

10 EASY WAYS TO INFUSE ABORIGINAL CONTENT INTO YOUR CLASSROOM

This brochure provides a brief overview of 10 easy ways to incorporate Aboriginal content into your classroom effectively. Many teachers are concerned they do not know enough about Aboriginal cultures, history or perspectives. They worry that they will inadvertently make mistakes and perhaps even offend. They want to be respectful and accurate. These strategies will allow you to proceed with confidence.



PHILOSOPHY OF THE DOCUMENT

Learning about First Nation, Métis and Inuit worldviews, cultures, issues, histories and peoples across the curriculum will enrich all students. Such learning is especially invaluable for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students.

First Nation, Métis and Inuit content and perspectives should be interwoven throughout the curriculum and not restricted to particular units. In this process, teachers need to be aware that students will need to unlearn stereotypical images and views of Canada's First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples as well as develop accurate, positive images.

2. USE *GETTING TO KNOW TURTLE ISLAND* TO PLAN A LESSON OR UNIT

Getting to Know Turtle Island: Incorporating First Nation, Metis and Inuit Perspectives, K-8 is a valuable tool to help you in the classroom. It was created by Limestone elementary teachers for Limestone teachers so that it would be user friendly.

It provides summative and formative tasks that incorporate Aboriginal content, as well as suggested resources. There are useful sections on Aboriginal peoples in the local area, factors to consider when purchasing books or teaching controversial topics, and a glossary of terms. The summative tasks are organized around three key concepts: Respect, Relationships and Change.

The document and sample summative plans are available in the Aboriginal Education section of Elementary Curriculum.

“My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back.”

Louis Riel, Métis leader, 1885

WHO ARE SOME FAMOUS ABORIGINAL ARTISTS?

Bill Reid
Daphne Odjig
Benjamin Chee Chee
Kenojuak Ashevak
Norval Morrisseau
Christie Belcourt
Andy Everson
George Littlechild
Maxine Noel
Carl Ray

1. CREATE OR DISPLAY POSTERS OR ART

Aboriginal art, both traditional and modern, is a powerful way to introduce students to Aboriginal cultures. The art can speak to all students and captures important elements of culture. Visual images also help to create an climate of inclusion in your classroom.

Samples of art are readily available on the Internet. You can access the powerpoint “Aboriginal Art in Canada” in First Class at the Aboriginal Education section of Elementary Curriculum.

You can order free posters from Aboriginal Affairs in Ottawa. Go to their publications catalogue.

<http://pse-esd.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pubcbw/catalog-eng.asp?cat=K&URL=www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ks/12052-eng.asp&URLDesc=Kid%27s%20Stop>



TRADITIONAL STORIES

First Nation, Metis and Inuit peoples have told stories since time immemorial. These stories convey their traditional cultures. The stories provide views on creation and the role of humans and animals within it. They offer examples of how to behave.

These traditional stories were shared during long winter nights and were often handed down within families.

Today many of these stories have been published in books and on the Internet.

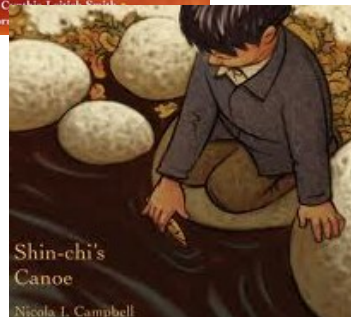
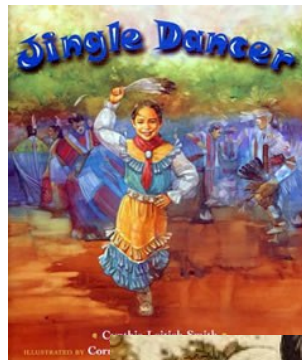
3. HAVE STUDENTS READ ABORIGINAL STORIES AND TEXTS

The Elementary Program Team has distributed rich mentor texts over the past few years. More than a dozen of these books highlight Aboriginal peoples and stories. The books typically provide an engaging story with vivid images. Share one of these books with your students.



JINGLE DANCER

This book tells the story of a young girl who dreams of dancing at the next powwow like the other women in her family, but her dress has no jingles. She visits different women in her family to collect the jingles needed for her dress. The story addresses the importance of family and traditions.



SHIN-CHI'S CANOE

This tender story recounts the experiences of a First Nations brother and sister who are sent to a government-mandated, church-run boarding school. At these schools Aboriginal children were denied access to their parents, languages and traditions

4. USE A TALKING CIRCLE

Talking circles are common occurrences at Aboriginal gatherings. In the circle people pass some kind of object, a talking stick or feather, around the circle and speak only when they hold the object. Those who do not wish to speak may pass. The circle allows everyone to be heard and teaches patience and respect. People of all ages can participate.

The Ministry of Education document, *Aboriginal Perspectives: The Teacher's Toolkit*, available online, offers two lessons on using talking circles (see Grade 1 and Grade 5) <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal/toolkit.html>



“Circles represent important principles in the Aboriginal worldview and belief systems, namely, interconnectedness, equality and continuity.”
Aboriginal Perspectives: The Teacher's Toolkit

5. WATCH A VIDEO OR SURF THE WEB

Videos allow you to present information about Aboriginal peoples without having to be an expert. They can be fictional, like the animated series *Wapos Bay* (available at the TRC at Queen's), or non-fictional. The NFB has many films available for free online. The CBC also has resources including the 8th Fire series, <http://www.cbc.ca/doczone/8thfire/>

Online resources need to be carefully vetted. *Getting to Know Turtle Island* includes an extensive list of websites with accurate information.

If possible, bring an Elder into your class so that students can hear traditional knowledge first hand.

Consider attending powwows or board organized activities that highlight Aboriginal cultures.



TURTLE ISLAND

The Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabe believe that the world was created on the back of a turtle.

In the beginning, the Earth was covered with water. Various water animals and birds tried to swim down to the bottom of the water to get dirt. None of them was successful until the scrawny muskrat managed to get a small clump of dirt and return to the surface. The dirt was then danced out into the land called Turtle Island (also known as North America).

This story speaks, as do many traditional Aboriginal stories, about the roles played by animals, including the great and the small. These stories reinforce the notion of interconnectedness in nature.

6. STUDY NATURE THROUGH AN ABORIGINAL LENS

Aboriginal peoples lived for millennia in close connection to the land. They needed to learn its patterns and cycles in order to survive. Their traditions typically suggest that humans need to approach nature respectfully. This message is a powerful one for today's students when we see environmental degradation and climate change all around us. For this strategy, focus on the cyclical patterns in nature (seasons, lifecycles, etc.) and the interrelationships of all living things.

13 MOONS

There are 13 lunar cycles or moons in each year. First Nations across North America have named these moons to correspond to significant natural or cultural events. One book that provides some information is *Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back* by Joseph Bruchac and Jonathan London. There are recommended classroom activities for each moon in *Achieving Aboriginal Student Success: A Guide for K to 8 Classrooms* by Pamela Rose Toulouse. A powerpoint presentation is available in the Aboriginal Education folder on the Elementary Curriculum hub.

GIVING THANKS

This book is a special children's version of the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address. The address is repeated at all important public gatherings of the Haudenosaunee. It reminds us to be thankful for all elements of creation and to approach the natural world with respect and humility.



7. PRACTICE THE SEVEN GRANDFATHER TEACHINGS

The Ojibwe or Anishinaabe honour the Seven Grandfather or Good Life Teachings. The teachings are respect, love, truth, courage, honesty, humility and wisdom. These teachings can be incorporated as part of the class's or school's character education policy. *Achieving Aboriginal Student Success: A Guide for K to 8 Classrooms* by Pamela Rose Toulouse offers excellent suggestions on how to incorporate the Grandfather Teachings in your class. See excerpts in the Aboriginal Education folder in the Elementary Curriculum hub.



“Each of us carries a fire within. Whether it’s through the knowledge we have, or through our experiences and associations, we are responsible for maintaining that fire. And so as a child, when my mother and father would say, at the end of the day - My daughter, how is your fire burning?” It would make me think of what I’ve gone through that day -- If I’d been offensive to anyone, or if they have offended me. I would reflect on that because it has a lot to do with nurturing the fire within.”

fourdirectionsteachings.com

8. PLAY ABORIGINAL GAMES AND SPORTS

Aboriginal peoples across Canada have traditional games they play. Some, like lacrosse or snow snake, require specialized equipment but many do not. These games are an easy way to incorporate Aboriginal content across the curriculum.

For more information consult the Health and Physical Education sections for each grade in *Getting to Know Turtle Island*. You can also consult the website *Living Traditions* for information on sports and games.





Both the Haudenosaunee and the Algonquins use Wampum belts to symbolize their treaties and relationships with other peoples.

These belts were traditionally made from shells. Whenever the parties to the agreements met, the belts would be brought out and their underlying treaties related so that everyone would remember the original agreement.



9. LEARN ABOUT THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN OUR AREA

Aboriginal peoples in Canada are incredibly diverse. They speak over 50 traditional languages and practice a wide range of traditions. It is important that students recognize the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and see them as important parts of present day Canada with vibrant, evolving cultures. Students should be especially aware of the Aboriginal peoples who have made the Kingston area their home for generations: the Algonquins and the Haudenosaunee, who include the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte.

ALGONGUINS

The Algonquin are part of the Ojibwe or Anishinaabe people. They live around the Great Lakes and the Ottawa River. You can learn about the Algonquins of our area by bringing Elders and knowledge keepers into your classroom or by using one of the following websites.

<http://www.thealgonquinway.ca/index-e.php>

<http://www.tanakiwin.com/>

HAUDENOSAUNEE

The Haudenosaunee include the Mohawks, Oneidas, Cayugas, Senecas, Onondagas and Tuscaroras. The Mohawks of our region have been living permanently at Tyendinaga for hundreds of years. You can learn more about these people and their traditional beliefs by inviting a knowledge keeper into your class or from the website

<http://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/>

10. STUDY A PARTICULAR ABORIGINAL GROUP OR ISSUE

Aboriginal peoples are in the news these days. The issues are often complex and highly politicized. Our students must be well informed about the issues if they are to be good citizens. You do not need to be an expert to guide your students through these issues. Start with questions,

- What is the Idle No More movement?
- Why did Canada apologize for Residential Schools?



“Through the 'Idle No More' movement, we have seen a tremendous outpouring of energy, pride and determination by our peoples... This level of citizen and community engagement is absolutely essential to achieve the change we all want.”

Shawn Atleo, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

1. Emphasize the diversity of Aboriginal peoples.
2. Teach about traditional and contemporary aspects of the lives of Aboriginal peoples.
3. Consider using Aboriginal concepts when planning your lessons and units.
4. Incorporate Aboriginal content across the curriculum in a seamless way.
5. Take time to explore resources and websites.
6. Bring Elders into your classroom.



This document was created by the Limestone District School Board for its teachers in 2013.

