

FIRST VOICES: N'SYILXCEN

ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES



11255 Okanagan Centre Rd. W.
Lake Country, BC V4V 2J7

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW:

1. Discussion prompts are provided to facilitate student learning and understanding while navigating the *First Voices* website
 - a. Key topics: Impact of colonization on Indigenous languages, language preservation efforts



BIG IDEA: Our rights, roles, & responsibilities are important for building strong communities; Canada is made up of many diverse regions & communities; learning about indigenous peoples nurtures multicultural awareness & respect for diversity; Indigenous knowledge is passed down through oral history, traditions, & collective memory.

COMPETENCY:

Inquiry processes, cause & consequence, continuity & change, historical perspectives, ethical judgement

CONTENT:

Roles, rights, & responsibilities in the local community; diverse characteristics of communities/cultures in Canada, incl. at Canadian First Peoples community/culture; cultural characteristics/ways of life of local First Peoples; oral history, traditional stories, & artifacts as evidence about past First Peoples cultures; the impact of colonization on First Peoples societies

WHAT WILL WE KNOW:

- Impact of colonialism on Indigenous language and culture
 - How it has evolved because of this

FURTHER INQUIRY:

Field Trip Suggestions

1. Sncewips Heritage Museum
2. Lake Country Museum and Archives



We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which the Lake Country Museum is situated, where this lesson was developed, is on the unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) Peoples.

Copyright © 2026

Lake Country Heritage and Cultural Society

11255 Okanagan Center Road West

Lake Country, BC V4V 2J7

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be produced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.

First Voices – N’syilxcen

Learning Objective(s)	Through the <i>First Voices</i> website, students will deepen their understanding of the Syilx Okanagan People’s language, <i>n’syilxcen</i> . Discussion about language preservation will highlight the importance of Indigenous languages as part of Canada’s cultural past, present, and future. This discussion-based activity is a great way for students to begin learning about the impact of colonialism on Indigenous languages and the present-day efforts to preserve these languages.
Suggested Grades	Elementary
ACTIVITY	
Introduction	<p>The Syilx language, n’syilxcen, is one of over fifty Indigenous languages still spoken in Canada today. Many of these have been carefully recorded and a written alphabet developed. N’syilxcen is now taught as a second language in many schools in the Okanagan.</p> <p>Discover the Syilx language at <i>First Voices</i>: http://firstvoices.com. The website holds a collection of tools and services designed to support Indigenous people engage in language archiving, language teaching, and cultural revitalization. There are also interactive games and stories available to further immerse your students in the Syilx language.</p>
Activity + Background Information	<p>We suggest beginning with a class brainstorm on language.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is language important? • If you were to move to a new place, why would learning that language be important? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why might learning a new language be difficult? (Lead students to the ties between culture and language) <p>Depending on the topic of your lesson (maybe you are teaching about the general impacts of colonialism on Indigenous peoples, maybe you are teaching about something more specific like residential schools), connect language to the broader picture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What impacts have colonialism had on Indigenous language? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How might this have impacted Indigenous culture? <p>Many Indigenous languages, including n’syilxcen, were only spoken. Stories and histories were shared orally. However, in recent years, Indigenous communities have created alphabets and dictionaries for their languages. This is a good place to begin discussions around culture and language preservation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why would the Syilx people work to develop an alphabet and dictionary despite them never having one before?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is it important to preserve languages? <p>You can choose to only incorporate discussions about Indigenous languages, or you can dive deeper by utilizing some of the resources on <i>First Voices</i>. A great place to start is viewing their alphabet or check out their ‘Word of the Day’ feature.</p>
<p>Further Inquiry</p>	<p><u><i>Field Trip Suggestions:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sncewips Museum • En’owkin Centre • Okanagan Heritage Museum <p><u><i>Suggested Resources:</i></u></p> <p>For background information and language inquiries, contact the Sncewips Museum in West Kelowna.</p> <p><i>Magic on the Water</i> DVD, by Tracey Bonneau Okanagan Nation Alliance: www.syilx.org</p> <p><i>Stories of our sq̓ilxʷ Ways:2016</i> : Okanagan Indian Band</p> <p><i>Okanagan Geology</i>, by Murray Roed and John Greenough</p> <p><i>Interior Pictograph Project</i>, by Bruce Goett: www.interiorpicto.com</p>