

Glossary of Terms

Anishinaabe – Indigenous People who come from Odawa, Ojibwe, or Algonkin ancestry.

Band Council – the governing body of a band or First Nation community

(Chi) Miigwetch – “thank you” in Ojibwe

Chief – political leader of a First Nation community

Elder – a member of a First Nation community who has trained throughout their whole life to pass on the languages, traditions and spirituality of the culture, considered the most revered members of a First Nation community for their wisdom, guidance and strength.

First Nation – a community shared by members of the same band

Impact Benefit Agreement – an agreement between a First Nation community and a mining company intended to ensure that Indigenous Peoples benefit from mining projects and are compensated for the negative impacts of mines on their communities, their land, and their traditional way of life.

Indigenous People(s)** – a group name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. There are three groups of Indigenous peoples: First Nation, Métis, and Inuit, each with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs.

Indigenous Rights** – the rights that some Indigenous Peoples of Canada hold as a result of their ancestors’ long-standing land use and occupancy. The rights of certain Indigenous Peoples to hunt, trap, and fish on ancestral lands are examples of Indigenous rights.

Nokomis – “Grandmother” in Ojibwe

Ojibwe – an Indigenous language; a person who speaks or descends from a speaker of Ojibwe; a cultural group of those who come from Ojibwe heritage.

Reserve** – an area of land that is set apart for the use and benefit of a band. Some bands have more than one reserve. Many First Nation communities now prefer the term “First Nation community,” and no longer use the term “reserve.”

Seventh Generation Stewardship – a traditional First Nation belief that the present generation has the responsibility to both learn from the actions of the past seven generations and make decisions with the next seven generations in mind. It is believed that the effects of our actions today will be felt seven generations after us.

Traditional Territory – land that has been occupied and used by a particular First Nation since before contact with Europeans.

** Resource: <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100013785/1304467449155>

Mining Comes to Ogimokwe – A Readers’ Theatre

*This story takes place on a fictional reserve called “Ogimokwe First Nation.”
The people of Ogimokwe are Anishinaabe (Ojibwe).*

Characters (7)

Rita Toulouse or “Nokomis”

The Grandmother, who is also a community Elder

Sarah Solomon

Rita’s daughter, who is also a Band Council employee

Joe Solomon

Rita’s son, who lives and works in Toronto as a salesman for a large industrial company

Catherine Morriveau

Sarah’s friend, who is a single mother of three and currently out of work

Andrew Solomon

Sarah’s teenage son

Jake Beaucage

Andrew’s best friend

Narrator

Narrator: It was a late, summer afternoon at Ogimokwe First Nation, and the Solomon family was about to sit down to dinner with family and friends. Sarah was awaiting the arrival of her brother Joe, who had been living off the reserve for the past four years. After high school, Joe had studied business at the University of Toronto and got a high-paying job for a large company in the city. Although Sarah was a bit jealous some days of the money he made, she would never want to leave the reserve to live in the city—it just wasn’t for her. She was very proud to call Ogimokwe her home.

Andrew: Hey, Ma! When’s Uncle Joe supposed to get here?

Sarah: (sarcastically)
I have no idea Andrew. Maybe his BMW got a flat coming through the bush.

Jake: (excitedly)
Are you serious? He drives a Beemer?

Sarah: (laughing)
Not sure Jake, but it must be something nicer than my rusty old pick-up!

Catherine: Speaking of that, I wanna thank that rusty pick-up for bringing me out here today!

Sarah: No problem, you know we love having you over for dinner. Andrew, can you check to see if your Nokomis needs help with the rice?

Andrew: Yeah, sure. Hey Jake, it's your turn to set the table, eh. You have to earn your supper around this place.

Sarah: I taught my boy well!

Catherine: You certainly did.

Narrator: About ten minutes later, Sarah heard the crunching of gravel as a vehicle pulled up in the driveway.

Andrew: (shouting from the other room)
Ma! Uncle Joe is here!

Narrator: Sarah peeked through the drapes on the front window to see a shiny, new SUV.

Sarah: (sarcastically)
Oh look, a Hummer. Now at least that is sensible!

Narrator: Andrew excitedly ran over to get the door for his uncle. Joe came in smiling, with his arms full of bags.

Joe: Hey everyone! So great to see you all again.

Narrator: Joe hugged each one of them, one by one. The last person was Nokomis; he gave her a very special long hug.

Joe: Hello, Ma....

Narrator: Nokomis was her usual stoic self.

Nokomis: Joseph....

Narrator: She gave Joe a nod and went back to the kitchen to finish preparing supper.

Andrew: So what did you bring me?

Sarah: Andrew!

Joe: (laughing)
Don't worry; I didn't forget your cream soda!

Andrew: Aw, sweet!!

Jake: Hey, pass me one buddy...

Sarah: Joe, you know I don't like the kids drinking pop.

Andrew: Yeah, more like we can't afford pop....

Sarah: No, it's bad for you and, yes, it's a waste of money.

Joe: Aw, c'mon Sarah, it's just a little treat from the big city.

Sarah: (rolling her eyes)
So how is "the big city" these days anyway?

Joe: Funny you should ask, Ogimokwe made the newspaper yesterday. I hear they are planning a mine...

Sarah: (irritated)
They are not bringing in a mine if I have something to say about it. The Chief has been talking to the newspapers before we have even had a chance to agree to this as a community.

Andrew: Ma, Nokomis is ready with dinner and I'm starving.

Sarah: Okay, okay. Everybody, sit down.

Narrator: The Solomons and their guests all found chairs around the big oak table that had been passed down through the family for many generations. As Nokomis was an Elder, it was customary in their house that she offers thanksgiving. Everyone bowed their heads.

Nokomis: (bowing head)
Creator, we thank you for the food that you have provided for us today.
We thank you for our strength and knowledge to prepare these foods, and for our health.
We also thank you for bringing us all together here today... (pauses, raising her eyebrow)
and for allowing my son Joseph to find his way home from “the big city.”

Andrew and Sarah: (smirk)

Nokomis: Chi miigwetch.

Everyone: Miigwetch

Narrator: As everyone dug into the wonderful meal that Nokomis had made, Joe attempted to restart his earlier conversation.

Joe: So about this mine...I think it is fabulous. Think about what this could do for Ogimokwe’s economic development.

Nokomis: What are you talking about?

Joe: I was just telling Sarah that Ogimokwe was in the newspaper yesterday. Apparently they are in talks with Trillium Mining Company to establish a nickel mine just off Lake Ogimokwe.

Joe (reading from the newspaper):
Listen, it sounds fantastic. They’ve quoted Chief Bernard as saying, “This will be a positive step for the future of our reserve. There will be training for our people and a guarantee of employment, benefits, and revenue sharing. They won’t come in without compensating our people and they will respect our inherent right to protect our land. If we can generate our own economy, then we will be self-governing.”

Sarah (increasingly annoyed):
You know, I’ve been working in the band office for 20 years now. We don’t need the mine here. Everything is okay here, so why change anything?

Jake: I know my parents have been out of work for a long time now. They have been talking about moving, and I don’t wanna leave all my cousins here. My dad would love the chance to work at the mine. Who knows, maybe that’s what I can be doing in a couple of years.

Sarah: If this mine comes, it is going to be worse here; you’ll have so many people coming in that everyone will be fighting for jobs.

Catherine: I don't know Sarah. I kind of like the idea of having something big like that come to Ogi-mokwe. They should make the mining company give jobs to the people who are here now first. I don't know if I could work in the mines, but maybe I could go to school to work in the offices...or maybe I could cook. I would just love to have a job so my kids could look up to me. I just wanna work, eh.

Joe: Just think of how much money this would bring to the reserve! We would have more people coming here....

Sarah: ...which would mean not enough housing. We don't need all this aggravation...we don't need change!

Joe: Hear me out Sarah. If the mine comes, it brings with it other companies to supply materials to the mine. True, this will bring in more people, but they don't necessarily have to live on the reserve. They can commute. These people will, however, be using businesses on the reserve during the work day, which means a tonne of external revenue.

Jake: I have no idea what that means, but I know I'd really like a youth centre or something for kids to do around here because, for teens, this place is boring!! Give us something to do, eh??

Andrew: Well said, buddy!

Catherine: Oh...I know my kids would love that too. It should be free though. What would be the point of making a big, fancy recreation centre where nobody could afford to send their kids?

Joe: Well, according to the article in the paper, that is what they are offering to do here. They want to build a recreation facility and provide new computers and other technology to the local schools. Trust me; this is so great for the community.

Nokomis: (clearing throat)
A-hem!!

Narrator: Suddenly there was silence. Joe cautiously turned towards his mother.

Joe: Sorry, Ma. Would you like to say something?

Nokomis: (sternly)
Well Mr. "Big City," it seems like you have forgotten where you came from.

Narrator: Forks dropped and mouths gaped as everyone waited for what Nokomis was about to say.

Joe: (stunned)
Pardon?

Nokomis: Do you not remember when you were little, when your Nokomis took you out to the lake to gather medicines?

Joe: Yes.

Nokomis: Do you not remember when you and she would fish at that same lake?

Joe: Yes, what are you getting at Ma?

Nokomis: What I am “getting at” is that the lake here is a site of traditional hunting and gathering for our people. Your grandparents worked their trapline in this territory for many years. They spent winters out there in our cabin and lived off the land.

Joe: Yes Ma, but we have to accept the fact that times have changed. If we want economic prosperity, we have to be willing to be open to new ways of making money for ourselves.

Nokomis: It isn't about making money, my son. You see, when I was young, my mother, grandmother, and aunties taught me very much about the land, the water, the animals and plants, the medicines and birds, and even the insects. Today, we aren't teaching our children these lessons. We have to take care of the Earth so there will be medicines and animals and fish. In whatever decision we make, we must consider the effects for the next seven generations. You know that Joseph.

Joe: But we are thinking about the future generations of Ogimokwe. Bringing in the mine is securing our young people jobs for many years to come. When people are employed they have good housing and can enjoy everything that other Canadians enjoy. Speaking of that, did you know that many of those very things we want— like phones, computers, better housing—are made of mined materials?

Nokomis: I understand that. I don't expect everyone to go live in the wigwam again. We want to live like others and use computers and all that. We want to work like everyone else does, but we have to balance our needs with our Earth's needs. If this here company thinks this mine is so important, they should be willing to work with us and follow our traditions. We must have our ceremonies and ask for permission from the spirits that live in the bush.

Jake: I still go out gathering medicines with my grandma and aunties at the lake. I can see how it would be important to do things our traditional way. My auntie says that the mining coming in is gonna pollute the lake from all that drilling, and then there won't be any fish to catch.

Andrew: Aw, that's not right! I would hate it if we couldn't go fishing in the lake.

Joe: Well, according to the article, these are the kinds of things that they are trying to put into an Impact Benefit Agreement between the Band and Trillium Mines. This will make sure that measures are put into place so that the mine doesn't disturb the fish and wildlife and doesn't interfere with traditional gathering.

Catherine: That sounds like a good plan. This way both sides are happy.

Nokomis: I sure hope that we do our homework on this. Once the mine is here—if it comes at all—it will be too late to turn back. Remember the seven generations....

Sarah: Well, I'm still against the whole idea. It seems like a whole lot of bother more than anything. I think that what Ma said is right. We have to protect the environment and this mine will destroy it.

Narrator: Nokomis stopped, paused, and turned to Sarah.

Nokomis: I never said this mine would destroy anything.

Joe: Exactly, a mine brought in the right way would not harm the environment.

Nokomis: (turning to **Joe**)
I never said that either.

Narrator: Nokomis offered her guests a wink as she headed back to the kitchen.

Jake (to Andrew): Wow, your Nokomis is a smart lady.

Andrew: (sarcastically)
Yeah, dude. That's kinda why she's an Elder....

Catherine: Well, she's been around for much longer than any of us, and she's been able to learn from her grandmothers and grandfathers who have been around even longer.

Andrew: I don't know what to think. Having the mine sounds so exciting and it would be great for there to be more for us to do here. I don't know about messing up the land or the lake though.

Joe: Well, I guess it is about figuring out what is important to us as a community here, and making sure that we let the Band Council know what we can negotiate with Trillium Mines, and what is not up for negotiation.

Andrew: (triumphantly)
Maybe we should bring this up in class tomorrow, eh Jake? Maybe if we get other kids in the community involved we could get in there and stand up for what we want!

Jake: First we have to figure out what we want.

Andrew: (smiling)
True...and right now, my friend, there is nothing I want more than a great big slice of my Nokomis' blueberry pie.

Sarah: (relieved)
Well, at least we can all agree on something!!

The End

Mining Comes to Ogimokwe

Thought Bubble Organizer

Using the Thought Bubble Organizer, identify the unique perspectives each character has towards mining on their traditional territories, and the evidence presented in the script.

<p>Rita Toulouse or “Nokomis”: The Grandmother, who is also a community Elder</p>	<p>Perspective:</p> <p>Evidence:</p>
<p>Sarah Solomon: Rita’s daughter, who is also a Band Council employee</p>	<p>Perspective:</p> <p>Evidence:</p>

<p>Joe Solomon: Rita's son who lives and works in Toronto as a salesman for a large industrial company</p>	<p>Perspective:</p> <p>Evidence:</p>
<p>Catherine Morriseau: Sarah's friend who is a single mother of three and currently out of work</p>	<p>Perspective:</p> <p>Evidence:</p>

<p>Andrew Solomon: Sarah's teenage son</p>	<p>Perspective:</p> <p>Evidence:</p>
<p>Jake Beaucage: Andrew's best friend</p>	<p>Perspective:</p> <p>Evidence:</p>

Andrew was undecided about the mining project at the end of the script. Using the letter-writing template below, organize your thoughts and write a letter from Andrew's perspective, expressing your opinion on the mining project.

Date	
Salutation	Dear
Introduction Say who you are and why you are writing.	
Introduce the Evidence Review the different perspectives raised at the dinner table.	
Make a Commitment Now that you have heard all the sides, where do you stand and why?	
Conclusion Restate the purpose of the letter and your perspective/ thank reader for their time.	
Closing Yours sincerely, etc.	
Signature	