

ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' FEDERATION OF ONTARIO

2011 Aboriginal Curriculum and the Sciences Junior



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Junior Lesson Plan

Indigenous people and their communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and fully support their identity, culture and interests, and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development.

~ The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992.

Background

Traditional Aboriginal belief is that human beings are a part of nature, not separate from it, and that everyone has a responsibility and a role as Earth's steward. There is an understanding in Aboriginal cultures that animals, like human beings, are conscious, social, and powerful spiritual beings that must be respected for their contributions to Mother Earth and all her inhabitants.

Objectives

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the idea of habitats and communities, and to build an appreciation for different animals, their habitats, and their varying contributions to Mother Earth.

Science and Technology

GRADE 4 | HABITATS AND COMMUNITIES

Specific Expectations

Grade 4 Science and Technology

Understanding Life Systems: Habitats and Communities

- 2.5 Use appropriate science and technology vocabulary in oral and written communication.
- 2.6 Use a variety of forms (e.g., oral, written, graphic, multimedia) to communicate with different audiences and for a variety of purposes.
- 3.1 Demonstrate an understanding of habitats as areas that provide plants and animals with the necessities of life.
- 3.4 Demonstrate an understanding of a community as a group of interacting species sharing a common habitat.

Grade 4 The Arts

Drama

- B1.1 Engage actively in drama exploration and role play, with a focus on exploring drama structures, key ideas, and pivotal moments in their own stories and stories from diverse communities, times, and places.
- B1.4 Communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas to a specific audience.
- B2.1 Express personal responses and make connections to characters, themes, and issues presented in their own and others' drama works.

Visual Arts

- D1.1 Create two- and three-dimensional works of art that express feelings and ideas inspired by their interests and experiences.
- D1.4 Use a variety of materials, tools, and techniques to determine solutions to design challenges.

Language

Oral Communication

- 1.2 Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate listening behaviour by adapting active listening strategies to suit a variety of situations, including work in groups,
- 1.3 Identify a variety of listening comprehension strategies and use them appropriately before, during, and after listening in order to understand and clarify the meaning of oral texts.
- 2.2 Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate speaking behaviour in a variety of situations, including paired sharing and small- and large-group discussions.

Lesson Plan

Task 1: Learning About Habitat

Ask students to draw a picture of their home and its surroundings, including other houses, buildings, trees, roads, sidewalks, yards, etc. Have students construct a legend for their drawing that shows where they can find food, water, shade, and space to play. These needs are provided for within students' environment, and the discussion can progress naturally to naming their home and its surroundings as their habitat.

Alternatively, students could draw a picture of the area around their school (not specifically their home).

Definition of Habitat

1. The area or environment where an organism or ecological community normally lives or occurs;
2. The place where a person or thing is most likely to be found;
3. A structure that affords a controlled environment for living in extremely inhospitable locations, such as in the highest Arctic or underwater.

Task 2: Becoming My Animal

Turn off the lights for this task to make the room comfortable, set the atmosphere, and conserve energy. Play instrumental or traditional Aboriginal flute music.

Invite students to close their eyes or put their heads down on their desks and let an image of an animal come to them. Remind them not to force themselves to think about a certain animal, but rather, to let the being visit them.

Ask students to begin to feel themselves turning into the animal that has visited their imaginations. Ask them: "What do you look like?" "Where do you live?" "What does your home look like?" "What are some of the things that you see in your environment?" "Do any other animals live in your environment?"

Task 3: Comparing and Contrasting Our Habitats

Ask students to draw a picture of their animal's home and habitat, in the same way as they drew their home and surrounding area. Again, ask students to locate and label where their animal can find food, water, shade, and a space to play/hunt/survive.

Ask students to look at both of their pictures and identify any commonalities between the two habitats. Have students use a Think-Pair-Share strategy to explore the following questions: "Are there any parts of the environment that your home and your animal's home may share?" "How do you share these common elements?" "Why do we share them?" As a class, have the pairs volunteer to summarize and share *each other's* insights with the class. Students should first ask for permission to share their partner's ideas.

Students can gather information about their animal from various sources. They may bring their own books from home, borrow books from the library, or use a website such as Arctic Animals (<http://library.thinkquest.org/3500/animals.htm>) or Discover Southern Ontario: Canadian Animals (<http://www.discover-southern-ontario.com/Canadian-animals.html>).

Task 4: Making Animal Masks

Materials

- Newspaper
- Balloons (one for every two students)
- Elastic string and masking tape
- Liquid dish detergent
- White flour
- Water
- Salt
- White glue
- Bowl
- Whisk
- Paint, paint supplies, decorations, and construction paper for details
- Optional: Large garbage bags to protect desks

Step 1

Tear the newspaper into small squares or strips.

Step 2

In pairs, have students inflate one balloon per pair to the approximate size of their heads, and knot it. The inflated balloon will act as a mould for the masks. Have students tape the balloon knot to a desk or space between them.

Step 3

Make a papier-mâché mixture by mixing approximately two cups of flour with two cups of water and adding a pinch of salt. You want the mixture to look like thick soup, neither too runny nor too lumpy or thick. (Add a little white glue for extra strength.)

Note: You may wish to have students cover their work surface with a large garbage bag to make the clean-up easier. The mixture is very difficult to remove once it has dried, so immediate clean-up is necessary on unprotected surfaces.

Step 4

Wipe a thin layer of liquid dish detergent onto the balloon for easier removal of the mask in the next step. Have students dip the strips of newspaper into the mixture and begin to cover the balloon. The more layers created, the stronger the mask. Strips should be laid as flat as possible.

Step 5

Once the papier-mâché has fully dried on the balloon (after one to two days), it is ready to be removed from the mould. Have students remove their balloon from the table and deflate the balloon inside the mask if it has not already been deflated. Cut the resulting globe in half vertically so as to make two masks from one mould.

Step 6

Bind the edges of the mask with white masking tape and add a string or elastic strap across the back of the mask so that students can wear it. Cut out eyes, noses, and mouths.

Step 7

Now it's time to decorate! Students can use paint, paper (for beaks and noses), feathers, sequins, etc., to make their masks look like their animals.

Task 5: Introducing Animals in a Community Circle

Note: The community circle is based on a TRIBES strategy for building community in the classroom. However, the circle is also an important symbol in Aboriginal culture and is found in many Aboriginal communities' healing circles. A circle allows everyone to be seen, to speak, and to be heard. While in the circle, students should be reminded of the TRIBES four positive agreements for a safe classroom: Attentive Listening, Appreciation/No Put Downs, Right to Pass/Participate, and Mutual Respect.

In a community circle, introduce yourself as your animal as an example to students, and invite them to do the same. (If they assigned a name to their animal, they can share that as well.) After each animal in the circle speaks, the other animals should respond by saying, "We hear you, [name of being]."

Task 6: Identifying Animals: "That's Me!" Activity

In this activity, the teacher makes a series of statements describing characteristics of various animals. If a statement applies to a student's animal, the student stands up and says, "That's me!" This is an energizer and a community building game that will make students aware of similarities between their chosen animals and habitats.

Statements

- "You live in water."
- "You hibernate."
- "You eat fish."
- "You build your home."
- "You live in a tree."
- "You are nocturnal."
- "You crawl."
- "You fly."
- "You live in a hole."
- "You are a hunter."
- "You swim."
- "You eat plants."

Task 7: Sharing Gifts

Still in the community circle, ask the animals to speak again, sharing what wisdom, knowledge, or gifts they have to offer and what they might teach people willing to listen. Give students practice time by pairing them with someone else for a discussion before speaking to the entire class. Another prompt might be, “What makes your animal special?”

As a class, go around the circle having each person say what their gifts are, with the group responding by saying, “We thank you, [name of being].”

End the community circle by saying, “Thank you to the beings who have come together today to share their feelings, dreams, hopes, and wisdom.”

Task 8: Writing and Reflecting

In journals, have students respond to the following questions:

- Should animals have the same rights as humans do? Why or why not?
- Should we protect animals and their habitats? Why or why not?
- What are some ways that you can act as a steward of Mother Earth and her creatures?

Resources

Papier-Mâché Mask Recipe

<http://www.homeschool-activities.com/paper-mache-recipe.html>

“That’s Me!” Activity

http://peer.hdwg.org/sites/default/files/ThatsMe-Activities-Peer_Training_0.pdf