

## Grade 5 Language

Oral Communication

Aboriginal Teaching Strategy

### **Stereotypes – Learning to Unlearn**

Students learn to dispel stereotypes of Aboriginal people and use appropriate vocabulary with regard to Aboriginal people and their culture.

#### **Related Curriculum Policy**

- *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language, 2006*

#### **Specific Expectations**

*Speaking to Communicate*

- 2.4 use appropriate words and phrases from the full range of their vocabulary, including inclusive and non-discriminatory language, and stylistic devices suited to the purpose, to communicate their meaning accurately and engage the interest of their audience (e.g., use evocative images, personal anecdotes, quotations, vocabulary from curriculum subject areas, and appropriate technical terminology to achieve particular effects)

#### **Aboriginal Context**

Historically, a number of inaccurate terms have been used to name and describe Aboriginal people. This is a sensitive issue since these terms were imposed on them by people who were not Aboriginal. Aboriginal people want to be known by terms they choose – terms that reflect their worldview and their understanding of themselves.

#### **Teaching Strategies**

- Post a three-column chart. Label the first column “Information”, the second column “Source”, and the third column “Fact or Stereotype?”
- Ask students what they know about Aboriginal people and record their answers in the first column. Explain that the term *Aboriginal people* includes First Nation, Inuit, and Métis people. Encourage students to use vocabulary they are familiar with, guiding them to reserve judgement and criticism as they answer.
- Ask students the source of their information and record the sources in the second column.  
*Teacher prompt:* What personal experiences have you had with Aboriginal people?
- Ask students whether the items in the first column are accurate or not, and record their answers in the third column of the chart – “Fact or Stereotype?”

*Teacher prompts:* What is a stereotype? Where do stereotypes come from? Are you aware of any derogatory terms used by people to describe Aboriginal people? Do you know of any beliefs people have about Aboriginal people that are inaccurate? Where do these terms and inaccurate beliefs come from? How are they spread? Why do people use the terms and believe the inaccuracies? How do the terms make you feel? How do you think they make Aboriginal people feel? Why is it important to identify these terms and correct the inaccurate information?

- Have students watch a video or read a book or newspaper articles about Aboriginal people.
- Discuss the video, book, or articles with them.

*Teacher prompts:* How were the Aboriginal people portrayed? Were the depictions accurate? What was accurate about them? What was inaccurate? Were there any stereotypes in the depictions? What facts do you know that contradict these stereotypes?

- Extend the discussion of stereotyping by exploring inaccurate beliefs about or racist terms for people of other cultures.

*Teacher prompt:* As individuals, what can we do to stop the use of stereotypes?

## Resources

*For Angela.* First Nations: The Circle Unbroken video series. A story of racism and empowerment, inspired by the experience of Rhonda Gordon and her daughter, Angela. Available from the National Film Board website, at <http://www.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=30183>.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. "Terminology". <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/tln-eng.asp>. Glossary of terminology used by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. *Words First: An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada*. <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/pubs/wf/wf-eng.asp>.

Keeshig-Tobias, Lenore. *Bird Talk*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace, 1994. When Polly's classmates say she's not Indian because she doesn't have feathers or red skin, her mother reminds her of her heritage and her large extended family.

*Positively Native.* Many Voices video series. <http://www.visualed.com>. This video tells the story of Martin, who makes a video about his native way of life, hoping to dispel some of the stereotypes he faces daily.

SWAP-TV. [www.swap-tv.com](http://www.swap-tv.com). A television series that lets young people spend two days in each other's lives. The programs air on TVOntario, Access, Knowledge Network, and SCN.

## Making Community Connections

- Invite your board's anti-racism officer to speak to the class about the importance of using appropriate terminology for all cultural groups.
- Contact a local Métis organization, Friendship Centre, or First Nation community to invite a speaker to talk to the class about correct terminology with regard to Aboriginal people and their culture and about why these terms are preferred by Aboriginal people.

### 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](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca).

