Lesson Plan 1: Aboriginal Families

Generalization
Families keep traditions that have been passed down from previous generations.

Rationale
Students should recognize important traditions, activities, events and celebrations that their own family celebrates. It is important that students recognize that not all families have the same traditions and celebrations. Aboriginal families have a unique method of sharing knowledge and ideas through the transmission of oral history. Students will be introduced to this concept and to the differences and similarities amongst families.

Objectives

Knowledge
- Recognize that Aboriginal families and communities have many similarities and differences
- Understand how oral history is used to share knowledge, ideas, customs and traditions
- Learn new words that describe Aboriginal culture and traditions

Skills
- Practice individual listening skills and group work
- Develop computer skills such as keyboard usage and basic Internet searching skills
- Identify aspects of their own family’s culture and traditions

Attitude
- Develop an appreciation and understanding of Aboriginal culture
- Learn to work well with others who hold differing opinions

Teacher Information
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 tell 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.
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**
Allow students to sit together in a circle. Read aloud a story about a young child learning from a grandparent or Elder. Make sure the story you chose illustrates a family tradition, ceremony or custom. When the story is over, have students discuss what they interpret the story to mean.

Some books that you may want to use are
- *Little White Cabin* by Ferguson Plain (Pemmican Publications)
- *Alfred’s Summer* by Darrell W. Pelletier (Gabriel Dumont Institute)
- *Bannock and Tea* by Vera Tremback (Saskatoon District Tribal Council)
- *The Crying Christmas Tree* by Allan Crow and David Beyer (Pemmican Publications)

**Main Lesson**
Shift the discussion to include traditions that are practiced in the students’ own homes and communities. Refer back to the story to highlight some of the Aboriginal traditions mentioned. Allow students to make comparisons between their own family and the one mentioned in the story. Ask students if they understand why they are sitting in a circle. Discuss the importance of the circle to Aboriginal culture. Next, introduce an object to serve as a ‘talking stick’. It could be a wooden spoon, ball or stuffed toy. Explain to students the importance of using a talking stick and the rules that govern its use (who ever is holding the talking stick has the right to speak whatever they feel, being careful not to hurt other peoples feelings, while the other students must listen respectfully). Share with students the concept of oral history and how it is important to Aboriginal culture. Ensure the students understand what oral history is. Pass around the talking stick and give each student a chance to share an example of oral history at work in their own family. You may need to provide students with an example from your own family.

**Supplementary Lesson**
Create a word wall and ask students to identify new words. Hang up the words in a place where all students can see them. Some words you may wish to include are: Aboriginal, oral history, traditions, talking stick, customs and talking circle.

**Supplementary Lesson**
Discuss the social and cultural importance of family and friends with the students. Help them identify customs and traditions that they have learned from other family members or people who are important to them. Distribute the ‘Important People In My Life’ worksheet (one large circle in the center surrounded by seven smaller circles—big enough to draw in). Students will draw a self-portrait in the central circle and then draw pictures of other important people in their lives. These people can be family members, friends, teachers, coaches, neighbors, or anyone significant in their lives. Once the students are finished, post the worksheets around the classroom.