

Elementary Lessons for Northern Lights the Soccer Trails by Michael Kusugak
Teacher's Guide, Lessons, and Assessment Ideas
Created by: Kaitlin Walker, 2018 Werklund Graduate

About Me

In order to understand where my content stems from, and where my inspiration comes from in this teaching guide, I feel it is important to introduce myself. You will find me speaking in first person a lot throughout this work, so this is who “I” am. My name is Kaitlin and I am going into my third year of teaching elementary students in Alberta. I graduated from the University of Calgary in 2018, and almost immediately, working with Indigenous learners and educators fell into my lap. I received an email from the principal on a Metis Settlement in Northern AB when she saw my profile on Education Canada, wondering if I might be interested in a position. I made the choice as a new graduate to accept this opportunity to go directly into a probationary contract without any knowledge of where geographically I was headed, but with a heart ready to take on the challenge. After a year, I felt called back home, and with a heavy heart made the choice to leave. The relationships I made, as well as the learning and growth I made working with this community is something I am forever grateful for.

This year, thanks to the little bit of experience I did have, I had the wonderful opportunity to work with Indigenous students once again for the 2019-2020 school year. I taught Kindergarten, which is truly where I feel most called. One of the things I find so compelling about Indigenous education is the sense of community, and the way Indigenous communities lean into their village (for lack of a better word). No problem or celebration belongs to just one person. The school is the centre of any community, and is the common place that everyone shares, and the place families go for support of all kinds.

I hope you enjoy my teaching guide for the book *Northern Lights: the Soccer Trails*. I fully acknowledge that all of the information in this guide is not perfect, as I am learning and changing every day in my career, as educators should. I invite you to question, change, edit, and use anything you find in this document.

Resources: Northern Lights the Soccer Trails

Author: Michael Kusugak

Michael Kusugak grew up in Repulse Bay, NWT (now Nunavut). During his childhood, his family travelled by dog sled, living a traditional Inuit lifestyle. He is the author of twelve children's books, including: The Littlest Sled Dog, The Curse of the Shaman, T is for Territories, Northern Lights: The Soccer Trails, winner of the Ruth Schwartz Award; Hide and Seek; My Arctic 1, 2, 3; and Baseball Bats for Christmas; and was co-writer of A Promise Is a Promise (with Robert Munsch). Michael Kusugak lives in Sooke BC, and spends most summers in his cabin in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut. Michael is listed on the [National Speakers Bureau](#).
<http://www.michaelkusugak.com>

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Alberta Education Connections

General Outcomes

ELA

Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts.

Fine Arts

REFLECTION - Grades 1 & 2

Component 1 - ANALYSIS: Students will notice commonalities within classes of natural objects or forms.

Concepts

- A. Natural forms have common physical attributes according to the class in which they belong.

- B. Natural forms are related to the environment from which they originate.
- C. Natural forms have different surface qualities in colour, texture and tone.
- D. Natural forms display patterns and make patterns.

Kindergarten Specific Outcomes

ELA

2.1 Use Strategies and Cues

Use prior knowledge

- connect oral language with print and pictures
- understand that stories, information and personal experiences can be recorded in pictures and print and can be listened to, read or viewed

2.2 Respond to Texts

Experience various texts

- participate in shared listening, reading and viewing experiences, using oral, print and other media texts from a variety of cultural traditions and genres, such as picture books, fairy tales, rhymes, stories, photographs, illustrations and video programs
- listen and view attentively

UPE Considerations

The following courses will find my plan for Northern Lights the Soccer Trails especially beneficial:

Education 460- Specialization I (Early Childhood Education) & Education 535- Specialization II (Early Childhood Education)

This book study can be directly linked to your course content for Education 460 in many ways, particularly Early Childhood Specialization. ECE has been a passion of mine since I began my journey with Werklund. I feel that when planning for your course, using my plan for *Northern Lights the Soccer Trails* is a great start for “Indigenizing” your course content, and guiding your pre-service teachers through the importance of including Indigenous ways of teaching and learning in their practice at the early childhood level. This study will also help you provide tangible ways to apply this when they enter their Field Experiences, and eventually their own classrooms.

Education 450- Diversity in Learning & Education 445- Individual Learning: Theories and Applications

This book study could be used in the teaching of either of these two courses for similar purposes. Diversity in Learning and Individual Learning are about teaching your pre-service teachers to apply the lenses of multiple learning styles into their planning and assessment. This can be done through interdisciplinary planning, as well as the inclusion of many learning styles (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, etc.). Using my book study for *Northern Lights the Soccer Trails* is an excellent talking point for inclusion of Indigenous ways of teaching and learning into your diverse planning. You will notice that throughout this study, I use both western and traditional ways of learning throughout. Traditional ways of learning are something that I feel are often neglected for our students, when yet so many of them require their learning to be structured this way. For example, while there are traditional classroom learning experiences in this book study, there are also opportunities for students to learn about oral storytelling, and recognize its importance to Indigenous people.

While fully acknowledging that my planning is not perfect, some talking points you might cover in your classes might be:

- How diverse is this book study really?
- How could I make it more diverse?

Education 456- Assessment

This study can directly apply to your course content for Assessment (EDUC 456) in any specialization, but especially elementary and early childhood levels. In this short study, I look at the following outcomes:

REFLECTION - Grades 1 & 2

Component 1 - ANALYSIS: Students will notice commonalities within classes of natural objects or forms.

Concepts

- A. Natural forms have common physical attributes according to the class in which they belong.*
- B. Natural forms are related to the environment from which they originate.*
- C. Natural forms have different surface qualities in colour, texture and tone.*
- D. Natural forms display patterns and make patterns.*

2.1 Use Strategies and Cues

Use prior knowledge

- *connect oral language with print and pictures*

- *understand that stories, information and personal experiences can be recorded in pictures and print and can be listened to, read or viewed*

2.2 Respond to Texts

Experience various texts

- *participate in shared listening, reading and viewing experiences, using oral, print and other media texts from a variety of cultural traditions and genres, such as picture books, fairy tales, rhymes, stories, photographs, illustrations and video programs*
- *listen and view attentively*

While you will notice that my book study covers various outcomes, you will also notice that I have chosen to only in a formative way. My book study gives your students the opportunity to assess what they feel the usefulness and quality of my assessments are, what they would change, and what they think they could use. It also gives them the opportunity to decide if the plan needs/could benefit from a more formal assessment, and to create one if so.

Rationale: What is the purpose of this book study?

The purpose of this study is to investigate the Northern Lights. To the Inuit people, the Northern Lights take on many spiritual meanings including the one mentioned in the book, in which the Northern Lights are the spirits of our loved ones, playing a game of soccer. The Northern Lights are a colourful display caused by solar wind and gases in earth's atmosphere. There are many different beliefs about the Northern Lights across various cultures, including many Indigenous legends. This lesson will combine art and storytelling to help your students learn about some of the beliefs and stories Indigenous peoples tell about the Northern Lights, as well as the science behind them.

This guide was created for a Kindergarten classroom, but may also be adapted accordingly for use in K-3 classrooms.

Learning Intention: What will students understand and/or be able to do?

Western Knowledge

- Art

- Fine motor skills

Traditional Knowledge

- Storytelling/Legends
- Spirits
- Oral Storytelling

Hook/Launch/Question- What question/problem will generate thinking around the learning intention?

Show your students one of the following videos about the Northern Lights to spark their curiosity:

- 3 Cool Facts about the Northern Lights- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyOGpGsxDIIs>
- Nature of Thingies: The Mystery of the Northern Lights| CBC Kids- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08EyMscYT_M
- Brilliant Time Lapse of Alaska's Northern Lights- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vdb9IndsSXk>

Lesson 1- Read the Story

- For your first lesson, read the story Northern Lights the Soccer Trails by Michael Kusugak. You may choose to shorten the story to a more appropriate length for younger students, highlighting only important aspects.
- KWL Chart: make a chart with your students- what do they know about the Northern Lights? What do they want to know? What have they learned? (leave this section blank for the next lesson)

Lesson 2- Beliefs and Stories

Many different cultures believe different tales and stories about the Northern Lights. Review with your students the Inuit belief presented in the story.

Using an oral storytelling method, tell your students some of the following stories believed by Indigenous people about the Northern Lights. While they are listening, play the slideshow of images found in the **Appendix**.

1. "Some spoke of them as torches of giants in the sky or the souls of animals they hunted like deer, whales or salmon." (CBC, 2020)

2. “Other legends spoke of the lights as a powerful spirit who assisted shamans; a torch-lit path to help souls along their journey; or the light from the fire built by the creator.” (CBC, 2020)
3. “An Algonquin myth tells of when Nanahbozho, creator of the Earth, had finished his task of the creation, he traveled to the north, where he remained. He built large fires, of which the northern lights are the reflections, to remind his people that he still thinks of them” (C.Pepper, 2000)
4. “It was like I was shrouded in this bluish, almost like a rainbow-type thing, all around me and right onto the lake surface. There was like a sizzling, like a sifting sand kind of whooshing noise all around me.

And then I recalled that many, many years ago — when I was young and our elders told stories about such things as the northern lights, the sun, the moon — my grandfather told me that if you listen closely, you can hear the northern lights.

At that time, my grandfather and I stood outside and listened. And sure enough we heard this ... swishing sound, almost like a crackling-type thing, as far as the northern lights were moving, dancing up and down, and they seemed to be so close at that time.” (CBC/Radio-Canada, 2019)

Ask your students: what do you think of when you see pictures of the Northern Lights?

Lesson 4- Wrap Up

Conclude your mini study on the Northern Lights by completing your KWL chart. What have we learned that we can add to the chart?

Lesson 3- Art

Materials:

- Black construction paper
- White paint
- Recycled paper (will be ripping into strips)
- Chalk OR oil pastels (chalk is easier to smudge, but oil can be used)

Now that your students know some of the stories Indigenous people tell surrounding the Northern Lights, you can guide them through the following art project.

I borrowed inspiration from the following YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjS9YGYA6CU>

- 1.) Make your stars and let them dry. You can make them by flicking white paint onto your black construction paper. Let this dry before the next step.
- 2.) Put up images of the Northern Lights to inspire students on colours and directions of the Northern Lights
- 3.) Draw a horizon with white to distinguish between the ground and the sky
- 4.) Give each student white paper, ripped into strips. You want the lines to be rough and imperfect to create your illusion of the Northern Lights. For younger students, such as Kindergarten, you may choose to rip the paper for them.
- 5.) Model the colouring and smudging. Put a piece of ripped paper down and trace along the top line. Leave the ripped paper on the black paper and smudge upwards.
- 6.) Repeat this process until you have the desired amount of lines in the sky.

EXAMPLE (See [Appendix](#))

Assessment

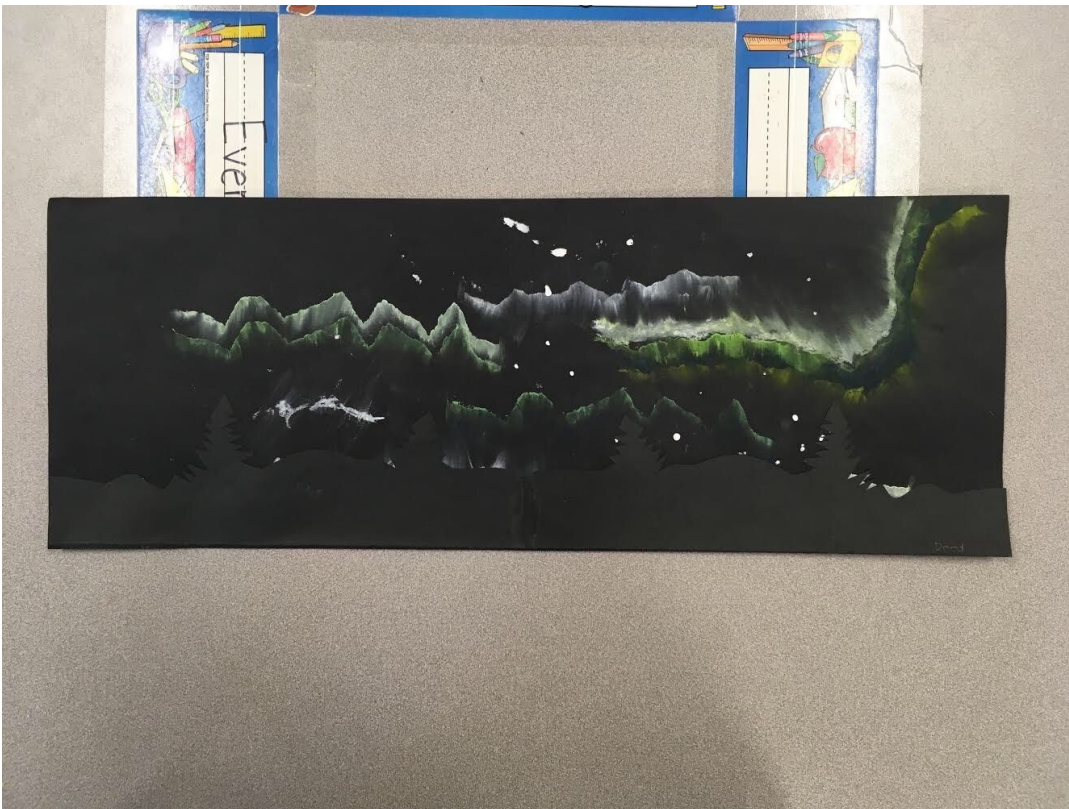
In this unit, I have chosen to take anecdotal notes based on visual products, as well as conversations during reading and KWL discussion.

APPENDIX

Northern Lights Images (Slideshow)

CLICK HERE: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1az2NMUtiiiRBwTbczXNocNYhr_9YILJPCbcy6TTZHIM/edit?usp=sharing

Art Example:



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