

Historica Canada Education Portal

Exploring Aboriginal Homes and Architecture

Overview

Students will explore different types of First Nations and Aboriginal architecture and submit a model to a simulated architectural firm.

Aims

Students will:

- Understand the transition of housing from pre-contact to today and the role government has played
- Describe practices and beliefs that reflect First Peoples' connections to the land and the natural environment
- Compare daily life in First Peoples communities
- Appreciate and value the cultures and traditions of First Nations people

Background

Background Contextual Scenario:

First Nations Architecture (FNA), an up-and-coming architectural design firm, prides itself on incorporating First Nations motifs and design

principles into its modern designs. Their work is edgy and traditional, thought provoking and respectful of the past. FNA is currently looking for models of traditional First Nations homes to display in their lobby of their head office in Toronto. The cross-Canada search is open to all students. The designs are to be historically accurate and representative of First Nations building techniques. The firm would also like to each entry to be accompanied by a comparison of traditional First Nations homes and current home designs.

Activities

Procedures:

Introduction:

Read students the background contextual scenario to introduce the model design opening activity.

Development and method:

Students will conduct research using reference material including books and the internet to find out how the various types of Aboriginal structures would have looked, how they would have been built, what materials would have been used, whether they were meant to be temporary or permanent etc. Students may also watch [“Aboriginal Architecture Living Architecture”](#), a film from the National Film Board.

Students will be provided with a variety of construction toys such as Lego, Tinker Toys, etc. They will construct a model of what they think an Aboriginal home may have looked like. Students should (in small groups,

or as a class) make a list of the things they now know, and what they still want to know.

Students will work as an entire class. The teacher can note their ideas on chart paper. Present a collection of photographs of traditional First Nations homes.

Through explicit instruction, students will discuss if they think First Nations peoples live in traditional housing today. From this discussion, students may realize that housing from the past and from the present are different.

This activity can be extended to have students write a report on specific varieties of Aboriginal housing, accompanied by the construction of more elaborate models using more authentic materials.

Resources

[Architectural History: Indigenous Peoples - The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)