

Native Plant Walk

LEARNING ACTIVITY #1: Native Plant Walk

 Overview	Students will spend time walking around the school yard or nearby forest, field, or river, learning and thinking about the plants and animals they find. The students are invited to engage with their senses, listening to birds, smelling the flowers, touching plants, tasting samples listed below, and witnessing their environment (OWL: Observe, Witness, Listen).
 Materials	• Basket, scissors • Journals, pencils (optional) • Preserved foods, i.e. wild berry jam (optional) • Yarrow skin salve (optional)
 Time	60 minutes

SEASONALITY:    

This lesson can be done at any time of year, though the Spring and Fall would allow for more plants to be examined as their leaves, flowers, and perhaps fruits may be available.

1. Opening (15 minutes): Acknowledge the traditional territory of the land you are on. Sit with the students in a circle. This could be done inside or outside.

a. Optional: Share one of the stories listed on page 45 from the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

b. Introduce yourself and personal history of where your family comes from. Invite students to respond to the following questions:

- Where are you and your ancestors from? What is your connection to the land?
- Highlight the diversity of cultures and people within the school community. Note how the diversity makes our classroom rich, and mirrors the diversity we will witness within different plants and animals.

c. Introduce the topic of seven generations:

- Are you familiar with the Seventh Generation Principle? “In our every deliberation, we must consider the

impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.” More information on the [Seventh Generation Principle](#).

- Our actions have had many impacts, and we want future generations to have the plants and animals and world that we do now, so we must protect the land.

d. Inquire about past experiences:

- What plants do you know? Have you ever eaten a wild plant?
- Have you ever seen a wild animal? How did it make you feel?
- How can we be good guests on this land? How can we protect wild spaces so other species can live?

e. Introduce the language (if using):

- When we go into the outdoor space, we will be naming the plants and animals that we see both in English and in the native language to the First Nations here (optional), but there is more richness to the creatures than just their names (for more on this, see *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer). Optional: Connect to your

school’s Indigenous Education worker or local Elder for more language options.

b. Themes to consider, the 5 R’s:

- Respect** for the environment, including each other
- Responsibility** of this **Relationship** through the practice of **Reciprocity**
- Reverence** to be grateful

2. In the outdoor space (35 minutes):

- Guidelines:** This is a time to invite sensory experiences, and students can use all of their senses in this learning experience.
- Samples (optional):** If there are berry plants, share some wildberry jam so students can taste what will be growing there (if it is the same berry). If there is yarrow growing, share the skin salve made from it.
- Discussion prompts:** Use the following prompts to guide discussion based on what you see outside in your school yard or nearby forest, field, or river. Pick and choose the following prompts based on your local context and experience.:

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- i. **Indigenous plants (for south-coastal regions):** How were/are the Indigenous peoples in this place in relationship with these plants? When and how were they grown and harvested?
 1. **Berries:** There are 23 different coastal berries including Salmonberry, Thimble Berry, and Oregon Grape. Do any of these grow here?
 2. **Edible plants:** What other native edible plants do you know? Do you think any of these are here?
 3. **Crafting:** Some plants can be grown and then crafted into other items and offered as gifts or for trade. Do you know of any of these plants and what they could be crafted into? (ie cedar, tobacco, depending on the local Nation's customs)
- ii. **Pesticides and herbicides:** What happens when we remove native plants using chemicals? How might it affect other creatures like the birds and insects who eat it?
- iii. **Insects:** Insects are a sign of a healthy environment. What evidence do we see that insects are here? How can we be good stewards and foster healthy ecosystems? For example, planting yarrow (a biocontrol plant) or nasturtiums (that are food for aphids). Birds, bats, and dragonflies eat insects, and butterflies need hosting and nectar plants ([Pollinator Curriculum](#)).
- iv. **Interconnectedness:** Everything that we do has an impact on the earth. It is all about creating relationships. Taking care of our own bodies is also part of taking care of the environment. For example, being outside like we are now is good for your mental health. What other ways

can you think of that help connect you to the land? For example, swimming in the ocean, witnessing the night sky, walking the land in your bare feet, or watching the clouds pass by.

3. Closing reflection, gathering class in a circle (10 minutes):

- a. How can you leave a small ecological footprint? What different choices can you make that can help our plant and animal friends?
- b. What plants did we see today? What insects did we see today? What birds did we hear today?
- c. What did you learn today? What do you want to learn more about?
- d. Share what you learned today as the teacher, demonstrating that adults are always learning too.



Additional Garden Activities

Other hands-on ways to build relationships between the students and plants (other than eating them):

- Make a herbarium (see page 159 in [FNESC/ FNSEA Secondary Science First Peoples Teacher Resource Guide](#))
- Making crafts with harvested plants (i.e. plants rubbings, collages, pressing leaves and flowers)
- Using plants as weaving materials (i.e. English Ivy or making Pine Needle baskets)
- School Garden themed beds:
 - Weaving plants ([Traditional Aboriginal Weaving with Wool and Plant Materials: Artists in the Classroom](#))
 - Sensory garden ([Creating a Sensory Garden](#))
 - Fruits and vegetables ([Farm to School BC](#))
- [School Garden Crop Planning Guide](#)
 - Indigenous medicinal and food plants ([Food Plants of Coastal First Peoples](#) by Nancy J. Turner)
- Culinary herbs ([Farm to School BC School Garden Crop Planning Guide](#))
- Butterfly gardens ([Lower Mainland - Selecting Plants for Pollinators](#))
- Tea-making garden ([Surrey school district tea-making recipes](#))

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Curricular Connections

The K-12 curricular connections listed below are not exhaustive, but reflect the main subject areas that align with this lesson. Extension activities could also be included in Math (counting, measuring), ADST (food studies), Art (visual representations like drawings), and Science (plant growth, experiments).

ELA	Kindergarten: Explore oral storytelling processes
	Grade 3: Develop awareness of how story in First Peoples cultures connects people to land
	Grade 9: Recognize the influence of place in First Peoples and other Canadian texts
PHE	Healthy and active living (K-12)
Social Studies	Grade 2: Diverse characteristics of communities and cultures in Canada and around the world, including at least one Canadian First Peoples community and culture
	Grade 5: First Peoples land ownership and use
	Grade 7: Social, political, legal, governmental, and economic systems and structures, including at least one indigenous to the Americas
Science	BC First Peoples, Grade 12: Traditional territories of the B.C. First Nations and relationships with the land
	Questioning and predicting: Demonstrate curiosity about the natural world; Observe objects and events in familiar contexts (K-9)
	Processing and analyzing data and information: Experience and interpret the local environment; Identify First Peoples perspectives and knowledge as sources of information (K-9)



CREDITS

This lesson was developed by Lori Snyder, a Metis Herbalist and Educator, who is a refugee of the Red River Metis Nation and was born and raised on the Coast Salish lands. She co-coordinated the Indigenous Foodscapes project from 2017-2019.

Lori resides on the traditional and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

This lesson was originally taught on the traditional and unceded land of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, and the language and story shared here are from these people. By highlighting the language and stories of different Nations, we celebrate the long history and current relationships with the Indigenous people in BC. Connect with your school's Indigenous Education Coordinator for more information if necessary.

xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Languages: To incorporate language into the lesson, here are several language resources: [Skwxwú7mesh Sníchim language](#), [hən̓q̓əmin̓əŋ̓ Alphabet](#), [Squamish Atlas](#), [North Shore Culture Compass](#), and a map of [First Nations Languages of BC](#).

xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Stories:

1. xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam): This is the story of the [Cedar tree](#). More stories and resources from the [xʷməθkʷəy̓əm \(Musqueam\) Nation](#).
2. Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish): [The Two-Headed Serpent: A Story from the Squamish Nation](#)
3. səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh): [Legend of the Wolf story by Dan George](#)