



BE A GOOD ANCESTOR: A SCHOOLYARD PROMISE

GRADE: 1-4

TIME: 45-60 minutes

THEME: Indigenous Knowledge

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

Language, Science, Social Studies, Arts, Social-Emotional Learning

MATERIALS:

- Leona Prince's presentation and reading of Be a Good Ancestor
 - Paper
 - Pencils, crayons or markers
 - Optional clipboards
 - Optional tablets or cameras
- No special outdoor equipment is required.

LEARNING GOALS:

- reflect on ideas of care and responsibility introduced through Be a Good Ancestor
- observe living things and relationships in a familiar outdoor place
- recognize that people share places with many other beings
- notice ways a place is already being cared for
- identify an action they can take to care for their outdoor community
- consider how choices made today can affect a place and the beings who will use it in the future
- communicate their thinking through words, art, photography or conversation

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

After listening to Leona Prince's presentation and reading of Be a Good Ancestor, learners take the ideas of care and responsibility outside.

Students explore their schoolyard or another familiar outdoor space, noticing the plants, animals, people and other beings that share it. They consider what the place provides, how it is already being cared for, and how their own choices can contribute to its wellbeing now and into the future.

The class then creates a collection of simple Care for Our Place Promises inspired by what they heard, observed and experienced.

This activity is intended as a response to Leona Prince's presentation and Be a Good Ancestor. It does not attempt to independently teach Indigenous Knowledge or turn the ideas shared through the book into a generalized Indigenous teaching.



BE A GOOD ANCESTOR: A SCHOOLYARD PROMISE



BEFORE GOING OUTSIDE:

Begin with Leona Prince's presentation and reading of *Be a Good Ancestor*. Afterward, give learners time to respond to what they heard.

Ask:

- What do you remember from the story?
- Was there an idea or picture that stayed with you?
- What do you think it means to be a good ancestor?

For younger learners, explain that an ancestor can be someone who came before us. One day, we will also be the people who came before someone else.

Ask: What could we do today that might help someone or something in the future?

Then connect the conversation to a place students know:

If we want to care for the future, how might we care for the place where we learn today?

Explain that the class is going outside to look closely at their schoolyard. They aren't going outside just to find problems. They are going to notice:

- What is here.
- Who shares this place.
- How things are connected.
- How the place is already being cared for.
- How they might help care for it too.

TAKE IT OUTSIDE:

Take learners into the schoolyard or another familiar outdoor space.

1. Notice what is here

Begin with a slow walk or quiet observation. Ask learners to look up, down and all around. What do they notice?

They might find:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • trees | • animal tracks or other signs |
| • grasses and other plants | • soil |
| • insects | • water |
| • birds | • rocks |
| • fungi | • gardens |
| • seeds, cones or nuts | • places where people gather |
| • fallen leaves | |

2. Notice who shares this place

For the first few minutes, encourage students not to write anything. Just notice.

Ask them to:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Look for evidence of other beings. | • Fallen leaves might shelter insects. |
| • A tree might provide shelter. | • A garden might provide habitat. |
| • Seeds or berries might provide food. | • A puddle might provide water. |

Encourage learners to think of the schoolyard as a place shared by people and other living beings.

3. Notice care

Next, look for evidence that someone is already caring for the place.

Students might notice:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • a tree that has been planted | • recycling or composting |
| • a garden | • an area that has been cleaned |
| • a protected habitat | • plants being watered |
| • a birdhouse | • natural areas being left undisturbed |
| • a path that helps protect vegetation | |



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TAKE IT OUTSIDE:

Ask: **How can you tell that someone cares about this place?**

This helps students recognize that care isn't only something they need to introduce. They may already be part of a community of people caring for the place.

4. Notice where care could grow

Now ask learners: **Is there somewhere our care could make a difference?**

They might notice:

- litter
- plants being stepped on
- an area that could provide better habitat
- soil being washed or worn away
- an outdoor space that isn't being treated respectfully
- something they would like to learn more about
- an area already being cared for that they could help continue caring for

Students do not need to identify a problem. They can also choose something they value and want to continue protecting or caring for.

4. Choose one place or living thing

Ask each learner to choose one thing that caught their attention. They can sketch or photograph it.

Then ask:

- **What did you notice?**
- **Why is this important to you?**
- **Who or what else might depend on it?**
- **What could you do to show care for it?**

Before going inside, return to the question: **What could we do today that might help this place tomorrow?**

BACK INSIDE:

Return to Be a Good Ancestor and something learners heard during Leona Prince's presentation.

Ask: After spending time outside, what does being a good ancestor mean to you now?

Then introduce the class response: **Our Care for This Place Promises**

Each learner completes: **I can care for this place by...**

Younger learners can draw their promise.

Older learners can write and illustrate it.

Students might promise to:

- leave living things where they find them
- give animals space
- pick up litter
- protect plants
- care for a garden
- waste less
- learn more about the beings that live there
- avoid disturbing habitats
- help something already growing
- teach someone else how to care for the place
- continue noticing how the place changes

Display the promises together.

From Promise to Action

If possible, don't stop with the promise. Look at the ideas students generated and ask: **Is there one thing we could actually do together?**



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BACK INSIDE:

- picking up litter
- caring for an existing garden
- protecting a small habitat
- checking on a tree throughout the year
- creating signs reminding others to respect an area
- learning more about one species that shares the schoolyard
- returning regularly to observe and care for the place

The important step is connecting reflection with action.

QUESTIONS TO PROMPT THINKING:

Connecting to the Presentation

- What do you remember from Be a Good Ancestor?
- What idea from Leona Prince's presentation stayed with you?
- What does being a good ancestor mean to you?
- What could we do today that might help someone or something in the future?

Recognizing Care

- Where can you see evidence of care?
- Who might already be caring for this place?
- What is worth continuing to care for?
- Where could our care make a difference?

Looking Ahead

- How could our choices affect this place in the future?
- What would you like this place to be like for learners who come to this school after you?
- What could we do now to help make that possible?

Noticing Place

- Who and what shares this place with us?
- What does this place provide?
- What signs of life can you find?
- What is changing because it is autumn?
- What did you notice that you hadn't noticed before?

Recognizing Relationships

- Who or what might depend on this tree, plant or space?
- How are we connected to this place?
- What does this place give us?
- How do our actions affect other beings that use it?

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS:

Return to Our Promise

Keep the **Care for Our Place Promises** somewhere visible. Return to them later in the school year.

Ask:

- **What did we promise?**
- **What have we done?**
- **What has changed outside?**
- **What have we learned since then?**
- **Is there something we want to do next?**

Students can return to the same outdoor place in winter or spring and notice how their relationship with it has changed.

Pass It Forward

Ask students to think about the learners who will attend their school after them.

Create a message for a future class:

- We cared for this place by...
- We hope you will...

Students could add drawings or photographs of the outdoor space.

This makes the idea of thinking beyond ourselves tangible for younger learners without asking them to interpret Indigenous teachings beyond what was shared through the presentation.



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ADAPTATIONS & ACCESSIBILITY:

The activity can happen in a very small outdoor area. Learners do not need to travel far to make meaningful observations.

Consider:

- selecting an accessible outdoor space
- providing seated observation options
- allowing learners to explore from one location
- pairing students as observation partners
- providing picture or visual prompts
- allowing verbal responses, drawing, photography or audio recording instead of written responses
- providing a quieter observation area for learners who may find a busy schoolyard overwhelming
- giving students additional processing time before asking them to share
- allowing students to participate in the class promise without requiring them to speak publicly

Where possible, adapt the outdoor experience so all learners can participate outside rather than replacing it with an indoor alternative.

TEACHER NOTE: CONNECTING RESPECTFULLY TO INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

This activity is designed specifically as a response to Leona Prince's presentation and reading of *Be a Good Ancestor*.

Let Leona Prince and the book provide the Indigenous voice and teaching at the centre of the experience.

Avoid introducing the activity by saying things such as “Indigenous people believe...” or presenting the class promises as an Indigenous practice. First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples are diverse, and Nations and communities have their own teachings, knowledge systems, cultures and relationships with their lands.

Instead, keep the attribution clear:

“After listening to Leona Prince and *Be a Good Ancestor*, we're going to think about what these ideas could mean for the way we care for our own outdoor place.”

The students' Care for Our Place Promises are their responses to what they heard. They are not presented as Indigenous teachings themselves.

If additional Indigenous Knowledge or perspectives are incorporated, prioritize Nation-specific, community-authored resources and existing relationships with local Indigenous communities.

The goal is for learners to move through:

listen → notice → value → reflect → care → act

and to recognize that even small choices today can influence the places and beings that will be here after us.