

Tool 3.2



Learning from Indigenous Peoples

CLARITY Competence Area:

Embracing values that sustain the lives of all living beings

GreenComp Competence Area:

Embodying sustainability values

Why use this tool?

This tool is meant to support reflection on the historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples face, and to encourage respectful engagement with Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems and practices when it comes to growing climate resilience and fostering ecosystem regeneration.

It is essential to note that Indigenous Peoples are communities who have been experiencing colonization, in most parts of the world. Yet, they still carry a deep sense of responsibility for the lands they have inherited from their ancestors, which includes ecosystems that have been exploited and those that have remained intact. While colonization is often associated with empires exploiting territories and people overseas, it has occurred within Europe as well. The Sámi in Sápmi, present across parts of four countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia) and the Inuit of Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland – a self-governed territory within the Kingdom of Denmark) are examples of Indigenous Peoples who still suffer from the burden of European colonization.

Today, one of the biggest challenges faced by many Indigenous Peoples is "Green" or "Climate colonialism" as a result, many Indigenous Peoples see their territories once again plundered for rare minerals or to install wind power, now with the excuse of saving the planet. It is important not to exoticize Indigenous Peoples' cultures, while recognizing their knowledge as vital to our shared journey towards a more climate-resilient world.

Activity 3.2.3

Learning through arts or cultural heritage

Overview

Exploring the arts or cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples can help better understand the variety of relationships to oneself, others and nature among different Indigenous Peoples, and tie them to issues of oppression and marginalization related to colonization and colonial continuities.

Curriculum linkage

History, Geography, Natural Science and Cross-Curricular & Global Competences.

Competences built

Self-reflection, self-awareness, perspective taking and humility

Engagement of external stakeholders:

Possibly, for example:

- An Indigenous artist (when possible)
- An expert working on the repatriation of Indigenous Peoples' art – they could bring in valuable perspectives

Prep

- Choose an artwork that tells a story about the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Feel free to explore contemporary Indigenous art, particularly for the short version of the exercise.

BASIC INFO



Age range:

15+ for level 1, 18+ for other levels

Duration:

From 45 minutes to several hours

Group size:

Flexible

Level of difficulty:

Advanced - many questions and challenges need to be considered when engaging with Indigenous Peoples and/or when sharing their stories or studying their arts and other cultural expressions. Numerous biases, and assumptions also need to be addressed.

Materials/space required:

Tools to play the video/recording

Location:

A visit to a dedicated museum could also be of value, provided that it is seen as an opportunity to introduce critical thinking and perspective taking



- Learn about the cosmology behind the art, if relevant.
- Learn about principles and practices related to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (see the reference section below)
- If visiting a museum, learn about the story of the Indigenous objects and art forms, as well as the measures that the museum might have taken to return the art to the community to which it belongs.

Competences/activities to practice first by the teacher:

- The Listening tool (3.3.), particularly Deep Listening (3.3.2)

Levels in the activity

1. Art as a mirror
2. Exploring the history
3. Researching the history

Level 1: Art as a mirror

1. Introduce an artwork from a contemporary Indigenous artist that explores the relationship between Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous society through their art.
2. Encourage students to express the ideas and/or emotions that came up while looking at the artwork. What did the artwork evoke in them? Which questions do they have? What would they like to know when looking at the artwork? This part of the exercise can be done in small groups, which would then be invited to share their thoughts and ideas with the larger group.
3. Introduce the artist, the intention and the process behind the artwork. Feel free to provide more details on the dimensions that could help answer questions raised by the learners.
4. Invite a second round of reflections and questions by the learners, either individually or in groups. If they worked in groups for the first round, they may wish to work individually for this second round, and vice versa. Feel free to take some notes throughout the discussion to identify key themes and patterns.
5. Offer the learners the opportunity to reflect on how their reflections and questions illuminate different ways of relating to oneself, others and nature in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts.
6. Open up a reflection on the conditions that foster those different ways of relating to oneself, others and nature. This can be tied to an exploration of cultural diversity in relation to biodiversity as the most biodiverse regions of the world are also the ones that are the most culturally diverse.



Level 2: Exploring the history

1. Building on the first artwork, explore the body of work of the artist and the history of their community in context.
2. Alternatively, visit a museum dedicated to Indigenous arts, artifacts and ways of life, and focus on a specific artwork/artifact or community to explore the history of this Indigenous People in context. The art or artifact can be chosen on the basis of the relationship to oneself, others and nature that it symbolizes, and that appears to be different from relationship to oneself, others and nature practiced by most people in society.
 - a. In the museum, explore how the art or artifact was acquired and possible measures that are implemented to return the art or artifact.
3. Some questions you can discuss with learners, for example in the museum, include:
 - a. What kind of relationship does the art/artifact symbolize?
 - b. How does this feel different?
 - c. What can we learn from this type of relationship in relation to the climate crisis and/or building climate resilience?
 - d. What does the process of returning the art/artifact symbolize?
 - e. Which additional measures or new practices could be in place to repair what has been done, and ensure that better relationships are sustained between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people?
 - f. What could be the role of the museum if most of the art/artifacts are returned?
4. Provide learners with the space and time to discuss or process the emotions that emerge out of this discussion through words, movements or creative practices (see tools under category 5 for inspiration).



Students took part in an excursion to the Ethnographic Museum of Budapest to explore Yanomami. Spirits. Survivors., a powerful photo exhibition by Claudia Andujar.

Photo by Carmelo Zamora, REAL School Budapest.



Level 3: Researching the history

1. Invite groups of students to dive deeper into the history of a specific Indigenous People so as to research:
 - a. Their cosmology and relationship to oneself, others and nature before or despite colonization
 - b. The process and impact of colonization on that People
 - c. The current situation for that People
 - d. Actions and measures to protect their rights as Indigenous People
2. Encourage groups of learners to pay particular attention to their sources and to reflect on the different perspectives introduced by different scholars over time.
3. Invite learners to reflect on what they have learnt through this research project in relation to building climate resilience in the context of a broader ecological crisis.



Dos and don'ts

Do:

- Prepare well about Indigenous Peoples in general and in particular the Indigenous People whose artefacts you will be exploring.
- Question and address your own assumptions and biases before the class.
- Acknowledge when you do not know and highlight that specific questions may require additional research.

Don't:

- Don't assume you know a lot about Indigenous Peoples because you have done some research. Acknowledge that there is a lot you may not know nor know in an embodied way, including when answering questions by learners.
- Don't limit their sources to peer-reviewed papers when researching a specific Indigenous People, and open a discussion with students on how to deal with situations where the novelty of a topic or the likelihood of bias compels learners to broaden the sources of information they consider.

Adaptations:

When possible, invite an Indigenous artist or Indigenous expert to be part of the discussion.

We invite you to adapt this activity to the specific needs of your learners, including by taking into account their neurodiversity. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent learners, please note it is not about treating others how *you* want to be treated, but how *they* want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging.



Resources

- [Arctic Arts Summit website](#)
- [Emerging Indigenous Artists](#)
- [Famous Indigenous Artists](#)

References

Activity designed by One Resilient Earth.

- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)
- A report of the Human Rights Council on [Free, Prior and Informed Consent](#).
- [Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures \(GTDF\)](#) is an arts/research collective that uses this website as a workspace for collaborations around different kinds of artistic, pedagogical, cartographic, and relational experiments that aim to identify and de-activate colonial habits of being, and to gesture towards the possibility of decolonial futures.
- [Protocol for non-Indigenous people working with Indigenous people](#)

To go deeper into the role of the arts and the exploration of artworks, as well as into experiences with decolonizing futures, please head out to the [One Resilient Earth website](#), and check:

- [When will we return what we took from Indigenous Peoples?](#), a dialogue with Nicholas Galanin – Yéil Ya-Tseen, Tlingit/Unangax̣ multi-disciplinary artist
- [Why we should value food](#), a dialogue with Konkankoh, Indigenous Elder from Cameroon
- Laureline Simon's [TEDx talk](#)

Podcasts and writings by Indigenous Knowledge holders

- A podcast by Cherokee reporter Rebecca Nagle: [There is no Climate Justice without Indigenous Sovereignty](#)
- A podcast by Sherri Mitchell (her name in her language is Weh'na Ha'mu Kwasset), an indigenous rights attorney from the Penobscot Nation and the author of a wonderful book, [Sacred Instructions](#). The podcast brings together indigenous lessons, teachings and guidance she has been moved to share with the wider world, on behalf of the elders in her community: [No Place Like Home](#)
- [Writings and Interviews](#) of Robin Wall Kimmerer, a mother, scientist, decorated professor, and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. She is the



author of [Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants](#), which we also highly recommend.

- [Sand Talk](#), a book by Tyson Yunkaporta, who looks at global systems from an Indigenous perspective.



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