

Dene

Name: _____

Dene have historically inhabited central and northwestern Canada in an area known as Denendeh, meaning "the Creator's Spirit flows through this Land" or "Land of the People." The Dene are a large group of Indigenous peoples, also known as **Athabaskan** peoples, who historically inhabit a vast area of northern and western North America, from Alaska down to the southwestern United States. "Dene" means "the people" in their language, which is a common term for a family of related Athabaskan languages spoken across many First Nations in Canada. Dene are also known as Athabaskan, Athabaskan, Athapaskan or Athapaskan peoples. The Dene people are known for their oral storytelling.

Dene were the first people to settle in what is now the Northwest Territories. In northern Canada, historically there were ethnic feuds between the Dene and the Inuit. One such feud was recounted by English explorer Samuel Hearne in 1771 as the Bloody Falls massacre, where a band of Chipewyan and "Copper Indian" Dene men ambushed and killed 20 Inuit camped by the mouth of the Coppermine River. In 1996, Dene and Inuit representatives participated in a healing ceremony at Bloody Falls to reconcile the centuries-old grievances.



Their environment is quite harsh with severe winters and short summers. Some of the area is forested, but a lot is tundra.

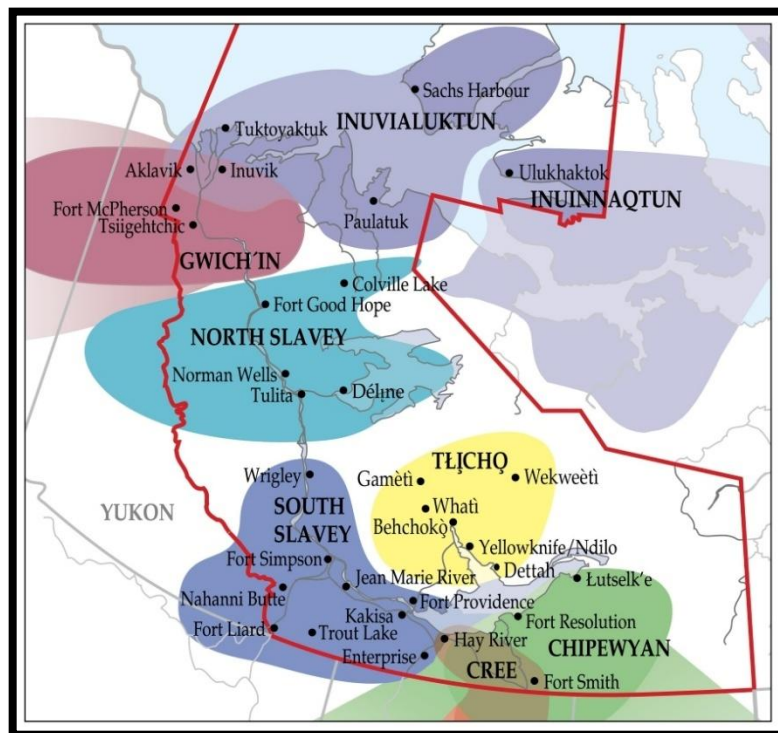
Course	Topic
English Reading	Dene Creation Story - Yam'Q'ria marries a beaver Curricular Competencies: Comprehend and Connect: Think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts
Social Studies	Nine Dene Laws Curricular Competencies: Take stakeholders' perspectives on issues, developments, or events by making inferences about their beliefs, values, and motivations (perspective) Curricular Competencies: Make ethical judgments about events, decisions, or actions that consider the conditions of a particular time and place, and assess appropriate ways to respond (ethical judgment)
English Writing	Hachoghe fights three giant beavers Curricular Competency: <i>Create and Communicate:</i> Transform ideas and information to create original texts
Art	Drawing of Hachoghe Curricular Competency: Exploring and Creating - Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play
Science	Flora and Fauna of the Dene Curricular Competencies: Communicating: Express and reflect on personal, shared, or others' experiences of place
Math	Flora and Fauna of the Dene Curricular Competencies: Reasoning and Analyzing: Model mathematics in contextualized experiences.
Core Competency	Creative Thinking - Dene Dwellings

English - Reading – Dene Creation Story - Yamŏria marries a beaver

The Dene include six main groups:

- **Chipewyan**
- **Tłı̨chǫ**
- **Yellowknives**
- **Slavey**
- **Sahtu**
- **Gwich'in**

The Dene people tell stories about a time long ago when their land, called **Denendeh**, was a dangerous place. There were giant animals that hunted people, and humans and animals could even change into each other. People often felt scared. During this time, a powerful man appeared. His name means **"The One Who Travels."** He walked across Denendeh to help the people. He defeated the giant animals and made sure that animals and people were separate, but still respected each other. He also gave the Dene people rules so they could live together peacefully. People across Denendeh remember him as a great traveller and a maker of laws. Different Dene groups have different names for him. The most common name is **Yamoria**, which comes from the Sahtu people. This name became well known after George Blondin used it in his 1997 book *Yamoria The Law Maker*. Even though there are many versions of the story, they all remind the Dene of where they come from and how they are connected.



Yamŏria marries a beaver - Yamŏria sá gharáııde

Long ago, a special man named Yamŏria traveled through the land, putting everything in its rightful place. During his travels, Yamŏria met a young woman who lived by herself in the bush. She was cooking and offered Yamŏria some food. After Yamŏria ate, the woman suggested that they live together as a couple and Yamŏria agreed. She asked Yamŏria for one thing – to cut a willow and place it over running water before crossing it when he was out on the land. Yamŏria didn't understand why she wanted this but he agreed to her request. They lived together happily for a long time.

One day Yamŏria was out in the bush hunting. It was getting dark and he was in a hurry to get home. He came to a creek and decided not to place a willow across it. When he arrived home he found his wife was gone. Using his magical powers, he followed her and discovered that his wife was really a giant beaver. She was living with a family of giant beavers at a big lake near Whati. Her beaver family had been killing and eating Dene who traveled in the area.

Yamŏria began to chase his beaver wife and her family. He chased them all the way through Great Slave Lake and down the Mackenzie River. He caught up with them at Great Bear Lake and chased them around the lake to Tulita. Yamŏria killed three giant beavers at Tulita, skinned them and stretched their hides on Great Bear Rock. You can still see the oval outline of the beaver pelts there today.



What did the young woman offer Yamŏria when they first met?

What special request did the woman make before Yamŏria crossed running water?

Why did Yamŏria decide not to put a willow across the creek that day?

Why do you think the woman wanted Yamŏria to place a willow over running water?

What lesson might this story teach about listening to others' warnings or advice?

How does this story help explain the land and places that are important to the Dene?

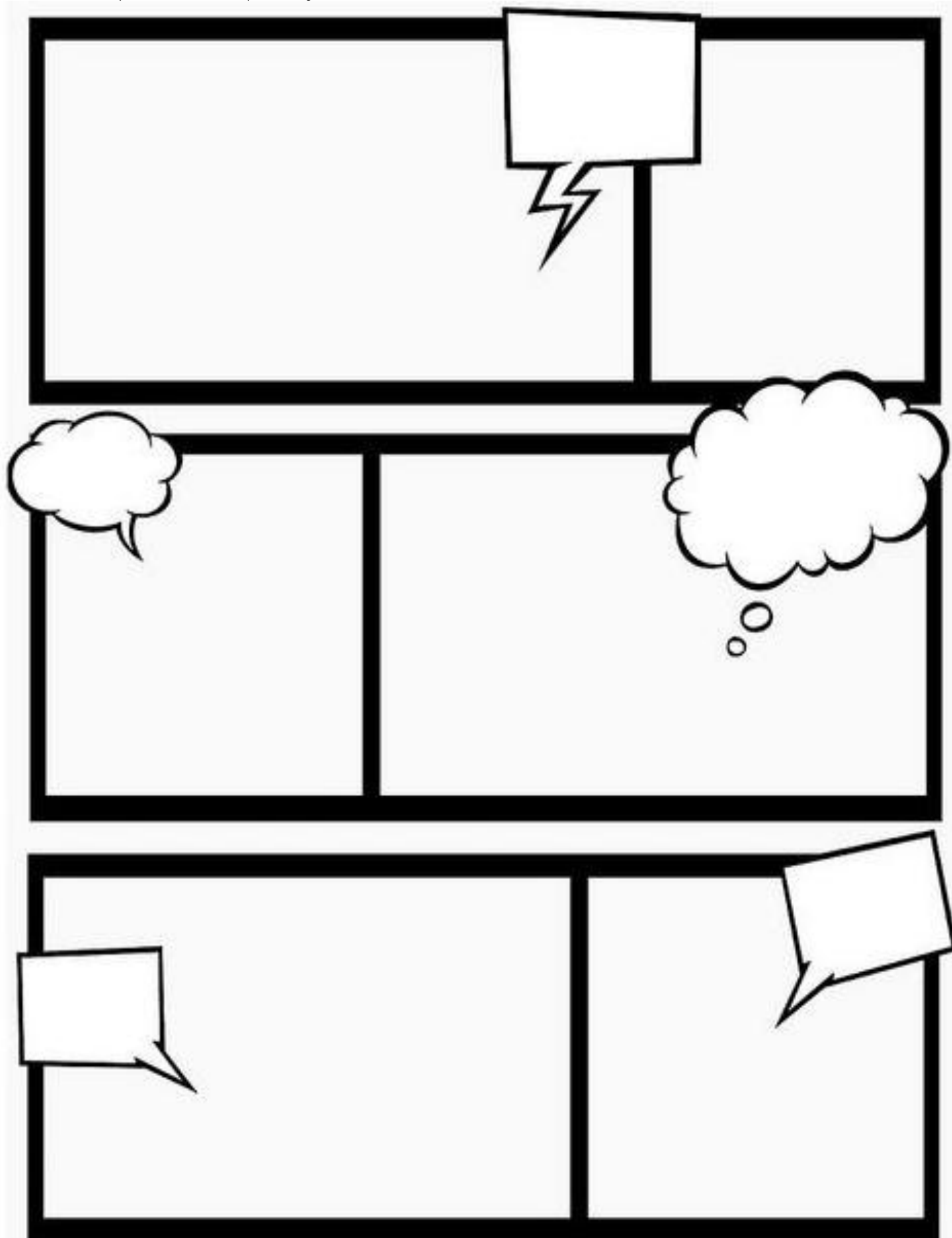
Do you think the woman should have told Yamŏria the truth about who she was? Why or why not?

What does this story teach about trust in a relationship?

Why do you think Yamŏria chose to help the Dene people by chasing the giant beavers?

What do you think the story says about respecting the land and the animals?

Create a comic strip based on the story of Yamŏria marries a beaver:



Social Studies - Dene Laws – Ethical Judgement, Significance

Yamoria created many Dene laws. They allowed people to live in mutual respect and harmony. The Dene laws remain important and guide how the way Dene live.

Here are the 9 most basic Dene laws:

- Share what you have
- Help each other
- Love each other as much as possible
- Respect others and everything around you
- Sleep at night and work during the day
- Be polite and don't quarrel
- Youth should behave respectfully
- Pass on the techniques
- Be as happy as possible at all times

Look at the nine most basic Dene laws. Order them in terms of how essential you think they are, to a caring and cohesive community. Then, justify why you ranked that component accordingly:

Dene Law	Justification for why you ranked it accordingly
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	

Choose one of the Dene laws. Choose a situation. Combine both of them in a skit that you create:

Dene Law	Situation
Share what you have	Hunting
Help each other	Fishing
Love each other as much as possible	Migrating / moving
Respect others and everything around you	Gathering (finding food)
Sleep at night and work during the day	Cooking
Be polite and don't quarrel	Learning how to do a new skill
Youth should behave respectfully	Making a fire
Pass on the techniques	Playing
Be as happy as possible at all times	Telling a story

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English Writing – Hachoghe fights three giant beavers

Long ago, three giant beavers lived on Lake Athabasca. They made life difficult by building huge dams and flapping their tails to drown people. A giant man named Hachoghe decided to help the people by getting rid of the giant beavers.

The first beaver made his den on the west side of the Lake Athabasca, near Old Fort. Hachoghe dug into the beaver's den and killed it. He tossed half the den into the Athabasca River, creating an island called Tanu.

The second beaver swam to the south side of Lake Athabasca before Hachoghe caught up with him. Hachoghe fought with the beaver and in their struggle, the beaver kicked away all the trees, creating the Athabasca Sand Dunes. After a long fight, Hachoghe killed the second beaver. The sand dunes are still red from the second beaver's blood.

The third beaver saw Hachoghe coming for him so he escaped down the Slave River. Hachoghe chased him all the way to Fort Smith and followed him over a beaver dam. This created the Slave River Rapids between Fort Fitzgerald and Fort Smith. Hachoghe continued to chase the third beaver north up the Slave River to the Mackenzie River. He finally caught up with him at Wolverine Rock, north of Tulita. There he killed the beaver and made a fire to cook it. Fat from the giant beaver dripped into the fire, igniting a flame that is still smoking today.

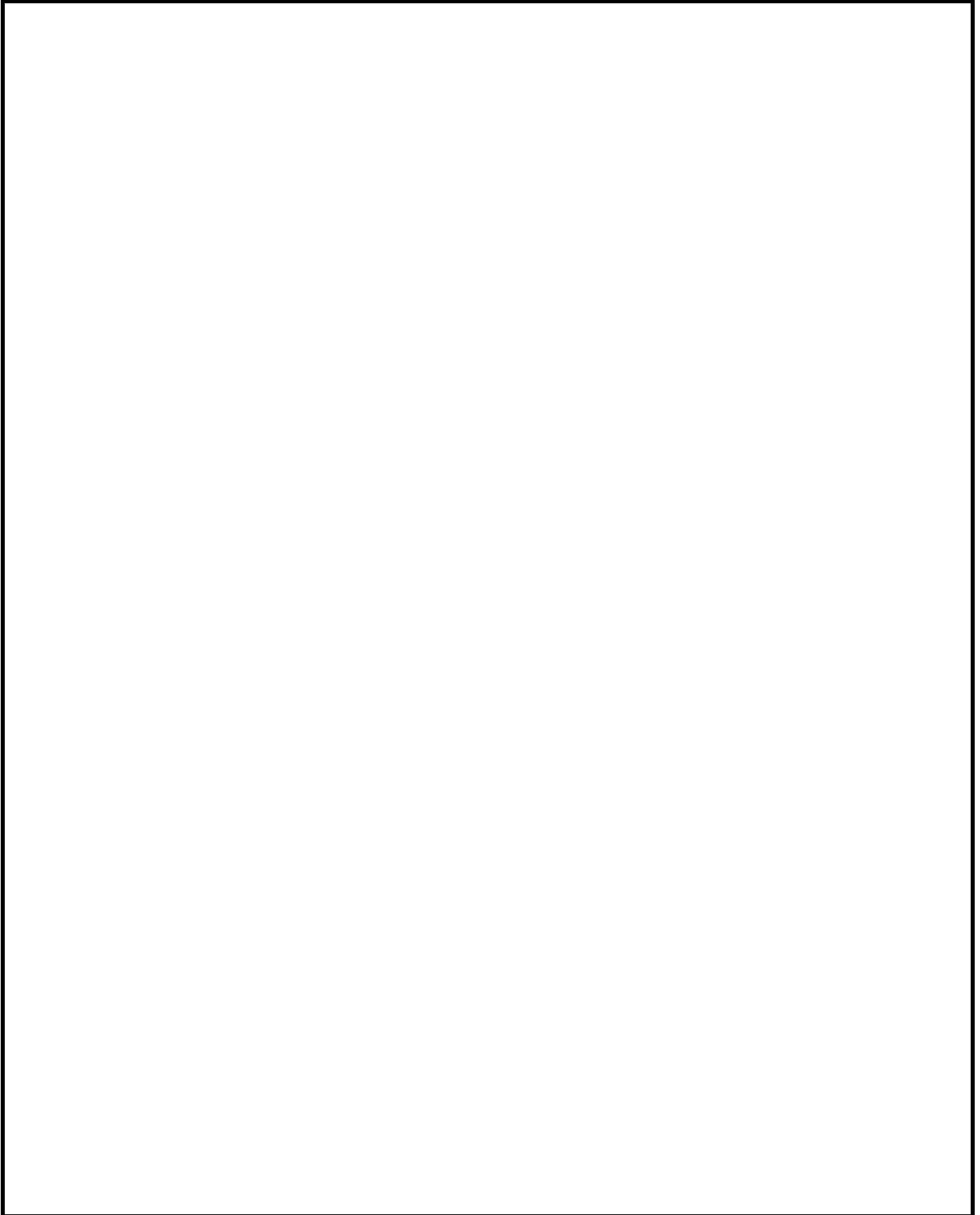
Choose one writing prompt, and write your ideas below:

- **Imagine you are a person living near Lake Athabasca when the giant beavers are causing trouble.** Write a journal entry about what life is like and how you feel when Hachoghe arrives to help.
- **Choose one of the three giant beavers** and write the story from *its* point of view. What does it think about Hachoghe chasing it?
- **Describe Hachoghe as a hero.** What qualities make him brave or strong? Use examples from the story.
- **Imagine you are travelling with Hachoghe.** Describe what you see as you follow him across the lakes, rivers, and rapids.
- **Create a conversation between Hachoghe and one of the giant beavers** before they fight. What might they say to each other?
- **Explain how the story helps people understand the land.** Choose one landmark (the island, the sand dunes, or the rapids) and describe how it was created in the story.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Art – Drawing of Hachoghe fights three giant beavers

Choose a scene from the story that you would like to depict. Sketch your drawing below:

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for a student to sketch a scene from the story. The box occupies the majority of the page below the instructions.

Science – Flora and Fauna of the Dene

The **Slavey people** depended on animals that moved from place to place, like **caribou, rabbit, moose, fish, and water birds**, for most of their food. Because these animals did not stay in one place, the Slavey people moved around during the year to follow them. They also caught small animals using simple traps in their home areas. Many **moose and bears** lived in the wet, forested land where the Slavey people lived.

To hunt moose, they sometimes copied moose calls by using a **birch bark tube** or by rubbing a bone or antler against a tree to sound like a male moose. When a moose came closer to investigate, the hunter would use a **bow and arrow**. Another way they hunted was in winter: when the snow had a thick icy crust, hunters wore **snowshoes** so they could stay on top of the ice. The moose would break through the crust and get tired, making it easier to catch. The most common hunting method was to guide moose or caribou into a **fenced area called a corral**, where snares were set to trap them.

Fishing was extremely important to the Slavey people. Like many other Subarctic groups, **fish were their main food**. In the summer, families gathered in big fish camps by lakes and rivers. They used nets made from **willow bark** to catch lots of fish, which they cleaned and dried. In winter, they split into small family groups and moved to smaller lakes. There, they fished under the ice, trapped small animals, and sometimes hunted moose.

Women would often be responsible for cooking meals, gathering food and taking care of children. They made clothes out of natural resources, such as furs and hides from animals. Sewing tools also came from animals, including bone needles and sinew for thread.

Because they had to move often and focus on daily survival, the Slavey people had a **simple social structure**. They lived in **regional bands**, which were made up of smaller family groups that cooperated with one another. Each family group had its own hunting area, and the boundaries were based on long tradition.

The Slavey were **Athapaskan-speaking**, nomadic people who lived in the cold Subarctic region of northern Canada. Their environment shaped how they lived, traveled, and worked. Even though they are often known as people who followed caribou or moose, they were actually **people of the fish**, because fish were the most important part of their diet.

The soils tend to be acidic and boggy. As you go nearer to the Arctic Circle, you will find the soils will be frozen tundra for a good part of the year. There the plants are small and the primary trees you find are very small willows. There is also an abundance of mosses, grasses and sedges.

How does the availability of animals in different seasons affect how people survive in the Subarctic?

Why would the Slavey people gather in large groups in summer but spread out in winter?

How does thick ice in winter allow people to fish, but also make travel and hunting harder?

How would being nomadic (always moving around) affect your culture and identity?

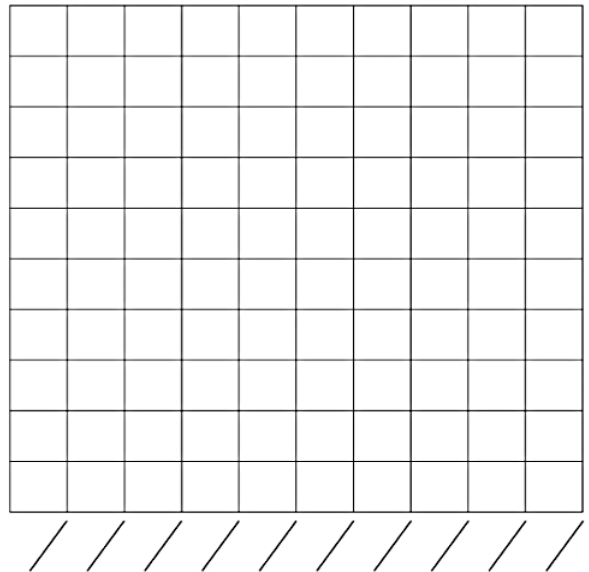
How would living in the subarctic be challenging in terms of finding plants, and farming?

Math – Flora and Fauna of the Dene

There are many types of fish that are found in Dene territory. Graph the data. Use a reasonable scale:

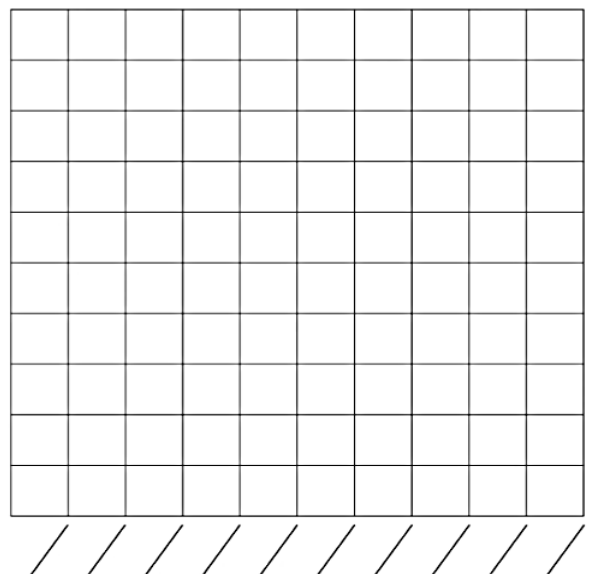
Approximate Chart: Fish Species Commonly Found in Dene Territory
Estimated Percentage of Fish Species in Dene Territory Lakes & Rivers
(For classroom graphing purposes)

Fish Species	Approximate % of Fish Population	Notes (Simple)
Whitefish	30%	Very common; important food fish.
Lake Trout	20%	Found in deep, cold lakes.
Northern Pike (Jackfish)	15%	Common in shallow lakes + rivers.
Arctic Grayling	10%	Found in clear, fast-moving rivers.
Walleye (Pickerel)	10%	Found in warmer, deeper lakes.
Burbot (Lingcod)	8%	Bottom-dwelling fish; winter-caught.
Inconnu (White Salmon / Coney)	5%	Found in Mackenzie River system.
Other species	2%	Suckers, trout species, small fish.

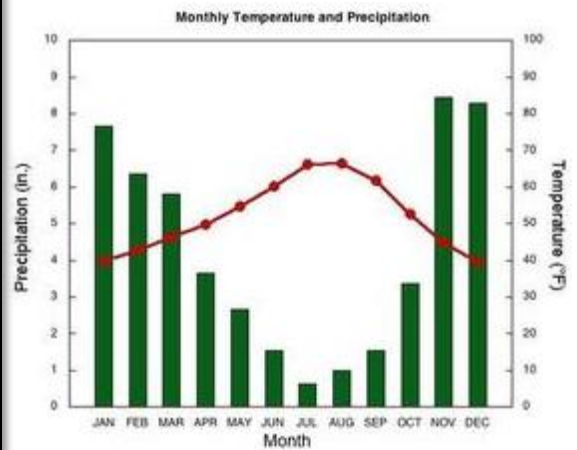
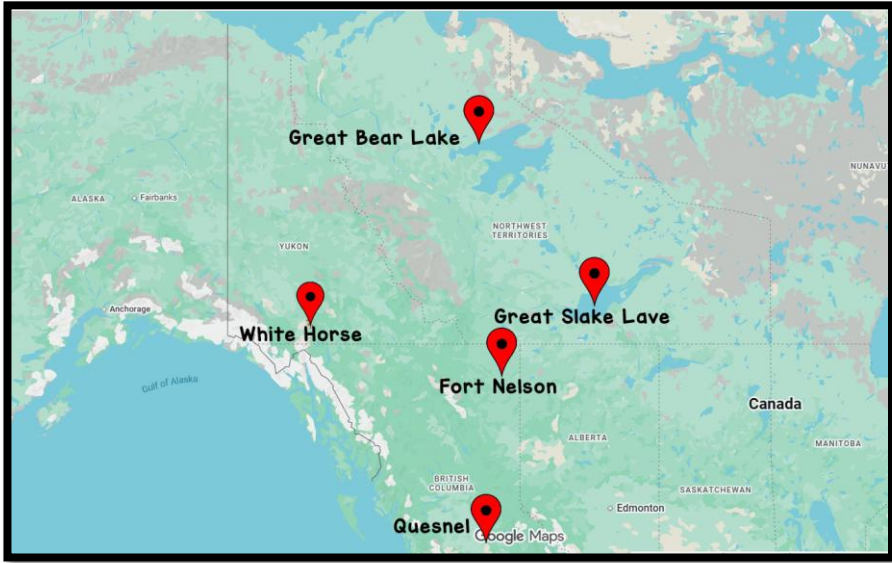


Approximate Chart: Land Animals in Dene Territory
Estimated Percentage of Common Land Animals
(For classroom graphing purposes)

Land Animal	Approximate % of Population	Notes (Simple)
Caribou	30%	Very common; important food source.
Snowshoe Hare (Rabbit)	20%	Found almost everywhere; population changes a lot year to year.
Moose	15%	Large, important animal for food and clothing.
Bears (Black Bear & Grizzly)	10%	Found in forests and mountains.
Beavers	8%	Common in rivers, lakes, and wetlands.
Wolves	7%	Live across forests and tundra; hunt caribou and moose.
Foxes	5%	Red fox and Arctic fox; common in many habitats.
Other small mammals	5%	Marten, mink, squirrels, voles, etc.

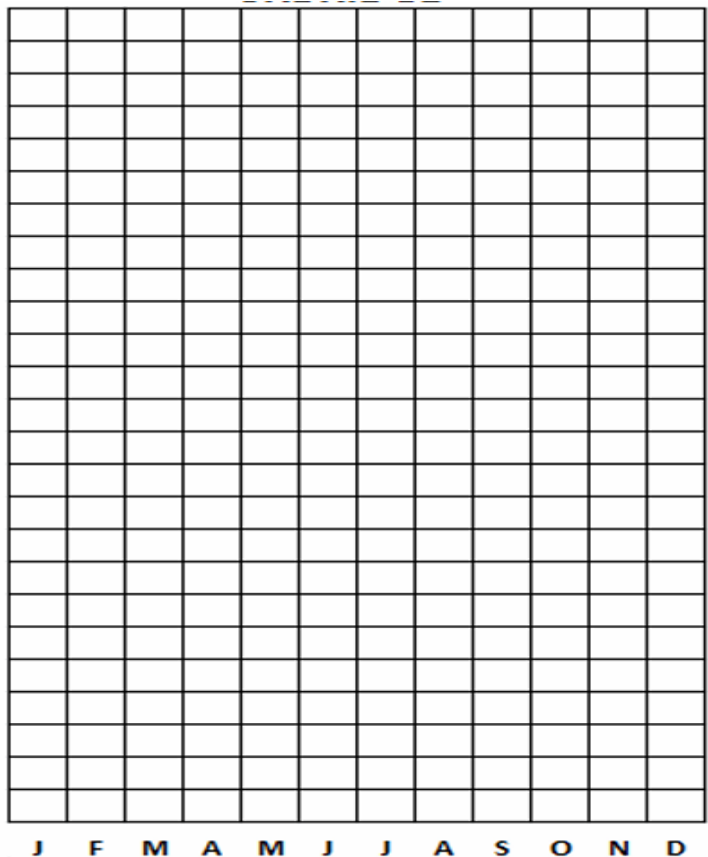


Create a **climograph** (a graph that shows climate and precipitation) for each of the different locations in Dene territory. Choose a reasonable scale for temperature and precipitation.



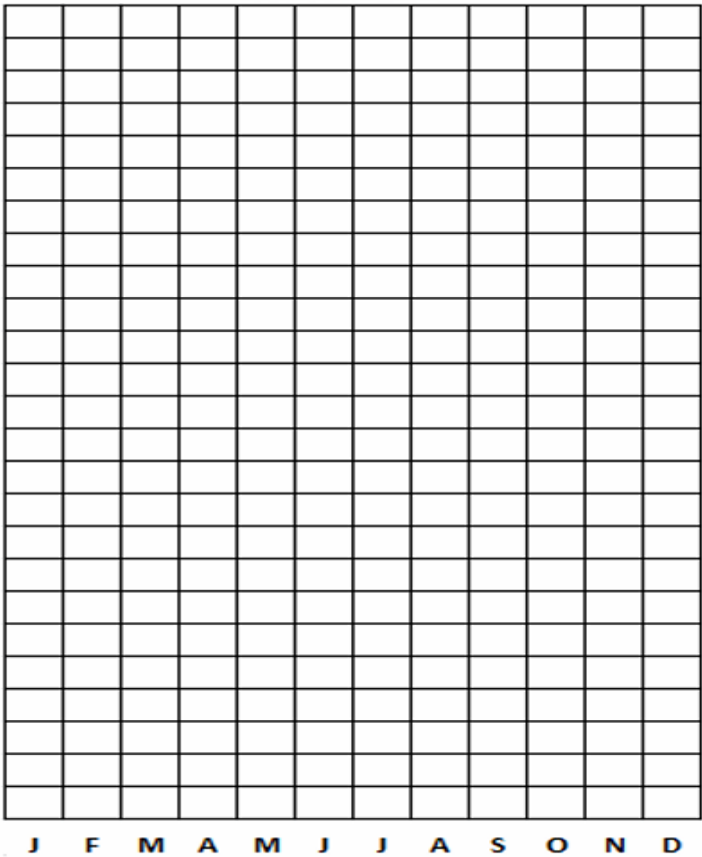
Whitehorse, Yukon – Average Monthly Climate Data

Month	Avg. Temp (°C)	Avg. Precipitation (mm)
January	-12.0	~32 mm
February	-12.2	~22 mm
March	-7.0	~21 mm
April	0.3	~19 mm
May	8.6	~18 mm
June	13.3	~39 mm
July	15.8	~51 mm
August	13.7	~48 mm
September	8.1	~39 mm
October	1.7	~16 mm
November	-7.6	~4 mm



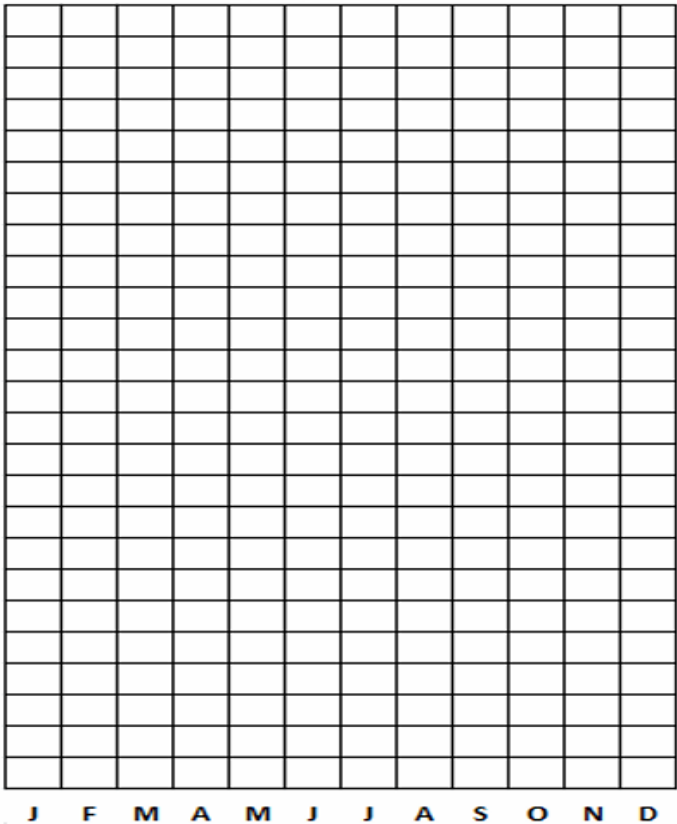
Quesnel, B.C. – Average Monthly Climate Data

Month	Avg. Temp (°C)	Avg. Precipitation (mm)
January	− 6.7	~ 51 mm
February	− 5.6	~ 29 mm
March	− 0.7	~ 28 mm
April	4.7	~ 23 mm
May	10.8	~ 43 mm
June	14.5	~ 57 mm
July	17.2	~ 59 mm
August	17.0	~ 56 mm
September	11.5	~ 49 mm
October	4.9	~ 50 mm
November	− 1.1	~ 46 mm
December	− 6.9	~ 49 mm



Fort Nelson, B.C. – Average Monthly Climate Data

Month	Avg. Temp (°C)	Avg. Precipitation (mm)
January	−18.2 °C	~22 mm
February	−14.2 °C	~16 mm
March	−8.6 °C	~17 mm
April	1.6 °C	~20 mm
May	10.3 °C	~48 mm
June	15.3 °C	~64 mm
July	17.5 °C	~84 mm
August	15.9 °C	~63 mm
September	10.2 °C	~43 mm
October	1.7 °C	~31 mm
November	−13.0 °C	~22 mm
December	−20.0 °C	~19 mm



Core Competency – Creative Thinking

Housing varied from dome-shaped **tipis** covered with skins to **dugout pit houses** and **cabins** or **lodges** built from poles. The dwellings were usually banked with snow and insulated in winter. For most of the Dene, life was very nomadic and dwellings had to be easy to transport. Depending on their geographic location, Dene families lived in tipis, pit houses or lodges – there wasn't one specific type of house for all Dene people.

They generally travelled often for hunting purposes, either on **foot** or in **canoes**, except during the winter when some Dene travelled using **snowshoes** and **toboggans**. Travel during winter was on foot with snowshoes and toboggans. In summer, light bark-covered canoes were carried on trips to be used when they came to navigable lakes and rivers.

In the photo with the horse, you can see a Tsuut'ina Travois (the triangle 'sled' thing), and Tipi (the dome house).

Dene Tha' fixed sites include cabins, camping places and settlement sites. These sites were used by Dene Tha' as either temporary, overnight camping places, or as more permanent settlement areas.

Dene Tha' adapted to a more semi-permanent lifestyle around the turn of the century. It was at this time that trading posts were established throughout the area by the Hudson's Bay Company. Gradually, the Dene Tha' settled in small, family-based groups, residing in log cabins that were used seasonally, according to hunting patterns. There are many stories recounted by the Dene Tha' elders which describe "when we first lived in a log house." It is only relatively recently that the Dene Tha' lived any type of sedentary lifestyle in the main contemporary communities.

Tipis were made out of buffalo hide (usually between 8-15 hides) or some other animal hides sewn together. A frame of three or four poles would start the process of building up the tipi. Most finished tipis would have between 15-25 poles before it was covered with the hide. You could fit (depending on the size) 8-40 people in a tipi.

A dugout pithouse was built by digging out a well defined hole into the ground, usually around 6" to 18" deep but occasionally as deep as four to five feet, and creating walls and roof. This helped to keep the house warm in the winter, and cool in the summer.

Your task is to create a comic on the following page, that shows three different types of Dene dwellings (tipi, dugout pithouse, and cabin), and show the pros and cons of each type of dwelling. Feel free to include activities such as hunting, fishing, ceremonies, travel, etc, to highlight the way the dwellings were used.



Summer dwelling of the Carrier tribe

