



The Power of Gratitude: Incorporating Indigenous Perspectives on Land-Based Learning in Early Learning Settings

Summer Institute [June 1st, 2022]

Land Acknowledgement



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Research Questions

- What are early years educators' knowledge, attitudes, and practices with respect to environmental inquiry, particularly from Indigenous perspectives?
- How can we support early years educators' professional learning and practice in environmental inquiry, particularly from Indigenous perspectives?
- What perspectives and practices support children's development of connections with the natural world?



Perspectives From the Literature

- Growing body of research on the health and developmental benefits for children of outdoor learning (e.g., WHO, 2019; CPS, 2012).
- Place-based Education (e.g., Adams & Branco, 2017)
- In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report made recommendations for the reconciliation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada which includes reconciliation with the natural world (TRC, 2015).
- Little attention has been paid to the history, culture, or perspectives of the First Peoples of the land (University of Alberta, 2021).
- Indigenous worldviews include developing relationships of gratitude and reciprocity with the land, which leads to a healthier world for all (Wall Kimmerer, 2013).

A Definition of Land-Based Learning

Land-based education assumes an environmental approach to learning that recognizes the deep connection and relationship of Indigenous peoples to the Land. It seeks to offer education pertaining to the Land that is grounded within Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy. Through this approach it is acknowledged that it is the cultivation and observation of the relationship between people and the Land that knowing and learning occurs (OISE Library News, Boon, 2018).



Methodology, Data Sources, and Participants

Methods

- Three-year qualitative case study (2020-2023)
- Interviews with educators
- Observations and documentation by research team and educators
- Workshops
- Thematic data analysis

Participants

- 20 Early Years Educators working in teams of two in preschool rooms in 10 sites.



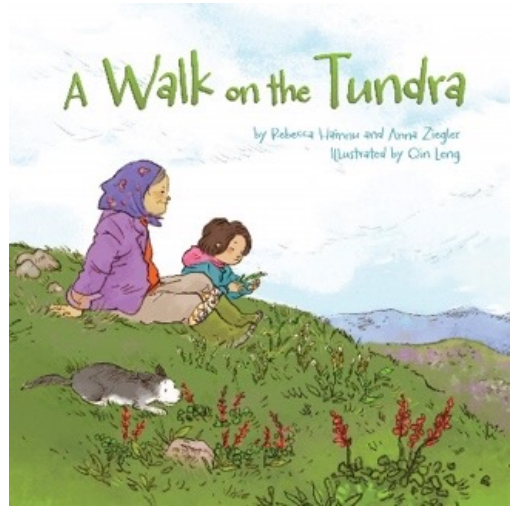
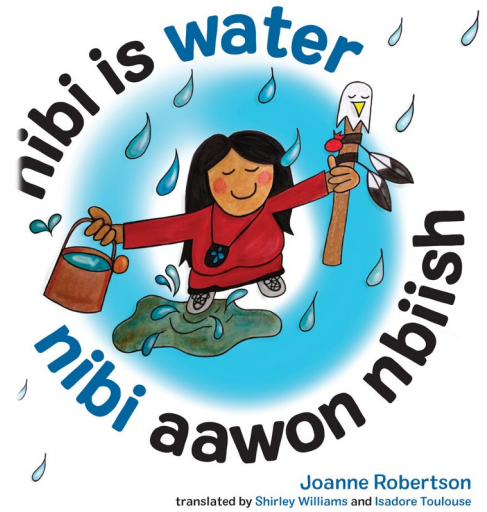
Findings from Research Team Observations Settings

Photo Credits: Research Assistants took these during their site visits

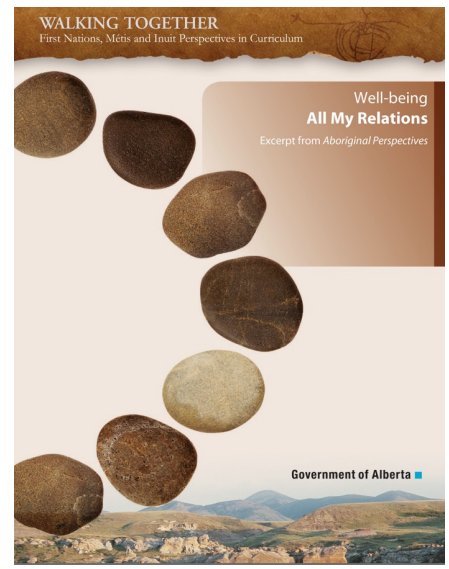


Curriculum Content for Children and Educators

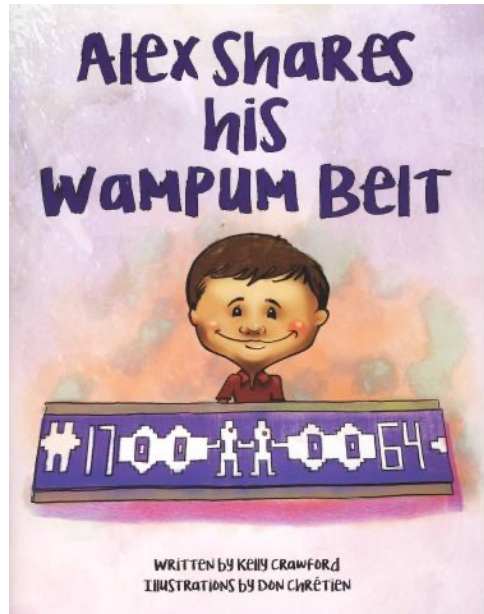
All My Relations



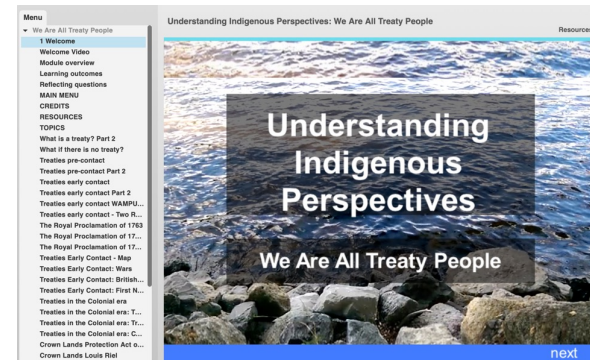
**Two Guest Speakers
Emma Greenfield and
Carolynne Crawley**



Curriculum Content for Children and Educators Treaties

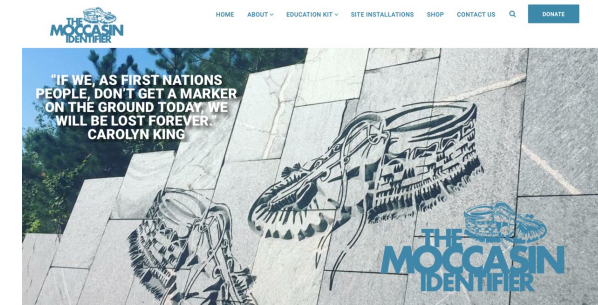


Independent Learning Modules: We Are All Treaty People



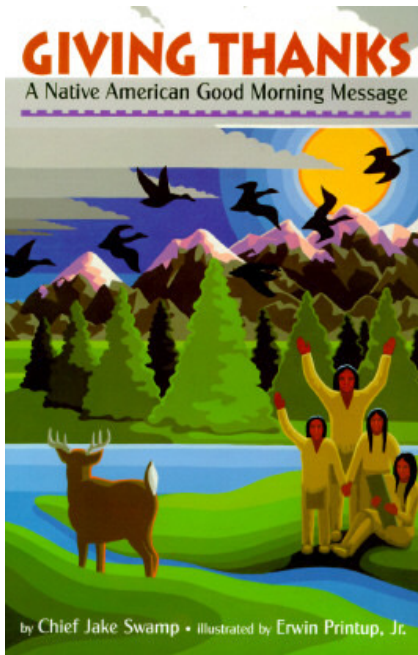
Video: Hayden King on Treaties

Website: The Moccasin Identifier Project

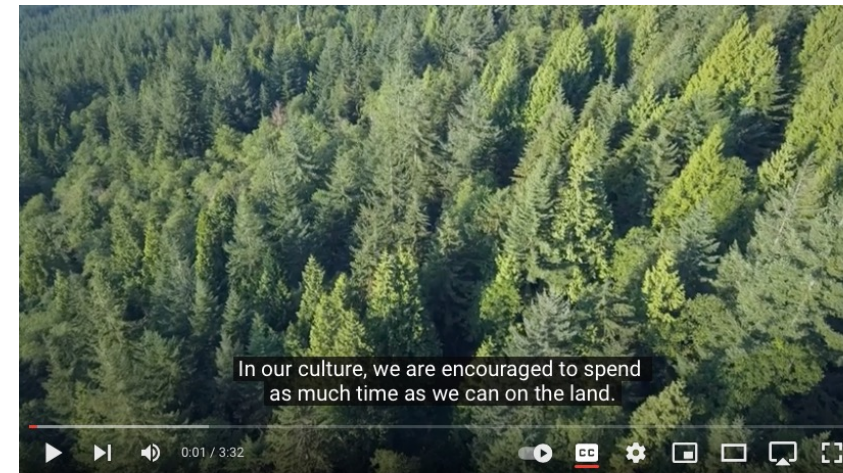


Curriculum Content for Children and Educators

Gratitude



Video: Learning How to Care for Mother Earth-Elder Dave Courchene

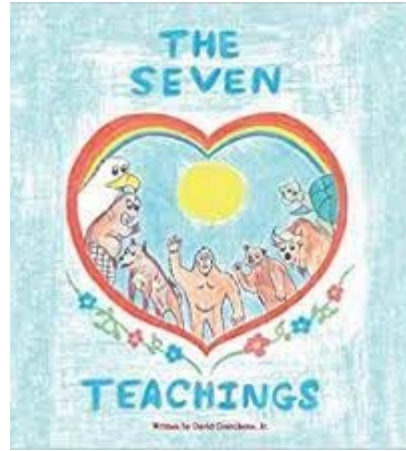
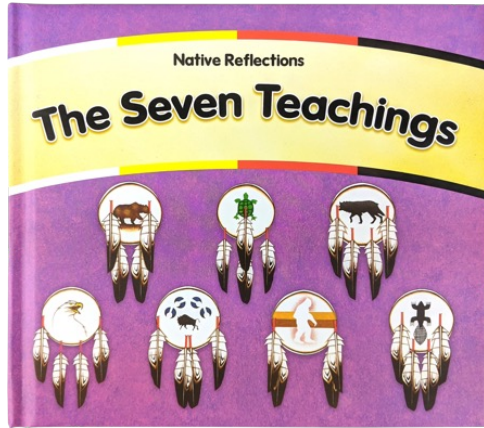


CBC/Radio-Canada is a Canadian public broadcast service. [Wikipedia](#)

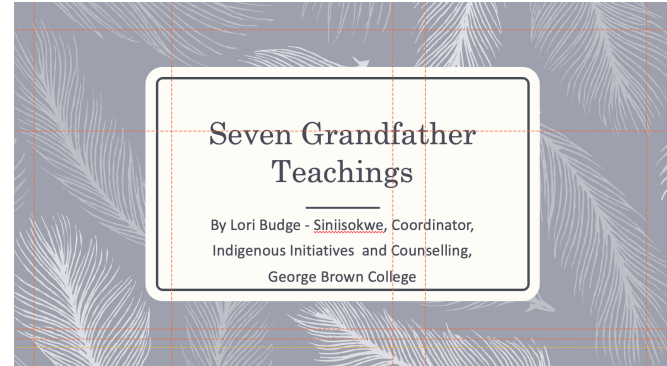
Learning how to care for Mother Earth with Elder Dave Courchene

Curriculum Content for Children and Educators

The Seven Grandfather Teachings



Guest Speaker: Lori Budge

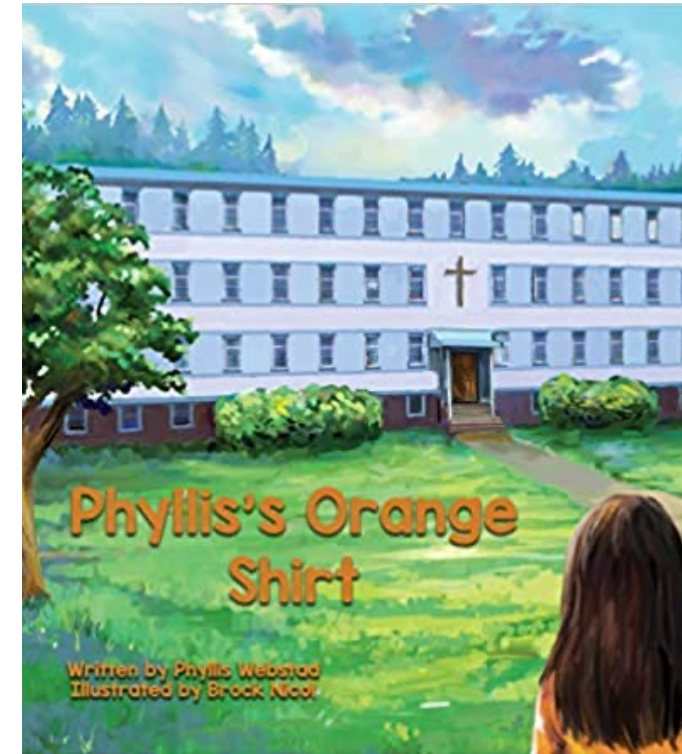


Video: Where the Sun Rises: The Seven Sacred Laws



Clip from Manitou Api: Where The Sun Rises - The Seven Sacred Laws

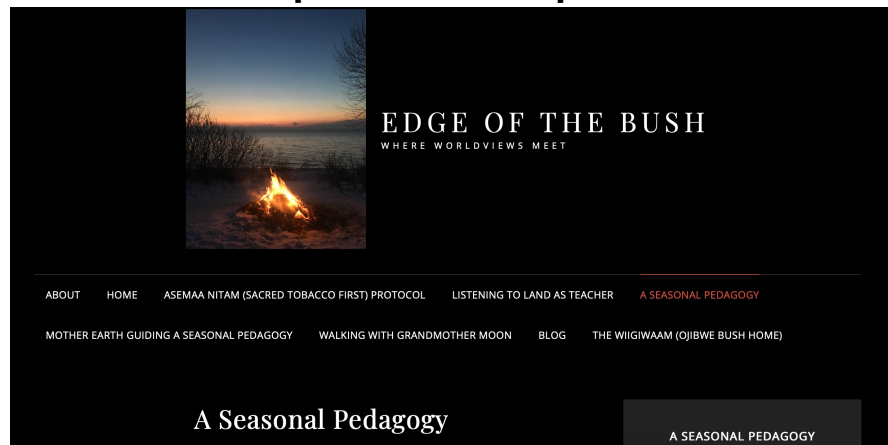
Curriculum Content for Children and Educators Residential Schools



Curriculum Content for Children and Educators

Land-Based Pedagogy

Guest Speaker: Dr.Hopi Martin



Seasonal Pedagogy

1. What experience sparked wonder in the child/ren or in you?
2. What movements brought the child/ren or you into deeper engagement with that wonder?
3. What relationships developed through the Land, between children, adults, or multiple generations?
4. What is the story of learning? How does it give back to community?

Video: Land-Based Learning by Elder Willie Ermine



1. Encourage children to observe nature closely: what do you see?
2. Encourage children to connect emotionally with nature: what do you feel?
3. Encourage children to engage with all of their senses playfully: follow their lead
4. Value intuition.

Materials and Resources



Photo Credits: Pinecones by Kijiji; Wood cookies by Etsy; Wood blocks by Scholar's Choice, Magnifiers, and Kids' garden tools by Amazon,, Biodiversity Sheets By University of Guelph: The Arboretum

Materials and Resources



Photo Credits: Bug stones, Woodland footprints and Leaf tiles By Canadian Education Warehouse, 7 Grandfather Teaching Poster and Puppets By Native Reflections

Educator Story from Year 1 Workshop



Educator Story from Year 2 Workshop



Research Assistant Observation from Year 1

18



Research Assistant Observation Year 2

19



Concluding Thoughts

- Educators are eager to learn about and incorporate environmental learning from Indigenous perspectives
- Urban early years child care centres have limited access to natural spaces but are able to maximize what they have
- Children are attracted to and eagerly engage with the natural world around them
- Children are attuned to Indigenous perspectives such as gratitude, care, and reciprocal relationships with the natural world, and if supported, are likely to grow up to advocate for just and sustainable treatment of the earth



Concluding Thoughts

“We've definitely taken more of an appreciation towards nature - things that we may have taken for granted before. We're showing appreciation and we're actually giving or feeling appreciation. You know, we say what the tree provides for us, the warmth that the sun provides for us, just for all of those things. And even in gardening...I approached it differently. It was almost like doing it for the first time, like there was just a different feeling to it. And I think that it was felt amongst all of us.”



Recommendations

- Partner with an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper, Elder or Friendship Centre for advice and support
- Use resources created by Indigenous authors (picture books, videos, articles)
- Give opportunities for educators to share and support one another



Recommendations

- Respect educators' own decision making with respect to how/when they incorporate Indigenous perspectives
- Offer simple activity ideas that educators can take up and adapt if they choose
- Take your time: start small and keep sharing and offering resources



Chi-Miigwech
*A big thank you in
Anishinaabewomin*



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d=2ea142c1ea1bc18710f535a459e3afb1](https://www.chapters.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/the-seven-teachings/9781425102937item.html?ikwid=the+seven+teaching&ikwsec=Home&ikwidx=1#algoliaQueryId=2ea142c1ea1bc18710f535a459e3afb1)

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