

## Introduction to the Bird Arc



### Indigenous Storywork – Opening Stories

Indigenous peoples learn how to be in the world through stories that are shared across generations. Listen to the stories about water to consider how we are meant to live in good relation with the world.

- ◇ [Story of Blue-Jay and Bear \(Chehalis, Western WA\) as told by Roger Fernandes](#)
- ◇ [Izhapuh \(Coyote\) Makes Himself a Nu'gant'nah \(Goose\) \(Shoshone, Idaho\) - told by Nikki McDaid-Morgan as retold by Donna E. Houtz McArthur](#)

*As you engage in bird activities, refer back to these stories or other stories and songs you know about birds. How can stories and songs help guide bird activities with your families?*

### Indigenous Science - Overview

The purpose of these activities is to build relationships with and learn to appreciate the birds in our own backyards, neighborhoods, local parks, and/or forest preserves. This involves learning where to look for birds, what habitats are appropriate for which birds, and learning to identify birds by getting to know their appearance, location, flight patterns, and calls. The best times for this activity might be closer to dawn and dusk, but it could happen any time of day.

### Arc Gifts and Teachings

(Re)making relationships with birds through observation and storytelling means that we are also connecting with our ancestors by engaging in a practice that they also engaged in. Observing bird relatives helps us to know how to live in particular places and to understand patterns and changes in our ecosystems. When we find bird feathers, we can use them for crafts, making regalia and other spiritual items used in ceremony and prayer. This is one form of resurgence of our traditional lifeways and it is a gift from our bird relatives!

### Our Gift – Our Indigenous Pedagogy

There are many things we can do to fulfill our responsibilities to bird relatives – the first step is to build relationships with them. These activities are intended to help you build relationships with birds through observing, listening, drawing pictures of them, and – if you choose and are able to – engaging in citizen science through apps like eBird.

You will consider our responsibilities to birds by recognizing the gifts they give us and how we can reciprocate by helping to sustain their habitats. We can do this through activities like putting up bird feeders in the winter, planting native plants that the birds like to eat seeds from, and putting decals on windows to help birds keep from running into them. We can also make more sustainable decisions in our everyday lives to support the broader ecosystem that birds are part of.

Prompts in this activity are intended to make you think – they are inquiry-based and should leave you wondering. Engage as a family and with friends and think through different possibilities.

### **Indigenous Observing with Lands and Waters and Activities by Season**

These activities enhance our relationships with bird relatives. Through them, you will take the perspective of birds through imagining what life is like from their eyes and point-of-view. What does the forest look like from an eagle's perspective as it soars high in the sky or is perched in a tree? How do they feel when they catch a fish? How do they feel when they see a forest clear cut? During each activity, imagine birds in different seasons, places, and times. Ask children what might be happening for our bird relatives in 100 years from now or what they might have seen 100 years ago? Observing deeply and talking with family and friends about your understandings *and* your wonderings work to deepen Indigenous knowledges.

### **Relationships with Other Arcs**

Relationships with bird relatives are intricately linked to other ISTEAM arcs. Consider how many of the bird relatives you may encounter are water birds or live near water and all rely on water – water is life. Many birds also eat parts of plants, spread the seeds of plants, use plant materials in their nests, or eat insects off of plants. Finally, many birds are part of our traditional diets and some eat similar foods as we do. As you watch the food videos, listen for bird calls. Do you recognize them from where you live? Are they new to you? As you move through the various ISTEAM activities, we encourage you to think across the arcs, make connections, and see the interconnected ecosystem we are all part of.

### **Visioning our Future**

When we try to live in right relationships with birds through taking actions in our local communities to teach others to notice and have strong relationships with birds, we are working against the systems that have caused humans to forget their relationships and responsibilities to the rest of the natural world. This is decolonization! These activities are meant to be one step toward that by helping you to notice and appreciate birds. As you work through the activities, consider how climate change might be affecting these birds and their ecosystems. What can we do to support them? How can we live more sustainably?

Also consider other human communities. Building solidarities across and within human communities is also central to living in good relations - particularly with Black, Latinx, LGBT+ and other communities who face system oppressions. How can we build solidarities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to work towards a world together that will support thriving human and more-than-human communities? In recognizing our complex and intertwined histories, we can work together toward equitable and just futures.