

# Makinak: The Turtle, A Cree Legend (told by Wilfred Buck)

Lesson plan by Brooke Young

Time: 45 - 60 minutes

Grades: K - 5

Curricular Connections: Oral storytelling, Night Sky, Seasonal Cycles, Indigenous people's connection to nature, Indigenous ways of knowing and being

This lesson shares a Cree legend about the turtle constellation. Wilfred Buck shares that his people used the spaces on a painted turtle or snapping turtle's back as their calendar. The 13 spaces on the inside of the shell each represent a full moon and the 28 spaces on the outside of the shell represent the days between each full moon. The website elaborates on each of the 13 moons.

## Prep:

- Borrow a bead timeline if possible. Check with your ISW or I am happy to share mine.

- Print Turtle Template for each student

Free download: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/First-NationsNative-American-Turtle-Calendar-3233087> (created by an Indigenous teacher in Ontario, "Miss Innovative Native")

- Open on smartboard:

- Legend: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aKY198dFgM> (told by Wilfred Buck)
- 13 moon descriptors: <https://www.asc-csa.gc.ca/eng/youth-educators/objective-moon/thirteen-moons.asp> (By Wilfred Buck, Researcher and Knowledge Keeper, Opaskwayak Cree Nation)

- If possible, open a copy of the turtle template using Smart Ink document viewer.

**Introduction:** Using the bead timeline, highlight where the written calendar began to be used (approx. 2000 years ago). Notice how much time (approx. 12 000 yrs) First Nations people lived without a written calendar. Introduce the lesson: We are going to learn how some First Nations people used nature as a calendar.

## Activity:

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aKY198dFgM>

Review video together, sharing highlights for the students and yourself.

Main ideas: 13 full moons, 28 days in between moons, each moon represented something that was happening in the environment at that time.

Open 13 moon descriptor website: <https://www.asc-csa.gc.ca/eng/youth-educators/objective-moon/thirteen-moons.asp>

View and read about each moon. After each one, draw a visual representation of that moon in the corresponding spot on the turtle (on the turtle download, there is a copy showing where each number is). Demonstrate on smart document if possible. Add color.

Add 5 star stickers to their turtle in the places to make the constellation shown on the video.

Optional: Have students write numbers 1-28 on the outside spaces.

## Closing:

Review meaning of 13 and 28 spaces. Have students share which moon they connect to the most.



Examples made by Kindergarten and Grade One students.