Rocky Cree understandings of the sky. Here is a list of some of the planetariums in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta to which you might plan a visit:

- Manitoba Museum Planetarium: Winnipeg, MB.
- Lockhart Planetarium: Winnipeg, MB
- University of Saskatchewan Observatory: Saskatoon, SK.
- Wilkinson Memorial Observatory: Eastend, SK
- Saskatchewan Science Centre: Regina, SK
- Get Rooted Planetarium: Lloydminster, SK
- Royal Astronomical Association of Canada Observatory: Edmonton, AB
- Ziegler Dome, Telus World of Science: Edmonton, AB
- Telus Spark Science Centre: Edmonton, AB
- Jasper Dark Sky Preserve: Jasper, AB
- Waterton Planetarium Shows: Waterton, AB
- Sunridge Observatory: Seven Persons, AB
- Eagle Butte Observatory: Dunmore, AB
- Hesje Observatory: Kingman, AB

Star Party Outdoors

Could you and your class plan an overnight camping trip for a star party?

A star party is a gathering of amateur astronomers and night-sky enthusiasts who meet in dark-sky locations to observe, photograph, and learn about the cosmos. These events range from local evening gatherings to multi-day camping trips, offering incredible opportunities to share equipment and knowledge.

Most astronomical star parties take place in the late spring and summer months, when the Milky Way core is at its highest position in the sky.

Generally, participants set up various telescopes and are often eager to show other attendees the stars and planets they are observing. Many attendees bring specialized camera gear to capture deep-sky objects and swap image-processing tips. Multi-day events often feature workshops, equipment showcases, guest speakers, and outdoor recreation.

You might plan an overnight camping trip as a class to attend an Astronomy Club's star party. Many Royal Astronomical Associations of Canada centres and other astronomy clubs either sponsor or actively participate in star parties throughout the year.

The RASC Winnipeg Centre frequently host observing nights at the Glenlea Observatory and a members-only event at Spruce Woods Provincial Park. Visit the RASC Winnipeg Centre to check their upcoming event schedule. To find other regional events and amateur astronomy groups, check out the RASC Star Parties Directory.

One important consideration when planning to visit or organize an outdoor star party is to avoid bringing white lights. Standard white flashlights, car headlights, or glowing phone screens are highly discouraged as they ruin night vision for everyone on the field.

You can red-shift a white flashlight by covering the lens with dense red plastic such as the clear red tape sold in auto parts stores for temporary repairs of broken taillights. In a pinch, you even can cover the lens with a red balloon or use a brown paper bag to both dim and redden a white flashlight.

To best see faint stars, star clusters, galaxies, and nebulae, you need to adapt your eyes to the dark. To do this, you must avoid looking at any bright lights, especially white light, for 20 minutes or more. This allows the pupils of your eyes to open to their widest and the photosensitive chemicals in your retinas to build up. Exposure to any bright light will spoil your dark adaptation and you'll have to start all over again.

Obviously the main reason for going to a star party or hosting one is to enjoy wonderful views of the night sky. However, they do not have to be exclusively nocturnal events. Participants can view the stars independently and meet the next day to discuss what they observed or to participate in workshops by guest speakers who can teach group members about things such as how to use a telescope, how to take and process sky photographs, and maybe even how to sketch or paint the night sky.

Star Party Indoors

An indoor star party brings the beauty of the cosmos inside using space-themed decorations, planetarium projectors, and galaxy-themed treats.

Decorate the room by blackening the windows with blinds or black paper; if you can, transform the ceiling into the night sky.

You might use an affordable mini planetarium projector to blanket your ceiling with thousands of stars and glowing nebulae. Students could also draw a constellation on the bottom of a cardboard bowl or paper cup and poke holes in the design where stars might appear. Inserting a flashlight behind the design will project the constellations into the ceiling. This activity could also be turned into a game where students guess the constellation they are seeing.

You might extend the space-themed decor with stars or star lanterns. Hang white or silver stars or geometric, atomic white or holographic paper star lanterns at various heights to simulate glowing stars.

Star Party Games and Activities

- Host a team trivia contest where you ask questions and give points for correct answers about the constellations, the moon cycles, the planets, the Milky Way, the Northern lights, or other astronomical wonders.
- Play a ball throw and catch game with a glow-in-the-dark ball.
- Host a star dance by playing space-themed music and giving each student a glow stick to hold while dancing in the dark.
- Decorate star-shaped sugar cookies for eating.
- Make it a costume party! Dress in sky-related costumes - characters from constellation stories, phases (and faces) of the moon, costumes that suggest planetary names or names of other stellar objects.
- Watch a movie that is set in the stars or the sky. Talk about what parts of the movie represented things your class has learned about earth and sky in this module of study.

Star Party Feasting

- The menu for your star celebration might include:
- Party sandwiches with the crusts cut off and shaped with cookie cutters into star shapes or round or crescent moon-shapes.
- Sliced Star fruit (also known as carambola).
- Sliced kiwi - Slice small, alternating V- shaped wedges all the way around the middle of a whole, unpeeled kiwi (pointing your knife toward the center). Once you pull the two halves apart, each side will have beautiful star points.
- Thick slices of watermelon or honeydew melon can be cut using a star-shaped cookie cutter.
- A Milky Way beverage - Drink milk or a vanilla milkshake in honor of our home galaxy - the Milky Way.
- Meteor meatballs - plant a toothpick in each meatball with an orange, red, or yellow construction paper flame.
- Hot or Cold? Serve foods on ice. Serve water or drinks with ice. Our universe is about an average temperature of -300 degrees Celsius. Permanently shadowed craters near the Moon's poles can dip below - 410°F (-246°C) (NASA Science). Much of our universe is very very cold.
- Serve something hot! Perhaps a sizzling pot of stirfry. Matter spiraling into massive black holes reaches temperatures of hundreds of millions of degrees Fahrenheit (Live Science). While a star's surface is extremely hot, its internal core is unfathomably hotter. For instance, the Sun's surface is 5,800 K, and its core reaches roughly 15,000,000 K. (NASA Science).

TEACHER TIP

Kelvin scale starts at absolute zero (the coldest possible temperature in the universe). 0 K is absolute zero (-273.15°C). 0°C is the freezing point of water (273.15 K)(eHOWeduc).

Stories and Student Work

Display the creative work done by students in this module and share stories of what they learned and what wonders still remain for them to explore!

Module 4 Blackline Masters and Teacher Resources

Rocky Cree Constellations and Star Stories

- 4.1 Sensory Words
- 4.2 An Imaginary Sky
- 4.3 Rocky Cree Constellations

Music is Sacred Medicine

- 4.4 Travelling Song Album Cover

Wawatiw: Painting the Northern Lights

- 4.5 What? Who? Why?

Exploring Cyclical and Linear Time

- 4.6 Linear vs Cyclical Time Sorting Cards

Rocky Cree Star Teachings

- 4.7 Four Point Star

Life Beyond Death

- 4.8 Sacred Fire

Sacred Stories and Beliefs

- 4.9 The Story of Star Woman
- 4.10 My Life and Beliefs

4.1 Sensory Words

For each of your senses (sight, taste, touch, smell, sound), write two descriptive words (adjectives) for the following night sky elements to create a word splash. The prompts below will help you create your word splash.

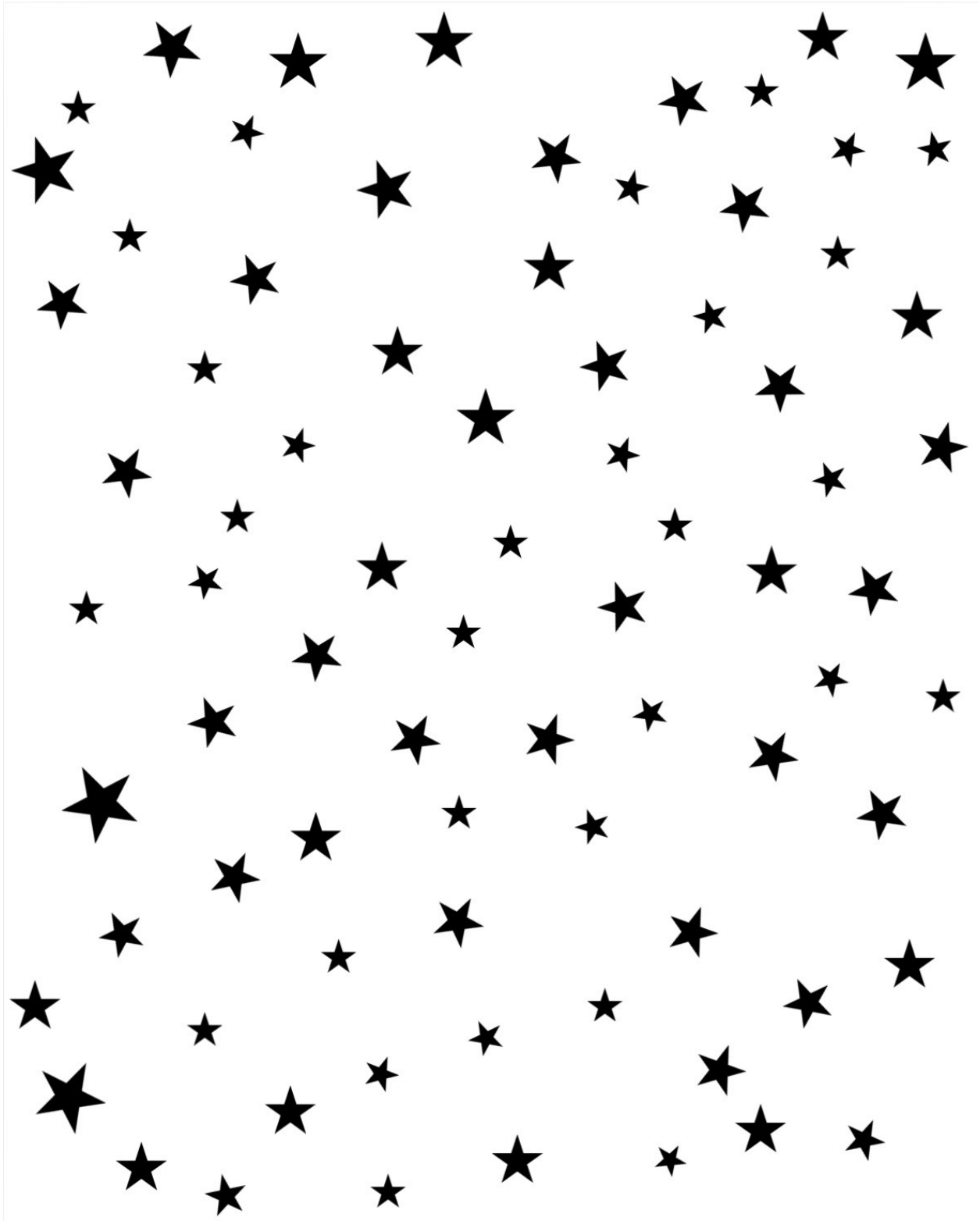
- The Sky: (Think about its color, depth, and texture)
- The Stars: (Think about their light, movement, and temperature)
- The Moon: (Think about its shape, glow, and presence)
- The Northern Lights: (Think about their color, shape, and movement)
- A Meteor Shower: (Think about its light, speed, and presence)
- A Constellation: (Think of its shape, position, and light)

Word Splash

The Sky	The Stars	The Moon
The Northern Lights	A Meteor Shower	A Constellation

4.2 Imaginary Sky

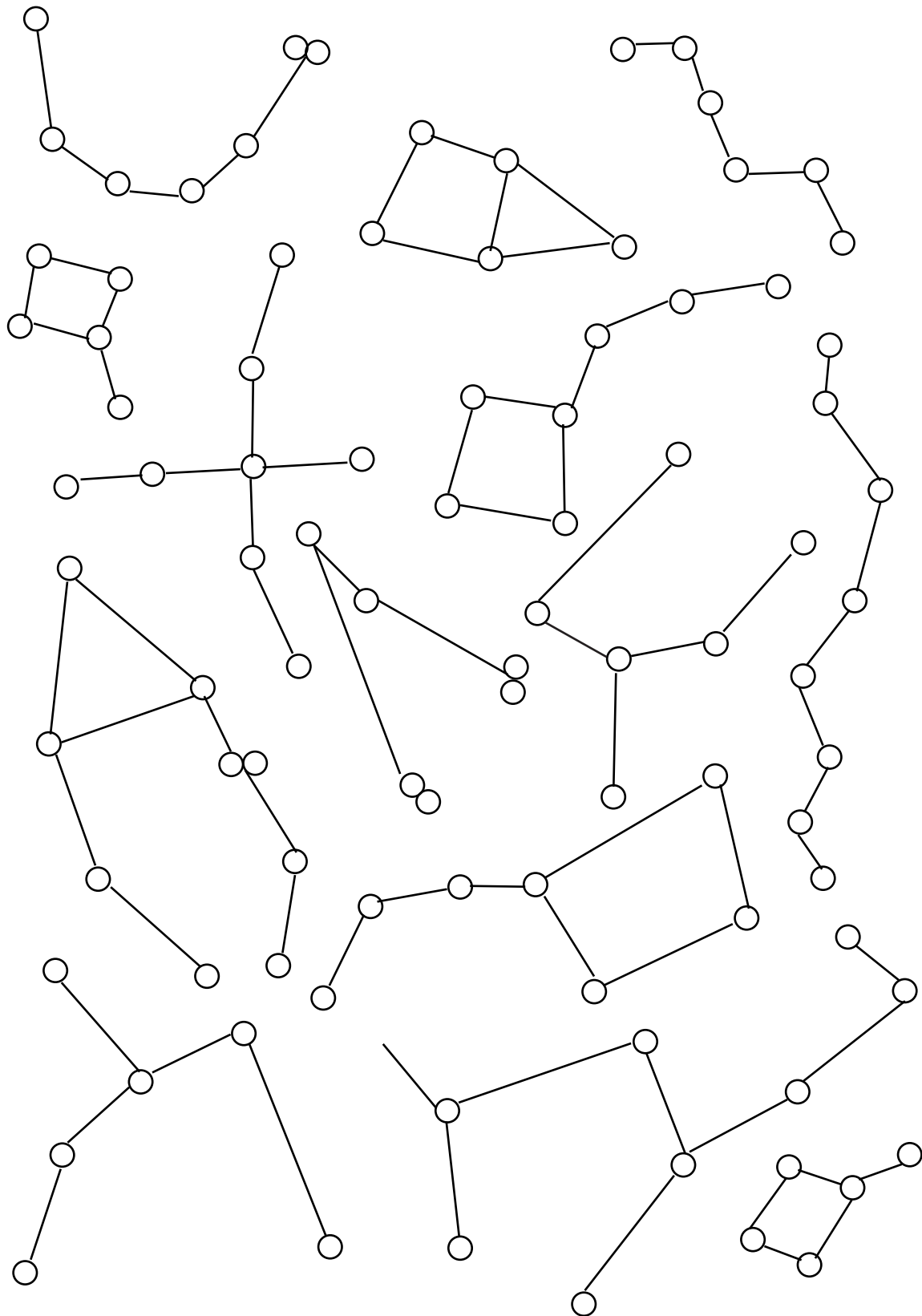
Create your own constellations with the following diagram.



Stock Images from canva.com.

4.3 Rocky Cree Constellations

Find the four Rocky Cree Constellations in this constellation map; label and color them.



4.4 Travelling Song Album Cover

Why are music album covers important? Album covers play a key role in the overall music experience. They represent sounds and emotions contained within the music. They capture the essence of the music and provide listeners with a glimpse into the artist's creative vision and message. They serve as a form of artistic expression and storytelling, adding depth and meaning to the music they represent.

Below is the album cover of the album *Travelling Home* by the band Cree Confederation. Write your answers the following questions in the space below.

- Based on the artwork, what do you think the band's message is?
- What and who do they represent?
- What emotions are presented?



Instructions: Use the template provided and design an album cover for Mwakwa's 'Star Traveller Song'. Take artistic inspiration from the artwork and story found in *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*. Use any art medium (or a combination) including: crayon, pencil, paint, markers, pastels, fingerpaint, gel pen, yarn, digital art, papercraft, etc. Make sure the title of the song and the artist's name appear on the cover.

Image Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1439989656950880&id=100028195789210&set=a.569345810681940>.

4.4 (Continued) Travelling Song Album Cover



1. Explain your album cover. What medium did you choose? Why did you choose it? What colours did you use? What fonts and the artistic style? Why?

2. What emotions or mood are you trying to convey in your album cover?

4.5 What? Who? Why?

WHAT DO YOU SEE?	WHO DO YOU SEE?	WHY DO YOU THINK ITS THERE?

4.6 Linear vs Cyclical Sorting Cards

Backgrounder for the Teacher:

Linear time refers to a view of time as a straight line that moves forward in a continuous manner. This concept is commonly used in Western societies and reflects the cultural values of progress and individualism. Time is viewed as something that moves from past to present to future with no repetition or return to previous moments. Cyclical time refers to a view where time repeats itself in cycles or patterns. This concept is more commonly found in Indigenous cultures where it reflects an emphasis on harmony and interconnectedness with nature. In this way, events repeat themselves over and over again without an end point or final destination. Understanding these two distinct concepts can help us better understand how different cultures view their place within history and their relationship with the natural world around them. Refer to [Time Quiver](#).

Materials:

- Pieces of string, one per student.
- Printed copies of sorting cards cut into individual pieces, one set per student pair.

Steps:

- Divide the class into pairs.
- Recap the lesson's learning content. Make sure the students have an understanding of linear and cyclical time.
- Hand each pair a set of Linear vs Cyclical Sorting Cards. Note that there are six blank cards. Instruct each person in the pair to take three cards.
- Instruct pairs to shape their two pieces of string to represent linear (straight horizontal line) and cyclical (circle) time.
- Instruct students to sort the cards under the correct heading and string shape. [Hint: linear time has a beginning and an end; cyclical time is repeating.] Attach cards to string if you wish.
- Once the sort is completed, invite pairs to share. Lead a class discussion.
- Draw students' attention to the 'blank' cards. Ask students to write down: One example of linear time in their daily life. One example of cyclical time in their daily life. One example of cyclical time from *Māskikīy Miskanaw: The Medicine Way*. Place these cards under or on the linear or circular time heading or string shapes.

4.6 (Continued) Linear vs Cyclical Sorting Cards

Sunrise	Summer /nīpin	Sunset
7 Day Week	Christmas, Diwali, Annual Feasts	Moon Phases
Historical Timeline	Production at a factory	mikiskaw/ Freeze-Up

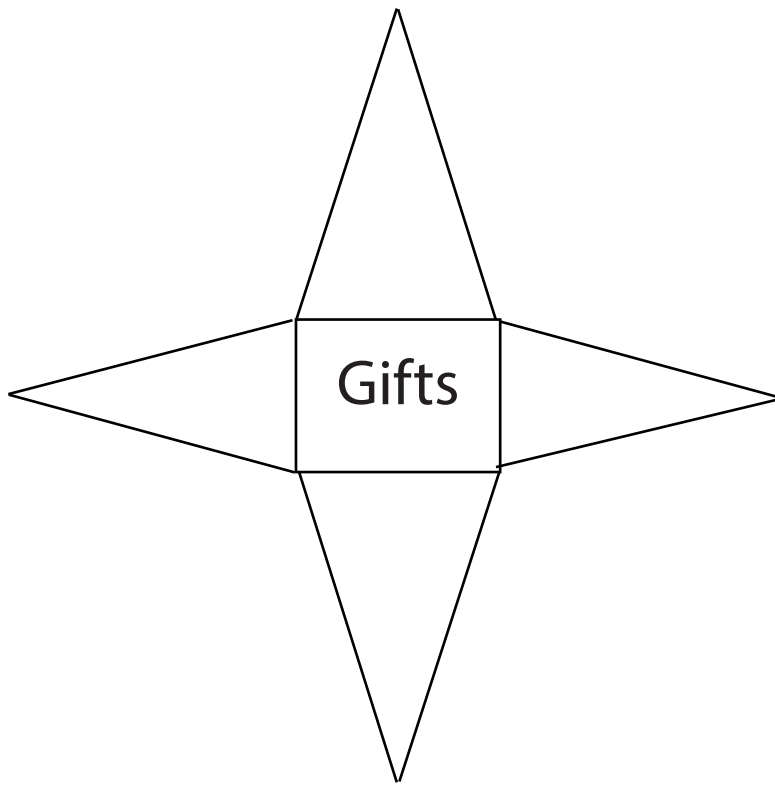
4.6 (Continued) Cyclical Sorting Cards

To-Do List	Waiting In Line	School Semester

4.7 Four Point Star

The four point star graphic represents sacred teachings about the four domains of personhood - physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual - and their corresponding domains of learning - psychomotor, cognitive, affective, and spiritual.

On the four point star below, label each ray of the star with one of the domains of personhood, and at the end of each ray, write down some of the skills and abilities that you have in each of these domains.



My star gifts help me in:

4.8 Sacred Fire

Create an infographic. Write notes about Rocky Cree protocols and ceremonies associated with death and dying and place them around your sacred fire image.



4.9 The Story of Star Woman

A being of energy, light and spirit that we have come to know as Acakos Iskwiw, or Star Woman, was travelling across the cosmos when she came across the Milky Way galaxy. Gazing through the Milky Way, she saw a beautiful world - Nikawiy Aski, the Earth. She was intrigued and decided to go to this lovely, mysterious place. She understood that to travel to Aski, the Earth, she would have to go through a portal, which is a doorway from one reality to another. She called on the doorkeeper of the portal, Kokominakasis, or Grandmother Spider, and asked for help to navigate the portal.

Star Woman was told by Grandmother Spider that there were three conditions that had to be met in order for her to go through the portal. She had to change from a spirit of light and energy and take on a physical form so that she could interact with the physical world. She needed to take a gift through the doorway to remind her of her origins. And she could not stay long on her visit.

Star Woman agreed to these conditions and and kokominakasis/Grandmother Spider spun a single strand of webbing through the doorway so that Star Woman could climb down and reach Aski/the Earth. When Star Woman touched the ground, she took on a physical form and transformed into a human being. She brought a star blanket with her to remind her of her home in the stars. She stayed on Earth for the span of a human lifetime - not very long - before returning through the portal back to the cosmos from which she came.

Rocky Cree people tell the story of Acakos Iskwiw/Star Woman to remind people that we, like Star Woman, are star beings of spirit, energy and light. Everything is made by the Creator Kitchimanito, the Great Spirit. The Creator's first thought was of light, spirit and energy. Therefore everything in creation has a spiritual base of energy, light and spirit.

Like Star Woman, say the Rocky Cree, we arrive here on earth through a single strand of webbing that we call the umbilical cord; we live our lives as visitors who experience, teach, learn, feel and age, and then we leave.

Rocky Cree star blankets are a reminder of the Rocky Cree belief that people have come from the skies and will return to the skies. In particular, the blankets are symbolic of the portal between the stars and earth, often called the Hole in the Sky, also widely known as the Pleiades constellation. There are eight-pointed stars on star blankets - seven points represent the seven stars of the Pleiades constellation and the eighth point is a reminder of the Star Woman, Acakos Iskwiw, whom Rocky Cree people recognize as the "first grandmother."

Paraphrased from Wilfred Buck in <https://pinnguaq.com>

Can you answer these questions about the Star Woman story? Work as individuals or in pairs as your teacher decides. Use your best guess to answer the questions based on what you read.

4.9 (Continued) The Story of Star Woman

1. Who do you think might be the narrator of the Star Woman story? (In other words, who might be telling the story?) What do you imagine would be true about the narrator based on how the story is told?

2. To whom is the story told? Who might be the intended audience for the story?

3. Who is the main character in the story? Who might the main character represent? (In other words, who might identify with the main character?)

4. What do you think are the most important characteristics of the Star Woman?

5. What parts of the story seem “true” to you? Why do you think that is so?

4.9 (Continued) The Story of Star Woman

6. What common life experiences are explained by the story?

7. In what ways is the story of Star Woman a sacred story?

8. The Pleiades are a constellation of seven stars also known as the Seven Sisters. This constellation of stars is the most obvious star cluster to the naked eye in the night sky. Due to the brightness of its stars, the Pleiades are viewable from most areas on Earth. They are especially prominent in the Northern Hemisphere in winter time. How are the Pleiades of importance to the story of the Star Woman?

9. How is the role of [Kokominakasis](#)/Grandmother Spider important to the story?

10. What do you like best about the story of Star Woman? Why?

4.10 My Life and Beliefs

Use the questions below to design and draw symbols that represent your way of life and important beliefs you hold about life. You will need colored pencils or pens for this exercise. When you have finished designing these important symbols, you will use them to create a colorful piece of artwork - a graphic representation of the things that are most important to you.

1. Draw your idea of time. For example, is it linear - a straight or a wavy line - or circular or spiral or some other shape? Think about why time might seem like a line or a circle or another shape to you. Design a symbol for time as you imagine it. (This will be the basic shape that your graphic piece of artwork will take).

2. What are the important ages or stages of life? What symbols could you use to designate those stages? Are there specific colors that go with various stages of life? Draw your ages and stages symbols here.

3. What holds life together for you? What might be the single most important thing in life? What symbol might you design to represent that very important idea? What colors would you attach to it? Draw it here and think about where you might place this symbol on your Life and Beliefs piece of artwork.

4.10 (Continued) My Life and Beliefs

4. What do you need for survival? What symbols will you use to illustrate the foods, plants, homes and other material things that are necessary for you to live? What colors will you attach to these objects and why?

5. Design symbols for elements of the natural world that you notice in everyday life and that are significant to you. Do certain elements seem to belong more naturally with certain stages of life?

6. How does change happen to you in life? What symbols could you use for the change of seasons, or for how you travel or change locations at various times in life?

7. What symbols might you use to show the relationships that are of most importance to you?

8. What do you treasure the most? What symbols might you use for your treasures? Where will these symbols appear in your final Life and Beliefs piece of art?

Cree Glossary

acako īthiniw (ah CHA ko eh THI new) – stargazer

acāko pimotiho miskanaw (ah CHAA ko pih MO te ho ME ska now) – “spirit road in the sky”; the Milky Way

ācapi (AH cha pe) – bow

akask (AH kask) – arrow

acathokiwiina (ah cha THO ke we na) – mist-of-time stories; sacred stories passed down over time

amatisowin (ah mah TE so win) – intuitive sense that other beings are nearby, usually negative

asiniskaw īthiniwak (uh SEH neh scow eh THI neh wuk) – Rocky Cree people

askī (ah SKEE) – earth

atāmiskātowin (ah TAA me skah toh win) – process of aligning our energy with one another, which is traditionally done when greeting people and when saying goodbye

atoskithakan (ah TOS ke tha kan) – helper

īmīthikōwisiwin (EE me the koh we see win) – teachings about the proper way of hunting

inikanotit (eh nee KAH no teet) – going ahead to the spirit world, dying

ipimwatākwit (eh pe MWA taa kweet) – to release an arrow/to shoot an arrow

kakakiw (KAH kah kew) – crow

kakikipakwa (KAH ke ke pah kwah) – Labrador tea

kanāci (kah NAA che) – to do something sacredly/in a sacred manner

kayas (kah YAAS) – a long time ago

kīkwan (KEE kwahn) – What?

kinanaskomitin (ke nah NAH sko me tin) – thank you

kinanaskomitinawaw (ke nah NAH sko me te now wow) – thank you (when addressing more than one person)

kīnikacos (kee NEE kah chos) – arrows with stone points made from flint or chert for big-game hunting

kinistinow (ke NE ste now) – what we are guided by (emotionally, spiritually, and mentally)

kinosiw thiwahikānak (KE no sew the wah HE kaah nuk) – dried pounded fish

kisī aya (ke SEE ah yah) – lead Elder

kisīthiniw (ke SEE the new) – Elder, Knowledge Keeper; the stage when a person is ready to teach younger generations

kiskimitowin (KE ske me to win) – planning ahead (for the upcoming season)

kiwītin acak (ke WEE ten AH chak) – The North Star, also known as kisikowi-iskotiw, spirit fire

kwīkwīsiw (KWEE kwee sew) – whiskeyjack or gray jay

makosiwi kisikaw (mah ko SE we KE se kow) – midwinter or solstice feast

mamitonicikan (mah ME to ne che kun) – physical, emotional, spiritual, mental concepts come together for decision-making

mathomin (mah THO men) – wild rice

māskīkiy (MAA skee kee) – medicine

māskīkiy acimowin (MAA skee kee ah che MO win) – medicine story

māskīkiy miskanaw (MAA skee kee ME ska now) – medicine way, the medicine road

mikiskaw (ME kis cow) – fall season, tools needed for winter travel

mīkīwahp (MEE kee wahp) – dome-shaped dwellings of trees and animal skins (also known as wigwams)

mīkīwahpa (MEE kee wah pa) – plural of mīkīwahp

Miko Pisim (MEE koh PEE sem) – Red Sun

miskanaw (MEH skaa now) – guidance path

mistikopakitahawin (ME ste koh PAH ke ta hah win) – a fishing net made of willow branches

mosihowin (mo se HO win) – Intuitive sense that friends or relatives are about to arrive

mōswa (MOOH swah) – moose

mwakwa (MWAU kwa) – loon

napakasīht (na pah KAH seet) – balsam

niciwam (NEE chee wam) – partner, companion

nikāwī (ne KAA wee) – my mother

nikipawataw (NE ke PAH wah taw) – I dreamed of him

nikōsis (ne KOO sis) – my son, my nephew

nipiw (ne PEW) – he or she dies; (from nipi, meaning water)

nitānis (neh TAA nis) – my girl

nitotimak (ne TO te mak) – my relatives

ōcākosa (oh CHAA koh sah) – spirit sister, sister-in-law

ōcawīmaw (oh CHA wee maw) – uncle

ōkawīmaw (oh KAA wī maw) – the mother of the family

ōkōsisīmaw (oh koh SI si maw) – a son of the family

omāchiw (oh MAAH chew) – constellation known as the hunter

ōsīma (oh SEE ma) – a younger sibling

ōtanisīmaw (oh TAH ni si maw) – a daughter of the family

ōtawīmaw (oh TAH wi maw) – the father of the family

othasowina (oh THAH so we nah) – family rules of conduct

ōtosīma (oh TOH see mah) – auntie

pastahowin (PAH stah ho win) – a breaking of the sacred laws

pīkwaciscakwan (pee KWA chis cha kwan) – wooden arrow with large conical blunt head for hunting geese, other birds, and small game

pimahamowī pīsīm (pe mah HAH mo wee PEE sem) – “flying back moon”: the time of year when the waterfowl fly south

pīpīciw (PEE pee chew) – robin

piponaskos (pe po NAHS kos) – a young bull moose, one or two years old

sowaki sahakikan (so WAH ke sah kah HE kun) – Suwannee Lake

tākwākin (taa KWAA ken) – fall season

tapwi (TA pwe) – true

Tipiskaw (TE pes kow) – night

wākomakan (WAA ko mah kun) – to adopt someone as a relative who is not your relative by blood

wākomakanak (WAA ko mah kah nuk) – ancestors

wakotowin (waa KO toh win) – adopted relatives

wapāsihk (wa PAH seek) – Little Narrows, Leftrook

wapasi pawistikos (wah pee SEE wee pah WE ste kos) – Swan Rapids

Wāpos (WAAH pos) – rabbit

wasō (wah SOOH) – the shiny one

waskatamo (wah SKA tah mo) – waterlily root

wīchiwiw otīma (we CHE wew oh TEE mah) – dog that accompanies omāchiw, the hunter, in the omāchiw constellation

wīkaskwa (WEE kah skwah) – wild mint / mint tea

wīkinanaskiwa (WEE kee nah nah ski wah) – gathering places

wīkis (WEE kees) – muskrat root

wītko (WEE te koh) – a powerful negative spirit

wītkowatisak – (WEE te koh wah te suk) – interacting negatively with others; literally, eating one another up

asiniskaw ininiw ayamiwin, the language spoken by the asiniskaw īthiniwak, is connected to the land and contains the teachings of the ancestors. The Six Seasons of the Asiniskaw Īthiniwak team has conducted research with community members to determine the best spellings and pronunciations to use in this book. Due to the evolving nature of such research, these glossary entries may not match those published in previous books in this series.

Appendix "A"

Introduction to Rocky Cree Medicinal Plants

The following teachings about medicinal plants were received from Rocky Cree Knowledge Keepers who live in or near South Indian Lake along the Churchill River in Northern Manitoba.

According to Rocky Cree teachings, medicine is not an afterthought. Medicine is what keeps you healthy and also makes you well when sick. All plants from the land are good for something even if we do not already know how they might help us.

Sustainability is important to gathering practices. Medicinal plants should be picked from the middle of a patch and seeds, if collected, should be scattered so more plants can grow. When possible, the root of a plant, or a portion of the root, should remain in the ground so the plant can regrow. Plant collectors should maintain reciprocity with the land; tobacco left as an offering indicates that the collector is trading with the land and paying respects for the gifts of the land.

Just as the medicine way involves having good relations with each other, it also means having good relations with the plants and the land.

From a Rocky Cree perspective, learning can come from watching and listening to a teacher, one another, or an Elder, well as all living things. Rocky Cree pedagogy is built on a modelling philosophy. "I do, we do, you do." This approach is critical when learning about medicinal plants.

Gathering medicines is not a gender-specific activity. Whoever receives the knowledge or is available to gather, should gather. In traditional culture, it might have been the women who did most of gathering because the men were frequently occupied in hunting.

The story of hydro development in South Indian Lake is important because it impacted the waterways and water levels and therefore impacted the plants that were collected for medicines.

Rocky Cree Knowledge Keepers recommend using collected rainwater or melted ice water – not tap water – for making medicinal teas.

osha – "Bear Root": looks like parsley; can grow to 3 feet tall; roots smell like celery and licorice; the leaves are elliptical with incised edges; osha grows at the edge of the lake; bears eat it in the fall to fall asleep; root can be dried and used as a tea for a decongestant and to treat flu and respiratory conditions; dried powdered root can be made into an ointment to treat skin infections (Editor's note: osha looks similar to poison hemlock or water hemlock, which are very toxic plants. Osha can be identified by its brown, wrinkly roots that smell like celery).

wikis - "Muskrat Root" : muskrat root has long, sword-like leaves that look like iris leaves; the plant can grow up to five feet tall and grows on the banks of river systems near low water; root is cut and the plant is left to regrow; the harvesting is done from the middle of the patch for sustainability; the portion of root that is harvested is scraped, dried and ground up for tea; can be chewed as well like chewing tobacco to get the juices; health benefits include treating colds, coughs, and assisting the respiratory system.

wikaskwa - "Mint" : mint plants are dark green with square stems and leaves that grow opposite to one another; in summer the plants can produce small white, pink or purple flowers. When crushed, the leaves smell like spearmint or peppermint. Mint is picked on the shorelines, can be found on beaver dams, growing around the inland lakes near the rocks; mint is a hardy plant; whole stem with leaves are picked; root is left to regrow and seeds are scattered for regrowth; plant is dried in bundles, stored in paper bags; good as a tea for the respiratory system, to treat colds, and can be mixed with wikis for added respiratory benefits.

kakikipakwa - "Labrador Tea" : is a low growing evergreen plant; leaves are long and slender and curl downwards; leaves are hairy on the underside (white hair when young and reddish-brown when mature); crushed leaves smell lemony; twigs are hairy reddish-brown and the plant can produce small umbrella-shaped clusters of white flowers; the whole plant can be picked including the root; dried and boiled, the plant is good as a tea for treating infections and for building the immune system; dried plant can be added to warm water and a person can soak in it; the warm water solution takes care of swollen feet, helps to heal infection, and improves circulation.

Spruce: the spruce tree is a cone-shaped evergreen tree; its needles are attached individually to the branches and needles can be easily rolled through the fingertips; spruce cones hang downward and have papery scales; spruce gum is used to make ointment; the clear hard knobs of sap can be found on the trunk of spruce trees; sap can be collected any time of the year; knobs are cut off with a knife or stick and boiled with lard; what sinks to the bottom is removed (it will be a hard piece) and the ointment is skimmed off the top. The ointment is used for infections and moisturizing. (Editor's note: conservationists recommend only collecting sap from one side of the tree to allow the sap to flow more freely through the tree).

Poplar: Poplars are fast-growing deciduous trees with white or grey bark that can be covered in black diamond markings; poplar leaves are heart-shaped and tremble in the wind; in fall, the leaves turn golden yellow; in spring, poplars drop long, fuzzy catkins; poplar buds can be picked in spring and stored in a mason jar; buds can be chewed or placed on a tooth when a person has a toothache. Teas made from poplar sap have anti-inflammatory properties and can be used for sore throats or for treating colds.

Red Willow: a fast-growing shrub or small tree with slender pointed leaves, vine-shaped buds and bark that appears reddish especially in winter; red willow stems can be chewed for pain relief; it can be smoked too. The bark peelings can be boiled for tea, and used for pain, inflammation or fever acting much like aspirin.

waskatamo - "Water Lily Root" : the water lily root stems grow underwater spreading in octopus-like tentacles; they are thick and fibrous with a texture that looks like pineapple; a person can bathe with a solution that contains water lily root or make a tea and drink it; it is mostly used as a pain reliever; treats sore backs, diabetes, colds, cancer, earaches, and removes wax from the ears. The beavers also eat the water lily. Water lily is harvested in mid-summer when the water is warm. It is an important plant in traditional Rocky Cree knowledge about health and wellness.

pōsākan - "Birch Tree Mushroom" : is a black charcoal-like mushroom growth found on the trunks of birch trees; the mushroom growth is cut or broken off and allowed to dry for a few days, then it is ground to make tea. The tea can be consumed lukewarm or cold. It is prepared by boiling water and putting the mixture of water and dried posakan in a mason jar. The posakan soaks and is allowed to cool; it is good for upset stomach and flushes out the digestive system. The bark of the birches can be used as a cast for a break or a sprain; warm, wet bark is shaped around the limb and allowed to dry and harden.

Mossberry: is also called wild cranberry, lingonberry, or partridge berry; berries contain anti-oxidants; teas made from mossberry are good for heart health, gut health, brain function, metabolism, inflammation, cancer, diabetes, and urinary tract infections. Mossberries contain vitamin c and e, omega and three types of fiber. The berries are small hard and white and ripen to red or even purple. The bush grows low to the ground and has spiky green leaves. Berries can be harvested in September. Berries can be picked when still white and they will ripen on their own.

Valeria: is a potent plant. Caution is required. The plant is found in quiet bays near the edge of water; small leaves just above the ground stick out. When the plant is dug up, the root smells. The kids call it "stinky feet weed". Use only the root; hang it outside to dry, then boil until the liquid is gone. Use the paste for eczema. Use as a kicker for other medicines.

Wild Dill: is a potent kicker. It is also good to restore circulation. Boil it. Swollen or sore feet soaked in wild dill will be soothed and swelling will go away.

Mushrooms: It is important to know which mushrooms are poisonous and which are not. Mushrooms should never be boiled as they are a fungus. Mushrooms can be used as medicine by adding 2tbsp of ground-up mushroom to hot water and then added to oil in a Mason jar once the mixture is lukewarm. Allow the mixture to sit for 48 hours like homebrew. When it is used, it supports good health - supports the inner organs, heart, kidneys, bladder - good to assist people with diabetes or anxiety issues or sleep disorders.

Juniper: Juniper berries are used to detoxify. The regimen when sick is to eat one juniper berry on the first day, then 2 the next day and so on until you reach 26, then reverse the process. This treatment will purify your organs; helps with diabetes. Smudging with juniper berries is done to purify the air. Juniper berries are also used for flavouring in meat dishes, stews, teas and gin.

Nettles: Pick nettles with care as the leaves sting. Nettle roots and young leaves can be boiled. Can drink this tea for many days; kills cancer. Do not use tap water for making medicine teas; melt ice or use spring rainwater.

Dandelion: The dandelion plant is used to heal cancer. The flower can be made into wine but the root and stem can be picked, dried and ground up. Then it is boiled and used as a drink or a tea.

Roses: Rose bush stems and roots are used are cut into sections, dried, ground up and made into a tea. Thought to help cure cancer. Rose hips can also be used to make tea.

Strawberries: Lovely berries to eat. The root and stem of a strawberry plant can also be dried, boiled and made into a tea to be used as heart medicine.

Birchbark: Birchbark can be peeled and placed on the skin for healing. It will heal -but not straighten- a broken bone. The inside bark of the birchbark is good for energy. Boil it for a tea. A gangrene infection in the foot can be healed through soaked birchbark and spruce gum dressings. Birchbark water is a cleanser; used for a cleanse of the internal organs. Collect birchbark sap early in spring before snow is all melted. Birchbark water and birchbark tea has many benefits.

napakasiht -"Balsam" : Balsam is a good medicinal plant for sore throats and respiratory illnesses. Boil the root, dry it, and use in a tea. There are two kinds of balsam - red root is good (if the plant is yellowish, do not use the root. Use plants that are green and healthy). When you boil the red root of the balsam, the water turns pink. This is good medicine. Brown root is a skinny root; it is not recommended to use for medicine.

Appendix "B"

Rocky Cree Star Chart and Syllabics

The following teachings about the Rocky Cree Star Chart and Syllabics were recieved from Knowledge Keeper Larry Tait of South Indian Lake.

The asiniskaw ithiniwak Star Chart is a beautiful graphic that represents a vast collection of knowledge about the stars, the land, Rocky Cree language, tradition, culture, spirituality and worldview. The Star Chart drawing used in *Māskīkiy Miskanaw* was given to Larry Tait by his Tait and Spence grandfathers.

The center of the star chart is the North Star as well as the earth. It corresponds to the self. You can think of the North Star or the self as a drive shaft.

The red triangle to the right of the North Star is the East Wind. It is also the syllabic "a". The red triangle below the North Star is the South Wind. It is also the syllabic for "i".

The red triangle to the left of the North Star is the West Wind. It is also the syllabic for "o". The red triangle above the North Star is the North Wind, Kiwitin, "go home to" wind. It is also the syllabic for "ī".

The four winds rotate clockwise around the North Star, the drive shaft. The four winds stand for four sounds and they are the four directions.

There are green triangles corresponding to each red triangle. The green triangles represent The yellow dots beside them represent the seasons. The East is spring and also morning. The South is summer and also mid-day. The West is fall/autumn and also evening. The North is winter and also night.

Four blue right angles divide the star chart into quadrants. They stand for spirit -the Rocky Cree belief about spirit. They are also syllabics, beginning on the upper right and moving clockwise - for "mī", "mī", "mo" and "ma."

Each blue right angle is capped by a yellow arch. The yellow arches complete a portion of the chart that looks like a flower. The flower represent plants, trees and medicines and inspires beadwork. Each yellow arch, beginning on the upper right and moving g clockwise - is also a syllabic - "tī", "tī" "to", and "ta".

Adding a brown hook to each center line of the blue angles creates a butterfly. The butterfly represents all birds and insects. Each brown hook, beginning on the right and moving clockwise - is also a syllabic - "cī", "c ī", "co" and "ca". The energy of the butterfly is new growth, new life. A baby is born.

The shape inside the yellow arch represents the women's pipe, also understood as the Little Dipper (or the Dog Stars?). Each shape represents a direction and is a syllabic. Starting to the right of the North Star the direction is north-east and the syllabic is "kī". On the right at the bottom, the direction is south-east and the syllabic is "ka". On the bottom at the left, the direction is south-west and the syllabic is "ko". At the top of the left, the direction is "north-west and the syllabic is "kī".

Four shapes connect to the outward facing line of the blue angles. These shapes represent the men's pipe or the Big Dipper (or the Great Bear?) Beginning at the right on the bottom and moving clockwise, the shapes represent the syllabics "nī", "nī", "no" and "na".

The blue arrows pointing to each green triangle are the four doorways of our life. On the East, the syllabic is “pa” and represents the baby, the first miskana. On the South, the syllabic is “pi”, and represents the teenager around 25 years old, oskatis. On the West, the syllabic is “po”, and represents the adult, middle-aged, kiti-aya. Kiti (the heart) is already beginning to wear out.

On the North, the syllabic is “pī” and represents the elder, kisi-aya, the kind one.

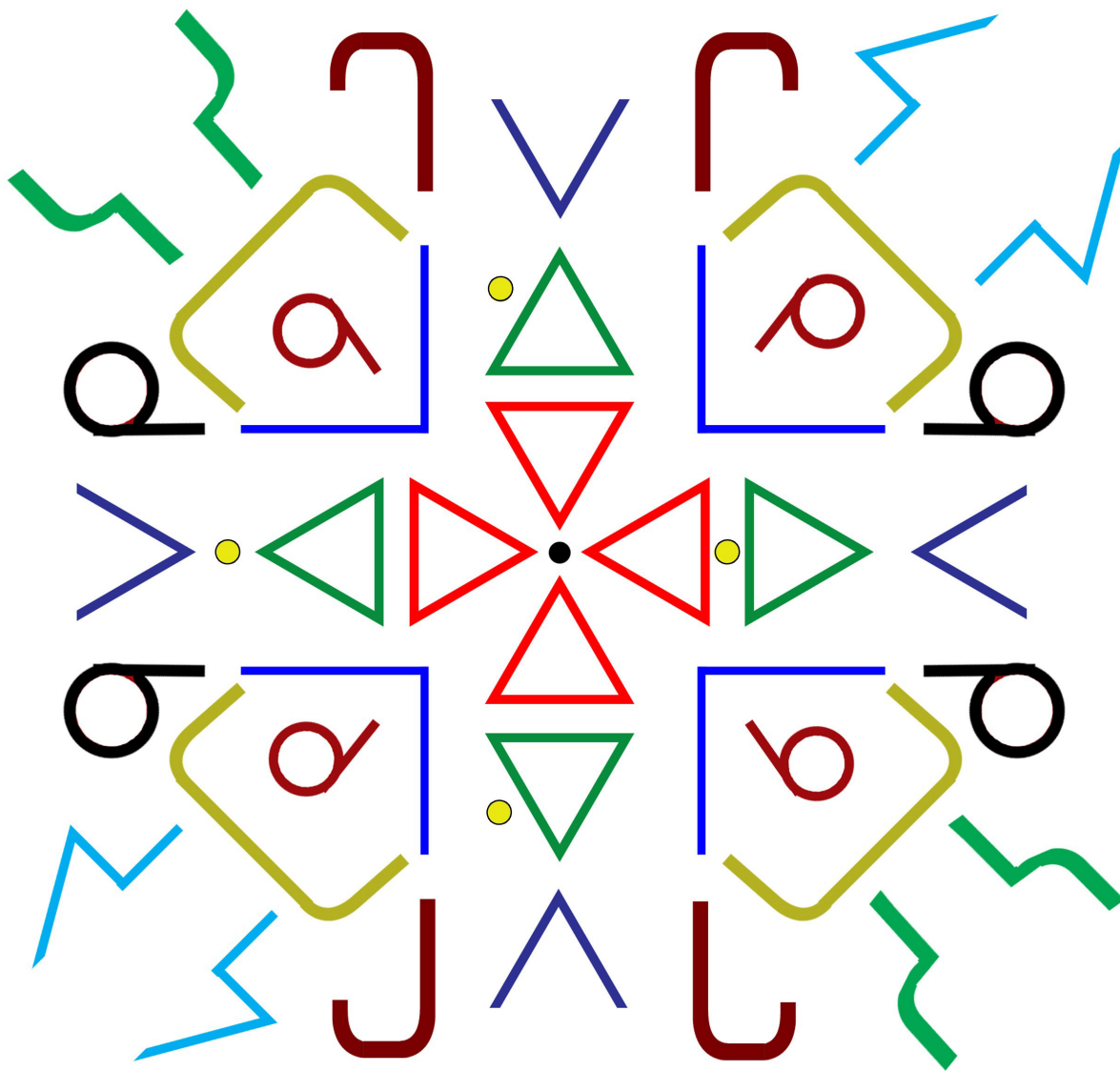
The four curved green lines standing in the south-east and north-west corner represent the flow of water from river to lake, from lake to lake, and finally to the ocean. The lines, starting from the south-east corner and moving clockwise, are the syllabics “sa”, “si”, “so” and “sī”.

The blue lightning bolt lines standing at the north-east and south-west corners represent the flow of energy. Beginning at the top right corner and moving clockwise, the lightning bolt lines are the syllabics “yī”, “yi”, “yo” and “ya”.

The syllabics of the Star Chart are spirit markers, which build the Cree language and a Cree worldview. The Star Chart encompasses language teachings, four directions teachings and star knowledge teachings, helping people to orient themselves in a good way on their miskana.

Rocky Cree Star Chart

As provided by Knowledge Keeper Larry Tait of South Indian Lake.



ACAKO PIMOTIHOWIN MISKANAW/STAR CHART

The asiniskaw Ithiniwak star chart represents a vast collection of knowledge about the stars, the land, Rocky Cree oral traditions, and cultural teachings about how to orient yourself in a good way on your miskanaw. Rocky Cree people also understand that the star chart is the basis of their syllabic writing system. Symbols from the star chart have traditionally been added to asiniskaw Ithiniwak clothing and moccasins through the use of porcupine quillwork or ochre. This particular drawing of the star chart was shared by Larry Tait. It was given to him by his Tait and Spence grandfathers.

Rocky Cree Syllabics Chart

As provided by Knowledge Keeper Larry Tait of Nelson House.

SRO CREE SYLLABIC CHART

	▽ ī	△ i	▷ o	◩ ō	◁ a	◀ ā	
w	▽• wī	△• wi	▷• wo	◩• wō	◁• wa	◀• wā	° w
p	∨ pī	^ pi	> po	◩̇ pō	< pa	◀̇ pā	˙ p
t	U tī	∩ ti	⌋ to	⌋̇ tō	C ta	Ċ tā	/ t
k	9 kī	p ki	d ko	ḋ kō	b ka	ḃ kā	\ k
c	7 cī	r ci	J co	j̇ cō	l ca	l̇ cā	- c
m	1 mī	Γ mi	J mo	j̇ mō	L ma	l̇ mā	c m
n	⌒ nī	σ ni	⌒ no	⌒̇ nō	e na	è nā	˘ n
s	4 sī	7 si	7 so	7̇ sō	4 sa	4̇ sā	ˆ s
y	4 yī	7 yi	4̇ yo	4̇̇ yō	4̇ ya	4̇̇ yā	+ y
th	4̇ thī	7̇ thi	4̇̇ tho	4̇̇̇ thō	4̇̇ tha	4̇̇̇ thā	≠ th
	" h	x hk	≧ r	ε l	✕ Christ	ᐃ• kwā	

Appendix "C"

Curriculum Connections

Social Studies

SS

Grade 4 Social Studies

Cluster 4: History of Manitoba

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

Cluster 5: Canada's North

- Give examples of Indigenous 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 Indigenous 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.

