Grade 10, 11, 12: Teachers Zone
Focus: Language and Culture
Aboriginal Studies 10: Aboriginal Symbolism and Expression
Aboriginal Studies 11: Schooling and Cultural Change
Aboriginal Studies 12: Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian Society

Topic: Understanding the relationship between language and culture, and the impact of contact on culture

Lesson Plan 1: Learning About Language

Generalization
Language is interwoven with culture and history

Rationale
Provides students with the opportunity to explore the relationships amongst culture, language and history

Objectives
Knowledge
• An understanding of the relationship between language and culture and the impact of history on language
• Learn about language and culture

Skills
• Learn the meanings and history behind Aboriginal language as spoken today

Attitude
• Demonstrate an understanding of differences in Aboriginal languages and the impact of cultural and societal change on language

Teacher Information
Some of the core aspects of traditional Aboriginal life are represented within language. At the point of contact, the language acquires and adapts new words. History is shown both through language and the use of language during periods of history. Encourage students to adapt the examples given to explore their own language. You will need to access a resource that will help with language if the teacher is not familiar with common words. It will not be necessary to examine a large number of words from an Aboriginal language, however it is important to be able to understand the meaning behind the words.

Some suggested resources:
• Mother Tongue: available through ACCESS BPN# 759203
The Algonquian language family is reportedly the largest language family and consists of language groups such as Cree, Blackfoot, Algonquin and Micmac. Each individual language group can have separate dialects, like the Cree which contains five dialects. Of these five dialects, only two are spoken in Alberta today—by the Woodland Cree in Northern Alberta and the Plains Cree in Central Alberta. This lesson focuses specifically on Plains Cree dialect ‘Y’. The Cree language is a descriptive language, so often there is no way translate certain words. All together, there are 26 Cree speaking regions in Alberta.

The letter ‘P’ in the Cree language blends ‘P’ and ‘B’. ‘T’ is a blend of ‘T’ and ‘D’, therefore there are no ‘sh’ or ‘th’ sounds in the Cree language.

Obly Cree, Ojibwa and Inuktitut are currently considered to be flourishing.

**Main Lesson**

Students will be examining culture and a single word. In Cree, the word for sun is ‘pisim’ and the world for clock is ‘pisimohkan’ or false sun. With many Aboriginal languages there is an understanding of living and non-living things. Aboriginal People existed within a living system and were respectful of the life around them.

Have students list some of the traditional values within their community.

List some examples on the board such as
- Tree
- Rock
- Mother Earth
- Water

What do these examples mean to the students?

Find someone in the class who can share the meaning of these Aboriginal words or invite someone into the classroom to share.

What do the terms animate and inanimate mean?

1. **Animate**: animate refers to objects/items considered to have living form. Examples are plants, people, animals, some foods, some fruits and certain household items.
2. **Inanimate**: inanimate refers to objects/items that have non-living forms such as curtains or a door.

Does the student’s language provide examples of words that show a respect for living and non-living things?
Do some of those words show a relationship to traditional culture and a respect for life around us?

*Supplementary Lesson*
At the point of contact, new words were developed for describing or communicating with newcomers. For example, the word ‘pisimohkan’ means false sun.

What words from your language show this introduction of inanimate life? What are the words from your language to represent
- Pizza
- Table
- Money

What can we learn from the impact of contact on language?

*Supplementary Lesson*
There was also the introduction of French and the development of Michif, the language commonly used by Métis people. Some French words are now common such as ‘Mama’ for mother or ‘Le The’ for tea.

What examples do you have of English and/or French words which are in common usage?