

Focus:

Examine the unique Treaty relationship that First Nations citizens of Canada have with the government of Canada and with other Canadians.

Consider how effective the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is at protecting the individual and collective rights of Aboriginal people in Canada.

Curriculum Connection:

6.1.1.

- Recognize how individuals and governments interact and bring about change within their local and national communities:

1. Recognize and respect the democratic rights of all citizens in Canada;
2. Value the role of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in protecting individual and collective rights and;
3. Value citizens' participation in a democratic society

Key Learnings:

- » Students recognize that Aboriginal people have a historical and unique relationship with Canada through the Treaties
- » Aboriginal people and governments need to communicate to reconcile their very different understandings of the Treaties
- » Recognize that Aboriginal people do not currently have the opportunity to exercise their right to participate in decision making with government through the Treaty relationship
- » Recognize that collective rights of Aboriginal people are not respected and protected as they are intended to be through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Treaties.

DID YOU KNOW :



IN ALBERTA THERE ARE THREE TREATY AGREEMENTS;
TREATY 6, TREATY 7 AND TREATY 8.

Materials and Resources Required:



» DVD/Online Video "Wind Spirit" www.sacredrelationship.ca/videos



» Wind Spirit worksheet

Teacher Preparation:

Relationships are the foundation of Aboriginal society. For the Cree people, the rules that guide the relationships are a part of what is called “wahkohtowin”. Wahkohtowin refers to a human’s relationship with their family, with their community, with the natural environment and with the spirit world/Creator. These relationships are very important in Cree society, and when the rules are observed, families and communities live in peace and harmony.

Treaty Relationships

For Alberta’s Aboriginal people, the actions of the newcomers (European law makers and settlers) had a detrimental effect on traditional society, and specifically on the behaviours of the people. The Canadian government committed a fundamental breach of the Treaty agreements and therefore a transgression of their sacred law that was evoked by the pipe ceremonies performed at the time of the Treaty signings. In one of the teaching Circles of Elders (that was held for this water research, video production and curriculum development project) the Cree Elders stated that:

“Regarding the law – Canadian law – as it is – is only made by one side – one party. When the newcomers came to our land – they shook hands – they said they agreed to live with us. They agreed to live in peace and harmony. They had an agreement – they lifted the pipe and made a treaty. Then he went his way and Indians stayed on the land. He started writing laws and using the paper to make things his way. An Indian person should have been there looking over that paper and seeing what it said. How that law affected Indian people, because we are half of that agreement that was made. It takes two people to make a treaty. Those treaties... that relationship is the relationship we are in today. Everything that the law is doing is affecting us but we have no say. They are not living up to their agreement – because of that there will always be disagreement and conflict.

The Elders concluded that it has had a detrimental effect on the peace and harmony of contemporary society:

Ever since the Europeans have come to live with us – things have changed. No longer can we go to the creek to drink water – everything has been poisoned. The animals have been infected and they pass it on to us. The future doesn’t look very good. It’s a reality of where we are with pollution and everything else. When we talk about wahkohtowin... it is a lot. In the beginning it was supposed to be that harmony – but how can you have harmony when one party is more dominant – and this dominance is creating conflict for us.

In conclusion, the historical breach of the sacred Treaty agreements, which resulted in the loss of understanding of the basic respect rules of relationships, has resulted in significant change in the relationships in Aboriginal society, including our relationships with everyone and everything around us.

Note to Teacher :

This lesson plan will be carried out over a 3 day period, minimally, if class periods are 30-45 minutes long. It is recommended that the 'Launch' is carried out on day 1, 'Activate' on day 2 and 'Connect' is done on day 3.

Launch:



Begin the class by asking students "What would you do if you saw someone that had a really amazing fish pond in their back yard and you wanted to be able to fish in that pond too because you were really hungry for fish?"

Guide the students through a discussion that will very likely become about approaching people with respect, communicating, working out how to share, etc. Ask students how they might feel if they were the one with the fish pond in their back yard and the other person came in and demanded that they share, but then took all of the fish, invited all of their friends to come and fish, poured all kinds of chemicals and garbage into the pond, and pushed the student, as the owner of the pond, back in to their house and wouldn't even speak to them anymore.

Once students have had the opportunity to share their ideas and thoughts on this issue, invite them to watch "Wind Spirit" as a class and ask them to reflect upon their discussion as it relates to what is being discussed in the video.



DVD/Online Video "Wind Spirit" www.sacredrelationship.ca/videos



Have students discuss how the film relates to the discussion at the beginning of the class and have the group determine what their view is on the role of Aboriginal people in land and water discussions in Canada. Ask each group to have one or more speakers to present the views of the group back to the full class.

Activate:



Distribute the worksheet “Wind Spirit” and ask students to respond to as many of the questions as possible through collaboration with their partner.



Once students have had approximately 15-20 minutes to work on the worksheet view the video a second time so that students can focus on the remaining questions and complete the worksheet.

Give students additional time to discuss their responses with their partner following the second viewing of the video. Ask students to join with another set of partners to discuss their responses and to consider some of the reasons why the government and Aboriginal people have such different understandings or views of the treaties and why Aboriginal people feel so powerless to affect change and protect their rights.

Connect:



Invite students to prepare a role play that reflects the 2 different understandings of the Treaties, of land use and of the lack of consultation and communication with Aboriginal people regarding the use and protection of the land and water in this country.

Remind students that their role plays can have any setting that they choose, be that within government discussions, an interaction in the community between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, involving an industry or developer, etc. The focus is to have students recognize how deeply lack of understanding of worldviews and open communication can, and has, impacted the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and in turn negatively impact the land, water, communities and our society.

Students may work in groups of 4 or more depending on the scenario of their role play.

Once students have had time to prepare their role plays, have them present their role plays to the full class. Facilitate a brief discussion after each role play to have students consider the complexity of conflicting worldviews, yet to understand how critical the relationship building and reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is in the transformation of our society for the benefit of all citizens.

Wind Spirit

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

1. Why does Allen Benson say that the Elders are hurt?

2. Why does Patti LaBoucane-Benson say Aboriginal people feel helpless and hopeless?

3. Why does the Elder, Fred Campiou, fly the British flag?

4. How did the laws and policies that governments imposed impact Aboriginal people?

5. How does Allen compare what has happened to Aboriginal people and their land to something similar that would seriously impact farmers and ranchers in Alberta?

6. How does Fred describe the Treaty and the difference in worldviews regarding the Treaty?

7. What does Allen say is the right thing to do?

8. What does Fred suggest is the way to resolve the issues? What do you think about this?

9. What does Patti say will happen when people start feeling like there is respect and voice? Do you agree with her? Why?

10. Why do you think that the government and Aboriginal people have such a difficult time communicating?

Wind Spirit

1. Why does Allen Benson say that the Elders are hurt?

Because of what has happened to them and their land and because nobody is talking to them. Nobody seems to care.

2. Why does Patti LaBoucane-Benson say Aboriginal people feel helpless and hopeless?

It's a helpless, hopeless place to be, especially when it is so connected to lifestyle and ceremony and when you see the degradation of the environment and there's no control over it they feel like they have no power over what's going on.

3. Why does the Elder, Fred Campiou, fly the British flag?

Because it was the flag under which the Treaty was signed. The Treaty is an agreement and they had a ceremony and lifted the pipe. (sacred)

4. How did the laws and policies that governments imposed impact Aboriginal people?

- The settlers just made laws and they never consulted with indigenous people.
- Laws and policies were made that severely impacted indigenous peoples' ability to teach their children their own worldviews, ceremonies.
- The Residential School policies removed children from their families and communities and there was every effort made to kill the Indian in the child.
- These policies attacked the relationships between people and the land, people and the water and even relationships with their Creator
- Relationships that were so important to the survival of Aboriginal people were being attacked.
- First Nation, Métis and Inuit people are carrying the burden of those policies even today.

5. How does Allen compare what has happened to Aboriginal people and their land to something similar that would seriously impact farmers and ranchers in Alberta?

- Going to southern Alberta and diverting a couple of the rivers there so that farmers and ranchers there didn't have access to irrigate their land. I didn't care if I heard their voice and never even created an opportunity for them to have a dialogue with me as a government, if those policies and decisions were made without them, how would they feel?
- How would the next generation and the one after that feel if their land was powder and they couldn't grow on their land anymore, if their farms were destroyed, their families were destroyed?
- Their communities would be destroyed and their economy would be gone.
- Same thing is happening to Aboriginal communities that use to depend on the fishing, hunting and trapping.

6. How does Fred describe the Treaty and the difference in worldviews regarding the Treaty?

- Who in their right mind would sign away resources that sustained their lives.
- They said as long as the sun shines, river flow and the grass grows and it was sacred and an agreement was made.
- A covenant was made with the sacred pipe and it was agreed that this agreement will never be broken.
- Some people say we signed it away and it was given up, surrendered but that isn't true that's what the crown wanted people to believe.
- We have never relinquished or given it up, it's in our blood we are not going to give it up.
- We are talking about a trust between 2 people, I trust you that you are going to keep your word, like I'm going to keep my word. You're going to teach me like I'm going to teach you.
- How to live better, how to live the prospects of this land; that's what the Treaty meant to us.

7. What does Allen say is the right thing to do?

- It is a breach of treaty. That means that people don't understand the true history of what happened.
- We know that development is going to continue, we just want a voice, we want to be a part of the decision making.
- So what's wrong with giving the traditional land owners the voice at the table?
- There's a legal obligation to honor the treaties, to involve, engage consult and have an open dialogue with Aboriginal people.
- This whole experience isn't about blame, it's about responsibility on both sides.
- To come together to talk to find ways to find solutions to our differences and to reconcile.
- Reconcile all of the history that has happened and moving forward.
- Moving forward within First Nations, Inuit and Métis people and the rest of Canada.

8. What does Fred suggest is the way to resolve the issues? What do you think about this?

- We should have sitting at the same level, together side by side, the Governor General and a First Nation leader that understands that relationship: They should be talking.
- Our understanding of that agreement was to share, to work together to build a nation together, to build a society that beneficial for both sides, to share the resources.

9. What does Patti say will happen when people start feeling like there is respect and voice? Do you agree with her? Why?

- When people start feeling like there is respect power and voice we will transform our societies, our communities, and our families.
- Before we can fix the land, the water, the before we can do anything, we need to repair our relationships between Aboriginal people and mainstream society.

10. Why do you think that the government and Aboriginal people have such a difficult time communicating?