Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives and Knowledge Through Storytelling

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It Takes Time

Even after almost ten years, some things just stick with you. In this case, it was one particular item on a list. As a student in England for six months, I had spent my three-week Christmas break traveling to Egypt, London and Northern Ireland. The list demonstrated my newfound knowledge about the differences between the United Kingdom and Egypt. To this day I can't shake this one major difference: the paper towel in England was blue, and the paper towel in Egypt was green. This was quite interesting to me as a twenty-two year old university graduate who had grown up in Canada with brown paper towels in bathrooms. Looking back, I wondered what else had been on that list that I had included in a mass email out to friends and family. After some strategic searching through old emails, I found it. Altogether there were about twenty-five items on my list of other things that I'd observed as a traveller, or that I had simply found interesting because they were different. I highly doubt that if I met someone from either of those places that they would be quick to tell me about the colour of their paper towels. From my experience as a traveller and as a foreigner living in a different culture, the more time I have spent in a place, the better my understanding of that culture. My first three years as a teacher were spent working at a BC Offshore School in China. Despite knowing very little of the language, I learned to get around the city, buy groceries, pay rent, bargain for a good price, make people laugh, and push my way through a crowd. While it is still highly dependent on my own personal experiences, my understanding of Chinese culture by far surpasses that of Egyptian culture. Had I lived in Northern Ireland or Egypt for three years, I have a feeling the list of things that stuck with me would look a bit different than the colour of paper towels.

Purpose of the Research Project

The Task

In my grade 3 classroom I am faced with the challenge of authentically teaching about other cultures. With the recent curriculum changes in British Columbia, the grade three Social Studies curriculum has changed to focus entirely on global indigenous peoples. A major part of this topic is the focus on local aboriginal culture. As a non-aboriginal settler teacher who has not had to directly teach this content before, I felt a little overwhelmed at my lack of knowledge and experience. In addition, a key feature of the new curriculum is the integration of aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum. In the past, efforts to educate about aboriginal knowledge have been from dominant culture rather than the aboriginal voice, creating a lack of real awareness. I understood that the inclusion of aboriginal perspectives was made to move away from stereotypes and narrow visions of First Nations, but I didn't feel qualified or prepared to teach their perspectives. How would I be able to authentically teach perspectives and knowledge that I knew very little about and potentially didn't completely agree with?

The Journey

Growing up in the predominantly white middleclass community of the Central Okanagan in the 1990s, I remember very little of what I learned about aboriginal peoples. I vaguely remember carving an animal out of a bar of soap and getting to sit in a dark dome-shaped shelter at a local museum. My only aboriginal friend was a girl I went to church with who had been adopted into a Caucasian family. There must have been more aboriginal

students at the larger middle school I attended, because there was a special room with an aboriginal teacher where they got to go do fun things.

In high school and university in the 2000's I began to see and hear a little more about aboriginal people around me. The stories I heard in the community weren't always positive, but for the most part, the conversation at university tried to move away from stereotypes. First Nation elders were invited to welcome guests to their land with music, speeches, and prayers at local conferences and special events such as the opening of UBC Okanagan. The few Canadian history and anthropology courses I took as part of my History and Education degrees must have talked about aboriginal peoples, but they didn't provide me with a deep knowledge base to draw on today. Throughout university, however, I did become increasingly more aware of the importance of using politically correct names when talking about aboriginal peoples, even though I wasn't always sure what those were.

Since I began teaching in 2010, I have taught in culturally diverse independent schools in China and Metro Vancouver, but have not had any aboriginal students in my classroom. As a result, when I heard about the new curriculum, I wondered why there was such a big focus on including aboriginal perspectives but not those of other growing multicultural perspectives in Canada such as Chinese, Korean or South Asian. I explored this question in more depth in the first assignment of my Masters program at Simon Fraser University in 2015. This investigation helped me to better understand the historical injustices involving Canadian aboriginal peoples and the importance of teaching today's students aboriginal content. I want to do my best to authentically teach my students about Canada's first peoples, and I have since sought out professional development opportunities in this area. Despite this, I'm still worried at times that I might pass on stereotypes or

incorrect perspectives. As I began to engage in conversations with other teachers about the new aboriginal content, I found I wasn't alone in my questions and feelings, which I explain more later on in my literature review and research data.

The Plan

I needed a way that I could feel more confident that I was authentically teaching aboriginal perspectives. As a Masters student in the Imaginative Education cohort, I naturally thought of using storytelling. The use of stories, to guide and emotionally connect the learner to the curriculum, is at the heart of Kieran Egan's Imaginative Education theory. Egan (2005) believes that

> Story is one of the most powerful cognitive tools students have available for imaginatively engaging with knowledge. Stories shape our emotional understanding of their content. Stories can shape real-world content as well as fictional material (p. 2).

Traditionally, aboriginal knowledge was passed on through oral storytelling, which aligns really well with IE pedagogy. I learned that today aboriginal stories and experiences could increasingly be found as children's picture books. I was eager to utilize this tool as a way to bring an authentic aboriginal voice into my classroom. So eager, in fact, that I collected authentic aboriginal picture books to share with my students as I traveled across Canada this past summer with my brother. I knew I would be teaching a unit about Canada's many diverse aboriginal peoples for the first time, so I wanted a variety of stories to share with my students. I have since heard about many more titles within this genre. This action research report is about my experience using aboriginal picture books in my grade 3 classroom to help me teach students about the diversity of Canada's aboriginal peoples.

Research Question

The central research question that guided my data collection:

- How can I best use authentic aboriginal picture books to help students understand the diversity of Canada's aboriginal peoples?

To answer this question, I felt my research took me down two different paths. First, I wanted to ask my grade 3 colleagues about their thoughts and experiences teaching aboriginal content and using picture books. Second, I looked at what worked best with my own students. I look at both of these areas in my literature review and research. These are sub questions I addressed:

- How do my colleagues feel about teaching aboriginal knowledge and perspectives?
- How are my grade 3 colleagues using aboriginal picture books?
- What should a teacher consider when selecting aboriginal picture books to read?
- What makes an aboriginal picture book "authentic"?
- What do my students already know about the diversity of Canada's aboriginal peoples?
- Do stories help students understand that aboriginal ways of life are connected to the land where they lived?
- What do my students know about Canada's aboriginal peoples' homes, transportation, clothing, and food?
- Can my students identify which cultural area the aboriginal story is from based on the illustrations and descriptions?
- Are my students excited about listening to and reading aboriginal picture books?

Research Context

This action research project takes place in my grade 3 classroom with my students acting as participants. There are twenty-six students in my class consisting of fifteen girls and eleven boys, ten of whom are Caucasian, ten Chinese, four Korean, one Filipino and one Jamaican. There are no aboriginal students that I am aware of in any of the grade 3 classes. My class this year is very active, and I am often feeling behind "getting through" curriculum in comparison to the other grade 3 classes. There are a number of students who need support during unstructured times, but as a class they are overall quite engaged when listening to stories or working towards a prize.

Grade three is part of the Intermediate School building, which is made up of grades three, four and five totaling just over 300 students. The four classroom teachers of each grade level are expected to collaborate in the planning and timing of units and are given time to do so each week. As a result of years of collaboration, there are many well-known projects, activities and theme days at each grade level that students (especially those with older siblings) have come to expect. Due to recent curriculum changes, the unit about Canadian aboriginal peoples has been "taken" from grade four and given to grade three. As grade three teachers we used pieces of these resources for the unit we taught about the Stó:lō people, a local First Nation, before Christmas break, but began from scratch as we taught about the diversity of Canada's aboriginal peoples. Using *The Kids Book of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada* by Diane Silvey, we introduced students to the seven diverse aboriginal cultural regions: Northwest Coast, Plateau, Plains, Arctic, Subarctic, Woodland Iroquois, and Woodland Algonquians. To do this we used one teacher's idea of visiting each cultural

region via the "Amazing Race: First Peoples of Canada Edition" to learn about each people and place. My action research project was set within this unit.

Our school is a large independent Christian school in Metro Vancouver that consists of four divisional buildings enrolling more than 1400 students from pre-kindergarten to grade 12. Enrollment is by application only and parents pay tuition fees for their students to be educated on a foundation of Christian principles. While our school strives to enroll students from many diverse economic and cultural backgrounds, we have very few aboriginal students. At the moment I am only aware of two families at our school with aboriginal backgrounds. Unlike public schools, we do not have aboriginal support workers at our school, but we do have a growing interest among some staff to learn more about aboriginal issues and perspectives – especially in light of the new curriculum. We began this school year with a morning of school-wide professional development about aboriginal history in conversation with some visitors. We are beginning to investigate how we can authentically teach aboriginal knowledge and perspectives through the lens of our Christian worldview. I believe that my action research project is one step in this direction.

Literature Review

A Lack of Knowledge

As I looked for literature that would help me better understand my topic, I found research about teachers' experiences integrating aboriginal knowledge and perspectives in other Canadian provinces and also Australia. Similar to my own experience, a common theme throughout this literature is that non-aboriginal teachers (which are the majority of teachers) do not feel qualified to teach this content because they lack the knowledge and personal experience (Kanu, 2005; Dion, 2007; Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; Scott, 2013; Donald, 2013). In a 2005 study of ten public high school teachers in Manitoba, Kanu describes the biggest challenge for the eight non-aboriginal teachers was "their own lack of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and understanding required for effective integration" (Kanu, p.57). While these teachers were open to integrating aboriginal perspectives, and had even taken some steps to become more familiar with the content, they lacked confidence due to their limited knowledge. Dion (2007), a professor at York University, states that the pre-service and in-service teachers she works with often

> Respond with comments that go something like this "Oh I know nothing, I have no friends who are Aboriginal, I didn't grow up near a reserve, I didn't learn anything in school, I know very little or I know nothing at all about Native people." (p.330)

She has termed this position the "perfect stranger" – denying any knowledge or experience because of "the fear of offending, the fear of introducing controversial subject material, the fear of introducing content that challenges students' understanding of the dominant stories of Canadian history" (Dion, 2007, p.331). Across the ocean in another former British colony, Harrison & Greenfield (2011) write about how Australian "teachers often lament

that they know little about Aboriginal people, while questioning how they can be expected to include Aboriginal perspectives in their programs" (p.65). These researchers even cite Australian literature that suggests that non-aboriginal teachers should not teach Aboriginal content because they continue to perpetuate stereotypes. In some cases, this lack of understanding was portrayed as a resistance to teach aboriginal perspectives. Scott (2013), reports on the resistance of five high school Social Studies teachers in Alberta to include aboriginal perspectives in all issues or events being discussed because they felt it wasn't always relevant. These teachers also felt that there was not one uniform aboriginal perspective, but rather many diverse aboriginal communities with their own unique perspectives. He suggests that "many educators have come to see Aboriginal ways of knowing and being as existing completely outside Euro-Western civilization and therefore unknowable" (Scott, p.35). Overall, whether non-aboriginal teachers welcome or are resistant to integrating aboriginal knowledge and perspectives in their teaching, there is a need for increased knowledge and understanding among teachers.

Teachers can become more familiar with aboriginal content through teacher training and professional development. Both Donald (2013) and Dion (2007) teach education courses about aboriginal perspectives at Canadian universities. Dion's graduate course helps teachers transform their own understandings of aboriginal peoples by helping them challenge and change their assumptions. This process helps teachers address any biases that may influence how they teach aboriginal content. Harrison & Greenfield agree that quality teaching depends on the teacher's own understanding and relationship with aboriginal knowledge. This includes understanding and using the appropriate language when talking about aboriginal peoples. Kanu (2005) suggests that schools should provide

teachers with teaching training and professional development opportunities, in addition to the financial support and release time to go. Harrison & Greenfield note that some Australian teachers from their action research project have received extra training, but in general, teachers want practical ideas of how to include aboriginal perspectives. In conclusion, greater understanding and knowledge of aboriginal issue perspectives is equally as important as the practical ideas and tools that teachers can use.

The Power of Children's Stories

Children's literature and picture books are commonly used in elementary classrooms to teach students about diversity. Studies and articles in support of this strategy began in the 1990s and continue into the 21st century as classrooms in both Canada and the United States have become increasingly diverse. Most of the literature begins by describing the importance of teaching multicultural education and then goes on to explain why stories are an effective method and how to use them. A researcher commonly referred to in the literature is James Banks, professor at the University of Washington and one of the forefathers of multicultural education. Cited by Bainbridge, Pantaleo, & Ellis (1999), Morgan (2009), Suh & Samuel (2011), and McGilp (2014), Banks defines multicultural education as "an idea stating that all students, regardless of the groups to which they belong… should experience education equality in the schools" (as cited in Suh & Samuel, 2011, p.2). Writing in 1999, Canadian researchers Bainbridge, Pantaleo & Ellis found little research had been done about the importance of multicultural stories and refer to the following two studies,

> Abound (1988) suggested that children's attitudes toward diversity tend to stay constant unless altered by life-changing events. More recently however, Wham, Barnhart, and Cook (1996) have demonstrated that

> children who are exposed to multicultural storybook reading… develop the most positive attitudes toward difference (p.184).

Seven year later, Wan (2006), a professor of Education at Ohio University, also cites these two studies in addition to more recent research, which suggests a growing recognition of the importance of teaching diversity using stories. One such piece of research that Wan has included is how "Perini (2002) stresses multicultural children's books have the potential to support diversity in the curriculum and raise consciousness on cultural issues that are ignored in schools" (Wan, 2006, p.141). This is exactly what Wan and other studies go on to do, which supports Suh & Samuel's claim that "the human brain learns from stories" (Suh & Samuel, 2011, p.4). Egan's (2005) IE pedagogy suggests that stories are so effective in teaching because of their emotional engagement.

Wan (2006) explains a thematic storybook approach to teach about diversity. She states "books from different cultures, which represent the same themes, can be used together to teach diversity to children" (p.142). Wan uses Cinderella stories from around the world to teach, "that people of different cultures are more similar than different from each other" (Wan, 2006, p.141). Not only can multicultural stories to be used to point out similarities and differences, but also they can help students "understand why and how each culture behaves, believes or does certain things" (Wan, 2006, p.142).

Morgan (2009), professor of Education at The University of Southern Mississippi, discusses the use of picture book biographies "to help young children develop an understanding of perspectives different than one's own" (p.219). This is referred to as taking multiple perspectives. Morgan continues suggesting that "teachers can begin developing this understanding in children at an early age when using well-written picture book biographies for children which represent people from diverse backgrounds" (Morgan,

2009, p.219). Morgan explains that students prefer these books to be shared as Read-alouds because "teachers often use their voice in special ways to make the characters in a book come to life" (Morgan, 2009, p.221). This is particularly necessary when teaching Primary students who are still developing their literacy skills.

Frieman & Kirmani (1997) suggest "folktales from other cultures give children a window into a new world" (p.39). Frieman tells of how a "diverse group of children treated each other more kindly; talked to each other in respectful tones; played with children who were members of ethnic groups other than their own" (p.39) after hearing and reenacting the stories of two Indian folktales when teaching in Kenya. As a result, the authors promote diverse folktales as "an invaluable tool in bringing together and enriching students of different backgrounds" (Frieman & Kirmani, 1997, p.42).

In addition to describing the rational and method for teaching about diversity, the literature also makes suggestions on how to use multicultural stories to connect with other curriculum. Wan (2006) states "it is not literature alone but the experiences created in response to the literature that determine the power of the stories" (Wan, 2006, p.148). Her suggested response experiences include comparing and contrasting different cultures, discussions, writing a report about the specific culture and creating a map of the world to show where each Cinderella story originated. Kim (2006) encourages using storybooks with these follow-up activities: discussions, art, writing, and role-play. Frieman & Kirmani (1997) encourage the use of diverse folktales accompanied by the learning and sharing student's own family stories through games, music, food, sharing special items from home and the creation of a class book.

The majority of the literature examined also states criteria for selecting multicultural stories and lists recommended books. Suh & Samuel (2011) warns that

> using multicultural literature must be carefully done to avoid promulgating old stereotypes, and teachers must be taught to use authentic criteria to identify accuracy, quality and realistic portrayals of various ethnic groups in their lesson plans (p. 6).

Suh & Samuel includes two detailed lists of criteria for selecting multicultural literature (see Appendix A of Suh & Samuel, 2011, p.8-9). Reese (2007), a Native American teacher, researcher and professor at the University of Illinois, encourages teachers to thoroughly research the books that they read aloud and have available in their classroom libraries as Native Americans have been poorly represented in books in the past. She includes detailed guidelines that can help teachers choose authentic Native American literature to read. Morgan also mentions associations that "regularly publish journals on the education of young children which include articles and book lists" (Morgan, 2009, p.221). Outside of North America, You, Me and Diversity: Picturebooks for Teaching Development and Intercultural Education by Anne M. Dolan is a new resource created in Ireland to help teachers use picture books to teach about intercultural education and global citizenship (McGilp, 2014). As the need to educate students about diversity increases, the resources to use stories as the method are also growing.

Aboriginal Picture Books

Retired teacher-librarian Marilynne Black's (2008) article "Teaching about Aboriginal Canada through Picture Books" was particularly helpful. She points out that picture books are very useful tools to help children learn about aboriginal peoples because "they both tell stories and provide visual information at the same time" (Black, 2008, p.

314). Black gives examples of aboriginal picture books with illustrations that show ways of life (homes, clothing, art, transportation) and resources that are tied to the land and so promote a sense of place. Her article mentions forty-three aboriginal children's books that were available in 2008 and describes a number of teaching activities that teachers might want to use. Included in this book list were two of the books I had purchased as I traveled across Canada. Black's comments about these books helped in the decision-making process as I selected which books to use in my action research project.

Research Methods

When I began planning my action research project I knew I wanted to explore how I could use aboriginal picture books within the context of my Canadian aboriginal peoples unit. Initially, I thought I would use these stories to broadly teach about aboriginal knowledge and perspectives in my classroom; however, that seemed rather difficult to measure. At the recommendation of my professor Michael Derby and critical friend group, I narrowed down my focus to look specifically at using stories to meet one big idea in the Social Studies curriculum. While the use of stories also met many requirements in the English Language Arts curriculum, I decided it was easiest to simply focus on Social Studies content for the purpose of this project. Since my grade 3 colleagues and I had already decided to teach a unit about Canada's diverse aboriginal peoples, I felt it made the most sense to focus on the following big idea:

> People from diverse cultures and societies share some common experiences and aspects of life (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016)

Selecting the Stories

To teach this big idea I decided to select stories from each of the seven cultural regions (Northwest Coast, Plateau, Plains, Arctic, Subarctic, Woodland Iroquois, and Woodland Algonquians) that I could use to introduce each diverse culture. I knew that I probably wouldn't be able to find, or have time to read, this many books since we would be on a race to get through each region. The Amazing Race unit plan that our grade 3 team had created only allowed us to spend two or three days on each region, which already seemed short. However, I knew that planning more was always better than not planning enough, so I aimed high. Focusing strictly on Social Studies content, I wanted to choose picture books with clear descriptions and illustrations so students could see how aboriginal people lived in the past – their homes, food, clothing, transportation, tools and resources (Black, 2008). This also seemed like a manageable way to measure what students would learn from listening to stories since the beliefs and values discussed in each book may differ and be more difficult to compare. I wondered if students could learn facts from stories like they do from nonfiction information books. I also hoped that along the way my students would be able to see how the peoples' ways of life were directly connected to the land, or region, they lived in. For example, the nomadic Plains people lived in teepees made of poles and hides because they followed the migration of the buffalo. I kept all these things in mind as I chose the picture books to use.

Selecting the books I wanted to use took time because I wanted to make sure I had done my research like Reese (2007) advised. I looked for traditional aboriginal stories among the books I had purchased and ones that were available in our school library. I first made sure the story was authentic – that it had been written by an aboriginal author, or at

the very least in consultation with indigenous people. Next, I consulted Strong Nations, an online indigenous bookstore, to see if the book was included in their collection and to read a brief summary. I discovered a number of resources that refer indigenous books, but the Strong Nations website was the most useful because of the volume of their resources.

Authentic Aboriginal Resources:

Strong Nations - www.strongnations.com

First Nations Education Steering Committee - www.fnesc.ca

Eaglecrest Books - www.eaglecrestbooks.com

Theytus Books - www.theytus.com

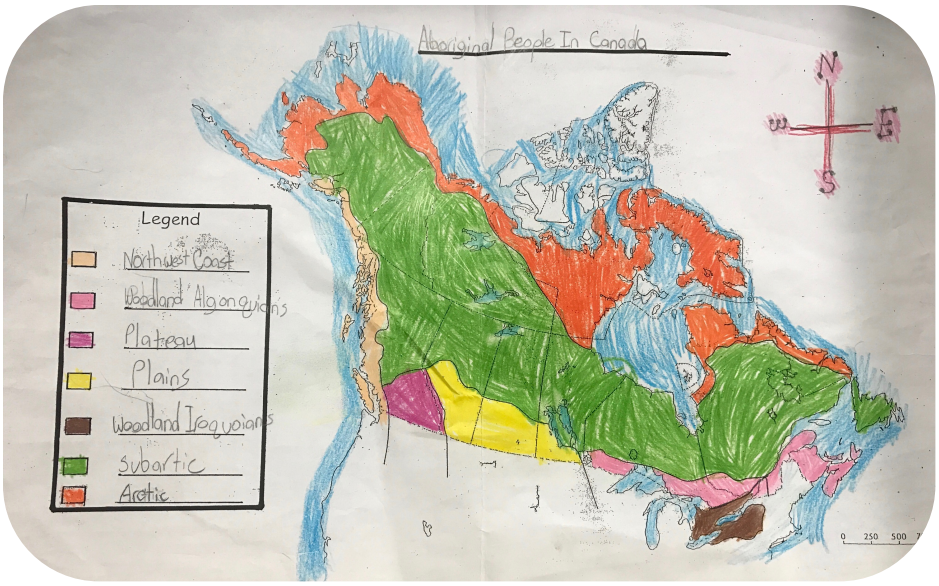
Pemmican Publications - www.pemmicanpublications.ca

In the end I decided on the following books to introduce these five cultural regions:

Plains	Auger, D. (2006). *Mwakwa Talks to the Loon*. Vancouver: Heritage.
Subarctic	Bouchard, D. (2006). *Nokum is My Teacher*. Markham: Red Deer Press.
Arctic	Noah, J. & Giroux, C. (2015). *Our First Caribou Hunt*. Iqaluit: Inhabit Media Incorporated.
Woodland Iroquoians	Robertson, R., & Shannon, D. (2015). *Hiawatha and the Peacemaker*. New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers.
Woodland Algonquians	Roy, R., Sock, S.M., & Mitcham, A. (2012). *The Mighty Gloosecap Transforms Animals and Landscape Mountain*. Moncton: Bouton d'or Acadie.

Collecting the Data

Once the books were selected, I decided to collect data using interviews, document analysis, audio recordings and observations. As part of the Amazing Race, students were introduced to a map of the seven cultural regions aboriginal peoples lived in. This map stayed on the bulletin board for the remainder of the unit for reference. I hoped that seeing a map, and then creating their own, would help students understand the vastness, and possibly some of the features, of the land. This was the activity that preceded my data collection.



I wanted to interview my grade 3 colleagues to learn how they felt about teaching aboriginal content and if they planned on using storytelling. I created a list of six questions (see Appendix B) using some of my research sub questions. Because of my personal experience, and the lack of knowledge felt by teachers in the literature I reviewed, I was curious if my non-aboriginal colleagues felt the same. I gave each teacher a copy of the interview questions in advance so they wouldn't feel surprised. Then I interviewed each teacher individually after school one day, audio recording each one so that I could refer back to it later.

Before I began reading the picture books, I wanted to know what my students already knew about aboriginal ways of life. To do this I created a prediction chart that allowed students to predict the homes, food, clothing, transportation and tools, materials, resources for each of the seven cultural regions (see Appendix C). This seemed to be a good way to hint to students that aboriginal ways of life often differed depending on the region rather than simply asking them what aboriginal houses were like. The chart was printed on 11x17 paper so that students would only have to record on one paper. Since we had already studied the Sto:lo, a Northwest Coast people, I expected that students would find it easy to fill in that column of prediction boxes. Once students had completed their prediction charts, I set them aside to have students reflect back on and then analyze myself.

Next came reading the stories to introduce each cultural region. I created a small booklet for each student to write or draw what they learned about the homes, food, clothing, transportation and tools or resources as they listened to the story (see Appendix D). Before we began reading the first story, *Mwakwa Talks to the Loon*, I spoke with my students about how each people had their own unique and diverse ways of life that we

were going to try to learn about through these stories. As I read, I would pause to ask questions or give students more time to record what they had heard or saw. After reading each story I planned to discuss students' findings altogether and record them on a class chart (also in Appendix D). I took an audio recording of each reading so I could go back and review insightful comments or questions that students had made along the way. I used the recording booklets for the first three stories, and then had students only listen to the fourth story. I quantitatively analyzed students' findings from their recording booklets by placing them in a chart and counting how many times each word was mentioned. I also qualitatively analyzed the data as I identified themes in the audio recordings and the observations taken in my research journal.

After listening to four stories, which was all there was time for in the end, students revisited the prediction sheets they had filled out at the beginning. They used highlighters to outline the Plains, Subarctic, Arctic and Woodland Iroquoians boxes to help them focus on the areas where the four stories came from. To distinguish between the initial prediction and the follow-up, students wrote with blue pens rather than pencils. Students independently completed this follow-up activity somewhat like a test because they were not allowed to use their recording booklets or any other resources to help them. These documents gave me insights on students' final knowledge about how aboriginal peoples lived. It is important to note however, that the stories I selected and read were not the students' only source of learning about aboriginal peoples. The stories were simply an introduction to each cultural group within the context of the Amazing Race unit that focused on reading for information.

Lastly, I was curious about which aboriginal stories my students enjoyed the most. After reading all four stories, I had them identify and write about their favourite aboriginal story. This was another source for document analysis. As I read the students' thoughts about the aboriginal stories I looked for themes among their responses. Unlike my other data-collection methods, this one focused on the students' emotional engagement rather than the information they could gather.

Research Ethics

In order to conduct this action research project in my classroom I had to get permission from both my school and my students' parents. Early in January I gained consent from the head of school and my school principal to move forward with my project. Following that I sent a letter home to get parent permission for their child to participate in the research project. All informed consent letters (see Appendix A) were returned signed. In order to protect the anonymity of participants, the names of teachers and students

involved have been changed. When talking about my students I have simply chosen to identify them as Student 1, Student 2, etc.

Results

Teacher interviews

Teacher Interview with Giana

How prepared do you feel to teach Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives in your classroom?

- *"I don't feel 100% prepared, not even 90, or 80, because I'm still trying to learn and understand it myself. There are a lot of things I learned that I had no idea about. Of course I feel like I could have some bias because of what I've been told, and what I've seen and heard."*
- *"I'm teaching information to my students because I'm told to teach it, but I don't know if it's all true."*
- *"I learned about aboriginals in grade 3, and it's sure not how I'm learning it now, or teaching it now."*
- *"I think it's important to make it as authentic as possible, definitely."*
- *"I want my students to know that [aboriginal people] were here first and they did live off the land and they were wiped out."*

What would help you feel more prepared?

- Taking a course or Pro D to learn more about the big questions and to learn more about their culture
- Wondering who wrote that? (Can it be trusted?)
- Need to be more informed
- *"I need to know what exactly the perspective is."*

What resources are you using to prepare? Or teach with?

- *"The Kids Book of Aboriginal Peoples"*
- Children's stories
- Library books
- *"For the Stó:lō, I just relied on the teachers upstairs and trusted they had the right info – which I think is opinionated in itself."*

How have you used aboriginal children's books?

- *"I haven't used a lot of children's books. I'm finding it as a time constraint. I feel like I*

have to facilitate more for them even to understand who First Nations were rather than telling them storybooks. When in essence, perhaps maybe I should be using more stories because maybe they would learn more from those storybooks, but I haven't used a lot. I have used maybe one or two."

- *"I've used more nonfiction / information books but I'm not even sure if it's true because it was passed down."*

How do you go about choosing a book to use?

- *"I look usually at the date, for sure, because if it is something that was written when I was growing up, then it's going to be very biased information because I know what books were like then."*
- Look at the date (for bias) – pre 2015
- Publisher
- Author
- Meaningful topic that will help students understand First Nations people

What makes an aboriginal book "authentic"?

- Oral tradition story: legends and stories
- *"I feel like the stories that tell a story, or a legend are more authentic"*
- *"It feels like its more authentic when it's an oral tradition story – like how the Coyote stole the moon."*

Giana, who has taught grade 3 at our school for 14 years and who I've worked with the longest, was the first teacher I interviewed. She is the oldest teacher in our grade team and has previously shared about growing up hearing, and still hearing at times, negative stereotypes about aboriginal people. In this interview she expressed not feeling completely prepared to teach aboriginal knowledge and perspectives because she's still learning about it herself. Giana feels she "needs to know what exactly the perspective is," but that is not always clear to her. She acknowledges that she could have some bias as a non-aboriginal teacher, but believes it is important to try to teach the content authentically. Giana admits not using many stories in her teaching thus far because she feels they are a time constraint. At the same time, she also feels "like the stories that tell a story, or a legend are more authentic." When choosing a book, she considers the date it was published, the publisher,

author and whether or not the content is useful to teach her students. I appreciated her idea of looking at the publisher (for bias) because I had not thought of that before.

Teacher Interview with Frank

How prepared do you feel to teach Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives in your classroom?

- *"I feel somewhat prepared. I'm learning a little bit more and solidifying the information I already know so I can make it more exciting and engaging for my students. So, comfortable. I'm not frightened by it. I'm just learning and then passing on the new information to the students."*
- **Do you feel prepared to teach perspectives?** NO
- Visited Missions Fest and focused on learning about First Nations

What would help you feel more prepared?

- *"I wish I'd taught this already. I'm learning this particular First people group for the first time."*
- *"It's a lot of trial and error right now."*

What resources are you using to prepare? Or teach with?

- Mostly the "Aboriginal Peoples in Canada" book
- Some links: FNSC, gov't of Canada, PDFs
- Found some Biblical resources from Missions Fest
- Reading a biography of a Metis-Cree woman
    - an adult story (not a picture book) with very descriptive writing
- Also have a devotion book written by elders
- *"I'm finding out their view, and how they viewed the Protestants coming in."*

How have you used aboriginal children's books?

- Not yet – will use it to introduce each region
- Will use books delivered from library

How do you go about choosing a book to use?

- As it relates to the region
- Given by library
- Look for current publication dates with better perspective
    - Old – 1970s, or even 1980s → "I will tend not to look at that book."

What makes an aboriginal book "authentic"?

- Who provided the info – if the people group had input
- From reliable sources

Frank, who has been teaching for about ten years and is new to our school this year, was the second colleague I interviewed. In the interview he describes feeling somewhat prepared, but not frightened by teaching aboriginal knowledge and perspectives. As many teachers experience, he explains that he's "just learning and then passing on the new information to the students." When asked specifically whether he feels prepared to teach aboriginal perspectives, he admits that he's not. Frank shared about finding some aboriginal resources with a Christian perspective, and while they are not children's books, he feels some parts might be worth sharing with his students. For the most part, he has used these resources to educate himself about the experiences of some aboriginal people. Frank has not yet used any aboriginal children's books in his classroom, but planned to use them to introduce different regions. When selecting one to use, he looks at library books with current publication dates because they have better perspectives, unlike ones from the 1970s and 1980s. To him, an authentic book is one from a reliable source in which the people being written about had input in how the story was told.

Teacher Interview with Holly

How prepared do you feel to teach Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives in your classroom?

- *"For a grade 3 level I feel fairly prepared"*
- Did read a bit
- *"Since it's the first year I've taught this curriculum, I have had to use reference books and stuff, and read through things in order to make sure that I'm teaching at a grade 3 level."*
- **Do you feel prepared to teach perspectives?** NO
- *"Well I feel that's a tricky one because the perspectives you're teaching from are based on someone else's teaching or knowledge. I don't have any first-hand experience really. Living where we do, our understanding isn't as great as it would be in Alberta or an area that has more aboriginals, and so I think perspective is a tricky thing to teach if you're not part of that culture or community or very closely connected."*
- Went on to admit that as a new teacher and with new curriculum, she feels less

prepared (new topic, new curriculum and new school)

What would help you feel more prepared?

- *"Prep time to figure out what's the grade 3 target and teaching towards that"*
- Pro D at the beginning of the year wasn't helpful because it didn't help you teach
- *"It's providing knowledge, but not on how to teach these concepts. It was a great activity, but I won't have used anything from that Pro D for this unit other than my own personal understanding."*
    - She finds specific implementation ideas best in Pro D

What resources are you using to prepare? Or teach with?

- *"The Kids' Aboriginal Peoples of Canada" by Diane Silvey*
- Library books for kids
- *"High school and university courses that have touched on this – but it's very vague and not my primary source"*

How have you used aboriginal children's books?

- Stó:lō unit – *"I read a couple stories – I don't remember which ones"*
- None yet until the end to tie up the unit
- Stories aren't great/best to deliver facts
- *"I probably, truthfully won't use any till the end to wrap it up and be an overarching type thing."*
- **Is there a reason for that?**
- *"I think stories are great and that they have a great purpose for learning, but as far as delivering facts, I don't know if stories are the most, or the best way… stories also take a while to go through and I'd rather use it as a 'break' from something else."*
- Stories take time

How do you go about choosing a book to use?

- Advice from others (eg. Adrienne Gear)
- Referrals from someone I know who's taught it before
- Library

What makes an aboriginal book "authentic"?

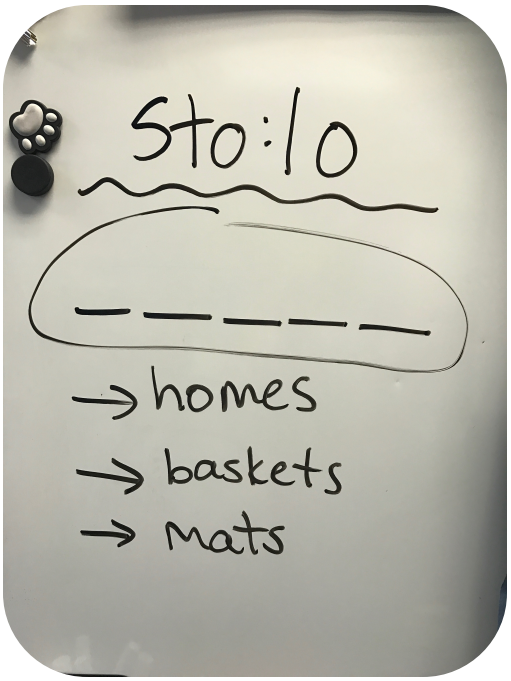
- Written by someone from that community with first hand knowledge from the author (importance of accuracy)
- *"I think stories can be mostly accurate where they're passed down, but I don't know how accurate they are."*
- Christian perspective – how does this work?
- *"We have to teach the Christian perspective, so I think that can take away from the story."*

Holly is also a new teacher to our school this year with one-year experience teaching grade three at another independent school. Though she has read a little and feels fairly prepared to teach this unit, she goes on to say that she's not prepared to teach aboriginal perspectives. She thinks, "Perspective is a tricky thing to teach if you're not part of that culture or community or very closely connected." She thinks more Pro D and preparation time would help her feel more prepared. She specifically appreciates Pro D that gives teachers practical ideas and tools. When asked about using stories she describes, "I think stories are great and that they have a great purpose for learning, but as far as delivering facts, I don't know if stories are the most, or the best way. Stories also take a while to go through and I'd rather use it as a 'break' from something else." Holly used a couple aboriginal stories in our previous Stó:lō unit and thought she would use more as concluding "extra" activities to wrap up the Amazing Race unit. As a new teacher, she relies on the advice of other more experienced teachers when choosing aboriginal books to use. To her, an authentic book is one that was written by someone from that community with first hand knowledge.

In summary, none of my grade three colleagues felt fully prepared to teach aboriginal content. In particular, they (like myself and many in the literature) felt unprepared to teach aboriginal perspectives to students because they weren't their own. Overall, these teachers either hadn't used aboriginal picture books in their classroom, or had used very little to this point. Giana and Holly both mentioned being unsure of the reliability of aboriginal stories because they were passed down orally, as well as expressing concern that stories take time to use. Despite this, all three of my colleagues acknowledged the importance of using authentic stories when choosing an aboriginal book to read.

Prediction Charts

Students were asked to fill in the boxes predicting about how First Peoples of Canada lived using the aboriginal cultural regions map they had created. I explained to students at the carpet what they were about to do and asked them to write words rather than pictures in the boxes. Their ability to focus seemed low at the time and once they returned to their desks they needed further instructions to help them along the way. I reminded students that they were making predictions – or guesses – based on what they already knew about the land, or from our Sto:lo unit, and that if they really couldn't think of anything they could leave the box blank. I told them the Sto:lo were a Northwest Coast people so those boxes should be easy for them to fill in, and I even gave them some hints to remind them of the importance of cedar. As I walked around the room I noticed that a lot of students seems slow to write much down. I had only given them about fifteen minutes to write down their predictions, which clearly didn't seem to be enough time. I wondered if they didn't yet know anything about how aboriginal people lived like I'd expected, or if they were simply overwhelmed. I decided to ask them two questions after they were finished to give me some insights: *How did this make you feel and why?* and *What helped you make these predictions?* Students wrote their answers on the prediction sheet before I collected them. Their very interesting answers, with corrected spelling are written here:



How did this make you feel and why?

- I feel annoyed because I don't like this!!!!!!
- I felt stressed with it because I don't know about first people
- This made me feel disgusted because about the salted meat and the fish scale clothes
- It makes me feel very curious because I want to know more about them
- I feel sad because I don't get this
- I feel good doing this because I like research and I like learning new things about first nations
- I feel sad because they don't have phones
- It makes me feel very difficult because it is very hard for me
- I feel excited because I love studying about first nations people and the Sto:lo peoples
- Fun and happy because its fun searching the map and writing stuff. Happy because I can write so much
- This makes me feel creative because I imagine that I am in that time period
- This activity makes me feel excited because I like learning about first nations and reading books
- I feel happy doing this work cause it is fun knowing the Sto:lo peoples
- This makes me feel glad
- I feel like my dream being a researcher, and excited because I can study the world
- I feel stressed because I can't remember
- I feel like I didn't get a lot of predictions
- I feel confident because I know a lot about back then
- I feel good because I can learn more about the places of Canada
- I feel excited because I like writing and reading. I feel good because its is a project
- It is a bit tricky, but it makes me feel smart and a bit anxious to finish. I like finishing things fast and getting them out of the way
- I feel bad and good because I do not like to travel but I love all places when we get there
- I feel sad and bored cause I don't know a lot about first people. I also feel happy because I learn more about first people
- I feel just happy cause this is cool by telling everything that tells me Sto:lo peoples

What helped you make these predictions?

- I can't predict the houses because there's not much lakes and not much trees either
- It helped me because I know about it
- The map helped me make predictions
- Learning about different landscapes helped me make my predictions
- This did not help me because I don't get this

- What helped me make predictions is that I know a lot about the Sto:lo people so it'll be easy to do the other areas
- What helped me to predict was a book
- What helped me was I knew what they did cause I learned it and what didn't help me was nothing
- Studying really hard about first nations and Sto:lo peoples helped me predict about the field trip that we went on helped me too
- What helped me is that the map shows me the name of it so I know the terrain like Arctic it is snowy
- What helped me make these predictions was the map that we made
- I made a lot of predictions because learning about the Sto:lo helped me
- It helped because Sto:lo do not have the stuff what we have
- Because we can see the answers at the end
- My forgetful brain made empty boxes
- I didn't get a lot of predictions
- I looked at the books because it had places
- Because we can learn more
- It was my brain and my map that helped me
- My map that we made helped me. The key and the main part too. Also our Sto:lo research helped. It was hard though because it was a while ago
- By the weather and how big
- They live near water. They have lots of wood, etc
- I did help me by thinking about Sto:lo nations
- It was my memory helping me

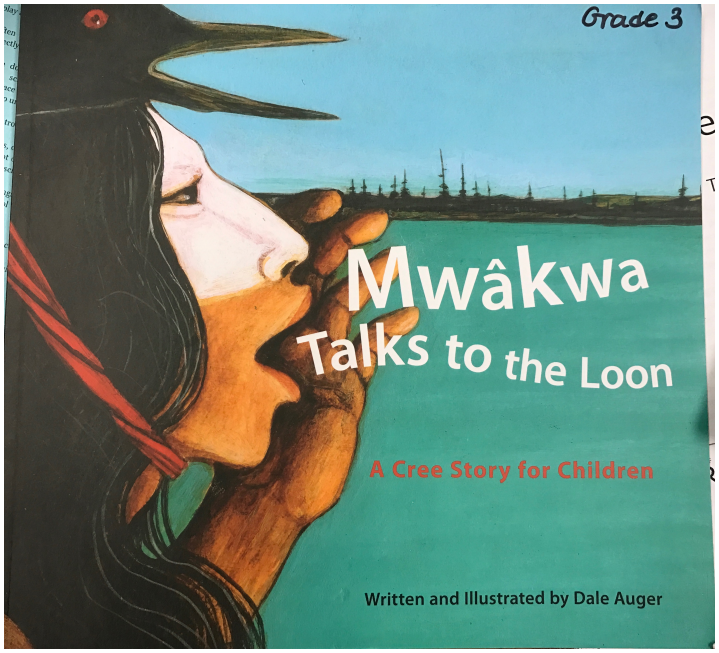
I was eager to review students' thoughts and predictions. At first glance I wasn't too surprised who had written a lot and who had very few predictions. Most all of the class was able to write some information in the Northwest Coast boxes, and about a third of the class put detailed notes in that section. As expected, most students didn't seem to know many details of how other aboriginal people in Canada lived yet. However, many students did predict that people living in the Arctic would live in igloos. It probably helped that we had missed three days of school the week before for snow days. Despite the overall lack of knowledge, I was pleased to discover that more than half my students felt good, happy or even excited making predictions. It was interesting to see how some of them were able to

draw on what they'd learned earlier in the year about landscapes the Sto:lo people, and while creating their map.

Stories

I describe the four stories I read with my class in the following sections. The transcript for each story is from the audio recordings that were taken as I read the story and facilitated discussion afterwards. I have included my voice and the questions that I asked students along the way (in bold), student responses (in italics), and some narrative of what else happened (regular font). Discussion of the results comes afterwards. Students were taking notes during the first three stories.

Story 1: Mwakwa Talks to the Loon



Mwakwa Talks to the Loon is a story by artist and storyteller Dale Auger about a young Cree man named Kayas who loses his gift to hunt because he gets caught up in listening to the praises of other people. The story tells of his journey learning to hunt again with the help of the Elders and the Beings that live in the water. The book is about Kayas learning the lesson to give thanks to the living creatures that give themselves to him and his people to have food. It is the winner of the Aboriginal Children's Book of the Year Award in 2006.

Story 1: Mwakwa Talks to the Loon

What do you notice about the land?

It's very important that we pay attention to the land.

Keep it in mind because it will affect your other answers.

It's a different language – that's why I have a hard time saying it.
I stopped trying to pronounce the words because I hadn't practiced in advance

Look at the picture. Which boxes did you find something for?
Lots of chatter about what they find – students were good reporters
I often referred them to look at the pictures.
Student 16: (making predictions and very eager)
Student 2: "do they all have long hair?"
I don't know. You can look at the pictures and we can find out.
You make a guess based on what you think and know

I emphasized and repeated words at times. eg. Birch bark baskets
Students eagerly calling out "teepee" when they saw it
Discussed that the land in this story could be plains or subarctic
I encouraged students to make connections to other regions if it looked similar

Why do you think Kayas lost his way?

"Water beings" – what does this mean?
Student: Fish
I pointed out they are fresh water fish because these people not near the ocean. Referred to the Canada map and the map students created.
The fish give themselves to the people. What do you think it means that they've given themselves?
Student 1: they let themselves be caught. They sacrificed themselves.
What does that mean they must do?
Student 1: they die.
Do you know anyone else who's done this?
Student 1: Moses sacrificed animals
Student 23: Jesus on the cross
What's another name for the old ones?
Student: the elders
Make sure you record everything you see.
What does it mean by beings?
Student: animals

Student 10: no one got the most obvious thing – water
Students are interested in the Cree words.

Hold up your boards so I can see how much you've done.
What in the story seems different and makes you think?
Student 5: they treat the animals like humans because they call them beings
Student: talking to animals
Student 1: there are different spirits, but there is only one spirit – the Holy Spirit. It seems weird that they're worshipping the animal spirits. They treated them like humans.
I commented on how this shows us how important animals were to them.

Students were starting to get pretty tired of sitting at about 29 minutes. The last 5 minutes of discussion were difficult to maintain focus.

What do we have in common with them?
Student: we worship something
Student: we honor elders
What's different from the Plateau people?
Student: birch wood, not cedar

We reviewed this story aloud at a later date before we read the next story
I emphasized that I only wanted students to tell me what they'd written down in their booklet.

What lessons did we learn in this story?
Student 1: the importance of fish
Student 5: don't be proud
Student 9: the importance of their voices because Mwakwa needs it to call to the loon

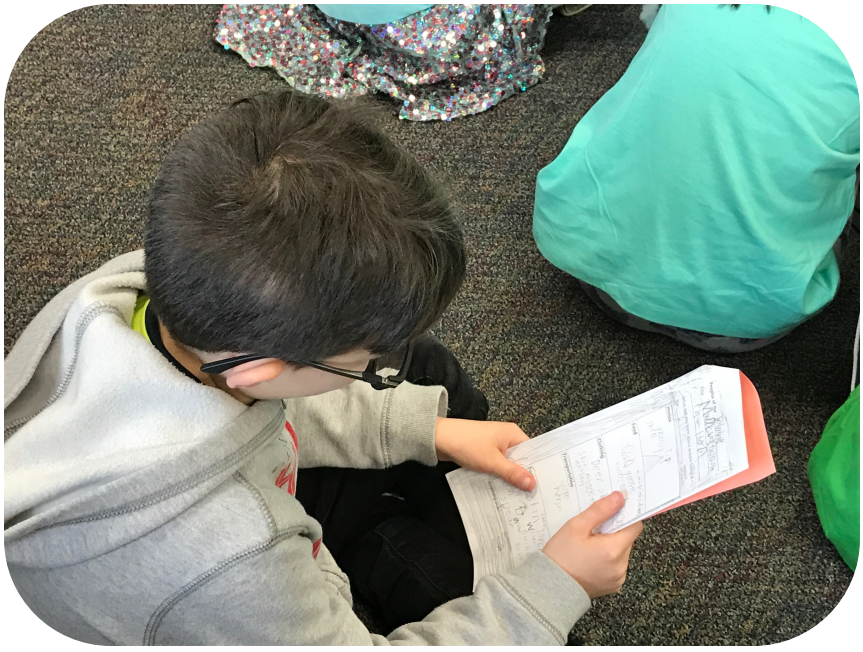
What's missing if this is a Plains story?
Student: Buffalo

This story was used to introduce aboriginal people who lived in the Plains cultural region. As this was the first story I read to my class, I made sure to frequently remind students along the way to record things they saw or heard about how Cree people lived. The story has some fantastic detailed pictures that include the flat green land, teepees, animal skin clothing, and some tools they used. Students were eager to record what they found and wanted to talk and share their answers with each other. They questioned why

there were no buffalo in the pictures, which they had already learned was an important resource in the Plains region. Throughout the story my students were very curious about the Cree words that were included.

The story started a good conversation with my class about aboriginal peoples' relationship with, and perspective of, animals. When the author describes the fish giving themselves to the people, my students were quick to understand that this meant they were allowing themselves to be caught or sacrificed for the people and in doing so that they would die. They made connections to stories they had heard in the Bible where animals, and then later Jesus, were sacrificed for peoples' sins so that others might live. One student pointed out that these people prayed to and worshipped many animal spirits, and how that was different from what he had been taught and believed there being just one Holy Spirit. We discussed how this shows us how important animals were to Cree people.

With all the stops along the way to record and discuss the story, the book took almost half and hour to read, causing most students to be pretty tired of sitting. As a result, I decided to save the group discussion about our results for another day.



Story 2: Our First Caribou Hunt

Our First Caribou Hunt is a modern story by Jennifer Noah and Chris Giroux about two Inuit children, Nutaraq and Simonie, who go on their first hunting trip with their father. They travel on a snowmobile and sleep in an igloo as they hunt for caribou and fish for arctic char. Throughout the story the authors teach about traditional Inuit values about the treatment of animals.

Story 2: Our First Caribou Hunt

Guess which region this book is from.
Most everyone thought the Arctic region because of the snow, ice, parka and hills on the front cover

"Before contact" – I briefly explained this meant before settlers came to create what is now Canada and the United States
I explained how this story is modern

Pay attention, like detectives, for what's "modern" and what's not in this story
Remember to use your special glasses or lenses for what's modern and what's not

Would you like to sleep in a tent on the snow?

Student: what are resources?
Things they use from the land
Student 17: I've got so much!

Listen carefully to this part.
I continue to emphasize key words
Again, it was hard to read the words in the other language

"Invite the caribou to give themselves." What does this remind you of?
Student: the fish sacrifice from the last book
Student: Jesus!
Student 1: they had guns? **(Remember, this is a modern story.)**
Student 1: like God
Student 23: they prayed to the animals before they gave their life
Student 9: like we pray to God in the morning or before we eat

Who are they thanking?
Student 9: they're thanking the animals

You can take your notes as you listen.
"Today we are jigging for igaluk"
Student 1: what's igaluk?
Student 23: fish – because you can see the bag and it's only big enough for fish

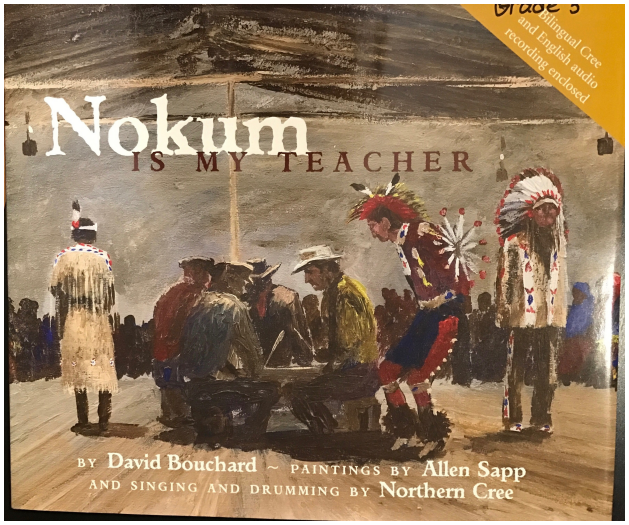
It says they used all parts of the animal. Who else did that?
Student 23: the Buffalo!

We're going to review the story. Let's be very fast!

Before even reading, students showed a basic understanding of the far north by easily predicting this story was from the Arctic region. I explained to students that this was a modern story, so they needed to carefully think about how Inuit people may have lived in the past. As part of this introduction I used the term "before contact" with my class as I tried to explain that we wanted to learn about how the Inuit lived before Europeans came. While the clothing and transportation (snowmobile) are modern, the characters make and sleep in an igloo and hunt for animals like their ancestors did (minus the rifles of course). Like the previous story, the authors talk about how animals give themselves to the people and how it is important for Inuit hunter to give thanks back to them. This time students were able to make connections to the Cree people in *Mwakwa Talks to the Loon* as well as to the Bible.

Before reading this story we reviewed our notes and the lessons learned from the previous story and I recorded them on a group chart. After that, students sat for another forty minutes as we read *Our First Caribou Hunt.* It took much longer than anticipated and other students or the materials they were using were distracting for many students. I too was getting a little anxious to finish because adult helpers had come into our classroom and were waiting at the back for us to finish. As a result, I decided to make sure the next stories and discussions did not last that long.

Story 3: Nokum is my Teacher



This story, by former teacher, principal and now award-winning author David Bouchard, is about an aboriginal boy having a conversation with his Nokum, or grandmother. The story is written in both English and Cree as the boy asks his Nokum why he needs to go to school and learn to read. He would rather learn the traditional ways through stories, songs, drumming and singing. Though the boy's Nokum did not go to school, she understands it is important her grandson to learn to read in this new world. By the end of the story the boy is convinced and determined to learn to read at school.

Story 3: Nokum is my Teacher Student listened to the audio recording that came along with the book. I paused it at points to ask questions and give students time to look at the pictures.

What do you think Nokum means?
Student 10: teacher
Student: grandmother

What do you think it means by 'the white world is meant for me'?
Student: Europeans

Who is this boy talking to his grandmother? Is he also in the white world?
Student: no
Student 7: he's one of the First Nations people
On the back of the book it says it's by the Northern Cree – a group that lives in the Subarctic area. So this story is about a boy talking to his grandmother.

Student 1: that's not their culture though…. but that's in the prairies
Maybe I got the books mixed up
Student 1: is it Subarctic though?
Write what you see. I think it's subarctic…
I explained how I put it in the subarctic category because the back of the book says its from the Northern Cree.
There was a lot of talk among students about whether this story is from the Subarctic region or the Plains region because there are Buffalo in the pictures
Student 1: it's sort of in the Plains though because of Manitoba and Saskatchewan

Cree singing heard on the CD
Student 10: he's horrible! You're horrible! (talking about the singing)
I stopped the CD as the students were discussing amongst themselves.
I noticed I heard a comment made. Student 10, your comment saying, "the singing is horrible" – is that the kind of thing that would be kind to say to anyone?
Student: no
Remember, did they have pianos? Did they have guitars?
Students: no
Did they have instruments that people play now?
Students: No
Student 9: they had drums
They had drums and their voices.
Discussed that they used different instruments – mostly drums.

Time ran into lunch so we came back to discuss the book later in the afternoon.

We have to review what we heard in the story.
Who are the characters?
Student 12: boy and grandmother
What was the boy asking his grandmother?
Student 5: why he had to go to the white peoples' school

Did the grandmother go to that type of school?
Student 1: no
What was the clue that she didn't go to that school?
Student 13: she doesn't know how to read

How did first people pass on their stories, and history and information?
Student 10: by drums and music
Student 7: storytelling
Student: you didn't need to read
You're right, they passed them on through storytelling. So, do you think you'd need to know how to read?
Student 9: no
But, do you think it's now important for the boy to know how to read now?
Student 21: yes, because if you can't read you don't know anything
Does anyone else think if you can't read you don't know anything?
Student 16: No, it's not like that. You know how stories are like passed down generation to generation? Well, when it gets to him he won't know how to read it to them.
But remember, what type of story is it? In an oral tradition you don't need to know how to read, so they were able to pass them on.
But now, is life the same? Do these picture look like long ago before Europeans arrived?
Students: yes
Ok, but do all the pictures look like long ago? Identify the differences between the pictures.
Student 23: no
Student 7: houses

Student 9: sometimes if you don't read books you don't know how to write

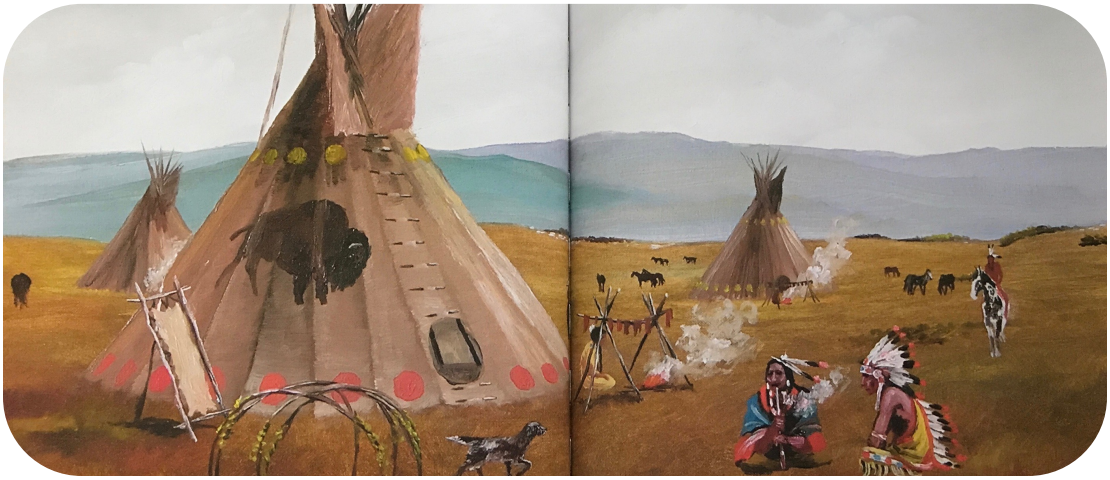
Referred back to Student 1's comment about the story being in the Plains region instead of the Subarctic region.
What made you think it's the Plains region?
Student 3: flat land
Student 23: teepee and buffalo
Student 19: deer,
Answers taken by asking random students "by surprise"
Tell me something I don't have already. Which category does it fit in?
Some people were very eager. Continued asking randomly – this worked best so far.
Student: I was going to say that!

Looked back at the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada book sections: Peoples of the Plains and Peoples of the Subarctic

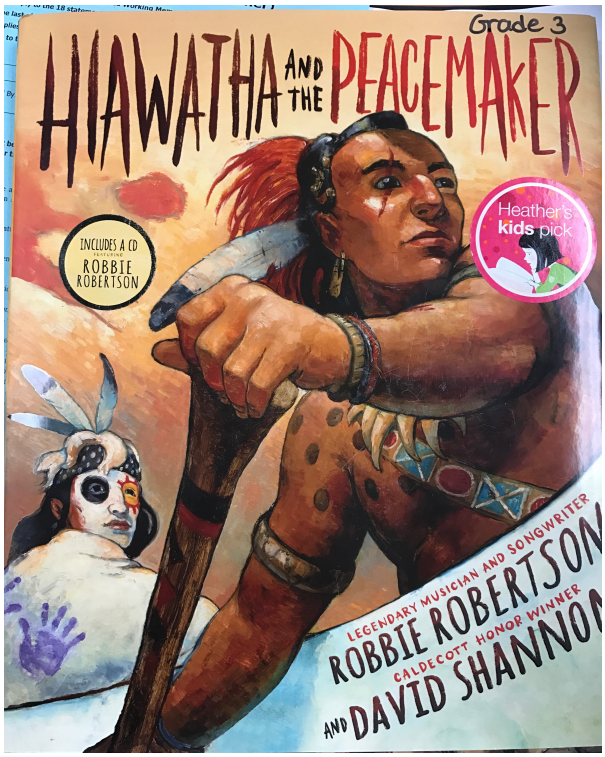
Which story do you think best showed the Plains people? Nokum is my Teacher OR Mwakwa Talks to the Loon?
Discussion followed

Students got to listen to *Nokum is my Teacher* being read aloud by the author from an audio recording that included singing and drumming by the Northern Cree. This was a unique experience that allowed students to hear Cree voices and music, and later some of their language as well. It provided the opportunity to talk about appropriate and respectful language to use when describing other peoples' cultural practices that students may find surprising or different at first. Students were encouraged to think about the resources that aboriginal people used to create musical instruments, such as drums, that were found on the land they lived in.

The detailed pictures in this book really got students thinking about the land the Cree lived on. As I told students that the music is by the Northern Cree who live in the subarctic area, one student in particular was quick to speak up. Based on the teepees, feathers and buffalo that he saw in the pictures, he thought that this story fit into the plains region instead. This sparked a discussion amongst the class that continued even after the story was finished. We later used *The Kids Book of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada* to learn more about where Cree people live. It turns out there are many Cree peoples who cover a vast area which includes the subarctic and plains regions. I was encouraged to see that students were able to make connections to which land an aboriginal people lived on based on their ways of life (living in a teepee) or the resources (buffalo) they are using.



Story 4: Hiawatha and the Peacemaker



Hiawatha and the Peacemaker is a book by legendary musician and songwriter Robbie Robertson who heard this oral story as a young boy from an elder. It is about a Mohawk man who wants revenge after his family has been killed and village destroyed in a battle. Instead, he meets the Peacemaker who convinces him that only forgiveness can bring healing and that fighting among their people must stop. The story is about Hiawatha and the Peacemaker's journey to spread the message of peace, power and righteousness to each of the six nations, which later became united as the Six Nation Iroquois Confederacy.

Story 4: Hiawatha and the Peacemaker

This is a First Nations story. What did we learn about first peoples from the other books?
Student 1: they learned by stories
Student 20: they told how things happened through an oral tradition
So they didn't actually pass a physical book along, they told the story out loud. These stories I read to you were ones that were all stories that were passed down – other than maybe the Caribou Hunt one. Now, can most first peoples read now? They also live in cities, towns, and houses like us now. They don't live in longhouses and teepees anymore because the world has changed. They know how to read and write and they wrote these stories now.
Explained some examples of different first people groups, and discussed some specific names (Inuit, Cree, etc)

This time we're going to do something a bit different. We're going to listen and not write.
Students: yay!

Listen to the story really carefully. Also, think about which people group you think this group might be from.
Student: woodland!

You have trained your eyes and ears lately to gather information from the story. You don't need to write anything down, but as you listen enjoy the story and still see what information you can gather.

Student 23: stone? That would sink! How can a stone
Student 10: I know one thing. This is a false story. This is a transform story.

Student: Mohawk!

Does he look like a peacemaker to you?
Students: No!
What does he look like?
Student: fighter
Student: warrior
Student 1: a ghost or something
Student 20: people who come to kill everyone
Student 7: someone who would be telling stories
Student 15: he does look like someone who would be telling stories because he's wearing a costume or something
Student 19: he kind of looks lonely sometime

Think about any thoughts or connections that you might have so far.
Students shared predictions and connections to other stories.

Can anyone think of another people that carried this message of peace rather than war, love rather than hate, or unity rather than fear?
Student 7: Christians, because Jesus said we should love our enemies

When I read this story the first time it reminded me of something.
Student 3: Oh! Oh! Oh! Zacheus when he got to see Jesus
Student 16: you said you saw kids climbing a tree and this is someone climbing a tree
Student 15: it reminds me of God because he'll lift you up into heaven
Student 1: when Jesus saved the three men in the fire. I thought of them because they trusted God and he saved them.
Student 19: it kinda reminds me of God because God is a peacemaker

Students gasping as they listen
Student 25: the three women who came represent the women who came to wash Jesus' body
Student 18: the cross that Jesus died of was made of a tree
This is a first peoples story.

Student 9: this is a Christian story too

Students: oooooo (at the picture)
Student: Medusa!
Student: Satan!
Student 16: that's Satan. That's obviously Satan.
Why is it so obvious?
Student 16: because of the snakes
Student 23: he turned into a snake for a disguise

Student 20: that reminds me of one of my memory verses that I read in my Bible.
Anyone else find anything that made them go wow?!

Student 23: I read in a book about something like this – that Satan was in a disguise in snake form. That's why lots of us are thinking it's Satan.
I hear lots of comments saying that this must be a Christian story, but remember, this is a First Nation story. How would they have had these stories? Just wonder.

Student: the tree of life!

Even though this story is longer and had to be read over two sittings (20 minutes before lunch and 30 minutes afterwards), I had a very captive audience. Students were glad to take a break from writing notes and look at the brightly coloured illustrations instead. Together, the text and illustrations gave a powerful picture of good and evil, peace and fighting. Throughout the story students expressed many connections to other stories, most of which were from the Bible once again. They were excited to share their comments and predict what would happen next with the six nations. The next day students also read about the Six Nation Iroquois Confederacy in *The Kids Book of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada* as part of the Amazing Race, but I don't think they were nearly as engaged as they were during this story.

Data Collection Chart: Story Reporting Booklets

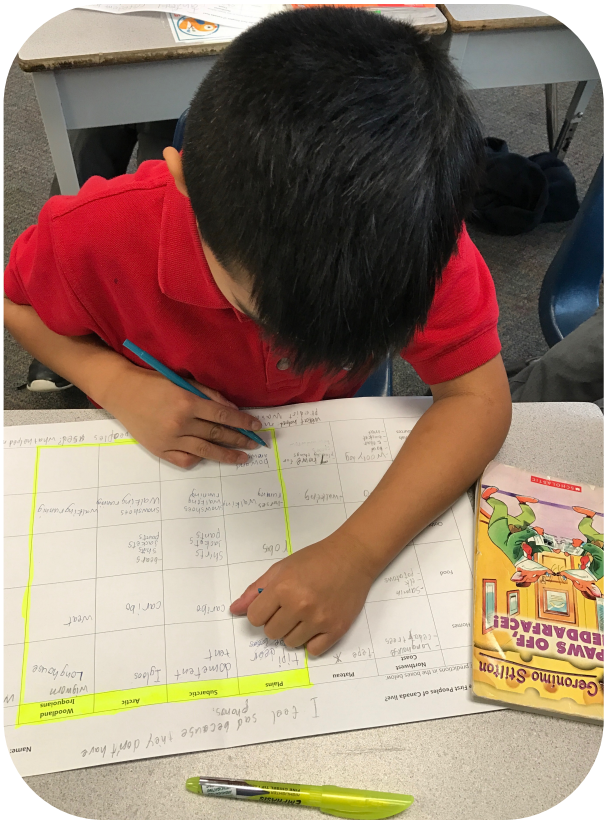
After reading, I reviewed the reporting booklets that students wrote in while listening to the first three stories. Student's answers have been written in the chart below where the number in brackets indicates how many students put that as an answer. The most popular answers (in blue) accurately reflect the pictures and descriptions in the stories that were read. This suggests to me that the majority of students were able to easily identify basic ways of life of the aboriginal peoples in the stories.

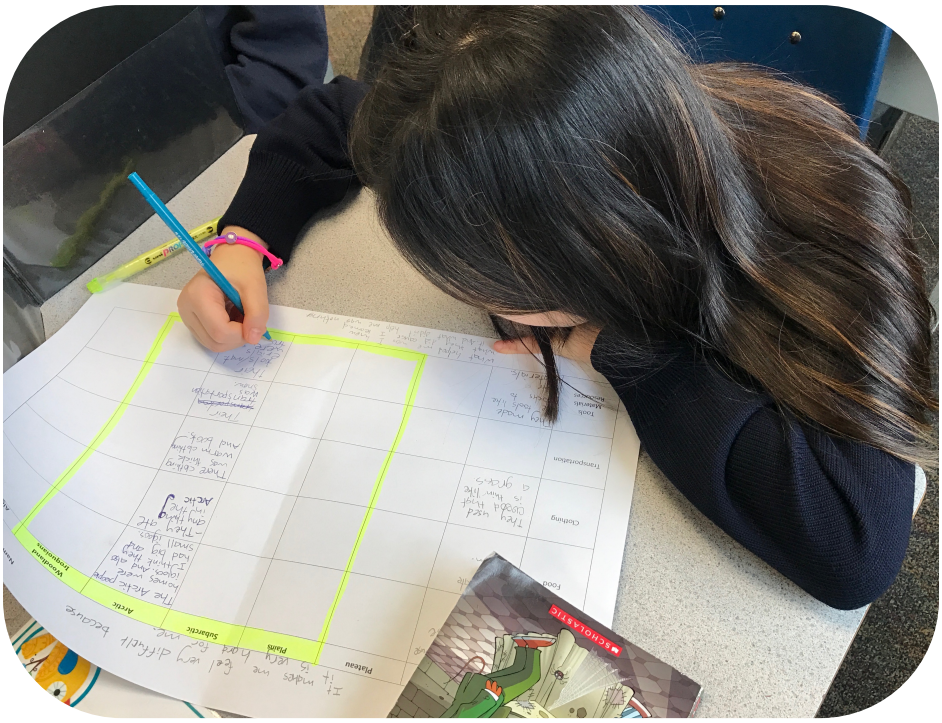
	Mwakwa Talks to the Loon (Plains/Subarctic?)	**Our First Caribou Hunt (Arctic)**	**Nokum is my Teacher (Subarctic/Plains?)**
Homes	Teepee (23) Lodge (22) Tents (3) Fire inside (2) Longhouse (2) Birch trees (1) Pit house (1)	Igloo (24) Tent (20) - canvas Snow house (8) Modern house (3) Shack (1) Teepee (1)	Teepee (20) Wooden houses (9) School (7) Tents (6) Church (4) Cabins (3) Tents (3) Igloos (3) Log house (1) Lodge (1)
Food	Moose (22) Fish (20) Salmon (13) Geese (13) Loon (13) Deer (5) Birds / winged ones (4) Apple (1) Buffalo (1) Berries (1)	Caribou (24) Fish/Arctic Char (23) Fox (3) Snow ice (1) Deer (1) Steak (1)	Deer (18) Buffalo (18) Fish (4) Wolf (4) Birds (3) Horse (2) Fox (2) Elk (2) Hay (1) Eagle (1) Bear (1) Wild dogs (1) Coyote (1) Caribou (1) Horses (1) Rabbit (1)
Clothing	Animal skins (11)	Animal skins (13)	Bird feathers (16)

	Moose skin (7) Bird feather (7) Goat wool (7) Deer hide/skin (6) Antlers (5) Bark (5) Drew picture (4) Sinew/animal string (4) Fish scales/skin (3) Furs (2) Moccasins (1)	Jacket (11) Furs (8) Polar bear fur/skin (4) Pants (4) Mittens (3) Hat (3) Wool (3) Boots (2) Blanket (2)	Animal skin (16) Jacket (4) Fur (4) Hats (4) Jackets (3) Pants (3) Deer antlers (1) Grass (1) Shoes (1)
Transportation	Canoe (25) Walking (14) Toboggan (10) Swimming (4) Horse (3) Snowshoe (2)	Sled / toboggan (18) Snowmobiles (12) Walking (5) Snowshoe (1)	Sled / Toboggan (12) Horse wagon (10) Horses (6) Dog sled (5) Sleigh (4) Dogs (3) Car (3) Walking (2) Canoe (1)
Tools/Resources	Bow/Arrow (23) Birch bark baskets (18) Drums (9) Spears (8) Drying racks (4) Mats (3) Animal skins (3) Bowls (2) Moose antlers (2) Water (2) Cedar (2) Antlers/fur for hats (1) Ropes (1) Nets (1) Grass (1) Northern lights (1)	Rifle / gun (15) Skins (14) Snow knife (12) Bones (11) Lanterns (8) Antlers / horns (6) Stove (3) Caribou (3) Arrow (3) Bags (3) Snow (2) Ice (2) Sinew (2) Wool (1) Bucket (1) Fire (1) Dogs (1) Rope (1) Sleeping bags (1)	Drums (15) Bow and arrow (9) Wood (7) Hockey sticks (6) Buckets (5) Fire (4) Hammock (4) Candle (3) Mats (2) Books (2) Horses (2) Horns / antlers (2) Trees (1) Hay (1) Sinew (1) Beds (1) Rope (1) Lamp (1) Drying rack (1) Pot (1) Bowl (1) Buffalo (1)

Prediction Charts revisited

This time students seemed much more confident and comfortable to fill in the boxes of the chart to demonstrate what they learned about different aboriginal peoples. I think it probably helped that they were excited to write with a pen and that they had less boxes to fill in this time. Most students were able to completely answer each section even if they guessed for some answers. Overall, sixteen out of twenty-six students' answers were mostly accurate based on the stories we read.





Favourite Story Writing

On the same day I finished reading the fourth story, I had students choose and write about their favourite story we had read and why. In first place by a long shot was *Hiawatha and the Peacemaker* with 18 votes, and then came *Mwakwa Talk to the Loon* with 3 votes and last *Our First Caribou Hunt* with 2 votes. I wondered if *Hiawatha and the Peacemaker* was such a popular choice because it was most recent in their minds, or because they didn't have to take notes while listening. Student 1 confirmed my one suspicion when he writes "the other stories were boring because it wasn't fun to write and read." Students mentioned a variety of things about the story that they found interesting, (the stone canoe, Tadodaho's healing from snakes and scales, the peacemaker's appearance, the illustrations), but the most popular reasons were connections that students made to the Bible. In fact, half of class wrote about how it seemed like a Christian story because of the values that were being taught, the Christ-like character of the Peacemaker, or another Bible story or character it reminded them of.

Conclusions

As teachers begin to integrate aboriginal knowledge and perspectives into their teaching, I think that pictures books are valuable tools they can use. My interviews with my grade three colleagues and the literature I reviewed both show a lack of confidence for many teachers when it comes to teaching aboriginal perspectives. Reading authentic aboriginal children's books can introduce some of these perspectives to students as they did in my own classroom. An example of this is the discussion that arose about how aboriginal people treat animals while reading *Mwakwa Talks to the Loon* and *Our First*

Caribou Hunt. Whether or not a teacher's beliefs and values, or those of their school, match those presented in the stories, the classroom is always a great place to try to better understand another's perspective.

In my action research project I practiced using stories to help my students learn. I set out hoping my students would learn information about how different aboriginal peoples in Canada lived in order to meet one big idea in the Social Studies curriculum. A couple areas of my research show students starting to recognize some of these differences. My data collection chart suggests that the majority of students could identify what type of home, or food, each aboriginal people used while listening to the story. The discussion about whether or not the story *Nokum is my Teacher* fits into the Plains or Subarctic culture area demonstrated that students were beginning to understand how certain resources (buffalo) fit into specific areas of land. In the end I feel like the stories provided more insights than the fact-finding boxes I had created. The stories introduced students to a variety of themes such as the treatment of animals, oral tradition, and respect for other cultures' differences. In doing so I also addressed the other three Social Studies big ideas:

- Learning about indigenous peoples nurtures multicultural awareness and respect for diversity.
- Indigenous knowledge is passed down through oral history, traditions, and collective memory.
- Indigenous societies throughout the world value the well-being of the self, the land, spirits, and ancestors (BCMOE, 2016)

It is encouraging to see that by using these four books in my classroom I could address many concepts, but I think I would use them differently next time. Due to the distractions

students encountered while note taking, and the increased engagement when they only had to listen, I probably wouldn't have them listen to a story just to gather facts. Next time I would make an effort to integrate my Social Studies and English Language Arts content to use my time better. I would read aboriginal pictures books during Language Arts to teach about both story elements and themes. I think that would help me save time, which is something I often found I was losing during this action research project. Because I read most of the stories during my Social Studies periods, I then got further behind on the Amazing Race activities. Like Giana and Holly mentioned in their interviews, stories take time. For me, I feel that the time I had to spend was worth it. Compared to the Amazing Race activities, I think the picture books did a better job of introducing students to aboriginal perspectives and aboriginal people. Rather than reading "aboriginal people think _____" they saw it presented through the characters in the story, which is more memorable. Students today can also learn through storytelling like aboriginal people traditionally have for many, many years.

Time and Effort

My biggest take-away from this action research project is that whether I'm teaching my students about aboriginal knowledge and perspectives, or learning more about it myself, it takes time and effort. At first I was frustrated that my class was so much slower getting through the Amazing Race unit (it lasted about five weeks rather than the intended two or three), that reading the stories always took longer than anticipated, and that as a teacher I didn't feel prepared for all the new curriculum I had to teach. I was especially irritated that we were racing through each aboriginal cultural region when there were so

many things to learn, and see and do. It was this emotion that got me thinking about learning about other cultures like building a relationship. It may seem faster to run around and collect facts (and often we do), but it's difficult to really get to know someone until you take the time to listen to them and spend time with them. Of course this can be tricky in a classroom when the people you are learning about are not physically there, but I want to suggest that listening to their stories is a good start. Instead of racing through every cultural region in two to three weeks, I think it would build greater depth and understanding if students were to linger and learn about one particular cultural area, listening to their stories, reading information and using their hands to create like those people would have. As a teacher I can also continue my own journey of understanding by reading and listening to stories of aboriginal people. Like my experiences traveling and learning more about a place as I really spent time there, I think the same can be said of my journey to better understand aboriginal culture and people. It takes my time and effort to listen and learn.

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Informed Consent

February 6, 2017

Dear Parents,

I am currently working on my *Master of Education* in *Curriculum and Instruction* through Simon Fraser University. This program enables me as an educator to reflect upon my practice and its impact on my teaching, as well as on my students' learning, with the intention of developing my own best practices. As part of my studies I have developed an inquiry project to examine how authentic aboriginal children's picture books help students to better understand the diversity of Canada's many First Peoples. I anticipate that my inquiry will provide me with insights of how to effectively teach aboriginal content in the new grade 3 Social Studies curriculum. It will also help me to reflect on my practice as a professional and improve my teaching.

My inquiry will be primarily informed based on my own observations and reflections on my work as a teacher. Over the course of the next two months I will also collect student work samples, surveys, reflections, interviews, videos, and photographs to inform my understanding of my practice. All elements of my inquiry will take place within the context of my normal instruction and practice.

This letter of informed consent is part of my ethical responsibilities as a teacher-inquirer. I am asking your permission to use your child's work samples, surveys, reflections, interviews, videos, and photographs to present to members of my graduate cohort and my instructors to demonstrate my own learning. As part of my responsibility as an educator, professionalism around issues of confidentiality will be ensured. Consistent with the ethical protocols of teacher inquiry, if your child is mentioned in the presentation of my work, an alias (pseudonym) will be used at all times to respect and protect his/her privacy. I would like to reassure you that regardless of my inquiry, my ethical best practices as a teacher will remain the same.

This inquiry process is not intended to assess, place, or evaluate your child in any way, but will serve to strengthen my teaching practice. Regardless of your decision, the integrity of the relationship I have with your child will not be affected, and you can withdraw your consent at anytime.

If you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to contact me at rgoshulak@pacificacademy.net If you agree to give your permission, please sign below. **Return one signed copy and keep the other for your own records.**

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Rachel Goshulak

Child's full name: _____

I, _____ give permission for my child to be included in Rachel Goshulak's inquiry and for the collection of work samples, surveys, reflections, interviews, video recordings, and photographs as described above.

Parent/guardian Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Teacher Interview Questions

Teacher Interview Questions

How prepared do you feel to teach Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives in your classroom?

What would help you feel more prepared?

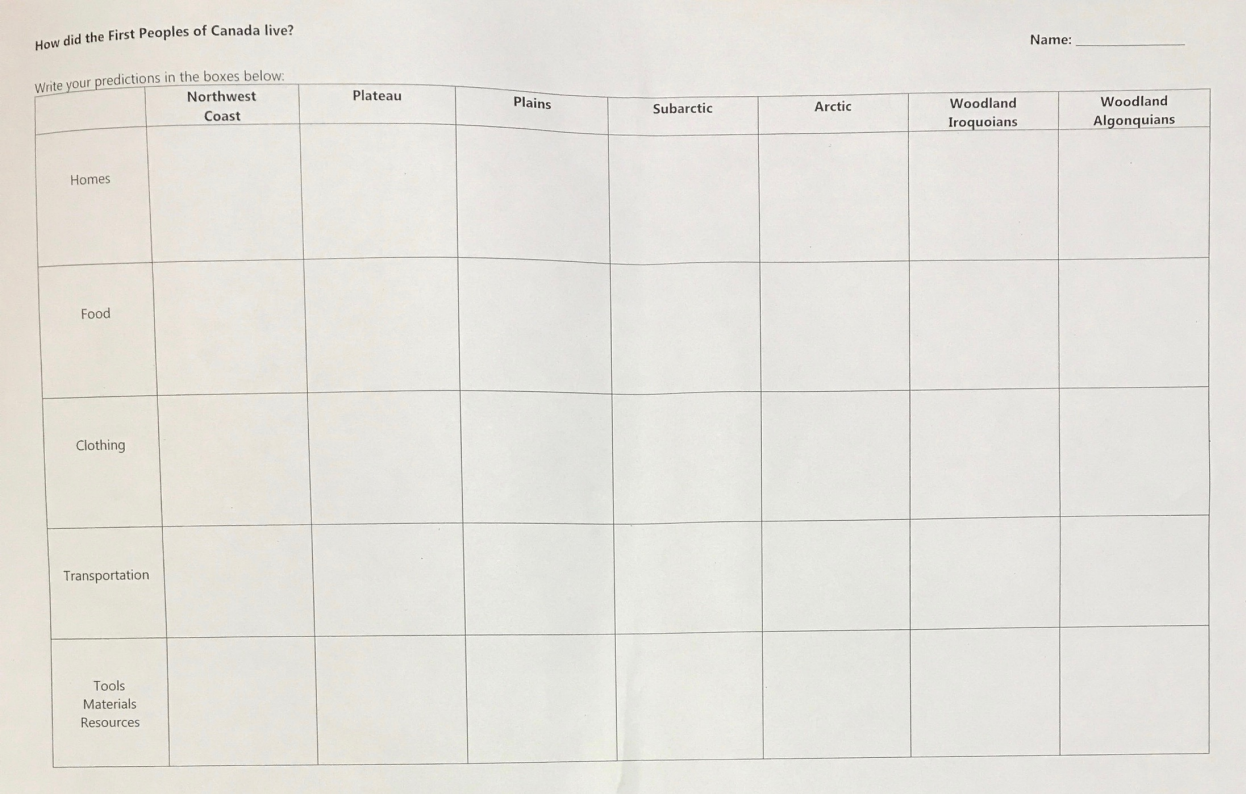
What resources are you using to prepare? Or teach with?

How have you used aboriginal children's books?

How do you go about choosing a book to use?

What makes an aboriginal book "authentic"?

Appendix C: Student Prediction Chart



How did the First Peoples of Canada live?

Name: _____

Write your predictions in the boxes below:

	Northwest Coast	Plateau	Plains	Subarctic	Arctic	Woodland Iroquoians	Woodland Algonquians
Homes							
Food							
Clothing							
Transportation							
Tools Materials Resources							

Appendix D: Story Recording Booklet and Class Chart

Learning About First Peoples of Canada through Picture Books

Peoples of the
_____

Title: _____

_____

What did you learn about people living in the _____ region?

Homes
Food
Clothing
Transportation
Tools/Resources

Anything else?

Title: _____

Author: _____

Region: _____

What does the story tell you about the people's ways of life?

Homes	**Food**
Clothing	**Transportation**
Tools/Materials/Resources	**Values**

How do you know? _____

_____

_____

_____