

THE SCULPTURE PROJECT

PASSAGE OF WIND & WATER

Essential Question for this lesson:

In what ways are adults and young people both responsible for teaching and for learning?

The Sculpture Project: Passage of Wind and Water is a public art project being carved at Main Street Square in Rapid City, South Dakota. As people engage with this piece of art, they think about nature and about culture in new ways. Through this art project, people of all ages learn about the natural and cultural history of the Black Hills and Badlands regions.

Oceti Sakowin people—Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota people—have been living in the Great Plains and Black Hills regions for thousands of years. In Oceti Sakowin culture, knowledge has been preserved and passed down for all these years through storytelling, or oral tradition; some written accounts preserve oral tradition in an unbiased way.¹

One Oceti Sakowin author, Luther Standing Bear, wrote a book about his culture in 1933 called Land of the Spotted Eagle. In his book, he writes about how Oceti Sakowin adults have educated young people. In this text, you will notice that the teachers and learners share a feeling of responsibility for learning. This way of thinking allows people to learn from close observation and to teach by example.

As you read the passage from Luther Standing Bear's book on the next page, think about how teaching and learning are happening. You will then get to show what you think about adults and young people acting as partners in the learning process.

¹ South Dakota Office of Indian Education. "Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards." 2013. <http://indianeducation.sd.gov/documents/OcetiSakowinEUS.pdf>. 23.

THE SCULPTURE PROJECT

PASSAGE OF WIND & WATER

“In Lakota society it was the duty of every parent to give the knowledge they possessed to their children. Each and every parent was a teacher and, as a matter of fact, all elders were instructors of those younger than themselves. And the instruction they gave was mostly through their actions—that is, they interpreted to us through actions what we should try to do. We learned by watching and imitating examples placed before us. Slowly and naturally the faculties of observation and memory became highly trained and the Lakota child became educated in the manners, lore, and customs of his people without a strained and conscious effort...

This process of learning went on all the time. There was no period in the life of the Lakota child such as that referred to by some as the “playtime” of life, when the child is growing only in body size and not in mind. Body and mind grew together...

But very early in life the child began to realize that wisdom was all about and everywhere and that there were many things to know. There was no such thing as emptiness in the world. Even in the sky there were no vacant places. Everywhere there was life, visible and invisible, and every object possessed something that would be good for us to have also—even to the very stones. This gave a great interest to life. Even without human companionship one was never alone. The world teemed with life and wisdom; there was no complete solitude for the Lakota [person].

Such living filled one with a great desire to do, to be, and to grow...”²

-from Land of the Spotted Eagle, by Luther Standing Bear

² Standing Bear, Luther. *Land of the Spotted Eagle*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006, 13-14.

THE SCULPTURE PROJECT

PASSAGE OF WIND & WATER

Thinking About the Project

Please write your thoughts about the questions below. We are looking for your **original thinking**: what actually comes into your mind as you carefully read the questions. Your answers may be clear bullet points or clear, complete sentences.

1. Oceti Sakowin people have been educating young people for thousands of years using the process this text describes. How do you notice that you have learned important skills from elders in your own life? Please give specific examples from your life to support your answer.

2. What benefits do you notice young people gaining from the way of learning Luther Standing Bear describes in the text? Please use examples from the text in your answer.

3. According to the text, what attitude do young Lakota people have toward learning?

4. What are some ways you can imagine parents and teachers becoming better at helping youth learn important positive skills? Please be specific, because elders want to know your ideas.

5. What is one example of you teaching a positive skill to a person younger than yourself?

THE SCULPTURE PROJECT

PASSAGE OF WIND & WATER

Notes for Teachers

The lessons connected with *The Sculpture Project: Passage of Wind and Water* are designed to be used with students in many grade levels. You may need to provide scaffolding in order to help your students access the text. To help with this, we have included this vocabulary bank. This bank can be easily used with the existing word study procedures you use with students.

- *Oceti Sakowin* (Oh-chay-tea Shaw-ko-ween)
- preserved
- oral tradition
- unbiased
- close observation
- possessed
- instructors
- interpreted
- imitating

- faculties
- lore
- customs
- strained
- conscious
- wisdom
- visible / invisible
- teemed
- solitude

CCSS Language Arts Anchor Standards Addressed:

- R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- R10: Read and comprehend complex informational and literary texts independently and proficiently.
- W9: Draw evidence from informational and literary texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting reference materials as appropriate.
- L6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career-readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge.

South Dakota Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards Addressed:

- EU 4.2: Analyze Oceti Sakowin social etiquette, proper behavior, and values.
- EU 5.1: Analyze Oceti Sakowin culture through oral tradition and unbiased information.
- EU 7.2: Analyze actions taken by people in an effort to bring about positive social change. (People who respect young learners and show an attitude of partnership with them will change their communities for the better.)

THE SCULPTURE PROJECT

PASSAGE OF WIND & WATER

Note: The text excerpted here is from a primary source document; Luther Standing Bear's book is an account of his own experiences living on the Great Plains before and during the reservation era. Standing Bear's written account of his boyhood training, cultural practices, and family life is unbiased information.

More Notes on the Standards and Student Work

The South Dakota Department of Education adopted the Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings and Standards in 2011. The document is available on the SD DOE website under "Oceti Sakowin Project." All South Dakota teachers should be employing these standards across the curriculum. These standards represent essential learning for all South Dakotans.

*We have included here the reference numbers and a basic description of each Oceti Sakowin Essential Understanding and Standard that this lesson addresses. For full articulations of all of these cultural standards, please consult the official state document:
<http://indianeducation.sd.gov/documents/OcetiSakowinEUS.pdf>*

This lesson was designed to be used with students in several grade levels. We would rightly expect the thinking of older, more experienced students to be deeper and their examples from the text to be more specific. This lesson has been field-tested with students in grades 6-12 as a springboard for writing arguments about the value of education, the need for adults to respect young people, and the importance of multi-generational partnerships that improve communities. "Learning from Elders" has also served as a catalyst for student-created public service projects that illuminate the yearning young people feel for respect and purpose in their lives. Adults are spurred to action when they see the student thinking that results from these projects.

The text of this article and the accompanying critical thinking questions are considered informational texts. The first part of the reading is a real-world text about a current local project and an Oceti Sakowin author; the excerpt from Land of the Spotted Eagle is a primary source text. The questions are designed to elicit high-level thinking and need no answer key. If students are showing their original thinking, engaging with the topic and the ways in which they perceive the project, then they are doing good work.

Teachers will have success when they encourage students to show and explain their thinking. Great student discussions can follow! The next page contains a graphic organizer that can help thinkers prepare for their discussions. This process of preparing for and engaging in peer discussions addresses the CCSS Speaking and Listening Standard SL.1!

This lesson was created for Passage to Schools by Gabrielle Seeley as a gift to the project. It has been used successfully with K-12 students & pre-service teachers in universities. Student learning data is available by e-mailing gabrielle.seeley@k12.sd.us.

THE SCULPTURE PROJECT

PASSAGE OF WIND & WATER

Brainstorm for five minutes, filling each shape with your ideas, then discuss!

Discussion: How could young people and elders learn from each other about...

...cooking?

Young people could:

Elders could...

...outer space?

Young people could:

Elders could:

...fixing machines?

Young people could:

Elders could:

...reading?

Young people could:

Elders could:

**...getting along
with others?**

Young people could:

Elders could:

**...improving our
community?**

Young people could:

Elders could:

Name:

Date of discussion: