



2017 K–12 Art Contest Teachers Info Sheet

Teachers may use this info sheet to help students understand the following terms and concepts, which are related to the contest “Fishing and Farming to the Cycles of the Moon and Seasons” poster contest theme.

TERMS

Cycle – a series of events that are regularly repeated in the same order.

Farming - the activity or business of growing crops and raising livestock.

Fishing – the activity of catching fish, either for food or as a sport.

Indigenous – produced, growing, living, or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment.

Lunar – of, relating to, or resembling the moon

Moon - the natural satellite of the earth, visible (chiefly at night) by reflected light from the sun.

Season - each of the divisions of the year (spring, summer, autumn, and winter or wet and dry) marked by particular weather patterns and daylight hours, resulting from the earth’s changing position with regard to the sun.

Traditional Knowledge – indigenous people of the world possess an immense knowledge of their environments, based on centuries of living close to nature. Living in and from the richness and variety of complex ecosystems, they have an understanding of the properties of plants and animals, the functioning of ecosystems and the techniques for using and managing them that is particular and often detailed. In rural communities in developing countries, locally occurring species are relied on for many—sometimes all—foods, medicines, fuel, building materials and other products. Equally, people’s knowledge and perceptions of the environment, and their relationships with it, are often important elements of cultural identity.

CONCEPTS

How do native people define traditional knowledge?

- It is practical common sense based on teachings and experiences passed on from generation to generation.

- It is knowledge about the country (island). It covers knowledge of the environment – land, ocean, weather, resources – and the relationships between things.
- It is holistic. It cannot be compartmentalized and cannot be separated from the people who hold it. It is rooted in the spiritual health, culture and language of the people. It is a way of life.
- Traditional knowledge is an authority system. It sets out the rules governing the use of resources—respect, an obligation to share. It is dynamic, cumulative and stable. It is truth.
- Traditional knowledge is a way of life -wisdom is using traditional knowledge in good ways. It is using the heart and the head together. It comes from the spirit in order to survive.
- It gives credibility to the people.

Comparisons between indigenous and scientific knowledge

The temptation to compare scientific and traditional knowledge comes from collecting traditional knowledge without the contextual elements. For example, native people have a far richer and more subtle understanding of the characteristics of the ocean than do non-indigenous people. In fact, some native classification is available only by virtue of its relationship to human activities and feelings. These comparisons sometimes incorrectly lead science practitioners to trivialize traditional understanding.

Whereas scientific practice generally excludes the humanistic perspective, traditional understanding assumes a holistic view including language, culture, practice, spirituality, mythology, customs and even the social organization of the local communities.

Local knowledge systems are based on the shared experiences, customs, values, traditions, lifestyles, social interactions, ideological orientations and spiritual beliefs specific to Native communities. These are forever evolving as new knowledge is obtained or generated.