**Definitions of Key Terms and Terminology English First Peoples** 

**First Peoples:** First Peoples is a term used to describe First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples. It is comparable to “Aboriginal” or “Canadian Indigenous Peoples”

* **Aboriginal:** a term defined in the *Constitution Act* of f 1982 that refers to all Indigenous people in Canada, including status and non-status “Indians” (as identified by the Indian Act), Metis, and Inuit. This term has been commonly used by the provincial, territorial and federal governments, but is decreasing in use.
* **First Nations:** the self-determined political and organizational unit of the Aboriginal or Canadian Indigenous community that has the power to negotiate, on a government-to-government basis, with BC and Canada.
* **Metis:** a person of European and First Nations ancestry belonging to, or descended from, the people who established themselves in the Red, Assiniboine, and Saskatchewan river valleys during the nineteenth century, forming a cultural group distinct from both European and other Canadian Indigenous peoples. The Metis established homelands in various parts of Canada, with unique traditions, language (Michif), way of life, collective consciousness, and nationhood.
* **Inuit (singular: Inuk):** Original peoples whose origins are different from other Indigenous peoples in North America. The Inuit generally live in northern Canada and Alaska. The word Inuit means “the people” in the Inuit language of Inukut.
* **Indian:** a term used historically to describe the first inhabitants of North and South America and used to define indigenous people under the Indian Act. The term has generally been replaced by Aboriginal peoples, as defined in the Constitution Act of 1982.

**First Peoples’ Oral**

**Traditions:**

These are the means by which cultural transmission occurs over generations, other than through written records. Among First Peoples, oral traditions may consist of told stories, songs, and/or other types of distilled wisdom or information, often complemented by dance or various forms of visual representation such as carvings or masks. In addition to expressing spiritual and emotional truth (e.g., via symbol and metaphor), the oral traditions provides a record of literal truth (eg. regarding events and/or situations).

**Themes and Topics**

English First Peoples 10-12 help students to identify recurring themes that are often a part of the worldview of many First Peoples. The following list, though not finite, identifies some of these themes and topics:

* connection of people to the land and environment
* interdependence & connectedness of everything
* connection to spirit & spirituality
* sustainability & continuity
* responsibility to family and community
* importance of identity
* the nature of learning and connection to story
* transformation
* diversity
* tradition vs modernity
* importance of oral tradition
* relationship between individual, family, and community
* nature of knowledge
* experience and impacts of colonization
* decolonization
* humour and its role in First Peoples’ cultures
* intergenerational roles
* loss
* resilience and healing
* connection to ancestors
* importance of balance

**Interconnectedness**

First Peoples are diverse, and the unique knowledge each group holds is part of its individual worldview. However, they share a common belief that we are all connected to nature and to each other. This notion that we are all connected with everything in the world is expressed by many First Peoples in the phrase “All my relations.” Inherent in this view of the world is the understanding that everything in the universe has a place there and deserves respect. From this vantage point, people appreciate that what affects one person affects others as well.

**Connection to Place and Land**

Connection with place, with the land, is foundational to Indigenous perspectives. Each Indigenous group holds unique worldviews, knowledge, and stories according to its environment and territories. The concept of Place goes far beyond the physical space. It includes a crucial Sense of Place – the memories, emotions, histories, and spiritualities that bind the people to the land.

Five concepts of place have been identified, common to most First Peoples:

* Place is multidimensional. More than the geographical space, it also holds cultural, emotional, and spiritual spaces which cannot be divided into parts.
* Place is a relationship. Relationship encompasses both human relationships and the relationships between people and the land.
* Place is experiential. Experiences a person has on the land give it meaning.
* Place is local. While there are commonalities, each First Nation has a unique, local understanding of Place.
* Stories are connected to Place.

Place is land-based. Land is interconnected and essential to all aspects of culture. Making connections with place in English First Peoples courses is an integral part of bringing Indigenous perspectives into the classroom. Peoples’ perspectives are influenced by the land they are connected to. That means including experiential learning in local natural and cultural situations.

**Aboriginal Ways of Knowing and Being**

**Learning is connected to land, culture, and spirit.**

* We-the two-legged, four-legged, finned and feathered, plants and rocks-are all related.
* We must always practice reciprocity through acts of giving and receiving.

**Learning honours our Ancestors, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Descendants.**

* It respects and embraces ceremony, protocol, and teachings that are connected to the sacred medicines including tobacco, cedar, sage, and sweetgrass.
* Important teachings emerge through stories.

**Learning involves developing relationships, respecting distinct cultures, and honouring the perspective of others in our communities.**

* The deepest learning takes place through lived experience. It requires exploring our identities, learning from our mistakes, and having gratitude for our gifts.

**Learning is a journey that takes courage, patience and humility.**

* It is about striving to become a better human being and living with balance in body, mind, heart and spirit.