**Chapter Outline**

to accompany

*Indigenous Peoples within Canada: A Concise History*, Fifth Edition

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**Chapter 1: Origin Stories**

Chapter 1 embraces an inclusive ethnohistorical approach to understanding the historical and archaeological record of Indigenous origins and ecology. This approach incorporates the voice of Indigenous Peoples through an examination of four origin stories from each of the four cardinal directions: east, south, west and north. Concepts of Indigenous ecology are rooted in place and expressed through stories. These stories reflect the voices of the people themselves and offer new insights about the ways in which different nations place their beginnings. In some instances, the people are born of the immediate environment and function of plant or animal beings, while in other stories the people come about through a migration or a celestial event. While the epistemological significance of the oral tradition is made evident through these stories, they demonstrate more than just ontological perspectives; there are also lessons about the ways in which that knowledge is transmitted to future generations. Indigenous languages maintain such stories, knowledge and value systems.

The four origin stories in this chapter illustrate four aspects of meaning, therefore helping to demonstrate the richness and diversity of Indigenous cultures in Canada. In the Glooscap origin story from the east, there are reminders about the importance of natural resources as well as the importance of teaching. The Inuit story featuring Sedna, while focusing on natural resources as well, also highlights the vagaries of nature, the Inuit sense of time, and the importance of history studied over long periods. The story from the south features what might be thought of as a lowly white sucker fish; however, the oral tradition of the Odaawaak reveals the important role the white sucker plays in the renewal process of the Great Lakes. Therefore, this story provides a lesson about how an origin story can help a listener from today to understand something that was not explained in the documentary record. In the Haida story from the west, the trickster-transformer role of Raven represents an imperfect creator with human qualities; this story provides lessons about the difficulties of an uncertain world, which is also one of the more universal themes from Indigenous stories overall. This theme is prevalent in the more common Turtle Island stories, and often features a flood. Another more universal theme is that of the western movement of people as they settled on the land.

Various aspects of these stories also complement current ethnohistorical accounts, and emerging evidence continues to build on what we know. The current record does not contradict the main explanations for Indigenous origins exemplified in this chapter. These include an American genesis, and the arrival of peoples from elsewhere, including by water and a land bridge that connected Asia and North America during the late Pleistocene age. Thus, this first chapter asks readers to be open to reconsidering dominant historical narratives regarding First Peoples in the Americas. Readers can subsequently approach academic inquiry with a critical mind that opens history to further study through various academic approaches.