Contested Terrain: Petition Edition

Lesson Plan: The Right to Write

Level Secondary

Objective To introduce students to the land petitioning process. Students will write a land petition using the governmental instructions.

Materials Petition of William Parks (1841)
Petition writing Instructions, published in *The Royal Gazette* in 1817

Background In order to acquire land, application had to be made by filing a land petition. A person did not have to be literate to submit a land petition, and either the clerk at the Land Office or a literate member of the community wrote the petition.

William Parks, an Irish immigrant, settled on Aboriginal land. In exchange for free rent of that land, Mr. Parks provided many services for his Aboriginal neighbours. He performed land surveys, supplied them with utensils, and wrote land petitions for them. Read William Parks' land petition for more details.

Land petitions followed a proper format as dictated by the New Brunswick government and the Provincial Secretary's Office. These instructions were published in the provincial newspaper, *The Royal Gazette*, in 1817.

Method Review the land petition format, using the printed instructions or by reading a few land petitions from this collection. Have students write a land petition, following the proper format. In their petitions, they will have completed the settlement tasks covered in the board game, *Contested Terrain: Petition Edition*. They can describe the type of house they have built, or even whether they have built a barn. Students might also note how many acres they have cleared and what kinds of crops they have planted. Have students choose either to write their own petition, or to act as a scribe for a neighbour petitioning for land.

Assessment Have students identify petitions which have been written by the applicant or by a scribe. The petitioner who cannot write signed his or her name with an "X."

Evaluation Discuss the differences between oral and print cultures.