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):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Aboriginal</th>
<th>Aboriginal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We must control nature and use it for our benefit</td>
<td>If we live in harmony with nature and obey its laws it provide for us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We live in the present and use the present to prepare for improvements in the future</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All should strive to climb the ladder of success. Success is defined by the first, the best, the most etc.</td>
<td>The influence of Elders is very important. Young people lack maturity and experience. People seek perfection in themselves not in competition with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People should save for the future</td>
<td>Share freely what you have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life is orderly and regulated by the clock. Punctuality is essential to the survival of business in an industrialized economy</td>
<td>Time is always with us and there is time available to do all things if not now then later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is necessary to be aggressive and competitive in order to get ahead</td>
<td>It is preferable to work as a a group and offer skills and/or assistance when needed. There is no need to overtly dominate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each individual determines their own destiny. Self-realization is limited only by</td>
<td>The group is more important than the individual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


individual capacities to excel and achieve

*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?