

Brian Matthew
FNSS Curriculum Integration Project
Grade 6

Lesson 2: The Relationship Between Culture and Environment

Time: 40 minutes

Topic:

Cultural Variations

Rationale:

Students will discover the differences in cultural activities which are directly related to location associated to the land/environment in which a group occupies.

By comparing and contrasting the lifestyle of the Secwepemc and people of the Coastal region, the students will discover these differences.

Materials and Resources:

- Map of traditional territories
- Descriptions of traditional economies and lifestyles for the North West Coast First Nations

Vocabulary:

Cultures- are systems of behaviors and customs passed from one generation to the next. The rules, language, religion, family systems, recreation, and education that a group of people share provide predictability and safety in their daily lives. When people are bound together by common beliefs and practices, they understand each other and the world around them has meaning

Secwepemc- The Secwepemc People, known by non-natives as the Shuswap, are a Nation of 17 bands occupying the south-central part of the Province of British Columbia, Canada.

Social- of or relating to human society , the interaction of the individual and the group, or the welfare of human beings as members of society <social institutions>

Nomadic- roaming about from place to place aimlessly, frequently, or without a fixed pattern of movement

Population density- the number of people per square kilometre

Traditional territory- the area normally inhabited by a group of people.

Economy- the structure of economic life in a country, area, or period

Lifestyles- the typical way of life of an individual, group, or culture

Main Concepts:

The students will work to identify variables that give rise to differences in culture between the North West Coast and the interior First Nation.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

- Identify and clarify a problem, issue, or inquiry
- Assess the relationship between cultures and their environments
- Research information using print, non-print, and electronic sources.
- Organize information from a variety of sources into a structured presentation using more than one form of representation

Planned Learning Activities:

- Go over the definition of culture and discuss what a cultural activity might be.
- Have the students read the information provided making notes on cultural activities. Identify the cultural artifacts as well. (ie. Bent boxes, decorated spoons, decorated canoes.....)
- Explain the differences in the cultures: The North West Coast had an elaborate social structure and system of art work. The interior was quite simple by comparison.
- Compare a traditional interior First Nation culture with a North West Coast culture.
- Hand out a copy of the word list. The students may work on this individually or in groups.
- Have the students sort the word list into the two cultural groups and then sort into further categories. The students may add to the word lists from their own knowledge. Have references handy for words the students aren't sure of
- Have the students write a short summary of the differences in culture. The North West Coast had one year round village site and the interior people were nomadic.
 - Why is this?
 - Are there differences in population density?
 - Are the traditional territories different in size?
 - What are the differences in cultural activity?
 - Does one group seem to have more leisure time?
- Use the word lists as an outline for further research.
- Describe the economies.
- Describe the differences in the economies.
- As a closure activity the students can make a poster either depicting one culture group or contrasting the two.

Assessment/Evaluation:

Students will be assessed on their involvement in group activities.

They will be able to distinguish the difference between the cultural activities of the Interior and Coastal First Nations groups and demonstrate this through discussion and recorded information.

Extensions:

A short summary of giftedness

http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/comatt/ghome.html

Special Education Links:

<http://4teachers.org/profd/spedlinks.shtml>

<http://www.pacificnet.net/~mandel/SpecialEducation.html>

Other Integration Opportunities:

Language Arts- Have students compile a written assignment.

Have the students study the climatic variable between the Interior and the West Coast. Focus on how the weather and climate could have played a role in the development of the cultures.

Resources Used and Supplementary Materials Available:

Secwepemc Museum/Cultural Education Society. (2001). The Secwepemc: A Guide To The History, Culture and Contemporary Issues of the Shuswap People. Kamloops, Canada.

The Secwepemc Nation

<http://www.secwepemc.org/sntc.html>

A lesson on how FN survived goes well with lesson on environment and culture:

<http://www.schoolnet.ca/aboriginal/science/survival-e.html>

A description of Interior FN:

<http://www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/exhibits/timemach/galler07/frames/index.htm>

Map of traditional territories ordering Information:

Catalogue Number: NATO# 7530879086

Schools and other organizations in BC that are Federally or Provincially funded can purchase maps through:

Office Products Centre
742 Vanalman Ave,
Victoria, BC
V8W 9V7

BC Toll-Free: 1-800-282-7955

Phone: (250) 952-4460

Fax: (250) 952-4442

Descriptions of traditional economies and lifestyles for the North West coast:

Teacher resource: Looking at ourselves, looking at others (defining culture)

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/guides/looking/>

About Canada – Canada's First Nations

<http://www.pch.gc.ca/csp-pec/english/about/native/index.htm>

The Nisga'a Nation

<http://www.ntc.bc.ca/>

Map of FN in BC <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/map.htm>

Prehistoric Art Project Pictographs and Petroglyphs

<http://www.bctf.bc.ca/social/firstnations/horizon/ArtProject.html>

Part One: A Year in the Life of Maxmaagay: Seasonal Rounds

<http://www.bctf.bc.ca/social/firstnations/horizon/TwoLives.html>

A description of Interior FN

<http://www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/exhibits/timemach/galler07/frames/index.htm>

A description of NWC art (difficult to read)

<http://www.northwest-connection.com/nations.htm>

WORD LIST

Oolichan

Hereditary chief

Ocean

Songs

Long house

Legal system

Religion

Weir

Shelter

Animal designs

Roots

Stone carvings

Pithouse

Elk

Caribou

Decorated canoe

Salmon

Harsh winter

Clans

Carved masks

Food

Pictographs

Mild climate

Animism

Clothing

Berries

Trading

Beaver

Spear

Drums

Sweat house

Button blanket

Bent box

Nomadic

Laws

potlatch

Clams

Moose

Dances

Tanning hides

Two Lives: Gitksan and Habitant

Sheila Ryan, Hazelton Secondary

Introduction:

Part One: A Year in the Life of Maxmaagay: Seasonal Rounds

Student Reading One: Spring

After the long winter, Maxmaagay and his family are glad of the early spring. Soon it will be time to travel to the Nass for the great oolichan, or candle fish, run. The families in the longhouse are preparing for the trip which will take many, many days. Meats, furs, baskets, and other goods are made ready to trade for the precious oolichan. Trading will also take place with Indians from the coast who bring abalone, clams, herring eggs, and seaweed to the Nass. They will exchange these foods for oolichan and the furs, baskets, and other goods brought by Indians such as Maxmaagay who live inland. Excitement grows in the longhouses as the day approaches to leave on the trip, which can take up to two months to complete. The bent boxes are packed with goods and the men and women who are able to complete the journey are ready to leave. Farewells are said and the journey begins.

Upon reaching the Nass, Maxmaagay and the others from his village enjoy their rounds of trading and renewing old friendships. Most of their time, however, is spent netting the oolichan. These small fish are allowed to decompose, then boiled, and the grease skimmed off. Finally, the grease is packed into boxes for the trip home. Dried oolichan are also brought home.

Oolichan grease, however, is the most precious commodity. It will be eaten with fish, berries, and meats. It will also be saved in order to hand out at feasts during the coming year. The boxes, now packed with grease, are very heavy and so Maxmaagay and the others must relay them from the Nass to their village on the Skeena. They bring one box ahead, then leave it and walk back and the other box and on it goes until they reach home.

Back in the village they are eagerly received and news of the past months is exchanged. The people in the village have been burning their berry patches in order to stimulate new plant growth. The fish nets and fish traps have been readied for the first salmon run of the season. The young boys have cut fresh twigs and have made racks on which to dry the many varieties of berries when they are ripe

Families are preparing to leave for their hunting grounds. Spring is the time of year to hunt beavers, which are highly prized for their meat and furs. The men will hunt the beaver and the women will prepare the meat for storage and the pelts for clothing. After the beaver hunt it will be time to leave for fishing sites along the river. The busy summer season will be here.

Vocabulary List

oolichan - small fish - eaten fresh, dried or smoked, also used for grease and for candles; caught in the Nass River. The fish is traded and sold even today.

longhouses - large wooden homes in which several families lived. There would be a number in a village and they would face the river.

bent boxes - boxes made of cedar and used for cooking, storage, and packing.

feasts or potlatches - held to conduct the business of the society; there was dancing and singing, food served and gifts exchanged. Held at times of marriage, deaths, pole raising, first salmon run, etc.

hunting grounds and fishing sites - these belonged to specific Houses and were controlled by the chiefs; you could not hunt and fish just anywhere. The same rules applied to the berry grounds.

Student Reading Two: Summer

Before leaving for his fishing site, Maxmaagay and other members of his House met with their Chief, who outlined the duties of each House member during the busy summer season. It is essential that everyone works hard and stores lots of food for the coming winter. Fishing is the most important summer activity and most people are involved in this. Maxmaagay and the other men prepare the dipnets and spears. The young men get the fish weirs ready. The children pack firewood for smoke houses while the women, children, and elderly pack, cut, and smoke the fish.

Fresh fish is enjoyed by everyone and not any of it is wasted. The eyes and cheeks are a special delicacy. The bones are burned to ensure the salmon are not offended and will return again next summer. Much of the fish is smoked and then wrapped in birch bark and stored in food pits. The men dug the cone shaped pits while the women wrapped the fish. The children covered the pits with needles from trees and the job of covering all of this with dirt was done by the able-bodied. This fish was now safe from animals and could be used during the hard times of winter and for feasting.

Oil was made from the salmon and would be used to preserve foods. Fish eggs were a favourite of Maxmaagay. Some were eaten fresh and others were stored in wooden boxes and then buried. Other important summer activities were the gathering of plants, roots, and berries. House members left for their berry grounds to gather these foods. Early summer was a good time for gathering fiddleheads and the inner bark of the jack pine. Later wild rice, rose hips, and fireweed were picked. Some were eaten immediately while others could be dried and packed away for winter use. Berry picking was a favourite activity and everyone played a role. Even the youngest child could pick berries and carry his own birch bark or woven cedar basket. Everyone, especially the children, enjoyed eating the soapberries, which were frothy and delicious when whipped.

A variety of berries were dried on racks, made into cakes, and stored for the winter. The Chief of Maxmaagay's House monitored the foods being stored to ensure everyone in the House would have sufficient food for the winter. The importance of the tasks, the working together,

the variety of foods, and the warmth of the sun all contributed to making summer a special season.

Vocabulary

house - every Gitksan belongs to the House of his or her mother, unless adopted into another House. Each House has a chief and its own hunting and fishing territories, as well as its own history, totem poles, crests, songs and dances. There can be several different families in one House. The Houses are the most important unit in Gitksan society.

chief - each House has a chief or chiefs, who can be a man or a woman. Chiefs are trained from a very young age to assume this responsible position. Upon their death the name and authority will often pass to the oldest child of the next generation in the family that holds the name.

fish weirs - a fence in a river to stop the fish thus making it easier to catch them.

smokehouses - large wooden buildings in which fish are smoked after they have been cleaned and cut into strips.

feasts - feasts have many purposes. For example, they are part of the legal system, where all of the actions of a House are witnessed properly.

berry grounds - each House controls an area where House members may pick berries under the direction of the chiefs. The same rules apply to hunting and fishing sites.

Student Reading Three: Fall

As the summer turned into Fall, Maxmaagay and the other members of his House prepared for hunting trips into northern territories. Their summer had been busy and successful. Many fish and berries were stored for the coming winter and now it was time to hunt and trap. The Chief and the elders advised where hunting would be good this season. Equipment was made ready, supplies packed, and soon the hunters left. Those staying in the village gathered firewood; a large supply was necessary for the coming winter. Late berries were picked and stored. Winter clothes were made ready. Plans for feasting were discussed among the chiefs and elders. When the successful hunters returned to the village there was much work to be done.

Meat had to be cut up, smoked and stored. The hides were worked into blankets, clothes, and moccasins. The variety of meats included mountain goats, caribou, deer, porcupine, ground hog, rabbit, and sometimes bear. Birds hunted included grouse, duck, and ptarmigan. No part of the animal was wasted. Many of the bones were worked into tools and utensils such as spoons. Sinew was used to sew together hides. Feathers, porcupine quills, and hooves were used for decorating clothing items. Maxmaagay and the others knew great respect must be shown to the animals in order that they return next hunting season.

There were strict rules governing the use of the fish and animals. Children were taught by the elders through legends about the importance of obeying the laws. It was considered shameful to waste food or spill food and no one wanted to be responsible for his House having to hold a Shame Feast.

The Fall was the final time of preparing for the winter. Maxmaagay and his family had prepared well. Their firewood was stacked, traps for winter use were ready, food was stored in pits, in bent boxes, and in the longhouse, warm clothes were ready, and plans well under way for the winter season.

Vocabulary

house

territories

chief

feasts

smokehouse

tanning hides

shame feast - the spilling or wasting of food was considered shameful and if this happened the House would hold a shame feast to restore the dignity of the House. The father's side of the House initiates the feast. For example, Fireweed spills food; his father's side is Frog, so the Frogs would assist with the feast.

food pits

bent boxes

Student Reading Four: Winter

As the cold winds blew and the snow fell, Maxmaagay and his family were busy in the longhouse preparing for a feast which would soon be taking place in the village. People from other villages were arriving daily in order to participate in this special event. Foods such as fish, meats, and berries were made ready to feed the guests and gifts prepared to distribute. Masks, drums, and rattles were carefully taken from their storage places; these would be used in the feast. Artists had been working for weeks to prepare new masks, bowls, spoons, and other items necessary for a successful feast.

Young people who would be receiving a name were carefully taught by the elders on how to behave in the feast house. Laws were strict and must be carefully observed. Maxmaagay's eldest nephew would be receiving a name at the feast. This young man was ready to assume new responsibilities in his House. This feast was necessary because a chief had died and his name must pass on to another member of his House. The person chosen, his niece, had been trained for many years to one day assume this position.

Along with the name went many responsibilities, such as providing leadership in daily life, in seeing everyone in the House had food, representing the House at village meetings, and

ensuring children were trained properly. To arrange marriages, and in general to ensure the members of the House assumed their rights and responsibilities, was very important.

When the snow was deep and the nights were long, people were excited when a feast was announced. For Maxmaagay it was a happy and serious occasion. When the cold winters began to break, the people began to spend more time outside. Fresh meat was welcome at this time of year. Travel was easy when the snow had a hard crust, and the people enjoyed the bright sunshine after the dark months of winter. When the frost left the ground, roots and young tender plants were eagerly gathered. Everyone anticipated the return of the oolichans.

Vocabulary

longhouse

feast elders

name - Gitksan people "receive" names at different times of their life: at birth, at puberty, and as adults. Names are transferred from one person to another. The name of Maxmaagay was held by his mother's uncle before him and will likely go to his niece's son when he receives another name or upon his death.

chief

designs - on masks, drums and bowls: each House has its own legends, and events from these legends would be carved or painted onto masks and other items. Designs would include animals, plants, the moon, rainbows and other images. The name Maxmaagay means rainbow.

marriages - it is not allowed to marry within your own clan or House.

Therefore, Frogs must marry Fireweed or Wolves, not another Frog. This rule is followed by most people even today.

clans - the four main clans among the Gitksan are Frog, Eagle, Fireweed/Killer Whale and Wolf. Within each Clan there are several Houses.

Within each village all four Clans may be represented, but it is more usual to have two. Since there may be more than one House per clan, a village may have several chiefs.

songs and dances - each House has their own songs and dances which can only be performed by them. The songs and dances convey the history of the House.

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Lesson 2

The Relationship Between Culture and Environment

Student Self Assessment:

I have:

Contributed ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Stayed on task	1	2	3	4	5
Supported my ideas with facts	1	2	3	4	5
Listened carefully	1	2	3	4	5
Respected contributions of others	1	2	3	4	5

- 1 - A Beginning - needs much improvement, did very little
- 2 - Emerging – shows some ability but still needs much improvement
- 3 - Developing – half way there, strength about equal to need to improve
- 4 - Competent – strengths outweigh weakness, a small amount of improvement needed
- 5 - Strong – many strengths, shows good ability in all areas, excellent work ethic.

Teacher Assessment:

The student has:

Contributed ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Stayed on task	1	2	3	4	5
Supported his/her ideas with facts	1	2	3	4	5
Listened carefully	1	2	3	4	5
Respected contributions of others	1	2	3	4	5

- 1 - A Beginning - needs much improvement, did very little
- 2 - Emerging – shows some ability but still needs much improvement
- 3 - Developing – half way there, strength about equal to need to improve
- 4 - Competent – strengths outweigh weakness, a small amount of improvement needed
- 5 - Strong – many strengths, shows good ability in all areas, excellent work ethic.

Group Participation:

Contributes his/her share of the information	1	2	3	4	5
Questions others' ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Shows respect for others' ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Considers the facts before making a decision	1	2	3	4	5
Supports ideas with facts	1	2	3	4	5
Listens carefully	1	2	3	4	5
Stays on task and works diligently	1	2	3	4	5
Comments about the group work session:	1	2	3	4	5

- 1 - A Beginning - needs much improvement, did very little
- 2 - Emerging – shows some ability but still needs much improvement
- 3 - Developing – half way there, strength about equal to need to improve
- 4 - Competent – strengths outweigh weakness, a small amount of improvement needed
- 5 - Strong – many strengths, shows good ability in all areas, excellent work ethic.