

Lesson Series: Aboriginal People and Astronomy

Learning Intentions:

- I can describe why Aboriginal people made stories about the moon.
- I can understand why the moon was important to Aboriginal people (seasons lesson extension).
- I can understand how the moons are connected to the seasons and months. (Seasons lesson extension).

Learning Outcomes:

Demonstrate an awareness of the special significance of celestial objects for aboriginal peoples.

Achievement Indicators:

Generate specific questions in response to an Aboriginal story focusing on celestial objects
Write their own stories, complete with picture on a celestial object (eg: how the moon came to be, why the sun is so hot).



Materials:

Sky Teller DVD (certain sections)

Blackline Masters

Copy: Rabbit and the moon man, How Raven Freed the moon

Moon art templates, black construction paper, pastels, samples of West Coast First Nations moon art.

13 moons on Turtle's back

Saanich Moons cards

Lesson:

1. Introduce the learning intention.
2. Complete my journal for the Moon together. What do we already know?
3. Read How Raven Freed the Moon. Why were these stories important? What does it teach?
4. Create Moon art project. Discuss colours and shapes used by Coast Salish Artists.
5. Assessment: Why did Aboriginal people tell stories?

Extensions: 1. Have students create their own story to go with the artwork about how the moon came to live in the sky. (Oral or written)

2. Moon connection to months and seasonal activities: Have students look at the moon cards, decide what is happening together in each card. The teacher will model connections to themselves about what happens in the seasons. Have students then share their connection to each of the seasons. Students can then complete the sheet of a picture of one of the moons, and then a picture of themselves doing something at that time of year (for full lesson plan see seasons lesson with the Saanich moons).



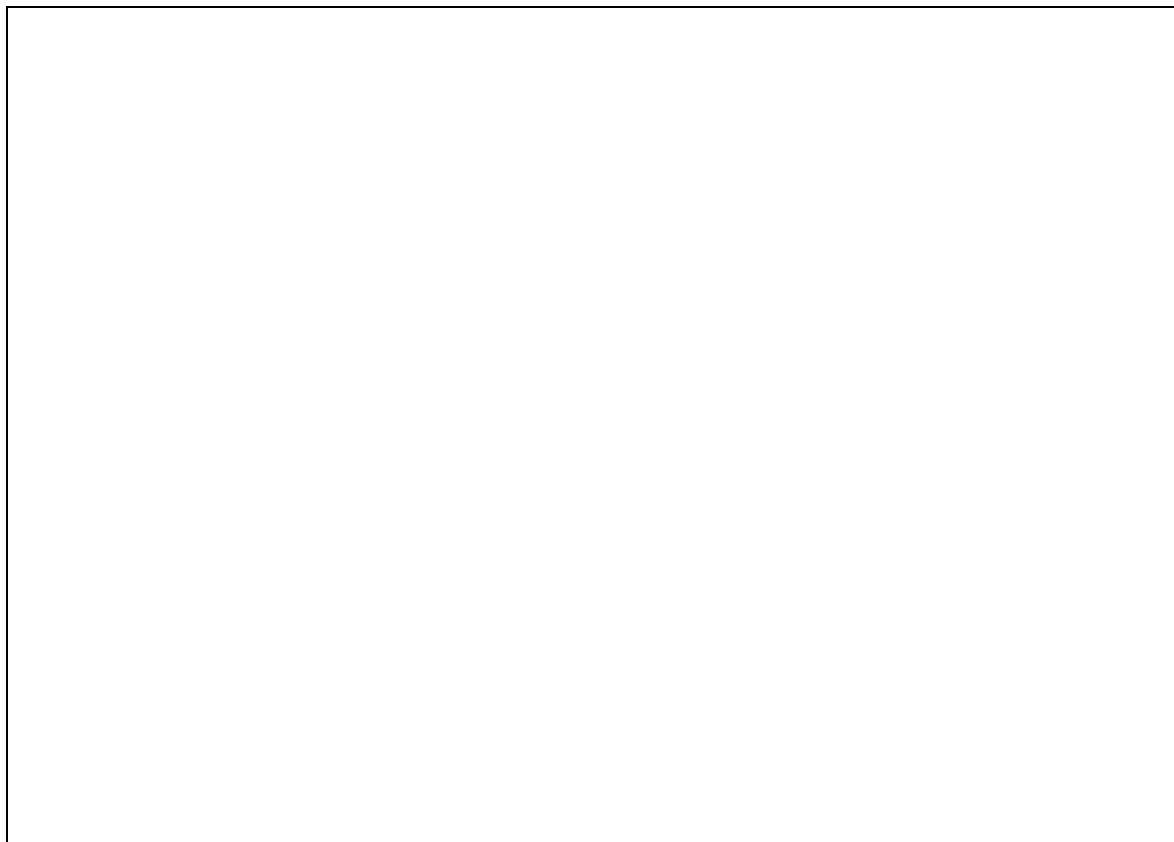
Our Learning Intention:

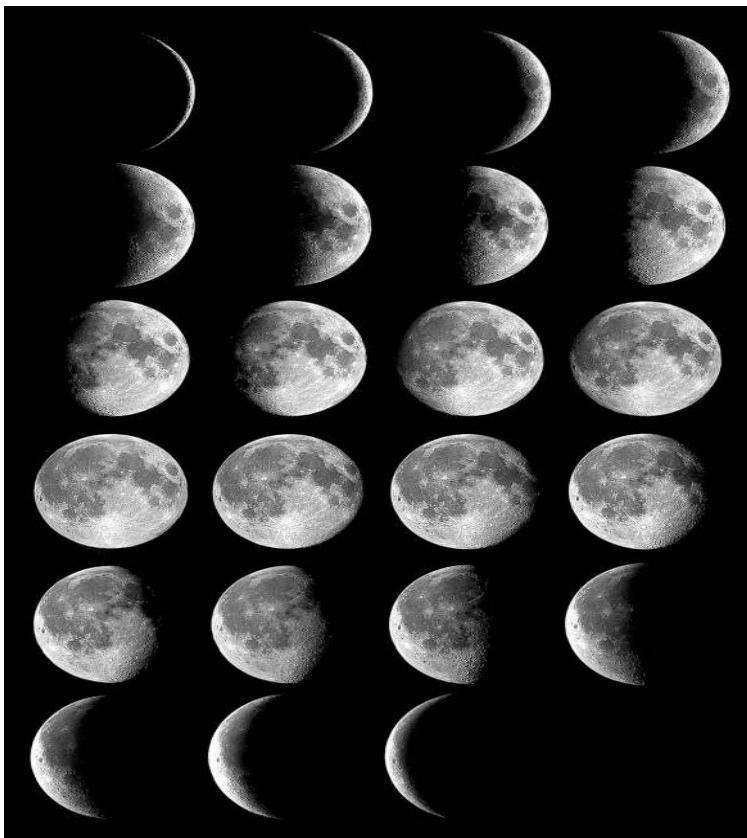
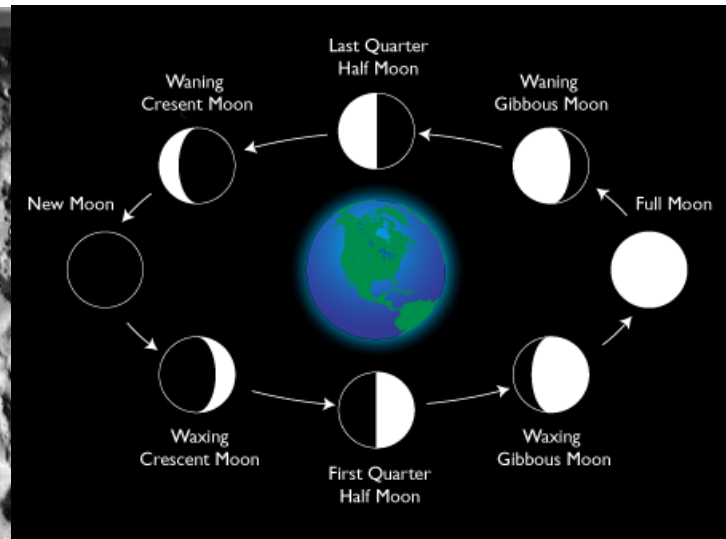
I can understand why the
moon is important to
Aboriginal people.

Name: _____

My Journal for: Moon Phases

Use words, pictures and symbols to explain what you know about the moon phases. Do you know any stories about the moon?





Why there is Day and Night

Chickasaw - Lynn Moroney

<http://solar-center.stanford.edu/folklore/day-night.html>

Before there were people, there were only the animals and the birds. And in those days, the day and the night were exactly the same. One time, when Rabbit was going along, he began to think about the days and the nights and how they were alike and how there wasn't enough light. And then, in a loud voice, he said, "There is not enough light. I can not see where I'm going. I need more light."

Just then, Rabbit heard a voice, and it said, "There is plenty of light." Rabbit could not see who was talking and so he called out "Who is there, who is speaking to me?" "It is I. It is Owl. And I say there is enough light in the world." Then Rabbit said, "Well I say there is not enough light, and I will call the animals together. We will have a council. And I will ask them. I will ask them if they think there is enough light and they will agree with me and then you will know that there is not enough light in the world." But then Owl said, "I will invite all the birds of the air. We will join in the council and then you will see that the birds will agree with me and then you will note that there is enough light in the world."

Well, all the animals and all the birds came together and they all sat around in a great circle and waited for Rabbit and Owl to speak. Rabbit stepped forward and said "There is not enough light in the world. We need more light." Then Owl stepped forward and then he said, "There is too much light. We do not need more light."

Well, with that, all the animals and birds began to talk to one another. Bear said that there was way too much light, that he liked to sleep in the dark and, if there were more light, it would interrupt his rest. Some of the birds said that they wanted more light so that they could see to gather twigs for their nests. Raccoon said that he agreed with Owl. Raccoon did not want light. Frog said that there was enough light, and that he couldn't sing well when there was too much light. Then Buffalo said that, with so little light, he couldn't find enough grass and that he was often hungry. Then all of the animals and birds began to talk at once. Some of them agreed with Owl and some of them agreed with Rabbit.

Finally, Rabbit and Owl decided that they would settle the argument by seeing which of them had the strongest medicine. And whoever had the greatest power, well, that person would have his way. So Owl began to say "Night, night, night, night." And then Rabbit spoke faster, "Light, light, light, light." And then Owl spoke even faster, "Night, night, night, night." Rabbit's friends warned him, "Rabbit, do not say Owl's word, or it will be night all the time." And Owls' friends warned him, "Owl, be careful. Do not say Rabbit's word or there will be light all the time."

Owl was saying "Night, night, night, night, night, night, night...." when he heard his friends say the word "light". And he accidentally said, "Night, night, night, night, light ... oh, oh," said Owl. But it was too late; he had already said the word "light".

And so it was that Rabbit won. And since that time, the day has had lots of light. But because some of the animals could not hunt or sleep with so much light, Rabbit declared that part of the time would be night after all. And that is why, in these days, we have both day and night.

Rabbit and the Moon Man

Mi'kmaq

<http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-Html-Legends/RabbitandtheMoonMan-Micmac.html>

Long ago, Rabbit was a great hunter. He lived with his grandmother in a lodge which stood deep in the Micmac forest. It was winter and Rabbit set traps and laid snares to catch game for food. He caught many small animals and birds, until one day he discovered that some mysterious being was robbing his traps. Rabbit and his grandmother became hungry. Though he visited his traps very early each morning, he always found them empty.

At first Rabbit thought that the robber might be a cunning wolverine, until one morning he found long, narrow footprints alongside his trap line. It was, he thought, the tracks of the robber, but they looked like moonbeams. Each morning Rabbit rose earlier and earlier, but the being of the long foot was always ahead of him and always his traps were empty.

Rabbit made a trap from a bowstring with the loop so cleverly fastened that he felt certain that he would catch the robber when it came. He took one end of the thong with him and hid himself behind a clump of bushes from which he could watch his snare. It was bright moonlight while he waited, but suddenly it became very dark as the moon disappeared. A few stars were still shining and there were no clouds in the sky, so Rabbit wondered what had happened to the moon.

Someone or something came stealthily through the trees and then Rabbit was almost blinded by a flash of bright, white light which went straight to his trap line and shone through the snare which he had set. Quick as a lightning flash, Rabbit jerked the bowstring and tightened the noose.

There was a sound of struggling and the light lurched from side to side. Rabbit knew the tugging on his string that he had caught the robber. He fastened the bowstring to a nearby sapling to hold the loop tight. Rabbit raced back to tell his grandmother, who was a wise old woman, what had happened. She told him that he must return at once and see who or what he had caught. Rabbit, who was very frightened, wanted to wait for daylight but his grandmother said that might be too late, so he returned to his trap line.

When he came near his traps, Rabbit saw that the bright light was still there. It was so bright that it hurt his eyes. He bathed them in the icy water of a nearby brook, but still they smarted. He made big snowballs and threw them at the light, in the hope of putting it out. As they went close to the light, he heard them sizzle and saw them melt.

Next, Rabbit scooped up great pawful of soft clay from the stream and made many big clay balls. He was a good shot and threw the balls with all of his force at the dancing white light. He heard them strike hard and then his prisoner shouted.

Then a strange, quivering voice asked why he had been snared and demanded that he be set free at once, because he was the man in the moon and he must be home before dawn came. His face had been spotted with clay and, when Rabbit went closer, the moon man saw him and threatened to kill him and all of his tribe if he were not released at once.

Rabbit was so terrified that he raced back to tell his grandmother about his strange captive. She too was much afraid and told Rabbit to return and release the thief immediately. Rabbit went back, and his voice shook with fear as he told the man in the moon that he would be released if he promised never to rob the snares again.

To make doubly sure, Rabbit asked him to promise that he would never return to earth, and the moon man swore that he would never do so. Rabbit could hardly see in the dazzling light, but at last he managed to gnaw through the bowstring with his teeth and the man in the moon soon disappeared in the sky, leaving a bright trail of light behind him.

Rabbit had been nearly blinded by the great light and his shoulders were badly scorched. Even today, rabbits blink as though light is too strong for their eyes; their eyelids are pink, and their eyes water if they look at a bright light. Their lips quiver, telling of Rabbit's terror.

The man in the moon has never returned to Earth. When he lights the world, one can still see the marks of the clay which Rabbit threw on his face. Sometimes he disappears for a few nights, when he is trying to rub the marks of the clay balls from his face. Then the world is dark; but when the man in the moon appears again, one can see that he has never been able to clean the clay marks from his shining face.

