

FOUR DIRECTIONS LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Elder	Stephen Augustine
Nation	Mi'kmaq
Lesson Plan Grade Level	Intermediate (Grades 7-9)
Time Required	2 - 3 hours
Subject Strand Links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biology • Chemistry • English • Art • Philosophy • Healthy Living and Sexuality
Traditional Teachings	Mi'kmaq Creation Story
Student Summary	<p>The Mi'kmaq Creation Story describes how life began for all things. This process occurred in seven stages or levels of creation and is described as follows:</p> <p>Level 1: The sky represents the Giver of Life, Gisoolg, who creates everything. Creation is a mystery that contains everything and is within everything. It is regarded with awe and reflected in all aspects of life, seen and unseen.</p> <p>Level 2: The Sun creates life and gives us our Shadows. The shadows reflect the identities, characteristics and spirits of <u>ancestors</u>. The Shadows are the joining of earth, matter, and the blood of human life. The Sun connects the spirit world to the physical world and is represented by the centre direction.</p> <p>Level 3: The third level of Creation is on the surface of Mother Earth. In the Mi'kmaq language, several words are directly related to the word for "Earth." For example, the word for the skin of a drum and the word for the Mi'kmaq people are related to each other and to the Mi'kmaq word for Mother Earth. The beat of a drum is the <u>heartbeat</u> of Mother Earth. The surface skin of Mother Earth gives rise to life, including people, and this is reflected in the word <i>Oosgitjinoo</i> which means "the person who has peeled himself off the surface of the Earth and is standing erect." <i>Oosgitjinoo</i> is a word used to refer to the Mi'kmaq people.</p> <p>Level 4: The first man, Glooscap, is created from a bolt of lightning. The bolt hits the Earth and his body is created on the Earth's surface. He is lying with his head in the direction of the rising sun and</p>

his feet are facing the setting sun. His arms are outstretched to the north and south. When the lightning meets with the elements of the Earth that make up Glooscap's body, a life force is created. When lightning hits a second time, Glooscap develops fingers and toes, and seven sacred parts to his head (two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and a mouth) appear. At the third bolt of lightning, Glooscap is freed from the surface of the Earth to walk and move about.

Glooscap gives thanks to Mother Earth and Grandfather Sun for his creation, and pays his respects to the **South**, the **West**, the **North** and the **East** directions. Once returning to the east where he was created, Glooscap is visited by an eagle that tells him he will soon be joined by his family to help him understand his place in this world. The eagle drops a feather, which Glooscap catches. This feather gives him strength and serves as a symbol of connection between his people and the Giver of Life, Grandfather Sun and Mother Earth.

Level 5: Glooscap meets his **Grandmother**, who is born from a rock. She teaches him to respect her wisdom and knowledge about the stars, the wind, the seasons and the tides, the characteristics and the behaviour of the plants and animals, and how to make food, clothing and shelter. For their *sustenance*, Glooscap takes the life of a **marten**, asking *permission* of the animal first, and giving thanks to the Giver of Life, Grandfather Sun and Mother Earth afterwards. Then, using the seven sparks from the bolts of lightning that created Glooscap, and seven pieces of dry wood, cousin **Whirlwind** is invited to create the Great Spirit **Fire**. Grandmother and Glooscap then feast to celebrate Grandmother's arrival into the world.

Level 6: Glooscap meets a young man who says he is Glooscap's nephew, a creation of Whirlwind, who passed through the ocean in the direction of the rising sun, causing foam to form and blow ashore. This foam has rolled in sand and picked up rocks and wood and feathers, eventually resting on sweet grass. With the help of the Giver of Life, Grandfather Sun and Mother Earth, the **nephew** was created. The nephew offers vision to the future and comes as a gift of the ancestors. Nephew is also a responsibility for Glooscap to guide, since the young turn to the old for direction in life. And just as Glooscap took the life of the marten for survival, the nephew calls upon the fish to give up their lives. Glooscap gives thanks, apologizing for taking the shadows of the fish and for taking elements of Mother Earth for their own survival. Again they feast, and continue to learn from Grandmother.

Level 7: Glooscap's **mother** appears, coming first as a leaf on a tree that falls to the ground and collects dew. The Giver of Life, Grandfather Sun and Mother Earth have made Glooscap's mother from this dew to bring gifts to her children. These gifts include the colours of the world, understanding and love, so that her children will know how to share and care for one another. Glooscap has his nephew

	gather food for a feast to celebrate the creation of Glooscap's mother. Glooscap provides leadership, respecting the teachings of the elders, the vision and strength of the young people, the gifts of the ancestors, and the teachings on how to rely on each other and to respect and care for one another. In this way, they live a good life.
Learner Objectives	<p>Knowledge/Understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand creation from a traditional Mi'kmaq perspective • To reflect, deconstruct and evaluate the Mi'kmaq Creation Story from a scientific perspective, an artistic perspective, and a philosophical perspective. • To identify the roles of the elements, humans and animals in maintaining balance in the <i>ecosystem</i> • To understand the formation of a human zygote into an embryo and finally into a fetus as a result of sexual reproduction <p>Inquiry/Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop insight as to the circle of life through the generations • To identify the gifts of the young and the old in teaching and learning • To determine through investigations the factors that contribute to the transfer of energy in the body • To identify aspects of healthy living and respect for one's own body <p>Skills/Applications :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To formulate operational definitions of the vocabulary terms • To develop proficiency in listening, speaking, writing, questioning and negotiating • To apply an aesthetic analysis to the Creation Story to interpret images of a theme
Strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin discussion with a question: "What is life?" Brainstorm answers on board. Add the question, "Where and how did life begin?" Brainstorm thoughts. Ask the students to list off the basic requirements for being alive: what are the characteristics of life? Introduce the concepts of 'animate' and 'inanimate'. While animate things are normally recognized as being living creatures as defined by science, there are other beings, such as rocks, that are also recognized as being 'animate' according First Nations people. Rocks do not qualify as being living beings according to the scientific definition of life. However, many scientists now feel that the Earth is animate, or a living being. Ask the students if they feel that the Earth is a living being. Watch <i>The Sacred Balance</i> series from the <i>Nature of Things</i> television series. This excellent video series highlights the contributions and influences that <i>Indigenous</i> peoples from across the world have made

to the fields of science.

2. Ask the students about how people create in their everyday life. What things do people create? Some expected answers can be: food, meals, art, crafts, written works, and clothing. People emulate creation when they create another person through sexual reproduction. Students should be taught about healthy living and sexuality through means such as open discussions about relationships, expectations, peer pressure and pregnancy. Students can view an excellent PBS video about sexual reproduction and the stages of pregnancy called *The Miracle of Life*. Depending on the comfort level of the instructor, students should openly ask questions about sex and sexuality, either in a sharing circle, open forum or anonymously on paper. These anonymous requests can be answered (or not) by the instructor in class.
3. Introduce Stephen Augustine, Mi'kmaq elder from the Maritimes, and the Mi'kmaq Creation Story. View www.fourdirectionteachings.com together as a class to:
 - a) Hear the "Mi'kmaq Creation Story"
 - b) Listen to Stephen Augustine's teachings, "The First Level of Creation," "The Second Level of Creation," "The Third Level of Creation," "The Fourth Level of Creation," "The Fifth Level of Creation," "The Sixth Level of Creation," and "The Seventh Level of Creation."
4. The groups will explore the Mi'kmaq Creation Story from their own perspectives simultaneously. Brainstorm ways in which we *create*, or assist in its development, and write these ideas on the black board or flipchart paper. People create gardens when they plant seeds and care for the development of the germinated plants. People create with images when they produce works of art. People transform basic food items into wonderful, nurturing meals when they cook with love.

Little Creations: Projects to involve students in the creative process

- a) Create a Native plant garden for the school yard. Research which plants, trees, bushes, shrubs, ferns, grasses and flowers are indigenous to your geographic area and climate zone. Find seed exchange programs to acquire a collection of these Native plants. Plan an area to prepare for your school garden. Is it shady or is there full sun? These factors will affect which plants you choose. Students should be aware that this type of project needs

time to develop, as with any creative work. Students can research the plants chosen for their medicinal and traditional histories, if applicable. Students can witness the process of seed germination and monitor germination rate with graphs and charts. The instructor should use this opportunity to teach about plant reproduction (sexual and asexual), as well as about general plant anatomy. This type of project needs to be an ongoing one, with successive groups of students participating in the garden's maintenance and upkeep. Native plant gardens will attract wildlife in a short time. Students can look forward to seeing different birds and butterflies to their schoolyard.

b) The students can create a mural of the *Mi'kmaq Creation Story*. This is a collaborative art project in which the students will contribute aspects to the final art piece. The instructor can order large rolls of paper and give out sections to groups of students to work on. The individual sections can be collated together to form the basis of the creation told in image form. The instructor can suggest style formats, e.g. *petroglyph*-style images, charcoal and pastels or paints. Divide the class into seven groups of 3-5 students, depending on class size, and each group will illustrate a particular *level of creation*. Display your final piece in your classroom, school hallway, library, or auditorium. Have the students prepare to retell the Creation story, using the mural as a visual aid.

c) Have a feast day celebration in which the students all provide something to the meal. Recall how **Marten** gave up his life so that Glooscap and Grandmother could eat. Recall how Glooscap honoured his Mother with a feast of fruits, nuts and plant foods. Invite an Aboriginal drummer to teach about Honour Songs and about the Drum. Invite a local Native Elder and teach the students about how Elders are honoured at feasts: Elders are always served before others. Ask your Elder to teach about how to honour the spirits and the ancestors with food. Note: Always present a **gift of tobacco** to an Elder and if the Elder accepts the gift, ask the question in a humble and honest way.

Additional Discussion Topics:

- Explain the relevance of the Mi'kmaq creation story to the Mi'kmaq people. What knowledge does this story provide in terms of living "a very nice and very happy life", as Augustine says?
- How does the knowledge gained from this story impact on our understanding of our ecosystem? To what extent is the relationship between Glooscap and the sea, sweet grass, and the wind a symbiotic one (mutually advantageous)?
- In what ways is Glooscap responsible for the nephew? What is the significance of their

	<p>relationship? What universal truths are there in Glooscap's relationships with his family members? Explain how these connections help us to conceive of higher realities by representing the relationships of all families in all societies and in every generation.</p> <p>Optional Exercises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a tree or garden planting project. Seek the help of community organizations (see link below) for direction. • Illustrate the steps involved in cellular respiration and photosynthesis in flowcharts, identifying all parts and processes clearly. • Demonstrate photosynthesis through an experiment using plants, sunlight, and sunlight filters and sunscreen lotions. • Contact a local First Nation to identify an environmental representative to present to the school. • Tour a wetland or conservation area. • Research the definitions of the terms in the vocabulary
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother Earth • Sustenance • Ecosystem • Indigenous • Petroglyph
Materials Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flipchart paper • Mural paper • Charcoals, pastels and paints • Native plant seeds • Gardening materials
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencil and paper quiz about the stages in human development and sexual reproduction • Labeling exercise about plant anatomy and sexual/asexual reproduction • Graphing exercise for germination rates of differing plant species. Plant growth data recording and data graphing.

Diagram for MI'KMAQ Curriculum

