

### Focus:

To recognize that for Aboriginal people there is no separation between ourselves and the land and water.

### Curriculum Connection:

**5.2.2-1** What do the stories of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people tell us about their beliefs regarding the relationship between people and the land?

### Teacher Preparation:

In the Aboriginal worldview, all living things are thought to be related; in other words, there is an important relationship between all living things/beings. We often hear Aboriginal people say “all my relations” at the end of a prayer, which is an acknowledgement of this belief. This is an interconnected worldview, and it is the foundation for how Aboriginal people view and manage the way they interact with other people, clans, nations, the natural world and the spirit world. This worldview thus leads to the following beliefs:

- » Anything that gives life is sacred and is a part of us.
- » No element of life can live without the others.

» Water and land are a part of every aspect of our being:

- » **Physical:** keeps our physical bodies alive.
- » **Mental/intellectual:** teaches us about everything that we need to know to live and how to utilize all that is provided for us on the earth.
- » **Social/emotional:** the earth, land and water, gives us a sense of belonging in that we are related to everything. It helps us to understand how we fit into our families, communities, societies and our geography.
- » **Spiritual:** water and land are a part of our ceremony because it is critical that we acknowledge, honor and respect all of the parts of our existence every day. They give us life and can take it away depending on our choice.

### Key Learnings:

- » We depend on the land and water for life
- » The land and water can give us life or take it from us depending on the choices that we make
- » Stories (oral traditions) are an important means of passing on the knowledge about our relationship with the land and water

### Materials and Resources Required:



- » DVD/Online Video "Sacred Relationship"  
[www.sacredrelationship.ca/videos](http://www.sacredrelationship.ca/videos)
- » visit [www.sacredrelationship.ca](http://www.sacredrelationship.ca) to view all videos

- » Everything on earth has a spirit and as such, we honor and acknowledge the spirit of it. For example, when we pick medicine from the earth we offer tobacco to the earth and thank the earth for giving us this medicine to keep us well.
- » The rivers are like our veins and the water is like the blood that runs through our veins. If the rivers stop flowing, all living things will perish.
- » The land lives within us in our language, stories and ceremonies.
- » We have co-existed with the natural world for thousands of years.
- » Balance of all things in nature is critical to the continuation of life on earth, which we are a part of.

- » Life is about survival; in order to survive you need a relationship with your family, the community and the land.
- » We see ourselves belonging to the entire existence of our world; we are not separate, nor superior.
- » We are connected with the land and water for life. If we respect the water it will respect us, take care of us and give us life. If we don't respect the water it can take life away as well.

Preview the DVD/Online Video  
"Sacred Relationship"

[www.sacredrelationship.ca/videos](http://www.sacredrelationship.ca/videos)



### DID YOU KNOW?

THE CREE TERM FOR THE SACRED RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ALL LIVING THINGS IS WAHKOHTOWIN. WAHKOHTOWIN IS A CONSTELLATION OF RULES THAT GUIDE ALL OF OUR RELATIONSHIPS – WITH OUR FAMILY, WITH OUR COMMUNITY, WITH THE NATURAL WORLD. WHEN WE FOLLOW THESE RULES, WE WILL ENSURE THAT ALL OF OUR RELATIONSHIPS ARE RESPECTFUL AND HEALTHY.

### Note to Teacher :

To allow students to manage their own learning through the choice of one of the Elders, and to be able to review sections of the video that are most relevant to their work, it will be important to set the students up with computers that allow them access to the video from the website. If this is not possible you can adapt the lesson so that the class chooses one of the Elders to focus on together for the project.

### Launch:

Begin the lesson by asking students the question: What is a relationship and what kinds of relationships can you have?



Based on the responses of students, facilitate a discussion regarding these concepts:

- » We often think about having a relationship with another person or animal.
- » For Aboriginal people everything in nature is living, so one could have a relationship with a tree, plants, rocks or anything else in nature.

Introduce the students to the title of the video: Sacred Relationship. Ask the students what they think this video might be about. After a few student responses (guesses) let students know that you will now watch the video to learn from some Aboriginal wisdom and to seek that answer to what the 'sacred relationship' might be.



View the video with the students. At the end of the video ask the students to give their response to what the 'sacred relationship' is referring to in the video. Discuss what that might mean to an Aboriginal person based on the Elders stories.

### Activate:



Group students into pairs or small groups. Invite each group to select one of the Elders from the video "Sacred Relationship" to focus on in the video. Give the students access to the video in their groups and ask students to review the sections of the video in which their chosen Elder speaks. As the Elder speaks the students should make notes on what the Elder tells about his/her own worldview regarding the relationship between people and the land/water.



Have students discuss the perspective and points of the Elder with group members. Then, the group will develop a sentence outline about the Elder's understanding of the relationship between people and the land/water. The sentence outline should be clear enough for someone who knows nothing about Aboriginal worldview to understand this view of the relationship between people and land/water.

### Connect:



Explain to students that common understandings are important for future discussion on Aboriginal worldview relating to any topic. Explain the foundational significance of land and water to all Aboriginal people, values, concepts and ceremonies. It is thus important for the class to develop a common statement of understanding of the relationship between people and the land/water from an Aboriginal worldview.



Have a representative from each group share of the findings in their sentence outlines. When all of the groups have completed their presentations, guide students to collaborate on the development of ONE shared statement on the relationship between people and the land and water.

The role of the teacher is that of writer/recorder as the students share the statements from their own small group and craft the joint statement. Wording will require much discussion and collaborative editing.

Once the class agrees on the final statement of understanding, one or more students will volunteer to rewrite the final version neatly and clearly and have it posted in the classroom where all students from the class can see it.