

Medicine Walk

Subject: Medicine Walk	Grade: 3-6	Duration: 1-2 hours
Lesson Overview	This lesson plan provides students with a hands-on experience of gathering local, traditional medicines of the Sto:lo people in a respectful way. It emphasizes ecological awareness, respectful harvesting, Indigenous ways of knowing, and relationship to place.	

Curriculum Ties (in addition to satisfying multiple core competencies):

Grade 3 Science:

- Biodiversity in the local environment

Grade 4 Science:

- Big Ideas: All living things sense and respond to their environment.

Grade 5 Science:

- First Peoples concepts of interconnectedness in the environment

Language Arts 3-6:

- Language and text can be a source of creativity and joy
- Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world.

Content Objectives

- Begin to understand that natural materials can be changed through physical and chemical processes.

- Acknowledge local actions have global consequences and global actions have local consequences, and what humans do to the land affects us all.
- Identify three traditional medicines, gather and prepare them.
- Build relationships to the land, other cultures, and with famil, ancestors and the school and community.

Materials & Equipment Needed

<p>Consumables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scissors • Small baskets or paper bags to collect plants • Paper towels for drying 	<p>Non-Consumables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photos of native plants • Access to local plant identification guides or posters
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Lesson & Activity

Lesson Stages	Learning Activities
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin with a classroom discussion using visuals of native plants such as salmonberry, cedar, stinging nettle, and plantain. Use a projector or printed visuals to display the plant, its name in English and, if possible, its Halq'eméylem or local Indigenous name. • Introduce basic information: What the plant looks like, where it grows, and how it has been traditionally used. Encourage students to share if they have seen or used any of these plants with their families. • Option: Invite an Elder, Knowledge Holder, or local Indigenous educator to share stories and teachings about these plants.

<p>Activity</p>	<p>At this point it is great if you can invite someone indigenous in to speak and tell stories for the medicine walk. If this is not possible, there are still many ways you can incorporate First People’s Principles from the curriculum into this activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before going outside you can speak and introduce how to be respectful and mindful when picking plants. For example the Stó:lō prayer in Halq’eméylem that should be spoken to the plants before they are picked. This can be done as a group outside before picking. <p style="text-align: center;">St’ólmexw Sts’eheyelh</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Le th’exwstelemt Ō Chichelh Síyám. Maytólxwchexw. Th’exwmetólxwchexw. Lálhtset túlh tsós. Qex te shxwhókwixtset. Shxwemlólwxchexw. Yálhyúxkw’ashó:y.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head outside to a pre-scouted location (schoolyard, nearby trail, or garden) where local plants are available. • In small groups or pairs, students observe and identify a few pre-selected plants. • At each plant, pause for a moment of respect. The teacher or student may speak the Stó:lō prayer (or a thank-you phrase) before gently harvesting. • Emphasize that students should take only what is needed, and only when appropriate. • Gather the materials in baskets or paper bags. Option: Assign students as photographers or notetakers to document what they observe.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back in the classroom, have students gently clean the harvested plants using a soft brush or water. Place them on paper towels to dry.
Closure	<p>Guide the class in a collective reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did they notice? • What surprised them? • How did they feel during the walk? • What responsibilities do we carry when we use plants for medicine? • "What will you do differently next time you see these plants?" • "How do our actions today help care for the land for future generations?"
Step Ups & Step Downs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students explore more plants and how they can be used. • You can also have them try to make teas with the prepared plants.

Background Knowledge

This lesson plan is intended for students to build a connection to land and acknowledge our relationship with all things, including plants and animals, other human beings, the water, the land, wind, sun, moon, stars and more.

This lesson will most likely need to be done in the spring / summer months. Familiarize yourself with the plants and where they can be found in advance.

What is an Indigenous Plant?

Indigenous or native plants are those plants/trees that have always been here. Non-native plants have been brought over from different parts of the world.

Traditionally, plants (and all of nature) are seen as being alive with their own spirit and knowledge. Plants are seen as “the first family” as all of life depends on plants for survival (belcourt, C. 2007)

We Are All Connected

Indigenous people see every person and all of nature (plants, animals, rivers, stars etc.) as connected. Indigenous people see humans as being connected to and part of nature, instead of higher up, as we need nature to survive.

Examples of Connections in the Natural World

Huckleberry plants grow best by cedar trees. Cedar trees give them nutrients to grow. Cedar trees teach us where to find huckleberries.

Things we Can Learn from Nature

- By watching the birds and animals we can see which berries are safe to eat.
- When the salmonberry bush's start to have flowers, then salmon may be coming back.
- Bears and other animals eat grubs that are in old logs.

Different Uses of Plants

- Medicine: The berries, barks, leaves, and roots of plants and trees are used to heal cuts, for headaches and body aches, to help sleep, and for nutrition / wellbeing.
- Teas: teas are made from the leaves and roots of different plants, such as blackberry, raspberry, rosehip and cedar trees.
- Food: The different parts of plants were used for food, such as berries, the leaves and stalks, and the roots.
- Materials: plants and trees were used to make rope, utensils, baskets, matts, clothing, shelter, bows, arrows, canoes, dyes, and many other things.

Learning About Plants:

For hundreds of years Indigenous people learned about how to use plants through observations of the animal, bird, and fish world. They learned from stories, visions, dreams, from the plants themselves and trying out different techniques (Belcourt, C. 2007).

Families passed down the knowledge through generations and some elders taught certain youth about plants.

When Gathering the Plants

- All plants should be treated with respect
- Thank you should be given to each plant
- Take only what you need
- Plants should only be picked at certain times

Here are some native plants of British Columbia:

- Salmonberry
 - In the spring the stalks are tender and sweet to eat
 - Berries can be eaten fresh or dried
 - Leaves and roots can be used in teas
 - When the berries appear, can be a sign that spring salmon are coming



- Stinging Nettle
 - Eaten in early spring
 - They are a good source of iron and can be used in teas
 - They can also be used to make ropes, twine, fishing lines and nets



- Plantain (Frog's Leaf)
 - Plantain is very common and is found in grassy areas
 - Crushed leaves can be made into a poultice for bug bites, cuts, scrapes, swellings, and bruises
 - In tea the roots and leaves are used for many reasons



- Bulrushes (cat tails)
 - Bulrushes are found near water, such as ponds and streams
 - The young shoots, roots, and seeds can be eaten
 - The leaves of the bulrushes are gathered and dried to make twine, and baskets. They also made mats that covered the walls for witting on and eating on
 - The white fluff in them could be used in diapers, to line moccasins and pillow stuffing



- The Cedar Tree
 - The Sto:lo and Coast Salish People view the Cedar Tree as a very important part of their lives. Every part of the Cedar tree is used.
 - The boughs are used like a smudge and in ceremonies for protection and healing.
 - The bark is used in medicines. The bark is also used to make mats, baskets, ropes, and waterproof hats and clothing.
 - The trunk of the tree is used for canoes, longhouses, art, boxes to store food and household goods, bowls, and utensils.
 - The roots are used in medicines and for weaving baskets.



Indigenous people believed that all plants and the natural world have their own stories. They believed that we need to treat plants and the natural world like our relatives with care and respect.

**Note: Please don't eat any plants in the wild unless you know for sure they are safe.

Additional Resources

- [The night sky as a teaching - NCCIE Kainai Land Learning - NCCIE](#)
- [Land Based Education in Denendeh: Interview with Dr. Glen Coulthard - NCCIE Making Spruce Gum Tea - NCCIE](#)
- [Consent from the Land with Spruce Boughs - NCCIE](#)
- [Medicine Walk - NCCIE](#)