Title
Introduction to the Lakota concept of *mitakuye oyasin*, or all my relations.

Grade Level
Community college survey course.

Theme
Everything is related.

Goal
Students will learn the significance of the Lakota concept *mitakuye oyasin* or all things are related.

Lesson Goal
Students will gain an understanding of the relationships between Lakotas and land, animals, plants, stars, and spirits.

Objectives
Students will:
1. Gain an understanding of the nature of the shared metaphysical components (*nagi*, *niya*, *sicun*, *nagila*) of all beings and the concept that all things share a portion of the blood of *Inyan*.
2. Be able to summarize the traditional stories of Lakota emergence, the Great Race and the gift of the sacred pipe and how they help to explain the Lakota concept of *mitakuye oyasin*.
3. Be able to summarize and explain the significance of the Lakota *hunka* ceremony.

Cultural Concept
The key to understanding Lakota culture is best expressed by the Lakota phrase *mitakuye oyasin* or all my relations. This belief is at the heart of all ceremonial aspects of Lakota culture.

Cultural Background
Vine Deloria says that “In the moral universe all activities, events and entities are related and consequently it does not matter what kind of existence an entity enjoys, for the responsibility is always there for it to participate in the continuing creation of reality.” This idea serves as a touchstone which permeates all ceremonial aspects of Lakota culture. For Lakotas, the universe is thought of as one unified kinship system with all beings having the potential for shared relationships based on the premise that “all activities, events and entities” 1) share the same metaphysical components (*nagi*, *niya*, *sicun*, *nagila*); 2) share a portion of the blood of *Inyan*; and 3) possess the ton (or sacred power) present in this blood.

The sacred Lakota narratives talk of the origin and nature of these relationships. One of the traditional stories recounts how Inyan gave of his blood to create all things creating the literal bedrock for the idea that all things are related. There are others that tell how the *Pte oyate* (Buffalo nation) were the ancestors of the Lakota people. The strength of this
relationship is best exemplified in the story of White Buffalo Calf Woman bringing the sacred pipe to Lakotas. The pipe is at the heart of all Lakota ceremonies including the hunka ceremony (or the making of relatives). Other narratives tell us of the importance of plants and that for Lakotas the cottonwood tree at the center of the sun dance is “the people, it also represents the way of the people”.  

**Student Activities**

1. Assigned readings: These will provide important background information which will be instrumental in providing knowledge concerning the components of the concept of mitakuye oyasin including, nagi, niya, sicun, nagila, the blood of Inyan and it’s ton, White Buffalo Calf Woman, the Great Race, the emergence, the hunka ceremony, the spirits, and the stars.
2. Powerpoint presentation by instructor. This will be approximately 75 minutes long and provide an overview of these components and explain their relationship to one another.
3. Guest speaker: This will be approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes long and will include a Q and A at the end. It will cover in more detail the components already explained in the readings and the instructor’s lecture.
4. Group activity. The class will be divided into teams (from 4-7 members each) and will be asked to perform dramatizations of the emergence, the Great Race and White Buffalo Calf Woman narratives.

**Evaluation Activities**

There will be three evaluation activities.

1. Group evaluation
2. Team self assessment
3. Essay

Upon completion of the group activity there will be a grade assigned to the group as a whole. In addition there will be a team self assessment evaluation in which each team member will be asked to evaluate the participation of the other individuals on their team. The third evaluation activity will be based upon an essay that will cover the first two lesson plan objectives. The final individual grade will be based upon an average of all three evaluation activities with an 80% grade being the equivalent of a B.

**Resources**

Instructor: Kenneth C. Macpherson  
Guest Speaker: TBD  
Readings:  

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Deloria, V. (1999). If you think about it you will see that it is true. In B. Deloria (Ed.) et. al. *Spirit and reason* (pp. 40-60). Golden: Fulcrum Publishing


**Developer**
Kenneth C. Macpherson
600 3rd Ave
Excelsior, MN 55331
Ph. 952-474-0437
xboycasey@netscape.net