

Classroom Technologies and First Peoples Principles of Learning

SET-BC District Partner Conference, February 2019

Presentation Notes

“I want to acknowledge that we live, work and learn on the unceded and traditional territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), sel̓ílwítulh (Tseil Waututh) and sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) Coast Salish people.

As well, we want to acknowledge and honour the collective knowledge shared by the vast number of Elders, knowledge keepers, Indigenous community members, story-tellers and teachers, who graciously provided their perspectives and wisdom through the interviews, books, articles, stories and conversations that are referenced in our workshop today.

Welcome. I am so glad you can join us for this session on Classroom Technologies and First Peoples Principles of Learning.

- Last year, as SET-BC was trying to determine what kinds of workshops we should be putting forward in this coming school year, we all agreed that it would be important and useful to explore a session around the First Peoples Principles of Learning.
- With the First Peoples Principles holding a really integral role in BC’s Redesigned Curriculum, we were hearing from many teachers around the province that they are looking for ways to respectfully incorporate the principles into their pedagogy.
- And last year we had a group of teachers trying to do just that in our Aboriginal Education Project Inquiry group. For the project, teachers were supported with a technology loan of 5 iPads, a projector and some video editing and story-telling apps. The projects explored various ideas on how to apply a First Peoples lens on teaching and learning, using the technology to support that process.
- At the end of the year, a web resource was created featuring some of these projects.
- Our hope, is that the shared stories and examples within this resource serve as an invitation for teachers to start thinking about the First Peoples Principles and perspectives, Reconciliation and Indigenous rights and how technology can support their endeavours to introduce these concepts into their pedagogy through project-based learning.
- Today’s session, will highlight some of the projects found within our resource.
- This resource is available online through our SET-BC website and teachers can access it at anytime.
- It is set up through a number of modules, and also includes a discussion around territorial acknowledgement, and an introduction to the pedagogical context behind the FIRST PEOPLES PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING.
- Teachers can work through the modules in order, or explore certain modules of particular interest.
- Each module includes a content tab with the main discussion, which is supported by video content, and additional resources (oftentimes these are downloadable resources that teachers can take and use in their classrooms)

Learning requires exploration of one's identity. At this conference, we have the unique opportunity to connect and get to know our colleagues around the province. So I want to begin our session today getting to know each other a tiny bit.

Tell the story behind your name. How did you get your name? And if you don't know, that's ok. Share with your partner what meaning your name has to you.

- Learning requires the exploration of one's identity. Learning is holistic, experiential, and relational.
- I know it may be a simple thing to share your name and listen to others as they share about their name.
- However, in this small act, we are highlighting a key idea that has emerged for me as being central within the First Peoples Principles of Learning: that it's about relationships and the act of relating - building relationships with our First Peoples, with our community, with the land, with our histories, and with ourselves.
- So, if there's one take away from this session, I hope it's that teachers will also begin to see learning through this lens of relationships -- that it's about fostering new connections and understanding -- with our students, with our local Indigenous community and our colleagues.

First Peoples Principles of Learning

- As most of you probably already know, the FIRST PEOPLES PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING are becoming widely recognized as an effective and powerful educational perspective for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners and as such have been integrated prominently throughout BC's redesigned curriculum.
- For example, the First Peoples Principles of Learning resonate in much of the Core Competency proficiencies in the curriculum which promote a holistic approach to child development and learning.
- This increased emphasis on Indigenous ways of knowing pays tribute to our BC First Peoples and begins to place a lens of respect and Reconciliation on our current educational landscape.
- Inherent in the First Peoples Principles of Learning is the concept of the interconnectedness of values and learning within daily life.
- Thus, these principles shouldn't be seen as a list of criteria to be met in the curriculum (Learning is reflective --I wrote in my journal today, so check.)
- Rather, the principles should be viewed as a way of understanding the world through an Indigenous perspective of knowing and learning.
- As you can see, whenever possible, I have tried to draw connections back to the principles within this very workshop. And there are many opportunities for teachers as well to frame their daily learning activities through this lens for students within their pedagogy.
- One point we do want to stress though is that each nation is unique, with their own protocols and traditions, and the principles should not be viewed as a simplified, pan-indigenous perspective on BC First Peoples.

- That said, the Principles are generally recognized as reflecting commonly accepted BC First Peoples perspectives on education, and are useful for providing context to educators who are planning to incorporate Indigenous content into their classrooms.
- In light of this, I want to highlight again the importance of relationship and encourage teachers to acknowledge, consult and invite Elders and knowledge keepers within their local community to add their perspectives into the classroom learning and begin building those connections for meaningful exchange.
- To start, here's a link to the Ministry of Education's aboriginal contacts. These contacts could help point teachers to other contacts within the community. This link can also be found within my aftershare. <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/apps/imcl/imclWeb/AB.do>

Digital Storytelling

- Storytelling is a significant aspect of Aboriginal oral tradition and points to an Indigenous process of learning and knowing.
- Stories connect the listener to memories and history as they are passed on from one listener to another, from knowledge keeper to child, from Elders to the community, from student to family.
- As learners listen to, learn from, and live out their own stories, the First Peoples values of connectedness and relationship, identity and well-being of self, respect for land and place, emerge from the histories and memories shared.
- The power found within stories highlight the voice and culture of our First Peoples.
- At JV Humphries Elementary and Secondary School in Kaslo, British Columbia, the teachers and students participated in a project to explore local Aboriginal stories and to create their own.
- To provide context and to honour the voices and stories of the territory, the team invited Bonnie Harvey, a Ktunaxa Story Teller – from one of the local nations in whose traditional territory the school district operates within – to come and share her perspectives on stories and story-telling.
- Video break

Here is another example of how a teacher is engaging the elements of story to bring alive Indigenous perspectives in her classroom.

- Lori-Ann Plewak and her students in SD 82 Coast Mountains explored local First Nations stories together, studying the story elements found within them. Then the students created their own stories and used dramatic techniques to retell it. Then using the iMovie app on the iPads, the students filmed and edited their dramatic retelling (complete with their self-created props and costumes!) and shared it with their classmates and other classes.
- Video break
- In her blog, Lori-Ann reflected on the importance of building authentic connections and relationships with a local knowledge keeper, through this learning process.
- Video break, excerpt from blog

- Digital Storytelling can take form in various formats and stories can be documented using a variety of technologies and apps.
- Projects can feature the retellings of known traditional, local stories (many Raven stories come to mind for example), new stories inspired by Indigenous stories and the traditional stories of the local land.
- It should be noted though that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission. Thus, it is very important for teachers be mindful of this when working with indigenous stories and knowledge that they also make their best efforts to learn about permissions for retelling and reuse by connecting with local members and knowledge keepers.
- Some examples of projects may be:
 - Dramatic retelling of traditional and created stories of local First Peoples and the surrounding land
 - Puppet Show using student-created puppets and backgrounds, digitally created puppets, or a mixture of both mediums
 - Digitally produced material created on various creative apps that allows stories to be documented through voice recording, drawing, photos, text and animations Stop Motion stories, Green Screen stories that use green screen technology to provide realistic backgrounds and context to traditional stories.

Medicinal Garden Module

- *Learning involves patience and time.* Kelly Kent and her students at Charles Dickens Elementary in Vancouver, B.C. learned that first hand when the greenhouse they built for their Medicinal Garden project blew off during a January windstorm or when winter was uncharacteristically cold and long for typically temperate Vancouver, students had to practice patience and tenacity to keep at their goal of growing a garden filled with plants that have medicinal significance with local First Nations people.
- Yet despite the challenges presented by nature, Kelly Kent’s project is making strides in promoting intergenerational learning as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young learners acknowledge and participate in the sharing of traditional wisdom through working with local Elders and community knowledge keepers as they grow the medicinal garden together.
- Kelly vision for the project was to develop the school’s outdoor learning space into a garden growing Indigenous food and medicine. Students worked with Indigenous elders to learn their perspectives around traditional plants and medicines and to gain insight into Indigenous people’s relationships with the environment around us.
- One of the aspects of the project involved students documenting their learning through multiple means of expression – drawing, writing and scrap-booking “Wildcrafting Journals” and translating their work into digital e-books featuring photos of plants, their traditional Aboriginal names, excerpts about their uses, and personal reflections on learning.
- By demonstrating the interconnectedness of life, the garden became a working model for the holistic values found within the First Peoples Principles of Learning, helping students understand the interconnected nature of learning, passed on through generations, requiring patience and time, and revealing the consequences certain actions may have on the environment.

- Indeed, when local knowledge keepers helped Kelly’s students see how an introduced plant species made it difficult for the native plants to flourish, some began to draw parallels between the introduction of foreign plant species into the local ecology and the impact of colonization on local First Nations people.
- By introducing a learning process that highlights interconnectedness, wholeness, and personal wellness as key pillars for learning, this project explicitly and implicitly points students towards an attitude of Reconciliation and works towards building a decolonized curriculum.

Suggested Medicinal Garden Learning Activities:

- Digital Field Guides / “Wildcrafting” Journals
- Garden Labels with Indigenous names and local uses of the plants written in both English and the language(s) of local Nations
- QR Code labels to accompany Garden Labels with audio recordings (potentially recorded with a local Elder or knowledge keeper) of the pronunciations of Indigenous plant names and/or the descriptions of local medicinal uses for the plants
- Document the growing and cooking of garden plants through traditional, Indigenous methods in a digital cookbook
- Create video documentation of traditional, medicinal uses for local plants that can be shared through blogs, school websites, or digital portfolios

Slam Poetry Module

- As Canadians begin to make a concerted effort to move towards the recognition and implementation of the rights of Indigenous people in Canada, educators are recognizing the crucial opportunities that can be found within their classrooms to join the movement towards Reconciliation.
- For Kelly McCarthy and Kathleen Meiklejohn of Spencer Middle School in Langford, B.C., that opportunity came in the form of a year-long project focusing on teaching their English/Social Studies 8 students how to write “Slam Poetry” – spoken word poetry written to be performed, often against a backdrop of musical and multimedia representations – on the Calls to Actions put forward by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2015.
- Their project aims to have students use diverse texts and multimodal approaches to explore their worldview and identity.
- Working with local Elders and community partners, students were given the opportunity to inquire more deeply into a chosen issue around Indigenous rights and Reconciliation in Canada.
- They were then mobilized to create a digital, multimedia “Slam Poetry” piece that explores the personal, cultural and historical events that highlight those specific calls within the 94 calls, with the purpose of galvanizing their audience to join the action for Reconciliation.

- Their project culminates in a Slam Poetry performance evening, where family, friends, Elders and members from the local Nations and local politicians are invited to join in a celebration and call-to-action for Reconciliation.
- If you are interested in seeing some of their performances, you can navigate to the video tab under the “Slam Poetry” module of the web resource.
- Video break

Afterword

Chief Russ Chipps, the Chief Councillor of Scia’new (Beecher Bay) First Nation, who was in attendance at the Slam Poetry Performance that evening, approached Kelly to provide his congratulations and express his thoughts on the performances. He was so impressed by the students’ poems and authentic grasp of the issues highlighted by their calls to action, that he contacted the local media outlet, the Times Colonist, to feature Kelly and Kathleen’s work in an article about their project, and show his support.

- This article highlights idea that media can be utilized to play a role in giving voice to Indigenous issues, and in the cultural revitalization efforts of our First Peoples. We have a module within the resource that explore idea of leverage the power of media, particularly, social media, for good. I encourage you to explore that if this is an idea that interests you.
- One example of how social media is being leveraged in this way is Isabella MacQuarrie’s project – #thelastword27 – with teachers and students from four schools (Anahim Lake, Dog Creek, Alexis Creek, Likely) in Cariboo-Chicolton, BC.
- Within the Module Endangered And Disappearing Languages, examples can be found of how Isabella uses platforms such as FligGrid, TES Blendspace, Twitter, and Instagram to bring attention to the issue of disappearing Indigenous languages.
- I want to highlight that this is an ongoing project that interested teachers can check out and join in the conversation. There are links to the various accounts and I know that Isabella would be thrilled to have other interested teachers comment and add to the activity on this project.

Leveraging the communicative power of online mediums, Isabella curated a variety of lessons and discussion forums around the topic of Indigenous language preservation using social digital learning sites such as [Flipgrid](#) and [Blendspace by TES](#).

There is much power to be found in using language – to communicate, to teach, to share, and to honour. With the dawn of the internet, new forms of communication emerge and evolve daily. #thelastword27 is an apt example of how educators can harness the communicative power of social media as a tool for positive social advocacy for Indigenous issues, rights and culture.

Suggested Learning Activities using Social Media for Language Preservation and Advocacy

- Create a Twitter account and follow various accounts related to Indigenous topics, people, and local nations such as #thelastword27, #indigenous, [#BCAbTalks](#), [@Rec Can](#) (Reconciliation Canada), [@BCAFN](#) (BC Assembly of First Nations), and join the conversation
- Create a Blendspace, inviting local Elders and community members to come alongside and join the online conversation

- Create a blog as a forum for inquiry and/or advocacy around the issue Indigenous language preservation
- Create a Flipgrid forum and invite students to share their ideas, reflections and questions around various issues and topics related to Indigenous languages
- Create a Pinterest account to curate online information, images, videos, music etc. about Indigenous languages and invite students and members of the local community to share and participate with the curation process
- Learning is holistic, reflective, relational... The principles can be found resonating within a multitude of learning contexts and opportunities. As we leave this session today, I want to encourage you to continue reflecting and exploring the various aspects of the FIRST PEOPLES PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING that were resonating with you and to pursue those areas as a starting point, a continued area of growth, and guides and principles to inform your pedagogy.