

## **Critical Thinking About Government Grade Four and Five**

### **Critical Question:**

Which would be the most effective form of government for the Comox Band membership today, a hereditary system or an elected band council?

### **Overview**

Students were placed in small groups to review and record information about the Comox Band's hereditary and elected systems of government. Each child compared positive and negative aspects of both systems and prepared questions for two guest speakers from the Comox Band. The guest speakers were asked to present their knowledge and opinions of the two types of government. Once the students gathered and reviewed their information, they wrote a persuasive article explaining and defending their answer to the critical question. As a conclusion to the unit, the students were given the opportunity to share their decisions orally.

### **Shared Learnings:**

Aboriginal peoples have lifestyles, customs and traditions that are unique to each culture. Aboriginal lifestyles changed in many ways following contact with European peoples. There are a variety of social structures in many Aboriginal Nations. Aboriginal peoples preserve identity and transmit culture through oral traditions. The Indian Act has had, and continues to have a profound effect on Canada's Aboriginal peoples.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

Social Studies

*It is expected that students will:*

Identify and clarify a problem, issue or inquiry. (4,5)

Locate and record information from a variety of sources. (4)

Gather and record a body of information from a variety of primary and secondary sources. (5)

Identify alternative interpretations for specific historical and contemporary sources. (4)

Develop alternative interpretations from varied sources. (5)

Assess at least two perspectives on a problem or an issue. (4)

Demonstrate awareness and appreciation of various Aboriginal cultures in Canada.(4)

Demonstrate understanding of contributions of Aboriginal people to Canada.(4)

Summarize the purposes of municipal, provincial, federal, and Aboriginal governments. (5)

Describe how different cultures meet people's needs in different ways. (4)

Describe ways cultures have sought to preserve identity and adapt to change. (4)

Describe traditional and contemporary Aboriginal forms of government. (4)

Demonstrate an awareness of Aboriginal place names. (4)

### **Language Arts**

*It is expected that students will:*

Read, listen, and view for specific purposes. (4,5)

Use strategies, including asking and developing questions, rereading and reading further to develop understanding. (4,5)

Organize information, or ideas they have read, heard, or viewed in the form of simple charts, webs or illustrations. (4)

Identify main information given in illustrations, maps or charts. (4)

Share what they know about chosen topics. (4)

Gather information for specific purposes and identify sources, including people, print, audio-visual media, and electronic media. (4)

Manage and organize information by grouping and sorting it into charts, webs, subtopics or logical sequences. (4)

Create and express thoughts, ideas, and feelings in a variety of oral, written and electronic forms. (4)

Create a variety of communications to express personal feelings and thoughts. (4)

### **Personal Planning**

*It is expected that students will:*

Select and use effective problem solving strategies. (4,5)

Apply a systematic decision making process. (4)

Explore appropriate strategies for sharing and expressing feelings and emotions. (4)

### **Tools:**

#### **Background knowledge:**

- Comparison strategies.
- Awareness of the concepts of government, heredity and elected.
- Persuasive writing skills.

#### **Criteria for judgement:**

- Factors about both forms of government.
- Comparison of pros and cons of each system using the information charts.
- Analysis of points made by guest speakers.

#### **Critical Thinking Vocabulary:**

- Compare and contrast.
- Representation.
- Accountability.
- Bias.

#### **Thinking Strategies:**

- Consider and listen to both sides of the issue.
- Review and reread the positive and negative aspects of each system.
- Analyze the information as if they were members of the band.

**Habits of Mind:**

- Reserve judgement until all information is gathered.
- Respect others' opinions.
- Make personal choice independent of their peers' influence.

**Activities:**

1. Students were divided into small groups in order to examine large flip charts with information about each type of government. The Learning Assistance teacher, the Library teacher and the two classroom teachers each worked with a group.
2. The groups met three times. First to record information about the hereditary system from the flip chart onto individual student charts with several headings. Next to write down information about the elected council system from a flip chart and finally to prepare questions for two guest speakers. See Appendices for flip chart information and individual student charts.
3. Both guest speakers were from the Comox Band. One was a prominent member of the hereditary system and the other an elected official to the Comox Band Council.
4. Each group met a final time to discuss the pros and cons of each system and drafted a short persuasive article that promoted their point of view.
5. As a whole class the students wrote a final copy of their persuasive article and then were given the option to share their opinions. This took the form of a debate and final vote by a show of hands.

## Evaluation

The teachers evaluated the students using the following criteria charts in addition to informal observations. The tables below indicate the areas that could be used for assessment or evaluation.

The student shows:	Worked independently	Needed a little help	Needed help quite often	Needed help all the time
Open and fair mindedness •by taking time to make decisions. • by looking for and considering new evidence •can change mind				
Independent mindedness •by standing up for own ideas. •by not simply following other's opinions.				
Critical Attitude •by questioning the claims he/she is asked to accept.				
Respect • for others' views and feelings. • by stating positive reasons for decisions.				

## Persuasive Writing

The following template and the criteria for evaluation for the persuasive writing task were displayed on charts:

1. Title.
2. Introduction including the reason for writing and the point of view.
3. Pros – the positive effects of your decision.
4. Cons – the negative effects of your decision.
5. Summary including why the positive effects outweigh the negative. Restate decision.

Criteria for persuasive writing:

Grade	Criterion	
A	Introduction is very clear and well written. Contains at least 4 pros and 2 cons. Summary explains why pros outweigh the cons.	
B	Introduction Contains at least 3 pros and at least 2 cons. Summary	
C	Introduction or Summary. At least 2 pros. At least 2 cons.	

## Adaptation/Modifications

Some students shared the task of recording information about each type of government and the pros and cons. They took part in the oral discussion and defended their decisions orally. The small group design enabled students with special needs to participate fully in the activities. The observation chart was used to evaluate for students who defended their orally.

## Note

Although this sounds and may look like a “dry” lesson, our experience with the grade four class was encouraging. They were completely involved in the process. The fact that they were told that knowledgeable guest speakers were coming to talk to them seemed to motivate the students. They took their job as researchers seriously and authored several excellent and perceptive questions for the guest speakers to answer. Taking on the role of the band member required them to use their empathy and critical reasoning in order to

make a decision. In addition, the children were impressed with the notion that the guest speakers were in the process of making the same decision in real life.

During the oral discussions, the students were amazed to find their teachers changed their personal opinion several times during the process. This presented a dilemma to the students and made them realize that this type of decision-making is a difficult and complex process. The guest speakers challenged the stereotypical notion of the chief's role as a leader. The students learned not to generalize from one tradition from a specific culture to all Aboriginal cultures.

## Hereditary System

### **Representation**

The Chief is the most important member of the community.  
Consults with the head of each family and makes decisions.

### **Becoming Chief**

The inherited position is based on clan lineage.  
Usually the oldest son of the chief is next in line.  
If there are no sons, the chief chooses a responsible male relative for example, a nephew.

### **Responsibilities of Chief**

Ensure survival of village with adequate food and resources and during wars.  
Hosts potlatches.  
Carries on traditions of lineage.

### **How the Government Works**

The position held for life.  
Responsibilities for what is needed in the community for example, medicine shaman,  
person who remembers legends/stories/rank.  
Children trained from early age to fill family position

### **Accountability**

If there was a bad chief the family suffered.  
The responses of the community could be to:

- Out-potlatch chief,
- Split and create new family village,
- Execute the chief.

### **Rank/Family Status**

Hereditary or acquired rights determined the rank of the family.  
The traditional family names indicated rank: nobles (highest), commoners, slaves  
acquired through wars.  
Individuals could gain privileges (rights) by having specialized skills.  
Each family owned their crest, names, and rights to resources from specific sites.

### **Gender Roles**

Usually there were no female chiefs and the leadership positions were usually filled by  
males.  
Jobs were done according to gender (women gathered and prepared food, men built  
canoes and houses, hunted and fished).

## **Elected System**

### **Representation**

Voters must be a status Indian and a band member.

Each adult band member can vote (18 years and older).

Bands can elect a minimum of two councilors and one chief.

For bands with more than 300 members there is 1 councilor for every additional 100 members.

Bands can apply to the Minister of Indian Affairs for more councilors but are funded based on membership numbers.

### **Becoming Chief**

The candidates for the chief must be nominated by a band member.

Does not have to be a status Indian nor a band member to be a candidate.

Elected by other band members and win by at least one vote.

### **Responsibilities of Chief**

Are determined by band council as a whole.

Works with councilors to make decisions about such things as use of money, resources, roads etc.

### **How the Government Works**

Band councilors are elected for two-year terms.

Band councilors have areas of responsibilities such as health, education, and economic development.

Regular council meetings are held to make decisions.

Represents the bands interests at the Assembly of First Nations and on matters such as land claims negotiation.

The band council can levy taxes.

The band manager is hired to manage money and service programs.

### **Accountability**

The Chief and Council can be voted out in the next election.

The Indian Act provides general guidelines for band councils.

### **Rank/Family Status**

Any band member or non-band member can be elected.

Inherited rights system were weakened and some family traditions were lost.

### **Gender Roles (Male and Female)**

Male or Female can be chief or councilor.

The present Comox Band Council's Chief is male, one councilor is female and the other is male.

Males or females can choose to run for these positions.

Student Chart No. 1

**Comparing Different Forms First Nations Government**

Criteria	Hereditary	Elected
Representation		
Process to become Chief		
Responsibilities of Chief		
How the Government Works		
Accountability		
Rank/Family Status		
Gender Roles (Male and Female)		

Student Chart No. 2

### Pros and Cons of Hereditary First Nations Government

	Pros	Cons
Representation of Families		
Process to become Chief		
Responsibilities of Chief		
How the Government Works		
Accountability		
Rank/Family Status		
Gender Roles (Male and Female)		

Student Chart No. 3 Pros and Cons of Elected First Nations Government

Criteria	Pros	Cons
Representation of Families		
Process to Become Chief		
Responsibilities of Chief		
How the Government Works		
Accountability		
Rank/Family Status		
Gender Roles (Male and Female)		