Traditional Inuit Knowledge

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Learning objectives

- Students will recognize the contribution of traditional Inuit knowledge to scientific knowledge.
- Students will apply their understandings of traditional and scientific knowledge to the 2014 Victoria Strait Expedition.

Time required

50-70 minutes

Grades

4-8

Materials

- Atlases or access to online mapping tools such as Google Maps or ArcGIS online
- Place name cards (14)
- "Comparing Map Resources" handout, one per group
- "Compare and Contrast Frame" worksheet, one per student
- "Traditional Inuit Knowledge" handout, one per student (optional)

Set-up

Read "Traditional Inuit Knowledge" handout to familiarize yourself with the subject matter, if necessary, and make copies for students, if desired. Make copies of the "Comparing Map Resources" handout and "Compare and Contrast Frame" worksheet. Cut out place name cards.

Links to the Canadian National Standards for Geography

Essential Element 1: The World in Spatial Terms

- Physical/political maps of the province, Canada and the world
- Map types
- Major cities of the province and Canada and the world

Essential Element 2: Places and Regions

Introduction

Organize the class into groups of two or three students. Distribute atlases, or give online access to a mapping tool to each group. Instruct the groups to locate a map of Canada's North. Hand each group a place name card and instruct them to locate it on the map. Depending on the number of groups, and time permitting, give each group a second place name.

Find out what they discovered (Baker Lake and Qamani'tuaq are the same place; Arctic Bay and Ikpiarjuk are the same place, etc).

Ask the groups: Why would a community have two names?
Why would a community be renamed?

Explain that in 1999, when Nunavut became a separate territory, many of the communities in Nunavut changed back to their original Inuit names, reflecting the Inuit culture and heritage. For this reason, several communities have alternate names or spellings in Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun. Ask students why they think this was done and the outcomes that this decision may have had.

Explain that many place names in the north reflect the Inuit's close ties to the land. For example:

- Qamani'tuaq (also called Baker Lake) means big lake joined by a river at both ends
- Iqaluktuuttiaq (also called Cambridge Bay) means fair fishing place
- Salliit (also called Coral Harbour) means a large, flat island in front of the mainland
- Naujaat (also called Repulse Bay) means a seagull resting place

Familiarize the students with the concept of traditional knowledge. Distribute the "Traditional Inuit Knowledge" handout to your students (optional). Ask students to think of an example of traditional knowledge or oral history in their own lives. Differentiate between traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge. Brainstorm a class definition of each; record and keep for reference for the following part of the lesson.

Development

Distribute copies of "Comparing Map Resources" handout. Read over the document and examine the images with the class. To check for understanding, ask:

- How was each map created? By whom? What technology was used?
- How do you think Image 1 was created with little or no modern technology?
- In what ways do the maps complement each other? Refer the class definitions of traditional and scientific knowledge.

- Factors that influence people's perception of places and regions
- Changes in places and regions over time
- How culture affects places and regions

Essential Element 4: Human Systems

- Cultural regions

Essential Element 6: The Uses of Geography

- Effects of physical and human geographic factors on major historic events

Provide students with an overview of the 2014 Victoria Strait Expedition either from cgeducation.ca/franklin or the December 2014 issue of *Canadian Geographic*. Draw the students' attention to this sentence taken from The Royal Canadian Geographical Society website about the discovery of HMS *Erebus*:

The discovery of the wreck was confirmed on Sunday, Sept. 7, using a remotely operated underwater vehicle recently acquired by Parks Canada. Details of where exactly the ship was found have not yet been released.

Read the following excerpt from a CBC News article, September 9, 2014:

"The beauty of where they found it is it's proof positive of Inuit oral history," CBC chief correspondent Peter Mansbridge, who has covered the Franklin search for many years, said Tuesday. "The Inuit have said for generations that one of their hunters saw a ship in that part of the passage, abandoned and ended up wrecking.... It's exactly where this guy said it was."

Conclusion

Ask students how traditional knowledge complemented the equipment used in finding the HMS *Erebus*. Instruct students to complete the "Compare and Contrast Frame" worksheet. Guide and assist as necessary.

Optional: View the CBC clip, "Inuit history and Franklin" ships [10:33] at www.cbc.ca/player/News/TV%20Shows/The%20National/ID/2278124371/

Extend your geographical thinking

Sense of place refers to the mix of physical and human features that characterize and give meaning to a particular location. Without this understanding, students may hold stereotypical views of places that are foreign to them. For example, many see Canada's North as "barren" or "lifeless." Aid your students in dispelling this misconception by having them research modern life in the Arctic.

For more information about the search for Franklin's lost ships, please visit www.pc.gc.ca/eng/culture/franklin/index.aspx

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There are two overarching ways in which we can learn about and approach the study of the Arctic. One is Western science and the other is traditional Inuit indigenous knowledge. Together, these perspectives are able to enrich our understanding of Canada's North.

There are many definitions of traditional knowledge (also called indigenous knowledge or local knowledge). For some, traditional knowledge is information that indigenous peoples have about the land, animals and the special relationship they have with them. However, from an indigenous perspective, traditional knowledge is much more. Since Inuktitut was not a written language until relatively recently, oral tradition is how Inuit people passed traditions from generation to generation. This knowledge has been orally transmitted through generations for thousands of years. It is a lifelong quest requiring patience, introspection, learning by trial and error, sacrifices and spirituality. The acquisition of knowledge starts during childhood and continues until death; it is conveyed through experiential learning and oral teachings. Family members are involved in passing on skills and wisdom; however, it is the elders who generally serve as the primary instructors for life's necessary lessons.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (formerly the department of Culture and Communications) in the Northwest Territories (ece.gov.nt.ca) has defined traditional knowledge as: "the condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association. The traditional knowledge of northern aboriginal peoples has roots based firmly in the northern landscape and a land-based life experience of thousands of years. Traditional knowledge offers a view of the world, aspirations, and an avenue to 'truth,' different from those held by non-aboriginal people whose knowledge is based largely on European philosophies."

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines traditional knowledge as: "the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. This knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also encompasses language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, ritual and spirituality. These unique ways of knowing are important facets of the world's cultural diversity, and provide a foundation for locally-appropriate sustainable development."

Parks Canada works with over 300 Aboriginal communities across the country to manage, present and educate visitors about the heritage places that have been entrusted to its care. Parks Canada believes that Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge rests with Aboriginal Knowledge Holders and that integrating Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge into Parks Canada operations and decision-making is first and foremost a process of building relationships and working with Aboriginal Knowledge Holders. For example, in determining the search area for the Franklin ships, Parks Canada worked with Inuit Knowledge Holders who had, for generations, received oral knowledge from their elders regarding the possible location of the ships.

INFORMATION SOURCED FROM: THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT, THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO), AND PARKS CANADA

Comparing Map Resources
Option 1

Image 1 is a map of the Cumberland Sound-Frobisher Bay region drawn from memory by an Inuk named Sunapigngnanq. Image 2 is a modern cartographic map. Image 3 is a satellite image.

Image 1

Image 2

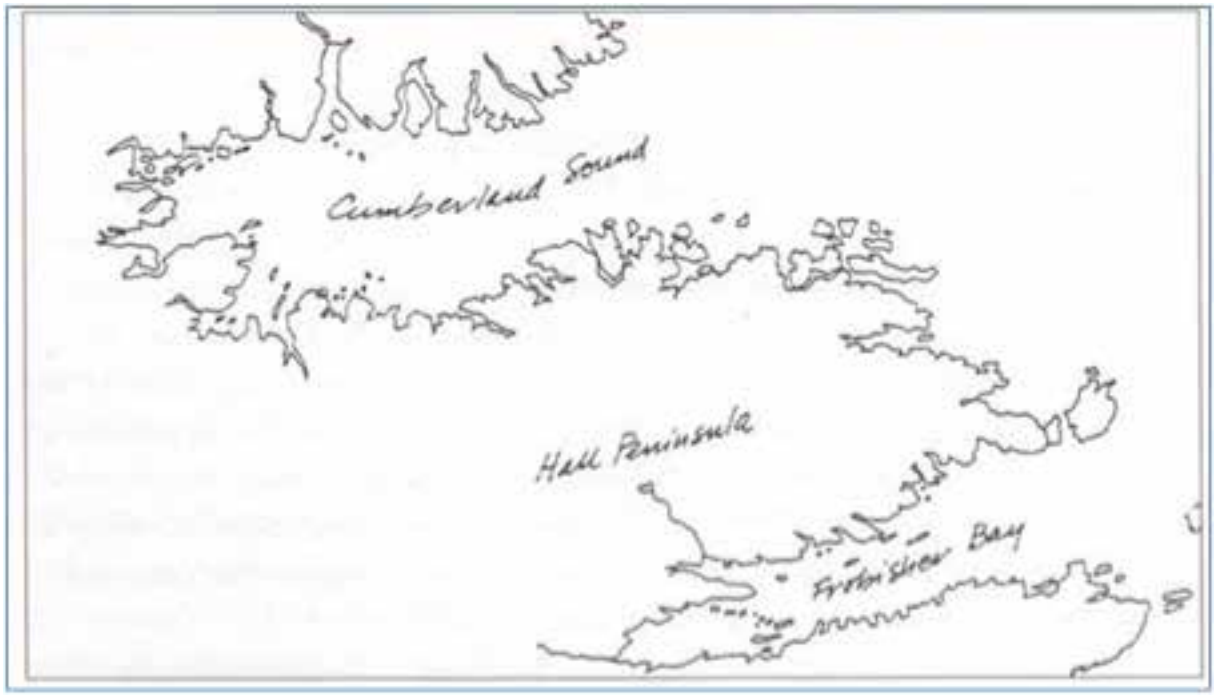

Image 3

Comparing Map Resources

Option 2

Image 1

Image 2

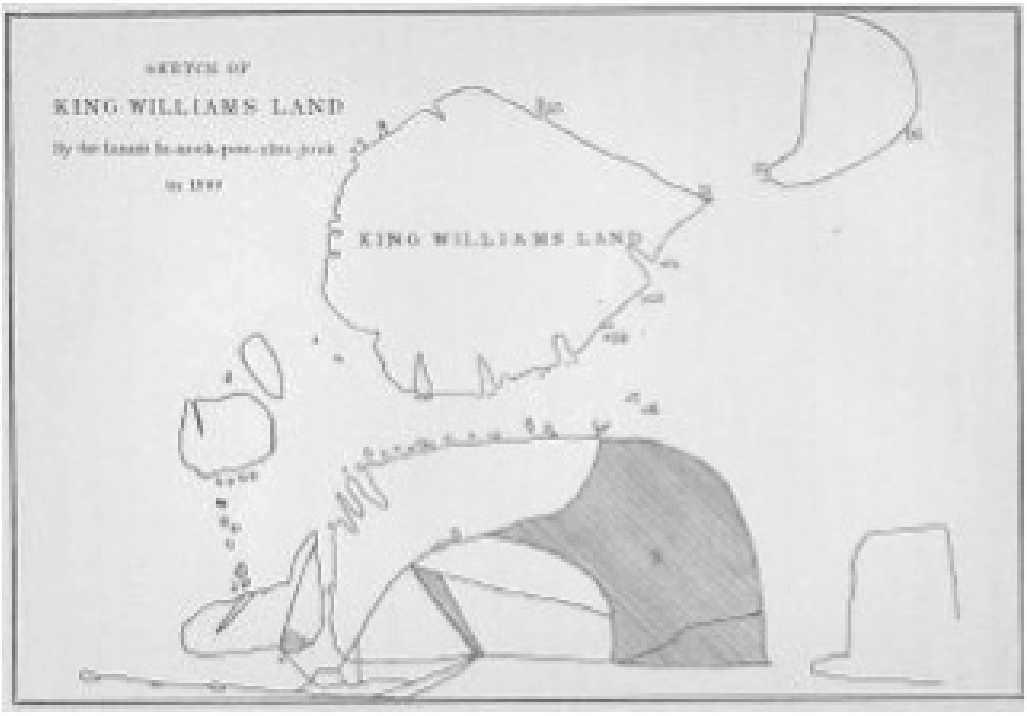

Image 3

2014 Victoria Strait Expedition
Compare and Contrast Frame

How are traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge alike?

How are traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge different?

Write a statement to compare and contrast how each was valuable in locating Franklin's lost ship, the HMS *Erebus*.

Place name cards:

Baker Lake	**Salliit**
Qamani'tuaq	**Cambridge Bay**
Chesterfield Inlet	**Iqaluktuuttiaq**
Igluligaarjuk	**Repulse Bay**
Bathurst Inlet	**Naujaat**
Kingoak	**Arctic Bay**
Coral Harbour	**Ikpiarjuk**