

# ALEXANDRIA LOUTITT

When Alexandria Loutitt was 6 years old, she watched the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games. Seeing the athletes do extreme jumps and fly through the air made her want to be an Olympic ski jumper too! When she turned 9, she got the chance to try ski jumping and she instantly fell in love with it. She knew right away that this was what she wanted to do.

Around that time, Alex cut out the Olympic Rings and put them on her bedroom door. It was a special reminder of her big goal: becoming an Olympic ski jumper one day. Alex is a very adventurous person. She calls herself an “adrenaline junkie” which means she loves to do lots of different things like travelling, meeting new people and soaring through the air on her skis!

When Alex was 14 years old, she faced a tough decision. The ski jumping hills in her hometown of Calgary were closing. Those were the only hills where she could practice to become an Olympic ski jumper. She now had two options. The first one was to move to Europe all by herself to keep pursuing her dream of becoming a ski jumper. The second choice was to stay in Canada. Even though she wasn't sure how things would turn out, she decided to follow her dream and took a chance.

Alex then moved to Germany, a country in Europe. She was away from her family and friends, but she was now able to focus on ski jumping and start reaching for her big dream of making it to the Olympic Games. She got to live with different families in Germany and she continued to work hard to get better at her favourite sport.

Alex kept getting better and she improved so much that she finally reached her dream! In 2022, Alex and a team of other Canadian ski jumpers made it to the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing, winning a bronze medal. This was a very special moment for Alex, but also for Canada. This was the first time ever that Canada had a mixed team (both boys and girls) in a ski jumping event and it was also Canada's first ever Olympic medal in the sport.

Alex is amazing at her sport. She keeps doing incredible things and making history. She became the very first world champion in ski-jumping from Canada. And that's not all! She's also the first Canadian woman to win a junior world title and the first Canadian woman to win a world cup ski jumping event!



PHOTO BY MARK BLINCH



Alex likes helping others and supporting other young athletes. She is also an Indigenous athlete from the Gwich'in First Nation. Her distant cousins, Sharon and **SHIRLEY FIRTH** were also Indigenous Olympians. **SHARON FIRTH** is now Alex's mentor.

Alex's Indigenous culture gives her strength and determination to reach her goals. Her family's hard work and values, help her stay strong and work hard. Alex sets a good example for others to follow and thanks her family for her success. Her grandfather, who went to a residential school, achieved great things. Alex knows that learning from tough times and developing skills can lead to success and help us deal with hard times better.

Whenever Alex finishes on the podium after an event, she always wears her lucky rabbit fur moccasins. Alex is so proud to get to show her Indigenous culture with the world. One of the things Alex has encountered is that some people use hurtful words without realizing their impact. She knows they might not mean to be unkind, they just lack understanding. Educating others about her Gwich'in roots is important to Alex and she does it with kindness. Of course it's not always easy, but Alex knows the impact of her effort is worth it.

Alex has some important advice about goals and dreams. She says, "If someone tells you your goals are unrealistic, it's because they don't think they could do it themselves. But that doesn't mean you can't do it!" Don't listen to people who say 'you can't' because if you hear it a lot, you might start to believe it. When Alex was a young girl, she wanted to be an Olympic ski-jumper but some people didn't believe she could do it. However, she worked hard and made her dreams come true. Alex shows us that with hard work, determination and surrounding yourself with the right people, anyone can achieve their wildest dreams!



# LEARNING ACTIVITIES

## LEARNING GOAL

The purpose of this lesson is to get students reflecting on their own cultures. By the end of the lesson and activity students should be able to make a clear connection between their culture and other cultures and how they can come together to create unity and a sense of community. The objective is to promote the theme of kindness and that we need to be kind when both teaching and learning about other cultures.

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social- emotional learning, visual arts

## MATERIALS

- Puzzle piece BLM for each student
- Alexandria Loutitt Athlete story (one per student, per group or displayed somewhere all students can see)
- Drawing materials (crayons, pencil crayons, markers, paint)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Ask students to share one goal they have for themselves. Encourage them to explain why this goal is important to them and share some first steps in achieving the goal. Emphasize that this can be a big goal or a small goal like reading more books or making a friend.
- Discuss with the class the topic of kindness and why it is important. Students can share examples of when someone was kind to them or a time they showed kindness to someone else. What does kindness look like, sound like and feel like?
- Ask students to think of something that they find challenging right now. Encourage them to think of how they can use hard work and practice to build habits and skills to make it less challenging.



## CONNECT

Lead a class discussion as a whole group about how Alex is teaching the world about Gwich'in culture (family stories and legacies, moccasins and traditional regalia). Then have students think, pair, share with a partner or small group about their own culture and what they know about it. Allow 10- 15 minutes for discussions to take place.

## PROCESS

Have any students that would like to share with the whole class what they discussed in small groups or partners. Explain that we all come from different cultures and it is important to be proud and share our cultures with others.

To extend this activity you can make a list as a whole class of 5-7 reasons why it is important to learn about cultures other than our own (inclusion of others, representation, diversity should be celebrated).

Distribute individual puzzle pieces and explain that today we are going to be celebrating our own cultures and we are going to represent our culture onto the puzzle pieces. Encourage students to think about food from their culture, days of celebration, traditional dress or even colours that represent it. Tell students that at the end of the activity, we will put all the puzzle pieces together to form a cultural mosaic.

## TRANSFORM

Encourage classmates to provide positive feedback to each other's artwork. Remind students of Alex's advice and that it is important to lead with kindness at all times.

After you have put all of the puzzle pieces together, display the cultural mosaic somewhere where students will see it often (inside the classroom, hallway outside the classroom or by the front entrance of the school).



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