

Theme: Language and Landscape

Authored by global oneness project

“We are children of the Earth.”

[Ilia Reyes, Kunza](#)

Atacama Desert, Chile



From the Global Oneness Project film *Wukchumni*. Marie Wilcox (center right) and her family gather materials for making baskets, a central and communal tradition of Wukchumni culture.

Indigenous languages reflect and express interconnection with land. Indigenous communities around the planet have developed traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and ways of knowing through generations of intimate contact with their homelands. These bodies of knowledge express the relationships of living beings with the environment, including the elements of land, water, fire, and air.

Access the Google Earth tour [Celebrating Indigenous Languages](#). Divide into pairs or small groups. With your partners or group members, explore the tour through the theme of language and landscape and how they are interconnected. Answer the following questions and use this [note-taker](#) to write down your observations, insights, and evidence from *Celebrating Indigenous Languages*.

Questions

1. Describe how the natural world is important to the Indigenous speakers represented in the Google Earth tour. What phrases, greetings, or songs communicate this relationship? Find three examples.
2. In what ways do the speakers express gratitude towards nature?
3. [Tatiana Degai](#), speaker of Itelmen from Kamchatka, Russia, said that Itelmen can be a challenge to learn since it is filled with a lot of consonants. “But when you hear it you can hear the ocean, you can hear the wind, you can hear the tundra, the birds, the animals. All the sounds that are in our language represent the life on our planet,” she said. What sounds do you hear?
4. “There is a saying in my community that the sky is so wide and the ground below is so deep. You have to respect it and be truthful. If you don’t remain true, the sky, which is very wide can see you, and the ground that is so deep can see you,” said [Thingreiphi Lungharwo](#), speaker of Tangkhul from Ukhul, Manipur, India. In what ways is respect for the living world expressed as a core value throughout this Google Earth tour?
5. “It’s not God ... but it’s the creator and nature all together. We believe that it has life, and it always guards us,” said [Mai Thin Yu Mon](#), speaker of Lai from Myanmar. In what ways does this worldview change your perspective?
6. “It’s the language basically of the cow and of God,” said [Longoli Simon Peter](#), speaker of Ng’akarimojong from Uganda. What are some examples of how cultures, as this speaker says, “treasure both the people and the land”? In what other ways do the individuals express a relationship with animals?
7. “Speaking *te reo* Māori connects me to my relatives, to the land, rivers and ocean, and it can take me to another time and place,” said [Wikuki Kingi](#) of New Zealand. How might seeing the land, rivers, and ocean as your relative be an important perspective?

Reflecting and Projecting

In one paragraph, write a response to the following questions.

1. Anthropologist Keith Basso asked, “What can the study of spoken languages reveal about the shapes and contours of other cultural worlds?” What do you know now about the relationship between language and culture? How did your perspective shift? In what way(s) do the Indigenous language speakers provide you with a new way of seeing the world? In what ways do their stories add to a more comprehensive global story of humanity?
2. What new insights or reflections do you have about your own connection to the natural and living world? Describe the land in which you live and why it is important to you.
3. Do you know which Indigenous people are the original stewards of the land you live on? Conduct research to find out the following:
 - The name of the tribe, territory, and language. (Note: In North America, students can use the website resource [Native Land](#).)
 - Learn a local Indigenous or Native word. What did you learn?
 - Ask students to share their findings with the class.