

Spirit of the Island: Manitoulin's People  
Stories of Indigenous-Settler Historical Dynamics

Ezhi-minidoowang Minis: Minidoo-wining Bemaadizijig Wiin E-zhi-kendaang  
gaa-zhiwebizid nji Anishinaabewid-Gaa-bi-daajig gaa-bi-zhi-gijigdoowaad

LESSON PLAN / ACTIVITY GUIDE: GATHERING THIRTEEN  
'Sacred Water' - 'Gchi-Nibi'



by Dr. Rhonda L. Paulsen  
with Anishinaabemowin Translators Elder Shirley I. Williams-Pheasant and Isadore Toulouse



FIRST NATIONS UNIVERSITY, SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA





*Walking in Birches*

*oil on canvas, L. Thippawong*

**GATHERING THIRTEEN:**  
**‘Sacred Water’, ‘Gchi-Nibi’**

Elder Shirley I. Williams-Pheasant and Dr. Rhonda L. Paulsen

**Cross-Curricular Subjects, established by Ontario’s Ministry of Education, are:**

- Social Sciences and the Humanities
- Native Studies
- Interdisciplinary Studies
- Environmental Sciences
- Canadian and World Studies
- Politics and Citizenship

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Heading time on video</b>
Thirteen Grandmother Moons and Turtle Island	0:09
Sacred Water Walks	2:58
The Right for Water	7:24

*Learning Outcomes – upon completion of this Gathering, learners will be able to*

1. Realize the importance of maintaining a strong knowledge base of historical and current issues concerning Inuit, Metis, and First Nations societies.
2. Ethically and morally discuss historical and contemporary events in the context of Indigenous-Settler dynamics/experiences.
3. Assess meanings embedded in public statements; be socially responsible.

The schedule below includes some of the dates during the school calendar year which focus on Indigenous experiences (there may be variances between district school boards). The Gatherings listed as relating to the event are only a starting point; after reviewing the book and videos yourself, you can best determine how to align the content for your specific needs.

DATE	EVENT	RELATED GATHERING
September 30	<i>Orange Shirt Day</i> – in response to a six-year-old’s experience of having her shirt ripped off of her on the first day in residential school, this day is set apart to promote awareness of the residential school system.	- One ~ Language Loss and Revitalization - Two ~ A Survivor’s Story - Three ~ Conflict and Resolution in Education - Nine ~ Forgotten Children
October 4	<i>Sisters in Spirit</i> – raising awareness of the high rates of violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada.	- Nine ~ Forgotten Children (heading) Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
November, first full week	<i>Treaty Week</i> – time set apart for the study of treaties in collaboration with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.	-Three ~ Colonialism Evades Ontario’s Education System - Four ~ status quo ante bellum - Seven~ Learning from Past Mistakes - Twelve ~ This is Who We Are
November 8	<i>Indigenous Veterans Day</i>	- Four ~ status quo ante bellum - Twelve ~ This is Who We Are - Glossary
November 16	<i>Louis Riel Day</i> - marking the date Louis Riel was executed in 1885, it is a day for recognizing Metis rights.	- Four ~ status quo ante bellum - Twelve ~ This is Who We Are - Glossary
May 10	<i>Bear Witness Day</i> – meant to advocate for Indigenous children to be able to receive the health care they require and that it is done without delays.	- Two ~ A Survivor’s Story - Three ~ Traditional Indigenous Education - Seven ~ Indian Act(s) - Nine ~ Forgotten Children (heading) Child Welfare and the 60’s Scoop
June	Aboriginal Month	- all content
June 21	National Indigenous Day	- all content

## Holistic Learning

Originally, I created the ink drawing (below) to depict my life story, after a friend suggested I draw a self-portrait. It also became my visual representation for five elements of holistic learning: openness, humility, listening, intelligences, and balance.



pen and ink by R. L. Paulsen

*“We are not human beings on a spiritual journey,  
we are spiritual beings on a human journey.” author unknown*

**Openness** ~ At any age, when learning, one becomes an open vessel, looking outwards from themselves in a position that welcomes the opportunity to embrace new knowledge and experience.

**Humility** ~ An open heart and an open mind reflect humility in the process of lifelong learning and personal growth and development.

**Listening** ~ The profile depicts the learner being positioned to listen, watch, and absorb the lessons.

**Intelligences** ~ Each person’s learning styles are unique; represented are the mouth (orality), ears (auditory), eyes (visual), wings (kinetic), and heart (our soul).

Interspersed within these representations are images suggesting **balance**.

## **Personal Inquiry Activity**

Each Gathering in the book includes questions for *Personal Inquiry*. The intention is to provide introspective time for the learner to absorb the information personally, process the meaning embedded in the data that is not necessarily on the surface, and explore the variables behind the *Personal Inquiry* questions. These questions can also be used as a spring board for:

- essay topics
- role play activities (e.g. an interview)
- small or large group discussion
- community-based research questions.

Using the *Personal Inquiry* questions in your classroom or workshop is most efficient when the instructor ensures there are no interruptions and provides a quiet time for the learners to be reflective. This personal reflection time can be followed by small group discussions with learners sitting in circles to share their perspectives. If these small groups are intended to move to a whole group discussion, options for doing so include:

- one person in the small group verbally shares the groups' perspectives with the whole group; or
- each small group writes their perspectives on flip chart paper that is displayed around the room, which then is taken up in the large group discussion.

### **Materials**

- flip chart paper and markers
- painters' tape or sticky adhesive to display the flip chart paper that can be removed safely from the walls.

### **Manifesting Ethics in the Learning Environment**

During *Personal Inquiry* exercises, learners are guided in manifesting ethics with one another in the form of: care, respect, truthfulness and trust, and integrity as individual's contributions to the learning environment are viewed, listened to, and discussed openly.

### ***Personal Inquiry questions included in the Video Series***

Following are the Personal Inquiry questions for Gathering Thirteen included in the video series. The corresponding image and inspirational quote can be displayed for the learners to view during this personal reflection time, encouraging thoughtful introspection.

## Gathering Thirteen: ‘Sacred Water’, ‘Gchi-Nibi’



*Dominion Acres, Manitoulin Island*

*photo by R. O. Paulsen*

*“Don’t be afraid to take a big step if one is indicated.  
You can’t cross a chasm in two small jumps.”*

*David Lloyd George*

### Personal Inquiry

1. Why do we need water protection?
2. Many First Nations, Inuit, and Metis communities have been under a boil-water advisory for years, sometimes decades. How long do you think an urban center, such as Toronto or Vancouver, would have to wait to rectify a boil-water advisory? 25 years? A generation born and raised into adulthood without safe drinking water.
3. Consider standing as your own ‘witness’, i.e. observing yourself objectively. Without any negativity in your own thoughts or negativity from others, explore how you define your own identity. Then, in the purity of your personal exploration, think of where the Creator wants you to be; consider how far your existing (perceived) ‘boundaries’ can be surpassed. What do you want to do? What will you do?

## 'READING DISCUSSION GUIDELINE' ACTIVITY

- The 'Reading Discussion Guideline' form relates to all of the Gatherings in the book, and to the video series which includes Gatherings Two, Three, Nine, and Thirteen.
- The purpose of this form is to assist learners in reflective and analytical reading and listening, as well as for personal review to retain the information long-term and, if a student, for tests.
- This form can be used at the end of a unit of study (if focusing on material under a heading), and/or at the completion of a class or workshop (if using an entire Gathering or the video series).

### Learning Outcomes...learners will be able to:

1. Appreciate the importance of culturally relevant curriculum and learning environments.
2. Ethically and morally discuss historical and contemporary events in the context of Indigenous-Settler dynamics and experiences.
3. Assess meanings embedded in public statements; be socially responsible.

### Participatory and Experiential Learning

#### a) For the classroom: *Personal student reflection and assessment*

- students can hand in their completed 'Reading Discussion Guideline' forms at the beginning of the class to confirm that their homework has been done and for assessment purposes;
- the form is returned at the end of class for the student to keep for their own studies.

#### b) For the classroom and professional development workshops: *Discussions and activities*

- i) whole-group discussion - preferably sitting in a circle, learners use their own completed forms as a guide to discuss one or more of their answers;
- ii) small group discussions can be formed, using the same process;
- iii) within the small or large group: flip chart paper and markers are used to record the input for each point, this information is displayed around the room, learners are encouraged to move about the room at their own discretion to view all of the input, the group reconvenes, and learners are invited to verbally share their responses with the group.

### Holism

Throughout the process of using this form, learners are encouraged to:

- draw connections between the various components of the lesson;
- relate the content to everyday life in a positive sense;
- recognize each person in the group as a whole person with their own experience and identity;
- reflect on relationships with one another and Creation.

### Manifesting Ethics in the Learning Environment

During this exercise, learners are guided in manifesting ethics with one another in the form of: care, respect, truthfulness and trust, and integrity as individual's contributions to the learning environment are viewed, listened to, and discussed openly.

### Materials

- one form per learner (below)
- flip chart paper and markers
- painters' tape or sticky adhesive to display the flip chart paper that can be removed safely from the walls.



*Walking in birches*

*oil on canvas, L. Thippawong*

READING DISCUSSION GUIDELINE

1. Identify up to three (3) main themes of the Gathering(s).

- i) \_\_\_\_\_
- ii) \_\_\_\_\_
- iii) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Explain how each theme (as listed above in '1') corresponds to your class/workshop and everyday life.

- i) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ii) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- iii) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Personal reflections (comments can be added during or after the group discussion).

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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*Walking in birches*

*oil on canvas, L. Thippawong*

## **OUTDOOR/COMMUNITY EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION - ACTIVITY**

### Learning Outcomes...learners will be able to:

1. Approach learning and education in relation to the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual realms of human being.
2. Describe perceptions of natural resources in term of Indigenous traditional knowledge.
3. Relate examples of effective land-based learning.

### Participatory and Experiential Learning

Briefly, traditional Indigenous education emphasizes the inter-generational aspect of learning that is based on Elders, family, community members, and students learning through storytelling and participating in activities together. Experiential learning outside of the classroom or organization fosters intergenerational relationships and connections with community and the natural environment. Food sovereignty, as one example, is intrinsically woven into people's relationship with the land and links emotional and physical health with diet, food sourcing, and food preparation. Unfortunately, emphasis at this point in human history is on stewardship for the land and water in response to global warming and climate change.

Hence, suggestions for experiential learning outside of the walls of the school or organization, while sharing with traditional teachers, Elders, and Knowledge Holders, include:

- community gardens that increase knowledge of local sustainable food sources
- edible school yards where students create a food curriculum; both students and professionals can design and maintain gardens on school and/or community property
- designing and maintaining a pollinator garden for bees and butterflies (include visits from apiarists who can teach about humans' dependence on bees for food sources)



*Experiential learning, Paulsen inserting queen cell to a mass of 'fuzzy friends'* photo by R. B.

- carpentry/math: build bee hives for local apiaries
- maple syrup harvesting



*Maple Sugar Bush*

*photo by R. L. Paulsen*

- outdoor survival skills; building outdoor shelters
- participate in Sacred Water Walks (described in Gathering Thirteen) and seasonal celebrations, such as Change of Season, Harvest Days, Ceremonies, and pow wows
- enjoy outdoor seasonal physical activities, such as snow shoeing and canoeing
- form a singing or drumming group
- create an interactive online learning center for contributions and discussions
- land stewardship responsibility; recycling and composting efforts; installing water gardens to prevent flooding and conserve water
- nature painting, sketching, photography, basket making, beading, sculpting
- astronomy (from Inuit, Metis, and First Nations perspectives).

### Intergenerational Learning

Community members, Elders, and Knowledge Holders are invited to lead and/or participate in the outdoor education experience for:

- guidance in protocols for being on the land and water
- sharing traditional knowledge of the environment and outdoor practices.

### Holism

Through experiencing the outdoor education lesson, learners can:

- draw connections between the various components of the lesson
- relate the learning to everyday life in a positive sense
- reflect on relationships with oneself, one another, and Creation.

### Culture and Language

- Through invitation of speakers or use of videos and/or hand-outs, incorporate one of the first languages and/or dialects of the territory into the outdoor experience to identify species and environmental aspects of the land and/or water.



*Walking in birches*

*oil on canvas, L. Thippahawong*

## **INSTRUCTOR'S CHECKLIST FOR PLANNING OUTDOOR EDUCATION**

<b><i>One month prior to the excursion - TASK</i></b>	<b>CHECK</b>
Confirm your request with your local school, district school board, or organization.	
Request your plans with the communities/centers/parks etc. which you will be visiting.	
Make alternate plans if the excursion relies on weather and needs to be cancelled.	
Articulate your goals for the excursion; plan related exercises and assessment tools.	
Identify safety and risk management issues and corresponding processes.	
Contact volunteers and supports (including transportation, food, medical personnel, etc.).	
Engage the learners in creating a website or blog for the excursion.	

<b><i>One week prior to the excursion - TASK</i></b>	<b>CHECK</b>
If in a classroom, send a Letter of Permission to the students' homes for signatures.	
Confirm with communities or centers that will be visited, volunteers, and supports.	
Ensure that all participants know to bring their personal identification, medical needs, and emergency contact(s); emphasize that this information needs to be on their person at all times.	
Discuss excursion goals and protocols with the students/participants.	
Review requirements for food (allergies), clothing, waste-free beverages, cell phone use, etc.	

<b><i>The day of the excursion - TASK</i></b>	<b>CHECK</b>
Arrive early to be available to organize transportation, food, volunteers, and participants.	
If in a classroom, collect all Letters of Permission; count, identify, and record each student.	
Ensure that any person with medical needs has appropriate accommodations in place and any medications required documented.	
Confirm that parent(s)/guardian(s) know the return time and place for picking up the students.	

<b><i>Following the excursion - TASK</i></b>	<b>CHECK</b>
Review the excursion in future classes/workshops to continue the learning and apply it to everyday life in a positive sense; manifest ethics of care, respect, trust, and integrity.	
Engage learners in maintaining the website with pictures, text, links, and open space for dialogue.	
Send notes of appreciation to all involved (have the students/participants write them).	

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