

# HOW (AND WHY) WE DO ARCHAEOLOGY

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## An Introduction to the Indigenous Archaeological Record

ARCHAEOLOGY LESSON PLAN SERIES

FIRST PEOPLES OF THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES OF CANADA

MI'KMAQ, WOLASTOQIYIK, AND PESKOTOMUHKADI

### Lesson 3

## A History of Indigenous People in the Maritime Provinces

DISCUSSION IDEAS AND EXERCISES

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How (and Why) We Do Archaeology: An Introduction to the Indigenous Archaeological Record

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Lesson Plan 3

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**Statement of recognition:** This lesson plan has been developed using educational facilities and resources within the traditional lands of the Wolastoqiyik and many other First Nations of Canada. The material in these lesson plans deals with the culture and history of the Wolastoqiyik, the Mi'kmaq, and the Peskotomuhkadi, as well as the First Nations in the Northeast of North America and across all of the Americas. Much of the knowledge base shared in this lesson plan is the direct result of the sharing of knowledge by the First Peoples of the Americas. The authors gratefully acknowledge that the unceded territories of the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, and Peskotomuhkadi and all First Peoples made this lesson plan possible and that the rich cultural history of these peoples created the sites that we study.

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## **Note Concerning Ethical Treatment of the Archaeological Record**

This lesson plan is not intended to replace archaeological education or give students or teachers the skills to conduct archaeology. The authors and NCCIE in no way endorse seeking out Indigenous artifacts, withholding archaeological information from regulatory bodies, looking for archaeological sites, or digging with the intention to find artifacts or sites. Conducting archaeology, including excavation, testing, surveying, and monitoring, is only to be undertaken by an archaeologist or under the direction of an archaeologist who meets the criteria to be permitted by the provincial regulatory body of the province in question. The authors and NCCIE strongly condemn any activity that endangers the archaeological record, treats artifacts in a disrespectful way (such as selling or destroying artifacts), or impedes the ability of regulatory bodies to protect cultural resources.

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# HOW (AND WHY) WE DO ARCHAEOLOGY

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## An Introduction to the Indigenous Archaeological Record

Lesson

3

## A History of Indigenous People in the Maritimes

### DISCUSSION IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES

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#### *Discussion 1: History of Indigenous Peoples*

People have lived in the Americas from at least 15,000 years ago, evidenced by the earliest archaeological dates. The main periods we can see in the archaeological record are the Paleo period, when people roamed freely across the continents; the Archaic Period, when people

began to settle down and create vast monuments and ceremonial sites; and the Woodland Period, when people began to build great cities and sacred earthworks. These different ways of living on the land probably came about at least in part because of changing climate and food resources, but whatever the reason, people adapted very well to the changes (both good and bad) that they encountered.

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#### THINGS TO CONSIDER

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People have been in the Americas since time immemorial. However, archaeological evidence can only say that people have been here since at least 15,000 years ago. What does “time immemorial” mean to you? What do you think archaeology contributes to this knowledge?

Cultures change; this is a thing we know about humans. What sorts of things do you think made cultures change through time? Why would people choose one way of life over another, in your opinion?

Technology is a very important part of how cultures changed. What technologies helped people become better at living on the land, in your opinion?

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LIST OF TERMS

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|                              |                              |                           |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>bigmanship</b>            | <b>ceremonialism</b>         | <b>coastal erosion</b>    |
| <b>commodities</b>           | <b>cremations</b>            | <b>cultural complexes</b> |
| <b>exotic</b>                | <b>grave goods</b>           | <b>hafted</b>             |
| <b>hierarchy</b>             | <b>horticulture</b>          | <b>interaction sphere</b> |
| <b>marine resources</b>      | <b>matrilocal</b>            | <b>megafauna</b>          |
| <b>monument</b>              | <b>Paleo</b>                 | <b>pilgrimage</b>         |
| <b>platform mounds</b>       | <b>red ochre</b>             | <b>resources</b>          |
| <b>shell midden</b>          | <b>staple</b>                | <b>status</b>             |
| <b>subsistence practices</b> | <b>terrestrial resources</b> | <b>toolstone</b>          |

*Discussion 2: Cities vs. Small Settlements*

Many cultures that have lived in the Americas chose to live in large cities. Some examples are Cahokia in Illinois, the largest of the Mississippian cities, and Tenochtitlan in Mexico, the largest of the Aztec cities.

On the other hand, many cultures did not seem to want to live together in large cities, instead preferring small towns or villages or moving around the landscape following food and other resources. There are benefits to each kind of settlement pattern. Cities concentrate resources and give people access to a lot of traded goods, but people lose a lot of personal freedom to do things like hunt or follow their own spiritual practices. In contrast, living in mobile or semi-mobile groups means you will probably never starve as you have many more food resources available, but sometimes, you have to work hard to get those resources, like in the middle of winter when the harvested food has run out.

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THINGS TO CONSIDER

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1. What kinds of things (available resources or type of terrain, for example) might make a group of people choose one way of life over another?
2. What kinds of skills would you need to live in a mobile band? How would they be different from living in a village that moves every 50 or 75 years?
3. Which way of life would you prefer: living in a city, living in a small, mobile band, or living in a town from which you travel sometimes to hunt or fish?

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LIST OF TERMS

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|                              |                            |                              |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>bigmanship</b>            | <b>ceramic technology</b>  | <b>commodities</b>           |
| <b>exotic</b>                | <b>gatherers</b>           | <b>hierarchy</b>             |
| <b>horticulture</b>          | <b>hunters</b>             | <b>Huron Confederacy</b>     |
| <b>Iroquois Confederacy</b>  | <b>matrilocal</b>          | <b>Paleo</b>                 |
| <b>platform mounds</b>       | <b>processing stations</b> | <b>resources</b>             |
| <b>staple</b>                | <b>status</b>              | <b>subsistence practices</b> |
| <b>terrestrial resources</b> |                            |                              |

*Discussion 3: Material Culture Change*

As cultures change through time, so does their material culture. One way to think about how cultures changed their material culture through time is to think of a “toolkit.” For instance, the toolkit of the Paleo period involved a lot of tools for hunting big game, like spears tipped with lanceolate bifaces, atlatls, knives, and scrapers. The toolkit changed somewhat during the Archaic Period as people began to make ground-stone tools in many shapes for carving dugout canoes and harpoons for hunting sea mammals. Then during the Woodland Period, the toolkit changed again to include ceramics, arrowheads for bow and arrow, and lots of small woodworking tools like thumbnail scrapers. These different toolkits expanded much like a woodworker’s or seamstress’s tool kit expands: bringing in more tools as the need arises. Because of this, we can understand a great deal about what each group needed based on the tools they used.

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THINGS TO  
CONSIDER

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1. Why were Paleo people not very interested in ground-stone tools? Similarly, why were Woodland people less interested in lanceolate bifaces?
2. What toolkit would you say characterizes your society? What needs do the most common tools satisfy and what does this say about your culture?

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LIST OF TERMS

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- |                              |                          |                              |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>ceramic technology</b>    | <b>Clovis</b>            | <b>commodities</b>           |
| <b>cultural complexes</b>    | <b>debitage</b>          | <b>decompose</b>             |
| <b>fluted</b>                | <b>Folsom</b>            | <b>foodstuffs</b>            |
| <b>gatherers</b>             | <b>hafted</b>            | <b>horticulture</b>          |
| <b>hunters</b>               | <b>Huron Confederacy</b> | <b>Iroquois Confederacy</b>  |
| <b>lanceolate biface</b>     | <b>marine resources</b>  | <b>matrilocal</b>            |
| <b>megafauna</b>             | <b>Paleo</b>             | <b>pocket polish</b>         |
| <b>processing stations</b>   | <b>resources</b>         | <b>shell midden</b>          |
| <b>staple</b>                | <b>stone-boiling</b>     | <b>subsistence practices</b> |
| <b>terrestrial resources</b> | <b>toolstone</b>         |                              |

*Activity 1*

**Class Presentation: Connecting to the Past**

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**COMMUNITY BUILDING**

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*Approximate time: 2 weeks*

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**GOALS**

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In this exercise, you will research a period in Atlantic Canada’s past that you think you would have done well in and try out something fitting of that period to see how you like it. Then you will present to your class why you fit well in this period and what you thought of the thing you tried.

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**MATERIALS /  
RESOURCES  
(STUDENTS)**

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For this activity, you will need:

- Access to the internet and/or a library
- Materials for trying out your art, technology, or skill (this will vary depending on what you choose to do, and you may want to tailor your activity according to what you have on hand)
- A way to present (for example, PowerPoint, posterboard, etc.)
- If you do not have access to one or more of these things, speak with your teacher to see if s/he/they can help you get what you need

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**INSTRUCTIONS**

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First, think about what you know about how cultures changed through time in the Maritimes and see which one suits your character the best. Would you have been most comfortable wandering over vast distances with your family, meeting up from time to time at gatherings to trade toolstone? Or would you have enjoyed journeying from your home to help build sacred monuments in Ohio? Maybe you would have loved hunting sea mammals and making fine ground-stone tools to offer the ancestors. Maybe you would have excelled in the fur trade after Europeans arrived. Whatever period you decide on, do a bit more research on those periods by asking a librarian for help, looking on Google, or asking a local archaeologist. Make sure you take notes so you can share what you learned with your classmates.

Find something from the period you prefer that you can try experiencing. This will help you learn whether you would indeed have enjoyed living at that time. For instance, if you decide you like the idea of being a Paleo person, you could try going for a day-long walk and making a campfire at the end of it. You could also try making an atlatl and a spear to see if you can get the hang of hunting large game. (Here is an instructional video for making an atlatl: <https://www.instructables.com/id/How-to-make-an-Atlatl/>).

Maybe you would like to try building a small monument, as they might have done during the Archaic period. This will help you decide if you like putting in all that work to make something meant for ceremonial purposes. You could also try grinding a stone

## HISTORY OF THE MARITIMES

into the right shape, although you might want to get started on this early because it will take you a long time!

You could also try eating something characteristic of the period you are interested in. For instance, you might like to try boiling and eating maize. Here is a video to help you with this: [http://www.mexican-authentic-recipes.com/cornmeal-maize\\_dough.html](http://www.mexican-authentic-recipes.com/cornmeal-maize_dough.html). If this is too much work, you can buy the maize flour ready to go and you can make some food out of it. You could also try making some coil-built pottery. This is a long video, but is a wonderful method for making Cherokee pottery step-by-step: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAOBOOrEBzI4>.

You should probably take some notes about this process as well, so you can share what you learned and experienced with your class. Remember! You are totally allowed to not do it perfectly, or even to fail completely! In fact, you will probably learn more by failing at what you try than by succeeding; for instance, if you find it is hard to cook with maize or you don't really like the taste of what you made, then you have some valuable information about what it would have been like to live during that time and what challenges you would have faced. Don't assume people would have lived with bad-tasting food though! If you made something you did not enjoy eating or using, probably people in the past would have not enjoyed it either, and would have learned what to do to make it better; your job is to figure out how they make it better, given the difficulties. This is all valuable information! Don't forget to share it.

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### REQUIREMENTS

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On presentation day, give a presentation to your class with the following information:

1. What period you think you would have liked to live in best
2. What you have learned about this period that you want to share with your classmates
3. What you did to try to experience something that period, and why you decided to do this
4. How your experience went, and what it would mean to be living in that period

You can use anything you want to help your presentation. You can prepare a PowerPoint presentation, or bring in what you made, or show pictures of what you did. You can also give out handouts, or act something out—whatever you think will make it entertaining and/or educational for your class.

## Activity 2

## Individual Project: Reflecting on the Past

## EMOTIONAL CARE

*Approximate time: 1 week*

## GOALS

In this project, you will try to imagine what it would have been like to live when Europeans arrived, bringing disease with them that devastated the people who lived here. You will write down your feelings about what that tragedy would have been like for you if you had experienced it yourself.

MATERIALS /  
RESOURCES  
(STUDENTS)

For this activity you will need:

- A computer or paper and pencil to write a 1-page report
- A 20-sided die or a computer to use the 20-sided die number generator
- Paper to keep track of 20 names

## INSTRUCTIONS

Imagine that an outbreak of a disease has endangered everyone in your country. Somehow, you managed to survive, but most of the people you know do not. To find out who in your community survives, follow these instructions.

First, write down the names of the closest 20 people in your life. This can be your family members, people you grew up with, people you care about most now, or your neighbours and classmates. Assign a number to each one. Then, generate a random number between 1 and 20 using a 20-sided die or using this website: <https://www.calculator.net/random-number-generator.html?slower=1&supper=20&ctype=1&s=4804&submit1=Generate>. Match the number you generated to the person with that number assigned to them. This person is the only person to survive the outbreak. If you want, you can pick another 20 and do the same thing; otherwise, move on to the next step.

Think about the people who died, and what kind of knowledge would die with them. Maybe they know how to trap animals or are an engineer that knows how to build roads. Think about the ways they contributed to your life and how you will no longer have that in your life; maybe they give you rides places, or provide childcare to you or someone you know. Consider the kinds of activities you might have done with them and how you will no longer have these times. Then consider the person who survived. What knowledge will they be able to contribute to future generations? What services do they give the people around them? What kinds of things do you do with that person that you will still be able to do?

Consider what your society will look like after this outbreak. What knowledge will the next generation have access to? What will they not be able to learn because there is no

## HISTORY OF THE MARITIMES

one to teach them? How will your activities, and those of future generations, change now that so many people are gone?

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### REQUIREMENTS

Write one page about what would happen if this were the case and how you feel about this. Try to mention specific people in your writing and say how you would be impacted by them being gone or how you would be helped if they were still here. Attach the page with the names on it and indicate which person survived. Add any details to this page you want.

## Activity 3

## Experiential Learning: Offerings to the Ancestors

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**SPIRITUAL WELLBEING**


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*Approximate time: 1 week*

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**GOALS**

In this assignment, you will take some time to connect with the land and the ancestors of Indigenous people through offering a gift. This is a personal process and you don't need to write anything or report on anything.

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**MATERIALS /  
RESOURCES  
(STUDENTS)**

For this activity, you will need to select or make something to give as an offering. You choose to offer only a prayer, your words, or your time.

**NOTE ABOUT TOBACCO USE FOR MINORS:** If you decide to offer tobacco, as many Elders prefer to do, you will need to discuss handling tobacco with an adult. Do not attempt to purchase tobacco yourself. You will need an adult to buy it for you or give it to you.

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**INSTRUCTIONS**

Take some time to decide what it means to you that people have been here since time immemorial, and that the land they (and we) have lived on has been an important force in helping the people survive and thrive. Just as the land has cared for people, so the people have cared for the land: culling animals like deer to keep the population in check, burning forests and grasslands in a controlled way to help with growth and reduce wildfires, and encouraging plants to grow that are important food sources. This relationship has helped Indigenous people survive unimaginable tragedy and to build great civilizations.

After you have reflected on this relationship, think of something you would be willing to offer to honour this relationship. It doesn't have to be large, expensive, or precious; it only has to have some meaning for you. Many people offer tobacco when they give thanks for things in their lives or when they take resources from the land. You may feel comfortable doing so, or this may feel uncomfortable or risky to you since the adults in your life may not approve of you having tobacco. Another possible offering is food that you made yourself. Sometimes, a prayer is the most meaningful offering a person feels they can make, or even simply taking the time to give thanks or to meditate.

When you are ready and have chosen what you will offer, go to a place you want to make an offering. This can be a special place on the land or your back yard or somewhere where there is a bit more grass than usual or some woods. In the middle of a city is fine if you feel you can connect with that place in a more special way. Once you are in that place, you can leave your offering somewhere, like in a tree or under a rock. You could also have a fire and throw your offering into the fire. If you offer tobacco, you can take a pinch of it and let it fall from between your fingers. You may want to give a bit of your offering to each of the four directions, and you may also

## HISTORY OF THE MARITIMES

want to offer some to Creation, to the ancestors, or to the Earth itself. If you are offering a prayer, try to use words that come from your heart, meaning they feel real to you. Even if the words seem silly, as long as you are telling the truth, your words are a gift.

Once you have finished, take a moment to see how you feel. See how you feel right after, then later that day, and also the next day. Do you feel any different? Remember that it is okay to feel different or exactly the same; all you are trying to do is notice how you feel.

## Activity 4

## Family Research: Making Connections

## KNOWLEDGE SHARING

*Approximate time: 1 week***GOALS**

In this assignment, you will learn what those around you believe about the past and relate archaeological evidence to how knowledge keepers understand their history. You will ask your family members to share their knowledge and beliefs about the past and then you will discuss with them what you are learning in this class. Finally, you will share what you have learned from you family in a Talking Circle.

**RESOURCES /****MATERIALS****(STUDENTS)**

For this activity, you will need:

- A way to audio-record interviews
- Paper or a note book for taking notes
- Paper or a computer for writing down your thoughts
- If you feel comfortable, some tobacco to offer to an Elder

**NOTE ABOUT TOBACCO USE FOR MINORS:** If you decide to offer tobacco, as many Elders prefer to do, you will need to discuss handling tobacco with an adult. Do not attempt to purchase tobacco yourself. You will need an adult to buy it for you or give it to you.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Many people know things about the past that are not common knowledge, even to archaeologists. This is why it is so important for archaeologists to ask the people living in an area what they know about the area's history; often, those people are experts in local history. On the other hand, many people do not know what happened in the distant past or even in the recent past. These two things can be true at the same time because history may not be accessible to people who do not attend university or have not been introduced to historic subjects. In this exercise, you will learn from your family members while sharing what you have learned.

*Research.* Choose at least two people in your family or close friends to ask about the area they know best. These are your study participants. Their local knowledge doesn't have to be about where they are now; it can be anywhere they want to talk about. Ask them to talk about the following questions:

- what they know about the area's history and how people used the land in that area in the past;
- How far back humans have been living there (and anywhere in North America);
- How humans came to be living in that area;

## HISTORY OF THE MARITIMES

- What important events happened there;
- Where their family is from and what their history is.

Try to write down as much as you can. You could also record their responses, but make sure they know you are recording them and that it is okay. Be sure to let them know what you are planning to use their responses for and ask them if this is okay. Also, if they are an Elder or if you see them as your senior (or if you feel it is appropriate), consider bringing them an offering like tobacco. (If you bring them tobacco, make sure you have an adult help you with obtaining tobacco for this purpose; do not try to buy tobacco by yourself). Ask them if they would like to remain anonymous or have their names attached to the information they give you. Remember that, in this stage, you are only listening; you may believe they are wrong about something, but your job is not to correct them but to try to understand what they believe and know.

*Data Synthesis.* After you have done your interviews, review your notes or your recordings and write down what you have learned in at least ½ page for each participant (you might need a lot more space). As part of this writing, draw three main points from each participant. For example, if someone spoke at length about his/her/their family hunting moose on the Mersey River in Nova Scotia from many generations back, one main point might be the following: “This participant comes from a family that traditionally hunted moose on the Mersey River from many generations back.”

*Knowledge Sharing.* Now that you have a good idea about what your participants know about their history and the history of a place, it is time to discuss with them what you know. This is the trickiest part of the assignment because you may have read or heard something that contradicts what your participant has said; you have to find a way to compare your own understanding with your participant’s understanding in a non-confrontational way and in a way that does not invalidate their perspective. No one knows everything about the past, so as a researcher, you have to always be ready to be wrong about what you thought you knew and to add to your knowledge. So, in this stage of the exercise, you must try to listen to your participant’s opinion about your archaeological knowledge without judging.

If you are not sure where to begin, here are some suggestions of things to discuss with your participants:

- Archaeological evidence suggests that people were here around 13,500 years ago. Do you believe this is true?
- The People have changed a lot in the time they have been here. About 10,000 years ago, people travelled around in small bands, never settling down for very long. But later, people built huge cities and accumulated large amounts of

## HISTORY OF THE MARITIMES

wealth. Do you think our family could have descended from either of those cultures?

- What was the impact of Europeans on our culture? How many of our people would you say died of disease?
- How do you feel about graves having been dug up by archaeologists in the past, and what do you think of how archaeologists now avoid graves except in really special circumstances?

Remember that your participants are likely to have strong feelings about some or all of what you discuss. Try to let them express themselves without taking it personally or thinking they are upset with you.

*Reflections.* Write a small (1/2 page) section on what you and your participants discussed. Try to be as fair to their perspectives as you can, but also consider where you disagree with them and why. Think about what you have learned from them and consider whether they may have learned anything from you. This is your chance to give your opinion about the subject matter, but remember to be respectful (that is, not insulting) with your words. You will hand this in later.

*Talking Circle.* If your teacher feels it is appropriate, be prepared to share what you have learned with your classmates in a Talking Circle. Your teacher will take some class time to let everyone share their findings. Feel free to bring the notes you have made to refer to while speaking, but this is not necessary. Remember that, in a talking circle, everyone gets a chance to talk; only the person holding the talking stick or the eagle feather is allowed to talk; and the main thing you do in a Talking Circle is listen. You may take as long or as short as you want to when the feather or stick comes to you. For more information on Talking Circles, go to this link: <http://www.muiniskw.org/pgCulture2c.htm>.

Your teacher may invite you to smudge before or after participating in the talking circle, which you may choose to do or not as you see fit. If you do not have the opportunity to smudge or feel you don't want to, take a moment to think about what you have learned as though it were an important rock that you are setting down once you have shared your knowledge with everyone. You can imagine yourself doing this, setting it in a place you think it would look nice (like in a garden), or you can think of a large weight being lifted out of your hands.

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### EVALUATION

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Your teacher will evaluate you on how respectfully you have listened to others during the Talking Circle, how well you have represented the views of your participants, and how much you have learned from others.

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### REQUIREMENTS

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Afterwards, hand in your reflections (1/2 page you wrote on each participant).