



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Our Words, Our Stories: Exploring chinuk wawa

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- **Language**
- **History**

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will understand

- why chinuk wawa is important, and
- a chinuk wawa greeting.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why are Native languages important to Tribes in Oregon?
- How does learning words from another language help us understand different cultures?

TIME REQUIRED

- 40 minutes

Overview

In this lesson, students learn about the importance of language to Oregon Tribes. Specifically, students focus on chinuk wawa, historically a trading language used by many Tribes in the Northwest, including members of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Siletz Indians. Students learn about why tribal languages matter, hear chinuk wawa being spoken and practice saying a few simple words. The lesson emphasizes that Native languages are alive and being used today.

Background for Teachers

Language is simultaneously a creator, holder and transmitter of culture. While some languages are sleeping, many are thriving. Oregon Tribes have many languages and dialects, and some Tribes share languages and dialects. There are significant tribal efforts to revitalize their languages, though it



is often difficult to develop enough language speakers. It is noteworthy that the speaking of Native languages in schools was outlawed in the United States until the 1960s.

Chinuk wawa is a trade language that developed among Indigenous peoples of the lower Columbia River and was later used by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Siletz, among others. Chinuk wawa was nearly lost as tribal communities faced policies that discouraged or prohibited speaking their languages. Today, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde have been working to revitalize chinuk wawa through language classes, immersion programs and educational materials. The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde consider chinuk wawa an important living connection to their ancestors and a vital part of preserving their cultural heritage. As this language was originally spoken by many people, including settlers, the Tribe welcomes teaching it to students.

Please note that chinuk wawa does not use capital letters when written. It is only written using capital letters when it is part of a capitalized title.

STANDARDS

Oregon English Language Arts Standards

- **1.L.6:** Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using frequently occurring conjunctions to signal simple relationships.
- **1.SL.1:** Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and small and larger groups
- **1.SL.1c:** Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion.
- **1.SL.2:** Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
- **1.SL.3:** Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarify something that is not understood.



Considerations for Teachers

Practices

While teaching this lesson, the following principles can help guide your decision-making and engagement with students.

- Focus on teaching the Essential Understandings through discussions of today's tribal services.
- When sharing content with students, address the why, not just the what.
- Highlight the strengths and struggles of Oregon's Indigenous peoples today while also acknowledging their history and tradition.
- Ensure your teaching practices are accessible and appropriate for Native and non-Native students.

Assessment

During this lesson, observe and listen to students during discussions and as they work independently and collaboratively to determine how their learning is progressing. Write down what you notice about what students say and do in relation to the Success Criteria. Use this formative information to provide feedback to students and plan next steps.

At the end of the lesson, provide students with an opportunity to reflect on their learning through a self-assessment. Students can

MATERIALS

What materials are needed for students to engage in this activity?

- Slide deck
- Student self-assessment

KEY WORDS and IDEAS

- **Chinuk wawa:** A language used by many Oregon tribes in the past and still spoken today.
- **Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde:** A Tribe near the Columbia River in Oregon made up of many different Tribes.
- **Confederated Tribes of Siletz:** A Tribe near the Oregon coast made up of many different Tribes.
- **Greeting:** A polite word or gesture used when meeting someone.
- **Tradition:** Customs or beliefs passed down from generation to generation.



indicate their level of learning relative to specific Success Criteria. They can also write out an explanation of why they feel they are at that learning stage.

Success Criteria

- I can explain why chinuk wawa is important to Oregon Tribes.
- I can pronounce two or three chinuk wawa words.
- I can identify one thing I like about learning new words from another language.

For the following activities, use the slide deck to support your implementation.

Opening

Time: 10 minutes

Step 1:

Introduce students to the concept that language helps you express yourself and understand others.

Let students know they will learn about the importance of language to Oregon Tribes. Specifically focusing on chinuk wawa, historically a trading language used by many Tribes in the Northwest.

Step 2:

Review the Essential Questions with students. Give them an opportunity to answer, question and wonder.

- Why are languages important to Tribes in Oregon?
- How does learning words from another language help us understand different cultures?

Step 3:

Ask students if any of them have heard someone speak a language different from the one we speak in school. By a relative? On the radio, television or YouTube? What was that like?

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Ask students to pair-share, then allow two or three students to share their experiences with the whole group.

Step 4:

Explain to students that chinuk wawa is a language spoken by many Oregon Tribes. It connects people to their ancestors, traditions and stories.

Share with students that for tribal communities, language is very special. It connects people to their ancestors, their traditions and their stories. Language helps people share their ideas, feelings and knowledge.

Tell students that they are going to learn about the languages that Oregon Tribes have spoken for many generations. Explain that students will focus on a language called chinuk wawa that has been spoken by many Tribes, especially by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Siletz.

Step 5:

Show the map of Oregon highlighting the traditional territory of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde and Siletz.

Ask students the following question:

- Can you locate the Grand Ronde and Siletz Tribes?

Step 6:

Review the vocabulary with students. Ask them to turn to an elbow partner, pick one word and use it in a sentence verbally with a peer.

Step 7:

Review the Learning Outcomes and Success Criteria with students so they understand what the intended learning is and what it looks like when they've achieved it.



Hook Activity

Time: 10 minutes

Step 1:

Share with students that chinuk wawa is a language that helped different Tribes communicate with each other and later with outsiders who came to their land. It is still spoken today, and Tribal members are teaching it to children just like you.

Tell students that they are going to hear a story about Mulak Man. Mulak means “elk” in chinuk wawa. After they listen to the story, they will hear a part of the same story in the chinuk wawa language.

Explain to students that these videos were created by the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde and are narrated by Tribal members.

Play the video, [Mulak Man](#). Stop for questions.

Step 2:

Tell students that now they will hear the story in chinuk wawa. Play the beginning of the video, [Mulak Man \(chinuk wawa\)](#), so that students can hear the sound of the language. Stop when it seems like students are ready to move on.

Ask students the following question:

- What did you notice about how this language sounds? Does it sound similar to or different from English?

Let students know they will be learning a few greetings in chinuk wawa.

NOTE: The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde have a few different stories that have been recorded and narrated. You can visit the [CTGR Book Links](#) to find other stories. It is important to note that certain stories are only told during certain seasons, and you should choose a story that is appropriate for the time of the year.

[Pause here if completing this lesson over two days.]



Main Activity

Time: 10 minutes

Step 1:

Share with students that they will be learning a few greetings in the chinuk wawa language.

Play the first 30 seconds of the video: [Chinuk Wawa Greetings and Introductions](#). Stop after each word is pronounced to explain what it means in English.

Present the following words:

- łaxyam: Hello and goodbye
- ałqi: Later
- łush chxi-san: Good morning
- łush lax-san: Good afternoon
- łush-pulak^hli: Good evening

Give students an opportunity to try it out in the whole group. After a chorus response, ask students to practice saying the greeting with a partner.

Write the words on the whiteboard or chart paper for students to reference. Be sure to use the characters exactly as written and do not use transliteration.

Closing

Time: 10 minutes

Step 1:

Ask students the following question:

- Why do you think it's important for Oregon Tribes like Grand Ronde and Siletz to keep speaking their languages?

Share with students that languages carry stories, traditions and knowledge. When the



members of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz and Grand Ronde speak chinuk wawa, they are connecting with their ancestors and keeping their traditions alive.

Ask students to complete the following sentence frames:

- "It is important because _____."
- "One thing I like about learning new words is _____"

Allow students to share their responses with the whole group.

Step 2:

Recap the key concepts. Share with students that we learned about why language is important to Oregon Tribes, especially the chinuk wawa language. Remind students that they practiced saying some chinuk wawa words themselves.

Revisit the Learning Outcomes and Success Criteria.

Ask students to complete the self-assessment, either verbally with a peer or by completing the self-assessment form, indicating their learning relative to the Success Criteria.

Additional Resources

[Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians](#), Kindergarten and 1st Grade Lesson: [Introduction to Dee-ni Wee-ya'](#)





Student Self-Assessment

Name:

Directions: Read the lesson Success Criteria in the first column. Then decide, did you meet these criteria? Choose Not Yet or Yes.

If you chose Not Yet, share one thing you can do to meet the criteria.

If you chose Yes, share what you did well to meet that criterion.

Success Criteria	Not Yet	Yes
Can I	 <p>One thing I can do to meet this criterion is...</p>	 <p>Something I did well is...</p>
explain why chinuk wawa is important to Oregon Tribes?		
pronounce two or three chinuk wawa words?		



identify one thing I like about learning new words from another language?		
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