

Indigenous Groups and the Environment

Land Ownership

For non-indigenous people, land is something they can own and develop as they see fit. They change the land from raw or unfinished to places they can call home or work. They make money from the land by selling natural resources like wood, minerals, fish, and other animals.

The indigenous people do not feel the same ownership of the land. They view the land as something they are connected to.



Spiritual Connections - Interconnectedness

Each First Nation group has a spiritual connection to the land that differs from nation to nation. The Canadian government and provincial governments across Canada understand that and have written that this connection be protected in the constitution and in the court room.

Spiritual connections means that the indigenous believe that everything in the universe is connected. The spirit world is connected to the mortal world, the land is connected to the sea, and the sky is connected to the ground.

Indigenous Views of Sustainability

Since the environment has been around for so long, the indigenous people of Canada have an intricate, respectful, grateful, and protective tie to the land. Being connected to the environment means they feel a responsibility to protect the land and all the creatures that live on it. This is not just an emotional feeling, as everything on the land has a spirit! If the connection between the spirits on the land is broken, the well-being of the indigenous group is affected.

The indigenous believe in environmental stewardship and taking care of the land. Before they make decisions, they think about the impacts the decisions will have on their ecosystems. They believe in biodiversity and protecting all species so that the environment as a whole, can stay healthy. This holistic approach is important to the indigenous, as they believe everything is connected. If one part of the environment is unhealthy, the entire environment will suffer.

The rest of the world is learning a lot from the indigenous views on sustainability. The greed and mismanagement of the land by corporations would not happen if everyone adopted the holistic approach of the indigenous. Many are still learning how one part of an ecosystem affects all parts of the ecosystem.

Indigenous Groups and the Environment

Questions

Use information from the text to support your answer

1) How do indigenous groups in Canada view the land? Why is it a sustainable approach?

2) How do non-indigenous people view the land? What could we learn from the indigenous?

Inference

What would have happened to our environment if European settlers/explorers adopted the indigenous way of life?

True or False

Circle whether the statement is true or false

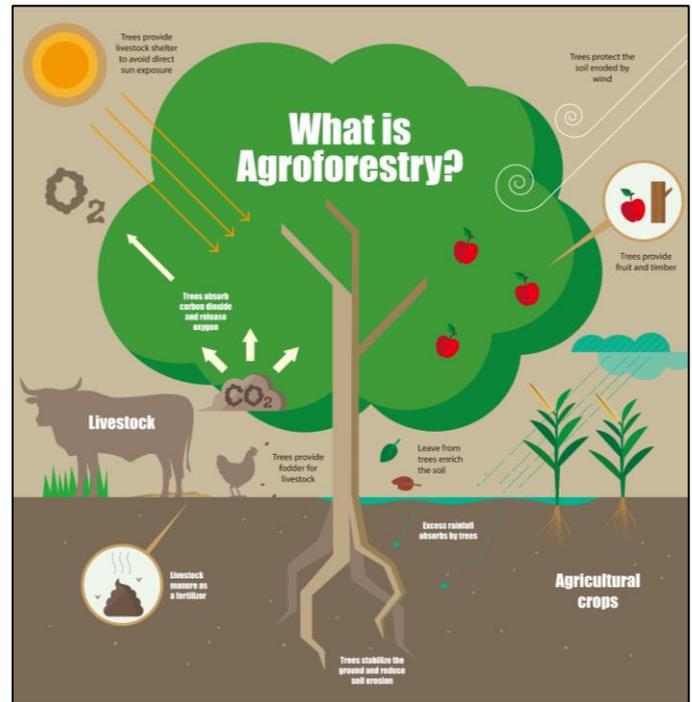
1) The indigenous feel connected to the environment	True	False
2) The indigenous view land as something that can be owned	True	False
3) For the indigenous, if one part of the environment is unhealthy, it all is	True	False
4) The indigenous way of life is more sustainable than the non-indigenous	True	False
5) The indigenous sell the resources on the land to make a lot of money	True	False

Indigenous Practices Promoting Sustainability

Indigenous Farming Practices

The indigenous people of Canada have mastered the sustainable development of their farming systems. They have been using the following methods successfully for many years.

- 1) Agroforestry – the planting of trees with crops has allowed the indigenous to control the temperature, sunlight, wind, and weather (hail and rain) exposure that their plants receive. Using agroforestry provides them with a wide range of products, such as food, fodder, firewood, timber, and medicine while also improving the soil.
- 2) Crop Rotations – the indigenous have been using crop rotations for thousands of years and they still use them today. Many First Nations plant the three sisters – corn, beans, and squash in a crop rotation.
- 3) Intercropping – instead of only planting a single crop on a field, intercropping means you plant 2 or more crops together. Doing so will reduce the risk of single crop failure. It will also increase biodiversity that attracts a variety of predatory insects that can feed on pests.



Sustainable Indigenous Ways of Life

It is obvious that the indigenous ways of life are more sustainable than modern Canadian ways of life. This is clear because we will find more biodiversity in indigenous communities than we find in Ontario's cities.

So, what do they do differently? Check out the list below.

- 1) Only take resources from the land that are needed
- 2) No wasting of resources, including animals they hunt (every part of the buffalo is used)
- 3) Respect the environment. For example – show patience in allowing old crops to decompose so they can provide nutrient rich soil (as opposed to burning the old crops)
- 4) The priority is not about making money or more development, it is about maintaining a healthy environment by honouring the Earth.
- 5) No pollution – traditional indigenous methods of transportation (canoes) emitted zero pollution

Indigenous Practices Promoting Sustainability

Questions

Use information from the text to support your answer

1) What agricultural practices do the indigenous use that promotes sustainability?

2) How is the indigenous way of life more sustainable?

Visualizing

What were you picturing in your head while you were reading?

Describe your picture

True/False

Is the statement true or false?

1) Agroforestry is the planting of trees with crops	True	False
2) Intercropping is when you grow different crops each year on rotation	True	False
3) The indigenous are more concerned with development than the environment	True	False
4) The indigenous have always created a lot of pollution	True	False
5) The indigenous do not waste natural resources	True	False

Seventh Generation - Indigenous Teaching Sustainability

Seventh Generation Principle – Ancient Haudenosaunee Philosophy

The **Seventh Generation Principle** is based on an ancient Haudenosaunee philosophy that the decisions we make today should result in a sustainable world seven generations into the future.

The Seventh Generation pictograph shows that all 7 generations are connected. The decisions our great grandparents, grandparents, and parents made have affected our current environment. The decisions we make will affect our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. In fact, the decisions we make will impact the next 7 generations.



Typically, the Seventh Generation Principle applies to decisions being made about our energy, water, and natural resources. But the indigenous also apply it to decision making related to sustainable relationships with other First Nations or government organizations.

Learning From the Seventh Generation Principle

In 1988, an American company started named Seventh Generation. Their name is inspired by the indigenous Seventh Generation Principle. The company sells cleaning supplies, like laundry detergent, spray cleaner, and dish soap.



Their mission is to transform the world into a healthy and sustainable place for the next seven generations. They are doing the following to ensure their decisions positively affect the next seven generations:

- use of renewable plant-based products
- use of recyclable materials in their packaging
- use of **biobased** products, meaning less chemicals that are harmful for the environment. When a biobased cleaning supply is washed down the drain, it isn't as harmful to the environment because the ingredients come from natural sources that will be broken down



We can all learn from the Haudenosaunee's ancient philosophy. If we think about the next seven generations before we buy a car for example, we might choose the electric vehicle that produces less emissions. If everyone considers the impact of their decisions, there is no doubt that we will achieve a more sustainable future.

Seventh Generation - Indigenous Teaching Sustainability

Questions

Use information from the text to support your answer

1) What is the Seventh Generation Principle? Why is it helpful for sustainability?

2) What is the company Seventh Generation? Why do you think they chose their name? What does their company do to ensure sustainability for 7 years?

Making Connections

What decisions have you made today or this week that could impact 7 generations? What could you have done differently?

Sustainable?

Circle yes if the action is good for the next 7 generations and no if it isn't

1) Throwing plastic into the garbage	Yes	No
2) Walking or biking to school	Yes	No
3) Convincing your parents to buy a big truck instead of a car	Yes	No
4) Burning a bunch of cardboard instead of recycling it	Yes	No
5) Leaving a TV on all night without watching it	Yes	No

Biodiversity and Indigenous Groups

Importance of Biodiversity for Indigenous Groups

The Indigenous groups in Canada have relied on the biodiversity in their home territories for the last 10,000 years and probably longer. This is because they live off the land and utilize the resources they have direct access to.

The Indigenous had diets based on a combination of salmon and other fish, shellfish, gamebirds and birds' eggs, berries and other fruits, root vegetables, green vegetables, and the inner bark of trees.

The variety of their diets was essential in providing energy, medicine, building materials, and more. If a plant or animal was no longer available to them due to over-hunting or over-picking, they did not have the option to order more online or ship some in from a different area. It would mean that they would live without it and have to adapt or move locations.



Cedar Tea

Biodiversity as Medicine

Plants and some animals as well as fungi are used to provide people with a host of medicines for maintaining health and for treating injuries and ailments of many kinds. Therefore, biodiversity was important in providing health and wellness to the Indigenous.

Biodiversity as Tradition and Culture

The Indigenous have a strong connection to the plants and animals in their territory. Some plants, animals, and fungi are prominent in the belief systems of the Indigenous. Their art, songs, and ceremonies often include wildlife that are important to them.

The Northwest Coast First Nation have an intense connection with biodiversity as their artforms represent stylized animals, birds, fish and other beings in wooden sculptures, totem poles, masks and dishes, as well as jewelry and paintings.



Biodiversity and Indigenous Groups

True or False

Circle whether the statement is true or false

1) More biodiversity means more different medicines and food	True	False
2) The Indigenous didn't really use wildlife in their lives	True	False
3) The Indigenous lived off the land and used wildlife available to them	True	False
4) The Indigenous honoured different animals on totem poles and in art	True	False
5) Cedar tea is cedar leaves mixed with hot water	True	False

Making Connections

What does the reading remind you of in your life?

Questions

Use information from the text to support your answer

1) How does biodiversity help Indigenous groups find medicines?

2) In what ways is biodiversity used in the traditions and culture of Indigenous groups?

Seasonal Rounds - Climate Change

Seasonal Rounds of the Coast Salish

The seasonal rounds of the Coast Salish people traditionally involved moving between different locations and activities in order to take advantage of different resources that were available at different times of year.

For example, in the spring, the Coast Salish gather shellfish and other seafood, harvest plants for food and medicine, and prepare their gardens for planting. During the spring, the salmon begin to swim upstream to spawn. The Salish people catch them and use them as food, but they also leave some fish behind so that there will be enough salmon for future generations. The salmon are an important part of their diet during this time because they can be dried or smoked for later use. In the summer, the Coast Salish fish, hunt, and harvest berries and other plants. In the fall, they harvest root crops, hunt and fish, and gather nuts and berries. In the winter, they hunt and fish, and rely on stored food and other resources.

The Coast Salish migrated throughout the year to take advantage of these resources. During the summer and spring seasons, they spent more time near the coast in order to harvest seafood and other resources from the ocean. In the fall and winter, they moved inland to hunt and gather plants and other resources from the forest and mountains. Living inland during the colder seasons allowed them to be more protected from the cool winds and weather on the coast.

Climate Change Affecting the Seasonal Rounds

Warmer temperatures and changing weather patterns can affect the availability and timing of traditional resources, such as seafood, plants, and game. For example, warmer temperatures may cause certain types of seafood to migrate earlier or later than usual or may affect the flowering and fruiting of plants. These changes can disrupt the traditional patterns of resource availability and make it more difficult for the Coast Salish to follow their traditional seasonal rounds.

In addition, as temperatures rise, the coastal nation has been forced to move their summer villages due to rising sea levels and increasing erosion. They are noticing more frequent flooding and rising tides. This is making it difficult to survive in the coastal territory that has been their home for thousands of years.

Another effect of climate change is that fishermen are finding that their catch is getting smaller as the water warms up and the fish move further away from shore. The change in temperature affects where they can put their nets, and it also means that they have to stay out at sea longer before they return home with a full catch.



Salish Canoe

Seasonal Rounds - Climate Change

True or False

Circle whether the statement is true or false

1) The Coast Salish stay in one place throughout the year	True	False
2) The salmon are an important part of the Coast Salish people's diet	True	False
3) Climate change is affecting the seasonal rounds the Coast Salish make	True	False
4) Fishermen are having to fish closer to the coast as the climate changes	True	False
5) Rising sea levels are destroying villages on the coast	True	False

Visualizing

Draw what you were picturing while you were reading. Explain the picture

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Questions

Use information from the text to support your answer

1) What are seasonal rounds? Describe the Coastal Salish's seasonal rounds.

2) How is climate change affecting the Salish First Peoples?
