Two Rows: The Two Row Wampum and the question of evidence

NBE3U, Unit 1: Where We Stand, Lesson 6. 75 minutes. Teacher lesson plan.

Lesson at a glance

The Two Row Wampum is a belt of white beads with two purple rows: two peoples travelling side by side, neither steering the other's vessel. Haudenosaunee tradition dates it to 1613. Historians argue about the paper evidence; the belt and the relationship it records are still renewed today.

What students do: Students learn the Two Row Wampum's design and meaning, examine the debate over the written 1613 evidence and the weight of oral tradition, compare perspectives on what counts as proof, write factual, comparative and causal questions about the treaty, and connect it to the 2013 renewal campaign.

Curriculum expectations

Code	Students will…
A1.4	identify and explain diverse themes, ideas, and issues associated with relationships in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, as reflected in various Indigenous text forms, and, as appropriate, in relevant non-Indigenous texts
A1.2	formulate increasingly effective questions to guide their explorations of themes, ideas, and issues related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit identities, relationships, and self-determination, sovereignty, or self-governance, as reflected in various Indigenous text forms, and, as appropriate, in relevant non-Indigenous texts
A1.6	compare multiple perspectives on themes, ideas, and issues related to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit identities, relationships, and self-determination, sovereignty, or self-governance, as reflected in various texts from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous sources

From The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies (2019), English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices, Grade 11, University Preparation (NBE3U). A = First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives and Text Forms in Canada, B = Oral Communication, C = Reading and Literature Studies, D = Writing, E = Media Studies.

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Learning goals and success criteria

Learning goals	Success criteria
• We are learning how a cultural text form records a relationship. • We are learning to ask effective questions and compare perspectives on evidence.	• I can describe the Two Row Wampum and its meaning. • I can explain the debate about the 1613 evidence. • I can compare perspectives on what counts as proof. • I can write factual, comparative and causal questions.

Materials and preparation

- **Slides:** Two Rows deck.
- **Handouts:** Evidence Table (page 1), Question Builder (page 2).
- **Image:** A teacher-chosen image of the Two Row Wampum from a Haudenosaunee or museum source.

Lesson sequence

Time (min)	Part	Teacher	Students	Look for
0–8	**Warm-up**	Side by side.	Discuss.	
8–20	**The belt**	Design and meaning.	Note.	
20–40	**The evidence**	Document vs tradition.	Sort.	Perspectives compared.
40–60	**Questions**	Factual, comparative, causal.	Write.	Effective questions.
60–75	**Renewal**	2013 and today.	Reflect.	

Differentiation

- **Support:** Evidence cards pre-sorted into two piles.
- **ELL:** Question stems for each type.
- **Challenge:** Read about the 2013 Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign and explain its purpose.

Assessment

Type	Tool	Purpose
Assessment for learning	Evidence Table and Question Builder	Relationships (A1.4), questioning (A1.2) and comparing perspectives (A1.6)

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Two Rows: key points

- **The belt:** White wampum with two parallel purple rows: two peoples, two vessels, side by side; neither steers the other.
- **Principles:** Respect, equality and non-interference: a relationship of peace and friendship.
- **The debate:** The written 1613 document is widely considered a forgery, but the belt and oral tradition record the relationship; historians disagree about the date.
- **Evidence:** Western courts and historians have favoured paper; Haudenosaunee tradition holds the belt and recited words as the record.
- **Renewal:** In 2013, paddlers travelled from Onondaga to New York City to mark 400 years and call for the treaty to be honoured.

Teacher notes

- The Two Row Wampum (Kaswentha) is traditionally dated to 1613, between the Haudenosaunee and Dutch traders near present-day Albany, New York. A written “Tawagonshi” document surfaced in 1968; in 1987 scholars argued it was a forgery, and a 2013 linguistic study agreed. Others, including historian Jon Parmenter, argue that Haudenosaunee oral tradition and early records consistently describe the relationship. In 2013 the Onondaga Nation and allies paddled over 300 miles to New York City for the renewal campaign.
- The two purple rows are often described as a canoe and a ship travelling side by side. Present Haudenosaunee understandings as theirs to explain; invite a Haudenosaunee speaker where possible.
- We strongly recommend reviewing this unit with your board's Indigenous education lead and, where possible, inviting a First Nations, Métis or Inuit Elder, Knowledge Keeper or guest speaker following your board's protocols (including offerings and honoraria). Local Nations' own sources come first.

Coming up

Lesson 7, Asking Better Questions.

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