
Aboriginal Education Perspectives

10 Ways to Weave Aboriginal Ways of Knowing into Classroom Curriculum

1. When planning a unit or lesson, consider the First Peoples Principles of Learning.
2. Incorporate place-based learning in your classroom. When talking about Aboriginal culture or traditions, remember to start with the local culture. Coast Salish culture here in North Vancouver, Squamish Nation or Tsleil Waututh Nation.
3. Use Aboriginal resources, such as an Aboriginal book, which relate to the theme (picture book, novel, literature circle books).
4. Build on all students' self-identity (name, where you come from and who your relatives and Elders are). All people need to be connected to their culture to be successful.
5. Bring in seasonal activities. Discuss how people's lives are affected by the changing seasons: how they move around, activities, food choices, clothing, and celebrations. Ask the students what the seasons look like in their community?
6. Discuss traditions/celebrations of various cultures ~ how, what and why we celebrate different occasions/things/people. This can lead to an exploration of a variety of cultural celebrations (which can highlight both similarities and differences amongst all people).
7. Remember the importance of "stewardship" of the land: the value of natural resources, sustainability and protecting the Earth.
8. Invite people with Aboriginal ancestry into the classroom. This could be from your local community: parent/grandparent at the school; artist; Elder or a Coast Salish presenter. At the school level, remember to acknowledge traditional territory at assemblies and special events.
9. Consider what is going on right now with Aboriginal communities in Canada: link this to the curriculum/ projects you are working on/ social justice discussions.
10. Continue to educate yourself about Aboriginal culture: visit local galleries and museums, see authentic artists' work, watch for Professional Learning opportunities/ attend festivals, events and conferences.

"It's a long road we have come and it's a long road we can go. We have to walk together and talk together. If you never listen to me, I will never listen to you. I will not follow you. Walk side by side and let's get there."

CONRAD RATARA (Elder)

First Peoples Principles of Learning

1. Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits and the ancestors.
2. Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships; and a sense of place).
3. Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.
4. Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.
5. Learning recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge.
6. Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.
7. Learning involves patience and time.
8. Learning requires exploration of one's identity
9. Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/ or in certain situations.

Place-based Thinking Concepts

1. Aboriginal people have a **relationship with nature**: the land, air, water, animals and plants. They respect the earth, taking only what they need and giving thanks for all they have.
2. Squamish and Tsleil Waututh people have **links to these lands and waters**. Squamish and Tsleil Waututh place names exist throughout the school district. In many instances, a location has particular meaning to people because of the existence of oral traditions that served to explain that place in the Squamish and Tsleil Waututh universe and relationship to the land. In addition, the land bears witness to the settlements, resource sites, and spiritual and ritual places of our ancestors, including villages, hunting camps, cedar bark gathering areas, rock quarries, clam processing camps, pictographs and cemeteries. Some of these village sites date back 3000 years.
3. In Aboriginal communities, men, women, and children all had their **roles**. Grandparents were looked after by their families and children learned from all adults by watching, listening and doing.
4. **Elders are not necessarily old people**; they are people who are consulted in the community because of their wisdom: spiritual, emotional, cultural and political.

Here are some examples of Place-based learning:

- *The Coast Salish people carve "House posts" (main supports that hold up the longhouse cross beams) or "Welcome posts" (posts found outside).*
- *Traditional Coast Salish blankets were woven from spun wool on a loom incorporating designs- with dyed wool. Button blankets were made of thick wool and embellished with mother of pearl buttons created by Northwest Coastal Nations such as Haida.*

GO FORWARD WITH COURAGE