Lesson Plan 1: Sharing Stories and Passing down History

Generalization
Families keep traditions that have been passed down from their parents and grandparents.

Rationale
Students in Grade 1 begin will be introduced to the concept that not all families are the same. There are many differences amongst families including spiritual beliefs and values, cultural values, and methods for transmitting knowledge. Students will be introduced to the special traditions Aboriginal families have that allow them to pass on spiritual knowledge and stories of creation.

Objectives
Knowledge
- Become aware of differences amongst families
- Gain an understanding of oral history and how it an important tradition in Aboriginal families
- Recognize ways in which the students family passes down traditions

Skills
- Create a simple family tree
- Share with others some of their family traditions
- Interpret an oral story and illustrate what they felt the story shared
- Develop self-esteem as they become comfortable sharing information with other students

Attitude
- Recognize that in general families have similarities and differences
- Develop a positive attitude towards peers and recognize that each individual has talents
- Develop pride in accomplishments

Teacher Information
Aboriginal families have a unique way of sharing information and traditions known as oral history. Oral history is a method of sharing one’s history, culture and traditions through the use of stories and legends. Aboriginal People have used oral history as the primary means of passing information from one generation to the next. It is important to share stories and legends accurately to properly preserve their initial purpose, lesson, meaning and intent. Oral history shares aspects of the customs and traditions that people practiced in the past and is a tool to
ensure that many of these customs and traditions are practiced in today’s families and communities.

Aboriginal Peoples have their own views on how the world, people, animals, and all the worlds objects were created. These views change from one Aboriginal group to the other and oral history is the primary means that Elders chose to share many of these sacred and important stories.

Oral history is an Aboriginal way of documenting history from the beginning of time as they did not have a formal written history until contact with Europeans.

The circle is an important symbol in Aboriginal culture as it represents interconnectedness, equality and continuity. Circles are non-hierarchal and inclusive, and are one of the main tenants of Aboriginal worldview and belief systems. Circles are found throughout nature. For instance, the sun and seasons start in the east and move clockwise to the south, west and north.

**Introductory activity**
Organize the students in a circle either sitting on the floor together or moving the desks into a circular formation. Share with students why the circle is an important symbol in Aboriginal culture. Distribute a blank sheet of paper and colouring materials to the students and ask them to draw as many things they can think of in nature that are in the shape of a circle. After they have finished, discuss how the different things they depicted. Try and use this activity to make the connection between the spiritual importance of the circle.

**Main Lesson**
From the worksheet section, print off enough copies of the “My Family Tree” worksheet for the students. Have students fill out the simple family tree. Once completed, ask them to share with one another the ways in which their own families share their history. Do their parents or grandparents tell them stories? Do they read about their history in a story book? By looking at pictures?

Ask the students if they have any ideas about how the world and all its beings were formed. Where did they hear these stories? Who told them? How do the stories share with us how we should behave? Do the stories tell us special things about other people, animals or the environment?

Many Aboriginal stories tell of the early days of creation and send a specific message about how human people should interact with different animals and natural elements. Read the following Blackfoot story to the students as an example of oral history and why families would pass down this information from generation to generation.

**Makoi-yohsokayi: The Wolf Trail**
Makoiyi, the wolves, were the first Earth Beings to pity us. One winter, when our people were starving, a young man and his family camped by themselves as they searched for food. The wolves found the family and appeared to them as young men bringing fresh meat to the tipi. The wolves took this family with them, showing the man how to cooperate with other people when he hunted buffalo and other animals. The wolves told our ancestors that animals with hoofs and horns were all right to eat, but that animals with paws and claws should be left alone.

The wolves disappeared in the spring, but we still see them in the sky as makoi-yohsokoyi, the Wolf Train (the Milky Way). These stars constantly remind us of how we should live together.

After you have read the story to the students, ask them to identify what important messages the story is sharing. Encourage all of the students to become involved in the discussion.

Supplementary Lesson
As a follow-up activity, students could draw their interpretation of the story. Hang these around the classroom for art decoration.

Supplementary Lesson
Develop a ‘New Word Wall’ and introduce students to the words ‘oral history’, ‘creation stories’, ‘legends’, ‘myths’, ‘family’, ‘generation’ and any other terms you deem important.

Supplementary Lesson
Students can identify and draw an important story that is shared in their own family about creation, or a specific lesson or rule to live by. Once the student has illustrated their story, have them share it with their classmates.