

# Storytelling Unit<sup>1</sup>

By

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## Introduction

Storytelling is an old tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation. Long ago, early storytellers served a vital function in society and were looked upon with great respect.

Storytellers played many roles within society and were viewed as the "keepers of culture." They were important individuals who also served as entertainers, reported news, and shared experiences, ideas and values.

Storytellers provide valuable teachings and thus training children in the art of listening, interpreting and telling.

Storytelling is important for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it is a pleasurable experience for both the speaker and the listener. A bond or connectedness develops between the two.

Storytelling is both delightful and entertaining, but also can be used as a teaching tool.

First Nation people describe their storytelling as that of: stories telling who they are, where they came from, and most importantly, how they are to lead their lives. Their stories teach lessons, while others reveal the secrets of the universe and others narrate peoples history. Many of these stories are full of humour.

Storytelling also provides many benefits to the students. Not only improving listening skill, but also storytelling stimulates the listener's imagination, can encourage creative writing, language skills such as comprehension and recall, vocabulary and sequencing.

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared for Omushkego Elder Louis Bird and the Omushkegowak Oral History Project (OOHP)/Canadian Culture Online Project (CCOP). This Unit is not specific to the material in the Louis Bird collection. The material from the Louis Bird collection or material from other First Nation cultures can be used with this Storytelling Unit.

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Hearing stories also instills "love of language", and also motivates children to read.

Within this unit on "storytelling" the focus is on the broadening of awareness of students' knowledge. Through the lessons taught, activities used throughout the unit are meant to provide experience and understanding.

Activities are "universal" and can be selected upon need. These can be used with the various types of storytelling:

- Stories of Creation (How Things Came to Be)
- Stories of the Sun, Moon and Stars
- Stories of the Animal People
- Stories of Romance and Mystery
- Stories of Heroes
- Trickster Stories
- Stories of Parenthood
- Stories of Teaching Values and Morals
- Stories of Lessons to be Learned.

These are only a few examples of the lessons students will be introduced to in this unit.

## **UNIT GOALS**

Students will:

- be introduced to the artistry of storytelling;
- examine what storytelling is;
- learn what is needed to be a good storyteller;
- learn and appreciate the relationship of storytelling and First Nations people;
- gain knowledge and understanding of storytelling through the listening to and the examination of legends;
- appreciate what is to be done in relation to activities completed with various legends.