

## Cultural Standards

- **4.1.1: A-4**—Identify and describe historical places and events of a Native American community in Minnesota
- **4.1.1: D-4**—Demonstrate understanding that identity is connected to the history of the home community and culture
- **4.1.1: E-4**—Give examples of Native American perspectives and practices related to marking the passage of time (e.g., by events rather than dates, rites of passage)
- **4.1.2: A-4**—Demonstrate understanding of appropriate protocols and behaviors associated with storytelling
- **4.1.2: B-4**—Explain the importance of oral tradition and Elders in Native American cultures
- **4.1.2: C-4**—Identify the teachings found in traditional Native American stories and legends
- **4.1.2: D-4**—Retell stories (e.g., using plays, storyboards, murals, puppets) relating to a Native American culture in Minnesota
- **4.1.2: E-4**—Research (e.g., interview Elders, parents) and discuss characters associated with stories relating a Native American culture in Minnesota
- **4.1.2: G-4**—Discuss how various values, beliefs, and teachings (e.g., respect, fairness, generosity) are shown in Native American cultures

## MN State Standards

### Third Grade:

- I can recount stories and identify central messages through key details in the text.
- I can recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures and I can determine the central message.
- I can determine the main idea of a text. I can recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea. (3.2.2.2)

### Fourth Grade:

- I can define main idea (who or what a text is mainly about). I can determine the main idea of a text. I can identify key details in a text and explain how they support the main idea. I can define summary (a shortened version of a text that states the key points). I can write a summary stating the key points of a text. (4.2.2.2)

### Fifth Grade:

- I can ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- I can retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

# Help From the Animals

Objective: To compare and contrast story elements

Integration: Social Studies, Geography

## Background Information

Sky stories of the Anishinabe are part of a complex system of spiritual beliefs. Knowledge of the stars is found in many aspects of culture including storytelling, symbolism and religious traditions.

Some spiritual leaders have special knowledge of the stars and the planets. In ancient times, these indigenous astronomers used this knowledge to help guide the day-to-day affairs of their communities.

The Anishinabe have been given ways of communicating with the powerful heavenly forces. The oral teachings and stories which flow out of this communication between mortals and the spiritual world have been passed down from generation to generation since the beginning of time. For example,

one of the most powerful symbols for the life force is the Sun. The need for its presence for survival is stressed in the ancient story called "Snaring the Sun."

To this day, the stories of the Anishinabe of Central North America featured in this project are remembered and told by respected storytellers. With the coming of the first snow, families gather around their elders during the long winter evenings, and the time for storytelling begins. In the summertime, when the plants are awakened and the animals are roaming about, these stories are not told, as the plant and animal "beings" might hear and be offended. The storytellers speak of these things only in the winter when the spirits are resting.



In our Anishinabe culture, only our "stargazers", some of whom are known as the Wabeno-innin, the "Morning star Men" or "The Men of the Dawn", are privileged to have a full knowledge of the Sky world. Much of their knowledge is sacred in nature and is used only under special circumstances associated with religious matters.

## Lesson

As a motivation set, lay out the felt star map and ask students what patterns they see in the "sky". As students if they recognize any of the constellations. Ask if they have heard any stories explaining what they see in the sky.

If you cannot get the Star Lab into your classroom, invite a storyteller into the room to hear the *Fisher in Skyland* story.

Have students choose a story from chapter two of *They*

*Dance in the Sky*. This chapter explains how other cultures view the Big Dipper. Students can choose one of the stories with a partner and pair read.

After finishing the story, the partners can each work on comparing and contrasting the story they chose with *Fisher in Skyland* using the attached Venn diagram graphic organizer.

Another activity included in this packet is [Make a Constellation](#). This activity also includes

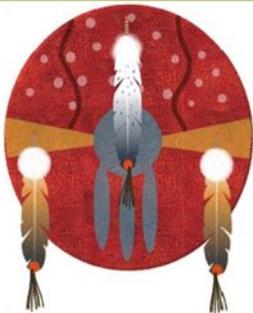
descriptions of how other cultures view the Big Dipper. As well, there is a handout where students can illustrate their own constellation. This is excellent for a creative writing component.

### Materials:

- Access to Star Lab (optional)
- Large felt star map puzzle with Ojibwe constellations (optional)
- Copy of the Fisher story
- Copy of *They Dance in the Sky*
- Copies of the compare and contrast worksheet

### Vocabulary:

Aadizookaan  
Anishinaabe  
Anung  
Asterism  
Big Dipper  
Constellation  
Coyote  
Contrast  
Dibaajimowin  
Fisher  
Maang  
Ojibwe  
Ojiig  
Pattern  
Perspective



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## Discussion Questions

1. What are the important parts of *Fisher in Skyland*?
2. How does this story teach us about the Seven Grandfather Teachings?
3. How does this story teach us about living as a good relative?
4. How are the stories in *They Dance in the Sky* similar to *Fisher in Skyland*?
5. Where does the Fisher story come from? What clues help us to determine this?
6. How does the location where these tales originate influence the story? (character, terrain, etc.)
7. When is the proper time to tell stories? What protocols exist around oral storytelling for Anishinaabe peoples?
8. Why might it have been important for our ancestors to know how to find the Big Dipper constellation?
9. What is the difference between aadizookaan and dibaajimowin?

## Evaluation

Students should be able to sequence the important story elements in the story.

Students should be able to tell you five differences between the two stories.

Students should be able to recount the Fisher story to a friend.

## Enrichment Activities

1. Research other names for the Fisher/Ojiig constellation. What is this group of stars known as in other places in the world? (See attached)
2. Make a star clock to use the stars to tell time like our ancestors did (see attached for two versions).
3. Borrow the Animal Signs trunk from MPS Indian Education to learn more about animals native to Minnesota.
4. Invite a wildlife biologist into the classroom to learn more about fishers.
5. Invite storytellers from other cultures into your classroom.
6. Plan a storytelling evening for Family Night.
7. Make puppets of the *Fisher in Skyland* story and create a play to share with others.
8. Map where the various Big Dipper stories are told around the world.