



# Unit 7: The Whitecaps

## Inspirational Individuals

**Featured athlete: Andrea Neil**  
**Lesson Plan | Suggested Grades: 4-8**

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Lesson Plan



**Featured Athlete:**  
**Andrea Neil**

## Objectives:

Students will:

1. Read about the athletic career of Andrea Neil, a world renowned soccer player.
2. Discuss why Neil's career is considered as inspirational to many other soccer players.
3. Identify a person who they consider to be inspirational.
4. Create a visual and textual representation of that person and explain why that person is inspirational.

## Required Materials

1. Photocopies of biography of Andrea Neil (*appended at the end of this lesson plan*)
  - One copy per student
2. Writing and drawing tools
  - Teacher's choice: pencils/pens and paper OR laptops
  - If laptops are used, the teacher can decide whether to allow students to create their visual representations using images from the internet (and then print off the text and images together) or to draw their visual representations by hand (after printing off the text component of the assignment).
3. White 8.5x11 paper for students to make their posters
4. Scrap paper for writing the first part of poster's written component
5. Teacher-made example of the small poster that students will be creating.
  - Description of this poster is in the "Classroom Activity" section of this lesson plan.

## Opening (10 minutes)<sup>1</sup>

As a class, introduce the word "inspirational." Using the think/pair/share strategy, give students approximately two minutes to formulate their own definition of the word, and to then share that definition with their partner. Then ask a small number of students to share their definitions with the rest of the class. Explain to students that they will now be reading the story of a local athlete, who is a soccer player that many other athletes consider to be a very inspirational person – Andrea Neil.

## Classroom Activity (30 minutes)

1. As a class, read the biography of Andrea Neil out loud. After reading the biography, ask students to give examples of why she could be considered an inspirational athlete, using examples from the text.

*Examples:* Neil may inspire other female soccer players; Neil preserved though serious injuries to return to playing soccer; Neil represented Canada in numerous soccer games

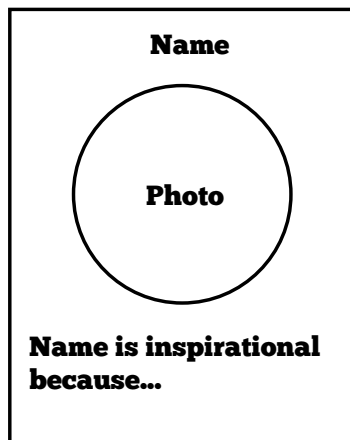
1 - NOTE: These time allocations are approximate, and have been estimated to fit into a class period of 45 minutes total. Please adjust the times to better suit your class if necessary.

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2. Ask students to try and think of an athlete from any sport (hockey, snowboarding, rodeo, etc) that they find inspirational.
- If a student is finding it very difficult to choose an athlete, they could (at the teacher's discretion) select another person they find inspirational.
3. Explain to students that they will be creating a "poster" that shows an image of this person, and some text about why that person is inspirational. Provide students with the following specifications/criteria:
- The poster will be made on one page of white, 8.5X11 paper.
  - The poster should contain the following:
    - The person's name
    - A short paragraph describing why that athlete is inspirational to the student (teacher may opt for students to instead create a numeric list of why that person is inspirational).
    - The paragraph should be brief (no more than five to six sentences), with the focus being on how the person is inspirational to the student.
    - A visual representation of that individual, such as the one shown below:



4. After reviewing the criteria with the students, have them begin to work on the writing component of the poster. Students should use the scrap paper for the first draft of their paragraphs. Once their rough draft is done, the student should bring it to the teacher for editing. After the teacher has reviewed the draft with the student, and the student has made any necessary corrections, they can retrieve a piece of white 8.5x11 paper and begin working on their poster.
- If students are creating their entire poster on the computer, they should use a program such as Word or Open Office Writer to facilitate the writing process. Even though these programs have built in editing services, students using this software should still have their teacher review their work before proceeding to the visual component.
5. The teacher can extend the amount of time to complete the posters at their discretion.

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## Conclusions and Reflections (5 minutes)

Ask for student volunteers to share their posters with the rest of the class. Each student should explain who their person is, and why they found that person to be inspirational. Once they are all finished, the posters could be displayed on a classroom wall or bulletin board inside the school.

## Evaluation

- Did the student finish their poster in the time allotted?
- Are all of the required components present on the poster?
  - Name of person
  - Short written explanation of why that person is inspirational
  - Illustration of that person

## Adaptations and Extensions

### Adaptations for Grades 1-3

- Students only compose one sentence for the written component of the poster. Students could either write the sentence themselves or have the teacher transcribe their reason onto the poster for them.

### Adaptations for Grades 9-12

- Students must select a fictional character, and create a poster that explains why that character is inspirational to them. They could select their own character, or use one that the teacher assigns (ex: from a novel the class is studying together).
  - For example, if studying Shakespeare, challenge students to use one of Shakespeare's characters.
  - Change the formatting of the text component:
    - Students write in the first person ("My name is Wayne Gretzky, and I am the greatest hockey player to have ever played the game. I am considered by many people to be an inspirational individual because...")
    - Students write in a specific style (ex: Shakespearean English)

### Extensions (all grades)

- Students create a short story or comic book that documents an event that their selected person/character is involved in.
- Students create a short presentation about their person/character, using their poster as their visual.
- Lead a discussion with the class: have any of the students had to make a difficult choice (just like Andrea did)? If so, what was it? How did they make their decision?

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## Curricular Links:

### Grade 4

#### English Language Arts

- **B2** Read fluently and demonstrate comprehension of a range of grade appropriate information texts
- **B8** Respond to selections they read or view
- **C1** Write clear, focussed personal writing for a range of purposes and audiences
- **C4** create meaningful visual representations that communicate personal response, information, and ideas relevant to the topic
- **C8** Use writing and representing to express personal responses and relevant opinions in response to experiences and texts

### Grade 5

#### English Language Arts

- **B2** Read fluently and demonstrate comprehension of a range of grade appropriate information texts
- **B8** Respond to selections they read or view
- **C1** Write a variety of clear, focussed personal writing for a range of purposes and audiences that demonstrates connections to personal experiences, ideas, and opinions
- **C4** Create meaningful visual representations for a variety of purposes and audiences that communicate personal response, information, and ideas relevant to the topic
- **C8** Use writing and representing to express personal responses and relevant opinions about experiences and texts

### Grade 6

#### English Language Arts

- **B2** Read fluently and demonstrate comprehension of grade-appropriate information texts with some specialized language
- **B8** Respond to selections they read or view
- **C1** Write a variety of clear, focussed personal writing for a range of purposes and audiences that demonstrates connections to personal experiences, ideas, and opinions
- **C4** Create meaningful visual representations for a variety of purposes and audiences that communicate personal response, information, and ideas relevant to the topic
- **C8** Use writing and representing to express personal responses and relevant opinions about experiences and texts

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## Grade 7

### English Language Arts

- **B2** Read fluently and demonstrate comprehension of grade-appropriate information texts with some specialized language and some complex ideas
- **B8** Respond to selections they read or view
- **C1** Write a variety of clear, focussed personal writing for a range of purposes and audiences that demonstrates connections to personal experiences, ideas, and opinions
- **C4** Create meaningful visual representations for a variety of purposes and audiences that communicate a personal response, information, and ideas relevant to the topic.
- **C8** Use writing and representing to critique, express personal responses and relevant opinions, and respond to experiences and texts

## Grade 8

### English Language Arts

- **B2** Read, both collaboratively and independently, to comprehend a variety of information and persuasive texts with some complexity of ideas and form
- **B8** Explain and support personal responses to texts
- **C1** Write meaningful personal texts that explore ideas and information
- **C4** Create thoughtful representations that communicate ideas and information

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Appendix



A young Andrea Neil playing for the Kerrisdale Express soccer team

## Andrea Neil Biography

Andrea Neil was born and raised in Vancouver, British Columbia. Growing up, she participated in both soccer and badminton, displaying immense talent in both sports. By the end of high school, Neil was considered a top Canadian national team prospect in badminton and soccer, and was soon advised to stop playing one sport and focus solely upon the other. Unable to choose one sport, she decided to hold off on making a decision until later on in her first year of university.

While attending the University of British Columbia, however, Andrea found herself still unable to decide which sport to focus upon. She eventually chose to take some time off during her second year of university, and instead travel the world as part of a tall ship's crew. She hoped that the time away would give her enough space to finally and fully make up her mind. During that trip, however, Neil experienced a significant and dangerous event that would help her to finally decide on which sport to pursue full time.

One of the many ports that the tall ship docked at while Andrea was on board was the Dominican Republic. One day, while exploring the Dominican Republic, Andrea was involved in a very serious motorcycle accident. Her leg was severely injured, and soon became infected. Doctors were concerned that she might lose her leg, but they were able to save it. She was quickly transported back to Canada, where she began to recover from her injuries.

Despite how scary the accident was, and the difficulty of the recovery process, Neil credited the entire event with helping her to finally be able to realize just how important soccer was to her, and just how much she wanted to keep playing:

"When you are forced to contemplate life in a deeper way, with me almost losing my leg...all of a sudden I realized how

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Appendix



Neil at Swangard Stadium as part of the Women's National Team

much I loved the game of soccer. In those moments things become crystal clear. To me it became obvious I was under-utilizing my brain as far as university was concerned. It really enabled me to look at life in a different way.”<sup>2</sup>

Once she had fully recovered, Andrea chose to return to UBC and rejoined the Thunderbirds women's soccer team. Neil led the team to the 1993 CIS national championship, during which she scored the game winning goal despite pain from stress fractures in her legs. She was named UBC's female athlete of the year in 1993. Andrea was named to Canada's national team in 1990, and remained on the team until 2007, when she retired from professional soccer. During those seventeen years, Andrea represented Canada at four women's World Cup tournaments. From 2001 to 2006, Andrea was also a well respected member of the Vancouver Whitecaps women's team, and was team captain when the team won two league championships in 2004 and 2006. She also holds multiple player records for both the Canadian national team and the Whitecaps women's team.

Following her retirement in 2007, Neil was named to the UBC Sports Hall of Fame in 2009, the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame in 2011, and both the BC Sports Hall of Fame and the Canadian Soccer Hall of Fame in 2012. In January 2013, Andrea returned to her soccer roots when she was named as the new head coach of the University of British Columbia's women's soccer team.

2 - <http://blogs.theprovince.com/2013/01/10/real-life-experiences-the-details-that-make-the-difference-for-new-ubc-coach-andrea-neil/>