

Foundations

This section provides key background information to assist in the planning of locally-based units for BC First Peoples 12. It gives insights into ways of bringing First Peoples' knowledge and perspective into the classroom. It also suggests ways of ensuring a reciprocal relationship with First Nations communities when planning student activities.

Foundations includes the following sections:

1. The Many Stories of BC First Peoples
2. Shared Concepts and Historical Topics
3. Engaging with Indigenous Communities
4. Indigenous Guest Speaker Considerations
5. Incorporating Story into Learning Activities
6. Creating Safe Learning Environments
7. Connecting with the Land
8. Talking Circles

1. The Many Stories of BC First Peoples

At a workshop in the development of this document, a teacher was thinking through one of the activities, and pondered aloud, “So what’s the story here?” The response came, “Which story? There are so many different stories.”

The stories of BC First Peoples are many and diverse. Deciding which stories and topics that students will study in your course depends on some key factors.

Within BC there are more than 200 First Nations, speaking over thirty languages, living in myriad ecosystems from the desert of the Okanagan to the rain forests of the coast, and the boreal forests of the north. Each has its own body of knowledge special to its local territories.

In addition, there are Métis and Inuit, as well as First Nations from elsewhere in Canada, who make BC their home.

Each Indigenous community has its own unique cultural history, its own encounters with colonialism, and its own present-day successes and challenges. These all result in a wealth of possible stories that can be presented in one BC First Peoples 12 course.

It is therefore important for teachers and students to develop and explore their own stories about First Peoples in BC based on some key factors:

- The local First Nations and other First Peoples living in your area
- The knowledge, experiences and interests of students
- The knowledge, experience and interests of the teacher

Many stories, many lenses

The materials in this Teacher Resource Guide are meant to be a starting place for educators. They are not comprehensive, and hold only a portion of topics that could be studied in BC First Peoples 12.

2. Shared Concepts and Historical Topics

There are many important concepts and topics relevant to the study of First Peoples in BC that are woven through the theme units in this guide. These topics underlie the experiences of most First Peoples and inform the foundations of BC First Peoples 12.

They are briefly summarized below in three sections:

- Indigenous Knowledges and Worldviews
- Colonialism and Colonization
- Moving Forward

Indigenous Knowledges and Worldviews

The First Peoples of British Columbia live in diverse communities and geographies and have equally diverse languages, cultures, histories, economies and politics. The unique knowledge each group holds is part of their individual worldview.

However, First Peoples share a number of important values and aspects of worldview. Some are briefly outlined below.

Family

Family is central to First Peoples' societies. The concept of family goes beyond parents and child, but includes relationships between multiple generations. Families are traditionally at the center of economies and social organization. They create identity and are the holders of Traditional Knowledge.

Elders

Elders are given great respect. They are key to transmitting knowledge to children and the community, providing knowledge, love, care, and to show us how we need to interact with each other.

Interconnectedness

First Peoples share a common belief that we are all connected to nature and to each other. This notion that we are all connected with everything in the world is expressed by many First Peoples in the phrase "All my relations." Inherent in this view of the world is the understanding that everything in the universe has a place there and deserves respect.

Language

First Peoples in BC speak a great diversity of languages. There are more than 30 languages spoken by First Nations. In addition, there are regional dialects. The languages have an intimate relationship with the land and how First Peoples interact with the environment.

Please note that while activities in this guide suggest learning relevant words in the local First Nations language, some Nations may prefer not to share their language.

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Oral Traditions and Traditional Stories

Oral Traditions are the means by which cultural transmission occurs over generations, other than through written records. Among First Peoples, Oral Traditions may consist of told stories or narratives, songs, and other forms. They are often accompanied by dance or various forms of visual representation such as carvings or masks.

In addition to expressing spiritual and emotional truth, such as through the use of symbol and metaphor, Oral Traditions provide a record of literal truth, for example, historical events.

Traditional Stories are culturally significant stories and narratives that have been passed down through Oral Traditions.

Protocols

In First Peoples' societies, Cultural Protocols reflect the values that hold and bind the people together. Protocols practiced by First Peoples today grew out of the practical ways of acting and relating with one another from the times of the ancestors.

Protocols vary from one community to another. They usually have a high degree of complexity that is missed by the uninitiated. Understanding, following, and respecting First Peoples' Protocols requires learning and experience.

Though different First Peoples have different Protocols, there are also many similarities and intersections of Protocols between groups. Many First Peoples recognize a need for Protocols and cultural practices to evolve and adapt to current times and circumstances.

Respect

Respect for others and the world around you are central to First Peoples worldviews. It involves a person honouring where they come from, the Traditional Stories and culture of their community, and themselves. It is intergenerational, and is a value often taught to children, expressed through story, and practiced in daily life and at special occasions.

Respect includes understanding Cultural Protocols that include relationships with one another, and relationships with the land and territory.

Reciprocity and Responsibility

An essential value of Indigenous worldviews is the understanding of reciprocal relationships in all interactions in life. In such relationships, there are mutual benefits to both parties. From a First Peoples' perspective, it may mean giving back to the land when we receive from it, or giving back in a personal relationship. For students it could mean giving back or sharing when they have had the opportunity to learn new knowledge. By emphasizing the importance of reciprocity, First Peoples ensure that the world is kept in balance and maintained in a sustainable way.

Responsibilities are interwoven with kinship ties in Indigenous cultures.

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Everyone in the community has a responsibility to the land, their family and community, and to themselves. Spheres of responsibility may include one's family and community, the ancestors, and the land. It involves aspects of stewardship and caring for others.

Sense of Place

A Sense of Place includes the memories, emotions, histories, and spiritualities that bind First Peoples to the land. This connection with place, with the land, plays a significant role in forming worldviews. Life for First Peoples in the past and today depends on their particular knowledge of the land, their unique relationship with the environment, and their shared values and practices through which they make sense of the world.

Five concepts of place have been identified, common to most First Peoples:^{*}

- Place is multidimensional. More than the geographical space, it also holds cultural, emotional and spiritual spaces which cannot be divided into parts.
- Place is a relationship. All life is interrelated.
- Place is experiential. Experiences a person has on the land give it meaning.
- Place is local. While there are commonalities, each First Nation has a unique, local understanding of Place.
- Place is land-based. Land is interconnected and essential to all aspects of culture.

Traditional Knowledge and Wisdom

Each community holds a body of knowledge that relates specifically to its land and territory. It includes knowledge of the natural world, scientific knowledge, ancient stories and narratives, cultural teachings and ways of health and wellness. It is taught and passed on from generation to generation. Much of the wisdom is sacred and is not shared with non-community members.

^{*}Adapted from Michell et al., *Learning Indigenous Science From Place*, University of Saskatchewan, 2008, p. 27-28.

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Colonialism and Colonization

A number of broad historical topics relevant to First Peoples' experiences with colonialism and colonization underly the theme units in this guide.

Key Considerations:

- There have been, and continue to be, diverse responses to colonization by First Peoples in BC
- Many present day events, policies and social issues affecting First Peoples have their roots in Canadian colonial history

Assimilation

Assimilation is when a distinct group is absorbed into a dominant society and loses its identity. In Canada, federal assimilation policies were aimed to cause First Peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada.

Colonialism and Colonization

Colonialism occurs when one nation establishes political control over another nation or region, sending settlers to claim the land from the original inhabitants and taking its resources. Colonialism involves subjugation of one or more groups of people by another.

Colonization is the process in which a nation takes control of lands governed and managed by Indigenous peoples, imposing its own social, cultural, religious, economic, and political systems and values. A colonized region is called a colony.

Disease and Depopulation

Unfamiliar infectious diseases like smallpox and influenza accompanied the onset of colonization, resulting in a massive depopulation of Indigenous communities. This had a devastating effect on all aspects of First Peoples' societies, including governance and leadership, and the functioning of Oral Traditions.

Historical Trauma and Intergenerational Trauma

These are terms for unresolved grief and trauma that can be passed from parents to children and which continues to be acted out or recreated in the lives of individuals, families and communities.

Indian Act

This is a Canadian Act of Parliament that concerns registered or Status Indians, their bands, and the system of Indian reserves. Since its creation in 1876, it has controlled many aspects of economic, cultural, educational and personal lives of First Nations. The Indian Act has been amended a number of times. Changes before the Second World War were increasingly restrictive. Major changes in 1951 removed many restrictions. The last revision in 1985 is still in effect today.

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Indian Reserve

The system under the Indian Act whereby First Nations were removed from Traditional Territories and restricted to small parcels of land. For many this meant loss of access to traditional resources as well as loss of other human rights and freedoms not experienced by other Canadians.

Indian Residential schools

Boarding schools run by the federal government and churches which removed children from the families and communities, creating multi-generational impacts.

Missionization

This refers to the driving goals of European Christian religious bodies to convert Indigenous people to Christianity. This was based on the concept that non-Christians were “heathen” and “uncivilized” and needed to be enlightened. This led to the repression and near extinction of many aspects of First Peoples’ cultural and spiritual practices, languages, and knowledge.

Sixties Scoop

Social welfare practices beginning in the 1960s, as the residential schools were closed down, resulted in an increasing number of Indigenous children being apprehended and taken from their families. The majority were placed in non-Indigenous foster or adoptive homes. Prior to 1980 they were removed without consent from the parents, and often without any warning.

Systemic Racism

Systemic racism, also known as structural or institutional racism, is racism that is built into social systems such as government, police, judiciary, business, media and other institutions. First Peoples experiences through colonization include both overt and systemic racism.

Moving Forward

First Peoples have responded to colonization with a continuity of values and practices, rooted in the continuity of Indigenous traditional values and practices before contact. Various types of action by First Peoples and others have brought many changes to build a broader understanding of the relationships between First Peoples, government and other Canadians. However, there is still much work to do.

Decolonization

Decolonization is used to describe the process of “undoing colonialism.” It is a concept used by many organizations and people to describe their efforts to support Reconciliation in Canada by critically examining, and undoing beliefs, values, structures and processes that are steeped in colonial mindsets and that systemically and overtly devalue or exclude Indigenous peoples, knowledges and process.

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It is also important to recognize that some people may consider this term misleading, believing that because the British Columbia K-12 system is inherently a colonial structure, it is not able to be decolonized. This perspective still supports the process of critically examining and questioning beliefs, values, structures and process that represent colonial perspectives, and working to change the system to make it more equitable for Indigenous learners and communities.

Diversity

Despite efforts to assimilate First Peoples, their diversity remains strong and evident. It relates directly to Place – the connections First Peoples have to the places of the ancestors. Cultural diversity within each group is quite vast and can even exist within a small geographic area.

It is important to understand the origins of well-known cultural expressions and objects. This can lead to what is known as “pan-Indianism” or “pan-Indigenous” where cultural features specific to one place or Indigenous group are applied to all First Peoples. For example, “Turtle Island,” a term from Eastern Canada, is not a part of the traditions of BC First Nations.

Diversity also is relevant within communities. Not all members will agree on some important issues such as treaties, pipelines, and economic development. Be aware there may be potential differences that could impact classroom learning.

Indigenous Rights and Title

BC First Nations have always fought to have Indigenous Rights and Title recognized and respected. Only in recent years have governments begun to recognize the existence of Indigenous Rights and Title.

Today, First Nations communities and individuals hold diverse perspectives on how to ensure recognition of Indigenous Rights and Title. To achieve their goals some First Nations are involved with the BC Treaty Process, while a small number of First Nations have signed treaties with Canada and others use other processes. For more information, see *BC First Nations Land, Title, and Governance* (FNESC/FNSA 2019).

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

This inquiry held from 2015 to 2019, was in response to the national crisis regarding the exceptionally high number of Indigenous women who have gone missing or have been murdered. Years of activism and protest to build awareness resulted in the inquiry, with a Final Report delivered in June 2019.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1991

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) was initiated in 1991 to examine the relationships between Indigenous Peoples and the Canadian government and society. The Final Report, published in 5 volumes, was submitted in November 1996. Although it made over 400 recommendations, little direct action was taken. However it remains a comprehensive source of research, and can be a very useful resource for students.

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Self-Determination and Self-Government

The goal of First Nations is to return to the self-determination they enjoyed as autonomous societies before contact. This includes establishing self-government, which is being achieved through a number of processes, including treaties and self-government agreements.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, 2006, came after an increasing number of First Peoples took action against the government and churches over abuses in Indian Residential Schools. Part of this agreement was to create the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Thousands of survivors, their families and others across Canada made statements to document memories of the schools and their impacts. The goal was to facilitate Reconciliation among former students, their families, their communities and all Canadians. It was active from 2008 to 2015.

The Final Report was delivered in 2015 including 94 Calls to Action, recommendations for future action. The statements, documents and other materials are housed at the National Research Centre on Indian Residential Schools at the University of Winnipeg, where the work of the Commission is being carried on.

References for Building Greater Understanding

A number of resources have been developed recently by Indigenous writers that may help teachers and students build a deeper understanding of perspectives and topics that are important to First Peoples.

Gray, Lynda. *First Nations 101*. Adaawx Publishing, 2022. This is a book for general audiences, with, as it says on the cover, “tons of stuff you need to know about First Nations people.”

Joseph, Bob. *Indigenous Relations. Insights, Tips and Suggestions to Make Reconciliation a Reality*. Designed for people in business and governments who work with Indigenous Peoples, this is also a useful reference for students and teachers.

McCue, Duncan. *Reporting in Indigenous Communities*. <http://riic.ca/> This website and blog are aimed at journalists, but have important perspectives that can be applied by teachers and students.

Younging, Gregory. *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples*. Brush Education, 2018. This is a guide for writers and publishers, but has useful information about important aspects of engaging with and writing about Indigenous peoples for a wider audience.

3. Engaging with Indigenous Communities

The key to using these resources is to focus on local First Nations and other Indigenous peoples as much as possible. The resources suggest general ideas for your classroom, and provide examples from diverse BC communities. However, they need to be supported by authentic content that relates to the local First Nations or other Indigenous communities. This means making connections with members of the communities wherever possible.

What Do We Mean By Community?

In most cases in this guide, community refers to the local First Nation. There are more than 200 First Nations communities representing the original peoples of the land known as British Columbia. Each has its own social and cultural history, Protocols, and governance systems tied to their traditional territories.

First Nations communities use a variety of names, such as Band (Nee-Tahi-Buhn Band), First Nation (High Bar First Nation), Indian Band (Osoyoos Indian Band), Nation (Cheslatta Carrier Nation), or Tribe (Gwawaenuk Tribe).

Every school is located on the Traditional Territory of at least one First Nation and may enroll students from more than one First Nation, as well as Métis and Inuit students. Schools or school districts that do not have a specific First Nation on whose territory it is recognized that the school district is on, can remember that all the territory now known as British Columbia is still First Nations Traditional Territory.

- Community may also be used to describe a broader Indigenous group within a larger locality. For example, there is a large Urban Cree community in Vancouver, and there are many Métis people throughout the province.
- Community can also mean any non-Indigenous village, town or city. For clarification, in this document the words town, municipality and locality are used to refer to non-Indigenous communities.

School Location

How you approach these units will depend on where your school is located:

First Nations Community

For schools in a First Nations community, students will likely focus on their own community. Students may have direct experience with many of the topics discussed in the theme units, and they may have family members who are directly involved with contemporary aspects of the topics studied. The First Nations language may be taught in the school.

Schools that serve one or more First Nations communities

For public schools which serve one or more First Nations communities, there likely is a relationship built up between the school and community(ies). They may have a large number of students from one or more local communities,

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with established formal relationships between the school district and community(ies). First Nations language may be taught in schools.

Schools with Indigenous students from different communities

For schools or school districts which have a significant number of First Nations or Métis students from different communities, or parts of Canada, it is important to first ensure an understanding of whose traditional territories on which the school is located. Learning about the different First Nations, Métis and Inuit from outside British Columbia and Canada helps students understand the diversity of Indigenous peoples, both within British Columbia and across the country.

Schools with few Indigenous students

Even though a school may have few or no Indigenous students, it is still important to value and incorporate First Peoples knowledge and perspectives. For schools with few First Nations students, it is still essential to build an understanding of the Traditional Territories on which the school is located, as all land in BC is First Nations Traditional Territory. In their studies students could undertake comparative studies of themes and topics with different parts of the province.

Respecting Community Protocols

It is important when learning by engaging with Indigenous communities that students and teachers are aware of local Protocols.

Ways of respecting Protocols can be thought of in two different ways:

- Traditional and contemporary Protocols that are followed within a specific Indigenous community. These relate to the customs and laws that members of a community follow. Some of these may be shared with people outside the community, and some may not. For example, there are specific Protocols to be followed at a Powwow or Potlatch. Some of these may be shared with invited guests.
- Protocols involving how people from outside the Indigenous community behave and interact with the community. These need to be learned and understood. These include a range of situations which require respectful practices:
 - Protocols around Oral Traditions and sharing stories.
 - Territorial Protocols.
 - Sharing Traditional Knowledge.
 - Using cultural materials and practices, such as crest designs.
 - Using preferred local terms. For example, some First Nations still use the word “Indian” as a part of their Nations’ name.
 - Cultural Protocols regarding respecting discussion and presentation of Indigenous Knowledge.

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Protocols: Welcome and Acknowledgment

It is important to understand the difference between a Welcome to a First Nations Traditional Territory and an Acknowledgment of Traditional Territory. Both are continuations of Protocols that have been practiced by First Nations for millennia.

A Welcome is a public act given by members of the First Nation on whose Territory an event is taking place. The form of the welcome depends on the particular Protocols of the Nation. It may be a welcoming address, a prayer or in some gatherings, a traditional dance or song, and is decided upon by the First Nation.

An Acknowledgment is an act of respect for local First Nations and their traditional territories. It is a recognition of their ongoing presence on the land in the past, present and future. Respect and recognition are a key part of Reconciliation.

An Acknowledgment is usually given at the beginning of an assembly, meeting, class, performance or other public gathering. It is the responsibility of the leader, host, or emcee of the event to give the Acknowledgement. In some gatherings, individual speakers may also add their personal Acknowledgments. In many schools, an Acknowledgment is made at the beginning of the school day.

If you are not sure of the correct Acknowledgement to use, see your district Indigenous Education Department.

Cultural Materials and Intellectual Rights, Protocols, and Policies

It is important to remember that cultural materials or process that are shared by a First Nation remains the property of the Nation. When working collaboratively to develop locally-based resources it is also important to remember that the knowledge shared by individuals, families, Clans or a Nation remains their intellectual property.

Protocols for Connecting with the Community

It is important to understand and practice the local Protocols in areas such as:

- Inviting Elders and other knowledgeable community members into the classroom to speak
- Respecting the natural world when going out on field trips
- Visiting First Nations lands and territories
- Interviewing people
- Holding special events such as a celebratory feast
- Developing units with local First Peoples content

Most communities have Protocols in place to be followed when engaging with Elders and Knowledge Keepers. This may include showing respect by offering a gift to the person, or perhaps to the land when on a field trip.

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In First Nations schools, work with the principal and community members to develop connections for working with Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

A list of school district Indigenous contacts is available online at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/apps/imcl/imclWeb/AB.do

For public schools, work through your district's Indigenous Education Department.

Guidance can be sought from local learning centres and community organizations such as Friendship Centres, First Nations government offices, Tribal Councils or cultural centres.

It is important to work with the appropriate agencies to make sure that certain Elders and Knowledge Keepers do not get over-worked or called upon too often. Also, note that some First Nations do not have the resources to work directly with school districts.

Some activities suggest that classes visit nearby First Nations communities. Ensure that before such visits take place, you ask permission from appropriate authorities.

Ensure everyone understands that all Traditional Knowledge shared by local First Nations is inherently that Nation's intellectual property.

4. Indigenous Guest Speaker Considerations

It is important to follow Protocols when inviting a member of a First Nations community or Indigenous organization to a classroom or school. Below are some general considerations and processes. There are also often Protocols specific to local communities. School district Indigenous education departments or community education departments can also provide guidance regarding those specific Protocols.

These considerations can also be adapted when taking students on field trips or into field learning experiences that will be led by, or facilitated by, a member of a First Nations community or Indigenous organization.

Some of the topics included in this Teacher Resource Guide may be political in nature, with different opinions held within the same community. Be aware of remaining neutral, and where applicable invite speakers that represent different perspectives.

See pages 169-174 of the book *Gather*, by Richard Van Camp for more suggestions about protocols when inviting Elders and other guests to the school.

Before the Visit

- Determine the purpose of the visit (how it is connected to the curriculum or learning standards for the class or course). If it is not directly connected to the curriculum, be clear about the intended learning goals so that the guest visit is a meaningful experience for all involved.
- It is a culturally appropriate Protocol for guest speakers to be provided with a gift and/or honorarium for sharing their time and knowledge.
 - Consult with the school district's Indigenous education department or the local First Nations to determine the appropriate amount or gift (if the speaker has not already indicated an amount for an honorarium).
 - Determine where funds will come from in advance.
 - If the school and/or school district requires any paperwork to be completed before payment can be issued, ensure that this is done well in advance of the visit so that payment can be issued at the time of visit or as soon as possible afterward.
- Talk with the speaker about the details of the visit:
 - Date and time of the visit
 - The course and grade levels of the students
 - Approximate number of students
 - Let the speaker know what content/learning has led up to the visit.
- Ask the speaker about any specific needs:
 - Are there any hand-outs that need to be photocopied in advance, or any equipment or supplies needed?
 - Is there any specific information that students should know before the visit?
 - Are there any specific Protocols that the students and adults need to be aware of and follow during the visit?
 - Is there anything else that will help make the visit more comfortable for the speaker (especially if it is an Elder)?
 - Would it help to have the classroom/space organized in a specific way?
 - Ask for permission to take photos or videotape (if desired).

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- Ask the speaker for some background information that can be used to introduce them to the students (for example, where the speaker is from, his or her role or occupation, noteworthy experiences or accomplishments).
- Arrange arrival details:
 - Ensure everyone knows where the speaker will be met. For example, arrange to have the speaker met in the parking lot, at the front door of the school, or in the main office.
 - In some situations, the speaker may need transportation from home.
 - If possible, include students in the greeting.
- Ensure the students are prepared prior to the visit:
 - Connect speaker's visit to students' previous learning
 - Review respectful behaviour with students, including non-verbal communication
 - Model for students how to introduce themselves
 - Brainstorm with students questions that they can ask
 - Prepare students to provide a thank-you to speaker
- Ensure office staff and administrators know that a guest is expected.

Day of Visit

- Prepare the physical space of the meeting area. Set up any necessary equipment.
- Welcome guest, offering water/tea/coffee. Let them know where the washrooms are located.
- Introduce speaker to students and if appropriate do an Acknowledgment of territory.
- If students will be introducing themselves to the speaker, consider a talking circle format, saying name and where they are from.
 - Ensure there is time for questions/discussion at the end of the session.
 - Have student(s) formally thank the speaker and present gift or honorarium.
 - If possible, debrief the session with speaker.
 - Walk the guest out.

After the Visit

- Debrief the session with the students.
- Do follow-up activity with students.
- Have students follow up with thank-you letter.
- Touch base with speaker to ensure that honorarium was received (if not presented on day of session).

It is important that the teacher stay present for the session as this models for the students a valuing of the knowledge and time of the speaker. If any behavioural challenges occur, it is the teacher's responsibility to address them, not the speaker's.

5. Incorporating Story into Learning Activities

Story or narrative is one of the main methods of traditional Indigenous learning and teaching. Combining story and experience is a powerful strategy that has always been used by First Peoples, and its power can also be brought to the classroom.

- Using story is a way of connecting with Indigenous knowledges and acknowledges the First Peoples Principal of Learning: “Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.”
- Stories enable holistic learning. They meld values, concepts, Protocol, practices and facts into a narrative. They also develop important skills of listening and thinking.
- Stories have the ability to carry emotion, to help humans connect on an emotional level, and to discuss powerful and difficult topics. Story can be used as a framework that each unit of the course could be built upon.

Oral storytelling can be incorporated by inviting First Nations storytellers into the class, or the teacher or students can read aloud a written version of a Traditional Story where appropriate. Reading published stories that are relevant to First Peoples in BC can integrate with English First Peoples courses, or with First Nations language classes.

It is important to note that in most Indigenous cultures certain people are recognized as storytellers of traditional narratives. Storytellers protect and hold traditional narratives that have been passed down from generation to generation while ensuring Cultural Protocols are followed (e.g., maintaining the privacy of sacred narratives). Not all Elders or Knowledge Keepers you invite into the classroom will be storytellers.

Story can be considered in multiple ways:

- Traditional stories and narratives from First Nations cultures
- Student and teacher stories from their experiences
- Stories as a way of telling and reconsidering colonial histories and legacies

Qualities or Characteristics of Stories from an Indigenous Perspective

- Repetition is key for learning from stories. Important stories take time to fully understand. Revisiting a key story can deepen understandings and learnings.
- Jo-ann Archibald identifies seven principles related to using stories and storytelling from a Stó:lo and Coast Salish framework (*Indigenous Storywork*, p. ix.):
 - respect
 - responsibility
 - reciprocity
 - reverence
 - holism
 - interrelatedness
 - synergy

The use of story to teach, and an examination of storytelling are two separate concepts. For the study of storytelling, see *English First Peoples*, 10-12 (FNEC/FNSA 2018)

For teachers interested in exploring story and storytelling in more depth, see *Indigenous Storywork*, Q’um Q’um Xiiem Jo-ann Archibald, UBC Press, 2008

Metaphor, analogy, example, allusion, humour, surprise, formulaic phrasing, etc. are storytelling devices that can be applied when explaining almost any non-fiction concept. Make an effort to use devices of this sort in all subject areas and to draw upon stories of the local Indigenous community.

Indigenous Worldviews and Perspectives in the Classroom (British Columbia 2015) page 30.

Using Story in BC First Peoples 12 Classes

Story can be a powerful strategy when developing units from a First Peoples perspective.

Using Traditional Stories

Find ways to incorporate Traditional Stories that connect with the content of the units.

- Select one or more significant Traditional Stories from your region that can be used as a jumping off point for a variety of learning experiences. This story can be a touchstone throughout a unit or the course. It should be revisited, and new meanings sought.

What to look for in finding traditional narratives.

- The story should be authentic. This means created by First Peoples or in significant collaboration with First Peoples. It is also important to ensure that permission has been granted to use the story. If the story has been published, then that is usually permission to share. If possible it is important to find local First Peoples stories or narratives.
- 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 Indigenous 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 fully tell. Often when an Elder has shared a story that has later been printed, it is just one part of a much longer narrative.
- Printed stories may be 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.

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WHAT ARE AUTHENTIC FIRST PEOPLES TEXTS?

Authentic First Peoples texts are historical or contemporary texts that:

- present authentic First Peoples voices (i.e., are created by First Peoples or through the substantial contributions of First Peoples)
- depict themes and issues that are important within First Peoples cultures (e.g., loss of identity and affirmation of identity, tradition, healing, role of family, importance of Elders, connection to the land, the nature and place of spirituality as an aspect of wisdom, the relationships between individual and community, the importance of Oral Tradition, the experience of colonization and decolonization)
- incorporate First Peoples story-telling techniques and features as applicable (e.g., circular structure, repetition, weaving in of spirituality, humour).

Questions to ask about narratives

- What can students look for in a traditional narrative?
- What lessons does the story teach about human's relationship with the land?
- How is an Indigenous perspective or worldview embedded in the story?

Using Story and Storytelling in Learning Experiences

Give students opportunities to use story and storytelling in investigations and activities by using a variety of learning strategies that incorporate story.

Suggestions include:

- **Elements of Story.** Students can discuss historical events or topics in terms of the elements of story used in English Language Arts: character, setting, plot (conflict, outcome), theme. Use graphic organizers to record results.
- **Headlines.** After students have finished a body of content, such as a reading, discussion of a topic, an activity, or a unit, ask them to write a headline that captures the important ideas to be remembered. They can then share the story behind the headline, and their thinking that went into making their choice.
- **Narrative essays.** Vary the standard format of essay writing by encouraging students to use a narrative form. This may include personal experiences or points of view. (Writing themselves into the story.)
- **Oral responses.** Give students the opportunity to respond to questions orally in places where you normally might expect written responses.
- **Photo stories.** Select an image relevant to a topic of study and ask students to write a story behind the picture. This could be purely from their imagination, or it could be based on specific events or an understanding of the context. Images could be historical photos, contemporary community or news photos, or works of art by Indigenous artists.
- **Podcasts.** Students could create podcasts in response to investigations or as part of an inquiry.

6. Creating Positive Learning Environments

Establishing a positive classroom climate is important for student learning. Teachers are responsible for setting and promoting a classroom climate in which students feel comfortable learning about, and discussing, topics in BC First Peoples 12.

It is important that the classroom climate encourages students to relate to one another in positive, respectful, and supportive ways. As well, it is key for teachers to develop positive, affirming relationships with students. By spending time getting to know your students, paying attention to them, listening to them, and teaching some of the key elements of dialogue and discussion, healthy boundaries for discussion can be established.

The following are some guidelines that may help educators establish and promote a positive classroom climate.

- Spend time at the beginning of the course helping students establish a sense of community with each other.
- Allow class members sufficient time and opportunities to become comfortable with each other before engaging in group discussion.
- Be prepared to facilitate any potentially controversial discussions. Establish clear ground rules for class discussions that demonstrate respect for privacy, for diversity, and for the expression of differing viewpoints.
- Become familiar with relevant legislation (e.g., Human Rights Code; Child, Family and Community Services Act) relevant initiatives (e.g., Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools: A Guide and Diversity in BC Schools: A Framework) provincial and district policies and protocols concerning topics such as disclosure related to child abuse, protection of privacy, and alternative delivery.
- Activities and discussion related to some of the topics in BC First Peoples 12 may evoke a strong emotional response from individual students. In this event, ensure that students know where to go for help and support.

Creating Safer Spaces

A totally “safe” learning environment is not necessarily possible, because students bring in many different perspectives and outside experiences that teachers may be unaware of or have little control over. For example, students may bring the effects of inter-generational trauma, abuse, addiction, and negative school experiences with them. The goal is to attempt to create spaces that are as safe as possible.

Dealing with Sensitive Topics

How this occurs will depend on the age, maturity, and experiences of students. Teachers will be the best judge of how to approach the material.

When presenting sensitive issues, teachers are not expected to be experts on all topics. Rather, their role is as guide and facilitator.

As students work through material that might be sensitive, teachers should be aware of the student’s potential reactions to the topics examined.

Foundations

It is important to convey to students that the purpose for understanding the past is to be part of a more positive future. For some students, the topics discussed may be sensitive if they have personal connections with the topic. Also, in classrooms with new Canadians, teachers will need to be aware that some topics may echo feelings that are part of some immigrant experiences.

Some considerations for dealing with topics with sensitivity include the following:

- Some sensitive topics are best taught through discussion rather than direct instruction.
- The teacher is responsible for ensuring exploration of sensitive issues so that discussion promotes understanding and is not merely an exchange of intolerance.
- Additional time may be needed to deal with students' concerns and questions.
- Issues may arise for students both in formal discussions and informal conversations in and around the classroom. Discussions will need to be closed appropriately. The teacher may need to play a role in ensuring potential conflict is dealt with in the context of the classroom.
- Students learn to focus on active listening, postponing judgment as they gather and process new information and perspectives.

When discussing sensitive topics it is important to set ground rules to ensure a safe environment for sharing ideas and opinion:

- Always respect and value what others bring to the discussion.
- It is okay to feel discomfort when wrestling with new ideas.

Some texts dealing with sensitive materials may trigger an emotional response from students. Teachers should be prepared to help students deal with the difficult emotions that may arise.

Find people who are knowledgeable about the issue or who are trained to counsel students, such as school counsellors, or First Nations, Métis, or Inuit resources available in the community. In certain circumstances teachers may wish to refer students to a crisis line for confidential support.

7. Connecting With the Land

Understanding and experiencing connections with the land are fundamental to First Peoples' worldviews and knowledge. It is important, where possible, to provide students with an opportunity to interact with the land in some way. This section gives some suggestions for how that can be achieved.

Activities that provide experiences and connections with the land are not intended to imitate or recreate actual First People's relationships with their territories. (The exception, of course, is for students in a First Nations community school whose experiences will be related to their own cultural activities).

The types of land-based activities suggested here are intended to encourage students to:

- develop their own relationships with the land
- interact with their environment and community
- engage in authentic experiences
- develop an understanding and appreciation of different relationships with the land
- view the land from a holistic, interconnected perspective

Suggestions for incorporating land-based activities into your units

- Know your local area. Beyond the school grounds, what places in your neighbourhood can students visit? Explore what options are available for land based activities, such as parks, open areas, or woodlands.
- Include a holistic view; consider the big picture as well as the specific activity.
- Some possible types of land-based activities include:
 - Food and medicine gathering with appropriate guidance from the local First Nations community. (Be aware of local Protocols for harvesting plants and medicines.)
 - Field trips to view geographical features.
 - Visits to archeological sites.
- Have discussions with your administration to create opportunities within the schedule to organize field trips.
- For more background and ideas, see the article "Learning from the Homeland; An Emerging Process for Indigenizing Education," by the W̱SÁNEC School Board and Tye Swallow. It is found in *Knowing Home: Braiding Indigenous Science with Western Science*, Book 2, page 206. Download from <https://tinyurl.com/fnesc76>.
- When possible, go outdoors for regular classroom activities, such as reading a narrative or text, doing group work, or using Talking Circles.

8. Talking Circles

Circles are a traditional Indigenous format for discussion and decision making. There are different types of discussion circles, such as Talking Circles, Sharing Circles, or Healing Circles, and the Protocols for usage depend on the purpose. The term Talking Circle is sometimes used interchangeably with Sharing Circle. Definitions of these terms may differ depending on the context of the user.

It is important to understand that the type of discussion circles generally used in classrooms are not intended to be used for any therapeutic purpose. Classroom-based Talking or Sharing Circles are not Healing Circles (the latter needing to be facilitated by skilled leaders in specific contexts, and in First Nations contexts, often include additional cultural Protocols).

Talking Circles in classrooms are usually used to demonstrate that everyone is connected and that every person in the circle has an equal voice. They also ensure that everyone can see and hear the speaker.

In classrooms, they can be used for a variety of reasons and at different grade levels (i.e. be a part of consensus building for decision-making, as ways to help debrief students' experiences, or supporting learning from each other). It is appropriate to use Talking Circles to discuss some of the topics in these resources.

It is important to ensure that students understand and respect the Talking Circle process. This may require some teaching and modelling of expected behaviours in a Talking Circle. As well, students should understand the reasons for using a Talking Circle instead of other types of discussion.

In traditional settings, an object like a talking stick or feather may be used to denote who is the speaker of the moment. It is passed from person to person, and only the person holding it may speak. You can use any item that may be special or has meaning to the class. You could engage the class in choosing what that object is. For example, it could be a feather, shell, a unique stone, or a specially made stick. It should only be used during Talking Circles so it retains its significance.

Here are some basic guidelines for a Talking Circle:

- The group sits in a circle, so everyone can see each other.
- One person introduces the topic for discussion (often the leader of the group).
- Only the person holding the special object speaks; everyone else listens respectfully giving the speaker their full attention.
- Everyone is given a chance to speak, but someone may pass the object without speaking if they wish.
- Speakers use “I” statements, stating what they are thinking or feeling, rather than commenting on what other people have said.
- Once everyone has had a chance to speak, the object can be passed around again giving people a chance to continue the discussion.

Check for any local Protocols or preferences to follow when using Talking Circles. For example, in schools in one area, students are asked to run the circle in a specific direction.

Foundations

When using a Talking Circle to discuss topics introduced in these resources, it is important to give students time to reflect following the discussion. They can consider how the discussion affected their opinions or ideas, and they can assess how they felt during the activity, what they learned, and what they might do differently next time.

More suggestions about using Talking Circles may be found at First Nations Pedagogy Online, <https://firstnationspedagogy.ca/circletalks.html>.