

Misconceptions



Introduction

Misconceptions about the Mi'kmaq are ubiquitous across Mi'kma'kik. They can be found in the media, in the home and, of course, in the classroom. The Learning Experiences in this section are designed not only to help learners identify and address misconceptions, but also to understand that as a shared society, we all have a role to play in challenging stereotypes, racism and prejudice, and the ways they shape misconceptions.

These Learning Experiences are designed to strengthen the skills required to recognize misconceptions about the Mi'kmaq. They ask learners to identify stereotypes, racism and discrimination that they may encounter in their daily lives. These skills include:

- Distinguishing among fact, misinformation and opinion.
- Learning to listen carefully to determine the source of information and other contextual information.
- Knowing when to ask "How do you know?"
- Using clues to recognize misconceptions in commonly-used biased words and phrases.

In addition to strengthening this generalized skill set, learners will also tackle key and often repeated statements about Mi'kmaq and other indigenous peoples. These statements include:

- "Indigenous people don't pay taxes."
- "Indigenous people get their education for free."
- "They should forget the past and get over it."
- "Indigenous people sold all of their land rights in the treaties."
- "Indigenous people want special treatment."
- "Residential schools weren't really that bad."
- "My tax dollars paid for their new casino."
- "Those treaties have nothing to do with me."
- "Indigenous people can hunt and fish whenever and wherever they want."
- "It's just a Halloween costume, why are they so mad about it?"
- "Indigenous people get free houses."

As learners come to understand more about Mi'kmaq history and experience, their ability to pinpoint misconceptions and stereotypes will grow. Educators can help young learners look forward to a future where they will understand more and feel confident about promoting interactions that are supportive and thoughtful for everyone.

Vocabulary for Misconceptions LEs

This vocabulary review is a good place to begin any Learning Experience in this theme:

A **misconception** is an opinion that is not correct, because it is based on false information. Usually misconceptions are widely-shared among people, but not always.

A **stereotype** is a simplified belief about an entire group of people. "All people who live in the country ride ATVs," or "All Asian people are good at math," are examples of stereotypes. Blanket statements like these are so big that they cannot be accurate, so regardless of whether stereotype is viewed as "good" or "bad," they are all harmful.

Racism is when a person judges another person by the way they look, and in particular by the colour of their skin.

Prejudice is when a person assumes they know something to be correct when it is actually false. It comes from the word pre-judgement or to judge before knowing.

Bias happens when people accept their misconceptions as permanent and always treat people according to these misconceptions.

Patterns are elements that repeat. In working to recognize misconceptions, the patterns of how people treat others or are treated themselves are important clues.