SUB-THEME: Traditional Teachings
TEACHER INFORMATON SHEET

TOPIC 2.2: Creation – Equality Rights of the Natural World: The Experience in Bolivia

THE CONCEPT

Indigenous peoples share a long-standing relationship with their traditional territories and the land upon which they have occupied since time immemorial. The Indigenous peoples of Bolivia are explored in this lesson which supports a broader discussion about the similarities with First Nations peoples of Canada.

BACKGROUND TO CONCEPT

Bolivia is a country in South America. Modern-day Bolivia has been occupied for over 2,000 years by Indigenous peoples; the capital city of Tiwanaku (today Tiwanaku is an important Pre-Columbian archaeological site in western Bolivia) dates back to as early as 1500 BCE (Before the Common Era) when it was a small farming village. Before European colonization in the early 1500's, the Andean region of country was part of the Inca Empire – the largest in pre-contact America.

The Spanish conquest of the Inca Empire in Bolivia began in 1524 and was near completion by 1533. Bolivian silver became an important source of revenue for Spanish Empire, and a steady stream of Indigenous peoples served as a labour force for the silver mines. An Indigenous rebellion laid seize to the city of La Paz in 1781 and 20,000 people were killed. Soon after Spanish control in the area weakened, largely due to the Napoleonic Wars in Europe and sentiment against Spanish royal rule.

After declaring itself independent in 1806, Bolivia – named for Simón Bolívar, a Venezuelan-born military and political leader of Basque heritage – established a republic in 1825. Since, Bolivia has struggled through political instability, dictatorships, and economic woes.

Today, the culture of Bolivia is representative of its past: it has been heavily influenced by the Quechua and Aymara Indigenous peoples, as well as by the popular cultures of Latin America as a whole. It has the largest proportion of Indigenous people, who make up around two-thirds of the population. The demographic breakdown is: Quechua 30%, mestizo (mixed white and Amerindian ancestry) 30%, Aymara 25%, white 15%. [26]

Though rich in mineral and energy resources, Bolivia is one of South America's poorest countries. Wealthy urban elites, who are mostly of Spanish ancestry, have traditionally dominated political and economic life, whereas most Bolivians are low-income subsistence farmers, miners, small traders or artisans.

The country has the second-largest reserves of natural gas in South America, but there have been long-running tensions over the exploitation and export of the resource. Indigenous groups say the country should not relinquish control of the reserves, which they see as Bolivia's sole remaining natural resource. [27]

On a resolution introduced by Bolivia, the United Nations declared the first 'International Mother Earth Day' on April 22, 2009. Endorsed by over 50 UN member states, it recognizes that "the Earth and its ecosystems are our home" and that "it is necessary to promote harmony with nature and the Earth." The term Mother Earth is used because it "reflects the interdependence that exists among human beings, other living species and the planet we all inhabit".

26 Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bl.html
27 Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1210487.stm

In his closing remarks to the UN, Assembly President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann thanked Bolivia for having taken the lead in bringing the resolution to the Assembly. d'Escoto Brockmann said the world body was sending a special message of hope with Mother Earth Day. Even as scientists and biologists sounded the alarm that the world may already be at the "tipping point", at which the damage wrought on the environment might be irreversible, the United Nations had moved "to put people and the well-being of the planet at the centre of our attention and recognize good stewardship of the planet and our dwindling resources as a shared responsibility". [28]

In April 2011, Bolivia took a step further when it marked International Day of Mother Earth with a ceremony in the Plaza Murillo, the center of political power. There President Evo Morales, the first Indigenous leader of Bolivia, introduced the **Law of Mother Earth**. Morales, the chief architect of the Law of Mother Earth, was supported by politicians as well as nongovernmental organizations, and the event was attended by representatives of the executive branch of the Bolivian government, legislators, diplomats, Indigenous peoples and peasants.

The first article of the Law of Mother Earth says that every human activity has to "achieve dynamic balance with the cycles and processes inherent in Mother Earth."

It defines Mother Earth as "a unique, indivisible, self-regulating community of interrelated beings that sustains, contains and reproduces all beings."

The Morales Government intends to establish a Ministry of Mother Earth to implement the Law of Mother Earth, which will establish new rights for nature, including:

- the right to maintain the integrity of life and natural processes
- the right to not have cellular structure modified or genetically altered
- the right to continue vital cycles and processes free from human alteration
- the right to pure water
- the right to clean air
- the right to balance, to be at equilibrium
- the right to be free of toxic and radioactive pollution
- the right to not be affected by mega-infrastructure and development projects that affect the balance of ecosystems and the local inhabitant communities.

The law promotes "harmony" and "peace" and "the elimination of all nuclear, chemical, biological" weapons. [29]

Soon after his election as president in 2006, the Morales Government took over gas and oil refineries, all in a bid to have the government control the country's natural resources. As a result of these policies, foreign private investment in Bolivia has plummeted.

In 2009, UN Assembly President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann said, "It is only right that we, as sisters and brothers, take care of Mother Earth […] as Mother Earth, after all sustains […] our very humanity." He urged listening to the voices of Indigenous people, who, despite all odds, had sustained their profound links with nature. He urged support for the world's small farmers and food producers, who, with sustainable farming methods, could provide us with healthy food, while not being driven into poverty by unfair trade policies and the actions of rapacious agro-industries. "Our decision today marks one more symbolic step in changing the dominant mindset that has brought us so close to self-destruction," he said.

The example provided by Bolivia and its Indigenous peoples' experiences begins to reveal some common inter-connected relationships, beliefs, lifestyles, practices and struggles which are similar to those of the First Nations peoples of Canada.

28 Retrieved from http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/ga10823.doc.htm
29 Retrieved from http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/apr2011/2011-04-20-01.html

LESSON PLAN:

TOPIC 2.2: Creation-Equality Rights of the Natural World: The Experience in Bolivia

GRADE 7

THEME: **First Nations Peoples in the World**

SUB-THEME: **Traditional Teachings**

TOPIC 2.2: **Creation-Equality Rights of the Natural World: The Experience in Bolivia**

Lesson Overview

In this lesson students will explore the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the land. The will explore Bolivia as a case study and create their own 'Charter of Rights for Mother Earth'.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the lesson the students will:

1. Understand the value of Indigenous cultures and ways of life.
2. Appreciate the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the land.
3. Recognize the commonalties in worldview between First Nations peoples in Canada and Indigenous peoples in the world.
4. Explore the global connections and interdependent relationships between First Nations peoples in Canada and other global Indigenous peoples.
5. Value how Indigenous peoples in Canada and in the world have contributed to shaping the past and influencing the future.

Links to Manitoba Curriculum:

VI-007 Appreciate the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity in the world.

VP-015 Demonstrate concern for the loss of Indigenous ways of life.

KI-014 Describe characteristics of Indigenous ways of life in a society of Asia, Africa, or Australasia. [South America]

Materials and Equipment:

- Large world map that can be seen by all students in the class
- BLM 2.2.1 Student Activity: Protecting the Natural World of Bolivia – Map: one per student.
- BLM 2.2.2 Student Reading: Rights of the Natural World – The Experience in Bolivia: one per student
- Atlases – one per student
- Access to Internet with projector
- Access to Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba website; www.trcm.ca
- One sheet of Bristol board
- Coloured markers, etc. (optional)

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS	TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES
Activate *How will students be prepared for learning?*	Ask the class the students to describe characteristics of Indigenous ways of life in a society of Asia, Africa, or Australasia. Probe: *In what ways is the land important to Indigenous peoples in Canada and all over the world?* *[Answer: Indigenous peoples maintain a worldview that they belong to the land that the Creator gave to them since the beginning of time. By placing Indigenous peoples on the land, they were given the teachings of how to live with the Creation around them. This included the responsibility of begin stewards – caretakers – of these lands.]* Handout BLM 2.2.1 Student Activity: Protecting the Natural World of Bolivia – Map With the use of an atlas, instruct the students to complete the task as assignment. Tell them it is a timed assignment: • 10 minutes: complete the map as instructed • 5 minutes: find a partner and compare and share • Finally: report to the class as a whole Lead a class discussion based on the questions in BLM 2.2.1. *[You may want to reinforce the following regarding Bolivia's geography: Bolivia is one of two landlocked countries on the South American continent and also has the highest altitudes. The main features of Bolivia's geography include the Altiplano, a highland plateau of the Andes, and Lake Titicaca, the largest lake in South America and the highest commercially navigable lake on Earth. The Andes Mountains define the country's three geographic zones: the mountains and Altiplano in the west, the subtropical Yungas and temperate valleys of the eastern mountain slopes, and the tropical lowlands or plains of the eastern* lowlands. *Bolivia has major deposits of oil, natural gas and iron ore.* There *are several environmental concerns in Bolivia, including the clearing of land for agricultural purposes and the international demand for tropical timber are contributing to deforestation; soil erosion from overgrazing and poor agricultural methods; desertification; loss of biodiversity; industrial pollution of water supplies used for drinking and irrigation].* Inform the students that Bolivia has the the largest proportion of Indigenous people in South America – they make up around two-thirds of the population. Ask: • *What value is the land and geography to the Indigenous peoples of Bolivia?* • *What value if the land and geography of Canada to the First Nations peoples?*
Acquire *What strategies facilitate learning for groups and individuals?*	Show vignette: 'Share the Land' (1:46) from the Treaty Relations Commission website at www.trcm.ca. Ask: • *How do First Nations peoples see themselves in relation to the land?* • *What is their role in respect to the land?* • *How do you think that may differ from traditional Western/European culture?* • *What commonalties are their between Indigenous peoples in Bolivia and First Nations in Canada?*

Apply *How will students demonstrate their understanding?*	Handout BLM 2.2.2 Student Reading: Rights of the Natural World – The Experience in Bolivia Read over with the students. Brainstorm as a class and come up with a Mother Earth Charter of Rights. Post on a large sheet of Bristol board once complete.

Further Learning:

- In October 2009, the UN General Assembly named Bolivian President Morales "World Hero of Mother Earth." Have students research President Morales and find out why he was bestowed this honour.

Assessment:

References Available:

- Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning. Retrieved at http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/docs/policy_k12/full_doc.pdf
- Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, Treaty Education Initiative (TEI). Retrieved at http://www.trcm.ca

BLM 2.2.1 STUDENT ACTIVITY: PROTECTING THE NATURAL WORLD OF BOLIVIA – MAP

Using an atlas, complete the following as instructed.



1. On what continent is Bolivia found?

2. Label the countries surrounding Bolivia.

3. Locate and label one major lake in Bolivia.

4. Label the capital (mark it with a star) and other major cities (each marked with a dot).

5. Mark and label the mountain range.

6. Mark and label any five geographic features (plains, rivers, lowlands, plateaus, valleys, etc.)

BLM 2.2.2 STUDENT READING: RIGHTS OF THE NATURAL WORLD – THE EXPERIENCE IN BOLIVIA

Because of their connection to the land, First Nations peoples in Canada and Indigenous nations all over the world have become recognized as stewards of the land. Indigenous peoples maintain a worldview that they belong to the land that the Creator gave to them since the beginning of time. By placing Indigenous peoples on the land, they were given the teachings of how to live with the Creation around them. This included the responsibility of begin *stewards* – caretakers – of these lands.

Even though there is diversity among the First Nations peoples in Canada, as well as among the many Indigenous peoples in the world, they share commonalities that form the way they look at life. This worldview includes:

- The life cycle and unity between the Creator and all of Creation
- An interrelated relationship between nature and all living things
- And a linkage between spirituality, values, knowledge, culture, oral traditions, language, government, and the natural world.

Bolivia:

Bolivia is a country with a large Indigenous population, whose traditional belief systems took on greater meaning following the election their first Indigenous president, Evo Morales.

In a 2008 President Morales and his government distributed a pamphlet at the United Nations pamphlet. The pamphlet outlined 10 "commandments" as set out by Bolivia as a plan to "save the planet".

Reflecting Indigenous traditional beliefs, the suggested global Treaty says humans have caused "severe destruction … that is offensive to the many faiths, wisdom traditions and Indigenous cultures for whom Mother Earth is sacred."

It also says that "Mother Earth has the right to exist, to persist and to continue the vital cycles, structures, functions and processes that sustain all human beings."

In Indigenous Andean culture, the Earth deity (god) known as Pachamama is the centre of all life, and humans are considered equal to all other entities.