

Grade 7 Language

Media Literacy

Aboriginal Teaching Strategy

Viewpoints in Aboriginal and Mainstream Media

Students analyse and compare Aboriginal and mainstream newspapers to determine the differences in their viewpoints.

Related Curriculum Policy

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

Specific Expectations

Understanding Media Texts

- 1.5 demonstrate understanding that different media texts reflect different points of view (e.g., compare pictures of the same character and/or event in media texts aimed at different audiences and identify the different perspectives represented)
- 1.6 identify who produces various media texts and determine the commercial, ideological, political, cultural, and/or artistic interests or perspectives that the texts may involve (e.g., films may be classified as "artistic", "commercial", "documentary", and so on, reflecting the different perspectives and approaches they take; one magazine contains a majority of pieces offering a political perspective, whereas another features various pieces written from different perspectives)

Aboriginal Context

While Aboriginal newspapers and magazines report on the same local, regional, national, and international news and events covered by mainstream newspapers and magazines, their reports usually have a different focus. For example, in stories related to mining, fishing, and logging in First Nation communities, Aboriginal publications are likely to focus on the mining, fishing, and logging rights of First Nation peoples, whereas this aspect of such stories would not receive much attention in mainstream publications. Aboriginal newspapers and magazines also report on large Aboriginal gatherings; provide a forum for the opinions of Aboriginal people on social, political, and environmental issues; and cover topics related to Aboriginal culture and identity. While such events and coverage are hardly ever present in mainstream publications, they regularly receive front-page headlines in Aboriginal newspapers and magazines.

Examples of Aboriginal newspapers published in Ontario are *Turtle Island News*, a weekly owned and operated by Aboriginal people and published at the Grand River Territory of the Six Nations in southern Ontario, and the *Anishinabek News*, a monthly tabloid-format newspaper designed to inform Anishinabek Nation citizens about the initiatives and activities of the Union of Ontario Indians and provide a sampling of indigenous current affairs stories from around the globe. Aboriginal magazines published in Ontario include *Windspeaker*, a monthly that covers national Aboriginal news, and *Ontario Birchbark*, which focuses exclusively on Ontario.

These newspapers and magazines provide valuable insight into First Nation community life and a different perspective on issues facing all Canadians. In addition to these important benefits, publications created and operated by Aboriginal people give Aboriginal journalists the means to combat stereotypes while painting an accurate, contemporary picture of Aboriginal people in Canada.

Teaching Strategies

- Pair off students and distribute to each pair one Aboriginal newspaper produced by an Aboriginal group, community, or organization and one local or national mainstream newspaper from a variety of Aboriginal and local or national mainstream newspapers you have located and brought to class.
- Have the pairs of students analyse the two newspapers, considering elements such as target audience; point of view; headlines; lead stories; proportion of local, national, and international stories; writers; choice and layout of images and graphics; cartoons; and public service announcements.
- Have the pairs of students complete a Venn diagram comparing the viewpoints represented in the two newspapers.
- Ask the pairs of students to present their findings to the rest of the class, citing both overt and implicit examples from the newspapers to support their observations.
- Record students' findings on a T-chart.
- Discuss students' findings as a class.

Teacher prompts: What differences are there in the newspapers' lead stories? What are the similarities? What do you notice about other features of the newspapers? Did you find that the newspapers have different perspectives? What are they? Are there similarities in the perspectives? What are they? How would the target audience for each newspaper react to the perspective of that newspaper? How might an audience that is not the target audience react to the perspective?

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.

Aboriginal Multi-Media Society. <http://www.ammsa.com/ammsa.html?180,307>
Website of the publisher of Aboriginal publications produced across Canada for various audiences, such as *Windspeaker*, *Raven's Eye*, *Ontario Birchbark*, *Buffalo Spirit*, and *Alberta Sweetgrass*, that contains information about the publications, including demographic and circulation data.

Canada Newspapers. <http://www.allyoucanread.com/canada-newspapers/>
Provides links to the websites of Canadian newspapers, sorted by province.

Library and Archives Canada. <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/aboriginal/020008-3000.9-e.html>
Contains lists of and links to Aboriginal newspaper sites.

Mondo Times: The Worldwide Media Directory. <http://www.mondotimes.com/>
Contains links to media outlets in Canada and around the world that can be viewed online.

NativeWeb: Resources for Indigenous Cultures Around the World.
http://www.nativeweb.org/resources/news_media_television_radio/newspapers_-_native_indigenous/
Contains links to North American Aboriginal newspapers.

Making Community Connections

- Invite a reporter from a local Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal media outlet to speak to the class about objectivity versus bias in reporting.
- Invite a communications officer from a local Aboriginal organization, for example, the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians, the Chiefs of Ontario, the Union of Ontario Indians, or the Métis Nation of Ontario, to explain the process of issuing news releases and talk about how the mainstream media portray a story described in a news release.

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.

