

## **Civil Conflict: Oka**

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## Tips for Teaching Controversial Issues

The teaching of value-laden issues has generated much controversy. There is some basic consensus on the fundamental moral and ethical values in our society and that these values can be taught in a meaningful way.

It is assumed in Canadian Studies that there are fundamental values on which there is agreement. It is also assumed that there are many disagreements and that students need to learn to deal with controversy. The social studies and history curricula provide students with learning experiences that will help them identify some of the fundamental value positions of society and how these arose. This curriculum deals with controversy, even invites it. However, it does not suggest that any belief is as good as any other belief. Therefore, this curriculum makes no attempt to be objective in the sense of being value free.

Canadian Studies gives students opportunities to examine controversial issues. Debating these issues will provide students with the opportunity to apply concepts and higher order thinking skills in organizing, interpreting and communicating information meaningfully. In this process, students can begin to understand the role of values as the basis for making inferences, that values provide us with evaluative criteria, and that we depend upon the traditions of Canadian society to provide us with guidelines. These criteria include: human dignity, basic rights and responsibilities as defined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and respect of, and tolerance for, individual differences.

There are many methods to teach controversial issues in the classroom. As these issues touch personal beliefs and trigger emotional reactions, these methods are sometimes difficult to conduct in an orderly fashion.

The following ideas may assist teachers:

- Recognize the general legitimacy of controversy as a part of society, and that students must learn to discuss the issues and problems presented.
- Establish ordered ways of proceeding: discussions, debates, take a stand, continuum, mediation, etc. Create and agree on effective rules.
- Concentrate on evidence and valid information.
- Represent the opposing positions accurately and fairly.
- Make sure to clarify the issue, so that everyone understands where there is a disagreement and where there is agreement (to avoid simultaneous monologues).
- Identify core issues.
- Avoid the use of slogans.
- Talk about concrete issues before raising the discussion to a level of abstraction.
- Allow the students to question your position.
- Admit doubts, difficulties, and weaknesses in your position.
- Teach understanding by re-stating the perspective of others. Have participants paraphrase what they hear to gain this skill.
- Demonstrate respect for all opinions.
- Establish means of closure: examine consequences and consider alternatives.

## Civil Conflict: Oka

### **Note to Teachers:**

This lesson has several potential uses, including:

- Grade 10 History: 1990s unit – Aboriginal Rights Movement
- Grade 10 Civics: Conflict resolution, Global Citizen (Human Rights)

### **Background information:**

Spotlight Canada, pg. 482-485  
CBC Radio and Television Archives web site

### **Resources Required:**

- Computer lab with Internet access
- Student worksheet

### **Purpose:**

- To provide students with the opportunity to work with primary sources in the form of video clips to gain an understanding of the facts and issues surrounding the Oka Crisis of 1990.
- To encourage students to consider the issue of human rights as it applies to the Oka Crisis and to discuss methods of conflict resolution.

### **Activity:**

1. Distribute Student Handout and discuss instructions.
2. Students access CBC archives web site and locate video clips.
3. Students watch and listen to video clips individually or in partners and complete the handout as they are viewing them.
4. Upon completion of the activity, explore the answers to the questions on the handout in a whole class discussion. Where appropriate, compare the Oka crisis to similar, more recent situations involving protests and civic conflict (Ipperwash, Caledonia).
5. Give students instructions and evaluation rubric for writing task.

## Civil Conflict: Oka Student Handout

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Instructions:**

1. Access Internet Explorer
2. Log on to CBC archives at <http://archives.cbc.ca>
3. Click on ***Oka Crisis***
4. Click on video clips
5. Watch video clips #1-10 in sequence. While viewing the clips, answer the questions provided for each.

### **Clip #1**

- a. What is the source of this conflict?
- b. Describe the Mohawk position.
- c. Describe the municipality's position.

### **Clip #2**

- a. By what methods do the Mohawks try to prevent the golf course expansion (be specific)?

### **Clip #3**

- a. What happens when the Mohawk warriors refuse to take down the roadblocks?
- b. To what extent do you feel that violence was justified in this situation? Explain your thoughts.

### **Clip #4**

- a. What happens when the police storm the barricades?
- b. What is the result?

### **Clip #5**

- a. Explain what happens with the negotiations.
- b. What role does the federal government play?

### **Clip #6**

- a. Why do the Mohawks refuse to lay down their arms in order to negotiate?
- b. What additional demands do the Mohawks have?

**Clip #7**

- a. What role does the military play at this point of the crisis?
- b. Who is Lasagna? What does his stare-off with a Canadian soldier symbolize?

**Clip #8**

- a. How and when does the standoff come to an end?

**Clip #9**

- a. How does Oka Mayor Jean Ouellette defend the actions that he took and the decisions that he made?

**Clip #10**

- a. Ten years later, how did two of the key players in the Oka Crisis feel about the roles that they played? What did they learn from this situation?

**Writing Task:**

Respond to the following question in a persuasive essay of 3-5 paragraphs:

The Oka Crisis drew worldwide attention, bringing Aboriginal land rights into the spotlight. How might this issue have been resolved more effectively and without violence? Be sure to demonstrate an understanding of the issue and the positions of both sides when formulating your argument.

**Evaluation**

	<b>Level One</b>	<b>Level Two</b>	<b>Level Three</b>	<b>Level Four</b>
<b>Knowledge/ Understanding</b>	Limited understanding of issue demonstrated.	Some understanding of issue demonstrated.	Considerable understanding of issue demonstrated.	High degree of understanding of issue demonstrated.
<b>Thinking / Inquiry</b>	Evidence selected contributes little to argument.	Evidence selected contributes somewhat to argument.	Evidence selected contributes considerably to argument.	Evidence is selected purposefully and contributes effectively to argument.
<b>Communication</b>	Argument is communicated with limited clarity.	Argument is communicated with some clarity.	Argument is communicated with considerable clarity.	Argument is communicated with exceptional clarity.