

Title

Mitakuye Oyasin—All My Relatives.

Grade Level

Grades 3-5 (Intermediate Grades).

Theme

Written and visual representations of the interconnectedness of all living things within Lakota culture.

Duration

3 class periods.

Goal

Students will understand the significance of *Mitakuye Oyasin* as it relates to the culture and Lakota population.

Objectives

1. Students will be able to identify animals that are interconnected with Lakota people through *Mitakuye Oyasin*.
2. Students will be able to identify animals by their Lakota and English name.
3. Students will be able to describe the role of the animal in relationship to Lakota people.
4. Students will be able to illustrate *Mitakuye Oyasin* with visual art.

South Dakota Standards (Addressed)

4.US.1.2 Identify basic environmental, economic, cultural, and population issues of concern to South Dakota.

Cultural Concept

Within Lakota culture, the living universe offers sacred connections between all living beings. This includes not only interconnected relationships between humans, but animals, plants, birds, and all natural components of the environment such as stones, water, and the moon and stars as well. Maintaining a balance of harmony with these relatives is a responsibility of each individual.

Cultural Background

Lifeways are very important to the individuals to whom they belong. Each way of life has value and meaning to the individual and one must take care to nurture the balance of these lifeways. This was important in previous generations and is also of importance in contemporary times. Cultural, social, and ecological responses to the living universe are important components of the Lakota belief of *Mitakuye Oyasin*.

Information from Stephanie Charging Eagle:

Inyan, the Rock, took blood from himself to make Earth and then shrunk to become the hard substances of earth. Today, he is known as the Grandfather of the Universe. Because of the creation from this one individual, *Inyan*, everything that comes from the earth is then related.

From *Spirit and Reason* (Deloria, p. 52):

“A living universe within which events and actions have moral content necessarily suggests that all things are related. Not only is everything related, but it also participates

in the moral content of events, so responsibility for maintaining the harmony of life falls equally on all creatures.”

“... ‘All My Relatives’ ...is to remind us of our responsibility to respect life and to fulfill our covenantal duties...the phrase also describes the epistemology of the Indian worldview, providing the methodological basis for the gathering of information about the world.”

“Their understanding of relationships provided the Indians with the knowledge necessary to live comfortably in the physical world, and to not unduly intrude into the lives of other creatures.”

Student Activities

This project is comprised of two portions: a written portion and a visual art portion (The written portion should be completed first).

1. Writing Portion:

Whole class discussion of respect for other people, for other cultures, and for nature and the environment.

Discussion of Lakota relations of *Mitakuye Oyasin* with specific focus on animals. Internet reading/individual reading packets to build background with information about animals sacred to the Lakota people and the Lakota names for those animals.

Each student will select one animal that he/she will later incorporate into the visual art piece. The student will write both the Lakota name and the English name for this animal on the note card, followed by a brief description of the importance of this animal to Lakota people as it relates to *Mitakuye Oyasin*.

2. Visual Art portion:

Read Paul Goble’s book as a visual and literary example of the *Mitakuye Oyasin* belief.

Discussion of colors often used in traditional Lakota art, including examples from books and/or Internet visuals.

Each student will make an outline pattern or stencil (depending of the size/details of animal) of the animal. Begin to think of the natural environment that will be used as the background (appropriate to the geography/landscape of SD).

Using the pattern or stencil, students will ‘stencil one, draw one’ (trace the stencil/pattern line, then draw the image on their own near to the stenciled one). Repeat as necessary for the visual piece. Think how your visual art piece can show interconnectedness between ‘all the relatives’. Complete the visual art by adding the natural environment background.

Use materials of choice to add color to the visual.

To display, include the written card descriptions with the visual art.

Resources

Internet access, note cards, pencils, unlined white paper (9” x 12” or 12” x 18”), paints/crayons/colored pencils, Paul Goble’s book.

Assessment

Rubric for writing portion of project, rubric for visual art portion of project.

References

- Deloria, V., Jr. (1999). If you think about it, you will see that it is true. In B. Deloria, K. Foehner, & S. Scinta (Eds.), *Spirit and reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr., reader* (pp. 40-60). Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.
- Walker, J. R., DeMallie, R. J., & Jahner, E. A. (Eds.). (1991). *Lakota belief and ritual*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
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