



OUR PLACE, OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

GRADE: 4-8

TIME: 45-60 minutes

THEME: Indigenous Knowledge

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

Science, Social Studies, Geography, Language, Arts

MATERIALS:

- Journals or paper
 - Pencils
 - Optional clipboards
 - Optional cameras or tablets
 - Optional drawing materials
- No special equipment is required.

LEARNING GOALS:

- observe relationships within a familiar outdoor place
- recognize that a place is made up of interconnected living and non-living elements
- consider humans as participants in, rather than separate from, the places where they live and learn
- reflect on their own relationship with a place
- consider how actions can demonstrate care and responsibility
- connect ideas from Be a Good Ancestor to choices they can make today
- communicate their thinking through writing, art, discussion or another form of expression

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

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

Students spend quiet time observing a familiar outdoor place. Instead of simply identifying what is there, they look for relationships: between plants and animals, living and non-living parts of the environment, people and place, and themselves and their surroundings.

They then consider a larger question:

If we are part of this place, what responsibilities come with that relationship?

This activity is not intended to teach Indigenous Knowledge independently of Leona Prince's presentation. Instead, it gives students an opportunity to listen to the ideas shared by Leona, reflect on them, and consider what those ideas might mean for how they relate to and care for the place where they learn.



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BEFORE GOING OUTSIDE:

After Leona Prince's presentation, return to the phrase: Be a good ancestor.

Ask students to recall an idea, image or message from the presentation that stayed with them.

You might ask:

- What did you hear that made you think differently?
- What do you think it means to be a good ancestor?
- Who or what might our actions today affect?

Explain that the class is going to take these questions outside.

Introduce the idea of relationship.

Ask: When you hear the word relationship, what do you think of?

Students may initially think about relationships between people.

Expand the conversation:

- Can a bird have a relationship with a tree?
- Can insects and plants have relationships?
- What about water and soil?
- Do people have relationships with places?

Then introduce the question students will investigate: **What relationships make this place what it is?**

Explain that they are going to spend time slowing down and paying attention to one outdoor place.

Their goal is not to make the longest list of things they can find. Their goal is to **notice connections**.

TAKE IT OUTSIDE:

Take students to a familiar outdoor space.

This might be a schoolyard, garden, courtyard, neighbourhood green space, local park or another accessible outdoor place.

1. Find your place

Invite students to choose a comfortable observation spot.

Students do not need to be far apart. They simply need enough space to focus on their surroundings.

Explain that they will spend several minutes quietly observing. They can sit, stand or use another comfortable position.

2. Begin by noticing

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

Ask them to:

- Look up.
- Look down.
- Look closely.
- Listen.
- Notice movement.
- Notice what is changing.

Then begin recording observations.

Students might record:

- what they see
- what they hear
- what is moving
- what is growing
- what is changing with the season
- signs of animals
- evidence of human activity
- weather
- water
- soil
- plants
- human-made features



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TAKE IT OUTSIDE:

3. Look for relationships

Now ask students to shift from **What is here?** to **What is connected?**

For example:

- A tree might provide shelter for a bird.
- A fallen leaf might become part of the soil.
- A flower might provide food for an insect.
- Rain might collect in a low area.
- A tree might provide shade for people.
- People might care for a garden.
- A pathway might influence where people walk and where plants grow.

Students can draw arrows, create a web, sketch or write about the relationships they notice.

Ask: If one part changed or disappeared, what else might be affected?

Tell students: We found lots of relationships in this place. But where do people fit?

Show students the 2 diagrams showing the worldviews of humans at the top, and humans as part of the web (attached at the end of this lesson).

Ask:

- What do you notice about where the human is placed in each picture?
- What might each picture suggest about the relationship between humans and other living things?
- Where are the trees, animals, water and soil in relation to people?
- Which picture looks more like the relationships you just observed outside? Why?
- Are humans outside an ecosystem, or are we participants in it?

Explain diagrams:

- **WORLDVIEW 1: HUMANS AT THE TOP** - People are shown above the rest of nature.
- **WORLDVIEW 2: HUMANS AS PART OF THE WEB** - People are shown among plants, animals, water, soil and other parts of the living world.

Sometimes these ways of thinking are described as:

- **Egocentric / human-centred:** Humans are placed at the centre or above the rest of the natural world.
- **Ecocentric / Earth-centred:** Humans are understood as one part of a larger interconnected ecological community.

4. Put yourself in the picture

After students have spent time observing other relationships and the 2 world views, ask: **Where are you in all of this?**

Encourage students to think about their own relationship with the place.

Ask (there does not need to be 1 correct response):

- How do you use this place?
- What does this place provide for you?
- How do your actions affect it?
- Does this place ask anything of you in return?
- If we see ourselves as part of this web rather than separate from it, does that change what our responsibilities might be?

5. Think about responsibility

Return to the idea from Be a Good Ancestor.

Ask students:

- If we are connected to this place, what responsibilities might come with that relationship?
- Thinking about what you heard from Leona Prince, which ideas from her presentation connect with what we're noticing or discussing here?

Ask students to record their answer to this before leaving: One way I can show care for this place is...



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BACK INSIDE:

Return to the ideas students heard in Leona Prince's presentation.

Ask: Did spending time outside change the way you thought about being a good ancestor?

Invite students to create a reflection titled: **How I Can Care for This Place**

Students can choose how they communicate their thinking:

- written reflection
- poem
- sketch or artwork
- relationship web
- audio recording
- photograph with a caption
- short video
- spoken reflection

Their reflection should include:

- Something I noticed
- A relationship I discovered
- How I am connected
- A responsibility I recognize
- An action I could take

For younger students within the grade range, these can be sentence starters. Older students can develop them into a more detailed reflection.

QUESTIONS TO PROMPT THINKING:

Notice

- What did you notice when you slowed down?
- What was happening that you might normally walk past?
- What signs of seasonal change did you notice?
- What surprised you?

Relationships

- What relationships did you notice?
- What depends on what?
- What does this place provide for the living things here?
- What might happen if one part changed or disappeared?
- Which relationships were easy to see?
- Which might be harder to notice?

Responsibility and care

- What responsibilities can come from being connected to a place?
- What does caring for this particular place look like?
- How could our actions help or harm the relationships we observed?
- What could we do now that might benefit the beings who live here in the future?

Our connection to place

- What does this place provide for us?
- How do people use this place?
- How do our actions affect it?
- How are we part of the relationships happening here?
- How might someone else experience this same place differently?

Connecting Back to the Presentation

- What idea from Leona Prince's presentation are you thinking about now?
- What does being a good ancestor mean to you after spending time in this place?
- How might thinking about future generations change the choices we make today?
- What is one idea from the presentation that you could put into practice?



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OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS:

A Web of Relationships

As a class, create a large visual representation of the relationships students discovered. Place the name or image of the outdoor space in the centre.

Around it, add things students observed:

Trees • insects • birds • soil • water • people • plants • weather • buildings • pathways • animals

Use lines or string to connect things that have relationships.

Then add people to the web.

Ask:

- Where do we fit?
- What happens to the web when one part changes?
- What actions could strengthen rather than harm these relationships?

Students can add one action to the web showing how they could care for the place.

Return to the Place

Return to the same observation spots later in the season or at another point in the school year.

Ask:

- What has changed?
- What relationships can you see now that you couldn't see before?
- Has your relationship with this place changed?

Repeated visits can help students understand that knowing a place comes from spending time with it, rather than observing it only once.

ADAPTATIONS & ACCESSIBILITY:

Students do not need to travel through a large outdoor area to participate. In fact, spending time in one small place is central to the activity.

Consider:

- choosing an accessible outdoor location
- providing seated observation options
- allowing students to remain in one place throughout the activity
- pairing students as observation partners
- providing visual prompts or picture cards
- allowing students to draw, photograph, speak or record instead of writing
- providing magnifying tools for students who benefit from focusing closely
- offering a quieter location for students who find busy outdoor spaces overwhelming
- giving students the choice to observe independently or with a partner

Where possible, prioritize an accessible outdoor experience rather than replacing the outdoor component with an indoor activity.

TEACHER NOTE: CONNECTING RESPECTFULLY TO INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

This activity is designed as a response to Leona Prince's presentation and Be a Good Ancestor. It should not be presented as an activity that independently teaches "Indigenous views of nature" or a universal Indigenous understanding of relationship with land.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples are diverse. Nations and communities have their own knowledge systems, teachings, histories, languages and relationships with their lands.

Let Leona Prince's presentation provide the Indigenous voice at the centre of the lesson.



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TEACHER NOTE: CONNECTING RESPECTFULLY TO INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

The educator's role afterward is to create space for students to:

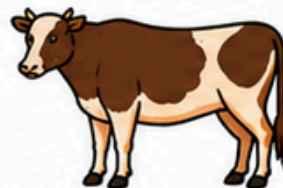
listen → observe → reflect → recognize relationships → consider responsibility → act with care

The quiet observation or “sit spot” used in this activity is simply an outdoor learning strategy for helping students pay attention. It should not be described as an Indigenous practice or teaching. If you deepen the activity with additional Indigenous Knowledge or perspectives, prioritize Nation-specific, community-authored resources and existing relationships with local Indigenous communities rather than generalized resources.

The goal is not for students to interpret or speak on behalf of Indigenous Peoples. Instead, ask:

After listening to Leona Prince, what do we notice about our own relationship with this place, and how might that change the way we care for it?

WORLDVIEW 1



WORLDVIEW 2

