

Sqigwts.org - Lesson Plan: Stories.

Four Learning Activities

4. Learning Activity A: Demonstration and Listening. The most insightful and rewarding way to have students access and learn about the oral narrative traditions is by having them listen “attentively” to the stories as re-told by a Tribal elder. When possible, have a variety of Tribal elders and experts come to your class and present on a range of pertinent topics. Most rewarding is having elders share in their favorite narrative story, stories of Coyote and the other Animal Peoples, and of the creation of the world. In doing so, elders wonderfully demonstrate the power of storytelling, modeling it for the students. Don’t forget to gift those who have shared – a meal after the class presentation, a little gas money. It is common and appropriate practice to give an honorarium. We acknowledge that given your school’s particular location, you may not have access to Tribal storyteller elders. As a secondary substitute, consider accessing some of the resources listed after Learning Activity C, below.

5. Learning Activity B: Sqigwts 3-D Landscape and Being Attentive. Developed specifically for this curriculum is a learning exercise that engages students as if they were gathering *sqigwts* under the guidance of an elder. Presented as an unfolding story, the [“Sqigwts: Interactive 3-D Landscape”](#) replicates for students the experience of participating in the gathering, and calls on students to be attentive and make the proper choices at key junctures in the storyline. This module provides invaluable supplemental and background information on *hnhwelkhwlnet*, as well as on the means of accessing it through the act of storytelling. The experience of having to experientially navigate the 3-D Landscape will itself offer insights into *hnhwelkhwlnet*, as well as the important skills of listening and participating with empathy, all in alignment with Indigenous teaching practices and learning styles.

6. Learning Activity C: Demonstration and Re-Telling. To further promote listening and speaking skills, this learning exercise has the students themselves re-member and re-tell “authentic” stories. In the act of re-telling the cherished stories, students can get an experiential insider’s view of the story’s landscape, and gain a heightened appreciation, as well as opportunity to have revealed to you something special in the story. Have the re-telling done in small groups of fellow students. In this small venue, perhaps more intimate for the student, the storyteller may feel less intimidated. The story is only fully engaged and brought to life when shared “live,” in performance with fellow student participants. It then becomes the responsibility of the student storyteller, using his or her particular repertoire of storytelling techniques and energy, to reanimate the bones of the story with “flesh,” to bring the story “alive” for the audience, now hopefully transformed into participants within the unfolding story. It becomes the responsibility of the student listeners to actively listen and participate in the story. The storyteller helps develop his or her speaking skills, while the story participants develop skills in listening. And if the story is truly brought to life, the storyteller and story participants have to some degree demonstrate their abilities empathize with each other and with the characters of the story, to appreciate the experiences and perspectives of someone else. See [‘me’y’mi’y’m](#).

It is interesting to note that the very same story might be animated by one student raconteur with extensive use of dynamic intonation and differing voice inflection for each character, while another storyteller might apply visual body language and hand gesturing to help bring the same narrative alive. In each case, experiencing the stories from the inside looking out can bring a whole new awareness of their meanings. And it is an experience students will not soon forget. While the experience can be met

with anxiety by some students, in having to publicly re-tell a story in front of fellow students, the resulting benefits are always eventually appreciated by the students and the instructor.

8. Learning Activity D: Reflection and Assessment. Following the [Sqigwts 3-D Landscape](#) engagement and the student story re-telling experience, have students reflect on what may have been revealed to them and they discovered within the story, on their **“ah ha moments”**. This "revealing" and "discovery" process is best approached and appreciated from a Schitsu'umsh perspective. The English term "discovery," for example, is loaded with many meanings, some of which may mislead and distort that which we seek. What have been the implications of Columbus "discovering" the American Indian?

There are two *snchitsu'umshtsn* terms that better convey the meaning and significance of the "ah ha moment." The first term is *chetche'in'nts*, "to reveal, disclose, or uncover," implying that something that had been hidden, something that had always been there, is now revealed. And the other term is *hischits* "it is my discovery," as if unintentional, as if almost by accident, referring to the great effort one must assert by being attentive and listening, all the while not knowing what might result, what might be revealed. And then comes the "ah ha," and you have, through your great efforts, discovered one of the "bones," uniquely appropriate given your particular background and life experiences, "it is my discovery." It is not a "my" in the sense of ownership (aka Columbus), but a "my" in the sense of linking you in particular to the "bones," while acknowledging access to what countless others before you had gained access to.

Have the students, in small groups, talk about their experiences and what they may have learned with the other students. By the voicing of what may have been revealed can lead to similar or differing insights by other students. As with the act of experiencing a story from the inside which illustrates the participatory nature of Indigenous learning, the group oral presentation also can help emphasize the orality and the collective relational nature of Indigenous learning. You can also have students articulate what they have learned on paper and then submit a short “reflective essay.”

Remembering that elders typically don't offer an Aesop-like ending, “and this is what the story means,” as there are no “correct or incorrect” insights made by students about the meaning or moral of the story. Encourage and support your students' many possible interpretations, within bounds. Help the student place a revealed *miyp* within the cultural background of the Schitsu'umsh. Help the student see these *miyp* in the context of *hnhwelkhwlnet* knowledge, practice and teachings. Keep in mind that in the storytelling tradition, the story's meaning is always relative to the level of experiences of the listener participant. The meaning derived from a high school student's first experience with *sqigwts* will inevitably change from that student, as they re-engage the same *sqigwts* experience as a sophomore in college. The meaning derived from a Native student's experience with *sqigwts* will inevitably differ from that of a non-Native student's experience.

This makes assessment of a student's gained level of competency challenging. It is important to have the student fully articulate what he or she learned, and have him or her reflect on the implications of that knowledge. Did the student fully articulate in spoken or written word, his or her new knowledge? To reflect is not to simply summarize (as important as that is), but to seriously contemplate and consider the cultural context, meanings, assumptions and implications of what was learned. For example, a student might have been impressed with the *mi'yp - unshat'qn* “eye to eye,” the notion that the animals and plants are to be viewed and engaged as equal to humans. How might that effect how that student engages the plant and animal world around him or her?

Assessment here would be based on your student's ability to articulate any revealed *mijp* or other culturally related insights. While there are no "correct or incorrect" answers, the level of a student's engagement in the stories can and should also be assessed. Assessed standards would be based on the level of a student's attentiveness, listening and participatory skills. "We learn by listening, *stmi'sm*. We learn by doing, *'itsk'u'lm*. Assessment standards would be based on the student's level of demonstrated empathy. Did the storyteller effectively understand his or her audience, and able to modify the "flesh" of the story to draw them into the story? Did the story participants effectively understand the Animal characters met within the story?

To help spawn small group discussion or for a reflective essay assignment, consider the following questions:

- What is the cultural context within which the oral narrative traditions emanate?
- How were the stories of the *sqigwts* and the narrative selected for re-telling similar and different? Were there any shared *mijp* common to both? In the acts of engaging both, were there any structural and dynamic similarities?
- Who were the Animal or First Peoples witnessed in both stories, and what did they bring about or do?
- What are the fundamental *mijp*, "teachings" and "cultural themes" embedded in the oral narrative traditions and what are their defining qualities? Or re-phrased, what "teachings" are revealed, conveyed, discovered and learned in the stories?
- Contrast orality and oral communications with literacy and written communications. What are the implications of orality and of literacy on how oral narrative traditions are understood and conveyed?
- What are the specific techniques of telling used by storytellers in their re-telling of the stories?
- In considering the techniques often used by storytellers, and the dynamics of orality, how do these processes coalesce and influence the role of the "listener" of a story? In other words, what are the primary intentions of a storyteller with regard to his or her audience?
- What are the purposes of the oral traditions? Or rephrased, why do elders continue to re-tell their stories? What is the relationship of these oral traditions with the culture and society from which they emanate?
- What are some of the insights uniquely offered in an appreciation and understanding of *hnhwelkhwlnet* and Indigenous knowledge? Compare what is uniquely offered in *hnhwelkhwlnet* when compared with scientific and other ways of knowing.
- In an appreciation of *hnhwelkhwlnet*, what possible *mijp* were revealed and learned that might help address policies and practices related to addressing global climate change?
- How might a Schitsu'umsh elder view global climate change, and seek to address it?