

When enough voices speak up, decision-makers take notice. No matter how old you are, your voice matters.

Student Voices

CPAWS Manitoba is a non-profit organization working to protect land and water across the province. With the support of Manitobans, we've helped create 23 parks and protected areas. We're working toward ensuring habitats stay protected for humans and wildlife for generations to come.

We're inviting classrooms to join our Student Voices Campaign – a chance for students to learn about local environmental issues and speak up for nature. Protecting land and water is a shared responsibility, and every student voice helps build a stronger call to protect what we can't replace. We want students to be a part of encouraging the Manitoba Government to keep their commitments to protecting nature a priority.

Check out the activities below to get started – from biodiversity walks and learning about Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) to writing letters to leaders. When students learn, reflect, and take action, they help shape a better future.

CURRICULUM CONNECTION

The Manitoba Curriculum provides multiple outcomes within Science and Social Studies that support the exploration of biodiversity and the interaction between humans and land. Below are key curriculum outcomes that can be, but not limited to, the ways in which this project can be connected to the classroom.

This project supports the exploration of concepts from the Science Curriculum across all grades.

Active Democratic Citizenship is a component of Social Studies throughout the curriculum.

Social Studies Curriculum Outcomes

- GLO (I) Identity, Culture & Community: Students will explore concepts of identity, culture, and community in relation to individuals, societies and nations.*
- GLO (L) The Land: Places & People: Students will explore the dynamic relationships of people with the land, places and environments.*

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Your Voice Matters!



Name:

Grade:

Land and water help all living things survive. Draw and write to show why it is important to protect them and keep the Earth clean and healthy.

Share your ideas to help leaders understand what matters to you!

WRITE

It is important to protect land and water because...

DRAW

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for drawing. It occupies the bottom half of the worksheet's main content area.

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HOW TO SUBMIT

1. *Ensure students are able to participate. Notify parents of their child's involvement in the project if necessary, omit any responses that may not be approved. No names will be attached to the document, only grade level of students and school recognition. **Feel free to submit a teacher response!***
2. *Compile response pages and send to our office at Unit 7-875 Corydon Ave R3M 0W7. - ***Include your name, email, school name and grade level of students in your submission.***
3. *Provide submissions by February 13, 2026 to be included in the document.*
4. *Once the document is compiled and printed, your classroom will receive a copy to show students how important their voice is!*
5. *An update will be provided once a meeting is had with government officials to share the document. Thank-you letters to students will be provided*

INFORMATION TO INCLUDE

Teacher name: _____

Teacher email: _____

School name: _____

Grade level of students: _____

Your Child's Voice Matters!

Dear Parents and Guardians,

CPAWS Manitoba has launched a student-led initiative that is working to engage young people in conservation and demonstrate that their voices are valuable and important to decision makers.

Your child's classroom will be participating in a meaningful class project focused on biodiversity and the importance of protecting nature.

As part of this learning experience, students will explore the following key questions:

- What is biodiversity?*
- Why is biodiversity important for nature and people?*
- Why do we need protected areas that help maintain biodiversity?*
- How can people of all ages use their voices to advocate for the environment?*

In class, students will engage in discussions, hands-on learning, and reflection activities. They'll have the opportunity to write a short response and/or create a drawing that expresses their thoughts on why nature should be protected. These responses will be shared back with participating classrooms to demonstrate how powerful and valuable their voices are.

To extend the impact of their learning, student responses will also be included in a larger document that will be shared with government officials to encourage them to keep their commitments to protecting nature a priority. No student names will be included in this document—only grade levels will be identified to represent student voices from across different age groups.

We hope this project helps students understand that their voices matter and that they have the power to make a difference in caring for the world around them.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out.

Sincerely,

Carly Gray

Environmental Educator, CPAWS Manitoba

Your Voice Matters!

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A key to understanding why protecting nature is important is understanding what biodiversity is. The goal of these lessons are to give your students an age-appropriate opportunity to learn about the diversity of living things in Manitoba and take action to protect it. To help guide your students understanding, explore the following questions.

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the variety of all living things – including plants, animals, fungi, and microorganisms – and the ecosystems they form. It includes differences within species, between species, and across habitats and regions.

Why is biodiversity important for nature and people?

Biodiversity keeps ecosystems healthy and balanced. It helps clean our air and water, provides food and medicine, and supports pollination and climate stability. For people, it also offers cultural, spiritual, and recreational value. When biodiversity is strong, nature is more resilient to change and stress (like climate events or disease).

Why do we need protected areas that help maintain biodiversity?

Protected areas (like parks, wildlife reserves, and Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas) provide safe spaces where plants, animals, and ecosystems can thrive without as much human disturbance. These areas help preserve species and habitats that might be at risk and promote outdoor exploration and education.

How can people of all ages use their voices to advocate for the environment?

Everyone, including young people, can speak up for nature. This can look like writing letters, making art, talking to leaders, participating in community events, or simply learning and sharing knowledge. When young people share what they care about, it sends a powerful message that the future matters and that all voices count in protecting the planet.

Your Voice Matters!

LESSON IDEAS

Early and Middle Years Activities

- *Daily write/draw about a specific natural space in your area i.e. schoolyard, backyard, park, a tree nearby, and count how many different kinds of species that you can see. Come back another day (if possible) to compare what is different from the first visit.*
 - *Are the same kinds of bugs around?*
 - *Are the tree leaves changing colour and falling off of the branches?*
 - *Is there high biodiversity or low biodiversity in this area?*
 - *What are things you can do to increase biodiversity in your area?*
- *Create a food pyramid with research done around your school yard or in a local ecoregion. Can you find two species that are working together? Do these species change with the seasons? Draw a timeline of the changes that you observe the species making.*
- *Biodiversity Blitz Scavenger Hunt*
 - *Use the following page to do a biodiversity log of a greenspace. You can count the number you find and compare the number with other times of the year.*
 - *When studying an area's biodiversity, scientists look at different criteria to help them evaluate its current status, as well as how it has changed or improved:*
 - *The number of different types of species found (composition)*
 - *The actual count of individuals of each species (abundance)*
 - *How spread out the individuals are (distribution)*
 - *How many of these species have been identified as threatened or endangered (extinction risk)*
- *Biodiversity Mosaic*
 - *Go for a walk and notice the various species in your area. Take note of these species and have each student pick one to draw and create a card for each species. Then, talk about them and create a mosaic of all the species in your area. Map our relationships between species in terms of food webs and connections. How does nature work together? Where do humans fit in?*
- *Watch this video on Biodiversity from WWF and pause to engage with your students with the following questions:*
 - *0:30 - When you think of a healthy planet, what do you picture?*
 - *1:15 - How can you work to lessen your impact on the planet?*
 - *2:46 - What actions can affect biodiversity? How do you think we limit those?*
 - *3:47 - Is there a biodiversity hotspot within our province that you think needs protecting?*
 - *4:04 - How can you help protect biodiversity?*
 - *5:10 - "We need all the riches of our living planet to help us live healthy, happy lives long into the future" - Think about this*
 - *5:18 - What "riches" do we need to protect and conserve?*

BIODIVERSITY BLITZ

How many different types (species) of living things can you find?

Trees



Look for different leaf shapes

Total TREE species

Plants



Look for flowers, bushes, grasses and weeds

Total PLANT species

Animals



What animals live here? Look for their homes

Total ANIMAL species

Insects & Bugs



Look for crawling, flying, and burrowing critters



Total BUG species

Your Voice Matters!

LESSON PLANS

Senior Years

- Senior students still benefit from outside time! Go for a walk and complete a biodiversity log of your schoolyard or local greenspace. Work on some of the mindfulness techniques like using senses and slowing down, we can all benefit.
- Use the following Biodiversity Guide from the Jane Goodall Institute to dive deeper into the nuances of biodiversity. Explore human impacts and brainstorm ways that we can work together to minimize them.
 - https://www.rootsandshootscanadaguide.com/_files/ugd/76c29b_e4849a2f192147b684af8526a3aa050b.pdf
- *Case study of Seal River Watershed. Research what the Seal River Watershed is, and what an IPCA is. Focus on; the diverse species in the area, carbon amount, different habitats and how they have changed over time, etc. Talk about Land Stewardship and the importance this has to cultural revitalization. Visit the website and explore videos at the link below*
 - <https://www.sealriverwatershed.ca/>
- Spend time outdoors *observing, and compiling research, thoughts, and questions, begin to create a nature journaling spread about your experience.*

Nature Journaling is a creative way to write, draw, and keep record of everything you can see and learn about in the natural environment around you. Keeping a notebook full of your nature journaling sketches and ideas is a great way to track your experience and learning. You can always go back to a page and add in new information that you've learned, and keep it nice and organized for yourself to look back on.

You can start with a notebook or piece of paper, and find yourself a comfy spot to dig into the nature around you. Begin by noticing what is around you, what you can smell, what you can hear in the area you're in. Really immerse yourself into the space as much as you can. Using your senses and focusing on them is a great way to ground yourself and ready your mind to focus on the surrounding environment. You can start by writing down everything you notice around you, any questions that you have, or draw some things that you can see. Let your imagination take over, and create, write, or draw anything that pulls your focus to it. This is where some of the greatest observations will come to you!

Follow-up with Action

WHAT NEXT?

Students may be curious what more they can do to help the environment. Encourage critical thinking and reinforce environmentally responsible behaviours to help ease eco anxiety and improve environmental literacy.

If you are looking for more things to do with your students, check out the list below! Engaging in environmental inquiry is a great way to infuse environmental learning into your classroom.

- **Speak out!** *Talk with your friends, family, and teachers about the importance of protecting nature. Draw their attention to biodiversity and share what you've learned about why it's so important.*
- **Practice reciprocity.** *Enjoy and discover the wonders of nature around you, but always be respectful of your surroundings and remember to give back to the land. Leave nature as pristine as you found it, even make it better.*
- **Plant Indigenous Plants.** *The Tall Grass Prairie is an endangered ecosystem with less than 1% left. Plants that naturally grow in this ecosystem are best for serving local wildlife. You can also create backyard wildlife habitats, such as rotten logs for beetles or bug hotels.*
- **Save energy.** *Turn off unnecessary lights and appliances. Bike or walk when you can, rather than using a car. Talk to your family and school about switching to renewable energy and energy-efficient appliances. Start a movement in your school or community to help the planet by planting trees or saving energy.*
- **Think about the food you eat.** *The ways in which we grow and produce our food have a massive impact on the planet. Reduce the amount of food and water you waste. Talk about the travel some foods take and encourage students to plant edible gardens.*
- **Shop smart.** *Talk to your students about being a conscious consumer. Do we really need to buy new school supplies every year? Talk about labels to look for like Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), as these products are made sustainably from responsibly managed forests. Do your research on products that contain palm oil and check the label the next time you purchase them.*
- **Use less plastic**—especially single-use items such as straws—and remember to reuse and recycle whenever possible. *Make artwork or projects out of single-use materials to give them another life!*
- **Buy things that last for a long time and can be repaired or recycled.** *Things such as bicycles and clothes can be restored or mended.*

more ideas at <https://www.worldwildlife.org/teaching-resources>

Your Voice Matters!

**Sign up for our
newsletter if you
want in!**

