UNDERSTANDING OUR RIGHTS

RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL: Grades 7 to 8

SUBJECT: Social Studies

Suggested time: 75 minutes

Essential Question: Are the rights of all Canadians equal?

LEARNING GOALS
Students will:
• Develop an understanding of rights and the role they play in the lives of individuals
• Explore evidence and draw conclusions about the experiences of Indigenous Peoples of Canada

1. RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING: Put the words STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, DISAGREE, STRONGLY DISAGREE in four different corners of the classroom. Tell the students you are going to make statements about yourself as a teacher and they must move to the corner of the room that corresponds to their opinion of the statement.

Alternatively, this activity can also be done by giving each student four different coloured sticky notes representing the four opinions. Students can respond by holding up the sticky note that corresponds to their opinion.

Present students with the first statement “I have the right to give you three hours of homework every night”. Give students a moment to think about the statement and then ask them to move to a corner. Ask three or four students to justify their opinions in order to assess their prior knowledge of rights. Present students with five or six more statements such as “I have the right to arrive thirty minutes late to school on Fridays”, “I have the right to have a break for lunch”, “I have the right to talk on my cell phone in class”, “I have the right to wear whatever I want to work”.

2. Start to develop a collective understanding of rights by asking students to give suggestions of the rights they feel they have as students in the classroom. As students start to give suggestions record all of the ideas on the board and discuss whether these suggestions are reasonable (e.g. “I have the right to share my thinking in a safe and respectful environment”) or unreasonable (e.g. “I have the right to juggle textbooks during class”). Begin to create two different lists by asking questions such as:
• What makes a suggestion reasonable or unreasonable?
• What is the difference between something you need and something you want?
• Does it interfere with or deny the rights of someone else?
• Does the right apply to everyone? Is it fair to everyone?

3. RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING: Once students have developed an understanding of what a right is, explain that rights are often expressed as declarations. A declaration is an official or formal announcement of an agreement. Model for students how to declare something by using the sentence frame:
“I, ___________ declare that ___________________________.”

WORD BANK
Right—a moral or legal entitlement to have or do something (Oxford Dictionary)

Declaration—a formal or explicit statement or announcement; a written public announcement of intentions or of the terms of an agreement (Oxford Dictionary)

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES
• Computer/tablet with internet access
• Paper and writing utensils
• Sticky notes
• “Heartspeak about Shannen’s Dream” www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Gy38grr35c (11:00)

EDUCATOR’S NOTE: This lesson will focus on developing students’ understanding of human rights. Consider going deeper into this topic by examining the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in more detail.

4. Introduce students to the story of Shannen Koostachin, a youth education activist from the Attawapiskat First Nation in Ontario using the video “Heartspeak about Shannen’s Dream” www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Gy38grr35c (11:00).

EDUCATOR’S NOTE: Consider exploring the story of Shannen Koostachin in more detail using the following resources:

- “Hi-Ho Mistahey!” – National Film Board of Canada www.nfb.ca/film/hi-ho_mistahey_en/

Using the think-pair-share strategy, ask students to reflect on and discuss the following questions with a partner:

- Who was Shannen Koostachin?
- What right was she fighting for?
- In what way was that right being denied?
- What connections can you make to Shannen and the children in her community?
- What would you do if one of your rights was being compromised or denied?

As a class, discuss the students’ responses to the video.

5. **Recommended Assessment of Learning**: Students will write a reflective paragraph based on what they have learned in the lesson. What are rights? What are declarations and why are they important? Do the children in Shannen’s community have the right to an education? What evidence can you draw from the video to show that children’s right to education in the Attawapiskat First Nation community was being denied? What impact did this have on the children in the community? As an alternative, students may prepare a short oral piece that can be recorded or presented to the class.

**Extension**: Investigate other stories where the rights of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada (especially Indigenous youth) are being compromised or denied. Give students the opportunity to explore books, movies and other media texts that present these social, cultural, political and economic issues from the perspective of the people who are directly affected by them.


Vice News – Indigenous news.vice.com/topic/indigenous

Indspire: Indigenous Education, Canada’s Future – indspire.ca


**Enrichment**: Review what the United Nations organization is and what Canada’s role is within it. Are students aware that there is a UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child?


Have students investigate what is currently being done in Canada to support the implementation of these articles and what still needs to be done.

Give each student a sticky note and ask them to use the sentence frame to declare one right that they have as a student in the classroom based on the previous discussion. Once students finish ask them to share their note with the class and then add it to a chart paper on the front board. Make sure that everyone has included something different and that everyone agrees on each note. Remind students that suggestions must fit their understanding of what a right is. Once all the notes have been added tell students that they have now created The Declaration of the Rights of Students in ____________ (e.g. Grade 8, Room 12).