

# Ocean Sense Program



## Lesson 1

### Module:

Arctic Ocean Biodiversity

### Time:

40 minutes

### Learning pillars:

- Indigenous knowledge

### Grade & curriculum connection:

- **BC Science 7**

*"Evolution by natural selection provides an explanation for the diversity and survival of living things."*

Created with knowledge from:

Rebecca Ukullaq, Salomie Qitsoalik,  
Jimmy and David Qirqqut, Danny Aaluk,  
and Zoe Ohokannoak

## The Story of Sedna

Inuit people tell the story of **Sedna**, the mother of all sea creatures, across **Inuit Nunangat**. Learn how traditional knowledge informs science by exploring various representations of the story from the **Kitikmeot Region of Nunavut**.

Sedna is also known as Nuliajuk, Taliialajuuq, and Uinnrumasuittuq depending on the location in Inuit Nunangat. It is a commonly told ocean story within Inuit culture, and aspects of the story change depending on the storyteller. Respecting nature is a central theme in the story. The knowledge holders and their interpreters are from **Gjoa Haven**: Jimmy and David Qirqqut, Rebecca Ukullaq, Salomie Qitsoalik, Danny Aaluk. Zoe Ohokannoak is an artist whose artwork was commissioned by Ocean Networks Canada in **Cambridge Bay**. Both Gjoa Haven and Cambridge Bay are communities in the Kitikmeot Region of Nunavut.

### Learning objectives

- Apply First Peoples perspectives and knowledge, other ways of knowing, and local knowledge as sources of information.
- Express and reflect on a variety of experiences and perspectives of place.

### Materials

- Computer with internet connection
- Projector, screen, and speakers
- Slide deck: **Arctic Ocean Biodiversity** ([bit.ly/SlidesAOB](https://bit.ly/SlidesAOB))

### Teacher preparation

- Preload the slide deck: **Arctic Ocean Biodiversity** ([bit.ly/SlidesAOB](https://bit.ly/SlidesAOB))

## Classroom instructions

### Hook

1. Share slide 5-10 and discuss the artwork following the prompts below adapted from the Creative Hunt thinking routine (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2015).
  - a. What is the main purpose of these artworks?
  - b. What parts of these artworks stand out to you?
  - c. What is especially creative in these artworks?
  - d. Who is the audience for these artworks?
2. Share that each piece of artwork represents the Inuit story of Sedna and ask if anyone is familiar with this story.

### Step-by-step process

3. Share slides 11 & 12 which introduce several different versions of the story of Sedna compiled by Ocean Networks Canada in Gjoa Haven in 2018.
4. Share slide 13 and discuss the questions about how stories are forms of knowledge passed from one generation to the next.
5. Share the video clip from The Story of Sedna on slide 13 featuring Jimmy Qirqqut speaking in Inuktituk translated into English by David Qirqqut.
  - a. Clip shared is from 1:01min - 5:40min.
  - b. Note that Jimmy Qirqqut uses the name Nuliajuk for Sedna and that he calls Sedna "he" which could be because in Inuktitut, the pronouns he, she, and they are interchangeable (Inuktitut Tusaalanga, n.d.).
6. Discuss the quote from Jimmy Qirqqut on slide 13 highlighting the fact that Nuliajuk's actions explain successful and unsuccessful seal hunts.
7. Share the video clip from The Story of Sedna on slide 14 featuring Salomie Qitsoalik speaking in Inuktituk translated into English by Rebecca Ukullaq.
  - a. Clip shared is from 8:16min - 11:00min.
8. Share slide 15 and discuss the fact that in many cultures, including Inuit culture, stories are shared for the purpose of education, science, and connection to place. Discuss how the story of Sedna describes the importance of our relationship to ocean creatures in Inuit culture.

### Modifications and adaptations

- Print and post around the classroom the four artworks on slides 5-9.

## Final remarks to the educator

Stories are used to share and preserve knowledge and can be part of a person's cultural identity. Stories like Sedna contribute to a deeper understanding of the people and places they involve because they hold knowledge and information that have been carried forward through many generations. Therefore, stories and oral histories are valid forms of data that, working in combination with scientific data, can help us understand an environment. Ocean Networks Canada sought permission from the Inuit knowledge holders to share these interviews for the purpose of education. Note that not all stories should be shared outside families or communities, and it is important that stories are shared with permission from the storytellers.

## Assessment

- What role have stories played in your life?
- Why might someone use traditional stories to inform their scientific work or vice versa?

## Extensions

- Explore additional versions of the Sedna story from reputable and/or authentic Inuit sources.

## Glossary

**Cambridge Bay:** A hamlet in the Kitikmeot Region of Nunavut where the Inuinnaqtun dialect of Inuktitut is spoken alongside English; the home community for artist Zoe Ohokannoak whose artwork is featured in this module.

## Glossary continued

**Gjoa Haven:** A hamlet in the Kitikmeot Region of Nunavut where the Inuktitut dialect of Inuktitut is spoken alongside English; the home community of the knowledge holders and translators in the video interviews: Jimmy and David Qirqqut, Rebecca Ukullaq, and Salomie Qitsoalik; the home community for artist Danny Aaluk whose artwork is featured in this module.

**Inuit:** The distinct rights-holding Indigenous People with their own history, identity, culture, language (Inuktitut), and way of life.

**Inuit Nunangat:** The homeland of the Inuit people that stretches across Arctic land and waters of the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut.

**Kitikmeot Region:** One of the three regions in Nunavut, encompassing the communities of Cambridge Bay, Gjoa Haven, and several other communities. This region is considered the heart of the Northwest Passage.

**Sedna:** A female character within Inuit culture who controls the ocean and created its creatures; also known as Nuliajuk, Taliialajuuq, and Uinnrumasuittuq depending on the location within Inuit Nunangat.

## References

- Aaluk, D. (2018). *Nuliajuk* [Illustration]. Ocean Networks Canada, Victoria, BC, Canada.
- Campbell, K., Freeman, P., Laite, A., Wheelock, A., et al. (2009). The Ocean: Spiritual Connection. In *Experiential Science 20-Marine Systems* (p. 32). Government of the Northwest Territories (NWT)/Pacific Educational Press.
- Government of Nunavut. (n.d.). *Inuit Societal Values*. Culture, Language, Heritage and Art. Retrieved July 30, 2025 from <https://www.gov.nu.ca/en/culture-language-heritage-and-art/inuit-societal-values>
- Harvard Graduate School of Education. (2015). *Creative Hunt*. Project Zero. <https://pz.harvard.edu/resources/creative-hunt>
- Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada. (n.d.). Inuit. In *Canadian Geographic Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*. Retrieved July 30, 2025 from <https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/section/inuit/>
- Inuktitut Tusaalanga. (n.d.). *Grammar » 29 » Possessions & Relations*. Inuktitut Tusaalanga. <https://tusaalanga.ca/node/1110>
- Inuktitut Tusaalanga. (n.d.). *Inuit Dialects in Canada*. Inuktitut Tusaalanga. <https://tusaalanga.ca/node/2503>
- Ohokannoak, Z. (2018). *Sedna Colouring Page* [Illustration]. Ocean Networks Canada, Victoria, BC, Canada.
- Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq Kitikmeot Heritage Society. (n.d.). *About*. Kitikmeot Heritage Society. Retrieved July 30, 2025 from <https://www.kitikmeotheritage.ca/>
- Qirqqut, J., Qirqqut, D., Qitsoalik, S., & Ukullaq, R. (2016, November 24). *The story Sedna (Nuliajuk)* [Interview]. Gjoa Haven, NU.
- Routledge, M. (2006). Qaqaq Ashoona. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/qaqaq-ashoona>
- Shultz, S. (2007). *Sedna-completed* [Painting]. DeviantArt. <https://www.deviantart.com/badgersoph/art/Sedna-Completed-65996139>