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# ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

## ELEMENTARY LEVEL

Lesson Plan: Aboriginal Education in the elementary classroom

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### Rationale

The term Aboriginal refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) populations in Canada. Each of these groups is unique in culture and traditions and they have a history spanning hundreds of years. Unfortunately, this history is also defined by disproportionate levels of incarceration, poverty, unemployment, school dropout rates, alcohol abuse, suicides, and domestic violence. However, these negative characteristics should not be taken at face value; rather, it is important to question how and why they came to be.

We at Free The Children believe that education and awareness are the first steps to bringing an end to issues facing our world. For this reason, this lesson was created to support educators and students explore this complex and integral part of Canada's past, present and future. With this knowledge, we hope youth will spread awareness about FNMI issues throughout their school and community.

This lesson is organized into three parts: orientation, core and concluding activities followed by Blackline Masters (B.L.M.1 - B.L.M.3) and an assessment rubric (Appendix 1: Assessment Rubric for Student Work). At the conclusion of this lesson, students will participate in Free The Children and Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative's campaign, Local Spotlight: Aboriginal Education.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples are not alone in their struggles, let's stand in unity and celebrate this truly Canadian culture.

### Details

- **Grade level:** elementary
- **Themes:** traditions, culture, development, FNMI issues, community, awareness, geography, education, climate, survival, social justice, arts, storytelling.
- **Estimated time:** 4.5 hours
- **Learning goals**
  - Students will:
    - Formulate and share opinions on local issues and problems.
    - Demonstrate research skills by compiling information from a wide variety of print and electronic resources.
    - Participate in active group work and class discussions.
    - Communicate effectively in written, oral and artistic forms.
    - Further develop the ability to think critically.
    - Raise awareness about an important local issue.
- **Resources required**
  - Writing materials
  - Computers and internet
  - Projector and screen



- Blackboard, white board or chart paper
- For the 'stations activity' (below): construction paper, string, markers, scissors, glue, elastic bands, circular containers, wax paper, crayons, rice and paper towel rolls.
- Newspapers
- Local Spotlight: First Nations Education How-To Guide
- Blackline Master 1 (B.L.M.1) – Blackline Master 3 (B.L.M.3)
- **Assessment**
  - Appendix 1: Assessment Rubric for Student Work

## Aboriginal Education: First Nations Talking Circle Activity

### Orientation Activity

- **Purpose:** the purpose of this activity is to introduce Canadian First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) populations by focusing on a First Nations cultural tradition.
- **Instructional method(s):** class discussion.
- **Differentiated instruction:**
  - Students are divided into small groups, creating smaller talking circles around the room.
- **Grade(s):** 1 - 8
- **Estimated time:** 30 minutes
- **Steps:**
  1. Ask students to sit in a circle.
  2. Ask students to identify circles they see around the classroom (e.g.: the shape of the clock).
  3. Then, go further and ask students to identify circles they have noticed in nature (e.g.: the sun).
  4. 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.
  5. 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.
  6. 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.
  7. 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.
  8. Review appropriate behaviour in the talking circle by asking the following questions:
    - What does a talking circle look like?
    - Why is a talking circle important?
    - What behaviours are expected in a talking circle?
  9. 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 about Métis? Finally, what do you know about Inuit peoples?
    - What does the “talking circle” tell you about First Nations peoples? What is unique about this tradition?
    - What do you know about the FNMI population in your community?
    - What cultural practices or traditions do you know about that are specific to First Nations, Métis or Inuit communities? Explain.
    - What were some issues FNMI peoples faced in the past? What issues do they face today?
    - Are there any steps being taking in your community by organizations or individuals to help solve the issues facing the FNMI population today? Are there any steps you can take individually?
  10. This discussion is meant to introduce the topic of FNMI culture and provide a strong foundation of knowledge for moving forward. Before moving onto the next activity,



identify any new knowledge gained during the course of the activity and answer any outstanding questions.

## Aboriginal Education: Cultural Stations Activity

### Orientation Activity

- **Purpose:** the purpose of this activity is for students to participate in activities that are indigenous to First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Canada in order to expand their cultural understanding.
- **Instructional method(s):** class discussion, station rotation, group work.
- **Differentiated instruction:**
  - Move through each station as a class, allowing direct educator instruction at each station.
- **Grade(s):** 2 - 8
- **Estimated time:** 1 hour
- **Steps:**
  1. View B.L.M 1.1 – B.L.M.1.4 and collect all specified materials.
  2. Arrange printed Blackline Masters and materials into four stations around the classroom.
  3. Tell students they will be participating in an Aboriginal stations activity where they will travel around the room in small groups and spend fifteen minutes at each of the four stations. At each station, students will participate in an activity that will teach them about a Aboriginal culture.
    - Station one: Aboriginal Technologies
      - At this station students will discuss the different technologies found on B.L.M.1.2. Then, students will choose their favorite technology and create an illustration of the object, demonstrating its usefulness
    - Station two: First Nations Art
      - At this station, students will be introduced to a specific type of West Coast First Nations art called the Totem Pole (B.L.M.1.1). Students will create their own Totem Pole using the materials provided at the station.
    - Station three: The Métis Jig
      - At this station, students will be introduced to a Métis style of song and dance. They will listen to “The Red River Jig” found at the following link - <http://members.shaw.ca/tunebook/riverjig.htm> and answer the specified questions on B.L.M.1.3
    - Stations four: Inuit Stories
      - At this station, students will be provided with an Inuit story (B.L.M.1.4); they will read this story and interpret its meaning.
  4. Explain to students that they must follow the directions on the worksheet found at each station. However, if they have any questions, they can approach the classroom teacher who will be wandering the room.
  5. Instruct students to begin. Allow fifteen minutes at each stations before signaling rotation.
  6. Each group in the class must rotate through each station before the activity is complete.
  7. After the groups have rotated through each station, bring the class back together and ask students to reflect on what they have learned. Emphasize the rich cultural practices of FNMI peoples of Canada.

## Aboriginal Education: Comparing First Nations, Métis and Inuit Groups Activity

### Core Activity

- **Purpose:** the purpose of this activity is for students to use their research skills to learn about First Nations, Métis or Inuit peoples in Canada. Once they have done this, they will compare the characteristics of their group to those of another, discovering the unique traditions that each group holds.
- **Instructional method(s):** group work, group presentation.
- **Differentiated instruction:**
  - Students work independently instead of in groups.
- **Grade(s):** 5 - 8
- **Estimated time:** 1 hour
- **Steps:**
  1. Reserve library or computer lab space for this activity so that students can research their topics independently.
  2. Write the following groups on the board:
    - First Nations
    - Métis
    - Inuit
  3. Divide the class into six small groups (so that two groups are assigned to each topic) and assign each group to one of the above topics.
  4. Distribute a copy of B.L.M.2 to each group and explain to students that they will be participating in a small group research project, where they must find the information listed on the sheet.
  5. Allow research to begin.
  6. When students have completed their research, combine the groups into three larger groups so that First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations are represented in each group.
  7. In this new structure students must represent their Aboriginal group and explain to their group members the information they recorded on B.L.M.2. After each group has been represented, students must compare and contrast First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples by creating a Venn Diagram.
  8. When the Venn Diagrams are complete, bring the class back together and ask the following suggested questions:
    - What differences did you notice between the groups? Explain.
    - What similarities did you notice between the groups? Explain.
    - Why is it important for these groups to celebrate and practice their cultural traditions? What role should schools play in this process?
    - Why is it important for people of other cultures to respect the Aboriginal culture? Does this always happen? List examples
  9. At the conclusion of this activity students should have a deep understanding of FNMI cultural practices.
  10. Ask students to submit completed B.L.M.2 and Venn Diagrams for assessment.

## Aboriginal Education: Exploring the Current Situation Activity

### Core Activity

- **Purpose:** the purpose of this activity is for students to understand the issues the FNMI peoples face in the education system.
- **Instructional method(s):** class discussion, independent work.
- **Differentiated instruction:**
  - Students create a written reflection instead of creating a poster.
- **Grade(s):** 5 – 8
- **Estimated time:** 1 hour
- **Steps:**
  1. Begin this activity with the following discussion questions?
    - What are you interested in? What do you feel passionate about? Write suggestions on the board.
    - Do you feel excited when you are learning about things that interest you in school? When you learn about things that do not interest you, do you feel engaged in the lesson?
    - What is the best way for you to learn (e.g.: by working independently, by observing teacher demonstrations, etc.)? What is the hardest way for you to learn (e.g.: group work etc.)? If you are asked to learn in a way that is difficult for you, how does this make you feel? Do you make progress?
    - When you attend school, if you were to feel as if you did not have a voice, how would this make you feel?
  2. After this discussion, distribute B.L.M.3 to each student.
  3. Ask students to volunteer their first impressions when looking at the graphs.
  4. Following this initial discussion, explain to students that when the Europeans settled in Canada, Aboriginal children were forced into a European way of learning that did not acknowledge the different learning and teaching styles of Aboriginal peoples.

*Teacher Note: this activity is intended to introduce FNMI education issues before students become involved in Free The Children and Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative's Local Spotlight: Aboriginal Education campaign. In this campaign, students will take a more in-depth look at Aboriginal education issues.*

5. Ask students to view the graphs and analyze the impact this educational journey had on Aboriginal people.
6. After students have finished viewing the graphs, bring the class back together and ask students to volunteer their thoughts on the topic of FNMI education. Use the following questions as prompts:
  - If FNMI students were able to be educated through their traditional ways of learning, do you think this data would be different?
  - Why are students living on-reserve, less likely to achieve their high school certificate? What do you know about education on-reserve?
  - Looking at Graph c., what does this data tell you about FNMI education?
  - What direction should the education systems take in order to support the Aboriginal people?
7. Following this discussion, tell students they are going to create posters to be placed around the school, to raise awareness about FNMI issues. Ask students to reflect on the information they have learned during the course of this activity and the lesson and ask them to list different poster ideas. Record suggestions on the board.
8. Allow students an opportunity to create their posters.
9. When posters are complete, display finished products around the school.

## Aboriginal Education: Staying Current Activity

### Concluding Activity

- **Purpose:** the purpose of this activity is to encourage students to explore current Aboriginal issues in Canada.
- **Instructional method(s):** class discussion, group work.
- **Differentiated instruction:**
  - Each student is assigned one media text that they must paraphrase, learning its meaning.
- **Estimated time:** 1 hour
- **Steps:**
  1. Collect media clippings over the course of the week containing news on FNMI peoples in Canada.
  2. Ask students to list any recent occurrences where they have heard about Aboriginal peoples mentioned in the news, especially regarding education. Discuss these issues as a class. Explain to students that it is important to be aware of these issues because only with awareness will there be change.
  3. Divide students into small groups and distribute media clippings to each group.
  4. Ask students to search through the media texts for any mention of Canadian Aboriginal populations. When this information is found, ask them to answer the following suggested questions:
    - What is the title of this text?
    - Who created the text?
    - In what source did you find this text?
    - Who is the audience? How do you know?
    - From whose point of view is the text being presented?
    - How might someone with a different perspective retell what is said in the text? How would a different audience interpret it?
    - What messages are being conveyed?
    - What messages are missing from the text?
    - How does the fact that there is something missing influence how you think about the text and its messages?
  5. When students have completed all of the above questions, bring the class back together and ask students to explain their findings to the class.
  6. When this discussion is complete, explain to students that in the past, mainstream media have often misrepresented Aboriginal peoples. Explain to students that this type of portrayal encourages negative stereotypes and thinking. Ask students to use the knowledge they have learned throughout the course of this lesson to combat these stereotypes because change can start with them.
  7. Find a space in the class to display these media texts whether it be a classroom bulletin board or an FNMI Issues duo-tang. Once compiled, this will act as a reference so that students can look back at the articles as the weeks pass to determine how things are progressing in Canada.



### Concluding activity 2: Local Spotlight: Aboriginal Education

- **Purpose:** the purpose of this activity is to provide students with an outlet for action by engaging them in the Free The Children and the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative's Aboriginal Education campaign.
- **Instructional method(s):** class discussion, video demonstration.
- **Differentiated instruction:**
  - Students read the How-To Guide, learning the details of the campaign and go on to present awareness-raising ideas to the classroom educator.
- **Grade(s):** 1 - 8
- **Estimated time:** 20 minutes
- **Steps:**
  - a. Ask students to reflect on all they have learned about Canada's FNMI peoples. Explain to students that Free The Children and the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative have introduced a campaign that will allow them to focus on Aboriginal issues particularly in the area of education.
  - b. Introduce the campaign by viewing the following video:
    - Free The Children's Local Spotlight: Aboriginal Education - [www.freethechildren.com/aboriginaleducation](http://www.freethechildren.com/aboriginaleducation)
  - c. Keeping in mind all they have learned throughout the course of the lesson, ask students the following questions:
    - Why is this campaign important?
    - What does this campaign mean to you?
    - What are the goals of this campaign?
  - d. As a class, access the campaign How-To Guide and follow the specific steps to determine your class awareness strategy.

## 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 Aboriginal Education campaign - [www.freethechildren.com/aboriginaleducation](http://www.freethechildren.com/aboriginaleducation)
- The Indian Act - <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/l-5/>
- Constitution Act, 1867 to 1982 – <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/9.html>
- The Criminal Code of Canada – specifically s718.2(e) <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/c-46/>
- The Supreme Court of Canada - <http://scc.lexum.umontreal.ca/en/index.html>
- Assembly of First Nations - <http://www.afn.ca/>
- Government of Canada Canadian Aboriginal Portal - <http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/site.nsf/eng/index.html>
- Ontario Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs - [http://www.aboriginalaffairs.gov.on.ca/english/news/2010/oct28\\_10.asp](http://www.aboriginalaffairs.gov.on.ca/english/news/2010/oct28_10.asp)
- First Nations Youth Network - <http://www.fn-youthnetwork.com/>
- Canadian Council on Learning - <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccl/Reports/StateofAboriginalLearning.html>
- Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative - <http://www.maei-ieam.ca>

## Blackline Master 1.1

**Canadian Aboriginal Technologies**

First Nations people have invented and discovered, overtime, various technologies to meet their needs and wants. In turn, these inventions have had a great contribution to Canada and the world.

<p><b>Darts</b>            Purpose: a recreational game.            Appearance: it began as a lawn game. The darts consisted of de-kernelled, shucked green corn with feathers attached to the ends. These darts were thrown at targets placed on the ground.</p>	<p><b>Upset stomach remedies</b>            Purpose: to cure stomach aches, dysentery, cholera and diarrhea.            Appearance: this was either done by eating the berries or drinking their juice or it was made into a tea made with the entire blackberry plant.</p>	<p><b>Pain relief</b>            Purpose: to cure aches and pains            Appearance: found an acid in willow trees which is the most commonly used ingredient in pain relievers today.</p>
<p><b>Canoes</b>            Purpose: to allow travel over waterways.            Appearance: these small boats were originally made of bark.</p>	<p><b>Chewing gum</b>            Purpose: chewed for pleasure and taste.            Appearance: collected from spruce trees and combined with sugar.</p>	<p><b>Lacrosse</b>            Purpose: played to resolve conflicts, heal the sick, develop strong, virile men and prepare for war            Appearance: a ball and stick game where the ball is thrown into a target using the stick.</p>
<p><b>Snowshoes</b>            Purpose: to allow for travel over snow.            Appearance: a wide, flat shoe made from materials such as spruce and rawhide thongs.</p>	<p><b>Cough syrup</b>            Purpose: to cure common coughs and colds.            Appearance: consisted of unique combinations of wild plants such as the balsam from pine trees, maple syrup and honey.</p>	<p><b>Snow goggles</b>            Purpose: to prevent snow glare.            Appearance: made from materials such as bone, antler and ivory.</p>
<p><b>Cure for Scurvy</b>            Purpose: to cure scurvy.            Appearance: the bark and needles of an evergreen tree were boiled to make a vitamin C-rich tonic that sufferers drank.</p>	<p><b>Petroleum jelly</b>            Purpose: used to moisten and protect animal and human skin and stimulate healing.            Appearance: combined olefin hydrocarbons and methane</p>	<p><b>Toboggan</b>            Purpose: to haul game out of the woods, to move camp and to travel.            Appearance: created out of bark and skin.</p>
<p><b>Sunflowers Seeds</b>            Purpose: the seeds of sunflowers were an important source of nutrition.            Appearance: basic sunflower seeds.</p>	<p><b>Corn</b>            Purpose: for food and nutrition.            Appearance: first cultivated by the Aboriginal people.</p>	<p><b>Kayak</b>            Purpose: these small boats were used to travel, fish, and to hunt sea animals. Appearance: constructed from stitched seal or other animal skins, stretched over a wooden frame.</p>

## Blackline Master 1.2

### Station four: First Nations Art

#### Step 1: Learn the facts

A Totem Pole is a tall, carved post of wood traditionally created by important men among certain First Nations groups in British Columbia and Alaska. On the pole, there tends to be carved and painted faces of animals or birds that are visual statements about group membership and identity. They were skillfully carved and were painted black, red, blue and sometimes white and yellow.

#### Step 2: Create your own Totem Pole!

##### Materials:

- Empty paper towel or wrapping paper rolls
- Crayons and/or markers
- Construction paper
- Glue
- Scissors

##### What You Do:

- Cut a piece of construction paper long enough to wrap around the paper roll.
- Lay the paper out flat and draw an animal's face.
- When you have finished drawing the face, glue the construction paper around the toilet paper roll.
- Cut a triangular shape (for the nose or beak) out of the construction paper, crease it down the middle (so it will stick out) and glue the edges onto the face.
- Cut a pair of wings and glue them to your totem.
- If you like, you can make a few different totems and stack them on top of one another.

## Blackline Master 1.3

**Station three: The Métis Jig****Step 1: Learn the facts**

Métis are descents are of mixed European and First Nations peoples. They developed their own culture with elements taken from both the European and Aboriginal cultures. An example of this can be seen in their style of dancing and fiddle tunes that are very similar to Celtic and French-Canadian antecedents, but seamlessly weaved in faster-paced First Nations footwork and rhythms.

Today, through dancing, singing and having fun, the old ways are remembered and pride is taken in traditional heritage. Aboriginal elders say that coming together in a joyous spirit is an important underlying and healing experience which brings together many nations in a celebration of life.

**Step 2: Listen to the song****Step 3: Answer the following questions**

- Analyze the music – what instruments do you hear? What type of dancing do you think happens?
- What is the song about? What does the title have to do with the song?
- What message is the song trying to convey to the listener?

**Step 4: Get creative!**

- As a group, write an interpretation of the story behind one of The Red River Jig and why this particular song and dance is important to the Métis peoples.

## Blackline Master 1.4

### Station four: Inuit Stories

#### **Step 1: Learn the facts**

Canadian Inuit peoples value a legacy of oral tradition. They believe that stories bind a community, linking it with its past and future. Such stories hold information about a community's spirituality, their lessons of morality and life skills to be passed down to later generations.

#### **Step 2: Read the story**

**The Wolf and the Caribou:** A story told by the Inuit of Canada, the people of the North.

In the beginning – so the legend says – there was a man and a woman, nothing else on the Earth walked or swam or flew. And so the woman dug a big hole in the ground and she started fishing in it. And she pulled out all of the animals. The last animal she pulled out was the caribou. The woman set the caribou free and ordered it to multiply. And soon the land was full of them. And the people lived well and they were happy. But the hunters only killed those caribou that were big and strong. And soon all that was left were the weak and the sick. And the people began to starve. And so the woman had to make magic again, and this time she called Amorak, the spirit of the wolf, to winnow out the weak and the sick, so that the herd would once again be strong. The people realized that the caribou and the wolf were one, for although the caribou feeds the wolf, it is the wolf that keeps the caribou strong

#### **Step 3: Answer the following questions**

- What is the moral of the stories?
- What symbols are used in these stories? What do these symbols represent?
- What knowledge will these stories pass on to future generations?
- Why are these stories important to this Aboriginal group?



**Blackline Master 2**

**Cultural Research Project**

Names of group members: \_\_\_\_\_

Aboriginal group: \_\_\_\_\_

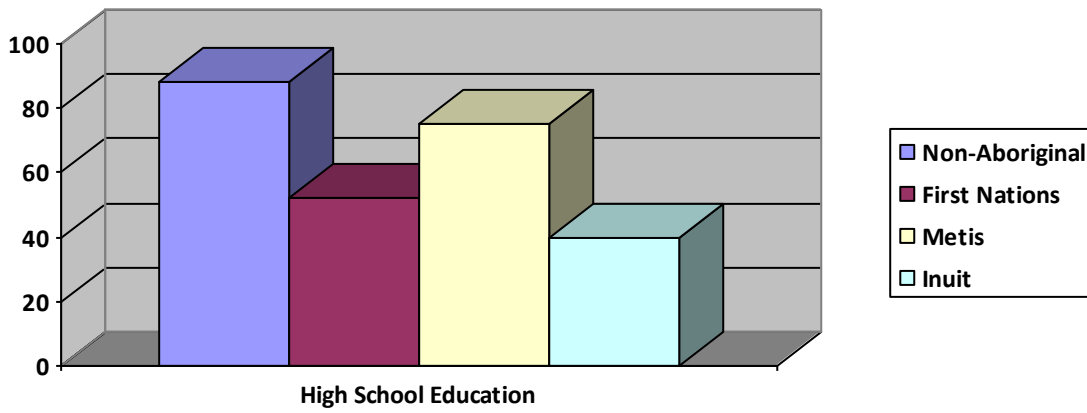
Language	
Hunting	
Governance	
Agriculture	
Geographical location	
Education	
Trade	
Recreation	
Roles of men, women and children	
The arts	
Story telling	

**Blackline Master 3**

Education Data

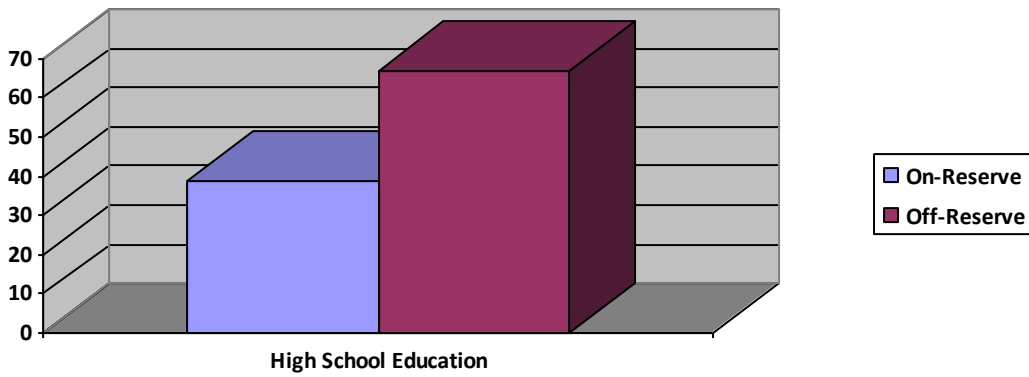
Graph a.

FNMI High School Completion Rates, Age 20-24, 2006



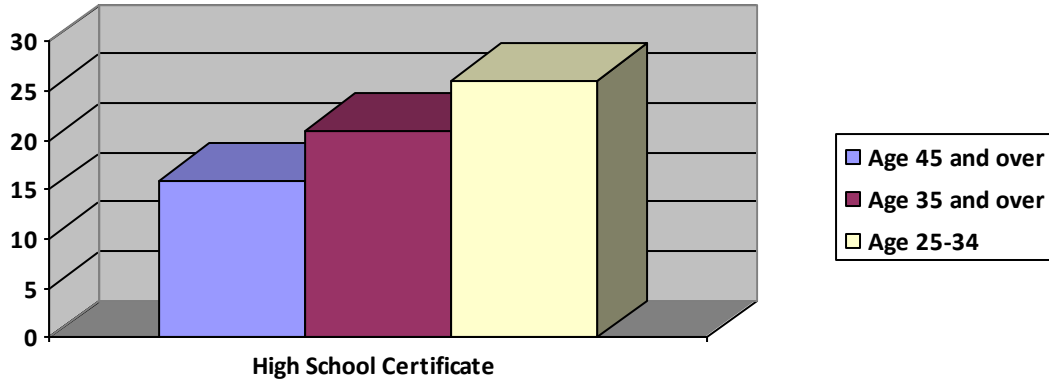
Graph b.

First Nations High School Completion Rates, Age 20-24, on/off reserve, 2006



Graph c.

Percentage of FNMI Peoples who Achieved a High School Certificate, 2006



\*Data taken from 2006 Canadian Census

## Appendix 1

Use the below assessment rubric to evaluate students' comprehension of issues and participation in the lesson plan activities. This rubric can be used in the following activities: Cultural Stations, Comparing First Nations, Métis and Inuit Groups, Aboriginal Education, and Aboriginal News.

### Assessment Rubric for Student Work

Performance Factors	Outstanding	Very Effective	Effective	Marginally Effective	Ineffective
<b>Producing Quality Work</b>	Produces high quality work.	Produces quality work.	Produces good quality work.	Produces work with limited quality.	Produces work with no quality.
<b>Using Work Time Effectively</b>	Always remains on task, showing exemplary adherence to boundaries and rules.	Consistently remains on task, showing respect to boundaries and rules.	Sometimes on task, showing inconsistent observance of boundaries and rules.	Sometimes on task, showing limited observance of boundaries and rules.	Not on task, showing no observance of boundaries and rules.
<b>Knowledge Of Topic</b>	Demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of concepts.	Demonstrates considerable knowledge and understanding of concepts.	Demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of concepts.	Demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of concepts.	Demonstrates no knowledge and understanding of concepts.
<b>Communicating Effectively</b>	Expresses and organizes ideas and information with a high degree of effectiveness.	Expresses and organizes ideas and information with considerable effectiveness.	Expresses and organizes ideas and information with some effectiveness.	Expresses and organizes ideas and information with limited effectiveness.	Expresses and organizes ideas and information with no effectiveness.
<b>Originality</b>	Presents or selects a fresh and original idea.	Presents or selects a somewhat original idea.	Presents a somewhat predictable response to the topic.	Presents a predictable response to the topic.	Restates topic using no original ideas.