

## Chapter 5



# Learning Strategies for Aboriginal Students: Opportunities to make learning meaningful

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This chapter will help teachers to:

- use effective instructional strategies that will support the learning needs and strengths of Aboriginal students
- gain a better understanding of the unique worldviews of Aboriginal students.

The teacher's relationship with the student is at the heart of Aboriginal approaches to education. Traditionally, teachers knew each student as an individual, with unique gifts and needs. In this environment, they tailored the learning process to the student's needs as a matter of course.

Tailoring the learning process for Aboriginal students helps to engage their interest and allows them to succeed. To do this, teachers need to:

- build relationships with individual students
- gather information through conversations with students, parents and other teachers
- observe students in a variety of situations.

In Aboriginal approaches to learning, simply knowing information is not enough. Students are supported, encouraged and challenged to own their learning, to bring it into context, to make it part of their experience and to reflect on what they have learned. The strategies explored in this chapter support this kind of learning experience.

## wisdom

**Shared**

“Touch their spirits softly with the feather of encouragement, whispering, ‘You can, you will, you must, your people need you,’ ...”

– Wilson in Gilliland 1999, p. 100

## Effective Instructional Strategies

Effective instructional strategies will encourage Aboriginal students to become independent, strategic learners by:

- engaging and motivating them
- reflecting their cultures and worldviews
- helping them focus
- organizing information for ease of understanding and remembering.

Students become successful strategic learners when they are offered:

- a variety of approaches and learning materials
- appropriate support that includes modelling, guided practice and independent practice
- opportunities to transfer skills and ideas from one situation to another
- meaningful connections between skills and ideas, and real-life situations
- opportunities to be independent and show what they know
- encouragement to self-monitor and self-correct
- tools for reflecting on and assessing their learning.

Teachers often say that their Aboriginal students are quiet in class and do not participate much in large group discussions, particularly when there are only a few Aboriginal students in the classroom. Yet teachers see that Aboriginal students do participate when they feel comfortable and safe as learners.

The following types of instructional strategies can be especially effective for Aboriginal students:

- graphic organizers
- cooperative learning
- independent study
- service learning.

These strategies are effective across grade levels and subject areas, and can accommodate a range of student differences. They resonate strongly with Aboriginal students when used to support content that reflects cultural continuity. This chapter will provide a brief description of each strategy and offer sample strategies for using them with Aboriginal students.

## Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers (also known as key visuals or cognitive organizers) are formats for visually organizing information—they make students' thinking visible.

Graphic organizers reflect a holistic approach to learning by revealing not only *what* students are thinking but also *how* they are thinking as they work through learning tasks.

Students can use graphic organizers to:

- generate ideas
- record and reorganize information
- see relationships between concepts
- apply their learning
- show their thinking.

Examples of common graphic organizers include Fishbones, T-charts, Venn diagrams, P–M–I charts, K–W–L charts and Mind Maps.

### Planning with graphic organizers

Graphic organizers are useful for students, but they are also a good planning tool for teachers. Using graphic organizers to plan learning activities gives teachers opportunities to become familiar with the tools and the many ways that they can be applied in the classroom.

When deciding which graphic organizer to use in a learning activity, consider the following questions.

- What type of thinking tool is best for this new concept?
- What level and type of support will best help the students?
- Is the tool developmentally appropriate for these students?
- How can the tool be modified?
- How can the tool be used interactively?
- In what other areas and ways can this tool be applied?

### Using graphic organizers with students

Consider the following framework for introducing, teaching and extending the use of graphic organizers in the classroom.

#### Introduce

- Show examples of the new organizer, and describe its purpose and form. For example, “A T-chart is a two-column chart in the shape of a T that can be used to compare two situations.”

### **Model**

- Use easy or familiar material to model how to use organizers.
- Model organizers on the board, overhead or chart paper, using a think-aloud format. Use colours to enhance memory and create meaning.
- Give explicit oral directions, explanations and reflections when modelling.

### **Guided practice**

- Give students opportunities to practise using the format with easy material.
- Coach students at selected points in the process.
- Create opportunities for students to collaborate and discuss with each other.

### **Reflect**

- Share final products; discuss what worked and what did not, and give students an opportunity to revise information.

### **Practise**

- Provide students with many opportunities to practise using graphic organizers.
- Make templates of several different kinds of organizers available. Encourage students to choose the most appropriate organizer for a task, and to design their own versions.

### **Transfer**

- Use graphic organizers across a range of learning situations and content areas.

### **Evaluate and extend use**

- Encourage students to evaluate which organizers work best for them and in which learning situations.
- Encourage students to use a variety of organizers independently in a variety of learning tasks, such as note taking, researching and studying.

## Fishbone

The Fishbone can be used to explore cause and effect, to analyze the results of an event (for example, in history), as a planning tool for creating an action plan, or as a review of information learned.

The head of the Fishbone names the issue or idea or outcome to be focused on, with causes, events or key concepts listed on the backbone, and supporting ideas listed on the ribs.

## story

### Teacher

#### **Exploring Aboriginal perspectives of the land**

“I used the Fishbone organizer with my Grade 8 regular and academic support students.

When studying the geography of North America, I used a cultural infusion approach to learning by having students consider Aboriginal perspectives of the land. I had in a guest who presented three lessons. The lessons included a personal story demonstrating connections to the land and one’s place of growing up, and quotations on the land from a variety of Aboriginal groups.

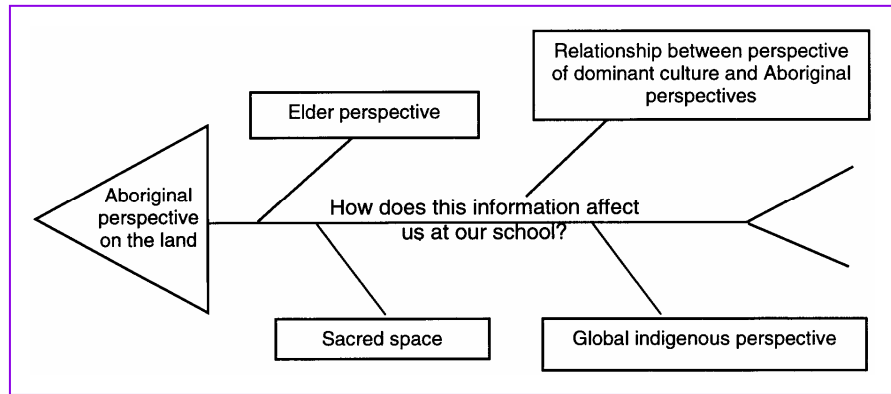
Students viewed a video focusing on the interconnectedness of people and the land from four global indigenous perspectives, including the Lubicon of Alberta. The final lesson included a story and visuals on sacred spaces and the spiritual component of the land.

In the class following the sessions with the guest presenter, students were given ‘sticky notes’ to write down as many things as they could remember from the lessons, one idea per note. Then they sat with a partner, compared sticky notes and grouped their responses into larger categories. Students used different coloured stickies to identify different categories. Once they had done this, I introduced the Fishbone organizer and students worked in pairs to transfer the information from the sticky notes to a single sheet.

The Fishbone organizer helped me to assess what students had learned and helped the students to solidify what they had learned.”

The example follows.

(continued)



For a blackline master of this graphic organizer, see *Appendix 9: Fishbone*.

### T-chart

T-charts help students organize their information and ideas, and see relationships between pieces of information. T-charts can have two, three or more columns.

T-charts can be valuable tools for describing or visualizing. They can also be used to compare and contrast different issues or situations, for example, a looks like/sounds like/feels like chart.

## story

### Teacher

#### The sound of a moose

“My Grade 3 students had great fun using empty tin cans to make moose calls as part of a sound unit in science. We removed the top lid and then made a hole in the bottom lid. We knotted one end of a piece of string and pulled it through the hole and out the open end of the can. To make the sound of a moose we wet the string and pulled two fingers down the length of the string.

The students tried out several different sizes of cans and created a T-chart to record how the size of the can affected the sound each can produced.

The students observed that the biggest can produced the loudest call with the lowest pitch. The class consensus was that the big can sounded like a father moose, the middle-size can sounded like a mother moose and the smallest can sounded like a baby moose!

This is what we recorded on our class T-chart.”

(continued)

**How does the size of can affect the moose call?**

<b>Looks like:</b>	<b>Sounds like:</b>
<i>Small cylinder: tomato soup can</i>	<i>Soft “moowah”</i>
<i>Medium cylinder: beef stew can</i>	<i>Medium pitch</i>
<i>Large cylinder: coffee can</i>	<i>Low loud pitch</i>

For a blackline master of this graphic organizer, see *Appendix 10: T-chart*.

**Venn diagram**

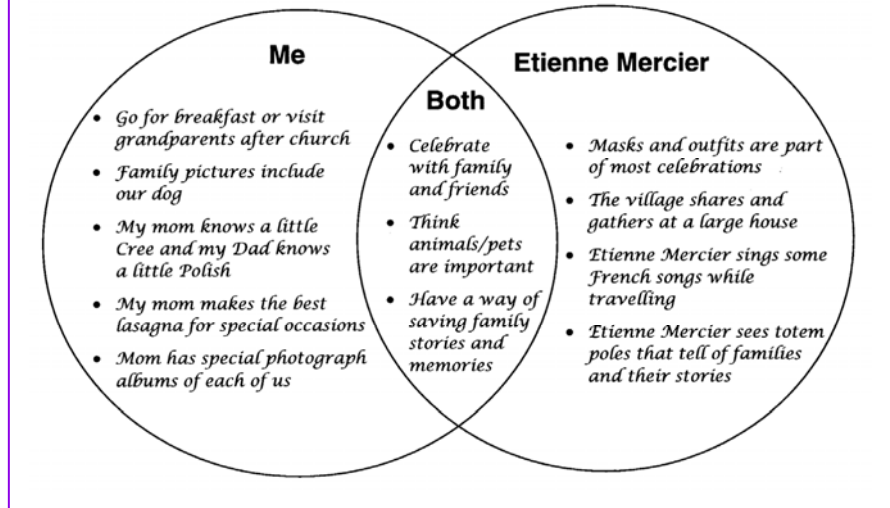
A Venn diagram includes two or more interlocking circles that can be used to compare two or more objects, concepts or ideas in a way that shows both similarities and differences. This tool helps students organize information and see relationships.

Venn diagrams can be used after such activities as reading text, listening to a speaker or viewing a film. They can also be expanded to three or more circles in order to compare a number of issues or concepts.

**Teacher** story

**Using Venn diagrams**

“I had my Grade 4 class read the children’s book, *The Journal of Etienne Mercier* by Métis author David Bouchard. Students created a Venn diagram comparing the cultural traditions of their lives with those described in the story.”



For a blackline master of this graphic organizer, see *Appendix 11: Venn Diagram*.

**P–M–I chart**

Students can use Plus, Minus and Interesting (P–M–I) charts to compare and contrast situations, ideas or positions. P–M–I charts give students a format for organizing information, and evaluating their knowledge and ideas. Students can use this tool to collect data and organize information to make informed decisions.

**Why we should learn our Aboriginal language**

Plus	Minus	Interesting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>You can talk to Elders</i></li> <li>• <i>You can appreciate true meaning of stories and songs</i></li> <li>• <i>You will have new understanding of traditional beliefs that can only be understood by speaking the language</i></li> <li>• <i>You can teach your own children the language!</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Learning another language is hard work and takes time</i></li> <li>• <i>Only a few people speak my Aboriginal language</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Many Aboriginal parents found their first days in English-speaking schools difficult. They didn't want their own children to experience this struggle so they decided not to use their Aboriginal language at home.</i></li> <li>• <i>Many people in the world speak two or more languages. Learning more than one language can help you become a better learner.</i></li> </ul>

**What do I think? Why?**

*Now that I have considered all the information, my thoughts on this topic are:*

*I know it will be hard work to learn Cree but I want to learn stories and songs from my grandmother. I think learning my language will help me understand better what it means to be First Nations.*

For a blackline master of this graphic organizer, see *Appendix 12: P–M–I Chart*.

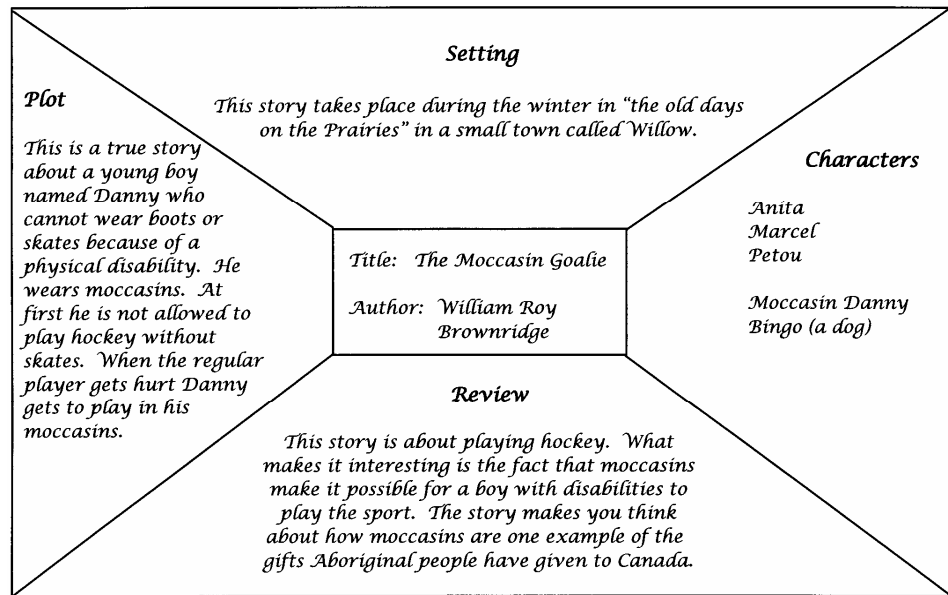
### Place Mat

Students can use the Place Mat to organize details for writing, and share information and ideas about a story. They can also use it to display a table of contents for a project or portfolio, or compare and contrast four items.

The Place Mat can also be used by a small group to collect and organize information collaboratively, and build consensus. Consider the following type of activity.

- In groups of three or four, students divide their section of the place mat into three sections: Plus, Minus and Interesting.
- They write about an issue for one minute in their Plus section.
- Then they rotate the mat and write in someone else’s Plus section.
- They repeat the process until they get their own section back.
- They repeat the process with the Minus and Interesting sections. Finally, the group writes their consensus, or shared ideas, in the centre section of the place mat.

#### The Moccasin Goalie



For a blackline master of this graphic organizer, see *Appendix 13: Place Mat*.

## K–W–L chart (Ogle 1986)

K–W–L is a brainstorming strategy. It is also known as a know–wonder–learn or What I know–What I want to know–What I learned chart. This tool encourages students to ask questions and to make a link between what they know and what they need to learn about a topic. The K–W–L chart helps students to organize information and find a starting point for other tasks such as research projects and assignments.

K–W–L can be done individually, in small groups or as a class activity, with the teacher recording the ideas.

## Teacher story

### Using K–W–L charts

“I find this chart most useful when I’m beginning a lesson. I’ll present a topic in the form of a question such as ‘How did the buffalo help to sustain the lives of prairie tribes?’

Students then identify what they ‘know’ about the topic. Then they’re given the opportunity to ask the ‘I wonder’ questions. Finally, they move to the ‘learn’ portion of the chart. Here they can suggest places or resources they can use to continue their learning on this topic.”

### How did the buffalo help to sustain the lives of prairie tribes?

K I Know	W I Wonder	L I will Look/Learn from
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>buffalo skins were used for clothing and shelter</i></li> <li>• <i>pemmican was made from buffalo meat</i></li> <li>• <i>buffalo were killed in large numbers by running over a cliff</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What were the other parts of the buffalo used for?</i></li> <li>• <i>Were there other ways to kill buffalo?</i></li> <li>• <i>What jobs were done by the women? By the men?</i></li> <li>• <i>How often did they have to go hunting?</i></li> <li>• <i>How long would it take to skin a buffalo?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>textbook</i></li> <li>• <i>Internet search—buffalo, Cree, Blackfoot</i></li> <li>• <i>field trip—Head Smashed In Buffalo Jump</i></li> <li>• <i>guest speaker: First Nations person</i></li> <li>• <i>stories</i></li> </ul>

For a blackline master of this graphic organizer, see *Appendix 14: K–W–L Chart*.

### Mind map

Mind mapping was developed in the early 1970s by British author and brain researcher Tony Buzan. It is an easy way to represent ideas using keywords, colours and imagery. The nonlinear format helps students generate and organize ideas, record a large amount of information on one piece of paper, and show connections between ideas. This tool integrates logical and imaginative thinking, and provides an overview of what students know and think about a particular topic.

Webs are simple mind maps. Adding pictures, colours and keywords transforms them into a more powerful learning, memory and idea-generating tool.

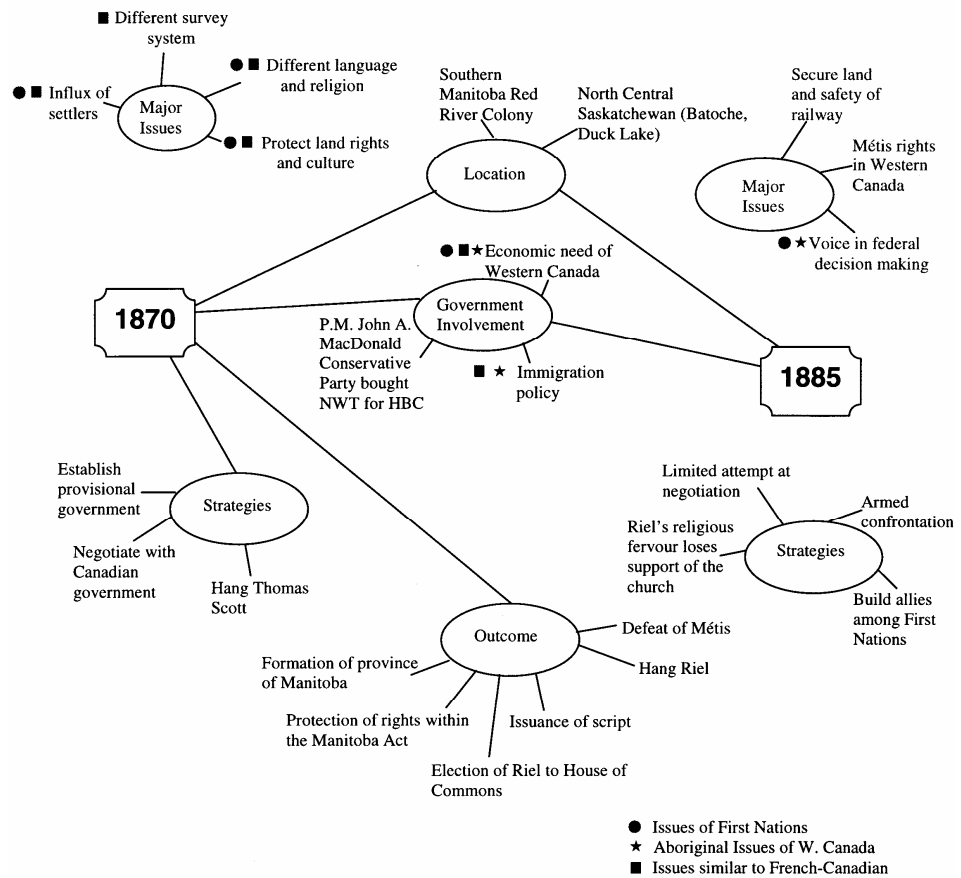
### story

#### Teacher

#### Using mind maps

“I’ve used a mind map to help students learn about the Riel Resistances (1870 and 1885), which are key to the development of western Canada and to furthering the alienation of Quebec within Canada. Because the Riel incidents can be viewed from multiple perspectives, it is useful for students to use a mind map to pull this information together. Mind maps can help students explore the tension between ideas while noting their interconnectedness. For example, a mind map on these historical events allows the position of the Canadian government in reaction to US foreign policy to be represented alongside the relationship between the Métis and First Nations people.”

## The Riel Resistances (1870, 1885)



## Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning, where students work in small groups to complete tasks or projects, is an effective strategy to use with Aboriginal students because it reflects the sense of cooperation and community that is a vital aspect of Aboriginal cultures.

Use cooperative learning to:

- increase students' respect for and understanding of each other's abilities, interests, needs and differences
- encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Cooperative learning tasks are structured so that each group member contributes to the completion of the task. Success is based on the performance of the group rather than on the performance of individual students, another strong reflection of Aboriginal cultural values.

Cooperative learning activities range from simple to complex. Beginning with simple activities allows students to develop the skills they need to participate effectively in more complex activities.

Simple cooperative activities include Think–Pair–Share, Inside/Outside Circles and the Three-step Interview. More complex activities include Jigsaw and Group Investigation.

### Setting the stage

- Discuss and model collaborative skills, such as listening, allowing others to speak, asking for help when needed, reaching consensus and completing a task within the allotted time. Students need opportunities to practise these skills, and to receive feedback and reinforcement.
- Teach basic routines for classroom management, including forming groups quickly and quietly, maintaining appropriate noise levels, inviting others to join the group, treating all students with respect and helping or encouraging peers.

Consider the following tips for organizing groups.

- Keep groups small—two to five members is best (the larger the group, the more skills are required).
- Create diverse groups—this allows everyone to learn from each other’s differences.
- Structure tasks or projects to ensure that success depends on each group member being responsible for some part of the task.
- Initially, group students and assign roles within each group.
- Encourage on-task behaviour by scanning groups, using proximity and friendly reminders, sitting and watching a group for a while, revisiting expectations and, when necessary, reteaching expectations.
- Ensure that individual students are aware of their roles and responsibilities within the group. Post a list of roles or give students cards describing specific roles.
- Allow students time to evaluate the cooperative learning process, both individually and as a group.

### Think–pair–share

In think–pair–share, the teacher poses a topic or question. Students think privately about the question for a given amount of time, usually one to three minutes. Each student then pairs with a partner to discuss the question, allowing students to clarify their thoughts. Next, each pair has an opportunity to share their answers with the whole class.

Think–pair–share is a cooperative learning strategy that provides opportunities for students to:

- participate
- learn from others
- make connections.

### Teacher story

#### Using think–pair–share

“When I have a question that requires thoughtfulness on the part of the student, I use think–pair–share. It gives students time to reflect on the question first, then broaden their understanding by sharing with a partner. For example, I would use it with questions like:

- Should the Métis have asked for Riel to return in 1885?
- How would the demise of the buffalo foreshadow the difficulties of the Plains people?
- Why does the director use flashbacks in the movie *Smoke Signals*?
- What does the reader learn about Métis poet Gregory Scofield’s sense of identity from his poem *Policy of the Dispossessed*?”

### Inside/Outside Circles

This strategy places students facing each other in two circles, one within the other. It works best with six or more students, half in each circle.

Inside/Outside Circles facilitate dialogue between students, which helps with community building at the beginning of term. It is an effective strategy for introducing movement and variety into a lesson. It works best with engaging questions that have a range of possible answers.

To use Inside/Outside Circles, consider the following.

- Write a question on the board and give the students a minute to think about their response.
- Then have the people in the inside circle tell their partners in the outside how they would answer the question or solve the problem, saying “pass” when they are finished.
- Then, the person on the outside takes a turn answering the question.
- When both students in a pair have had a turn, rotate the outer or inner circle for a new pairing.

## Teacher story

### Using Inside/Outside Circles

“I like to use Inside/Outside Circles when I have a question that has a range of possible responses, for example:

- How did Canada benefit from the Riel Resistances?
- How has the use of treaties with First Nations peoples contributed to Canada’s national identity?
- How have animals contributed to the survival of First Nations peoples?”

## Brainstorming

Brainstorming is an effective technique for generating ideas and creating interest and enthusiasm for new concepts or topics. Brainstorming is a creative form of list making, which creates opportunities for students to come up with as many ideas about a topic as they can.

Students can use brainstorming as a starting point for more complex tasks, such as essay outlines or mind maps.

### Tips for Brainstorming

- Establish ground rules. For example, accept all ideas without judgement, everyone participates, focus on quantity rather than quality.
- Establish the purpose. For example, brainstorm to come up with a fun theme for a class party.
- Establish the limits for brainstorming. For example, generate as many ideas as possible in five minutes, or go for 25 really good ideas, or three ideas from each group.
- Revise the list. For example, cross out ideas that are not feasible, combine similar ideas, put ideas in a logical sequence.

To make a decision from a brainstormed list:

- give each student three coloured stick-on dots and have students cast a vote for their favourite choices by putting dots beside them
- use a process of elimination to reach a consensus on the final choice.

## Brainstorm

**Topic:** *Activities for celebrating Aboriginal Day*

**Goal** *Ideas for activities for Aboriginal Day*      **Time limit** *10 minutes*

### Why am I doing this?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> to generate ideas         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> to make decisions |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> to assess prior knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> to review information        |

1. *dancing*
2. *cook Aboriginal foods for feast★*
3. *round-dance*
4. *pow-wow dancers*
5. *Aboriginal guest speaker*
6. *Aboriginal games★*
7. *Aboriginal author book fair*
8. *Aboriginal music*
9. *Aboriginal craft fair★*
10. *feast*

### Reflect and revise

- Are any ideas similar? If yes, combine similar ideas.
- Do all ideas fit the topic? If no, cross out ideas that don't fit.
- Star your three ideas.

Form reproduced with permission from Edmonton Public Schools, *Thinking Tools for Kids: Practical Organizers* (Edmonton, AB: Edmonton Public Schools, 1999), p. 167.

For a blackline master of this graphic organizer, see *Appendix 15: Brainstorm*.

## Graffiti

Graffiti is a brainstorming process that encourages everyone to contribute. To use Graffiti, consider the following.

- Organize students into groups of three or four.
- Give each group a large piece of paper with a topic (the same or different for each group) written in the centre.
- Give students one minute to think, then 60 to 90 seconds to write their ideas on the paper individually but simultaneously. Add interest by using coloured markers. Younger students can draw images.
- Tell students not to worry if they have the same response as someone else—if two or more of them write the same thing, that probably means the concept is important.
- Then, have the students stand and move, as a group, to a different piece of paper.

- Repeat the process until every group has visited every sheet of paper.

At the end of the process, each group will have the collective wisdom of the class on their sheet of paper.

### Teacher story

#### Using Graffiti for brainstorming

“Graffiti lets my students provide a visual expression of a topic. We were going to read the novel, *My Name is Seepetza*, the experience of a girl in residential school, so I wanted to start out by finding what my students knew about the topic. The topic was ‘The effect of residential schools on today’s First Nations communities.’

I laid out four large sheets of paper, and wrote the following headings on them, one per sheet: Funding and education, Church-operated, Limited contact with home, and Residential schools were in place from the 1870s to 1980s.

Then I divided the students into four groups. Each group gathered around one of the sheets of paper, and when I gave the signal, they began writing whatever they felt was appropriate to that heading. After a couple of minutes I had them rotate to the next sheet and do the same process. I continued until all the students had an opportunity to write on all four topics.

Once they were finished, we looked at the responses as a group. We looked at the frequency of ideas and the range of opinions. I raised questions with the students that had them:

- consider responses that affirmed what they knew
- identify what might be unsubstantiated points of view
- identify thoughts that might lead to new perspectives or new questions to be explored.”

#### Walk About

Walk About is a strategy patterned on cross-pollination. After the class has worked in groups on a strategy such as Place Mat or Graffiti, one member from each group moves on to another group, carrying ideas from the first group with him or her.

Walk About builds interest, individual accountability, physical movement and variety into the learning process.

To select the student who will move, have the original groups letter or number off, then all the “ones” or “As” move on to the next group.

## Teacher story

### Using a Walk About

“I read the *Journal of Etienne Mercier* by Métis author David Bouchard to my students. I broke students into groups of four and gave each group a Place Mat with four sections with the headings: Government structures, Ceremonies, Animals and Vocabulary. I gave the students about 10 minutes to complete their Place Mats as a group. Then we did a Walk About. One student from each group took their Place Mat to another group and shared their ideas.”

## Three-step Interview

The Three-step Interview encourages students to share their thinking, ask questions and take notes.

Use the Three-step Interview to:

- problem solve, so that each student has the opportunity to say how he or she would approach a problem
- identify key ideas in a group report
- discuss a recently read book.

To use the Three-step Interview, consider the following.

- Place students into groups of three and assign each student a letter: A, B or C.
- Assign each letter a role: A=Interviewer, B=Interviewee, C=Reporter.
- Student A interviews student B while C takes notes. The roles then rotate after each interview.
- When each student has taken each role, have students share key information they recorded as the Reporter.

## Teacher story

### Using interviews

“I wanted my students to better understand the concept of role models. I gave each of my students a short biography of a First Nations or Métis role model. Then I broke the students into groups of three. After reading their biographies, the students shared information about what they had read, then followed this with the Three-step Interview. The interview focused on what makes that person a good role model.”

### Three-step Interview



#### **Interview One: Jasmine**

*Susan Aglukark is an Inuit. She was born in Churchill, Manitoba in 1967. She grew up in Arviat, Nunavut. She is a famous singer who sings in English and in her traditional language Inuktitut. Her songs contain images of her culture. She is a role model because she stays true to her culture. She also speaks to youth and tells them to stay in school. She is a good role model because she sets a good example.*



#### **Interview Two: Jesse**

*George Littlechild is a Métis. He is part Plains Cree and part White. He was born in Edmonton, Alberta in 1958. Even though he was raised by a foster family because his parents were deceased, he still honours his Aboriginal roots. He does this through his paintings. He makes a good role model because he is proud of his heritage and his art is exhibited in galleries and museums all over the world.*



#### **Interview Three: Jordan**

*Joseph Francis Dion is a Plains Cree who was born near Onion Lake on July 2, 1888. During the 1930s, when he was living by Kehewin Reserve, he became involved with efforts to ease the plight of the Métis in Alberta. Even though he was treaty, he was concerned about the poverty and living conditions of the Métis people. He worked with concerned others to form l'Association des Métis d'Alberta et des Territoires du Nord-Ouest. This later became known as the Métis Association of Alberta. This group worked to bring Métis issues to the public. He sacrificed time with his family. He is a role model because he put the needs of Métis people before himself.*



#### **Round Robin: Key ideas from interviews**

*Aboriginal role models can be of any age, gender or time period. There are different mediums to present positive Aboriginal values such as music, art and politics. Role-models think about helping others.*

For a blackline master to support this activity, see *Appendix 16: Three-step Interview*.

### Jigsaw

In the Jigsaw strategy, students become “experts” in one or two concepts or pieces of information and then share their expertise with students in their home group. At the completion of the activity, all the pieces of information fit together like a jigsaw puzzle to become a whole.

To use the Jigsaw strategy, consider the following.

- Divide a concept or topic—for example, fractions or northern ecosystems—into several areas.

- Place students in home groups of four or six. One approach to consider is to have pairs of students working together on one topic, teaming students who are weaker with students who are stronger to create a natural peer tutoring situation.
- Number or letter off group members. Assign all As to one or two areas: expressing fractions in lowest terms, for example, or reading an article about boreal forest management. Give Bs, Cs and Ds, and so on, different assignments.
- Have all As meet to share what they have learned about their area. Bs, Cs and Ds and so on, also meet.
- Experts then return to their home group to share all that they know and all that they have learned from the other experts in their area.

### story

#### Teacher

##### Using a Jigsaw

“After over 300 years of being a fur trade company, the Hudson Bay Company made the decision to no longer sell furs because of international pressure. I thought this was a really relevant issue for many of my students, and that it was important for them to reflect on the question: should foreign countries be able to pressure other countries to change their practices?”

I showed students the CBC News in Review on this topic and then used the Jigsaw strategy to structure their discussion. After breaking the students into groups, I gave each group member a letter. In their letter groups, students read short articles offering a perspective on the fur trade. That is, all the As read an article on clubbing seals, the Bs read a short article on trapping and the northern economy, and so on.

Once they had discussed the articles in their ‘expert’ groups, they returned to their home groups to share what they had learned. Then we discussed the issue as a whole class.”

### Four Corners

In the Four Corners strategy, students “vote with their feet.” Each corner of the classroom, or cleared space in the classroom, represents one of four answers to a question or four points of view about an issue. Students move to the corner of the room that best reflects their point of view about an issue or idea.

Four Corners encourages students to think creatively and evaluate their ideas.

To use the Four Corners strategy, consider the following.

- Begin with a statement, issue or question. For example, “Which organ—heart, brain, liver, lungs—is most important?” or “Smoking should not be allowed in restaurants.”
- Identify four corners that correspond to the statement or question, for example “Heart, Brain, Liver, Lungs” or “Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.”
- Students choose the corner that most accurately expresses their opinion, response or point of view.
- The students move to their chosen corner.
- If others move to the same corner, they share with each other why they chose that corner.
- Students should be prepared to share the reasons for their choice with the whole group.

### story

#### Teacher

##### Using Four Corners

“I found a number of articles about Native Land Claims and logging on crown land. The different articles reflected different perspectives including lumber companies, forestry officials, environmentalists and Aboriginal people. Students used the articles to make informed opinions in response to the statement, “The government should have total access to land for economic development.” Each of the students moved to one of four corners to indicate their level of agreement with the statement. They discussed their positions with other class members who chose the same corner and then they presented their case to the whole class. It was interesting to hear the different perspectives. It created a valuable opportunity for students to reflect on one another’s viewpoints.”

### Independent Study

In traditional Aboriginal cultures, survival depended on making independent judgements, so learning to take responsibility for one’s behaviour was paramount. Responsibility for one’s behaviour fosters motivation to attain a given goal. In this context, independence means recognizing and making good use of one’s power. It does not mean working in social isolation (Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern 1990).

Independent study can facilitate the development of student responsibility. Independent study is an individualized learning experience in which students select a topic focus, define problems or questions, gather and analyze information, apply skills and create a product to show what they have learned.<sup>12</sup> It is a way to create opportunities for Aboriginal students to undertake learning that is meaningful to them.

Independent study projects can encourage students to:

- gather, analyze and report information
- develop in-depth understanding of specific content areas
- make connections between content and real-life applications.<sup>12</sup>

Regular student–teacher interaction, whether structured conferences or casual conversations, are essential for successful independent study.

The teacher’s role is to:

- keep in touch
- help with problem solving
- provide direction
- open up new areas for exploration and production
- give encouragement
- introduce, teach and/or reinforce needed skills.<sup>12</sup>

This learning strategy reflects the experiential, practical, try-it-for-yourself aspect of Aboriginal education. It is most effective for students who have a high degree of self-direction. A mastery of basic research skills is a prerequisite to successful independent study.

### Basics<sup>12</sup>

A successful independent study project requires:

- cooperative teacher–student planning of what will be studied and how it will be shared
- alternative ideas for gathering and processing information
- multiple resources that are readily available
- teacher interaction
- time designated specifically for working and conferencing
- working and storage space
- opportunities for sharing, feedback and evaluation
- recognition from other students of expertise gained and the finished product
- established evaluation criteria.

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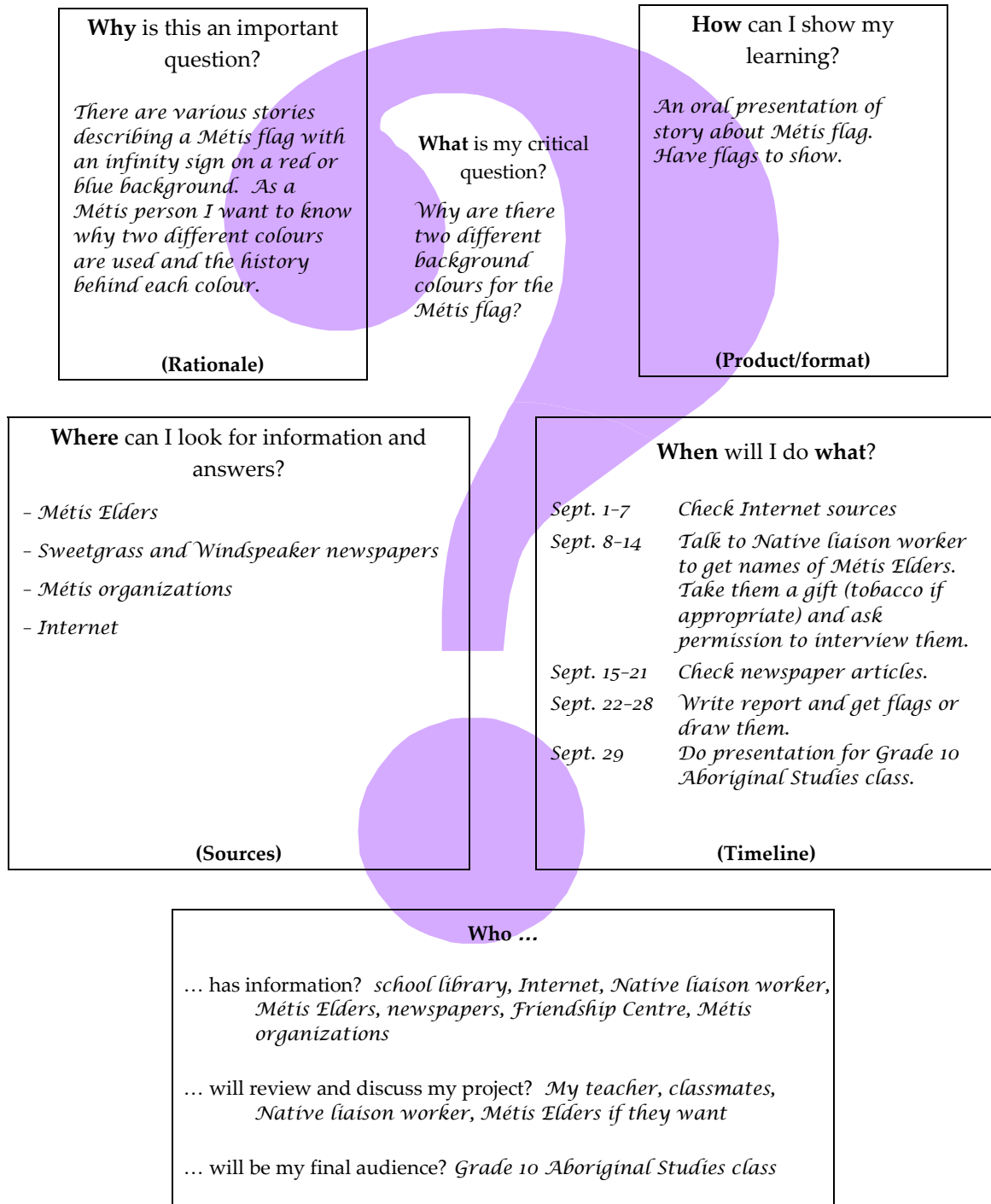
12. Adapted from *Change for Children: Ideas and Activities for Individualizing Learning* (Revised Edition) (pp. 169, 170) by S. N. Kaplan, J. B. Kaplan, S. K. Madsen and B. T. Gould. © 1980 by Scott, Foresman and Company. Used by permission of Pearson Education, Inc.

### Independent study plans

As students are planning, encourage them to:

- select topics or issues that motivate them
- brainstorm and discuss possible questions
- identify key questions to pursue and answer
- develop plans and timelines
- locate and use multiple resources
- decide how to use what they learn to create products
- share findings with classmates
- evaluate the process, products and use of time
- explore possibilities that could extend their studies into new areas of learning.<sup>12</sup>

Students can use a graphic organizer, such as the sample on the following page, to plan their study.



Form reproduced with permission from Edmonton Public Schools, *Think Again: Thinking Tools for Grades 6 to 10* (Edmonton, AB: Edmonton Public Schools, 2003), p. 95.

## Teacher story

### Setting up an independent study

“One of my students was interested in learning about dislocated people in Canada. I thought it was a really intriguing question, so I supported the student’s interest by setting her up in an independent study. She decided to focus on Davis Inlet and the impact relocation had on its people.

After some initial discussion, we came up with the research question: Would the people of Davis Inlet meet the UN criteria of refugee? Neither of us had an answer to that question, but thought it was worth exploring.

We decided she should use several sources of information to gather diverse perspectives, including the United Nations Web site, as well as the CBC News in Review on Davis Inlet. As well, I knew that some of the youth from Davis Inlet had attended an Aboriginal treatment centre nearby – so I thought she might find it interesting to talk to one of the counsellors there to get a different perspective. I taught her how to create questions based on Bloom’s taxonomy, to use when she talked to the counsellor.

Evaluation of the project involved multiple assessments, including a PowerPoint presentation and a rubric assessing the quality of the questions she created for the counsellor at the treatment centre.”

For a blackline master to support independent research, see *Appendix 17: Independent Study Planner*.

## Service Learning

Service learning can benefit both students and their community—in and beyond the school. In service learning, students provide a service to the community and in doing so, learn more about their community and about themselves while practising skills such as goal setting, problem solving and planning.

For Aboriginal students, service learning reflects the commitment to community that is traditionally a vital aspect of Aboriginal cultures.

Service learning benefits students and communities by:<sup>13</sup>

- building connections among students, their schools and their communities
- improving school climate as students work together in positive ways
- showing the community a positive image of youth, leading to stronger support for students and schools
- creating greater awareness of community needs and concerns
- increasing community capacity to address key issues.

Service learning encourages students to:<sup>13</sup>

- strengthen academic knowledge and skills by applying them to real situations
- build positive relationships and work with a variety of people
- discover new interests and abilities
- set goals and work to achieve them
- work cooperatively, and also learn the importance of individual responsibility
- take on leadership roles
- learn the value of helping and caring for others.

### story

#### Teacher

##### **Using service learning**

“Contributing to the community is very important in Aboriginal communities, so my students were quite excited about undertaking a service learning project. They wanted it to be meaningful, so they decided to plan an Aboriginal fine-arts celebration for National Aboriginal Days, an event widely celebrated by Aboriginal peoples.

The students were responsible for all of it, including identifying a program, contacting Aboriginal artists from the community, developing an advertising strategy, arranging for a ceremonial opening and greeting, taking care of traditional people and guests as they arrived, and acknowledging those who contributed to the performance.

It was a wonderful learning experience for the kids to organize such an event for the community!”

13. Adapted with permission from Lions Clubs International, *Skills for Adolescence: Changes and Challenges* (4th edition) (Oak Brook, IL: Lions Clubs International Foundation, 2003), p. 4.

### Sample service learning projects<sup>14</sup>

**Goal:** To make school a positive place for everyone.

#### Possible projects

- Create posters with positive messages on friendship, cooperation, cross-cultural understanding, school spirit and other topics.
- Start schoolwide campaigns to eliminate put-downs. Make posters, organize noon-hour events and involve school staff.
- Begin campaigns using posters, buttons and bulletin boards to encourage students to strive toward higher academic achievement. Develop special awards for improvement. Organize workshops and tutoring programs.
- Make information available about scholarships and other opportunities for Aboriginal learners.
- Plan appreciation days for school volunteers.
- Plan appreciation days for school staff.

**Goal:** To contribute to young families in the community.

#### Possible projects

- Plan special parties for children in daycare.
- Teach simple crafts based on Aboriginal traditions to children in after-school programs.
- Read Aboriginal literature to children in elementary school.
- Organize on-site babysitting services for special parent and community meetings held at the school.

For more information about service learning, see pages 94–100 of Alberta Education’s *Kindergarten to Grade 9 Health and Life Skills Guide to Implementation* (2002).

### Turning service projects into service learning

Service learning is a way of taking the classroom to the community. It introduces analysis, planning and evaluation into community service projects. The experience will help students develop a sense of community and purpose, as well as a real understanding of local needs and issues. Students who complete all of the following steps of service learning will realize that their actions make a difference.

#### Step 1: Prepare

With teacher guidance, students:

- decide which needs in the community and the school they want to address
- list questions they have about the issues involved and research the answers

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14. Adapted with permission from Lions Clubs International, *Skills for Adolescence: Service Learning* (4th edition) (Oak Brook, IL: Lions Clubs International Foundation, 2003), pp. 64–65.

- develop an understanding of why their project is significant and how it will benefit their community
- define desired outcomes and goals
- consider how they can collaborate with parents and community partners to address these needs
- develop a project (or projects) that responds to authentic needs in the school or community.

## Choosing a Service Learning Project

Identified Need: \_\_\_\_\_

1. List reasons this is an important need for the class to address.

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2. What is one short-term project the class could do to address this need?

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3. What is needed for this project? (Think about expenses, materials, adult help, transportations.)

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4. What challenges or barriers might keep this project from being successful?

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5. What are *two* long-term projects the class might carry out to address this need?

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Adapted with permission from Lions Clubs International, *Skills for Adolescence: Service Learning* (4th edition) (Oak Brook, IL: Lions Clubs International Foundation, 2003), pp. 48–49.

## Step 2: Plan

With teacher guidance to ensure that the learning provides meaningful service and real consequences, students can:

- develop a plan and timeline
- take responsibility for their part of the project
- consider ways to communicate effectively with the school, parents and community about the project, to encourage others to participate
- consider possible challenges and roadblocks, and how they might be overcome.

**Making It Happen**

Service Learning Project Plan

1. The need we will address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. A brief description of our project: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Our project goals: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Our committee: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jobs to be done	Who will do them?	Timelines
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Adapted with permission from Lions Clubs International, *Skills for Adolescence: Service Learning* (4th edition) (Oak Brook, IL: Lions Clubs International Foundation, 2003), p. 51.

**Step 3: Put the plan into action**

As students put their plan into action, teachers need to:

- ensure that students assume as much responsibility as possible
- ensure that the service learning project happens in an environment that is safe, and that the project creates opportunities for mistakes and successes
- involve parents and pre-screened community volunteers, and monitor performance and safety on a regular basis.

## Step 4: Review, reflect and demonstrate

It is essential that at the end of service learning projects, students have opportunities to privately and publicly reflect on what they have contributed and learned through the project. Students need opportunities to:

- acknowledge and celebrate everyone's participation
- reinforce what they have learned through the service learning project by demonstrating their mastery of skills and new insights by reporting to their classmates, families and communities, writing articles or letters to local newspapers about community issues, or using what they have learned to develop future projects in the community.

### Reflecting on Our Service Learning

1. What skills did the class use to carry out this project?

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2. What was accomplished through this project?

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3. What can we do to improve our next project?

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Adapted with permission from Lions Clubs International, *Skills for Adolescence: Service Learning* (4th edition) (Oak Brook, IL: Lions Clubs International Foundation, 2003), p. 52.

For blackline masters that support service learning, see *Appendix 18: Choosing a Service Learning Project*, *Appendix 19: Making It Happen*, and *Appendix 20: Reflecting on Our Service Learning*.

