

Listening and learning from Elders

use a strategy before, during, and after listening to learn with an open mind and heart

take responsibility for making sense of learning when listening to an Elder

- Objectives:**
- appreciate the nuances of learning from oral storytelling
 - recognize why learning by listening to stories can be both easier and more challenging than other methods of learning
 - appreciate the importance of learning by listening to stories told by Elders
 - use a strategy to prepare for listening, focus while listening, and reflect on what was heard

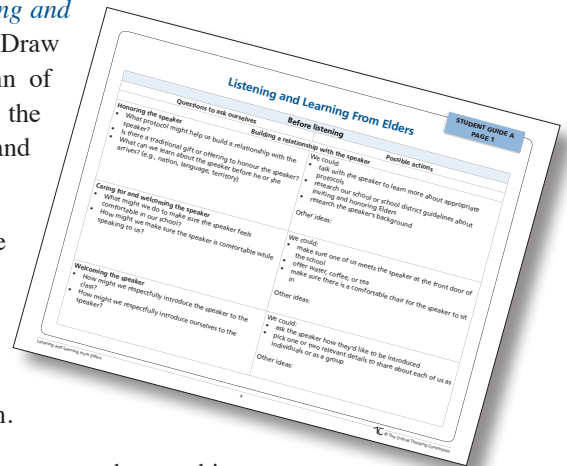
How can we listen to and learn from Elders when learning about community history?

Use the following activities to develop the strategy

Introduce the strategy

- Invite students to tell, or read to students, a short story with an ambiguous meaning or a story without an obvious moral (e.g., *The Giving Tree*, which can also be found online as a video, or *The Three Little Pigs*). After listening, prompt students to suggest possible meanings of the story. To guide the discussion, consider asking questions such as:
 - Might the story mean something different to them as they get older?
 - Might it have meant something different to them when they were younger?
 - Why might the relationship between the storyteller and the listener matter?
- Ask students to think of a favourite story that they were told as a child. Discuss the nuances of storytelling by posing questions such as:
 - What made it a favourite?
 - Did they learn anything from the story?
 - Were they supposed to?
- Explain that when someone tells a story, it may not be clear what you're supposed to learn, even though there may be something to be learned from the story. Instead, the meaning and learning might emerge and even change over time.
- Brainstorm as a class situations where young people are expected to learn by listening. Student responses might include listening to teachers in class, listening to peers' class presentations, listening to parents' lectures, and listening to or watching the news. Invite students to suggest which ways are the easiest to learn from. Which are more challenging?
- Ask students to suggest why learning by listening can be easier than other ways of learning, and at other times more challenging than other methods of learning.

- Introduce oral storytelling as a unique way of learning through listening. Suggest that when inquiring into local history, we can learn by listening to Elders of local Indigenous communities. When we visit them in the community or they visit us in the classroom, we must think about our relationship to them as storytellers and keepers of knowledge. They may tell us stories about their lives and experiences, traditional stories, or talk to us about the world we live in today and the future. In these situations, we may or may not fully understand the meaning of the story in the moment it is told.
- Explain that the purpose of this strategy is to help us build a relationship with the Elder in such situations, to help us stay focused and present in the moment, and to allow the meaning of the story to develop inside us and become clearer over time.
- Provide each student with a copy of *Listening and Learning From Elders (Student guide A)*. Draw students' attention to the left-hand column of the guide, and lead the class in discussing the questions that could be asked before during and after listening to a story from an Elder.
- Explain that the right-hand column of the guide includes possible actions for before, during, and after listening. Discuss the suggestions with students, and invite them to suggest additional examples of what might be done to implement each suggestion.



Practise the strategy

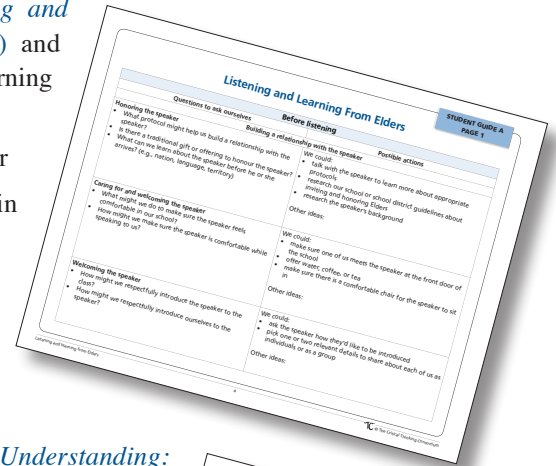
- Explain to students that they will practice the strategy by watching a video or listening to a podcast of a story being told to a live audience.
- Before starting the video or podcast, encourage students to refer to the student guide to remind themselves of the “during listening” suggestions.
- Play a video or podcast of oral storytelling. Some possibilities include:
 - Amos Scott, a Tlicho filmmaker from the Northwest Territories:
<http://indianandcowboy.ca/podcasts/stories-from-the-land-amos-scott/>
 You may wish to use an excerpt of this 40-minute podcast. There are two distinct stories: one begins at 9:28 and ends at 14:50; the other begins at 14:50 and ends at 38:36.
 - Dr. Shauneen Pete, an educator, public speaker, and storyteller from Little Pine First Nation:
<http://indianandcowboy.ca/podcasts/2015310stories-from-the-land-sakewewak-storytellers-festival/>
 You may wish to use an excerpt of the 22-minute podcast. The main story begins at 4:30.
 - Michael Kusugak, Inuit storyteller and author:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obC22TGomBM&list=PLjqZ7q_-qbniEHERqRv59OTaISMT57Y2B
 The total time of the recording is 16:34. However, an excerpt might start at 5:30.
- Invite them to review the “Before listening” part of the student guide and ask what they might have done if this storyteller had come to their class. Encourage students to share their ideas with a partner or the whole class.
- After listening to the storytelling, invite students to discuss the experience with a partner using the “After listening” part of the guide, especially those in the “Take time for reflection and meaning making” section. Encourage students to share their thinking with the class.

- Prompt groups to review the “Possible actions” part of the guide. Ask students to identify which strategies they used during and after listening, and which they might have used to enhance their learning. Invite students to share their thinking with the class.

Apply the strategy to learn more about a local history

- Provide students with a copy of *Listening and Learning From Elders* (Student Guide A) and encourage them to use the strategy in learning situations such as:

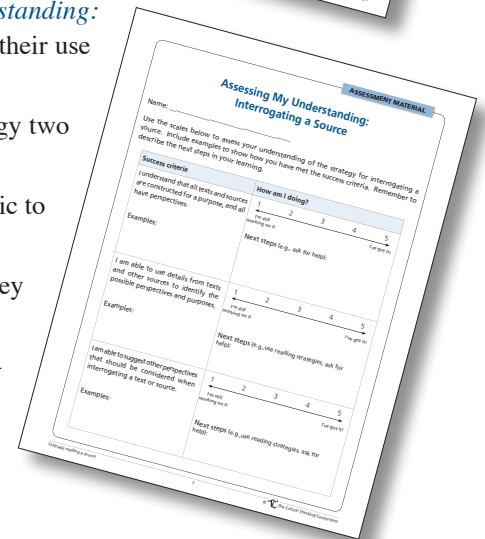
- visiting a local historical site with an Elder
- hosting an Elder or other guest speaker in their classroom or school
- listening to important oral accounts, such as residential school survivor testimonies
- watching a video or listening to a podcast of oral storytelling



Assess use of the strategy

- Encourage students to use *Assessing My Understanding: Listening and Learning From Elders* to self-assess their use of this strategy.

- Allow students opportunities to apply the strategy two or three times without assessment.
- Guide students in interpreting and using the rubric to assess their own responses.
- Encourage students to use the rubric whenever they use this strategy.
- To use the rubric for teacher assessment of student work, remove the first person (student) reference from each descriptor.



Listening and Learning From Elders

Before listening	
Questions to ask ourselves	Possible actions
Building a relationship with the speaker	
<p>Honoring the speaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What protocol might help us build a relationship with the speaker? • Is there a traditional gift or offering to honour the speaker? • What can we learn about the speaker before he or she arrives? (e.g., nation, language, territory) 	<p>We could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talk with the speaker to learn more about appropriate protocols • research our school or school district guidelines about inviting and honoring Elders • research the speaker's background <p>Other ideas:</p>
<p>Caring for and welcoming the speaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What might we do to make sure the speaker feels comfortable in our school? • How might we make sure the speaker is comfortable while speaking to us? 	<p>We could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make sure one of us meets the speaker at the front door of the school • offer water, coffee, or tea • make sure there is a comfortable chair for the speaker to sit in <p>Other ideas:</p>
<p>Welcoming the speaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might we respectfully introduce the speaker to the class? • How might we respectfully introduce ourselves to the speaker? 	<p>We could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ask the speaker how they'd like to be introduced • pick one or two relevant details to share about each of us as individuals or as a group <p>Other ideas:</p>

Listening and Learning From Elders

Opening my mind and heart

Reflecting on my thinking and feelings

- What do I feel and think about this topic or situation that might help me listen and learn?
- What do I feel and think about this topic or situation that might keep me from listening and learning?

I could:

- jot down relevant ideas and questions to think about or ask later
- refocus by shifting my posture, making eye contact with the speaker, or visualizing what the speaker is describing

Other ideas:

During listening

Questions to ask ourselves

Possible actions

Staying focused

Paying attention to where my mind is going

- What questions or thoughts are arising in my mind about what the speaker is saying?
- What questions or thoughts are arising in my mind that distract me from listening?

I could:

- jot down relevant questions to think about or ask later
- refocus by shifting my posture, making eye contact with the speaker, or visualizing what the speaker is describing

Other ideas:

Staying patient

Understanding that I might not understand or agree right away

- Am I getting agitated, upset, or frustrated by what I'm hearing?
- Can I quiet or suspend my own opinions and keep listening?
- How might I listen closely even though I may not understand or agree?

I could:

- remind myself that what I'm hearing might not make sense to me right away and that some things take time to become clear
- commit to taking responsibility for making meaning and interpreting stories at a later time

Other ideas:

Listening and Learning From Elders

After listening	
Questions to ask ourselves	Possible actions
Responding with respect and gratitude	
<p>Thanking the speaker for sharing their stories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What protocol might help us thank the speaker? • What could be given as a gift or honorarium to show gratitude for the speaker’s time and wisdom? 	<p>We could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ask the speaker to learn about appropriate protocol • research our school or school district guidelines about inviting and honoring Elders <p>Other ideas:</p>
Taking time for reflection and meaning-making	
<p>Reflecting on what I’ve heard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did what I heard make me feel? What did it make me think? • If I am feeling uncomfortable or agitated, why am I feeling that way? What might be causing that feeling? • This story was not about me but what might it mean for me? 	<p>I could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • remind myself that it is my responsibility, and not the speaker’s, to personalize and make meaning of what I hear • take a little quiet time to think about what I’ve heard • note my thoughts or feelings using words or images <p>Other ideas:</p>
<p>Revisiting stories, thoughts and feelings at a later time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the story remind me of anything that happened today? This week? This month? • What do I think and feel now? 	<p>I could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • re-read the notes that I made during or after the speaker was talking • talk to others about the stories I heard and what they might mean to me <p>Other ideas:</p>

