



Traditional hunting territories

Learning Objectives

- Students will learn about the Dene people and the Dehcho region in the Northwest Territories.
- Students will learn about the names of areas where Indigenous Peoples have traditionally hunted animals for food and clothing.

Materials

- Computer/device with Internet connection
- Map of the traditional territory of the Dehcho First Nations (not provided, but many maps of this territory can be found on the Internet, for example on the [CBC website](#), the [Northwest Territories Archives website](#), and the [Spectacular Northwest Territories website](#))
- Names of traditional Dehcho hunting areas cards (15)
- Vocabulary list card (1)
- Pylons
- Chains

Targeted Levels

- K–12

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Introduction

Students will walk around the Giant Floor Map (GFM) and make observations, comparing the physical geography of different regions in Canada. Students will then compare and contrast those observations with what they see on a map of the traditional territory of the Dehcho First Nations in the Northwest Territories. Students will be guided by the teacher through a series of geo-inquiry questions about the history and geography of the traditional hunting grounds of Indigenous Peoples in the Northwest Territories, and encouraged to do individual or group research on that topic. The activity ends with students gathering on the GFM to share what they have learned.

Development

1. Students walk around on the GFM while the instructor informs them they will be learning about traditional hunting territories.
2. Students talk about their knowledge of hunting in general, walk to different parts of the map, and discuss wildlife that could potentially be hunted and how landforms impact animal distributions and hunting strategies.
3. Students consider what resources need to be hunted for and gathered from the land.
4. Students compare and contrast the hunting methods used by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians and how they relate to the different landforms observed on the GFM.
5. Students are told by the teacher that many Indigenous Peoples still hold true to their hunting and gathering roots and traditions, even those living in urban centres. Urban dwellers can travel to their traditional territories and carry on the traditions of their ancestors. (The Dene Nahjo is an example of a group of young people who are revitalizing their culture in this way; see [denenahjo.com](#).)
6. The teacher describes the different Indigenous Peoples, languages and territories in the Northwest Territories using resources available at their school or online (for example, see the [Statistics Canada 2016 census profile for the Northwest Territories](#) and the [Northern Heritage Centre Official Languages of the Northwest Territories page](#)), and students identify those locations on the GFM using chains and pylons.
7. The teacher then specifically discusses the Dene people of the Dehcho region and their hunting grounds in the Northwest Territories using a map of the Dehcho region.
8. Students take the Names of traditional Dehcho hunting areas cards and use the short descriptions to identify the locations on the GFM where the Dene people of the Dehcho region hunt. Students place the cards on the GFM once they have located the hunting areas.
9. Students compare the different hunting areas (e.g., identify one animal hunted, what that animal would require in this particular geographic location to survive, what would be easy or hard in this geographic region compared to others, how food is processed or stored).

Conclusion

Ask the students to sit in a circle on the GFM and discuss what they have learned. Through group discussion, evaluate student understanding of territories where Indigenous peoples have traditionally hunted animals for food and clothing. Using the GFM, the chains, and the pylons, have students share with a partner or with the class what they have learned about the geography of the Northwest Territories, the reasoning behind traditional hunting area locations, and the inspiration behind the names of hunting areas.





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Extend Your Geographical Thinking

1. The origins of the names of the hunting areas of the Dene people cannot be identified using books or the Internet – these names were given orally by the Dene based on the description of the area and passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth. Have students study oral histories and how the Dene people passed down their history through oral tradition.
2. The names of these hunting areas, and many other areas in Canada, changed over time after European colonists gave them names in English or French. Have students compare the names of regions given by Indigenous Peoples before colonization to the ones that are frequently used today. Discuss why names change over time and why it is important to preserve traditional names.
3. Use the vocabulary list to play a game that encourages students to use words that describe the climate, environment, animals and hunting practices of the Dehcho region. Games like charades, twenty questions, Simon Says and four corners are good options that offer an alternative to structured learning and an opportunity for students to be physically active.

Modifications

1. Incorporate a lesson on territorial acknowledgement. Teach your students about the purpose and importance of territorial land acknowledgement. For example, the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada* companion app (available from [the App Store](#) and [Google Play](#)) can be downloaded on any device with an Internet connection and used to learn about territorial acknowledgements across Canada.
2. Incorporate a lesson on language. Teach your students about the many Indigenous languages that exist, and how some are in danger of being lost forever, while others are frequently used today. For example, use the Indigenous Languages of Canada poster map from the November/December 2017 issue of *Canadian Geographic* ([also available here](#)).
3. Incorporate a lesson on how Canadian satellite technology is serving communities in the Arctic. Explain to your students how satellites allow us to study climate change, monitor ecosystems and the environment, and plan safe routes for hunting and fishing ([Canadian Space Agency website](#)).

Additional Resources

- Dehcho First Nations: dehcho.org
- Learn the Dene language: gudeh.com
- Jean Marie River First Nation: jmrfn.com/about/language-heritage
- Tourism in the Northwest Territories: indigenoustourism.ca/en/regions/northwest-territories
- Overview of official languages in the Northwest Territories: ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/secretariat-des-langues-autochtones/official-languages-overview

