

Grade 2 Social Studies

Heritage and Citizenship
• Traditions and Celebrations

Aboriginal Teaching Strategy

Seasonal Traditions

Students use a medicine wheel as the framework for learning about seasonal traditions common to their cultures and their community.

Related Curriculum Policy

- *The Ontario Curriculum: Social Studies, Grades 1 to 6; History and Geography, Grades 7 and 8, 2004*

Specific Expectations

Knowledge and Understanding

- outline traditions of various cultures that are passed down from earlier generations (e.g., celebrations, names)

Inquiry/Research and Communication Skills

- use primary and secondary sources to locate simple information about family history and traditions (e.g., *primary sources*: interviews, eyewitness visitors, class trips; *secondary sources*: maps, illustrations, print materials, videos)
- make and read a variety of graphs, charts, diagrams, maps, and models to understand information about cultural or religious traditions and share it with members of the class (e.g., Festivals of Lights, First Nation powwows, toys from various cultures)

Aboriginal Context

Medicine wheels have traditionally been used by western and central North American Aboriginal people to represent harmony and connection between and among all living and non-living things. Being circular, they symbolize equality and the belief that life has no beginning and no end. The wheels, each of which is unique, are made of stones and can be quite large – as big as 12 metres in diameter.

The wheels, which continue to be part of Aboriginal spirituality, are used for astronomical, ritual, healing, and teaching purposes. The Ojibway and other Aboriginal peoples use the medicine wheel to represent the circle of life and the cycles of nature, painting the quadrants of the wheel four different colours to symbolize each of the seasons. In Ojibway tradition, the colours are yellow for spring, red for summer, black for fall, and white for winter. As part of teaching about the

cycles of nature, the names of the seasonal traditions observed by the community are written in the appropriate quadrants.

Teaching Strategies

- Draw a large medicine wheel on chart paper or on the board.
- Talk about the meaning of the medicine wheel for Aboriginal people.
- Explain the tradition of painting the quadrants of the wheel four different colours to represent the seasons.
- Colour the wheel according to the Ojibway tradition (described in the Aboriginal Context section above), explaining that the colours are those used in Ojibway tradition, and write the names of the seasons in the quadrants.
- Read aloud a story that illustrates traditions practised by an Aboriginal family.
- Have students identify the season or seasons in which Aboriginal traditions are observed in the story. Model how to record the information in the appropriate quadrant of the medicine wheel.

- Ask students which seasonal traditions they observe, and record their answers on a chart.
Teacher prompts: What kinds of traditional activities do you do once a year? What do you do in the spring? Summer? Fall? Winter? Why are these activities important? Where did you learn about them?

- Have students research the traditions their families practise in each season. Tell them to find out why the activities are important and how their parents learned about them.
- Have students draw their own medicine wheel and record the information about family traditions on it.
- In pairs, have students compare their traditional practices, record the similarities and differences on a Venn diagram, and report what they have learned to the class.

- Add any new information to the class medicine wheel.

Resources

Carney, Margaret. *At Grandpa's Sugar Bush*. Toronto: Kids Can Press, 1997. ISBN: 10: 978-1-55074-671-6. Alongside his grandfather, a young boy shares the tasks involved in making maple syrup the old-fashioned way.

The Medicine Wheel – Circle of Life. http://www.spiritualnetwork.net/native/medicine_wheel.htm. Information about how medicine wheels are created and what they mean.

Orie, Sandra de Coteau. *Did You Hear the Wind Sing Your Name? An Oneida Song of Spring*. New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2002. This book explains Oneida worldviews, including the importance of the Hawk, the bringer of good news; the sustaining Elder Brother, the sun; the use of cedar and sweet grass in ceremonies; and the Three Sisters: corn, beans, and squash.

Waboose, Jan Bourdeau. *Skysisters*. Toronto: Kids Can Press, 2000. On a cold winter's night in Northern Ontario, two Ojibway sisters set out in search of the Sky Spirits their mother has told them will come that night to do their sky dance.

Making Community Connections

- Take students on a field trip to learn about a community tradition (e.g., see maple syrup being collected at a sugar bush, explore a fall fair, attend a cultural festival).
- Invite local drummers and dancers to demonstrate traditional powwow songs and dance.

ABOUT THE TEACHER'S TOOLKIT

This teaching strategy is one component of *Aboriginal Perspectives: The Teacher's Toolkit*, a collection of resources designed to help Ontario educators bring Aboriginal perspectives into the classroom. Based on the revised Ontario curriculum, the collection includes resources for educators at both the elementary and secondary levels. Other resources in this series can be found on the ministry website, at www.edu.gov.on.ca.

