

Grade 7 Language

Oral Communication*

Aboriginal Teaching Strategy

Gestures and Movements in Aboriginal Dances

Students interpret gestures and movements used in Aboriginal dances, verify their interpretations through research, and create a presentation to show what they have learned.

Related Curriculum Policy

- *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Language, 2006*

Specific Expectations

Speaking to Communicate

- 2.6 identify a variety of non-verbal cues, including facial expression, gestures, and eye contact, and use them in oral communications, appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences, to help convey their meaning (e.g., lean into a group to make a point; make eye contact with the person to whom the response/question is directed)
- 2.7 use a variety of appropriate visual aids (e.g., charts, videos, props, multimedia) to support and enhance oral presentations (e.g., use a short video clip to support a formal presentation)

Aboriginal Context

Movements and gestures in Aboriginal dances have special meanings. For example, the raised hand in the Jingle Dance demonstrates recognition of, and respect for, the Creator and Aboriginal ancestors. In other traditional dances, dancers keep their feet close to the ground to symbolize their connection with the earth.

* Note: While dance is not a form of oral communication, it is often spoken of as a language, and Aboriginal dances have in them movements and gestures that communicate specific things.

Teaching Strategies

- Show students video clips of Aboriginal dances and have them list the movements and gestures they see as they watch the clips.
- Ask students to describe the movements they saw, listing their responses on a class chart.
- Have students suggest possible meanings for the movements and write their ideas beside each movement.
- Have each student choose two of their ideas about what the movements mean and verify whether they are accurate through research and/or interviews.
- Have students create an oral presentation in which they talk about what they learned, supporting their talk with a demonstration of one or two of the movements they discuss.
- Have students give their presentations to the class.

Resources

The following recommended resources and web links were accurate at the time of publication. Teachers are encouraged to check that these reference listings remain current.

Native Dance. <http://natedance.ca/>

This site includes information, interviews, and articles about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit dances, as well as videos of the dances and teacher resource kits.

Native Spirit. <http://nativespirit.com/>

Information about and videos of a variety of Aboriginal dances.

The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture. Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research. <http://www.metismuseum.ca/main.php>
Information about and videos of Métis dances.

Making Community Connections

- Invite an Aboriginal dance group to perform for and discuss the language of their dances with the class.

ABOUT THE TEACHER'S TOOLKIT

This teaching strategy is one component of *Aboriginal Perspectives: The Teacher's Toolkit*, a collection of resources designed to help Ontario educators bring Aboriginal perspectives into the classroom. Based on the revised Ontario curriculum, the collection includes resources for educators at both the elementary and secondary levels. Other resources in this series can be found on the ministry website, at www.edu.gov.on.ca.

