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**Lesson:** Digital Preservation of Natural and Cultural Preservation

**Lesson Objective(s):** Students will learn about the Value of Respect. They will learn about the knowledge of Natural and Cultural preservation by interviewing or listening to an elder. This will be done by using technology. They will learn about how Natural and Cultural resources have changed over the years.

When I was growing up I had the privilege of having a good size extended family. One of my Grandparents was the First Chairman of the Cheyenne River Lakota Nation in South Dakota. My other two grandparents lived with us throughout my lifetime. I had many opportunities to sit and visit or just listen to the many stories about a long time ago when they were growing up. They told stories about the good times and hardships they went through living on the reservation. They told stories about Lakota ceremonies and how we came to be and exist here in this area. My one grandparent helped survey the reservation when it was just being created and boundaries were being made after the State of South Dakota became a state. I had several grandparents, but these two that lived with us had a big impact on the family and decisions being made in the family. I grew up respecting all elders just because that was an important value to our family and most Lakota people of the day.

Lakota values such as generosity, fortitude, bravery, respect, wisdom, spirituality, compassion, honesty, and humility, were always apparent and seen as life skills living on the wide-open prairie. Those were life skills that most Lakota Tribes used to survive during those time periods. Today some of those life skill values are still apparent, but not as much as they used to be. Today elders are put in old people homes or old age manors to finish up their years on this earth. I am glad we kept our grandparents with us until it was time for them to move on to the spirit world. I miss those days and those old ones, but they and their stories are never forgotten. I am glad I had the privilege of learning all the things they taught me because those things were not listed in a book, and no one will ever hear those stories again, by those elders that have moved on!

Having said that; this leads me to a story that was told to me by my grandparent who lived to be 104 years old. When the reservations were first created a lot of Indians lived out in small communities, or out on land parcels that were given to them by the Tribal government and Bureau of Indian Affairs. Most Indians during that time were supposed to become farmers or ranchers on the reservation and sustain themselves through farming or ranching. They were supposed to live off what they grew and raised for food. About once a year they came into the agency to get groceries and commodities (government rations). Times were hard and people had to be careful when they traveled off the reservation, for fear of being shot. They needed a travel paper to leave the reservation and they also had a timeline that they had to adhere to. A lot of Tribal members had family that lived on other reservations, so they always wanted to see and or visit them to make sure they were

alright. The government split Lakota families up for a reason and placed them far from each other because they thought if Indians got back together and united as a whole group they would cause trouble for the white settlers moving westward. Long story short, my grandfather would always travel across the Missouri River during the winter months of January or February with horses. That was when the river would be frozen. He would trail those horses to Pierre, South Dakota and sell or trade his horses for supplies and then return. It would take him about a week to get there. He had to cross the ice and travel along the river bottom with his horses, so he wouldn't get caught off the reservation. He would trade his horses for supplies and returned back to the family place with all the supplies they needed to last at least another 10 to 12 months and then do it again. He did that for a long time until the Cheyenne Agency moved up to the eagle butte township in Eagle Butte, South Dakota. After the agency moved to Eagle Butte, he started to go to eagle butte to do his business. Not too many people do those kinds of things anymore or live out in the country with just a wood stove and kerosene lamps. Most people today have 4-wheel drive pickups, electricity, lights, cell phones, and highways to drive on. Not many Indians ride horses anymore as a form of transportation. What a change from back then to now.

- A) Let's learn about elders and knowledge: Google "Wolakota Project". When that site comes up, click on a phrase called "All Interviews". Select and listen to one of the several interviews; after listening to the interview, list the name of the person that you listened to and what you learned from that interview. Write a short paragraph about what you learned from that elder. Discuss with other students about what you learned after listening to that interview. Elders are important!

- B) Another resource to explore is to: interview an elder using some form of technology to document that conversation. Your conversation will be about what changes they have seen during their lifetime. You may video or record him or her, take notes using an iPad, iPhone, and or computer. Here is a list of 5 questions you may want to ask. Please make sure you have their permission to interview them and or take pictures of them. Introduce yourself first and let them know what you are doing and why you are

doing this assignment. You may also want to gift them in some way for their help and knowledge; sage, tobacco, handshake, etc.

1. What kinds of transportation existed when you were growing up? Was gas expensive as it is today? Do you know how to ride a horse / have you ever rode a horse?
2. How did people communicate when you were growing up? What do you think about cell phones?
3. What was school like when you were growing up? What do you think of school now?
4. What did young kids do for fun when you were growing up?
5. Have you ever gone to a sweat lodge ceremony or Sundance?

You may come up with your own list of questions! Just visit with an elder and listen for what kind of topics you discuss. If they have something to say about a topic, sit and listen! A lot can be learned from listening! When you are finished, discuss with the other students what you learned about changes from back then to now.

- C) Another resource is to Invite an Elder to your class and come up with a list of questions for him to visit with your class about. Take notes and discuss what was learned afterward! Write a reflection paper on what was learned from the elder. You may be surprised; elders have lots of knowledge!