Lesson Plan for Relations Video: "What was the Pacific Northwest like before the Europeans came?"

Lesson Overview

Indigenous peoples have lived on the Pacific Northwest Coast since time immemorial. This lesson plan introduces students to the relationships between these peoples, the land, and other-than-human beings.

Resources:

- Video "What was the Pacific Northwest like before the Europeans came?"
- Video worksheet
- Spiral timeline template
- Placemat activity template

Lesson Learnings

Inquiry Question:

- What was life like on the Pacific Northwest Coast before colonization?

Learning Objectives:

- Shift understanding of historical time to include time immemorial.
- Interpret a variety of sources to learn about Indigenous relationships between communities (governance) and the environment (stewardship).
- Question how knowledge of time immemorial and Indigenous relations can influence the present and future.

Activate Prior Knowledge

Introduce students to what life on the Pacific Northwest Coast was like before colonization.

1. Begin by giving students some time to fill out the first two columns of the video worksheet, which is in the style of a K-W-L Chart. Ask students to write down what they already know and what they wonder about life on the Pacific Northwest Coast before colonization.
2. Watch the video "What was the Pacific Northwest like before the Europeans came?" as a class.
3. In the last column of the worksheet, students will reflect on what they've learned and what questions they still have.

Human Timeline: Introducing Time Immemorial

Introduction

The video discusses a time long before Europeans arrived on the Pacific Northwest Coast. Ask students to reflect on how long their family/ancestors have been living on Turtle Island (North America).

Ask each student to write down their best guess to the question: "How long have Indigenous peoples been living on the Pacific Northwest Coast of North America?" During this activity, your class is going to learn the answer.

Materials:

- Schoolyard field
- Whiteboard
- Paper and pencils
- An index card with "Time Immemorial" written on it
- String (~10 metres in length)
- Optional: social studies textbook or learning resources with historical dates

Gather Historical Events

In the classroom:

1. In groups, create a short list of historical events and dates. Use classroom resources. Encourage students to include events significant to Indigenous communities.
2. Together as a class, write down all the events and dates on a whiteboard and remove duplicates. Here are some significant dates to the Pacific Northwest Coast you can add:
    i. 1791-1795 CE Captain Vancouver explores the Pacific Northwest Coast
    ii. 1700 CE - Cascadia coastal earthquake. This was a massive earthquake causing large floods. Many traditional stories speak to this earthquake.
    iii. 2,000 BCE Western red cedar forests establish in the cooling, wetter Pacific Northwest Coast temperate rainforests. These trees can live for over a

thousand years. They stabilized the riversides, paving the way for salmon to return.

iv. 3,000 BCE - After thousands of years of glaciers receding and landscapes changing, shorelines begin to look like they do today. Salmon return to the streams on the Pacific Northwest Coast.

v. 7,000-5,000 BCE Patchwork of Douglas fir forests, camas prairies in a warmer, dryer Northwest Coast.

vi. 13,000 BCE Glacier retreat. Tundra landscape with mammoths and ancient bison on southern Vancouver Island.

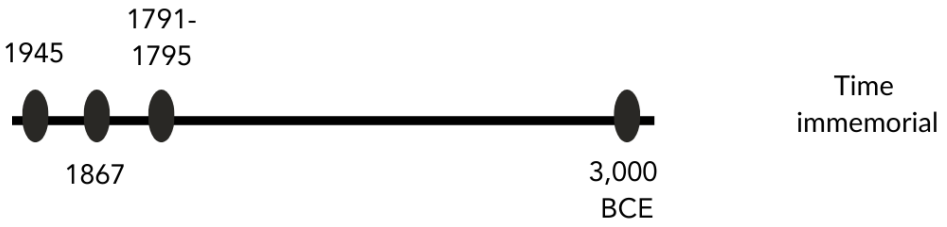
b. Add to this timeline some events and dates that are well-known to students (ex. Great Pyramid of Giza completed (2560 BCE); mammoth goes extinct (2500 BCE)). Adding these dates as reference points will help them understand how far back time immemorial truly is!

3. Each student chooses an event and date to write down and takes it with them outside. One student will get a surprise date later.

Create a Human Timeline

Outside on the schoolyard:

4. Lay down the string in a straight line on the schoolyard. Identify which end of the string represents the present.
5. Students arrange themselves on the string timeline based on their historical events. Challenge students to think about how close they should stand to the dates on either side of them.
6. Review the timeline together.
7. Hand the last student the surprise date: time immemorial. What does this mean? Time immemorial means a time way in the past, so long ago that no one remembers it. It's beyond memory. Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island have been here since time immemorial, including those on the Pacific Northwest Coast. Where should the student stand in the timeline?
8. When the student is at the least contemporary end of the timeline, ask them to keep walking further back in history, beyond the length of the string. When they have walked as far away as you feel comfortable, yell stop. Get the class to look at how far time immemorial is from the group.
9. Remind the class that time immemorial is even further back than anyone can remember. If they could, that means the student would keep walking and walking until we couldn't see them anymore.



Discussion

In a talking circle, share reflections on why time immemorial is important.

- Respond again to the question: How long have Indigenous peoples been living on the Pacific Northwest Coast of North America?
- Why do you think it is important to know that Indigenous peoples have been here since time immemorial?
- Why do you think it is important for politicians/policymakers to know that Indigenous peoples have been here since time immemorial?

Spiral Timeline

Introduction

Many of us are familiar with seeing time drawn as a line, such as a timeline. This is a very European way of thinking about time. There are many different ways to think about and imagine time.

Materials:

- Spiral Timeline template
- Pencils and paper
- Picture of a snail shell

1. Get creative: Draw different ways to imagine what time looks like. (ex. Clock; timeline; Earth spinning)
2. Do a gallery walk: Everyone pins their drawings up around the classroom, and students walk around viewing them.
3. Discussion: What are some similarities and differences amongst the drawings of time?

Circular & Spiral Time

As our class showed, there are many different ways to think about and imagine time. Cultures have different ways they think about time:

- We can also think about time as being circular. Clocks are a familiar example of time moving in a circular motion. Can you think of any other circles of time? (ex. Seasons, yearly calendar, tree rings, Medicine Wheel, salmon cycle).

- Another way to show time is as a spiral. Think of a snail's shell. The snail builds its shell starting in the center. As the snail gets older, it builds onto the shell, continuing the spiral as it gets bigger and bigger. The more swirls in the shell, the older the snail.

Indigenous storytelling often has a circular or spiral structure. Themes are visited over and over again throughout the story. The story may start and end at the same place, and there may be no clear beginning or end. And everything is connected, in relationship, and builds off each other.

Create a Spiral Timeline

Students will write and draw on different historical events to the spiral timeline template.

1. Add words and drawings inspired by the video to time immemorial and the central rings. These represent life on the Pacific Northwest Coast for as long as anyone can remember and longer.
2. Keep this spiral timeline nearby as students go through the other content on the *Changing Perspectives* exhibit. As they come across other dates or periods, add them to the spiral timeline.

Discussion

In talking circles, share reflections from the spiral timeline.

- What events on the spiral timeline are related to one another? (cause/consequence)
- What do you notice about seeing these events in a spiral that you wouldn't have noticed seeing them on a straight timeline?

All in Relation

Materials:

- Placemat activity template
- Pencils and paper
- Large piece of paper
- Markers
- See resources section

Introduction

This video introduces the wealth of relationships on the Pacific Northwest Coast: relationships between Indigenous societies, between the land and people, and between members of a community.

Relationships Placemat Activity

In this activity, students will research a plant or animal significant to Pacific Northwest Coast Indigenous communities, then come together to share their collective learnings about Indigenous relationships on the Pacific Northwest Coast.

Note: You can choose to focus on one of the multiple Indigenous communities on the Pacific Northwest Coast. Keep in mind that while there are similarities between Indigenous communities on the Pacific Northwest Coast, these communities are not homogenous.

1. Each small group chooses a plant or animal to complete the placemat activity. Some examples include red cedar, salal, salmonberry, Douglas fir, salmon, halibut, herring, sturgeon, deer, elk, and mountain goat. Most of the examples are of flora and fauna are viewed as sources of food or material. Other examples, like the grey wolf, eagle, or orca highlight spiritual connections to the other-than-human world. Write the plant or animal in the middle of the placemat.
2. Research multiple sources, including Indigenous-created sources, to complete the placemat. Consider the relationships with the plant or animal in the past and current, contemporary relationships.
    a. Hint: potlatches are an important way to share and trade wealth
3. Each group will present what they learned to the class.
4. Draw together what the Pacific Northwest Coast would have looked like before European colonization. Each group will add features and relationships they researched (ex. Draw a cedar forest, and items made from cedar such as canoes, baskets, longhouses). Once everyone has added their elements, discuss as a class and draw in the connections you see. (ex. Cedar canoes are used to catch fish; these plants and animals are traded).

Discussion

In a talking circle, reflect on what students learned from this activity.

- What does the class drawing tell you about:
    - The relationship between different Indigenous nations.
    - The relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the environment.
    - What the Pacific Northwest Coast was like before European colonization.
- What are some themes you notice? What do these relationships tell you about Indigenous Peoples, their culture, and way of living?
    - (ex. Stewardship, sustainability, sharing, giving back)
- How have Indigenous peoples demonstrated sustainable environmental practices since time immemorial?
- If your class has learned about a local Indigenous community, think about the similarities and differences between the communities.

Resources

Digital

- The digital exhibit Sq'éwlets: A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Community in the Fraser River Valley funded by Digital Museums Canada is a student-friendly resource of Sq'éwlets First Nation stories and belongings, and classroom lesson plans.

Mapping Change

Introduction

Since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have storied their territories. Place-names evoke stories, old and new, that set communities in relation to the landscapes they call home. But, settlers have changed the landscape, waterways, ecosystem, and even what is remembered in the area on maps.

Students will use the case study of Semá:th Xo:tsa (Sumas Lake) to learn about how the Pacific Northwest Coast has changed over time.

Materials:

- Computers for digital resources
- Tracing paper or online iMapBC

Semá:th Lake

Semá:th Xo:tsa (Sumas Lake) was central to the livelihood of the Semá:th people, and the nearby Noxws' áʔaq (Nooksack) and Mathxwí (Matsqui). The lake and surrounding wetlands were home to a wide variety of plants and animals. Sturgeon and salmon spawned in the lake, birds (swallows, hawks, eagles, geese) nested nearby, and berries (saskatoon, cranberry, blueberry) grew. The local First Nations relied on this diverse ecosystem for food and their well-being. Each spring the lake would flood, fertilizing the wetlands. In the 1920s, the lake was drained by settlers to make agricultural land. The lake was physically erased. The remaining Sumas Valley and Sumas Prairie are located between Abbotsford and Chilliwack, British Columbia.

Mapping Semá:th Lake

A map can be broken down into layers. Each layer tells different information about the landscape. When you add them all up, they tell a story about a place. Students will create different map layers and add them together to tell a story about Semá:th Lake over time.

To create the Semá:th Lake mapping layers:

1. Each group chooses a map layer. They will use the following resources to learn about and create their map layer.
    - Indigenous territories: Native Land Digital Map

- Indigenous languages: Native Land Digital Map
- Indigenous settlements and place names: Nooksack Tribe Place Names and Sq'éwlets: A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Community in the Fraser River Valley exhibit. The Semá:th First Nation is part of the larger Stó:lō Nation.
- Reserves: iMapBC "Indian Reserves - outlined" layer
- Agricultural land: iMapBC "ALR polygons" layer
- Cities and highways - Google Maps
- Semá:th Lake, streams and wetlands before drainage - "Evolution of the Lower Fraser Valley From Langley to Harrison" video by Seelkee; Map of New Westminster, Map 97.02 , Map 529 - British Columbia. Port Moody from Vancouver Archives.
- Flood protection (dikes): iMapBC "Flood protection structural works" layer
- November 2021 flood and evacuation: "Abbotsford's Return Home Plan starts with evacuation order lifted for north Sumas Prairie" by Vikkie Hopes in *The Abbotsford News*; "Before-and-after satellite images show flood devastation in B.C.'s Sumas Prairie" by *CBC News*
- Current wetlands ecosystem: iMapBC "FWA water-wetlands -colour themed" layer
- Current sturgeon distribution: iMapBC "Sturgeon (general) (SG)" layer
- Historical fish distributions: iMapBC "Historical known fish" layer and "Historical known fish distribution zones" layer

2. The groups share what they learned about their map layer.
3. Add all the map layers together (see note below for instructions).

Note: The final map can be created using transfer paper or the online iMapBC tool.

- Transfer paper: It is translucent paper. Each group should draw the same outline of the Semá:th Lake area and create identical grids. This will allow all the layers to be at the same scale when they're layered on top of each other to create the final map.
- iMapBC is an ArcGis map that allows users to add digital map layers. Become familiar with the "Identify", "Add Provincial Layers" and "Sketch" features. With the sketch features, students can create a new map layer and save the resulting URL. At the end, all the map layers can be added on one screen (add URL layers) to create a full map. iMapBC is free and no account is needed.

Discussion

Share reflections on the final map.

- What do Indigenous place names represent? How are they different from settler place names? Why is it important to have them on a map?

    - Indigenous place names represent: historical events, stories, legal processes, geographical features, animal and plant cycles
    - Oral stories and place names carry knowledge across generations, even if only witnessed every few generations. They are stories of long-term changes, like earthquakes and 100-year floods. They emphasize that the world changes and is dynamic.
- What has caused these changes on the landscape?
- Places teach us. Reflecting on the maps, what story would you tell about the 2021 floods? What lessons would you like future generations to learn from your story?
- We learn about the past to understand our current context and issues. The actions George Vancouver and other European explorers had rippling impacts. But understanding the past can help us plan for the future. Which layers and features do you think are important for us and help us in the future?
    - Example: a place name to teach us a lesson, remind us of the past, and changes.
    - Extension: Many Indigenous communities are re-establishing and revitalizing traditional knowledge and land-based practices. Search for examples of these restoration projects (ex. Clam gardens, root estuary gardens, camas prairies, Indigenous gardens, food forests) for inspiration and hope. The Muckleshoot Food Sovereignty Project is one example.

Extra Resources:

- "Sumas First Nation seeks compensation for its lost lake" by Emma Smith and Katelyn Verstraten in *Vancouver Sun*
- *Before we Lost the Lake: A Natural and Human History of Sumas Valley* by Chad Reimer