Winter Survival

Objectives:

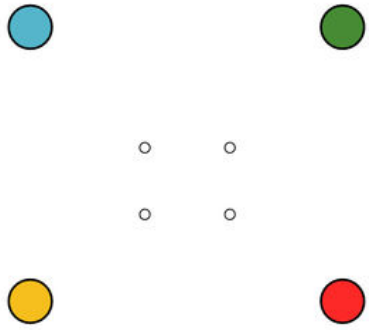
Students will learn about the reality of animal survival in a habitat, resource usage, and the importance of conservation through an experiential running game.

Materials Needed:

- 4 hula hoops
- 4 small pylons
- Blue, Green, Red, and Yellow popsicle sticks

Set Up:

To begin, place the 4 hula hoops in corners to create a large square. This will be the outline of your playing area.



Create another, much smaller square in the middle using the pylons. This will be a safe zone.

Place the coloured popsicle sticks in the hula hoops, with each hula hoop holding one colour.

How to Play:

Each student is a Manitoba animal like a deer, rabbit, mouse, or squirrel.
Begin by asking: "What do animals need in order to survive in their habitat?

- A: Food, water, shelter, and energy.

In order to survive the winter each animal must collect:

- 3 Food (Green)
- 3 Water (Blue)
- 3 Energy (Red)
- 1 Shelter (Yellow)

Popsicle sticks can only be collected 1 at a time and each time a student collects one, they must go back to the safe zone before going out to retrieve another one. Students should be holding their collected sticks throughout the game.

Introduce taggers:
Ask students, "What makes it more difficult for animals to collect everything they need?"

- Could be things like: Droughts, Predators, Starvation, Weather Phenomenons, Wildfires, etc.

We often do:

- Starvation: takes one food stick if they tag an animal
- Drought: takes one water stick if they tag and animal.
- Predator: takes one shelter or energy stick if they tag and animal.

If an animal is tagged and does not have the coloured stick required, they continue playing as usual.

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Other rules and commonly asked questions:

- Both animals and taggers should continue holding the popsicle sticks they collect.
- Have students tell you when they collect all of their sticks (usually around 5 minutes). At that point, they should keep collecting more sticks. Animals in the wild don't stop after they get their basic needs met.

Round One:

Play one round with all the popsicle sticks in play. This should take around 5 minutes. Give students a one minute warning when around 5 students have collected everything.

Call all the students in. Ask them to sit down if they did not collect everything they need. You should notice that some animals did not make it while the majority did. This is an accurate representation of animal survival through the winter.

Questions to unpack:

- What do we notice about the population?
- What would happen if more resources were available?
- What would happen if there were less predators?
- If our population increased, would there be enough resources for everyone?

Round Two:

Move each hula hoop closer towards the middle pylons to make the play space smaller. Collect around half the popsicle sticks from each hula hoop and put them on the side.

Explain that now, humans have come into your habitat and want to develop it. This means it's going to shrink your habitat and take away half your resources.

- Ask: How do you think this will affect the wildlife in this habitat?

Choose new taggers and play the round. The game ends when all the resources run out or you decide otherwise.

Call all the students in. Ask them to sit down if they did not collect everything they need.
Questions to unpack:

- How did our surviving population change from last round?
- What made it difficult for the animals to survive?

Connection to Conservation:

The number one reason that the majority of animals did not survive the second round is because human development in the area fragmented habitats and reduced the number of resources available. When development fragments habitats, animals are forced into smaller plots of land, increasing competition for resources and reducing population rates. Conservation Organizations like CPAWS work to ensure that large areas of wild land are protected from development. This work not only helps protect animals but also contributes to the protection of global biodiversity, a crucial step in mitigating climate change.

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