

CURRICULUM ACTIVITY CHAPTER EIGHT

IMPORTANCE OF WATER

TEACHER BACKGROUND

Many traditional First Nation activities related to water are still practiced today. Communities depend upon water to heal illness, maintain health, and nourish plants used as medicines. Women carry the responsibility of being water keepers. Water was given as a gift in Creation and should be shown gratitude for its continuing effort to carry on its responsibilities.

Many First Nation communities are located on waterways. Traditionally, waterways were the main mode of transportation. Mostly travelling by birch bark canoe, the First Nations people of Ontario explored the Great Lakes watershed. Trade routes were established early between different nations, and later, between the First Nation communities and European settlers.

Today, the water is becoming tired, discouraged, and unable to complete its responsibilities. In 2003, Josephine Mandamin, an Anishinaabe Kwe grandmother from Wikwemikong, had a dream about water. She dreamt that if she walked around Lake Superior carrying a bucket of water while praying to the water Spirit to let it know that she cared, the water would respond and begin healing. Josephine and her water walker friends began a journey which took them around each of the Great Lakes, one year at a time. This walk took place from the St. Lawrence River to the Atlantic Ocean. As Josephine completed her water journey, she challenged all women on Turtle Island to carry a bucket of water in their own communities and walk with it

around their watershed. She urged people to pray for the water and challenged them to thank the water for its gifts.

National Film Board of Canada:

In this short documentary from conservationist Bill Mason, he illustrates that although the Great Lakes have had their ups and downs, nothing has been harder to take than what humans have done to them lately. In the film, a lone canoeist lives through the changes of geological history, through Ice Age and flood, only to find himself in the end, trapped in a sea of scum.

The activities in this chapter extend Josephine's invitation to the students to make a difference in their community.

Additional Resources:

Mother Earth Water Walkers
<http://motherearthwaterwalk.com>

5 minute interview and video of Josephine from Indian Country News regarding her reasons for walking for the water
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gn5eEWWEc30>

10 minute video of interview with Josephine regarding her walk
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPega7E8lhg&feature=related>

Paddle to the Sea
Available to teachers through an agreement with the National Film Board (as of April 2010). The movie is about 30 minutes long and is downloadable from the NFB website or viewable at this website.
http://www.nfb.ca/film/paddle_to_the_sea#

ACTIVITY

8.1 THE RISE AND FALL OF THE GREAT LAKES

Using media in the classroom, this activity uses a graphic organizer to analyze a global issue. There is a Teacher Copy of the graphic organizer with prompts for answers in the Activity Worksheets section.

Materials:

- Computer with internet access and projector (or order film on DVD/VHS)

- *Rise and Fall of the Great Lakes Through History Venn diagram (located in Activity Worksheets section of document)*

Steps:

Distribute the Venn diagram worksheet to each student to be filled out while watching the short film.

Show the film, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Lakes*. This is available on the National Film Board website:
http://www.nfb.ca/playlists/bill-mason-beyond-wild-beyond-paddle/viewing/rise_and_fall_of_the_great_lakes

Give students time to finish their worksheets.

Draw a large Venn diagram on the board to fill in with student answers. Discuss as a class the similarities and differences between the Great Lakes, or other lakes, in the past and present using the film and their own experiences.

Extension: It would be especially beneficial to have a Knowledge Keeper come in to speak about the local water ways.

8.2 WATER WALK

This activity includes Native language use, as well as artistic expression.

A) Planning

Materials:

- Paper and art supplies
- Map of community wetland (teacher must print one off of Google maps as each community differs)

Steps:

Help students decide where and when the Water Walk will take place. Considerations include the time of year, construction, other field trips, etc.

Have students individually, or in pairs, make a poster for the Water Walk which advertises and invites community members to participate. Encourage community members to meet at the school on the day of the walk. The poster should answer the 'who, what, where, when, and why' about the Water Walk. If available, get a map of the community wetland from the Band Office or other source so students can recopy this map for their poster.

The poster should contain some of the fundamental visual art concepts such as shape and form, space, colour,

texture, contrast, emphasis, proportion, balance, unity and harmony, and movement.

Have students post the posters around the school and community.

B) The Water Song

This activity incorporates Native language with musical expression.

Materials:

- Native Language Teacher
- Paper and writing tools

Steps:

Bring examples of Aboriginal music into the classroom for students to listen to. Students can bring in their own as well.

Have students brainstorm key words that should be included in the song with the help of a language speaker or Native Language teacher.

In pairs, give the students a word from the list to write a line for the song about. When all students are done writing their part, collect the lines to create the song.

Practice the song in class and give copies to the students to take home.

C) Walking

This activity incorporates physical activity with conservation and positive action.

Materials:

- Appropriate attire for walking outdoors
- Signed permission forms
- Map of the community wetland
- Water Walk Reflection Chart (located in the Activity Worksheets section of document)

Steps:

Distribute and collect permission forms for the Water Walk. Ensure parents are aware of the clothing requirements for the day. Remind students to be respectful of their surroundings, not disturb the wildlife, and to pick up any litter they see on the walk.