

Walking Land: Making Bird Relatives



Activity Purpose

Since time immemorial, Native and Indigenous people have learned about the world through our relationships. One way to make relationships is by paying close attention. This activity involves building relationships with bird relatives by going on a walk and making observations.



Activity Overview

- ◇ Go on a walk (it can be in your neighborhood, at a park, your yard, or even a city block). As you walk, talk about the place you're in. What do you notice?
- ◇ Stop to observe the bird life that you notice. What draws your attention first (e.g., a bird call, sounds of leaves in trees or on the ground rustling, movement)? Consider what details you notice about the bird and what colors you see. Do you know things about this bird and how they relate to humans? Where did you notice the bird? Is it flying, perched, or walking? Is it in a tree or a bush? What size is it?
- ◇ You can use the bird relative activity sheet to draw connections and track what you learn.

Roles, Relations, Responsibilities & Gifts

- ◇ What role does this bird play in this place? What is our role in this place? How are these roles related? How do we know?
- ◇ Consider your responsibilities to this place. How can humans help or harm bird relatives? What decisions can we make each day to be good relatives to birds?
- ◇ Consider the web of relationships that this bird relative is part of. How are we, our ancestors, and future generations connected to that web?
- ◇ What gifts does this bird offer? And what gifts can we offer in return?

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?
- ◇ Talk as a family about the different ceremonies, regalia, and dances that connect us with our bird relatives. There are many dance movements that are direct imitations of birds, as well. Can you try these dances if it's appropriate?
- ◇ Check in with community members and physically distant relatives. Share what you've learned and ask what they know, or what they've been learning about.

Supporting Learning & Wellbeing

- ◇ Start the walk by talking about big ideas. Ask family members to share what they know about birds or what memories they have with birds. Consider how being with birds makes us feel and how birds feel when we visit them. Once the walk is finished, discuss what you learned and revisit the big ideas. Bookending the walk in this way can make the big ideas come through more clearly.
- ◇ Pay attention to patterns. We learn from land by paying close attention to the patterns that exist. Do you see particular birds more often in certain areas? Near certain trees or plants? Soaring high in the sky or walking on the ground? Near water? Why is this?

Making Connections with Stories

- ◇ Are there stories that your tribe has about certain birds? Is there a special memory that you or family have with a certain bird? Ask your Elders what stories, memories, or teachings they have with different birds.
- ◇ Get creative and make your own story about this place or about a certain bird.
- ◇ Ask children to consider what stories they will tell of this time and place when they are Elders.

Making Relations with Lands & Waters

- ◇ Consider what this place was like a long time ago. Also, consider what it might be like one hundred years from now! What decisions can we make right now that will make that future bright for bird relatives?
- ◇ You might revisit the same birds multiple times. See the Nurturing Relations With Bird Relatives activity for more information on revisiting a bird relative.
- ◇ Hone your attention on one bird or a group of birds. What do you notice about how they interact with other birds, animals, plants etc.? What can we learn from watching birds in this way?
- ◇ How do the birds move through the sky on a windy day? A rainy day?



Decolonization, Resurgence & Good Relations

Indigenous peoples have always learned through walking land with family and community. You engage in resurgence by continuing these traditions and everyday practices! Getting to know bird relatives leads us to a better future.

Some humans have made decisions that have made it harder to be in good relations with birds. What decisions can we make to nurture healthy relationships with birds?

