

Lessons based on “Up Home” by Shauntay Grant, illustrated by Susan Tooke

(Author’s note) I was privileged, during the summer of 1969, to live for four months in the vibrant community of North Preston, Nova Scotia, working with preschoolers in the mornings and youth in the afternoons and evenings. Here, I was enveloped in a rich culture of deep brown, spirited and generous souls. Each Sunday, following the most joyous church services, I would be invited to family dinners (mostly at the Johnstones), and stuff myself with heaping plates of chicken, vegetables, rolls, salads, tea, and the best homemade pies of my life, after which spontaneous singing would burst forth – a leading solo voice, followed by rich layerings of sweet harmony from family and friends dropping in. I experienced a sense of loss in having to return, that September, to what felt like a foreign, uncompromising world. The people of Preston taught me so much more than I could ever have shared with their children. This single summer experience would become a vital lesson on the strength and resilience of community that profoundly shaped my learning and my beliefs.

Title: I Remember Up Home

Developed by: Willie Reid

Suggested grade levels: 4 – 12

Background:

The book “Up Home”, written by Shauntay Grant and illustrated by Susan Tooke, evokes the poignant memories of a young girl growing up in one of the largest and most important African Canadian communities in our country. It is a sweet reminiscence of a profoundly connected community, one that continues to overcome deep and on-going social stigma. Shauntay speaks of the innocence and wonder of a rich rural childhood, and honours the people who nurtured, taught, and loved her - those same people who recognized in her a very special and gifted child in their extended family.

Rationale:

Each of us carries a tapestry of woven childhood memories of the people, places, and events that shaped and re-shaped our lives. It is true that we will never know who we are if we don’t know where we come from. In this increasingly complex world, it is important that we invite young people to pause, reflect, and share their personal recollections of and pride in their communities. This series of lessons will encourage students to collect and record their own rich memories of home through writing, art, music, and dance.

Resources:

Book, “Up Home”
other resources on stories of communities
art materials
paper/pencils

recycled materials
sound making items (sticks, whistles, drums, shakers, etc)
plasticine
wire
paint, brushes

Suggested Outcomes:

- Develop knowledge, understanding, and appreciation for communities in historical and contemporary cultures
- Interpret and represent a range of thoughts, images and feelings using arts processes
- Understand ways in which past events, the way people live, and the arts influence one another.
- Use writing and other ways of representing to record, develop and reflect on ideas

Lesson Ideas:

- Share and talk about “Up Home” then take a real (or imaginary sensory) journey through your community
 - What can you see, feel, hear, smell, taste and touch?
 - Where would you begin your journey?
 - Who might you meet along the way?
 - Where might you stop to play...to rest...to meet others?
 - What special places would you pass?

Create a personal poem or spoken word piece and prepare a collage of mixed media images based on the walk - textile, print, paint, 3-D objects, etc.

- Artifact fair...bring a special item from your home that tells something about your family (old photographs, mementoes, medals, recipes, diaries)
- Create a youth driven blog/website for the community
- Stage “roots and wings” – dances choreographed and based on stories of community history and culture
- Create “Heritage Moments” (similar to CBC vignettes) and videotape them based on a study of your community’s history
- Interview the elderly - record their stories, create artwork and poetry as a means of honouring and thanking them
- Create plasticine portraits of special people in the community
- Carry a sketch book made from recycled paper and make sketches of your community – nature, animals, buildings, people – first small sketches for development into more finished artworks