

What are my gifts? (k-7) Lesson
Improve Oral Language and Communication Skills

Putting the Talking Stick into practice: Characteristics and Connections to Animals

Learning Intentions:

- I can think about my gifts
- I can practice using the talking stick
- I can identify with animal characteristics.

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Learning Outcome:

- actively participate in classroom language activities by asking questions, predicting, expressing feelings, sharing ideas, and making personal connections
- listen and respond appropriately to contextual questions

(Note that talking circles can be used for discussions in any subject area, or for working on connections, questions, inference, etc).

Materials

Class talking stick, gold, silver and black Sharpie felts

Space to gather in a circle

Sharing Our World: Animals of the Native Northwest Coast

Totem Tales by Deb Vanasse, I am Raven by David Bouchard

BLM: Pictures of the animals corresponding to the Sharing Our World Book and blank totem poles

Legend Queneesh totem pole: Aboriginal Education Center can bring it out to you, it is a small version of the one in the traffic circle by the Airport

Teacher Reference:

1. Stephen Covey Indian Talking Stick: www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUxi-Zc45tA (note that this video is American and the use of word Indian is used. In Canada, we use the term Aboriginal).
2. Talking Stick explanation - in this document as one example of the meaning of talking stick symbolism
3. Totem Pole Explanations—in this document are two explanations and an explanation of a totem pole maquette
4. Legend of Queneesh story—in this document
5. Shortened version of I am Raven story
6. Animal Characteristics

Lesson

1. Introduce the learning intentions: I can practice using the talking stick; I can identify with animal characteristics..
2. Opening Talking Circle: Everyone introduce themselves and anything they know about their ancestry
3. Discuss basic idea of totem pole and the Aboriginal perspective of animals—that everything is related and equal. Connect to children's experiences—Does anyone have a pet? Have you ever been close to a wild animal? Ever wonder what that animal is thinking?
4. Using the actual Legend of Queneesh totem pole or with pictures, tell quick version of Legend of Queneesh. Note importance of animals and the characteristics of the people in the story.
5. Read to the students, Sharing our World: Animals of the Native Northwest Coast. Have students listen to the story and think about an animal that they might connect to. Make connections as you read through the story.
6. Turn and talk. Tell the person that you are sitting beside which animal you are like, and why.
7. Ask students to make connections to the animals in the story. Are there animals that they can identify with the characteristics of? Give an example. (I am like a wolf, because I am a provider and protector for my son. Or, I am a like a hummingbird, because I try to be a good friend).
8. For K-2, read, Totem Tales and for Grade 3 and up read, shortened version of I am Raven
9. Activity: Cut our paper totem and 6 animals that you feel connected to or that you are like. Glue animals onto the totem— front and back.

An American Indian Legend - Nation Unknown

From First Peoples - The Legends website

<http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-Html-Legends/TraditionalTalkingStick-Unknown.html>

The Talking Stick is a tool used in many Native American Traditions when a council is called. It allows all council members to present their point of view. The Talking Stick is passed from person to person as they speak and only the person holding the stick is allowed to talk during that time period. The Answering Feather is also held by the person speaking unless the speaker addresses a question to another council member. At that time, the Answering Feather is passed to the person asked to answer the query. Every member of the meeting must listen closely to the words being spoken, so when their turn comes, they do not repeat unneeded information or ask impertinent questions. Indian children are taught to listen from age three forward; they are also taught to respect another's viewpoint. This is not to say that they may not disagree, but rather they are bound by their personal honor to allow everyone their sacred point of view.

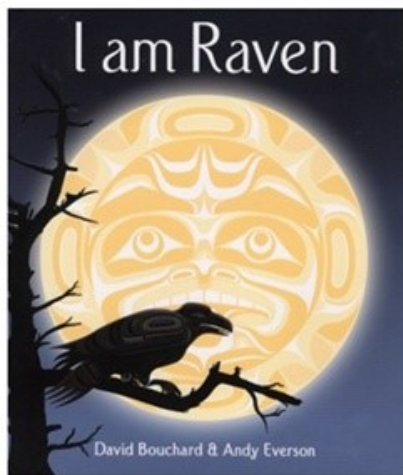
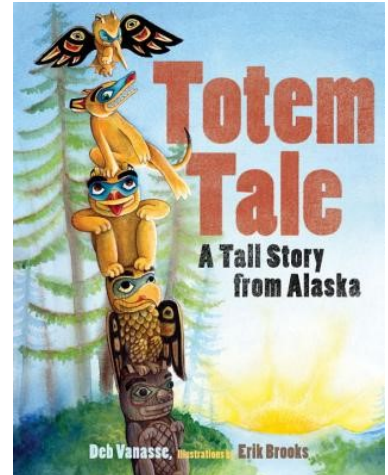
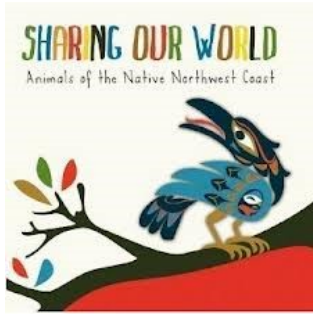
People responsible for holding any type council meeting are required to make their own Talking Stick. The Talking Stick may be used when they teach children, hold council, make decisions regarding disputes, hold Pow-Wow gatherings, have storytelling circles, or conduct a ceremony where more than one person will speak.

Since each piece of material used in the Talking Stick speaks of the personal Medicine of the stick owner, each Talking Stick will be different. The Qualities of each type of Standing Person (Tree) brings specific Medicine. White Pine is the Peace Tree, Birch symbolizes truth, and Evergreens represent the continued growth of all things. Cedar symbolizes cleansing. Aspen is the symbol for seeing clearly since there are many eye shapes on the trunk. Maple represents gentleness. Elm is used for wisdom; Mountain Ash for protection; Oak for strength; Cherry for expression, high emotion, or love. Fruit woods are for abundance and walnut or pecan for gathering of energy or beginning new projects. Each person making a Talking Stick must decide which type of Standing Person (Tree) will assist their needs and add needed medicine to the Councils held.

The ornamentation of each stick all has meaning. In the Lakotah Tradition, red is for life, yellow is for knowledge, blue is for prayer and wisdom, white is for spirit, purple is for healing, orange is for feeling kinship with all living things, black is for clarity and focus.

The type of feathers and hide used on a Talking Stick are very important as well. The Answering Feather is usually an Eagle Feather, which represents high ideals, truth as viewed from the expansive eye of the eagle, and the freedom that comes from speaking total truth to the best of one's ability. The Answering Feather can also be the feather of a Turkey, the Peace Eagle of the south, which brings peaceful attitudes as well as the give and take necessary in successful completion of disputes. In the Tribe that sees Owl as good Medicine, the Owl feather may also be used to stop deception from entering the Sacred Space of the Council.

The skins, hair or hides used in making a Talking Stick brings the abilities, talents, gifts and medicine of those creatures-beings to council in a variety of ways. Buffalo brings abundance; Elk brings physical fitness and stamina; deer brings gentleness; rabbits bring the ability to listen with big ears; the hair from a horse's tail or mane brings perseverance and adds connection to the earth and to the spirits of the wind. The Talking Stick is the tool that teaches each of us to honor the sacred point of view of every living creature.





'Legend of Queneesh' Totem Pole Maquette*

Created to depict the totem pole located in the roundabout on Knight
Road near the Comox Airport

Created to depict

Created to depict the totem pole located in the roundabout

Road near the Comox Airport

Carver: Calvin Hunt Kwagu't Nation (Kwakwaka'wakw)

Legend of Queneesh Pole Raised: May 15, 2009

Details: The pole was commissioned by the Town of Comox. The front of the pole is meant to represent the Legend of Queneesh. The bottom figure is Queneesh the Whale. The figure in the middle is a human figure holding a canoe, which represents the Pentlatch people being saved from the flood. The top figure is an eagle spirit. The back of the totem pole shows salmon swimming. The salmon represent an important food source of the K'ómoks. As well, the salmon represent the Salmon River in Kelsey Bay which is part of the K'ómoks traditional territory. The circles represent the big rocks along the shore of Cape Lazo. The cross hatching pattern represents salmon weirs in the Comox estuary.

**Maquette is a French word for a small scale model of an unfinished sculpture. It is used to visualize and test shapes and ideas without incurring the cost and effort of producing a full-scale product. For commissioned sculptures, especially monumental public sculptures, a maquette may be used to show the client how the finished work will fit in the proposed site.*

Totem Poles

<http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/culture/totem-poles.html>

What are totem poles?

Totem poles are monuments created by First Nations of the Pacific Northwest to represent and commemorate ancestry, histories, people, or events. Totem poles are typically created out of red cedar, a malleable wood relatively abundant in the Pacific Northwest, and would be erected to be visible within a community.

Most totem poles display beings, or crest animals, marking a family's lineage and validating the powerful rights and privileges that the family held. Totem poles would not necessarily *tell* a story so much as it would serve to document stories and histories familiar to community members or particular family or clan members.

A totem pole typically features symbolic and stylized human, animal, and supernatural forms.¹ Totem poles are primarily visual representations of kinship, depicting family crests and clan membership. For example, some Kwakwaka'wakw families of northern Vancouver Island belonging to the Thunderbird Clan will feature a Thunderbird crest and familial legends on their poles. Other common crests among coastal First Nations include the wolf, eagle, grizzly bear, thunderbird, killer whale, frog, raven, and salmon.² Wealthy and influential families may have more than one crest. Totem poles can also be created to honour a particular event or important person.

Of all the material culture produced by coastal First Nations, the totem pole is likely one of the most recognizable cultural symbols of the Pacific Northwest. The array of different totem pole styles and designs reflect the rich diversity of the First Nations histories and cultures that produced them. This section will explore the meaning and purpose of totem poles, how they are constructed, stylistic variations, and their significance in cultural revitalization initiatives among First Nations.

Totem Poles

The raising of carved wood poles or columns is not a rare occurrence in human history. For centuries many different peoples throughout the world carved and raised large vertical columns for various purposes. What sets the indigenous people of the Northwest Coast apart are the spectacular forms, intricate patterning and the sheer monumental size, height and girth of the logs used. As Edward Malin notes, "Here the totem poles achieved an artistic significance without parallel in human experience".

The use of the word "totem" to describe the carvings historically found along the Northwest Coast is somewhat misleading. Even the earliest explorers recognized that the poles did not depict gods nor were they objects of worship. Rather the totem poles of the Northwest Coast are heraldic. These monumental carvings are better understood as physical manifestations of the owner's family histories and rights. The images displayed are crest figures, many of which represent supernatural beings, or ancestors who encountered supernatural beings, from whom hereditary rights and privileges were obtained. These rights include lands, resources, house designs, images, names and ceremonies including the songs, masks, dances and regalia that are shown in the ceremonies. Poles proclaim and validate a person's lineage and importance.

https://www.sfu.ca/brc/art_architecture/totem_poles.html

The Legend of Queneesh



Queneesh is the K'ómoks name for the gleaming white glacier which can be seen from all over the Comox Valley. The Legend of Queneesh tells us how a great white whale saved the K'ómoks people. It began long ago when the K'ómoks people still lived in big cedar plank houses along the shores of Puntledge River estuary.

One night an elder of the village, *Quoi qwa lak*, had a powerful dream. It warned him of a coming time when the rain would fall for many days and nights. In his dream he was told that this rain would cause a great flood and the K'ómoks people would be in danger.

In order for them to survive the flood, they would have to make canoes, cedar bark rope and clothing and preserve food for the coming disaster. *Gye gya janook*, Chief of the K'ómoks, directed all of the people of the village to work together so that they would be ready when the rain began to fall.

Quoi qwa lak himself supervised the making of a strong cedar bark rope that was many miles in length. The rope had to be long enough to reach from the village to the top of the glacier.

As foretold, the rains began to fall just as everything was ready. The river rose rapidly to flood stage. Young men carried the long cedar rope from the village to the mountains and attached it securely to the glacier. The people tied their loaded canoes to the rope so they wouldn't get swept away to sea by the flood waters.

Soon the land was covered with water and still it continued to rain. The people were afraid as the water continued to rise up to the glacier where they had anchored their canoes. Suddenly the glacier began to float, breaking up through the rising waters like a giant grey whale breaching. The people were awestruck as they watched the glacier become a huge white whale.

"Queneesh, Queneesh!" they called. Queneesh almost floated free of the mountain, but the rain stopped and the flood waters began to recede. The K'ómoks people were saved. Some are still heard to whisper to him "Kwo la whee gai, Queneesh".

"Thank you, thank you."

I am Raven

I am Raven

By David Bouchard and Andy Everson

Author's note: "You do not have to know what your totem is to have one. You just do. You do not choose your totem. It chooses you. And you do not have to acknowledge it or celebrate its presence, but you can and when you do, it is good."

Summary for Oral Storytelling

There was a great chief who lived over there, somewhere west of here.

He was known because he was kind and wise.

People from the north, east, and south of this place came to him for counsel. He was so wise that animals, birds and his also sought out his counsel.

One day the chief decided to erect a new totem pole. He invited some of our wild cousins to his lodge. Together they honoured their grandmothers and grandfathers, as always should be done. They had tea.

The chief explained that he was having a pole carved so his descendants could remember him for who he was and that he wanted to include all of them on his totem pole because they were all special to him, but he could not.

Later that day the chief saw **Beaver**. Beaver spoke to the chief, and said,

"Chief, I would not want to influence your decision on who you will place on your pole, but I have built this beautiful canoe for you"

And then Beaver continued, "I am a builder, I work hard and do not dream or play. With persistence and determination I create, much like you. Your legacy will surely be that of the builder!"

On his evening walk, the chief saw **Bear**.

Bear said, "I am happy to see you and have a gift for you. It is a ceremonial headpiece that I pass onto someone who is wise and a natural born teacher. It is for someone who is knowing, humble and strong. May you be blessed as you pass this healing medicine on."

The Chief spent that entire evening accepting gifts.

He met **Wolf** returning from a hunting trip, who gave the Chief a gift of meat, a gift from a courageous and resourceful protector whose presence brings joy, laughter and prosperity to the people.

Then **Owl**, who could see into the dark side, and could find truth and guide the young and the elders, gave the Chief a medicine bag to wear. The medicine bag was to help the Chief remember who he was.

I am Raven shortened version.

Eagle's gift was a traditional fan of his finest feathers, a symbol of peace and friendship.

Frog, who understood that peace of mind and heart is the key to happiness, gave the Chief a gift of tobacco and sweet grass braid as a reminder of the quiet moments of reflection they shared together.

Killer Whale waited for the Chief, "I see that I am not the first to reach you. I too believe that much of what you are is of me. Through us comes the history of all that has passed before us, and the gift of creating peace, harmony and friendship with All our Relations and Mother the Earth. Please accept this talking stick as a reminder of what we share."

Otter was playing and playing and having fun. He gave the Chief new gaming sticks and invited the Chief to play with him.

Thunderbird then blinked and lightening flashed across the sky, thunder echoed from sea to sea, and he spoke, "Most fear my power and wrath, I am the Creator's message carrier, I have made you a powerful spear. It is a symbol of the Creator's blessing to you for a life honouring all creatures."

Now it was late, and the Chief went to sit in the quiet clearing by the water's edge.

There sat **Raven**, unusually quiet.

"Ah," said the Chief, I am surprised I have not run into you this evening, have you a gift for me?"

"Look into the water and tell me what you see", replied Raven.

The Chief looked down, expecting to see his own reflection. Instead he saw that of Raven.

"What is this trick you play on me, Raven?"

"This is no trick, Chief. It is as you see it. I am the trickster, the magician, intelligent and cunning. I can make things happen that others cannot. By using my gifts, I succeed where others fail. Does that not sound familiar to you?"

"I am your totem, Great Chief. I have taught you to use your wit and your strengths to survive and thrive. No, I bring you no gift. All that I have I have already given you. All I am, you have become. And you, my friend, have made me proud to be Raven."

The next day, everyone came to a great potlatch to feast this chief's new pole. They were all given many gifts. They sang and danced and marveled at the way in which the chief would be forever remembered. No one was surprised at what they say. They *all* knew.

You too would know *your* totem if, before traveling to your dream time, you would shut your eyes, open your heart, mind and spirit, and let it come to you. Do not get fancy. Just shut your eyes. It will come.

Animal Characteristics

<p>Beaver</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am a builder. • Hard worker • Persistent • Determined • Motherhood • Creative 	<p>Bear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am a natural leader. • Wise • Knowing • Humble • Strong 	<p>Wolf</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am a hunter. • Courageous • Resourceful • Protector • Provider • Bring joy laughter and prosperity.
<p>Owl</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am the one who can see into the dark side. • Have power to find deep truth. • Guide the young • Lead elders toward great knowing. 	<p>Eagle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am the symbol of peace and friendship. • Honest • Open • Close to the creator. 	<p>Frog</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am the one understands that peace of mind and heart is the key to happiness. • Value our families. • Value what we carry in our hearts.
<p>Killer Whale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am a communicator. • Rule the domain of the ocean. • Perfect joy • Love • Beauty • Bring good fortune 	<p>Thunderbird</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I command the elements. • Powerful • Worthy friend • Feared 	<p>Raven</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am the trickster. • Magician • Intelligent • Cunning • Makes things happen. • Have the ability to look within yourself.
<p>Hummingbird</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am the messenger of spiritual things. • Perfect joy • Love • Beauty • Bring good fortune 	<p>Duck</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am patient teacher. • Nurturing and protective • Bring emotional comfort • Grace • Harmonious 	<p>Canada Goose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am the inner spirit child. • Intensely love • Love to travel. • Adept at teamwork. • Achieve your goals.
<p>Loon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am solitude. • Awakens dreams • Imaginative • Independent • Lead others back to their dreams • You can be misunderstood. 	<p>Kingfisher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am the promise of abundance. • Love to be near water • Courageous • Take chances • Love blue • Plunge into every endeavor. 	<p>Beetle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am the transformation. • Rejuvenating. • Trustworthy • Reliable • You are a survivor.

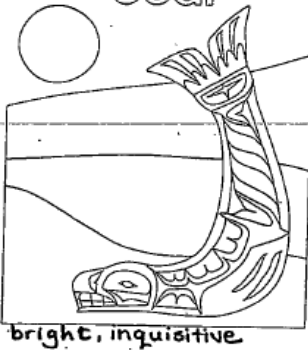
Animal Characteristics

Bumblebee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am honest. • Pure thinking. • Willingness and drive. 	Dogfish <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am a born leader. • Persistence • Strength • 	Dove <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love • Gentleness • Kindness
Dragonfly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ever changing life. 	Halibut <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life protector • Strength • Stability 	Hawk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength • Far-sighted
Salmon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependable • Renewal • A provider 	Heron <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience • Graceful • Easy-going 	Seal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bright • Inquisitive • Organized
Otter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trusting • Inquisitive • Bright • Loyal • Friendship 	Ladybug <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am loyal • Inquisitive • I make others lives richer. • Giving 	

Pictures of Animal Characteristics—Karla is fixing

Totem bookmark project

Seal



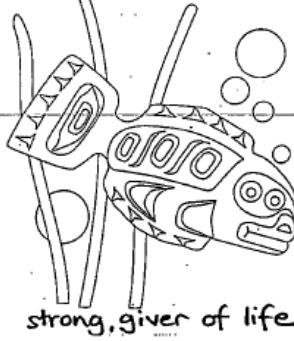
bright, inquisitive

Whale



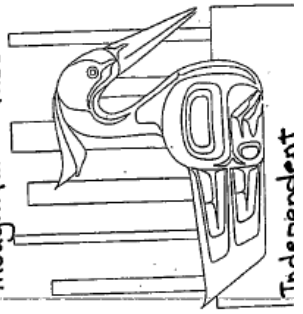
wise, help each other

Halibut



strong, giver of life

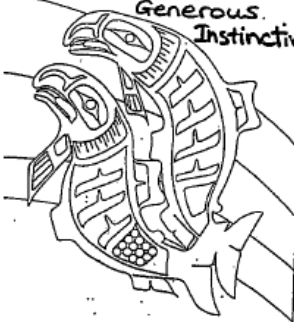
Crane
Thoughtful
Wise



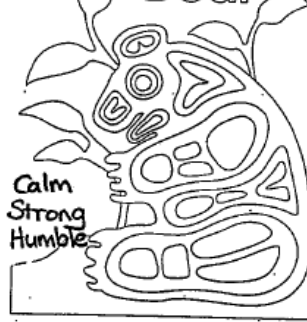
Indomitable

Salmon

Generous
Instinctive



Bear



Calm
Strong
Humble

Starfish

Renewal



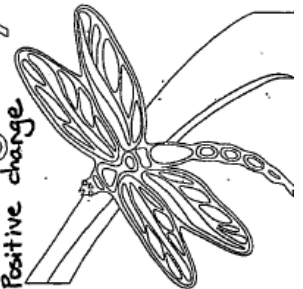
Hummingbird

Good
Luck
Joy
Friendship



Dragonfly

Positive change



Beaver

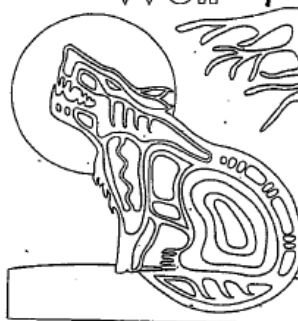


Hard working
Family

Adaptable Rest
Frog



Wolf Loyal



Rabbit

Gentle
Playful



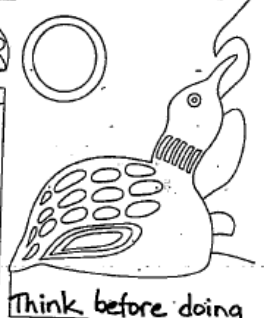
Eagle



Courage
Healing

Free

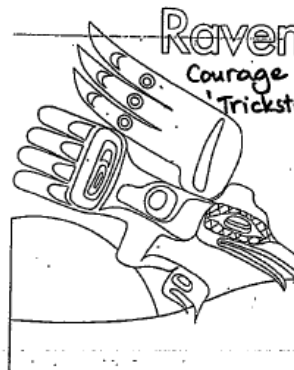
Loon



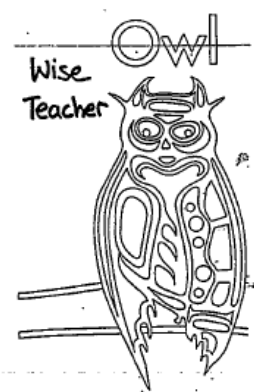
Think before doing

Raven

Courage
'Trickster'



Wise
Teacher



Oral Storytelling, Background

- storytelling is used for many reasons-to teach values, beliefs, morals, history and life skills
 - through sharing stories, the lessons carried a deeper, implicit, or multi-layered message that illustrated shared values
-

-stories hold the key to the traditions, the rituals, and the social ways

-passed on messages about loyalty, respect, responsibility, honesty, humility, trust, and Sharing

-Storytelling was much more than a pastime. Storytelling was a social institution, an “oral university” that taught people young and old about being “human” -- that is, how to function in the community. Traditional repertoires of oral tales embody systems of belief and guiding principles of personal behavior that are as relevant today as they were in centuries past

-giving the listener the responsibility to listen, reflect and then interpret the message.

- story as analogy to explain the relationships with people and the natural world

-Grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles always had an oral story to context, teach or to share expectations. Their stories “contexted” implicit messages about being loyal, responsible or respectful—qualities that helped Indigenous peoples live worthy lives. (knowledge, information passed orally from elders, not from books)

-Oral and literate cultures manage knowledge in differing ways.

In the traditional ways, teaching is not telling. Students learn through demonstration, observation, and careful listening. Rediscovering Indigenous forms of learning means designing learning opportunities that allow students to watch, to listen, to process and try and then to reflect on what they have accomplished. In this methodology, there is no best way. In their own reflections students learn that others accomplish the task in different ways; all ways are acceptable and encouraged. There are multiple ways of learning; the only standard is that everyone is honoured for learning.

source: When Aboriginal and Metis Teachers use Storytelling as an Instructional Practice, (McLean & Wasam-Ellam, 2006)

