



Oral Traditions: Memory-Making as Individuals and Groups

Overview

In this LE, learners explore the nature of oral histories through individual and group memories. They also learn that Mi'kmaw culture is anchored in oral, rather than written, traditions. Using only oral dialogue (or other non-written forms of communication), learners experience the differences between collective memory-making and individual memory-making. The content learned through memorization will also increase learners' understanding of Mi'kmaw history and culture, and provide context for future units.

Learners will...

- Understand that Mi'kmaw 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'kmaw history and culture.

Focus

An introduction to this activity should include a short explanation of Mi'kmaw culture and history as anchored in oral tradition as well as a brief discussion on strategies for remembering to activate learners' prior knowledge. See the Family, Culture, Community introduction for content on Mi'kmaw oral history, if required.

In this activity, each learner is asked to remember one Mi'kmaw knowledge element over a number of days (at least 3 days is suggested). The individual knowledge element is to be conveyed privately and orally (no writing!) to the learner. At the same time, the class is divided into groups of 3–4 learners and asked to remember a different element/story. Without writing anything down, learners are asked to remember the element, working together as a group.

In their groups, learners 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 learners have a clear understanding of the following content:

- *The Mi'kmaq as the indigenous people of Nova Scotia and the Atlantic region.*
- *Mi'kma'kik as the ancestral homeland of the Mi'kmaq.*
- *The concepts of netukulimk and msit no'kmaq. (See LE F4)*

Additional Resources

- For additional resources, see the digital version of this LE at **Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre website:**
<http://mikmaweydebert.ca/f10>

Teacher Tip



Learners don't have to be "good" at remembering things to do well with 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—some might not get it on the first try, and that's okay! Mi'kmaq recognize that some people have strong memories, and some people have other gifts!

Memory Facts for Individual Learners

(TO BE SHARED VERBALLY WITHOUT ANYONE ELSE HEARING)

Tpi'tnewey (duh-bead-ne-way) 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'kik.

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

Traditional homes were made of birchbark and called **wikuo'mk** (wi-gu-wom-k).

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'kik 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 **Ko'jua** (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'kik on **June 21st**.

The Mi'kmaq and their ancestors have been in Mi'kma'kik 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 stories.

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

Qalipu (hal-i-boo), or 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'kik.

The name **Googoo** comes from the Mi'kmaw word for owl, **ku'ku'kwes** (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 **porcupine quillwork**.

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