



## Global Voices Information Sheet

### Aboriginal Child Welfare



Maurina and Jeremy Beadle of the Pictou Landing First Nation in Nova Scotia. The Canadian Government won't provide enough funding for Maurina to care for Jeremy at home. (Photo: The Canadian Press/Andrew Vaughan)

#### Background Info

- Starting in the 1840s, tens of thousands of Aboriginal children in Canada were taken away from their families and put into “residential schools” so they could be taught white European-Canadian culture.
- About 27,000 Aboriginal children are currently in foster care – three times more than the number of children taken away in 1949, at the peak of the residential school system.
- The reasons children are taken away from their families can include poor living conditions – very dirty and unhealthy houses, if they are not getting enough nutrition, drug or alcohol abuse by their parents or caregivers, and physical or sexual abuse of the children.
- When she was Auditor General, Sheila Fraser investigated and found that Aboriginal children are taken from their families by social workers six to eight times more often than non-Aboriginal children.
- These children are then placed in group homes with other foster children, with other Aboriginal relatives, with other non-related Aboriginal families, or sometimes with non-related families who are not Aboriginal.
- Some social workers like Cindy Blackstock believe that it is very traumatic for children to be removed from their families, and it is better to try and fix the problems in the home. It is especially traumatic for Aboriginal children who are put in non-Aboriginal homes because they are being taken away from their culture.
- A National Policy Review report in 2000 found that there is 22 per cent less funding for Aboriginal child welfare than non-Aboriginal child welfare, especially for programs that would help children stay with their families.

#### Key terms

- **Foster care** – Temporarily placing a child in the care of people who are not their immediate family.
- **Group home** – An institution where children who have been taken away from their families live together when, for any reason, they cannot go to another individual family for foster care.
- **Social workers** – People whose job is to help children and families. Some social workers can take children from their families if the social worker thinks the home is not healthy for the children.
- **Residential schools** - Residential schools were boarding schools believed to be the best way to prepare First Nations youth for life in mainstream European society

## Global Voices Secondary 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: Family, culture, tradition, child welfare, foster care.
- Course Connections: History, Civics, English and Political Science.

### Materials

- Chart paper or blackboard
- Computer and internet
- 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. Families (estimated time: 10 minutes)
  - a. As a class define 'family.' Ask students to brainstorm the different types of families that exist in our society. Write students' ideas on the board.
  - b. If no one has mentioned it, explain to students that there are other kinds of families called "adopted families."
  - c. Ask students what they know about foster care. They should volunteer any information they might have. List ideas on the board.
  - d. Then explain if unclear that some kids also live in foster homes, which involve "care of children on a full-time, temporary basis by persons other than their own parents."
    - i. Teacher Note: It may be worth it to read out the full definition to the class, from <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/foster+home>

## Thinking

1. Reading Comprehension: Global Voices Column (estimated time: 15 minutes)
  - a. Pre reading steps:
    - i. Introduce the topic and encourage students to discuss what they already know about the topic, making predictions around what the column is about.
  - b. Reading steps:
    - i. Read: students must read the text independently, highlighting important points throughout the column.
    - ii. Ask: students must ask themselves what the story is about, recording five questions they are unsure of after reading the column.
    - iii. Paraphrase: encourage students to write point form notes in their own words around what the column is about.
  - c. Post reading discussion:
    - i. What are the main points of the column?
    - ii. What emotions did this column evoke in you?
    - iii. What problem is identified in the column?
    - iv. What questions do you have about the column?
2. Media Literacy (estimated time: 10 minutes)
  - a. Ask each student to perform an OPVL on the Global Voices column.
    - i. Origin: what is the source of this column?
    - ii. Purpose: why was this column written?
    - iii. Value: what are the facts and statistics in this column that give it value?
    - iv. Limitations: what perspective is the column written from, does this cause limitations? Are there any biases? If so, what are they?
  - b. When this is complete, bring the class back together and discuss student answers.

## Communication

1. Homesickness and culture shock (estimated time: 30 minutes)
  - a. The Global Voices column states: “Most of us are probably familiar with that uncomfortable feeling of staying in a stranger’s home, perhaps being billeted for a sports event or while on vacation. We don’t know the rules, the expectations, or the way things work there.”
  - b. Hold a class discussion around homesickness, by asking students to recall and share stories about how they felt when they were staying over at a friend or relative’s house, at a summer camp etc.
  - c. Now, ask them to imagine that they are separated from their families in a brand new cultural environment. For example, different kinds of foods, different language etc. Explain to students that many First Nations children in foster care experience both homesickness as well as culture shock.
  - d. For the remainder of the class, ask students to write a one-paragraph reflection on one of the following:
    - i. A time when they were separated from their family and felt homesick and/or culture shock.
    - ii. A reflection from the perspective of a First Nations child who was taken away from his/her family and placed in foster care.
  - e. Completed reflections can be handed in for grading.

## Application

1. Writing a persuasive research paper (estimated time: ongoing assignment)
  - a. Tell students they are going to write a persuasive research paper that accomplishes the following:

- i. Asks a good question
  - ii. A well organized and persuasive thesis
  - iii. Uses quotes, facts and statistics from scholars to support its interpretation
- b. They must choose one of the following suggested topics:
  - i. Explore the legacy of the residential school system
  - ii. The advantages and disadvantages of the foster care system in Canada, especially as it relates to First Nations children
- c. Explain to students that a good essay question is narrow and allows one to find a persuasive answer. The above topics are broad so students must use their research to narrow it down.
  - i. Tell students that a good question demands deep thought and cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” How, why and comparative questions allow you to stay away from this problem.
- d. Tell students that the next step is to formulate a well-organized and persuasive thesis:
  - i. A good thesis for a historical essay must answer the historical question posed in a concise yet impactful manner.
  - ii. The thesis must cover the following three items: the subject of your paper, your argument about the topic and the evidence you’ll be using to argue your thesis.
- e. Brainstorm possible thesis ideas as a class.
- f. Explain that the next step is for students to connect their topic to work by other scholars:
  - i. Students must read work by other scholars. This will help to place their paper in perspective.
  - ii. Students must use quotes, facts and evidence to support their thesis and answer their historical question.
- g. Discuss how evidence from scholarly writers can help to strengthen a persuasive essay.
- h. When students are familiar with the process of writing a persuasive essay, allow the class to begin their research and eventually their writing.
- i. Completed essays will be handed in.

## 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](http://www.freethechildren.com)

We Day Teach - <http://www.weday.com/teach>

First Nations Family Caring Society - <http://www.fncfcs.com/>

Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal - <http://www.cecw-cepb.ca/infosheets/comparison-first-nations-and-non-aboriginal-2003>

Cindy Blackstock - <http://www.extension.ualberta.ca/research/faculty-members/blackstock/>