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?