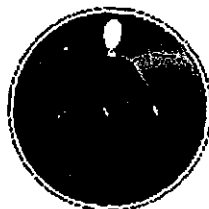


THE ABORIGINAL LITERACY CURRICULUM TOOLBOX

**Cultural Philosophy, Curriculum Design,
& Strategies for Self-Directed Learning**

By Janice Brant



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Janice has presented workshops on the use of portfolio assisted prior learning assessment with Aboriginal literacy learners at various conferences and gatherings across Canada, including “Strengthening the Learning Circle” hosted by Nokee Kwe Occupational Skill Development Inc.. She also presented at “Recognizing Learning” Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Janice advocates that portfolio assisted prior learning assessment can empower literacy learners and assist them in developing skills sets necessary for self-direction.

The contents of this manuscript are the result of her experience and observations as a practitioner, researcher and scholar in the Aboriginal literacy community.

PREFACE

This manuscript is intended to encourage literacy practitioners and community members to be innovative, creative, and compassionate in their approach and delivery of curriculum to Aboriginal literacy learners.

Learners are unique and diverse, and we cannot assume to know anything about them individually. We cannot assume that any learner believes in or follows his or her culture. You may find that many Aboriginal learners today are somewhere in between or closer to the values and culture of dominant society. Often we cannot know how to adapt to the needs of Aboriginal literacy learners until we have engaged with them and had an opportunity to understand their backgrounds and values, or unique ways of learning.

As an Aboriginal literacy practitioner wanting to improve my practice, I began asking myself the following questions:

- How can I engage with learners to acquire the information that will allow me to adapt to their needs?
- How can I help learners to access their full potential in the program?
- How can I help learners to reach their individual goals and believe in themselves?

Finding answers to these questions depended on how well I could communicate and develop a reciprocal relationship with each learner. I use the word reciprocal to describe the relationship because what became apparent was the learner's need to know who I am and where I come from. This reciprocity allowed for mutual respect, trust, and safety to be earned and established between the learner and myself, and was a key element in developing our relationship further.

Listening to learners tell their stories and recount their life experiences was a principal method of learning how to help learners identify and address barriers to learning. Literacy practitioners should be advised that some of the activities and approaches in this manuscript could trigger spiritual, emotional, mental, or physical reactions from learners. I found it to be a good practice to have counseling service referrals available to inform learners about where and how to access help, or to have training and experience myself to ensure that Aboriginal learners make a healthy transition into their new learning situation.

By taking the time to engage with Aboriginal literacy learners, I came to understand what they wanted from the program, myself as the practitioner, and their learning experience. To summarize, Aboriginal literacy learners want a learning experience that respects them for who they are, is relevant to their world view, offers reciprocity in their relationships with others, and helps them exercise responsibility over their own lives. In other words, Aboriginal literacy learners have a strong desire to be self-directed.

Finally, while engaging with Aboriginal learners, remember that humour and laughter are integral to a healthy Aboriginal identity and known to release healing properties. Learn, laugh and love together.

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INTRODUCTION

The Aboriginal Literacy Curriculum Tool Box is intended for literacy practitioners and community members interested in fostering a learner centered approach to literacy learning and curriculum delivery.

In this tool box you will explore techniques and approaches to inclusive and collaborative Aboriginal literacy learning and curriculum delivery that engages learners in self-directed practices. Self-directed practices include empowering skills such as critical thinking and self-reflection, self-esteem, communication, problem-solving, decision-making, creative thinking, collaboration, and information gathering.

The Aboriginal Literacy Curriculum Toolbox is organized into five chapters. The chapters provide a cultural philosophy, ideas for increasing the participation of individuals, techniques to help build group cohesion, guidelines for designing culture based curriculum, and evaluation techniques to assess skill development and personal growth.

Chapter One

FOUNDATIONAL BELIEFS

A cultural philosophy of Aboriginal literacy goes beyond the teaching of reading and writing and includes an emphasis on student development. This chapter describes beliefs and learning qualities that provide a foundation for culture based curriculum.

Although diverse from region to region, Aboriginal cultures share values, beliefs, and views on learning that represent or create or contribute to a cultural philosophy of literacy. This philosophy is based on the notion that people must live in respectful coexistence with the natural world, one another and themselves. It is understood that laws from the Creator govern these relationships.

“Prior to contact, it is known that aboriginal societies had their own unique form of social organization, spiritual practice and systems of government. Aboriginal peoples developed their social systems so they could function in a manner, which supported their beliefs in a Creator and their understandings of “Natural Law”. Their cultural belief systems about kinship ties encompassed a wide range of both human and spiritual relationships. The aboriginal vision of the world was both holistic and universal and it was this view of life that made it possible for aboriginal people to be truly respectful and humanistic in their daily interactions with people and in their co-existence and interdependence with the environment in which they lived” (Hill, 1995:8).

Foundational beliefs include oral tradition, communication, and self-direction. Learning qualities involve relationship building, experiential learning, spirituality, and holism. Literacy practitioners and community members are encouraged to explore these areas in the design of culture based curriculum.

Key Concepts

- sharing common beliefs and understandings
- human and spiritual relationships (significance of greetings and thanksgiving)
- learning through relationships and relationship building
- respectful interactions with other people and all of creation
- experiential learning
- oral tradition
- holistic (balancing spirit, heart, mind, and body)

Customs on story telling are seasonal in most Aboriginal cultures, and include the following types of stories and customs.

- teaching
- creation stories
- historical
- discipline
- trickster
- how-to-do
- role model
- series stories

Oral Tradition

Oral tradition plays a significant role in Aboriginal identity. Teachings or legends, as they may be called today, provide important information on origins, beliefs, values, practices, and social customs. They also recount valuable lessons about survival, describe the landscape, or convey deeper spiritual connections. Creation teachings, present in most cultures, inform human beings on how to interact with their environment. Trickster stories can challenge aboriginal literacy learners to think creatively and laugh at their own shortcomings.

Story telling is an exciting way of preserving Aboriginal history. Stories support and strengthen the learners' knowledge of who they are and their own history. Elders, in most communities, continue to share stories in the oral tradition. Some may even interpret wampum belts, birch bark scrolls, pictographs, and symbols left by their ancestors. Aboriginal cultures value oral expression and the wisdom that is recorded in human memory.

Oral tradition is a great learning resource. It carries the history of people, transmits a living culture, and conveys values, humour, and truth. Learners benefit by being informed about their own history. But more importantly, it helps them bridge the past with the present.

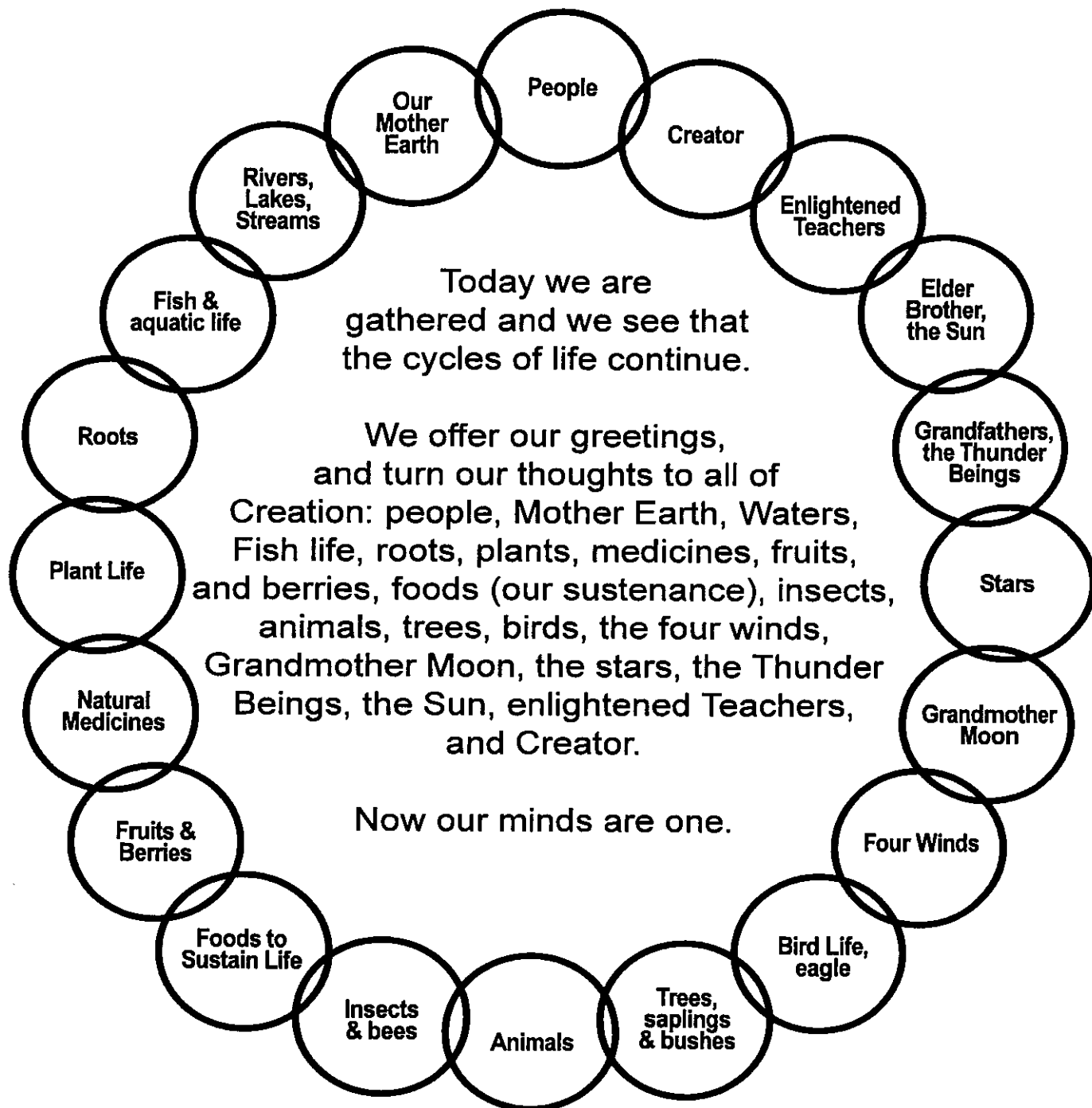
Aboriginal Communication

Ability to communicate is highly valued in Aboriginal cultures. Communication takes place on a spiritual, emotional, mental and physical level. Aboriginal cultures view all things as having a spirit. Spirit is the force and cause of life and interconnected in a great web. The custom of offering greetings and thanksgiving is done to ensure the continuation of all creation.

It is understood, for example, that greetings must come from the "good mind", a place of compassion, strength, and love. When spoken from this place the sharing of good words offers encouragement and uplifts those gathered. This is true inclusion. Words are like medicine and each life is a ceremony.

Story telling, public speaking, presentations, and sharing circles are common cultural forms of communication. Taking part in such activities encourages students to develop better verbal skills and to model the value of sharing and listening. The offering of greetings and thanksgiving can be used to open and close learning circles or group activities. This will support reintegration of

Offering Greetings & Thanksgiving to ALL Creation



Aboriginal literacy learners must be able to communicate who they are and where they come from-- in order to know where they are going. When one knows where they are going, it is then possible to identify responsibilities to self, family, clan, community, Nation, Confederacy, and Creation.

Smudging is often thought of as a traditional form of cleansing. It is also an act of internal and external communication. In most Aboriginal communities, the ritual is a tool for communicating with the vibrations of spirit. The actual practice, materials, and medicines that are used to smudge can vary between cultural groups.

Tobacco is used in Aboriginal communication to provide a direct link between people and the Creator. It is said to ensure that thoughts and prayers reach the Creator. An offering of tobacco also serves to communicate respect and gratitude to Elders, or to honour plants, animals, and all of creation. When tobacco is smoked in a pipe at a ceremony or in council, a non-verbal communication is made honouring creation and the community.

Aboriginal literacy learners must be able to communicate who they are and where they come from-- in order to know where they are going. When one knows where they are going, it is then possible to identify responsibilities to self, family, clan, community, Nation, Confederacy, and Creation.

Significant loss has occurred in the spiritual connections of Aboriginal peoples. The loss affects one's ability to communicate and can disrupt physical, emotional, and mental well being. The inclusion of Aboriginal communication customs into the literacy curriculum makes sense. By reestablishing holistic communication, the literacy practitioner can help learners achieve positive relationships and nurture their spirit, heart, mind and body.

Self-Direction

Self-direction is widely respected in Aboriginal cultures. Practices such as using insight, having respect for yourself and others, and taking responsibility for your actions are desired life skills. This reflects a common cultural understanding of seven generations planning. In other words, before any action is taken consideration has been given to both the ancestors and future generations.

Personal ethics, honesty, and integrity are essential values of self-direction. These involve self-esteem and confidence in one's own abilities, gifts, and role in the family, community, and nation. Values help students create a positive attitude toward personal growth, learning, and change.

Human beings, in Haudenosaunee culture, are gifted with a reasoning mind.

Thus, they can choose to live a balanced existence in harmony with the natural cycles and seasons of the earth. Similar concepts are reflected in the Seven Grandfather Teachings of the Anishinawbe. The principles of peace, good mind, and strength, along with offering gratitude and thanksgiving are the heart of internal governance.

Answering who I am and where I come from is a necessary step in achieving empowerment and self-direction. The Aboriginal literacy learner must have opportunities to build and develop a positive self-image. To do well in life people must know who they are and feel a sense of pride in their background. The importance of developing a positive self-concept cannot be overstated.

Learning Qualities

How one learns is frequently overlooked. The learning qualities significant in Aboriginal cultures involve learning through relationships, experiential learning, and holism or education addressed to the complete person. Cultural differences are more often acknowledged in what students learn, but not in how they learn.

Aboriginal learning is best explained through a holistic model (Johnny and Hill, 2002). To understand this model, it must be read from the center. The components to learning are shown in the following illustration and include one's Spirit (intuition – visioning – seeing it), Emotion (emotional / relational – feeling – relating to it), Mind (mental – understanding – knowing it), and Body (physical – doing – acting on it).

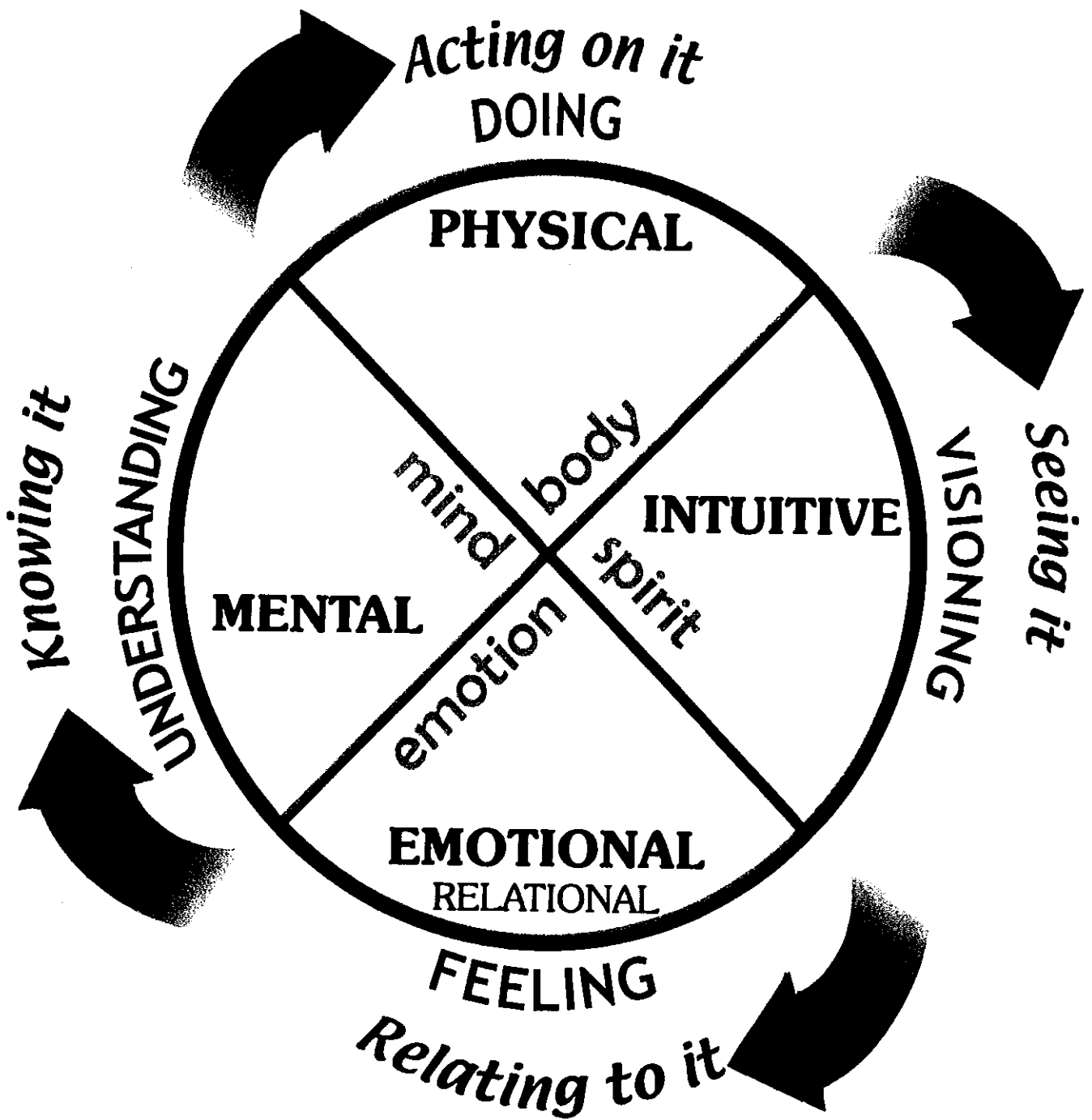
The role of the learner in Aboriginal cultures is succinctly described in the following passage.

Observation and imitation of daily family and community activities with the goal of integration into the larger social structure is how Aboriginal cultures traditionally approached learning. The focus was on values and identity, and was developed through the learners' relationships with other people and the environment. Also referred to as modeling, extended periods of observation were allowed.

Aboriginal learners develop concepts and skills by repeating tasks in many different situations. Learners were not typically

Characteristics of Self-Direction

- Accountability for actions
- Ability to set priorities
- Adaptability
- Creativity
- Respect for the thoughts and opinions of others
- Thinking critically and act logically to evaluate a situation, solve problems, and make decisions
- Personal initiative



given explicit instructions on basic ideas or concepts, but rather shared what they had experienced and listened to stories shared by others which presented concepts and principles. Ideas were then formulated by the individual learner according to their own skill level and experience (Stairs, 1991:280-94).

Most importantly, the holistic approach teaches learners how to learn and to model outcomes. This approach reflects the belief that learners can benefit from understanding how they learn. Literacy practitioners are urged to identify the learning style of individuals and to share it with the student. Various materials and exercises are available to help practitioners. *Native Learning Styles*, a publication of Ningwakwe Learning Press, is an excellent resource. It offers an assessment tool, descriptions of learning style characteristics, and tips for teaching and facilitating this process.

Also consistent with the holistic approach, learners need assurance that learning is about trial and error. Demonstrate to them that making mistakes is a good way of learning and discovering. Show them that, as a literacy practitioner, you also learn by experience. Share your own errors, weaknesses or faults. Communicate that we are all human beings and we all make mistakes. Learners need to hear practitioners say, "I was wrong about that," or "It was disrespectful of me to say that."

Summary:

It is essential that literacy practitioners and community members responsible for designing culturally based curriculum possess an understanding of the foundational beliefs and learning qualities of Aboriginal cultures. The challenge for the literacy practitioner is to support the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical needs of learners, which will allow them to embark on a path of self-discovery and learning.

Strategies for Self-Directed Learning

What it is	How it works	Resources	Time Needed
<p>Experiential Learning Techniques:</p> <p>Experiential learning is hands-on and provides learners with the opportunity to experiment and practice new skills and knowledge by putting them into action.</p> <p>Aspects of experiential learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • action, doing, experiencing • processing, sharing reactions and observations, discussion, value • generalizing, what is the real world logic related to this experience, ownership • applying, internalizing, planning, changing behaviours 	<p>1. Exploring Foundational Beliefs</p> <p>Greeting Circle / Circle Discussion</p> <p>-Opening with a greetings circle and words of acknowledgement for the people gathered and thanksgiving to Creation</p> <p>-Circle discussions allow learners to verbally articulate and share what they have learned with the support and acknowledgement of their peers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may want to consider incorporating a talking stick or feather. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain to the circle that it is important that everyone have an opportunity to share. • Time may vary depending on the number of learners or topic. Practitioners can set a time limit. • Approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour should be sufficient.

What it is	How it works	Resources	Time Needed
	<p>Story telling / Oral Tradition (Interacting with Elders)</p> <p>-Creation Teachings (from Creation teachings ask learners to identify what rituals, protocols, ceremonies, medicines, relationships, values, etc. have their origins in their cultures</p> <p>-Creation teaching, this helps them to reflect on what they know or have learned, ask them how this has impacted their worldview, ask what instructions their Creation Teachings offer for a good life)</p> <p>-Communicating who they are and where they come from</p> <p>-Self-direction is knowing where they are going and recognizing their responsibilities</p> <p>-Traditional Iroquoian Thanksgiving Address (teaches us boundaries of sacred space, communication / relationships, and working together)</p> <p>-Life Road Teachings (an interpretation of the Seven Stages of Life) Banakonda Kennedy Kish Bell</p> <p>-Medicine Wheel Teachings</p> <p>-Cycle of Ceremonies</p> <p>-Vibrant activities (drum making, singing, dancing, cooking, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Elders and Traditional teachers. •Newspapers, Magazines, and books of short stories and legends. •Tell Me A Tale, a book about storytelling by Joseph Bruchac 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teachings and Elder visits 1 - 2 hours •Reading activities 30 – 40 minutes •Discussion 15 – 20 minutes •Journal reflection 10 – 15 minutes

What it is	How it works	Resources	Time Needed
	<p>-Seven Grandfathers (seven teachings) Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, and Truth</p> <p>-Seven Principles (Good Mind, Compassion, Love, Strength, Kind and Nurturing Words, Words of Encouragement, and Spirit) Elder Norma General</p> <p>-Life Road Teachings (an interpretation of the Seven Stages of Life)</p> <p>-Medicine Wheel Teachings</p> <p>-Cycle of Ceremonies</p> <p>-Vibrant activities (drum making, singing, dancing, cooking, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dictionary • Journals • Elders and Traditional Teachers • Research Material on colonization (i.e. The Power within People, A community organizing perspective, June 1986, Tribal Sovereignty Associates or Ethnostress: The disruption of the Aboriginal spirit, August 1992, Bob Antone and Diane Hill). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hour
	<p>2. Ideas for Reflection</p> <p>-How has colonization affected you, your family, and your community?</p> <p>-Think back to when you were a child. Remember what you loved doing. Remember why you stopped doing it. How were you nurtured by that experience? And, is there anyway to restore your creative passion?</p> <p>-Focus on a time in your life when you felt powerful. You had a clear vision and knew nothing could stop you from achieving your goal. How did you feel? What was your motivation? What step did you take to achieve your goal?</p> <p>-I am truly thankful for....</p>		

Chapter Two

COMMUNICATING WITH LEARNERS

The participation of individuals is essential in creating meaningful classroom learning experiences. This chapter identifies communication barriers and outlines classroom techniques to help increase student participation.

Based on my experience as a literacy practitioner, I found that many of the learning barriers are emotional, such as unresolved grief, loss and hurt, anger, historical trauma, shame, guilt, and fear. Many Aboriginal learners also suffer from lateral violence (anger, shame, and gossip) that is prevalent in Aboriginal communities today. The barriers arise out of cultural losses and the lack of a secure sense of identity for many Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal learners also identify childhood or school related experiences in which they were humiliated and teased by their classmates, or worse yet, by their teachers. For many Aboriginal learners the stigma of being unable to read or make mathematic calculations, along with low self-esteem, paralyses them from searching out and accessing help. The negative feeling learners carry about themselves and others, impacts not only their thought processes and self-image, but also their ability to learn or recognize that learning is happening.

Learning barriers come in different shapes and sizes, and can be spiritual (social), emotional, mental, or physical (economic). However, I found that identifying and addressing learning barriers can emancipate learners and allow them to move forward.

Overcoming Barriers:

Communicating with learners can be complex. Communication is both verbal and non-verbal. It is not simply the words we speak or hear, language we choose to convey our message, or our tone of voice. It includes our body language, facial expressions, actions, and intuition.

Key Concepts

- Speaking / talking / voice
- Dialogue
- Listening actively
- Comprehension
- Recording
- Body language, facial expressions, action, and intuition
- Verbal and non-verbal communications
- Safety
- Holism

Common Learner

Communication Barriers

1. Hesitation to answer unless they are positive they can answer correctly.
2. Fear of criticism from past experiences.
3. Cultural nuances that may make learners appear passive or apathetic.
4. Shyness.

Communication between the literacy practitioner and learners is necessary to transfer knowledge and skills. Learners need encouragement to communicate with literacy practitioners, to ask questions, discuss problems, and be relaxed. Communication barriers exist and can be complex.

One barrier is that learners may hesitate to express an opinion or to make statements unless they are sure their response is correct. Another barrier may be previous experiences where their ideas were not respected and included. Or worse yet, they may have been criticized or ridiculed.

A third barrier is that learners may seem passive and hard to assess. Learners may display different behaviours due to their cultural backgrounds. Direct eye contact, for example, can embarrass Aboriginal learners and make them uncomfortable. Sustaining direct eye contact in many Aboriginal cultures is seen as rude or intrusive.

A fourth barrier involves shyness. When an Aboriginal person is placed in an unfamiliar or new situation, they may become very shy or even freeze. They may be "terrified of making a mistake or looking foolish, inept, or stupid" (Brant, 1993:261).

Creating a Dialogue:

Creating a dialogue is a classroom technique that works with Aboriginal learners. The technique involves interactive dialogue between teacher and students and reciprocal communication. What is often said to be dialogue in education, is little more than a question and answer period where a teacher controls the outcome.

Relationship building between the literacy practitioner and learners is a necessary part of this technique. The idea of establishing relationships with learners rather than teaching from an authority role may seem discomforting. Yet, the relationships can remain professional and increase learner participation by addressing their needs.

Active listening and effective interviewing provide tools for dialogue. By asking the right questions practitioners can collect useful data about their learners. Create a dialogue with learners on *purpose*, needs, and interests related to learning. As learners experience being seen and heard, they will begin to

develop feelings of *acceptance, belonging, security, and safety*. The data collection can then be applied to the development of curriculum and classroom activities.

A welcoming adult environment speaks volumes about atmosphere, program, and staff. It is critical to establish a sense of safety and protection for learners. Discuss confidentiality and their right to decline participation if they are in any way uncomfortable or feeling vulnerable. Learners need to know they will not be harmed or injured by their participation.

Talking is a way for learners to clarify a question, declare alternatives, and/or make a decision. Provide learners with an opportunity whenever possible, to come to a conclusion on their own. If you are a good listener eventually learners will share their feelings with you. When this happens you will know that you have developed real communication and a reciprocal relationship.

What am I saying when I am not speaking:

Learners need confirmation from the literacy practitioner that their ideas and comments are valued. Whether working in groups or individually, learners must see that you are listening and genuinely interested in their ideas or concerns. Practice paraphrasing to ensure that you have heard correctly. Learners will also know that you are sincere and genuine about their needs, goals, interests, and participation.

Reassure learners that they are being heard. Use communication techniques such as: active listening, reflection or paraphrasing, focused attention, moderate eye contact, attentive and open body language, and acknowledgement (nodding). Listening of course does not mean that you respond to everything, it is about offering assistance or feedback when it is needed or requested.

Literary practitioners must also be willing to listen for words and phrases that provide clues and direction about learner expectations. These may relate to you and the curriculum, their learning journey, how they learn, or perhaps their attitudes and beliefs. Respond to what you have heard by integrating their ideas or suggestions for learning activities.

Besides letting learners know you are listening, such action encourages them to take responsibility and ownership for their learning. For example, learners may indicate that they express themselves best artistically, by drawing or painting. A learning activity might ask learners to create a drawing or painting with a

Reassure learners that they are being heard:

- active listening
- reflection
- paraphrasing
- focused attention
- moderate eye contact
- attentive and open body language,
- nodding

Needs Empowerment

C
R
Y
I
N
G

L
O
V
E

PURPOSE

I have a
reason
for living

I am
important

ACCEPTANCE

I am
understood

I'm okay
just the way
I am

BELONGING

I am
wanted

I am part
of a family,
community,
Nation, Creation

SECURITY

I won't be
forgotten
about

I won't
be
abandoned
or neglected

SAFETY

I am
protected

I have my
basic
needs met

Communication
To be seen and heard

diagram by Diane Hill, FNTI

Needs Empowerment

This diagram represents a spiral of learning and communication. At the heart of this spiral is open and reciprocal communication between the learner and practitioner. In order for learners to begin to experience a sense of safety with the practitioner and their peers they must be seen and heard. Practitioners can reassure learners that they are being heard by listening actively, paraphrasing, and with attentive and open body language. Practitioners can also make note of suggestions made by learners and include them in program activities.

Safety and security develop when learners know, feel, see, and experience that they are heard and acknowledged for their contributions. As the learner/peer / practitioner relationships evolve learners begin to experience an increased sense of belonging; they are wanted and appreciated. The learners begin to feel that they are part of a learning community; they are accepted and understood. Each learner will move through the various levels of the spiral at their own pace. A learner that has been ridiculed and suffers from lateral violence may take much more time to develop a sense of safety and security with the practitioner and their peers.

When learners know, feel, see and experience that they are accepted by the practitioner and their peers, they grow in acceptance of themselves and others. They experience an empowering sense of purpose, recognize they are important, and have a valuable contribution to make to their family, community, Nation, and creation.

brief commentary that reflects something they have been learning, their goals, or feelings.

Keep Learners Informed:

Keeping learners informed can alleviate unnecessary stress in the learning environment and ensure that collective goals are being achieved. Literacy practitioners can keep learners informed by communicating the learning objectives and outcomes of the curriculum in advance. Post your objectives and outcomes for learners to see, read them aloud, and discuss them.

Communicate to the learners what is required of them individually and collectively, and open the door for feedback, suggestions, and comments. Ask them to share what they are thinking and feeling, and provide an opportunity for them to negotiate timelines or alternative assignments.

Communicate the method of evaluation/assessment or self evaluation in the same manner. Give the learners plenty of time to respond, think, and ask questions, and record their feedback and direction.

Communication is Holistic:

Holistic communication with Aboriginal learners can be a challenge for literacy practitioners. Put simply, it is important to remember to communicate with all four aspects of their being. They are whole persons and should be given the opportunity to reflect and respond spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically concerning the environment, learning, curriculum, assignments, and evaluations.

Questions can be used to obtain meaningful information on the learning experience. The idea is to address each of the four aspects. *Spirit*, for example has to do with meaning, beliefs, dreams, and intuition and can be addressed by asking; what are your insights? Or, what do you see? *Emotion* or heart has to do with relationships to self and others and can be address by asking; what do you feel? Or, how do you relate to....? The *mind* has to do with understandings and attitudes leading to questions such as what do you know and understand. Or, what do you think? Finally, *body* is about behaviour leading to questions like what do you do. Or, how do you do it?

Holistic Communication:

- Spirit

What are your insights?

- Emotion

What do you feel?

- Mind

What do you think?

- Body

How do you do it?

Summary:

Insight into the communication styles of Aboriginal cultures can help literacy practitioners and community members open dialogue with learners, resulting in better participation. The challenge for the literacy practitioner is to demonstrate openness, caring, sharing, and respect, thereby encouraging learners to tell their stories, express themselves, and feel more comfortable with their peers.

Strategies for Self-Directed Learning

What it is	How it works	Resources	Time Needed
<p>Techniques for Communicating with Learners:</p> <p>This is a mind mapping exercise to explore an issue, address concerns, fears, or barriers to learning. It can also be used to identify learning gains or to debrief from an experience.</p>	<p>1. <u>Wheeling Out Exercise</u> by Banakonda Kennedy Kish Bell</p> <p>-Write a word or phrase in the centre of the page that best reflects the topic or situation at hand.</p> <p>-Moving in a circle following the four cardinal directions placing a word at each interval (remember these are immediate responses or intuitive responses) do the same in the SE, SW, NW, NE directions until you have eight responses.</p> <p>-Use these words to develop a paragraph to express your thoughts, ideas, feelings, or learning about the perspective topic or issue.</p> <p>-Ask what you have learned (what is the message) and what you still need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Blank sheets of paper •Markers, pencils, pens •Diagram on page 50 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Research and topic exploration 1 hour •Discussion 30 minutes •Journal reflection 15 minutes

What it is	How it works	Resources	Time Needed
<p>This exercise involves organizing and explaining something in detail.</p>	<p>2. <u>Suggest an Exposition</u></p> <p>-Give learners the opportunity to do an oral presentation focusing on their own learning and achievement. This can be a formal or informal presentation, depending on the desired outcome.</p> <p>-The learners may be encouraged to include what they have learned about who they are, where they come from, and where they are going.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Presentation criteria •Peer evaluation sheet (eye contact, voice, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Approximately 10 minutes for each learner
<p>Cultural metaphors can convey messages, instructions, or help make ordinary lessons culturally appropriate.</p>	<p>3. <u>Use Cultural Metaphors</u></p> <p>-A medicine bundle carried by an Aboriginal person may contain spiritual items, medicines, and tools for helping themselves and others.</p> <p>-Ask each learner to compile a list of their own personal skills and knowledge. This could metaphorically be described as a bundle of sorts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Describe and discuss a Medicine Bundle and its contents; what items might be in the bundle, how are they used to help the individual or other, etc. •Discuss skills and knowledge; ask learners to describe some of their skills, special gifts or talents; think about how these gifts benefit the learner or are used to assist others. •Paper, pens, markers, magazines •Journals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Discussion 30 minutes •Learners list of skills 15 – 20 minutes •Journal reflection 10 minutes

What it is	How it works	Resources	Time Needed
Interviewing Learners:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Are you comfortable? -What has brought you here? -What you need to know about me (practitioner)? -What do you need to know about the program? -What would you like to accomplish? -Do you have any concerns? -What is important to you? -What will work best for you? -What would you like to try? -What challenges might you encounter that would effect your commitment or participation? -Have we covered everything? Is there anything else you need? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Writing paper •Pens, pencils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •20 – 30 minutes
Getting Learners Talking:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Describe life experience -Articulate and identify learning -Express their learning within the framework of the program, courses, and curriculum -Relate their learning to career, education and life plans -Demonstrate learning and one's ability to perform 		

What it is	How it works	Resources	Time Needed
Communication Activities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listening/speaking Reflective discussions Reading to learners Contextual drama Story telling Interview 2. Reading Journal entries Researching 3. Writing Point-of-view stories Journal writing Researching Writers' workshop 		

Chapter Three

FOSTERING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

Fostering a learning community can help Aboriginal literacy learners feel a sense of unity and that they are supported by their peers. This chapter outlines elements of a learning community and techniques to help build group cohesion.

Creating a Sense of Solidarity:

“The freedom and strength of the individual is the strength of the group... The individual does not form an identity in opposition to the group but recognizes the group as relatives included in his or her own identity.”

Eber Hampton, Chicksaw Nation, Oklahoma

The group cohesion and individual freedom and strength found in Aboriginal cultures can be replicated in the educational setting by fostering a learning community. A learning community seeks to develop in all members a sense of personal worth, a sense of shared responsibility for each other's well being, a shared commitment to the learning task, and a belief in one's ability to contribute to the learning process in a positive and unique way.

Learners need the guidance of the literacy practitioner to realize common goals and interests related to learning. This serves as the foundation of the learning community. Opportunities for learners to share aspects of themselves, including their concerns and expectations will bring about a collective recognition of common goals. The expectation of the learning community is for all participants to be seen and heard, feel acceptance, and experience respect, warmth and empathy from their peers.

Learners also need the literacy practitioner's assistance to feel safe and secure, knowing that self-disclosures can be made without fear of ridicule, gossip, or lateral violence. This is a key ingredient of a learning community. Safety can be established by asking learners to collaboratively develop basic guidelines for

Key Concepts

- modeling
- peer support
- respectful and collaborative learning
- identifying common goals
- group cohesion
- awareness of interpersonal relationships
- respect for diversity
- intergenerational participation (Elders and community members)
- principles of adult learning

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:

- **Social recognition** is the need for companionship and identification with a group.
- **Self-esteem** is the need to feel unique, important, and accepted by a group.
- **Self-fulfillment** is the need to realize one's potential and be true to one's own feelings.

conduct and behaviour. This ensures that the guidelines are based on their values and needs. In addition, it encourages sharing and relationship building between participants.

Fostering a learning community can help Aboriginal literary learners feel supported by their peers and set a direction for respectful and collaborative learning. It is also helpful to have learners share any issues that may affect their participation in the learning community such as transportation and childcare. It is important to note that literacy learners will need time to develop reciprocal relationships, in which all participants are respected and comfortable.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:

Abraham Maslow identifies social recognition, self-esteem, and self-fulfillment in his hierarchy of human needs. Social recognition is the need for companionship and identification with a group. Self-esteem is the need to feel unique, important, and accepted by a group. Self-fulfillment is the need to realize one's potential and be true to one's own feelings.

A learning community has the potential to address most of Maslow's list. Value is placed on group cohesion, awareness of interpersonal relationships and one's role in the social network. Cohesion is supported through interactions among learners, and interactions between learners and the practitioner. All participants cooperatively work to acquire knowledge.

Group cohesion ensures a supportive environment where participants can openly share their life stories and act as resources for each other. Educators frequently use Maslow's hierarchy as the basis for curriculum development and student motivation.

Recognizing Diversity:

Recognizing diversity in the learning community can enrich and broaden the experience of Aboriginal learners. There are many nations of Aboriginal people with rich and diverse cultures. Their histories, traditions, languages, and colonial experiences vary across the Canadian landscape. Literacy practitioners can create an awareness of the diversity of Aboriginal peoples, and be regionally specific in their curriculum delivery without alienating other perspectives.

The development of mutual respect for all Aboriginal people and cultures is

essential to inclusive learning. Practitioners and community members can demonstrate their respect for Aboriginal learners by validating their unique cultures. However, it is ethical to be aware of resource materials, actions and attitudes that might imply one culture is superior to another. Diversity means teaching respect for all people and cultures in our society.

Inviting Elders to Participate and Share:

Learners benefit socially and culturally from the intergenerational participation of Elders.

In many Aboriginal cultures Elders and grandparents play a significant role in teaching and learning, and contribute to their community by passing on skills and knowledge. Inviting an Elder to share cultural teachings can be a tool for informing learners about protocol. Some suggestions follow.

Begin by visiting with the Elder you wish to invite. Offer tobacco and tell the person about the program and the learners. Explain how a visit could help with the learning process. Give the Elder plenty of time to think and decide if he or she would like to participate. If the answer is no, ask if there is someone else who might be willing to participate. Once an Elder has agreed to visit the program, it is appropriate for learners to suggest an activity or topic in which there is interest.

Inform the Elder of the learners' interest and discuss how he or she can contribute to the learning process. Show respect and gratitude by introducing the Elder immediately upon arrival. "Be patient; allow the Elders to share their culture in their own way." (Littlefield) Ensure that the person is not interrupted by setting aside time for questions. Thank the Elder for coming.

Other items to consider in planning are noted. When possible provide the Elder with an honourarium in exchange for the energy and knowledge contributed to the program. Also, confirm that Elders participating in your program understand that they are not obligated to participate. Finally, as with all guest speakers, it is a good idea to keep your lesson plan flexible in case the Elder cannot attend with little notice.

Fostering a learning community that involves Elders and community members

Inviting an Elder

- visit Elder and offer tobacco
- tell them about the the program and students
- explain the process
- give the Elder plenty of time to think and decide
- students should suggest a topic
- introduce the Elder immediately
- Be patient.
- Thank the Elder and give them an honourarium.

supports the needs of learners. Intergenerational participation can strengthen the identity of Aboriginal literacy learners and help them retrieve traditional cultural knowledge reflective of their beliefs, values, and practices. The wisdom and experience of Elders is central to cultural teaching and learning.

The Principles of Adult Learning:

Exploring the principles of adult learning can enhance the work of literacy practitioners and foster development of a learning community. Understanding how adults learn can assist practitioners by defining their role and approach to Aboriginal literacy learners.

The practitioner becomes a learner, listening to and understanding the needs of their learners. By becoming a co-learner you are actively participating in the learning process, through dialogue with learners, and taking into consideration their needs and past experiences.

- Aboriginal literacy learners, like all adult learners bring a great deal of life experience into the classroom. This is a valuable source of information to be acknowledged, tapped and used.
- Adult learning is rooted in life experience. Learners need to connect learning to their experience base. To help them do so; practitioners should draw out those experiences relevant to the topic.
- Adults are autonomous and self-directed. Learners need to be guided to their own knowledge rather than being supplied with facts. In this way, the practitioner's role is one of a facilitator rather than as an expert or formal authority.
- Adults need to be shown respect, as do all learners. They should be treated as equals in experience and knowledge and allowed to voice their opinions freely in the learning environment.
- The practitioner becomes a learner, listening to and understanding the needs of their learners. By becoming a co-learner you are actively participating in the learning process, through dialogue with learners, and taking into consideration their needs and past experiences.

Therefore the learning experience is mutual or co-operative and learners share

the responsibility of the teaching and learning process with the practitioner.

Commonly Accepted Practices in Adult Education:

- the physical environment should be welcoming and one in which adults feel at ease (informally decorated and arranged)
- the atmosphere should be one of acceptance, respect, support and freedom of expression (free of punishment or ridicule)
- learning needs should be identified and diagnosed by the learner
- learners should be involved in planning their own learning, with the practitioners acting as a resource person
- teaching and learning is the mutual responsibility of the practitioner and learner
- the adult learner would be involved in self-evaluation
- the practitioner should utilize the rich resource of the learners experience (emphasis can be placed on discussions, problem-solving exercises, group work, role-playing, etc.)
- emphasis should be placed on the practical application of learning and related to the life-situations of learners
- focus on the problem areas, not subjects

Summary:

Knowledge of the interaction patterns of Aboriginal cultures involving how to listen, observe, and interact with others can help literacy practitioners and community members foster a learning community. The challenge for the literacy practitioner is to provide learners with ample opportunities for sharing and listening, collaborative decision-making, showing respect for diversity, and engaging in teamwork to build group cohesion.

Strategies for Self-Directed Learning

What it is	How it works	Resources/Materials	Time Needed
<p>What does your learning community value?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect • Understanding • Communication • Consensus in decision making, considering all points of view • Personal integrity and self-worth • Equality, everyone is a full partner • Thinking collectively • Listening • Honour of everyone's gifts or talents • Humour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flip chart paper and markers for brainstorming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 – 30 minutes
<p>Activities for Fostering a Learning Community:</p> <p>The purpose of this activity is to contribute to the learners' positive self-image through a process of sharing self-identified qualities and positive feedback with the group.</p>	<p>1. <u>Acknowledging Positive Qualities</u></p> <p>Explain the importance of being able to identify and acknowledge our strengths as well as our weaknesses. Advise learners that this circle activity asks them to focus on their own positive characteristics and those of others in the group.</p> <p>Ask each learner to share:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -a physical quality you like about yourself -a personality characteristic you like about yourself -one talent or skill you have that you like -one of your most satisfying achievements -two of your most meaningful or happy relationships -a dream you have for yourself <p>Ask each group member to respond:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -share two positive feelings you have toward the learner who has just shared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking stick or feather 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hour • Journal reflection 10 minutes

What it is	How it works	Resources/Materials	Time Needed
	<p>Debriefing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -discuss the importance of acknowledging and celebrating positive qualities of both ourselves and others -discuss how you feel when sharing positive qualities about yourself -discuss how it felt to point out good things about others -discuss how it felt to hear positive comments about yourself 		
	<p>2. Mind Mapping</p> <p>Ask learners to create a diagram of values, experiences, and influences, which are important to them. This is an opportunity for learners to introduce aspects of their family and their past, as well as their hopes for the future. List the possible mind mapping topics on the board and emphasize that these are suggestion. Some suggested topics are family, hobbies, community, employment, school, cultural beliefs and background. Ask learners to begin with his or her name at the center of the page. The lines extending out to the clusters are then labeled with the topic that leads to information about the learner. Learners can write, draw or paste picture to convey their information. When learners have finished, ask them to share their map with the group, explaining and elaborating as they wish.</p> <p>Debriefing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge the diversity of the group, the variety of experience, and interesting backgrounds acknowledge common factors and issues discuss what you know about the group now that you didn't know before 	<p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> paper pens, pencils, markers magazines scissors glue sticks 	<p>•1 – 2 hours</p>

What it is	How it works	Resources/Materials	Time Needed
<p>The purpose of this activity is to make a dedication or commitment to the group about participation, honouring group members, and upholding group values. It is an opportunity to reflect on significant life events and identify their support network.</p>	<p>3. <u>Wampum Dedication String</u></p> <p>Discuss the role and significance of Wampum beads, belts, and strings in the social and political structure of the Haudenosaunee. Note that wampum beads were made from shell and were strung together to record an event or signify a contract or relationship. Often they were made into belts and used as a device to record detailed events or meanings. A person held wampum to signify that he or she spoke the truth.</p> <p>1. Ask the group to identify six or seven important group values or laws, such as confidentiality, respect, and listening. Assign a coloured bead to represent each value.</p> <p>2. Distribute a length of string to each learner. Tie a piece of round leather near the bottom and fray the string below. The round piece of leather represents the sustenance we receive from mother earth and the frayed string represents our connection to the ancestors.</p> <p>3. On top of the leather circle, string the coloured beads that represent and acknowledge the group values.</p> <p>4. Cut and string a piece of triangular leather to represent birth and entrance into the physical world.</p> <p>5. Ask learner to string five to seven beads representing significant life events leading up to the present. Group members will choose their own colour of beads for each event.</p> <p>6. A third rectangular piece of leather is cut and added to represent the base of our support system.</p>	<p>Materials:</p> <p>large coloured plastic beads</p> <p>leather scraps</p> <p>heavy string</p> <p>scissors</p> <p>Diagram for handout</p>	<p>• 1 hour</p>

What it is	How it works	Resources/Materials	Time Needed
	<p>7. The third set of beads will represent the support system of the learner and can include the practitioner, Elders, family members, friends or others. Again, the learners will choose their own colour of beads for each.</p> <p>8. The last bead should be a special bead representing "self".</p> <p>9. Ask each learner to share with the group the story of their string.</p> <p>10. Tie off each string, leaving enough at the top to tie all of the strings together from each group member. This represents a family or community.</p> <p>11. Hang the bundle of strings somewhere visible in the classroom, as a reminder of each learner's dedication to the group and themselves.</p>		

Chapter Four

INCLUSION OF CULTURE BASED KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

Aboriginal cultures have a complete way of seeing the world and teachings provide the context for becoming a balanced person (spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical). The inclusion of culture based knowledge and skills is a concept broader than content. It describes a learning approach unique to Aboriginal cultures. This chapter provides a framework and guidelines for developing curriculum in a learning modality that will meet student needs.

Ways of Knowing:

“The task challenging Native communities is to retain their distinct cultural identities while preparing members for successful participation in a world of rapidly changing technology and diverse culture.”

- *Indian Nations at Risk Task Force*

Culture based learning applies Aboriginal cultural values, beliefs, and life skills to modern living. The skills and knowledge present in Aboriginal cultures can show Aboriginal learners how to maintain peace and good relations within themselves as they learn to participate in the whole of society. Learning should not draw Aboriginal learners away from who they are; instead it should enrich their capacity to know who they are.

For literacy practitioners it may require learning about the worldviews expressed by various Aboriginal cultural groups. For example, every group holds ideas about its relationship to its environment. Does nature control us, or do we control it? Every group has shared norms about strategies for life. What is a priority? Every group has shared norms about the past. How does that shape perception and define reality? Every group has shared norms on the time horizon and the use of time. What is a long time? What does being late mean?

Key Concepts:

- holistic approach
- cognitive and social processes
- ecological context
- content materials
- Aboriginal languages
- Identify
- diversity (multiple perspectives)

Cognitive Process:

- knowledge is conveyed holistically - spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical qualities.

Social Processes:

- centers on awareness of interpersonal relationships and one's role in the social network

Ecological Context:

- harmonious relationships between Aboriginal people, their culture, and their environment are emphasized.

Culture based learning offers a thought-provoking alternative to dominant Western notions of knowledge and ways of knowing. According to Stairs (1991), there are five dimensions to culture based learning ---cognitive and social processes, an ecological context (by region), content material, and Aboriginal languages. In short, it involves the renewal of spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical strengths required to rebuild relationships beginning with self, family, clan, community, nation, and creation.

What are Cognitive Processes?

Cognitive relates to the mental development involved in knowing, learning, and understanding things. In a cognitive process for Aboriginal learners, knowledge is conveyed holistically, inclusive of spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical qualities. This process brings to life the foundational beliefs which guide learning within a cultural context. In other words, based on a unique way of thinking about the world (world view), what learners feel, value, think, do, and see. Cognitive knowledge is often conveyed thematically and validated by life experience, people's relationships, feelings, and community consensus.

What are Social Processes?

Social relates to behavioural development of people living in groups and their relationships with each other. In a social process for Aboriginal learners, group cohesion is emphasized and highly valued. It centers on awareness of interpersonal relationships and one's role in the social network. There is collective respect for individual differences within the cultural norms of the community, and special emphasis is placed on honouring the various gifts and talents of each member. Learning is initiated by the learner's motivation to develop their gifts and talents, and evaluation is conducted by the group rather than an individual.

What is an Ecological Context?

Ecological relates to the relationships between people, plants, animals, and nature. In an ecological context for Aboriginal learners, harmonious relationships between Aboriginal people, their culture, and their environment are emphasized. It reveals a world view in which everything is connected, ordered, and there are no random events. Traditions, customs, symbols, belief systems, and artifacts of material culture reinforce this view and are taught as a way of

being. Learning in the context of real-world settings, watching and imitating their surroundings, is another way Aboriginal people make sense of the world. Simply stated, the content of learning is based on lived experience and responsiveness to the natural surroundings and environment.

Where can I locate Content Materials?

Research is often available at a local heritage center or library. Attending cultural activities is another way literacy practitioners may learn about Aboriginal learners, their culture, and communities. It will show learners that you are interested and serious about your commitment to learning. It can also provide invaluable opportunities to connect with resource people and Elders. Attending or hosting cultural activities as part of the literacy program provides Aboriginal learners with experiential learning opportunities and can enhance cognitive and social processes.

“We need the Elders to provide us with the guiding principles and to interpret for us how the traditional principles are to be translated in the contemporary urban context.”

- *George Calliou, Cree, Sucker Creek, AB*

Making effective use of local expertise and Elders can provide Aboriginal learners with a sense of connectedness to tradition and culture that transcends their lived experience. Many Aboriginal cultures are fortunate to still have those Elders who retain the cultural systems of knowledge.

Where can I get help with Aboriginal Languages?

Literacy practitioners can embrace the Aboriginal languages of their learners by encouraging visiting Elders or guest speakers to share their language, if they are speakers. Many aspects of Aboriginal languages can also be incorporated into the curriculum through audio technology, the internet, and other sources. Including languages from the learners' community or region of ancestry can help them identify with their culture and recognize the diversity of Aboriginal peoples.

Content Materials

- traditions
- customs
- symbols
- belief systems
- artifacts

Aboriginal Languages:

Including languages from the learners' community or region of ancestry can help them identify with their culture and recognize the diversity of Aboriginal peoples.

What steps are involved in Developing a Culture Based Curriculum?

1. Developing a culture based curriculum is the result of collaboration between the practitioner and learners. The criteria for developing a culture based curriculum are first identified by researching and presenting multiple perspectives. This is best achieved through a team approach. Everyone is responsible for gathering information about their respective Aboriginal culture. Historical documents, oral traditions, newspaper clippings and magazine publications, old photographs, and interviews with contemporary Elders can provide rich sources of materials.

2. The next step is to select a theme that emerges from the beliefs that explain how this world and human beings came into being. Cultural themes often emerge by examining world view, such as corn in Haudenosaunee culture or wild rice in Anishinawbe culture. Questions could be asked such as what is the link between corn to the economy, worldview, ceremonies, way of life, and social structure of the Haudenosaunee. Or, how does the oral tradition of corn relate to family structure (kinship, clan), economy (agriculture), and science (hill planting).

3. Developing a culture based curriculum requires a holistic approach to the selected theme. This ensures that the theme is connected to all aspects of a culture and learners can develop an understanding of the interconnected relationships. Wild rice as a theme for example includes culture, math, art, creative writing, and language. It would include exploring ceremonies, songs, dances, and foods made with wild rice. Artistic skills could be used to illustrate a story, ceremony, or dance. Math could be incorporated in the productivity of wild rice, as well as the science and history of its evolution. This same culturally holistic approach can be applied to drum making, or basketry demonstrating how these items are part of a holistic culture.

4. Finally, it is essential to recognize the continuous role of culture in contemporary life. Visiting or interviewing Elders can provide the basis for a living history project. Analyze and compare Aboriginal art over several time spans and identifying significant cultural symbols that continue to appear. Comparing old and contemporary photographs, guest speakers, audio-visual resources, music, and dance are exciting ways for learner to share and experience contemporary Aboriginal cultures. (Cornelius, 1999)

Developing a Culture Based Curriculum:

1. Collaborative research between practitioner and learners.
2. Select a theme.
3. Apply holistic approach.
4. Recognition of culture in contemporary life.

Summary:

The inclusion of culture based knowledge and skills makes a powerful statement about the value of Aboriginal cultures for modern living. It can help literacy practitioners and community members acknowledge the values, contributions, languages and world views of Aboriginal cultures. The challenge for the literacy practitioner is to involve students in the task of identifying cultural content relevant to their learning styles, needs, and interests.

Strategies for Self-Directed Learning

What it is	How it works	Resources	Time Needed
Cultural Skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal needs are being meet • Cultural identity and personal identity • Role models • Recognize gifts • Express feeling • Cultural communication • Visioning • Career and life path 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flip chart paper and markers • Journal 	ongoing
Workplace and Employment Related Skills:	<p>self direction, determine what knowledge and skills are required in the workplace and design a program curriculum based on the need of learners, employer and community understanding behaviours communication skills (speaking and listening)</p> <p>personal esteem problem-solving lifelong learning teamwork / group collaboration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competencies materials • Personal esteem assessments • Problem solving activities • Team building activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies depending on the activity • Group discussion 15 – 20 minutes • Journal reflection 10 minutes
Culture Based Activities in Communications, Numeracy, and Self-Management:	<p>1. <u>Communications</u></p> <p>Read with Understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Read cultural materials (legends, poetry, plays, and scripts) -Read Aboriginal newspapers and publications for contemporary Aboriginal perspectives -Research Aboriginal culture, language, history, and publications on the Web -Research the history of music, songs, dances, and instruments in Aboriginal cultures <p>dramatizing an Aboriginal legend, story, or historic experience you have read about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Study musical lyrics of contemporary Aboriginal artists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal publications; books, newspapers, magazines, etc • CDs and CD player • Creative materials • Drums, shakers, rattles • Paper, pens, makers • Journals • Flip chart paper • Tape recorder and blank tapes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies • Group discussion 15-20 minutes • Journal reflection 10 minutes

What it is	How it works	Resources	Time Needed
	<p>Write Clearly to Express Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Write a life history paper, poem, or play -Keep and make regular journal entries of thoughts, feelings, experiences, and learning -Articulate changes between traditional and contemporary Aboriginal music <p>Speak and Listen Effectively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Attend a conference or workshop on important Aboriginal issues -Exchange writings or letters with Aboriginal learners in another program -Learn social songs and sing -Listen to music and nature sounds (traditional and contemporary) -Take in a concert or go see a play -Create a broadcast for an Aboriginal radio station -Organize and host a traditional social -Listen to Elders share in the oral tradition -Have discussions and use circles -Build a sweatlodge with the help of an Elder teaching in the oral tradition 		

What it is	How it works	Resources	Time Needed
	<p><u>2. Numeracy</u></p> <p>Number sense and Computation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Trade, commerce and economic development in Aboriginal communities -Systems of counting / counting in Aboriginal languages -Beading and loom work -Traditional calendars <p>Measurement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Traditional calendars (Thirteen Moons) -Building a canoe -Estimation (seasonal concept of time) -Weaving -Sewing, designing and making regalia -Prepare a traditional meal <p>Geometric Problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Traditional and contemporary Aboriginal art work -Drum and rattle making -Circle concept (hoop dancing) -Symbolism (wampum belts, birch bark scrolls, pictographs) -Leather work (clothing) -Dream catchers and Medicine Wheels -Traditional dwellings (longhouse, teepee, wigwam) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beads and looms • Graph paper • Indian corn • Rulers, tape measure • Thread and needles • Fabric • Paint • Leather • Hoops • Peach pits and large bowl 	

What it is	How it works	Resources	Time Needed
	<p>Data Management and Probability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Peach pit and bowl game -Wampum Belts (graphs) -Play lacrosse -Gardening -Hunting and tracking -Study and chart Aboriginal population growth, diabetes statistics, or traditional language use in various communities or regions 		
	<p>3. <u>Self-Management</u> Become a Self-Directed Learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create a portfolio (reflect on your life, your learning, skills, and knowledge) -Tree of Life Food Guide -Medicine Wheel teachings (spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical harmony/ balance, the four races) -Active participation in community events (Powwows, ceremonies) -Dancing -Medicine walks -Substance abuse awareness -Multicultural learning and respect for diversity of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and cultures -Volunteer to support a good cause 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper, pens, pencils, markers, binders or portfolio • Magazines • Journals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies • Group discussion 15-20 minutes • Journal reflection 10 minutes

Chapter Five:

ASSESSING THE SITUATION

Today there is increasing awareness of the importance of including learners in the evaluation process, rather than having it remain mysterious and unexplainable. Evaluation results can provide informative feedback to learners and practitioners. This chapter suggests evaluation techniques to assess skills and knowledge.

Assessing the situation involves recognition that key factors influence the learning process. These include the learner, practitioner, curriculum content, and environment. Learning, in Aboriginal cultures, is a life-long process of awareness and self-actualization. It occurs through a constant cycle of awareness, struggle, building and preservation that are possible in each moment. (Hill, 1995) Evaluation like learning, must be continuously underway and holistic in nature for Aboriginal learners.

Learning is a partnership between the practitioner and the learners established to transfer skills and knowledge. Planning for and conducting an evaluation is a cooperative process that requires the active engagement of both the practitioner and the learners. The actual evaluation procedures should be seen as meaningful to learners as well as the practitioner and be an extension of learning for both.

For learners, it is a cornerstone of self-directed learning; for practitioners it is an indispensable tool for curriculum improvement. Learners assume more responsibility for their decisions and as a result they become more self-confident and assured of their own abilities. Practitioners receive timely information to assess the effectiveness of curriculum delivery and activities.

Literacy practitioners can collaborate with learners to match evaluation techniques to learning, and offer learners choices about the method of evaluation. Evaluation can include a wide variety of activities from observations, to oral reports and discussion, and formal tests. By providing learners with

Key Concepts

- communication and collaboration
- critical thinking and self-reflection
- self-evaluation
- self-esteem
- identifying and documenting skills and knowledge
- key factor in the learning process
- evaluation impact
- gathering data for evaluation
- evaluation activities

regular feedback and discussing evaluation, practitioners can help to reduce the anxiety and frustration Aboriginal learners may experience around assessment.

Self-Evaluation:

Self-evaluation is an on-going concept in Aboriginal cultural philosophy. It supports the autonomy of the individual and emphasizes the value of self-governance within the collective community or culture. Besides demonstrating specific skills and knowledge, self-evaluation allows Aboriginal learners to feel a part of the process not separate from it. It also supports learners in their development of critical thinking and self-reflection strategies.

Whenever possible, it is good practice to include some element of self-evaluation. Learners could evaluate their contribution to the group or they could evaluate a self-directed project and negotiate any discrepancies with the practitioner. Learners can be encouraged to reflect upon their relationships and reciprocity within the group, the use of their gifts, their acceptance toward their purpose in life, and their accountability and ownership over their own learning.

Documenting Skills and Knowledge:

Identifying and documenting skills and knowledge (what one knows and can do) is like gathering medicines for a Medicine Bundle. Documenting our skills and knowledge helps us to remember and reflect on our relationships and experiences, and identify the learning and nuggets of wisdom within. By remembering, revisiting and bringing forward our past learning, we are celebrating who we are. Documenting skills and knowledge can provide learners and practitioners with the opportunity to compare previously acquired competencies with current learning and changes in skill level, attitudes, and feelings related to cultural beliefs and practices.

Gathering Data for Evaluation:

There are many ways that practitioners can gather data for the purpose of evaluation. Learning and reading response journals can assist practitioners and learners in observing progress, or change in skill level, beliefs, attitudes and feelings. Sharing or talking circles, informal presentations, interviews, oral

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examinations, and dialogue provide an opportunity for practitioners to make informal and formal observations of learning and change from oral interaction with learners. Written self-evaluations, journal entries, anecdotal records, multiple choice and short answer tests, and essays all contribute to the collection of data and can be evaluated.

Summary:

Self-evaluation practices in Aboriginal cultures used to sustain balance and harmony can help literacy practitioners and community members facilitate accountability. Collaboration with learners ensures that they are never put on the spot or required to perform before being adequately trained and prepared for the evaluation. The challenge for the literacy practitioner is to evaluate in a manner that is both fair and responsive to the individual needs of learners.

Strategies for Self-Directed Learning

What it is	How it works	Resources	Time Needed
<p>Evaluation Techniques: Benefits to Learners from the use of authentic assessments related to real life experiences.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge-students learn how to uncover knowledge and understanding for themselves. 2.Cooperative Learning-students explore how to compromise and work with others. 3.Greater Accountability-students assume more responsibility for their decisions. 4.Increased Self-Confidence-because students have greater say in their learning, they become assured of their own abilities. 5.Self-Reflection-students examine their own perceptions, and begin to reflect on their own judgments and thoughts. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Learning Response Journals</u> <p>Divide a page (long way) to create two columns. The heading for the first column will be titled Activity and the second column, Learner Response. This gives learners the opportunity to describe their experience and articulate their learning.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 15 – 20 minutes

What it is	How it works	Resources	Time Needed
	<p>2. <u>Reading Response Journals</u></p> <p>Divide a page (long way) to create two columns. The heading for the first column will be titled Quotes from Text and the second column, Learner Response. In the first column learners copy the exact words of the author. This helps learners explore more advanced language and sentence construction. In the second column, the learner records his or her response. The learner should include what those words mean to him or her, if they share a similar experience with the author, how they felt, etc.</p>	<p>Make a reading response journal – paper and cardstock</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response journal 15 - 20 minutes

Resource List

The following list will be helpful to literacy practitioners and community members interested in learning more about Aboriginal literacy, learning, and culture based curriculum.

1. Web-based Aboriginal Literacy Resources:

- Ningwakwe Learning Press www.ningwakwe.on.ca
- National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) www.nald.ca/index/htm
- NALD Literacy Collection, Aboriginal Materials www.nald.ca/CLR/aborigin.htm
- AlphaPlus Centre <http://alphaplus.ca>
- Adult Literacy Resources (Grass Roots Press) www.literacyservices.com
- Centre for Literacy www.nald.ca/litcent.htm
- Laubach Literacy of Canada www.laubach.ca

2. Print-based Aboriginal Literacy and Learning Resources:

Aboriginal Learning Styles

- Ningwakwe Learning Press, Owen Sound, ON. (2002)
- Authors, Michael Johnny and Diane Hill

Vision, Guiding Native Literacy

- Ningwakwe Learning Press, Owen Sound, ON. (1999)
- Author, Priscilla George

Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education, Prior Learning Assessment and its use within Aboriginal Programs of Learning

- First Nations Technical Institute, Tyendinaga Territory, ON. (1995)
- Author, Diane Hill

Culture-Based Curriculum: A Framework

- Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (April 2001)
- Author, Ken Hill

Assessing Adult Learning in Diverse Settings: Current issues and Approaches

- Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco (1997)
- Editors, Amy D. Rose and Meredyth A. Leahy

Iroquois Corn, In a Culture-Based Curriculum, A Framework for Respectfully Teaching about Cultures

- State University of New York Press, Albany (1999)
- Author, Carol Cornelius

Circle Works, Transforming Eurocentric Consciousness

- Fernwood Publishing, Halifax (1998)
- Author, Fyre Jean Graveline

Ten Legends Workbook, Ojibwa and Iroquois Legends

- Ningwakwe Learning Press, Owen Sound, ON. (1998)
- Author, Jim Tole

Education for a Change

- Between the Lines and the Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action, Toronto, ON. (1991)
- Authors; Rick Arnold, Bev Burke, Carl James, D'Arcy Martin and Barc Thomas

Empowering the Spirit: Native Literacy Curriculum

- Ningwakwe Clearing House, Owen Sound, ON. (1997)
- Authors, Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm and Deanna Halonen

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- Cornelius, Carol. Iroquois Corn In a Culture-Based Curriculum, A Framework for Respectfully Teaching about Cultures. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1999.
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- Hill, Ken. Culture-Based Curriculum: A Framework. Owen Sound, Ontario: Ontario Native Literacy Coalition, 2001.
- Littlefield, Roby. Elders in the Classroom. Handbook for Culturally- Responsive Science Curriculum. Pages 15 and 16.
- Stairs, Arlene. Learning Processes and Teaching Roles in Native Education: Cultural Base and Cultural Brokerage. Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue canadienne des langues vivantes 47, 2:280-94, January 1991.
- Western Canadian Protocol Framework for Aboriginal Language and Culture Programs – Kindergarten to Grade 12. Voices of the Elders, June 2000.

Glossary of Terms

Annishinawbe

- Ojibwa
- Original human being

Haudenosaunee

- Iroquois or Six Nations Confederacy
- Building / extending the rafters of the house

Literacy Practitioner

- One who is engaged in the exercise of literacy teaching and learning

Learner

- A person who is open to gain knowledge or skills, acquired by study

Lateral Violence

Lateral Violence is an act of an oppressed people acting out of rage, anger and frustration from being constantly put down. This occurs most often without understanding the cycle of oppression and its impact. Violence is directed laterally at their own people, rather than at the oppressor. Lateral violence can include: gossiping, blaming and putting others down, family feuds, jealousy, and in fighting with a group or community.

Aboriginal

Aboriginal people is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian Constitution (the Constitution Act, 1982) recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples — Indians, Métis and Inuit. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

- **First Nations people**

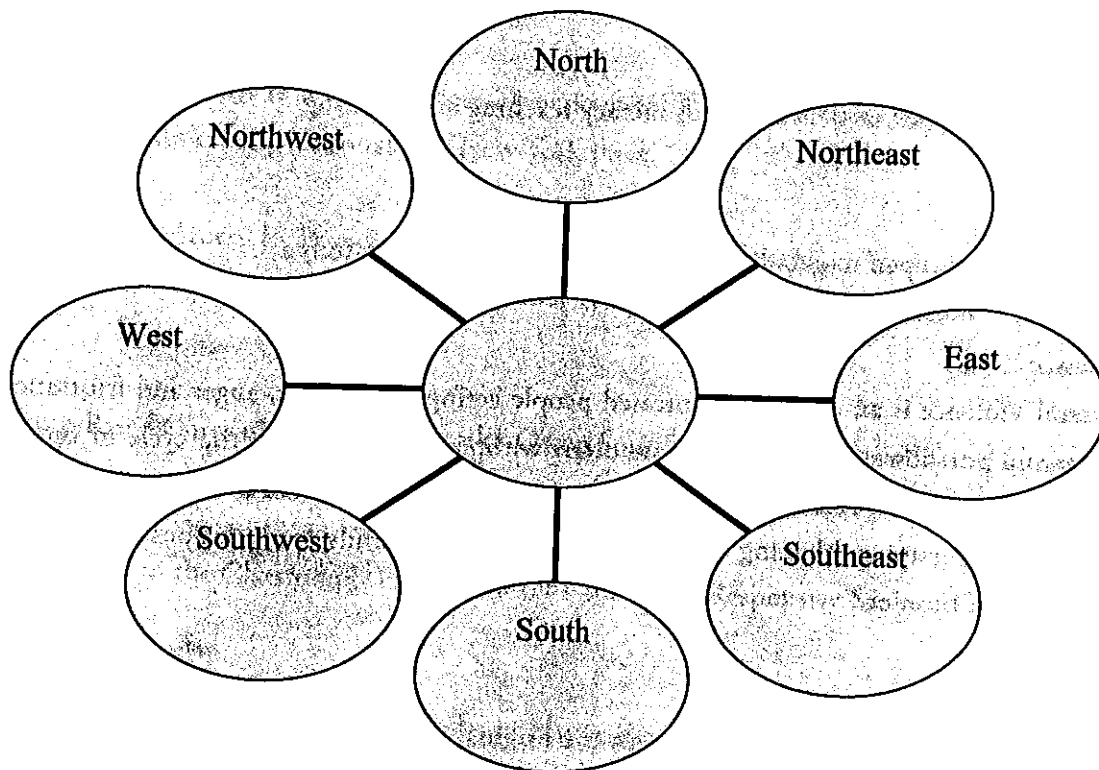
Many people today prefer to be called “First Nations” or “First Nations people” instead of “Indians.” Generally, “First Nations people” is used to describe both Status and Non-Status Indians. The term is not used as a synonym for “Aboriginal peoples” because it usually doesn’t include Inuit or Métis people.

- **Métis**

Historically, the term “Métis” applied to the children of French fur traders and Cree women in the Prairies, and of English and Scottish traders and Dene women in the North. Today, the term is used broadly to describe people with mixed First Nations and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis, distinct from Indian people, Inuit, or non-Aboriginal people. (Many Canadians have mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry, but not all identify themselves as Métis.)

Wheeling Out Exercise

diagram from page 17





This book is a "must read" for anyone working with Aboriginal learners. It outlines, in a clear straight forward way, how to utilize cultural knowledge in the classroom.

By tapping into the full range of human experience, the author provides the tools for helping Aboriginal learners develop and find personal direction.

*Dr. Margaret Sprague -
Ojibway*

Janice's contributions to the design, development and delivery of community-based programs for Aboriginal people continue to reflect her interest in and commitment to Indigenous teaching and learning concepts.

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