

## Grade 7 Language

Oral Communication

Aboriginal Teaching Strategy

### Aboriginal Poetry

Students examine a poem written by an Aboriginal poet and prepare and deliver an oral presentation of the poem.

#### Related Curriculum Policy

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

#### Specific Expectations

*Speaking to Communicate*

- 2.5 identify a range of vocal effects, including tone, pace, pitch, volume, and a variety of sound effects, and use them appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences to communicate their meaning (e.g., use pauses and changes of pace to highlight the introduction of each new point in a speech to the student body)
- 2.7 use a variety of appropriate visual aids (e.g., charts, videos, props, multimedia) to support and enhance oral presentations (e.g., use a short video clip to support a formal presentation)

#### Aboriginal Context

Canadian Aboriginal poets such as Chief Dan George, George Clutesi, Lee Maracle, Marilyn Dumont, and Pauline Johnson have contributed to greater understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. Through their poetry, they relate their own experiences and those of other Aboriginal people, drawing on their culture, histories, challenges, and legends to tell these stories.

#### Teaching Strategies

- Divide students into small groups and have each group choose a poem written by an Aboriginal poet.
- Have the groups read the poem they have chosen and discuss its meaning and the techniques the poet has used in the poem, including word choice, theme, imagery, and mood.
- Have the students organize their observations about the techniques on a graphic organizer.

- Have the groups research and write a one-paragraph biography of the poet whose poem they have chosen to focus on.
- Have each student create a graphic image that represents their interpretation of the poem (e.g., a painting, drawing, collage, or sculpture).
- Have each group decide on the best format for presenting the poem (e.g., choral reading or reader's theatre) and have them practise reading it aloud in that format, using vocal and sound effects that effectively convey its mood, theme, action, and message.
- Have the groups rehearse their presentations.
- Have the groups present their poems to an appropriate audience in an appropriate setting (e.g., to other students in the school as part of a school poetry festival), telling them to put the images they have prepared on display, introduce the poet by having a member of the group read the one-paragraph biography, and read the poem aloud as a group.

## Resources

*The following recommended resources and web links were accurate at the time of publication. Teachers are encouraged to check that these reference listings remain current.*

Armstrong, Jeannette, and Grauer, Lally, eds. *Native Poetry in Canada: A Contemporary Anthology*. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001.

Hirschfelder, Arlene, and Singer, Beverly R., eds. *Rising Voices: Writings of Young Native Americans*. Toronto: Random House, 1993.

Johnson, E. Pauline. *Tekahionwake: Collected Poems and Selected Prose*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.

Kegedonce Press. [www.kegedonce.com/authors\\_kateri.php](http://www.kegedonce.com/authors_kateri.php)  
A publisher's website that contains information about Aboriginal poets and their books.

Native Web: Poetry Online. [http://www.nativeweb.org/resources/literature/poetry\\_-\\_online/](http://www.nativeweb.org/resources/literature/poetry_-_online/)  
Contains links to websites of Aboriginal poets.

Storytellers: Native American Authors Online.  
[http://www.nativewiki.org/Storytellers:\\_Native\\_American\\_Authors\\_Online](http://www.nativewiki.org/Storytellers:_Native_American_Authors_Online)  
Contains information about Native American writers, particularly poets.

## Making Community Connections

- Invite community members to attend the poetry presentations.
- Invite a local Aboriginal poet to read a selection of his or her poems to the class.

### 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).

