Canada’s Fur Trade: Past and Present

Introduction:
Related to the history of the Canadian fur trade, this lesson identifies the fur-bearing animals commonly hunted and trapped throughout Canadian history. From both an historic and contemporary perspective, students investigate animals commonly associated with the fur trade industry and explore how they feel about the fur trade industry.

Subject / Time:
Social Studies (Grade 5)
1-2 classes

Learning outcomes:
By the end of this lesson students will be able to:
• Identify animals associated past and present with the Canadian fur trade industry
• Outline characteristics of each animal, including geographic locations in North America
• Discuss how each animal is linked to the fur trade industry
• Think critically about the current fur trade industry
• Hone research skills; organize and present information

BC Ministry Prescribed Learning Outcomes: Grade 5
Skills and Processes of Social Studies.
• A2 use maps and timelines to locate, interpret, and represent major physical, political, and economic features of BC and Canada
• A3 gather a body of information from a variety of primary and secondary sources
• A4 create a presentation on a selected topic

Identity, Society, and Culture
• B1 describe the significance of key events and factors in the development of BC and Canada, including the fur trade

Materials:
• Computer access / Projector
• Website: http://furbearerdefenders.com/about-us/who-are-the-fur-bearers

Procedure:
1. The teacher begins by discussing the national symbols of Canada, including the maple leaf and the beaver. Students are asked why the beaver is Canada’s national animal? Discussion may ensue about the characteristics of beavers, how they are associated with the fur trade, and why they were hunted, almost to the point of extinction in Canada.

Historical photos, such as the catalogue of beaver hats might provided: http://www.canadiana.ca/hbc/_popups/PAMp58-98_e.htm as well as other photos from primary resources from this website.

2. The teacher asks students to think about other examples of clothing with fur they have seen.
   • What are some examples? (e.g. fur coats, fur trim, etc.)
   • What animal fur is usually used for clothing?
   • How do the students feel about wearing fur on clothing?
The teacher introduces the website from which the students will work together to further explore the questions above. The teacher will show the photos and names of each of the animals listed.

3. Students are put into pairs or threes and asked to choose one of the animals they would like to learn more about. Each group is provided with a worksheet to complete. (See following page.)

4. Students share images and information about their animals with the rest of the class. More time for research might be granted if the teacher would like to have the students make a formal presentation.

5. Students are then asked to write in a reflective journal about how they feel about their animal’s fur being used in the fur-trade industry. Did learning more about their animal make them change their position? Why or why not?

Follow-up class debate topics or writing prompts:
- Should the fur trade industry be allowed in Canada? Why or why not?
- Is it okay to kill animals for the purposes of fashion? Why or why not?
Worksheet 1 - Canada’s Fur Trade: Past and Present

What fur-bearing animal are you researching? _______________________________________

Please provide the following information:

Animal facts:

What my animal likes to eat:

Where my animal likes to live:

How my animal’s fur is used by the fur-industry:

Our thoughts, feelings, and further questions about our animal: