



Global Voices Information Sheet

First Nations Education



(Photo from Attawapiskat.com)

Background Info

- In the 19th Century, Canada's First Nations children attended residential schools, and were separated from their families in a system designed to remove them from their culture.
- Recently, Canada's federal government issued an official apology for residential schools and promised to help integrate First Nations culture into reserve schools.
- Funding for reserve schools comes from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and is less regulated than in provincially funded "city schools."
- In 1979, a large diesel fuel spill under the JR Nakogee School in the Attawapiskat First Nation contaminated the grounds. The school was shut down and temporary portables were built in 2000. The portables have worn down with age.
- Attawapiskat made multiple requests to INAC for a new school. INAC said there isn't enough money and there are other schools in Canada that take priority.
- In 2009, INAC promised to rebuild JR Nakogee School. It hasn't yet been rebuilt.

Key terms

- **First Nations**—a group of nations within the broad category of Aboriginal Peoples, which does not include Inuit or Métis. The term First Nations People generally applies to both Status and Non-Status Indians
- **Assimilation**—the process whereby a minority group gradually adopts the customs and attitudes of the prevailing culture
- **Band councils**—First Nations government bodies
- **Policy**—basic principles by which a government is guided; declared goals that a government seeks to achieve
- **INAC**—Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the federal department branch that funds on-reserve schools
- **Parliament Hill**—serves as the home of the Parliament of Canada, the federal government, in downtown Ottawa, Ontario

Global Voices Elementary Educator Resources

Note to Educators:

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. Activities are structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Extension and conclusion activities are included to challenge students and finally, encourage them to reflect on the issues at hand.

Since these activities are designed as discussions rather than formal lessons, assessment strategies are not included.

Themes and Course Connections

- Themes: First Nations education, education, Aboriginal issues, human rights, and equality.
- Course Connections: The Arts, Health and Physical Education Program, Language and Technology, and Social Studies.

Materials

- Chart paper or blackboard
- Global Voices column

Specific Expectations and Learning Goals

Students will:

- Develop and express responses to issues and problems.
- Reassess their responses to issues on the basis of new information.
- Participate in active group work and class discussions.
- Communicate effectively in written and spoken language or other forms of expression.
- Demonstrate the ability to think critically.
- Develop, express, and defend a position on an issue and explain how to put the ideas into action.

Knowledge and Understanding

1. First Nations Talking Circle (estimated time: 30 minutes)
 - a. Ask students to sit in a circle.
 - b. Next, ask them to identify circles they see around the classroom (e.g.: the shape of the clock).
 - c. Then, go further and ask students to identify circles they have noticed in nature (e.g.: the sun).
 - d. Explain to students that the circle is a symbol of high importance in First Nations culture. It represents many things from principles in the First Nations belief system, to patterns found in nature, to the construction of important structures, such as the teepee or the dream catcher.

- e. Tell students that when a group of people sits in a circle, this is called a “talking circle” and it is said to represent inclusiveness and equality. Each member of a talking circle must be respected and listened to while all comments directly address the question or issue at hand, rather than the comments another person has made.
 - f. Point out to students that they have formed their own “talking circle”. Explain that in this exercise they will carry out the principles of the talking circle and address some very important issues in Canadian culture.
 - g. Introduce an object that will be used to facilitate the circle (e.g.: a pencil) this object is called the “talking stick”. Only the person holding this object has the right to speak. Explain that students can indicate their desire to speak by raising their hands, at which point the talking stick will be shared with them.
 - h. After students have an understanding of the talking circle, use the following questions to facilitate discussion in the circle:
 - What do you know about First Nations peoples in Canada?
 - What does the “talking circle” tell you about First Nations peoples? What is unique about this tradition?
 - What cultural practices or traditions do you know about that are specific to First Nations? Explain.
 - What were/are some issues First Nations peoples faced in the past and still face in the present?
2. This discussion is meant to introduce the topic of First Nations culture and provide a strong foundation of knowledge about the culture. Before moving onto the next activity, identify any new knowledge gained during the course of the activity and answer any outstanding questions.

Thinking

1. Guided Reading: The Global Voices Column (estimated time: 20 minutes)
 - a. Have students sit in a circle and distribute one copy of the Global Voices column to each student.
 - b. Pre-reading steps:
 - i. Make predictions: ask students to read the title of the column and view the pictures. After doing so, ask them to make predictions as to what the column is going to be about.
 - ii. Introduce vocabulary: Aboriginal, First Nations, contaminated, portables, temporary.
 - iii. Assess prior knowledge: ask students to discuss what they already know about these topics.
 - c. Reading steps:
 - i. Go around the circle and have each student read a section of the column to the class so that everyone gets a turn to read.
 - ii. As students are reading, offer guidance and coaching by providing prompts, asking questions, and encouraging attempts at reading strategy application.
 - d. Post reading steps:
 - i. Encourage students to provide a summary of the column in order to ensure they have understood the series of events.
 - ii. Ask questions about the text to judge comprehension.
2. Media Literacy (estimated time: 15 minutes)
 - a. Ask students to practice their media literacy skills by identifying the following:
 - i. Title: include the full title of the article (also called the headline).
 - ii. Author: give the author’s full name; if there is no author given, indicate if the article is an editorial or from a foreign news source.
 - iii. Newspaper: the full name of the newspaper from which the article is taken.

- iv. Date: the day the article appeared in the newspaper
 - v. Subject: the overall topic that the article is describing.
 - vi. Event: what event led to the writing of the article?
 - vii. Main idea: identify what the article is proving or arguing about the issue. Is it trying to convince readers to take a side? If so what opinion is it encouraging?
 - viii. Evidence: list several facts/arguments that support the main idea and help to convince the reader or inform them of the issue. Does the author provide enough factual material to support his/her ideas?
 - ix. Significance: explain why this issue is important and whom it may affect.
 - x. Point of view: is the article, in your opinion, balanced or biased? Are different viewpoints presented? Are any left out?
- b. When this is complete, bring the class back together and discuss student answers.

Communication

1. First Nations Education (estimated time: 30 minutes)
 - a. Begin this activity with the following discussion questions?
 - i. What does your classroom look like? I.e. what objects does it contain? (desk, chairs, etc.)
 - ii. What resources do you have available at your school?
 - iii. What extracurricular activities do you participate in at school?
 - iv. What is your favorite subject?
 - v. What is your favorite thing to do in the classroom?
 - b. Direct the students' attention back to the Global Voices column and ask them to describe Shannen's school environment. Write all descriptive words mentioned on the board.
 - c. Following this discussion ask students to describe the differences between their school and Shannen's school and ask the following suggested questions:
 - i. Why do these differences exist?
 - ii. Is this fair? How does this make you feel?
 - iii. How is the Attawapiskat community proposing this be changed?
 - iv. What is meant by the statement: "Attawapiskat students became the face of a generation of forgotten First Nations children?"
 - v. What is Shannen's Dream? How did Shannen's death make you feel?
 - d. Ask students to write a reflection about the importance of equal access to education for all Canadian citizens.

Application

1. Shannen's Dream Day of Action (estimated time: continuous project)
 - a. Explain to students that April 27, 2011 is Shannen's Dream Day of Action. This is when students and educators across Canada will join together to support Shannen's Dream of "safe and comfy" schools and culturally based education on reserves.
 - b. There are a variety of ways to participate in this meaningful cause. Present the following options to the students and create your action plan:
 - i. Host a talk on Shannen's Dream and encourage everyone to [sign up to support Shannen's Dream](#).
 - ii. Write an article for your student newspaper or local newspaper on Shannen's Dream and why First Nations children deserve proper schools and education.
 - iii. Write letters to all the [candidates running in the Federal Election](#) in your area and ask them if they support Shannen's Dream and what their party is going to do to make sure that First Nations children get proper education.

- iv. Organize an awareness walk with your teachers and invite the local news to cover it.
 - v. 50 First Nations communities need new schools, so think about drawing 50 schools or building miniature schools to show the Government of Canada how it is done. Take pictures and send them to the Prime Minister at pm@pm.gc.ca
 - vi. [Buy Shannen's Dream pins](#) and spread the word!
- c. Tell Shannen's dream about the actions you took by writing them at info@fncaringsociety.com

Additional Resources

In addition to the above lesson plans, you may want to share some additional resources with your students. Listed below are some links to useful online resources:

Free The Children – www.freethechildren.com

Shannen's Dream - <http://www.fncfcs.com/shannensdream>