



# ORAL TRADITIONS: MEMORY-MAKING AS INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS (F1O)

## OVERVIEW

In this learning experience, classes will explore the nature of oral histories through individual and group memories and understand that Mi'kmaq culture is anchored in oral traditions, rather than written traditions. Using *only* oral dialogue (or other non-written forms of communication), students will experience differences between collective memory-making and individual memory-making. In addition, the content shared as memories will enhance students understanding of Mi'kmaq history and culture and strengthen their context for future units.

## LEARNERS WILL...

- ▶ Understand that Mi'kmaq history and culture are anchored in oral traditions.
- ▶ Explore the differences between collective memory and individual memory through lived experiences.
- ▶ Brainstorm strategies for how to strengthen memory within groups.
- ▶ Brainstorm strategies for how to strengthen individual memories.
- ▶ Encounter the relationship between orality, cultural practice, and social organization.
- ▶ Learn key elements of Mi'kmaq history and culture.

## FOCUS

An introduction to this activity should include a short explanation of Mi'kmaq culture and history as anchored in oral tradition, as well as a brief discussion on strategies for remembering to activate students' prior knowledge. See introduction for content on Mi'kmaq oral history if required. In this activity, each student is asked to remember one (1) Mi'kmaq knowledge element over a number of days (at least three (3) days is suggested). The individual knowledge element is to be conveyed privately and orally (no writing!) to the student. At the same time, the class is divided into groups of 3-4 students and asked to remember a different element/story. Without writing anything down, students are asked to remember the element working together as a group. In the group memory, students should brainstorm strategies to remember their elements together in a collaborative approach. After several days have elapsed, they are asked to recall both elements. The guided questions will help them to think through this activity focusing on what creates oral traditions, makes them strong and keeps them relevant.

**PE!**

It is important that students engaging in this unit have a clear understanding of the following content:

- The Mi'kmaq as the Indigenous people of Nova Scotia and the Atlantic region.
- Mi'kma'ki as the ancestral homeland of the Mi'kmaq.
- The concepts of *netukulimk* and *ms'it no'kmaq*.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Sister Dorothy Moore L'nu Resource Centre:** <https://www.cbu.ca/indigenous-initiatives/lnu-resource-centre/mikmaq-resource-guide/essays/oral-histories/>



## TEACHER TIP

Students don't have to be "good" at remembering things to do well on this activity. There are lots of different methods to remember oral information: try making up rhymes, telling stories, giving one person in the group one part to remember, and another person another part. This takes practice-- you might not get it on the first try, and that's okay! Mi'kmaq recognized that some people had strong memories, and some people had other gifts!

# MEMORY FACTS FOR INDIVIDUAL LEARNERS

(TO BE SHARED VERBALLY WITHOUT ANYONE ELSE HEARING)

*Sharing* is an important Mi'kmaw value

*Humour* is an important part of Mi'kmaw culture

*Kwe'* (gway) is the Mi'kmaw word for hello.

The Mi'kmaq call themselves L'nu'k (ul-noog), meaning "the people."

10,000 years ago there were giant beavers the size of black bears in Mi'kma'ki.

The Mi'kmaq signed treaties to protect their ways of life.

Traditional homes were made of birchbark and called wigwams.

Many Mi'kmaq pray in sweat lodge ceremonies.

Mi'kmaq invented snowshoes.

The primary way to travel was with a birchbark canoe.

Eel skin can be used for casting broken bones and other injuries.

Mi'kma'ki includes most of the Maritimes and part of Quebec.

Oral Traditions are teachings that are passed on through generations.

A traditional dance of the Mi'kmaq is called Kojua (go-joo-a).

The closest nation to the Mi'kmaq are the Wolastoqiyik (woe-lis-toe-wee-uck) or Maliseet.

National Indigenous Peoples' Day is celebrated across Mi'kma'ki on June 21st.

The Mi'kmaq and their ancestors have been in Mi'kma'ki for more than 13,000 years.

*Nitap* means friend in Mi'kmaw.

*Kluskap* is a Mi'kmaw culture hero.

*Wela'lin* means thank you from one person to another in Mi'kmaw.

Mi'kmaw knowledge of plants has provided foods, medicines, and other supplies for many generations.

Mi'kmaq used wampum (quahog shell beads) belts to pass on their stories.

Grand Chief Membertou was the first Mi'kmaq baptized by the Catholic church.

*Qalipu* (hal-i-boo), caribou, lived in Nova Scotia until the 1900s.

Sacred rocks, called "grandfathers", are used in the sweat lodge.

There are 13 Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia, and many more across Mi'kma'ki.

The name Googoo comes from the Mi'kmaw word for owl, kukukwes (goo-goo-gways)

The largest Mi'kmaw-speaking community is Eskasoni.

Mi'kmaq use black and white ash trees to make many things.

More than 100 Mi'kmaq volunteered for World War I.

Mi'kmaq are famous for their porcupine quillwork.

Many Mi'kmaw names are based on animals that represent your mother's family.