GORD DOWNIE & WENJACK FUND CHANIE

Lesson Plan

KOOKUM AND SHOOMISH MAGNETS

Learning from Our Elders by Harriet Visitor

SUGGESTED AGES:

Grades 3-8
(adaptable for other grades)

SUGGESTED SUBJECT AREAS:

Indigenous Studies, Indigenous Languages, Visual Arts, Social Studies, Art, Character Education, Language Arts

DURATION:

1-2 class periods (55-75 minutes)

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the role of Elders in Indigenous Nations and communities
- Reflect on the importance of respect, listening, and intergenerational learning
- Express learning through art and discussion
- Demonstrate appreciation for cultural teachings and community knowledge

Disclaimer: Educators and group leaders are responsible for ensuring lessons and materials presented in their classrooms or groups are appropriate for their unique students.

OVERVIEW:

Connection across time is fundamental to understanding who we are and where we're going. Our Elders stand as pillars in our community, linking our history, present, and future through the sharing of their lived experiences and knowledge.

In Oji-Cree, *Kookum* means grandmother, and *Shoomish* means grandfather. In many Indigenous cultures, Elders and Knowledge Keepers are important people who share ways of being and doing through stories, teachings, and life lessons. They help guide younger people and community members by teaching them how to care for themselves, others, and the community.

In this lesson, students will think about the Elders in their own lives and why it is important to listen to them, respect them, and learn from their experiences. Students will also create Kookum and Shoomish magnets. In this design, the Elders are shown from the back to remind us that they are walking ahead of us, showing the way forward with their teachings. This also helps us remember that Elders were once children and students too, and that one day, today's students will grow up to become leaders, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers who help guide the next generation.

MATERIALS:

- Internet access for research
- Audiovisual equipment (projector, speakers, etc.)
- Art supplies (listed below)
- Ziplock bags (optional, for unfinished work)

MATERIALS FOR EACH PARTICIPANT:

- One set of templates including: Two magnets, glue stick, three different pieces of patterned paper
- Kookum:
  - Body
  - Skirt
  - Head (scarf)
  - Shawl
  - One small bunch of yarn (for hair)
- Shoomish:
  - Body
  - Hat
  - Shirt
  - Pants

LESSON PLAN

INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES):

Begin by asking students:

- Who are the Elders in your life?
- What are some things you have learned from grandparents, older relatives, or community members?

Introduce the Oji-Cree words Kookum and Shoomish, explaining their meanings and significance. Share that Elders are respected teachers who guide others with wisdom, care, and lived experience.

GROUP DISCUSSION (10-15 MINUTES):

Facilitate a discussion using questions such as:

- Why are Elders important in communities?
- What does it mean to learn by listening?
- How can we show respect to Elders in our daily lives?

ACTIVITY: KOOKUM AND SHOOMISH MAGNET CREATION (30–40 MINUTES):

Instructions:

- Cut out the templates (if not already cut out).
- Choose three different patterned papers for the clothing pieces.
- Trace each template piece onto the patterned paper and cut them out.
- Glue the pieces together from the bottom up:
  - Skirt → Shawl → Hair (optional) → Head
- Attach the magnet to the back.
- If time runs out, place all pieces in a Ziplock bag to finish at home.

Note: We recommend using a glue gun for attaching yarn hair (adult assistance required).
Remember: We see the Elders from behind because they are leading us forward.

CONCULSION (5-10 MINUTES):

Instructions:
Reconvene as a class and invite students to share:

- One thing they learned
- One Elder they are thankful for
- What their magnet represents

Encourage students to keep their magnet somewhere visible as a reminder of the teachings and guidance of Elders.

ASSESSMENT:

Assessment can be based on:

- Participation in discussion
- Thoughtfulness and effort in the art activity
- Reflections shared verbally or in writing (see Extension activity)

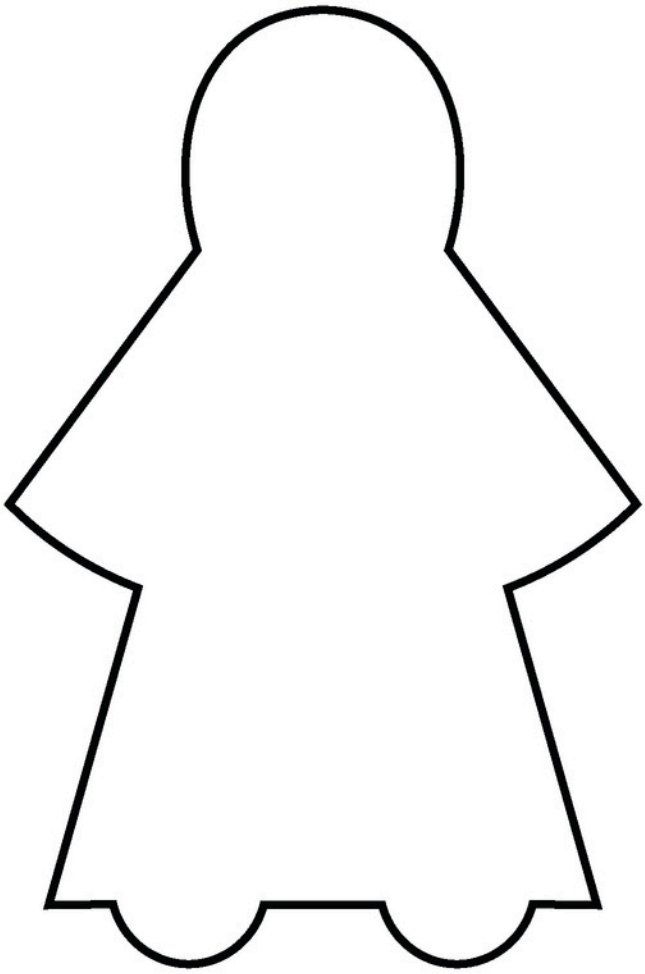
EXTENSIONS:

- Write a thank-you letter or card to the Wenjack Family or an Elder
- You can email **legacyschools@downiewenjack.ca** or mail your letters to the Wenjack family:

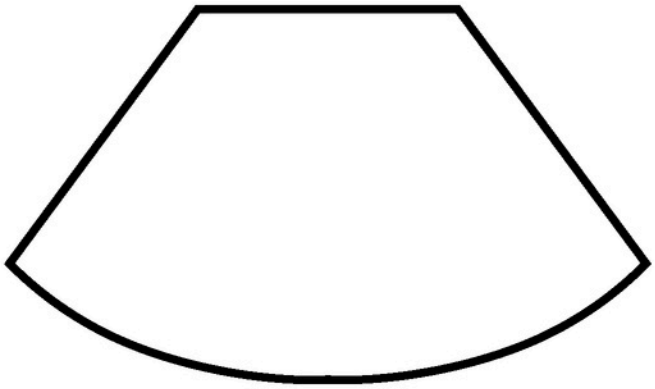
  Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund
  Wenjack Family
  PO BOX 749
  Ohsweken, ON N0A 1M0

GORD CHANIE
DOWNIE & WENJACK FUND

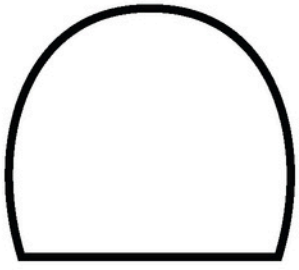
Kookum Magnets



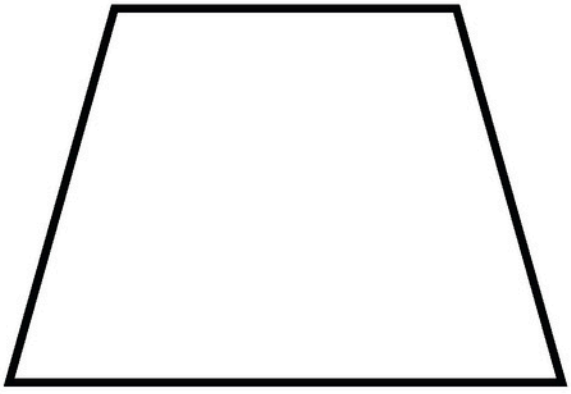
Body



Shawl



Head



Skirt

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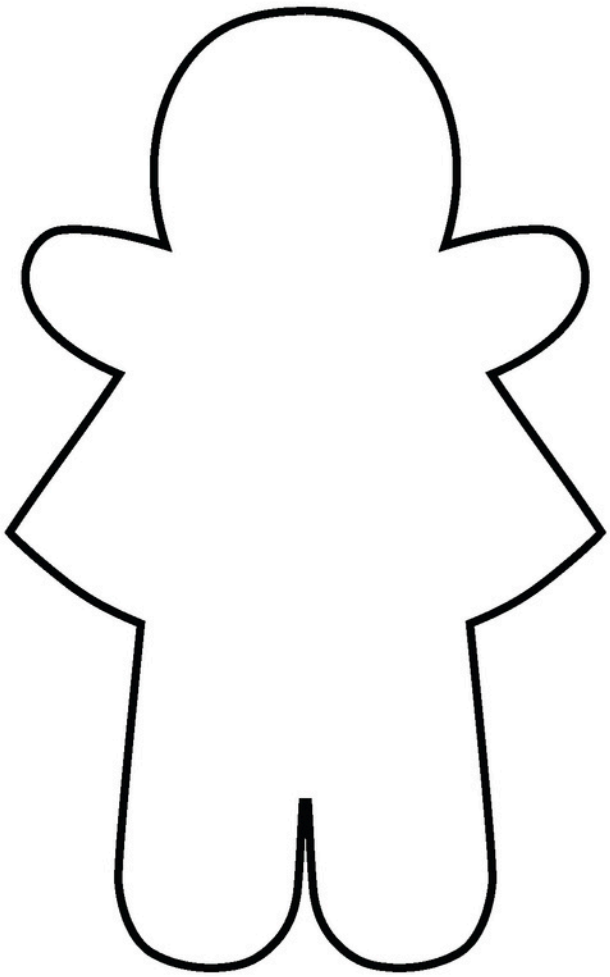
Shoomish Magnets



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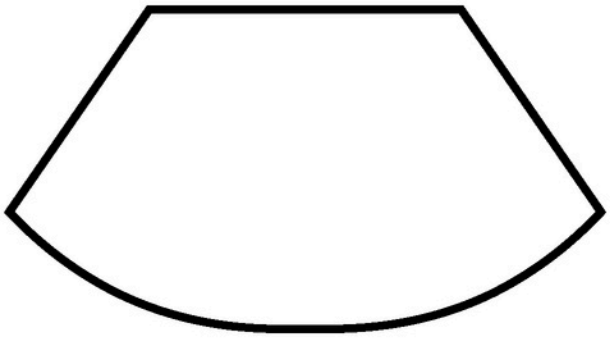
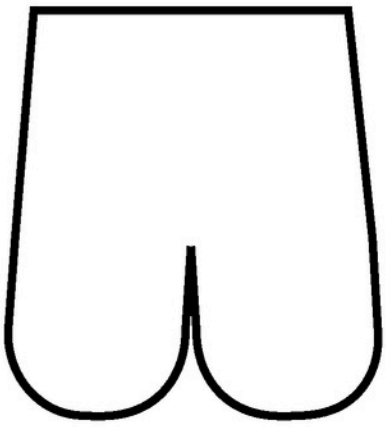
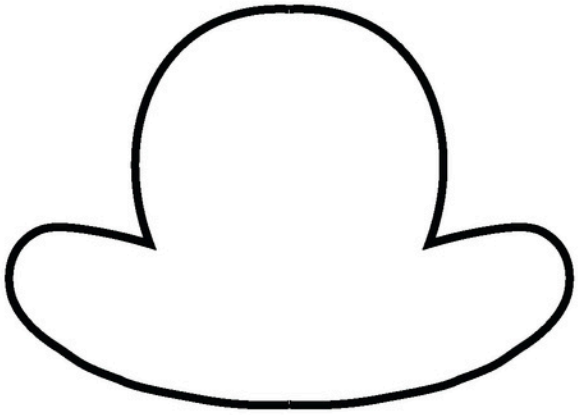


Shirt



Pants



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EDUCATOR REFLECTION AND IMPACT QUESTIONS:

Please complete this short **Feedback Form**. Your feedback helps DWF improve resources and support reconciliation-focused learning throughout Canada. Each submission also enters you into a monthly draw for classroom resources.

Stage I – Short-Term Results (Respect and Empathy, Learning History and Impact):
How did this lesson plan help students build respect for Elders and understand their role in Indigenous communities?

Stage II – Medium Term Results (Reflection, Taking Action, Reciprocal Relationships):
In what ways did students reflect on their own relationships with Elders or consider actions that show respect and gratitude?

Stage III – Long Term Results (Shifting Institutional Values and Culture):
How might lessons like this contribute to long-term changes in classroom culture, school practices, or community relationships?