
ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

SECONDARY LEVEL

Aboriginal Traditions Activity

- **Purpose:** the purpose of this activity is to educate students about the topic of Canadian Aboriginal populations and heritage by exploring a general overview of culture and customs.
- **Instructional method(s):** class discussion, group work.
- **Differentiated instruction:**
 - Read each Aboriginal story as a class and discuss the specified questions together.
 - Students respond to the questions in written language and hand their answers into the teacher.
- **Course Connection(s):** Canadian and World Studies, English, Interdisciplinary Studies, Native Studies and Social Sciences and Humanities.
- **Estimated time:** 30 minutes
- **Steps:**
 1. Ask students to list any Canadian First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) traditions they are aware of (e.g.: storytelling). Write suggestions on the board.
 2. As a class, discuss each tradition listed on the board and why they think it's important to Aboriginal culture.
 3. Explain to students that Canadian FNMI 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, as well as life skills to be passed down to later generations.
 4. Divide the students into small groups and distribute B.L.M.1 to each group.
 5. On B.L.M.1, students will find three stories selected from First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Assign each group one of the stories.
 6. Ask each group to read over the story together and discuss the following questions:
 - What is the moral of the story?
 - What symbols are used in this story? What do these symbols represent?
 - What knowledge will this story pass on to future generations?
 - Why do they think the story is important to Aboriginal people?
 7. When groups are finished reading their stories and answering the above questions, have the groups responsible for the different stories explain them to the class.
 8. Move the discussion back to Canadian Aboriginal traditions, focusing on why it is important to keep cultural traditions (such as those discussed in this activity) alive. Encourage an active debate at this time.

Teacher Note: all Aboriginal stories were obtained from the Government of Canada Aboriginal Portal - <http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/site.nsf/eng/ao04580.html>



Take action to raise awareness about Aboriginal Education. Participate in Free The Children and Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative's campaign, Local Spotlight: Aboriginal Education. Check out www.weday.com/takeaction to get involved.

Blackline Master 1

Canadian Aboriginal Stories

1. **The Earth World:** A story told by the Mohawk from the residents of the Tyendinaga Reserve, Ontario.

The woman from the sky world went through the hole in the sky and fell downwards; there was only water below her. The beaver, the otter, the muskrat, and the turtle saw her fall, and fearing that she would drown sent a flock of ducks to catch her. The ducks flew underneath the woman, caught her on their backs, and set her safely down on the turtle's shell.

When she had rested she told the animals what must be done. She said that she needed soil which could be obtained from the bottom of the sea that covered the world. The strong beaver was the first to go down towards the bottom. He was gone a very long time until finally his drowned body floated to the surface. The otter considered himself to be a much better swimmer than the beaver; he was the second to make the attempt. He was down for an even longer time, and when his body surfaced he too was dead. Finally the muskrat attempted the dive. He was underwater longer even than the otter, but his body eventually floated to the surface. The woman discovered a tiny piece of soil in the crevice of the muskrat's paw, and this she sprinkled on the edge of the turtle's shell.

While the woman slept, the world grew from the edge of the turtle's shell and extended as far as one could see in every direction. By the time she awoke there were willows growing along the edge of the world, and they were the first trees to grow upon the earth.

2. **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

3. **How the People Hunted the Moose:** A story told by the Métis-Cree of Canada, the children of the Cree women and French, Scottish and English fur traders

A family of moose was sitting in the lodge when a pipe came floating in through the door, passing close to each of the Moose People until it reached the youngest of the young bull moose. He took the pipe and started to smoke it. The old moose knew that it was a pipe the human beings were smoking to ask for success in their hunt. "Now, tomorrow, they will find us," he said. But the young moose was not afraid, for he thought he could outrun them.

When the Moose People reached the edge of the forest the next day, they caught the scent of the hunters. The thin crust on the snow made it hard for the moose to move quickly. The young moose was still sure he could outrun the hunters, but the hunters were wearing snowshoes. They followed him until he tired, and then they killed him. They thanked him for giving himself to them so they could survive. They treated his body with care, soothing his spirit.



When the young moose woke up in his bed that night, he said to the others, "Those hunters treated me with respect. It is right for us to allow the human beings to catch us." And so it is to this day. Those hunters who show respect for the moose are always the ones who are successful when they hunt.