

# Lesson # 1: Opinion Writing (short piece)

**Length:** one class

**Issue:** Bullying



## Materials:

- Chart paper for anchor chart
- Class sets of several non-fiction articles (some included here)
- Highlighters of different colours
- Article – “First Nations mount national day of resistance in several cities” **(NF 1-1)**
- Article – “What we don’t know about bullying” **(NF 1-2)**
- Handout – Opinion Writing **(NF 1-3)**

## Pre-Activity:

Opinion Writing is an important part of the OSSLT as both shorter and longer pieces are evaluated. In order to prepare students, it is a good idea to have them read various short pieces with the hope that students will become more familiar with the structure of opinion writing before they write their own. Deciphering between fact and opinion is important for students to understand to both identify an opinion, and then incorporate opinion into their own writing.

As a class determine the characteristics of a FACT and those of an OPINION. Complete this work on an anchor chart that remains visible for students to refer to during the course of this unit. It is also helpful to have a condensed version for students to keep in their notebooks.

## Sample Anchor Chart:

FACT	OPINION
A statement	Expression of someone's feelings (ie. I feel, I see...)
Can be proven true or false	Based on emotions
Informs the reader	Is subjective, can't always be proven

Another activity to help students determine the difference between fact and opinion would be to create a set of fact/opinion cards. Divide the class into small groups and instruct them to sort the cards into FACT and OPINION categories. On each card would be either a statement of fact (ie. stop signs in Ontario are red) or opinion (ie. Pearl Jam is the ultimate band); this is a great opportunity to infuse content from current texts you are reading as a class. Small groups will share their findings with the whole class as you discuss how students categorized their cards into the two groups.

This activity could also be adapted as a whole class activity utilizing a 3-Corners strategy where the teacher reads a statement and students physically move to a location in the room with category markers; in this case – FACT, OPINION, and UNSURE.

### **During Activity:**

1. Use the “Read Aloud” strategy as you work through the article **“First Nations mount national day of resistance in several cities” (NF 1-1)** as a whole class modelling critical thinking. For further information about the “Read Aloud” strategy, you may wish to visit the following resource:  
<http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/teacher-read-aloud-that-30799.html>
2. Have students colour code with highlighters what they think is FACT or OPINION directly on the article; if highlighters are unavailable, you can also code the text using a straight underline and a wavy line, or pen and pencil. This is a good place to remind students that they are permitted, and encouraged, to write on the articles provided to them on the OSSLT and that they are not evaluated nor penalized for any rough work they complete on the test.
3. After reading the article as a whole class, have students work in small groups to compare their answers. Remind students to refer to the Fact/Opinion anchor chart in their discussion.
4. Review article as a whole class identifying the facts and opinions in the article.

*Note: Bias is an important concept to present to students when discussing all forms of media; both inherent within the published texts, and in the editorial selection process in determining which pieces are selected for publication. You may wish to incorporate the following discussion at any time during when analysing an article as a class:*

- \*Who wrote this text?
- \*Why was the text created?
- \*What assumptions does the author/text make?
- \*What things does the author leave out or focus on?
- \*What language incites strong emotions and how does that sway the reader?
- \*How might different people interpret the text differently?

### **After Activity:**

1. Hand out copies of the article: **“What we don’t know about bullying” (NF 1-2)**
2. Instruct students to read the article independently and complete the same work as previously done together: using different coloured highlighters (or some variance) to identify the facts and opinions presented in the article.
3. Hand out the short writing assignment – **Opinion Writing (NF 1-3)** for students to complete.
4. This activity is a good opportunity to check for understanding through formative assessment and may be used as an exit ticket.

5. Please note, as this topic may be more sensitive to students, have support resources available if needed – both community and school resources and where to access them.
6. As an extension activity, you may wish to have students take a closer look at either article, or another of their choosing. A strategy to help reinforce the idea of separating fact and opinion would be to have students use a Question Matrix to write their own questions about the article. This will provide students an opportunity to refine their understanding of both the article topic (ie. the First Nations Education Act) and further practice deciphering between what is presented as fact and opinion, as well as higher order thinking. Please see **Question Matrix (NF 1-4)**.

Sample Lesson Plan

# First Nations mount national day of resistance in several cities

At heart of today's protests is frustration with First Nations education bill

[CBC News](#) Posted: May 14, 2014 6:39 PM ET Last Updated: May 15, 2014 7:51 AM ET



A Parliament Hill protest today drew more than 1,000 of people opposed to reforms proposed for the First Nations Education Act. (Karina Roman/CBC)

More than 1,000 people rallied in Ottawa today to protest the federal government's approach to aboriginal Canadians.

They are calling it a day of resistance. While aboriginal people and supporters arrived by the busload on Parliament Hill, protesters also took to the streets in Kahnawake, Saskatoon, Sudbury and Winnipeg.

The protesters said they are frustrated about the federal government's proposed education reforms for First Nations, and about Ottawa's refusal to call a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women.

"When people are starting to be desperate, you see people like this turn out on the street," said Ontario Regional Chief for the Assembly of First Nations Stan Beardy.

"I think we'll see more and more of that. People are getting very desperate."

The protesters are determined to be listened to, something they say the Conservative government isn't doing. The poverty, social and health problems continue for many, both on and off reserve.

For Kitigan Zibi Chief Gilbert Whiteduck, change will happen if Canadians realize one thing.

"When First Nations are doing better, Canada is doing better," he said.

### **First Nations education**

This morning, dozens of Kahnawake Mohawks marched along Highway 138 toward the Mercier Bridge, before heading to Ottawa to join the protest on Parliament Hill.

"It was very important to my mom to bring the culture and the language back and it did come back, people know who they are and this bill is gonna do the exact opposite." - *Diane Beauvais*

They carried signs that read "Kill Bill 33" and "Protect our education." Many of the protesters were students who say the bill is an insult.

"It's our culture and I don't think they should take that away from us," said Rihanna Dibo, a Grade 9 student at Kahnawake Survival School. She is afraid the proposed changes would take away her language and culture classes

Diane Beauvais is also worried. Her mother was instrumental in introducing culture and language classes in schools

"It was very important to my mom to bring the culture and the language back and it did come back, people know who they are and this bill is gonna do the exact opposite," said Beauvais. "It's going to turn it around."

She said schools in Kahnawake are constantly improving their graduation and literacy rates, and what they need from the government is financial support ... without interference in their curriculum.

Chiefs from across Canada are in Ottawa to craft an official response to the proposed First Nations control of First Nations education act.

For his part, AFN Quebec Regional Chief Ghislain Picard said the bill is unacceptable.

"It's one ideology imposing its way to another one," said Picard.

Chiefs plan to unveil their formal position on the legislation at the end of the month.

*With files from CBC reporters Karina Roma and Sophie Tremblay*

# What we don't know about bullying

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By: Don Marks

Canadians are caught up with the problem of bullying. The Manitoba legislature is enacting laws to deal with it in our schools, and research is being conducted to help devise prevention and cessation programs that are meaningful, relevant and effective. This is all well and good.

But all too often in the past, these programs tended to get applied universally. This would be a disaster, or at least a failure, if we do this with First Nations children and youth.

First Nations kids face situations that are unique. First of all, some live in cities and others live on reserves. This is a lot different from the nuances that exist between rural and urban life that other Canadian children face.

From the days of Indian residential schools, it has been well known that children who returned home with their hair cut short and their long braids gone, looking like white kids and unable to speak their own language or participate in the sacred ceremonies of their people, were ostracized, which is just another form of bullying. The multi-generational impacts of the IRS experience and colonization in general can never be discounted, even if it is not identified or articulated in the research we undertake today.

Some studies indicate the biggest risk factor for being bullied on a reserve is to have a father who has a professional occupation. These kids are bullied 18 times more on average, according to a study by the Canadian Journal of Public Health in Saskatchewan. This manifests itself down the line as First Nations kids who do better at school are more at risk of being bullied, and those who exhibit behaviours which can be considered "more white than Indian" are targets. This indicates prevention programs designed for Canadian kids in general can't be applied universally for First Nations children and youth.

We waste so much money when we fail to undertake proper research and study. And speaking of money, while generally, Canadian kids who are poorer endure more bullying, low incomes are almost universal in First Nations communities wherever they live, and therefore, not as big a factor in the incidence of bullying.

Most people would think native kids living in cities would be subject to more bullying than kids who live on reserves, because of racial differences. Yet the study by the CJPH reveals 29 per cent of First Nations kids living in Saskatoon claimed they have been bullied while the percentage of kids on reserves being bullied reaches as high as 36 per cent. Interestingly, only two per cent of the kids in the city said their race had anything to do with the bullying.

Many of our street gangs are based on race and the impact of interracial bullying may pale in comparison with the pressure applied by groups such as the Indian Posse, Manitoba Warriors or Native Syndicate.

But most disheartening is the revelation that success in the white world is viewed so negatively by young First Nations people. The native kids with professional parents, or the kids who do better at school, or who have parents who are involved in their academic progress and expect a lot from them are most vulnerable to bullying. Does this cause a child to become ashamed of parents who should normally be excellent role models? Does it cause a native kid to dumb down in order to be more accepted?

Conventional approaches to bullying prevention and cessation will fail if programs aren't tailored to address specific factors.

This is not to say that we abandon all common sense and ignore experience completely. We still hear plenty of complaints about racism and discrimination at school, from peers, teachers, the administration and in society, where racial profiling remains common. This racism may now be covert instead of overt, but it is still there, and it also may be contributing to bullying no matter what the surveys say.

Bullying is a serious, complicated problem with serious consequences. Let research and study, analysis, knowledge, wisdom and common sense, and above all, honesty, guide us to the most relevant programs possible for all kids, wherever they live.

Don Marks is a Winnipeg writer

# OPINION WRITING

Determining the difference between FACT and OPINION.

A Fact is:

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An Opinion is:

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As a class we will determine the characteristics of both a FACT and an OPINION.

Copy down these points from the anchor chart to keep in your notes:

• FACT	• OPINION
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## Activity

1. Using the same format we practiced together, colour code the article: "What we don't know about bullying". Remember, to do this you will use one colour for FACTS and one colour for OPINIONS.
- 2. After you have colour coded your article, complete the following writing response:

In 2-3 sentences, explain the author's opinion about bullying and First Nations students. Use the points you already highlighted in the text as the evidence to help justify your answer. Please hand in both your written work, and the highlighted article.



# QUESTION MATRIX

	Event	Situation	Choice	Person	Reason	Means
Present	What is?	Where/ When is?	Which is?	Who is?	Why is?	How is?
Past	What did?	Where/When did?	Which did?	Who did?	Why did?	How did?
Possibility	What can?	Where/When can?	Which can?	Who can?	Why can?	How can?
Probability	What would?	Where/When would?	Which would?	Who would?	Why would?	How would?
Prediction	What will?	Where/When will?	Which will?	Who will?	Why will?	How will?
Imagination	What might?	Where/When might?	Which might?	Who might?	Why might?	How might?

## Some ways in which a question matrix could be used

1. Make dice or spinners to indicate different question beginnings, eg 'What?', 'Which?', 'Where/When?', 'Who?', 'Why?', 'How?'.
2. Make dice or spinners based on questions with a particular emphases, eg finding the reason – 'Why is?', 'Why did?', 'Why can?', 'Why would?', 'Why will?', 'Why might?'.
3. Give each group their own question matrix chart and instruct members to ask a question using one of the question beginnings, and to then place a counter on that square. The question beginning cannot be used again in the same round, encouraging the formulation of different kinds of questions by the group.

Resource from: [www.assessmentforlearning.edu.au](http://www.assessmentforlearning.edu.au)