

# Activity 9

## ABORIGINAL SELF-GOVERNMENT: THEN AND NOW

### **Objectives**

To become familiar with:

- Aboriginal self-government in Canada, from before the arrival of Europeans to present day developments; and
- the meaning of self-government to Aboriginal peoples in users' regions and across Canada.

### **Directions**

1.
  - a) In small groups, have users research First Nations or Inuit communities from before Europeans settled the country. Have them choose two different nations or Inuit communities from the region in which they live or elsewhere in Canada. Using the resources listed at the back of this guide or others from your area (for example, Friendship Centres or National Councils), research the traditional form of government used by each group.
  - b) Next, compare the two systems of government and have users list the main differences that exist between the two systems. Why do they think the priorities and values of one culture are different from another? Compare these specific elements to Canada's present-day system. Are there any similarities? Has one type of government influenced the other? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
2.
  - a) Have users, as one group, research a local or regional Aboriginal system of government as it functioned before the arrival of Europeans to Canada. Next, research current developments in the area of self-government generally, how it has changed in the last 10 years, and how local or regional organizations and/or councils see it evolving in the next 10 years. (Use the list of organizations and councils in the *Additional Resources* section of this guide if you require assistance.) Finally, have users compile this information in order to develop their own "Aboriginal Self-Government: Then and Now" chart. As background, have the users read or listen to the *Declaration of the First Nations* which was adopted by all of the First Nations in Canada at a conference of the Assembly of First Nations in 1980.
  - b) *Enrichment:* Invite a guest to speak to the rest of the group about self-government for their people in your region. An Aboriginal person in the group could ask a relative, family friend or other acquaintance to speak to the group. Otherwise, extend an invitation to your local Friendship Centre, National Council or other First Nations, Métis, or Inuit organizations in your area. The group should offer a gift of thanks, preferably one that they have created themselves, to honour the speaker after the presentation.

# *Activity Sheet*

## ABORIGINAL SELF-GOVERNMENT: THEN AND NOW

### **Declaration of the First Nations**

“We the Original Peoples of this Land know the Creator put us here.

The Creator has given us Laws that govern all our relationships to live in harmony with nature and mankind.

The Laws of the Creator defined our rights and responsibilities.

The Creator gave us our spiritual beliefs, our languages, our cultures, and a place on Mother Earth that provided us with all our needs.

We have maintained our freedom, our languages, and our traditions from time immemorial.

We continue to exercise the rights and fulfill the responsibilities and obligations given to us by the Creator for the land upon which we were placed.

The Creator has given us the right to govern ourselves and right to self-determination.

The rights and responsibilities given to us by the Creator cannot be altered or taken away by any other Nation.”