

# In Our Own Words

Bringing Authentic First Peoples Content  
to the K-3 Classroom



# Unit 7: Making Our Ancestors Proud

Grades 2-3



## Overview

The Gitxsan Elders teach that balance comes from trusting one’s intuition and one’s reason. Hear with open ears. See with clear eyes and a good heart.

Developing personal and social responsibility is more than learning and changing behaviour — it is changing of the mind, the spirit, and the will; with the use of stories this goal can be accomplished.

“By lifting our vision, the petty quarrels of our daily existence will be overcome by a view of our future, and then our communities will emerge as sacred places.”  
~ Vine Deloria, Jr. (Lakota), in *American Indians, American Justice*, 1983

Storytelling is a favorite way to develop personal and social responsibility. Stories teach by attraction rather than by compulsion. They invite rather than impose. Stories capture the imagination and stir strong feelings. Stories give hope and encouragement. They stir minds to think about other ideas and choices that are possible.

The personal and social responsibility characteristics that form the basis of this unit are based on the Gitxsan understanding of seven foundation traits — the “seven Grandfathers shown on seven stones.” These foundation traits are:

- compassion
- forgiveness
- integrity
- respect
- responsibility
- initiative
- cooperation & perseverance

Although these traits are universal, there may be local variations on the concept of “foundation traits.” Wherever possible, teachers are strongly encouraged to adapt the unit to invite guests and incorporate stories representing their local culture(s). Consult your district’s Aboriginal contact for assistance in this. (An up-to-date list of district Aboriginal contacts can be found at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/apps/imcl/imclWeb/AB.do](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/apps/imcl/imclWeb/AB.do).)

### Curriculum Connections

This unit can be used to help students achieve Grade 2 and 3 curriculum expectations in the following areas:

	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
English Language Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ speaking and listening for specific purposes</li> <li>▪ listening and speaking skills</li> <li>▪ reading grade-appropriate texts</li> <li>▪ making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections</li> <li>▪ responding to stories in a variety of ways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ speaking and listening for specific purposes</li> <li>▪ listening and speaking skills</li> <li>▪ reading grade-appropriate texts</li> <li>▪ making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections</li> <li>▪ responding to stories in a variety of ways</li> </ul>

	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
Drama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ presenting drama</li> <li>▪ using drama to tell stories</li> <li>▪ voice, movement, and body skills in drama</li> <li>▪ purposes for drama</li> <li>▪ responding to drama performances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ presenting drama</li> <li>▪ using drama to tell stories</li> <li>▪ voice, movement, and body skills in drama</li> <li>▪ traditional drama forms</li> <li>▪ purposes for drama</li> <li>▪ responding to drama performances</li> </ul>
Health and Career Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ personal skills and attributes</li> <li>▪ healthy practices; benefits of healthy practices</li> <li>▪ healthy friendships</li> <li>▪ assertiveness and refusal skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ personal skills and attributes</li> <li>▪ sources of support</li> <li>▪ effective work habits</li> <li>▪ healthy practices; benefits of healthy practices</li> <li>▪ consequences of bullying behaviours</li> <li>▪ assertiveness and refusal skills</li> </ul>
Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ changes that occur in the school and community</li> <li>▪ ways individuals contribute to community</li> <li>▪ roles, rights, and responsibilities within the classroom and school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ changes that occur in communities</li> <li>▪ importance of communities</li> <li>▪ personal roles, rights, and responsibilities affecting school and community well-being</li> <li>▪ how needs and wants are met</li> </ul>
Visual Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ creating images in response to stories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ creating images in response to stories</li> </ul>

### **Authentic Texts**

The primary texts for this unit are two Gitxsan stories (provided at the end of the unit) — “Wiigyat and the Star Belly Gazing Gitxsan” and “The Little Porcupine.” Additional texts for the unit include:

- *The Moccasins*
- *Rabbits’ Race*
- *Hockey Challenge*
- *The Littlest Sled Dog*
- *The Little Duck*
- *The Journey of Dog Salmon*
- *I Like Who I Am*
- *Raven Tales — The Games* (DVD)

### **Themes Addressed**

- rights and responsibilities
- citizenship & service
- collaboration and co-operation
- inclusivity & belonging
- well-being
- traditional knowledge
- identity
- conflict & conflict resolution
- respect
- ways of learning
- sharing, fairness



## Suggested Instruction and Assessment Approach

### Courtesy and Respect

Invite a guest from the local First Peoples community to share common saying used to teach respectful behaviour to children. For example, Gitksan sayings:

- Walk gently in the forest.
- Respect the forest and all things in it.
- When you arise in the morning give thanks for food and the joy of living.

Other possibilities:

- Be independent. Paddle your own canoe.
- Your actions reflect on the members of your family and clan.
- When problems and life close in around you, wait it out.
- Believe in yourself.
- Be kind.
- Forgive others.
- Help others.
- Be caring.
- Laugh often.
- Respect all things.

Have students select one of the sayings (or create a new one) make a poster to promote this characteristic. Display posters throughout the school.

### Medicine Wheel

If students are not already familiar with the Medicine Wheel, explain the significance of the four colours:

- White: north— Elders, winter, intellectual
- Yellow: east — children, spring, physical
- Red: south — youth, summer, emotional
- Black: west — adults, fall, spiritual

The four colours of the medicine wheel represent all humankind.

(Note: find out what variations of the Medicine Wheel apply locally. The Medicine Wheel is used in various ways in many, but not all, BC First Peoples cultures, and the colours don't mean exactly the same thing in every culture.)

Brainstorm characteristics that could fit in the Medicine Wheel. For example:

- resilience
- courage
- patience

- honesty
- humility
- generosity
- integrity
- peacefulness

Have students create and colour a personal Medicine Wheel with their chosen characteristics.

## Bullying

What is a bully? Read *The Journey of Dog Salmon*. Discuss:

- What bullying behaviour was in this story?
- What could the bully have done differently?
- What do people feel like when they are bullied?

Read the following statements aloud, and explain that these are quotations from grade 4 and 5 students about bullying:

- A bully is someone who throws little kids around.
- A bully is someone who punches small kids.
- I would try to help the little boy be safe around town.
- A bully is so bossy when they yell at you until you go with them to play. Then when you don't go they tell their mom and their mom tells you to go play with them when you don't want to.
- A bully is someone who needs to learn bad into good. If you're bullied tell an adult. A bully is someone who needs care and friends around. Everyone needs a friend in his/her life.

Have the students create a cartoon illustrating one of the views.

### Extension

Additional or alternative titles on the topic of bullying include

- *I Like Who I Am*
- *Hockey Challenge*

## Playing by the Rules

View the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of *Raven Tales — The Games* (beginning at approximately 12:28, “Hey kids, having a good time?”).

Discuss:

- Do you think games and competitions are good ways to resolve conflict?
- Why do you think rules are important?
- What happens if someone doesn't follow the rules?
- Do you agree that trying your best is as important as winning? Why or why not?

Ask students to remember a time when they tried their best but didn't necessarily “win.” Have them draw a picture of themselves, with thought bubbles showing how they felt.

## Emotional Responses

Remind students that we all feel emotions at various times in our lives, and how we act on those emotions. On a daily basis, we might encounter situations that make us feel

- happy
- angry
- surprised
- silly
- unhappy
- loving
- very sad
- nervous
- embarrassed

Knowing how situations make us feel, and responding appropriately, is an important skill.

Have students complete the Emotional Responses worksheet (provided at the end of this unit), and then share with a partner.

## Science — Truthful Reporting of Data)

Read the story of “The Little Porcupine” (provided at the end of this unit).

### Assignment

- You are a reporter and you arrive at the scene on the mountain. You find the remains of Mr. Porcupine scattered all over the mountainside.
- You talk to the witnesses; creek and the little rocks.
- They say that Mr. Porcupine stormed over to them screaming and drank up the creek and licked the rocks dry.
- The witnesses say that Mr. Porcupine was alone.
- The witnesses say that it was early afternoon.
- The witnesses say that Mr. Porcupine was very angry.

### G.T.V. News Report

This is Johnny reporting to you from a mountain near Hazelton where there has been a fatality. The police tapes are down and no arrests were made. They have considered it an accident.

The only witnesses who would talk to us are the Rock Group and Mrs. Creek.

Both stated that Mr. Porcupine was very angry for no apparent reason.

Mrs. Creek said that Mr. Porcupine had arrived on the mountain early in the afternoon and went right to sleep under a little tree.

The Rock group said Mr. Porcupine woke up and was drinking a lot. He seemed very thirsty.

The Rock group said Mr. Porcupine made very nasty remarks to them and Mrs. Creek.



Mrs. Creek reported that Mr. Porcupine was headed back for his nap when he exploded.

His next of kin has been notified and are expected to arrive soon. The Father Clan is expected to pick up the remains of Mr. Porcupine. We will give them some privacy.

This is Johnny signing off. Back to you Lisa.

## Prejudice and Discrimination

Despite the efforts of many parents and schools, children still learn prejudice and practise discrimination. We must teach our children that there is no place for prejudice or discrimination in our communities, homes, schools or places of work. Teachers must prepare children to live and work harmoniously and productively alongside others who represent various cultural groups, backgrounds and abilities in our society.

“Children get constant reinforcement from their peers for negative actions. There must be adult reinforcement to counter-balance this effect. Ceremonies are needed in each phase of a child’s life to celebrate their positive actions.”  
~ Dr. Jane Smith (Xsiwis)

Discuss the definition of prejudice:

- Prejudice is attitudes or opinions about a person or group simply because the person belongs to a specific religion, race, nationality, or other group.
- Prejudices involve strong feelings that are difficult to change.
- Prejudice is pre-judging. A person who thinks, “I don’t want (that person) living in my neighborhood,” is expressing a prejudice.

Discuss the definition of discrimination:

- Discrimination is when a person is treated unfairly because they are a member of a particular group.
- Some people are called hurtful names or are excluded from participating in events
- Some people are unfairly excluded from jobs.
- Some people are attacked and beaten.
- Some people’s homes, places of worship, or cemeteries are vandalized.
- Some people are unfairly paid less than others for doing equal work.

Read one or more of the following stories to further examine the themes of prejudice — and its opposite, acceptance.

- *The Moccasins*
- *Rabbits’ Race*
- *Hockey Challenge*
- *The Littlest Sled Dog*
- *The Little Duck*

## Drama Presentations

This activity uses the drama “Wiigyat and the Star Belly Gazing Gitxsan” provided at the end of this unit. Preview the text to determine if the level is appropriate for

your students. An alternate methodology would be to “cast” older students to perform the drama for your class.

Allow time for students to prepare the drama. Supply simple props and costumes to help students prepare the drama. You may wish to invite other classes for the presentation.

Discuss:

- What lessons do we learn from this story?
- Has there ever been a time when you’ve been treated unfairly? How did it make you feel?

## Certificates of Merit

The merit certificate is an attempt to help the students accept the challenges of the culture and environment and gain confidence like the purpose of the “rites of passage” of old. It is believed that creating these foundations in a child’s life is critical in leading them towards a positive future and will give them the necessary tools to proceed positively in their academic studies if they so choose.

Provide students with a list of activities they could accomplish to earn merit certificates. For example:

- Chopping wood/Building a fire — go to the campsite and collect and chop dry wood and driftwood and build a fire.
- Donate to a charitable organization – participate in the Terry Fox Run and collect pledges.
- Recycling — take the class recycling to the bins and sort. Give clothes and toys to a charity thrift store.
- Serve at an event (feast, tea, party, banquet) — bring goodies to an event and serve.
- Visit a patient at the hospital — make a card for a patient at the hospital and go and give this card.
- Build a cedar bough shelter —class project so only one shelter is made.
- First aid kit — identify the items in a first aid kit.
- Identifying local plants collect 10 plants and label them and present to the class.
- Wilderness survival — make a kit, include items that you think are important for wilderness survival.
- Bird study — select photographs of 7 local birds and label them and include a few details like habitat, food source, migration patterns and present to the class (e.g., eagle, owl, robin, hummingbird, hawk, chickadee, raven, seagull, crow, swan).
- Do a give-away – give away 5 items that you own or something you have made and present them at the Elders ceremony.

Plan a ceremony for the end of the year to present certificates. Invited Elders and other members of the community (particularly those who have benefits from students’ activities) to the ceremony.

## Summary — School Slogan

List review and the various characteristics of personal and social responsibility that have been discussed over the course of the unit. Add to the list as necessary.

Challenge students to work in groups to create a slogan or logo for the classroom or school that demonstrates the characteristics of personal and social responsibility they feel are most important.

For example, from Wagalus School in Tsax̱is (Fort Rupert), “Our School R.O.C.K.S — **R**espect, **O**wnership, **C**o-Operation, **K**indness, **S**uccess.”

Or the Gitxsan seven Grandfathers shown on seven stones:



# Wiigyat and the Star Belly Gazing Gitxsan

*Two narrators wearing star blankets and stars on their bellies stand at the front looking at their bellies.*

*Wiigyat is sitting in a chair deep in thought. He has lots of stars on his belly and wearing a black robe with more stars.*

*Background is black with different colour stars.*

*All the Aadixs (stuck up) and the Gweey's (poor) are wearing the same colour tops.*

*Wiigyat takes a flashlight out of a small designed box and puts it back. Wiigyat jumps up looking startled holding his head.*

1<sup>st</sup> Narrator Long ago, at the dawning of time, Wiigyat had an idea. Wiigyat was always thinking and getting into trouble. He had a chunk of light that he had rescued the morning when the ball of light fell and broke into a million pieces. Wiigyat sent out a message that anyone who brought him food would get a star on their belly. Word went around the village that Wiigyat is trading stars for food.

*Smoke signals go up with a star dangling from it, add drum beats here. He dances and is fluttering a blanket over the fireplace. Wiigyat is dancing around the fireplace and hugging and kissing his box.*

2<sup>nd</sup> Narrator Now what was never told, and it should be told about that great event is that not all the stars flew up to the heavens. Some landed on the bellies of the Gitxsan who were out and about. Those who were lazy and still on their very own sleeping mats making Z's did not get stars on their bellies. And this was too bad and this was too sad.

1<sup>st</sup> Narrator Well it is told and I know it's true that those with stars started the aadixs society. There is a border in the village with aadixs and gweey' people Duuuuuuu.

*(Enter the group of four with stars on their bellies heads held high and walking aadixs with marshmallow sticks and bags of fish strips.)*

2<sup>nd</sup> Narrator The ones who were sleeping and didn't get the stars on their bellies are called the gweey' bunch. The look sad, sad, sad indeed.

*(Enter group of five with no stars looking at the ground and looking really gweey' carrying bags of goodies. They point at those having fun and look sad.)*

1<sup>st</sup> Narrator The Aadixs group never invited the Gweey's to their fish strips parties and s'mores picnics. Oh, I see that the gweey's brought goodies, they must have read the Smoke signals. The Gweey's are desperate for a solution to their depressing state.

2<sup>nd</sup> Narrator I remember the time after Wiigyat stole the ball of light from the Wolf Chief. Wiigyat was raven at the time and he opened his big mouth and dropped the ball of light. Lucky for us or we would still be in black darkness.

*Meanwhile Wiigyat is taking the bags of goodies and shining his flashlight on the bellies of the Gitxsan with no stars. Wiigyat removes one of his stars and sticks it on the belly of the gweey'. The gweey' acts happy, tall and strong.*

1<sup>st</sup> Narrator Oh, look the gweey's are going over to the s'mores picnic. Goodness, I can't tell who is in the aadixs society anymore. They all look the same.

*The original aadixs society head over to Wiigyat. They give him bags of hooxs. Wiigyat shines the light on their bellies and the stars disappear.*

*The gweey's are still having s'mores and are laughing and happy.*

2<sup>nd</sup> Narrator Look, the gweey's don't realize what has happened. Now the "no stars on their bellies group" is the high society.

*The happy gweey's stand and look depressed then drop their s'mores stick and run over to Wiigyat.*

*Soon a circle is going around Wiigyat, his light is blinking on and off. Stars are on. Stars are off. Then Wiigyat's flashlight won't go on.*

WIIGYAT (hollers) HEY!! HAW IT (stop it)

*Everyone stops. Wiigyat starts handing out goodies from the bags and pointing in a direction. Wiigyat leads everyone off the stage.*

1<sup>st</sup> Narrator Oh, look they are all going over to the smokehouse to have a hooxs party. Wiigyat always has the bad things told about him. Wiigyat never worries, he doesn't care; his light is dim.

2<sup>nd</sup> Narrator History does not mention that it was Wiigyat who started treating everyone all the same. Now the Gitxsan high society is a myth. The rewards are greater if you treat each other with love and respect. So let's get rid of our stars. Let's put them in jars and save them as a reminder of the unhealthiness of having an aadixs society.

**Sabax**, pronounced  
sah-BA, meaning "the end"

Sabax

# Social Responsibility — Self-Assessment Scale

	<b>Not Acceptable</b>	<b>Getting Better</b>	<b>Good Citizen!</b>
Contributing to the Classroom and School Community	<p>I am often unfriendly disrespectful of others.</p> <p>I don't like to work in groups.</p> <p>I have a hard time following rules.</p>	<p>I am usually friendly and, if asked will help others.</p> <p>I am usually willing to work with others in the classroom.</p>	<p>I am friendly, kind, and helpful.</p> <p>I participate in and contribute to classroom activities and I volunteer to do extra things.</p>
Solving Problems in Peaceful Ways	<p>I usually blame other for things I have done.</p> <p>Sometimes I cannot articulate the problems I am having and cannot solve them.</p>	<p>I work hard to explain how I feel and to control my anger.</p> <p>I try to decide when I need help from adults.</p> <p>I usually try to solve my problems.</p>	<p>I try to control my anger and also try to use clear thinking to solve my problems.</p> <p>I can come up with thoughtful ways to solve my problems.</p>
Valuing Diversity and Defending Rights of Others	<p>I am not nice to people.</p> <p>I am more concerned about what I want than what others want or need.</p>	<p>I am usually nice to others.</p> <p>Sometimes I need someone to explain to me how others are being treated unfairly.</p>	<p>I am nice to others and treat them fairly.</p> <p>I stick up for others when I see them being treated unfairly.</p>
Exercising Democratic Rights and Responsibilities	<p>I can repeat school rules but not explain why we have them.</p>	<p>When explained to me I feel a responsibility to follow class rules.</p> <p>I have ideas for making the school and community a better place.</p>	<p>I want to follow class rules and do most of the time.</p> <p>I can think of way to make the world a better place and can help make plans.</p>



# Emotional Responses

<b>When this happens:</b>	<b>Use pictures or words to show how you feel:</b>
My friend invited me to a birthday party.	
My dog died.	
I am moving to another school.	
I did well on my math test.	

<b>When this happens:</b>	<b>Use pictures or words to show how you feel:</b>
I had to go to the detention hall.	
I made a basket during the basketball game.	
I caught a big trout.	
I fell off my chair.	

# The Little Porcupine

The Gitksan storytellers tell this legend to illustrate the importance of respect for all things. One beautiful summer day, as the story goes, a young porcupine was up on *Sdikyoodenax*. He had been eating all day and was feeling like he should take a nap.

*Sdikyoodenax*,  
pronounced *steeg-YO-den*

Porcupine found a shady place by the scrubby fir bushes. He settled down for what he thought would be a long nap and pleasant dreams.

Then Porcupine woke up. Something or someone was making an irritating noise. Porcupine looked around with his beady little eyes and saw what it was that had awoken him. Creek was trickling peacefully over on her way to the lake. Over Porcupine strutted, very annoyed. He drank up Creek and licked all the rocks dry. After all was quiet once again, Porcupine went to the shade under the fir bushes once again to continue his nap and sweet dreams.

Just as Porcupine was dozing off, Creek started her journey down the mountainside again. Porcupine was really angry this time. He went and drank up the creek and licked all the rocks dry. He went back to dream in the shade of the scrubby fir trees. This happened two more times, and each time Porcupine got angrier and angrier.

After drinking up Creek for the fourth time Porcupine was so full of water, he needed to relieve himself. He waddled toward another clump of bushes. But he did not get there. In the stillness of the afternoon, Porcupine exploded, with fur and quills falling on the nearby bushes.

Creek once again started her journey down the mountain.

Porcupines, the Gitksan say, are still easily irritated. At the slightest disturbance they will discharge their quills.

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- the other individuals, communities, and organizations who provided the authentic content that enriches the material included in this teacher resource.

Many of the strategies and unit plans in this guide incorporate the use of grade-appropriate story books and other learning resources identified in *Authentic First Peoples Resources for Use in K-7 Classrooms* (FNESC, 2012). This guide is available online at [www.fnesc.ca](http://www.fnesc.ca).



## Personal Thanks

Debra Hooper

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Jacqueline Hunt

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Jane Smith

*I would like to express my gratitude to the Gitxsan Elders who took the time to tell me stories and teach me to understand and speak Sim’algax. They are now in the spirit world, but their teachings live on. These exceptional individuals have been significant forces in my life. I thank them for their wisdom, their courage, their faith, their commitment, and their sense of humour, their generous sharing, and their tremendous patience with me throughout my life.*



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