

12. Aboriginal Teaching and Learning

(Social Studies 9; also appropriate for Health and Career Education 4-7 and 8-10)

SHARED LEARNING

- Teaching and learning are understood in distinct ways in traditional Aboriginal cultures.

PRESCRIBED LEARNING OUTCOME

It is expected that students will:

- assess how identity is shaped by a variety of factors including family, gender, belief systems, ethnicity, and nationality
- demonstrate understanding of the ways in which Aboriginal peoples interact with their environment

PURPOSE

- to provide students with information about teaching and learning in Aboriginal communities in the past and the present
- to provide opportunities for students to experience new ways of teaching and learning.

SUGGESTED TIME FRAME

- one month

APPROACH

1. Hand out and discuss with students the “Traditional Aboriginal Teaching and Learning Assignment.” Establish class times for student assignment completion, class presentations and a general class discussion.
2. On due date, after student presentations, lead a class lesson filling in the question sheet based on traditional Aboriginal Teaching and Learning (as in the answer key on page 161). Discuss the reasons why these methods may have been used (e.g., time, needs of the community).
3. Encourage students to continue to work on their new skill and to teach someone else.

ASSESSMENT

- Look for evidence of students’ cooperation and responsibility in learning the new skill.
- Evaluate clarity and completeness of student presentations with a checklist.
- In their presentations, and in a follow-up class discussion, look for evidence of increased student understanding and awareness of the ways in which individual identity is shaped by culture and how this relates to Aboriginal teaching and learning (e.g., emphasis on values and beliefs).

TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL TEACHING AND LEARNING ASSIGNMENT

A boriginal children were taught by the members of their community. At every stage of learning there was someone ready to teach the next level of knowledge right up to mastery of the subject or skill. Aboriginal peoples did not have schools as we now know them and there was no official school year or learning time. There were no divisions of learning stages into elementary or high schools, and no universities or colleges. (However, if there had been Aboriginal universities, the professors would have been the Elders.)

Skills and knowledge were learned and then passed down to the next generation over thousands of years. Learners were simply taught over and over again, until eventually they acquired the knowledge and/or skills. It was up to each person if they wished to specialize their learning in a particular area (e.g., medicine, agriculture, fine arts).

1. Seek out someone in your community to teach you how to do something new.

There are people with specific skills in your community, and many are willing to teach his or her skill to others. You may want to learn a language, a craft, an art form, a dance, a song, a musical instrument, a skill in the kitchen, a sport, etc. (Try to pick something that is completely new to you!)

It is very important that you treat the person whom you have asked to teach you with respect.

It is also important to explain the purpose of this exercise to your new teacher before you begin.

2. Show what you have learned to the rest of the class.

To complete this assignment you will:

- report your experiences in the teaching and learning process using the questions on the following page as a guide (both a written report and a class presentation of your new skill)
- participate in a class discussion about the presentations and reports
- write and deliver a thank-you letter to your teacher.

Your mark will depend on:

1. demonstration of new skill(s)
2. clarity and completeness of the oral/written presentation
3. participation in class discussion
4. thank-you letter
5. demonstration of cooperation and responsibility within the learning process (e.g., showing respect for the teacher, arriving at lessons on time, practising skills, completing the training).

All material will be due one month from today.

HAVE FUN!

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL AND WRITTEN PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

1. Who is teaching you?
2. How did you ask to be taught?
3. What materials are being used?
4. What are your teachers feelings about teaching you?
5. What are your feelings about working with the teacher?
6. How did you feel/how were you treated as the learner?
7. What did you learn?
8. How did you learn?
9. Did you get feedback/evaluation?
10. Will you continue with this skill?
11. Would you eventually be able to teach others?

Questions for Oral and Written Presentation and Discussion (Answer Key for Traditional Aboriginal Teaching and Learning)

1. Who is teaching you?
 - the entire community
2. How did you ask to be taught?
 - the child did not have to ask, teaching occurred when seen as necessary
3. What materials are being used?
 - everything is interrelated, so all things are used
4. What are your teachers feelings about teaching you?
 - it is a responsibility
 - it is an honour
5. What are your feelings about working with the teacher?
 - they are role models
 - they set an example
 - they allow the child to intelligently imitate
6. How did you feel/how were you treated as the learner?
 - unique
 - special
 - a miracle
 - born with special gifts, which need to be developed
 - the future of your people
 - respected as an individual
 - responsible to learn or not learn
 - powerful
 - treated as an adult
 - given time to think and learn
 - not forced
 - allowed to make own decisions
 - a sense of well-being
 - given all teacher's attention and time
 - welcome to try everything
 - cared for
7. What did you learn?
 - survival/life skills
 - values and beliefs
 - that each child is valuable and can be successful
 - about identity
 - that everything is connected (intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual)
8. How did you learn?
 - naturally, in each child's own time
 - holistically
 - through observation
 - listening to Elders/others telling and demonstrating
 - trying skills in real-life situations
 - learning about values and beliefs whenever the opportunity arises
 - trying something else when one approach was not effective
9. Did you get feedback/evaluation?
 - yes, but sensitively, selectively, in a non-threatening manner
 - by making mistakes and then trying again without threat of failure or condemnation
10. Will you continue with this skill?
 - yes, because it is a skill that will be used throughout life
11. Would you eventually be able to teach others?
 - yes, because it is a student's responsibility to become a teacher