

Teacher Candidate: Spencer Butler

Subject: English Grade/Class: **NBE3U**

Date: 2018, 01, 11

Duration (minutes): 72 mins

Lesson Topic: **The Animal People Choose a Leader (group discussion and “talking circles”)**

CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS (Overall Expectations):

- describe the concepts related to identity in Aboriginal literary works;

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OR EXPECTATIONS:

- explain social and historical values and perspectives on Aboriginal identity, based on examples from Aboriginal literature
- explain how literature provides telling insights into the character and ways of a people (e.g., the creation stories from several Aboriginal communities)

Teaching/ Learning Resources:

Short story (The Animal People Choose a Leader), Rules for discussion in a “talking circle”/ leadership traits handout

LESSON SEQUENCE:

-Independent Reading- 10 mins

-The class begins with the teacher dividing the class into groups of 4-5. The groups will be asked to discuss amongst themselves what traits make a person a successful leader. The teacher can prompt insight by asking students to think about leaders in their lives, and what traits they possess that make them good leaders (coaches, teachers, bosses, parents etc.). The groups are to compile a list of 5 top traits of great leaders. Elect one person in the group as the leader who will present the group’s findings. The rest of the group must defend the decision of group leader. 10-15 mins

- Next, the teacher will read the short story to the class (The Animal People Choose a Leader). This story discusses what traits traditional native communities valued in a leader. Rather than have one person at the top of an organization, the First People valued collaboration. To demonstrate the value of collaboration, the students will sit in a circle where no individual is a clear leader. 10 mins

- Finally, students will be given a set of directions about how to collaborate in a “talking circle” setting. Students will be asked to define what it means to be a good leader in the traditional way of the first people and compare these values to the values discussed at the beginning of class. They will share their ideas in the style of a “talking Circle”. Students will also be asked to define the term “fable”. The students will then be asked to figure out what the meaning or purpose of the short story is. 35 mins

- Exit cards: students will write about what they learned about themselves, and their own belief structures, by discussing the ways of the First People. – remaining time

Summary of expectations, and reasoning behind the selection of teaching strategies:

In modern day North America there is a strongly ingrained hierarchy structure. In this structure, the leader is at the top of a pyramid. More people are situated at the bottom of the pyramid than at the top. This is not the case in the **social organization of original Native communities**. Instead, there were many leaders, and fewer people with little power. The use of these two conflicting teaching strategies demonstrates the difference between our current culture, and the culture of the Original People. In this case it is the difference between groups of 4-5 with a clear leader, and the entire class situated in a “talking Circle”. Students can be critical of the differences between these two styles of leadership. Students are able **to explain social and historical values and perspectives of Aboriginal identity** by reflecting on their own personal situation.

The Instructional Strategies document states that:

“Talking circles are useful when the topic under consideration has no right or wrong answer, or when people need to share feelings. **The purpose of talking circles is not to reach a decision or consensus. Rather, it is to create a safe environment for students to share their points of view with others**”
(Instructional Strategies, 2002, p. 71)

In this case, students are asked to reflect on their own understanding of leadership, and the description of leadership offered by the text. There is no correct answer here. The purpose of the discussion is to discover new ways of thinking, and to reflect on the way things were in Canada before the arrival of the explorers.

The Animal People Choose a Leader is a Fable about the first leaders, set before people even existed. As such, **studying this story offers valuable insight into the character and ways of the Original People**. This fable teaches us about the importance of collaboration in Native Canadian society.

Questions to ask the students:

Where did each animal struggle? Why is this surprising?

What was the lesson of the fable?

Talk about circles and triangles as representations of leadership models. Talk about the medicine wheel. Which describes our current hierarchy of management?

What are the benefits of having NO leader?

Which system do you prefer? (if time)

Traits of a Successful Leader

1. _____.
2. _____.
3. _____.
4. _____.
5. _____.

Talking Circle Rules:

1. Only one person speaks at a time. Everyone else listens in a friendly way to the speaker.
2. Silence is an acceptable response. No one should be pressured at any time to contribute, and may say "I pass"
3. Only the speaker may pass the speaking role on, and they must pass it to someone who has not spoken yet
4. Everyone must be positive, and support their peers

About Richard Wagamese:

Richard Wagamese was an Ojibway Author from Wabaseemoong, First Nation. He was a survivor of the Canadian residential school system, and much of his literature often reflects the hardships that he endured there. He is best known for his novel, *Indian Horse*.

References:

Instructional Strategies. (2002). *Health and Life Skills Guide to Implementation*. Alberta.

Landon, R., Robinson, J., & Walker, N. (2012). "The Animal People Choose a Leader". *Strength and struggle: perspectives from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada, teachers resource*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.