

Connecting with Nature Program Guide

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Introduction

This is the instructor manual for the Connecting with Nature program that provides the logistics, materials, teaching tips and activity instructions for the program.

Objective

This Connecting with Nature program is intended to enhance children's bond and relationship with nature through exploring, experiencing and connecting with nature within our communities.

Location

The program is intended to be situated in natural outdoor spaces within the school grounds. This space should have an open grassy area for the students to explore along with some trees, gardens or shrubbery. I also encourage its use in any outdoor setting such as parks, backyards, and conservation areas for any children's programs that wishes to connect children with nature such as family bonding activities, after school programs and summer camps.

Age

It is intended for use with children ages seven to ten but I believe that many of these activities would be well received by younger children.

Format

The program has been divided into nine lessons that each contain roughly three activities, in addition to an opening and closing circle. Each lesson can be taught in one sitting which is how it is intended, allocating roughly two to three hours per lesson. For those under time restrictions these activities could be split up throughout the week. The program was designed with the intention that adaptations would be made by the instructor based on their outdoor space, the age of the children, time constraints and various weather conditions.

Weather

I would encourage that the program operates rain or shine, making use of tarps and warm and waterproof clothing, as this allows children to fully immerse themselves within the variable and seasonal natural weather patterns.

Materials

This program is designed for resource scarce settings requiring minimal props for these activities. A list of items each student should have for each lesson:

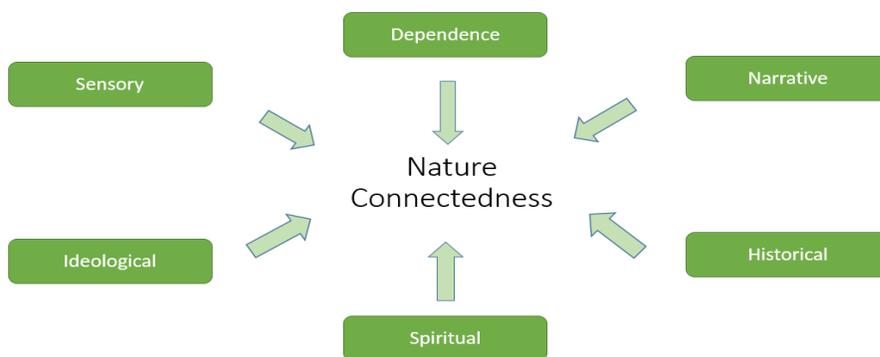
- Nature nametag
- Nature journal
- Pencil
- Hat (sun hat or winter hat)
- Sunscreen
- Waterproof Jacket
- Rain boots
- Umbrella

Recommendations

- I recommend that a letter is sent out to the student's parents prior to the start of the program, providing a description and rationale for the program. This letter should encourage the parents to engage with their children at home about the program by reviewing their nature journal and activities they participated in.

Program Framework

The program was designed using a modified version of Cross's seven steps to place attachment as illustrated in the diagram below.



Sensory. This is the process where you experience place through four of your senses: sight, smell, touch, and sound.

Narrative. Stories are a powerful tool that facilitate the sharing of knowledge, experiences and emotions. It provides the opportunity for bonding with nature through the telling and hearing of stories about nature or individuals experience in nature.

Historical. The historical process uses knowledge and stories about the past to enhance one's understanding of the nature surrounding them, where it came from and where it is today. It also includes stories and information about our ancestors who have inhabited the land for centuries. as a way of bonding to nature.

Spiritual. The spiritual process is developing a deep sense of belonging with nature that connects our soul or our deepest self to our natural surroundings. It is an internal sense of being that is described as "oneness between self and place".

Ideological. The ideological process is founded on an ethical code that determines appropriate relationships between people and nature. It is an understanding of how to live in and alongside nature in a way that is sustainable and respectful.

Dependence. Dependence is a functional connection based specifically on the individual physical connection to a setting. This process emphasizes people's physical reliance on nature for sustenance and well-being. It illustrates an interdependence between humans and nature, how we are dependent on nature and how nature can depend on us to survive and prosper.

Each activity indicates which components of this framework are being activated along with the learning objectives and instructions for the activity. Some activities are also provided with additional teaching tips or talking points that can be used when engaging with the students.

Program Format Rationale

The first half of the lessons focus on the exploring and experiencing many aspects of nature to get the students in touch with and reflect upon their thoughts and feelings while bonding with nature. This is an important piece required for building a relationship with nature. The second half of the program demonstrates the interconnectedness between all living things, highlighting our dependence on the earth and how our actions have implications on all living things. This is a critical second piece that helps instill gratitude for the earth's gifts and an understanding of how human and environmental health is indistinguishable. These two components are both integral for developing a connection with nature.

The program starts off by first initiating a special relationship with nature by assigning nature names, in which they can associate with and embody throughout the program. They also select a special sit spot where they will go to individually explore, feel and reflect on their experiences and special bond with nature. It begins with a general introduction to experiencing nature in our communities by exploring and reflecting on what is nature and what it means to us and the types of nature that are present on the school grounds.

A first nations component is introduced early on in the program to teach traditional beliefs about the human and nature relationship and is reinforced throughout the program with traditional Indigenous stories. Throughout the lessons, a variety of sensory activities are presented that either engage all of their senses at once or focus in on one heightened sense through imaginative or explorative activities. Throughout the program themes of gratitude, respect, appreciation and care are laced throughout in the exercises and reflective discussions. There is diversity among the lessons on the nature items that are in focus, such as edible plants in the garden, other plants such as trees, flowers and shrubs, large animals and small insects. The focus of the activities range in scope from the small details of a leaf to the large diversity of insects, plants and animals in the school grounds.

Lesson 1

Welcoming Circle

Learning Objective:

- Students will get a brief introduction to the program
- Students will get an introduction to First Nations traditions

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 5 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree or near a garden

Instructions: With the students sitting in a giant circle, introduce yourself and the program. Begin today's lesson by discussing the importance of opening and closing circle and the use of the talking stick and how it is a first nations tradition. You will then describe the opening First Nations poem called *The Morning Prayer* that will be recited at the beginning of each lesson. Recite a portion of the poem and have the students repeat after you, so they can learn it. Feel free to add actions to it if you wish. I suggest you write the poem on the first inner page of each of the student's nature journal (which are introduced in the next activity). Then provide a general overview of today's lesson.

Talking Points: We will begin and end each lesson with a talking circle. The circle is an important first nations symbol that represents the circular movements seen in nature such as the earth, sun, moon and planets being round, the rising and setting sun is in a circular motion and the seasons form a circular movement. A talking circle is a First Nations collaborative learning method used to enhance communication. Every person in the circle brings a piece of truth to the circle, where we learn from other's perspectives and experiences. It was traditionally used as a place of comfort, wisdom and security that is a sacred place to share thoughts and feelings. The talking stick is a special first nations tool that empowers you to speak from your heart. When you hold the talking stick is when it is your turn to speak about your beliefs, thoughts and stories.

At the beginning of every lesson we will begin with a special poem by the Coast Salish First Nations people that inhabited this land long ago. This poem will help us to recenter our thoughts and emotions before beginning with the daily activities to reflect upon our gratitude for the earth. Today we are going to identify how we related to nature by having a nature naming ceremony. We will then do a few activities where we explore what nature is, what it means to us and the nature we can see on the school grounds.

Poem: The Morning Prayer – By Brandon Bob

The wind listens
 Hear my heart
 Hear my spirit
 Hear my words

The water cleanses
 Clean my heart

Clean my spirit
Clean my mind
The animals guide me
Guide my heart
Guide my spirit
Guide my mind
Mother earth feeds me
Feed my heart
Feed my spirit
Feed my mind

Nature Names

Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn to explore how they relate to or feel about nature items
- Students will begin to embody their nature character, facilitating the initial steps to connecting with nature.

Framework: Spiritual, Ideology

Materials: Paper, scissors, writing utensil, hat/bag, drum (optional), name tags, journals

Time: 30 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree or near a garden

Introduction: Today is a special day. Today they will each chose a nature name for themselves that best represents the things they love about nature. Each name is a powerful animal or plant in nature with fantastic and important skills. You might pick a plant, bird, insect or mammal, but remember, the name you select may have something to teach you, something very special, because it's only for you. This will be your special nature name throughout the program that you will embody each time we come together.

Instructions: Students will split off into pairs and will each take turns describing to their partner the things they love about nature and what nature items they love most. Based on each student's descriptions they will brainstorm a nature name that best represents their love for nature. The same process is done for the other partner. Once both set of partners has selected a nature name for themselves they will be given a name tag where they are to write their nature name and decorate it how they wish. They will also be given a special nature journal that they will use throughout the program to document the activities and act as a memory for all that they experience and learn throughout the nine weeks. Please encourage them to use it on their own time as well to reflect about their memories, thoughts and feelings in nature. Once everyone has finished making their name tag the students will get into one big circle for the nature naming ceremony. Each child is to announce their name to the rest of the group and the rest of the class will respond with "Hello nature Friend the [insert nature name]". To make it more fun you can add music or a drum beat.

If the students are struggling with this activity, here are some probing questions:

- What is your favourite animal?
- What is your favourite flower or plant?
- What is your favourite fruit or vegetable?
- What is your favourite season?

Finding Nature

Learning Objectives:

- Students will have an enhanced awareness of the nature that is present in their everyday surroundings.

Framework: Sensory

Materials: Paper, pencils, student's journals, talking stick, magnifying glasses, binoculars

Time: 30 minutes

Location: Entire outdoor area of the school grounds

Instructions: Ask the students to walk around the school grounds independently to document all the nature they can find. Provide some fun props that will facilitate their exploration such as magnifying glasses and binoculars or instruct the students to put their fingers around their eyes like pretend binoculars as a tool to noticing nature around them. However, they understand nature to be, is what they will document in their nature journals. Leave it open ended at the beginning to allow for different interpretations. Instruct them to use all of their senses while completing this activity (sight, smell, and sound). They are to walk slowly, to make sure not to miss anything. They can document the nature items they see by drawing a picture, make notes about the sounds, smells, colours and location of the item so they can find it again if they wish. It is also important to provide some guidelines on how to interact with nature, to observe but do not disturb. Once they have had sufficient time to explore, bring them back into a group circle to discuss what they found, using the talking stick.

Reflection Questions:

- What kinds of nature did you see on your walk?
- What is nature? Is it anything that grows? Is it air and water that flows? Is it the creatures with two and four or more legs?
- What nature items were missing on your walk?
- What would make your schoolyard more natural?
- Do you think nature is important?
- How are we connected to nature?

Sit Spot

Learning Objectives:

- Students will realize the items and features of nature they enjoy spending time around
- Students will build a connection with place by getting to know their special place in all kinds of weather, many times of day, throughout the seasons, and from a variety of their own states of mind.
- Students will establish an anchor in their life - a place to settle down, cultivate present-moment awareness and a quieter mind.

Framework: Spiritual, Sensory

Materials: Journals, pencils

Time: 20 minutes

Location: Any outdoor area of the school grounds

Instructions: The students will walk around the school grounds and find a place on their own away from others that they feel is special. This will be their special sit spot that they will go to throughout the program. Before they select a sit spot it is important to explain how this exercise is a traditional First Nations practice that was used to refocus the mind and spirit through opening up their senses to allow the surrounding to become apart of them. This was a very special practice used to connecting and feeling apart of the natural world. Once they have found their special place, they are to name the spot. This name can represent their feelings while at this spot, the rationale for why they chose this spot or any name they wish to use. Have them sit at their sit spot and open up all of their senses to fully experience their sit spot. Once they have taken a few minutes to take in their sit spot, have them answer the following questions in their journal:

- What drew you to this place?
- What are the things you first noticed about your sit spot?
- How do you feel being here?
- Describe what you see, hear, and smell around you.

Nature Journaling

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn to express and reflect upon the role nature plays in our life
- Students will deepen one's connection to nature and self.
- Students will develop a heightened awareness of the relationship between place and self.

Framework: Spiritual, Narrative, Historical

Materials: Drum, nature journal, pencil, talking stick

Time: 30 minutes

Location: Grassy open area and the students sit spots

Instructions: While in a circle students are asked to think of a powerful and unforgettable memory that they experienced while in nature. They are to write about this experience in detail in their journals. Provide the students with a personal example of a powerful experience you had in nature and share it with the class. Give the students time to think of a memory. Once they have all thought of that activity do a visualization exercise to bring this memory to life:

- Close your eyes and imagine this special place
- Where are you? Are you sitting or standing?
- When you look around, what do you see? What is in front of you, forests, a river, an open meadow? What are the colours you see?
- What can you hear close to you? If you listen into the distance what sounds of nature do you hear?
- Are there animals that you can see or sense?
- What is the season? Are you warm, cold or just right?
- How do you feel while in this special place?
- What did you learn about this place in nature about yourself? What did you learn about what nature means to you?

Once you've completed the visualization activity they are to go to their sit spot and now write about this experience and how they felt during or after this experience. You can walk around the school yard to each child to see if they need guidance with this activity. After you leave about ten minutes to write about this experience you can gather the group by banging a drum and use the talking stick to have students sharing their nature experience if they wish to share.

Circle of Thanks

Learning Objective:

- Students will reflect on what they learned in today's lesson
- Students will learn to express feelings of gratitude for nature's gifts

Framework: Dependence, Spiritual, Ideology

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree or near a garden

Instructions: Conclude each session with everyone taking turns around the circle using the talking stick to state one thing they enjoyed about today's lesson, one thing they like about their nature names and one thing in nature that they are thankful for.

Lesson 2

Welcoming Circle

Learning Objective:

- Students will reflect on their experience from the last lesson

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree or near a garden

Instructions: First open up this lesson with reciting the poem and having the class repeat after you. You will remind the students the activities that were completed last week (the naming ceremony, finding their sit spot, defining what nature is and nature journaling). Then facilitate a discussion (using the talking stick) to allow the students to reflect on the activities and discussions that were had at the last session. You will finish opening circle by introducing the story that will be told in the next activity.

Poem: The Morning Prayer – By Brandon Bob

The wind listens

 Hear my heart

 Hear my spirit

 Hear my words

The water cleanses

 Clean my heart

 Clean my spirit

 Clean my mind

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 Guide my heart

 Guide my spirit

 Guide my mind

Mother earth feeds me

 Feed my heart

 Feed my spirit

 Feed my mind

Reflection Question:

- From last week's discussion, how would you define nature?
- What kinds of nature items did you see last week during your exploration walk?
- What did you learn from the nature journaling last week about your experience with nature?

Story Introduction: Nature has inspired people to express their relationship to the land through creative means such as story telling, drawing art and making music. A long time ago Indigenous people lived right here on this land, called the Musqueam people, where they would fish right here in this ocean and use the plants in our neighborhood for medicine. The Musqueam people have a saying:

We the Musqueam people are united and strong,
We have good hearts and will work together to do the right thing.
We will use our Teachings to the Musqueam people will be alright.
We will care about our elders, the ones and everything on this earth.
That way we will be looking after the ones that come after us.
Then the Musqueam will continue to be strong.

What do you think this means?

First Nations people used stories as a way of passing down important values, beliefs and lessons to their children. Each band has their own traditional stories, that represent their personal experiences with the land. Today we will begin with a story that called *Little Water and the gift of the animals* by the Seneca People who are Iroquoian-speaking people who resided south of Lake Ontario.

Little Water and the gift of the animals (Seneca)

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn about the traditional stories of the First Nations people
- Students will learn about what nature does for our survival
- Students will deepen their gratitude for the gifts nature gives us

Framework: Narrative, Historical

Time: 10 minute

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree or near a garden

Introduction: First Nations people rely on stories as a means to pass life lessons and cultural values on to the next generation. These stories are heavily influenced by their connection with the land and is a great way to learn about the history of Indigenous people.

Instructions: Have the student lie down on the grass with their feet close to one another making a giant sunflower shape.

1. Have them close their eyes and take slow deep breathes
2. Instruct them to bring awareness to their body resting on the earth and the heaviness of their body, sinking into and becoming one with the earth
3. Feel the wind blowing over their face

Story: *There once lived among the Seneca a young hunter named Little Water. He knew the forest and the animals so well that he could always find food for his people. But he never took*

more than was needed and he always gave thanks. Often he went into the woods and did not hunt at all. Among his people it was said that he had a special gift – he could talk with the animals. He never tired of learning from them for there was always more to know. Wolf was his special friend. Sometimes wolf seemed to know what little water was thinking without a word passing between them.

One summer Little Water was away from the village for such a long time. The leaves started to change their colours. That means he was needed at home to help with the harvest, but he did not mind for it was a happy time of year. When the corn and other vegetables were safely stored for the winter, there would be a festival with drums, dancing and great feast.

Little Water said goodbye to Wolf and hurried home. But as he approached the village he was puzzled by the silence. No one was in the cornfields. No children played by the lakeshore. No smoke came from the cooking fires in the longhouses. Then, at the water's edge, Little Water was relieved to see his grandfather. Stone Owl was also the medicine man of the village and the people depended on him for wisdom and confidence, as well as for his medicine. But now he sat, bend over and staring at the ground, as if he did not know what to do.

“What’s the matter, Grandfather?” Little Water called. “Where is everyone?” Stone Owl looked up and tried to smile. “I was coming to look for you, Little Water,” he said. “A terrible sickness has come over the village. My medicine does not cure it. Everyone is too weak to work. If we do not die from the sickness we will starve this winter. There is no one to harvest the corn. We need your help.” “I will work the fields by myself,” Little Water offered. “No,” said Stone Owl. “We need you for something else. It is said that the animals know a cure for this sickness. Go back to the forest. Ask for their help.”

The gentle autumn weather turned violent just as Little Water began his search. Rain poured down in blinding sheets and the wind blew wet leaves from the trees. Little Water tried calling the animals but they could not hear him over the sound of the wind and the rain. Towards evening, just when Little Water was hoping the rain would stop, it got worse. The sky was split by lightning and wind drove the rain against his face like pine needles. Little Water stumbled on, almost blind. He did not see the cliff in front of him and he fell over the cliff.

The storm passed on. When the moon came out it cast a soft light over the forest. In the shadows below the cliff Little Water lay against the rock where he had fallen. Wolf, out on a night hunt, was the first animal to come across Little Water. “Wake up, my friend,” Wolf said, and licked Little Water’s face. But little Water showed no sign of life. Wolf raised his head to the sky and let forth a howl for help that rang through the night. “Come, my brothers,” cried Wolf. “Our friend Little Water needs us.” The moon shone brighter and lit the paths and waters leading to wolf.

Many traveled all night to reach Wolf. Bear arrived at dawn and helped wolf move Little Water to a more comfortable spot. Deer, Hawk, and Turtle watched, worried about their friend. Otter, the last to arrive, asked what had happened. “Little Water was searching for us when he fell,” Wolf told the. “his people are sick, They need our help to get well.” “We must do what we can,” said Bear. Turtle agreed. “Little Water has always shown us kindness and respect.” “Each of us must give a part of ourselves,” said Otter. “We must tell him our secret medicines.”

As he lay unconscious, Little Water saw the animals moving over him in a great dance of life. He learned the secrets that would save his people. Deer who lost his antlers every winter and grew

new ones every spring was the first to speak. “The antlers of the deer will begin the renewal of life.” He said. Then it was Bear’s turn: “The claws of the bear will give strength” “The feathers of the hawk will grant peace,” Hawk said. “The shell of the turtle will make the music.” Turtle said. Otter spoke next. “The skin of the otter will make a medicine bag to hold the magic. Wear it around your neck.” Wolf was the last to speak, as they all swirled around Little Water. “I will give you my song. When you hear me sing to Grandmother Moon, you will know we are watching over you.”

In the morning Little Water woke just in time to see the animals leaving. At first he was confused, trying to remember what had happened. Then he saw Wolf sitting beside him. “They have told you all they know.” Wolf said. “They have shown you what you must do. Now I will take you back to your village.” “Will I remember it all?” Little Water asked. “Yes,” said Wolf. “Once it is known, it is never forgotten.”

Wolf accompanied Little Water back to the village. In the silence, Little Water wondered if his grandfather, too, had fallen ill. Then as he got closer to the longhouses, Stone Owl appeared. Little Water ran to him. “Grandfather, the animals have shown me how to cure our people. I have their secrets.” Together, Little Water and Stone Owl called for everyone to come to the doors of their longhouses. Those too weak to walk were helped out. Then Little Water told the people about the secret gift of each animal that would make them well, about the songs they must sing and the dances they must perform. As they began to recover, they sang louder and danced faster, feeling their strength return. Soon they were well enough to bring in the corn, beans and squash, and the harvest festival began. Little Water knew his people would always be grateful to the animals. And when Grandmother Moon shone her brightest, he listened for the distant call of her friend Wolf.

Reflection Questions:

- Why do you think the animals were so kind to Little Water?
- What did you learn from this story?

Adopt a plant

Learning Objective:

- Students will gain an appreciation for what we receive from plants
- Students will learn what it means to take care of plants

Framework: Ideology, Dependence

Materials: Journal, Pencil, colouring markers/crayons/pencils, take home growing kit (seeds, soil, container)

Time: 20 minute

Location: The garden

Introduction: It is a really powerful thing to be able to grow your own food by caring and nurturing the plants in your garden. It is important to know where the food we eat comes from and how to properly take care of plants so they will thrive and nurture us.

Instructions: Student will “adopt” a plant in the school garden. This could be a plant that the students plant themselves, takes care of and watch grow throughout the months to come, or can be an already existing plant in the garden. This will be a plant that they will care for and give thanks to on a regular basis throughout the program. Once each student selects their own plant they are to water it and then complete a journal entry by completing the following tasks and answering the following questions:

- Record the date, time and location of the plant you’ve adopted at the top of your paper
- Describe what the plant looks like and what type of plant it is. Does the plant look healthy or weak?
- How can you nurture your plant?
- Why did you select this plant to adopt?
- Draw a picture of your plant

After a few weeks, ask the students to visit their plant and draw and describe the plant’s shape, size, and texture changes. Each time they visit they should bring something for the plant as a gift to nourish it (such as a leaf to feed the soil near its roots, water to drink or insects that protect their soil).

Reflection Questions:

- What kind of things do you receive from your plant?
- What sorts of things can you do for your plant to help it survive?

Senses of Nature

Learning Objective:

- Student’s will experience the beauties of nature in the garden by using all their senses

Framework: Sensory

Materials: Egg cartons, marker

Time: 25 minutes

Location: The garden

Instructions: Divide the class into teams of three or four and give each team an empty egg carton. On the bottom of the egg carton write two opposite descriptive words (e.g. shiny and dull, hard and soft, rough and smooth, young and old) one on each row of the egg carton. The students are then to go around the garden and find objects that fit that description and are to put it in their egg carton in the corresponding row. It is important to carefully explain what they are and are not allowed to collect, making sure that they aren’t picking any plant that are growing. The students are to keep their words a secret from all of the other teams. Once all the items have been collected the students are to all come back together and look at the other team’s egg cartons and try to guess what the words were on the bottom of the egg carton.

Reflection Questions:

- What items did you find that were shiny/dull/hard/soft/rough/smooth?
- What is your reaction to finding all of these treasures in the school grounds?
- What did you find that surprised you?

Circle of Thanks

Learning Objective:

- Students will reflect on what they learned in today's lesson
- Students will learn to express feelings of gratitude for nature's gifts

Framework: Dependence, Spiritual, Ideology

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree or near a garden

Instructions: Conclude each session with everyone taking turns around the circle using the talking stick to state one thing they learned today about nature providing for us, one reason why they feel connected to their nature names and one thing in nature that they are thankful for. Finish with presenting the students with the growing kits that was prepared for the *Adopt a Plant* activity and encourage them to plant into the container at home and set in on their windowsill to grow.

Lesson 3

Welcoming Circle

Learning Objective:

- Students will reflect on their experience from the last lesson

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Instructions: First open up this lesson with reciting the poem and having the class repeat after you. You will remind the students the activities that were completed last week (Adopting a plant and egg carton sensory activity). Then facilitate a discussion (using the talking stick) to allow the students to reflect on the activities and discussions that were had at the last session. You will finish opening circle by introducing the story that will be told in the next activity.

Poem: The Morning Prayer – By Brandon Bob

The wind listens

 Hear my heart

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The water cleanses

 Clean my heart

 Clean my spirit

 Clean my mind

The animals guide me

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 Guide my spirit

 Guide my mind

Mother earth feeds me

 Feed my heart

 Feed my spirit

 Feed my mind

Reflection Questions:

- What did we talk about last week of how to care for plants?
- What did you learn from the senses of nature activity from last week?
- What did the Story about Little Water teach us about how to interact with animals?

Four Worlds: The Dine Story of Creation (Navajo)

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn about the traditional stories of the First Nations people
- Students will learn about the importance of caring for the earth

Framework: Narrative, Historical, Ideological, Dependence

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: Have the student lie down on the grass with their feet close to one another making a giant sunflower shape.

1. Have them close their eyes and take slow deep breathes
2. Instruct them to bring awareness to their body resting on the earth and the heaviness of their body, sinking into and becoming one with the earth
3. Feel the wind blowing over their face

Story: *The world was not always as it is now. Long, long ago, the People say, they lived in a place of darkness. It was called First World. First World was very small, like an island surrounded by mist. In it lived First Man, First Woman, and Coyote, dressed in his long fur robe. Some say there were beings that looked like insects. There was one tree in the center of the world.*

World One: First world became crowded and miserable. The beings argued and fought. Finally, First Man gathered up handfuls of soil from the four directions (North, East, South, West). He took seeds from the tree so the People would always have firewood. Then he led them to the next world.

World Two: When First Man poked his head into Second World, he saw that it was blue. Many of the blue creatures were there. The sky was full of blue-colored birds. In Second World, things started out well. First Man and First Woman went about making four little mounds in the four directions. They planted trees. But the People became selfish and took what was not theirs. The Swallow Power had to order them to leave.

World Three: Third World had four mountains in the distance, one in each direction, and there was a mighty river down the middle of it. It was a good place. But it was here that the People had their worst argument. The women and the men became jealous of each other. Mean things were said on both sides. "We don't even need you," First Woman said. First Man was so hurt that he gathered up all the men and crossed over to the other side of the river on a raft. At first the women and men did not miss each other. The women's gardens produced lots of corn, and the men had plenty of meat. But later they looked longingly across the river at each other. One woman even tried to cross the river, but she disappeared into the waves. After four years, the men and women realized they could not live without each other. The men helped their wives through the strong current to their camp on the other side. But coyote would not let the matter end so easily. We went looking for the missing woman who had tried to cross over but never made it to the other side. Coyote suspected Water Monster had taken her to his house under the

rough water. Coyote dove in and, just as he thought, found the missing woman. As he rescued her, he decided to secretly steal one of Water Monster's babies, hiding it under his fur robe.

The next day the People woke up to a terrifying sight. The water levels were rising as a wall of white water rushed toward them from every direction! First Man had to think quickly to save the People from drowning. He led them to the top of the tallest mountain, the one in the East, but the water kept rising. Then he planted a seed and a stock grew out from the seed quickly high into the sky. The people all climbed up the plant into the sky where they reached a hole in the sky and they climbed through, but the water still rose into the fourth world! Coyote felt guilty. "This is why Water Monster is angry with us," he said. He opened up his robe and dripped the water baby through the hole down back into the Third World so it was returned back to the Water Monster. The flood waters dried up.

Fourth World: They were in Forth World, the world of today. First Man and First Woman went about rebuilding the four sacred mountains. They put the sun and the moon in the sky to give light. In Fourth World, Coyote made up for his mistake. He taught the People about Death. To die means there will always be room in the world for new children. The People know that there are no new worlds to escape to, for the Firth and final world is the land of the spirits. So human beings must always work hard to keep from fighting, taking what is not theirs and becoming selfish or jealous. They must treat all with respect. In Fourth World, the People try to live in harmony.

Reflection Questions:

- What did the First Man and First Women do in to make the Second World end?
- What did the Coyote do to make the Third World end?
- What were the lessons from this story?
- How can we learn from what happened in this story to make sure our world doesn't end?

Sound Map

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn to use their sense of sound to experience the nature that surrounds them

Framework: Sensory

Materials: Journal, Pencil

Time: 20 minutes

Location: Sit spots

Instructions: Ask the students go to their sit spot to complete this activity. They are to create a sound map of all the sounds they hear around them. In their journal they are to mark an 'X' in the center of the page which represents their location. They are to close their eyes and listen to the natural sounds surrounding them. When they hear a sound they are to mark its location on the

map based on the direction and distance of the sound in reference to their bodies on the paper. They are to draw a symbol that represents that sound. This is not a detailed picture but a small indicator of the sound, for example some wavy lines could represent a gust of wind or a music note could indicate a singing bird. They should do this activity for between 4 to 10 minutes, depending on the group's age and interest level, and on how active the nature is in your location. Once you've called the group back together ask them to divide into pairs and share their sound map with their partner.

Reflection Questions:

- What sounds were the most familiar to you??
- Was there a sound you never heard before?
- Do you know what made the sound?
- What sound did you like best? Why?

Become an Insect: Micro-Hike

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn to use their imagination to develop a self concept that includes nature.
- Students will experience nature from differing perspectives and embody small insects to better relate to nature

Framework: Sensory, Spiritual

Materials: string (two full arms length long for each student), magnifying lenses

Time: 20 minutes

Location: Any natural area of the school grounds

Instructions: It is time to explore the world from the perspective of a small insect. Everyone is split into pairs and given a long piece of string. They are asked to find a location on the school ground that they find interesting and will place their piece of string down on that piece of ground (It doesn't have to simply lay flat on the ground, it can go over rocks and other objects if you wish and can weave along the ground rather than in a straight line). This string is their path that they will examine with a magnifying lens (if you don't have access to a magnifying lens then ask the students to look down at the level of the string to see what it would be like). Ask them to look along the path of the string and pay attention to what they see being so close to the earth. Demonstrate the activity for the visual learners. Encourage them to use their imaginations for this activity. They are then asked to answer the following questions in their journals. They may discuss with their partner for these questions:

- As an ant, what do you see as you travel along your path?
- Who are your nearest neighbors? Are they friendly? What are they doing?
- How would it feel like to live like an ant?
- Draw a picture or describe in words what the world looks like from an ant's eyes.

Circle of Thanks

Learning Objective:

- Students will reflect on what they learned in today's lesson
- Students will learn to express feelings of gratitude for nature's gifts

Framework: Dependence, Spiritual, Ideology

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree or near a garden

Instructions: Conclude the session with everyone taking turns around the circle using the talking stick to state one thing they noticed today either with the sound map or the micro hike exercise that they normally wouldn't have noticed, one thing they like about their nature names and one thing about nature that they are thankful for.

Lesson 4

Welcoming Circle

Learning Objective:

- Students will reflect on their experience from the last lesson

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: First open up this lesson with reciting the poem and having the class repeat after you. You will remind the students the activities that were completed last week (sound map and micro hike activity). Then facilitate a discussion (using the talking stick) to allow the students to reflect on the activities and discussions that were had at the last session. You will finish opening circle by giving a brief overview of the activities they will complete in today's session.

Poem: The Morning Prayer – By Brandon Bob

The wind listens

 Hear my heart

 Hear my spirit

 Hear my words

The water cleanses

 Clean my heart

 Clean my spirit

 Clean my mind

The animals guide me

 Guide my heart

 Guide my spirit

 Guide my mind

Mother earth feeds me

 Feed my heart

 Feed my spirit

 Feed my mind

Reflection Questions:

- What is one thing you noticed during the sound map activity last week that you normally wouldn't have noticed?
- What is one thing you noticed during the micro hike that you normally wouldn't have noticed?
- What did you learn from these activities?

Another Sense

Learning Objective:

- Students learn that allowing your body to connect with nature and let your instinct take over, you experience things you would have never otherwise noticed

Framework: Narrative, Historical, Sensory

Materials: Talking Stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: Inform the students that this story was written by Daniel Evans and is found within the Coyotes Guide to connecting with nature. Ask the students to pretend as though they are the characters in the story exploring the woods. Have the student lie down on the grass with their feet close to one another making a giant sunflower shape.

1. Have them close their eyes and take slow deep breathes
2. Instruct them to bring awareness to their body resting on the earth and the heaviness of their body, sinking into and becoming one with the earth
3. Feel the wind blowing over their face

Story: *It is easy to remember how the forest felt that day I went looking for a cougar. My friends and I wandered into a deep section of old trees, douglas fir, cedar and hemlock. An amazingly happy little brook babbled away and even though clouds covered the sky, the dawn light slipped in underneath them and lit the place up. Even as we searched for evidence of the mysterious, powerful and elusive cougar, our hearts felt light and happy.*

Actually, we were on a tracking expedition in a nice sized patch of mature forest. For two whole days, we had combed the area, made maps, and noted all the areas where we found signs of deer and elk. We hoped to find an area that didn't have deer or elk because they were afraid to go there. That would be where the cougars trails would go.

On our last day of tracking, we felt excited to once again find cougar signs, although we all noticed a feeling between us: We felt kind of lazy. Our laziness turned into a buzz of excitement once we found something! When a tracker finds animal poop, we use it to tell us what kind of animal we have discovered and what it has been eating. This great big pile of elk poop told us we were just minutes behind the animal. I know this may sound gross- but the pellets were steaming and stuck all together with strands of what looked like mucous.

I felt both scared and exited as we followed the trail of crushed vegetation. What would the elk do if we got too close? Is it possible to run away from a charging elk? Would we be able to get close enough to see it without scaring it? These questions and more bounded through my head as we followed the trail. Soon though, the questions disappeared. We trackers had our eyes to the ground, to the trees in front of us, what lay beyond and we longingly watched the sun disappear up into the clouds.

An elk trail is both easy and difficult to follow. Following through thickets we could see tender branch tips were broken by 800 lb bodies moving past and in a sea of ferns, we saw ferns

stepped on, pushed down, but hadn't sprung back up. I felt a little like a bloodhound dog. With the rest of the pack behind me, my eyes picked up important clues to lead us to the elk.

Walking through a section of ground covered with just pine needles, we felt we had lost them. We rested for a while, because following tracks can be intense work, and we felt really tired. After we ate a snack, we decided, since we couldn't find the trail of tracks, we would just wander wherever we felt curious to go. Maybe then we would find more tracks.

We entered a zone of sword ferns again and the trail seemed to lead right through it. Walking through those ferns, something strange happened: I felt my body being pulled in a certain direction, and I found myself walking towards a group of bent over trees, shaped like an open umbrella. "odd," I thought, "Why am I going down here where there aren't any elk tracks around? Why do I want to go this way?" As I took a few more steps, something even stranger happened: I felt a weird sensation in my body, like walking through an invisible wall of molasses mixed with tiny prickles and air. If the invisible wall could have talked it would have growled deeply, but with a voice far away and distant, "Go away". My body almost listened. Without even thinking about it, I started to turn and form the words to tell my friends I had gone the wrong way. But, I wrenched back. There was something irresistibly drawing me forward to explore. My curiosity felt stronger than the "go away" threat.

I'm glad I continued on. At the very edge of the umbrella vine maple lay the biggest animal backbone I have ever seen. A tingle of the excitement of discovery shot up my spine. More bones came into view, a giant leg bone, some more back bones, even the atlas joint. Then wonder of wonders, I found my first elk skull.

We dropped to our knees as if we had been blessed by a buried treasure. We passed the bones from hand to hand. They were clean, completely white, and moss already started to grow in places. We tried to assemble back bones together, and fit the atlas joint into the skull. Then I noticed some marks on the back of the skull. I had heard from little forest rodents gnawing on bones for their mineral content, but these seemed different. Deep gouges seemed like they had been scratched into the skull. I didn't think they were rodents. We sat under that umbrella tree for a long while, we made up stories of what we thought had happened. What do you think happened? (By David Evans)

Reflection Questions:

- What happened when he listened to his instinct in the woods?
- What do you think this story trying to teach us?

Body Radar

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn how their bodies can intuitively lead the way to amazing discoveries and experiences.

Framework: Sensory

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 15 minutes

Location: Any natural space outside in the school grounds

Instructions: Body Radar encourages us to let go of our plans and agendas and listen to the unconscious knowledge and guidance of our body. Those who intentionally use Body Radar seem to find things that others usually miss. Ask everyone to pause, to be still and silent, to close their eyes and to listen to their senses. Ask them to physically turn their bodies in a circle until they feel a direction calling them. Tell them with opened eyes begin wandering in the chosen direction. They are able to change directions whenever they wish based on where their body radar guides them. If they feel like they can no longer feel their body radar pulling them in a direction, instruct them to stop, close their eyes and to listen and feel nature's energy around them. Remind them to be aware of their surroundings big and small as they wander.

Reflection Questions:

- What did you see or experience while doing the Body Radar activity?
- What did you like about this activity?
- What was new or unfamiliar?
- Do you think you could use this activity in other parts of your life?

Nature Museum

Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn to connect personal feelings and expressions to items in nature

Framework: Sensory, Spiritual

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 30 minutes

Location: Any natural area on the school grounds

Instructions: The students are to walk independently around the school grounds while observing and taking in the nature surrounding them. They may select one or a few nature items that stood out to them in some way or elicited some sort of emotion. This could be because it looks interesting, beautiful, or unique; or their object may invoke powerful emotions or memories or it may help remind them of important lessons. The students are also to find a nature item that reminds them of their nature name. This item could be their nature name (eg. leaf), or something that is apart of their name (eg. twig) or something that reminds you of your name. It is important to remind the students about what items are okay to take and how plants that are growing are to stay in the ground. Once the students have selected their nature items they are to bring their items and place them in the middle of the circle so the nature items can be proudly displayed like a beautiful nature gallery. Each student will take turns sharing their nature items with the group, saying why they picked the item that reminded them of their nature names and what specifically

drew them to their second nature item. After the activity tell the students they can bring their nature items home with them to remind them of the beauties of nature.

Circle of Thanks

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn to express feelings of gratitude for nature's gifts

Framework: Dependence, Spiritual, Ideology

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree or near a garden

Instructions: Conclude the session with everyone taking turns around the circle, using the talking stick, to state one thing they learned from today's activities, one thing they will bring for their plant they adopted for next week and one thing in nature that they are thankful for.

Lesson 5

Welcoming Circle

Learning Objective:

- Students will reflect on their experience from the last lesson

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: First open up this lesson with reciting the poem and having the class repeat after you. You will remind the students the activities that were completed last week (another sense, body radar and nature museum). Then facilitate a discussion (using the talking stick) to allow the students to reflect on the activities and discussions that were had at the last session. You will finish opening circle by giving a brief overview of the activities they will complete in today's session.

Poem: The Morning Prayer – By Brandon Bob

The wind listens

 Hear my heart

 Hear my spirit

 Hear my words

The water cleanses

 Clean my heart

 Clean my spirit

 Clean my mind

The animals guide me

 Guide my heart

 Guide my spirit

 Guide my mind

Mother earth feeds me

 Feed my heart

 Feed my spirit

 Feed my mind

Reflection Questions:

- What did you learn from the Body Radar exercise last week? Did you have a unique experience letting your instincts guide you?
- When you think back to the Nature Museum activity last week, what are the feelings you associated with the item you selected?

Introduction: This story is called The Little Deer and originated from the Cherokee tribe that originally migrated from the great lake region in Ontario and resided where is now the Eastern coast of the United states in North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. Their name means “those who live in the cave country”.

Awi Usdi, The Little Deer (Cherokee)

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn the importance of taking what one needs and to be thankful for what this earth provides us

Framework: Narrative, Historical, Ideology, Dependence

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 7 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: Have the student lie down on the grass with their feet close to one another making a giant sunflower shape.

1. Have them close their eyes and take slow deep breathes
2. Instruct them to bring awareness to their body resting on the earth and the heaviness of their body, sinking into and becoming one with the earth
3. Feel the wind blowing over their face

Story: *Back when the world was young, the humans and the animal people could speak to each other. At first they lived in peace. The humans hunted the animals only when they needed food or skins to make clothing. Then the humans discovered the bow and arrow. With this new weapon they could kill many animals quickly and with great ease. They began to kill animals when they did not need them for food or clothing. It seems as if all the animals in the world would soon be exterminated. So the various animals met in council. When the bears came together and talked about what the humans were doing, they decided they would have to fight back. “How can we do that?” said one of the bear warriors. “The humans will shoot us with their arrows before we come close to them.” Old Bear, their chief, agreed. “This is true. We must learn how to use the same weapons they use.”*

Then the bears made a very strong bow and fashioned arrows for it. But whenever they tried to use the bow, their long claws got in the way. “I will cut off my claws,” said one of the bear warriors. He did so and then he was able to use the bow and arrow. His aim was good and he hit the mark every time. “That is good,” said Old Bear. “Now can you climb this tree?” The bear without claws tried to climb the tree, but he failed. Old Bear shook his head. “This will not do. Without our claws we cannot climb trees. Without our claws we will not be able to hunt or dig for food. We must give up this idea of using the same weapons the humans use.” So the bears gave up their idea of fighting back against the humans with weapons.

It seemed there was no way to fight back. But the last group to meet was the deer. Awi Usdi, Little Deer, was their leader. When all were gathered together, he spoke. "I see what we must do," he said. "We cannot stop the humans from hunting animals. That is the way it was meant to be. However, the humans are not doing things in the right way. If they do not respect us and hunt us only when there is real need, they may kill us all. I shall go now and tell the hunters what they must do. Whenever they wish to kill a deer, they must prepare in a ceremonial way. They must ask me for permission to kill one of us. Then, after they kill a deer, they must show respect to its spirit and ask for pardon. If the hunters do not do this, then I shall track them down. With my magic I will make their limbs crippled. Then they will no longer be able to walk or shoot a bow and arrow." Then Awi Usdi, Little Deer, did as he said. He went at night and whispered into the ears of the hunters, telling them what they must do. The next morning, when they awoke, some of the hunters thought they had been dreaming and they were not sure that the dream was a true one. Others, though, realized that Little Deer, Awi Usdi, had truly spoken to them. They tried to do as he told them. They hunted for the deer and other animals only when they needed food and clothing. They remembered to prepare in a ceremonial way, to ask permission before killing an animal and to ask pardon when an animal was killed. Some of the hunters, though, paid no attention. They continued to kill animals for no reason. But Awi Usdi, Little Deer, came to them and, using his magic, crippled them with rheumatism. Before long, all of the hunters began to treat the animals with respect and to follow Little Deer's teachings. So it is that the animals have survived to this day. Because of Awi Usdi, Little Deer, the Indian people show respect. To this day, even though the animals and people no longer can speak to each other as in the old days, the people still show respect and give thanks to the animals they must hunt.

Reflection Questions:

- The story says that the hunters should take only what they need, not what they want. What is the difference between a need and a want? (make sure they give examples)
- Do we take more than we need today?
- What are some of our real survival needs?
- How are these different from our wants?
- How can we help the plants and animals in our neighborhood to assure their survival?
- How does this story relate to the way we should treat nature in general?

A Need or Want?

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn how their needs are similar and different to the animals in nature

Framework: Ideology, Dependence

Materials: Chart paper, markers, talking stick

Time: 20 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: Ask each student to find a partner, using their nature names they are to compare the needs of their nature name to the needs of humans. Make sure that the needs they identify are related to the ecosystem such as air, water, sun, etc. Using chart paper, draw two large circles that intersect in the middle, like a Venn diagram. The nature name and human are each allowed seven needs. Place the needs that are for both humans and the nature name in the middle intersecting circle and the needs that are specific to each, in the outer parts of the circle. The partners will work together to complete this, doing two Venn diagrams, one for each of their nature names. Have the students share their Venn diagrams with the rest of the class.

Reflection Questions:

- Which needs are shared with both animals and humans?
- Which ones belong just to the animal and which one belong just humans?
- What are we can do to respect the needs of nature?

Adopt a Plant

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn to show appreciation for what we receive from plants
- Students will learn how we are in a reciprocal relationship with nature and need to give and care for plants like they nurture.

Framework: Ideology, Dependence, Spiritual

Time: 15 minutes

Location: School Garden

Materials: Gift to plants

Instructions: Visit the plant they adopted a few sessions back. Bring it a gift to nourish it (water, soil nutrients, stake, name plate, decorations, etc...) and notice the changes that may have occurred to their plant since the last time they visited it and document it in your journal.

Reflection Question:

- Does your plant look healthy?
- Is there something you can do to improve its health?

Circle of Thanks

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn to express feelings of gratitude for nature's gifts

Framework: Dependence, Spiritual, Ideology

Materials: Talking stick

Running Head: CONNECTING WITH NATURE PROGRAM

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree or near a garden

Instructions: Conclude each session with everyone taking turns around the circle using the talking stick to share with the class what they brought as a gift for their plant, one way they will embody their nature name this week and one thing in nature that they are thankful for.

Lesson 6

Welcoming Circle

Learning Objective:

- Students will reflect on their experience from the last lesson

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: First open up this lesson with reciting the poem and having the class repeat after you. You will remind the students the activities that were completed last week (a need or a want and adopt a plant activity). Then facilitate a discussion (using the talking stick) to allow the students to reflect on the activities and discussions that were had at the last session. You will finish opening circle by giving a brief overview of the activities they will complete in today's session.

Poem: The Morning Prayer – By Brandon Bob

The wind listens

 Hear my heart

 Hear my spirit

 Hear my words

The water cleanses

 Clean my heart

 Clean my spirit

 Clean my mind

The animals guide me

 Guide my heart

 Guide my spirit

 Guide my mind

Mother earth feeds me

 Feed my heart

 Feed my spirit

 Feed my mind

Reflection Questions:

- At the end of last week we all said one way that we will embody our nature names this week. Can anyone share what they did?
- Last week we talked about animal/plants needs compared to humans needs. What are some things we talked about that we can do to respect the needs of plants and animals?

Nature Meditation

Learning Objective:

- Student will experience nature while embodying a relaxed and reflexive state of awareness of one's bodily experience on and with the earth

Framework: Sensory, Spiritual

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 7 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: Have the student lie down on the grass with their feet close to one another making a giant sunflower shape.

1. Start by asking your students to close their eyes and take a few deep breaths. Then ask them to put their attention on the sounds around them -- seeing if they can focus on the calls and movements of birds or any other natural sounds within earshot. Their attention will naturally dip back into their thoughts -- gently remind them to bring their focus back to the sounds. When the timing feels right, move on to the next part.
2. Next, ask your students to feel the sun on their skin -- their faces, hands, arms or any place exposed to the sun. Ask them to keep their attention on all the parts of their body where they can feel the sun, reminding them that all the life and energy on earth comes from the power of the sun.
3. Ask them to feel the air moving across their skin. After doing this for a minute or two, ask your students to concentrate on a specific part of their body where they can feel the wind -- it could be the tip of their nose, their hands or the back of their neck. Ask them to keep their attention in this specific place until you feel ready to move on to the next part.
4. Instruct your students to feel their bodies lying on the earth. See if they can keep their attention focused on any part of the body that is touching the earth -- it could be their feet or the whole lower half of their body. Ask the students to really connect with the earth and feel the earth supporting them.
5. Next, ask your students to connect with their breath. See if they can focus on their breath for 1-2 minutes, paying close attention to each inhalation and exhalation. Ask them to keep their focus on each breath while thinking of how the air passing in and out of their lungs comes from the trees.
6. End with a gratitude practice. Ask students to envision their favorite place or thing from the natural world. It could be a park, an animal or a tree -- whatever comes to their mind. Once they have something in mind (it will take a moment or two), ask them to send thoughts of gratitude to this place or element of the natural world. Encourage them to fully appreciate this place or creature. Remind them how special it is to have this creature or part of the natural world in their life.

Reflection Questions:

- How did you feel during this exercise?

- Who feels like they are more a part of the earth after completing this exercise?
- Does anyone want to share what favourite place they envisioned during the activity?

Teaching Tips: You want your tone of voice to be gentle and inviting. Make sure that you speak slowly and clearly. It is also important to pause between sections so they have a minute or so to reflect upon what you have said.

Mind's Eye Imagining

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn to pay more attention to their surroundings and the nature that is around them

Framework: Sensory

Materials: Talking Stick

Time: 20 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: Sometimes we get swept up in our busy lives at school and extra curricular activities that we forget to pay attention to our surroundings. We miss out on interesting and beautiful observations. This activity will practice this skill of being aware of our environment. The students will sit in a circle, and give them 1 minute to focus on their surroundings paying attention to the sights, sounds and smells around them. Ask them to close their eyes and ask them questions about their surroundings to find out how much they were paying attention. Be sure to ask questions that at least a few people will answer correctly, with most relating to the natural environment. Try to vary your questions to emphasize different skills. Make sure to include all of the senses in your questions. Not all of your questions should revolve around sight:

- Who is sitting next to you on your right? Is the person across from you wearing blue shoes? What direction are the clouds moving? Were there any birds in the tree beside us? Where is north? What flowers are blooming right now?

This activity can be played a few times so that they can improve their sensory and observation skills. A student can take a turn asking their classmates questions if they wish.

Reflection Questions:

- Were there things in your surrounding that you noticed that you normally don't see?

Blindfold Drum Stalk

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn to better rely on their senses other than sight to navigate this world

Framework: Sensory

Materials: Drum

Time: 30 minutes

Location: An open grassy area

Instructions: Divide the class into partners one partner will be blindfolded and the other person will be their protector who will shadow them and keep them from bumping into others and objects. They should first practice guiding each other, instructing how to appropriately guide their partner by touching their elbow to guide them out of harms way. This game requires silence and strong listening skills. Ask the participants to stand silently until they hear the first drum beat. Then they will navigate their way (with their eyes closed and hands stretched out) across the landscape towards the sound of the drum, until they touch the drummer. Remind the participants that this is not a race. If anyone wins it will be the one who goes the slowest, because they will learn the most. The drummer beats infrequently, but often enough to inspire movement from the participants. Make a drumbeat every five or 10 seconds. Be sure the drummer is located in an area where the sound will clearly be heard by the students. Once the students have touched the drummer, they will move silently away and sit and watch others arrive. Challenge the early-comers to sit so still and quiet a bird might come and land on their shoulders. Once that group has completed the exercise, the partners will switch roles so that the protectors now get a chance to try the activity.

Reflection Questions:

- What did you feel while completing this activity?
- Did you feel other senses kick in during this activity?

Circle of Thanks

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn to express feelings of gratitude for nature's gifts

Framework: Dependence, Spiritual, Ideology

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree or near a garden

Instructions: Conclude each session with everyone taking turns around the circle using the talking stick to state one thing they noticed while using their other senses and state one thing in nature that they are thankful for.

Lesson 7

Welcoming Circle

Learning Objective:

- Students will reflect on their experience from the last lesson

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: First open up this lesson with reciting the poem and having the class repeat after you. You will remind the students the activities that were completed last week (nature meditation, minds eye imagining, blindfold drum stalk). Then facilitate a discussion (using the talking stick) to allow the students to reflect on the activities and discussions that were had at the last session. You will finish opening circle by giving a brief overview of the activities they will complete in today's session.

Poem: The Morning Prayer – By Brandon Bob

The wind listens

 Hear my heart

 Hear my spirit

 Hear my words

The water cleanses

 Clean my heart

 Clean my spirit

 Clean my mind

The animals guide me

 Guide my heart

 Guide my spirit

 Guide my mind

Mother earth feeds me

 Feed my heart

 Feed my spirit

 Feed my mind

Reflection Questions:

- During the activities last session, what were some things that you noticed while using all your senses that you wouldn't have normally noticed?
- When could you use all of your senses to explore nature in your daily life?

Owl Story

Learning Objective:

- Students will develop one's self concept that includes nature by embracing their imagination to become different items in nature

Framework: Narrative, Sensory, Spiritual

Time: 7 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: This is an interactive story telling experience. While you tell the story ask the students to participate by mimicking the actions you do as the story progresses.

For example: "I went for a run through a trail in the woods" - Ask students to run on the spot.

"I also used all my senses, sniffing the earthy air (ask them to sniff the air), listening to the last bird-songs of the day (put hand to ear as if listening to the birds), and feeling the breeze on my skin (wave hands above head to represent the wind)"

Story: *One day I had an unforgettable experience with one of the most beautiful of birds. I went for a run through a trail in the woods. While jogging I used my peripheral vision, what we call Owl Eyes, causing my eyes to see more than normal. I also used all of my senses, sniffing the earthy air, listening to the last bird-songs of the day, and feeling the breeze on my skin. Suddenly I heard a great big "Whoosh!" right behind me, stopping me in my tracks. It's a good thing I ducked, because a bird about as big as a cat swooped right over my head. It landed on a tree branch about three feet away from me, settled its wings, and just stared at me. Can anyone guess what flew at me? It was a Barred Owl.*

Standing there, my heart beating fast, I thought, "Owl...if I want to learn to use Owl eyes, here is the greatest teacher I'll ever meet. So I stared back at the owl with its huge eyes and imitated the way it perched on the branch, completely calm and quiet, blending into the woods around it. My whole body relaxed like Owl's, and I slipped back into Owl Eyes, allowing my eyes to go soft and wide. As I did, my body relaxed.

I became Owl: When he turned his head slightly to follow the sound of leaves rustling on the ground, I also turned my head, feeling my neck as a well-greased machine, turning on bearings. Rotating my head and using my Owl Eyes, I could see almost the entire landscape around me.

I'm not sure how long I stood there. Time didn't matter, maybe only fifteen minutes passed. Suddenly I saw a movement ahead of me. I quickly turned my owl-head to focus: a pair of wings thirty feet away, opened up and sailed into the air... and came straight towards me. In a moment, this second bird landed three feet away on the other side of the trail...another owl!

So now one owl perched three feet to my left, and another one perched three feet to my right. Can you imagine my excitement at being so close to these two wild animals of the night? I returned to my Owl Eyes so I could see both owls in my peripheral vision. I looked at their beautiful, long, sharp talons, but didn't feel fear. Instead, I imagined I was just another owl, sitting with my relatives. I felt the fluff of feathers all over my body. I gripped my toes and imaged talons clutching the branch. Moving my shoulders ever so slightly, I felt great wings resting at my side.

The sun sank below the horizon, and the woods around me grew darker and colder. I listened, and smelled, feeling the wind blow against my skin. Then I heard a sound down the trail. In the exact same moment, all three heads turned...mine and two Owl's. Using Owl Eyes, I recognize a jogger's shape through the trees. We heard footsteps and heavy breathing. When that jogger was still down the trail, Owls and I made eye contact one last time, then they lifted silently, and flew about twenty feet into the woods where they perched a bit higher. They dissolved into the darkening web of tree branches silhouetted against the sky. I took a cue from the Owls and took just one step off the trail, next to a tree, then relaxed back into being an owl, blending into the leaves around me. Watching, my Owl Eyes detected the swooping flights of bats. I could still make out the lump-shapes of the two owls. The Owls taught me about using my senses to notice everything happening around me and how to stretch those senses far out into the distance.

Animal Imitation

Learning Objective:

- Students will develop one's self concept that includes nature
- Students will practice using their senses to connect with nature

Framework: Sensory, Spiritual

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 20 minutes

Location: Moving around the school grounds

Instructions: Ask the students to spread out but still able to hear your instructions. You could also do this as a walk around the school grounds. You will put your imagination to work and will embody a variety of animals. The students will get into the mindset of the animal and imagine what it would be like to think like an animal. You will read out (it will work better if you memorize the excerpts) the descriptions for each animal and you and the students will act out this animal and their heightened senses.

Owl Eyes: This is a way of using peripheral vision. Pick a single point somewhere straight ahead of you, glue your eyes on it and imagine that your eyeballs can't move, just like an owl's eye. Owls' big eyes are stuck in place, so they turn their heads all around when they want to focus. They spend most of their hunting time open eyed and gazing widely, waiting to notice the tiniest movement in the field that would be their food. Imagine you are becoming an owl perched on a tree, feel the wind ruffle your feathers, feel your sharp talons and the strength in your wings. Stretch your peripheral vision: hold your hands straight out in front of you and wiggle your fingers. Notice that you can see the wiggling movement. Now move your arms slowly out towards your sides while your eyes still look absolutely straight ahead, stretch the edges of your vision sideways as far as you can to still notice the wiggling. Bring your wiggling hands back in front of you, then stretch one up and one down. Widen your vision again, this time vertically. Relax your arms and now notice with your Owl Eyes if you can see tiny movements of leaves when the breeze lifts them and all the people in the

circle, even the ones next to you. Notice all the different colours you can see, the different shapes and the shades of light and dark- all without moving your eyes even once.

Dear Ears: Let your ears become the huge ears of a deer. Deer ears have huge bulging muscles that can turn about like satellite dishes to focus on different sounds. To put on deer ears, cup your hands behind your ears and turn your head to focus on certain sounds. Do you notice the sounds become louder? Now cup your hands and put them in front of your ears, so you can hear behind you without turning around. Does it make a difference? Wow, you can hear twice as much as your eyes can see because your hearing picks up a full 360-degree sphere of sound. While also keeping your vision wide, pay attention to all the sounds around you. What do you hear in front of you? From your sides? Behind you? Are there constant sounds, like wind or running water, car traffic or maybe your own breath? Listen for soft sudden sounds like little birds or buzzes. Where are they coming from? What is the closest sound? What is the farthest sound?

Raccoon Touch: Now, use the touch of raccoons. Raccoons practically feel their way through the world. They don't have good vision or great hearing, but they have long and amazingly sensitive fingers. They can use them to break into your garbage cans and then feel for the food they want. So, while keeping your Owl Eyes stretched and your Deer hearing tuned, feel with your skin. Feeling the ground under your feet. Feel the wind on your skin, which way does the wind blow?

Dog Nose: Think of the dogs you have seen walking down the street, with their noses to the ground, or sniffing around every bush, smelling everything as they go. Turn into a dog and pay attention to your sense of smell. Take quick sniffs of the air around you like a dog. What do you smell? The grass or the flowers? Can you smell differently with a long breath than with quick sniffs? Try taking a long slow breath in through your nose. Try sucking in a tiny bit of air through just parted lips. Get down on all fours like a dog, or pick up a leaf and handful of dirt and hold it close to your nose. What do you smell? How would you describe it? What smells hit your nose the strongest?

Nature Name: To finish off this activity get the students to embody their nature names. To not only make their bodies look like the nature item and make the sounds of the nature item but also to get into the mind set, to thinking and acting as if they are their nature item.

Reflection Questions:

- What did it feel like to get in the mind and spirit of these animals?
- What animal did you enjoy being the most? Why?
- When during your day could you use your animal senses?

Sensory Scavenger Hunt

Learning Objective:

- Students will explore the nature that's in the school grounds
- Students will gain a heightened awareness for the hidden beauties of nature

Framework: Sensory, Spiritual

Materials: Journal, pencil/pen, talking stick

Time: 40 minutes

Location: The natural area of the school grounds

Instructions: Now turn on all your senses together: Your Owl Eyes, your Deer Ears, your Raccoon Touch and your Dog Nose. Let your eyes be soft and stretched, listening with your ears to the little sounds around you, feel the wind on your face, smell the air with long breaths. Hold this whole, wide-open awareness for as long as you can. This heightened awareness, using all of your senses helps to notice the hidden beauties of nature that normally go unnoticed.

1. Find the best place to listen for nature sounds. Then see how long it takes to hear at least five different natural sounds. Can you understand what makes these sounds? Write down the sounds you heard and who made them in your journal.
2. Find an old piece of nature. Draw it and explain why it's unique in your journal.
3. Use your hands to find a warm and cold place and write it down in your journal.
4. Look for a wet and dry site and document it in your journal.
5. Look for a windy and calm place and document the location.
6. Stop at different places. Close your eyes and focus your attention on the sense of smell. Find three different smells and see if you can find where they came from and write it in your journal.
7. Find something that is small and has many colours.
8. Find something that makes you smile.

Reflection Questions:

- What was something that you discovered that you found interesting or exciting?
- Was there something you discovered that surprised you?

Circle of Thanks

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn to express feelings of gratitude for nature's gifts

Framework: Dependence, Spiritual, Ideology

Running Head: CONNECTING WITH NATURE PROGRAM

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree or near a garden

Instructions: Conclude each session with everyone taking turns around the circle using the walking stick to state one thing they enjoyed from today's lesson and one thing in nature that they are thankful for.

Lesson 8

Welcoming Circle

Learning Objective:

- Students will reflect on their experience from the last lesson

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: First open up this lesson with reciting the poem and having the class repeat after you. You will remind the students the activities that were completed last week (animal imitation and sensory scavenger hunt). Then facilitate a discussion (using the talking stick) to allow the students to reflect on the activities and discussions that were had at the last session. You will finish opening circle by giving a brief overview of the activities they will complete in today's session.

Poem: The Morning Prayer – By Brandon Bob

The wind listens

 Hear my heart

 Hear my spirit

 Hear my words

The water cleanses

 Clean my heart

 Clean my spirit

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The animals guide me

 Guide my heart

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Mother earth feeds me

 Feed my heart

 Feed my spirit

 Feed my mind

Reflection Questions:

- During last week's lesson we did an animal imitation activity where we learned to use our owl eyes, deer ears, raccoon touch, and dog nose. We then brainstormed ways where we can use our animal senses in our daily lives. Did you find yourself using your animal senses since last week's class?

- We also did a sensory scavenger hunt last week where you found different nature items on the school grounds that looked, smelled or felt a certain way. What was something you discovered during this activity?

Introduction: This story is called *How food was given* which is a story that comes from the Okanagan first Nations people. Okanagan translates to mean *transport towards the head or top end*, as they would travel from the head of the Okanagan Lake down to the Columbia river.

How Food was Given: An Okanagan Legend (kou-skelowh)

Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn the sacrifice that nature has made for humans to survive
- Students will learn to be grateful for the gifts nature gives

Framework: Narrative, Historical, Ideological, Dependence

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: Have the student lie down on the grass with their feet close to one another making a giant sunflower shape.

1. Have them close their eyes and take slow deep breathes
2. Instruct them to bring awareness to their body resting on the earth and the heaviness of their body, sinking into and becoming one with the earth
3. Feel the wind blowing over their face

Story: *In the world before this world, before there were people, and before things were like they are now, everyone was alive and walking around like we do. All creation was talking about the coming changes to their world. They had been told that soon a new kind of people would be living on this earth. Even they, the Animal and Plant people, would be changed. Now they had to decide how the People-to-be would live and what they would eat. The four chiefs were: Skimheest (bear), Enteeteegh (salmon), Speetlum (Bitterroot), and Seeya (Saskatoon). They held many meetings and talked for a long time about what the People-To-Be would need to live. All of the chiefs thought and thought. "What can we give to the People-To-Be to eat that is already here on earth?" they asked one another. "There seems to be no answer." Finally, the three other chiefs and to Skimheest, "You are the wisest and the oldest among us. You tell us what you are going to do." Skimheest said, "Since you have all placed your trust in me, I will have to do the best I can." He thought for a long time and finally he said, "I will give myself, and all the animals that I am Chief over, to be food for the People-To-Be." Then we said to Enteeteegh, "What will you do?" Enteeteegh answered, "You are indeed the wisest among us. I will also give myself and all the things that live in the water as food for the People-To-Be." Speetlum, who was Chief of all the roots under the ground said, "I will do the same." Seeya was last. He said, "I will do the same. All the good things that grow above the ground will be the food for the People-To-Be." Chief Skimheest was happy because there would be enough food for the People-To-Be. He said, "Now I will lay life down to make these things happen." Because he was the greatest*

chief and had given his life, all of the People-That-Were (the Animal People) gathered and sang songs to bring him back to life. That was how they helped heal each other in that world. They all took turns singing, but Skimheest did not come back to life. Finally, Fly came along. He sang, "You laid your body down. You laid your life down." His song was powerful. Skimheest came back to life. Then fly told the four chiefs, "When the People-To-Be are here and they take your body for food, they will sing this song. They will cry their thanks with this song." Then Skimheest spoke for all the chiefs, "From now on when the People-To-Be come, everything will have its own song. The People-To-Be will use these songs to help each other as you have helped me. That is how food was given to our people. This is how songs were given to our people. This is how giving and helping one another was and still is taught to our people. That is why we must respect even the smallest, weakest persons for what they can contribute. That is why we give thanks and honours to what is given to us.

Reflection Questions:

- Who were the People-To-Be that were described in the story?
- What did the animals sacrifice for us?
- What lessons did you learn from this story that can be applied to your life?

Brother Soil Sister Tree

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn how humans and other living things depend on trees

Framework: Dependence, Ideology

Materials: Items that are made from trees (pencil, journal, fruit, chewing gum...) and items that are not made from trees, chart paper for brainstorming activity, writing utensil

Time: 15 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: Ask everyone to sit in a giant circle. In the middle of the circle place some items that are produced by trees (fruit, pencil, journal, sunblock, chewing gum, cinnamon) and some items that are not. Ask the students to identify which items are made from trees and which are not. Discuss the unusual tree products. Ask students to think of other items that come from trees. Facilitate a discussion about the values and uses of trees and make a list of all those things: wood for building and for heat, beauty, shade, noise reduction, oxygen, clean air, pleasant sounds from wind through leaves, apples, almonds, homes for animals, erosion protection...

Reflection Questions:

- Have you used anything that comes from trees today?
- What do you like most about trees?

Meet a Tree, Be a Tree

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn to connect with trees through embodiment and using their senses

Framework: Sensory, Spiritual

Materials: Blindfolds (optional)

Time: 30 minutes

Location: An outdoor area with trees with different shapes and sizes

Instructions:

Part One: Ask the students to embody a tree by making a pose of a tree and fully embracing the following passage:

Sit or stand in a place where you feel close to nature. Visualize that you are a tree, your roots go into the ground. Through the topsoil, the loose, warm, rich earth; into the rocky layers, down, down, down until they are near the warm center of the earth. Feel the warmth. Now bring it up, through the cold rocky layers, through the warm, rich soil, up into your trunk, up into your branches and out your leaves. Feel the sun (or the stars) overhead. Feel their energy. Is it difficult to feel the energy? Do you need to thin your branches? Or is there too much energy? Do you need to thicken your branches? Bring it down into your branches, into your trunk, into your roots, and down deep into the center of the earth. Remind the students that trees are rooted to the ground and cannot move or talk in order to get what they need. Ask student to demonstrate how a tree might act if sunlight only reached one side. What might a tree look like if it is hungry, thirsty, or cold? What might happen if a tree's root spread overlapped with those of other trees?

Part Two: Now the students will connect with trees in a memorable way. To play, divide the group into pairs and have one of each pair wear a blindfold or close their eyes. First the seeing player will spin the blindfolded partner 5 times so that they are disoriented in their direction. The seeing player then leads the blindfolded player to a special tree, one that has intriguing characteristics (each pair will pick a different tree). Upon meeting the tree, the blindfolded player feels the texture of the tree's bark, sees how big the tree is by putting their arms around it, and explores the tree's branches and leaves. The guiding partner can silently guide the player's hands to interesting places on and around the tree. After getting to know their trees, the blindfolded players are spun 5 times in a circle again before being brought back to the starting point, where their blindfolds are removed. They then try to find their tree. Once they have correctly identified their tree, partners will switch duties and the other person will get a chance to meet a tree.

Reflection Questions:

- How did it feel to be a tree?
- Did you find it difficult to recognize the tree you explored with your eyes closed once you opened your eyes?

- Did you notice something new about the trees in the school yard that you hadn't noticed before?

Circle of Thanks

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn to express feelings of gratitude for nature's gifts

Framework: Dependence, Spiritual, Ideology

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree or near a garden

Instructions: Conclude each session with everyone taking turns around the circle using the talking stick to state one thing about trees you are grateful for.

Lesson 9

Welcoming Circle

Learning Objective:

- Students will reflect on their experience from the last lesson

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: First open up this lesson with reciting the poem and having the class repeat after you. You will remind the students the activities that were completed last week (Brother soil sister tree and meet a tree). Then facilitate a discussion (using the talking stick) to allow the students to reflect on the activities and discussions that were had at the last session. You will finish opening circle by giving a brief overview of the activities they will complete in today's session.

Poem: The Morning Prayer – By Brandon Bob

The wind listens

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Mother earth feeds me

 Feed my heart

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Reflection Questions:

- Last week we did a few activities to connect us to trees. What is one thing you learned about trees from last week?

Introduction: This story is called the *White Buffalo Calf Women and the Sacred Pipe* and is a story by the Lakota people, First Nations people of the Great Plains of North America. The White Buffalo Calf Woman is a sacred mythical woman central to Lakota beliefs.

The White Buffalo Calf Women and the Sacred Pipe (Lakota)

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn how all things are connected
- Students will learn to appreciate what this earth provides us through our thoughts and actions on this earth

Framework: Narrative, Historical

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: Have the student lie down on the grass with their feet close to one another making a giant sunflower shape.

1. Have them close their eyes and take slow deep breathes
2. Instruct them to bring awareness to their body resting on the earth and the heaviness of their body, sinking into and becoming one with the earth
3. Feel the wind blowing over their face

Story: *It was a time when there was little food left in the camp and the people were hungry. Two young men were sent out to scout for food. They went on foot, for this was a time long before the horses were given to the people. The two young men hunted for a long time but had no luck. Finally, they climbed to the top of a hill and looked to the west. "What is that?" said one of the young men. "I cannot tell, but it is coming towards us," said the other. And so it was. At first they thought it was an animal, but as the shape drew closer they saw it was a woman. She was dressed in white buffalo skin and carried something in her hands. She walked so lightly that it seemed as if she was not walking at all, but floating with her feet barely touching the earth. Then the first young man realized that she must be a Holy Person and his mind filled with good thoughts. But the second young man did not see her that way. He saw her only as a beautiful young woman. She was now very close and the second man reached out to grab her. As soon as he did so, though, there was a sound of lightning and the young man was covered by a cloud. When it cleared away there was nothing left of the second young man but a skeleton.*

Then the White Buffalo Calf Woman spoke. "Go to your people," she said, holding up the bundle in her hands so that the first young man could see it. "Tell your people that it is a good thing I am bringing. I am bringing a holy thing to your nation, a message from the Buffalo People. Put up a medicine lodge for me and make it ready. I will come there after four days have passed. The first young man did as he was told. He went back to his people and gave them the message. Then the crier went through the camp and told all the people that something sacred was coming and that all things should be made ready. They built the medicine lodge and made an earth altar which faced the west.

Four days passed and then the people saw something coming toward them. When it came closer, they saw it was the White Buffalo Calf Woman. In her hands she carried the bundle and a bunch of sacred spices. The people welcomed her into the medicine lodge and gave her a seat on honor.

Then she unwrapped the bundle to show them what it meant. “The bowl of the Pipe,” she said, “is made of the red stone. It represents the flesh and blood of the Buffalo People and all other Peoples. The wooden stem of the Pipe represents all the trees and plants, all the things green and growing on this earth. The smoke that passes through the Pipe represents the sacred wind, the breath that carries prayers up to Wakan Tanka, the Creator.” When she finished showing them the Pipe, she told the people how to hold it and how to offer it to the Earth and Sky and the Four Sacred Directions. She told them many things to remember. “The Sacred Pipe,” said the White Buffalo Calf Woman, “will show you the Good Red Road. Follow it and it will take you in the right direction. Now,” she said, “I am going to leave, but you will see me again.”

Then she began to walk toward the setting sun. The people watched her as she went, and they saw her stop and roll once on the Earth. When she stood up she was a black buffalo. Then she went farther and rolled again on the Earth. This time when she stood up she was a brown buffalo. She went farther and rolled a third time and stood up. Now the people saw that she was a red buffalo. Again she walked farther and a fourth and final time she rolled upon the Earth. This time she became a white calf and continued to walk until she disappeared over the horizon. As soon as the White Buffalo Calf Woman was gone, herds of buffalo were seen all around the camp. The people were able to hunt them and they gave thanks with the Sacred Pipe for the blessings they had been given. As long as they followed the Good Red Road of the Sacred Pipe and remembered as the White Buffalo Calf Woman taught them, that all things were as connected as parts of the Pipe, they lived happily ever after.

Reflection Questions:

- What does it mean for people to live, remembering that all things around them are connected like the parts of the pipe?
- In what ways can we affect the plants, animals, people and the rest of the earth by the things that we do?
- What can we do to take care of the earth and keep the earth strong and healthy for years to come?

Nature Connectedness Exercise

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn about the interconnectedness among all things in nature

Framework: Dependence, Ideology

Materials: Ball of yarn, nature name tags

Time: 30 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: Ask students to form a circle while wearing the name tag of their nature name as they will embody their nature names for this activity. The instructor will grab hold of a piece of the yarn and then toss the ball of yarn to a student in the circle. Thinking of their nature name the

student is to toss the ball of yarn to another student in the circle whose nature name is in some way connected to their own nature name and explain this connection to the class. For example, the animal breathes the air; the air is filtered by the tree, the tree shades the human, and so on. Each student will remain holding onto a piece of the yarn so that it begins to make a web. Continue until every student is connected in a giant web. This web symbolizes the interconnectedness of all living things.

This could also be taught by telling a story about interconnectedness and have each student represent a character in the story. Once their character is introduced into the story they are passed the ball of yarn. At the end of the story, each student will have a chance to be thrown the ball of yarn and the yarn should be all interwoven together, representing the interconnectedness of all living things on this planet.

Example Story: *In Yellowstone National Park in the US in 1995 wolves were introduced into this park. This had many impacts to the animals and vegetation within this area. Before the wolves turned up in this park the number of deer had significantly increased in this region. This resulted in the plant life significantly decreasing because the deer were eating it all. As soon as the wolves arrived the deer population decreased and the deer's behaviour changed by avoiding certain areas of the park where they were easy targets for the wolves. This resulted in rapid vegetation growth! The height of the trees quintupled in 6 years, bare valleys became rich forests of aspen, willow and cottonwood. Once that happened the birds started moving in, using this new vegetation as their home. The number of beavers increased because they would eat the trees. The beavers, like wolves, were instigators of new habitat, as the dams they created were habitat for other animals like muskrats, otters, ducks, fish, reptiles and amphibians. The wolves killed coyotes and as a result the number of rabbits and rats began to rise which meant more hawks, weasels, foxes and badgers. Bears would feed on the dead flesh of the animal carcass the wolves would leave behind and their populations began to rise also because there were more berries growing on the regenerating shrubs. The wolves also changed the behaviour of the rivers. The channels narrowed, there was less erosion, more pools formed which was great for wildlife habit. This was because the increase in vegetation stabilized the river banks so the rivers became more fixed in their course. Therefore, the wolves, small in number, transformed the ecosystem and physical geography of the Yellowstone national park. This example demonstrates how all animals big and small, all plants and soil and nature's elements are all connected.*

Key actors in the story: Wolves, Trees, Cottonwood, Aspen, Birds, Beaver, Muskrats, Otters, Ducks, Fish, Reptile, Amphibians, Coyotes, Rabbits, Rats, Hawks, Weasels, Foxes, Badgers, Bears, Berries, River.

Reflection Questions:

- What did you learn from this activity?
- What is interconnectedness and how does it relate to this activity?

Up-close and Personal

Learning Objective:

- Students will discover the physical characteristics and special qualities of a nature item

Framework: Sensory, Spiritual

Materials: binoculars, magnifying glass, talking stick

Time: 30 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: Ask the students to go to their sit spot for this activity. Choose a nature item that is easy to observe, such as a bird, frog, insect or plant like a tree, flower or plant in the garden. To see the nature item well, provide binoculars or a magnifying glass to the students to further explore the nature item.

As you study your special nature item look for characteristics you've never noticed before—the color of its eyes, how it moves, or the texture or pattern of its leaves or feathers. Complete the following questions in your journal.

1. List seven things you've discovered about your animal or plant.
2. Describe how your animal moves (or stands, if it is a plant).
3. Write a word or phrase that expresses the unique spirit of your animal or plant.
4. If you were to give your animal or plant a name, what would it be, and why?
5. Write a short poem or story about your animal or plant. Tell what you admire about it.

Reflection Questions:

- Would anyone like to share the nature item they explored and what you discovered about that item that you've never noticed before?
- Would anyone like to share their poem or story about their animal?

We all depend on one another

Learning Objectives:

- Students will experience tangible examples of how nature and humans are dependent upon one another.
- Students will learn the importance of preserving and protecting nature

Framework: Ideology, Dependence

Materials: Journals, pen/pencil, talking stick

Time: 20 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree, or near a garden

Instructions: Ask the students to split off into pairs and find a pleasant place to sit on the school grounds. They will be given a list of natural items. These items can be specific plants, animals, insects, or the elements. In pairs they are to brainstorm and write in their journals how we as

humans are dependent upon that natural item (it can be physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally) and how that nature item depends on us (e.g. we are dependent on bees to pollinate our food and bees are reliant on us to reduce our use of pesticides and increase urban bee farms). Bring the group back into the circle and discuss how we are dependent upon nature and how nature is dependent on us for each natural item on the list.

Reflection Questions:

- What did you learn from this activity? Was there something that surprised you about nature and human's dependence on each other?
- Now that we know how nature is dependent on us, what are some things we can do to help nature?

Circle of Thanks

Learning Objective:

- Students will learn to express feelings of gratitude for nature's gifts

Framework: Dependence, Spiritual, Ideology

Materials: Talking stick

Time: 10 minutes

Location: Grassy area in a field, under a tree or near a garden

Instructions: Conclude each session with everyone taking turns around the circle using the talking stick to state one thing in nature that they are thankful for, one thing they learned from their nature names and one thing they are going to do now that they understand so much more about their connection to nature.

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