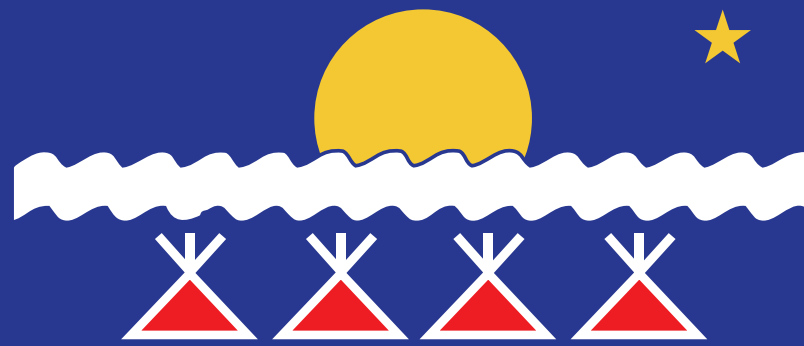


# Tłıchǫ Nation

## EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



Imagine a land straddling the Arctic Circle, covered in ice and snow for months out of the year, where dog sleds race alongside their modern counterparts – snow-mobiles known as “ski-doods.” This area in the heart of the Northwest Territories of Canada is known as Behchoko, and is home to the Tłıchǫ people. The Tłıchǫ are a small and vibrant indigenous group who have roamed this landscape for thousands of years. Their native language is Dogrib, and they share a common ancestry with the Navajo and other Athabaskan-speaking groups who have migrated from this area to regions throughout North America. Until the past few decades, the Tłıchǫ were primarily a migratory people who traveled throughout these lands based on the seasons. In the 20th century, their world was transformed as rich supplies of valuable minerals including gold, diamonds, crude oil and natural gas were discovered throughout their lands. Today, the Tłıchǫ are faced with a critical question: how can they take advantage of the technologies and resources of the modern world while maintaining their rich cultural heritage?

***Save Our History: Tłıchǫ Nation*** tells the story of the Tłıchǫ people, showing how they have managed to thrive in the modern world while preserving their history and cultural ties. Elders such as John B. Zoe, Executive Director of the Tłıchǫ Nation, discuss vital traditions including the centrality of the caribou, the importance of music and games, and the oral traditions that have helped keep their history alive. A land claims and self-government agreement signed in 2005 has given the Tłıchǫ the ability to set their own priorities and goals. Interviews with Tłıchǫ students show how young people are connecting with their traditions and using technology to save them for future generations. This program is an engaging introduction to this unique people, showing how they are traversing into the future without letting go of the ancestors and traditions that have paved the way.



## Curriculum Links:

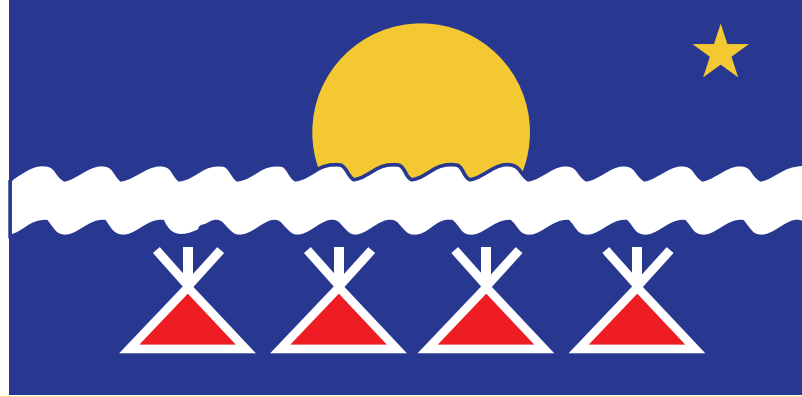
***Save Our History: Tłıchǫ Nation*** would be useful for History, Social Studies, Global Studies, Arts and Culture, and Politics courses. It is appropriate for middle school and high school students. This program fulfills the following standards outlined by the National Council for History Education: (1) Civilization, cultural diffusion, and innovation; (2) Human interaction with the environment; and (3) Patterns of social and political interaction.

## Pre-Viewing Activities

1. This documentary explores the history of the Tłıchǫ people and the Northwest Territories in Canada. Before watching this documentary, ask students to locate Yellowknife and/or Behchoko on the map. Students can also use an online mapping program to determine the distance of this area from where they live.
2. In Canada, there are several terms used to describe indigenous people including aboriginal, First Nations, and native. The Tłıchǫ people are distinct from the Inuit peoples also native to this area of Canada and Alaska. Ask students to define and discuss these terms.

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## Vocabulary and Identification Terms:

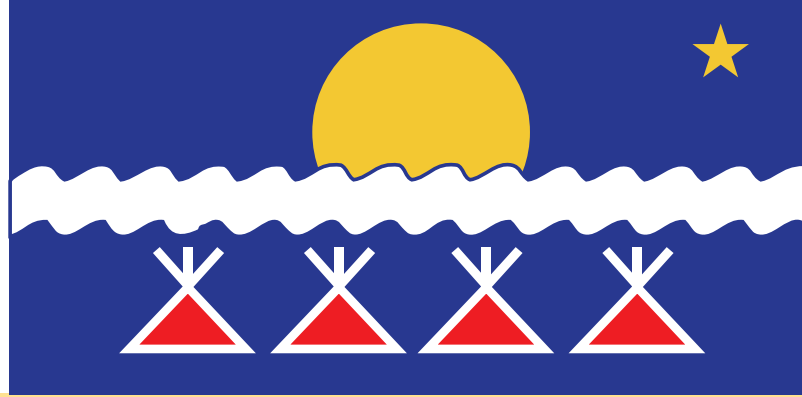
Educators may want to start a lesson plan on this program by asking students to define the following terms, using the dictionary at [www.merriamwebster.com](http://www.merriamwebster.com), an Internet resource such as [www.history.com](http://www.history.com), or an encyclopedia.

aboriginal	Dogrib
advocate	indigenous
assimilate	self-determination treaty
cache	tundra
cosmology	



## Discussion Questions:

1. Where does this documentary take place? What do you think are some of the challenges and benefits of living in this area?
2. How long have the Tłıchǫ people lived in the Northwest Territories region? What were the primary activities of this group prior to the discovery of resources such as gold and diamonds?
3. What does it mean to describe a group of people as “nomadic” and how does this term apply to the Tłıchǫ community?
4. What is the significance of caribou in Tłıchǫ society? Are caribou still important today?
5. What are some of the Tłıchǫ traditions discussed in this documentary? What are some traditions in your community and how do they compare?
6. What role does technology play in the Tłıchǫ community? Do you think there are any drawbacks to the use of technology in this area?
7. What are some of the ways technology has been used to preserve the history and heritage of the Tłıchǫ?
8. The Tłıchǫ Agreement passed in 2005 was a significant landmark for the Tłıchǫ people. What was this agreement and what rights did it secure for the Tłıchǫ?
9. Chief Jimmy Bruneau developed the saying “Strong Like Two People” when referring to the educational model of the Tłıchǫ. What does this phrase mean? Can you think of similar concepts or ideas used in other communities?
10. What is the “Trails of Our Ancestors” meeting organized by Tłıchǫ elders? Are there similar events or traditions in your community? What is the importance of this event?
11. What are some of the most effective ways of preserving Tłıchǫ culture explored in this documentary?



## Extended Activities:

1. ***“Strong Like Two People.”*** This documentary introduces the concept of being “Strong Like Two People” which was developed by Chief Jimmy Bruneau as a way to encourage Tłıchọ young people to embrace the benefits of the contemporary world while holding onto their own cultural heritage and traditions. In small groups, ask students to discuss this concept. Then, ask them to design a poster, PowerPoint presentation, or other visual presentation which represents this idea.
2. ***Dogrib Dictionary.*** The native language of the Tłıchọ people is known as Dogrib. Ask students to investigate the history of this language online or at the library. Then, ask students to create a Dogrib/English dictionary in which they define 10-15 words in both languages. These dictionaries can be illustrated with images, drawings, or photos which represent each word. Students may want to share these projects with students in other grades.
3. ***“Trails of Our Ancestors.”*** This documentary discusses the importance of keeping Tłıchọ traditions and histories alive. After watching this documentary, ask students to write a short editorial or essay about why it is important to preserve the history of the Tłıchọ people and the role young people can play in recording and continuing to practice these traditions. Students might also want to write a letter or diary entry from the perspective of an elder describing why it is important to preserve the memories and traditions of the past.
4. ***Records of the Past.*** This documentary discusses the importance of recording and saving the stories of elders in order to preserve their memories of the past and their knowledge of important cultural traditions. Ask students to locate elders in their community and conduct oral histories with them. Students may want to turn these interviews into podcasts or design their own websites to share this information with the larger community. For guidelines and tips about how to do oral history interviews, visit <http://www.history.com/classroom/oralhistguidelines.pdf>.



## Additional Resources:

### Books:

Abel, Kerry. *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).

Helm, June. *Prophecy and Power Among the Dogrib Indians* (University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

Morrison, William R. *True North: The Yukon and Northwest Territories* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

Moses, Daniel David (editor). *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

### Websites:

The official website of the Tłıchọ Nation: [www.tlicho.ca](http://www.tlicho.ca)

The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Center: <http://pwnhc.learnnet.nt.ca>

More background on Tłıchọ history: [www.tlichohistory.com](http://www.tlichohistory.com)