

Thinking Seasonally & Relationally Using Plant Cards



Activity Purpose

Since time immemorial, Native and Indigenous people have learned about the world through our relationships with plants. This activity involves learning about the seasonal cycles and relationships of plants. Attending to the seasonal and relational aspects of plant life is central to Indigenous ways of being.



Activity Overview

- ◇ Go outside and find a plant, or several plants, to learn about. You might pre-select a plant for your family to find, or learn about whatever plant(s) reveal themselves on your walk.
- ◇ Use the cards as a resource for discussing the seasonal cycles of the plant (front side) and what the plant is in relation to (back side). Your family can read the cards before you go outside, as you walk, or as you make observations.

Roles, Relations, Responsibilities & Gifts

- ◇ Consider how paying attention to seasonal changes and the web of relationships around you strengthens your relationship to place.
- ◇ How does this plant's roles and relations change throughout the year? How do our roles and relations change throughout the year? Consider the differences between seasons.
- ◇ How do the plants' relations change, and what new relations is the plant making as lands and waters change?
- ◇ What gifts does this plant offer? And what gifts can we offer in return? Does this change with the seasons?
- ◇ How do humans adapt with the seasons? Are there similarities in the way that humans and plants respond to seasonal cycles?

Learning Across Generations & with Other Families

- ◇ Take time to hear the ideas from everyone in your family. What do you learn from each other? What are the different perspectives the youngest children bring? And the oldest?
- ◇ Check in with community members and physically distant relatives. What changes have they been noticing?

Making Connections with Stories

- ◇ Are there seasonally specific stories that your tribe has? Is there a special memory that you or your family have of a certain season? Talk to your elders and see what stories they have about plants and seasons.
- ◇ How can we think of the seasons as different stages in a story? Craft a narrative that explains or describes seasonal changes within this place and with particular plants. Get creative!

Supporting Learning & Wellbeing

- ◇ Use the plant cards as a tool rather than the focus of the learning. It's better to get close and perceive the plant with all of your senses than read about it from a distance. Ask yourself, "is this activity place-specific or is it something that can be done from my kitchen table?"
- ◇ Pay attention to patterns. We learn from land by paying close attention to the patterns that exist. What do you notice over time?
- ◇ Big wondering questions make for better learning opportunities than known-answer questions.
- ◇ Use "how" and "why" questions to talk about plants. Consider how plants were a long time ago and how they will be far into the future.
- ◇ Questions you don't know the answer to are great learning opportunities! Discuss different possibilities, talk with friends and family or look to other resources to learn more.

Making Relations with Lands & Waters

- ◇ Remember wherever you are, you are in an ecosystem and on Native land. If you are in a new place, learn which tribal nation communities are nearby or have homelands in that place.
- ◇ Take the perspective of plants. What might plants be feeling in different seasons and how might that explain the way they act across time?

Decolonization, Resurgence & Good Relations

Plant knowledge has always been central to Indigenous ways of living, and our land-based practices shift with the seasons. Resurgence involves going back to these seasonally specific practices. For example, as part of the food sovereignty movement, many tribes are resurging their seasonal harvesting practices. For example, Ojibwe and other woodland tribal communities are continuing maple-tapping. Consider how you can be a part of these resurgent efforts. It could be as simple as paying attention to seasonal changes, or starting a small garden.

Are there factors that make it more difficult to engage in seasonal traditions? What might these challenges be and what are ways for us to overcome them?