

PART ONE: FOUNDATIONS

4. Finding and Using Narratives in the Science Classroom

Using traditional narratives in science units is a way of connecting with Indigenous knowledge and acknowledges the First Peoples Principal of Learning: “Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.”

What to look for in finding narratives in science classes.

- The story should be authentic. It will be approved by an Indigenous group or body, either published directly by them or with an indication that the story or publication has their approval.
- While there may not be a narrative that relates to specific curriculum content, you may be able to find a local story that speaks to a holistic approach to the content.

Narrative sources

- Ideally, a local First Nations storyteller would visit your class to share a narrative that relates to your unit. Work with your school and district’s Aboriginal Education staff to help you to find a storyteller. They may also be able to help you communicate with the storyteller the theme of the unit and the type of story that will fit with the topic of your unit.
- There are video sources of First Nations storytellers sharing stories on the internet. These can be relied on to be authentic. However, beware of videos that illustrate or act out a traditional story unless you are sure that it is authentic and produced by or with Indigenous artists.
- Children’s books
- Published sources

Things to know about narratives

- Traditional narratives that are printed may have different structures than students may be used to. Many Indigenous narratives are complex intertwined stories that can take hours or days to tell fully. Often when an Elder has shared a story that has later been printed, it is just one part of a much longer narrative.
- The stories are out of context. As traditional stories were told many times, people would have known the cultural references and the context of a character or an event, so the narrative we read today often lacks this context.

What can students look for in a traditional narrative?

- Often examples of Traditional Ecological Knowledge are embedded in a story. Sometimes they may be explicit, other times they may be implied.
- What lessons does the story teach about human’s relationship with the land?
- How is an Indigenous perspective or worldview embedded in the story?

PART ONE: FOUNDATIONS

Sources for Narratives

Here are a few sources to find First Nations stories and narratives. More references can be found in the Bibliography, page 273.

- *People of the Land: Legends of the Four Host First Nations*. Theytus Books. 2009. Lil'wat, Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh narratives. (See summaries of the stories in the Bibliography, page 275.)
- Sinixt Nation. Chaptikwl (Stories)
<http://sinixtnation.org/content/chaptikwl-stories>
 - Coyote meets the Wind and the Sinixt
 - How the Columbia River Came to Be
 - Mountain Goat Brings Huckleberries
 - Frog Mountain Story (ancient survival story of Sinixt) includes video
 - Coyote at Kettle Falls
- Man Turned to Stone: T'xwelátse. Stó:lō Nation. Man Turned to Stone website. Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre. Link at <https://tinyurl.com/fnesc90>

This website describes the traditional story of the man who was transformed to stone, as well as a background to the importance of stories and the connections with the land.
- Transformation Stories. See Unit 2, Activity 2.1