




Aboriginal History: Creating Tribes and Artifacts

Contributor

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Objective

This introductory lesson encourages groups of students to cooperatively devise a tribal name and artifact. Through this process, students will gain a respect for and understanding of an ancient custom that exists within Canadian Aboriginal culture.

 **Time** two to three 50-minute classes

Materials

- Dowelling (at least 30 cm in length) (two per group)
- Rolls or yards of string
- Feathers
- Embroidery hoops (at least 25 cm in diameter), one for each group
- scissors
- Student Handout 1 *Student Self-Assessment Rubric – Group Work*
- Student Handout 2 *Cultural Symbols of Canadian*

Getting Started

Knowledge Now

The teacher generates discussion by asking the class to brainstorm a list of aboriginal tribes and customs. Students take out a piece of note paper and individually generate a list of tribes they know at the top of the page and customs/artifacts below each tribe name. For example: Blackfoot tribe, dream catcher. After a few minutes, each student will share the list with another person. After about five minutes students share their lists by writing one of their answers on the board. The teacher should challenge the students not to write duplicate answers. The teacher can then add to the list if necessary to show students the tremendous scope of Aboriginal culture in Canada.

Engaging Interest

The teacher will show the students an owner stick or picture of an owner stick. (see photo or resource reference) and explain that the class will be working together as a tribe to create their own owner stick artifact, which will be used to identify their “tribe” throughout the class or unit. Owner sticks were created by Plains Indian tribes as a way of marking their property and hunt

while they were away. This cross-shaped stick was decorated with paint, hoops and a variety of other materials such as leather, feathers, flannel and fur. Tribes used the sticks as a form of identification or as a symbol that would assure the safety and respect of their tribal property. An owner stick often featured tribal animals, birds or personal totems. (Macfarlan 1999, p 58–59) Student groups should be encouraged to work together to select a tribal name and a group symbol, and to contribute at least one thing to the artifact. The teacher should emphasize that students will use the concepts of consensus and cooperation to reach all decisions during this project.

Learning Activities

Students will be introduced to the topic of Aboriginal culture through the cooperative creation of their own tribal name and tribal artifact. Teachers should divide students into mixed groups or “tribes” of five or six for the project and assign them a group workplace.

Student groups should be encouraged to work together to select

- Name for the tribe and
- Group symbol and to each contribute at least one thing to the artifact.

The teacher should emphasize that students should use the consensus and cooperation to reach all decisions during this project. The teacher could further explain these expectations by discussing the rubric “*Student Self-Assessment Rubric – Group Work*” (see Student Handout 2) with the class before the activity begins.

Assessment/Analysis

As culmination of the activity, each group could present their tribe in a sharing circle and show their owner stick to the class. They should explain what their owner stick means and why it represents their group.

The teacher should highlight the importance of sharing ideas, respecting others’ ideas and focusing on the non-competitive nature of the activity. Students could fill out the rubric “*Student Self-Assessment Rubric – Group Work*” and then discuss how consensus and cooperation helped the groups work together more harmoniously.

Teachers can conclude this lesson within the sharing circle by making some comments about the positive interactions observed during the activity. Teachers might also encourage students to talk about what it felt like to work together as a tribe and how this is different from aspects of our culture.

Proudly display the owner sticks near the groups that created them by: hanging them from the ceiling, using poster pins and posting them in front of the class, or placing them upright in plant pots filled with rocks and dirt.

Application

The idea of having a symbol to represent an Aboriginal tribe could be applied to the students’ individual family/cultural symbols.

For homework, the students could look for an artifact/symbol that has significance in their home/culture. They could be encouraged to bring the artifact or a picture of it to share with the class and to complete the Student handout 2 “*Cultural Symbols of Canadians.*”

The activity would be a wonderful starting point for a unit on Aboriginal culture in Canada.

Activities for Extension and/or Integration

The owner sticks could be part of a larger display featuring Aboriginal and other cultures that could be displayed for open-house or a cultural day at the school. Other classes could also participate in this event.

This activity would also relate to the Aboriginal Studies 10 program if it were modified for the age group.

Subject and Level Learner Outcomes for Subject and Level

Social Studies Curriculum Learner Outcomes-Topic C: Grade 7

Knowledge Objectives

Cultural heritage is a part of a person's identity.

Canada's population is made up of a variety of cultural groups.

Skill Objectives

Participation-Converse in a small group, observe courtesies of group discussion, contribute to group process.

Attitude Objective

Appreciation and respect for contributions of all cultural groups to Canada.

SACS Topics and Concepts

Respecting Diversity and Preventing Prejudice

- Recognizing and Appreciating that Individuals, Families and cultures are Unique Builds Respect for Diversity
- Recognizing and Appreciating Contributions Made by Culturally Distinctive Groups Builds Respect for Diversity.

Teaching Strategies

| Go to | Cooperative Learning | Inquiry Learning | Direct Instruction |
|---|--|------------------|--------------------|
| www.sacsc.ca/strategies for strategy descriptions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think-pair-share | | |

| Generalization and Transfer | Peer Teaching | Empathy/Affective Education | General Teaching Activities/Ideas |
|--|---------------|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modelling • Fine arts | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story circle | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorming |

Supplementary Resources

Resource Books

Alberta Education. 2006. *Social Studies Program of Studies (Grade 7)*. Edmonton, Alta: Alberta Education.

Alberta Education. 2004. *Aboriginal Studies 10: Aboriginal Perspectives (Student Test)*. Alberta: Duval House

Macfarlen, A. 1999. *Living Like Indians: A Treasury of North American Indian Crafts, Games and Activities*. Mineola NY: Dover (picture and description of owner sticks, p 58).

Parker, C. 2006. *The Indian How Book*. Mineola, NY: Dover (a general reference that contains over 50 illustrations of Native American artifacts).

www.collectionscanada.ca/explorers/kids/h3-1110-e.html - This site gives information about the ancestors of Canada's First Nations and Inuit.

www.onlineguide.learnalberta.ca/contentog/ssoc7/html/aboriginalsocietiescc.html This site has some ideas for examining similarities and differences in social and economic structures among selected Aboriginal societies prior to the 16 century.

Student Self-Assessment Rubric – Group Work

Your teacher will go through this rubric with you before your group starts its task. As you work, think about where you would place yourself in these categories.

After your work is complete, evaluate your own work as a group member, using this rubric.

Name _____

Group Members _____

| | Beginning 1 | Developing 2 | Accomplished 3 | Exemplary 4 | My Score |
|---|--|---|---|---|-----------------|
| Researches and gathers information | Does not collect any information relating to the topic | Collects very little information – some relates to the topic | Collects some basic information – most relates to the topic | Collects a great deal of information – all relates to the topic | |
| Shares information | Does not relay any information to teammates | Relays very little information – some relates to the topic | Relays some basic information – most relates to the topic | Relays a great deal of information – all relates to the topic | |
| Completes duties | Does not perform any duties | Performs very few duties | Performs nearly all duties | Performs all assigned duties | |
| Participates | Does not share ideas during group work | Either gives too little information or information that isn't important or is off topic | Offers some information – most is on topic | Offers a great deal of important information – all is on topic | |
| Shares equally | Most often relies on others to do the work | Rarely does the assigned work – often needs reminding | Usually does the assigned work – rarely needs reminding | Always does the assigned work without having to be reminded | |
| Listens to teammates | Is always talking-never allows anyone else to speak | Usually does most of the talking – rarely allows others to speak | Listens but sometimes talks too much | Listens and speaks a fair amount | |
| Cooperates with teammates | Usually argues with teammates | Sometimes argues | Rarely argues | Never argues with teammates | |
| Makes fair decisions | Usually wants to have things their way | Often sides with friends instead of considering all views | Usually considers all views | Always helps team to reach a fair decision | |

Rubric adapted from Rubrics for Web Lessons

Cultural Symbols of Canadians

Name _____ Date _____

Instructions

Look around your home and list at least four items that are meaningful to you. Indicate the materials that are used for each item and what the significance of the item is to your family.

Bring one significant item to share with the class.

| Symbols used to identify your home/possessions | Materials used to make the item | Significance of the item (religious, spiritual, family custom, etc) |
|---|--|--|
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