



# WEAVING WAYS

INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING  
IN CLASSROOMS AND SCHOOLS



An Introductory Guide

Created by the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortium



WEAVING WAYS IS INTENDED TO BE A COMPLIMENTARY GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS WHO ARE DEEPENING THEIR FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES TO FOSTER RECONCILIATION.

**CONTENTS**

- Introduction ..... 3
- Guiding Questions ..... 4
- Cultures of Belonging** ..... 5
- Embracing Indigenous Knowledge Systems ..... 5
- Connecting to the Classroom ..... 6
- Instructional Design** ..... 7
- Embracing Indigenous Knowledge Systems ..... 8
- Connecting to the Classroom ..... 9
- Pedagogy** ..... 10
- Embracing Indigenous Knowledge Systems ..... 10
- Connecting to the Classroom ..... 11
- Sharing Through Story** ..... 12
- Embracing Indigenous Knowledge Systems ..... 13
- Connecting to the Classroom ..... 14
- Furthering Your Learning Journey ..... 15
- References..... 16



ARPDC



INCORPORATING WESTERN  
AND INDIGENOUS  
KNOWLEDGE IN THE  
CLASSROOM CAN  
MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN  
THE PERFORMANCE OF  
ALL STUDENTS.

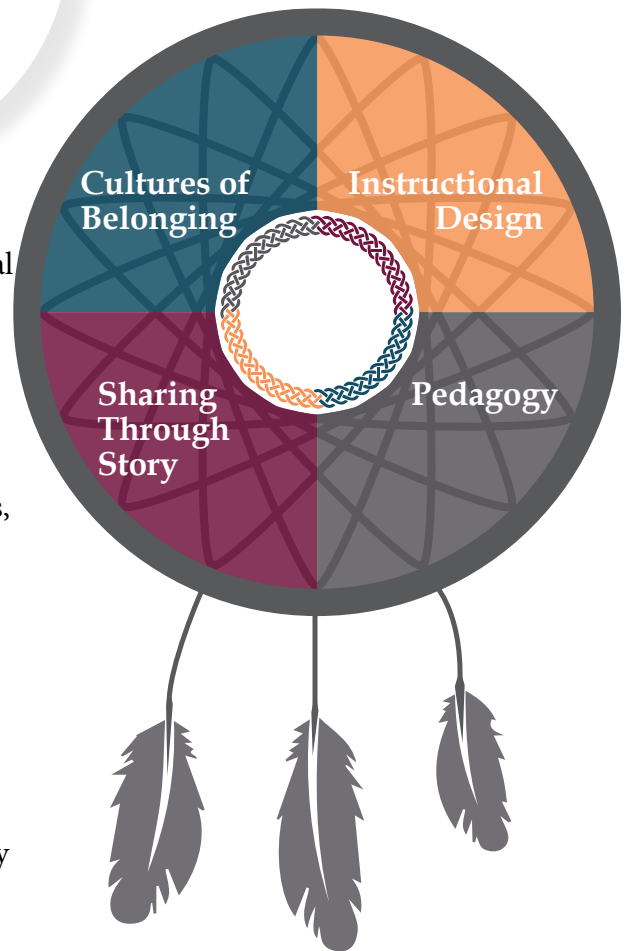
AHENAKEW, 2017

## INTRODUCTION

Weaving Ways was developed by the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia (ARPDC) Education for Reconciliation team, through a grant from Alberta Education. The evolution of Weaving Ways could not have been accomplished without the ongoing support of our Collaborative Community of teachers from the Calgary Board of Education (CBE), and Elder Bruce Starlight of the Tsuut'ina Nation in Alberta. As an introductory guide, Weaving Ways supports teacher exploration of the histories, cultures, languages, contributions, perspectives, experiences and contemporary contexts of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples while engendering knowledge, understanding and respect.

Weaving Ways is structured with four interrelated quadrants which teachers can utilize to organize their thinking and approaches. The structure supports teachers in designing meaningful teaching and learning opportunities that weave together Indigenous ways of knowing with Western pedagogical practices for the benefit of all students and our collective journey towards reconciliation.

The four quadrants are interconnected and encourage teachers to consider how Indigenous knowledge systems can support a rich experience for students in their classrooms. Effective education that includes Indigenous knowledge systems does not exclude or discredit other cultures, but instead ensures that both non-Indigenous students and Indigenous students alike are given the opportunity to see Indigenous perspectives, and the strengths and gifts of the First Peoples reflected in the schools they attend. The weaving together of Indigenous knowledge with Western pedagogical practices is coined by scholars as *trans-systemic synthesis*. (Battiste, M. & Henderson 2000)



Diverse First Nations, Métis and Inuit experiences and perspectives across the curriculum provide means for reconciliation. Increasing inter- and cross-cultural understanding and initiating shifts in thinking and in attitudes will build trust to improve relationships among all Albertans.

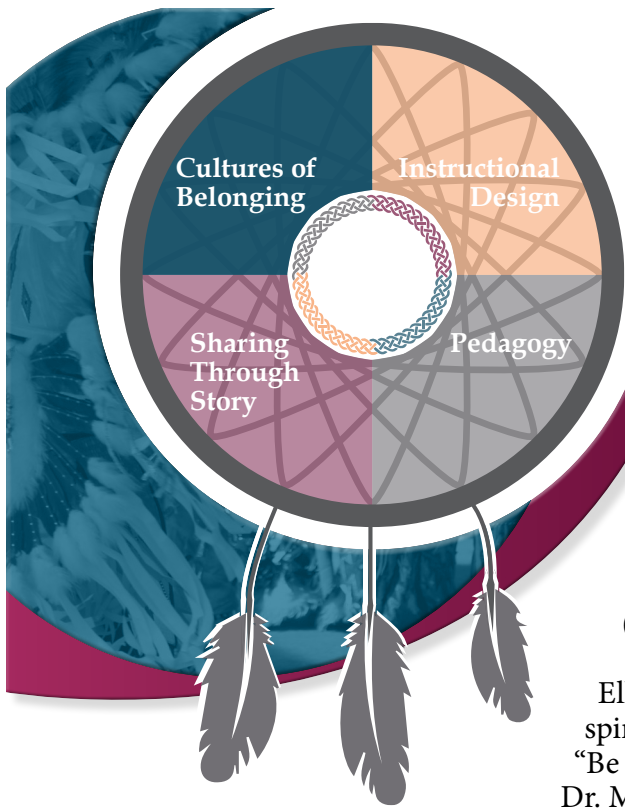
Guiding framework, 2016 (pg 10)



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

Weaving Ways provides a series of inquiry questions and guiding information:

QUADRANT	GUIDING QUESTIONS
<b>Cultures of Belonging</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How can we embrace the Indigenous idea of wholeness in the classroom to support greater belonging for all learners?</li> <li>2. How can I draw from the ways Indigenous peoples foster cultures of belonging to compliment the ways I create belonging in my classroom?</li> </ol>
<b>Instructional Design</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How might valuing Indigenous and other knowledge systems in our learning designs promote cultural appreciation and advance reconciliation?</li> <li>2. In what way can Indigenous knowledge systems enhance how I design learning for my students?</li> </ol>
<b>Pedagogy</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How can the Indigenous idea of Two-Eyed Seeing, or Etuaptmuk, support a blended experience in my classroom that authentically respects and builds on the strengths of both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing and learning?</li> <li>2. What similarities does Indigenous pedagogy have to my own pedagogical beliefs and approaches?</li> </ol>
<b>Sharing Through Story</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How can we support deeper connection to learning outcomes for all students through storytelling?</li> <li>2. Do my current teaching practices and approaches relate to sharing through story? Can I further incorporate this approach?</li> </ol>



# CULTURES OF BELONGING

How can we embrace the Indigenous idea of wholeness in the classroom to support greater belonging for all learners?

“Do I belong here?” is a question many students wonder and ultimately answer for themselves based on their interactions with the learning space and people within their school. Research has found that students who have a sense of belonging and connectedness at school thrive in their learning, are more engaged, and attend school more often. (Alberta Education, 2015)

Ella Deloria, a Lakota teacher and anthropologist, described the spirit of belonging in Indigenous cultures with her statement, “Be related, somehow, to everyone you know.” (2009, pg. 46) As Dr. Martin Brokenleg notes, “The ultimate test of kinship was not genetic but behavioral: You belonged as a relative if you acted like you belonged. Treating others as kin forged powerful human bonds that drew everyone into a network of relationships based on mutual respect.” (2009, pg. 46). A blended classroom that respects and weaves Indigenous and other perspectives together to create a new shared experience for all learners not only helps everyone belong, but supports a pathway to further reconciliation as students learn to expand their understandings of one another and see value in the ways of others.

One truth central to Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and relating is the impression of wholeness: *everything in the universe is part of a single whole; everything is connected in some way*. The notion that *everything in the universe is part of a single whole; everything is connected in some way* can shape and guide the creation of a classroom community where students, parents and other community members see themselves reflected and a vital part of the relational space.

## EMBRACING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

When an entire school commits to fostering a culture of belonging that embraces Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching and learning is invited by examples such as:

- Character education programs such as the *Virtues Project* which supports students in understanding and developing empathy and character skills they need to be successful in life.
- A *Circle of Courage* model, which exemplifies the medicine wheel for balance and harmony.
- A social justice lens that develops a critical consciousness in youth.
- *Seven Sacred Teachings* which models natural laws or sacred teachings of the virtues and animal spirits.
- A relational perspective that values the sacredness of relationships and promotes connectedness to land, plants, and animals.

Consider: How do these approaches relate to and compliment the ways I create belonging in my classroom already?

Families, schools, and youth organizations are being challenged to form new “tribes” for all of our children so there will be no “psychological orphans”.

Dr. Martin Brokenleg

# CULTURES OF BELONGING

## CONNECTING TO THE CLASSROOM

Below are some sample strategies, tools and ideas related to cultures of belonging.

### 1. Compare and Contrast

- a. Why use: To explore diversity.
- b. How to use:
  - i. Examine various creation stories. Each nation has a teaching story about how that nation came to be. Using a circular graphic organizer and have students explore the similarities, diversity and different interpretations of how the land and people came to be.
  - ii. Discuss how Indigenous people use the land and are recognized as “keepers of the land”. What does this mean? How does this inspire their historical and contemporary commitment to the land? How does it compare to how Western civilizations value land and the Western focus on responsible use of land and resources?
  - iii. Explain and model that differing perspectives and unique reactions expand understanding.
  - iv. Engage with community to develop and create an Indigenous traditional games day. Creating a traditional games day provides a real-life learning context that is meaningful to First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.

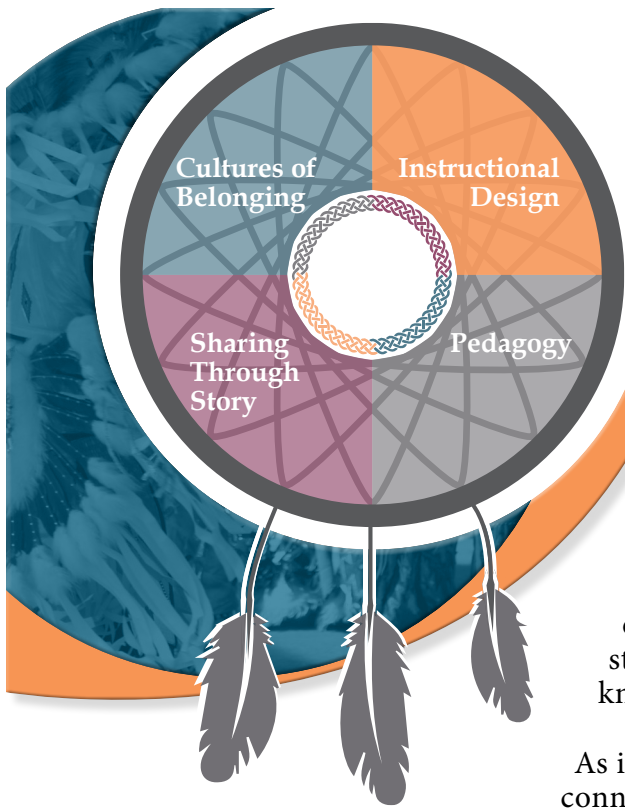
### 2. Clarify and Extend

- a. Why use: To consider the ideas of others.
- b. How to use:
  - i. Listen and respond constructively to alternative ideas or opinions.
  - ii. Develop the competency of communication with your students by teaching protocols that enable students to have constructive conversations about opinions or perspectives using the *Competency Indicators* for communication.

### 3. Respond to Texts

- a. Why use: To explore and foster an appreciation for various texts.
- b. How to use:
  - i. Experience oral, print and other media texts from a variety of cultural traditions and genres, such as journals, nature programs, short stories, poetry, letters, mysteries, historical fiction, drawings and prints.
  - ii. Reflect on, revise and elaborate on initial impressions of oral, print and other media texts through subsequent reading, listening and viewing activities.
  - iii. Introduce students to the title of the poem “Footprints in the Snow” by Nichola Batzel. The poem addresses kinship roles and responsibilities of mothers and children. The poem provides the perspective of an Inuit mother sharing her story through poetry.





# INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

How might valuing Indigenous and other knowledge systems in our learning designs promote cultural appreciation and advance reconciliation?

Instructional designs are the intentional and iterative efforts made by educators within their classrooms to understand the strengths and needs of students and to unfold learning experiences that best meet those needs. Instructional design achieves learning outcomes. It is the “defining, creating, assessing and redesigning that is essential in creating effective learning environments in which students inquire into questions, issues and problems; build knowledge; and develop deep understanding.” (Friesen, pg. 5)

As instructional designers, educators empower students to connect deeply to learning outcomes through the experiences they create. Culturally responsive instructional design recognizes and builds on the strengths cultural viewpoints bring to the learning environment and bridge different ways of knowing. Teachers create deeper learning when they help students to explore outcomes from multiple cultural perspectives.

Thoughtful and intentional learning designs that enable students to experience deeper learning through a weaving of Indigenous ways of knowing and other pedagogical practices advance the spirit of reconciliation and promote cultural appreciation. As students have powerful learning experiences rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems, value is found in seeking understanding through the perspective of Indigenous peoples. When instructional design embraces and reflects worldviews, all learners are supported.

*“The first thing we need to teach is respect. Respect for one another. To take away the biases that we are taught as children that form our opinions as we grow older that we get so set in. We need to have that respect for all people; then we will come to the understanding of where they are coming from.... You need to open up your heart, and you need to open up your mind.”*

Métis Elder Marge Friedel 1936–2011

**Ethical Relationality:** An understanding of human rationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to more deeply understand how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other.

Dwayne Donald, 2013



# INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

## EMBRACING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

An instructional design that values Indigenous ways of knowing includes the following mindsets:

1. **Holistic:** Consider approaches that appeal to whole person learning. Holistic approaches recognize that learners find meaning through connection to the community, the natural world and to spiritual values. Whole person learning provides “opportunities to develop over time and across interconnected learning domains: intellectual, physical, social, spiritual and emotional.” (p. 25, Guiding Framework, 2016) In the Indigenous context, this includes teachings connecting learners to place through content.
2. **Collaborative:** Create an extended family of learning to support and enrich concepts. Who else can add perspectives and enrich concepts from the community? [Click here](#) to use this protocol guide when reaching out to members of your local Indigenous community. Also, how can students support one another in learning? Designing opportunities for both classroom small group and large group collaboration, as well as community collaboration increases and supports connectedness to learning.
3. **Relational:** Support students in connecting content to their personal reality through story, artifacts, personal reflection, comparative tasks, and experiential or place based learning. As Dwayne Donald, descendent of the Papatash Cree noted, “What we want to learn cannot be separated from the processes we go through while learning. For teaching and learning to be meaningful, we need to see ourselves in ecological relation to that which we want to know. Relations always come first.” (Donald, 2011) We are all in relation to one another and to the events and objects in our world and the spiritual world.

**Consider:** How do these approaches relate to and compliment the ways I design learning for my students?





# INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

## CONNECTING TO THE CLASSROOM

Below are some sample strategies, tools and ideas related to instructional design.

### 1. Broaden Holistic Perspectives

- a) Why use: To build foundational knowledge.
- b) How to use: Deepen understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures by exploring how Indigenous people find meaning through connection to the community, the natural world and spiritual values.

### 2. Connect Holistically to Outcomes

- a) Why use: To provide opportunities that invite learners to use their minds, bodies, spirits and imagination to learn.
- b) How to use: Have students interview Indigenous community members to talk about their traditional understanding of a learning outcome. Students can share what they have learned with their classmates.

### 3. Work Together

- a) Why use: Support student collaboration.
- b) How to use: Develop the competency of collaboration with your students by teaching protocols that enable students to share ideas with reciprocity and sensitivity to diverse cultures. Share responsibilities when working in groups using the Competency Indicators for collaboration.

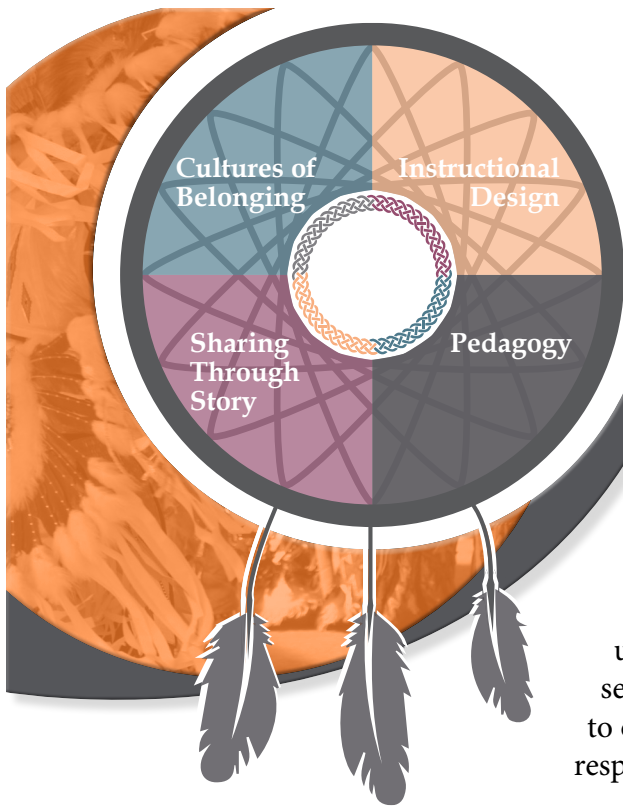
### 4. Support Relatedness

- a) Why use: Connect the past to the present.
- b) How to use:
  - i. For elementary levels: Study an Indigenous community closest to your geographical area. Complete the “My Community” Medicine Wheel Chart on page 20 of the document.
  - ii. For secondary levels: Within the context of a First Nations, Métis or Inuit community closest to your geographical area as well as other Indigenous communities across Canada, complete a jigsaw activity that incorporates a 5W chart on topics which may include the following:
    - Treaties
    - Land issues
    - Indian Act
    - Colonization
    - Residential schools
    - 1960s scoop

### 5. Community Connections

- a) Why use: To invite relation.
- b) How to use:
  - i. Invite local community members to talk about their connections to the land. This is known as *traditional ecological knowledge*, and can be used to create a project of how Indigenous people spent time on the land and how the lifestyle developed a close relationship with their environment.
  - ii. Visit a significant site in a regional Indigenous community to develop a deeper appreciation of the systems Indigenous people used to understand animals, properties of plants, seasonal weather patterns, social customs, and how they flourished on the land.





## PEDAGOGY

How can the Indigenous idea of two-eyed seeing, or *Etuaptmunk*, support a blended experience in the classroom that authentically respects and builds on the strengths of both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing and learning?

Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall coined the phrase “two-eyed seeing” (2009), or *Etuaptmunk* in his language, for a guiding principle found in Mi'kmaq knowledge. The word *Etuaptmunk* communicates the idea that most beneficial outcome occurs when we consider multiple perspectives in understanding and exploring ideas. Inherent in the two-eyed seeing approach is a respect for different worldviews and a quest to outline a common ground while remaining cognizant and respectful of the differences. (Hatcher, Annamarie, et al, 2009)

Two-eyed seeing helps us to acknowledge the idea of wholeness, a part of many Indigenous knowledge systems: looking through one eye to see things through Indigenous perspectives, (represented as one whole eye), alongside Western ways of knowing, (also represented as a whole eye), while inviting these two eyes to work together as they do in binocular vision. A weaving back and forth between knowledges that embraces a flow between the strengths of the two ways to best suit the circumstances strengthens the approach further. Ongoing co-learning with and from each perspective is an important feature of two-eyed seeing, as are collaboration and connection with culture and community. (Hatcher, Annamarie, et al, 2009)

As one Stoney Nakoda elder noted, “When it comes to culture... you're never going to be right, but you're never going to be wrong. You're never going to be right if you are not open to other perspectives and you're never going to be wrong if you act with an open heart.”

## EMBRACING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Pedagogies that embrace Indigenous ways of knowing are fostered by approaches to teaching and learning that include purposeful thinking about:

- People:
  - Invite sharing from other teachers, such as elders, knowledge keepers, community members and parents.
  - Use appropriate protocols when inviting elders and knowledge keepers.
- Places:
  - Create the idea that Mother Earth is a co-teacher, providing opportunities to learn *from*, *on* and *with* the land.
  - Traditionally, teaching was an informal practice that was practical, meaning that children learned as they completed tasks in various environments like berry picking, beading, setting traps and cooking food.
- Processes:
  - Teach with circle processes in mind. The circle is a place where everyone is respected, equal and safe.

Consider: How do these approaches relate to and compliment the pedagogical beliefs and approaches I hold now?

# PEDAGOGY

## CONNECTING TO THE CLASSROOM

Below are some sample strategies, tools and ideas related to pedagogy.

### 1. Discover and Explore

- a) Why use: To express ideas and develop understanding.
- b) How to use: Seek out and consider diverse ideas, opinions and experiences to develop and extend your own and students' ideas, opinions and experiences.

### 2. Combine Ideas

- a) Why use: To encourage weaving ways.
- b) How to use: Expose students to varied ideas and opinions to clarify understanding and to broaden personal perspectives.

### 3. Respond to Texts

- a) Why use: To experience various media.
- b) How to use: Experience oral, print and other texts from a variety of cultural traditions and genres, such as magazine articles, diaries, drama, poetry, internet passages, fantasy, nonfiction, advertisements and photographs.

### 4. Respect Others and Strengthen Community

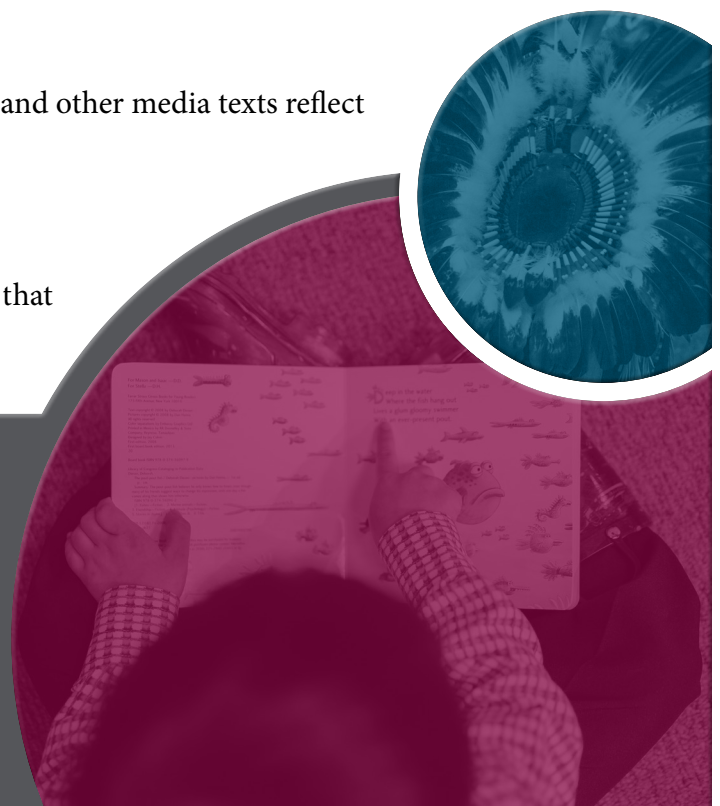
- a) Why use: To relate texts to culture.
- b) How to use: To compare ways in which oral, print and other media texts reflect specific elements of cultures or periods in history.

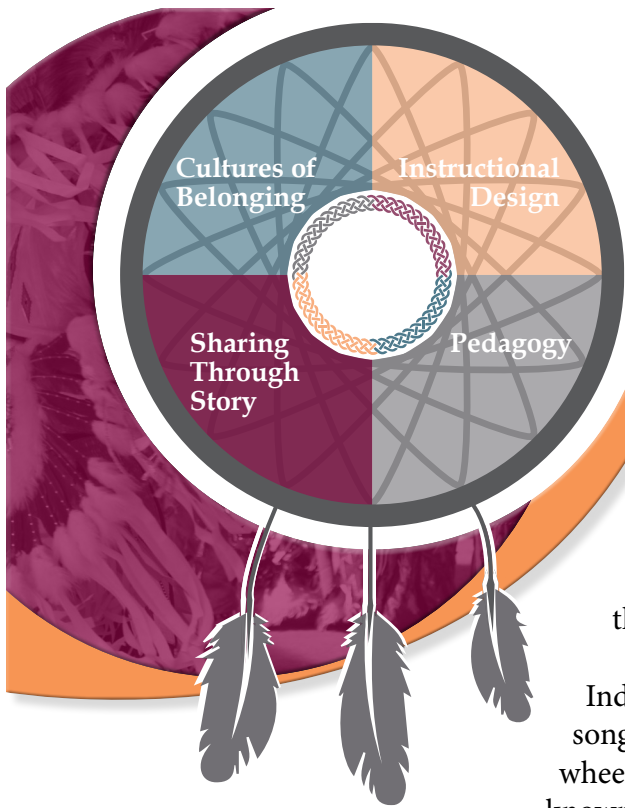
### 5. Use Language To Show Respect

- a) Why use: To support inclusion.
- b) How to use: To use inclusive language and actions that demonstrate respect for people of different races, cultures, genders, ages and abilities.

*Learn to see from your one eye with the best or the strengths in the Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing ... and learn to see from your other eye with the best or the strengths in the (Western) knowledges and ways of knowing ... but most importantly, learn to see with both these eyes together, for the benefit of all.*

Albert Marshall





# SHARING THROUGH STORY

How can we support deeper connection to learning outcomes for all students through storytelling?

The telling of stories is humankind’s oldest form of teaching. People around the world historically relied on storytelling to pass on knowledge through the generations. Storytelling bonded early communities of all cultures, giving children and adults alike the answers to life’s biggest questions about creation, life and the afterlife. The importance of sharing through story is no different in Indigenous cultures.

Indigenous cultures share stories in many ways – orally, through song, with drumming, in pictographs, as well as through medicine wheels and tipi rings. Traditionally, stories are told by elders – known as knowledge keepers or historians in some nations – as well as community members who have earned the title of storyteller. “First Nations, Métis and Inuit songs, stories, histories, languages, arts, sciences, and contributions to the rich history of Alberta need to be part of every Alberta student’s education.” (p. 10, Guiding Framework, 2016) Our ability to share through story in modern times is enhanced through print. Many stories have been captured, and it is through harnessing the power of literature that we have access to authentic, traditional stories.

In classrooms, storytelling creates a climate that is responsive to the individual needs of the classroom while making connections to prior and new learning. Through storytelling, teachers provide analogies or connections to ideas that students can understand, resulting in meaningful and transformative learning. (MacLean and Wason-Ellam) As one Indigenous proverb goes, “Tell me the facts and I’ll learn. Tell me the truth and I’ll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever.”

If classrooms can become communities of storytellers, the connections to content as well as the connections with and between students flourish. Stories build on the foundations laid by other stories. Personal stories shared by teachers about their experiences related to topics pave the pathway for students to share in the same way, infusing multiple perspectives into a singular deep and collective understanding of the content. Indigenous author Richard Wagamese talks about this idea. “We are story,” he says. “All of us. What comes to matter then is the creation of the best possible story we can while we’re here: you, me, us, together. When we can do that and we take the time to share those stories with each other, we get bigger inside, we see each other, we recognize our kinship.”

The most important qualities of our culture are our language and our stories. In oral traditions such as ours, telling stories is how we pass on the history and the teachings of our ancestors.  
Hanna & Henry, 1995, p. 201



# SHARING THROUGH STORY

## EMBRACING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Approaches to sharing through story that embrace Indigenous ways of knowing are embodied in:

- Song: Cree and Blackfoot stories are uniquely engrained in song
- Dance: Genres of First Nation dance (pow-wow) have stories, and each dance teaches a valuable lesson.
- Landscapes: Many sacred sites in Alberta that have stories to tell.
- Art: Creativity releases stories from within and studying artistic expression supports understanding of self and the world around us.
- Culturally Responsive Teaching: Finding ways to weave storytelling into teaching practices develops a relationship with students. Educators can use stories and narratives about themselves to share experiences and understandings. Educators can create a learning environment that fosters trust and respect by connecting personal narratives about the places they have been or events they have attended. Using stories about turning points in life, educators can address a wide range of curricular outcomes at any grade level. More importantly, educators can connect with their students on a personal level.

Consider: How do these approaches to sharing through story relate to and compliment my current teaching practices and approaches?



Storytelling moves the spirit and is a way of making meaning, of finding one's unique place in the world and making sense of the mysteries of life.

Our Way is a Valid Way, pg 57

# SHARING THROUGH STORY

## CONNECTING TO THE CLASSROOM

Below are some sample strategies, tools and ideas related to sharing through story.

### 1. Learn Through Story

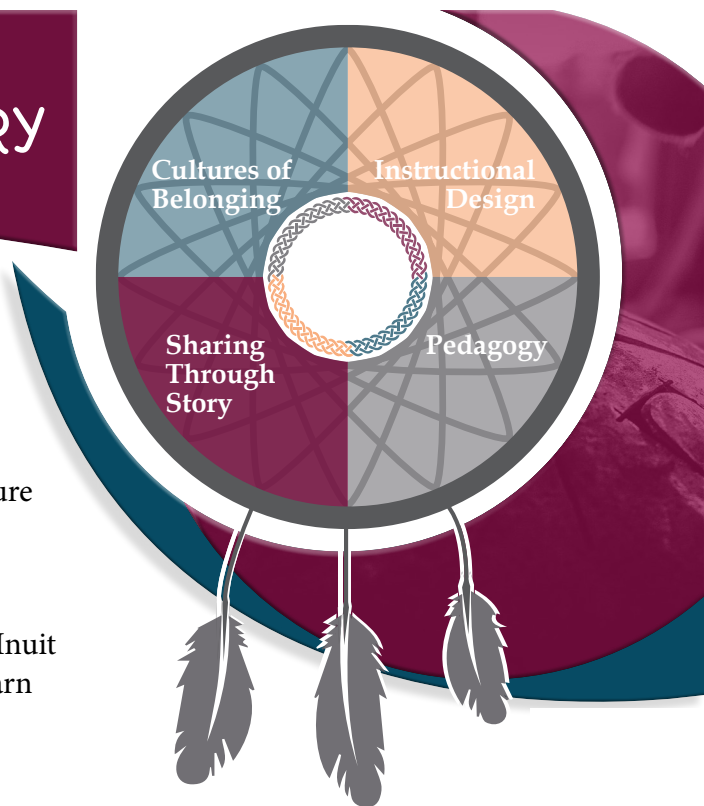
- a. Why use: To connect subjects to traditional literature and oral stories.
- b. How to use:
  - i. Select books that have been approved by educational and First Nations, Métis and Inuit community stakeholders and through Learn Alberta – Walking Together resources.
  - ii. Read out loud to students and discuss the themes and messages from the stories.
  - iii. Allow students the opportunity to share with a partner, in a written response, or as a class the connections they make from the stories and how the stories relate to their personal lives. This metacognitive skill can be incorporated at any age and it is an important element of literacy that can connect to all subject areas.

### 2. Learn Through Dance and Art

- a. Why use: To connect subjects to traditional dances, songs and art that tell stories.
- b. How to use:
  - i. In math class, explore examples of parallels, geometry, balance or symmetry in Indigenous art and architecture.
  - ii. In music or art class, build awareness of the similarities and differences in the use of art or songs in traditional Indigenous and Western societies. What do both cultures communicate through art and song?
  - iii. In physical education, analyze the appropriateness of various Indigenous images used in professional sports like team names or logos. How are Indigenous peoples represented, and how can this enhance our understanding of cultural items and story to honour sacred and ceremonial artifacts and narratives?

### 3. Learn Through Games That Share Story

- a. Why use: To connect subjects to traditional games.
- b. How to use: The *Move and Play Guide*, developed by Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association and the Be Fit For Life Network, aims to connect movement skills and physical literacy with traditional history, culture and games from Alberta's Indigenous peoples.



## FURTHERING YOUR LEARNING JOURNEY

Many of the strategies and *connecting to classroom* ideas contained in this guide were adapted from four online resources. Find these ideas and many more at:

- **First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Professional Learning Project:** <http://www.fnmiprofessionallearning.ca>
- **Our Way is a Valid Way:** <https://learning.arpdc.ab.ca/course/index.php?categoryid=170>  
<https://education.alberta.ca/media/563981/our-way-is-a-valid-way.pdf>
- **Alberta Education Lesson Plan Samples:** <http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/fnmilp/index.html>
- **Empowering the Spirit:** <http://empoweringthespirit.ca/>

Other fantastic resources available to support your learning journey include:

### First Peoples Principles of Learning

Created by the First Nations Education Steering Committee of British Columbia, the First Peoples Principles of Learning articulate common themes agreed on by the committee that prevail within First Peoples societies. With 203 First Nations bands in the province of British Columbia, these principles are intended to articulate similarities in ways of knowing and learning and commonalities in cultural constructs that could serve to enhance learning for all students.

Learn more about the creation and use of the principles:

<https://firstpeoplesprinciplesoflearning.wordpress.com/background-and-current-context/>

Access a poster of the principles:

<http://www.fnesc.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/PUB-LFP-POSTER-Principles-of-Learning-First-Peoples-poster-11x17.pdf>

### It's Our Time First Nations Tool Kit

The Assembly of First Nations has developed the It's Our Time First Nations Tool Kit as the basis of a comprehensive strategy to reach out to First Nations students, teachers, schools, communities and the Canadian public at large. The resource is designed to bring together First Nations and non-First Nations people and foster a spirit of cooperation, understanding, and action.

The It's Our Time First Nations Education Tool Kit is a collection of many resources for the exploration of issues that are important to First Nations and to all Canadians. Discussions of these issues can lead to:

1. Insights and understandings of the ideas, concepts, and forces that are the foundation of the integrity and power of First Nations people, and
2. Awareness and appreciation of the role of First Nations in the shared history of Canada.

To access the PDFs version of the toolkit please visit:

<http://www.afn.ca/education/toolkit/>

To access the iTunes U course (this link only works on an iPad):

<https://itunes.apple.com/ca/course/id1199604596>

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