

Introduction

The following is a plan based on an Inuit music unit of study. Music concepts and skills are developed in conjunction with the learning of Inuit culture. The inclusion of stories and the creation of stories are meant to help students connect with themselves and with each other. Activities have been designed to help build community and the knowledge and appreciation of another culture.

Context

This unit of study is aimed at a grade four class. It is designed to enhance student learning of Inuit culture by integrating with the grade four social studies program. It will be implemented in January after students return from their winter holiday. Activities have been designed that not only meet music curricular goals, but address the following purpose:

Objectives

To promote community by:

- Providing opportunities for students to share things about themselves to each other.
- Providing opportunities to work in pairs, groups and full class.
- Providing opportunities for students to appreciate the accomplishments of others.

Rationale

I have always believed that we are not just teachers of our subject area, but teachers of people. We need not dichotomize between teaching skills and teaching students to be caring and responsible human beings. (Sapin-Shevin, 1999)

Several characteristics are identified by Sapin-Shevin as to what a community looks like. Security and open communication are not directly addressed in the objectives as I believe they are part of the underlying groundwork built at the beginning of the school year and are present and important in every interaction and activity that will occur in your classroom throughout the year.

The objectives in this unit have been developed to support community by addressing the characteristics of mutual liking, shared goals and objectives, and connectedness and trust. The use of cooperative learning groups, working in pairs and as a whole class address mutual liking by providing students with opportunities to connect with each other in a variety of ways. They are given opportunities to share things about themselves in an environment that is designed to promote respectful listening, observation and responses (audience skills). The use of 'two stars and a wish' in peer assessment of

performances enable students to have an opportunity to demonstrate appreciation of the accomplishments of others. In this method of formative assessment, students give each other specific and positive feedback on performance projects. Depending on the type of performance project, students may be given the opportunity to help each other by providing a wish. A wish statement is a positively worded suggestion about how to make the performance even better. By working in group or whole class projects, students know that their individual efforts are needed and valued to produce a final product.

Storytelling has also been included in this unit of study. Listening to stories allows emotions to rise up within individuals as they connect with the various characters within the story. They provide opportunities for students to feel, think and reflect, and it is the stimulation and the development of these feelings that will allow them to have more meaningful and positive interactions with each other and the world around them.

Inuit stories have been incorporated into this unit because one way to know the spirit of a different culture is to hear their stories. Becoming these stories as you listen is the first step in true multicultural education. (Simms, 2003)

Plan

The following plan is one that contains various activities designed to address the musical concepts of syncopation, canon form, composition of short question and answer phrases, the singing of a variety of songs from another culture and listening activities to promote awareness and appreciation of differences and similarities of this music. These activities have been developed to be both engaging and motivating and able to promote community and cultural awareness and appreciation.

ACTIVITY 1 (Cooperation, Group work, Respectful Listening)

- Through inquiry, discover what the students know about the North. Where do the Inuit live? What kinds of sounds would you hear? What kinds of animals live in the North? Which ones make high pitches? Which ones make low pitches? What do you think it looks like in the North? You may want to show pictures of the North.
- Explain that the Inuit have many descriptions for snow. Place students in heterogeneous groups of four and give each group a card which contains an Inuit word and an English translation of a description of snow. As a group, have them vocally create what they think their description sounds like and then perform it for the class. Have the other students in the class try to guess what type of snow each group is trying to portray. This activity is designed to be a fun activity that allows students to practice

cooperation with their group members and promote respectful listening to other groups.

Inuit words for description of snow: QANUK-snowflake, KANEQ-frost, KANEVVLUK-fine snow particles, NATQUIK-drifting snow, NEVLUK-clinging particles, MURUANEQ-soft deep snow, QETRAR-crust on fallen snow.

- I would include with this activity, the learning of an Inuit weather chant found in the book, 'Ride With Me: a Journey From Unison to Part Singing' by J. Barron. Inuit shamans sang many songs asking for the help of spirits. Weather spirits were important because if the weather were bad, there could be no hunting for food. The learning of this song would be a whole class activity in which everyone's effort is needed for success. It also addresses the musical concept of canon form.

ACTIVITY 2 Storytelling

- This activity involves the telling of the story of 'Raven and the Whale'. This is a traditional Inuit story as retold by Laura Simms. After telling the story, I would ask students what the story made them think of. A variety of comments might be voiced as this story deals with death and the idea that every person and animal that lives has a soul. Again, respectful listening to each others' ideas and comments would be emphasized as a class expectation.
- I would have students draw what the story makes them think of and perhaps hang them on the wall in the shape of the wings around the face of a raven.

ACTIVITY 3 Inuit Throat Singing

- Through inquiry, discover what occasions and reasons your students think the Inuit used music. Listen to a sample of traditional Inuit throat singing as found on an ENESCO recording. Through guided questioning on a written listening log, discover what students hear in terms of voices heard, language used, rhythmic motifs and what the music makes them think of. Explain that throat singing was traditionally a game that women played to entertain their children when the men were on a hunt. Generally they were done by two women facing each other. One person led with a short rhythmic motif with a silent gap in between. The other person rhythmically filled in the gaps. The first person to run out of breath or unable to maintain the pace usually stopped. Thus they lost the game. Usually meaningless syllables were used which could portray the sounds of animals and birds.
- As a class, learn to sing an excerpt of throat singing found in the song 'Nukapianguaq' as arranged by the Canadian composer Stephen Hatfield. Again, the effort of the whole class is needed for success. The

novelty of the piece is a great motivator for learning and working together to produce something promotes community.

ACTIVITY 4 Inukshuk Concrete Poem

- This activity involves the creation of concrete poetry in cooperative groups of four. Each group is given a picture of an inukshuk on which each member must place a word that they think describes the Arctic. As a group, they must create a soundscape to accompany their concrete poem and perform it to the class. The feedback given to each group would take the form of two positive and specific comments. Because each group might interpret and create their soundscape in different and unique ways, students are encouraged to ask each group why they chose a particular instrument or why they performed it in a particular way. This activity provides opportunities for students to share their ideas and value the ideas given by their group members. They then in turn, are able to share the group’s creative work to the whole class through performance.

ACTIVITY 5 Syncopated Rhythm and Ajaaja Songs

- This activity would be used after some direct teaching of syncopated rhythm, which is a lesson in itself. After visually developing the concept by building on knowledge they already have, I would then have them internalize their learning of this rhythm by carefully designed activities. In keeping with the Inuit theme, I would divide the class in half and have each half stand in ‘V’ formations on opposite sides of the room facing each other (like Canadian Geese flying formation). Have one side of the room advance towards the other while walking on the beat. The other side speaks and claps the rhythm ‘syn-co-pa.’ When the teacher says ‘switch’, they reverse roles. Eventually they must pass through each other without touching each other.
- Show students a visual of an ajaaja song. (board or overhead). Explain that an ajaaja song was a popular form of vocal music that was accompanied by a paddle drum and dancing. Almost every adult had their own personal song which was about notable incidents, experiences or emotions from their daily lives. The dancing had no set steps. The dance was characterized by movement within a circle of people. The dancer moved slowly round and round the circle with knees slightly bent and occasionally hopped lightly on both feet.
- Sing the song to the students and then have them point out where the syncopated rhythms occur. Teach them the song by rote. Divide the class in half so that one half sits in a circle and sings the song while the other half dances within the circle. Reverse roles.

ACTIVITY 6 Assessment of the Use of Syncopation

- Because of the need to assess the students' ability to use syncopated rhythm in a composition, I would have students practice four bar question and answer phrases using this rhythm. After practicing as a group on barred instruments on a predetermined pentatonic scale, I would have them practice and eventually assess them with a partner. We would set the criterion for success together which would allow them to have a voice and a sense of ownership over their learning. The use of partners gives students a sense of safety and security in their demonstration of their learning.

ACTIVITY 7 Personal Ajaaja Song

- In this activity, I would have students create their own ajaaja song. Because these songs were based on incidents of importance in a person's life, I would use a similar formula that Laura used to write our story. I would have students write their important moment in life by asking them to think about a moment of importance and then write down their responses using the following guiding questions: How old are you? Where are you? What are you doing? Why is the moment important? I would then have them practice telling their story to a partner. Afterwards I would have everyone sit in a circle and invite them to tell their story to the whole group. Using the conditions of council, the teacher would be the facilitator and the object held by those speaking would be a stone. The understanding would be that no one is compelled to speak but everyone must listen to the speaker. No one would be allowed to react to what was being said and whatever was spoken of would be confidential. I would include this method of communication in this unit assuming that a firm foundation of trust had been developed at this point in the year. Because of the nature of its form, those students speaking would know that they are being heard. This is empowering because it gives everyone an opportunity to have a voice.

ACTIVITY 8 Class Ajaaja Song

- In their cooperative groups, I would have students create one sentence describing something positive about their class. These sentences would be shared and then incorporated into a melody to become a class ajaaja song. This song could be recorded onto their portfolio CD and sung on many occasions throughout the year. I think that having a class song would help create a cohesive community with a shared identity.

ACTIVITY 9 Final Class Project

- For a final class project, I would like to script an Inuit story so that the class could use drama to bring the story to life and incorporate the Inuit music and dance that they have learned. Although I haven't made a decision as to what story I would like to use, the story "The Polar Bear" by Lydia Dabcovitch looks promising. This final project would be performed for the rest of the school population and the community. A class project of this sort would be very helpful in creating classroom community because of the shared goal and the fact that its success is dependent on everyone's effort.

Unit Extensions

This unit could be enriched by the inclusion of soap stone carving and/or a field trip to the Winnipeg Art Gallery. The Winnipeg Art Gallery has a very large and impressive collection of Inuit art. There is a video at the Department of Education library called 'The Inuit of the Ice: Inuit Arts', that gives a glimpse of an Inuit ajaaja song and accompanying dance. It also contains an enactment of a traditional Inuit story.

One could extend the learning by including modern Inuit music. Susan Aglukark is an Inuit musician with many recorded CD's.

CONCLUSION

This unit is detailed because I have planned it for my own use with my grade four students. I have tried to incorporate a variety of activities that help build community – a place where students can feel connected with each other and understand that we can have diversity within unity.

By creating a unit with a multicultural focus, I hope that my students not only understand and appreciate another culture, but that they become curious to know more when confronted with something that is different. Increased knowledge leads to increased understanding. In this way, I hope that I am contributing in the development of peace-building skills within my students.

References and Resources

Print Resources

Corriveau, D. (2002). *The Inuit of Canada*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Co.

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Simms,L.(2003). *Becoming The World*. New York:Mercy Corps

Internet Sites

<http://www.healingstory.org/wwwboard/raven/ravenAndWhale.html>

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LINGUIST List 5.1239:Eskimo 'snow'

<http://www.linguistlist.org/issues/5/5-1239.html>

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CDs

Canada.Inuit Games and Songs.Music and Musicians of the World:ENESCO Collections AUVIDIS

Print Music

Barron, J.(1993). *Ride With Me:A Journey from Unison to Part Singing*.Frederick Harris Music Company Ltd.

Hatfield, S.(1993).*Nukapianquaq*.Boosey&Hawkes