

## ROOTED IN RECIPROCITY: LAND-BASED LEARNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

### INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN TREATY 7



- Siksikaitsitapi**  
*Blackfoot Confederacy*
- Siksika
  - Kainai
  - Pliikani
  - Amskaapiikani



- Îethka Nakoda Wicastabi**  
**First Nations**
- Bearspaw
  - Chiniki
  - Goodstoney



**Tsuu'tina First Nation**



- Otipemisiwak Métis**  
**Government**  
*Métis Nation of Alberta*
- Nose Hill Métis District 5
  - Elbow Métis District 6

### INDIGENOUS LAND STEWARDSHIP

For Indigenous Peoples, ecological knowledge and stewardship are not separate from daily life; they are deeply embedded within it. Stewardship is rooted in reciprocity: to protect, nurture, and respect all living things. We invite you to reflect on what it means to act in a good way: to care for the land, the animals, and each other.

### ACTIVITY ANCHOR #1: WE ARE WATER PROTECTORS



**"We are Water Protectors"**  
**Interactive Activity Kit**



#### **Why This Resource Matters (Divisions I & II)**

**Purpose:** To support reflection on water as a living relative and explore personal and cultural relationships with land, water, and responsibility through art. Connects **story** → **activism** → **care**

#### **How to Use It in Land-Based Learning**

##### **BEFORE the land-based experience**

- Purpose: Build emotional and ethical context
- Read aloud (physical book or video)
- Ask: Why is water important? Who is responsible for protecting water?
- Introduce the idea that humans have responsibilities to land and water

##### **DURING the land-based experience**

- Purpose: Ground abstract ideas in place
- Visit a creek, river, puddle, or snow
- Invite observation: Where does water move? What lives near it? How do people use or affect it?

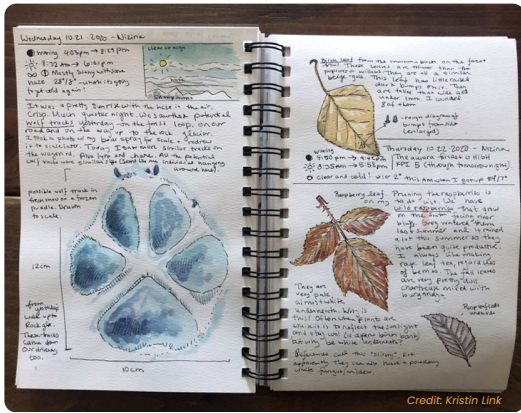
##### **AFTER the land-based experience**

- Purpose: Move toward stewardship action
- Use the Interactive Activity Kit
- Reflect: How can we protect water at school or home?
- Possible actions: Water conservation posters, schoolyard clean-up, sharing learning with families

**Note:** This book is not something we "use" to teach Indigenous knowledge - it is something we learn alongside, with care and respect.

## ROOTED IN RECIPROCITY: LAND-BASED LEARNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

### ACTIVITY ANCHOR #2: NATURE JOURNALLING



#### Why Nature Journaling is Effective

- Supports scientific observation
- Encourages slow looking
- Builds personal connection to place
- Works across K-6 with differentiation

#### How to Use It in Land-Based Learning

##### **BEFORE the land-based experience**

- Introduce journaling indoors
- Emphasize:
  - Drawings count
  - Words are optional
  - Curiosity matters more than accuracy

##### **DURING the land-based experience**

- Pair with:
  - Sit Spot Practice
  - Sensory Walk
- Prompts: What did you notice? What surprised you? What changed?

##### **AFTER the land-based experience**

- Revisit journals over time
- Compare: Seasons, weather, growth and change

**Stewardship connection:** When students document a place, they begin to feel responsible for it.



Nature Journaling Video  
with Rosalie Haizlett  
Ranger Rick Kids



Conservation Champions  
Festival at the Calgary  
Zoo: Stewardship in Action

### ALBERTA PROGRAMS OF STUDY: CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS (DIVISIONS 1 & 2)



#### SCIENCE

Students observe and ask questions about their environment, begin to understand how living and non-living elements are connected, explore how human actions affect ecosystems, and practice basic scientific skills through hands-on outdoor inquiry.



#### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Students build communication skills by sharing stories and observations, engaging with nature-based texts, expressing learning through drawing and writing, and connecting personal outdoor experiences to broader ideas.



#### MATHEMATICS

Students develop numeracy skills by collecting simple data, measuring and comparing natural objects, recognizing patterns in nature, and using real-world outdoor experiences to practice problem-solving and reasoning.



#### HEALTH & WELLNESS

Outdoor learning supports students' mental and physical well-being, fosters a sense of belonging and connection, and encourages respectful, responsible behaviour toward themselves, others, and the environment.



#### SOCIAL STUDIES

Students build a sense of place and identity, consider diverse perspectives on land and community, explore responsibility and citizenship, and develop critical thinking skills through inquiry and observation.

## ROOTED IN RECIPROCITY: LAND-BASED LEARNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

### LAND-BASED LEARNING

Connecting your students to land-based learning is a beautiful way to appreciate and connect with the natural world. Land-based learning helps students form relationships with place. From relationship comes care. From care comes responsibility. And from responsibility comes stewardship and action.



#### SENSORY NATURE WALK

##### Facilitating a Sensory Nature Walk

- Slow pace
- Five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, & touch
- No task to complete; presence

##### Sensory Nature Walk Prompts

- What can you hear?
- What textures do you notice?
- What colours do you see?
- Is anything moving?
- How many different types of plants do you see here?



#### FOREST BATHING (SHINRIN-YOKU)

Shinrin-yoku is the practice of slowly and mindfully spending time in nature, using your senses to connect with your surroundings. It is not exercise, hiking, or a lesson; it's about being present. You "bathe" in: sounds, sights, smells, textures, & the feeling of being outdoors

##### Key ideas of Shinrin-yoku:

- Slow down (no destination, no rush)
- Engage the senses (listen, look, touch, breathe)
- Notice without judging
- Be with nature, rather than doing something to it



#### SIT SPOT PRACTICE

##### Facilitating Sit Spot Practice

- Select an outdoor space: school yard, park, community space
- A place students return to regularly during different seasons
- Bring a nature journal!

##### Why sit spot matters

- Observation skills
- Calm focus
- Empathy for living things
- Nature journal: draw or write what you see



#### LEARNING OUTSIDE

Connecting with nature can be as simple as bringing regular classroom learning outdoors.

##### Examples:

- Reading a book to a stuffed animal outside during ELA time
- Math games using natural objects
- Outdoor art or journaling

##### Curriculum Connections:

- Science: Scientific observation, noticing change
- Citizenship & Stewardship: School clean-ups, caring for shared spaces
- Inquiry: Tending a garden, participating in simple citizen science projects

## IN THE SPIRIT OF LEARNING: HONOURING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION



Land Acknowledgement: The Calgary Public Library offers audio clips to read aloud the names of the different Nations in Treaty 7 territory, along with resources to support learning and reconciliation.



Indigenous Services: On their Indigenous Services page, you will find guidance on land acknowledgments, opportunities to meet with Elders, Indigenous art installations, language resources (including children's books and a dedicated Language Resource Centre), curated Indigenous reading lists, and programs that celebrate Indigenous cultures and knowledge.



Making Treaty 7 has a great collection of Educational Resources, from starting your journey, learning diverse Indigenous languages and cultures, and information about Truth and Reconciliation.



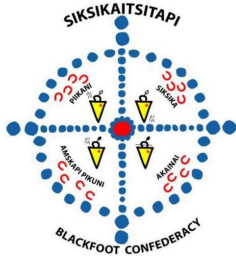
The Blackfoot Digital Library has information about Blackfoot people and culture. The site contains images, audio, videos and documents collected during the past century.



Empowering the Spirit includes educational resources to deepen understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives and ways of knowing. The resources are the result of collaboration between Alberta Education and the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortium.

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### ACTIVITY ANCHOR #1: WE ARE WATER PROTECTORS



### "We are Water Protectors" Interactive Activity Kit



#### Why This Resource Matters (Divisions III & IV)

- Centers Indigenous-led environmental stewardship and resistance
- Frames water as a living relative, not a commodity
- Models collective responsibility, advocacy, and civic action
- Connects **story** → **activism** → **ethics** → **stewardship**

"We Are the Water Protectors" is rooted in the real-world resistance led by the Standing Rock Sioux Nation against the Dakota Access Pipeline, which threatened water sources, treaty rights, and Indigenous sovereignty. The text provides an accessible entry point into discussions of power, environmental justice, and responsibility.

#### How to Use It in Land-Based Learning

##### **BEFORE** the land-based experience

**Purpose:** Build ethical, historical, and civic context

Before the land-based experience, students engage with We Are the Water Protectors through selected excerpts or video to build ethical and historical context, learning about the Dakota Access Pipeline and the leadership of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation. Through guided discussion, students examine why water protection became a global movement, who was most affected by the proposed pipeline, and how power, sovereignty, and decision-making shape environmental outcomes, introducing the idea that environmental stewardship includes responsibility, advocacy, and informed civic action.

##### **DURING** the land-based experience

**Purpose:** Ground activism and ethics in local place

Students visit a local water source to observe how water moves through the environment, supports living systems, and is affected by human activity, connecting local observations to broader environmental and political systems.

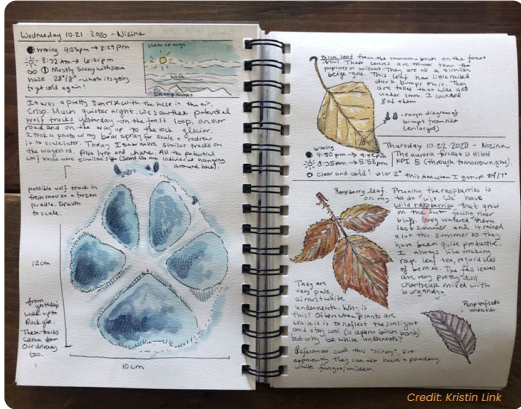
##### **AFTER** the land-based experience

**Purpose:** Move from awareness to informed action

Students reflect on their observations and consider responsibilities related to water protection, then plan or take age-appropriate stewardship or advocacy actions that demonstrate informed and ethical civic engagement.

## ROOTED IN RECIPROCITY: LAND-BASED LEARNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

### ACTIVITY ANCHOR #2: NATURE JOURNALLING



Credit: Kristin Link

#### Why Nature Journaling is Effective

- Strengthens scientific observation and evidence-based reasoning
- Encourages slowing down to notice patterns, relationships, and change
- Builds intentional, long-term connection to place
- Supports systems thinking by linking observations over time

#### How to Use It in Land-Based Learning

##### **BEFORE the land-based experience**

- Introduce field journaling as a tool for inquiry, not art.
- Emphasize:
  - Diagrams, maps, and labelled sketches are valid evidence
  - Written observations, questions, and data tables are encouraged
  - Accuracy matters, but curiosity and noticing come first

##### **DURING the land-based experience**

- Use journaling as field documentation alongside:
  - Longitudinal place study or an inquiry-based ecosystem walk
  - Students record observations using a combination of words, visuals, and data.
- Suggested prompts:
  - What patterns or relationships do you notice?
  - What evidence of change or impact is present?
  - What surprises or questions are emerging?

##### **AFTER the land-based experience**

- Revisit field journals to deepen understanding.
- Students may:
  - Compare observations across time (seasons, weather, human activity)
  - Identify trends and changes
  - Develop claims supported by evidence
  - Reflect on how their understanding of the place has evolved

**Stewardship connection:** When students document a place over time, they begin to recognize patterns, notice change, and understand impact. This awareness supports responsibility and stewardship, reinforcing the idea that caring for land begins with attention and relationship.



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### ALBERTA PROGRAMS OF STUDY: CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS (DIVISIONS 3 & 4)



#### SCIENCE & BIOLOGY

##### **Scientific inquiry & systems thinking:**

Students investigate ecological systems by collecting data, analyzing interactions, and using evidence to explain patterns, change, and human impacts, supporting sustainable and conservation-focused decision-making.



#### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

##### **Critical literacy & communication:**

Students analyze and create texts connected to land and stewardship, using inquiry, research, and reflection to connect personal experience with broader social, ecological, and ethical issues.



#### MATHEMATICS

##### **Data analysis & problem-solving:**

Students collect and interpret environmental data, apply measurement and modeling in real-world contexts, identify patterns over time, and use mathematical reasoning to evaluate environmental challenges and possible solutions.



#### HEALTH & LIFE SKILLS CALM

##### **Well-being & responsibility:**

Time outdoors supports mental well-being, focus, and regulation while encouraging personal responsibility, ethical decision-making, a sense of belonging, and healthy, active engagement with natural spaces.



#### SOCIAL STUDIES

##### **Citizenship, place & perspective:**

Students examine relationships between land, identity, and community, explore diverse perspectives including Indigenous leadership, and use inquiry and evidence to analyze responsibility, power, and ethical decision-making related to human-environment interactions.

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#### CITIZEN SCIENCE BIODIVERSITY & ECOSYSTEM MONITORING

**What students do:**

Students engage in an outdoor **citizen science investigation** to observe, document, and analyze biodiversity and ecosystem health in a local outdoor space (schoolyard, park, zoo grounds, or community green space).

**Students collect and analyze data using:**

- Field observations and species counts
- Photographs and sketches
- Mapping locations and patterns
- Data tables and graphs
- Longitudinal comparisons over time (optional)
- Citizen science: [www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org)



#### SENSORY NATURE WALK OR FOREST BATHING (SHINRIN-YOKU)

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#### SCHOOLYARD OR COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT

**What students do:**

Students investigate how humans interact with a shared outdoor space by conducting an audit of:

- Waste and recycling
- Water use
- Habitat quality
- Human impact and care

Students analyze findings and propose realistic stewardship actions.

**Indigenous ecology connection:**

Students examine reciprocity by asking: What does this place give us, and what responsibilities do we have in return?



#### LONGITUDINAL PLACE STUDY (SEASONAL OR MONTHLY)

**What students do:**

Students select a specific outdoor site and revisit it over time to observe:

- Environmental change
- Seasonal cycles
- Species presence
- Human use and care

Students document findings through journals, photographs, maps, or data tables.

**Indigenous ecology connection:**

This mirrors Indigenous stewardship practices grounded in long-term relationship with place and responsibility to future generations.

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