

INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

PRE-TEACH/PRE-ACTIVITY

Ensure that students understand the concept of governance by reviewing the different levels of government and authority in their own lives, looking at school structures (e.g., teachers, support workers, department heads, principals, directors of education), home structures (e.g., siblings, parents, guardians, grandparents, relatives) and Canada (e.g., elected officials, cabinet, members of Parliament, prime minister, judges, justices). Next, ask students to research how Indigenous groups (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) are currently governed. Access documents and websites for the [Assembly of First Nations](#), Métis Nation ([Métis National Council](#)) and [Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami](#) to help with this research. Additional resources can be found at the end of this teachers' guide. Compare and contrast traditional and current models of governance.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Students will learn about how Indigenous groups are governed.
- Students will learn about different models of governance.
- Students will compare and contrast current and traditional models of governance.

INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

Foundational knowledge and perspectives

FIRST NATIONS

“The original clan system was spiritually endowed as a Great Law. It became an effective system of social order and structure of government. Its spiritual importance was to serve as a foundation for the social, political and good governance of the people. For this reason, it continued to function for the whole of the people and wholly for their needs and pursuits. Through changing times, the clan system remained strong and was a key to the strength of the people, their collective identity and their unity, while at the same time maintaining the dignity, integrity and personal identity of the individual.

In one teaching, my friend Mark Phillips speaks of three consultation circles in the community. These circles

were in addition to clan responsibilities and provided a forum to speak to specific matters. Those circles were the Women’s and Children’s Circles, the Elders’ Circle and the Men’s Circle. Each of the consultation circles had specific duties and considerations to bear in mind. The Women’s and Children’s Circles

had a duty to consider matters in light of the future. In addition, the Women’s Circle had to agree before any war was considered, as it was their sons, brothers and husbands who might be lost. The Elders who were — and are — the repository of our history consider matters in light of past events. The Men’s Circle was to consider the issues in light of current events and needs.

In addition to the time frames that guided the consultation circles, other considerations such as political, social, economic and health needs guided consultations. Those consultations were conducted in a prayerful and respectful manner with the knowledge that true consultation was the key to understanding.

Being a Chief was seen as temporary, and there were few lifetime Chiefs because they were the poorest in the

community. They were poor because their duties included taking care of the sick, old and orphans, and thinking of others before themselves. Chiefs were taught that they should be advisors to the people and that spiritual consensus is the highest form of politics.

Most Indigenous leaders today are confronted with a multitude of issues they must manage cooperatively if they are to make the transition to an adaptive leader, or a leader acting in a manner consistent with traditional teachings. The system today’s leaders are working within (usually one imposed by the federal government) is not the system or society that the traditional leadership role was originally developed for. The impacts of

the Indian Act (first passed in 1876) and the actions of the federal government have ingrained in many of our people the notion that someone else will make decisions for us. The devastating effects of residential schools wherein individual initiative and expression of our culture was punishable in a brutal man-

ner compounds this. This brutal enforcement of conformity to a non-Indigenous worldview, combined with an enforcement regime that pitted individuals against one another, has created a shameful legacy.

Perhaps now more than ever, traditional Indigenous leadership and governance is necessary. It is critical that people feel part of the decision-making process and that their voice is important. Hope is crucial to our survival — and what better way to help give people hope than to make it clear that there is a role for everyone in the community. The need to help create change must be done in light of the culture and values of the community.”

— from *“Governance”* by Bob Watts, in the *First Nations volume of the Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*



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INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

Foundational knowledge and perspectives

MÉTIS

“**Founded in 1983**, the Métis National Council — made up of provincial Governing Members in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario — is the Métis’ national governing body. Soon to be based in Winnipeg, the primary role of the MNC is to build a common sense of Métis identity among its constituents, to pursue the Métis’ inherent Indigenous rights through the court, and to establish and maintain a nation-to-nation relationship with Canada. In court cases such as Powley (2003), the Manitoba Metis Federation (2013) and Daniels (2013, 2016), the MNC has been an intervener and has advanced a coherent Métis rights agenda.

The original Métis provincial governing members came from the three Prairie provinces, but by the 1990s, British Columbia and Ontario were added to the fold. The MNC’s constituent members are the Métis Nation British Columbia, Métis Nation of Alberta, Métis Nation — Saskatchewan, Manitoba Metis Federation and Métis Nation of Ontario. Together, the MNC and the provincial Métis councils represent more than an estimated 400,000 Métis living in the Métis Nation Homeland.

Each of the five Governing Members provides Métis citizens in the five provinces with a measure of self-government, as well as cultural programming and educational, social, employment and skills training. As an example, the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan governing structure consists of regions, areas and locals. Locals are the most direct form of Métis government and include Métis citizens from the same community in their membership. Each provincial governing body consists of elected regional directors

who, along with the president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer, form the provincial Métis council. Each of these elected officials holds one or several portfolios, such as education, housing or harvesting/hunting rights within the various provincial Métis councils. The governing councils serve as an executive branch of government and are most directly involved in the day-to-day governing.

Since 2004, the Métis Governing Members have moved towards a central registration of Métis citizens for the purposes of asserting the Métis’ Indigenous rights via Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

To vote in a Governing Member election, a person must be registered as a Métis citizen and have a citizenship card. Elections are held and monitored by various Métis electoral commissions. Citizens with a Métis card within each province can vote for their choice of president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and regional director.

The various Métis Governing Members control their citizen registries. To become registered, applicants must show where they have Métis ancestry in a genealogy, must self-identify as Métis and must be recog-

nized as Métis by the Métis Nation. This is based on the MNC’s definition (2002) of Métis: “ ‘Métis’ means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, and who is accepted by the Métis Nation.”

—from “*Modern Political Life*” in the *Métis* volume of the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*

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INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

Foundational knowledge and perspectives

MÉTIS

“The eight Alberta Métis Settlements are the only government-recognized Métis land base in Canada. Comprising 512,121 hectares, the settlements are located in east-central and northern Alberta. These settlements emerged from the activism of Métis political leaders in the 1920s and '30s who were concerned about the social plight of landless Métis who struggled to feed their families. An earlier federally operated Métis settlement in Alberta — St. Paul des Métis — had been dissolved in 1909 for public homesteading after only 10 years of operation.

In 1932, the Métis Association of Alberta was formed from an earlier Métis political lobby. The new association lobbied the Alberta government to investigate the miserable living condition of the province's Métis. Their efforts convinced the government to act. In 1938, the Alberta government passed the Métis Population Betterment Act, which, based on the recommendations of the Ewing Commission, established a land base for the province's Métis. The new settlements, or “colonies” as they were then known, were: Buffalo Lake (Caslan), Cold Lake, East Prairie, Elizabeth, Fishing Lake (Packechawanis), Gift Lake (Ma-cha-cho-wi-se), Kikino (Goodfish Lake), Marlboro, Paddle Prairie (or Keg River), Big Prairie (now Peavine), Touchwood and Wolf Lake. The original governance structure was paternalistic; government and church officials had the largest say in governing, although the Métis had limited self-governing authority relating to hunting, fishing, and trapping. Four of the original settlements — Cold Lake, Marlboro, Touchwood, and Wolf Lake — were later dissolved.

Frustrated at the lack of self-government in these settlements, a group of activists formed the Alberta Federation of Métis Settlements in 1975. After years of negotiations and the threat of legal action, their lobbying efforts were successfully realized in 1990 when the Alberta government passed the Métis Settlements Act, the Métis Settlements Accord Implementation Act, the Métis Settlements Land Protection Act and the Constitution of Alberta Amendment Act. With this legislation, the Métis on the settlements were granted control of 512,121 hectares of land.

In 2016, the Alberta Métis Settlements contained 5,054 residents. The eight current settlements are Buffalo Lake, East Prairie, Elizabeth, Fishing Lake, Gift Lake, Kikino, Paddle Prairie and Peavine. These settlements are self-governing and administered by the Métis Settlements General Council. Each settlement has a council, and the eight councils meet and hold an annual general council assembly. A board of directors oversees the MSGC and includes the eight settlement chairpersons and all four MSGC executive members, who are non-voting members. In consultation with the Alberta Minister of Indigenous Relations, the MSGC makes policies that are binding on the settlements.”

— from *“Métis Settlements and Farms” in the Métis volume of the Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*



INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

Foundational knowledge and perspectives

INUIT

“**The Labrador Inuit path to self-governance** has involved the hard work and dedication of many people over a span of decades. Today, it remains one of the proudest and most important moments in our long history.

The Labrador Inuit Association was formed in 1973 to promote Inuit culture; improve the health and well-being of our people; protect their constitutional, democratic and human rights; and advance Labrador Inuit claims with Canada and the Newfoundland and Labrador government. In 1977, the LIA began the long journey towards self-government by filing a land claim with the provincial and federal governments seeking rights to the ‘land and sea ice in Northern Labrador.’ For the next three decades, their negotiators pursued the dream of self-government for Labrador Inuit through the settlement of their land claim. This dream was realized on Dec. 6, 2004, when the provincial government passed the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act, which paved the way for the establishment of the Nunatsiavut government on Dec. 1, 2005.

The Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement set a precedent by including self-government provisions within the claim. This is the first Inuit region in Canada to achieve self-government, a proud accomplishment for all Labrador Inuit. As a self-governing Inuit regional government, Nunatsiavut continues to set new standards for the way in which Labrador Inuit interact with the provincial government and other entities.

Although Nunatsiavut remains part of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Nunatsiavut government has authority over many central governance areas, including health, education, culture and language, justice and community matters. At the heart of governance is the power to

make laws. In Nunatsiavut, the Labrador Inuit Constitution is the fundamental law of Labrador Inuit. All other laws made by the Nunatsiavut government are driven by a set of fundamental principles that arise from the Labrador Inuit Constitution.

Nunatsiavut is a consensus form of parliamentary democracy designed to ensure a separation of power between the political and operational levels of government. At the political level, the democratically elected representatives of the Nunatsiavut assembly make laws and provide broad policy direction for the government.”

—from “Nunatsiavut” in the Inuit volume of the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*

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the world at large. Its goal is to continually improve the economic, social and cultural well-being of the Inuvialuit through implementation of the IFA and by all other available means. Inuvialuit beneficiaries directly control the IRC and its subsidiaries by electing directors from each of the region’s six communities.

In the IFA, Inuvialuit agreed to give up their exclusive use of their ancestral lands in exchange for certain other guaranteed rights from the federal government. These rights came in three forms: land, wildlife management and money.”

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INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

Foundational knowledge and perspectives

INUIT

—from “Inuvialuit Settlement Region” in the Inuit volume of the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*

“Located along Hudson Bay and on the Ungava Peninsula, Nunavik is one of four Inuit homelands in Canada that make up Inuit Nunangat. The political, cultural and economic administrations of Nunavik are managed by the Makivik Corporation. The corporation is guided by elected officials, including a president, executive council and board of directors.

Between the dualistic nations of Canada and Quebec, Inuit in Nunavik have established their own distinct place and identity. Makivik, which in Inuktitut means “To Rise Up,” is a fitting name for an organization mandated to protect the rights, interests and financial compensation provided by the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (the first comprehensive Inuit land claim in

Canada) and the more recent offshore Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement that came into effect in 2007.”

“The Makivik Corporation’s distinct mandate ranges from owning and operating large profitable business enterprises and generating jobs for Inuit, to social economic development, improving housing conditions and protecting the Inuit language, culture and natural environment. In 1975 when the first agreement was signed, it took the position that ‘settling Inuit land claims’ must be viewed in the context of a ‘new beginning’ in terms of developing and implementing a new relationship and way of doing business with both the federal government and Quebec government.”

—from “Nunavik” in the the Inuit volume of the *Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada*



INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

Points of inquiry and activation related to the Giant Floor Map



- **Locate your hometown on the Giant Floor Map and place a pylon there.** Have students examine the land and symbols near your hometown and identify any national, provincial and community governing entities within 100 kilometres of your hometown, using the different symbols on the legend. Place red sticky notes on the national locations, blue sticky notes on the provincial locations, and yellow sticky notes on the community locations.
- **Discuss where the federal, provincial or territorial, and community governing entities are located in your province or territory and in Canada.** Mark them on the map using pylons from the teachers' kit. Discuss patterns that students observe, focusing on where it appears Indigenous Peoples are well represented and where Indigenous Peoples are not represented or underrepresented. Ask students what they observed when they were trying to find these map elements.
- **Bring students to the northern part of the map, to the region known as Inuit Nunangat, and explain that 50 per cent of Canada's coastlines and 35 per cent of Canada's land mass are in Inuit territory.** Discuss how this part of Canada is managed by asking the following questions: Have there been negotiations for self-governance or is it a co-management system? Is there another model? Which regional Inuit organization is responsible for managing which territories?
- **Using the Governance Examples card and the Co-management Model card as a starting point, have students discuss the different types of governance styles and models that are in place today.**

INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

Age appropriate application and experiential learning

ELEMENTARY

K-6

- **Introduce governance** to your students by asking: Who makes the rules in your home? Who has to follow them? Who has input on decisions that are made? Repeat this exercise for your school and the classroom.
- **Ask students to identify** who is in charge of your community. Why do they get to do this and how are they selected?
- **Discuss leadership qualities:** Who would you like to be in charge of a class trip? Why? Make a list or a chart of these qualities and have students reflect on which ones they embody.
- **Ask students** what process or processes are used to determine leaders in Indigenous groups.
- **Read *Hiawatha and the Peacemaker*** by Robbie Robertson and David Shannon. This book shares the story of the creation of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy. This system is thought to have contributed to the foundation of the United States of America, as detailed in the 1988 book *Indian Roots of American Democracy* by José Barreiro.

INTERMEDIATE

7-9

- **Introduce the concept** of sovereign nations to your students by looking at Europe and comparing the countries to First Nations in Canada. Each country is significantly smaller than Canada but is independent. Together they make up all of Europe. With this analogy, it is not hard to imagine how each First Nation in Canada sees its own people and territory as a sovereign entity. First Nations see themselves as nations for reasons other than just land mass. Ask students what First Nations have in common with other nations? What is needed to be defined as a “nation”?
- **Discuss the qualities** of a leader, then as a class create a list of strong leadership qualities. Have students offer examples of people they consider good and bad leaders.
- **Discuss how** decisions are made in students’ lives. Are they made the same way in all aspects of their lives? What are the differences? What are the benefits and drawbacks of each process? Ask students to relate this to the decision-making process of Canada, past and present.
- **Dig deeper** into decision-making processes by looking at the pros and cons of coming to a consensus and voting. Ask students to research when Indigenous people in Canada were given the right to vote. Have students make a chart that shows when, where and for whom this process might not work, focusing on the following idea: “If you cannot vote, can you really be part of governance?”
- **Have students look at gender** roles and gender balance in relation to decision-making processes and governance.
- **Explore what the terms “matriarchal” and “consensus” mean** in Indigenous governance, and where this is seen today. Have students reflect on how these governance models could be extrapolated to be used in their own lives.

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INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

Age appropriate application and experiential learning

SECONDARY

10-12

- **Identify Indigenous leaders** and write biographies of past and present leaders.
- **Give students a co-management model** to explore (e.g., the Archipelago Management Board for the Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, National Marine Conservation Area Reserve, and Haida Heritage Site) and have them discuss the benefits and drawbacks of this model (see the Co-management Model card in the teachers' kit).
- **Discuss which forms of governance**, both past and present, are used by different Indigenous Peoples (e.g., representative, hereditary, elected, appointed). How are things coordinated from a local to national level? How long are terms of office? How do elections happen? What is the structure of the governance system (e.g., grand chief, president, prime minister, board of governors, legislature, council)?
- **Ask your students if**, based on the research they have completed, there would be a different structure from what currently exists at the provincial and national levels that would better support and reflect Indigenous Peoples governance. For example, individual First Nations may choose to self-govern, as might tribal councils. Métis groups might see themselves organizing by territory or proximity rather than the current politically determined boundaries.
- **Have your students research** how Métis settlements are governed and how this differs from other Indigenous groups.
- **Give your students** a copy of the [Canada-Métis Nation Accord](#), signed in 2017, and discuss how this agreement will affect future Métis governance.

INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE



DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING

- **As a class, reach out to local Indigenous organizations and/or communities** to interview them about their governance structure, past and present. Have students create organizational charts to show different governance structures.



LEARNING TO ACTION

- **Have students write letters** to an elected official explaining what they would change so that Canada's government better reflects Indigenous governance models for your local organization and/or community.
- **Have students reflect** on the structure of the student council at your school. Ask them to think about what they can do to ensure that all students are represented equally. Are there Indigenous governance models that might work better than the current structure? If possible, encourage students to implement changes in the student council to reflect what they have learned.