

Geography 9

Overarching Question: What does it mean to live in a good way with the land?

Overarching Challenge: Describe at least three actions we can take to live in a good way with the land, using the format of your choice (for example, photos, traditional art form, or song.)

Lesson Question: What do our words reveal about our relationship with the land?

Lesson Challenge: Create a collection of words and phrases that accurately describe your relationship with the land.

Lesson Summary: In this lesson, you'll explore how the words that people use to describe the land can reflect or reveal their relationships to the land.

Big Idea: The words that people use to describe various aspects of the land can reflect how they view or think about the land.



Lesson Question: What do our words reveal about our relationship with the land?

Lesson Challenge: Create a collection of words and phrases that accurately describe your relationship with the land.

Start Your Thinking

To begin this lesson, read the short quote below. After you've read the quote, identify the words or phrases that best describe this person's relationship with the land.

"I think that the land provides a lot for people of this province. The land has many natural resources that we can use for all our wants and needs.

While people should look after the land that they own, we should also take and use the resources to keep growing our economy. If a tree can be cut down and used to build a house, let's cut it down. If a river can provide electricity, let's put a dam on it."

Which words or phrases best describe the speaker's relationship with the land?

(You can check more than one word or phrase if you wish.)

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> family | <input type="checkbox"/> useful | <input type="checkbox"/> responsible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a thing | <input type="checkbox"/> ownership | <input type="checkbox"/> disconnected |
| <input type="checkbox"/> respectful | <input type="checkbox"/> connected | <input type="checkbox"/> disrespectful |

Write down at least two reasons that support your choices:

1.

2.

What other words or phrases might describe this person's relationship with the land?



Think About the Lesson Challenge

In this lesson, you'll explore how the words and phrases that we use when we speak, write, or even sing can tell a lot about our relationship with the land. Our words and phrases can reveal what we think of the land and even how we interact with the land.

During this lesson you will learn how to look for messages that words and phrases can reveal about our relationship to the land. You'll then use these messages to help you create a list of words and phrases that accurately describe your relationship to the land.

Before moving on to the next part of the lesson, take a moment to think about some aspect of the land that might be meaningful or important to you. It could be a tree, a river or a lake, a trail that you've walked, or where you're from. What words or phrases would you use to describe the part of the land that's important to you?



A place or a part of the land that's important to me:

Words and phrases that describe my relationship with this part of the land:

Grow Your Thinking

To begin this part of the lesson, carefully read the pairs of statements in the table below. See if you can describe the most important difference between the statements in each pair.

Pair	Statement A	Statement B	What's the most important difference?
1	"Please bring my jacket."	"Do you still have my jacket?"	
2	"I am afraid of flying in airplanes."	"Flying in airplanes isn't my favourite way to travel."	
3	"The fish was delicious."	"Actually, the fish tasted okay."	

As you read each pair of statements, you probably noticed that while both statements were about the same topic, each statement sent a different message. For example, both statements in Pair 1 mention a jacket. Statement A makes it clear that the speaker wants their jacket. Statement B, on the other hand, is less obvious.

Some words and phrases that we use send clear and direct messages. Often called *direct* or *explicit* statements, these words and phrases send easy-to-understand messages. For example, in Pair 1, the phrase "Please bring" in Statement A makes it very clear what the speaker wants the listener to do.

Other times, words and phrases send messages that are not as clear or easily understood. Often called *implicit* messages, these words and phrases suggest or hint at the meaning, but don't directly state it. For example in Pair 1, the words of Statement B don't really make the speaker's message clear. The speaker might want their jacket, or they may simply want to know where it is.

Sometimes it can be challenging to interpret the implicit meaning of statements. To decode the meaning of these messages, try thinking about the meaning behind or beyond the words and phrases—what was the speaker or writer *really* meaning to say?

Revisit the pairs of statements in the table on page 4. Which column—Statement A or Statement B—is most likely to contain direct or explicit messages?



The statements in column A are most likely	The statements in column B are most likely
<input type="checkbox"/> direct or explicit <input type="checkbox"/> implicit A reason that supports your decision:	<input type="checkbox"/> direct or explicit <input type="checkbox"/> implicit A reason that supports your decision:

Let's practise with one more pair of statements. See if you can decide which of the statements below is sending a direct message and which is sending an implicit message.

Follow these steps to make your decisions:

1. Read each statement. Highlight or circle any words or phrases that might help you decode and understand the message each statement is sending.
2. Describe the message each statement is sending.
3. Decide if the message is direct or implicit.



Statements	What message is the statement sending?	Direct or Implicit?
A. "Don't eat those berries—they're poisonous."		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct message <input type="checkbox"/> Implicit message
B. "I wouldn't eat those berries if I were you."		<input type="checkbox"/> Direct message <input type="checkbox"/> Implicit message

Write down at least two reasons that support your decisions:

1.

2.

Statement A is sending an *explicit* message. The speaker clearly and directly tells you not to eat the berries and the reason why—the berries are poisonous! The words and phrases in the statement very clearly communicate the message.

On the other hand, Statement B is an *implicit* message. The speaker isn't directly telling you not to eat the berries, and the reasons are not clearly explained. The speaker of statement B is implying or suggesting that you shouldn't eat the berries, but the reason is not clear. The berries might be poisonous, but the speaker might also be saving the berries to make a delicious dessert. When you read the statement, you had to think carefully about what message the words and phrases in the statement might be sending.

Like the statement about poisonous berries, some words and phrases send very clear and direct messages about our relationship to the land. Other times, words and phrases suggest or hint at our relationship to the land but don't directly state it. Languages and the words and phrases that we use reveal ways of seeing the world and ways of knowing and being.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous languages have many words and phrases that send direct and implicit messages about relationships with the land. One effect of colonialism is that many of the Indigenous words and phrases used to describe the land and important relationships with the land have been replaced with other words and phrases. These words and phrases still describe relationships with the land, but the messages are often very different.

In English, personal pronouns are usually only used to refer to people. *He*, *she*, and *they* are used to refer to humans. In English, personal pronouns are usually not used to refer to the land.

Many Indigenous languages, however, do use personal pronouns to describe the land and other members of ecosystems; a flock of geese can be called *they*, a bear could be *he*, and the land could be referred to as *she*. Using words and phrases to describe things in this way reflects a belief in animism, the belief that all things have a spirit.

Words and phrases can also send messages about the relationships or connections that a speaker or writer has with the land. For example, what might it mean if a person calls a tree an *it*? Using *it* to describe a tree may send an implicit message about how a person would treat the tree. The speaker might view the tree as an object, not as a living thing with a spirit.

On the other hand, someone else could call a tree "grandmother tree." Describing a tree as a grandmother sends a different message about how a person would view and treat the tree. This speaker might view the tree as a living thing with a spirit that is to be respected, not treated like an object.

Let's revisit the quote from the beginning of the lesson. When you read it this time, look for explicit and implicit messages that can help you describe the speaker's relationship with the land. Follow these steps:

1. Reread the quote on page 2 and look for any words or phrases that send **direct** messages about the speaker's relationship to the land. You can write these words and phrases in the left-hand side of the table below.
2. Look for any words or phrases that send **indirect** messages about the speaker's relationship to the land. You can write these words and phrases in the right-hand side of the table below.
3. Choose the words or phrases that best describe the speaker's relationship with the land. Remember to use the words and phrases that you noticed in the statement to guide your decision-making.
4. What other words and phrases can you think of to describe the speaker's relationship to the land? You can list your ideas at the bottom of the table.



What words or phrases send <i>direct</i> messages about the speaker's relationship with the land?	What words or phrases send <i>indirect</i> messages about the speaker's relationship with the land?
Which words or phrases best describe the speaker's relationship with the land? (You can check more than one word or phrase if you wish.)	
<input type="checkbox"/> family <input type="checkbox"/> a thing <input type="checkbox"/> respectful	<input type="checkbox"/> useful <input type="checkbox"/> ownership <input type="checkbox"/> connected <input type="checkbox"/> responsible <input type="checkbox"/> disconnected <input type="checkbox"/> disrespectful
What other words or phrases might describe this person's relationship with the land? 	

You probably noticed that the quote on page 2 includes many direct and implicit messages about the speaker's relationship to the land, such as the following:

- The speaker says that the land can be owned. This is a very direct and clear message about how the speaker views the land: it is to be owned and used.
- The speaker uses the word *it* to describe a river or a tree. This could be an implicit message that the speaker views rivers and trees as objects.

Check Your Progress

To learn more about how words and phrases can describe relationships with the land, talk to someone you know. This could be another student, a teacher, a friend, a relative, a Knowledge Keeper, or an Elder.

What important words or phrases do they know that help describe important relationships to the land? Which would you add to your collection of words and phrases that help describe your relationship with the land?

Practise the Thinking

Let's look at some other statements that send different messages about relationship to the land. These statements are from Indigenous writers and thinkers, and they describe how Indigenous languages send important messages about relationships to the land.

Follow these steps:

1. On page 9, you'll find four statements describing relationship to the land. As you read each statement, try to decode the messages that are being sent about relationship to the land.
2. Look for any words or phrases in each statement that send **direct** messages about the speaker's relationship to the land. You can write these words and phrases in the left-hand side of the table on page 10.
3. Look for any words or phrases in each statement that send **indirect** messages about the speaker's relationship to the land. You can write these words and phrases in the right-hand side of the table on page 10.

Statement A	<p>The language that my grandfather was forbidden to speak is composed primarily of verbs, ways to describe the vital beingness of the world. Both nouns and verbs come in two forms, the animate and the inanimate. You hear a blue jay with a different verb than you hear an airplane, distinguishing that which possesses the quality of life from that which is merely an object. Birds, bugs, and berries are spoken of with the same respectful grammar as humans are, as if we were all members of the same family. Because we are. There is no <i>it</i> for nature. Living beings are referred to as subjects, never as objects, and personhood is extended to all who breathe and some who don't.</p> <p>Source: Robin Wall Kimmerer, "Speaking of Nature," Global Oneness Project, https://www.globalonenessproject.org/library/essays/speaking-nature</p>
Statement B	<p>Anishinaabemowin—the language of Anishinaabe people—does, however, carry key concepts for evaluating our effects on the world and inherently questioning whether we should do something. The word <i>nindinawemaganidog</i> translates as "all my relations"—but the meaning runs deeper than one's family. It is about our connection to all other living things and our relationship with them.</p> <p>Source: Andrew McConnell, "Language Is the Root of STEM," <i>Root & Stem</i>, Spring 2023, no. 7, 26–31, https://pinnguaq.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/root-stem-spring-2023-digital-final.pdf</p>
Statement C	<p>"All my relations" is at first a reminder of who we are and of our relationship with both our family and our relatives. It also reminds us of the extended relationship we share with all human beings. But the relationships that Native people see go further, the web of kinship to animals, to the birds, to the fish, to the plants, to all the animate and inanimate forms that can be seen or imagined. More than that, "all my relations" is an encouragement for us to accept the responsibilities we have within the universal family by living our lives in a harmonious and moral manner (a common admonishment is to say of someone that they act as if they had no relations).</p> <p>Source: Thomas King, quoted in "Well-being: All My Relations," p. 1, <i>Aboriginal Perspectives, Walking Together: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum</i>, Government of Alberta, https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/well_being/documents/all_my_relations.pdf</p>
Statement D	<p>The interconnected relationships with all living things is called the Sacred Circle of Life. First Nations teachings guide us to show respect for all within this Sacred Circle. An intense and deep connectedness with all that surrounds us is a foundational concept of First Nations philosophy. This includes a connection to Mother Earth and all that the Universe contains, including other people (personal relationships, family, neighborhoods, communities, nations), all of the plant beings and four legged brothers and sisters, the finned and flying beings, and ultimately the Great Spirit that animates all.</p> <p>Source: "Interconnectedness," First Nations Pedagogy Online, https://firstnationspedagogy.ca/interconnect.html, licensed under the CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).</p>

As you read each statement, try to decode the messages that are being sent about relationship to the land. Look for any words or phrases in each statement that send **direct** and **indirect** messages about the speaker's relationship to the land.



Decoding Messages About the Land		
	What words or phrases send <i>direct</i> messages about the speaker's relationship with the land?	What words or phrases send <i>indirect</i> messages about the speaker's relationship with the land?
Statement A		
Statement B		
Statement C		
Statement D		
<p>Direct messages: words and phrases that send clear and easy-to-understand messages Indirect messages: words and phrases that suggest or hint at the meaning of a message, but don't directly state it</p>		



Reflect on Your Thinking

Think About the Lesson Challenge

During this lesson, you learned how the words and phrases that we use can send direct or implicit messages about our relationship to the land. You've also read statements that describe important beliefs, values, and teachings about the land that are found in Indigenous languages. Hopefully you've been able to talk with a Knowledge Keeper or Elder to learn more about how your language can be used to describe your connection to the land.

On page 3 of this lesson you started thinking of words and phrases that could be used to describe your relationship with a place or a part of the land. To finish this lesson, use what you've learned to respond to the lesson challenge ("Create a collection of words and phrases that accurately describe your relationship with the land."). Look at your list on page 3 and try answering these questions in the space below:

- Which words and phrases send clear and direct messages about your relationship to the land? Which of these words and phrases would you like to keep? Are there any words or phrases that you'd like to add?
- Which words and phrases send implicit messages about your relationship to the land? Which of these words and phrases would you like to keep? Are there any words or phrases that you'd like to add?



Words and phrases that describe my relationship to the land:



How can thinking about the words and phrases that we use help us live *mino bimaadiziwin*?

Think About the Overarching Challenge

If you completed the geography launch lesson (“What does it mean to live in a good way with the land?”), you probably started a Thoughtbook. In this Thoughtbook you began thinking about ways to respond to the challenge: **Describe three actions that we can take to live in a good way with the land.**

After you’re finished the geography lessons, you’ll use what you’ve learned to respond to that challenge. You can use the format of your choice—a song, a traditional art form, photographs, a poem—whatever you think would be best to describe the actions we can take to live in a good way with the land.

Revisit your Thoughtbook now or use the space on page 14 to reflect on the actions we can take to live in a good way with the land. As you think about what you’ve learned in this lesson about how the words and phrases that we use can reflect our relationship to the land, answer these questions:

- What actions would you add to your Thoughtbook?
- Would you change any of the ideas that you already have in your Thoughtbook?

Lesson Question: What do our words reveal about our relationship with the land?



My Thoughtbook: What actions can we take to live in a good way with the land?

Use words, symbols, or pictures to describe three (or more) actions that we can take to live in a good way with the land.