**K-3 Opportunities**

Here are some key ideas for kindergarten teachers to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into their teaching:

***1. Connection to the Land:***

* *Nature walks:* Teach students to observe and respect the natural environment. Highlight the importance of the land to Indigenous cultures and their stewardship practices.
* *Seasonal Cycles:* Incorporate lessons about the seasons and how they guide traditional Indigenous practices like harvesting or fishing.
* *Local Ecosystems:* Identify local plants, animals, and landscapes significant to Indigenous peoples in your area.
* Incorporate outdoor education where participants learn about the land and its stories.

***2. Storytelling***

* *Oral Traditions:* Share Indigenous stories and legends that teach morals, respect, and relationships with nature and community. Use books written by Indigenous authors or invite a local Elder or Knowledge Keeper to share stories.
* *Story Stones:* Create or use story stones featuring symbols from Indigenous culture to inspire imaginative storytelling.
* Ask students to retell an Indigenous story through art, drama, or creative writing, ensuring cultural respect and accuracy.

***3. Art and Symbols***

* *Traditional Art Forms:* Introduce students to Indigenous art styles, such as Coast Salish or Metis beading patterns, and have them create their own art using similar techniques.
* *Animal Symbols:* Explore the representation of animals in Indigenous cultures and let students create their own artwork inspired by these animals.
* Ask students to retell an Indigenous story through art, drama, or creative writing, ensuring cultural respect and accuracy.

Exploring the representation of animals in Indigenous cultures with children can be an engaging and meaningful experience. Many Indigenous cultures see animals as being teachers, guides, and relatives, each with unique traits and lessons. Here are some ways to approach this topic in an age-appropriate and respectful way:

**1. Storytelling and Oral Traditions**

- Read Indigenous stories and legends that feature animals, such as *The Raven Steals the Light* (Haida) or *How the Animals Got Their Colors* (Cree). *Look for something in Secwepemc and St’at’imc territories.*

- Invite Indigenous Elders or Knowledge Keepers to share traditional animal stories. Ask you IEW to share animals stories.

- Encourage children to retell stories in their own words or through drawings..

**2. Symbolism & Teachings**

- Discuss how different animals represent values and characteristics (e.g.., the bear symbolizes strength, the eagle represents wisdom and vision)*.This may differ somewhat among the various territories and clans.*

- Introduce the Seven Sacred Teachings (Anishinaabe), where animals embody virtues like respect (buffalo and courage (bear).

**3. Art & Creativity**

- Explore Indigenous art forms like West Coast totem poles, Metis beadwork, or Inuit sculptures that depict animals.

- Have children create their own animal artwork, inspired by Indigenous styles. *Mention something here about cultural appropriation*

**4. Outdoor Learning and Observation**

- Take a nature walk and observe local animals, discussing their significance in Indigenous worldviews.

- Talk about the idea of animals as kin and our responsibility to respect and protect them.

**5.. Language Connections**

- Introduce Indigenous names for local animals in traditional language of local Indigenous peoples.

- Teach simple phrases related to animals in these languages.

**6. Respectful Inquiry and Research**

- Use Indigenous-authored books, websites and museum resources to explore animal symbolism across cultures.

- Emphasize learning *with* Indigenous perspectives, *not just about* them.

**Books and resources that align with the BC Curriculum**

Exploring the representation of animals in Indigenous cultures with children can be both educational and enriching. Here are some recommended resources that align with educational curricula:

**Books**

* + *Native American Animal Stories* by Joseph Bruchac: This collection features traditional tales from various Indigenous cultures, highlighting the significance of animals in Native American traditions. Amazon.com
  + *Keepers of the Animal: Combining storytelling with interactive activities*, this book teachers children about the importance of wildlife in Native American Traditions. Birchbarkbooks.com
  + *Native Animals* by Kelly Robinson: Illustrated by Indigenous artist Kelly Robinson, this book encourages children to engage with nature and learn lessons from various animals. Pacificnorthwestshop.com

**Educational Resources:**

- *Animal Meaning in Indigenous Culture* by Studiostone Creative: This resource provides insights into the symbolism of various animals in Indigenous traditions, emphasizing the importance of cultural context*. Check to see if this is authentic voice.* Studiostonecreative.com

- Learning about Native American Totem Animals by Doodles Academy: This lesson plan guides students in understanding the significance of animals to Indigenous people and includes an art project where children create self-portraits using animals to symbolize themselves.(Doodles-Academy.org

**Art Activities:**

* + Aboriginal Animal Dot Painting Lesson: This step-by-step lesson teaches students about Aboriginal dot painting techniques, allowing them to create their own artwork featuring animals. (TPT)

**Cultural Considerations**

When teaching about Indigenous cultures, it’s essential to approach the subject with respect and accuracy. Avoid oversimplifying or misrepresenting concepts such as “spirt animals,” as this can trivialize Indigenous relationships with the animal world.

By utilizing these resources, you can provide children with a deeper understanding of the rich and divers representation of animals in Indigenous cultures.

***4. Songs, Dance, and Movement***

* *Drumming and Music:* Incorporate simple drumming rhythms or songs shared by local Indigenous communities. Discuss how music connects people to the land and each other.
* *Dance:* Learn about and celebrate traditional dances, emphasizing their cultural significance. (Speak with Indigenous Education Worker about having a traditional dancer come to school.)

*Education is sacred, as are the children we teach.*

***5. Language***

* *Words in Local Indigenous Languages:* Teach a few basic words or phrases (e.g., greetings, numbers, or animal names) in the language of the local First Nations.
* *Names and Meanings:* Explore the meanings behind place names or names of natural landmarks in Indigenous languages.

***6. Values and Relationships***

* *Respect and Gratitude:* Emphasize respect for all living things, gratitude for resources, and caring for one another – key values in Indigenous cultures.
* *Circle Time:* Use the circle as a symbol of equality and interconnectedness, mirroring traditional Indigenous practices of gathering and decision making.

***7. Seasonal Celebrations and Practices***

* *Local Events:* Highlight local Indigenous celebrations, such as National Indigenous Day or salmon runs.
  + For ideas of what can be done Beyond September 30th, the British Columbia Teacher Federation has a resource with ideas on;
    - what you can do in your school to help carry the weight of the work *(not relying on others to do all the work around organizing activities to celebrate Orange Shirt Day)*
    - actions to advance truth and reconciliation *(we all have a responsibility)*
    - commitments to be made to Indigenous colleagues *(Communicate with Indigenous teachers and support staff in your school.)*
* *Gardening:* Gardening: Plant a small garden with traditional Indigenous plants or foods like corn, beans, or squash *(the “Three Sisters”)*.

[](https://www.bctf.ca/classroom-resources/details/beyond-september-30-doing-the-work)

***8. Collaboration with Indigenous Communities***

* *Invite Elders or Knowledge Keepers:* Welcome Indigenous community members to share knowledge and perspectives.
* *Professional Development:* Participate in workshops or training that provide insight for incorporating Indigenous perspective.

***9. Children’s Literature***

*Use Picture books by Indigenous authors, such as:*

* *We are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom
* *Little One* by Richard Van Camp
* *Shi-shi-etko* by Nicola I. Campbell
* *Shin-Chi's Canoe* by Nicola I. Campbell
* *A Day with Yayah* by Nicola I. Campbell
* *Stand Like a Cedar* by Nicola I. Campbell
* *When We Were Along* by David A. Robertson
* *I Hope* by Monique Gray Smith
* *My Heart Fills With Happiness* by Monique Gray Smith
* *Every Child Matters* by Phyllis Webstad
* *Walking Together* by Elder Dr. Albert D Marshall & Louise Zimanyi

***10. Play-Based-Learning***

* *Cultural Games:* Introduce simple traditional games played by Indigenous children. (Communicate with Indigenous teachers and support staff in your school.)
* *Nature Play:* Encourage outdoor play that fosters a connection to the environment, applying Indigenous ways of learning through observation and exploration.

By integrating these elements thoughtfully and respectfully, you can help Kindergarten students develop and understanding of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives that align with the British Columbia curriculum.