



Pisskan Instructional Unit and Assessment

Introduction:

The Pisskan Unit has been developed as a way for students and their teachers to explore this particular aspect of Blackfoot life and culture. These lessons focus primarily on Language Arts and Social Studies outcomes and are applicable to the grade 6 level. The assessment tools provided should allow teachers to get a greater understanding of what students truly know and understand and the areas where they continue to struggle. Through teaching the lessons teachers will be able to gauge in their own ways with their own students how their understandings and attitudes are developing. This unit contains three lessons and a culminating activity directly related to the Pisskan and one lesson focussing on Story Robes. See the curricular link document at the end of the unit for curricular connections for the unit.

Many of the activities in the lessons provided have a hands-on component, which makes them accessible to a variety of students with differing needs. The assessment tools may not always be viable for all students and may be modified to suit a variety of different situations.



Buffalo horns were used for cups and ladles. Collection of Glenbow Museum





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Pisskan – A lesson in Understanding how Groups Meet Basic Needs

Lesson 1: Introduction to the Web Exhibition

Objectives:

To help students understand how people have met their basic needs in the past. This can be contrasted with any other group that students are studying.

Note: Understanding what basic needs are and how they are met is a grade six social studies topic.

For more information on curricular links for this unit see the *Curricular Links* section of this document.

Materials:

- large piece of paper for brainstorming
- markers
- computer access and internet access for all students
- student journal

Timeline:

Approximately 1.5 – 2 hours

Grade Level:

Grade Six

Supporting the Learning Environment/Background Information:

An historical and cultural background document called Buffalojump_resources has been created for this unit. It outlines the importance of the buffalo to the Blackfoot people. This document also contains several archival images and images of artifacts from the Pisskan. These resources can be printed out for posting on bulletin boards Supporting the Learning Environment/Background Information: shared with students as handouts. They can also be used for the lessons which follow.

Method:

Connector: Build from the known

Ask students what they think a buffalo jump is or what it might be used for.

- Brainstorm as a class the possibilities. Write down all answers on a large piece of paper. At this point no answer is wrong. (As students



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access and use the website they will be able to cross out the incorrect information on the brainstorming sheet.)

- Tell the students that a buffalo jump was a way that the Blackfoot people killed buffalo by driving them over a cliff. Emphasize that this was an important activity, which allowed the Blackfoot people to access many of the things that they needed to survive.

Activities:

Online Web Exhibition – Relationship with the Buffalo:

Plan to take students to the computer lab as a class to explore **The Nitsitapiisinni - Online Web Exhibition** or have small groups of students access the site through classroom computers.

After the students have worked through the introduction of the site direct the them to the **Relationship with the Buffalo** web activity. Students should take at least one class to explore the site and they may wish to return to explore additional areas and activities.

Students may work in pairs or individually to complete the site. Pairing strong readers with those who experience difficulty may be a modification required in this activity.

- As students navigate the site the teacher should be available to answer questions or discuss the activity the students are working on. **Note:** Teachers please work through the site before you send your students there.

Once students have accessed the buffalo jump part of the website, come back together as a class and discuss what you have learned. Refer back to the brainstorming sheet. Ask the students if there is anything that was incorrect about the things that they had brainstormed previously.

- Discuss the misconceptions that students had at the beginning and allow them to make the changes.

Student Reflection:

In student journals invite students to finish the statements:

- Something I would like to know more about is...
- Something I learned is...
- A buffalo jump is... (when, why, and how it was used).

Newspaper Article:



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Students will write a newspaper article about what they have learned about the buffalo jump. They should include details like who, what, when, where, why, how. Students may take on the role of one of the people they met on the website and write the newspaper story from that person's perspective. Students should feel free to refer back to the web site to check facts.

Extension Activity:

Have students research using books, Internet resources, or community resources the questions that they have about buffalo jumps.

This may also be a good activity for older students in a split grade classroom, gifted students, or as a class research project, which would complement many language arts curricular outcomes.

Note: extra time for research will be needed in addition to the timeline guide given.

Assessment: Marking Rubric

Content

- Ideas are not well developed, and organization is poor.
- Essential information and supporting ideas are not presented.

- Ideas are poorly developed and organization is adequate.
- Essential information is missing and supporting details are inappropriate or insufficient.

- Ideas are adequately developed and the news article is adequately organized.
- All essential information is present and is supported by appropriate details.

- Ideas are well developed and the news article structure is clearly followed
- All essential information is presented, as well as additional information that makes the article more interesting, and is supported by interesting and appropriate details

- Ideas are extremely well developed and the organization of the news article is clearly effective.
- All information is present and is presented in such a way that it is interesting and informative to the audience.



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Lesson 2: Basic Needs of Blackfoot People

Objectives:

Students will further their understanding of how different cultures meet their basic needs.

Materials:

- bulletin board
- Buffalo Jump Picture Kit
- bulletin board with headings: What are people's basic needs and how do they meet them?
 - Community
 - Food
 - Clothing
 - Shelter

Note: This bulletin board can be built upon further throughout the exploration of the site.

- tape
- markers
- paper
- string or strips of paper

Timeline:

1 hour

Grade Level:

Grade Six

Supporting the Learning Environment/Background Information:

An historical and cultural background document called Buffalojump_resources has been created for this unit. It outlines the importance of the buffalo to the Blackfoot people. This document also contains several archival images and images of artifacts from the Pisskan. These resources can be printed out for posting on bulletin boards Supporting the Learning Environment/Background Information: shared with students as handouts. They can also be used for the lessons which follow.



Method:

Connector: Build from the known

Have the main heading “What are peoples basic needs and how do they meet them?” posted on the bulletin board when students enter the classroom

- Ask students to think about what they have learned about how the Blackfoot people meet their basic needs.
- Ask students what basic needs the Blackfoot people have? Refer to the headings on the bulletin board:
 - Community
 - Food
 - Clothing
 - Shelter

Activities:

As students provide the above answers have students choose the appropriate headings and place the answers on the bulletin board. Connect these to the main heading with string or strips of paper to create a giant mind map.

Ask students how they have seen these basic needs being met. Students may choose the pictures which they feel are examples of the needs being met. These should be taped into the appropriate spot and joined to the corresponding bubbles with string or strips of paper.

Have the students write what is being done in each picture to meet the need of the group in each picture. Example meat is set in the sun to dry to be made into pemmican, and important food source for the Blackfoot people.

- The teacher may also choose to have these types of descriptions pre-written and have students choose them, and place them on the bulletin board, dependant upon the ability of the class.

Students may create their own version of this mind map in their notebooks or on a computer software program such as Inspiration.

Accommodating Diversity:

Modifications to the activity – A Lesson In Understanding How People Meet Their Basic Needs.

Students who are not capable of writing a news article may be assigned to draw a sequence of drawings depicting what a buffalo jump looks like, who would be there, what the people would be doing, what time of year this activity would occur, and where buffalo jumps may be found.



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Pisskan – A lesson in Understanding how Groups Meet Basic Needs

Lesson 3: Creating and Exploring – Culminating / Extension Activity

Introduction:

This is a great activity for students to continue to build upon as they work through the website. As they learn about aspects of Blackfoot culture, past and present, they will continually build a classroom reminder of their learning and see the interconnectivity of the Blackfoot world.

Objectives:

- Experiment with a variety of forms of oral, print, and other media texts, to discover those best suited for exploring, organizing and sharing, ideas, information, and experiences
- Use prior experiences with oral print, and other media texts to choose new texts that meet learning needs and interests.
- (Alberta Grade Six Language Arts Specific Outcomes)

Materials

- **Buffalo Jump Artefact kit**
- Carpet Scraps or blankets
- Pen
- Paper

Timeline:

1 – 2 classes

Grade Level:

Grade Six – but may be adapted in terms of expectations for a variety of grades

Supporting the Learning Environment/Background Information:

An historical and cultural background document called Buffalojump_resources has been created for this unit. It outlines the importance of the buffalo to the Blackfoot people. This document also contains several archival images and images of artifacts from the Pisskan. These resources can be printed out for posting on bulletin boards or can be shared with students as handouts. These resources can be used for the following lessons.



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Method:

Connector: Build from the known

Discuss with students how we know about the past.

- Stories
- History books
- Things that were left behind

Discuss with students that often we leave behind items that tell about who we are as a culture. Ask students to think of some examples of cultures who have left things behind

- Greeks
- Chinese
- Dinosaurs – not a culture but we know that they were here because we find what has been left by them
- Native People

Activities:

Tell students that today they will get to carefully examine several objects, which were part of Blackfoot culture in the past. These things tell a story about the people who used them and what those people did.

Divide students into groups of 3 or 4

Assign groups to a station previously set up using the artefact kit.

Groups may only look at the object at their station for the first three minutes. Remind them to look carefully notice the shape and size. What does it look like it is made from?

Have students sketch the object in their notebook. They should do this for at least 6 minutes. Tell them to label the sketch if possible.

Students may now carefully approach the carpet scrap on which the object lies.

Students may now, one at a time, carefully pick up the object. Remind them to pay attention to what it feels like, and to imagine what it was used for. Students should each have 2-3 minutes to handle the object.

After students touch the object ask them to add to their sketch. Write details about how it looks and feels. Note what they think it is made of. Have students rotate objects, groups move to object, objects do not move to groups.



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Ask students to imagine what the object is and who might have used it.

Ask students to brainstorm their ideas on a sheet of paper in their journal.

Ask students to write a short story about the person to whom they think the object may have belonged to and what it may have been used for.

Note: Students will need to have some extra time allowed to get their stories written and polished.

Ask for students to volunteer to share their writing, then tell students what each of the objects actually were. Remind students that this was not an assignment about being right, but an exercise in putting the pieces that they had learned throughout the unit together in a creative and imaginative way.

Assessment: - Culminating Activity – Creating & Exploring

In the previous lesson (Creating and Exploring) students were asked to write a story where they were a person using an object found at a buffalo jump. The following rubric is a way of grading the story.

Note: 1 - not at all or insufficient, 4 - excellent or absolute completion of the task



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Assessment: - Creating & Exploring

Student: _____

Story has been created where student develops ideas, plots, and characters.

1 2 3 4

The object has been integrated as a central part of the story but is not obviously the forced center.

1 2 3 4

The story represents a creative understanding of topics covered in the unit.

1 2 3 4

Correct use of convention is present.

1 2 3 4

Total Score: /16

Teacher Comments:



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Pisskan – Reading and Creating Story Robes

Lesson 1:

Objectives:

- Students will experiment with a variety of forms of oral, print, and other media texts to discover those best suited for exploring, organizing, and sharing, ideas, information, and experiences.
- Students will demonstrate respect by choosing appropriate language and tone in oral print and other media texts

Materials:

- scissors
- markers or crayons
- large roll of brown paper, perhaps the kind used for mail
- computer access, to view project website, including the specific information pertaining to the story robe and photographs, teachers may wish to print these materials or project them on a screen.

Timeline:

Approximately two classes

Grade Level:

Students in early elementary to (with adjustment of expectations) grade 5

Supporting the Learning Environment/Background Information:

An historical and cultural background document called Story_Robes has been created for this unit. This document explains the importance of story robes to the Blackfoot people. It also contains an archival image of tipis with story robe designs. This resource can be printed out for posting on a bulletin board or can be shared with students as a handout.

Method:

Connector: Build from the known

This lesson assumes that students have accessed and worked through ***The Nitsitapiisinni - Online Web Exhibition***

Using the materials pertaining to story robes on the website, view and discuss what story robes are, what they are made of, and why they were important to the Blackfoot people.



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At this time discuss with students how we keep personal records

- journals
- photo albums
- family bibles or records

Have students make a personal inventory of how they and or their families have kept personal records. Students should record this in their own reflective journals.

Activities:

Tell students that they are going to look at the way that the Blackfoot people kept records of their lives and the events that happened in their communities.

As a class work through the story robe information provided and discuss why individuals would record the events that they did.

- Discuss how a story robe is different from a journal
- Why didn't every person keep a story robe?
- How do they think a person would decide to what to record?

After working through what a story robe is, ask students to brainstorm individually the important events in their lives. Encourage them to move past telling about every birthday party they have ever had and more towards very special or significant events, things that changed their worlds such as the birth of siblings, moving, etc.

Ask students to note that the story robes that were viewed were not written using words. Discuss how people use symbols to tell others things.

- road signs
- Egyptian hieroglyphics
- art
- photographic essays or personal photo albums

- How do we know people are happy, sad, angry?
- How do we identify holidays?
- What symbols do we use for special occasions?
- Are these symbols the same across cultures?

Ask students to develop their own symbols for the events in their lives. Remind them that story robes would not exist independently; the people who created them would have been there to tell the story and their audience would have a much closer knowledge of the story being told than we do when we see story robes on display.



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Review symbols with students, remind them that everyone has their own style of drawing and creating and we respect all sincere efforts.

After you have reviewed the symbols with each student and discussed the events that they are going to depict give each student a large piece of brown paper.

Ask students to carefully tear the paper into a buffalo hide shape similar to those that were seen on the website, it would also be helpful if students could access the site again individually at this point, or if teachers would draw their attention to a printed copy.

Have students begin to organize their symbols in such a way as to represent their stories, remind them to be conscientious of sequencing.

Ask students to share their story robe with a small group, or ask each student to show and share their story robe with the class.

Assessment

The assessment of this activity consists of a self-assessment by the student.

Please see the following form:



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Individual Story Robe Assessment

Student: _____

Please answer each of the following statements honestly using a scale where 4 means totally agrees and 1 means totally disagree.

I have told me life story to the best of my ability.

1 2 3 4

I have been respectful of the tradition where the story robe originated.

1 2 3 4

I put sincere thought and effort into developing the symbols that I used on my story robe.

1 2 3 4

I feel that my story robe effectively tells the story that I intended to tell

1 2 3 4

Total = /16



Relationship with the Buffalo – Curricular links

Curricular Links

Questions for Inquiry:

What are basic human needs? Your needs? How can government help meet these needs?

- What does a band council do to help meet needs of people in the community?
- How does the federal government participate in meeting needs?

Which of your needs are being met by local government?

How can I actively be involved in local government, as a student and as an adult?

What current issue is being debated locally?

Knowledge Objectives:

How political decisions form the basis of by-laws and laws.

The major responsibility of a local government is to deal with the issues and concerns of the local community.

- Needs of individuals met by local government
- Ways local government resolves issues
- Different positions and roles of officials in a local government
- How individuals can contribute to and participate in local government by voting, attending meetings, initiating or supporting petitions.

Skill Objectives:

Gather information through interviews, field studies, or surveys

Analyze how well local government is meeting needs

Draw conclusions about rights and responsibilities of citizens.