

# **SURVIVOR, CANADA-STYLE: OVERCOMING OUR ENVIRONMENT**

**Gary Simons, Ontario**

## **INTENDED GRADE/SUBJECT AREA**

**Grade 12 Canadian Studies or Native Studies class, but can be easily adapted for Grade 7 Social Studies, Grade 11 Civilizations in History or for a unit on local history.**

## **CONCEPTS:**

- **developing historical imagination and appreciation; identifying and capitalizing on local resources; overcoming cultural preconceptions in order to survive; early ways of life and abilities of First Peoples; challenges of the Canadian environment.**

## **INSTRUCTIONAL OUTCOMES:**

**Students will:**

- **identify the major survival challenges local first peoples faced;**
- **identify the means local peoples used to over come these challenges;**
- **develop an appreciation for the intelligence and abilities of First Peoples;**
- **assess how and why our way of life today is very different that that of early First Peoples by appreciating how difficult these challenges are for people accustomed to a modern high technology culture.**

## **RECOMMENDED TIME FRAME**

**Four one-hour classes, with the following suggested allotment:**

- Class 1** Explain the background to the problem and begin the simulation.
- Class 2** Continue the team work and add enrichments, i.e., the sample materials for the students to use and out-of class activities to enhance the students' awareness of the challenges.
- Class 3** View the students' results and begin a teacher-centered take-up of historical answers.
- Class 4** Enhance learning with a good video on First Peoples.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**One thing I have to stress repeatedly is that the students cannot use any modern technology. Eyeglasses cannot be used to start fires. Metal from belt buckles or other sources cannot become a tool. Students can only use locally available materials. It helps to have slides of local forests, or to even bring in local rocks, berries, tree branches, etc. to stimulate thinking.**

## **ACTIVITIES:**

- Class 1**
- Explain the background to the problem. Have the students read the explanatory hand-out: What situation are the students in, what resources are available for them, what are the challenges they face?
  - Set the class up into teams of three to five and explain the competition.
  - Go over the “rules” of the simulation and show slides of their new home (slides of local wilderness or forests).
- Class 2**
- Add the enrichments, e.g., rock samples for tool making, wood for fire-making, other local resources. Do out-of-class activities to enhance the students’ awareness of the challenges. Try:
- starting a fire using the friction method
  - throwing wooden spears at a target [much more difficult than you realize!]
  - making and using a hand axe made from local stone
  - basket-weaving using local vines



- Class 3**
- View the students’ results. Answers should be written on large sheets of newsprint so the entire class can see their ideas. Students view each others’ answers. Begin a teacher-centered take-up of historical answers:

**How did local First Peoples overcome these challenges?**

**In what ways do many of these solutions display high resourcefulness and intelligence?**

**Examples:**

- Kayaks (boats where there is no wood)
- Inuit caribou skin clothing (better than modern hi-tech cold weather clothes)
- Fish tidal traps and deliberate animal kill zones, such as "Head-Smashed In" in Alberta
- Atlatyls [spears] and boomerangs (sophisticated concepts in physics employed by early peoples)



**Class 4**      **Announce which team won. Possible prizes include certificates, pizza, etc. Enhance learning with a good video on First Peoples.**

**Follow-up**      **Students do an individual assignment. They answer a series of questions on the survival simulation, including an appreciation of what they learned about the abilities of our First Peoples.**

**MATERIAL/RESOURCES:**

- a set of local area slides
- local rocks
- samples of wood for fire starting
- some wooden spears (students usually love to make these at home )
- possibly an atlatyl or boomerang

**Videos**

- *The Early Americans* by National Geographic
- *Head Smashed In* National Historical Site (of the Historylands series)
- Other videos that contain good excerpts of survival are *Quest for Fire* (some nudity) and *Castaway*

**About the Educator**

**Gary Simons, a senior high teacher at Thousand Islands Secondary School in Brockville, ON, has a reputation for using innovative teaching methods, such as learning outside the classroom, cross-curricular learning and multiple intelligence theories, to increase student success and make Canadian history come alive. He has developed projects such as a family budget analysis to illustrate the gravity of the Depression; *Men of Courage: World War II Computer Simulation*, where students experience the war as a Canadian soldier, sailor or airman; and this Native Peoples Survival Simulation to make relevant the hardships faced by early native peoples through analysis of a similar modern-day scenario.**



# **Appendix A**

## **FIRST PEOPLES SURVIVAL GAME**

### **SCENARIO:**

**You and a team of friends are in a remote wilderness area in September. You have no metals, plastics, any other man-made things other than the clothes you wear and one plastic lighter. You have light summer clothes, a sweater, shoes and one windbreaker each. Your environment consists of lots of pine and hardwood forests with typical wild animals of the region such as birds, deer, raccoons, bears, etc. You have freshwater streams and lakes in your region stocked with typical fish and aquatic creatures. In several areas, the stream has carved a gorge, with exposed rock walls.**

### **THE CHALLENGE:**

**You have agreed to live here, off the land, for one month. Explain how and what you would do to survive for these two months. Use written explanations as well as sketches or drawings. Include:**

#### **1) Your shelter plans**

- **what kind of shelter will you use, how will you make it**
- **what tools must you make, what materials must you find, in order to make your shelter?**

#### **2) How you will get food**

- **explain all the ways you can think of for getting food**
- **describe the methods and weapons you will need to help you (Hint: think of ways of getting food that do not require great skill or effort, once you get them set up)**

#### **3) Important tasks for your team**

- **list all the major jobs your team will have to do**
- **include both important one time tasks and important daily tasks**

#### **4) Key things you will need to make, and how you will make them**

- **include drawings, bonus points for trying to make them**

#### **5) How you will cope with bad weather, problems with predators, etc.**

### **NOTES:**

**1. Every item listed above or proposed by your group must be something your team could actually make from local materials or any of the natural materials seen in the slides. If you like, even bring in a working model of it!**

**2. There are team bonus points for extra work such as:**

- \* **Answering the bonus survival questions**
- \* **How close you came to starting a fire using traditional methods**
- \* **Making working models of survival items and bringing them into class (you can use modern tools to help you )**
- \* **Success in our outdoor hunting challenge, can you hit the target?**

## Evaluation:

### 1. For the Tribal Championship:

- How many ideas did your tribe have in each category?
- How realistic is each idea?
- How clear and detailed are your answers?
- How many bonus points did your tribe get for trying to make fire, making models of tools, in the spear throwing contest, etc.?

### 2. For you as a student:

- Your teacher's evaluation of the quality of your tribe's work
- Your self-evaluation on your efforts in your tribe
- Questions to be answered and handed in

## Bonus Survival Questions (One set of answers per tribe, please)

1. What is a safe way to store food at a camp site to minimize visits by raccoons or bears?
2. What is a labour-efficient way to catch fish?
3. Barring simple bad luck, what is the Number One danger in the bush—the problem that will most likely cause death if you don't cope with it properly?
4. You have an eight-foot tree limb that is 2-3 inches in diameter. What is the easiest way to turn it into one-foot lengths of firewood?
5. You want to set a trap or an ambush for animals. Explain how you can know where the animals travel (before you actually see them), or what specific thing will lure them to a trap.
6. What very specific tree bark will burn, even when wet?

## Hands-On Learning Bonus Points

You can earn points for your tribe with these hands-on challenges:

- |  |   |                 |
|--|---|-----------------|
| 1. Successfully making smoke in your attempts to start a fire  | = | 2 points        |
| 2. Making the wood very hot and creating smouldering ash in your attempt to start a fire                               | = | +2 points       |
| 3. Creating a burning ember in your attempt to start a fire  | = | +2 points       |
| 4. Getting an actual fire started, SAFELY  | = | +4 points       |
| 5. Throwing a wooden spear or other weapon at least 20 metres and hitting the target (life-sized drawing of an animal) | = | +2 points       |
| 6. Using a stone and wood hand axe to cut through a 2 inch log   | = | +2 points       |
| 7. Making models or full-sized tools, baskets, shelters, etc.  | = | up to 10 points |

### Answers to Bonus Survival Questions:

1. Put your food into a knapsack and tie it up using one end of a rope. Find a tree with a strong high branch well away from your campsite. Toss one end of the rope over the branch and raise the knapsack about 15 to 20 feet off of the ground. Tie the other end off on the tree trunk. The suspended pack will be out of the reach of bears. Raccoons will still be able to reach the pack, but they won't be able to do much damage.
2. Find a swift flowing stream likely full with fish and partially dam the stream to narrow the flow. Take a fishing net (or make a net in the survival game) and stretch it across the opening. Anchor the net well and leave it for several hours. Fish will be pushed into the net by the current. **Note: Do not try this unless you are desperate, it is illegal.**
3. Hypothermia is your main enemy. A combination of cold, wind and rain can be deadly in just one night.
4. Look around for two good-sized trees about one foot apart. Stick one end of your branch in the gap between the two trees and push the branch hard against the tree. The trees act as a lever and the end of the branch will snap off if you push hard enough. It's much faster than using an axe or saw. Make sure to use dry wood; green wood is less likely to snap.
5. Find something that the animal likes to eat and use it as bait for your trap. Many animals love salt, so use that if you can find some. Carnivores are attracted to meat such as leftover fish. Bears love berries. Deer love cedar. Watch and see what different animals like to eat.
6. Birch bark—especially paper birch. It can be a lifesaver when you need to start a fire on a wet day.

## **Appendix B**

# **THE INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT**

**For 15 marks**

**1. Complete the self-evaluation sheet and hand it in with these answers.**

**For 25 Marks**

**2. After doing our survival simulation what did you learn about survival without modern technology?**

- A. What were some of your most difficult problems to solve and how did your tribe solve them?**
- B. How would your daily concerns and needs change compared to your life today?**
- C. What objects would assume a much greater importance for you in the wilderness, than they do in your current life?**
- D. It was not enough for First Peoples humans to merely have the right general idea on how to do something. Specific knowledge could make the difference between life and death for the tribe. Describe four specific skills or areas of knowledge that would be the most important and valued ones in an early native culture.**
- E. What did you learn about First Peoples and their way of life by doing our survival simulation?**
- F. Modern technology has made our way of life much easier than that of an early hunter-gatherer culture, but in the process we have had to give up some aspects of life. What things have we and our culture likely lost or diminished in importance in the transition from hunter-gatherer culture to our modern culture?**

*Hand in Your Self-Evaluation Sheet and the Answers to these Questions.*