

CPAWS Environmental Action Contest

Lesson Plan

Objective

Students will observe natural phenomena in their local environment, make connections, and identify ways they can be mindful of their impact through environmentally responsible behaviours (ERBs). Below are some activities you can do inside and outside the classroom to foster curiosity and connection to nature. Activities are conducted in 3 phases and include guiding questions. **Use the CPAWS Environmental Action Plan workbook to help guide the process.**

Natural Curiosity stages environmental inquiry through 3 main questions - **What? So what? and Now what?** (Anderson et. al). If you want to learn more about supporting environmental inquiry in your classroom and integrating Indigenous Perspectives on environmental inquiry, read *Natural Curiosity*, 2nd Edition by D. Anderson, J. Comay, and L. Chiarotto.

Land Acknowledgment

Earth is a gift, all of the beauty around us is part of that gift.

We believe that land acknowledgments should be more than words we repeat at the start of the day; they should be authentic, personal, and linked to actions we take in our daily lives. Acknowledging our relationship with the land we live on has been a practice since the beginning of time and can be part of a personal relationship that changes and evolves. You can acknowledge the story of the land and your personal connection to land in addition to those who have and continue to take care of it. Land acknowledgments can help to see and strengthen our relationships with the land and each other.

We are told to conduct land acknowledgements but don't always know how to do so in a meaningful way. Here is a suggestion for how it can be incorporated into this place-based learning exercise.

Take students outdoors, either in the schoolyard or on a community walk.

- Instruct students to look for something that they are curious about or interested in.
- **ASK: Do any students know how to say “thank you” in another language?
Considering the earth is a gift, what are some ways we can say thank you to land?**

Phase 1: Get Outside

What? - Observations, give students time to observe natural phenomena. *Here are some ideas to get your students outside engaging with natural phenomena. These can be adapted based on the needs of your students.*

Grounding exercise - either in pairs or as a group

- **ASK: What are 5 things you see? What are 4 things you can touch? What are 3 things you hear? What are 2 things you smell? What does the air taste like?**

Go for a walk. You can change how students engage with the environment through questions. For more examples read *A Walking Curriculum* by Gillian Judson.

- ***Wonder Walk - Notice parts of the natural environment that make you curious and have students reflect and express wonder. Ask students to start sentences with “I wonder...” as you walk.***
- ***Human Impact Walk - Imagine what this place might look like if people were not here. What might be here that isn’t right now? How might this area have looked 100 years ago? What kind of impacts do humans have on the environment?***
- ***Wildlife Walk - Notice signs of wildlife in your schoolyard, what species call this place home? Imagine you are looking at the world from their eyes, what do you see? What stories do animals leave behind? Who has lived here in the past?***
- ***Motion Walk - What is motion? Ask students to use as many senses as possible to notice what is moving around them.***

Sit Spot - Find a spot to sit and use your sense of sight

- Zoom IN - look at something close
- Zoom OUT - look at the big picture, something far away
- Draw what you see in that spot. Return to this spot over time and do an audit of what you notice.
- **ASK: What stayed the same? What is different? What do you notice?**



**Submit photos of Phase 1 by
March 29, 2024 to be entered in the
EARLY BIRD DOUGHNUT PARTY DRAW!**

Phase 2: Make Connections

So what? - Identify relationships and why they matter.

Have students make connections by doing one or more of the following activities.

While outdoors have students explore with a clipboard

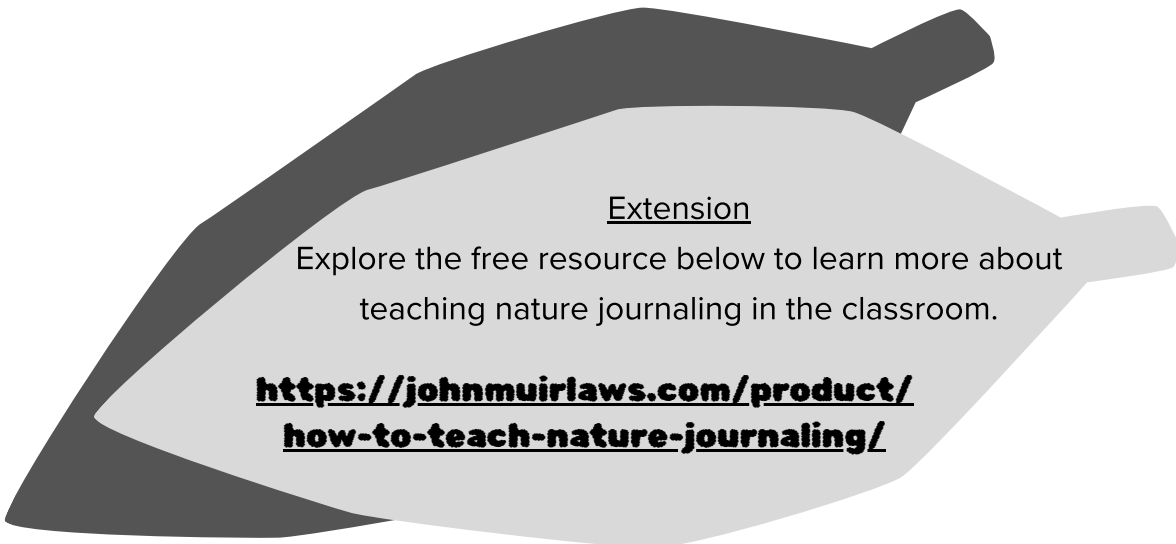
- Depending on age, have students draw or write things that make them curious or formulate questions about the natural world.
- **ASK: What do you notice? What do you think might happen if...? Does this remind you of anything? What can we do to find out?**

Back in the classroom, make a mind map of all of the observations made outdoors. This can be done individually, in groups, or class wide.

- Draw arrows connecting relationships found in nature. Discuss the importance of the relationships and connections.
- **ASK: What impacts do humans have on these relationships? What can humans do to help these relationships?**

Nature Journaling - Use the workbook page to start a nature journal

- I notice... I wonder... This reminds me of...
- **ASK: What's going on here? What else can't we see? What does that make you wonder about? What kind of questions come up for you?**



Extension

Explore the free resource below to learn more about teaching nature journaling in the classroom.

<https://johnmuirlaws.com/product/how-to-teach-nature-journaling/>

Phase 3: Take Action

Now what? - Say thank you to the earth!

We know nature is a gift and how important it is to practice gratitude when we receive a gift. Brainstorm ways to say thank you to the earth!

Use the environmental action plan to have students begin to think about actions they can do to be mindful of the environment. Use the knowledge students have gained throughout the process to encourage environmentally responsible behaviours (ERBs).

- Create individual environmental action plans or make a classwide plan that includes positive behavior reinforcement and reflection.

To Enter the Contest:

1. Submit at least 1 photo of your students outdoors engaging with natural phenomena to the form below
2. Provide feedback on the experience. What conversations did this spark with your students? Provide one of the environmentally responsible behaviours discussed by the students. Students can all work together to implement one or do their own!

Extension

Have students design a campaign t-shirt that promotes your environmental action and post it around the school!
Check out the CPAWS Keep Manitoba Wild t-shirt design for inspiration!

[CLICK HERE TO ENTER](#)



If you used this lesson plan, help us to continue offering free programming by filling out this quick survey! [Click here for the Environmental Education Feedback Survey](#), and be entered to win a FREE CPAWS T-shirt!

Resources

D. Anderson, J. Comay, and L. Chiarotto. "Natural Curiosity, 2nd Edition." 2017.

Gillian Judson. "A Walking Curriculum." 2018.

J. Laws, A. Tan & E. Lygren, "How to Teach Nature Journaling: Curiosity, Wonder, Attention." 2020.