

New ELA Curriculum and Incorporating Indigenous Ways of Knowing



ERLC Presentation
February 9, 2023 4-5 p.m.
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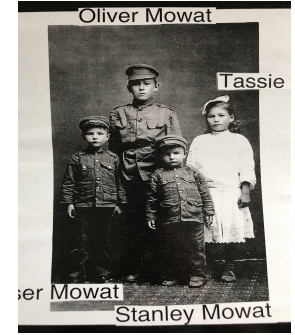
Land Acknowledgement

Tansi!

I live on Treaty 7, traditional Blackfoot Territory. There are Dene people and Metis Nation No. 3 as well.



Who is the presenter?



Well you may not be wondering, but I'll let you know (some context helps!).

- Manitoba Metis from what was historically known as the “Red River Settlement”, and for those who are Metis as well, our main family surnames are Mowat, McDonald, McKay and Beaudry.
- There's a school, park in Fort Saskatchewan and street in Edmonton named after my great grandfather James Mowat: <https://www.jamesmowat.ca/>
- Started as a music teacher in the core area of Winnipeg in 1988 and moved to Calgary in 1994.
- Have worked a lot in special education and with indigenous students.

Incorporating Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being into the Curriculum

What are Indigenous and Western Ways of Knowing?

- Indigenous Knowledges
- Western Knowledges
- Risks

This can be a daunting task for educators, so what can we do? It's important to remember to include indigenous ways of knowing regularly in lessons, so that this is understood to be apart of Canadian life and not a separate area of study.

The example of storytelling is a good place to start:

<https://vimeo.com/46515730>

What to avoid and what to include

Avoid:

- Cultural appropriation
- Using unauthorized materials (check with an elder and/or contact the creators of the website/video/story if unsure)
- Engaging in ceremony without an elder

Include:

- Storytelling (authorized/published stories)
- Land-based learning
- Language (vocabulary and phrases)
- Ways of knowing and being

Holistic Practices

In the classroom and throughout the curriculum, there are some holistic practices that we can employ to include indigenous ways of knowing. These are common practices or ones that have been adopted as common by indigenous Canadians:

The Sharing Circle

Storytelling

The Medicine Wheel

The 7 Grandfather Teachings

Land-Based Learning



How Can You Include Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being in Your Classrooms?



Sharing Circles



In traditional First Nations communities, meetings of any importance were held in a circle.

Talking Circles originated with First Nations leaders - the process was used to ensure that all leaders in the tribal council were heard, and that those who were speaking were not interrupted. Usually the Chief would initiate the conversation, with other members responding and sharing their perceptions and opinions of the topic under discussion. The process provides an excellent model for interaction within the learning environment as well. It is also very adaptive to any circle of people who need to discuss topics and make decisions together.

(From: <https://firstnationspedagogy.ca/circletalks.html>)

Different objects were used to pass around the circle to identify who was speaking, such as a talking stick, a feather, special stones, a wampum belt, a peace pipe, or a sacred share. In the circle we usually pass the object counter-clockwise or to the right, following the course of the moon.

Sharing Circles Lesson

All grade level exercises: [Sharing Circle \(K - 3\)](#)

K: Children explore listening and speaking skills through a variety of literacy experiences.

1: Students develop listening and speaking skills through sharing stories and information.

2: Students examine and adjust listening and speaking to communicate effectively.

3: Students examine and apply listening and speaking skills, processes, or strategies in a variety of formal and informal interactions.

4: Students examine and demonstrate how listening and speaking support connections and clarify understandings.

5: Students investigate how oral language can be designed to communicate ideas and information.

6: Students connect the quality and efficacy of oral communication to oral language skills.

Inquiry-Based Learning & Open-Ended Questions

Inquiry-Based Learning may be used for any subject.

Many students struggle with open-ended questions and not being able to find a concrete solution or answer.

In FNMI tradition, an elder or knowledge keeper usually asks open-ended questions, but does not give a conclusive answer...the child must discover their own answer. It is how we develop our internal values compass and learn how to problem solve.

[Talking Inquiry - Knowledge Building Circles » Madly Learning](#)

[inquiry based literature circles | bctela](#)

Storytelling and Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Language Arts

Storytelling is integral to indigenous languages and culture. It is the means that is used to pass along generational knowledge, teach values, and spend time together. Any lesson involving storytelling or story structure can be used in a circle.

Storytelling is how culture and family stories are passed down by a people who have an oral tradition:

[Recording History Through Oral Tradition](#)

What can educators do to honour indigenous storytelling?

Use authentic texts: Identifying authentic texts can sometimes be a challenge. To assist in this process, FNEESC has published the resource guide, *Authentic First Peoples Resources for Use in K-7 Classrooms* (FNEESC, 2012). This guide is available online at www.fnesc.ca.

What can educators do to honour indigenous storytelling?

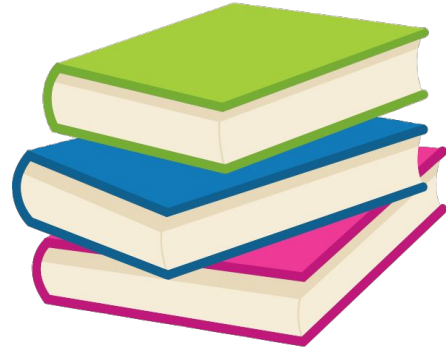
Different stories have different purposes. Traditional and contemporary First Peoples stories are told for teaching — life lessons, community responsibilities, rites of passage, etc. sharing creation stories recording personal, family, and community histories “mapping” the geography and resources of an area ensuring cultural continuity (e.g., knowledge of ancestors, language) healing entertainment.

What can educators do to honour indigenous storytelling?

Copyright and Protocol: It is important to recognize that local cultural protocols exist. Permission for use of First Peoples cultural materials or practices such as legends, stories, songs, designs, crests, photographs, audiovisual materials, and dances should be obtained from the relevant individuals, families, Elders, hereditary chiefs, Band Councils, or Tribal Councils.

Storytelling

Story, Legend, and Myth Because of the connotations often associated with the terms “legend” and “myth” (i.e., fiction), it is preferable to use the term “story” or “traditional story.”



Storytelling

What themes and topics might I encounter in First Peoples resources?

seasonal cycle

seasonal activities

time and place

collaboration and cooperation

sustainability & continuity

vitality inclusivity & belonging

[In Our Own Words – Bringing Authentic First Peoples Content to the K-3 Classroom \(2020\)](#)



Storytelling

- *well-being*
- *traditional knowledge*
- *identity relationship to the natural world*
- *conflict & conflict resolution*
- *diversity*
- *racism & stereotypes*
- *humour*

Storytelling

- *respect ways of learning*
- *competition*
- *relationality & connectedness*
- *roles of teacher & learner*
- *language tradition*
- *generosity*
- *grief & loss*

Storytelling

- *worldview*
- *ceremony*
- *feasts*
- *wisdom*
- *family*
- *food*
- *games*

Storytelling

- *listening*
- *family and community roles*
- *feelings*
- *ownership*
- *nurturing*
- *decision making*
- *sharing, fairness*

Storytelling

- *structure and hierarchy*
- *Elders*
- *self-reliance*
- *protocol*
- *performance (song, dance, drama, etc.)*
- *balance*

Storytelling

- *relationship with spirit world*
- *storytelling*
- *tricksters*
- *rights and responsibilities*
- *citizenship & service*
- *dreams & visions*

Storytelling

- *beliefs*
- *traditional technologies (transportation, tools, food gathering prep & storage)*
- *rites of passage*
- *art*
- *tradition*
- *modernity symbols and symbolism*

Lesson Plan: Leah Dorion “The Giving Tree”

Combining Sharing Circles and Storytelling is a great place to start:

["The Giving Tree: A Retelling of a Traditional Métis Story," Written and Illustrated by Leah Dorion](#)

[Elementary Lesson for The Giving Tree- A Retelling of a Traditional Metis Storyby Leah Dorion Teacher's Guide, Les](#)



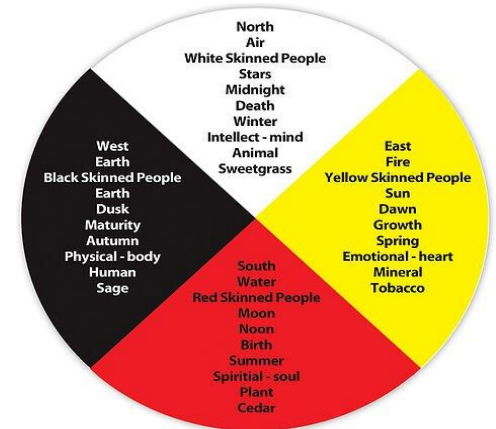
Storytelling Lesson

What is storytelling in an FNMI context?: [LESSON PLAN #1](#)

K: Children explore how messages can be organized.

- 1: Students examine ways that messages can be organized and presented for different purposes.
- 2: Students create and enhance ideas and information by applying a variety of writing processes. (Take the storytelling from oral to written.)
- 3: Students investigate writing and research processes that support informed written expression. (Take the storytelling from oral to written.)
- 4: Students construct and organize text to share perspectives and develop creative expression. (Take the storytelling from oral to written.)
- 5: Students enhance the accuracy and artistry of expression through creative and critical thinking processes. (Take the storytelling from oral to written.)
- 6: Students create texts that reflect personal voice and style through creative and critical thinking processes. (Take the storytelling from oral to written.)

The Medicine Wheel



[Medicine Wheel TEACHINGS](#) ●●●● (NATIVE Medicine Wheel System EXPLAINED!)

The Medicine Wheel (sometimes called a Sacred Hoop) is an important Indigenous symbol used by Anishinaabe, Cree, and other Native North American tribes to represent the core of (their) worldviews.

The use and meaning of the Medicine Wheel is different, depending upon the culture and teachings of each group of indigenous people.

1. All Aspects of Life Connect
2. Unending Balance
3. Sharing and Organizing of Knowledge
4. The Sacred Number '4'
5. Many Parts Make a Whole

From: <https://tribaltradeco.com/blogs/medicine-wheel/medicine-wheel-teachings-native-medicine-wheel-system-explained>

Medicine Wheel Lesson Ideas

[The 7 Lessons of the Medicine Wheel](#)

The Medicine Wheel can be used to show connectedness in so many areas. It can be a visual representation for older students to summarize their research and for younger ones to organize their ideas.

K: Children experiment with written expression of ideas and information.

1: Students create messages through the application of writing processes.

2; Students create and enhance ideas and information by applying a variety of writing processes.

3: Students investigate writing and research processes that support informed written expression.

4: Students construct and organize text to share perspectives and develop creative expression.

5: Students enhance the accuracy and artistry of expression through creative and critical thinking processes.

6: Students create texts that reflect personal voice and style through creative and critical thinking processes.

The 7 Grandfather Teachings

Many Aboriginal organizations and communities have adopted the 7 guiding principles, in one form or another, as a moral stepping stone and cultural foundation. Each community has adapted the teachings to suit their community values. Despite where the teachings may have originated, they share the same concepts of abiding by a moral respect for all living things. (From: <https://www.southernnetwork.org/site/seven-teachings>)

[Seven Grandfather Teachings First Nations Métis Inuit Student Education Resources Alberta Educators](#)

Character Education through journaling and writing: [Teacher's Guide - Seven Grandfather Teachings.indd](#)

Edmonton SPCA: [The Seven Sacred/Grandfather Teachings - everylivingthing](#)

Story Development and Poetry: [Gr K-8: Sacred Teachings « Royal Saskatchewan Museum](#)

Comic Book Creation and Storyboarding: <https://pinnguaq.com/learn/comic-book-storytelling-using-seven-grandfather-teachings/>

Land-Based Learning and Authenticity

...where Indigenous land-based education is understood in terms of its deepest and most expansive potential and meaning, it gives context to the knowledges that arise from the land as well as from a specific nation, says Wilson. It encompasses the preservation of culture, language and philosophy, and addresses the ramifications of colonization and “epistemicide”—the severing of Indigenous knowledge systems as a consequence of policies designed to limit or cut off access to food, sacred places, culture and language. (From: [Land as teacher: understanding Indigenous land-based education](#))

What are some ways to do this?

Intentional activities that are on the land, learning about indigenous ways of knowing and avoiding an “excuse” to have outdoor education:

[INFUSING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE - Land Based Learning](#)

Land-Based Learning

The land informs indigenous peoples about every aspect of life. This connection to the land is found in all traditional teachings through the use of all of the materials from nature.

How to incorporate LBL: [3. Connecting With the Land: Including Land- Based Activities in Your Units](#)

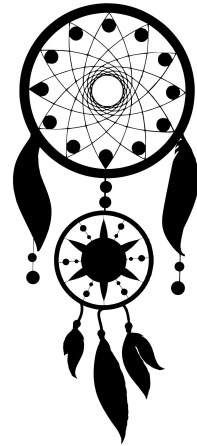
Paragraph Writing: [First Nation Stories - NCCIE](#)

Stories about the stars: <https://acakwuskwun.com/>

What can be incorporated for ELA and Literature?

For Kindergarten to Grades 6 English Language Arts and Literature, there are many ways to incorporate indigenous ways of knowing in your classroom.

- Talking stick/sharing circle
- Oral stories/traditions
- Sit spots for outside observation
- Printed stories
- Kid-based language
- Indigenous words and phrases
- songs



Indigenous Languages

I've encountered an unfamiliar Aboriginal language word. I'm afraid of being disrespectful if I mispronounce it. What should I do? : If the language is from your local area, try to find a speaker of the language to teach you. If this option is not available to you, or if the language is not local, the First Voices website is a valuable resource. This site contains audio clips and other language learning resources for a number of First Peoples languages in Canada. Visit www.firstvoices.com/

Questions/Comments

