

## **BC Legislature Mural Debate**

### **Rationale**

One of the most important elements of our society is our ability to speak our minds on controversial topics, even if our opinions are unpopular. However, without our opinions being well-informed, this right's utility rapidly diminishes. The first step in building a well informed opinion is establish ones stance on a topic, and develop our basic values. Although these may be updated as we learn and grow, we need to start somewhere. One of the most useful places to start, is with a debate. Debates help people explore difficult issues, but more importantly, they help teach people about themselves. It's through this self-awareness that a deep sense of self-confidence originates. This class will have students debate a topic that is both historically significant, and relevant in our society today. This will provide students with an access point to the moral dimension of history.

### **Objectives**

- Students will gain exposure to a current example of tensions between two peoples in British Columbia: primarily members of First Nations groups, and those who identify with a European background.
- Students will move closer to developing their own position on this controversial issue, and a better self awareness of their own values
- Give students practice making an argument and supporting it with reason/evidence in real-time

### **Lesson Plan**

#### **Introduction: 10 mins**

Students will have been divided into groups the previous class with the knowledge that they would be debating this class. The first ten minutes will see an overview of the issue. Slides of the murals in question will be put up and a brief account of their background given. Students will be given the basic rules of the debate – i.e. Students on either side will not address each other directly, but use the parliamentary method of speaking through the Speaker of the House. They should be encouraged to look for evidence that will support their argument during preparation.

The question they will be given to debate is:

Should cultural sensitivity outweigh historical significance?

Be sure to tell students that if they find themselves on the “wrong side” of the debate, and don't personally support the argument they've been asked to make, to hang in there. They will have a chance to express their real feelings afterwards. Be explicit that, although the immediate objective is to win the debate, the ultimate goal is to gain a better understanding of the issue and of their own feelings towards it. It must be made clear to students that part of their task is to assess the usefulness of debate in their learning experience.

### **Debate: 40 mins**

Prep: Students will be given ten minutes to prepare their arguments in their teams. They will have access to their books and the internet to help them find any evidence that will back up their position.

Debate: Students will debate for no more than fifteen minutes before an intermission. This will last for five minutes to give the teams a chance to regroup. Students will then debate for another ten minutes before closing. Finally, but secret ballot, all students will vote on the motion.

### **Closure: 10 mins**

Students will debrief on how the debate went, discussing what points made the deepest impact, and what strategies seemed to work best.

### **Assessment**

Students will write a short position piece (around 250 words), taking a position on the issue, and providing reasons to justify it. If their feelings are different from their assigned position, this will be their chance to express them. They will also include how debating the idea with others changed their view, and if not, what else they might have learned through the process of debate. Assessment will be based on the clear articulation of the reasons given for their position, and their recognition of how the debate itself affected their thinking process. Students will have time to begin this paper in class, but will finish at home.

|  | <b>3</b>   | <b>2</b>   | <b>1</b>   |
|--|--|--|--|
| Well articulated and reasoned position | Gives a convincing argument using specific examples to support position                            | States position and gives reasons  | Missing position and/or reasoning                          |
| Insightful commentary on the debate    | Thoughtfully assesses how the debate did or did not affect their position, using specific examples | Identifies at least one point about how the debate process was useful or not | Does not acknowledge the debate process as a learning tool |
| Clear thesis statement present         | Yes 1  | No 0   |  |

Photos of the murals: