

The Seven Teachings Stories Lesson  
Created by Peter Le, 2020 Werklund Graduate

Peter Le is a K-12 Mathematics teacher passionate about contextualized, relevant, and meaningful learning experiences for all students through multiple forms of teaching. He has worked across various fields and disciplines including Sciences, Technology, and ELL, with diverse demographics. Recently, Peter has worked through a Two-Eyed Seeing approach with Indigenous communities, mentors, and elders, in coordinating and planning events, workshops, and STEAM activities in robotics over the summer.

Resource	The Seven Teachings Stories By Katherena Vermette Illustrated by Irene Kuziw
Book Description	This seven part short illustrated stories series each feature a child embodying or learning one of the seven sacred teachings of the Anishinaabe—love, wisdom, humility, courage, respect, honesty, and truth. Each story shows an Indigenous child in a modern, urban setting accessible to learners both Indigenous and not.
Author/creator and/or literature background	<p>Katherena Vermette is a Métis writer from Treaty 1 territory, the heart of the Métis nation, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Her first book, North End Love Songs (The Muses Company) won the Governor General's Literary Award for Poetry. Her National Film Board documentary, this river, won the 2017 Canadian Screen Award for Best Short, and her novel, The Break (House of Anansi), won the 2017 Amazon.ca First Novel Award. She holds a Master of Fine Arts from the University of British Columbia, and lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba (Portage &amp; Main Press, n.d.).</p> <p>Irene Kuziw has worked in galleries, museums, and schools. Her artwork has been featured in many shows. Irene now devotes her time to doing what she loves - drawing and exploring the abstraction of reality, whether it be the human face of the animal spirit. A graduate of the University of Manitoba School of Art, she lives in the Interlake region of Manitoba. (49th SHELF, n.d.)</p>
UPE course connections	<p>Educ 551 - This lesson is a good example of building social, and emotional wellness in any classroom by exploring key moral concepts from the Seven Teachings, and building those into the classroom culture. These stories highlight the importance of relationships with the community, the self, nature/environment, and others. This lesson sets up the class atmosphere and the expectations that will help students succeed in all areas of wellness and is a building block for social, and emotional wellness.</p> <p>Educ 450 – These texts can provide pre-service teachers a simple and clear way of exposing students to moral teachings of different cultures, that are embedded in all cultures/societies, and the diversity we all embrace and share. It can help students appreciate and demonstrate sensitivity towards individual and cultural differences. These texts help students highlight and recognize the importance of relationships with the community, the self, nature/environment, and others; providing meaningful and relevant ways to demonstrate and celebrate the</p>

The Seven Teachings Stories Lesson  
Created by Peter Le, 2020 Werklund Graduate

	<p>Teachings, creating an open and safe space for diversity in everyday life throughout the school year. Lastly, pre-service teachers can formulate strategies for incorporating a respect for diversity based on the classroom guidelines.</p> <p>Educ 435 - These texts are an excellent example of diversity in literature, exploring moral lessons from other cultures and seeing their importance and relevance in everyday life through making meaning of the Teachings in a personal way, and applying them inside and outside the classroom. This text also highlights the importance of the Seven Sacred Teachings that have great significance across various groups and the oral stories/language that have been passed down, preserved and although different across various Indigenous groups, all have the same message passed on. Teachers can use these texts to explore and celebrate culture, morals, and stories of other cultures.</p>
K-12 connection	<p>This text has connections to English, Social Studies, and Art. This can easily be an interdisciplinary project spanning over 2 days or a week.</p> <p>Grades 3 - 4</p> <p>Art:</p> <p>Component 5 ACTIONS AND VIEWPOINTS: Students will select appropriate references for depicting.</p> <p>Component 8 UNITY: Students will create unity by interrelating the parts of a composition.</p> <p>Component 10</p> <p>-PURPOSE 2: Students will illustrate or tell a story.</p> <p>Component 10 (ii) SUBJECT MATTER:</p> <p>Students will develop themes, with an emphasis on social concerns, based on: People</p> <p>Social:</p> <p>3.1.1 appreciate similarities and differences among people and communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate an awareness of and interest in the beliefs, traditions and customs of groups and communities other than their own (CC)</li> </ul> <p>3.1.2 examine the social, cultural and linguistic characteristics that affect quality of life in communities in other parts of the world by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry.</p> <p>3.2.1 appreciate elements of global citizenship.</p> <p>3.S.5 demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building: develop age-appropriate behaviour for social involvement as responsible citizens contributing to their community</p> <p>3.S.8 demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy</p> <p>3.S.9 develop skills of media literacy</p> <p>4.2.1 appreciate how an understanding of Alberta's history, peoples and stories contributes to their own sense of belonging and identity</p> <p>4.S.5 demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building</p> <p>4.S.8 demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy</p>

The Seven Teachings Stories Lesson  
Created by Peter Le, 2020 Werklund Graduate

	<p>4.S.9 develop skills of media literacy</p> <p>English:</p> <p>Express ideas and develop understanding</p> <p>Experiment with language and forms</p> <p>Express preferences</p> <p>Consider the ideas of others</p> <p>Combine ideas</p> <p>Extend understanding</p> <p>Use comprehension strategies</p>
Rational	<p><u>Big Idea:</u></p> <p>Introduction to key moral concepts from the Seven Teachings. The class will develop a deep understanding of the teaching and what it means for each of them and how to embody them in everyday life- ultimately preparing young students to be global citizens. Students will work to create the classroom guidelines based on these teachings and will continue living out these teachings through themes throughout the year.</p>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Seven Teachings Stories (ebooks on the CPL)</li> <li>• 1 stick note for each student</li> <li>• 1 learning log/journal for each student</li> <li>• 7 blank poster paper for planing</li> <li>• 7 blank poster paper for art work.</li> <li>• Computer access for students wanting to do writing on a text editor</li> <li>• Art supplies for creating a poster - colouring tools, scissors, colourful paper, etc.</li> <li>• 1 large blank poster for class guidelines</li> <li>• Paint and brushes for students to place handprints on poster</li> <li>• Free Teacher's Guide: <a href="https://www.portageandmainpress.com/product/teachers-guide-for-the-seven-teachings-stories/">https://www.portageandmainpress.com/product/teachers-guide-for-the-seven-teachings-stories/</a></li> </ul>
Lesson Activities	<p>This lesson is ideal during the first week of the start of the semester as classroom guidelines/routines/conduct will be established together with students with guidance from the Seven Teachings. This lesson can be extended over the first few days and can easily become interdisciplinary in Social, Art, and other subjects.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Let students know: Before early settlers arrived in what is Canada today, there were already many Indigenous peoples living here. Each of these groups had unique beliefs. These beliefs are often passed down orally from generation on to generation through traditional teachings by Elders. The Elders have used their experience and wisdom to help people in their communities make good decisions. Many</li> </ol>

Indigenous communities have adopted 7 guiding principles/ideas, in one form or another, as a moral guide. Each group/community has adapted the teachings to suit their community values. Despite where the teachings may have originated, they all share the same concepts of abiding by a moral respect for all:

- Respect
- Truth
- Humility
- Honesty
- Love
- Wisdom
- Bravery

The Seven Sacred Teachings is a group of teachings that originated with the Anishnaabe of North America. The teachings are guidelines to live by and consider in every aspect of a person's life.

Please see the following for more information:

<http://empoweringthespirit.ca/cultures-of-belonging/seven-grandfathers-teachings/>  
<http://ojibwe.net/projects/prayers-teachings/the-gifts-of-the-seven-grandfathers/>  
<https://www.southernnetwork.org/site/seven-teachings>

2. Form 7 Groups:

Give a sticky note to each student and have them rank the top 3 teachings they would like to learn more deeply about. Gather all the sticky notes and form 7 groups. Explain that each group will learn a lot about a teaching, and will be responsible for sharing that knowledge with the rest of the class, and the school. Let each group know that they will be reading a book about their specific teaching.

3. Reading the story in groups:

Have each group read their story individually, once done, the group will read again as a group to ensure comprehension, allowing discussion, enhancing their understanding of the teaching. Each group can decide a reading protocol when reading as a group. I.e. each student reads a page, or each reads a paragraph, etc. Circulate to assist students/groups as needed. If possible, having an E.A. to assist around the classroom with this section would be ideal.

While circulating - prompt questions from the guide\* to facilitate discussion:

\*<https://www.portageandmainpress.com/product/teachers-guide-for-the-seven-teachings-stories/> starting on page 11

Ex. The Just Right Gift:

- Ask students to predict what the story might be about. Name the main character and spell out his name on the board. Ask them to suggest what word they would use to name the four images above Migizi's head.
- What Anishinaabe words did you learn?
- Discuss other names for grandmother: What do you call your grandmother?
- Have any of you tried to find something for someone in order to show them something that you knew you were good at?
- How does Ma'iingan show humility?
- Have each student share what they think humility means to them and how they that you love them?
- What does love mean to each one of you? How do you think you can demonstrate this with others in this class?

Ex. Singing Sisters

- Discuss the words the students know for a range of family members. Introduce the word "siblings," which covers brothers and sisters.
- Ask students to describe their siblings, how they feel about their siblings, what is their favorite thing about their sibling. If students don't have siblings, they can apply this to a close friend.
- Like the story, have any one of you felt upset because your sibling/friend was better than you at your favorite activity/sport? How did you deal with it? If you haven't experienced this, how do you think you would deal with it?

4. Individual Writing and reflection:

Once done reading, have each student write down in their journal or learning log what the teaching that they read about means to them, and examples of how they can demonstrate this at home, in class, with friends, with strangers, on the playground, etc. If students struggle, have them recall the discussion prior and the examples other students shared. Students will answer the question: "In my life, ( i.e. Honesty) looks/ sounds /feels / tastes or /smells like...". Encourage students to write this as a song, a poem, a simple paragraph, a word cloud, mind map, etc (anything but drawing or art since this will be the next part). Students can do this writing activity on the computer to practice technology skills i.e. Office, Word cloud apps, etc.

**This next part can be done the next day or in Art class**

5. 7 Groups Expressing through Art

	<p>Remind students that each group will embody the messages of their particular teaching, and teach the class- they will be the ‘ambassadors’ of that teaching, responsible for sharing it with the rest of the class and school.</p> <p>Have each student share their writing piece with other members of their group. Instruct each group that they will work with their members together, to create something related to their Teaching that shares what they have learned and what it means to them- they can use their writing piece as a guide or for inspiration. I.e. a Poster, an art piece, setting up a routine for the year for the class, etc. Groups can create multiple items. I.e. The group with Wisdom would research something neat/novel every week and share that with the whole class once a week, while also creating a word tree of what wisdom means to each of the group members where each branch/leaf is a drawing with a description of what sharing/exemplifying the teaching of wisdom to friends, family, and classmates looks/ sounds /feels / tastes or /smells like.</p> <p>6. Sharing of the Teachings and what they personally mean:</p> <p>Each group will create a small space in the classroom to display/ post up their art work in the classroom and have time to present their creation to the rest of the class. During the presentation, each group will summarize the story, what they learned from it, and what their teaching looks/ sounds /feels / tastes or /smells like for each member of the group. Remind each student that if they ever forget a teaching, they can just go to one of the 7 areas around the room, and look at the teaching- and how to exemplify that.</p> <p>7. As a class, work together to develop a classroom code of conduct/guidelines based on the Teachings. Ensure every teaching is included some way in the guidelines. Create a poster with the guidelines with everyone’s handprint or signature.</p> <p>Let students know that after the first week, each month or week (if shortened) the whole class would focus on a Teaching as a theme to focus on for the whole month. I.e. October could be the month of courage. Try to infuse courage as a theme this month. Writing prompts in this month could encourage students to try out something new, or to try to develop and grow away from a certain fear. Try to find readings around the courage theme. Remind students to stand up for each other, against bullying. As a teacher, try something new- let students know and work with them to embrace a new style/approach to teaching, etc.</p>
--	--

The Seven Teachings Stories Lesson  
Created by Peter Le, 2020 Werklund Graduate

	<p>This lesson can be extended to be school wide. All classrooms could create their classroom guidelines/conduct in a similar way. Each month or week, the whole school could focus on one of the Teachings, and build pep rallies and events such as guest speakers related to the theme. Each class could also create a mural or art work focusing on one Teaching, resulting in enough art pieces for all 7 Teachings to be displayed around the school and embodied in the school population/culture.</p>
--	---

Supporting Sources:

Alberta Education (1985). Art. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/media/482114/elemart.pdf>

Alberta Education (2000). English Language Arts. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/media/160360/ela-pos-k-9.pdf>

Alberta Education (2005). SOCIAL STUDIES KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 12. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/media/3273004/social-studies-k-6-pos.pdf>

Empowering the Spirit (2020). Seven Sacred Teachings. Retrieved from <http://empoweringthespirit.ca/cultures-of-belonging/seven-grandfathers-teachings/>

Ferguson, Katya (2015). Teacher's Guide for The Seven Teachings Stories. Portage & Main. Retrieved from <https://www.portageandmainpress.com/product/teachers-guide-for-powwow-counting-in-cree/>

Ojibwe.net (2020). The Gifts of the Seven Grandfathers. Retrieved from <http://ojibwe.net/projects/prayers-teachings/the-gifts-of-the-seven-grandfathers/>

Portage & Maine Press (n.d.). KATHERENA VERMETTE. Retrieved from <https://www.portageandmainpress.com/authors/katherena-vermette/>

49th SHELF (n.d.) Irene Kuziw. Retrieved from <https://49thshelf.com/Contributors/K/Kuziw-Irene>