



Making a difference...together

Education and Appreciation Garnered through Listening and Exploring – E.A.G.L.E. Layers of the Forest

Educators Guide

Program at a Glance

On this interactive program we invite participants to explore through a First Peoples lens the cultural significance of plants & wildlife, thriving within the different layers of the forest. The cultural uses, lessons and values linked with respectful hunting and gathering by local First Peoples will amaze students. We begin with a traditional welcome and territory acknowledgement then share the history and importance of the site to the First Peoples. We will explore from the forest floor to the canopy, while sharing the interconnection First Peoples have with the plants and creatures thriving within this ecosystem. Through hands-on engaging activities and the oral tradition of storytelling, students will develop an understanding of how First Peoples use available resources in a respectful and sustainable way.



In this program, your students will...

- Discover the unique value that all living things have.
- Explore the forest and see how it provides many resources to First Peoples.
- Develop an understanding of why First Peoples feel it is necessary to apply cultural ceremonies and protocols to hunting and gathering in forests.
- Learn and appreciate how First Peoples passed down their knowledge through cultural gatherings and storytelling.

Curriculum Connections

Our place-based school programs directly relate to the K-5 curricula. Below you will find some big ideas, curricular competencies and contact that will be addressed on your program.

Big ideas:

- Living things have life cycles adapted to their environment (Gr 2)
- Through listening and speaking, we connect with others and share our world (Gr 2)
- Local actions have global consequences and global actions have local consequences (Gr 2)
- Living things are diverse, can be grouped, and interact in their ecosystems (Gr 3)
- Indigenous knowledge is passed down through oral history, traditions, and collective memory (3)

Curricular Competencies: Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives

- First Peoples knowledge of life cycles. (2)
- Recognize First Peoples stories, songs, and art as ways to share knowledge for future generations (Gr 2)
- Sustainably gathering plants and hunting with adherence to cultural protocols i.e.: only taking what is needed, etc. (Gr 2)
- The interconnection between living and non-living things in the local environment (Gr 3)
- Our sacred responsibility to care for the local environment, i.e.: stewardship (Gr 3)
- Information shared from the local First Peoples community and Elders (Gr 3)

Curricular Competencies: Social Studies and Science:

- Demonstrate curiosity and a sense of wonder about the world (Gr 2)
- Compare observations with those of others (Gr 2)
- Consider some environmental consequences of their actions (Gr 2)
- How can you share your observations and ideas about living things in your local environment to help someone else learn about place? (Gr 2)
- Show awareness of how story in First Peoples cultures connects people to family and community (Gr 2 and 3)
- Exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding (Gr 2 and 3)
- Experience and interpret the local environment (Gr 2 and 3)
- Express and reflect on personal experiences of place (Gr 2 and 3)
- Demonstrate curiosity about the natural world (Gr 3)
- Show awareness of how story in First Peoples culture connects people to land (Gr 3)
- Make observations about living and non-living things in the local environment (Gr 3)
- Explain why people, events, or places are significant to various individuals and groups (Gr 3)

- Identify some simple environmental implications of theirs and others' actions (Gr 3)
- Identify First Peoples perspectives and knowledge as sources of information (Gr 3)

Content:

- First Peoples use of their knowledge of life cycles (Gr 2)
- Relationships between people and the environment in different communities (Gr 2)
- The knowledge of local First Peoples of ecosystems (Gr 3)
- Biodiversity in the local environment (Gr 3)
- Energy is needed for life (Gr 3)
- Relationship between humans and their environment (Gr 3)
- The importance of maintaining Cultural Safety.
 - Cultural safety: A culturally safe environment is physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually safe. There is recognition of, and respect for, the cultural identities of others, without challenge or denial of an individual's identity, who they are, or what they need. Culturally unsafe environments diminish, demean, or disempower the cultural identity and well-being of an individual.
 - *College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia - Feb.*

Suggested Pre-Trip Activities

- Share personal stories and experiences about visiting the forest (i.e.: birding)
- Explore traditional stories of the forest from an Indigenous Perspective.
- Draw a picture of your favourite forest creature and describe why you like it. Determine where this forest creature lives in the forest (up high in the tree or low to the ground).
- Discover native plants such as salal or cedar in your school yard or backyard.
- Research local First Nations' histories and gain a deeper understanding of the overlap and interconnectedness in the area.

Follow-up Activities

- Write a paragraph and/or draw a picture that reflects your favourite part of the program.
- Plan and host a gathering for another class where the students have an opportunity to share what they have learned with other students.

Background Information on Indigenous Perspectives

Indigenous Peoples of this area have lived on these lands for countless generations and always with a sense of coexistence and interconnection. This relationship with the land, deeply rooted in harmony,

respect and gratitude inspires the belief that all natural resources are considered as gifts versus an entitlement.

Cultural protocols demonstrating a commitment to conservation were firmly established. From hunting and harvesting to fishing and gathering, these guidelines always ensure respect and gratitude for all 'gifts' from the environment. The protocol of taking only what is needed is faithfully applied today, evidenced by the culturally modified cedar trees in several Regional Parks.

When Indigenous Peoples observe the layers of the forest, they are always reminded that we should never take for granted the many gifts around us.

The following are examples of applied protocols:

- Prior to the arrival of Europeans, hunting on Mount Work was an annual event, with the cultural protocol to wait until the ground was one colour. This was to ensure a wounded animal could be easily tracked and a life would not be wasted. Black Tailed Deer still abound in Mount Work Regional Park.
- Some of the trees in Francis King Regional Park are over 500 years old and to the Ləkʷəŋən Peoples, cutting down a tree of this age is equivalent to removing a history keeper from the forest. Therefore, ceremonies were performed to acknowledge the life of the tree before it became a canoe or house-post.
- Following the trails left behind by bears, deer, and elk, guided Indigenous Peoples of this territory to fresh water, medicine and trap lines. Leaving these pathways was deemed to be disrespectful to animals relying on the forest floor for homes and food.
- Since time immemorial eagles have been revered by all First Peoples across Canada. This is why they are never hunted on the Northwest Coast. The finding of an eagle feather indicates that something good is about to happen, i.e.: the arrival of a baby, a new member of the community.

When the 'Newcomers' arrived, the impacts on Indigenous ways of being and knowing were devastating.

- Forests of trees were cut down indiscriminately, without consideration for the habitats of animals or surrounding plants.
- Diseases spread widely throughout the province decimating the populations.
- Governance structures that had stood the test of time began to collapse.
- Cultural practices, protocols and the speaking of Indigenous languages were outlawed.

Cultural Renewal

“Despite repeated attempts to ban traditional practices and assimilate Aboriginal People, Aboriginal culture did not disappear. Rather, it was held in sacred trust by the elders, who are now helping to rekindle traditional concepts and practices.

Today, centuries-old traditions - dances, songs, and feasts - are being passed along to the young, providing them with a sense of cultural pride, community, and purpose in life.

Traditional Aboriginal culture was based on spirituality, which was meant to be a guiding force in a person’s life. Attempts to destroy this force have failed. The cultural bonds of Aboriginal peoples have not and never will be broken.”

- Excerpt from Author, Diane Silvey’s book - *The Kids Book of Indigenous Peoples in Canada*

Additional Resources

Teacher References

Turner, Nancy. Royal BC Museum Handbook, Plant Technology Of First Peoples in British Columbia. Royal BC Museum 2017

Turner, Nancy J. and Hebda, Richard J. Saanich Ethnobotany, Culturally Important Plants of the WSÁNEĆ People. Royal BC Museum 2012

Stewart, Hilary. Cedar. Douglas & McIntyre 2013

Wall Kimmerer, Robin. Braiding Sweetgrass – Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants. Milkweed Editions 2013

Province of British Columbia Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in the Classroom. Queen’s Printer for British Columbia 2015

Student References

Silvey, Diane. The Kids Book of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. Kids Can Press 2005

Goade, Michaela. Berry Song. Hachette Book Group Inc., Little, Brown and Company 2022

- For an extensive list of student resources, we recommend visiting the website of the First Nations Education Steering Committee (www.fnesc.ca) and accessing their 2016 publication: **Authentic First Peoples Resources for Use in K-9 Classrooms**.

