

Grade 7-Teachers Zone

Topic A: Culture

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?