Lesson 2: A Period of Silence
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 of language and culture and the impact of contact on culture

Generalization
Language is interwoven with culture and history

Rationale
Students have the opportunity to explore the relationships amongst culture, language and history

Objectives
Knowledge
• Understand the impact of residential schools on Aboriginal languages
• Recognize that being unable to communicate in a specific language contributes to feelings of isolation and loneliness
• Interpret various maps of Aboriginal language groups in Alberta

Skills
• Practice re-interpreting and integrating maps into their own work
• Predict how the languages spoken in Alberta will change over time

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

Teacher Information
Generally speaking, residential schools are viewed in a negative light. Aboriginal students were stripped of all forms of cultural identity. Boys and girls hair were forced to cut or shave their hair, and it was forbidden to speak their own language. They were often secluded from their own brothers and sisters who attended the same school, and in many instances given Christian names. Since the importance of language to culture is paramount, the fact that many Aboriginal children were not allowed to speak their mother tongue resulted in the inability to communicate in their traditional language at all. This was incredibly damaging for many Aboriginal communities across Alberta.

Main Lesson
In residential schools, many Aboriginal people were prevented from speaking their native language, resulting in feelings of loneliness and isolation. It was a time when many traditional languages were almost lost.

Using a map of Alberta, map the areas where the different traditional languages are spoken today.

Using a map of Alberta, map the areas where the traditional languages were spoken before colonization.

How does this reflect the impact of colonization on language?

Complete a map that shows your reflection/prediction on how what languages will be spoken in Alberta in 50 years.

**Supplementary Lesson**
Using poster board, have students create scenes from pre-colonization and post-colonization and label as many parts of the scenes with the language from our community.

What do the students think will be lost if a particular language is lost?

What steps are being taken in the students’ communities to maintain their traditional language?

What role can the student/class play in helping to strengthen their traditional language?

**Supplementary Lesson**
Working in small groups or as a whole (depending on class size) students will create a board game that demonstrates the periods of time in Alberta and the impact of language.