

# Wapos Bay AS LONG AS THE RIVER FLOWS episode 11

## Episode Description

The need for an elder care program is highlighted as T-Bear and Talon help Hector take two kohkums home with their groceries. With a lot of encouragement from his father Jacob and ideas from Talon, T-Bear takes advantage of the All Chief's Conference held in Wapos Bay to raise the issue of elder care. Jacob develops big plans for T-Bear to run for president of the Youth Council while Talon becomes more resentful that T-Bear is presenting Talon's ideas as his own. T-Bear finds himself on a Walk for Elders and challenges the chiefs to match any donations he raises for elder programs in their own communities. When nominations are announced for president of the Youth Council, T-Bear acknowledges Talon's contributions.

## Background Information

In the past, Aboriginal societies held those who had developed special knowledge over a lifetime in high regard. However, government policies that divided Aboriginal families resulted in elders not always receiving adequate care. Aboriginal communities can work together to provide care for elders with diminished capacity.

There are over 600 First Nations in Canada and most belong to a provincial as well as a national organization. The Assembly of First Nations is the national political organization for First Nations in Canada, and they meet to cooperate and consult on a host of issues including economic development, social programs, education and land and resources.

Elders contribute to our lives when we are young and vulnerable and deserve our respect and care when age affects their capacities.

The phrase "as long as the river flows" is often invoked in Aboriginal contexts to suggest that an agreement is timeless. It was first used by a treaty commissioner who represented the British Crown and not an Aboriginal leader, as is often thought.

Raising funds is a part of life in most Aboriginal communities.

## Key themes

- We have a responsibility to care for the elderly as their physical and sometimes mental capacities diminish with age.
- Recognizing the ideas and contributions of others is an important way to show our respect and appreciation. Presenting other's ideas as our own is dishonest.
- The use of persuasive language is an important ability for leaders to cultivate.
- Walking a long distance to raise awareness about social and political issues requires physical and mental fitness.
- Geriatric medicine has contributed to our understanding of aging and can improve the lives of the elderly.
- Groups and individuals have to consider the media in their plans to highlight political and social issues.



### PREVIEWING ACTIVITIES

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- 1 ► Do we have a responsibility to care for the elderly? Why? What is the area of medicine that studies aging? (Geriatrics)
- 2 ► How can we show respect for elders? Why might some elders be vulnerable to neglect?
- 3 ► Do you know how many First Nations there are in Canada? What is the name of the Aboriginal organization in your province? What is the national organization that represents First Nations in Canada? Why is such an organization needed?
- 4 ► What math knowledge contributes to a successful fundraising effort?
- 5 ► Introduce the Cree words used in episode 11, and remind students to listen for them while watching the film.

#### CREE GLOSSARY

**kohkum** – grandmother

**tansi** – hello

**akosi** – That's all

**Ah ho** – Expression of affirmation at the end of a prayer

- 6 ► What types of language do leaders use that compels us to follow them? What is meant by the phrase “as long as the river flows”?
- 7 ► How do the media influence our plans to highlight political and social issues?

### VIEW THE EPISODE

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Introduce and view *Wapos Bay: As Long As the River Flows*.

### POST-VIEWING QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

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- 1 ► How do Wapos Bay members take responsibility to care for the elderly? Why?
- 2 ► Why was Talon upset with T-Bear? Why is it important to recognize the ideas and contributions of others?
- 3 ► Review the answers to these questions if the information was not elicited in the previewing discussion: What is the name of the umbrella organization for First Nations in the province? What is the national organization that represents First Nations in Canada? Why are such organizations needed?
- 4 ► What does it mean to “match” the funds raised? What if T-Bear had raised \$2500? What would the chiefs have to do?
- 5 ► Review the Cree glossary words.
- 6 ► What language did T-Bear use to urge people to follow him? What is meant by the phrase “as long as the river flows”? When should this phrase be invoked? Do you think it is a cliché?

- 7 ► How did the media influence T-Bear's plans for his walk for the elders? How do the media influence our plans when we want to highlight political and social issues? How do they limit the kinds of activities that we can plan and carry out? What kinds of awareness campaigns are most successful?

### PROJECT IDEAS



- Research the provincial and national Aboriginal organizations to determine their main activities. Is elder care a priority for them? Send an e-mail to them to inquire about their policies on elder care. Conduct interviews with elders to determine what is needed to improve their lives.
- What scientific research is needed to improve the lives of the elderly? Find out what geriatric medicine research is focused on. How will it be helpful?
- Write a letter to a First Nations organization to persuade them to implement an elder care program. Invoke the phrase “as long as the river flows.”
- Invite elders to the class to provide their perspective on the phrase “as long as the river flows” and when it should be used.
- Contact the news department from a local TV station to find out what gets their attention. Invite a reporter to the class to present their perspective about what kinds of campaigns compel them to report.
- Invite a guest speaker from an Aboriginal organization to present their strategies for managing the media.