

Elementary Lesson for *The Giving Tree- A Retelling of a Traditional Metis Story* by Leah Dorion
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 *The Giving Tree*. 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: The Giving Tree- A Retelling of a Traditional Metis Story

“The Giving Tree is a charming story that focuses on the boyhood reminiscences of Moushoom as he describes finding the Great Giving Tree with his mother and father. Steeped in Métis culture, this vibrantly-illustrated children's book is a beautiful retelling of a traditional story. It emphasizes Métis core values and beliefs including strength, kindness, courage, tolerance, honesty, respect, love, sharing, caring, balance, patience, but most importantly, the connection with the Creator and Mother Earth. This book also includes an accompanying narration CD in English and Michif.” (Goodreads Inc., 2020)

Author: Leah Dorion

“Leah Marie Dorion is an interdisciplinary Metis artist raised in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. A teacher, painter, filmmaker and published writer, Leah views her Metis heritage as providing her with a unique bridge for knowledge between all people. Leah holds a Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Arts, and Master of Arts degree. She has numerous creative projects to her credit, including academic papers for the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, books for children, gallery showings of her art works, and numerous video documentaries that showcase Metis culture and history. Leah’s paintings honour the spiritual strength of Aboriginal women and the sacred feminine. Leah believes that women play a key role in passing on vital knowledge for all of humanity which is deeply reflected in her artistic practice. She believes women are the first teachers to the next generation.” (Dorion, n.d.)

Publisher: The Gabriel Dumont Institute

“GDI is a Saskatchewan-based educational, employment and cultural institute serving Métis across the province.” (Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2020)

Rationale: What is the purpose of this book study?

There are 2 purposes for this book study. The foci are as follows:

- 1.) The concept of want vs. need, and not taking more than you need
- 2.) Traditional indigenous concepts such as offering tobacco, sharing responsibilities, and functioning as a community

Students will have the chance to explore these topics by engaging in kinesthetic, auditory, and visual activities, as well as in a small project in which they demonstrate what they would leave in the Giving Tree if they were to come across it on a journey with their family.

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

- Recalls events and characters

Traditional Knowledge

- Taking only what you need
- Offering, sharing
- The spirit
- Equality of men and women

Lessons

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

Build your students a giving tree that they can visit either in your classroom or within your school. If you can, make sure it has each of the items that are in the tree in the story (tea, flour, sugar, etc.). This will ignite curiosity for your students, who will hopefully ask themselves what the items have in common, why they might be in there, etc.

Lessons

1. Visit the Giving Tree.

Read the story and have a group discussion:

- A. If you are _____ (mom, dad, child, grandma/grandma), what would you hope to find in the hollow of the Giving Tree.
- B. If you are _____ (mom, dad, child, grandma/grandma), what would you leave in the Giving Tree.

2. Act it out.

Take your students outside if possible, and give them character roles. Using the discussion you had during the last lesson, students should have an understanding of what they might take or leave at the tree based on who their character is. If you can, have a student or helper record on an electronic device to use for assessment, and for students to watch back if they want to. Have the students act as their character, approaching the tree and saying what they are taking and/or leaving.

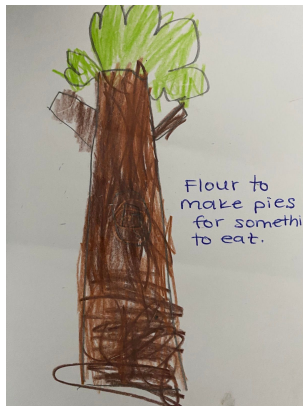
3. Discussing Wants v. Needs- Picture Sorts.

Using either a small group “centre” style, or a whole class discussion, give students various items or pictures and have them sort into two groups: wants and needs. See *Appendix* for sort.

4. Assessment.

Give students a small piece of paper and have them answer two questions. On the front, “What would you hope to find in the Giving Tree?”. If your student(s) need an extension, ask them to draw/write “What would you leave for the next person?” on the back of the paper. Depending on level and ability, students in Kindergarten may choose to draw a picture and dictate to a teacher, or for extension, they may write (or attempt to write) words to go along with it. See rubric in *Appendix* and adapt accordingly.

Example



Assessment- How will I track student learning?

- For learning:
- Monitor how the students understand the concept of sharing, giving, and taking only what you need

- During hook, note what your students notice about the items in the tree, and the questions they have about the story so far. Does this change at the end? Do they have a better understanding of the traditional learning concepts?
- Of learning:
 - Follow the rubric provided and assess understanding of the story based on what each student says they would leave in the tree (see exemplar provided above)

Alberta Education Connections

General Outcomes

ELA (Alberta Education, 2000)

General Outcome 2

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

2.1 Use strategies and cues

2.2 Respond to texts

Kindergarten Specific Outcomes

ELA (Alberta Education, 2000)

2.1 Use Strategies and Cues

Use comprehension strategies

- begin to use language prediction skills when stories are read aloud
- ask questions and make comments during listening and reading activities
- recall events and characters in familiar stories read aloud by others

2.2 Respond to Texts

Construct meaning from texts

- relate aspects of oral, print and other media texts to personal feelings and experiences

UPE Considerations- The following courses will find my plan for *The Giving Tree* 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, and possibly even before. I feel that when planning for your course, using my plan for *The Giving Tree* 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.

First and foremost, the original plan for this book study was made by a Kindergarten team, for a Kindergarten classroom. While it can easily be adapted to other grades, subject levels, and ability, you will find it particularly applicable to a K-3 classroom. You will find this not only in the direct Alberta Program of Studies applications, but engrained in the pedagogical considerations as well. Early childhood education, in my opinion, should be heavily based on the theories of play-based learning, including the principles of Vygostky, Piaget, and social learning theory. Students at this age truly learn best when they are given the freedom to explore topics in a play based manner, use their hands, and learn from their peers in a way that is structured, but still allows choice. This is why you will find the activities in this study of *The Giving Tree* particularly helpful in giving your students an example of how they can apply both play based theories, and indigenous ways of teaching and learning to their planning and practice.

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 *The Giving Tree* is an excellent talking point for inclusion of Indigenous ways of teaching and learning into your diverse planning. You will notice that throughout this unit, 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 to learn about the Indigenous ways of sharing, and offering, taking only what you need, and the concept of spirit.

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?
- Are my assessments covering a wide range of learning styles?

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 my given rubrics, I assess my students understanding and fulfillment of the following outcomes from Alberta Education throughout the course of the study:

General Outcome 2 (K)

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

2.2 Respond to Texts

Construct meaning from texts

- *relate aspects of oral, print and other media texts to personal feelings and experiences*

While you will notice that my book study covers various outcomes, you will also notice that I have chosen to only assess one of them formally. These are the outcomes that I know can be concretely assessed using the material I have provided my students. When teaching the course on assessment, you will likely have your students evaluate the quality of various assessments found online, as well as create their own. My book study for *The Giving Tree* can provide several talking points for your pre-service teachers as they explore assessment themselves, while at the same time utilizing a resource that has Indigenous ways of teaching and learning incorporated into its material.

My book study and rubrics give 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.

APPENDIX

Wants vs. Needs Picture Sort (print, cut, and laminate)







“What would you hope to find in the Giving Tree?” Rubric

<p>Outcome: General Outcome 2 (K) Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts.</p> <p>2.2 Respond to Texts Construct meaning from texts - relate aspects of oral, print and other media texts to personal feelings and experiences</p>				
<p>Proficiency levels & descriptors to assess learning outcome</p>	<p>1- Needs Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates no understanding of the story, and of want vs. need based on what they would leave and take from the tree • Needs assistance formulating an answer • Picture is unrelated to their answer 	<p>2 - Basic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates little understanding of the story, and of want vs. need based on what they would leave and take from the tree • Needs assistance formulating an answer • Picture is somewhat related to their answer 	<p>3 - Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates understanding of the story, and of want vs. need based on what they would leave and take from the tree • Needs little or no assistance formulating an answer • Picture is clearly related to their answer in some way 	<p>4 - Excellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly demonstrates understanding of the story, and of want vs. need based on what they would leave and take from the tree • Does not need any assistance or prompting • Picture is strongly related to their answer • Uses vocabulary or detail that is beyond what the story gives

References

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