First Nations People always treated their working dogs well. If you treat your dog with respect he will respect you and he will be ready to care for you, protect you, and have fun with you.
Dogs were used as pack animals. They carried packs on their backs or pulled a travois when it was time to move seasonal camps. The travois has been used for thousands of years because it is simple to make and it is rugged. Dogs were the first working animals to pull a travois. They were strong and could pull a lot of weight a long way. You could load up to 250 pounds on a travois and the dog would still pull it.

Traditionally, we had a relationship with our dogs that was one of respect and caring; we helped each other out. Dogs played important roles in our families, our communities and our nations.

Dogs were treated differently in the times of our grandparents and great grandparents because they had jobs to do. Grandmother Lee Maracle had Salish dogs as a child. Listen as she tells us about her dad’s dog.

Use the QR code or go to the link to hear the story.

www.ifaw.org/maracle4

Dogs were used to help us hunt.

Dogs were used as pack animals. They carried packs on their backs or pulled a travois when it was time to move seasonal camps. The travois has been used for thousands of years because it is simple to make and it is rugged. Dogs were the first working animals to pull a travois. They were strong and could pull a lot of weight a long way. You could load up to 250 pounds on a travois and the dog would still pull it.

How do we carry heavy loads today?
Connect the dots to see what we use.
Dog Sleds: First Nations Travel in Winter

Sleds are best known by their Algonquian name: toboggan. Our tie with the land is deep and before roads were made, it would have been hard to survive through the winter without the toboggan.

A dog team pulling a toboggan meant that you could pull firewood back to camp and also go to hunt large animals and be able to bring the catch back home.

Dogs may need a warm blanket in the winter so they do not get too cold. This dog blanket with bells on it and beading designs was made in Yukon by a Gwich’in craftsperson between 1907 and 1913. It was used on a sled dog.

In the winter, dogs’ feet are always in contact with the frozen ground when they are outside. Did you know that some First Nations have a tradition of making moccasins for dog feet? These traditional dog moccasins were made by Mrs. Albert Isaac of the Southern Tutchone nation in the Yukon.

Draw some things in the picture that could help the dog stay warm and do his work well.
Kwey Thomas Louttit

Thomas Louttit is a member of the Moose Cree Band on James Bay. His dad worked for the Ontario Northland Railroad. He is the second oldest of nine children and he spent his childhood living in Moose Factory, Ontario. At five years of age, Thomas was sent to the Fort Albany residential school. In 1994, he went back to school to become a counsellor. He learned from the Elders and has been helping with men's healing circles and conducting a sweat lodge to help people heal. He speaks in classrooms from grade school to universities about his experiences through residential school.

Kwey! My name is Thomas Louttit, and I am now a grandfather. When I was young, we lived on a little island on Moose Factory River. We had many dogs to help us. Our dogs were tied up in our backyard and we took good care of them.

We needed our dogs to help us get wood and we had to cross the river in the winter time. We had a dog team of eight dogs pulling the sleigh and it was a trip of ten kilometers to go get wood. So we walked across the river, chopped logs and filled the sleigh. They were pretty powerful dogs and they pulled the sleigh like there was nothing on it. We didn’t ride on the sleigh because it is not for us to ride; we just used it to pull our wood and the dogs would pull that weight back to our house on the Island.

You may listen to “Thomas and His Sled Dogs” by using this QR code or link.

www.ifaw.org/louttit
We got to the cutting area and we cut and loaded the toboggan while the dogs got to rest a bit.

We value the work our dogs do so we don’t push our dogs. We don’t use whips or straps to get them going, we just use language. My dad taught me how to use a gentle voice to talk to the dogs. We said, “oit, oit!” and that means “go, go!” That’s all we say in a kind voice.

After that long day of work, we would go and sit with our dogs and talk to them. We would tell them how much we appreciate them. We would show them the feelings we have for them and that we were thankful they did all that work.
Nowadays when I go back to the island, I don’t see many dogs any more; they have gotten rid of the dogs. I don’t like that very much. The machines are taking over. I remember my uncle many years back, he said: “We’re losing our dogs. The machines are taking over. That’s what is going to happen.” And he was right.

Now when I go home, I see that all the old people – they always talk to their dogs and never yell at them, nor kick them, nor be mean. We should remember how to use dogs and how to treat them well so that if gas runs out and machines break down, we will be able to get wood or a hunt’s catch.

We also made a big meal of boiled fish. We would put porridge and lots of lard with the fish and they would eat it.

All evening they would rest from the day’s work and get enough rest for the next day when we would work again. When we got wood for the entire winter that’s what we did every day. We used the dogs in that good way. If you’re nice to them, if you talk to them, they’ll treat you good as well. They will work hard to help you because you have shown kindness, treated them with respect and taken care of them.

Dogs can be used in a good way still.
Working Dogs Today

Our communities now use machines, such as snowmobiles and ATVs. We don’t use dogs like we used to, but if we can find them a job to do, they will be glad to help. In other places dogs are trained to do special work.

Meet Captain George Leonard

Captain George Leonard, who is Anishinaabe, founded the MSAR (Meghan Search and Rescue) and Courageous Companions programs. George is a dog trainer who trains service dogs that work with soldiers who have returned home from war. Listen to his story about Stinky, a wise service dog.

Service Dogs

Service dogs do jobs for someone who has special needs. You can recognize a service dog by the special harness that he wears. Service dogs have been trained to know that when they have a harness on, they are working. They know that they can play and goof around when they do not wear their harness.

Sniffer Dogs

A sniffer dog will search for hidden items that she has been trained to find. In the military, there is a need for dogs that can smell explosives and other weapons. Dogs also work in airports to smell things that are not allowed on airplanes. These dogs may sit and bark when they find something that is not allowed.

Tracker Dogs

Dogs can be taught how to follow a person’s scent and find people who have become lost in the bush. Some tracker dogs work with police forces while others work with special search and rescue teams like Captain George Leonard’s Elite K9 service.

How does a dog smell and track? Captain George Leonard tells us that we humans have 5 million scent receptors in our nose and a dog has 240 million scent receptors!
Bravery is an important teaching for both people and dogs. Bravery is when someone goes into a dangerous situation or handles fear or pain well. We often consider working dogs and service dogs to be brave to do their daily jobs. A brave dog might help find someone who is missing. A dog with courage will protect the people he knows.

Think about what you have learned about working dogs. Ask yourself these questions:

• When have I seen a dog who is working?
• How should we treat working dogs?
• How have my feelings about dogs changed?

1. ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

Information for Parents and Community Members

This activity book is about dogs and First Nations. It has been written by First Nations for First Nations. It is about how many of the First Peoples of North America have lived with dogs for a long time. Readers will meet Elders and others who share their stories about dogs and about caring for dogs. All of these people love and respect dogs, and they have shared their ideas about dogs with us. All are First Nations (Stó:lo, Moose Cree, Anishinaabe). We are proud to have them share about our peoples and our good ways with dogs.

IFAW—the International Fund for Animal Welfare—rescues and protects animals around the world. IFAW rescues individual animals and works to prevent cruelty to animals. IFAW speaks out for the protection of wildlife and their habitats.

IFAW also inspires young people to care about the welfare of animals and the environment.

IFAW knows that communities benefit from healthy and happy dogs and cats. IFAW reduces dog and cat suffering from cruelty and neglect by providing care to animals and support to communities around the world, including First Nations.