

“Shadows in Time” - A Teacher’s Guide

This lesson plan was developed in response to a call by the girls of Stardale Women’s Group in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Specifically the 7th call to action stating:

“We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.”

We aimed to develop age-appropriate educational materials that provide Canadians a deeper understanding as to the nature of Indigenous societies, and the history of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

The colonial foundations of our country resulted in a relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people that was always unbalanced and unjust. The example highlighted here is that of the intersection of racism and sexism with regards to indigenous women and girls. The time is overdue for a strengthening of the relationship between Indigenous and non- Indigenous people, and this can only be accomplished by a full and truthful understanding of the history of the relationship as well as its permeation into today’s current events.

Before Viewing

Dealing Sensitively with Racism and Sexism

It is important to deal with this topic with sensitivity. A great deal will depend on the age, maturity and family background of students, and teachers will be the best judge of how to approach the material.

In presenting these issues, teachers are not expected to be experts on the history and legacies of Indigenous peoples, rather their role is as guides and facilitators.

When discussing sensitive and controversial topics it is important to set ground rules to ensure a safe environment for sharing ideas and opinion:

- Always respect and value what others bring to the discussion
- Discussion should protect diverging views among participants
- It is okay to feel discomfort

For some students the topics discussed will be sensitive, especially if they themselves come from a minority community or have experienced racism or sexism. For others, the topics may be controversial, particularly if they feel they have no connection with the issues. Also, in some

schools with new Canadians, teachers will need to be aware that some topics may echo feelings that are part of the immigrant experience.

Some considerations for making sure the topic is presented fairly and with sensitivity include the following:

- These topics are best taught through discussion rather than instruction
- A teacher is responsible for ensuring exploration of the issue so the discussion promotes understanding and is not merely an exchange of intolerance
- Allow time to deal with students' concerns and questions
- Be aware of issues that may arise for students both in formal discussions and informal conversations in and around the classroom; close conversations appropriately; play a role in ensuring potential conflict is dealt with in the context of the classroom
- Try to give students the tools and skills to discuss these topics rationally in the school and community

Campbell, K. (2003). Overview: Dealing with Controversial and Sensitive Topics . In *B.C. First Nations Studies teacher's guide*. preface, B.C. Ministry of Education.

[Question 1: “What is colonialism?” Is colonialism still affecting us today? If so, how?](#)

The dictionary definition: The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.

[Question 2: How do race and gender intersect ? If so why is it important?](#)

Depending on the grade-level, the discussion can move towards defining ‘intersectionality’ and the ways it is present in our society.

Introducing the Video

To reveal deep-rooted biases about race and gender, the young women and girls of Stardale Women’s Group share painful stories about their lost history, loss of identity, loss of community, family and friends. Whether intentional or unintentional, the film showcases how racial microaggressions are incessant and cumulative, and have detrimental impacts on their mental, physical and social well-being.

[Watch “Shadows in Time”](#)

After viewing

[Question 3: Thoughts and feelings on the video?](#)

Offer time for students to reflect before answering, perhaps they can write their initial thoughts/feelings down before sharing verbally with the class.

[Question 4: What are examples of “racial microaggressions”? How do they affect mental, physical and social well-being?](#)

The class can begin by defining racial microaggressions and then move into giving examples from the movie. Some students may feel comfortable enough to share from their own experience and while that should be welcome and respected, it shouldn't be expected or mandatory.

The Way Forward

While it is important to acknowledge the past and present oppression of Indigenous communities in our society, it is also important to focus on taking action. The table below is a possible exercise that outlines different kinds of citizens and the actions they take in our society.

Teachers know their class best and will know what works best for them. It is important that the activity ends on a note of hope and working towards a better future.

Table 1. Kinds of Citizens		
Personally Responsible Citizen	Participatory Citizen	Social-Justice Oriented Citizen
Description		
Acts responsibly in their community Works and pays taxes Picks up litter, recycles, and gives blood Helps those in need, lends a hand during times of crisis Obeys laws	Active member of community organizations and/or improvement efforts Organizes community efforts to care for those in need, promote economic development, or clean up environment Knows how government agencies work Knows strategies for accomplishing collective tasks	Critically assesses social, political, and economic structures Explores strategies for change that address root causes of problems Knows about social movements and how to effect systemic change Seeks out and addresses areas of injustice
Sample Action		
Contributes food to a food drive	Helps to organize a food drive	Explores why people are hungry and acts to solve root causes
Core Assumptions		
To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must have good character; they must be honest, responsible, and law-abiding members of the community	To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and community structures	To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must question and change established systems and structures when they reproduce patterns of injustice over time

Westheimer, J. (2008, May). No child left thinking: Democracy at-risk in American schools. *Democratic Dialogue Series* (17), p. 6.

[Question 5: What type of citizen do you want to be? Why? None of these are wrong, it's about capacity, we need all types of people.](#)