

2020-2021

Indigenous Theme:

Skyworld Teachings

June & Atima Atchakosuk:
The Dog Stars



JUNE STAR SIGHTINGS

"We originate from the stars..."
Wilfred Buck

Our CDSBEO Indigenous Theme of **Skyworld** culminates with the exploration of what you may know as "The Little Dipper" or "Ursa Minor," but in our continued efforts to decolonize language, we will refer to this constellation in the language of the Cree people: **Atima Atchakosuk**.



WHAT IS Atima Atchakosuk?



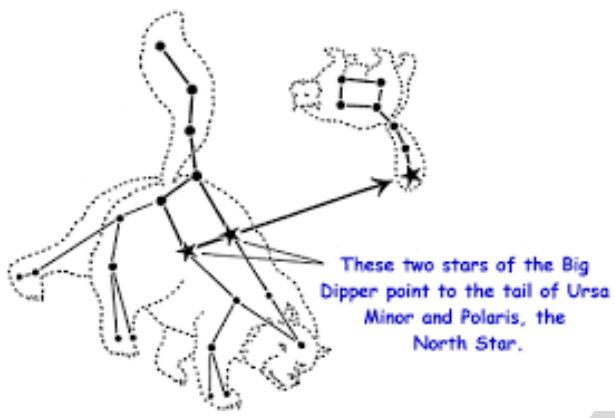
Listen to Wilfred Buck
tell the history of
Atima Atchakosuk:
The Dog Stars.





HOW CAN I FIND *Atima Atchakosuk*?

On June nights, spot the Great Bear (Big Dipper) high in the North. Use the two outer stars of the bowl (farthest from the handle) in this constellation. These stars point to Keewatin (Polaris/The North Star). This is the last star in the handle of *Atima Atchakosuk*.



DOG STAR STORIES

Told by Jacquelyn Cardinal:

“Long ago, people didn’t have dogs. Children played alone, elders carried heavy loads by themselves, and hunters didn’t have help tracking game. When settlements were attacked by wildlife or other groups, the people would always be surprised and dismayed.

Over time, the wolf, coyote, and fox — relatives of the humans — took notice and were concerned. But what could they do to help?

To begin, they called together a council where the animals talked for many days and nights. By the end of their discussion, they understood that humans needed companions and decided that they would help them by sending two of their own pups to all four directions of humankind to live with the people.



DOG STAR STORIES

Over many generations, the pups of the coyotes, wolves, and foxes adapted to life with the humans and began to flourish alongside them in play and work. Children played with furry friends, elders had help hauling heavy loads to where they needed to be, and hunters were more successful in providing for their communities thanks to the noses of their new hunting partners.

To honour their sacrifice, the creator honoured the wolves, foxes, and coyotes by putting a reminder in the stars. First with *mahikan atchakos* or the "Wolf Star" which you may already know as *Polaris*. Second with the *mêstacâkan atchakos* or "Coyote Star", third the *mahkesîs atchakos* or "Fox Star", and finally the four *atima atchakosuk* or "Dog Stars" which were the pups that were sent to the people.

On a clear night this winter, see if you can catch a glimpse of *mahikan atchakos* anchoring the leash of the *atima atchakosuk* with the help of *mêstacâkan atchakos* and *mahkesîs atchakos*."



EXTENSION POSSIBILITIES

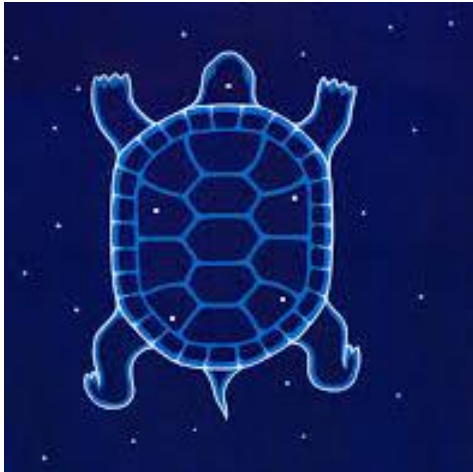


INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

The National Centre for Collaboration

- Indigenous Education: The National Center for Collaboration is a site with thorough, thoughtful and interesting lesson plans entitled: [Lessons From the Night Sky](#)
- The following site contains a huge amount of free and fantastic websites for bringing astronomy into your classroom. Though not through an Indigenous lens, perhaps comparing to some Skyworld resources would be an interesting research project 😊
[Astronomy Apps](#)





VOCABULARY REMINDER

Throughout the *Skyworld: We Come From the Stars* journey, we have examined many different terms. Here is a reminder:

- **Achakosuk** (Cree) = The Stars
- **Atima Atchakosuk** = The Dog Stars = The Little Dipper/Ursa Minor
- **Makinak** = The Turtle = Cepheus
- **Matootisan** = The Sweat Lodge = Corona Borealis
- **Mista Muskwa** = Great Bear = The Big Dipper/Ursa Major
- **Keewatin** = Going Home Star / **Nuuttuittuq** = The One That Never Moves = Polaris = The North Star
- **Sisikwun** = The Rattle
- **Quviasukvik** = Happy Day (First Day of the Year)
- **Wesakechak** = The Giant = Orion

Mapping!

Evening Sky Map (Sky Calendar)

Skymaps

(*While this resource does not use Indigenous language, it does contain some great information if looking in depth at the night sky – perhaps compare to the names on the map on the right!)





- Watch as Wilfred Buck recounts:
[Orienteering with the Sky](#)

- A slightly lengthier version of the "Dog Stars" as told by Wilfred Buck on Facebook:
[The Dog Stars](#)

- Listen to CBC Unreserved for an interview with Sandra Laronde who directed "Trace" a dance that tells an Anishnaabe star story:

[Trace](#)

Works Cited

- Buck, Wilfred. "Wilfred Buck Official Site".
<https://acakwuskwan.com/>. Accessed May 10, 2021.
- Cardinal, Jacquelyn. "Atima Atchakosuk: The Dog Stars." November 13, 2019. <https://www.wintercityedmonton.ca/atima-atchakosuk-the-dog-stars/>. Accessed May 10, 2021.
- McClure, Bruce. "Find the Little Dipper." June 4, 2017.
<https://earthsky.org/tonight/how-to-find-the-little-dipper#:~:text=Use%20the%20two%20outer%20stars,handle%20of%20the%20Little%20Dipper>. Accessed May 13, 2021.