

## Cultural Standards

**4.1.1: F-2** Identify the traditional ways in which people in Native culture met their basic needs.

**4.1.2: A-2** Demonstrate understanding that storytelling is an important part of oral tradition

**4.1.2: C-2** Demonstrate awareness that Native stories have specific teachings.

**4.2.1: E-2** Give examples of seasonal gatherings and celebrations of Native people.

**4.2.3: A-2** Give examples of ways in which people depend on the Earth for survival.

**4.2.3: E-2** Identify examples of common needs of humans, plants, and animals.

## MN State Standards

### Science

#### Kindergarten

**0.3.2.2.2** Identify the sun as a source of heat and light

#### 1st grade

**1.4.2.1.2** Describe ways in which an animal's habitat provides for basic needs

#### 2nd grade

**2.2.1.2.1** Observe, record and recognize that water can be a solid or a liquid and can change from one state to another

### Social Studies

#### Kindergarten

**0.4.1.2.1** Describe ways people learn about the past

#### 1st grade

**1.1.1.1.1** Demonstrate ways good citizens participate in the civic life of their community

#### 2nd grade

**2.3.1.1.3** Use maps, photos, or other geographical tools to identify and local major landmarks or major physical features of the United States

# Freshwater Ecosystems in Native culture

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**Objective:** Learn the importance of freshwater biomes in native culture

**Integration:** Science, Social Studies

## Background Information

To Indigenous people, water is considered a tremendously sacred gift from the Creator. In particular, for tribes surrounding the Great Lakes region, freshwater ecosystems are at the core of Native thought and culture.

Water is at the beginning of the Ojibwe creation story. After the great flood, Nanaboozhoo<sup>1</sup> attempted to dive underwater to find a piece of Earth. After he was unsuccessful, other animal beings volunteered to try. First loon came forward, but was unable. Others tried so bravely like mink, otter, and even turtle, and finally, it was muskrat's turn to try. Muskrat dove into

the water and was gone for a very long time. Finally, one of the animals spotted muskrat floating on the surface. Nanaboozhoo pulled him onto the log they were on and found muskrat had died. However, in Muskrat's tiny paw, Nanaboozhoo found a small piece of Earth. Turtle came forward and offered to bear the weight of the Earth on his back. Today, Native people consider North America to be "Turtle Island".

The Great Lakes region is home to not only a variety of tribes, but a diverse multitude of animals, plants, medicines, and legacy of Native culture.



Water is the most basic need of all life. Native people are perpetually cherishing the spiritual and physical relationship to water and all the beings and deities<sup>2</sup> that reside within.

Tribal people across Turtle Island honor our freshwater sources which helps define our worldview as Indigenous nations.

## Lesson

1. Create a KWL chart with students. What they KNOW, what they WANT to know, and then finally, what they LEARNED.
2. Invite local Elder to the class to discuss the significance of lakes to tribal people. If you are unable to locate an Elder, work with local American Indian community to identify an individual available to come in to present the impact of lakes in tribal communities.
3. Fill container 3/4 full with water. Mark the level with Sharpie. Measure the height of the water and record on daily log sheet.
4. Have students draw what they see and what they predict will happen on Day One.
5. Decide as a class how often you will check on water levels. The second time you check will be Day 2.
6. Each day, mark and record evaporation experiment. Material list on back page.
7. On the last day, record final measurements. Ask students questions. Where did the water go? Will the water come back? What happens to the water in your body? Why do we need water?
8. Create a classroom graph of your collective findings and show student's new knowledge of their relationship to water.

1. Nanaboozhoo, depending on the Algonquin community, Nanaboozhoo is also known as Weynaboozhoo, Nanabush etc. is a benevolent, shape-shifting cultural hero.  
2. One of the most important of Anishinaabe water beings, "Mishibizhii" is a feminine underwater panther or lynx that is in essence a powerful dragon-like creature.

## Materials

- Glass or plastic transparent container
- Water
- Sharpie
- Journal
- "Ezhi-aanjiibiigising" (Water Cycle) poster

## Vocabulary

**Aadizookaan** - *Sacred Story*

**Aniibiish** - *Leaf*

**Asemaa** - *Tobacco*

**Gichigami** - *Lake Superior*

**Giigoonh** - *Fish*

**Giizis** - *Sun*

**Jiimaan** - *Birchbark Canoe*

**Manoomin** - *Wild Rice*

**Mikinak** - *Turtle*

**Mitig** - *Tree*

**Nibi** - *Water*

**Noodin** - *Wind*

**Wazhashk** - *Muskrat*

**Zaaga'igan** - *Lake*

**Ziibi** - *River*



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## Discussion Questions

1. Why are lakes important to Native people?
2. What kind of animals live in and around lakes? How do you know?
3. Name a lake that you have visited? What did you do when you were there?
4. How might Native people have traveled on the lakes long ago? How do they travel on lakes today?
5. Why do you think the Ojibwe people called this land "Turtle Island"?
6. What happens to water when the sun makes it hot?
7. Which of the seven teachings did Muskrat show when he dove under water to get a piece of Earth?
8. Where does the rain come from?
9. Why do you need water?
10. Why is it important to honor our lakes, rivers, & streams?
11. What is one way you can honor water in a respectful way?
12. How can a story live for hundreds of years?
13. Who might you go to if you have a question about Native culture?

## Assessment

Student journals should demonstrate through drawings or writings that they understand the basic concept of the water cycle, where freshwater comes from, what animals, plant-life or trees live near lakes and/or rivers.

Students should also be able to demonstrate they have an understanding of why the Muskrat is important to Anishinaabe culture and also illustrate they have an idea about who Nanaboozhoo is to the Anishinaabe people. Take note

about student usage of Ojibwe words and Indigenous concepts, because it indicates higher order thinking skills.

## Seasonal Enrichment Activities

### Ziigwan (Spring)

\*Visit a nearby lake or river to explore what kinds of trees or plant-life grows. This is a perfect opportunity to invite a local elder into the classroom to demonstrate the proper protocol of offering asemaa. Students can journal their findings.

\*Invite local Native artisan to present a lesson birchbark canoes. Make miniature canoes and experiment with them in a tub of water. Connect lesson to water preservation and have students journal findings.

### Niibin (Summer)

\*Organize an activity about Stewardship. Take a walk outside and talk about caring for the

planet. Take note about the amount of litter that can be found outside. Connect Stewardship to protecting our waters and the Seven Teachings; Bravery, Honesty, Humility, Love, Respect, Truth, and Wisdom.

\*This time of year is the perfect opportunity to attend MPS Indian Education and Phillips Indian Educator's annual Mde Maka Ska canoe event with your classroom in May. Contact MPS Indian Education or please visit [www.pieducators.com](http://www.pieducators.com)

### Dagwaagin (Fall)

\*Check out the wild rice teaching trunk from MPS Indian Education and invite local elder in to discuss the wild rice harvest and explain why wild rice is im-

portant in tribal communities. Also welcome teachings or stories that may come with the process of harvesting wild rice. Explain nutritional value of wild rice and the process of metabolism. Share the importance of respecting food!

### Biboon (Winter)

\*Present a puppet show! If there snow is on the ground, use animal puppets (available for check out at the Indian Education office) to share stories about Nanaboozhoo or any other sacred story as a tool to reinforce the Seven Teachings;

\*Elders are excellent storytellers. They should be invited into the classroom to share legends as well as personal stories!