

TIPS FOR CONNECTING YOUR WORK WITH THE CURRICULUM

In these years of high stress and low budgets, I strive to show that my presentations are informative as well as entertaining, and relate to various areas of the curriculum – in language arts certainly, but also in social studies, science and history. As teachers are often overworked and I don't want to be a “here today and gone tomorrow” phenomenon, I leave them with written ideas and solid content for follow-up activities.

Here is one example.

My presentations on Northern Canada – Inuit and Dene cultures – fit well into many of the prescribed learning outcomes of the Social Studies curriculum Kindergarten to Grade Seven e.g.

- Assessing the relationship between cultures and their environments (grades 4 and 6)
- Analyzing how a society's artistic expression reflects its culture (grade 6)
- Demonstrating an appreciation of how the Inuit and Dene culture contributes to Canada and the world (grade 5)
- Describing and comparing different economic systems – northern and southern (grade 6)
- Evaluating mass media stereotypes of cultural groups and geographic regions (grade 6)
- Describing how peoples' basic needs are met in a variety of cultures (grade 4)
- Adaptations of animals to their environment (several grades)

In my slide presentations *Encounters with Animals of the North* and *Inuit Culture*, I tell the story of my trip from Hall Beach, Nunavut, to the floe edge in Foxe Basin with an Inuk father who is teaching his son to hunt walrus. He shoots the walrus, we haul it onto an ice pan, we cut up the hide for bags and rope, we cut up the meat and put it in the hide bags which later will be stored under the gravel of a terraced beach and after a fermentation process of several months, will be collected, perhaps at Christmas, and eaten as *igunak*. Hall Beach and neighboring Igloolik are known as the *igunak* capitals of the world. We prepare an impromptu walrus stew on the ice and my Inuk guide spices it with the braided intestines of the walrus, an efficient custom in a land with no trees, few if any vegetables, and expensive energy.

In class, we discuss contrasting cultures: how learning takes place, how energy needs are met in a harsh environment, sources of food (the walrus eats clams and the clams eat plants and Inuit obtain these nutrients either from eating the organism that eats the plant or eating the whole animal), how different parts of animals (walrus, caribou, muskox, polar bear et al) are used to provide food, clothing, tools, transportation, material for arts and crafts, both traditional and modern, how Inuit are trying to develop a modern economy yet at the same time retain much of their traditional knowledge. We discuss how attitudes to other cultures can change with

personal or vicarious experience of those cultures. Metaphorically, we put ourselves into other peoples' shoes, and hopefully, the southern city audience will no longer react to northern country aboriginals eating bloody, raw or preserved meat with "Yuck!"

As another example, my slide presentations on studying animals in British Columbia eg cougars, eagles, seals, bears, raccoons, apes, and raising wild animals at home and in the classroom – *Encounters with Animals at Home and in the Classroom* and *Books Begin in Backyards* - may be linked to many learning outcomes in many areas of the curriculum and for various ages and levels. I encourage students to write stories of their own animal encounters, of topics they find in their own backyard (literally and metaphorically), of reporting adaptations of animals to their environment, of interviewing animals on location at a zoo, a circus, game farm or the wild, of writing a Day in the Life of..., of writing a postcard from a certain animal to Lyn Hancock (or a student) away from home. These are all natural extensions of the content of my books.

The options are endless.