

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: How is your well-being connected to the land?

Lesson Challenge: Use pictures or words to describe important connections between your well-being and the land.

Lesson Summary: In this lesson, you will explore various perspectives on well-being and use a strategy that will help you notice and describe how the land influences your well-being.

Big Idea: There are many important connections between our well-being and the land.



Lesson Question: How is your well-being connected to the land?

Lesson Challenge: Use pictures or words to describe important connections between your well-being and the land.

Start Your Thinking

Students of the Matawa Education and Care Centre have many opportunities to participate in outdoor activities like ice climbing, winter camping, canoe trips, winter dog sledding, and even a spring bird hunt and fall moose hunt.

In addition to being great fun, each of these activities is designed to create opportunities for students to connect with the land. The photo on this page is from the two-week summer canoe trip, one of the highlights of the year. To begin this lesson, take a careful look at the photo of the canoe trip. What do you think the students might notice or feel when they are connected to the land while on the canoe trip?



The Matawa Education and Care Centre

What pictures or words might describe the feeling of being connected to the land during the summer canoe trip?



Think About the Lesson Challenge

There are many benefits to being on the land. Going on adventures like a two-week summer canoe trip can provide many opportunities to learn important life skills and lessons from the land. We don't need to go on big adventures, though, to benefit from being on the land. Even going on a quiet walk near some trees or sitting by a river can be a time to connect with the land. In this lesson we will explore how being connected can be important for our well-being (mino akii-ayaa).

You can start your thinking about the connections between the land and your well-being by following these steps:

1. Think about a time when you were on the land—it could have been on a school trip or in your community. You can note this on page 4.
2. Use words and images to answer these questions:
 - What do you remember noticing about the land?
 - What did you notice about yourself?
 - How might the land be connected to your well-being?

You can add your words or pictures to the space on page 4. And don't worry: you don't need to have a "right" answer! This is a time for you to start your thinking and you'll be able to come back to your first thoughts later in this lesson. You can add to these thoughts or even change them later. At the end of the lesson, you'll use these first thoughts and what you learn to respond to the lesson challenge.



How is your well-being connected to the land?

A time when I was on the land:

- What do you remember noticing about the land?

- What did you notice about yourself?

- How might the land be connected to your well-being?

Grow Your Thinking

Before we explore connections between well-being and the land, let's learn more about well-being.

There are many different definitions and understandings of well-being. In the table below you'll see four different descriptions of the meaning of well-being. As you read the definitions, look for important differences and similarities. Use the right-hand column to describe the important similarities and differences that you notice.

Descriptions of Well-being	What's an important <i>difference</i> between all of these descriptions of well-being?
Well-being is being healthy, happy, and comfortable, both physically and mentally.	
Well-being is a complex combination of a person's physical, mental, emotional and social health factors.	
Well-being is having enough money to live, good health, education, time for work and fun, a clean environment, and the opportunity to control your own life.	What's an important <i>similarity</i> shared by all of these descriptions of well-being?
Well-being is the balance and connection between the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual parts of who we are.	

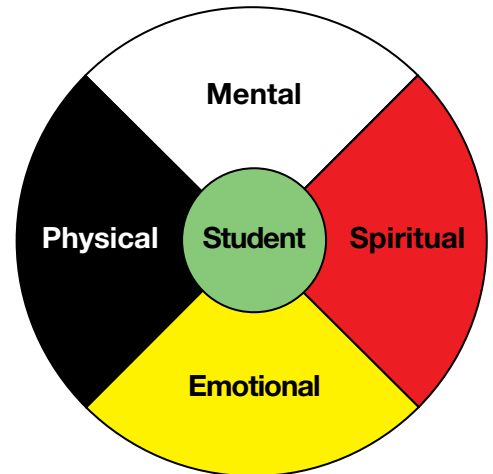
Many non-Indigenous views focus on separate parts of well-being like health, education, or the environment.

On the other hand, the Medicine Wheel shows four parts or dimensions of well-being that are connected and interrelated. Many Indigenous beliefs describe well-being as a strong mind-body-spirit connection. Indigenous ways of thinking see strong connections between the land and all the parts of the Medicine Wheel: strong connections and relationships with the land can help support healthy and strong well-being in all areas of life.

The Anishinabek worldview believes that being in harmony and balance with ourselves and our planet is a way of knowing peace. Paying attention to the land around you and noticing how it affects your thoughts, emotions, and how your body feels can help you understand how the land is connected to all dimensions of your well-being.

In the next part of this lesson, you will read about two Anishinaabeg teenagers and how time they spent on the land impacted the dimensions of their well-being. Their experiences on the land are described on pages 7 and 8.

As you read about the experiences that Mitig and Aki had on the land, look for words and phrases that describe how the land impacted the dimensions of their well-being. For example, you might read that Aki was learning about manoomin while on the land. This learning could be an example of how the land could support the physical dimension of her well-being (this example has been included for you). You can add these words or phrases to the right-hand side of pages 7 and 8.



Aki went to a lake with a school cultural worker to learn more about manoomin. While they were by the lake, Aki took a picture of ducks swimming.

Later, Aki shared that she has some negative relationships in her life. These relationships can make her feel sad, isolated, and upset about life. She couldn't concentrate in school and her negative thoughts seemed to take all her energy. Being able to watch the ducks living in nature and trees along the shore gave her a sense of hope to believe that healthy relationships can exist. Aki said, "I learned a lesson from the ducks. They showed me that healthy relationships are possible, which gave me a feeling of hope and helped turn my thoughts in a more positive direction. As I watched the ducks and rested in the leaves under the trees my body felt comfortable and relaxed. Like the leaves, I felt settled. And I stopped feeling so lost and angry. Seeing and feeling this on the land helped me see this in myself."



Dimensions of Well-being	How might the land affect or impact this dimension of well-being?
Physical well-being includes what our bodies need to be well. This includes food and nutrition, exercise, and relaxation.	Learning about manoomin is an example of how the land could support the physical dimension of Aki's well-being.
Mental well-being includes what we need to think, grow, and face challenges and opportunities.	
Emotional well-being includes what we need to pay attention to and use the emotions that we feel in positive ways.	
Spiritual well-being includes how we find purpose, connection, and meaning in life. This dimension can also include important teachings or lessons.	

Mitig went canoeing as part of a school trip. He spent a lot of time by the water and took pictures of the river.

In the evenings by the campfire he shared that he felt a lot of stress, anger, and anxiety because he struggled with school. He felt far away from his family and felt that other teens sometimes made fun of him. When he was younger, his dad would often walk and play with him near a river in their community.

Mitig found that connecting with the land and being by the river helped him think more positively. He said, “the river calms me down and provides a sense of peace and positive memory for me. The sky is really blue over the river—it’s so beautiful. Sometimes when I am really worried I come to the river, take my shoes off, and walk and splash about. I notice my body is less tense then. The river has calm and turbulent areas which remind me that it is normal for life to have ups and downs.”



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Before moving on the next part of the lesson, go back to page 4 and your ideas about how your well-being might be connected to the land. Given what you’ve learned thus far in this lesson, what would you change or add to your ideas about the connections between the land and your well-being? Add any new ideas that you may have in the space provided on page 4.



Dr. Dwayne Donald, a Cree scholar and professor at the University of Alberta, describes a time when he was walking in a river valley, thinking about his well-being and the land. Below is a short quote from Dr. Donald; what do you think he's saying about the connections between well-being and the land?

Human beings are called to repeatedly acknowledge and honour the sun, the moon, the land, the wind, the water, the animals and the trees ... because we carry parts of each of them inside our own bodies.

Source: Dwayne Donald, "We Need a New Story: Walking and the wâhkôhtowin Imagination," *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies*, 18, no. 2 (2021): 53–63.

What is Dr. Donald's main idea about his connection with the land?

Dr. Donald learned more about how the land is an important part of him and the significant role that the land plays in his well-being. When he intentionally pays attention to and honours his relationship with the land, his mind, body, and spirit connect with the surrounding life energies of the land. This connection has an important impact on well-being.

While there are important relationships between the land and your well-being, it might sometimes seem challenging to feel connected to the land. There may be times when you're unable to be on the land or when your connections to the land may feel distant or hard to find. Colonialism has also weakened or broken our connections to the land in many ways.

In the next part of the lesson, you'll practise using a strategy for paying attention to the connections between you and the land, similar to how Dr. Donald noticed and honoured the connections he felt. You can use this strategy to help you when you're on the land and you want to honour what you're feeling, or you might use it in moments when you don't feel very connected to the land.

Follow the steps below to learn more about the strategy and how it can help you connect the land and your well-being:

1. Think again about a time you have spent on the land. It can be the same place that you've thought about earlier in this lesson, or it can be a different place on the land. You can note this place at the top of page 10. You can also do this if you're actually able to go on the land—just follow these steps when you're outside!
2. As you think about the place on the land that you've chosen, answer each of the questions on page 10. You can use words or pictures to describe your answers.

Check Your Progress

To learn more about how well-being might be connected to the land, talk to someone you know. This could be another student, a teacher, a friend, a relative, a Knowledge Keeper, or an Elder. How do they describe the relationships and connections between their well-being and the land?

After your conversation, revisit page 4 and your initial thoughts about connections and relationships between your well-being and the land. What would you change in or add to your ideas about the connections between the land and your well-being? Add any new ideas that you may have to the space provided on page 4.

You can complete this part of the lesson by going back to the photo on page 2. Reread what you wrote when you described how being connected to the land might feel. This time use what you've learned about well-being and the strategy for paying attention to the land to help you think of more words and pictures to describe the feeling of being connected to the land while on a summer canoe trip. You can add your new ideas in the space on page 2.



Reflect on Your Thinking

Think About the Lesson Challenge

In this lesson you've explored how your well-being can be connected to the land. You've also read descriptions about how being on the land has impacted people's well-being. Hopefully you've also been able to talk with a Knowledge Keeper or Elder to learn more about how the land has impacted their well-being.

During this school year you'll have opportunities to be on the land with other people in your class as well as cultural workers and Elders. There may be other times, though, when you're in the city and the land that you love and is important to you feels far away. In those moments, the strategy that you learned in this lesson can help you focus on and honour the important connections between your well-being and the land in both situations. You don't need to carry a paper copy of this lesson with you—just try to remember the questions and use them to help pay attention to and honour your connections to the land.

On page 4 of this lesson you started collecting pictures and words that could be used to describe connections between your well-being and the land. To finish this lesson, use what you've learned to respond to the lesson challenge ("Use pictures or words to describe important connections between your well-being and the land."). Look at your collection on page 4 and try answering these questions:

- Which pictures and words create the best description of connections between your well-being and the land?
- Which of these pictures and words would you like to keep? Are there any pictures and words that you'd like to add?



The pictures and words that create the best description of connections between my well-being and the land are:

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 15 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 connections between the land and your well-being, 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?



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.