

STUDENT MATERIALS



Isadore Charters, an Aboriginal artist, elder and residential school survivor at SFU shares his story with students through storytelling and totem pole carving. Photo by SFU Public Affairs and Media Relations for Flickr. Released under CC-by-2.0

CLB

6

Traditional Aboriginal Education

In this unit, you will learn about the different ways that Aboriginal Peoples educated their children before contact with Europeans. You will discover how some of these traditional methods are being used in Aboriginal communities and mainstream classrooms again today to preserve Aboriginal languages and cultures.

Imagine

Think, write, share

Write answers to the questions below on your own. Then share your answers with your partner(s). Try to come to some agreement about your answers and definitions.

1. How do you define teaching?
2. How do you define learning?
3. In your opinion, where and when does learning take place?
4. In your opinion, what is the goal of education?
5. How does our education influence how we see the world and our place in it?



Violin teacher 1. Photo by Nathan Russell for Flickr. Released under CC-by-2.0



Centre for Adult Education Flipped Learning Design in VET Workshop 070214. Photo by Vanguard Visions for Flickr. Released under CC-by-2.0



Science teacher and students. From Microsoft Office.

Read

This morning I woke up early. My brother woke me up, again. He likes to get up early to go fishing with Dad and Grandpa on the boat. Yesterday, I went with Grandma and Mom into the forest to peel cedar bark. Grandma is going to teach me how to make a mat. I want to make a basket, but she says I should make a mat first.



Today, I helped Mom and the aunties clean the house and prepare the meals. Grandma spent a lot of the day weaving. I hope Mom will let me sit with Grandma tomorrow while she weaves. I want her to tell me the story of the elk and the little wren again. It is one of my favourite stories.

Discuss

With your partner, answer the following questions. The answers are not directly stated in the story, so you will need to infer from the information you have.

1. Who is this little girl? How old is she?
2. Where is she?
3. What year do you think it is? Why do you think so?
4. What season is it? How do you know?
5. How does this story about her day relate to the topic of education?

Consider

TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Before you read

Underline the words you have seen before. Circle the words you use. Then use your dictionary to look up the meaning of the words you don't know.

WORD**MEANING**

balance (n.)

contribute to (v.)

elder (n.)

experiential (adj.)

harmony (n.)

morals (n.)

role model (n.)

storyteller (n.)

supernatural (adj.)

values (n.)

Predict

The words above are from an article about traditional Aboriginal education. Look at the words again. With your partner can you guess what some of the main ideas of the article might be? Write your ideas below.

Prediction #1:

Prediction #2:

Prediction #3:



Young Aboriginal girl. UN Photo by John Isaac.

Read

TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Experiential Learning

In traditional Aboriginal societies, children did not go to school for only a few hours a day as many children do today. Instead, teaching and learning took place all day every day in both the home and community. This is because the purpose of education in traditional Aboriginal societies was to learn how to live, how to survive, and how to participate in and contribute to one's household and community. Therefore, children were encouraged to take part in everyday activities alongside adults, to watch and listen, and then eventually practice what they had learned. In this way, Aboriginal children learned the skills and knowledge they needed by observing and listening to their parents, grandparents and other community members. Similarly, it was the job of every adult in the community to make sure that each child learned the information and skills that they would need for adult life. For example, in Coast Salish communities young boys learned how, when and where to fish by going fishing with their fathers, uncles and grandfathers, and by listening to the stories that these men told about their fishing experiences. Similarly, young girls learned how to weave beautifully patterned blankets from mountain goat hair and intricate baskets from the bark of cedar trees by watching and helping their mothers, aunts and grandmothers. In this way, many adults in the community became teachers by passing on, or sharing, their knowledge and experiences. This informal, experiential style of teaching and learning started when children were very young and continued throughout adulthood.

Storytelling

Along with modeling practical skills such as fishing and basket weaving, Aboriginal Peoples also taught their children important lessons, spiritual beliefs, values and histories through oral storytelling. In fact,



Coyote. Photo by Larry Lamsa for Flickr. Released under CC-by-2.0

oral storytelling played an extremely important role in traditional Aboriginal education and culture, and it continues to be an essential part of Aboriginal societies. There are many different types of stories. For example, some are life experience stories, some are creation stories, some are stories that teach morals and values, and some are oral histories of a particular place or community. In addition, each Aboriginal community and even family has its own stories. This means that many stories are unique to a particular First Nation, community or family. These stories are only told and/or heard by members of that group of people. Also, many

stories include specific geographical places such as mountains, rivers or lakes and specific animals such as ravens, coyotes, rabbits, and buffalo that are found in a particular First Nation's territory. Therefore, in order to truly understand a story, the listener often has to be familiar with the land where that story comes from. These stories are frequently used to teach Aboriginal children about the land and the animals, and the importance of maintaining balance and harmony in the natural world. Sometimes these

stories explain how a particular place was created, or where the sun and moon come from. Some stories have a moral, or a lesson about right and wrong, while others tell of great journeys and adventures. Therefore, by listening to these stories during childhood and throughout their lives, Aboriginal people learn who they are, where they and their ancestors come from, how the world was created, and how to interact with that world.

The Trickster

Many of these important lessons are taught through stories about the Trickster. The Trickster is an important character in many Aboriginal stories because it is through its attitude, actions and experiences that lessons are taught. The Trickster character takes on many different forms in Aboriginal stories because of the diversity of the many Aboriginal cultures in Canada. For example, in some cultures the Trickster is in the form of Coyote, while in other cultures the Trickster may be Raven or Whiskey-Jack or Rabbit or even an old man. The Trickster can also change its form to be a human male or female, an animal or a supernatural being. Even the personality of the Trickster varies from story to story. In some cultures, the Trickster is a powerful, helpful, and well-intentioned character, or even a Creator. In other cultures, the Trickster has a more devious role, and is often creating trouble for itself and others. This trouble often comes because the Trickster has not followed important advice or rules, or because it has been selfish or greedy. Sometimes it has not thought carefully about the consequences, or effects, of its actions. The form and personality that the Trickster has depends on the culture of the particular First Nation and the landscape of its territory. However, no matter which form this character has, there is usually an important lesson in the story that is being told.

The Storyteller

Because storytelling plays such an important role in Aboriginal culture and education, not just anyone can have the job of storyteller. Every detail of these stories has to be remembered and retold exactly, so that the story does not change as it is passed on from one generation to the next. Therefore, in many communities, only respected Elders know and tell certain stories, especially important oral histories that explain the origins of a particular place or First Nation. However, an Elder is not simply an older or elderly person in the community. Although each First Nation defines who an Elder is in its own way, usually an Elder is someone who is very knowledgeable about the history, values and teachings of his/her culture. Also, he or she lives his/her life according to these values and teachings. Because Elders have gained their position through their knowledge, wisdom and behaviour, they are considered to be valuable role models and teachers to all members of the community. Therefore, it is the Elder's responsibility to accurately remember and teach the oral histories and stories of his/her culture. These oral histories and stories have been passed down from generation to generation for thousands of years, and they are essential to maintaining Aboriginal identity and culture.



Portrait of a Heiltsuk Elder. Bella Bella, Heiltsuk Nation. UN photo by John Isaac.

Vocabulary in context

Use the clues in the reading to find words in the text that have the same or similar meaning as the words listed below. Write the word on the line.

Paragraph 1

1. goal _____ **purpose** _____
2. outside of a tree _____

Paragraph 2

3. to show someone how to do something _____
4. relating to a specific place _____
5. an area of land _____
6. members of your family that lived a long time ago _____

Paragraph 3

7. including many different types of people or things _____
8. being dishonest _____
9. result or effect _____



Totem pole garden in Stanley Park. Photo by Madeleine Holland for Flickr. Released under CC-by-2.0

Comprehension

Write answers to the following questions in complete sentences. Try to use your own words rather than copying directly from the text. When you are finished, share your answers with a partner.

1. In traditional Aboriginal cultures, what was the purpose of education?
2. In a traditional Aboriginal community, where and when did teaching and learning take place?
3. How do you think an Aboriginal Elder might define teaching?
4. In what ways is this view of education similar to your own?
5. In what ways is it different?
6. Many Aboriginal cultures in BC have beautifully carved masks, totem poles or sculptures as well as the intricately patterned blankets. How do you think these items might relate to the Aboriginal tradition of storytelling?

Stories

A TRADITIONAL LEGEND (CBC LEGENDS PROJECT – THE ELK AND THE LITTLE WREN)

Before you listen

You are going to hear a traditional Aboriginal story told by members of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation who live on Cormorant Island off the northeast coast of Vancouver Island. All of these words are used in the story. Before you listen, work with a partner to match each word to its definition. Use your dictionary for the words you do not know.

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. _____ bounce (v.) | a. to breathe air through your nose in a noisy way to show you are annoyed |
| 2. _____ cape (n.) | b. a long piece of clothing without sleeves that fastens around your neck; superman wears a red cape |
| 3. _____ hooves (n.) | c. a path through a forest or countryside |
| 4. _____ nostrils (n.) | d. the two holes at the end of your nose |
| 5. _____ sniff (v.) | e. to move quickly up and down |
| 6. _____ snort (v.) | f. long thin pieces of wood from a tree or branch |
| 7. _____ sticks (n.) | g. the hard feet of an animal such as a horse, cow, deer or elk |
| 8. _____ trail (n.) | h. to breathe air into your nose loudly, for example when you are have a cold or you are crying |

Predict

There are 2 main characters in the story you are going to hear: a small brown wren and a large elk. One day, these 2 animals meet on a forest trail. Using this information and the words above, predict what you think might happen in this story. Share your prediction with your partner.



Grand Canyon National Park Bull Elk 0781. Photo by Grand Canyon National Park for Flickr. Released under CC-by-2.0 (cropped from original)



Carolina Wren. Photo by SEAN.CUILL for Flickr. Released under CC-by-2.0

Listen

Listen to the story. Put these events in order. Write numbers on the lines.



CBC Ideas – Legends of the Kwakwaka’wakw – (15:50 – 24:54).

<http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/episodes/2013/06/28/legends-of-the-kwakwakawakw/>

- _____ The little wren makes a cedar cape.
- _____ The elk decides to snort up the little wren.
- _____ The villagers come to the trail to see what has happened.
- _____ The little wren makes a fire.
- _____ The little wren begins bouncing on the elks hooves.
- _____ The villagers have a feast.

Listen again

Listen to the story again and answer the following questions.

1. What is the main problem or conflict in this story?
2. How is this conflict resolved?
3. What are the morals of this story?

Discuss

Discuss the following questions with a partner.

1. The climax is the most interesting or exciting event of a story. What is the climax of this story?
2. What are 2 adjectives to describe the personality of the wren? What is something that the wren does or says in the story to support your answer?
3. What are 2 adjectives to describe the personality of the elk? What is something that the elk does or says in the story to support your answer?
4. How did the narrator learn this story?
5. In Aboriginal cultures, stories had to be remembered precisely so they could be passed down from generation to generation. How do the storytellers make this story memorable for the listeners?

The Facts

HISTORIES, FABLES AND FOLKTALES

Did you know...

A folktale is a story that has been orally passed down from generation to generation. Usually people do not know who, when or where it was written. A fable is a story that uses animals as the main characters and has a moral, or lesson. A fairytale is a story that includes magical beings such as witches and wizards, and usually has a happy ending. A myth is a story that explains a natural phenomenon or event, or a belief or behaviour of a certain culture.

Before you listen

Discuss the following questions in small groups.

1. In your culture, are there different types of stories?
2. How are they different?
3. Who are these different types of stories told to?
4. What is the purpose of telling these different types of stories?

Listen



Histories, Fables and Folktales: <http://youtu.be/8YqiWTuJYBY>

Note taking practice

Fill in the table with information from the listening. Only use key words and phrases. You may need to infer, or guess, some information. Then share your answers with a partner.

	Oral Histories	Informal Stories
What is the purpose of this type of story?		
Where is this type of story told?		
When is this type of story told?		
Who tells this type of story?		
Who is the intended audience?		



A Feast

Today the Chief of our village is holding a feast to celebrate his daughter's wedding. Many people are coming from the other villages. There will be many songs, many dances, and many important stories told.

World Perspectives

Interview

Using key words and phrases, write your own answers to the questions below. Then interview a partner. If possible, try to interview someone from a different culture. Do not show your answers to your partner, tell them.

Question	Your answers	Your partner's answers
<p>In your culture, what types of stories are commonly told?</p>		
<p>In your culture, what types of characters are commonly used in traditional stories?</p>		
<p>In your culture, is there a Trickster-type character used in traditional stories? If so, describe him or her and his or her personality.</p>		
<p>In your culture, who are the storytellers? Do they have a special position/status?</p>		
<p>What are some common morals that are included in the stories in your culture?</p>		

Paragraph writing

Use the information from the interview chart to write a compare/contrast paragraph. Follow these steps.

1. Organize your ideas in an outline.
2. Write the first draft of your paragraph.
3. Read your draft carefully. Have you included explanations and examples to make all of your ideas clear for your reader?
4. Read your first draft again and check for spelling, punctuation and grammar errors.
5. Add compare/contrast signal words, coordinators and subordinators to connect ideas in your paragraph (similarly, in contrast, etc.).
6. Write your final draft.

Compare/Contrast Signal Words & Phrases

Use these words/phrases to connect your sentences: in contrast, in comparison, similarly, likewise, however, on the other hand.

In my culture, many stories have trickster-type characters. In contrast, these types of characters are not common in my partner's culture.

Usually, grandmothers tell traditional stories to their grandchildren in my culture. Similarly, in my partner's culture, it is usually older adults who spend time with children and teach them folktales and myths.

Punctuation note: Notice that these words and phrases are followed by a comma.

Compare/Contrast Coordinators & Subordinators

Use these words/phrases to connect two clauses: but, yet, although, though, even though, while, whereas

Folktales in my culture typically have a strong male hero, but stories in my partner's culture usually have more female characters.

Folktales in my culture typically have a strong male hero, whereas stories in my partner's culture do not.

Although there are many traditional stories in my culture, few people tell stories to their children nowadays.

Create

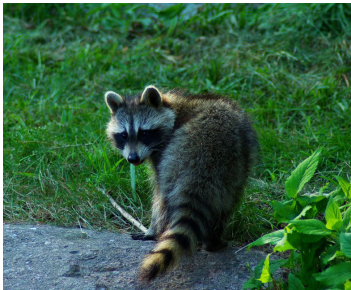
Write a Modern Fable

You are going to create your own modern fable with animals as characters. The story will be fiction but should have a moral or lesson. Use animals and places that are local to your area of B.C. Be creative! After you have written your story, you will share it with your classmates. This activity will not only give you an opportunity to create and tell an amusing story in English, but also help you learn a bit more about the area where you live.

STEP 1 – Brainstorming and Planning

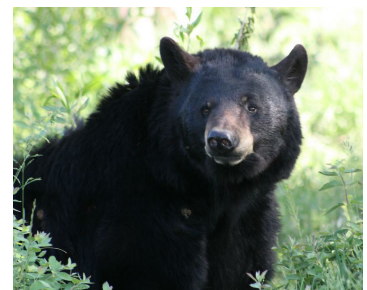
Characters

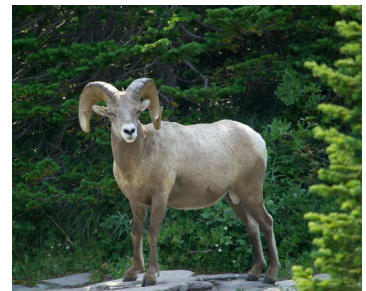
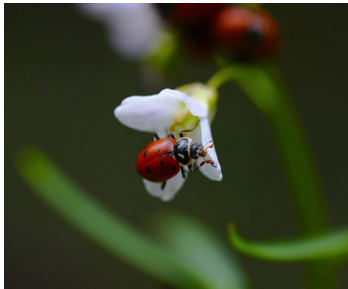
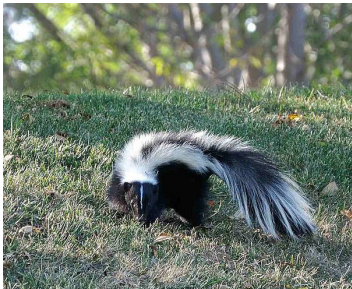
Work in a small group. Write the name of each animal below the picture. Then write 2-3 words on the second line that describe the characteristics of each animal.



Raccoon

clever, sneaky





Now choose 2–3 animals to include in your fable and discuss the following questions with your group. Each person in your group should take notes on what is discussed.

1. What are the similarities between these animals?
2. What are the differences?
3. If these animals met in a story, what are some possible problems or conflicts that might arise?
4. What are some lessons that might come from this encounter or meeting?

Setting

Make a list of local places and landmarks that are found in your area. These can include natural landmarks such as hills or mountains, or they can be interesting or popular local buildings, parks, etc. Choose the season. Choose the year.

Plot

After you have chosen your characters and setting, brainstorm the plot—or story/events—of your fable with your group. Each person should take notes, so they can use them to write and retell the story later. Remember to include problems or conflicts for the main characters that will move the story along. Also include a climax in your plot. This is the most exciting or important event in the story.

Notes:

STEP 2: Writing

On your own, use the notes you made on the characters, setting and plot to write your fable. Have fun and be creative! Be sure to use narrative or time order signal words and phrases to help your reader clearly understand the events in the story.

Time Order Signal Words/Phrases

Use these words/phrases at the beginning of your sentences: one day, the next day, on the third day, a few weeks later, then, next, after that, soon, later, meanwhile, at the same time, suddenly, eventually.

Soon the rabbit was very far ahead of the tortoise. He decided to stop and take a little nap.

Time Order Subordinators

Use these words/phrases to connect two clauses: after, as soon as, before, when, while, since.

After the rabbit woke up from his nap, he realized that the tortoise had passed him in the race.

STEP 3 – Peer Feedback

Exchange first drafts of your fable with another member of your group. Use the peer feedback form to review your partner's writing.

STEP 4 – Revise

Use the feedback from your classmate to revise your story. Rewrite it on a new piece of paper.

STEP 5 – Storytelling Strategies

We all know someone who is a great storyteller. Whenever this person tells a story about a recent event or retells the plot of a movie or TV program, everyone is completely captivated. So what makes this person so good at telling stories? Before you tell your fable to other classmates, take some time with your group to answer the following questions.

1. What does a good storyteller do with his/her voice?
2. What does a good storyteller do with his/her body?
3. What makes a story memorable?

Now, take turns practicing telling your fable using the strategies you came up with. Your group members can give you feedback about your use of voice and body language.

STEP 6 – Sharing

In new groups, take turns sharing your modern fables. Be sure to use body language and your voice to make the story as interesting and memorable as possible for your listeners. Remember, if you simply read your story, your audience may fall asleep!

Aboriginal Education Today

Before you read

Discuss the following questions with a partner.

1. Why do so few people in Canada know about Aboriginal culture, traditions and stories?
2. Why do so few people in Canada speak an Aboriginal language?

Read

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION TODAY

For a long period in Canada's history, Aboriginal people were not allowed to educate their children in the traditional way. Traditional ceremonies, such as feasts and potlatches, during which stories and oral histories were told were banned by the Canadian government. Many of the masks, blankets and other important ceremonial items were taken and sold to collectors or given to museums. Furthermore, thousands of Aboriginal children were removed from their families and villages to attend Indian Residential Schools. At these schools, Aboriginal children were not allowed to speak their languages or practice their traditions. They were also made to believe that Aboriginal culture was not as good as Euro-Canadian culture, and that it was not a good thing to be Aboriginal. All of these events led to the unfortunate loss of many Aboriginal languages, traditions and stories. This is the reason why many Aboriginal people today cannot speak an Aboriginal language and are not familiar with Aboriginal traditions. However, this is slowly beginning to change.

Many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada today recognize that the loss of these languages and cultural practices is a tragic part of Canada's history, and they are working very hard to save what is remaining. In many communities, Aboriginal Elders who still remember their native languages and traditions are being asked to share this knowledge with younger generations. Traditional stories are being digitally recorded, and Aboriginal languages are being documented and uploaded onto websites so that people can learn and practice them. And many aspects of traditional Aboriginal education, including experiential learning and storytelling, are being used in newly created Aboriginal daycare centres and schools. Elders are being invited to these schools to share their stories and pass on their skills. Children are learning how to speak their languages, how to carve, how to weave, how to drum and how to dance. New masks, blankets and drums are being created for ceremonial feasts, and new stories are being created and told about Aboriginal families and communities today, stories and histories that can be shared from one generation to the next for many centuries to come.

Aboriginal knowledge, traditions and perspectives are now also finding their way into mainstream Canadian schools. For example, many school districts in BC now have Aboriginal Education

Enhancement Agreements. These are agreements between school districts and local Aboriginal communities to work together to increase knowledge and respect for Aboriginal culture, language and history among all students. Because of these agreements, many elementary and high school students can now take Aboriginal language or art classes, and learn more about Aboriginal history and culture. Also, new classroom curricula and materials have been created so that students have more opportunities to learn about Aboriginal perspectives and worldviews. For example, English 12 First Peoples is an English class for high school students that uses books and stories written by Aboriginal authors. This class also explores the importance of oral storytelling traditions and gives both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students a chance to learn more about the experiences, values, beliefs, and lives of Canada's First Peoples.



Relearning

"Today is a big day. My granddaughter started kindergarten today. She is going to a Musqueam school where her teachers will speak hə́n̓q̓əmiḥəm̓. I'm so happy that she is going to learn the language that I was forced to forget when I went to Indian Residential School so long ago. I am so happy that the young people now have a chance to learn the traditional stories, songs and dances that I was not allowed to learn. Today is a great day."

Comprehension

Write short answers in your own words for the questions below.

1. What are two reasons that few people in Canada know about Aboriginal stories and traditions?
2. Why do so few Aboriginal people speak an Aboriginal language?
3. In what ways are Aboriginal elders helping to preserve Aboriginal cultures?
4. What are two reasons that new stories, masks, drums and other ceremonial items are being created today?
5. Why do school children have more opportunities to learn about Aboriginal culture and traditions today?

My Perspective

Projects & Assignments

These projects and assignments give you a chance to share your ideas and perspective on this topic.

Journal/Blog Writing

1. Reflect on what you've learned by comparing your knowledge of Aboriginal education before the unit and what you understand now.
2. Write a story about a funny, unusual or exciting experience you've had since you arrived in Canada.
3. Write about the use of experiential learning in your own culture.
4. Write about the use of storytelling in your own culture.
5. Compare traditional education in your culture to education today.
6. Compare education in your country to education in Canada.

Sharing and Connecting

Projects & Assignments

These projects and assignments give you a chance to learn more about Aboriginal education and stories and/or share what you have learned with others.

Visit the Public Library

Visit the public library to find a book of traditional Aboriginal stories. Choose a story and share it with the class or a small group of classmates.

For students in Vancouver, the VPL has an Aboriginal Storyteller in Residence program.

https://www.vpl.ca/events/details/aboriginal_storyteller

Learn from an Elder

Invite an Aboriginal elder from your community to come and share some of his/her stories and teachings with your class. The staff at your local Aboriginal Friendship Centre may be able to put you in touch with an elder in your community.

<http://www.bcaafc.com/bc-friendship-centres>