



# **CARETAKERS OF THE LAND**

EDUCATOR PACKAGE FOR  
GRADES K – 6

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledging The Land</b> _____	<b>1</b>
ACTIVITY: My Role as Caretaker	3
ACTIVITY: Land, Water, and Beings	4
<b>Treaty People in Treaty Lands</b> _____	<b>6</b>
ACTIVITY: Body Break	6
ACTIVITY: Animals in Blackfoot Language	7
ACTIVITY: Sharing Circle	9
<b>Listening to and Reflecting on Stories</b> _____	<b>10</b>
ACTIVITY: Watch and Jot	12
ACTIVITY: I Hear / I Think / I Wonder	13
ACTIVITY: I Can Identify the Main Ideas in an Oral Story	14
<b>Tricksters, Shapeshifters, and Spiritual Beings</b> _____	<b>15</b>
ACTIVITY: Building a Shapeshifter	16
ACTIVITY: Drawing a Shapeshifter (Exquisite Corpse) for Older Grades	17
<b>Resources</b> _____	<b>18</b>

*Caretakers of the Land* is a virtual series for grade K – 6 classes presented by Calgary Public Library. Sessions feature Elders, Knowledge Keepers, authors, illustrators, performers, and Calgary Public Library staff. These sessions aim to share the diverse perspectives and ways of knowing of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people living in Alberta, using stories, songs, and Library resources.

Please use this information, inquiry-based activities, suggested booklists, and resources to support your elementary school students' understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, land, and stories. Online Library resources are available at [calgarylibrary.ca/indigenous](https://calgarylibrary.ca/indigenous)

## Acknowledging The Land

What is a Land Acknowledgment, and why is it important to learn? For Indigenous people, the land is important because it's where their laws, values, and teachings come from. The land is their mother, and she provides plenty to live in harmony with the land, waters, animals, plants, and people. Acknowledging the land helps us remember that this was and is Indigenous land and home. Acknowledging the land is an important part of reconciliation, by building respectful relationships. Guiding values for Land Acknowledgments are humility, respect, and inclusion.

### Grades K – 3

Calgary Public Library's Indigenous Services team wrote a Land Acknowledgment for young children that includes actions:

*Today we acknowledge our Treaty 7 friends,  
Where the Blackfoot meet on Elbow's bend.  
Soon came the Tsuut'ina from the Beaver clans,  
And the Îethka Stoney Nakoda who live in mountain lands.  
Last but not least, the Métis people from Region 3,  
We are all treaty people, here in Calgary.*

To view a video of Charlie the puppet and Henri Giroux sharing why land acknowledgments are important and teaching the children's land acknowledgment, visit:

[calgarylibrary.ca/childrens-acknowledgment](https://calgarylibrary.ca/childrens-acknowledgment)

### Grades 4 – 6

Being Canadian means being a treaty person. We are all treaty people. In southern Alberta, our schools, libraries, and homes are on the ancestral territories of the Blackfoot people and home to the Treaty 7 signatories of southern Alberta which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy

(Siksikaitsitapi): the Blackfoot First Nations, the Siksika, the Piikani, and the Kainai; the Îethka Stoney Nakoda Nation, consisting of the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Good Stoney Bands; the Tsuut'ina First Nation; and the people of Métis Nation Region 3. Traditional names for this landscape in their languages are:

- Moh'kinstsis [*Moh-gihn-s-tis*] (Blackfoot)
- Guts'ists'i [*Goo-tist-see*] (Tsuut'ina)
- "Wicîspa [*Win-cheese-pah*] (Îethka Stoney Nakoda)

Practise saying the Treaty 7 Nations' names:

- Siksika [*Six-ih-gah*]
- Piikani [*Be-gun-knee*]
- Kainai [*Gah-nah*]
- Îethka Stoney Nakoda [*Ee-iith-kah Stow-nee Nah-koh-duh*]
- Tsuut'ina [*Sue-tin-uh*]
- Métis [*May-tea*]

For more information on the Blackfoot language and help on pronouncing the words, visit Calgary Public Library's Land Acknowledgment page at [calgarylibrary.ca/land-acknowledgment](http://calgarylibrary.ca/land-acknowledgment) or the Blackfoot online dictionary at [calgarylibrary.ca/blackfoot-dictionary](http://calgarylibrary.ca/blackfoot-dictionary)

**ACTIVITY**

# My Role as Caretaker

Land Acknowledgments recognize and honour the original caretakers of this land that we call home. They remind us of our continued responsibility to be caretakers of the land, its beings, and each other. What does it mean to be a caretaker? How might we honour the land?

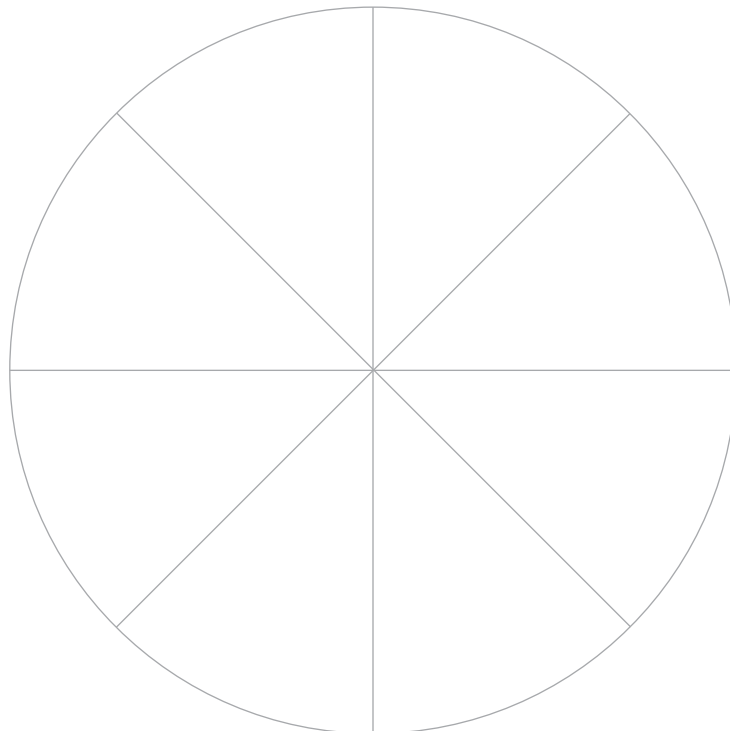
**MATERIALS NEEDED**

- paper
- pencils and crayons or markers
- ruler (optional) and dinner plate (optional)

**ACTIVITY**

1. Using the plate as a template if needed, draw a big circle on your paper
2. Use the ruler, if needed, to divide the circle into eight sections, like a pizza.
3. At the top of the page, write the prompt “How might I honour the land I live on?”
4. In each section, draw and / or write one thing that shows how you can honour the land such as “planting native plants,” “pack in and pack out when hiking,” “looking at the stars,” or “showing my sister my favorite place.”

## How might I honour the land I live on?



## ACTIVITY

# Land, Water, and Beings

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Yarn and ribbon in shades of blue
- Map of Alberta or southern Alberta (topographical is best), for reference
- Rocks to represent mountains, pinecones to represent trees
- A green or yellow blanket or carpet
- Canadian prairie animal figurines: bison, deer, hares, beaver, etc. (optional)
- Objects to symbolize the impacts of industrialization: toy cars, black ribbon for roads, etc. (optional)

## ACTIVITY

1. Ask students to sit around the blanket or carpet.
2. Ask them to reflect on themselves as babies and themselves today. Invite them to share some things that stayed the same from when they were a baby to now (ie: first name, your caregivers / family, your eye colour)? Can you share some things that changed (ie: height, weight, clothes, ability to speak)?
3. Ask them to reflect on southern Alberta (Treaty 7 territory) in the same way. Begin with what has stayed the same? What remains from a long time ago before your great-great-grandparents were born?
4. Referring to the topographical map, ask students to name the elements of the landscape of this area. (i.e.: prairies, grass, hills, mountains, rivers). Refer to the green or yellow of the carpet as representation of the prairie grasses.
5. Referring to the map, ask students to name the main bodies of water of this area. Place one ribbon for the Bow River on the carpet. Invite a child to place a second river for the Elbow to intersect at the confluence.
6. Continue to add elements such as rocks and pinecones for the mountains and forests and a stone for the Big Rock in Okotoks.
7. You may wish to have students name and place figurines representing animals who are native to this land. Bison are especially important, and students can imagine that, a long time ago, if all the people who are in Calgary today were bison, that is how many bison

roamed these lands — millions! Ways to say “buffalo” in different Indigenous languages include:

- linii (Blackfoot)
- Tatanka (Nakoda)
- Hanate (Tsuut’ina)

8. You may wish to introduce colonization and discuss the changes to the land when non-Indigenous settlers arrived and when the railway was built. Your class may co-construct the changes to the land overtime, removing animals and adding buildings and objects to symbolize the impacts of industrialization (toy cars, black ribbon for roads, etc.). Invite conversation on what has changed and what has stayed the same, including the changes to Indigenous people and their ways of living and being on this land.

# TREATY PEOPLE IN TREATY LANDS

## ACTIVITY

### Body Break

1. Bend over and touch your toes. Traditional Blackfoot territory stretches all the way south to the Yellowstone River.
2. Stand up and bend your body to the left. Traditional Blackfoot territory stretches east to Manitoba.
3. Reach your hands as high as you can. Traditional Blackfoot territory stretches north all the way to the North Saskatchewan River.
4. Stand tall and bend your body to the right. Traditional Blackfoot territory stretches all the way west to the Rocky Mountains.

Source: [calgarylibrary.ca/body-break](http://calgarylibrary.ca/body-break)

For a map of Alberta with Treaty 6 and 7 and a map of all the treaty lands in Canada, visit [calgarylibrary.ca/treaty-maps](http://calgarylibrary.ca/treaty-maps)

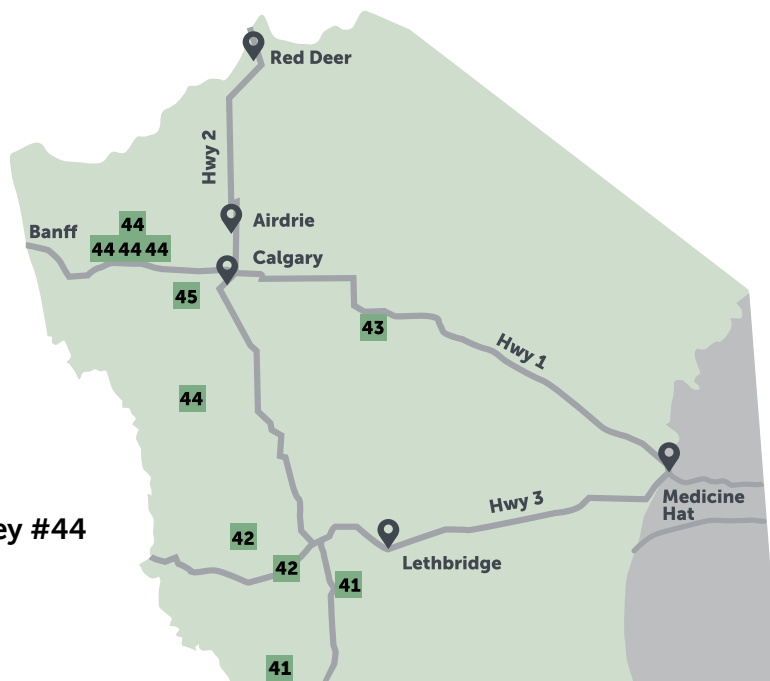
#### Blackfoot Confederacy:

- Kainai # 41
- Piikani #42
- Siksika #43

#### Tsuut'ina #45

#### Îethka Stoney Nakoda

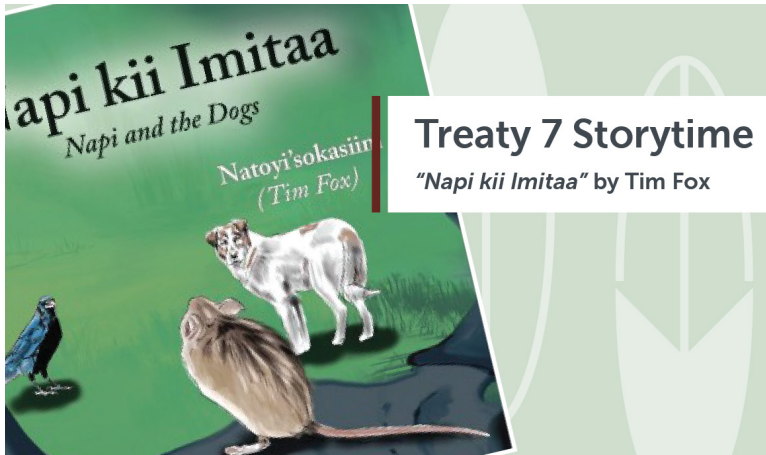
- Bearspaw, Chiniki, and Good Stoney #44





ACTIVITY

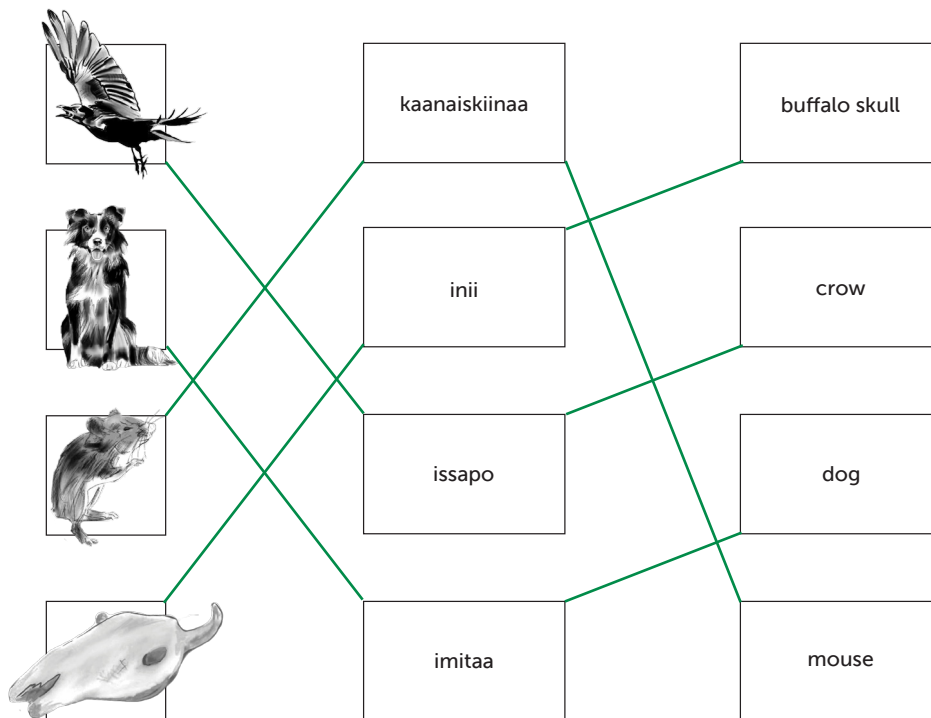
# Animals in Blackfoot Language



Enjoy a reading of *Napi kii Imitaa* (*Napi and the Dogs*) by author Tim Fox on the Library's YouTube channel: *Napi Kii Imitaa: Napi and the Dogs | Treaty 7 Storytime (Read Aloud)*

[calgarylibrary.ca/napi-and-the-dogs](http://calgarylibrary.ca/napi-and-the-dogs)

Practise your Siksikáí'powahsin (Blackfoot language) skills by connecting Keegan Starlight's illustrations of the animals from the story with their name in English and in Blackfoot.

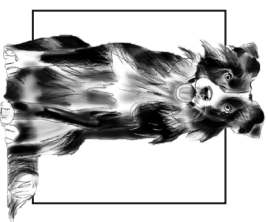


WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY



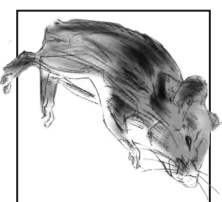
kaanaiskiinaa

buffalo skull



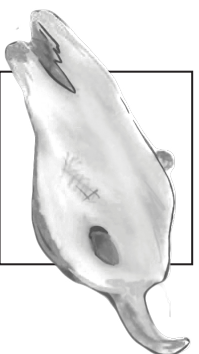
inii

crow



issapo

dog



imitaa

mouse

## ACTIVITY

# Sharing Circle

Can you be a good listener? Can you create a positive space? Can you speak from the heart, be truthful and caring? Sharing Circles are used in many Indigenous cultures to create a respectful environment for listening to each other. Sharing Circle protocol can be used for any discussion in your classroom and all you need is a space large enough to sit in a circle and an object that can be passed and held easily.

For this activity:

- Sit in a circle.
- Whoever holds the talking object is the only person who can speak.
- Listen when someone else is talking.
- Share how you feel. Use the sentence starter: I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_ .
- You don't have to share.
- You can say, "I pass."
- We are all equal.
- We all belong.

Some discussion prompts to begin a conversation in the Sharing Circle about treaties, their original intent, and how they are regarded today:

- How do you decide who will be your friend?
- Have you ever broken a promise?
- Has a promise that was made to you ever been broken?
- What does it feel like to be on the receiving end of a broken promise?
- What does it mean to reconcile?
- How can you be a part of Indigenous reconciliation?

To download Sharing Circle protocol classroom posters for various grades, visit [calgarylibrary.ca/sharing-circle](http://calgarylibrary.ca/sharing-circle)

# LISTENING TO AND REFLECTING ON STORIES

Indigenous cultures traditionally share stories in many ways – orally, through song, in drumming, through dance, with pictographs, through medicine wheels, story robes, and tipi rings. Traditionally, stories are told by Elders as well as community members who have earned the ability and may be called a Storyteller, Knowledge Keeper, or another name. Deep and active listening is required when listening to Indigenous stories.

Listening to oral stories from a culture other than your own can seem intimidating. Indigenous stories, especially told orally, do not always have a clear beginning, middle, and end. They can weave in and out of the natural and spirit world and may seem mysterious or confusing. Listeners may wonder: what if you don't understand the story; what if you don't know how to listen correctly; what if you don't "get it"? The good news is that children have an innate curiosity and, unless told otherwise, are usually excited by oral storytelling and stories in general. Because everyone is unique, and because our experiences are unique, the stories will affect one person differently than they will another. Indigenous stories may affect your students' emotions, thoughts, spirits, and bodies. Stories are meant to trigger reactions, invite reflection, awaken feelings, activate memories, and touch the heart. Allow students to be affected.

Indigenous stories can seem mystical and vivid and are often funny. Repeated and active listening gives students time to process, absorb, and become more and more affected by a piece. A wonderful and mysterious thing about listening as a class is that everybody comes to be affected together; the storyteller and everybody in the listening circle shares in the same experience, each of us in our own unique way.

## Audio Recordings of Treaty 7 stories

Blackfoot Language Resource Project, University of Lethbridge (some in Blackfoot, with transcripts, and some in English): [calgarylibrary.ca/blackfoot-stories](http://calgarylibrary.ca/blackfoot-stories)

Traditional Stories (in Blackfoot with transcripts), Glenbow Museum:  
[calgarylibrary.ca/traditional-stories](http://calgarylibrary.ca/traditional-stories)

## Tips for Listening to Elders and Knowledge Keepers

1. Prior knowledge of stories and culture, and our experience with them, influences how engaged we are by stories. Learning about the story and the storyteller often makes it more impactful. What can you find out about the Elder and their culture in advance?
2. Give the Elder time for storytelling and be mindful to not interrupt the Elder who is sharing until they indicate it's OK to speak. This shows the Elder that you respect them and their teachings. We should practise this with everyone.
3. Remember that storytelling is often meant to help or teach you, it is not frivolous or strictly entertainment.

4. It is up to you to take what you need from a story. Listen to hear. Ask yourself, “What is the story teaching me?”
5. There is reciprocity in story, it is not one-sided. The listener may not walk away with a solution, answer, or next steps and may be self-reflective. What did the story show you about your part to play?
6. It is OK to close your eyes, to shift your position, to get comfortable. Listening is harder to focus on than watching, especially for children. It is OK for them not to have eyes on the Elder the entire time, but they should show respect by not interrupting. When listening to Elders, “understand the expectation of the transformational change to allow your Elders as eminent scholars that time to transition their spirits to that space. Afford those Elders time for their own transformation – mentally, physically, emotionally, to do the work for Creator.” – Cindy Provost

Source: Engaging with Elders, A Co-created Story: [calgarylibrary.ca/elders-protocol](http://calgarylibrary.ca/elders-protocol)

**ACTIVITY**

# Watch and Jot

With thanks to Ms. Harvey, Grade 4 teacher at Hugh A. Bennett School, for sharing her graphic organizer with Calgary Public Library. Use it to encourage active listening (and watching) of a *Caretakers of the Land* session, self-assessment, and reflection.

## What are you thinking as you listen and watch?

<p><b>COMMENTS</b></p>	<p><b>QUESTIONS</b> (who, what, where, when, why, how)</p>
<p><b>CONCERNS</b> I am feeling... I am worried about...</p>	<p><b>CONNECTIONS</b> I am making a connection to... This reminds me of...</p>

## ACTIVITY

# I Hear / I Think / I Wonder

This routine for exploring oral stories can help students make careful observations and thoughtful interpretations and help set the stage for curiosity and inquiry. Ask:

1. What do you hear?
2. What do you think about that?
3. What does it make you wonder?

## ACTIVITY

Use this thinking routine, adapted to support active listening, from the Thinking Routines found at [calgarylibrary.ca/thinking-routine](http://calgarylibrary.ca/thinking-routine) when you want students to think carefully about why something sounds the way it does or is the way it is.

Ask students to listen to an oral story and to think through the three stems regarding the story, topic, or Indigenous culture the story belongs to. Encourage students to back up their interpretation with reasons.

The routine works best when a student responds by using the three stems together at the same time, i.e., I hear?, I think?, I wonder? However, you may find that students begin by using one stem at a time, and that you need to scaffold each response with a follow-up question for the next stem.

The routine works well in a group discussion but in some cases, you may want to have students carry out the routine individually on paper or in their heads before sharing as a class. Student responses to the routine can be written down and recorded so that a class chart of observations, interpretations, and wonderings are listed for all to see and return to.

## ACTIVITY

# I Can Identify the Main Ideas in an Oral Story

With thanks to Ms. Cooper, Grade 4 teacher at Ethel M. Johnson School, for sharing her lesson plan with Calgary Public Library. Use it to encourage active listening of an oral story (and watching of a *Caretakers of the Land* session) and recollection.

As a class, discuss the importance of oral storytelling in Indigenous cultures. After listening to the story, orally retell the story to each other focusing on retelling the main ideas. Invite the students to select their favorite moment in the story or something they felt was significant and represent it using clay or Play-Doh. Use “I can” statements, such as “I can identify identify the main ideas in an oral story” and “I can identify how oral stories represent multiple perspectives of the past.”



To take the learning further, the class might research a scientific or cultural perspective of the same or similar story. Discussions can be “compare and contrast” and encourage the idea that there might be more than one perspective.



## TRICKSTERS, SHAPESHIFTERS, AND SPIRITUAL BEINGS

The word trickster is a contemporary word that was created by anthropologists to describe these important beings. The more appropriate word that is commonly used in Blackfoot communities is Spiritual Beings as they have the power to transform and show themselves to the people.

Trickster stories often teach lessons about how to behave and treat other people. Tricksters are smart and they use their knowledge to play tricks or to try and bend the rules. Indigenous people have used trickster stories to teach their children for many years. A trickster often appears as an animal who has human traits — like being able to talk. Many trickster stories feature a coyote or raven because these animals are sometimes considered to be clever creatures. Tricksters can be shapeshifters and move easily between our world and the spirit world and can appear as animals, humans, or even rocks!

“Napi is a Blackfoot character that is central to our stories; he is often referred to as the ‘Old Man.’ Napi comes from the sun, he is our quasi-Creator, he is crazy, funny, and is sometimes a fool. He also can be brutal and very mean. In many of our stories, Napi is the creator — along with ‘Old Woman’ — of many of our objects and creatures. Napi is not our god, yet like many divine entities he is credited with the creation of the world and everything in it.

But Napi also gets into a lot of trouble when he starts messing with his own creation; this is why we also refer to Napi as a trickster, a contrary. Napi stories are very familiar in Blackfoot country, often told by Elders who have a history of storytelling and the rights to tell these stories. Napi and his many stories are our guide to life, he teaches us lessons on how to live and not to live. In a way he is our moral guide, giving us insight into our human condition. While Napi Stories are often told by Elders who have been the recipients of these stories from time immemorial, a new generation of Blackfoot artists, actors, and story tellers have started to create new Napi stories. Napi is not static, he is dynamic.” — Adrian Stimson, Blackfoot artist

- What are various ways that trickster stories are told across world cultures?
- What makes the stories interesting?
- Are there any common elements in trickster stories across cultures?

Napi Booklist: [calgarylibrary.ca/napi-books](https://calgarylibrary.ca/napi-books)

Trickster Stories Across Cultures booklist: [calgarylibrary.ca/trickster-theses](https://calgarylibrary.ca/trickster-theses)

## ACTIVITY

# Building a Shapeshifter

## MATERIALS

- Play-Doh or clay for each person
- Tools to make marks in the clay
- Small paper plate

## ACTIVITY

1. Review animals that are native to southern Alberta.
2. Invite students to build one animal out of clay. What characteristics and distinguishing features does the animal have? Feathers? Wings? Tail? Beak? Two or four legs? Fur?
3. Each child places their animal on the plate and writes their name on the plate.
4. They then pass the plate to a new friend and invite the friend to shape shift their animal into a new and different animal by adjusting the clay. What characteristics will they keep?
5. Continue to pass and shape shift the animals as often as you like.

## ACTIVITY

# Drawing a Shapeshifter (Exquisite Corpse) for Older Grades

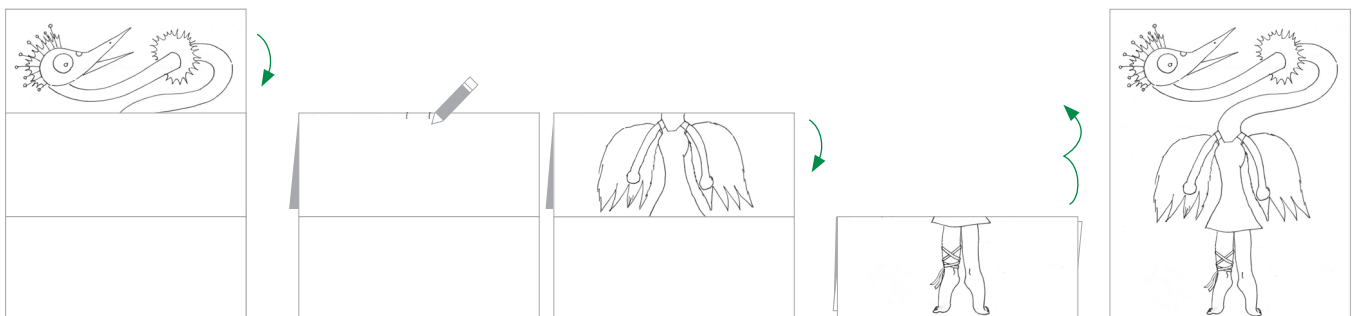
## MATERIALS

- One piece of paper per group
- Crayons, markers, and pencils

## ACTIVITY

Exquisite Corpse is a game invented and used by surrealist artists such as Frida Kahlo. Participants play by taking turns drawing sections of a body on a sheet of paper, folded to hide each individual contribution. The first player adds a head — then, without knowing what that head looks like, the next artist adds a torso, and so on.

1. Take a piece of paper and fold it into four equal parts, like an accordion.
2. Draw or collage on the top section of the paper to create the head of an imaginary character. Use whatever materials you have around you.
3. Fold your image back to conceal it. Extend the lines of your character's neck over the edge of the fold so that your collaborator will know how to connect their image to yours.
4. Pass the paper on to a friend or family member. Keep your image hidden and have them add a body to your figure in the middle section of the page.
5. Repeat! Pass the paper to a third person or back to the first, concealing the first two sections of the page, and have them add the legs.
6. Then hide that section and pass to a fourth person to add the feet. Remember to draw lines over the fold into each new section so the following person knows where to start.
7. Unfold the page and reveal your collaborative image / shapeshifter.



## RESOURCES

*Niitsitapiisini Teacher Toolkit* from the Glenbow Museum (to accompany their excellent online exhibit): [calgarylibrary.ca/teacher-toolkit](http://calgarylibrary.ca/teacher-toolkit)

*Four Directions Teaching* is an animated narrated interactive site for Grades 5 and up, to help teach about five different First Nations in Canada including the Blackfoot: [fourdirectionsteachings.com](http://fourdirectionsteachings.com)

*Blackfoot Teacher's Guide for Grades 1 – 6* developed by Reg Crowshoe, Geoff Crow Eagle, and Maria Crowshoe: [calgarylibrary.ca/four-directions](http://calgarylibrary.ca/four-directions)

*Stepping Stones* is a publication of the Alberta Teachers' Association *Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation* and is intended to support certified teachers on their learning journey to meet the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Foundational Knowledge competency in the Teaching Quality Standard: [calgarylibrary.ca/stepping-stones](http://calgarylibrary.ca/stepping-stones)

Ten Ideas to Learn More About Treaty 7 and Métis Culture: [calgarylibrary.ca/treaty7-cultures](http://calgarylibrary.ca/treaty7-cultures)

Werklund School of Education Indigenous Education Resources: [calgarylibrary.ca/uc-indigenous-ed](http://calgarylibrary.ca/uc-indigenous-ed)

*Guiding Voices*, an Alberta Education curriculum development tool for integrating First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives through curriculum: [calgarylibrary.ca/guiding-voices](http://calgarylibrary.ca/guiding-voices)

*Empowering the Spirit* is a comprehensive collection of Alberta-based educational resources to support reconciliation: [calgarylibrary.ca/empowering-spirit](http://calgarylibrary.ca/empowering-spirit)

National Centre for Collaboration Teaching Resource Centre: [calgarylibrary.ca/indigenous-teaching](http://calgarylibrary.ca/indigenous-teaching)

Calgary Public Library Indigenous Services: [calgarylibrary.ca/indigenous](http://calgarylibrary.ca/indigenous)

Calgary Public Library Services for Educators, Caregivers and Students: [calgarylibrary.ca/educators](http://calgarylibrary.ca/educators)