



TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Grade 9

MAIN IDEA

Prior to European contact, First Nations people had their own education system and their own belief systems in how children learned their traditional gender roles, gained spirituality, became part of their community, interacted with nature and so forth. It is important to be aware of the way First Nations taught their children in order to compare and understand the impact residential schools had on these children and of generations to come. Students will learn about Traditional Knowledge Systems, have the opportunity to identify with pre-colonial First Nations children and participate in a traditional sharing circle.

ONTARIO SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS Students will...

SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Compare various personal, societal and cultural beliefs about individuals and the function of families.
- Identify the universal basic functions of families.

MATERIALS	RESOURCES & SOURCES
Background Information	Walking on the Lands of our Ancestors http://www.canadashistory.ca/Education/Lesson-Plans/Lesson-Plans/High/Walking-on-the-Lands-of-Our-Ancestors.aspx
Handouts	
Computer Lab	Virtual Museum.ca, Red Lake Project (page 17), Aboriginal Education before Boarding Schools (scroll inside beige area)
Chart paper	http://www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/histoires_de_chez_nous-community_memories/pm_v2.php?id=record_detail&fl=0&lg=English&ex=00000353&rd=86627
Ball of Yarn	
Sharing Circle Object	First Nations Pedagogy (slide numbers 8-15, 17, 18, 26-30)
Elder to assist with Sharing Circle	http://www.slideshare.net/junek/first-nations-pedagogy-online

ACTIVITIES

1. Review background information on **Traditional Education for First Nations** and **First Nations Pedagogy** with the students.



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2. Have students read the **Traditional Knowledge Systems of First Nations** (Traditional Forms of Education) handout and complete the worksheet (point form is acceptable).
3. Ask students to brainstorm any information they know regarding Sharing Circles. Has anyone taken part in a Sharing Circle before? Record their answers (blackboard, whiteboard, chart paper). Review **Sharing Circle** information sheet with the students.
4. Tell students they will participate in a modified version of a sharing circle. During the circle students will revisit their responses on their **Traditional Knowledge Systems** worksheet. The concept of building an interconnected spider web will be the outcome of this activity. See **Spider-Web Sharing Circle** directions sheet.
5. Debrief the lesson with the class.

ASSESSMENT

Formative: Worksheets are complete and class participation.



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION continued...

NURTURANCE OF GIFTS

- The nurturance of each person's special gifts, talents and abilities so that s/he would be able to share their gifts with the community is a central tenet of Pre-Colonial teaching and learning.
- Spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional growth was cultivated
- Vision Quests, Meditation, Intuition, Dreaming and Rites of Passage are all valid methods of gaining knowledge

INHERENT ABORIGINAL VALUES

- Rights and freedoms of the individual and group
- Respect for Elders, land, community, self, sacredness of life
- Spirituality, Wisdom, Honour and Fortitude, Generosity, Peace, Harmony
- Acceptance Quietness, Patience, Dignity
- Extended family
- Connectedness of all living things

SEVEN SACRED GIFTS OR TEACHINGS

- Respect, Humility, Compassion, Honesty, Truth, Wisdom, Love

CULTURALLY RELEVANT METHODS

- Circles, Smudging and Medicine Plants/Objects, Prayer/Giving Thanks, Dreamwork, Sweat Lodge Ceremony, Dance and Arts Vision Quests, Fasting, other Ceremonies

Source: <http://www.slideshare.net/junek/first-nations-pedagogy-online>



HANDOUT

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION FOR FIRST NATIONS

Read the following information and answer the questions (1 to 9) on the worksheet.

Aboriginal Education before Residential Schools

Celia Haig-Brown, Resistance and Renewal, pg. 37

First Nation childhood and education were an inseparable part of the on-going process of life and living. The methods used to teach skills for everyday living and to instill values and principles were participation and example. Within communities, skills were taught by every member, with Elders playing a very important role. Education for the child began at the time he or she was born. The child was prepared for his role in life whether it be hunter, fisherman, wife, or mother. This meant that each child grew up knowing his place in the system.

Integral to the traditional education system was the participation of the family and community as educators. (JACK, 1985:9) Education was the responsibility of all and it was a continuous process. Parents, grandparents and other relatives naturally played a major role, but other members of the tribe, particularly the elders helped to shape the young people. (Mary Ashworth, 1979: 6)

Kaaren Olsen, Native Women and the Fur Trade

Canadian Woman Studies, Volume 10, Numbers 2 & 3

Because the Native woman is the home-maker, and in charge of the children if they are too young to go with their father as he checks and tends the traps, she is also to a great extent in charge of their education. As she goes about her work, she teaches them their role in Production (a role that does not exist in town or back in their villages).

She teaches them a respect for the animals as she skins and prepares the hides. She shows them what part of the animal the hunter has to return to the earth when it is killed. She shows them where to leave the carcasses, what to do with the bones. The children are taught the rituals and ceremonies of thanking and showing respect to the land and animals.

For example, when she is skinning a beaver, the mother will show the children where one of the toenails is missing from the animal's foot. She'll explain how the beaver uses this nail to groom itself, to distribute the oils it uses to waterproof its fur, and how the trapper will cut this nail off and return it to the water where the beaver was caught. In this way, the trapper pays his respect to the beaver that gave its life to him and at the same time thanks its spirit.

The children are also taught the taboos; actions that may anger or offend the spirits of the earth and the animals, and thus make the hunt unsuccessful until such time that the spirits are appeased.



HANDOUT continued...

For example, the bones of the animals cannot ever be thrown into the fire. The knee bones of the muskrat, beaver, rabbit and other animals cannot be eaten. When the children are old enough to go with their father, they will know enough to put these teachings into practice.

The traditional teachings and values are thus passed onto the next generations. In a way of life where sometimes man and animals go hungry, where there are times of plenty, the children have to be taught to respect the land and animals.

The children have to learn to take and use what is needed, to kill well and to make every effort to ensure that the gifts from the land and animals are not wasted.

Traditional education allowed children to begin the process of observing from the time they are in their takinaakan and learn by participating as soon as they are able; traditional life was ruled by the principle of production from each according to his ability and distribution to each according to his need.

The History of Education in Nishnawbe Aski Nation

Dr. Donald J. Auger and Dr. Emily Faries, 2005

Education of the Ojibwe and Cree cultures did not exist as a separate part, it was in essence just part of their culture.

Education in their cultures included: cultural beliefs, economy, kinship and other ties, community and social relations, and spiritual beliefs.

The Ojibwe and Cree lived in groups/extended families and shared everything.

Food, tools and equipment, chores, tasks and activities were all shared as was necessary to their survival.

Group rights were more important than individual rights.

Traditional education occurred whether children were playing, helping or doing chores.

Children learned not only from their parents, but also from their grandparents and the elders in the community.

Source: http://www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/histoires_de_chez_nous-community_memories/pm_v2.php?id=record_detail&fl=0&lg=English&ex=00000353&rd=86627



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WORKSHEET

Name: _____

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS OF FIRST NATIONS

1. Who taught the children?

2. What (content) were the children taught?

3. When did learning occur?

4. How did learning occur?

5. Where did learning take place?



WORKSHEET
Traditional Knowledge Systems continued...

Name: _____

6. Why were children taught this way?

7. Include any other noteworthy information.

8. Share an example(s) of traditional learning that has occurred in your life.

9. Share an example(s) of traditional learning that you would like in your life.



**TEACHER MASTER COPY
WORKSHEET**

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS OF FIRST NATIONS

1. Who taught the children?
 - Every family member, especially mothers.
 - Every member of the community.
 - Elders played the most significant role as educators.
2. What (content) were the children taught?
 - Requirements for everyday living.
 - Gender based knowledge; children knew their place in the system.
 - Respect for animals, self, land and others.
 - Rituals and ceremonies for giving thanks and showing respect.
 - Taboos.
 - To not be wasteful.
 - Group rights more important than individual rights.
 - Share everything.
 - Hunting, gathering.
 - Cultural beliefs.
 - Social relations.
 - Spiritual beliefs.
 - Seven sacred gifts of respect, humility, compassion, honesty, truth, wisdom, and love.
3. When did learning occur?
 - Right after birth.
 - During play.
 - When helping and doing chores.
 - Throughout whole life.
 - Passed on from generation to generation.
 - In social settings.
4. How did learning occur?
 - Through observing.
 - Through participation as soon as they can.
 - Through examples set by others.
 - Oral traditions, storytelling.
 - Holistically (body, mind, heart and spirit).
 - In social settings.



***TEACHER MASTER COPY
WORKSHEET
Traditional Knowledge Systems continued...***

5. Where did learning take place?
 - At home.
 - In the community.
 - Sweat lodge.
 - In nature.
 - Every where.
 - (Not in an institution)
6. Why were children taught this way?
 - Education and childhood considered inseparable.
 - Aboriginal beliefs regarding education.
 - Strong emphasis on social learning.
7. Include any other noteworthy information.
 - Answers will vary.
8. Share an example(s) of traditional learning that has occurred in your life.
 - Answers will vary.
9. Share an example(s) of traditional learning that you would like in your life.
 - Answers will vary.



INFORMATION

SHARING CIRCLE

WHAT IS A SHARING CIRCLE?

Usually it takes place after a smudging ceremony or as part of a ceremony. Each morning or evening, before we begin our daily activities we have a sharing circle where we are all seated in a circle we share our thoughts, feelings, growth, successes, failures, good news or bad news... we share it all with the group.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO USE SHARING CIRCLES?

Through sharing, we learn from others and gain strength through the group. Often we see another face a similar challenge, or have a similar success. We can identify with them and feel less separated and feel that what we go or are going through, it is not uncommon, and certainly okay.

A sharing circle supports each of us to express ourselves, clear out minds of any concerns and supports us in forming positive, nurturing relationships with the members of our group. Participation in the sharing circle also builds self-confidence, assertiveness and helps us develop our public speaking skills.

There is often an eagle feather, talking stick or other important object that is used to show who has the "floor" for their time to speak. It is like our microphone in the sense that the holder of the object has the right to speak until they are finished.

GUIDELINES FOR A SHARING CIRCLE

When part of the sharing circle, each member agrees to the following suggested guidelines:

1. A prayer or blessing is done to start or "open" the circle.
2. No cross talking (IE: don't talk privately with your neighbour)...respect the speaker.
3. Honour the person holding the eagle feather (or other object) by respecting that person's time to speak.
4. Everyone agrees that anything said in the sharing circle by that person is to be held in confidence and can only be repeated outside the sharing circle with that person's agreement.
5. Respect each member of the group - no matter what you think of their "sharing".
6. Within the sharing circle, each member is equal, no one is less or greater than one another.
7. Participation is required by all in the sharing circle, even if you only want to say "I'd like to pass today" or something simple if you don't feel like speaking that day.
8. When all have spoken and it is time to finish, acknowledge the time to "close" the circle. Usually closure happens when everyone says, "All my relations". Different people with different backgrounds will have different interpretations of what this phrase means to them.

Source: http://www.imakenews.com/spiritlink/e_article000368547.cfm?x=b11,0,w



DIRECTIONS

SPIDER-WEB SHARING CIRCLE

1. Have students sit in a circle, on the floor or on chairs. During this spider web-sharing circle tell the students they can toss or roll the ball of yarn to anyone in the circle, preferably across from them and not directly beside them.
2. The teacher will begin the activity by holding the end of a ball of yarn and then share one example of traditional learning. The teacher holds the end of the yarn, and then tosses the ball to another student.
3. The next student shares another example of traditional learning and holds on to a piece of the yarn while tossing the ball to the next student and so on.
4. Once all students have had at least one chance to share an example of traditional ways of learning, the class will be holding a spider web of examples.
5. Tell students that the spider web illustrates the interconnected way children of First Nations communities were educated. Learning is connected, continuous and lifelong.
6. Now that students are comfortable with the concept of a modified sharing circle, students will have the opportunity to share their responses to numbers (8) and (9) from their **Traditional Knowledge Systems** worksheet. During this more traditional sharing circle a talking object will be used in place of the ball of yarn and students will pass the talking object clockwise.
7. Students will follow the guidelines for a sharing circle (only speak when it is your turn, respect all members, what is shared in the circle, stays in the circle).

