

Lesson 7:

First Nations Governance

LESSON 7: FIRST NATIONS GOVERNANCE

1. Possible Inquiry Questions:

1. How are First Nations communities governed?
2. How have First Nations governments changed over time?
3. Are all First Nations governments governed the same way?
4. How do First Nations communities interact with the Crown?
5. How do First Nations governance processes reflect the Seven Sacred Teachings?
6. Why is it important for us to understand traditional and current First Nations governance?
7. What does self-governance mean?
8. What is the Indian Act and what is its impact on First Nations governance?
9. Which First Nation(s) are close to my school?

2. Background Information for the Teacher:

Historical Background:

There are 74 First Nations in Saskatchewan. Each Nation's language and culture is founded on the 8 larger cultural groups: the Nêhiyawak (Plains Cree), Nêhithawak (Woodland Cree), Nêhinawak (Swampy Cree), Nahkawiniwak (Saulteaux), Lakota (Sioux), Dakota, Nakota (Assiniboine) and Denesuline (Dene/Chipewyan). Prior to European contact, each First Nation was a sovereign Nation, with legal, political, economic, and social systems.

First Nations relationship with the land and their spiritual lives strongly influenced how they governed themselves. Natural laws guided leaders in making good decisions for their communities.

For example, the Cree words for the Natural Laws are:

Wihotawimaw (The Divine Father)

Manatisiwin (respect)

Miyo-wicehitowin (the principle of getting along well with others, good relations, expanding the circle)

Pimacihisowin (the ability to make one's own living)

Kihci-asotamatowin (Sacred promises to one another)

Wahkotowin (relationships)

Witaskewin (living together on the land)

(Source: Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan, 2000)

Leaders of pre-contact governance systems were selected rather than elected. As a result, the leaders were groomed and mentored early in the natural laws. Many First Nations leaders demonstrated their readiness to lead and their commitment to their community through sacred ceremonies, following strict codes and protocols.

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Abolishing traditional forms of governance was not agreed to in the treaties. *The Indian Act*, enacted by the Sir John A. McDonald government, granted all powers over the Indian people to the Indian Agent. Through practices such as banning sacred ceremonies and displacing children to residential schools, among others, the *Indian Act* “...effectively displaced, obscured or forced underground the traditional political structures and the associated checks and balances that Aboriginal people developed over the centuries to suit their societies and circumstances.” (1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples).

Since the Constitution Act in 1982, First Nations across Canada have been working towards re-asserting their self-governance and jurisdiction.

Like the rest of Canada, there is much variety in how each of Saskatchewan’s First Nations govern their people and how they hold elections. Many have custom elections where leaders hold their positions for 3 or 4-year terms. Some continue to follow the Indian Act and Indian Band Election Regulations which allow for 1 Chief and 1 Councillor for every 100 band members for 2-year terms of office. Some First Nations follow the First Nations Elections Act, which came into force in 2015. Finally, some First Nations, such as the Whitecap Dakota First Nation, are actively pursuing Self-governance and may hold elections as outlined in their Nation’s constitution.

Many First Nations share common challenges in supporting their communities. Some Nations have decided to join a Tribal Council to pool their resources to better respond to the needs of the people. Currently, 64 of Saskatchewan’s First Nations are affiliated to one of the ten Tribal Councils. Tribal Councils act as advisors to member nations as well as providing and administering programs and services, such as education. Finally, Tribal Councils provide important political representation and advocacy.

Through the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) all of Saskatchewan’s First Nations work to honour “the spirit and intent of the Treaties, as well as the promotion, protection, and implementation of the Treaty promises that were made more than a century ago.” (Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, n.d.)

Each First Nation elects or appoints representatives to the FSIN legislature (the Chiefs-in-Assembly), the Senate, and the Elders Council. Together, all First Nations work on solutions to common issues facing First Nations governments.

At least twice per year, First Nation Chiefs join with other Chiefs from across Canada to direct the work of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). (www.afn.ca/about-afn/) The AFN’s Executive Committee, Elders, Women’s and Youth councils, coordinate national and regional efforts to improve the conditions for Canadian First Nations, including the advocacy for self-governance.

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Local Governance Profile:

With such variety in how each First Nation in Saskatchewan is governed, teachers are encouraged to research a near-by First Nation by contacting the First Nation's office directly, or search out information on their webpage. Some guiding questions may be:

- Names of the First Nation: Some First Nations have traditional names and spelling as well as a post-contact English name. It is respectful to confirm the preferred name of the First Nation.
- Acknowledgement: What is the preferred land acknowledgement of the First Nation's territories where your school is situated? Is the First Nation on Treaty Land or unceded territory?
- Geographic location: Where is it in relation to your city/town? Is there a nearby landmark?
- Nation and Tribal Council affiliation: With what larger group might the community or local First Nation be affiliated?
- Language(s) spoken: What is the proper name or dialect of the language or languages spoken in the local community? Does this language belong to a broader language group?
- Words about governance in the First Nation's language: What is the vocabulary used when speaking of the land and governance? How might these words be translated into English?
- Type of government: How are their leaders elected? How is the council structured? How are decisions made? Are they self-governing or working towards self-government?
- Names of elected leaders and council members.
- What are some current initiatives?

First Nations Education Steering Committee and First Nations Schools Association. (2019). BC First Nations Land, Title and Governance Teacher Resource Guide. Vancouver, BC.
Funded in part by the British Columbia Ministry of Education

First Nations Governance Profile Page:

Official name of the First Nation: _____

Also known as: _____

Acknowledgement: _____

_____ Location: _____

Nation and Tribal Council affiliation(s): _____

First Nation language and other languages spoken: _____

First Nations Education Steering Committee and First Nations Schools Association. (2019). BC First Nations Land, Title and Governance Teacher Resource Guide. Vancouver, BC.
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Words Related to Governance in the First Nations Language:

Land or Territories: _____

Laws: _____

Oral histories: _____

Chief and other leadership titles: _____

Other words: _____

Traditional Government:

What were traditional ways that leaders were selected? _____

What are some names of historical leaders that were significant in this First Nations history?

What did they do?

Include titles and names of people who currently hold traditional leadership roles:

Current Form of Government:

Is the local government a Band Council, a Treaty or Self-governing body,

or another form of government? _____

Are leaders selected in accordance to

- a custom election format
- First Nations Elections Act
- the Indian Act
- hereditary leadership selection process

Names and titles of elected leaders and council members:

What are some current initiatives of the Council?

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3. Key Vocabulary:

7 Sacred Teachings – Wisdom, Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Humility, Truth

Indigenous Peoples - First Nation, Métis, Inuit

Treaty - There are 6 Treaty lands in Saskatchewan: 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10

Assembly of First Nations (AFN)

Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN)

Self-Government

Sovereign Nation

Chief

Vice-Chief

Hereditary Chief

Elected Chief

Advocate

4. Focus/Supplementary Outcomes:

PA 4.3: Demonstrate an understanding of the First Nations systems of governance.

Indicators:

- (a) Research the structures of governance in First Nations communities (e.g. local band council, tribal council, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Assembly of First Nations)
- (b) Compare the traditional processes for selection of leaders in First Nations communities to current practices for selection of leaders in First nations.
- (c) Compile an inventory of issues of current focus for First nations governments in Saskatchewan.

5. Timeline: 60 minutes plus 45 minutes

6. Materials:

- Prior to teaching the lesson, contact a First Nation near you or your school division to arrange for a Council member, Elder or Knowledge Keeper to come and speak to your class about the traditional ways that First Nations elected their leaders and how it is different today. **Please ensure that you inquire about and follow traditional protocols when inviting Indigenous speakers, such as offering tobacco, an honorarium or a monetary payment.**

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- Chart paper or bulletin board with 6 columns titled from left to right:

School Board	Municipal (town or city)	Provincial (Saskatchewan)	Federal (Canada)	First Nations	Métis Nation

- Small images to place in the First Nations column. You may choose to use Velcro dots on the back of cards and on the chart for easy maneuverability. (See Teacher Materials below) Add pictures related to local First Nation Governance as appropriate.
- Cut out and laminate the Government Services pictures/You may choose to use Velcro dots on the back of cards and on the chart for easy maneuverability. Use as a whole class or make multiple copies and have students work in groups at a centre.
- Optional:
 - make multiple copies and have students work in groups
 - Glue the chart to a file folder. Place smaller images in an envelope and have students work at a centre, adding items as the unit progresses.
- Copy of the Student Community Role Cards
(Suggestion to copy on Tag board and keep for future use)
- Paper lunch bags prepared with varying amounts of pipe cleaners and straws.
 - Prepare 6 bags with different amounts with 2 – 20 straws and 8-20 pipe cleaners. These will be distributed to the “Nations”.
 - Prepare 1 bag with 10 straws and 10 pipe cleaners. These will be distributed to the classroom “Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations” (FSIN)
- Small fishing weights (9-11 grams each) attached to paper clips or ornament hooks
- Student materials: Student Handout Booklet pages

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7. Motivational Set:

Continue adding/modifying the chart as introduced in lesson ... Focusing on what we think a First Nations band council responsibilities and comparing that to municipal and provincial responsibilities.

Remind students that by now, they know that a 'government'

- i. Is formed of community members who have been chosen by the people of that community.
- ii. They make rules, bylaws or laws to guide the citizens in keeping each other safe.
- iii. the board, or government makes decisions to manage the communities resources as best they can for all the people who live in that community.

Tell the class that today, they will participate in a role play to see how First Nations governments might work together to manage the resources for their communities.

8. Process:

Activity 1: Structures of governance (60 minutes)

1. Hand out index cards indicating which 'community' to which each student will belong. (Appendix 4) Note: Not all Nations have the same number of councillors. Explain that each student has been elected to be a member of their Nation's local government. Some people will be councillors, some will be vice-chiefs and others will be Chiefs of their Nation.
2. Ask each Chief to come get a bag of 'resources' (Paper bags with straws and pipe cleaners) for each Nation.
3. "Councils" gather together in a section of the room. Their task is to build the strongest and tallest free-standing tower that they can. This tower represents their community. The council must discuss options to use their resources and come to decisions about the best way to build their community then begin building.
4. After all groups have had about 10 minutes to begin their tower, announce that the provincial government has decided to allow mining on your Nation's land. Each Nation must give you one straw. (For Nations with fewer straws, this will be a greater burden.) Then allow another 5 minutes for groups to continue building.
5. Announce to groups that there have been challenges in some communities, perhaps a natural disaster, tainted water supply or shortage of housing. You will represent this by placing two weights on each community tower. Allow the communities to continue building their towers for another 5 minutes.

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6. Ask groups to pause in their tower building. Ask them to take a look at the towers around the room. Announce to groups that you have extra bags of resources that can be shared among Nations. To decide how these extra resources might be best used, we will create a new governance called a Tribal Council for our classroom. The councils from each independent Nation must decide if they would like to join the Tribal Council. The Chief of each independent Nation that wishes to join will sit on the Tribal Council to advocate for their community and support other communities. Together, the role of the Tribal Council is to support all of the Independent Member Nations to build strong communities.
7. Allow some time for the Tribal Council to meet and divide the resources. Then have students work on their 'communities'. Tribal Council members are also allowed to share/trade 'resources' between Nations to support all of the member Nations. Independent Nations who do not choose to join the Tribal Council may continue working on their community towers.
8. When there is approximately 10 minutes left in the lesson, allow students time to look at all of the 'communities' in the classroom. What did they notice about each tower? Why might some towers be taller? Stronger? How did they feel as they participated in the activity?
9. Have students return to their desks and make jot notes on the "Structure of First Nations Governance" graphic in their Student Handout Booklet. Explain that each First Nation is independent and makes decisions for their community (small stars). Some First Nations have decided to join a Tribal Council, but not all First Nations must do this (small circles).

Every First Nation in Saskatchewan is part of, or affiliated with, the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (Middle circle) The FSIN is a group that stands up for the rights of all the First Nations in Saskatchewan. All of the Chiefs together form the Legislative Assembly of the FSIN. Following the formula and procedures set out in the FSIN Election Act, 5 people are elected to the FSIN Executive, comprised of the Chief and 4 Vice-Chiefs.

The Chief of the FSIN represents Saskatchewan First Nations in the Assembly of First Nations, which is all of the First Nations in Canada. (largest circle).

Note: This is a graphic representation. It does not represent the exact number of First Nations.

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Activity 2: Compare and contrast traditional and current selection for leaders?

1. Refer to the 6 Column chart of the different governance structures. Ask students what they think a First Nation Council may be responsible for. Add small images to the chart and compare to other governance structures. Students should begin to realize that First Nations are responsible for a variety of services that are in the school board, municipal, provincial and federal columns. Tell students that, like all Governments, First Nations need good leaders to make good decisions for their people.
2. On the board, write the question 'What makes a good leader?' Remind students of the discussion in Lesson 4 when they identified their "Ideal Candidate" for the School Board.
3. Assign students into groups of 4-5. Provide each group with a pad of sticky notes or strips of paper. Ask students to write as many characteristics as they can think of in 3 minutes. Ensure that students write one characteristic per sticky note.
4. Have students look at the characteristics they have brainstormed and group them into common categories and give each category a title. As a class, debrief the categories that students have identified. Note these larger categories on the board. If possible, connect the larger categories to the 7 Sacred Teachings of Wisdom, Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Humility, Truth. Tell students that our First Nations ancestors taught these as the 7 Sacred Teachings that guided leaders for many generations.
5. Explain to students that First Nations have many ways of selecting their leaders and you have invited (Name) of (First Nation/School Division) to speak to your class on (date) about traditional and current ways that First Nations select their leaders.
6. If no speaker can be arranged, watch a video from the Center for First Nations Governance Youtube channel. (<https://www.youtube.com/user/fngovernance/search>) Suggested videos are:
 - a. Tradition and Governance: Chief Dale Awasis, former Chief of ThunderChild First Nation
 - b. Tradition and Governance: Chief Richard Gamble
(Former Chief of Beardy and Okemasis First Nation)
 - c. Tradition and Governance: Tom Happynook (Not from a Saskatchewan First Nation)
 - d. Tradition and Governance: Joseph G Norris (Not from a Saskatchewan First Nation)
7. While students listen to the speaker/video, ask them to complete the Venn Diagram to compare and contrast traditional and current leadership selection processes.
8. Have students complete the "Who Governs Me?" graphic organizer for First Nations Governance.

Note: Some students may realize that this governance has little direct impact on them as they are not of First Nations descent. This may be an opportunity for them to consider how they may show respect to First Nations through land acknowledgements and building relationships. Other students may identify a Nation to which they belong and how it might govern them, even if they do not live on reserve.

9. Assessment:

- 1 - “Who Governs Me?” graphic organizer in Student Assessment Booklet.
- 2 - Venn diagram and exit slip: Copy the page “What makes a good leader?” and ask students to write one or two sentences about what qualities they might want in a leader that they would vote for. Alternatively, have students complete this in a journal entry or as a writing assignment.

10. Teacher Resources:

Internet resources that may be helpful:

<https://sicc.sk.ca/saskatchewan-first-nations-who-are-they/>

<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1601920834259/1601920861675>

<https://www.fsin.ca/>

<https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/FNP/Main/Search/SearchFN.aspx?lang=eng>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assembly_of_First_Nations_leadership_elections

http://www.otc.ca/ckfinder/userfiles/files/fnl_1100100020617_eng.pdf

<https://teaching.usask.ca/indigenoussk/index.php>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous>

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Student Community Role Cards

1 You are a councillor of the ----- Nation	1 You are the Chief of the ----- Nation
1 You are the Vice-Chief of the ----- Nation	1 You are a councillor of the ----- Nation
1 You are a councillor of the ----- Nation	1 You are a councillor of the ----- Nation
2 You are a councillor of the ----- Nation	2 You are the Chief of the ----- Nation
2 You are the Vice-Chief of the ----- Nation	2 You are a councillor of the ----- Nation
3 You are the Chief of the ----- Nation	3 You are a councillor of the ----- Nation
3 You are the Vice-Chief of the ----- Nation	3 You are a councillor of the ----- Nation
4 You are the Chief of the ----- Nation	4 You are a councillor of the ----- Nation

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4	You are the Vice-Chief of the ----- Nation	4	You are a councillor of the ----- Nation
4	You are a councillor of the ----- Nation		
5	You are the Chief of the ----- Nation	5	You are a councillor of the ----- Nation
5	You are the Vice-Chief of the ----- Nation	5	You are a councillor of the ----- Nation
5	You are a councillor of the ----- Nation		
6	You are the Chief of the ----- Nation	6	You are a councillor of the ----- Nation
6	You are the Vice-Chief of the ----- Nation	6	You are a councillor of the ----- Nation
6	You are a councillor of the ----- Nation	6	You are a councillor of the ----- Nation

Fire Services



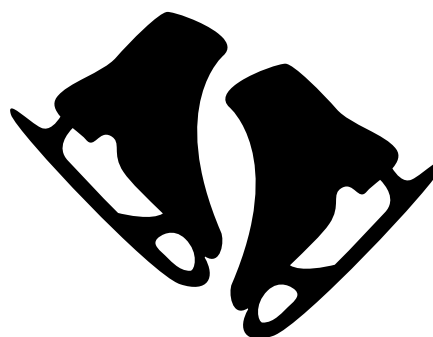
Swimming Pools



Hospitals/Medicare

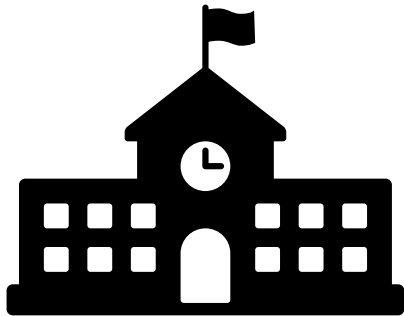


Rink

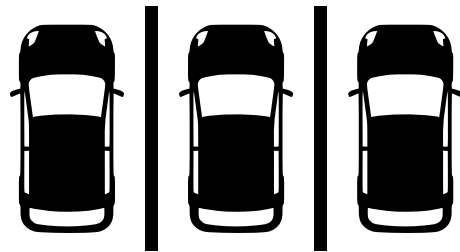


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Education/Schools



Parking Lots



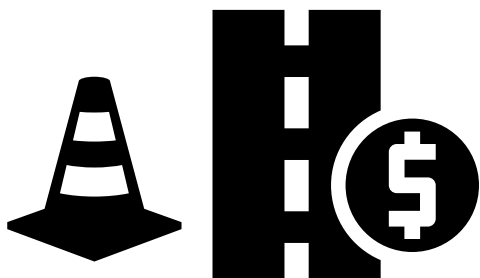
Garbage Pick-up



Playgrounds



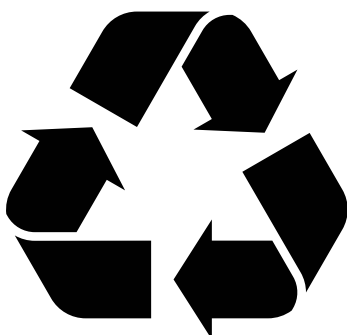
Highway Maintenance



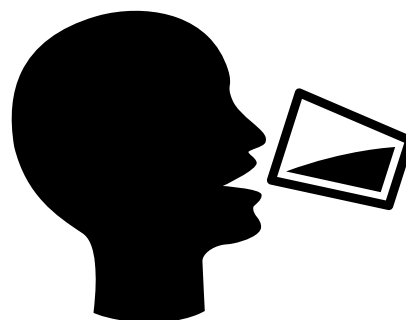
Snow Removal on Highways



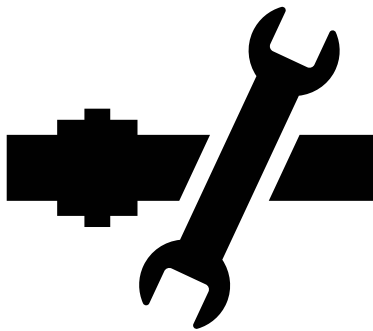
Recycling



Water - drinking and cleaning



Sewer Systems



Police in Larger Cities



Agriculture



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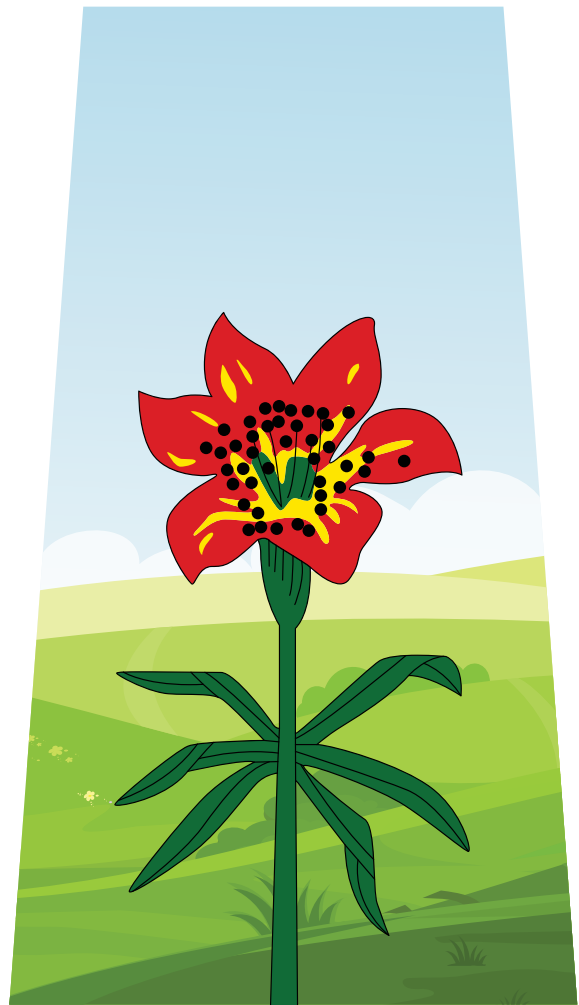
Exit Slip: What makes a good leader?

Exit Slip: What makes a good leader?

Power and Authority

Social 4 Student Handbook

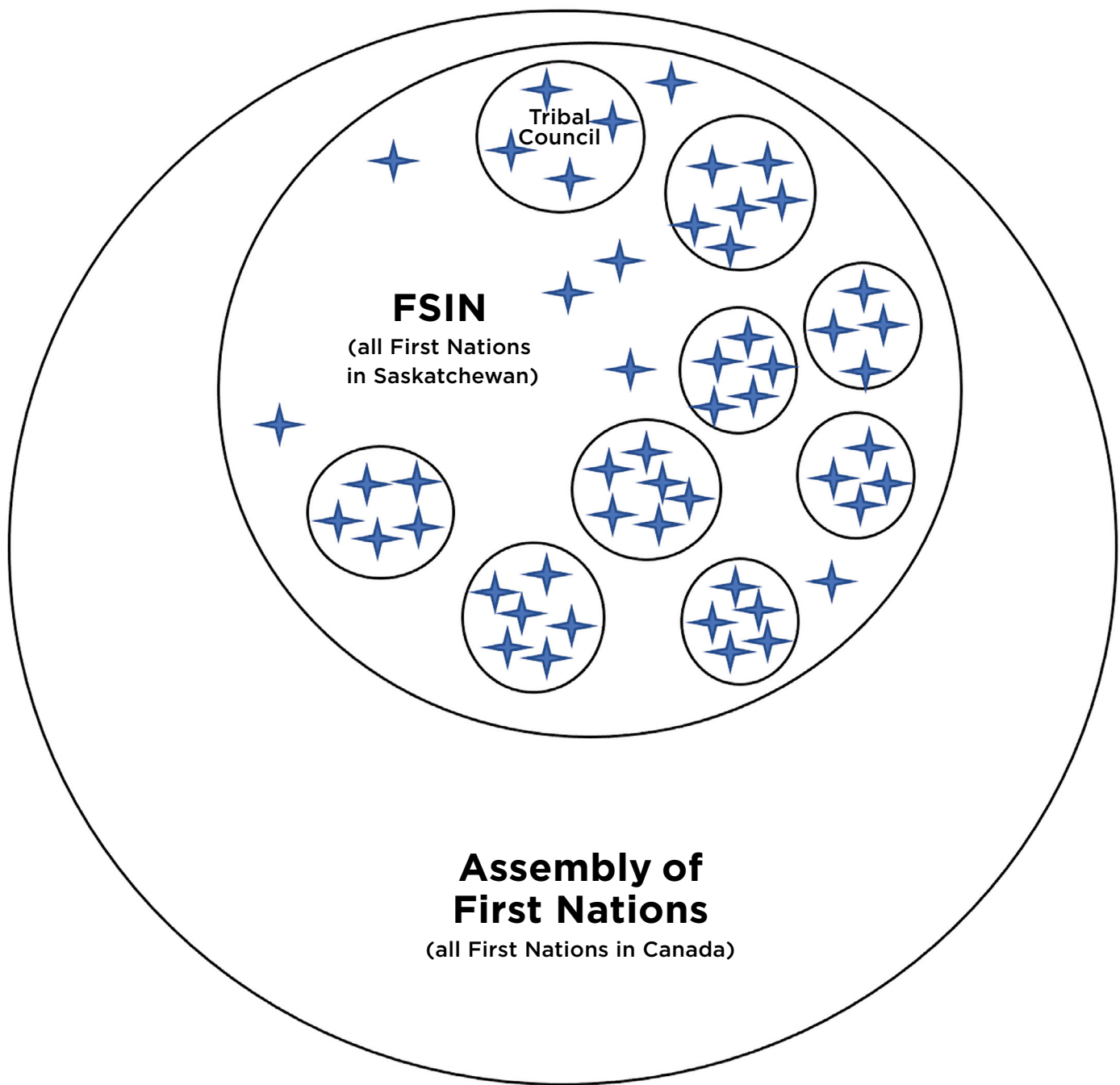
Lesson 7: First Nations Governance



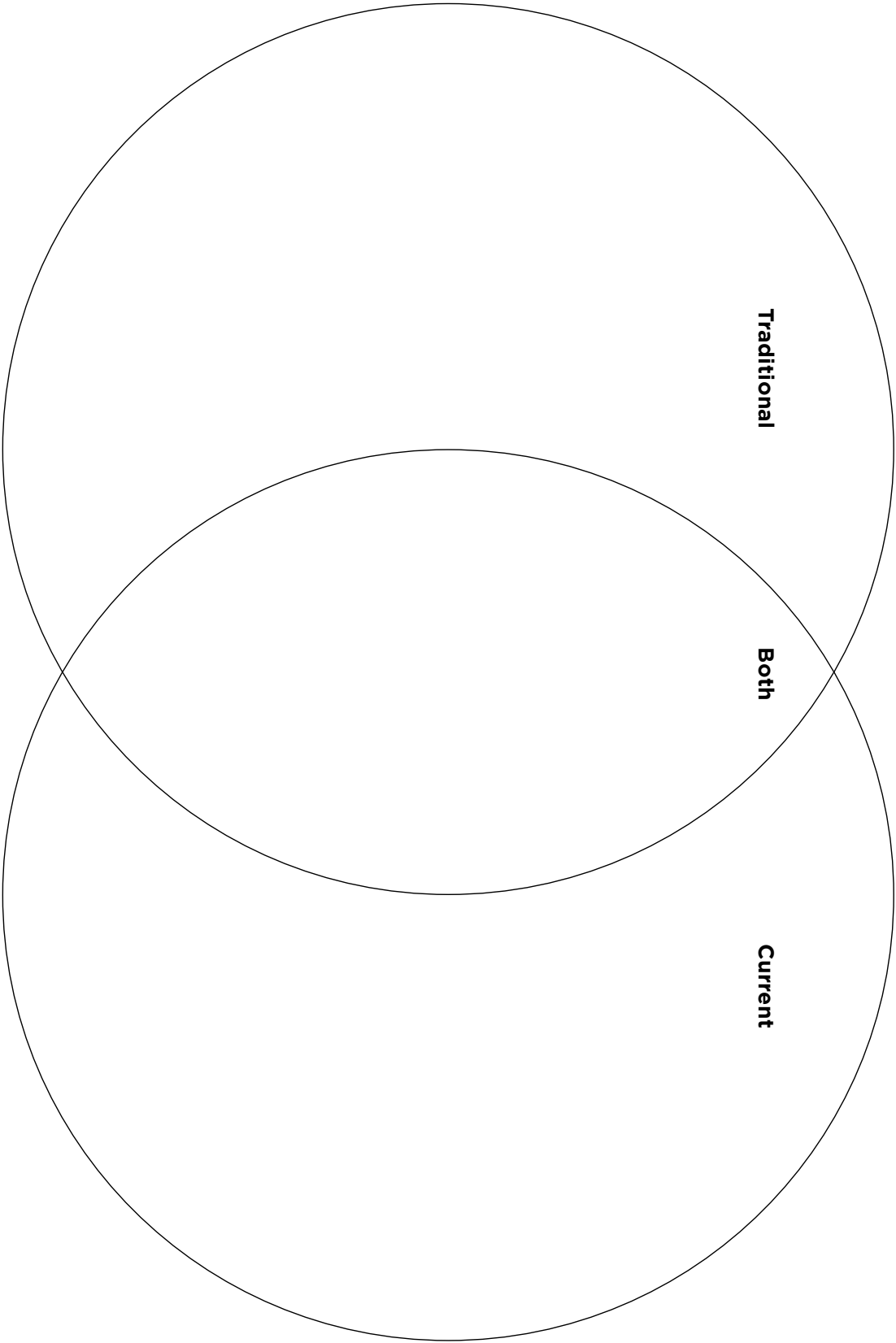
Name: _____

The purpose of Our Government Unit is to learn about how decisions are made to help Canadians and people in Saskatchewan.

Structure of First Nations Governance



Venn diagram



References:

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