Lesson Plan 1: Changing Communities

**Generalization**
Changes in my community have taken place in the past, are taking place today and will occur in the future.

**Rationale**
At this grade level, it is important to introduce students to the idea that many communities exist outside their own. It is also an opportunity for students to learn that Aboriginal communities exist throughout Alberta and have undergone significant changes since the pre-contact era, throughout the early fur trade and settlement eras, and that many changes continue to affect Aboriginal communities today.

**Objectives**

**Knowledge**
- Recognize that Aboriginal communities were impacted by the fur trade, settlement, changes in technology, treaties and the railway
- Understand how communities continue to change
- Make connections between settlement and its affect on Aboriginal culture and traditions

**Skills**
- Participate in group and in-class discussions as active members in the learning process
- Develop computer research skills
- Understand the difference between primary and secondary resources
- Develop reading comprehension skills

**Attitude**
- Develop an appreciation for Aboriginal culture and traditions
- Accept and appreciate differing opinions

**Materials**
- Dene poem samples
- Dene music
- *Worksheets* - Dene Questions, Dene Portrait and Dene People word search
- Crayons, markers, etc. for illustration-portrait box worksheet
**Teacher Information**

The Dene were a northern nomadic tribe whose territory stretched from the Churchill river north to the tundra, and from Hudson Bay in the east to Great Slave Lake and part of Alberta in the west. Fur traders who worked for the Hudson’s Bay Company often referred to the Dene as ‘northern Indians.’ The Dene are also known as Chipewyan (meaning ‘pointy skins’), a name given to them by the Cree and which referred to the distinctive pointy tails on their long over-shirts. The Dene, which means ‘the people,’ speak a distinct form of the Algonquian language group.

Compared with modern societies, the Dene appear to have had few formal internal social or governmental structures. Their language characterized them as a community and their leadership was flexible and loosely defined. Dene culture valued personal freedom and, unlike most other Plains peoples, demonstrated no system of organized warfare—although they did consider both the Cree and the Inuit to be enemies. After the arrival of the first Europeans in their region, the Chipewyan population was decimated by smallpox, which claimed a reported 90 percent of the population. In 1898 the Dene signed Treaty 8, along with the Cree and Beaver. Under the terms of the treaty the Dene were allowed to obtain land in individual allotments as they shared no official community and did not wish to confine themselves to reserves.

The Caribou was an important animal to Dene culture. They designed elaborate ‘Caribou Rounds’, also known as ‘Deer Hedges’ by Europeans, to trap and slaughter the caribou. The Dene also engaged in fishing, snared small animals (typically a woman’s job), and collected berries, nuts, roots and leafy foods. They lived in domes (tents) that were constructed with poles and covered in caribou hides or moose skin. At the time of European contact, copper was already in use by the Dene people for fashioning hatchets, ice chisels, bayonets, knives and arrowheads. The Dene also used a transportation device known as the ‘Chipewyan sled’ that was constructed of caribou skin and wood with the front end turned up in a semi-circle. Even though the Dene had domesticated dogs, they were not used for hauling.

Although tasks were divided according to gender, women held equal status in Dene society and carried out a number of important tasks. Women would often pull the Chipewyan sled and both men and women would carry loads on their backs. They were also responsible for preparing meals, butchering animals and distributing the meat, producing clothing and utensils, and hauling possessions when the camp was on the move.

**Introductory Activity**

Read at least one Dene poem which tells a story about life in the past. You may want to select more than one poem to provide students with a few different perspectives. Have students identify differences between modern society and the lifestyle of the Dene people.
Main Lesson
Distribute the Dene Questions - worksheet which highlights important facts about the Dene people and their culture. Ask students to illustrate one of the Dene activities that you described. They may want to draw more than one picture, or one large picture that shows the Dene people engaged in several different activities.

Students will also receive a Dene Portrait - worksheet containing a portrait box in which they will draw a picture of what they think the Dene may have looked like many years ago. Encourage them to be creative and express themselves using colour and images.

Supplementary Lesson
Aboriginal People, including the Dene, used songs to tell stories. Some songs tell a true story from the past. Play some traditional songs for the students, either during the above activity or separately. If you choose to do the song activity separately, students may listen to songs and then draw pictures to illustrate the events being described. You may want to provide a copy of the lyrics for students to sing or read along with.

Provide students with the Dene People Word Search- worksheet below which requires them to find words that describe aspects of Dene origins and culture. This activity could be used to supplement the above activities or as an introductory activity.
Dene Questions

1. What is another name for the Dene?

2. In what area of Alberta did they reside?

3. Did the Dene sign any treaties?

4. What was the most important animal to the Dene way of life?

5. What was a ‘Chipewyan sled’?

6. What were some of the women’s responsibilities?

7. What language group do the Dene belong to?

8. What does Dene mean?

9. Who did the Dene consider enemies?

10. What was a ‘Caribou round’?
Dene People Word Search

CARIBOUCJFNTSNEDEUZRMAZPIRGA
GLYFFEBCRoskedV
VNNXHRJOJIVSASQK
NMOTHPANBDZETBK
HARMPUTZ0ZYSYDK
MOYEAYHPUSPOALF
NHRWSDSHTCR00YX
CESKEYIFOBNMJSV
VXXICAPICUNVZFUPE
ENLVRPILNHXIDTJ
SUUHRQHDGMLK1
WKHNYIQPCQQVKOHI
RXDOCMBZLWBBKSME
ELPOEPEHTXRTYDJ

CARIBOU
CARIBOOUROUND
CHIPEWYAN
COPPER
DENE
MOOSESKIN
NOMADIC
NORTHERN
POINTYSKINS
THEPEOPLE
TREATY