Grade 10 – Teacher Zone
Aboriginal Social Studies Enrichment Unit

Topic 1: Origin and Settlement of First Nation People in North America

Lesson Plan 1: Exploring Origin Theories

Rationale
There are opposing views as to the origin of Aboriginal People in America and it is important to the study of Canada’s First Nations that students understand the different theories. It is imperative that students understand that these are in fact archeological and scientific theories and that many First Nations people reject them as they have their own oral histories that tell of their Creation.

Objectives
Knowledge
- Demonstrate an understanding of the different theories of origin of First Nation People in North America by researching, analyzing and comparing (debating) the major theories
- Recognize that there are attributes and flaws to each of the major origin theories
- Define the key terms and concepts in relation to First Nations origin theories

Skills
- Acquire information using print, audio-visual and library resources
- Record/organize information in note form
- Analyze and evaluate information, including detecting bias and distinguishing fact from opinion
- Debate issues effectively
- Develop the skills necessary for composing an argument

Attitude
- Work at individual tasks in a group situation
- Cooperate in decision making
- Accept differing opinions
- Respect for and appreciation of Aboriginal history/society
**Teacher Information**
This lesson will probably require several class periods to produce a quality debate. Prior to this lesson or mini-unit, students should be made aware of the rules governing a debate. Students will then be introduced to different stories about Turtle Island. Some students may have their own story that they would like to share with the class. This should be encouraged.

The Story of Turtle Island
Traditional Story of Onondaga
(The Earth on Turtle's Back)
This is just one story about Turtle Island. The following presents an educational opportunity to relate First Nations concepts about our existence and the world around us, especially our deteriorating environment.

Long ago, before the Earth was here, all was water. Many creatures lived in the water, swimming about.

Far above the clouds, there was, however, a land where there lived a powerful chief. His wife was going to have a baby. In that Sky, land was a great tree with four large roots, stretching out to each of the four sacred directions, and bearing many kinds of fruits and flowers. One night the chief's wife dreamed that the great tree had been uprooted. The chief perceived that this was a dream of great power, and thus must be fulfilled. With great effort, the tree was uprooted, leaving a large hole in the sky. The chief's wife leaned to look through the hole, but lost her balance and fell. Grasping at the tree as she fell, she only managed to hold onto a handful of seeds. The water creatures below saw her falling. They realized that she was not a water creature and tried desperately to think of a way to help her.

"I have heard," said one, "that there is earth far below the waters. Perhaps we should try to get some for her to stand upon." One by one the animals tried to dive down far enough to retrieve land, but one by one they failed. Finally brave little muskrat tried one last time.

Deeper and deeper she dove until her little lungs almost burst. Suddenly she found a bit of land. Scooping it up, she frantically swam to the surface. But alas, where to put the land?

Turtle said, "Put it on my back. I will hold up the Land and the Sky Woman."
And so they did. Sky woman landed safely on Turtle's back and was very thankful. She cast the seeds about. The Land became ever so beautiful. Some people call that land "America."

Adapted from The Mishomis Book; The Voice of the Ojibway, by Edward Benton-Banai
There are many different versions of the origin of this American Aboriginal oral tradition. For the Ojibway/Anishinabe people, the legend is as follows.

Long ago, after the Great Mystery, or Kitchi-Manitou, first peopled the earth, the Anishinabe, or Original People, strayed from their harmonious ways and began to argue and fight with one another. Brother turned against brother and soon the Anishinabe were killing one another over hunting grounds and others disagreements. Seeing that harmony, brotherhood, sisterhood, and respect for all living things no longer prevailed on Earth, Kitchi-Manitou decided to purify the Earth. He did this with water.

The water came in the form of a great flood, or mush-ko'-be-wun', upon the Earth destroying the Anishinabe people and most of the animals as well. Only Nanaboozhoo, the central figure in many of the Anishinabe oral traditions, was able to survive the flood, along with a few animals and birds who managed to swim and fly. Nanaboozhoo floated on a huge log searching for land, but none was to be found as the Earth was now covered by the great flood. Nanaboozhoo allowed the remaining animals and birds to take turns resting on the log as well. Finally, Nanaboozhoo spoke.

“I am going to do something,” he said. “I am going to swim to the bottom of this water and grab a handful of earth. With this small bit of Earth, I believe we can create a new land for us to live on with the help of the Four Winds and Kitchi-Manitou.”

So Nanaboozhoo dived into the water and was gone for a long time. Finally he surfaced, and short of breath told the animals that the water is too deep for him to swim to the bottom. All were silent. Finally, Mahng, the Loon spoke up. “I can dive under the water for a long way, that is how I catch my food. I will try to make it to the bottom and return with some Earth in my beak.”

The Loon disappeared and was gone for a very long time. Surely, thought the others, the Loon must have drowned. Then they saw him float to the surface, weak and nearly unconscious. “I couldn't make it, there must be no bottom to this water,” he gasped. Then Zhing-gi-biss, the helldiver came forward and said “I will try next, everyone knows I can dive great distances.” So the helldiver went under. Again, a very long time passed and the others thought he was surely drowned. At last he too floated to the surface. He was unconscious, and not till he came to could he relate to the others that he too was unable to fetch the Earth from the bottom.

Many more animals tried but failed, including Zhon-gwayzh’, the mink, and even Mi-zhee-kay,” the turtle. All failed and it seemed as though there was no way to get the much needed Earth from the bottom. Then a soft muffled voice was heard. “I can do it,” it spoke softly. At first no one could see who it was that spoke up. Then, the little Wa-zhushk”, muskrat stepped forward. “I'll try,” he repeated. Some of the other, bigger, more powerful animals laughed at muskrat. Nanaboozhoo spoke up. “Only Kitchi-Manitou can place judgment on others. If muskrat wants to try, he should be allowed to.”

So, muskrat dove into the water. He was gone much longer than any of the others who tried to reach the bottom. After a while Nanaboozhoo and the other animals were certain that muskrat had give his life trying to reach the bottom. Far below the water's surface, muskrat, had in fact reached the bottom. Very weak from lack of air, he grabbed some Earth in his paw and with all
the energy he could muster began to swim for the surface. One of the animals spotted muskrat as he floated to the surface. Nanaboozhoo pulled him up onto the log. “Brothers and sisters,” Nanaboozhoo said, “muskrat went too long without air, he is dead.” A song of mourning and praise was heard across the water as muskrat's spirit passed on to the spirit world. Suddenly Nanaboozhoo exclaimed, “Look, there is something in his paw!” Nanaboozhoo carefully opened the tiny paw. All the animals gathered close to see what was held so tightly there. Muskrat's paw opened and revealed a small ball of Earth. The animals all shouted with joy. Muskrat sacrificed his life so that life on Earth could begin anew.

Nanaboozhoo took the piece of Earth from Muskrat's paw. Just then, the turtle swam forward and said, “Use my back to bear the weight of this piece of Earth. With the help of Kitchi-Manitou, we can make a new Earth.” Nanaboozhoo put the piece of Earth on the turtle's back. Suddenly, the wind blew from each of the Four Directions, The tiny piece of Earth on the turtle's back began to grow. It grew and grew and grew until it formed a mi-ni-si’, or island in the water. The island grew larger and larger, but still the turtle bore the weight of the Earth on his back. Nanaboozhoo and the animals all sang and danced in a widening circle on the growing island. After a while, the Four Winds ceased to blow and the waters became still. A huge island sat in the middle of the water, and today that island is known as North America.

Traditional Aboriginal People, including the Ojibway, hold special reverence for the turtle who sacrificed his life and made life possible for the Earth's second people. To this day, the muskrat has been given a good life. No matter that marshes have been drained and their homes destroyed in the name of progress, the muskrat continues to survive and multiply. The muskrats do their part today in remembering the great flood; they build their homes in the shape of the little ball of Earth and the island that was formed from it.

**Introductory Activity**

Use the following questions to initiate and maintain class discussion

- What is a theory?
- What are some theories that you know of?
- What is the difference between fact and opinion?
- How does it apply to theories?
- Why do you think North America is sometimes called Turtle Island?
- Share some of the different Aboriginal stories regarding Turtle Island. Why is it important to Aboriginal People? Have students formulate a theory for that and share it.

At this point students should have a clear understanding of the various theories, and recognize that even though some are based on archaeological evidence, they nevertheless remain theories.
Main Lesson

Place students into small research/debate groups (two to three people) for the next part of the lesson. Explain that they will be assigned a First Nation theory of origin, and that they will research, analyze and argue either for the pros or the cons of the theory. They will be able to use the Internet and any print for resources. Students will most likely have questions at this point, so make sure everyone is clear on the task before letting them loose in the computer lab or library. Ideally you want to ensure that all of the theories are being researched by a “for” team and an “against” team to facilitate a proper debate. Help guide students through the vast amount of material they will encounter, to keep them on task. Try to get groups to search out information on their theories from a number of different sources so that they do not rely on one site or piece of text. This way they can compare and contrast the information that they find and generate a well-rounded argument.

After the research is complete, prepare for the actual debate.

The debate format is as follows

Making A Case
1. Each group should be allowed five-10 minutes to make their case
2. Prior to the debate, each group will type out a summary of their case and hand it out to the rest of the class
3. Each group should distribute the task among its members

Rebuttal
1. After each group has made their case, they will have two-three minutes to plan a rebuttal of their opponents case
2. Following the break, the “against” group will rebut by pointing out the flaws in their opponents’ arguments. The “for” side will then respond to these comments
3. Following this discussion, the “for” side will rebut by pointing out the flaws in their opponents’ argument and then the “con” side will respond to these comments

Closing Arguments
1. After the Teacher/Moderator signals the end of the rebuttal time, the two opposing sides will be given two to three minutes to put the finishing touches on their closing argument
2. The “for” side will start, followed by the “against” side

Use the debate format supplied above to get things rolling. Explain to students that the debate is not an opportunity to personally attack each other. Rather they need to attack the evidence instead. You will act as moderator, to ensure things go smoothly. After the debates, discuss with the class what they feel they’ve learned while participating and from the research process.

At this point, if time allows, you may want to let the class ask questions or make comments on the debate.
You may want to use a rubric to mark students and to give them a complete idea of what skills they are trying to formulate. Below are some informative links to help develop a rubric that suits the classroom atmosphere

http://webtech.kennesaw.edu/jpoynton/debate_rubric.htm
http://mh034.k12.sd.us/classroom_debate_rubric.htm
http://webster.commnet.edu/faculty/~title3/DebateRubric.htm
http://7-12educators.about.com/blrubricdebate.htm?once=true&