



ORANGE SHIRT DAY AND BEYOND

2023- 24 SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS

This guide supports Education for Reconciliation through inclusion of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing, historical perspectives, traditional games, dance, and song. This lesson embraces the rich and vibrant cultures of Indigenous people across Alberta and Canada and activates learning and thoughtful reflection about Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples.

The White Buffalo

Introduction

The spirit of the buffalo is said to be a blessing and is considered sacred. There are many shared stories that are part of Turtle Island's understanding about the White Buffalo. Originally, the story states the rare birth of a White Buffalo on the great plains was considered a sacred event that represented hope, rebirth, and unity. The White Buffalo symbolizes the spiritual journey many Indigenous people are on.

Essential Questions

Why is the White Buffalo an important belief to many Indigenous people on Turtle Island?

What is the importance of the White Buffalo today?

How can learning about the buffalo deepen knowledge of cultural identity?

Stories and storytelling are the main method of passing knowledge, creation beliefs, and collective wisdom in many Indigenous communities across Turtle Island. How can the sharing of the White Buffalo teachings enrich your own class?





Activity

Sharing-Talking Circle: After watching the video about the White Buffalo, share in a circle the teachings acquired from the knowledge keepers. What is the symbolism behind the White Buffalo? Share with students how learning about the buffalo deepens knowledge of cultural identity.

Presenting an artifact of your choice, share a story of how it resonates with you and your family. Encourage students to bring in their own personal or family heirloom artifact to share its history and relevance to their families.

Reconciliation Connection: The sharing of the sacredness of the buffalo respects the beliefs about hope, optimism, and positivity to move forward with reconciliation.

Key Words: sacred, beliefs, cultural identity, symbolism, Turtle Island

Themes: intergenerational teachings, sustenance, sustainability, respect, knowledge

Extensions: Share with students how learning about the buffalo deepens knowledge of cultural identity. In the sharing circle, identify the spirit of the four-legged relations that we acknowledge as relatives and the need to be respectful, and that all animals give us life in many aspects.

Resources

Tatanka Ska (White Buffalo) – CBC New Indigenous Voices

<https://vimeo.com/146931671>

The rare birth of a white buffalo on the Great Plains was considered a sacred event that represented hope, rebirth and unity for the tribes who depended on the buffalo for their sustenance. Many tribes have passed down legends that explain the symbolism of the white buffalo. We have used the white buffalo to show respect for Aboriginal history and culture in the hope that, as teachers become more familiar with Aboriginal culture, they can foster hope, rebirth, and unity among Aboriginal students.

Excerpt from *Education is our Buffalo*, The Alberta Teachers' Association, 2006.