Integrating First Nations and Metis Content and Perspective

Grade 6

Physical Science: Understanding Electricity

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Rationale for Integration:
First Nations people often learned about the natural world through observation. The natural world was available to seek knowledge and wisdom form the spirit world. Their connection to the Earth is very strong. As we learn and understand electricity and the natural resources available to produce electricity it is important to understand indigenous science worldviews and find ways to implement into our personal lifestyles but also indicate where society and industries are beginning to implement. Indigenous science worldview see natural resources as gifts and the relationship with nature is a continuous two-way reciprocal relationship. Indigenous worldviews honour nature on a daily basis and assume the responsibility for maintaining a harmonious relationship with the natural world. Western science worldviews see natural resources as resources that are available for human usage, to use for personal and economic gain. This hierarchical relationship contrasts the relationship of indigenous worldviews. (Michelle, 2008) The integration ideas presented focus on better understanding the relationship between the land and First Nations people. Beginning to understand this relationship can help us to examine or personal, societal, economic, and environmental impacts we have on the Earth and its’ resources.

Incorporating Medicine Wheel Philosophy

Spiritual
Students will value that the Earth gives us life. Students will appreciate the natural resources that are retrieved from the Earth and understand that it is the Earth that provides us with electricity.

Physical
Students will analyze the amount of electricity needed in Saskatchewan and analyze the impact it has on our Earth. Students will investigate and model an understanding of ways in which electricity is produced.

Emotional
Students will express their individual opinions about the impact we have on the Earth and its’ sustainment and identify sources of electricity that are environmentally friendly and suggest ideas to reduce the impact we have on the Earth through our usage of electricity.

Mental
Students will show their appreciation for technology and Earth as an energy force by analyzing their behaviours, and developing ways of decreasing their energy consumption in order to conserve natural resources and protect the environment.

Curriculum Unit Outcomes
EL6.1 Assess personal, societal, economic, and environmental impacts of electricity use in Saskatchewan and propose actions to reduce those impacts.

EL6.2 Investigate the characteristics and applications of static electric charges, conductors, insulators, switches, and electromagnetism.

EL6.3 Explain and model the properties of simple series and parallel circuits.
Deeper Understanding Questions

Following is a list of some of the bigger questions that could be explored throughout this unit. These questions are based on the understandings which originate from the Tipi Teachings and universal values that First Nations peoples deem imperative. For further understanding of Tipi Teachings go to “Four Directions Teachings” and select Cree Teachings by Elder Mary Lee. For further information on Universal Values go to Office of Treaty Commissioners website and look for Treaty Essentials Learnings We Are All Treaty People from the Teaching Treaties Kits.

- **Respect** - all things are created equally
- **Humility** – humans are not above other things in creation
- **Happiness** – the world is an interesting and beautiful place
- **Love** – humans need to be encouraged to appreciate all things in the natural world
- **Kinship** – we are related to and affected by all things in nature and by changes experienced by any parts of nature
- **Thankfulness** – we are fortunate to live in such an interesting and beautiful place and we are privileged to be able to use things like rocks and minerals for our own use

Deeper Understanding Questions for Understanding Electricity

Why is it important to understand our usage of electricity for work, home, entertainment and survival?

How can we change the ways in which we use these items to show we are grateful, humble, appreciative and thankful?

How has technology and electrical facilities caused changes in the way we use and perceive the environment and all life forms?

How could the knowledge you gained help towards the future?
Suggested Resources


Curriculum Outcome and Indicator

EL6.1
Assess personal, societal, economic, and environmental impacts of electricity use in Saskatchewan and propose actions to reduce those impacts.

a. Provide examples of the types of energy sources used to provide heat and light to homes in the past and describe ways in which electricity-based technologies have changed the way people work, live, and interact with the environment in Saskatchewan.

Understanding First Nations Relationship with the Land
Learning about the relationship that First Nations culture have with the land can connect itself to this unit as we try and seek the amount of natural resources we use to produce electricity and the impact of using non-renewable resources. We can use the traditional teachings and culture of First Nations peoples and examine ways in which we can reduce our impact on the Earth.

- Aboriginal peoples highly respect the earth as being our provider and caregiver, therefore earth is regarded as Mother Earth in many Aboriginal cultures. (Appendix 1) The Earth is our educator, lifeblood, and many gifts have been learned and are used from the earth and its’ resources. Storytelling is a gift that helps teach ways of understanding the world and teach a variety of lessons (Appendix 2). The following Aboriginal legends offer explanation and/or moral teachings of the importance of the land its’ resources.

Mother Earth
- When Clay Sings (Baylor, 1972)
- Teaching Treaties in the Classroom Grade 3 pg. 25-30 (Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2008)
- The Coming of Gluscabi (Bruchac, Keepers of the Earth, 1988)
- The Earth on Turtle’s Back (Bruchac, Keepers of the Earth, 1988)
- Gluscabi and the Game Animals (Bruchac, Keepers of the Earth, 1988)
- How Grandmother Spider Stole the Sun (Bruchac, Keepers of the Earth, 1988)
- Brother Eagle, Sister Sky (Seattle, 1991)
- Grandfather Drum (Plain, 1994)

Examining First Nations Relationship with the Earths Resources
The Medicine Wheel is a traditional First Nations model that explains the interdependence and relationship First Nations peoples have with the world around them(Appendix 5). The Medicine Wheel is commonly known as “the circle of life” model where each entity within the Medicine Wheel is a gift with many teachings, all entities are imperative for the survival and balance of all. Identify the areas in which the resources used today fit within the traditional Medicine Wheel. Relate Medicine Wheel teachings with our personal, societal, economic, and environmental needs, wants, and impacts of electricity.

Examples of medicine wheel teachings are introduced on next page.

- www.fourdirectionsteachings.com (accessed 19/04/08)
- Teaching Treaties in the Classroom Grade 1 by Treaty Commissioner pgs. 26-27
- Treaty Essential Leanings We Are All Treaty People Treaty Essential Learning #4 pgs. 26-46
Renewable Resources

- Identify energy sources used in the past by First Nation and Non–First Nation peoples (Appendix 4). Seek to understand the time it took to gather and prepare these materials in order to use for light and heat. Relate and connect how medicine wheel teachings and cultural ceremonies such as offerings were examples of their appreciation for the Earth.
  - *The Inuit Thought of it Amazing Arctic Innovations* (Ipellie, 2007)
  - *Voices of our Elders* (Millar, 2006)

- Renewable resources are used in Saskatchewan to produce electricity such as solar power, wind mills, and hydro-electric dams. We are very dependent on these resources for our electrical needs. The following resources explain the importance of each natural resources within First Nation cultures and tradition. These natural resources are vital for our survival and respect by First Nations cultures (Appendix 6). Legends demonstrate the teachings and respect of these resources within the culture. Use medicine wheel teachings to deepen the understanding of the resources and their significance within the legends and cultural beliefs.

  **Sun and Fire as an Energy Source**
  - *Loo-Wit the Fire-Keeper* pg. 41 (Bruchac, Keepers of the Earth, 1988)
  - Fire p. 41-47 (Bruchac, 1988)
  - The Day the Redtailed Hawk Brought Fire (Friesen, 2005)
  - The following website explains symbolism and meaning of fire.
    - [http://www.shannonthunderbird.com/symbols_and_meanings.htm](http://www.shannonthunderbird.com/symbols_and_meanings.htm) accessed on (04/05/11)

  **Importance of Wind**
  - *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* (Seattle, 1991)
  - *Gluscabi and the Wind Eagle* pg. 67 (Bruchac, Keepers of the Earth, 1988)
  - The Big Storm (Pelietier, 1992)

  **Water**
  - *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* (Seattle, 1991)
  - Wesakejack and the Flood (Ballantyne, 1995)
  - The Bulrush helps the pond (Carriere, 2002)
  - The Beavers Big House (Whitford, 2004)
  - Canada’s Animals and their Aboriginal Caretakers p.10 (Hadubiak, Canada’s Animals and Their Aboriginal Caretakers)

- Non-Renewable resources are also used today to produce electricity. The types of coal, oil, and natural gas used today would not have been used traditionally in the past. Important teachings within First Nations culture is to take care of Mother Earth’s gifts, to use only what is needed. See the following medicine wheel teachings to implement into unit when teaching non-renewable resources.
Examples of Medicine Wheel Teachings

These entities are only a few teachings found within the medicine wheel. Look at the diagram in Appendix 5 and relate other factors within the unit.

- Resources were found within their environments and used very carefully in order to maintain and not deplete the resource. Identify the natural resources that are being used today to produce electricity and the amount we use. Compare our individual and global relationship with the earth and its’ resources to peoples of the past and indicate what we can do globally and individually to reduce our impact. The following resources can be used to examine our appreciation for electricity.
  - *I Can’t Have Bannock But The Beaver Has A Dam*
  - *The Big Storm* (Pelletier, 1992)

- One of the fundamental teachings of First Nations cultures is that the circle of life involves both giving and receiving. When preparing to take from the Earth prayers and gifts were offered to the resources and the Creator. Offerings such as small bits of food, tobacco, and sweet grass were presented with respect and presented as an exchange for what the land or the environment provided. (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canda, 1999, p. 33) The following legends identify the appreciation and thanks towards the environment. There is opportunity to relate these teachings with the way in which we use resources for electricity without even understanding what resources we use.
  - *Nanabosho Dances* (McLellan, 1991)
  - *Nanabosho, Soaring Eagle* (McLellan, Nanbosho, Soaring Eagle and Great Sturgeon, 1993)
  - *Giving Thanks* (Swamp, 1995)

- Within the circle there needs to be balance and harmony. It has been understood by First Nations culture that the actions of one affects everything within the circle. Because of this interconnected First Nations cultures practiced a respectful relationship with all of creation as to not upset the balance and harmony creation provided. It is important to maintain balance as creation provided, when we do not maintain balance life provides challenges. (Oksasikewiyin) The following legends provide teaching opportunities for understanding balance and harmony. Relate balance and harmony within the resources we use for electricity and the effects it can have on the environment.
  - *Awi Usdi, the Little Deer* pg. 173 (Bruchac, Keepers of the Earth, 1988)
  - *The Origin of Death* pg. 181 (Bruchac, Keepers of the Earth, 1988)
  - *The Corn Spirit* pg. 3 (Bruchac M. j., 2007)
  - *The Old Man with the Otter Medicine* (Blondin, 1993)
  - The White Buffalo Calf Woman and the Sacred Pipe pg. 187 (Bouchard, 2009)
  - *How We Saw the World- How the world will end* (Taylor, 1993)
  - *The Learning Circle Classroom Activities on First Nations in Canada Unit 6 First Nations and the Environment* (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canda, 1999)
**Curriculum Outcome**

**EL6.2**

Investigate the characteristics and applications of static electric charges, conductors, insulators, switches, and electromagnetism.

**Static Electricity and Lightning**

Lightening is a large-scale static shock that is created when the clouds build up charge. Many First Nations cultures viewed these natural events with great respect, just like other natural phenomena’s. Lightning and thunder tell us about nature’s power. First Nations peoples of the plains had such reverence for the lightning and thunder that these aspects became embodied in the form of the Thunderbird. A Thunderbird governed each quadrant of their sacred circle. “The Thunderbird is one of the most important symbols of spirituality. It shows the power and mystery of the heavens, “explains Danny Musqua, an Ojibwa Elder, name-giver, and sweat lodge keeper from Keessekoose First Nation. (Pearson, 2009)

The following are list of legends about lightening and/or the Thunderbird (Appendix 7);

- *The Creation of the Moon* (Bruchac M. J., Keepers of the Night, 1994) pgs. 67-68 &76
- Go to “thunder and lightning legends” [http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/ca/ily/ily33.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/ca/ily/ily33.htm) this legend is titled LEGEND OF THE ORIGIN OF THUNDER AND LIGHTNING accessed on 05/17/11

- [http://www.theeaglesnestonline.com/content/native-legends/NativeAmericanThunderbirdLegend.htm](http://www.theeaglesnestonline.com/content/native-legends/NativeAmericanThunderbirdLegend.htm)
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Appendix 1  First Nations Relationship with the Land

First Nations peoples have a deep connection with all life forms on Mother Earth provided to them by the Creator. They believe(d) the Creator gave them “natural laws” that ensured they would live in balance and harmony with all of creation. First nations peoples had deep respect for the land, the plants and animals, for these entities provided everything they needed to live. These nations gave thanks every day for all of creation through spiritual ceremonies in the form of prayers, feasts, pipe ceremonies, lodges, songs and dances.

*Teaching Treaties in the Classroom, A Treaty Resource Guide for Grade 1*, pg. 14  

The First Nations were well adapted to the natural environment: they were knowledgeable about the geography of the land; they were experts at hunting, trapping and gathering food; they knew how to survive the harsh winters; they had a special relationship with the land and they respected all living things. As natural conservationists, they used only what was necessary for survival and did not abuse the land, nature or the environment.

First Nations peoples used plants, animals and other resources carefully so that their children and grandchildren would be able to use them as well. They cared for these resources as a way of respecting the land which they believed the Creator gave them; therefore, they treated the resources and took what it had to offer as gifts. First Nations peoples realized their relationship to the land gave them the big responsibility of caring for the natural resources.

*Teaching Treaties in the Classroom, A Treaty Resource Guide for Grade 3*, pg. 27  

First Nations peoples are spiritual in nature. The Creator provided many spiritual ceremonies to First Nations peoples so they would be able to show their appreciation and spiritual connection to him. These ceremonies are carried out in recognition of certain life achievements and events which have special significance. Ceremonies are a means of showing respect and gratitude to the Creator, to others and to the natural world.

*Teaching Treaties in the Classroom, A Treaty Resource Guide for Grade 2*, pg. 26  

First Nations peoples only use what was needed from the land. In recognition of thanks an offering would be made back to Earth. Offerings are made during hunting and gathering of different plants and foods. Most commonly used as an offering was tobacco. As plants and animals were taken from the Earth tobacco was offered with a prayer of thanks in which it is believed that the offering and prayer would please the Earth and the resources and allow for replenishing to take place.
Appendix 2   Understanding Oral Tradition

Oral history is a way to store knowledge and pass it along by word of mouth. Legends and stories are part of the oral history of First Nations peoples. These stories have many themes: the creation, trickster and animal stories that teach about the beliefs and values of these cultures. They are entertaining, humorous and easy to understand. They tell about the world of animals, plants, the sky and the universe. Stories differ from nation to nation but have similarities, too. First Nations cultures have their own languages, traditions and customs that are learned through storytelling and ceremonies.3

The Elders in First Nation cultures are usually the ones who tell these stories. Elders are very important in First Nation cultures because they are wise and knowledgeable about their traditional teachings and spiritual ceremonies. They taught children how to live in balance and harmony with the environment. The Elders told stories to the children so they could learn the beliefs and values of their cultures. Many First Nations Elders continue to pass on these teachings and ceremonies today.


Within First Nations societies, storytelling is an important developmental and educational tool, and is a central characteristic of their rich oral traditions. Legends, stories and teachings, which remained intact, were passed down from generation to generation over thousands of years. Storytelling was not only used as an important instructive tool, it was also a means of entertainment during the long winter season.

The stories include prayers, songs and dances, which also have a type of story in them. Some stories provide practical instruction on traditional living, such as food preparation, child rearing, friendship, love, hunting routes, bird migrations, family lineage, and prophecies that describe major ecological and spiritual events.

First Nations peoples give great honour to their ancestors because without them, there is no gift of life. One of the most important and common themes is creation stories, which explain how life began on Earth and how each First Nation came to be. Each story is part of a greater whole, providing the particulars on spiritual, emotional, mental and physical teachings – in particular the “natural laws” that remain inherent in traditional teachings and tell how to live in balance with creation.

*Teaching Treaties in the Classroom, A Treaty Resource Guide for Grade 1, pg. 31*  

Among Native North American cultures there were certain stories that were usually told at specific times of the year. Northeastern Indians told stories during the long cold season between the first and last frosts. Although you may not be able to restrict your use of these stories to this period of time, it is good to point out to children the traditional storytelling seasons.  

*Keepers of the Animals, pg. 10, (Bruchac, J., Caduto, M. J., 1991)*

Drums are often used to tell stories, many elders that use a drum with first light some sweetgrass and with the smoke they will smudge the four directions, the drum and himself. Smudging will enable to storyteller to give good, honourable stories. Legends and stories are traditionally told in the cool
months as Mother Earth prepares for the long sleep of rest and rejuvenation and as the animals prepare for hibernation and migration.  

*Grandfather Drum* (Plain, F. 1994)

**Characteristics of Oral Tradition**  
Taken from Treaty Essential Learnings *We Are All Treaty People* by The Office of the Treaty Commissioner (2008)

Oral tradition transmits the First Nations’ worldviews, including the values, beliefs and the “essence” of the nations.

Oral tradition requires the ability to listen and understand.

Oral traditions are repetitious so teachings can be understood and will not be lost.

Oral traditions encompass values, customs, beliefs, traditions, songs, ceremonies, history and information about events.

Oral traditions are still practised today by Elders who pass on important wisdom and knowledge that are invaluable to the culture, language and spirituality of their people.

Elders acknowledge the source of oral history.

Oral traditions were shared only if they imparted accurate information.

Oral traditions follow strict laws of respect.

*Treaty Essential Learnings, We Are All Treaty People* (Office of the Treaty Commissioner, 2008)

“Of Science and Indian Myths” from *Keepers of the Earth* (Bruchac, 1988) is a legend that explains the origin of storytelling.
Appendix 3  Offerings

Traditional tobacco has been used by many Aboriginal people in ceremonies, rituals and prayer for thousands of years. Using tobacco in non-traditional ways like smoking cigarettes or chewing tobacco or snuff is abuse of its traditional purpose.

"Traditional tobacco is our SACRED connection to our Creator."

- Pauline Shirt
Elder, Cree Nation

Elders teach that tobacco was one of the four sacred medicines (Sacred Tobacco, Cedar, Sage and Sweetgrass) given to many Aboriginal Nations. When used properly, Sacred Tobacco can be used to communicate with the Spirit World and the Creator.

In its original form, tobacco had both honor and purpose. The chemical additives found in commercial tobacco take away from tobacco’s original purpose in Aboriginal ceremonies. Smoking cigarettes and chewing tobacco have no connection to Aboriginal spirituality.

Traditional tobacco is intended to be used in small amounts for prayers and ceremonies.

Some traditional methods of using Sacred Tobacco:
1. The smoke from tobacco burned on sacred fires or in sacred pipes rises to the sky, carrying prayers to the spirit world.
2. Sacred Tobacco can be used as a daily offering to say prayers and give thanks for all the gifts the Creator has given to us. We lay Sacred Tobacco on to the Earth, our mother, for providing all the things that help sustain our physical beings.
3. Offering Tobacco to water is an acknowledgment of the lifeblood that sustains us all as well. Without water, we would cease to exist.
4. Historically, many Aboriginal people used Sacred Tobacco in combination with other plants/herbs to treat some illnesses.
5. Offering Sacred Tobacco is a way of giving thanks in advance of a request. Whenever there is a request for guidance, advice, ceremonies or taking from the animal or spirit world, Sacred Tobacco is always offered first.


Traditional Tobacco Use

Tobacco is often smoked in a sacred pipe during certain ceremonies. Tobacco acts as a communication link between the people and the Creator. Thus when tobacco is smoked from a pipe or burned as an offering, all thoughts, feelings, and prayers are carried in the tobacco smoke directly to the Creator.

Tobacco is not always burned. It is also used as a means of giving thanks. Before and after killing an animal such as a deer, a hunter will often say a prayer while holding the tobacco in his left hand (the one closest to his heart) to give thanks to the Creator and to the animal for giving up its life so that the hunter can feed his family. First Nations people will also place tobacco on the ground and say a prayer as an offering when picking medicines to give thanks to Mother Earth.
Appendix 4  Resources for Heat and Light in the Past

The following methods of creating heat and light in the past were found in the following resources:

Voice of the Elders (Millar, 2006), and The Inuit Thought of it Amazing Arctic Innovations (Ipellie, 2007)

Heat and light are most commonly generated today through the technology of electricity. Discuss how these methods took time and were very scarce. Because of the lack of simplicity these resources they were used and extracted with care and respect (see medicine wheel teachings).

- Inuit used soapstone carved into bowls that had seal oil in it. Wick was made of moss and dipped in seal oil. Other end was lit, provided heat and light inside the igloo.
- Inuit used seal oil for cooking during cold, dark winter months only when they had a lot. It took a long time to cook with seal oil. They would boil fish and meat. In the summer the Inuit would use driftwood and brush for campfires and cooking.
- To steam eggs, eggs were placed on moss in a campfire.
- Using the sun and wind to dry fish
- Wood stoves
- Make candles out of fish oil
- Fires with dry willows, moss, dead trees
- Moss used for insulation to fill in the cracks of walls
- Hay was put on the rooftop and covered it with clay to keep heat in and water out
- Whale blubber used for heat, lamps, soaps, lubricants
- Sperm Whale oil was very valuable to make candles, lamp oil, and base for perfumes
- Another method of cooking was to heat stones and place them into a hide full of water and the food to be cooked
- Keeping warm using animal hides and fur
- Candle light and washboards

“There was no power then and I used to use a wood stove. We used to make candles out of fish oil. We would put material in there for a wick. We had candles, then a coal oil light, then a gas light and then we had power. We were isolated. We washed our clothes on a washboard in a tub. We used to buy a big iron with a handle. We would warm it on the stove and use that to iron our clothes.”

Voice of the Elders Compiled by Marleen Millar pg. 32

More elder stories from Voice of the Elders

Wood Stoves pg.33
Muskeg fridge pg.34 & 98
Meat Storage pg. 47
Moss Insulation pg. 80
Appendix 5 Understanding the Medicine Wheel

The First Nations peoples’ common worldviews are formulated by interrelated components such as spirituality, values, knowledge, culture, oral traditions, language, technology, and the natural world. These influential components comprise social, economic, and belief systems.

_Treaty Essential Leanings We Are All Treaty People_, Office of the Treaty Commissioner (2008)

**Purpose:**
The four directions of the medicine wheel are gifts given by the Creator. It represents change, equality, unity and interconnectedness with all creation. The medicine wheel is a circle of hope and of healing. It contains many stories and many teachings. We will never see in our lifetime all the wisdom that comes from these doorways. Every entity is considered a life form as it is essential for survival and balance. Every life form has a spirit, from the tiniest insect to the largest rock. The medicine wheel helps people balance and heal themselves and use it to provide a sense of direction and guidance to their lives. It helps people achieve a greater understanding of themselves in relation to all of creation.

**Shape:**
The spiral within the wheel represents change and moving toward another level of growth and development. The life force of all existence moves in a clockwise circular manner, representing wholeness and continuity. All of life forms within the circle will go through these cycles. The wheel is an important tool because of its constant movement. When the earth completes a full cycle of the four seasons, we also mature and grow as we complete a full circle. The circle is a sacred symbol used by most aboriginal people. There is no beginning and no end. When sitting in a circle all are equal; no one is greater than anyone else. We can see all who is in the circle and know what strengths the circle holds.

The circle shape also keeps us in mind of the many circles found within Creation. It remind us of the sun and the moon. Not only is their shape a circle, but so also is their journey. The natural cycles of life move in a circle. Think of the four seasons.

**Examples of Gifts from Creator within the Quadrants**

- Four Direction east, south, west, north
- Four seasons spring, summer, fall, winter
- Four original races Caucasian, First Nations, African, Asian
- Four principles of life love, honesty, unselfishness, purity
- Four stages of life child, adolescent, adult, elder
- Four parts of self physical, mental, emotional, spiritual
- Four medicines sage, tobacco, sweetgrass, cedar
- Four types of animals winged ones, two legged, four legged, flyers, swimmers
- Four elements sun, water, air, earth

**Understanding the 4 Parts of Self -** Making personal connections within your medicine wheel?

Physical: What are you putting in your body that makes it weak?
Mental: What is causing stress in your life?
Emotional: Share a story that relates to your feelings.
Spiritual: When was the last time you participated in a ceremony?

_Empowering the Spirit II_, pg. 3, (Elliot, 2004) and _Empowering the Learner 2_, pg.5, (Hawker, 2005)
Native beliefs stress that it is important to maintain a balance among all things in nature. The people believe that plants, animals, and minerals have spirits that must be respected. If people take too much from nature, they upset the balance of nature and disrespect the spirits. Once the balance is disrupted, people may experience sickness, hunger, or other types of suffering.

To maintain the balance, people must treat one another, plants, animals, and the land with respect. Native people show respect by offering thanks for the gifts that they receive from nature. People show thanks with prayers, songs, dances, and offerings.

Native North American Wisdom and Gifts (Kalman, 2006)
Appendix 6  Wind, Sun, Earth, Water as Living Entities

All entities within the circle were given to us from the Creator. These entities are needed for our survival. Because each entity is of great importance, First Nations cultural spirituality believes that all of these entities are living factors with spirits. It is these spirits that First Nations peoples and cultures celebrate and give thanks to through various forms of prayer, ceremonies, and practices. For example, the sundance, raindance and other songs like the ‘stone spirit song’ were opportunities for First Nations people to communicate with the spirits and ask for guidance and seek prayer.

The Elements

It is good that you never forget about the Creator, Grandfather Moon, who watches over us from above and Mother Earth, who we all survive from. Everyday the Father Sun watches over us as he travels around this earth. The wind also protects us. Everything that is not good is blown away. This is what is going to take us a long ways. A person should not dislike the wind; he is there to protect us, that is his work. Each new day, Father Sun watches over us as we walk along Mother Earth’s surface. At night Grandfather Moon comes out, he looks after us the whole night.

Elder Albert Morningchild taken from Voice of Our Elders (Millar, 2006)

Fire

Fire is needed for survival; it is the heart of people. It provides us with life, warmth, & protection. We all have fire within ourselves, within our families and within our communities. Fire cleanses, and renews life.

http://www.shannonthunderbird.com/symbols_and_meanings.htm accessed on 05/17/11

Wind

The wind is here to protect us. Things that are not good are blown away. It is important to our lives and needs to be recognized as our protector.

http://www.shannonthunderbird.com/symbols_and_meanings.htm accessed on 05/17/11

Wind also assists in bringing new life within the plant world. Wind moves the seeds, the beginning of new life.

“The air is precious...for all things share the same breath-the beasts, the trees, and man, they are all of the same breath....The wind gives man his first breath and receives his last sigh.” (Jones, 2005)

Water

First Nations used water for cooking and washings, and as an essential ingredient in remedies and cures. They also used water to manipulate leather, wood, and used water to soften porcupine quills. All First Nations looked upon water as a vital, living element in their environment. Water, as a living entity, occupied an important place in the oral histories and sacred stories of each First Nation. (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canda, 1999)
Appendix 7  Significance of the Thunderbird of Lightening

“The people (long ago),” explains the Elder, “believed that the Thunderbird was a physical animal that came at critical times. It brought about rain and healing. When it blinked, lightning flashed form its eyes and its yell was the thunder. But there was another group of Elders who believed there was another explanation for lightning and thunder. In their Tobacco circles, where groups of Elders talked to each other and spoke freely about the natural world, some believed that lightning was two objects crashing together in the heavens. They called it ‘waskwanehpigan’. Light and thunder were not necessarily associated with the physical bird, but were two powerful forces striking together like flint rock causing sparks. Today, we know that lightning is electricity.”

(Pearson, 2009, p. 95)

The Thunderbird is represented differently among various First Nations cultural beliefs such as;

Native American Thunderbird

All quotes below retrieved from:
http://www.theeaglesnestonline.com/content/native-legends/NativeAmericanThunderbirdLegend.htm

The story of the Thunderbird in Native American Mythology is popular among various Native American and First Nations peoples. We are most familiar with the stories in our area, the Pacific Northwest Coast. Thunderbird is a giant supernatural bird who causes thunder and lightning. His weapons are lightning snakes which are carried beneath his wings. Lightning flashes when he throws the lightning snakes or when he blinks his eyes. He is powerful enough to hunt Killer Whale and is often shown with one in his talons. In many Coast Salish legends, Thunderbird is a mountain dweller and is a highly intelligent creature. From his home, he keeps a close eye over his dominion. Humans should beware not to try and outwit Thunderbird for they are most certain to have it backfire.

In some Coast Salish myths, the peak Black Tusk in southern British Columbia, Canada is said to be his favourite perch. According to the Quileute people of Washington State, it is the Blue Glacier of Mount Olympus.

Art designs vary by artist but some common features found in Northwest Coast are a hooked beak, often but not always larger than that of Eagle. Thunderbird is often shown with a crown or a curly top.

Thunderbird and Killerwhale according to Joe Wilson:

The Thunderbird and Killerwhale figure prominently in Salish Legend. One such legend tells of the Salish people's great dependence on the salmon. One day the Killerwhale swam into the bay and the salmon were scared away. It was not long before the people began to starve and called out to the Thunderbird for help. The Thunderbird swooped down and grabbing the Killerwhale in his claws, carried him out to sea. The salmon returned and the people were no longer hungry.

Thunderbird from Andy Everson:

In Penlatch legend, the mountains in the Beaufort range were home to a family of fabulous Thunderbirds. They could make lightning with their eyes and flap their wings to produce thunder. They
could pick up whole whales with their immense talons and bring them back to their home to eat. In short, they held dominion over the skies.

Since the time of the flood, my ancestors have been able to look up to the mountains and see Queneesh, the glacier overlooking the Comox Valley. It is a symbol of our origins and is important to our territoriality. My ancestors were always keenly aware of their environment and were conscious of the supernatural world that also surrounded them. Although they recognized that they held dominion over their territory, they also acknowledged that this dominion was flexible. It was shared with animals on the land, in the sky and under the sea. It was under the influence of the supernatural world.

http://www.theeaglesnestonline.com/content/native-legends/NativeAmericanThunderbirdLegend.htm

The Thunderbird Myth


The thunderbird myth comes from Native American mythology, ranging from the Pacific Northwest to tribes in the Southeastern United States.

A thunderbird is a huge bird with an enormous wingspan who was directly connected to adverse weather conditions. It was said in thunderbird legend that the bird caused thunder claps each time it flapped its gigantic wings. Depending on the storyteller, the thunderbird could also cause rainfall or shoot lightning from its eyes.

In every case, the creature was powerful and intelligent. It could cause great storms at will, and was not to be messed with. Depictions of the thunderbird can be found on several totem poles in various Native American cultures. It usually appears at the top, sometimes with teeth inside of its beak.

The origins of this bird are largely unknown. Some researchers believe that the thunderbird legend is based on the sightings of real birds, with some even posing the argument that early sightings could have been from descents of the pterodactyl dinosaur species. Because of this, the thunderbird goes from being merely a mythical creature to potentially also being a cryptid - a creature whose existence is reported but not proven.

This is a difficult argument to make, since a gigantic bird of any mystical quality (or lack thereof) would likely be easy to spot. Also, most legends have the bird with bright feathers, which some say they could remove like a blanket upon taking human form. This directly conflicts with the pterodactyl theory, as their wings more resembled the featherless stretched-skin style of bats. While there are folktales about creatures that resemble pterodactyls in
more modern settings, these are not necessarily connected to the thunderbird in any way.