



WILDLIFE, PEOPLE & STORIES

GRADE Grade 2

TOPICS Wildlife, story, respect, stewardship, habitats

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Grade 2 Social Studies

Topic 1 – Canada’s Dynamic Communities

2.1.1: Appreciate the physical and human geography of the communities studied:

- Value oral history and stories as ways to learn about the land
- Demonstrate care and concern for the environment

READING LIST

- **The Woman Who Married a Bear** by Elizabeth James
- **Coyote’s New Suit** by Thomas King

OVERVIEW

Students will engage with stories about wildlife in a variety of ways, including sharing their own stories aloud, listening to other stories and illustrating another. Through these different media, students will gain a broader appreciation for storytelling as a way of learning about nature, wildlife and themselves.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand that there are diverse and vibrant cultures in Canada that tell stories about people and wildlife
- Students will understand that stories are a way of teaching and learning about how to care for nature
- Students will create their own stories using text, images, and other media

KEY TERMS

- **Ancestor** – a person who was in someone’s family from whom one is descended
- **Oral** – passed from person to person by word of mouth instead of by being written down
- **Relationship** – the way that two or more things are connected to one another
- **Story** – an account of real or imaginary people and events told for entertainment and lessons
- **Turtle Island** – the name used by many Indigenous people for the continent of North America

BACKGROUND ESSAY

Spotting wildlife – whether from the window of a passing car or in a distant alpine meadow from atop a ridge – is an experience that is guaranteed to be memorable, regardless of whether it is the first time or fiftieth. People come to the Canadian Rockies from all around the world with the hope of catching a glimpse of the incredible creatures that call this place home. It seems like almost everyone who has spent time in the Bow Valley has a **story** about a wildlife encounter to share.

Humans have been captivated by animals for as long as we have existed alongside them. This fact shows through the ancient stories passed down by the people who have lived in the area since time immemorial. Animals appear in cave paintings, songs, art and beyond.

The stories that we tell may be funny or serious. They may be deeply personal, borne from personal experiences or from our **ancestors’** experiences that have been passed on to us through generations. They might be rooted in events that actually transpired, ancient legends, or somewhere in between. What is certain is that they are always intended to entertain and often include valuable lessons.



DURATION 10-15 minutes

ACTIVITY – ORAL STORY SHARING

Young students ALWAYS have stories to share about their experiences with the wildlife that they have seen. This activity allows the students to participate in **oral** storytelling, while making sure that every student who wants to share has the opportunity to do so.

1. Start by asking students to brainstorm animals that live in the Canadian Rockies. Ask students to think of a memorable time when they saw or had an encounter with one of these animals.
2. Instruct students to take turns sharing their story with the person next to them. Remind the students to think about the important parts of the story. Where did it take place? Who was involved? What happened? How did you feel during and after the encounter?
3. Ask students to reflect on whether they learned something from their encounter. If time permits, you may want to invite some students to share their stories with the whole group. *Note that this can require a large amount of time if all students want to share. Rather than having students share aloud, teachers may wish to have them write or draw about their experience.*
4. *Variation: An important part of oral storytelling is passing on others' stories. Once students have had an opportunity to share and hear a story with one of their neighbours, instruct them to find a different person and share what they heard from their neighbour. Teachers may like to preface this activity with a discussion about practicing active listening.*



KEEP READING

Some characters appear in the stories of many different Nations across **Turtle Island**. For example, Coyote is commonly presented as a trickster. *Empowering the Spirit* has produced many terrific resources for educators looking to infuse Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Indigenous Texts into their practice. Learn more at empoweringthespirit.ca/.

BACKGROUND ESSAY

The ways that Indigenous cultures share stories are diverse, including through word of mouth, song, drumming, pictographs and the medicine wheel. Animals – including bears – are present in many of these stories.

In North America – or Turtle Island as it is known by many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people – stories about wildlife are an important part of culture, ceremony, spirituality and religion, and have been for thousands of years. These cultures are incredibly diverse, and the stories that are passed on from generation to generation are connected to the environment, region and their own history.

Fictional and real-life experiences are used to pass on traditional knowledge, such as survival techniques and medicinal plants, and to share knowledge about wildlife and the environment. They are also used to impart and commit to memory family histories and **relationships** with other people. Some stories can only be told by certain individuals in the community such as Elders and Knowledge



Keepers, while some stories can only be told during certain seasons or times of year.

Stories preserve teachings of how people relate to and interact with the natural and spiritual worlds. They illustrate the relationships between animals and humans and how they might coexist. Before we share a story that has been told to us by an Elder, it is of the utmost importance to understand the protocol around the sharing of that story.

One thing is consistent across cultures: people hold wildlife in extremely high regard. Wildlife demand an incredible amount of respect from us. They are tremendously important to the landscapes they call home. The ways that we show respect towards these and other creatures might differ from culture to culture and will be informed and reflected by the stories that we tell.

DURATION 20-40 minutes

MATERIALS

- Books
- Puppets

ACTIVITY – STORY READING & RESPONSE

Choose a story from the Grade 2 reading list that incorporates lessons from a variety of Indigenous peoples in Canada with an emphasis on different relationships with wildlife.

Use the following strategies to engage students further with the texts:

- Before reading, have students make predictions about what the book might be about based on the illustration on the cover
- Stop to make predictions as you read the book
- Check-in to make sure that they understand any new vocabulary
- Look in detail at what is happening in the pictures
- Ask students to share ways that the book connects to their own lives

DURATION 20-30 minutes

MATERIALS

- Coyote Story illustration panels

ACTIVITY – MISSING IMAGES

Students will provide the images for a story. The Biosphere Institute can bind these pages and return them to the classroom teacher.

1. Instruct the students that you have a storybook to share with them, but it is missing the images. You would like for them to help by adding images to the story.
2. Read the story to the students *OR* distribute the pages to the students and have them share the responsibility for reading the story.
3. Invite students to draw and colour their pages for the story. When they are finished, the Biosphere Institute can bind these pages and return them to the classroom teacher.
4. *Variation: Provide students with a brief overview of the story, but do not read the whole story until it has been illustrated and bound. Students will only know the details of their page.*



COYOTE STORY for MISSING IMAGES ACTIVITY

In the old days, there were just a few houses huddled together in the valley bottom. In those days, Coyote went wherever he pleased. He trotted along the lower slopes of the mountains along well-worn trails that had been used by generations of deer, wolves and bears. He trotted along the riverbank and greeted the moose and beavers who lived there. Coyote trotted freely, back and forth, from one end of the valley to the other.

Over time, Coyote started to notice that what was once just a few houses huddled together in the valley bottom was now a few more than a few houses. Then a few more. And a few more. The houses that the human beings built were bigger and bigger. The humans built their houses up the sides of the mountains, away from the river. They built them across the valley, from one side to the other.

Coyote's world was changing around him, but he was a quick learner. As the town swelled in size, Coyote learned new tricks. He learned that the humans spent Sunday afternoons in the park beside his forest. They sat on blankets and cooked delicious smelling foods. He snuck up on the humans to grab a morsel of food – a piece of chicken here, an ear of corn there – to take back to the forest. The humans yelled at him, but he was too clever for them to ever catch him.

One December evening, Coyote decided that he would go visit his friend Raven. In the old days, Coyote would have followed the river to the other end of the valley where Raven lived in her castle in the sky. Now there were too many houses and too many humans to navigate the valley without getting into trouble. Coyote had learned that humans didn't like it when he visited their houses. He did not think that this made very much sense since he was here long before they built their houses.

Then Coyote had an idea – he could take the train across the town to visit Raven! The humans had built the train to move them from one part of town to another. Why shouldn't he also use the train? Coyote tiptoed through the snow to the train platform. He was careful not to make a sound. When the train pulled into the station, Coyote trotted right onto the train.

It was late in the day and the train car was completely empty. There was not a human in sight. "Perfect!" Coyote thought to himself. He hopped up onto a nice purple chair and stretched out. Not soon after he got comfortable in his seat there was a 'BEEP, BEEP, BEEP' from a speaker. The doors snapped shut and train began moving forward.

Coyote looked out the window as the train whizzed past the houses. Coyote saw that the humans were taking up lots of space with their houses. He couldn't understand why they didn't want to share their food with him. But he could also see that they cared very much about the valley and the creatures that called it home.

In between the houses he saw lots of trees where squirrels could make tree houses and birds could make their nests. He saw parks where children were throwing snowballs that strange looking coyotes would chase after. He saw open fields that had herds of elk huddled together for warmth.

Then, from the back of the train car, Coyote heard a voice. He turned around and saw that he wasn't alone on the train after all – there was a young girl there!

She asked Coyote "Why are you riding the train?" Coyote responded "It is very difficult for me to walk between all the houses to see my friend Raven and sometimes people don't like to see me in their backyards." The girl considered what Coyote had just told her. Then she said "I like to see animals in my backyard. I want to make sure that we can share our home with them forever."



The train pulled into the last station. This was where Coyote had to get off. Coyote hopped down from the seat, waved goodbye to the girl, and trotted out the door of the train. By this time it had gotten very dark outside. The sky was filled with twinkling stars and the moon was just starting to peek up from behind the mountain.

Coyote trotted up a well-worn trail to Raven's home on the mountain. The trail wound up and up and up, all the way to the top of the mountain. There he found Raven looking down at the lights shining up from the town. He greeted Raven and excitedly began telling her all about the train and the girl that he met along the way.

Coyote thought about the way things were in the old days and the way they were now. He turned to Raven and said "I wonder what the valley will look like tomorrow." Raven thought for a minute before saying "We'll just have to wait and see."