

Grade 7-Teachers Zone

Topic A: Culture

Lesson Plan 1: Communication and Cultural Transmission

Generalization

Communication in all its forms is the means by which culture is learned.

Rationale

Communication can be expressed verbally or non-verbally in a variety of mediums. Aboriginal People across Canada have their own language groups and dialects, artistic forms, and have Aboriginal owned and or operated media outlets. Students will be introduced to the influence of these mediums upon Aboriginal culture.

Objectives

Knowledge

- Describe in detail an Aboriginal owned and/or controlled business and its contributions to maintaining and preserving Aboriginal culture
- Correctly identify the main Aboriginal language groups in Canada
- Define the concept of cultural heritage
- Develop awareness of the importance of communication mediums in defining culture

Skills

- Process and sort information in regards to classifying Aboriginal art forms and cultural influences
- Practice Internet search and retrieval skills
- Learn to write and understand words from the Plains Cree language group

Attitude

- Develop an interest in learning about the culture of Canada's Aboriginal Peoples
- Express respect for traditional Aboriginal art forms and skills

Introductory Activity

Break students into small groups and provide each with large piece of flip chart paper. Have students record what information they know about Aboriginal People under three primary headings—Language, Arts and Media. After each group has finished their chart, have them post them on the board at the front of the class and ask a representative from each group to share the gathered information. Facilitate a discussion about separating fact from fiction, and breaking down stereotypes. Lastly, as a class, decide on one or two things the students would like to learn about Aboriginal People under each category and add these to the lists. Make sure that the lists maintain presence in the classroom throughout the project.

Main Lesson

Divide the main lesson into three topic headings—Language, Media and the Arts. Instructors can choose to do all the lesson plans or focus on one of the three headings. It is recommended however that, to increase students' understanding, interest and awareness of Aboriginal culture, that all areas are addressed.

The first area focuses on language. The argument is often made that language is one of the most important factors in the transmission and maintenance of culture. Language reflects values and a distinct worldview that is in direct relation to the culture with which it is associated. Language is also an important symbol of group identity.

Teacher Information

(adapted from Laura Okemaw's Bush Land People Teacher's Guide)

There are approximately one million Canadians who claim Aboriginal descent. The Canadian Constitution outlines three categories of Aboriginal People: Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis. Aboriginals represent the most varied of the three groups with several separate languages and cultures. This lesson segment focuses primarily on Aboriginal languages and dialects. For the remainder of the lessons, Aboriginal People will be referred to interchangeably as Aboriginal, Native or First Nations.

The exact number of Aboriginal languages spoken at the time of European contact is unknown. This is for a number of reasons, including the fact that Aboriginal People did not communicate at this time using letters or numbers. In addition, early European traders often kept biased accounts of interactions with Aboriginal People and it is unlikely that they would have been able to record language dialects at that point. Many Aboriginal languages exist in a wide range of similar dialects, making classification a confusing and subjective task. However, at present time it is accepted that approximately 53 distinct Aboriginal languages exist in Canada. Many of these are related and are subsequently grouped into eleven language families.

The Algonquian language family is reportedly the largest language family and consists of language groups such as Cree, Blackfoot, Algonquin and Micmac. Each individual language group can have separate dialects, as is the case with Cree which contains five dialects. For the purpose of the lesson, the main focus will be on the Algonquian language family as it geographically covers a large portion of Southern Alberta, with the exception of the Micmac language group. It is important to note that only Cree, Ojibwa, and Inuktitut are currently considered to be flourishing with chances of survival.

The Cree language has five dialects. The first dialect students will be introduced to is the Plains Cree dialect 'Y'. The Cree language is a descriptive language, so often there is no way translate certain words. Students will have an opportunity to learn a few Cree words just for comparison and to grasp basic understanding of the language.

Lesson 1

On a blank map students will use an atlas and/or the *Culture and Its Meaning* website/CD-ROM to locate and map the 11 language families. Have students research the approximate numbers of people who speak the various languages.

On a blank map of Alberta, have students label (draw and designate) all of the languages spoken throughout the province.

As Cree is the largest language group in Alberta, students will learn a few simple words and phrases. This would be an excellent time to invite a Cree person within the community to provide a presentation on the Cree language. This will allow students to hear firsthand what the language sounds like, and how it is interwoven with culture. Students may also use the Student Zone of the *Culture and Its Meaning* website/CD-ROM to explore examples of the Cree language. Students will complete the following worksheets.

Getting to Know the Cree Language

1. How many Cree dialects are there? List. (5: Plains 'Y', Swampy 'N', Moose Cree 'L', Wood Cree 'TH', and Atihkamek Cree 'R')
2. List the consonants in the plains Cree language: (p, t, c, k, s, h, m, n)
3. List the vowels in the plains Cree language: (short: i, a, o long: î, â, ô, e)
4. What is a semi-vowel? How many are there? (there are two semi vowels 'w' and 'y')
5. What is a diphthong? (the sound that occurs when a vowel is combined with a semi-vowel w or y)

Translate the following words and phrases into Plains Cree

- Edmonton: _____ (amiskwacîwâskahikan)
(Beaver Mountain House)
- dog: _____ (atim)
- child: _____ (awâsis)
- deer: _____ (âpisimôsis)
- ice cream: _____ (cahkâs)
- yes: _____ (ehâ)
- reserve: _____ (iskonikan)
- woman: _____ (iskwew)
- fish: _____ (kinosew)

bus: _____ (kiskinohamâtôtâpânâsk)
it is morning: _____ (kîkisepâyâw)
corn: _____ (mahtâminak)
God: _____ (Man'tow)
to play: _____ (metawe)
horse: _____ (mistatim)
white person: _____ (môniyâw)
Cree language: _____ (nehiyawewin)
my younger brother/sister: _____ (nisîmis)
my friend: _____ (nitôtém)
teacher: _____ (okiskinohamâkew)

Distribute the following worksheet to students to be completed after they translate the English/Cree words.

What's in a Language?

1. Why do you think language is important?
2. What is the definition of language?
3. How is language a part of our culture?
4. Do you think all people should speak the same language? Why or why not?
5. Give an example of two words that describe your culture.
6. How would you feel if someone told you that you could no longer speak your own language and that you had to learn a new one?
7. What other languages would you like to learn?

Teacher Information

The section on media will focus on two aspects of the media

- How it portrays Aboriginal People
- A study of Aboriginal controlled media outlets.

It is important that students recognize how traditional mainstream media has created biases and stereotypes surrounding Aboriginal People and how over the past few decades Aboriginal People

have countered these negative views by developing their own culturally relevant media outlets including television, paper publications and radio programs.

Historically, the media has significantly contributed to and perpetuated negative stereotypes of Aboriginal People. Examples date back to some of the earliest movies. Everyone is familiar with the stereotypical image of an 'Indian' riding horseback scalping innocent European settlers. Hollywood, feeling perhaps a little guilty for this negative typecasting developed the token sidekick 'Indian'—always helpful and full of knowledge about nature and warfare. Aboriginal People were always depicted in full regalia, just one of the stereotypes of Aboriginal culture that is misleading and incorrect. Even large and reputable media companies like Disney played a role, perpetuating stereotypes in some of its biggest cartoon motion pictures like Peter Pan and Pocahontas. There have even been non-Aboriginal performers cast in the role of an Aboriginal person.

Aboriginal People have subsequently developed numerous paper publications as well as the television conglomerate 'Aboriginal Peoples Television Network'. The Network is headquartered in Winnipeg, MB and offers Aboriginal People the opportunity to explore roles as directors, writers, producers and media professionals. Today, nearly 75% of its employees are Aboriginal. The idea of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) began in the 1970s in the Canadian North. The federal government initiated experiments to test communication satellites they partnered with Inuit organizations in Nunuvut and Northern Quebec. In 1980 a report suggested that the development of Aboriginal broadcast initiatives would benefit the preservation of Aboriginal culture and languages. In 1983 the Government of Canada announced the Northern Broadcasting Policy and the Northern Native Broadcasting Access Program. By 1991, Television Northern Canada (TVNC) was launched and their success prompted the conception of the APTN. By 1998 it was recognized that a national Aboriginal channel should be made available to Canadians across the country. In September 1999 the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network became a reality, making broadcasting history. It is currently viewed by more than 9 million Canadians.

The APTN is aimed at both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal viewers. Programming is diverse, including children's animation, youth shows, cultural and traditional programming, music, drama, current affairs, daily news broadcasts and more. Nearly half of the content broadcast is unavailable on other networks.

Introductory Activity

Have students sit in a large circle. Begin the activity by asking them to define the word 'stereotype'. Write this on a piece of flip chart paper (or any large piece of paper). Once the definition has been established, ask students to discuss what they think are common stereotypes regarding Aboriginal People. Write all of the information down, and be sure to discuss definitions of Aboriginal People. For instance, many students may be under the impression that Inuit is the same as Métis, or they may not know what treaty status is. These definitions are important because they affect stereotypes.

Lesson 2

Have students return to their desks and post up the information collected on the flip chart paper, so students have the opportunity to visually understand how the media perpetuates many of the stereotypes that were discussed. The Walt Disney movies Pocahontas and Peter Pan are excellent examples of negative and misleading stereotypes regarding Aboriginal People. They can both be rented from the library or local video store. It is important that you preview the movies first and have the movies cued up to parts that you feel are especially negative.

If time permits you could choose to show one of the movies in entirety and have students act as a movie reviewer. The students would focus on the representation of Aboriginal people in the movie and stereotypes that are present.

Accompanying Worksheet

Distribute to students before the selected movie scenes are shown, so they have an idea what to be looking and listening for

1. Give an example of stereotyping in Peter Pan
2. Give an example of stereotyping in Pocahontas
3. Do you think the way Pocahontas looks is realistic? Why or why not?
4. What are some of the phrases used to describe Aboriginal People in the movies. Do you think these are accurate?
5. Overall, do you think the movies portray Aboriginal People in a good way or a bad way? Explain.

After the movie clips are shown and the students have completed their worksheets, initiate a class discussion on the influence of the media on perceptions of Aboriginal People.

Supplementary Lesson

Students will create a 'Stereotype Scrapbook'. The scrapbook would examine print media sources. Have them collect headlines and stories from the Internet or from newspapers brought from home or from the school library over a set period of time. The stories would be organized into a scrapbook and under each story students would answer the following questions

1. What is the article about? Who wrote the article?
2. Why do you think this article is important?
3. What stereotypes are present?
4. How does this article affect the overall perception of Aboriginal People?

Students could share some of their articles with the class in a group discussion.

Supplementary Lesson

This lesson plan focuses on how Aboriginal People have engaged media outlets in an attempt to provide Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal People with positive empowering examples of Aboriginal culture, traditions and individuals that seek to eliminate negative stereotypes perpetuated with mainstream media.

Aboriginal Peoples Television Network Research Project

Students will be responsible for creating a research project on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network. Students will adopt the role of a marketing executive who is trying to increase awareness about Aboriginal television programming. Information can be presented in the form of a brochure, poster or, if the students have regular computer access, a PowerPoint presentation. Students must include the following basic information in their research project

1. A brief history of the APTN
2. A preview/description of five programs
3. A programming schedule for a chosen weekend (Friday, Saturday and Sunday)
4. Upcoming special programs
5. Brief description of the some of the partnering companies that work with the APTN
6. A reproduction of the APTN symbol
7. Three quick facts about APTN
8. A new slogan to spark interest in the APTN

Present students with a rubric to follow based on your criteria for marking. Many rubrics can be downloaded from the Internet.

Supplementary Lesson

Students can complete a similar exercise as the one above, but instead could research an Aboriginal magazine produced in Alberta. Some questions they may want to answer could be

1. When did the publication begin?
2. Who is it aimed at?
3. What kind of material is generally covered?
4. How does the magazine contribute to creating a healthy positive image of Aboriginal People?
5. What are some of the regular features?

Teacher Information

Often when people think of Aboriginal art, the first examples that come to mind are moccasins, mukluks, birch bark canoes and totem poles. There is however, a whole milieu of Aboriginal arts and crafts that are rich in tradition and culture. Even everyday items such as clothing can reflect tremendous skill and pride. Ultimately, art is an expression of emotion, and through artistic interpretation many insights into culture and traditions can be unearthed. Although Aboriginal People across Canada have many artistic talents that reflect the diversity of Aboriginal culture, the following lesson plans will focus on the Wood Cree people of Alberta.

The Wood Cree live in the northern areas of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. They share their traditional ground with the Ojibwa and Dene peoples.

All Aboriginal People recognize a relationship with nature. All living things are regarded with respect and honour as they are believed to have a soul. Aboriginal People seek to live in harmony and balance with the natural environment. Due to the importance of Mother Earth

and all that she provides, Aboriginal artwork is greatly influenced by the environment. Nature both inspires art and provides the raw materials necessary to create.

Allow students to make connections between the past and present. The traditional way of life led by the Woods Cree has obviously affected the way people live today. Therefore, the lesson plans will examine art and influences from the past, as well as the role of contemporary artists.

Traditionally, the Woods Cree people were nomadic hunters who followed the seasons and moved their camps in search of food. Each season provided different gifts and influenced how specific items were made. The Woods Cree, like many Aboriginal groups, shared their history through a method known as oral history. They told stories and legends that reflected important events and lessons that were passed down to future generations. Some stories were even drawn or painted. Items such as woven baskets reflect skill and cultural influences. For instance, baskets made by the Woods Cree were similar in style to those made on the southern prairies. However, they used different materials resulting in a unique finished product. The Woods Cree used limber willow or the birch tree that was easy to bend and be transformed into beautiful baskets.

Students should also recognize that not all Aboriginal People designed or used their artistic talents in the same way. For example, the Peigan Nation, members of the Blackfoot Confederacy, were talented in elaborately adorning clothing and tipis. Beadwork often adorned the front and shoulders of men's shirts. The seams of leggings were covered in beadwork that matched the shirt. Elaborate outfits were often decorated in weasel skins, and eagle feather bonnets were reserved for special occasions. Blackfoot people often dyed porcupine quills red, green or blue, decorating items in geometric patterns.

Introductory Activity

Read students the 'Legend of Second Creation'.

"It has been said by the old and ancient people that when the Great Spirit first put people on this land, he gave them the power to rule over the creatures that lived there. The spirits talked openly with the people and counseled them on how they should use their power for good and true purposes.

The people soon learned that pure raw power could also be an evil thing. They began challenging each other to see who had the greatest power. This soon led to fighting and wars among the people of the land.

The Great Spirit was disappointed with his people. He warned them that as a result of their misuse of power, he would destroy all but the most humble and spiritual people. At the passing of ten winters, a great flood would fulfill this prophecy.

Most people did not believe that the Great Spirit would really destroy the world, and continued to abuse their power. A few families, however, did believe the Great Spirit, and lived a most humble and spiritual life. In each of the four major nations, the spirits picked out one family that they would save.

The Sun Spirit chose a Hopi family.
The Buffalo Spirit chose a Sioux family.
The Bear Spirit chose a family from the West Coast Tribes.
The Thunder Spirit chose a Cree family.

When the rains began, the families were taken to live in the land of the spirits. For two seasons they lived there, and the spirits taught the people all the ceremonies and the rituals that they would need to know to call the spirits to them. After the floods subsided, the people returned to the lands they once lived on.

The spirits no longer spoke openly with the people, and power to call the spirits was given to only a few people. The rituals provided the steps that had to be followed to call the spirits. The power a person has is acquired through following all the steps of the rituals. Few people have the knowledge of the rituals, so few have the power to call the spirits. The people from the four nations who have the knowledge have shared it with others who have the power, so all nations know the ceremonies and rituals of the spirits.” Discuss with students some of the imagery used in the story. Ask them if they have ever seen Aboriginal drawings or paintings and to describe what they remember.

NOTE: If it appears that the majority of students have not seen Aboriginal art, show them pictures previously downloaded from the *Culture and Its Meaning Edukit* Student Zone section.

Pass the pictures around once you have established what the students remember or know about Aboriginal art. Ensure they identify elements such as the four earth colours—blue, yellow, green and red. Make note of the symbolism and imagery used in the drawings.

Main Lesson

Students will be responsible for creating a drawing or painting that depicts the story ‘Legend of Second Creation’. Students may want to incorporate techniques or symbols they saw in some of the Aboriginal art. Another option is to allow students to draw or paint their own family/cultural belief in creation. If your classroom is culturally diverse, this project would be especially beneficial in allowing students the freedom to express their own beliefs and increasing cultural understanding in the classroom.

Supplementary Lesson

Birch bark is an important element to the Woods Cree people. Not only did they fashion canoes from it, but also a wide variety of other practical items and artwork. Students will have the opportunity to make a birch bark wall plaque.

Tools

- Scissors
- Pencil
- #1 glovers needle

Materials

- Light cardboard (cereal box)
- Bristol board (birch bark replacement)
- Pencil crayons in brown, light brown and yellow
- White chalk or white crayons
- Wool or different coloured yarn

Instructions

1. Cut an oval (10 cm x 24cm) out of the light cardboard
2. Trace two ovals, side by side, on one side of the bristol board. Colour these with pencil crayons to simulate the bark of a birch tree and then cover with white crayon or chalk
3. Cut out the bristol board ovals
4. Cut another, smaller oval out of cardboard to be used as backing for the decoration
5. Choose a piece of coloured yarn and thread it on the needle
6. Place the small cardboard oval on the white side of the bark and decorate the plaque. The design should be centred on the plaque (no bigger than 8cm x 12cm), and is done on the coloured surface of the Bristol—the outside surface of the plaque when completed
7. Place ovals together. Trim so both sides match
8. Sew the top two pieces together using an overcast stitch
9. Begin sewing at the top center. Begin your first stitch inside to hide the knot. Space stitches 0.5 cm apart and 0.5 cm from the edge to prevent tearing. Stitch all the way around the plaque. Tie off at the top where you began
10. Put a stitch through the back piece and tie a loop to hang the plaque on the wall

Supplementary Lesson

Distribute the Peigan Design handout highlighting five of the most popular Peigan designs. The handout can be downloaded from the *Culture and Its Meaning Edukit* Teacher's Zone. These designs were typically used on clothing and on tipis. Explain to students how dyes were generally made from the natural environment and a colour could have numerous shades. The most popular colours were red, blue, green, yellow, white and black. There is also the concept of ownership to consider. A design was considered the property of the owner, and could not be copied. Students should keep this in mind when designing their tipi. Pass out the next handout, which can be downloaded from the *Culture and Its Meaning Edukit* Teacher's Zone. The handout will have an outline of an empty tipi and the students must design their own tipi following some of the basic principals. Display the designs around the classroom once they are finished.

Lesson Plan 2: Socialization

Generalization

Socialization is achieved (family, education, religion) through interaction with government, economy, recreation, role models and others.

Rationale

Socialization is achieved via many factors. The Canadian Government played a distinct role in its interaction with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Prior to European contact, Aboriginal groups across Canada had their own methods of governing and enforcing cultural laws. Students will be introduced to some of these traditional practices and the contemporary reality faced by Aboriginal groups today who are subject to the guidelines of the federal government.

Objectives

Knowledge

- Learn to identify aspects that define culture
- Recognize the structure of traditional Aboriginal governments
- Identify government policies that affect Aboriginal Peoples

Skills

- Compare and contrast existing government organizations to traditional models
- Examine the main factors contributing to the development of culture
- Practice multiple decision making strategies

Attitude

- Relate to Aboriginal culture
- Develop an appreciation of the traditional models of governance and dispute resolution used by Aboriginal People

Introductory Activity

Write the word 'culture' on the board. Have students independently create a definition of what they think culture is. When done, write the word 'Canadian' above 'culture' and have students define what they think 'Canadian Culture' is. Erase Canadian and write 'Aboriginal' and have students define 'Aboriginal culture'. Students may have a difficult time defining the three versions of culture. This is however the point of the exercise. Initiate a discussion on the 'elements' of culture—write the elements down on the board and make sure to include

- Language
- Kinship
- Religion
- Technology
- Art
- Social customs
- Traditions
- Taboos
- Government

- Environment

Make sure students have this list in their notebooks. Beside each heading, have them write an example. Ask students to share examples with the class so that students can begin to see how each individual interprets the concept of 'culture' differently. Next, write the title 'social systems' on the board and underneath the topic headings Religion, Kinship, Government, Institutions, Education, Philosophy and Time. Have students copy these headings into their notebooks and provide an example of each.

Teacher Information

Prior to European contact Aboriginal People across Canada maintained their own traditional systems of governance, dispute resolution and decision-making. Structures varied from coast to coast and from patrilineal to matrilineal systems. Each nation developed systems that worked to serve their own unique needs. However, despite differences, there are still many commonalities. Most Aboriginal cultures retained a system of hereditary or elected chieftainship with methods to ensure that the Chief was putting the needs of the group before his own and not abusing his power. The people had a voice in the role of the Chief and could dispose of his power and choose a new leader as they felt fit. Occasionally, this led to more than one leader for each band.

An important aspect of all Aboriginal political systems was the concept of consensus building. It was often difficult for a Chief to retain power if he was not able to guide the group into making decisions based on consensus. Some bands, such as the Woods Cree, also recognized the roles of spiritual leaders and Elders in the decision-making processes and often their advice was given special attention. Sometimes successful hunters were recognized as community leaders.

The majority of Aboriginal groups who now reside permanently in Alberta were for the most part nomadic or semi-settled groups. In this type of social and economic structure, the main responsibility of the Chief was to guide meetings towards consensus reduce group friction, manage trade with other groups, sponsor ceremonies, negotiate peace treaties and ensure the basic needs of the group were being met.

The onset of colonization slowly eradicated the power of Aboriginal People to recognize and choose their own leadership. When Aboriginal leaders were confronted with the signing of treaties, they were left with very little room to negotiate or to fully comprehend how the signing of a treaty would effect future generations. The federal government presented the treaties in a language that was foreign to Aboriginal People and often coerced leaders into signing by threatening their food rations or with the intent to take over their lands regardless of whether they signed. The decline of the buffalo and the onset of infectious diseases paralleled the government's desire to erase Aboriginal culture and worked in tandem to force Aboriginal leaders to sign treaties.

One of Canada's first policies was to gain control over the Aboriginal way of life. Traditional governance structures were targeted, control over education was rescinded, and Indian Agents were imposed to regulate government laws.

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) was developed and it subsequently regulates the power of Chiefs and councillors so that basic decision making on reserves is in the hands of the federal government.

Main Lesson

Students will examine the government structure in a reserve community in Alberta. They will want to examine

1. Who is the Chief?
2. How are they elected?
3. What is the Chief's role and responsibilities?
4. Who are the councillors?
5. How are the councillors elected?
6. What are the roles and responsibilities of the councillors?

Students will compare this existing structure to traditional system of governance.

1. What was the basis of band divisions?
2. What is Chieftainship?
3. How was crime and justice handled?
4. How are some of those practices being used today? i.e. Sentencing Circles

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the current government regulated system upon reserves?

Supplementary Lesson

To ensure that students recognize that not all Aboriginal groups are homogeneous, split the students into small groups of three or four and have them complete a research assignment that compares and contrasts different Aboriginal groups across Canada. The students should list the characteristics of their chosen group in a chart format. After each group is finished the charts can be discussed. Write the following information on the board and have students copy it into their notes to ensure they grasp the concept of culture

Culture is

- Universal—all people in history have and belong to a culture
- Dynamic—culture is always changing because of new technology, innovations, new language (words) and new ways of doing things
- Shared—culture is shared by a group of people that may be large or small
- Transmitted—culture is shared with one generation to the next to ensure its survival

Supplementary Lesson

Break students into two groups. Have one group make a decision concerning the class following our current system of elected government. The other group will make a decision following the consensus model preferred by Aboriginal groups. Have the students discuss which system they preferred. Which systems seemed to work best for everyone?

Lesson Plan 3: Aboriginal Beliefs and Values

Generalization

Beliefs and values influence behaviour.

Rationale

Belief and value systems are aspects of culture. Different groups around the world have their own cultural belief systems that impact the way individual members behave. It is important for students seeking to understand Aboriginal culture to recognize that Aboriginal People have belief and value systems that may be different from their own.

Objectives

Knowledge

- Understand that belief and value systems are important in defining culture
- Recognize that belief and value structures are different among different cultures
- Identify important beliefs and values to Canada's Aboriginal Peoples

Skills

- Learn to categorize a variety of Aboriginal belief and value systems
- Share opinions in a large group setting
- Study Aboriginal groups objectively and subjectively as peoples with distinct culture, belief and value systems

Attitude

- Develop an appreciation of cultures, beliefs and values that are different from their own
- Develop a positive attitude towards Aboriginal Peoples in Canada

Teacher Information

Beliefs and values differ from one culture to the next. In Aboriginal communities, the family was viewed as an important unit since traditionally all members of the family had to work together in order to survive. The economic situation has changed, but the underlying belief in all members of the community working together has not. All members of the family—grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters and parents—are seen as important models for Aboriginal children to learn traditional and cultural norms. Aboriginal culture values the role of grandparents and Elders in educating children, sharing wisdom and stories of the ways of the past.

Aboriginal People have a strong belief and world vision that embraces all living creatures and human beings as being equal. Animals and nature are respected and are believed to work harmoniously with humans. Aboriginal People never wasted what was given to them and they believe that all things return to the earth in a natural cycle.

Introductory Activity

Have students draw a chart with two columns in their notebooks. They should label the headings Non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal. Under each column students must identify VALUES that are important to each society/culture. Generalizations and stereotypes may be used as they will still serve in demonstrating the differences in priorities set by each culture. Below is a list of some values that you will want to make sure students identify (this can be done by a follow up discussion):

Non-Aboriginal

We must control nature and use it for our benefit

We live in the present and use the present to prepare for improvements in the future

All should strive to climb the ladder of success. Success is defined by the first, the best, the most etc.

People should save for the future

Life is orderly and regulated by the clock. Punctuality is essential to the survival of business in an industrialized economy

It is necessary to be aggressive and competitive in order to get ahead

Each individual determines their own destiny. Self-realization is limited only by individual capacities to excel and achieve

Aboriginal

If we live in harmony with nature and obey its laws it provide for us

Focus is on the here and now. Accepting nature and its seasons, we shall survive through the years, one at a time. If I am doing good things now, doing these same things all my life will be good

The influence of Elders is very important. Young people lack maturity and experience. People seek perfection in themselves not in competition with others

Share freely what you have

Time is always with us and there is time available to do all things if not now then later

It is preferable to work as a group and offer skills and/or assistance when needed. There is no need to overtly dominate

The group is more important than the individual

NOTE: Make sure the above values are discussed thoroughly and give examples of each to aid in student understanding.

Main Lesson

Have students write the word ‘family’ in the middle of a blank sheet of paper. The idea is to get students brainstorming about their own family with the following questions in mind

1. Who makes decisions in the family?
2. Who lives in your family home?
3. Do you have a certain family member that you like best?
4. Do your family members play certain roles? Who is the disciplinarian, who is the teacher, etc?
5. Do you have a relative with a special skill or ability who is helping you learn that skill?
6. Who do you admire?
7. What are some beliefs and values in your family?
8. Do you think other families have the same beliefs and values?

Students should write their thoughts out randomly on their papers. Following the activity, initiate a discussion about families, beliefs and values. Steer the discussion towards recognizing that not all families have the same beliefs and values. Relate this to the concept of culture—do the students think that all cultures have the same beliefs and values? How do our beliefs and values influence how we behave?

Topic C: A Bilingual and Multicultural Country

Lesson Plan 1: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Identity

Generalization

Cultural heritage is a part of an individual’s identity.

Rationale

The culture in which an individual is raised has a tremendous impact on the way they think, feel and even communicate. Unfortunately, many Aboriginal students experience an identity crisis as they try to fit into two cultures—Aboriginal and mainstream culture. Students will initially examine themselves as individuals and then reflect on how culture effects who they are.

Objectives

Knowledge

- Recognize how culture influences identity and behaviour
- Make connections between culture and identity
- Understand how government policies, in respect to Aboriginal People, have influenced Aboriginal identity

Skills

- Develop an understanding of map reading
- Effectively research information on the Internet
- Define factors that contribute to identity

Attitudes

- Develop an appreciation for Aboriginal culture and identity
- Gain acceptance of the importance of other cultures and their contributions to Canadian society

Introductory Activity

Students will begin by filling out an 'All About Me' questionnaire. It would be a good idea for the teacher to fill one out as well and put it up on an overhead.

All About Me

1. I was born in:
2. The language I speak at home is:
3. My favorite holiday is:
4. I collect:
5. My favorite activity to do with my family is:
6. My favorite type of music is:
7. The last place I went on holidays was:
8. If I could go anywhere in the world I would go to:
9. My favorite sports are:
10. Something I believe is:
11. My favorite foods are:
12. If I could meet one person dead or alive it would be:

Main Lesson

As a class, discuss and create a summary chart that tracks all of the different answers. What things do students have in common, what things are different? Do they think that culture influences some of their answers?

Ask students to record where they were born, their parents and grandparents. On a large world map using pushpins, students will label where everyone was born. Students will draw in possible migration routes that parents or grandparents may have taken. Each student will draw and colour a mini flag of their family's various countries of origin. Be sure to display the flags around the world map as a border. Initiate a discussion with students about the different cultural heritages present in the classroom.

Students should begin to recognize that Aboriginal People did not immigrate to Canada and that they are the original inhabitants. How do the students think this affects identity? What factors contribute to identity? Distribute the following worksheet to students regarding Aboriginal identity. The purpose is for students to understand how Aboriginal identity is determined by two factors—individual perception and guidelines set forth by the Canadian government that determine who is considered ‘Indian’.

The Contemporary Aboriginal

1. Who is considered to be ‘Indian’?
2. Who is considered to be a ‘Treaty Indian’?
3. What does non-treaty refer to?
4. What does enfranchisement mean and how did it affect Aboriginal People?
5. Who are the Métis?
6. How did the government determine ‘Indian Status’?
7. What is a reserve?
8. How did Aboriginal People view ownership of the land compared to Europeans?
9. What does the Constitution say about Aboriginal Peoples’ rights?
10. Why is the *Indian Act* an important document to Aboriginal People?