

First Peoples: Learning Materials for Newcomers

Teacher's Guides and Student Materials

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Language Instruction Support and Training Network (LISTN)

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Introduction

Vancouver welcomes newcomers from all parts of the world. Newcomers are often at a disadvantage when it comes to learning about Canada's First Peoples because of language barriers, access to information, or the time to learn. Yet, learning about the rich and diverse history and experiences of Canada's First Peoples is essential to building understanding between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal communities.

First Peoples: Learning Materials for Newcomers aims to help adult newcomers to Vancouver and the Province of British Columbia learn more about some of BC's Aboriginal Peoples: their cultures, their histories and a few of the key political and social issues that they currently face. While these materials created for the English as an additional language classroom provide an introduction to BC's First Peoples, they are by no means intended to represent the thoughts, feelings, opinions and/or experiences of Aboriginal people in BC. This learning package is instead meant to offer a starting point designed to answer some basic questions that newcomers may have about BC's Aboriginal Peoples, dispel some of the stereotypes and misconceptions that are prevalent in our society, and motivate newcomers to reach out to and connect with the Aboriginal community in their area to learn more.

Concurrent with this publication is another document published by the City of Vancouver called *First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers*. This book, available online, provides information in simple language about the First Peoples in Vancouver and Canada. The Guide introduces three important topics: Aboriginal people (or First Peoples) in Vancouver and Canada; a brief overview of the relationship between the government of Canada and First Peoples; and current initiatives and ways for newcomers to learn more about Aboriginal people in the community.

Welcoming Communities Initiative

First Peoples: Learning Materials for Newcomers is one of the six initiatives undertaken under the *Welcoming Communities Initiative* between 2013–14. The Initiative was convened by the City of Vancouver with funding support from the government of Canada and the Province of BC. The overall goal of the *Welcoming Communities Initiative* was to reflect upon the unique needs and perspectives of Vancouver's newcomers and to develop innovative and effective strategies in creating a welcoming and accessible city for all.

How to Use These Materials

First Peoples: Learning Materials for Newcomers provides content and language goals for the English as an additional language classroom. There is a teachers' guide and student materials for each of the 5 units divided by level according to the Canadian Language Benchmarks 5 to 8. Each unit contains a variety of skill building (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and language building (grammar, sentence structure and vocabulary) activities as well as extension projects and assignments. The activities included in each unit build upon one another, so instructors can use the materials to complete a 1–2 week unit for each topic/level. Alternatively, instructors can pull out individual level based activities and projects to help introduce First Peoples content to their newcomer students over time.

Each unit is divided into some or all of the following sections. The order of the sections may vary depending on the topic.

Reflect – encourages the students to think about and share what they already know about the topic. It gives students a chance to activate their prior knowledge of the topic to prepare them for the activities that follow.

Imagine – asks students to imagine certain topics, situations and events from different perspectives. It gives students a chance to personalize the topic and think more critically about it.

Consider – introduces the context, key information and important vocabulary related to each topic.

Stories/The Real Stories – contains a variety of stories related to Aboriginal people and culture. It includes biographies and Aboriginal legends and myths to give students a chance to learn more about Aboriginal people and cultures. At the higher levels, it also outlines some of the stereotypes that have been perpetuated by the media and movie and television industries and encourages students to critically think about where these stereotypes have come from, their impact on society and what can be done to break them down.

The Facts – provides students with facts about Aboriginal people and cultures and tries to further break down some of the more common generalizations and misconceptions.

Create – gives students an opportunity to be creative with the topic of the unit. Students are asked to create collages, posters and even host art exhibitions.

My Perspective – includes projects and assignments that ask the students to share their perspective on and reaction to what they've learned in the unit. It also gives them a chance to compare the information in the unit to their own lives, experiences and cultures.

Sharing & Connecting – contains project, guest speaker and fieldtrip suggestions that can be used to wrap up the unit. These extension activities encourage students to share what they have learned with others and continue to learn more about the topic by connecting with Aboriginal people in their community.

How to Access Materials

Materials for both instructors and learners can be accessed on the Language Instruction Support and Training Network (LISTN) website under resources for teachers (<http://www.listn.info/site/resources>) and the Vancouver Public Library website. LISTN is a network of organizations that support English language acquisition for newcomers to BC.

For those interested, *First Peoples: A Guide for Newcomers* is available on the City of Vancouver website (www.vancouver.ca/newcomers) and through the Vancouver Public Library's ebook collection.

We hope that the Learning Materials will be useful to instructors, students and newcomers who would like to learn more about the First Peoples in Vancouver and Canada through a language teaching format. We welcome feedback and suggestions via email: esl@listn.info

A Few Words from the Writer

I would like to sincerely thank everyone who contributed to this project. It has been a long journey and I have learnt more than I could ever have imagined.

Thank you to Baldwin Wong at the City of Vancouver and Brenda Lohrenz at LISTN for providing the opportunity to work on this project, which is such a wonderful blending of my two passions: teaching English and learning about Canada's First Peoples.

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– Carmen Larsen, M.Ed.