

Lesson: Having Your Voices Heard: Participating in Matters that Directly Concern You!

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Overview:

This multi-part lesson plan will help students understand the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and explore historical and contemporary injustices against First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples in Canada. Students will engage in activities that encourage them to consider the government's treatment of Indigenous Peoples, learn about Indigenous-led movements, and take action in support of reconciliation.

Grade Level: Grades 6 to 10

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Understand the responsibilities and rights outlined by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People ("UNDRIP" or "the Declaration").
- Learn about historical and contemporary injustices against First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples in Canada.
- Determine whether the Government of Canada treats First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples fairly.
- Question to what extent the Government of Canada has addressed past and/or current injustices against Indigenous Peoples. What have been the results of these efforts?
- Learn about Indigenous-led movements in Canada and how students can participate in them.

Teacher will:

- Learn alongside their students and let them lead in participating in matters that concern them.
- Ensure that if they do not know an answer to a question, they do meaningful research and/or speak with their school board's Indigenous Education Team or other experienced and knowledgeable colleagues within their learning community.

- Facilitate conversations in trauma-informed ways and consider holistic teaching pedagogies throughout the instruction of the lesson and those thereafter.

Resources:

- [Truth Before Reconciliation - Mino-pimatisiwin: Living the Good Life, 2024.](#)
- [The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People](#)
- [Shannen's Dream - First Nations Child & Family Caring Society](#)
- [Jordan's Principle - First Nations Child & Family Caring Society](#)
- [Timeline of Residential Schools - National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#)

Background Information:

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007. UNDRIP is a framework that recognizes the rights of Indigenous Peoples worldwide, including the right to self-determination, cultural preservation, education, health, and land. The Declaration sets out a universal framework for the survival, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous Peoples.

In its 2015 report, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission centred the Declaration in the 10 Principles of Reconciliation, calling UNDRIP, "the framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of society."

The Government of Canada initially opposed the Declaration but eventually endorsed it in 2010 as an aspirational document. In 2016, the Government of Canada announced its full support for the Declaration and committed to its implementation. In 2021, the Government of Canada passed Bill C-15, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, which began the process of ensuring Canadian laws and policies are aligned with the principles of UNDRIP. However, the implementation of UNDRIP in Canada remains a complex and ongoing process.

Lesson Activity:

PART I

This lesson introduces students to human rights and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Students will research and learn more about the rights that this international agreement protects.

- Share this definition of human rights with your students: **Human rights are the rights and freedoms that all people have. They can be considered rules for how we should treat one another. Human rights help keep people safe and help make sure everyone is treated fairly.**
- Explain to students that while human rights have always existed, they have not always been protected. However, since the Second World War, important laws and international agreements have been created to protect human rights. In addition to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (UDHR), there is also the 1990 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Have students read about UNDRIP on pages 18-19 of *Mino-pimatisiwin: Living the Good Life*.

- Begin a conversation with students to have them develop an understanding of how they can honour what is outlined in UNDRIP. Share some of the articles protected under UNDRIP – we have suggested some you can use in **Appendix II**, but you can expand or condense this list based on your classroom.
- For each UNDRIP article, share what it means and brainstorm with your students some examples of that right being upheld in Canada. You can make this conversation engaging by co-creating a concept map of the different rights they learn about, examples of what those rights mean, and including definitions of words that may be new.

PART II

In this lesson, students will come to understand that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples' rights have not always been respected and honoured in Canada. They will learn about some past and contemporary examples of unfair treatment towards First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. They will also learn about role models who have worked hard to enact and uphold Indigenous rights in Canada.

- Have students look at their concept maps and remind them of what they have learned about human rights.
- Introduce the idea that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples' rights have not always been upheld in Canada. Individually or as a class, have students read pages 11 and 16 of *Mino-pimatisiwin: Living the Good Life*, which provide some examples of moments when rights were not protected and also of efforts that have since taken place to ensure that rights are protected.

- Discuss with students historical and contemporary violations of Indigenous Peoples' rights in Canada. This can include examples from *Mino-pimatisiwin: Living the Good Life* or others that they have previously learned about or actively researched for this activity. Have students connect each issue to a specific article of UNDRIP.
- Initiate a conversation with students about the historical significance of UNDRIP. You may wish to do some additional research with your students to explore one of the following questions:
 - Why was UNDRIP necessary for Indigenous Peoples globally and in Canada?
 - Why did Canada initially reject UNDRIP? What events or influences had the biggest impact on the federal government's decision to adopt the Declaration?
 - What articles do you think will make the biggest impact on First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples' rights in Canada?

PART III

In this lesson, students will discover movements that work to uphold the rights of Indigenous children and consider how they can act against various forms of discrimination.

- Let students know that despite there being past and current examples of Indigenous Peoples' rights being violated, there are also lots of individuals and groups who are speaking out against injustices and working to make change. Students can discover some of these role models throughout *Mino-pimatisiwin: Living the Good Life*.
- Play all of the following videos for your students to learn about the ways that others are taking action in Canada:
 - [Autumn Peltier](#) addressing the United Nations about protecting water (CBC News).
 - [Shannen Koostachin and Serena Koostachin](#) at the Ontario Federation of Labour Convention about the right to a good education
 - The [I Am a Witness campaign](#) by the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society on discrimination against First Nations kids.

As noted in this guide's introduction, some of the videos share big discussion topics, so ensure that Indigenous students in your class are supported. Consult with the Indigenous Education Team at your school board on how to do this in a good way.

After showing each video to your students, lead a whole-class discussion. You may explore the following questions. Some may require additional research to answer:

- What is the movement about? What right is being protected? Who is involved? What is their message? How does it make you feel?
- How does this issue highlight the unfair treatment of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples in Canada?
- How have the different levels of government responded to the movements? Have their actions been sufficient?
- How can individuals make a difference toward ending discrimination against First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples in Canada?

End the conversation by highlighting the key takeaways from your collective conversation.

- After learning about specific examples of movements in Canada, ask your students to create a list of the different ways that people can take action by asking, “What does taking action look like?” Answers may include:
 - Listening to speeches, attending presentations or hearing testimonies
 - Educating others; sharing their learnings with their friends, family, and school community
 - Attending Indigenous cultural events or visiting Indigenous-run museums
 - Participating in movements (online or in-person), phoning or writing letters to elected officials/decision-makers in Canada and the world
 - Donating to Indigenous charities or organizations
- Ask students to consider which actions have the most impact and are the most meaningful. Which actions are considered more passive and require less engagement? Why? Have students create class-based criteria for assessing these actions and rank them from least effective to most effective.

PART IV

Now that the students know more about UNDRIP and the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, they can practice participating in matters that concern them. You may continue to explore the youth movements introduced earlier or investigate other issues that are pressing in Canada such as (but not limited to) land disputes, resource

extraction, Indigenous children in care, or language revitalization.

To begin, read aloud the message from Elder Harry Bone and Elder Florence Paynter on pages 4-5 of *Mino-pimatisiwin: Living the Good Life*. Through this message, the Elders have shared an important teaching. Have students reflect on the meaning of *Mino-pimatisiwin* and how they can follow a good path in taking action toward reconciliation in Canada.

- Ask your students to form groups of three or four and select a movement from those discussed in which they would like to participate. Multiple groups can work towards the same movement, honouring *Mino-pimatisiwin*.
- Have students decide which articles from UNDRIP will be honoured as they respond to their selected movement. (Encourage students to limit their selection to five articles – we can't respond to everything as much as we want to!)
- Now that the students have selected the relevant articles, it is time for them to research each of their movements. Students will be encouraged to respond to the following questions in their research:
 - What is the issue about? What is the historical context for the issue?
 - What is the movement about?
 - Who are the leaders in the movement? Is there youth participation?
 - Who are the individuals, organizations, or governments that are responsible for this issue?
 - What are ways everyone living in Canada can make a difference and take action toward this movement?
 - What are the ways we have chosen to participate in the movement?
- After the students answer the questions from their research, they can now mobilize what they have learned! There are lots of ways students can apply what they have learned, such as creating a podcast or video, making a public service announcement, creating a letter template for others to complete and send to their elected officials/decision-makers, making posters for their school or community, performing a song, or writing a report to share with their peers or to send to influential groups. You may also use the template in **Appendix III** below to create a social media campaign.

- Each campaign should include the following elements:
 - Introduction to the issue, including specific information, historical context, and compelling data or statistics
 - A connection to the relevant articles of UNDRIP
 - A clear message about how people can get involved and make a difference toward reconciliation
 - How they are honouring the concept of *Mino-pimatisiwin* in their efforts, and how they will plan to honour *Mino-pimatisiwin* every day

Assessment:

Teachers can prepare a summative assessment for this collective work. We encourage you to co-create assessment rubrics with your students as this honours the ethical space you are creating with them. To do this, dedicate a class to discussing with your students what successful learning looks like. Assessments can also change based on each assignment the students decide to complete, which also honours differentiation. As such, be sure to work with your students in good ways to co-create these rubrics!

Extension:

As a collective participation, students can host a school assembly (much like [Have a Heart Day](#)). Have the students share what they have learned and how the whole school can take action together.

Closing Statement from Author:

Teachers and students must use Indigenous-made/co-created resources and/or ensure they work with Indigenous Education Teams at their school boards when taking on these topics. As we noted earlier, *if you are doing this work alone, you are doing it wrong!* Reach out to folks as needed and know that you're never alone. This experience is also meant to ensure that students know that their voices ought to be heard and CAN be heard! Be sure to use this lesson alongside other conversations you have with your students. You are also encouraged to ask your students if they want to form a social justice club to keep these dialogues going and to keep your school community accountable. Participation in these movements must be ongoing because the work of reconciliation is every day.

Appendix II: The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Article 3

Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination. This means that they have the right to decide what is best for them and their communities.

Article 8

Indigenous Peoples have the right to not be assimilated. This means that they cannot be forced to take up someone else's culture and way of life, or for their culture to be destroyed.

Article 10

Indigenous Peoples may not be removed or relocated by force from their lands.

Article 11

Indigenous Peoples have the right to practice and revive their culture and traditions.

Article 12

Indigenous Peoples have the right to practice their spiritual and religious traditions.

Article 13

Indigenous Peoples have the right to recover, use and pass on to future generations their histories and languages, oral traditions, writing systems and literature and to use their own names for communities, places and people.

Article 15

Indigenous Peoples have the right to their cultures and traditions being correctly reflected in education and public information.

Article 18

Indigenous Peoples have the right to take part in decision-making in all matters affecting them.

*Adapted from the UN publication [*Adolescent-Friendly Version of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*](#).

Appendix III: Social Media Campaign Template

Students can use this Instagram template to plan a social media campaign. Have students identify one compelling photo to represent their topic and write a short caption that captures the most important message they want to share. They can think about hashtags or other creative details to include. Other guidelines to consider:

- Images should be appropriate and specific to the topic
- Images and statistics should be sourced properly
- Captions should be no more than five sentences
- Content should be original and not use AI
- Content should be appropriate and not include anything exploitative, triggering, or abusive

Once complete, hang up the posts throughout your school to educate other students. If you have a classroom Instagram account, you can create real posts to share online. Be sure to never include the faces of your students without signed permission from their parents / guardians.



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