



Date: _____

Exploring the Past

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Please read this Acknowledgement before the start of this lesson to respect the knowledge that is being shared and the Land of the People where the knowledge originates.:

We respectfully acknowledge the Mi'kmaq people and the traditional territory of Ktaqamkuk from which this lesson plan originates. We also recognize Sara Leah Hindy, a Mi'kmaw educator from the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation, as the creator of this lesson plan.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this lesson plan, students will be able to:

1. Explain how primary sources are used to construct historical knowledge; [GCO 6; SCO 1.0]
2. Describe how archaeologists and historians help us understand the past; [GCO 6; SCO 1.0]
3. Describe the challenges of creating an accurate history; [GCO 6; SCO 1.0]
4. Write a history based on primary sources. [GCO 6; SCO 1.0]

LIST OF ACTIVITIES

1. Exploring the Past

MATERIALS

- RAN Chart
- Assessment Rubric
- Two objects of cultural and historical value
- The RAN Strategy
- Exploring the Past - Assignment Rubric (Sample)



Social Studies

Origin

Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation,
Newfoundland
Newfoundland and Labrador

Learning Level / Grade

5



300 mins

Related Subjects

English Language Arts,
Family and Parenting,
History, Indigenous Language,
Indigenous Ways of Knowing
& Being, Civics, Archaeology

DESCRIPTION

This lesson plan teaches students about local Indigenous history and fosters opportunities for students to inquire about and to explore their family histories.

HOLISM AND ALL OUR RELATIONS

This lesson plan has been developed with an Indigenous lens that is holistic in nature, a way of being and knowing that acknowledges our relationships with 'all our relations', including plants and animals, other human beings, the water, land, wind, sun, moon, stars, and more - everything seen and unseen. With 'all our relations' in mind, this lesson plan has been developed with a focus on:

- Language and Culture
- Participatory and experiential learning activities
- Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders
- Relationship with family, ancestors
- Different learning styles; attention given to mind, body, and spirit
- Nurturing healthy relationships in school and community
- Ethics in the classroom: care, truthfulness and trust, respect, integrity
- Healthy relationship with self and identity
- Relationship with the land
- Personal reflection time (connecting with thoughts and feelings)
- Connections are made with everyday life

TEACHERS' GUIDE

Background/Foundational Information

- An initial conversation with an Elder or Knowledge Holder will help determine the direction of this lesson. The lesson will be shaped by the objects selected and the ways in which the history of these objects is shared by the Elder or Knowledge Holder. For the purpose of this lesson, an eel spear and a spruce root basket were used. It is important to have an understanding of the cultural and historical significance of each item prior to beginning the lesson. Through conversations with an Elder or Knowledge Holder, an historical context can be created. Archives, museums, and digital resources can also provide valuable information. Some digital resources on spruce root basket making and the traditional method of eel spearing are provided in the "Where can the educator find additional information" section below.
- Another important consideration involves the curiosity of the students and what they hope to learn about history and culture through the lesson. When students are vested in their learning, they are better able to make personal connections to the content. A lot can be learned about student perspectives and interests from the opening sharing circle.
- Intergenerational learning is another integral aspect of this lesson. Engaging family and community helps students connect their learning with life and with self.
- To deliver this lesson, first acknowledge the local land, the people, and the place. Also, seek help and guidance with this lesson in a way that respects Indigenous values and traditions.
- Learning on the land can provide students with tangible, first-hand experience while interacting with the subject matter. However, some experiences may have limitations. It is important to consider medical needs, accessibility, supports, policies, and consents prior to organizing an outdoor experience. This will ensure student safety and educational equity.

ACTIVITIES

1 - Exploring the Past

Purpose

This activity is intended to reinforce the cultural and historical value of artifacts or objects. It also further demonstrates the significance of perspective in relation to the telling of history.

Materials required are two culturally and historically significant items, e.g. an eel spear and spruce root basket (video resources are also available).

Time: 300 mins

Activity Instructions**Overview:**

Students will consider the value of historical knowledge and examine how primary sources are discovered, evaluated, and used to construct historical knowledge. They will use this information to answer the question: "How do we learn about the past?" Students will also consider some of the difficulties in creating an accurate account of the past.

Preparation:

Prior to beginning this lesson, consult an Elder or Knowledge Holder. Explain the intent of the lesson and ask if they would be open to sharing traditional knowledge with students. This initial conversation will help to inform the content and flow of the lesson as well as the most appropriate way to present the lesson material.

Through conversation, identify two culturally and historically significant items. These items will be at the heart of the lesson and provide context to conversations about artifacts, primary sources, oral history, traditions, values, language, culture, and perspective. For the purpose of this lesson, an eel spear and a spruce root basket will be used; however, any two culturally significant items may be used.

When asking an Elder or Knowledge Holder for help, it is important to do so in the most respectful way. In the Mi'kmaq culture, it is appropriate to offer a tobacco tie before asking for guidance or help from an Elder or Knowledge Holder.

Activation:

This lesson will explore the local history of people and place. To introduce the lesson, the teacher may begin with a land acknowledgment and explain its importance to the class. Next, the teacher can set the context of exploring the past by asking students if they know what an artifact is. They can explain that it is an object made by humans that tells us about their culture and history. Artifacts are primary sources that provide firsthand evidence about the past. Explain that we can learn about the past through artifacts by asking:

- Where was the artifact found?
- What is its age?
- Who created it?
- What was its purpose?

Next, the teacher explains that the class will be shown two items that can provide valuable information about the history of Mi'kmaq people. Although the items may not be considered artifacts, they can tell us a great deal if we ask the same types of questions. In a sharing circle, students will have the opportunity to hold each item and to share their thoughts about the items. They may attempt to answer some of the artifact questions, they may have a story to share, or they may make a personal connection to the items. Two rounds may be devoted

to each item. Each round will build connections between what each individual contributes. A great deal of learning can be achieved through the listening and the sharing that occurs within a circle.

Please note: It is important that students understand the purpose of the circle. The teacher should explain that it provides a safe and respectful space where everyone has equal opportunity to listen and to share.

After each item has been discussed, the teacher may explain the purpose of a RAN chart. Students will be asked to complete the "What I Think I Know" section of a RAN chart using what they know about the items and what they have learned through a sharing circle. They may also work on the "Wonderings" section to identify questions they may have. The remaining sections will be completed later in the lesson. A sample RAN chart is provided in this lesson plan (in 'Materials' section below).

To continue the discussion, ask students to bring their RAN chart home and ask their family members if they would like to contribute information to any section of the chart. This will encourage dialogue, foster intergenerational learning, and create deeper connections with the lesson content. The chart will also help guide student learning and raise important questions about how we learn about the past.

Advise students that an Elder or Knowledge Holder (also referred to as a guest) will be joining the class to share their knowledge about the traditional uses of both the eel spear and the spruce root basket. The special guest may provide answers to the artifact questions discussed at the beginning of the lesson. This is an integral component of the lesson as students begin to make connections between the cultural and historical importance of items and the perspective from which the history and stories about the items are told as well as the language used in the telling.

Connection:

The teacher and students will welcome the Elder or Knowledge Holder into the classroom. The guest will share their knowledge of how both the eel spear and the spruce root basket were used by the Mi'kmaq people. They may share how the items were made, how they were used, where they were used and the traditions, values, and language associated with each item. Students will be provided with opportunities to ask questions and to engage in dialogue to clarify some of the points raised in their previous discussion and in their RAN charts.

Note: A prayer and smudging ceremony may be the preferred way to begin this portion of the

lesson. Ensure that suitable space is provided for this.

Consolidation:

The Elder or Knowledge Holder may bring students on an outdoor walk to identify spruce trees and to explain the process of harvesting and preparing the roots for basket weaving. They may also identify other culturally significant plants in the area and explain their traditional uses. If the outdoor location is near eel fishing grounds or other fishing and hunting grounds, this may also be discussed.

To make this excursion as experiential as possible, a hands-on learning experience may be included. For example, students may contribute to the weaving of a partially finished spruce root basket at the site of a spruce tree. If eel is locally available, and permissible, the guest may have a boil-up and roast small pieces of eel over a fire for students to sample. (Please refer to school policy and food regulations, and seek parental permission prior to providing this experience).

After the outdoor learning experience, students may return to class and reflect on everything they have learned by completing the remaining sections of the RAN chart. They may share what they have learned in a classroom discussion.

Extension:

The teacher may ask students to bring their RAN charts home and discuss what they have learned about the eel spear and spruce root basket with their family. They will ask their family to help them identify an object that carries history or tells a story about their own family.

Assignment:

Students will be asked to prepare a demonstration, depiction, or description of an object of their choosing to share with the class in a sharing circle. This portion of the lesson relies heavily on the input of family members to assist students in selecting an object of cultural and historical value and to provide them with information about why this item is important to their family. Examples may include:

- a demonstration of the how the object is used (for example, a song using a hide drum)
- a short piece of writing, phrases, or words that describe the object using the language of the culture from which the object originates
- a replica or photos of the object if they are unable to bring the original object to class

- a depiction of how it was used in the past such as a painting, a drawing, or a diorama
- a retelling of a story about the object that was shared by a family or community member.

Students will be asked to bring their assignment and, if possible, the original object to class. In a sharing circle, each student will have the opportunity to talk about their object as they share their assignment with the class. This exercise will encourage conversations about how objects relate to ancestry, culture, language, values, traditions, etc. The four rounds of the sharing circle will also provide students with opportunities to make connections between the stories they share. Students may find similarities and/or differences between their objects and histories.

A sample rubric for this assignment is provided with this lesson plan.

This activity is designed to connect with learners with these learning styles...

- Spiritual (e.g., Relational) Learners
- Physical (e.g., Tactile, Experiential, Visual) Learners
- Intellectual (e.g., Rational, Logical) Learners
- Emotional (e.g., Feeling, Intuitive) Learners

... in the following ways:

- Spiritual - students are provided with opportunities to reflect on their family history and sense of identity
- Emotional - students explore personal connections to subject matter through intergenerational dialogue
- Physical - the outdoor experience provides students with kinesthetic learning opportunities
- Intellectual - students begin to interpret historical sources and resources by using critical thinking skills.

Materials

Click the 'Link' to open and view videos.

To open and print files, please go to the 'files' folder accompanying this downloaded lesson plan.

Resource Title	Type
RAN Chart	File (The_RAN_Strategy .pdf) 📄
This chart is used by students to consolidate and reflect on their learning.	
Assessment Rubric	File (Exploring the Past Rubric.pdf) 📄
This rubric can be used as an assessment tool for this activity.	
Two objects of cultural and historical value	Supplies 📦
In preparation for this class, the teacher consults with an Elder to discuss the lesson and its aims and to identify two objects of cultural and historical value for the class to consider during the 'Activation,' 'Connection,' 'Consolidation,' and 'Extension' activities.	

TEACHING NOTES

ASSESSMENT

This section contains information for assessing progress in students' learning. While Indigenous approaches to assessment may be highlighted, conventional assessment methods may also be discussed.

Assessment for Learning - Ongoing dialogue, through sharing circles and individual discussions, helps inform the instruction.

Assessment as Learning - Students are actively engaged in identifying and recording what they currently know, and adding what they learn throughout the lesson.

Assessment of Learning - Students are challenged to think critically about the topic and evaluate their initial perceptions and what they have learned through the RAN chart. Students are tasked with demonstrating personal connections to the subject matter through an assignment.

Resource Title	Type
The RAN Strategy	File (The RAN Strategy.pdf) 📄
Exploring the Past - Assignment Rubric (Sample)	File (Exploring the Past - Assignment Rubric (Sample).pdf) 📄

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Click the 'Link' to open and view videos.

To open and print files, please go to the 'files' folder accompanying this downloaded lesson plan.

Resource Title	Type
Eel Spearing, Mi'kmaq	Link 🔗
Weaving Spruce Root Baskets	Link 🔗
The Words of White Wolf (Elder Victor Muise)	Link 🔗
Outdoor Education	Link 🔗

HOLISM AND ALL OUR RELATIONS

This lesson plan has been developed with an Indigenous lens that is holistic in nature, a way of being and knowing that acknowledges our relationships with 'all our relations', including plants and animals, other human beings, the water, land, wind, sun, moon, stars, and more - everything seen and unseen. With 'all our relations' in mind, this lesson plan has been developed with a focus on:

Relationship with the land
An Elder or Knowledge Holder will guide students on an outdoor walk to identify plants and places that hold cultural and historical significance. The Elder or Knowledge Holder may show students a spruce tree and explain the process of harvesting and preparing spruce roots for the purpose of basket weaving. They may also identify fishing and/or hunting grounds and explain the traditional routes and methods. To incorporate hands-on learning, an additional experience may be added to this portion of the lesson such as basket weaving or a boil-up, providing students with an opportunity to actively participate in a traditional cultural activity.
Participatory and experiential learning activities
Language and Culture

Language and culture are present throughout this lesson. The language is used for identifying objects (natural and made) and the cultural historical values are explored, discussed, and reflected upon. A community Elder or Knowledge Holder provides traditional knowledge, language, and stories to deepen students' understanding of the objects and to encourage critical thinking about historical sources and perspectives. They also lead the outdoor, experiential learning component of the lesson which provides students with an opportunity to engage in the language and with cultural traditions.

Relationship with family, ancestors

Intergenerational learning is encouraged by engaging parents/family in the discussion about artifacts and cultural items, and seeking their contributions to the RAN chart. The assignment portion of this lesson relies heavily on the input of family members to assist students in selecting an object of cultural and historical value and to provide them with information about why this item is important to their family.

Connections are made with everyday life

Students are encouraged to reflect on how the lesson relates to them, individually, by examining aspects of their own family history and drawing connections between history and identity.

Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders

Were Elders or Knowledge Holders involved in the development of this Lesson Plan? Yes
Can Elders or Knowledge Holders be invited to help teach part of this lesson plan? Yes

Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders

Ethics in the classroom: care, truthfulness and trust, respect, integrity

Care - compassion and consideration for each individual's thoughts and ideas as they are shared throughout the lesson;
Respect - respect for individual stories, cultural practices, and beliefs;
Truthfulness and Trust - nurtured through sharing in a safe and respectful space;
Integrity - reflected in acknowledging the importance of our individual contributions and perspectives.

Different learning styles; attention given to mind, body, and spirit

Healthy relationship with self and identity

The assignment provides students with an opportunity to personally relate to the lesson content as they explore aspects of their own identity.

Personal reflection time (connecting with thoughts and feelings)

The RAN chart provides students with an opportunity to document their insights and reflections on what they have learned throughout the lesson.

OTHER DETAILS

This Lesson Plan aims to meet curriculum expectations or outcomes for: Newfoundland and Labrador Yes

Unit Plan Title: Exploring the Past - How do we learn about the past?

RELATED LESSON PLANS

- [Elements of Art](#)
- [Our History – Understanding the Past that Shapes our Present and Informs our Future](#)
- [Bison Unit: Lesson 1](#)
- [Bison Unit: Lesson 4](#)

CONTRIBUTORS

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QUESTIONS/MORE DETAILS

For Questions contact: [Sylvia Moore \(sylvia.moore@mun.ca\)](mailto:sylvia.moore@mun.ca) for more information.