First Peoples Story

Adapted from FNESC/FNSA *English First Peoples 10-12 Teacher Resource Guide*, 2018

# Course and grade level(s)

Suitable for any of the English First Peoples 10 options:

* English First Peoples (EFP) 10 – Writing
* English First Peoples (EFP) 10 – Literary Studies
* English First Peoples (EFP) 10 – New Media
* English First Peoples (EFP) 10 – Spoken Language

# Learning standards

From all EFP 10 Options:

## Big Ideas

* The exploration of text and story deepens understanding of one’s identity, others, and the world.
* Texts are socially, culturally, geographically, and historically constructed.

## Curricular Competencies

* Recognize and appreciate the role of story, narrative, and oral tradition in expressing First Peoples’ perspectives, values, beliefs, and points of view
* Respond to text in personal, creative, and critical ways
* Use writing and design processes to plan, develop, and create engaging and meaningful oral and other texts for a variety of purposes and audiences
* Demonstrate speaking and listening skills in a variety of formal and informal contexts for a range of purposes

## Content

* reading strategies
* metacognitive strategies
* writing processes
* oral language strategies

# Core Competencies

## Communication

* Connect and engage with others
* Explain/recount and reflect on experiences and accomplishments

## Critical Thinking

* Question and investigate

## Creative Thinking

* Generating ideas

## Social Responsibility

* Contributing to community
* Valuing diversity
* Building relationships

## Postive Personal and Cultural Identity

* Relationship and cultural contexts

# Overview

Storytelling is integral to the English First Peoples curriculum. This unit helps to build an understanding of, and comfort with, the idea of stories, listening to stories, and telling stories. When teaching this unit, it is important to:

* distinguish between storytelling and First Peoples oral traditions (**Note:** While storytelling is a part of the oral tradition, oral traditions encompass far more than storytelling. For more information on First Peoples oral tradition, see the FNESC/FNSA *English First Peoples Teacher 10-12 Resource Guide*, 2018 <http://www.fnesc.ca/learningfirstpeoples/efp/>.)
* ensure that students understand that in First Nations societies, the term “story” also includes the narratives that keep histories, and that “story” has multiple meanings depending on purpose.

This unit is guided by the following questions:

* What are the various purposes of stories shared by First Peoples?
* How are oral stories and the skill of storytelling important to Indigenous cultures?
* Why is the ability to tell an oral story an important skill in modern society?
* How is the experience of listening to and telling oral stories different from the experience of reading and writing stories?

The first few lessons of the unit focus on traditional storytelling and on hearing from members of the community. Beginning with traditional stories, students will experience some origin stories from across Canada and learn about traditional First Peoples stories and storytelling. Ideally, students will have the opportunity to:

* explore how place contributes to story by going on a field trip
* hear some traditional stories from members of a local First Nations community.

This would help students expand their concept of story and move away from the idea that a written story is inherently superior to or more valid than one told orally.

Stories are integral to all of us, as human beings. The last few lessons of the unit suggest activities that help students play with the idea of stories and become comfortable with telling stories (oral/performance).

## Lesson plans

Lesson 1 – Introduction to First Peoples Story

Lesson 2 – Stories Are Alive: History and Importance of Place

Lesson 3 – Elder Interview

Lesson 4 – Telling My Own Story

Lesson 5 – Re-telling Challenge

Lesson 6 – Every Object Has a Story

Unit summative assessment options are included at the end of this document.

## Primary texts

* Our Voices, Our Stories ([www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/stories/020020-4002-e.html](https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/stories/020020-4002-e.html))
* Canadian Museum of History, An Aboriginal Presence Our Origins ([www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/aborig/fp/fpz2f02e.shtml](http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/aborig/fp/fpz2f02e.shtml))
* Historica Canada, Indigenous Arts and Stories ([www.our-story.ca](http://www.our-story.ca))
* Local protocols for working with Indigenous Elders or guests (see Aboriginal Support Worker or Aboriginal liaison in your school)
* Mishenene et al., *Strength and Struggle: Perspectives from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada*

## Supplementary texts

* Photographs and documentary art collection, Royal BC Museum ([royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/bc-archives/archives-collections/photographs-documentary-art](https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/bc-archives/archives-collections/photographs-documentary-art) – for use if a field trip to a local site is not possible)
* One or two personal stories that can be shared orally with students (memorized, if possible)
* McGraw-Hill Education, *Moving Forward: A Collection About Truth and Reconciliation*
* Richard Wagamese, *One Native Life*

## Blackline Masters (BLM)

1. Reflection Guide

2. Guest Presenter Note-Taking Guide

# Lesson 1 – Introduction to First Peoples Story

Have students work in pairs or small groups to create a word web using the following words:

* story
* narrative
* myth\*
* legend\*
* fable\*
* fairy tale\*
* parable
* history

Share the word webs and debrief the process with the whole class, asking the following questions:

* What associations (connotations) do you have for each of these words?
* How does each of these words fit various stories you know?
* Why do you think there are so many English words for “story”?
* **Although many of these words have been used in the past to describe First Nations stories, can you think of reasons why they may not be appropriate or respectful?\***

**\* The last question is a vital point for discussion, as it is generally considered disrespectful to refer to First Peoples stories as “myths,” “fables,” “fairy tales,” or “legends.”** While *some* Indigenous authors (and others) may still use these words to describe some First Peoples stories, the terms do not represent an authentic understanding of the scope and purpose of Indigenous stories.

With the class, discuss the purposes of stories in our world. Discuss the importance of storytelling in First Peoples communities, and the similarities and differences between non-Indigenous stories and First Peoples stories. Review the narrative structures (circular, cyclical, recursive, use of repetition, stories within stories) found in First Peoples stories. On the Canadian Museum of History website, *Our Voices, Our Stories*, there are several origin stories, including:

* “Glooscap,” from the Mi'kmaq
* “Sky Woman,” from the Haudenosaunee
* “The Birth of Good and Evil,” from the Haudenosaunee
* “Why Porcupines Have Quills,” from the Anishinaabe

The *Our Voices, Our Stories* website includes background information and explanations, as well as messages from Elders in many communities that explain the importance of stories. Read these messages with the class and discuss the following:

* purposes of stories (e.g., to teach, to record information and history, to entertain, for cultural continuity)
* the importance of stories
* authenticity of oral stories
* local First Nations terms for specific types of stories
* forms that First Nations stories take (e.g., oral narratives, songs, dance, regalia, masks, poles)
* any ownership or protocol issues associated with local stories
* legal status of First Nations stories that keep histories (**Note:** If students have not learned about this yet, refer to the lesson about oral histories in the Oral Traditions unit earlier in the FNESC/FNSA *English First Peoples 10-12 Teacher Resource Guide*, 2018.)

*An Aboriginal Presence: Our Origins*, on The Canadian Museum of History website, is another good source for stories. If possible, invite guest speakers from local First Peoples community(ties) to tell a traditional story to the class.

## Formative assessment strategies

Students could start a learning journal for this unit, in which they write reader responses to the stories and reflections on their learning. In this introductory sequence of lessons, some of their learning journal entries could include their reflections on the origin stories that they read, or what they learned from the Elder who told the story. (**Note:** If students are unfamiliar with the learning journals process, refer to the the “Introduction to English First Peoples” unit and the “First Peoples Oral Traditions” unit in the FNESC/FNSA *English First Peoples 10-12 Teacher Resource Guide*, 2018, <http://www.fnesc.ca/learningfirstpeoples/efp/>.)

# Lesson 2 – Stories Are Alive: History and Importance of Place

Take students on a field trip to a local setting – a beach, a mountain, a forest, or local landmark – that is significant in First Nations history. Ask students to visualize what this setting might have looked like a thousand or more years ago.

If possible, have a member of a local First Nations community come to talk about stories that are connected with this specific place.

If it isn’t possible to have students visit a location, share photographs of a significant place. Many archival photographs and documentary art are available on the Royal BC Museum website.

Focusing on the traditional stories they have studied, discuss the following questions:

* How do stories create visual images of where the story is taking place?
* What topics and issues about place and setting are common in traditional stories? (e.g., place name stories, stories about local landmarks)
* What do these stories tell us about the First Peoples relationship to the land?

## Formative assessment strategies

Have students write reflections on their experience being in a specific place. Provide students with feedback on their reflections.

# Lesson 3 – Elder Interview

This lesson will require some preparation. Be sure to have laid appropriate groundwork by obtaining a list of local protocols for working with Elders or guests (see Aboriginal Support Worker or Aboriginal liaison in public schools, or First Nations Education Coordinators in First Nations’ communities) and possibly even a list of local Elders who might be approached. For more guidance, review the information included in the Introduction for to the FNESC/FNSA *English First Peoples Teacher Resource Guide*, 2018 (<http://www.fnesc.ca/learningfirstpeoples/efp/>), which refers to Making Connections with the Community, and First Peoples Guest Speaker Considerations.

In advance of interviewing an Elder, have students:

* prepare questions and review them to ensure that they are respectful and appropriate (the focus of the questions should be on traditional stories – how they have been, and are currently, used within the Elder’s community)
* brainstorm ways of showing respect to the interviewee
* discuss ways to show thanks to the person (this may require some research to learn if there are local First Nations protocols that should be followed).

Provide the Elder with a copy of the questions in advance of being interviewed, so that he or she can think of how to reply ahead of time. Ideally, each student will conduct a one-on-one interview, but depending on the availability of Elders who can be approached, teachers may need to have students work in pairs or even small groups to conduct the interviews.

If the Elders are willing, ask students to record the interview rather than take notes. If an Elder agrees to this, ensure that students ask the Elder what he or she wants done with the audio or video record at the end of the assignment. Help students understand that respectful and ethical behaviour with this type of research means that the Elder has a say in how his or her voice or image is used and whether the recording can be kept or should be returned to the Elder or destroyed.

Following the interview, have students present to the class what they have learned from the process. Various extensions of the activity are possible. Students could:

* create an oral presentation or create an alternative visual presentation that they then explain to the class (e.g., a video or audio recording of themselves to play for the class)
* create a personal reflection that they present to the Elder to share the positive impact that meeting the Elder has had on students
* interview younger students about what is important to them, following a similar process to that used for the Elder interview, where students create a list of questions in advance; afterwards the older students could reflect on the differences in constructing interview questions for the interviewees (Elders versus younger students) who are at very different stages of life.

## Formative assessment strategies

As a class, co-create criteria by which they will self- and peer-assess their presentations (taking into account the diverse forms the presentations may take). After the presentations, ask students to compose a learning journal entry to reflect on the process of interviewing, on the process of presenting, and on what they’ve learned from the undertaking. Provide feedback.

# Lesson 4 – Telling My Own Story

Share a story about a “time in your life you will never forget.” The story can be dramatic, happy, exciting, and so on. Start with a hook that will pull students into the story. The story could also begin with the most exciting part, and then flash back to the beginning.

Students should think of a time in their lives that they will never forget. With a partner or in a small group, they should share their stories orally with each other.

Some students may feel comfortable enough to share their stories with the whole class. If this activity is being done at the beginning of the year, students can introduce each other to the class and tell their partner’s stories.

Review how the original story was framed and how to tell stories effectively. Have students write their stories as a personal narrative.

## Variant approaches

There are many collaborative ways to build stories. Either as a warmup for this activity or as an extension afterward, in small groups or as a whole class, story starters can be written on papers. That story can be passed to the next student, read, and then added to. The papers can be passed to several students before completion.

## Formative assessment strategies

Observe and listen to students while they are sharing their stories with each other. Provide feedback as necessary.

# Lesson 5 – Retelling Challenge

For this lesson teachers will need a personal story (lasting between two and five minutes when read aloud), ready to be shared from memory. Provide a pre-typed list of bullet points of key elements of your story (checklist).

Before telling the story, begin by informing students that they will be retelling your story from memory, trying to repeat it as accurately as possible to one of their classmates. Students may take notes if they like while they are listening to the original story, but they won’t be able to use the notes later when they are retelling the story.

After telling the story, give students five minutes to review their notes (and talk to a partner if they wish) and prepare to retell the story from memory. Have students find partners and give them a way to determine who is telling the story first. Give a copy of the bullet points of the story to the partner who will be listening (so the partner can confirm the story for accuracy). Then have the partners switch roles after one student has finished telling the story.

Debrief by asking:

* What was difficult about this activity?
* What were some strategies you used to help you remember better?
* How many times would you have to hear this story before you could repeat it word for word?
* If a story was passed down accurately through generations, what steps would have been taken to preserve the accuracy of the story?
* Who has ownership of this story? Would you feel comfortable if someone told your story to a different audience?
* How was this experience different from reading a story?
* Why have we lost the skill of memorizing stories word for word in our society? What might be the benefits of redeveloping this skill?

These discussion questions could be used in a number of ways. Students could discuss with partners and then share with the class, reflect on them individually, or be a given choice of questions to focus on.

## Variant approaches

* Instead of using a personal story, choose a short written story to read aloud (with copies of the text available to confirm accuracy).
* When the students are retelling the original story, challenge them to tell the story from different points of view (first person or third person).
* Ask a few volunteers to retell the story to the whole class.
* Have students retell the story from the perspective of a different person in the story (not the original narrator).
* Ask students to add motions or actions or recreate the story using pictures (for students who are more visual or physical learners).
* Ask one student to leave the room. Tell the story, then one of the groups listening in the room leaves the room and tells the story to the student in the hallway. The student then comes in from the hallway and retells the story to the class (and the class compares it with the original story).

## Formative assessment strategies

* While students are working on strategies for remembering the story, circulate and offer guidance and feedback.
* Have students use the checklist of key points from the original story to self-assess their ability to accurately retell the story.
* Collect a brief written reflection from each student on one of the discussion questions to review what understandings the student gained from the activity.

# Lesson 6 – Every Object Has a Story

For this lesson, teachers will need to provide a variety of objects for students to choose from that they will use to develop their stories. These objects could be common, everyday classroom objects (e.g., staplers, whiteboard pens, rulers), outdoor objects (e.g., rocks, pinecones, leaves), or random objects brought from home or borrowed from another school department.

Place a collection of random objects on a table or in a bag for students to choose from. Give students a chance to pick one of the objects. Give them approximately 20 minutes (use discretion as to how much time students need) to wander around the classroom (or preferably wander around outside) and create a story around the object they have been given. Students should remember that they are practising inventing a story. They should practise telling it out loud to themselves a number of times until the story is complete. The story does not have to be from the point of view of the object or even have the object as the central idea. The object just has to be part of the story.

Ask students to return to a writing place (or they could carry something to write on with them on which to do this) and jot down 10–12 key words or phrases that will help them remember the story. Then they can continue practising the story with the key phrases to trigger their memory.

Organize students into pairs, or groups of three, and have them take turns telling their stories to each other.

## Variant approaches

* In groups, students can pick one story that could be shared with the class (or the student who feels the most comfortable sharing with a larger group) and then the whole group works to revise the story and help the storytellers refine their performance. For example, they could give tips on pacing, or parts of the story that could be clarified or described in more detail, or ways the ending could be improved.
* Partners or groups could choose one of the stories they all like and then turn it into a version that they all share together (perhaps by expanding the original story or having different students take on different roles or simply take turns telling the story).
* Students could create a written version of their oral story.

## Formative assessment activty to support further learning

Have students:

* generate criteria for what makes a good story and a good storytelling performance
* discuss criteria for what it looks like to listen respectfully to another story
* reflect on the experience of thinking of a story as they move around and hold a physical object in their hands (as opposed to sitting in a desk with a written prompt).

# Unit Summative Assessment Options

## Classroom story fair

Pick several stories, such as those found in *Strength and Struggle*. Good choices include:

* Gord Bruyere, “A Raven Flies South”
* Cherie Dimaline, “The Amazing Sense of Shake”
* Richard Wagamese, “The Animal People Choose a Leader”
* Richard Van Camp, “The Biggest Moccasins in the World”

Organize students into groups of four to six. Have them choose a story from the list, with each group preferably choosing different stories. Have each group read the story and pick one task from the list below to share with the whole class in a classroom story fair:

* Create an artifact that would be of interest to a character in the story. The artifact should be symbolic and should represent a motivation of the character, or a setting or mood.
* Write a poem or song that brings to life part of the story. Create an explanation of how the poem or song you have written connects with the story.
* Write a letter to the class explaining why this story should be used as a whole-class story and what it would fit with thematically.
* Create a “lesson plan” for teaching the story to the class, complete with important questions that should be asked in discussion and an activity for the class to do.
* Create a commercial or movie trailer for your story, making sure that you include details from the story that would entice your classmates to read it.
* Create a comic strip that illustrates the important details of the story, including the central conflict and the characters.

On the day of the classroom fair, have the groups set up their tasks in a space. Each group could formally present what they have completed, or they could set up as a station to be visited by other students.

## Sharing traditional stories

Have students work in small groups to prepare and present a sharing or retelling of one of the traditional stories that they have permission to share. **For stories they have heard from local guest speakers, ensure that permission has been requested and provided to retell them, and that proper protocols are followed**. Assign or have students select the format they will use to share their chosen story (e.g., readers’ theatre, tableaux, puppet show, radio play, dance, drama). Discuss criteria for peer and teacher assessment, such as the extent to which students’ presentations:

* reflect a clear purpose
* are appropriate for the audience
* incorporate presentation techniques (e.g., props, use of the physical environment)
* incorporate original language as appropriate
* engage the audience
* are memorized
* are presented fluidly.

BLM 1 – Reflection Guide

Topic/Activity:

Name:

**Possible prompts:** *These are questions to think about for your response*. You don’t have to answer every single point, as long as you demonstrate depth and thoughtfulness in the points that you do respond to.

* What did you take away from the experience?
* What was something new that you learned that was valuable or thought-provoking?
* What questions do you have?
* What connections did you make to something else you know or have learned about?
* Describe something you struggled with.
* Do you consider yourself a learner? (Do you always try to learn something from every new experience or opportunity?) Explain why or why not, and explain how you personally engaged with this experience.

BLM 2 – Guest Presenter Note-Taking Guide

During any presentation or field trip, you are responsible for learning as much as you can from the experience. It is helpful to always engage with a positive frame of mind and, where/when possible, take responsibility for helping the presenter with the presentation.

Notes (important or interesting pieces of information):

Specific questions you have:

Most memorable or important idea you are taking away from this experience: