

Curriculum Implementation Day

October 4, 2019

Lesson Plan: Sage: One of The Four Sacred Medicines

The Four Sacred medicines are sage, sweetgrass, cedar and tobacco.

Theme: Indigenous Peoples plant knowledge and use

For Some First Nations and Métis People sage is used in a smudge cleanse ceremony to lift heavy feelings and emotions by burning the sage.

Grades K-12 (*This lesson plan may be used in all grades and adapted for the age of the students*)

First Peoples Principles of Learning: Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

Background Information:

Traditional Ecological Knowledge about the diverse plants growing in their territories was crucial for the survival of First Peoples in the past. Today this knowledge is still passed on and is key to the sense of place held by First Peoples. When they go out on the land to pick berries, to dig bitterroot, to gather stinging nettle, bark or grasses, it provides a connection with the land and with their ancestors. As with other resources, traditional knowledge views plants holistically, as a complete living organism interconnected with the rest of the world. There are many dimensions to the wealth of plant resources, such as healing, spirituality, ceremony, nutrition, and technology. (*FNESC: First Peoples Science*)

Resources:

- FNESC: First Peoples Science
- Request NVSD Indigenous Education Team Plant Walk or to collaborate on sage and four sacred medicines
- Relatives With Roots written by Leah Dorion
- Muskgege Carol's Traditional Medicines written by Carol Sanoffsky
- Our Traditional Medicines, Kwakwaka'wakw Series, Strong Nations Publishing
- Métis, Wetlands and Mallards; Interview with Leah Dorion, Buffalo Sage; Strong Nations Publishing.

Introduction:

1. Brainstorm with students on the board what they know about plants and where plants grow. Answers may include: from the garden, the grocery store, etc. Fruits, vegetables, flowers, grass, trees, weeds.
2. Then ask which plants help us as humans? How do they help us? Answers may vary: carrots have vitamins, apples other fruits and vegetables, give us food, feed other animals, etc.
3. Ask students to reflect on who taught them about plants and how they help us.

Body of Lesson:

1. Show students a picture of sage or show a bundle of sage (Here are two examples, but you can find many online)



2. Ask students if they have seen this plant before and discuss where they might have seen it.
3. Explain that sage is a traditional plant used by some First Nations and Métis people since the beginning of time, and still today, in a smudge cleanse to help lift heavy emotions or feelings they may be feeling for self-care.

Métis artist and author Leah Dorion explains that there are many different types of sage and her favorite is the Buffalo Sage, which has broad leaves. She makes a sage tea, a foot soak or a hair wash to help her feel better. Leah explains that at ceremonies that they use sage to bless the space and clear the area for prayer. (*Métis, Wetlands and Mallards; Interview with Leah Dorion, Buffalo Sage*; Strong Nations Publishing.)

4. Explain that for Indigenous People plants were used for different purposes. Nutritional, spiritual, ceremonial, technology and medicinal. Plants may be used for one or a combination of purposes.
5. Class discussion:
 - Which plants do you know make you feel better?
 - Is there a plant your family plants and harvests every year?
 - What time of year do you plant and harvest that plant?
 - What other uses can plants be used for?
6. Go for a walk on your school site with your class and see which plants they can identify.

Please contact the NVSD Indigenous Education Team for more information, to request an Indigenous Plant Walk and Use, or to collaborate on the Four Sacred Medicines.

Go Forward With Courage