These teaching and learning ideas originate from the Books to Build On: Indigenous Literatures for Learning website. Please check out the website, as well as the Indigenous Education resources at the Werklund School of Education, for more information on working with Indigenous literatures! We would love to hear your feedback on our educational materials! Please find our contact information on the website.

How do we engage with Indigenous literatures in teaching and learning?

By Erin Spring & Aubrey Hanson

“Starting with Story” allows us to centre Indigenous voices, knowledges, people, and experiences in our teaching and learning.

Why do we believe in teaching and learning with Indigenous literatures? During our years of engagement with Indigenous knowledge systems, communities, literatures, and scholarship, we have come to know that stories are at the heart of our work. Stories embody communities and their ways of knowing, being, and doing in an appealing form—reaching the heart, not only the head. Stories are inherently relational, in that a teller and listener are drawn into relationship with each other and with the story being told. And because relationships call for mutual responsibility, storytelling as a mode of sharing knowledge draws people into reciprocal webs of connection. Stories are not just for entertainment; they are there to guide how we live our lives. Thomas King’s oft-repeated line at the end of each chapter in the Truth about Stories lecture series is an illustration of this principle. King (2003) tells the reader that the story is “yours. Do with it what you will . . . But don’t say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You’ve heard it now” (p. 29).

When deciding how to engage others in the work of Indigenous education, then, we believe in starting with story. We appreciate storytelling for how it respects Indigenous knowledge systems, ensures that knowledge remains rooted in context, and emphasizes the value of personal voice and collective listening. Stories are a key way into relational work in education.

Social responsibility is at the heart of our work, we are working for better futures

Teaching and learning with Indigenous literatures is part of the broader work of Indigenous Education. We believe that work in education must be socially responsible and committed to communities. Significant social impact is being created by the process of reconciliation and with Indigenous-focused teaching and learning happening across the country. We see our task as working to nourish Indigenous communities and knowledge systems, while challenging racism and colonialism. This work is also about fostering open and reciprocal relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This call for social responsibility informs our collaborations in the Books to Build On project.

Teaching and Learning Ideas

BOOKS TO BUILD ON

Teaching and Learning Ideas

Thank you for downloading this Books to Build On Teaching and Learning “Seed” for you to plant in the garden of your professional practice! We are excited for you to use it in a good way to further Indigenous Education and reconciliation for you and your students. Please take them as inspiration and adapt them to your needs. See below for some important information.

www.werklund.ucalgary.ca/teaching-learning/indigenous-literatures-learning

Open Education Resource

Teaching and learning ideas have been gifted to Books to Build On and are free to use. In this spirit of giving, all of the lesson plans are Open Education Resources. They all have a Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0) License. For more information on what exactly this means, visit this website: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/. Under this license we welcome you to share the lessons with anyone you wish and adapt the lessons to your own unique needs for your own specific students and teaching situation. You may not, however, use these lessons in a commercial setting to earn money, and you must always credit Books to Build On when you share the lessons. Finally, remix, transform, or build upon the lesson; you must use the same Creative Commons licence as we picked.

https://werklund.ucalgary.ca/teaching-learning/indigenous-literatures-learning

Grade 6-8 Lesson for **A is for Aboriginal** – Joseph Maclean and Brendan Heard  
Created by Rianna Garthus, 2019 Werklund Graduate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources used and possible concerns</th>
<th>Picture Book: A is for Aboriginal Joseph Maclean and Brendan Heard</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Author/creator and/or literature background | Joseph Maclean  
- Canadian born historian, storyteller and social entrepreneur  
- Studied Native Studies alongside a history degree  
- Award winning author, founder of nuMedia group and KidzBiz.com  
Brendan Heard  
- Canadian born artist that works in various mediums including oil, watercolour, clay and digital imaging |
| UPE course connections (not exhaustive) | Educ 445 – Individual Learning: Theories & Applications  
- This resource fits into the idea of individual learning because of the nature of the project. It is an individual based research project that involves several literacies (written, visual, and digital) while being supported by a group component. It allows students to be creative and blend their individual learning while collaborating with their peers. This project will help students form strong research and work habits while being accountable for their own learning.  
Educ 420 – Issues in Learning and Teaching  
- This resource can be used to highlight the importance of inquiry based learning and evaluating the sources in which we obtain information from. It can be used to help students facilitate a critical thinking approach to the information they are researching and presenting and to be mindful of the false or misleading information readily available.  
Educ 435 – Literacy, Language & Culture  
- This resource encompasses everything that this course entails. Not only are students expanding several literacies, they are doing so by exploring language and culture that they are surrounded by. This resource entangles the perspectives of the teacher and student with the very important Indigenous perspectives and histories while challenging students to develop their different literacies.  
K-12 Connections | Target age range: grades 6-8 |
This resource could really be used at any grade level K to 12. The graphics are suitable for younger audiences, while the content in the book can be scaled up or down to meet the curricular outcomes for any grade.

Related curricular outcomes: Social, Language Arts, Art

**Because this resource can be taken in many different directions, the curricular connections are quite broad. In completing the tasks required for this project, students will be attending to more processes and dimensions of thinking in the social studies stream; however it can be related to some more specific outcomes in each grade at the teacher’s discretion.

Grade 6-8 Social Skills and Processes /Dimensions of Thinking
S.1 develop skills of critical thinking and creative thinking
S.2 develop skills of historical thinking
S.4 demonstrate skills of decision making and problem solving
S.7 apply the research process
S.8 demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy
S.9 develop skills of media literacy

Grade 6 Social
G.O. 6.1 Citizens Participating in Decision Making
G.O. 6.2 Historical Models of Democracy

Grade 7 Social
G.O. 7.1 Toward Confederation
G.O. 7.2 Following Confederation: Canadian Expansions

Grade 8 Social
Historical Worldviews Examined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Picture book – A is for Aboriginal by Joseph Maclean &amp; Brendan Heard</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visual journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pencils and art supplies for colouring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Camera/Scanner</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Access to computers and internet</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>BIG IDEA: to have students engage with history and current events surrounding Indigenous peoples and culture as an independent study.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>PURPOSE: This resource is meant to help students take learning into their own hands and research things that they can relate to/are interested in. By allowing students to research these issues/people/events on their own, they are able to gain their own</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
perspective and really understand and take away what is important to them.

Whether we are looking at the past or present students are able to discover how everything is interconnected and how our understanding of the past can help guide us into the future. Indigenous culture is a very important part of our history and by breaking it down into smaller components students can begin to learn about these cultures in a less daunting way.

This resource fits into social, language arts and art in grades 6-8.

| Lesson/activities | 1. Read book aloud to students (this may be done over more than one session, as there is a lot of information to digest)  
2. Discuss with students what they knew and didn’t know from the alphabet, things they were curious about, questions they have, etc. (KWL chart could be used here)  
3. Explain to the class that they are going to participate in making their own alphabet based on Indigenous peoples, culture, language, social issues, etc.  
   - Teacher to decide if this will be done individually, in pairs or small groups depending on class size and how in-depth they want this project to be  
   ***the overall end goal for this task may look different to different teachers - possible outcomes could be  
   - group alphabets, each student gets 3-4 letters  
   - one large alphabet with more than one word for each letter  
   - each student gets assigned a letter depending on class size  
4. Creating a word bank  
   - Teachers can compile a list of words that directly relate to what they are teaching/learning currently, can give students the opportunity to find their own words, words can be taken from the glossary in the book A is for Aboriginal.  
   - This can be done as a brainstorm with the entire class.  
   - This can be tailored to local (Alberta), national (Canadian) or global Indigenous people, history, events, etc.  
   - The point of creating this alphabet is to not limit students but to get them exploring Indigenous histories/culture they may not typically have much access to.  
5. Alphabet requirements (exemplar included at end of doc): |

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- Each letter has to have a word associated with it that students have researched and compiled a short paragraph for explaining what it is/means
- A picture or drawing needs to accompany the word (this can be hand-drawn, photographed or sourced online)
- Students will be asked to illustrate/stylize their page in the alphabet book in relation to the word they’ve chosen
***teachers should choose a specific size of paper to keep things consistent
- References should be included for all research on a separate page
***depending on the class and teacher, this project could be staggered so students are less overwhelmed by the open ended nature of the task (ie. start with the research portion, secondly, source images/create the artwork, then stylize page)
- Options for adding more requirements such as fun/interesting facts, quotes, statistics, etc. could also be included

6. Once students have completed their letter, they will compile it into a digital presentation. To make things easier for group work and consistency, a google platform would be recommended

OPTIONS/EXTENSIONS:
1. Compile all letters/alphabets into one presentation for an assembly presentation to the whole school

Supporting Sources (APA):
**Important to note that this exemplar could be interpreted many ways. I chose to use the letter “W” for water warrior, but the letter “A” could have been used for Autumn Peltier or Anishinaabe-kwe for her tribe. The information listed was a summary of what she is known for, however there is plenty of information that could have been used to represent her and/or graphic imagery as well.**

“Ate, I said it once, and I’ll say it again, we can’t eat money, or drink oil.” - AP (Canada, 2019)

**Awards & Recognition**

- Nominated for the International Children’s Peace Prize, 2017, 2018, 2019
- Canadian Living Me to We Award Youth in Action under 12, 2017
- Ontario Junior Citizens Award, Ontario Newspaper Association, 2017
- Sovereign Medal of Exceptional Volunteerism, by Governor General of Canada and Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, March 2017
- Ottawa Riverkeeper Award, 2018
- Water Warrior Award at the Water Docs Film Festival in Toronto, 2019
- Young Leader Award, Ontario Municipal Social Services Association Award, 2019
- Named Top 30 under 30 in North America for Environmental Education making a difference, 2019
- Named to the BBC 100 Women list for 2019, Maclean’s list of 20 to Watch in 2020, Huffington Post’s list of 15 Canadian Icons Who Stole our Hearts in 2019, Union of Concerned Scientists list of 2019 Science Defenders, Chatelaine 2019 Woman of the Year (Autumn Peltier, 2020)
References


Interested in learning more? Resources for additional reading:


