

## **A Lesson Study in Building a Sense of Community Values in Grade One: Connecting to the Seven Grandfather Teachings**

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Group Members Chriss Bogert, Zoe Donoahue, Haley Higdon, Judith Kimel, Sarah Luongo, Tara Rousseau, Lisa Sherman

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### **Section 1: Our Process as a Group**

In our initial meeting, we came together as a primary division (Grades 1-3) along with Judith -Special Education Teacher, Tara - Visual Arts Teacher and Chriss – Vice Principal. We began to brainstorm the areas of Indigenous studies that we would be teaching in the various grades and how we could show this learning in a lesson study. We reviewed curriculum documents from a number of boards and provinces to consider what we felt was a good starting point for the students at this age level. We talked a little bit about Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> as a possible place to start but quickly discovered the negative ramifications of this celebration to the Indigenous community. We considered approaching with an appreciation lens, exploring the contributions of Indigenous individuals and groups, specifically in the Arts and Technology. After all the classroom teachers shared the directions we would be going with our students, we really felt that working with the Grade Ones and the learning they had started in exploring Community would be the best direction for our team to take. Zoe had been trying to find a meaningful way to introduce The Seven Grandfather Teachings and we quickly saw the relationship between the inquiry the class had been doing around the concepts of Community and what things are important to have in a community and The Seven Grandfather Teachings/Virtues. From there, our group set out to find age-appropriate quality materials to introduce the specific teaching to the class to ensure that they could see the connections to the virtues they had already identified as important and to the Indigenous beliefs and way of life.

As a staff we watched a video hosted by Curve Lake First Nations entertainer Missy Knot, where Elder and Educator, Shannon Thunderbird shares and explains each teaching and describes the virtues of being a good person. With the help of Bev Caswell from The Robertson team, we

were then put in contact with Melody Crowe, Elder and Language Instructor from Alderville First Nation and First Nation Education Liaison for Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board. We are fortunate to have her visiting our primary classes in the coming weeks.

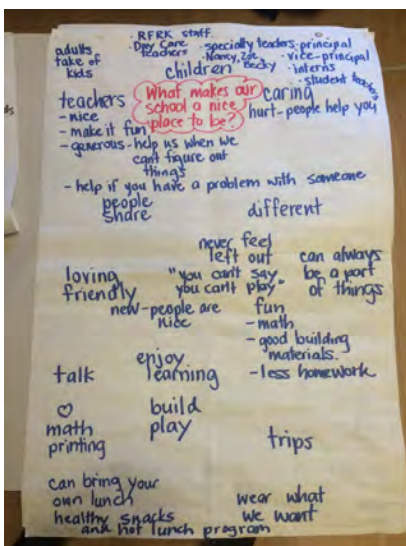
Following our initial meeting, we invited another teacher who is currently studying Indigenous Studies to collaborate with us. Hopi brought some good ideas to the table around the order in which we would present information to the students. This conversation helped us to start with student exploration and allow for knowledge building prior to bringing in any “expert” voices through books, videos, guest speakers etc.

*“The first elder was given these gifts of knowledge by the Seven Grandfathers. These gifts were to help the people live a good life and to respect the Creator, the earth and each other. We have learned how to take care of Mother Earth. In our care for Mother Earth, we have learned to apply these gifts to families, communities, ourselves, and to all things. The Seven Grandfathers told the First Elder that “Each of these teachings must be used with the rest; you can not have wisdom without love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth...to leave one out is to embrace the opposite of what that teaching is.” If one of these gifts is not used with the others, we will not be in balance. We must remember these teachings, practice them, and teach them to our children.”*

[http://www.nativewomenscentre.com/files/Traditional\\_Teachings\\_Booklet.pdf](http://www.nativewomenscentre.com/files/Traditional_Teachings_Booklet.pdf)

## Section 2: Background and Pre-lessons: Lessons Leading up to Today’s Lesson in Zoe’s Grade One Class

In the past I have started an inquiry about the idea of community by having children draw and talk about their local community. This year I decided to start with the idea of the classroom and school as a community. We would work out from there to looking at the local community and communities around the world.



For the past couple of years I had wanted the children to learn about the Seven Grandfather Teachings. I had done my own research and reading, but couldn’t figure out an authentic way to introduce them to the children. I hoped that this different entry point into an inquiry about community might provide a natural connection to the Grandfather Teachings.

First I asked the children to draw and write about their thoughts about all the things that make our school a nice place to be. We had a KB Circle and put our knowledge together. I recorded the ideas on chart paper.

The next day we further explored ideas about how children like to be treated and how they treat others. They wrote ideas on small pieces of paper and we gathered in a circle to sort these ideas into categories. We recorded these ideas on chart paper. On another day the children moved from table and wrote ideas about what these words mean to them - what does it mean to be kind, inclusive, helpful, loving, to share, etc.?

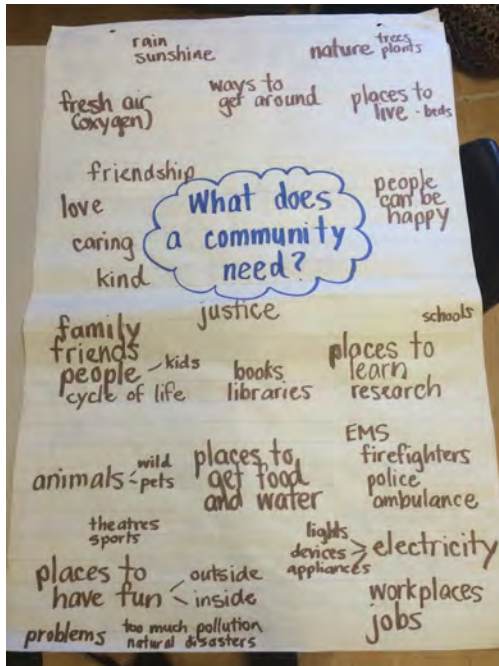


The children then decided they would like to ask all the children in the school why they think their classroom and the school are nice places to be. We decided to ask the older children to write their thoughts and to interview the Nursery and Kindergarten students. Over the next few weeks we collected class sets of responses and visited each Early Years classroom, where two Grade One students interviewed two younger children. There was an incredible amount of excitement around this

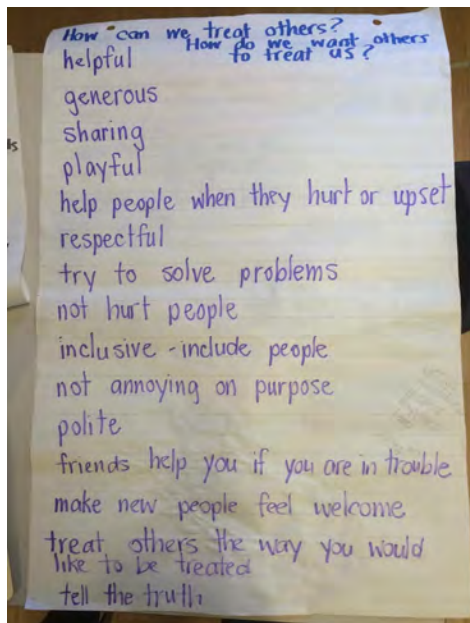
event! As responses came to us we worked in small groups with a teacher to categorize the ideas. Next we looked at some of the ideas that children from all classes wrote or spoke about and explored them a little. We talked about words such as inclusion and respect (add others) and what they mean to us. The word community also came up, and someone said they thought that meant “people coming together.” Others built onto this idea, suggesting that our classroom, the school and even the world are all examples of a community.

The next day we again had a look at the data from all the classes in the school and used it to think about what a community needs. After a half hour of brainstorming we came up with a long list that included:

- people, friends, family
- homes with beds
- clean air
- water to drink
- mature, including trees
- places to get food
- places to have fun, like parks
- places to learn, like schools, and places where research happens
- jobs and workplaces
- ways to get around (transportation)
- emergency services
- electricity (to run appliances, devices and to give us light)



Last week we revisited ideas around the ways we like to be treated and the ways we would like others to treat us. The concept of treating others the way you would like to be treated came up. Some children shared what they have discussed at home that relates to their faith or to their family's values. One child said that she is expected to be kind to her sister and to include her when she has friends over to play. Children built on, talking about difficulties with siblings and how they handle them. The discussion then evolved into a sharing of different ways that children calm themselves down when they are angry -- drawing, reading, taking deep breaths, withdrawing from the situation, talking, going to sleep, etc.



The next day we started to read and discuss a book called The Golden Rule. It focuses on how many faiths have a version of the golden rule in their teachings. I invited the children to ask their families about the values that are important to them. This is the discussion we planned to have yesterday (Tuesday).

Yesterday we finished reading The Golden Rule and had some discussion about what this meant. Children shared experiences about being new at school and how they had welcomed new children in the past. Several children talked about discussions they had at home over the weekend with their families. A couple of children talked about trying to peacefully resolve disputes with younger siblings.

### Section 3: Lesson Goals

Our goals for today's lesson include a consolidation of understanding, in which students might link the Seven Grandfather Teachings to their own lives, and living a good life within a community. We also aim for student understanding of the Teachings in a broader, global way-linking them to other cultures, traditions, teachings, and belief systems.

**Curriculum Objectives from Teacher's Guide, Seven Grandfather Teachings: Character Development** <https://rover.edonline.sk.ca/system/guides/R054842.pdf>

- *analyze actions and practices in the family, classroom, and on the playground that support peace and harmony, including rules and decision-making processes*
- *learn the significance of talking circles for Aboriginal people. They participate in classroom talking circles focused on curriculum-related issues or other issues relevant to them.*
- *demonstrate respect for ourselves, each other and our environment.*
- *learn about how Aboriginal peoples demonstrate responsibility for themselves, others, and the environment around them. Students make connections to similar ways in which they demonstrate responsibility.*
- *describe how they follow the rules about respecting the rights and property of other people and about using the shared environment responsibly (e.g., by sharing, being courteous, cooperating, not littering)*

**Section 4: Lesson Plan: Introducing the Seven Grandfather Teachings**

The teacher gathers all Grade One students on carpet. And invites students to reflect on the past conversations/story.

Introduce the 7 words from the Anishinaabe Grandfather Teachings which are on papers that are spread around the classroom on the tables.

Ask the students to travel around the room and write down their thoughts on each paper answering these questions:

*What does \_\_\_\_\_ mean to you?*

*Why is \_\_\_\_\_ important to you?*

The students disperse and move around the room writing their thoughts.

The teacher then gathers the children on the carpet and leads a debrief discussion. She chooses a couple of the words to talk about together.

The teacher asks,

First - *Why are these important things to have in a community?*

Then - *What would it be like if we didn't have these things?*

Read from Lost Teachings if time.

Ask, does anybody know what an elder is?

Tell the children that we are going to have an elder visit soon, Melody Crowe, to tell these stories and teach us more about them

## **Section 5: Curriculum Connections & TRC**

### **The Ontario Curriculum: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Connections Scope and Sequence of Expectations, 2016**

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/elementaryFNMI.pdf>

Social Studies (2013)

**The Heritage and Identity strand looks at the role of an Elder and respectful protocol in dealing with Elders.** Elders are influential and significant people in First Nations and Inuit communities with similar roles attributed to Métis Senators. The People and Environments strand focuses on the interrelationships among First Nations community services and reserves. The combination of the citizenship education framework (provided on page 10 of the curriculum document) and the knowledge and skills outlined in the curriculum expectations provides opportunities for students to learn what it means to be a responsible, active citizen – in both the community of the classroom and the diverse communities to which students belong within and outside the school, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. As teachers make connections between the citizenship education framework and the curriculum expectations, they may focus on terms and topics listed in the framework. Some examples of terms and topics of particular relevance to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit contexts are *stewardship, advocacy, rights and responsibilities, and interconnectedness.*

### **Ontario Ministry of Education Grade 1 Social Studies Curriculum - Heritage and Identity: Our Changing Roles and Responsibilities**

Overall Expectations:

A2. Inquiry: use the social studies inquiry process to investigate some aspects of the interrelationship between their identity/sense of self, their different roles, relationships, and responsibilities, and various situations in their daily lives

A3: Understanding Context: demonstrate an understanding that they and other people have different roles, relationships, and responsibilities, and that all people should be treated with respect, regardless of their roles, relationships, and responsibilities

### **Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action: Education**

[http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)

Education for reconciliation

62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:

i. **Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.**

ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.

iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.

iv. Establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education.

63. We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:

i. Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.

ii. Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.

**iii. Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.**

iv. Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above.

## **Section 6: Resources**

Benton-Banai, Edward. *The Mishomis Book : The Voice of the Ojibway*. University of Minnesota Press, 1988, 2010.

Bouchard, David. *Dreamcatcher and the Seven Deceivers*. More Than Words Publishers, 2013.

Bouchard, David, and Martin, Dr. Joseph. *Seven Sacred Teachings*. More Than Words Publishers, 2009

Cooper, Ilene. *The Golden Rule*. ABRAMS Books, 2007.

Dimaline, Cherie. *Seven Gifts for Cedar*. Ningwakwe Learning Press, 2010.

Hart, Lisa A. *Children of the Seventh Fire : An Ancient Prophecy for Modern Times*. McDonald & Woodward, 2011.

Isaac, Michael James. *The Lost Teachings*. Roseway Publishing, 2013.

Ojibwe Teachings and the Seven Grandfathers. Anishnaabeg Bimaadiziwin : An Ojibwe Peoples Resource <http://ojibweresources.weebly.com/ojibwe-teachings--the-7-grandfathers.html>

Vermette, Katherina. *Kode's Question : A Story of Respect. The Seven Teachings Stories.* Highwater Press, 2014.

Vermette, Katherina. *The Just Right Gift : A Story Of Love. The Seven Teachings Stories.* Highwater Press, 2014.

Vermette, Katherina. *Amik Loves School : A Story of Wisdom. The Seven Teachings Stories.* Highwater Press, 2015.

Vermette, Katherina. *What is Truth, Betsy? A Story of Truth. The Seven Teachings Stories.* Highwater Press, 2015.

Vermette, Katherina. *Misaabe's Stories : A Story of Honesty. The Seven Teachings Stories.* Highwater Press, 2015.

Vermette, Katherina. *The First Day : A Story of Courage. The Seven Teachings Stories.* Highwater Press, 2014.

Vermette, Katherina. *Singing Sisters : A Story of Humility. The Seven Teachings Stories.* Highwater Press, 2014.

Invert Media: The Ojibwe teachings share how the Grandfather teachings connect to the Medicine Wheel.

<http://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com/>

Elder teachings and the animals that carry the Grandfather teachings:

<http://ojibweresources.weebly.com/ojibwe-teachings--the-7-grandfathers.html>



## Section 7: Questions for Observers

1. Listen for conversation as the students move about the room, pondering the seven words. Is it a more solitary exercise, or are students discussing ideas with each other? What are they saying?
2. Do you see or hear evidence that the students are connecting their thoughts today with those of previous lessons?
3. Which words are the children stuck on? Are they able to interpret the words and connect with them? Which words resonate with them the most?
4. Do children take time to read what others have already written before they add their own ideas?
5. What are your observations of how the children link the values on the chart paper with their growing understanding of communities? To themselves and their own experiences?