

Integration of Indigenous Culture

November Focus: Oral Traditions

Indigenous Pedagogy and Continued Exploration of Indigenous Worldviews

What is Indigenous Pedagogy?

It is a holistic practice of teaching that incorporates Indigenous worldviews throughout all components of our learning environments, including how we interact with children and families, how we develop our daily routines, how we set up our physical spaces, and how we intentionally engage children in learning opportunities. Educators are viewed as active learners and researchers alongside children, and role model looking and listening as part of the learning process.



Some world views we will introduce as we proceed throughout our integration of Indigenous culture include the respect for the environment, animals, and each other, the interconnectedness of all living things, oral traditions, land-based teaching, the appreciation for the wisdom provided by Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Cultural

Advisors, and spiritual wellbeing.

Our next series of activities will focus on the following:

Oral Traditions

Oral tradition refers to sharing knowledge through the oral transmission of information, as opposed to written. Traditional cultural knowledge is transmitted through stories from one generation to the next. In the oral tradition, stories that are shared hold rich historical timelines that educate listeners about identity, roots and culture. Through metaphor and allusion, traditional stories also offer layers of meaning, providing guidance that varies according to the age and maturity of the listener. In some communities and for some stories, specific protocol and seasonal indicators must be followed before telling a story.

(https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/oral_tradition/#reflection)

Consider the following points showcasing more information regarding oral traditions

(<https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/11-things-you-should-know-about-aboriginal-oral-traditions>)

- *Storytelling was a seasonal tradition practiced in the winter when hunting and gathering activities slowed, food was processed and stored, and people had time to relax and share stories.*
- *Indigenous storytellers were the first performance artists. The drama of the stories is enhanced by the storyteller so that the audience can experience the drama. Enactment keeps ancient stories alive.*
- *Stories, like songs and dances, are often owned. Hearing a story does not give one the right to retell that story.*



- *Certain stories are never written down, which preserves the tradition of sharing knowledge, culture, and history orally. These stories are the fabric of the community's history, knowledge and culture, and some are thousands of years old.*
- *Certain stories are very protected and only retold to select audiences. This, and not writing them down, protects the story. If you are selected to be part of the audience, consider it an honour.*
- *Certain stories are much more than mere entertainment - they are used as lessons and provide a moral, through the form of a traditional belief, that will help guide people through their lives.*
- *Knowledge is one of the greatest gifts an Indigenous person has to give - the telling of oral traditions requires the storyteller to trust the listener to take away the proper message of the story.*

Activities:

1. At the start of the week, reflect on your program's current study topic. As the week continues, collect items/artifacts that represent the activities children have participated in. For example, place aside a feather if your program completed feather painting, or a leaf reflecting outside play. Place these objects in a suitcase and use as mementos to share a story about the children in your group as the week closes out. Print the word "oral tradition" on a white board and explain to the children that it means sharing important stories to others without reading from a book. Let the children know that you will be the storyteller and you want to share a story about them all as they engaged in the learning story of the past week. Be sure to incorporate into your story any positive, kind, and helpful behaviours that were observed.
2. As an extension to explain "oral tradition", invite your children to help you collect a pile of rocks with smooth surfaces. Consider the interests of the children in your group and draw pictures using a Sharpie marker on the surfaces that relate to the current learning topic. Place the rocks in a suitcase and invite the children to help you tell a story that showcases a positive element of the current theme. Be sure to include in your story where the topic of interest came from and where it led to.

Book Suggestion:

"We All Play" by Julie Flett

This story showcases the playful adventures of both animals and children, sharing the natural world together. The beautiful pictures are displayed with limited text, encouraging the focus on the natural beauty and messaging. It also provides a glossary of Cree words denoting the wild animals in the book, complete with a pronunciation guide.

