**Social Studies Inquiry Centre: Cognitive Maps**

Geography from Human and/or Behavioural Geographers Lens

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| **Course/Class:**  Social Studies 9 | **Unit 2:** Geographic Influences | **Date:** January 30th, 2020 |
| **Topic:** Cognitive Maps | **Theme:** ‘Canadian Identity’ | **Grade:** 9 |

**Background:** A Cognitive map is a mental representation of one’s physical environment.

Cognitive maps can give insight to a person’s points of view, understanding, perception, biases and influences of a geographic area. Cognitive maps can be a window into someone’s spatial knowledge that is embedded in their memory and helps geographers understand human’s perception of space, shape, distance and time. It can also give insight into how humans reference their environment such as physical and non-physical elements.

The importance of cognitive mapping is that it can help human geographers to understand how humans view and move throughout their environment and relay vital information such as how “readable” an area is. Also, design professionals are interested in understanding cognitive mapping because it can give them insight into transportation planning and design. Lastly, people use cognitive maps on a daily to travel to and from work, to moving in their office, to walking their dog. It’s a vital part of how humans internally navigate their surroundings.

**Lesson Objectives**: Students will have a basic understanding of a Cognitive map and its purpose and importance. They will be able to relate how a cognitive map can be a window into their own personal understanding of Canadian geography such as basic features, landscape and elements. Students will be able to critically analyse their own work and others. Students will demonstrate communication skills when examining their work and others.

**Curriculum Relevance**: This inquiry center relates and meets two curricular outcomes:

9.2.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the basic features of Canada’s landscape and climate

9.2.2 Analyse the effects of selected geographic factors on Canadian identity.

The cognitive map can be a beginning activity to see where students are in demonstrating their understanding of basic features of Canada’s landscape. Having students physical draw a cognitive map of Canada, it can give the teacher a window into their students understanding of Canada geographically, but also elements that relate to Canadian identity. Students physically drawing and analysing their own and other cognitive maps give them an authentic experience of human and behavioural geography.

**Procedure & Materials:** Students will receive one piece of blank paper and writing utensils.

**Step 1**: They will be asked to draw a map of Canada from memory.

In their map they can include and are not limited to adding in

* Provinces, Territories & Capitals
* Landscape and basic features
* Landmarks and elements
* Some Personal touches: trips, home, school, recreational, family/friends, etc.

\*Students may put as much or little detail as necessary to them.

**Step 2:** Peer Evaluations. Students would share their cognitive map of Canada to a partner.

Students may wish to compare and contrast their maps. They may discuss what their maps says about their knowledge of Canada geographically and perceptually. They may discuss the size and shapes, common landmarks, cities, Anchor points and Personal Points.

**Step 3**: Group Discussion. What’s not on the map? What does that say or indicate about your perception of Canada? What does your map say about your geographic understanding? Does this exercise give you a personal window into someone’s Canadian influences?

**Step 4**: Wrap up. How do geographers use Cognitive maps? Are they something we use every day?

**Extension Activity:** German students cognitive map of Canada. Online I found a website that talks about cognitive maps of Canada from German students. In the document it breaks down what the maps collectively say about what these students know about Canada geographically. I would be interested in placing the images on a slide and allowing my students to analyse them themselves. I would want my students to ask questions like, what does their maps say about their understanding of Canadian Geography? Is there a common theme? What does it say, or does it say anything about their understanding of Canadian identity? I would what them to think critically about what’s being presented.

**Link**: <https://journals.openedition.org/lisa/2710>

*\*If you Scroll down in the document of the link, you can find the images of the German student’s cognitive maps of Canada*

**References**

Golledge, Reginald G. and Garling, Tommy (2004) ‘Cognitive Maps and Urban Travel” in *Handbook of Transport Geography and Spatial Systems,* Edited by D.A. Hensher et al. Elsevier, Ltd.

Lynch, Kevin (1960). ‘City Elements that Create Images in our Mind’

Weston, Lisa and Handy, Susan (2004) “Mental Maps” in *Handbook of Transport Geography and Spatial Systems,* Edited by D.A. Hensher et al. Elsevier, Ltd.