

Aboriginal Perspectives Unit Guide for the Theme Sovereignty and Resistance

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Overall Objective

This theme focuses on the Aboriginal Peoples' struggles and victories associated with self-government, self-determination and nation building. It is important to note the fundamental differences in the approaches used in negotiation. The films illustrating this theme are important examples of how there has been a shift from adversarial to consensus building in the resolution of disputes between First Nations and Canadian governments.

Grade Levels

7 – 12

Content Areas

Citizenship
Language Arts
Native Studies
Social Studies
History

Films (and excerpts used)

You Are on Indian Land, 1969

Excerpt 1 (38 s – 2 min 47 s)

Excerpt 2 (14 min 39 s – 18 min 21 s)

Kanehsatake 270 years of Resistance, 1993

Excerpt 1 (29 s – 3 min 49 s)

Excerpt 2 (14 min 22 s – 16 min 9 s)

Our Nationhood, 2003

Excerpt 3 (18 min 14 s – 22 min 45 s)

Excerpt 5 (1 h 17 min 44 s – 1 h 20 min 33 s)

Dancing Around the Table Part 1, 1987 Excerpt 2 (9 min 29 s – 14 min 58 s)

NB: The excerpts and related films can be viewed online free of charge at
<www.nfb.ca/aboriginalperspectives> in the Sovereignty and Resistance theme.

Materials Required

Internet, data projector, map of Canada, access to research materials.

Summary

The struggle that Aboriginal peoples have been engaged in can be understood by recounting the famous statement made in 1920 by Duncan Campbell Scott, poet, essayist and Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, that encapsulates the prevailing attitude of his day: *Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department.* The films chosen under this theme will focus students on the efforts made by Aboriginal peoples to have their inherent rights recognized and to have treaty obligations properly fulfilled. The confrontational scenes depicted in the selected films demonstrate the hardships and difficult negotiations that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people have experienced in their efforts to build harmonious relations within all of Canada.

Introduction Activity (10 minutes)

Define the following terms: *Sovereignty, Paternalism, Nation, Inherent Rights* and *Self-Determination*.

Understanding these terms creates a foundation for the comprehension of the struggle Aboriginal people have had since European contact. These terms will be used extensively in the films associated with this theme.

ACTIVITY 1: First Nation – Sovereign Nation (2 X 50 minutes)

Step 1: View film excerpts for *You Are on Indian Land* and *Kanehsatake*.

- Instruct students to write down the issues facing the First Nations peoples in the films.
- How are these issues related to the inherent right of a people to self-determination?

Step 2: Identify the strategies used by the government in their dealings with Aboriginal issues (ex: authority, force, intimidation, paternalism). How effective were these strategies? What strategies were used by the First Nations during disputes? How effective were their strategies? (See teacher's notes.)

Step 3: Consider the following statement: First Nations proclaim and affirm their inherent Aboriginal rights of self-government and demand that their rights be respected and recognized by all levels of government in Canada (Congress for the Assembly of First Nations 1993). Given this position taken by First Nations across Canada what solutions can be negotiated? In small groups have the students discuss this and have them work through their possible solutions.

Step 4: Model for students the consensus building approach so that they might use this in their discussions. Consider reviewing United Nations material on sovereignty (see resources for link). Ask groups to share with one another their solutions and have them reflect on the strategies employed in their groups that facilitated their arrival at a solution. Evaluate the students using the rubric provided (Rubric for Consensus Building).

ACTIVITY 2: For As Long as the Sun Shines, River Flows, and Grasses Grow (see teacher's notes for explanation of the title) (2 X 50 minutes)

Step 1: View film excerpts for *Our Nationhood* and *Dancing Around the Table* excerpt 2.

- Identify the issues facing the Mi'kmaq people in the excerpts from *Our Nationhood*; how have the issues changed over time? What treaties were signed between the Mi'kmaq and the Canadian government? (See link to historic treaties in resources below.)
- Describe the situation depicted in *Dancing Around the Table*. Is there a treaty signed between the government and the Aboriginal people of British Columbia? What decisions are the courts making regarding inherent rights and title to the land? What impact are these court decisions having on the modern day treaty making process?
- Reinforce the concept that we as citizens of Canada are all treaty people; we are treaty people by virtue of the fact that we are Canadian and as Canadians we share in the obligation to honour the treaties.

Step 2: Print the text of a few of the numbered treaties (see link in resources), reproduce several copies for students to refer to, and compare the texts of two or more treaties. Ask the students if these documents are still valid today. What makes these documents binding to the parties that signed them? (Use the concept of a contract to help students understand the legal obligations implied in the signing of a treaty.)

Step 3: Have students further research one of the numbered treaties. Have them determine through their research whether or not the terms of the treaty have been met. Ask them to report back to their classmates with their findings, including information related to the resolution of any long-standing disputes over land entitlement or resources.

Closure Activity (10 minutes)

Ask students to reflect on how they go about deciding with their friends which movie they will go to. Is it a decision based on majority rules (the most votes wins), dictatorial proclamation (the leader says what goes, or consensus building (everyone agrees after some discussion which movie will be seen)? What are the pros and cons for each approach?

Check for Understanding

How would the students describe their sovereignty within the institution of education? Would recognizing the inherent rights of students change the way schools operate?

Evaluation rubric
Rubric for Consensus Building

Criterion	5	3	1
<u>Participation</u>	Actively participates, paraphrases; encourages others; is patient; is enthusiastic	Shares some ideas; requires encouragement; sometimes needs redirection; may need prompting.	Off-task; distracting; inappropriate responses or contributions.
<u>Critical Thinking</u>	Clearly identifies problem; considers others' viewpoints; formulates conclusions, makes comparisons and contrasts; applies extended learning.	Identifies the problem by restating main points, showing a general understanding; some/limited application of ideas.	Demonstrates little comprehension of the problem; comes to hasty conclusions; little or no consideration of others' viewpoints.
Communication of Ideas	Has a well-defined position; uses questioning; paraphrasing and clarifying; uses positive body language (eye contact; posture; voice); supports others and is convincing.	Demonstrates ideas in a general way; limited paraphrasing and questioning; passive interaction.	Vague positions; judgmental; confrontational; shares own point of view in a negative fashion or is non-committal/withdrawn.
Use of Knowledge	Shares in-depth knowledge; applies knowledge to past; present and future issues.	Shares a general knowledge of the issue.	Refrains from contributing any knowledge or denigrates others' knowledge.

References and Resources

[Canadian Encyclopedia: Definition of Sovereignty](#)

[United Nations position on Sovereignty](#)

[Link to Historic Treaty Information](#) (treaty texts included in this site)

Appendix

Teacher's Notes

First Nation: Sovereign Nation

Consider viewing the film excerpts only to identify the issues facing the government and the Aboriginal people. Then conduct an exercise with the students in which they try to arrive at an equitable solution to the issue(s) raised.

For As Long as the Sun Shines, River Flows, and Grasses Grow

This title refers to the time frame in which the treaties would be in effect.

From the Aboriginal perspective the passage of time is closely linked to the cycles of nature and this understanding was applied to the terms of the treaties.

In other words, the treaties are in effect for all time.