

# Task-Based Activity



## Read Newspaper Article Elder Lillian McGregor



### OALCF Link

#### Relevant Goal Paths (Spirit-Vision):

√	<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>
√	<b>INDEPENDENCE</b>
√	<b>POSTSECONDARY</b>
√	<b>SECONDARY SCHOOL CREDIT</b>
	<b>APPRENTICESHIP</b>

#### Rationale:

Learners on the Employment, Independence, Postsecondary and Secondary School Credit Goal Paths will most likely read newspaper articles about Native issues (such as the passing into the Spirit World of a respected Elder) and to express opinions about them.



#### Learner Plan Link (Heart- Feeling):

When an Elder passes into the Spirit World, the Native community celebrates the 'Gifts' that Elder has left with everyone. At times like this, we are also reminded that each and every one of us is an 'Elder in training', an Aboriginal form of Apprenticeship. To quote an Elder (name forgotten) in the Closing Plenary of the 2011 CMEC Educators' Forum on Aboriginal Education, Winnipeg, "I aspire to inspire before I expire."

#### Task-Based Activity Description:

This task-based activity is a fairly long text of a few paragraphs (approximately 1500 words) from the Globe and Mail, May 22, 2012. It details the impact Birch Island Elder Lillian McGregor made in the lives of many Native people. Learners will read the article and answer questions about it.



## Competency, Task Group and Level Indicator: (Mind - Knowledge)

### LEVEL:

Find and Use Information			Communicate Ideas and Information				Understand and Use Numbers				Use Digital Technology	Manage Learning	Engage with Others
Read continuous text	Interpret documents	Extract info from films, broadcasts & presentations	Interact with others	Write continuous text	Complete and create documents	Express oneself creatively	Manage money	Manage time	Use measures	Manage data			
A1	A2	A3	B1	B2	B3	B4	C1	C2	C3	C4	D	E	F
A1.3													

### Materials Required

Pen or pencil and eraser      Question Sheet



## Overview of Task (Body-Skills)

### Activity Introduction

Discuss with the learner that Elder Lillian McGregor was originally from the Whitefish River First Nation before she moved to Toronto. In Toronto, and over a period of several decades she encouraged many Native people to keep their culture, traditions and spirituality alive.

### New Words/Phrases

Review the words/phrases and explain their meanings. You may need to review additional words as the learner works through the activity.

### Instructions

1. Have the learner fill in their name and the date.
2. Have the learner complete the pre self-assessment.
3. Review the Student Activity Sheet with the learner.
4. When the learner has completed the activity, have him/her complete the post self-assessment.
5. After the learner has completed the task-based activity, complete the assessment section and review the results with the learner.
6. Discuss next steps with the learner.

### Extension Activities

Encourage learners to share about the impact Elders from their own nation (First Nation, Métis and Inuit) have had on them – and how.



## Task-Based Activity: Read Newspaper Article Elder Lillian McGregor

Learner Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Pre self-assessment

I need to improve my skills at reading texts to connect, evaluate and integrate ideas and information.

- Yes
- No

I need to improve my skills at writing texts to convey factual ideas and information.

- Yes
- No

I need to improve my skills at writing longer texts to present information, ideas and opinions.

- Yes
- No

### New Words

Immersing	assimilation
Urbanity	'middle class' activists
Affluent	munitions
Paternalistic	systemic barriers

## Assessment

### Task-Based Activity: Read Newspaper Article Elder Lillian McGregor

Learner Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Performance Descriptors	Needs Work	Improving	Excellent
A1.3 Integrates several pieces of information from texts  Manages unfamiliar elements (e.g. vocabulary, context, topic) to complete tasks  Identifies the purpose and relevance of texts  Skims to get the gist of longer texts  Uses organizational features, such as headings, to locate information  Follows the main events of descriptive, narrative, informational, and persuasive texts  Obtains information from detailed reading			

**The learner needs to work on the following:**

**This task was successfully completed \_\_\_\_ This task needs to be tried again \_\_\_\_**

**Practitioner Comments:**

**Learner Comments:**

**Question Sheet:**

1. List 3 things that happened for Lillian at the University of Toronto.
2. What was Lillian's advice to the students?
3. In at least three paragraphs, describe Lillian's most important '*contributions*' to the Native community.

**Post self-assessment**

I think my skills have improved as a result of this activity.

- Yes
- No

## Newspaper Article – Globe and Mail

**Lillian McGregor helped natives survive in the city**  
**NOREEN SHANAHAN** - Special to The Globe and Mail  
Published Tuesday, May. 22 2012, 9:00 PM EDT

Lillian McGregor's achievements as an aboriginal leader, her insistence on keeping aboriginal culture, tradition and spirituality alive while immersing herself in Toronto's demanding urbanity, easily crowds the page – and most of this work happened after she retired from a 40-year career in nursing, a dozen years ago.

From the Whitefish River First Nation on Birch Island just off Manitoulin Island, McGregor was a founding member of the Native Canadian Centre and a national leader in the Friendship Centre movement. She was on the board of Native Child and Family Services, Nishnawbe Homes, the Aboriginal Advisory Council and the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy for the Ontario government.

As the University of Toronto's first elder-in-residence, she secured bridges between aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities. At U of T's First Nations House, she was "grandmother" to young people, helping them.

*"Go home," she'd counsel. "Go home for a day, or whatever you need to get the feel of home. Toronto isn't your home ... we come from the land."*

She lectured on the seven sacred teachings of the elders: wisdom, courage, truth, honesty, love, humility and respect, insisting that everyone deserves the opportunity to walk in dignity.

McGregor was the first native woman awarded an honorary doctorate of law from U of T. In 1996, the university established a scholarship in her name. She received both the City of Toronto's civic award and the Ontario government's outstanding achievement award for voluntarism. She also received a national aboriginal achievement lifetime award and was named to the Order of Ontario.

She had tea with the Queen, offered a first nations prayer to open the provincial legislature and travelled to Russia with the Toronto Olympic Committee in support of Toronto's Olympic bid.

Asked how she got Olympic leaders to listen to her, she said, *"I told them what I thought their mothers and their grandmothers would want done."*

At the age of 86, with a handsome young aboriginal man pushing her wheelchair, she held the torch for several Toronto blocks during the 2010 relay for the Winter Olympics, a bicycle-mounted police officer by her side.

She was instrumental in founding the Ontario Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative. Diabetes was

one of the health conditions that she suffered with over a long period. She died in Newmarket, Ont., at the age of 88 on April 20 from complications of the disease.

In 1924, Lillian McGregor was born into a family of nine children on a reserve in Northern Ontario. She learned her first English words from the Eaton's catalogue, thumbing through the pages by the light of a kerosene lantern. She learned more English from tourists at a lodge where she worked alongside her mother, Victoria, as a cook's helper and chambermaid. She and her cousin Florence were the first native children to graduate from Grade 8 on Manitoulin Island.

Lillian's father, Angus McGregor, was chief as well as postmaster on the reserve. He also built the biggest skating rink, fostering Lillian's lifelong love of hockey and her unfaltering faith in the Maple Leafs. (As a young woman, she'd head over to the Gardens and watch a game for 25 cents, standing-room only.)

*"Back home, the excitement of the time was sitting around the radio, and she used to do it so much they called her Radio Lill,"* said her niece, Frances Sanderson. *"She decided there was a whole world out there she wanted to see."*

At 15, Lillian heard murmurings among the mothers about an arranged marriage. She opted to move to Toronto. An affluent white couple she met at the lodge hired her as their nanny. But only on the condition, set by her father in a moment of truce, that she continue her education.

George Gale, her employer, later became chief justice of Ontario. He and his wife encouraged Lillian while she finished high school and went on to complete nursing college. During the postwar years, hundreds of young aboriginal women left their reserves for the city. The Department of Indian Affairs produced a pamphlet called *"So, you are coming to Toronto,"* featuring three attractive young native women on the cover in tidy white nurse's uniforms. It advised women in a paternalistic tone to pay their rent, be on time for work, and spend money wisely.

*"Don't be alarmed if many foolish questions are asked of you,"* it said. *"Many people have not had the benefit of your experience and who is better prepared to advise them about Indians than yourself? Always be courteous in your reply, even if the questions appear silly."*

A 1973 article by Heather Howard-Bobiwash, published in the American Indian Quarterly, discusses how native women sought higher education, jobs and freedoms denied them on reserves. But rather than choosing assimilation, they kept their cultures alive by supporting the structural development of urban native communities, and promoting pride in their identity in the city.

*"Various pathways led individual native women to come together as 'middle-class' activists,"* wrote Howard-Bobiwash, citing Lillian McGregor as an example.

During the war, McGregor worked in a munitions factory east of Toronto, packaging



parachutes to go overseas. Her sister Olive, with whom she settled in the city, joined the military and like other native people who signed up, she promptly lost her Indian status and therefore was not able to return to her community.

McGregor formed a coffee klatch with other aboriginal city-dwellers at Fran's downtown restaurant during that time, nibbling strawberry pie and talking about how to deal with the systemic barriers they faced on a daily basis.

Out of these meetings the North American Indian Club was formed, a forerunner of the Native Canadian Centre. McGregor joked that a great number of marriages and children resulted from these gatherings.

In 1949, she took a job as a visiting nurse with the Victorian Order of Nurses, hopping on and off streetcars all day long wearing sensible shoes and hefting a heavy work bag. She credited her interest in nursing to her grandmother.

*"I used to tag along when she picked her medicines, listening to her talk about what to pick and when, how to prepare them and store them. She kept them all in a little back porch in her log home. It was like a pharmacy."*

McGregor later took a permanent position at a west end nursing home and worked there until retiring in 1990. During this time, she also singlehandedly parented three sons: David, Dennis and Ken. Days were long and demands were great. Not surprisingly, it took retirement from this first career to free her up enough to begin her second career as a full time activist.

She was invited to serve as U of T's elder-in-residence in 1994. Her proven track record as a respected member of the aboriginal community and a strong advocate for education stitched her to this position. But she still doubted her credentials.

*"She didn't agree willingly,"* said Sylvia Maracle, head of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres. *"She called a number of people in the community and said, 'I don't know how to do this.'"*

Toronto's aboriginal leaders held a public ceremony to honour and encourage her. They were convinced that aboriginal students would benefit from her generous guidance as their urban grandmother or auntie.

She not only counselled students at the university, she also met with faculty, staff and leaders of the institution. Her door was always open and she was always willing to make room on her sofa.

In 1997, McGregor was awarded the distinguished educator of the year award from the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, U of T. Three years later, she received her honorary doctorate.

*“Often, we find it’s the beginnings that elude us,” she said in her acceptance speech. “But physicists are still researching, peering at stars and testing the boundaries of the theory – never stopping the search for that elusive beginning.”*

*“Go home,”* she might have been saying once again, even to this crowd of prestigious academic leaders in suits.

McGregor retired from her position at First Nations House in 2008. Her next moment of excitement and apprehension came when she met the Queen in 2010. Sitting on her walker, wearing her red ribbon dress embroidered with crane clan images and clutching her eagle feather, she stood out among the dignitaries.

*“Quick! Tell me the rules,”* she anxiously whispered to Maracle as the Queen moved closer. Moments later, she was among the elite guests invited to tea.

*“If you can imagine growing up with no running water, no electricity, with people who still spoke their language, still lived off the land, fished, preserved food, hunted,”* said her niece. *“It’s quite a thing to meet the Queen in downtown Toronto.”*

McGregor leaves sons David, Denis and Ken, four grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

*Special to The Globe and Mail*

## Answer Key

1.
  - a) She was U. of T.'s first elder-in-residence
  - b) She was the first Native woman to receive an honorary doctorate
  - c) She had a scholarship established in her name in 1996
  - d) She met with faculty, staff and leaders of the institution
  - e) In 1997, she received the distinguished educator of the year award
  
- 2)
  - a) realize their ambitions while insisting they always remember their culture and language.
  
  - b. never stopping the search for that elusive beginning.
  
  - c) She lectured on the seven sacred teachings of the elders: wisdom, courage, truth, honesty, love, humility and respect, insisting that everyone deserves the opportunity to walk in dignity.
  
- 3) Answers will vary with the learners.