

MOTHER EARTH'S WAY

A BEGINNING RESOURCE GUIDE FOR
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS



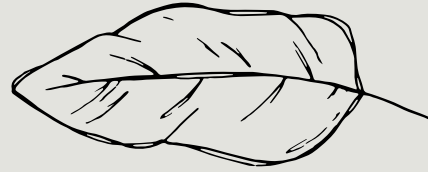
***Learning, Teaching, and Following Mother Earth's
Cyclical Pattern of the Seasons***

Arising from the Haudenosaunee/People of the
Longhouse's (Six Nations) cultural ways

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INTRODUCTION



Context of this Work

The intention of this resource guide is to explore ways to support the understandings, perspectives, and cultural knowledge of Indigenous communities in the classroom. Its development reflects a desire to actively take up Competency 15 and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action in Quebec education. This early childhood resource document aims to help educators of young children strengthen their own perspectives, ideas, and knowledge of Indigenous First Peoples in their surrounding communities. Our hope is that teachers will use it to transform their classroom practice and pedagogy through this understanding of Onkwehón:we (original being) beliefs and knowledge.

The predominant cultural practices and beliefs in this resources guide follow the Haudenosaunee/People of the Longhouse, who are made up of six different Nations: Ononta'kehá:ka/People of the rolling hills, elder brother, (Onondaga) and Keepers of the central fire; Kanien'kehá:ka/People of the Flint (Mohawk) and Keepers of the Eastern door, and elder brother; Shotinontowane'á:ka/People of the Mountains (Seneca), keepers of the Western door, and elder brother; Oneniote'á:ka/People of the Standing stone (Oneida) and younger brother; Kaion'kehá:ka/People of the Pipe (Cayuga)- also younger brother. Later, the Tuscarora Nation joined the league of Peace, and they are known as Tehatihskaró:ros/People of no shirt (Tuscarora).

This guide is offered up to non-Indigenous teachers and classrooms, however, our invitation to explore it extends to Indigenous early childhood educators as well, who mean to include Indigenous culture as curriculum.

Before the development of the guide began, we held many conversations (always engaging, sometimes working through tensions) to ensure mutual respect, comfort, and to establish an enduring foundation to grow upon. Both Owén:nakon and I needed to develop a way of knowing how we would move forward in mapping out honourable and meaningful pathways to build appropriate resources together. Our first step was to properly acknowledge the land we were working on together. This land, which has been occupied predominantly by the Kanien'kehá:ka, but other nations as well (such as the Anishinaabeg nation), has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples. As a settler, I (Sheryl Smith-Gilman), recognize and respect these nations as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters on which our work was undertaken.

INTRODUCTION



Accordingly, in collaboration with our Kanien'kehá:ka/People of the Flint elders and Indigenous partner advisors, we sought to listen to (and built a foundation for) reciprocal collaborative work. Our Kanien'kehá:ka/People of the Flint advisors led us to Kaswentha/Two Row Wampum Treaty belt as a guiding value. The Two Row Wampum Treaty belt is made from white wampum shells with two rows of purple wampum shells down the centre. The parallel purple rows symbolize the Haudenosaunee/People of the Longhouse and the European settlers travelling "life" in separate vessels, but alongside each other. This mindfulness of voyaging alongside each other, learning from one another, helped us both understand our positions in this collaboration. We recognized that while we both have our own cultural practices, understandings, and traditions, we can travel the same path together in our own canoes. That understanding put us at ease, comfortable to share our culture and practices in ways that did not dominate (one over the other), but instead informed and educated each other. This resource guide reflects the process of "walking alongside" that we undertook.

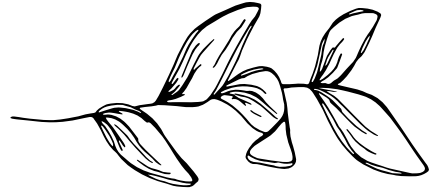
The professional work that went into this guide followed the message of Kaswentha- Two Row Wampum: mutual respect on the voyage of learning and building relationships. Therefore, this resource collection connects to the broader themes of the Walking Alongside: Responsibilities and Redress in Quebec Teacher Education project—collaboration, unification, recognition of the interdependence of all living things, compassion, knowledge, experiential learning, and values that support improved understandings for better relations. In our collaboration, we have tried to be of one mind as we have considered the future of all our children.

Why the Earth's Life Cycle?

The Haudenosaunee/People of the Longhouse's belief system is comprised of cultural and spiritual teachings that have been orally transferred from generation to generation. It is based upon the cycle of the earth's natural flow and balance. To honour the yearly rotation of the earth's life, the Haudenosaunee/People of the Longhouse partake in ceremonies throughout the year, during which a thanksgiving is recited for the people and for all living things in the natural, spiritual world, and to the Creator.

In this resource guide, environmental considerations are central to our shared perspective and design. For this reason (and considering the fact that the seasons typically direct every school year), we chose to offer early childhood resources alongside the changing cycle of the natural world. The resources offer suggestions to teachers on ways to integrate Haudenosaunee knowledge and understanding of the seasons into early childhood (4-6 years old) programs. Teachers are invited to use this guide alongside Indigenous understandings of the seasons in their own local communities. We advise them to share it with, and seek out specific, corresponding cultural knowledge and traditions from their local knowledge keepers and elders.

INTRODUCTION



Learning Experiences and Activities:

To fulfill the intention of harmoniously including Indigenous cultural understandings into a curriculum for young children, we have persisted in our conviction of journeying through the seasons alongside each other. Below are several suggestions for age-appropriate topics, activities, or projects that are open to teachers' own creative development. Our hope is that the guide will assist educators in generating a vision for teaching through a more comprehensive lens of Indigenous cultural knowledge. The seasonal thematic approach creates a place for active and meaningful experiences that underscore Indigenous understandings of the natural world. Importantly, the suggested activities we offer here adhere to our shared belief in an image of the child who is capable, active in their explorations, and respected for their independent choices.

With that in mind, we hope educators will be flexible guides, facilitating the learning, and building relationships with participating children, materials, and topics. In Kanien'kehá:ka culture, a child is reared through the natural cycle of the earth's seasons. Similar to the growing of plants, foods, and medicines, this process has all its stages of beauty and uniqueness, which allows one to really get to know a child's inner being and character.

Many of the learning experiences recommended below are arts-based, as the arts offer a language of expression for young children who are not yet capable of writing their innermost thoughts. We suggest that teachers also consider the role of the environment, recognizing that the environment is a third teacher (Vecchi, 2010). In a Kanien'kehá:ka approach, the earth and universe are the main teachers, the educator is only a guide, and not the holder of all wisdom and knowledge. The Reggio Emilia philosophy of educating young children (a world-renowned approach to excellence in early learning), similarly recognizes the child's knowledge and agency, and emphasizes their right to beauty in a school environment. This belief is grounded in a healthy psychological relationship with one's surroundings and is key to supporting authentic and meaningful learning. Cultivating daily experiences in a place that is cared for creates well-being, and is a critical practice for young children who are at the prime of their formative development (Vecchi, 2010). The extent to which the physical environment influences the construction of identity is significant and therefore was important for us to consider as a way of thinking about classrooms for young children.

With these guiding philosophies in mind, we invite educators to be creative, and to invent, explore, and learn alongside their students.

VECCHI, V. (2010). ART AND CREATIVITY IN REGGIO EMILIA: EXPLORING THE ROLE AND POTENTIAL OF ATELIERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION. NY: ROUTLEDGE

KANIEN'KEHA (MOHAWK) VOCABULARY

Kanien'kehá:ka (*Ga ni yon' gay haw ga*): People of the Flint
Kaswentha (*Ga swan t ha*): Two Row Wampum Treaty
Haudenosaunee (*Hoe day no saw knee*): People of the Longhouse

Autumn/Fall/Kanenna'kè:ne. (Ga naw naw' gay: nay)

Ó:nenhste (*O na stay*): corn
Onon'ónsera (*O noon oon ze la (ra)*): squash
Osahè:ta (*O za hay da*): dried beans

Winter/Akohserà:ke (A go say rah: gay)

Otsísto (*O tzi z toe*): star
Ahtahkwa'ón:we (*Ah da gwa oon way*): moccasins
Osahè:ta (*O za hay da*): dried beans

Spring/Kakwitè:ne (Ga gwi day: nay)

Wáhta (*Wah da*): maple tree
ehníta (*un knee da*): moon
Ratiwé:ras (*Ra (la) dee way r us*): Grandfather Thunder

Summer/Akenhnhà:ke (A gun ha: gay)

Ken'niiohontésa (*g un nee io hoon day saw*): strawberry
Akhsótha (*Au k so th aw*): my grandmother
Rakhsó'tha (*Raw k so th aw*): my grandfather
Rake'niha (*Raw ge' nee haw*): my father
Ake'nisténha (*A ge' nee st en haw*): my mother
Kahwá:tsire (*Ga wa tzi re/le*): my family

COUNTING: 1-10

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Enska (<i>en s ga</i>) | 5. Wisk (<i>wi s k</i>) | 9. Tiohton (<i>Joe doon</i>) |
| 2. Tekeni (<i>Day gay nee</i>) | 6. Iaiak (<i>ya ya k</i>) | 10. Oié:ri (<i>O yay ri [li]</i>) |
| 3. Ahsen (<i>Aw s en</i>) | 7. Tsa:ta (<i>Tza da</i>) | |
| 4. Kaié:ri: (<i>Ga yay ri [li]</i>) | 8. Sha'té:kon (<i>saw' day goon</i>) | |



AUTUMN

Autumn/Fall/Kanenna'kè:ne. (Ga naw naw' gay: nay)

When the summer season ends, autumn comes and the land is harvested. The first thing that comes to mind during the fall season, is the harvesting of the Three Sisters: corn, beans, and squash. In the spring, the planting of this threesome is carried out because, as autumn comes, the plants flourish together, depend on each other, much like inseparable sisters. Individually the sisters contribute to Mother Earth's offering of a balanced diet from a single planting. At harvesting time, the sisters are celebrated. For the Kanien'kehá:ka, the Three Sisters are precious gifts from the Great Spirit. In autumn, retelling the stories of the Three Sisters, and participating in annual harvesting traditions sustains the knowledge of growing and using, enjoying, and continuing the Three Sisters and their legend for generations to come. Through recognition and celebration, the cultural knowledge of the Three Sisters is continued through oral transference.

In autumn, people close their gardens, and care for the land. Besides the harvesting activities that occur, gardens are prepared for the winter and seeds are saved for future planting.

Kanien'keha (mohawk) vocabulary:
Ó:nenhste (corn)
Onon'ónsera (squash)
Osahè:ta (dried beans)



AUTUMN: STORYTELLING AND DRAMA

Beginning the school year with many stories of the changing season and the legend of “The Three Sisters” (see book list for book choices) provides a strong foundation for young learners.

Read **The Three Sisters** story and emphasize the

Kanien’keha/Mohawk names of these important life sustainers: ó:nenhste (corn), onon’ónsera (squash), osahè:ta (dried beans), (a recording of proper pronunciation should be supported). Explain and ask children about the characteristics of each vegetable from the story.

Clarify that this story is how Kanien’kehá:ka recognize these vegetables and give gratitude for each year’s harvest during the fall.

The harvest is a grand celebration because the people are grateful to have healthy natural foods for the winter. The Kanien’kehá:ka show their gratitude and thanksgiving through ceremony and dance.

They celebrate by acknowledging the creator, and all of the universe, specifically Mother Earth and all she provides for life on the planet.

Children can be asked what foods they are grateful for that come from the earth. Their answers can be documented, including the corn, beans, and squash. Ask, “Why are they grateful for that particular food?”

It is fun to review the story of The Three Sisters, and having students act out the characters helps to deepen their understanding of the story. At first, they can be guided by the teacher as the story parts are reviewed. Puppets can be added (and/ or made) to help children explore the characters, and these can be added to the drama centre or reading center of the classroom so that children can return to the story. Felt board and felt characters can also be good additions for dramatic play and re-telling of the narrative.



AUTUMN: HARVEST AND HARVESTING

An introduction to harvesting a garden, or any type of vegetables growing in a garden, would be appropriate prior to (or during) the introduction of the Three Sisters.

- Great discussions can occur, and books can be read (see book list suggestions below) to the children about where food or vegetables come from, how they grow, where they grow, etc. Make the talk specific, and emphasize the topic of growing and harvesting the vegetable.
- If possible, bring children to a garden, or show them images of gardens and food plants that are growing and ready to be picked. Offer samples of pumpkins, squash, corn, and or other vegetables that are plentiful in early fall. Children can create a “harvesting journal” as they carefully observe and document (drawing, sketching, painting) the fall bounty.
- Demonstrations of harvesting, and reading informational books to the children can highlight the difference between root vegetables and the squash/pumpkin family, and or different types of beans and how they grow/are harvested/picked. Have children paint, draw, or collage to create an image of the plant/food/vegetable that is ready to be harvested. How do they know a plant is ready for harvest? Encourage children to draw the information they know. Feel free to have conversations with each child and document their understandings to display along with their work.
- Ask children to explain why it is so important to give thanks to the growth of seeds and their harvest.

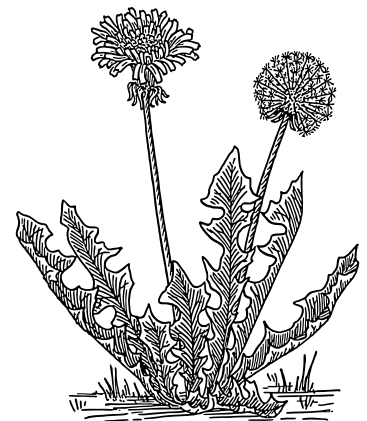


AUTUMN: THE MEDICINES AND THE HARVEST

Present to the children the information that Indigenous peoples in Canada have been using plants and other natural materials as medicine for centuries. Even today Indigenous people find medicines on the land, using plants to help heal a variety of ailments and conditions.

- Explain (and show) that different parts of certain plants are used to keep healthy. Present roots, bark, leaves, buds, flowers, fruits, sweetgrass or sap to the children.
- Offer examples such as:
 - One root that is plentiful is dandelion. This root can be harvested in early spring, and late fall. Dig up the root as best you can and dry it. The root is made into tea and can be made into a tincture. This plant is edible: the leaves can be used in salads or cooked with garlic and oil, and the root is dried for tea. Dandelion is a vigorous medicine to cleanse and heal the liver and or liver problems.
 - Maple sap can be used not only as a sweetener but also soothes a sore throat. By drinking raw sap water, you cleanse the inner intestines.
 - The bark of certain trees can be removed, and the white powder can be useful as a sunscreen.
 - Sweetgrass is known for its vanilla-like scent when dried and it is a sacred plant for First Nations communities. It can be used in tea to treat colds.
 - Teas for colds can be made from plants such as: mint, thyme, bee balm, stevia, rosemary, raspberry, and hyssop.
 - If possible, have children try a few samples.

THE MEDICINES MENTIONED IN THIS RESOURCE GUIDE EMBODY SPIRITUAL AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF HEALING THAT SPANS MANY GENERATIONS OF THE PEOPLE. BESIDES THE HEALING POWERS DERIVED FROM THE NATURAL WORLD, THE ESSENCE OF THE MEDICINES LIES WITHIN THE CONNECTIONS TO THE LAND, AND AN APPRECIATION FOR THE EARTH'S PRODUCE, AS WELL AS BEING PART OF CULTURAL TEACHINGS.



AUTUMN: CLOSING OF THE GARDENS

Tell children that nearing the end of fall – around late October, beginning and up until late November – medicines are still harvested. Burdock, dandelion, horse radish, and other root medicines are prepared to be stored for the winter. If possible, display samples. Roots are picked and dried for winter teas. What do these plants look like when they are full-grown prior to picking the root? How do we dry roots? What do the roots smell like? The teacher can show a variety of roots using visuals, and/or go picking roots outdoors, or obtain a variety of harvested plants and go through the process of storing the produce. Examine them through a magnifying glass and have children tell their findings in an oral tradition similar to oral transference and storytelling.

Students can then finger paint, draw, or collage a root plant, and orally tell what they know about root plants. Record all oral speaking (with permission).



Closing of the Gardens:

Explain to children that in many Indigenous communities, the closing of the gardens is done each year at the end of each season. There are ceremonial songs sung in celebration for the long season of growing. Gardens are cleared of old plant matter and or dried plant matter is burned to add nitrogen to the earth for the next season. A thanksgiving is said to the land, earth, and water, sun, moon, and wind for their assistance in the growing season.

if possible, close a nearby garden with the children to demonstrate care for Mother Earth. Children can develop their own songs that reflect gratitude and thanksgiving toward the natural elements and processes of growing food. The teacher can record students as they orally speak about the importance of closing the gardens, and/or create a song and record the students singing.

CLASSROOM CONSIDERATIONS



Science Center: Add baskets of mini-pumpkins, gourds, and squash for children to examine with magnifying glasses and flashlights. Have children feel the textures of each squash/pumpkin type and learn the terms to describe them. Let children say what they feel. Samples of plant leaves, bark, sweetgrass, tobacco, and other medicines can be offered in smell jars so that children can also remove them easily to examine under a light.

Decorate the classroom with autumn's bounty of coloured leaves, gourds, corn husks, etc.

If possible, bake something with the harvested crop/vegetables. Learn recipes together!

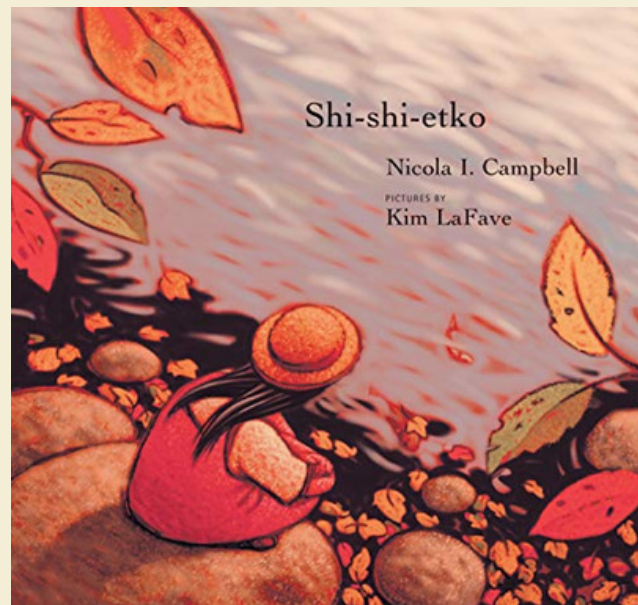
Art Center: Add baskets of fall leaves collected by the children for open need collaging or printing, as well as a collection of natural items found outside on a nature walk. Offer autumn-coloured paints to match the season for a mural painting.

Documentation: Photos of children can be displayed showing them working during the above activities, with their documented comments alongside.

CLASSROOM CONSIDERATIONS

SUGGESTED BOOKS: AUTUMN

Bouchard, D.	The Elders are Watching
Campbell, N.	Shi-shi-etko
Coneau, M.	Les Trois Sœurs
Cummins, L.R.	Stumpkin
Flett, J.	Birdsong
Gibbons, G.F.	From Seed to Plant
Greendeer, D.	Keepunumuk: Weeâchumun's Thanksgiving Story
Krauss, R.	The Carrot Seed.
MacKay, E.	If You Hold a Seed
McDougal, C.	A Salmon's Sky View
McLeod, E.	Strong Stories: Kanyen'keha:ka: The Three Sisters
Pfeffer, W.	We Gather Together: Celebrating the Harvest Season
Rawlins, J.	Fletcher and the Falling Leaves: A Fall Book for Kids
Schae, L.M.	Because of an Acorn
Shemie, B.	Houses of Bark: Tipi, Wigwam and Longhouse, Native Dwellings
Sweet Grant, A.	Leif and the Fall
Vermette, K.	Singing Sisters: A Story of Humility
Vermett, K.	The First Day: A Story of Courage
Veremette, K.	Amik Loves School: A Story of Wisdom
Webstand, P.	With Our Orange Hearts
Webstand, P.	Phyliss's Orange Shirt
Williams, S.	Strong Stories Kwakwaka'wakw: Our Traditional Medicines





WINTER

Winter/Akohserà:ke (A go say rah: gay)

This is the time of year when the earth sleeps (in the north), a perfect occasion for storytelling, and learning about and perfecting crafts. In many Kanien'kehá communities, people work on their hands-on skills, and time is devoted to developing abilities in beading, making clothing, and assembling moccasins. This season allows the time for fixing, refurbishing, and even producing new items. How wonderful a season to embark on making gifts for friends and family!

After several months of the coldest season, the Kanien'kehá:ka communities celebrate the mid-winter ceremony, and children learn the story of the Seven Dancers. With dark night skies, children have the opportunity to examine the stars and constellations and can learn how the stars hold great meaning for First Nations peoples.

Kanien'keha (Mohawk) vocabulary:

Otsísto (star)

Ahtahkwa'ón:we (moccasins)

Osahè:ta (dried beans)

WINTER: STORYTELLING AND DRAMA

A unit on storytelling would fit well during the winter months. This topic can be introduced to young children through the lens of Indigenous oral traditions, the pillar of how Indigenous knowledge is transferred. During an extended unit on storytelling, children can come to understand how stories inform, create, and demonstrate how they learn about community, others, themselves, and everyone's place in the world.

An authentic way to begin this unit could be to ask children, "What is your favourite story?"

Who reads to you? When do you hear stories? What kind of books do you like? Are there any kinds of stories you like/don't like?"

Record children's answers on a large poster sheet and go back to those questions to add answers during and at the end of the unit. Revisiting children's thoughts through the process allows them to reflect on new knowledge, understandings, and vocabulary that has been developed.

Lessons & Activity Choices:

- Explain Indigenous oral storytelling to children. Invite an Indigenous storyteller to class 2-3 times and have children live the experience.
- Provide daily reads of Indigenous stories (see list below) and include children's favourite stories that you gathered in the first discussion. Make sure to encourage links to children's lives, acknowledging differences and similarities with the stories you share. Ask open-ended questions to generate learning (e.g., What do you think will happen next? How do you feel about "this" character?)
- Connect to families: Depending on the theme of a story, children make connections to their families (e.g., If a story raises insight into special relationships with grandparents, extend the topic with photos and stories to share).
- Ensure you have read or told the story of The Seven Dancers.



WINTER: STORYTELLING AND DRAMA

- Engage with the Kairos Blanket exercise. There are age-appropriate ways of guiding children through this experience. It is a must.
- (https://ied.sd61.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/112/2019/02/Blanket_Exercise_Standard_Edition.pdf)
- <https://www.kairoscanada.org/the-blanket-exercise-video>
- Read or tell a story and then have children re-enact the story. Offer props and hints to help move a story along.
- Create puppets or felt board characters/scenery so children can retell stories after they have had a storytelling session.
- Invite children to be the oral storyteller. Create an environment for sharing. Allow the child to tell a new story they have learned.



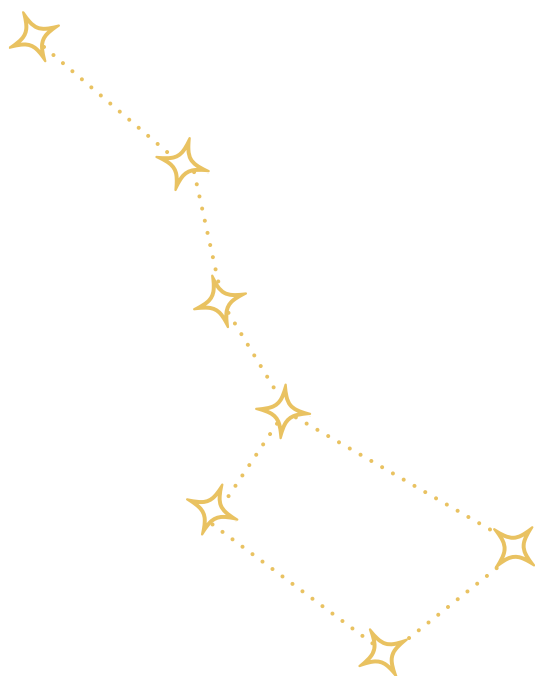
WINTER: VISUAL ARTS AND MUSIC

Use the arts across disciplines to develop children's understanding and encourage them to make connections using the language of the art.

- Art table or Centre: Provide materials for children to recreate a character or scene from a story. Document their explanations before displaying (older children can write).
- Drawing: Invite children to sketch the moral or lesson learned in a story. Document their explanations before displaying (older children can write).
- Best story of the week: Have children vote on their favourite story. Create a class mural of their favourite scenes. Line the classroom wall with collected murals.
- Study various Indigenous artists who have depicted "The Storyteller" (e.g., Norval Morrisseau, Simone McLeod, McMichael). Display a variety of Indigenous artwork depicting storytelling. Have conversations with children about common depictions in the artwork, as well as differences. Invite children to recreate or develop their own oral storytelling art pieces using pastels or paint.
- Beading: Invite children to take part in beading exploring the tiniest beads possible (for the age of your group). Provide designs and patterns for children to copy and display. If possible, invite an individual from an Indigenous community to share their skills with the children in an age-appropriate workshop.
- Create gifts for family and friends with open-ended materials and include beading in the offering.
- Retell stories and ask for children's help to add sound effects, background humming, and possibly use instruments relevant to Kanien'kehá/Mohawk culture (e.g., turtle rattle, water drum, horn rattle). Have children create their own instruments out of gourds or other natural materials.
- With children, write a short song to accompany one of the Indigenous stories read (use a familiar tune).
- Have the children become storytellers. Allow them to create their own style of storytelling, through listening and seeing/hearing different kinds of storytelling.



WINTER: THE SEVEN DANCERS, STARS, AND CONSTELLATIONS



The Seven Dancers, Stars, and Constellations:

After learning the story of the Seven Dancers, children will be happy to engage in activities dealing with the stars and constellations.

Create a Bingo game and/or matching game using various constellations as the subjects. Include the seven dancers as “special” cards and add a challenge (related to the story) if a child selects that card.

At the Art Centre, have children create their own constellations in the night sky. Materials can be white paint, chalk, and coloured pencils all explored on a black mural hanging in the classroom.

Prepare constellation Geoboards where children can select and follow designs with a variety of brightly-coloured elastic bands.

Allow students to create their own Seven Dancer’s constellation: the Big Dipper. Have students role play the dancers as well, orally speaking to one another as the characters. Film/document.

CLASSROOM CONSIDERATIONS:

Create a storytelling corner: With children's assistance, bring the outdoors into the classroom. Carve out an area of the classroom, complete with a circular burlap-type rug, wooden tree stump seats, and a wood campfire, to allow for oral storytelling, book-sharing, and conversations. Use a talking feather to allow children to take turns when storytelling.

Display Indigenous art posters that display storytelling and storytellers.

Create a print-rich environment with children. Surround them with written words from stories and display these in various areas of the classroom.

Invite children to create word walls with illustrations and new words they are learning in a variety of languages, including those from their own storybooks.

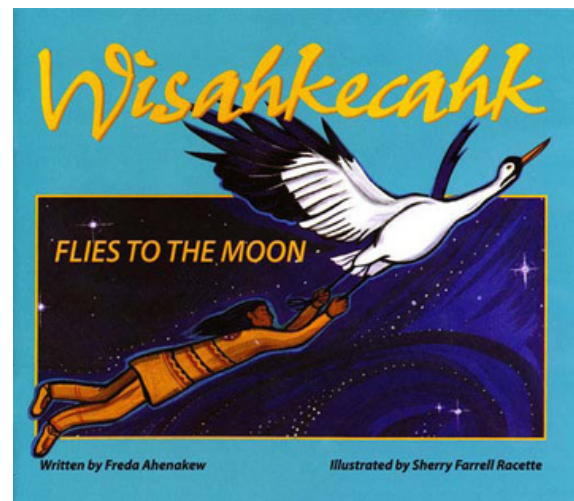
Collect and organize open-ended materials for a workshop where children can work on long-term projects, making gifts for families and friends over the winter months.



CLASSROOM CONSIDERATIONS:

SUGGESTED BOOKS: WINTER

Andrews, J.	Very Last First Time
Ahenakew, F.	Wisahkecahk Flies to the Moon
Angalik, S.	Sila and the Land
Avingaq, S.	Fishing with Grandma
Avingaq, S.	The Pencil
Bouchard, D.	Nokum is My Teacher
Bouchard, D.	Cornielle Arc-en-ciel - Nagweyaabi-Aandeg
Bouchard, D.	That's Hockey
Bourdeau Waboose, J.	SkySisters
Campbell, N.I.	A Day with Yayah
Cummings, P.	Out on the Ice in the Middle of the Bay
Einarson, E.	The Moccasins
Eyvindson, P.	Red Parka
Highway, T.	Caribou Song
Kigjugalik Webster,D.	Akilak's Adventure
King, L.C.	Storyteller Skye: Teachings from my Ojibway Grandfather
Kolpak, D.	Starfall
Kusugak, M.	The Littlest Sled Dog
Kusugak, M.& Munsch, R.	A Promise is a Promise
Pfeffer, W.	The Shortest Day: Celebrating the Winter Solstice
Leitich Smith,C.	Jingle Dancer
Lindgren, A.	The Tomten
Meuse,T.	The Sharing Circle: Stories about First Nations Culture
Robertson, D.	On the Trap Line
Roberston, D.	When We Were Alone
Root, P.	Grandmother Winter
Sanderson, E.	Two Pairs of Shoes
Van Camp, R.	A Man Called Raven
Van Camp, R.	What's the Most Beautiful Thing You Know About Horses?
Wheeler, B.	Where Did You Get Your Moccasins?
Yolen, J.	Owl Moon



SPRING

Spring/Kakwitè:ne (Ga gwi day: nay)

As winter is coming to an end and March approaches, the Maple Ceremony is welcomed early in spring. The people gather to give thanks for the maple tree and all its offerings: for example, acknowledging the sap and the making of the syrup. The maple tree, Wáhta, is celebrated as it is the first tree to wake up from the winter. Stories and legends about trees are great reads for the end of this natural earth cycle.

The spring season begins with celebrations, cooking, and enjoying the earth's natural products. Spring marks the beginning of planting, preparing the earth for new growth, and new life on earth. Alongside the plants and foods that start to sprout, we also celebrate the birth of baby animals. Indigenous peoples also recognize the return of the medicines. Medicine plants, such as fiddle heads, are gathered and prepared. The medicine and seed ceremony celebrates the newest seeds arriving, and therefore the natural medicines return each year - Mother Earths' cycle. What's more, in recognition of earth's cycle progressing, the thunders are distinguished, celebrated once in the fall and once in the spring. The weather changes and the world is recognized. Grandfather Thunder wakes up the hibernating animals, the fish, and reptiles.

The spring awakening applies also to the people. Time is taken to look after one's body, mind, and spirit. The Kanien'kehá:ka/Mohawk people consider this time of year as a cleansing of the mind...in other words the people wake up alongside the earth's natural cycle.

Kanien'keha/Mohawk vocabulary:

Wáhta (maple tree)

ehníta (moon)

Ratiwé:ras (Grandfather Thunder)

SPRING: WAHTA/MAPLE CEREMONY

Wáhta/Maple Ceremony:

The Maple Ceremony is the first celebration of the new year. Thanks is given for the maple tree with its healing and nourishing properties. The maple syrup is considered one of Mother Earth's natural gifts, helping the people survive the cold and long winter.

Enjoy baking all kinds of treats with the children that include maple (e.g., maple muffins, maple cookies, maple pancakes, maple Rice Krispie squares, maple cinnamon rolls, and even maple ice cream!)

Have children create a Maple Recipe Book with images of the different stages of work during their baking classes (recipes included!).

Create gift baskets of maple goodies and children's drawings of maple trees. Offer such gifts to a seniors' home.

Take a field trip to a maple tree farm so children can experience first-hand the process of making maple syrup. Document the experience with photographs so children can revisit and comment on their experiences. Create a classroom book of the land visit and allow each child to take the book home to read with their families.



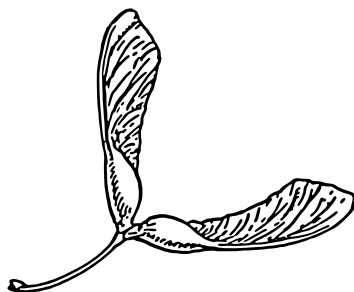
SPRING: WAHTA/MAPLE CEREMONY

STEM ACTIVITY

With children, examine the maple's characteristics by letting them observe and handle the bark and leaves of a maple tree.

Give each student:

- a small re-usable container filled with 15 ml of water
- a small re-usable container filled with 15 ml of maple syrup
- a dropper containing 15 ml of simple syrup (syrup made from sugar and water)
- a wooden Popsicle stick
- a biodegradable straw



Steps to follow to properly understand the concepts of physics and natural science involved in making maple syrup:

Step 1: Students put the straw through the hole in the bark.

Step 2: Invite students to drop two drops of simple syrup into the end of the straw on the inner side of the bark. Have them note how fast the syrup is flowing. Students collect the drops on a paper towel.

Step 3: Have students dilute the simple syrup with water by pouring the simple syrup in the dropper into the container filled with water.

Step 4: Repeat step 2. Using the dropper, students draw two drops of diluted syrup and drop them into the end of the straw on the outer side of the bark.

Students need to observe the difference in flow in comparison with the first experiment.

Ask children about the differences between the diluted syrup and the maple syrup. Students need to pay particular attention to the physical and material characteristics (e.g., colour, consistency, smell, and so on).

SPRING: MIND AND BODY

Breath Yoga: Introduce breathing slowly to the children. Explain and explore yoga breathing exercises with them. Have yoga cards and mats in the corner of the classroom for children to have a space to relax and stretch. Feel free to add a full-length mirror as well.

Ask and add children's invented yoga poses to the yoga card collection (photo and name of pose). Encourage children to relate their unique pose to the spring season.

For example:

Spring/earth poses: Butterfly, flower pose, warrior pose defending the earth, animal stretch (waking up from hibernating).

- **Guided breath work:** Use storytelling in the breath work. Tell a very short story or part of one and have them breathe in at particular moments of the story and breathe out at what happens next or what they feel happens next.
- **Guided Imagery:** Have children relax, close their eyes, and listen to a calming story as you take them through a relaxation exercise.



SPRING: MIND AND BODY

Relaxation exercise:

Gratitude for Mother Earth: Ask children to start by finding a comfortable seated or lying down position. With eyes closed, invite them to take a few deep breaths, allowing their body and mind to relax.

- Take a few deep breaths: breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. Imagine, with your breath that you are connecting to the natural world around you in spring.
- Imagine yourself standing in a beautiful outdoor space, such as a forest, beach, or mountain. Use all of your senses to experience this place around you. Feel the warmth of the sun on your skin, the sound of birds chirping, or the smell of fresh flowers.
- As you relax think about the things on Earth that you are grateful/thankful for. It could be a beautiful sunset, a field of flowers, or a fresh breeze. Hold on to this thought in your mind and feel happy about this place on Mother Earth. Imagine sending love and gratitude to the Earth. You can do this by sending a beam of light flowing from your heart to the Earth. Think to yourself: "I am sending love and gratitude to the Earth."

Enjoy the moment.

- Take a few final deep breaths, and when you're ready, slowly open your eyes. Sit up if you were lying down. How do you feel?

Let's take turns to describe the place you imagined for your friend next to you.

Once conversations are complete, invite children to the art table to draw their experience with coloured pencils. Document their story.



SPRING: STORYTELLING AND DRAMA

Creative Drama: Improvisation and pantomimes are wonderful exercises for children to connect with themselves and their friends. Here are some suggestions:

- **Group Pantomimes:** Divide the class in half and have one side carry a large piece of glass from one end of the room to the other. Have the other side of the class do the same but add in a challenge such as, you are carrying the glass but going upstairs (repeat giving groups opportunities and add further challenges such as walking through a forest of maple trees; walking barefoot on the fresh spring mud....)
- **Sound Improvisations:** Children work in pairs. One child performs the actions while the partner makes the sound (e.g., sneaking across a creaky floor, sawing a piece of wood, a baby plant pushing through the earth, a bear waking up from hibernation...).

Improvisations: Invite children to act out parts of the season while developing their affective domain.

Example:

A Tree's Feelings: What does it feel like?

Ask students to dramatize how a tree would "feel," using large and small muscle movements to move like a tree under the following conditions and relate how it feels.

- a gentle spring breeze
- a violent windstorm
- pelting rain
- a forest fire
- budding leaves popping up on your branches
- a squirrel running up its trunk
- a bird nesting in your branches
- a person climbing your tree
- someone cutting a tree down



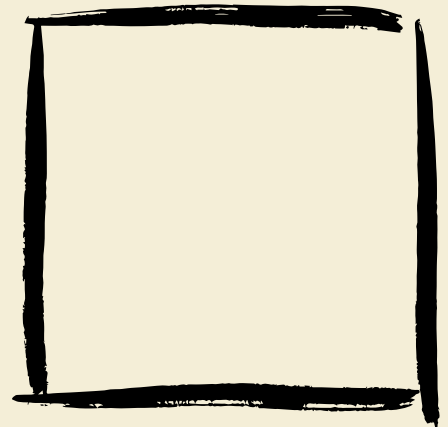
SPRING: PHYSICAL PANTOMIMES

With this activity, the intention is to offer individualized experiences aligned with the personal/cultural regard of the season—a sense of self "awakening". For young children, the pantomime allows them to exercise their imaginations (the way young children learn) within the context of moving their body in space. Therefore, this spring activity awakens the body and mind. Through early childhood experiential learning, children acquire self-understanding by doing, and by reflecting on their experiences, which have to be playful. Such activity allows for the growth of identity in a joyous manner, prompting them to explore who they are within a setting.

Activity:

Painting the Box: Everyone finds their own personal space in the room. Be sure you have room to turn all the way around with arms outstretched and not touch anyone else. Once you have found your personal space, sit down comfortably.

- Imagine you are inside a small box. The box is big enough for you to be comfortable, but not quite big enough to stand up in. In your hand is a paintbrush, and at your feet is a large can of paint.
- Pick up the paint and feel how heavy it is. This is magic colour-changing paint. Each time you dip your brush in the paint, it comes out whatever colour you want. The paint won't get on your clothes, and it dries instantly. Paint the inside of your box with the magic paint. You may paint it any colour or colours you want. Don't forget to paint the ceiling and the floor. Remember that since the paint dries instantly, you won't end up painting yourself into a corner. Be as creative as you want. It's your box.



SPRING: PHYSICAL PANTOMIMES

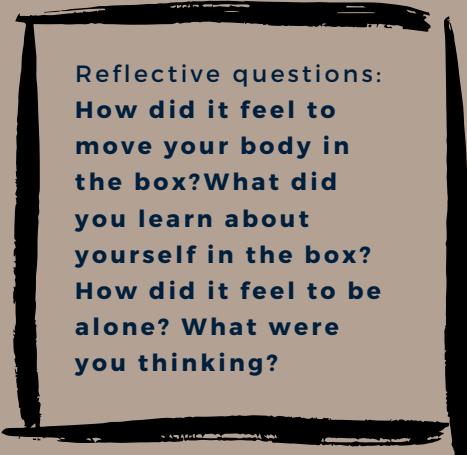
When you're finished, put down the paint can, but keep the brush. You'll need it, because now there's another can of paint in your hand. This is magic door paint. If you paint a door on one wall of your box with the magic door paint, it will become a real door that opens. Don't forget to paint a doorknob! Once you have painted your door, use it to step outside your box. You may want to stretch a little—it was kind of cramped in there, wasn't it? Walk all around your box. The inside is very nice, but the outside needs something.

Paint!

Reach inside and retrieve the can of colour-changing paint. Use it to paint the outside of your box any way you like. Maybe you'll even paint a peaked roof or castle turrets onto your box. They all look wonderful. If you want windows or more doors, you can use the door paint. It's your own little house, so make it the way you want it. All these boxes look fantastic!

Sharing the Boxes

After everyone has finished painting their boxes, students can share their work with one another. Go around the room asking each student to "show" their box, and to describe it in detail. As necessary, coach the rest of the class to "see" each box and complement each maker on their work.



Reflective questions:
How did it feel to move your body in the box? What did you learn about yourself in the box? How did it feel to be alone? What were you thinking?

SPRING: SHADOW GAMES

Create a dark area of the classroom so that children can experiment with shadows (using large flashlights and by hanging a white sheet). Allow children to experiment with shadows by offering a variety of challenge cards, for example:

- Can you make your shadow look like a maple tree?
- Which hibernating animal can you make using only your hands?
- Can you create a growing plant with your body? Your hands only?



SPRING: PREPARING THE GARDEN AND PLANTING



Plant an outdoor garden with children. Take the time to explain and prepare the earth for the best growing conditions. Allow children to take turns being the reporter who documents the growth that is occurring (use an iPad if available, so that you can also take photos). Allow each child to take photos of how the garden progresses and record their comments. Over time, all the children can revisit and share the experience by watching slides of the documentation.

Suggested plants: corn, beans, squash, strawberries, blueberries, healing herbs (e.g., chamomile, sage, sweetgrass, milkweed).

Seed planting:

- First, invite children to paint or draw (with Sharpie markers) what they are learning about spring on their personal terra cotta planters. They can choose to paint their planter with spring colours.
- Have children bring in seeds to plant in their inspiring terra cotta pots. Discuss the preparation of the earth and review the steps involved for planting.
- Provide individual plant journals so that each child may document their plant's growth right from seed. Eventually, children can bring their journal and plant home to share with the family (and maybe even transfer to their own gardens!)

SPRING: OUTDOOR LEARNING

Enjoy a spring walk while paying close attention to Mother Earth's changes. Point out the observable stages, such as buds growing, flowers blooming, snow melting, etc. As you walk, stop to have children photograph spring's beginnings so that they can display and later discuss them in class.

Find (or arrange) for an outdoor sharing circle to discuss what is being observed. Explain to children the understanding of Indigenous ways of connecting with place and the land. Clarify and question children about the need to respect the land and/or the environment. Importantly, explain the meaning of the seasons and seasonal cycles that Indigenous peoples follow. Allow the children to partake in a sharing circle by adding comments and asking questions of each other. Make this a weekly practice during the warming months.



SPRING: OUTDOOR LEARNING

Scavenger Hunt in the Park (or any outdoor place that may offer natural items): Prepare pictorial cards (with words and numbers) for children. The visuals can guide them in cleaning up and looking after Mother Earth and celebrating the new season. With basket or bag in hand, invite the children to the Scavenger Hunt (video children as they search). Some suggestions may include:

- Find 5 twigs or branches
- Hop like a frog while you search
- Find something soft
- Find something bumpy
- Crawl like a turtle
- Say hello to the sun
- Dance on the grass
- Find something yellow, or that has a colour
- Collect 10 pebbles
- Boogie around a tree

Once you are back in class, have children create a table display of found items, then watch the video of the Scavenger Hunt.



SPRING: OUTDOOR STORYTELLING

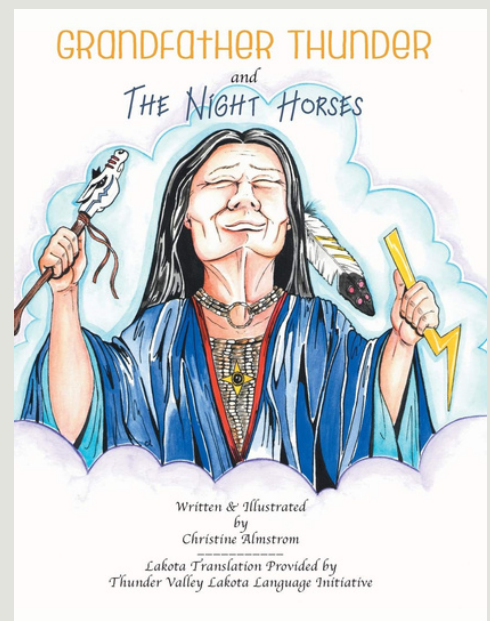
Grandfather Thunder: Ionkhisohthó:kon Ratiwé:ras.

Arrange for a place for outdoor reading activities that can occur on pleasant spring days. You can also create a small outdoor setting in a classroom if space is available. Select books (see list below) about Grandfather Thunder and/or the changing weather at this time of year.

- Before reading a book raise the listeners' sensory awareness, for example:
 - Have children close their eyes and play a recording of a thunderstorm. Brainstorm feelings and thoughts about what happens in their body when they listen to this sound. Discuss.
- In contrast, play a recording of birds singing. Ask questions about the emotions the sound evokes: What thoughts come to mind, or how do students' bodies feel?
- Introduce the book, the cover, and have children predict what the book is about. Take a "picture walk" through the text if possible.

If a book lends itself to Grandfather Thunder:

- Teach children how to say grandfather in Kanien'keha/Mohawk (or language of their territory)
- Ask children what they call their grandfathers (or other family members)
- Talk about our different cultures and languages, the similarities, and differences.
- Have a drum session in the round as children pay homage to their grandfathers by drumming out (syllabification) what they call them.
- On another occasion, invite grandfathers or grandmothers to come to the outdoor class to share something their ancestors have taught them



CLASSROOM CONSIDERATIONS:

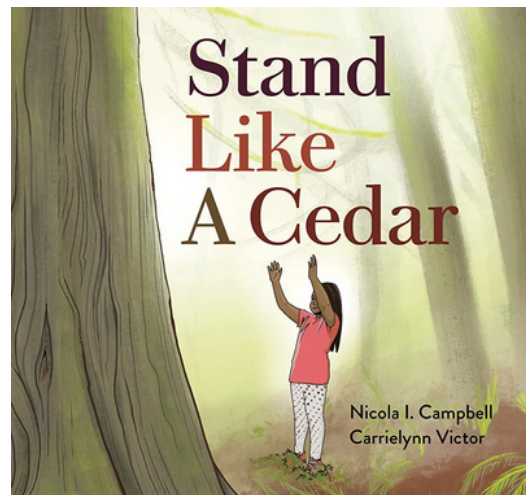


- **The never-ending Spring Mural:** At the Art Centre allow children to create colours of the season by “lightening” up the dark winter colours. Provide white paint, primary colour paints, baby food jars, and mixing spoons for children to experiment with and eventually name their invented spring colour. Encourage children to depict the season by finger painting onto the mural paper on the wall. Challenges can be added each day (e.g., paint with a leaf, paint with a roller, paint with a twig, etc.).
- **Display Earth Day posters** that promise to look after the land. Encourage children to make their own posters to be hung alongside.
- **If possible, place small plants and/or flowering plants** around the classroom. Try to plant some flowers with the children.
- **If not present already, add recycling boxes** for paper, glass, and plastic to the classroom. Airtight composting bins can be added as well.
- **Create an in-class art supply recycling box** where children will be encouraged to use left-over materials.

CLASSROOM CONSIDERATIONS:

SUGGESTED BOOKS: SPRING

Bear, G.	Two Little Girls Lost in the Bush
Bruchac, J.	Fox Song
Brummel Crook, C.	Maple Moon
Campbell, N.I.	Stand Like a Cedar
Cregg, R.J.	Spirit Riding Free: Spring Beginnings
Erdrich, L.	Grandmother's Pigeon
Fabrizio, F.	Mindfulness
Fitch, S.	Sing in the Spring!
Goble, P.	The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses
Gonzalez, X.	All Around Us
Hillenbrand, W.	Spring is Here: A Bear and Mole Story
Ikuutaq Rumbolt, A.	The Legend of Lightning and Thunder
Larsen-Jonasson, T.	The Circle of Caring and Sharing
Lazzaro Knowlton, L.	Maple Syrup from the Sugarhouse
Lewis, W. A.	In Abbey's Hands
Lindstrom, L.	We Are Water Protectors
Locke, K.	The Eagle Feather (<u>La plume d'aigle</u>)
Madsen, M. & De Asis, A.	You Are Like A Seed
Maguire, N. &	
Zababashkina, A.	My Body Sends a Signal
Meredith Schmaltz, D .	
& Schmaltz, R.	The Maple Tree Story
Nih'shaw, C.	Grandfather Thunder and The Night Horses
Simpson, T.	Forever Our Home
Syliboy, A.	The Thundermaker
<u>Teckentrup, B.</u>	Tree: A Peek-Through Picture Book
<u>Teckentrup, B.</u>	Moon: A Peek-Through Picture Book
Ulmer, M.	M is for Maple: A Canadian Alphabet
Vickers, R.H.	Sockeye Silver, Saltchuck Blue
Youngquist, M.H.	Maple Tree Tales





SUMMER

Summer/Akenhnà:ke (A gun ha: gay)

As the warm weather arrives, summer too has its celebrations and thanks is given. The first fruit, the strawberry is recognized. The strawberry has cultural and spiritual significance to Haudenosaunee/People of the Longhouse. It is an important medicine as it revitalizes the body. Indeed, the strawberry is referred to as "the big medicine" as its heart shape reminds the people of love and the emotions that drive our relationships and community. With that rejuvenation, the summer is a great time to reconnect with friends and families through picnics, walks and other outings.

A Strawberry Ceremony is typically held in late June when celebrations feature food, hands-on art and craft booths, storytelling, cultural talks, and traditional music and dancing. Such activities add to the opportunities to learn more about the Haudenosaunee people.

Kanien'keha/Mohawk vocabulary:

Ken'niiohontésa (strawberry)

Akhsótha (my grandmother)

Rakhsó'tha (my grandfather)

Rake'niha (my father)

Ake'nisténha (my mother)

Kahwá:tsire (my family)

SUMMER: STRAWBERRY CELEBRATION

Strawberry season is a significant marker for the Kanien'kehá:ka— it indicates the beginning of the summer season.

Wild strawberries are the first fruit on the ground, and the first fruit that was brought to Mother Earth by Sky Woman when she came down from Sky World. She brought several plants/seeds with her, but the strawberry is one of the Kanien'kehá:ka/Mohawk people's special plant, food, and medicine. Those qualities are what is celebrated at the Strawberry Ceremony.

In mid-late June, once the strawberries are in bloom, and the white flower turns into fruit, a grand oral thanksgiving is said, and everything about this fruit is thanked. The strawberry's medicinal properties and health properties are greatly acknowledged.



SUMMER: STRAWBERRY CELEBRATION

Activities can include:

- Strawberry juice making: The children can assist in mashing the berries, adding water (just a bit), honey, or maple syrup or sugar. The recipe can be figured out as they taste it – do we need to add anything to make the juice sweeter? Is the juice too thick?
- Have picnic lunches/snacks at various outdoor locations. Invite children to observe the natural world and give thanks for their beautiful surroundings.
- If possible, bring students outdoors to look for the strawberry flowers. If not possible, have students view realistic photos of the strawberry flowers. Extend to students a real strawberry plant and let them closely observe with a magnifying glass. Provide finger paint paper so that children can depict the strawberry flower with its yellow middle and small, needle-like stems that carry pollen. Decorate the walls of the classroom with these original paintings.
- Read books about how a strawberry grows (see booklist below)
- Invite children to create a strawberry collage using images from old food magazines. Find foods that show all the ways strawberries are used. Can you find images of strawberry jam? Strawberry shortcake? Or a strawberry milkshake? Children can colour and add their own strawberry food to the collage.
- Discuss and analyze the parts of the strawberry plant and how the fruit helps us stay healthy. Create a classroom poster by having children enlarge the parts of the plant and label the components as well.
- The children can learn how to dry strawberry leaves for tea—an act to share with families, and to gather medicine for the winter months.
- Invite families to send in recipes that include strawberries. Bake the recipes with the children and send thank you notes to the families.



SUMMER: STRAWBERRY CELEBRATION

Families/Community and the Story of Our Names: At this time of year and during the Strawberry Ceremony celebration, there is a naming ceremony for female children. It is such a meaningful time of year as Mother Earth offers the season of summer!

- Ask families the story of their child's names. In a sharing session, allow children to learn about the ways different cultures name their children. Invite an elder or a knowledge keeper from the community to share how children are named in their community.
- Have children create their own name plates on wood. Offer a variety of natural items to shape the letters they might glue onto the wood. Provide a variety of open-ended materials and markers, allowing each child to create a unique design, as they are each unique.
- On different days, invite family members to the classroom to tell a story of their culture or a traditional story. Include an Indigenous storyteller as well. If possible, create a word wall for the different ways to say "family" in various languages including Kanien'keha/Mohawk. Create a class photo album along with the various words for family, and children's comments about the stories they listened to.
- Have children learn a children's game relative to the community where they are situated.

For example:

- The Peach Pit game (Mohawk)
 - Line Tag (Blackfoot)
 - Shoe Shoe (Inuit)
 - Hide and Go Seek (Metis)
-
- Teach children the Kanien'keha/Mohawk vocabulary for family members (Mother, Father, Grandmother, Grandfather). Create a memory game or Go Fish-like game where children can use the Kanien'keha/Mohawk name in the game.
 - Invite an elder to the classroom to present to children how community is vital to the people. If not available, create a felt story board whereby children will learn how the community looks after each other. Have children retell what they have learned with the felt board props or act out some of the ways communities can help each other. Allow children opportunities to tell their own stories.

KAHWÁ:TSIRE (MY FAMILY)



CLASSROOM CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Frame word walls with children's artwork of strawberries.**
- **Create a bulletin board filled with children's family photos.**
- **Hang posters depicting the life cycle of the strawberry.**
- **Construction centre: Add baskets of toy animal families so that children can help build animal habitats. Include natural materials.**
- **Drama Center: Set up a strawberry bakery where goodies are being prepared for the Strawberry Festival.**



CLASSROOM CONSIDERATIONS:

SUGGESTED BOOKS

Bailey-Sirko, J.	Berry Picking for Grandma
Bruchac, J.	The First Strawberries: A Cherokee Story
Bullard, L.	My Family Your Family
Campbell, N.	A Day with Yayah
Campbell, N.	Grandpa's Girls
Dominic, G.	First Woman and the Strawberry: A Cherokee Legend
Flett, J.	Wild Berries
Gray Smith, M.	You Hold Me Up (French version: <u>Tu es là pour moi</u>)
Gray Smith, M.	When We Are Kind (French version: Nous sommes gentils)
Harris, R.H.	Who's in My Family? All About Our Families.
Larson-Jonasson, T.	The Sharing Circle
Loewen, I.	My Kokum Called Today
McCluskey, K.	Families
Minnema, C.	Johnny's Pheasant
Munsch, R.	Blackflies
Nelson, R.	Plant Life Cycles: Strawberry
Robertson, D.	On the Trapline
Schuh, M. C.	From Seed to Strawberry
Sainte-Marie, B.	Still this Love Goes On
Sellars, W.	Dipnetting with Dad
Sweeny, J.	Me and My Family Tree
Umpherville, T.	Jack Pine Fish Camp
Vermette, K.	Kode's Quest(ion): A Story of Respect
Yaffe Talmor, L.	The Strawberry Garden

