

The background of the slide is a light cream color, decorated with several stylized handprints in pink, orange, and yellow. The handprints are of varying sizes and are positioned around the central text, creating a frame-like effect. Some handprints have white lines indicating fingers or palms.

# Life Writing as Transformative Praxis

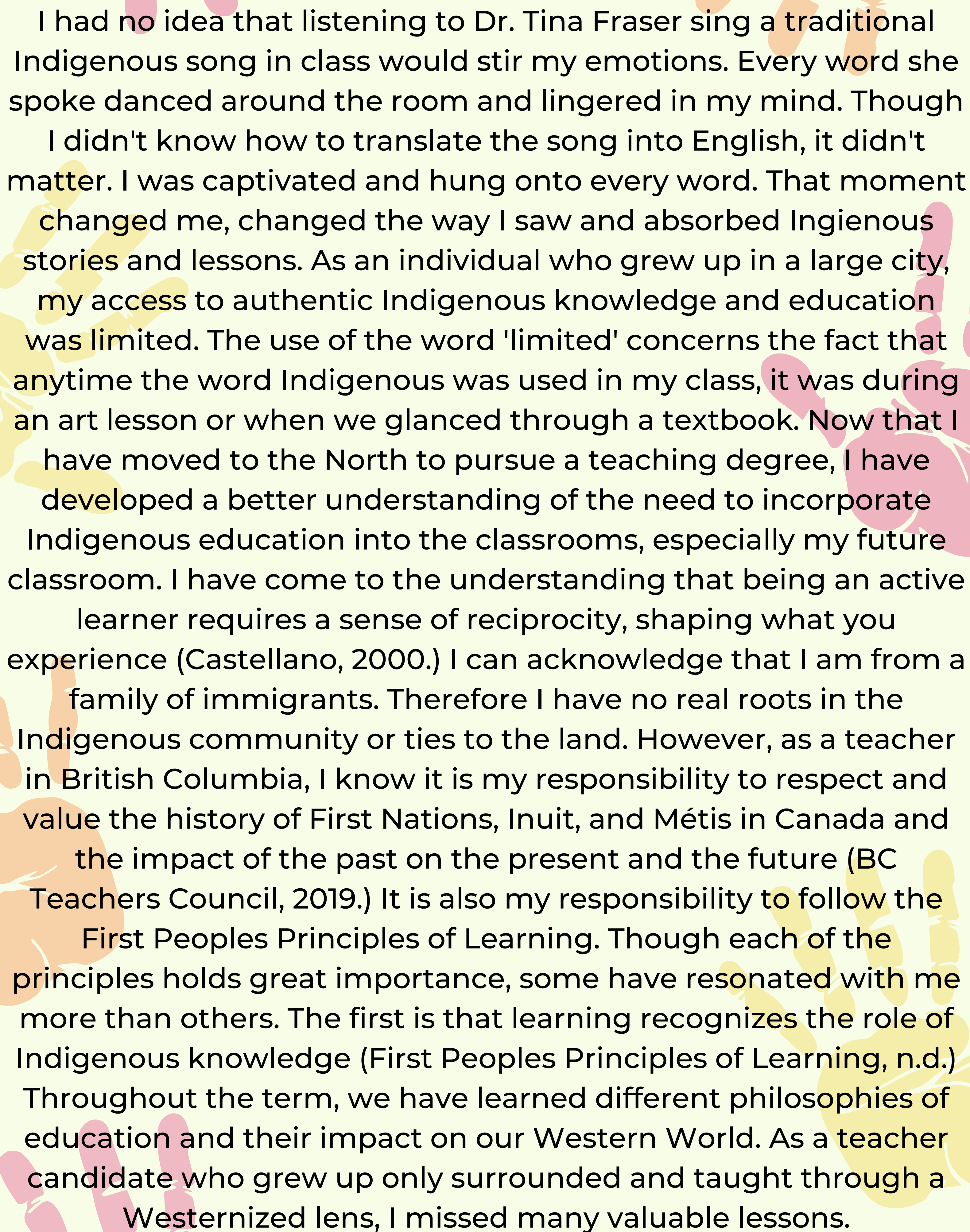
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Education 446- Aboriginal and Indigenous

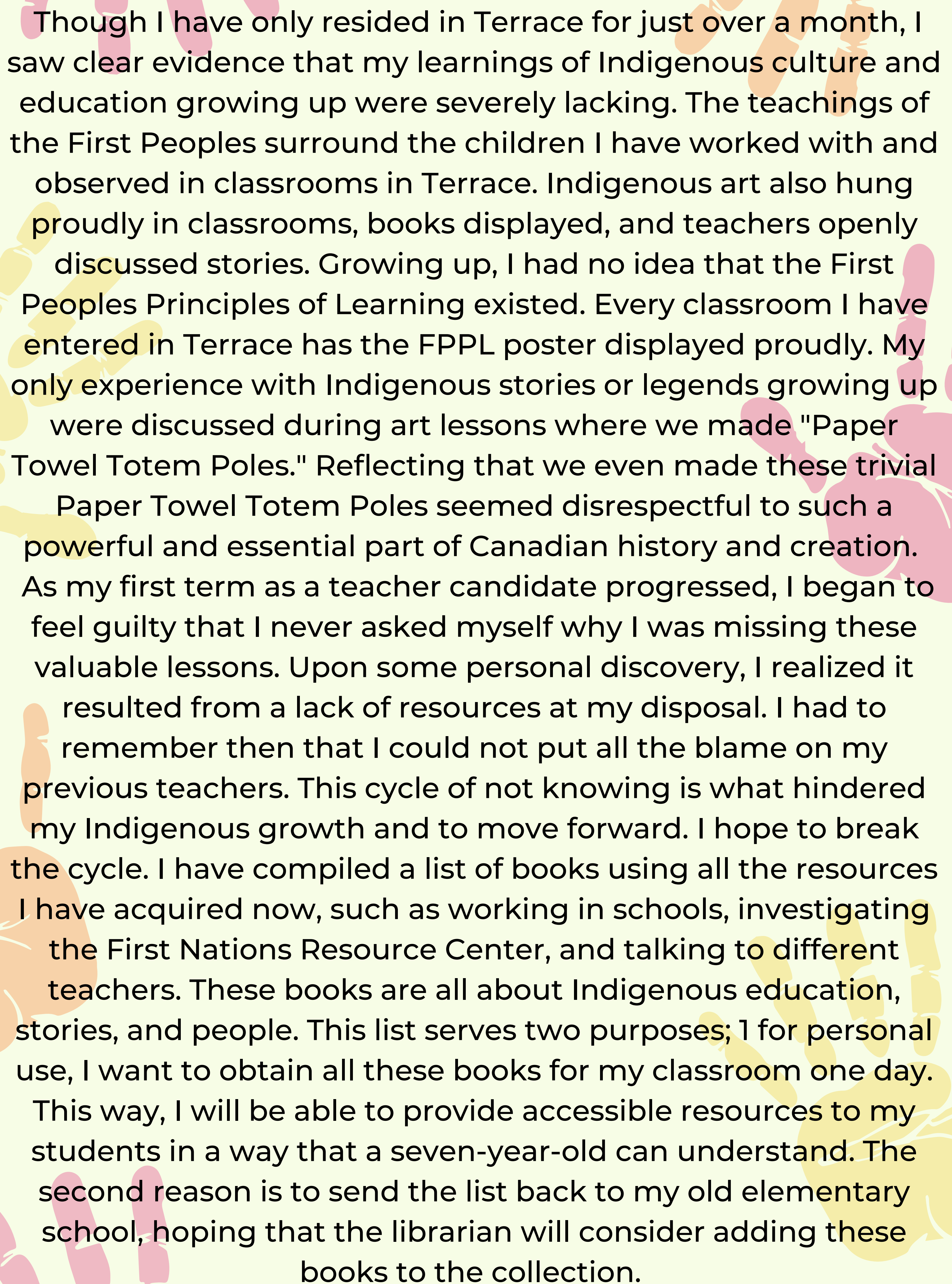
Education

K. Veldhoen



I had no idea that listening to Dr. Tina Fraser sing a traditional Indigenous song in class would stir my emotions. Every word she spoke danced around the room and lingered in my mind. Though I didn't know how to translate the song into English, it didn't matter. I was captivated and hung onto every word. That moment changed me, changed the way I saw and absorbed Indigenous stories and lessons. As an individual who grew up in a large city, my access to authentic Indigenous knowledge and education was limited. The use of the word 'limited' concerns the fact that anytime the word Indigenous was used in my class, it was during an art lesson or when we glanced through a textbook. Now that I have moved to the North to pursue a teaching degree, I have developed a better understanding of the need to incorporate Indigenous education into the classrooms, especially my future classroom. I have come to the understanding that being an active learner requires a sense of reciprocity, shaping what you experience (Castellano, 2000.) I can acknowledge that I am from a family of immigrants. Therefore I have no real roots in the Indigenous community or ties to the land. However, as a teacher in British Columbia, I know it is my responsibility to respect and value the history of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in Canada and the impact of the past on the present and the future (BC Teachers Council, 2019.) It is also my responsibility to follow the First Peoples Principles of Learning. Though each of the principles holds great importance, some have resonated with me more than others. The first is that learning recognizes the role of Indigenous knowledge (First Peoples Principles of Learning, n.d.) Throughout the term, we have learned different philosophies of education and their impact on our Western World. As a teacher candidate who grew up only surrounded and taught through a Westernized lens, I missed many valuable lessons.





Though I have only resided in Terrace for just over a month, I saw clear evidence that my learnings of Indigenous culture and education growing up were severely lacking. The teachings of the First Peoples surround the children I have worked with and observed in classrooms in Terrace. Indigenous art also hung proudly in classrooms, books displayed, and teachers openly discussed stories. Growing up, I had no idea that the First Peoples Principles of Learning existed. Every classroom I have entered in Terrace has the FPPL poster displayed proudly. My only experience with Indigenous stories or legends growing up were discussed during art lessons where we made "Paper Towel Totem Poles." Reflecting that we even made these trivial Paper Towel Totem Poles seemed disrespectful to such a powerful and essential part of Canadian history and creation. As my first term as a teacher candidate progressed, I began to feel guilty that I never asked myself why I was missing these valuable lessons. Upon some personal discovery, I realized it resulted from a lack of resources at my disposal. I had to remember then that I could not put all the blame on my previous teachers. This cycle of not knowing is what hindered my Indigenous growth and to move forward. I hope to break the cycle. I have compiled a list of books using all the resources I have acquired now, such as working in schools, investigating the First Nations Resource Center, and talking to different teachers. These books are all about Indigenous education, stories, and people. This list serves two purposes; 1 for personal use, I want to obtain all these books for my classroom one day. This way, I will be able to provide accessible resources to my students in a way that a seven-year-old can understand. The second reason is to send the list back to my old elementary school, hoping that the librarian will consider adding these books to the collection.



It is important to respect the values of Indigenous peoples, but it is also important to model the principles such as showing that learning is reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational. (First Peoples Principles of Learning, n.d.) Giving back to my old community is a way for me to model my understanding of this principle. I am hoping to braid my past life, a former student with no prior knowledge of Indigeneity and a teacher candidate with the tools and understanding of its importance to demonstrate my growth as a reflective practitioner of education. In addition, these books will hopefully allow students to understand the power and roles of Indigenous knowledge. You do not have to live in the North to have a reason to want to learn about Indigeneity. There is no better way than to create an opportunity for students to have the right resources to learn and experience Indigenous culture. This is my mission moving forward; though it may seem daunting, I know the impact it will have on future generations to come



(left) Gabby Lombardo - Kindergarten  
September 2001



Gabby Lombardo - UNBC Teacher Candidate  
October 2021





## References

Castellano, M. B. (2000). Updating Aboriginal traditions of knowledge. In G. J. S. Dei, B. L. Hall, & D. G. Rosenberg (Eds.), *Indigenous knowledge in global contexts*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

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<http://www.fnesc.ca/first-peoples-principles-of-learning/>