

WILDFLOWER WONDERS

A Big Day Out in the Schoolyard

Designed to be experienced in Spring & Summer.
Incorporates the Kindergarten Alberta Program of Study.
Easily adaptable to other grade levels.

Season Charades

In small groups, work together to act out a scene depicting one of the four seasons. Come back together with the class and see if the others can guess!

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Circle Discussion

Learn the word for Earth in the Îethka, or Stoney Nakoda language: mâkoche. Brainstorm ways the land cares for us all, every day.

4-5

Wildflower Journeys

Play with the names of the many wildflowers that call this place home: Rosy pussytoes, showy milkweed, bearberry. Then act out their journey through the seasons

5-7

Sit Spot

Go to your sit spot and look around for some of nature's gifts that surround you. Draw what you see in your journal.

7

The Tiny Seed

Sing together this action song to the tune of "Do You Know the Muffin Man".
Curl up like a tiny seed, tiny seed, tiny seed...

7-8

Wildflower Walk

Take a walk together around your schoolyard looking for blooming wildflowers. Perhaps you'll see white clover and dandelions. Perhaps something more! Stop and sketch.

8-9

Bumblebee Freeze Tag

Bumblebees are great helpers to the wildflowers! And wildflowers help the bumblebees! In this tag game, the running wildflowers need the bees to unfreeze!

10

Talking Circle

Review the learnings from the day. Pass around the talking stick and take turns reflecting on what you want to remember about our Big Day Out - Wildflower Wonders.

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Wildflower Wonders

Wildflower Wonders supports young students to recognize that each season has different qualities and that each season provides gifts from the earth (mâkoche – meaning older brother land in the Îlethka language). Children learn the names of some wildflowers that bloom in the Calgary area and imaginatively follow the life cycle of a wildflower through the seasons. Students are then brought on a wildflower walk in the schoolyard to see what might be blooming and to sketch and colour wildflowers. After a game of bumblebee tag, students are invited into a closing circle to reflect on the learnings of the day.

Program Details

Grade Level: Created for Kindergarten. Easily adapted for Grades 1-3.

Season: Spring, summer, and autumn – anytime there are flowers blooming

Location: Outside, in the schoolyard

Potential Benefits and Skills:

- Connection to place
- Emotional wellness
- Multi-sensory awareness
- Collaborative learning and teamwork
- Personal growth and well-being

Curriculum Connections to Alberta Programs of Study – Kindergarten (Alberta Education, 2008)

- “Social Studies...
 - I am unique...
 - I belong...
- Early Literacy...
 - Engages in wordplay and action songs...
- Environment and Community Awareness...
 - Explores and investigates objects and events in the environment...
 - Becomes aware of the importance of protecting the environment...
 - Becomes aware of colours, shapes, patterns and textures in the environment...
 - Role-plays familiar situations...

- Recognizes that some activities or events occur at particular times...
- Recognizes changes in weather and some ways people and animals adapt to the seasons...
- Creative Expression...
 - Experiments with line, colour, shape, texture and pattern in diverse media to explore and express ideas" (Alberta Education, 2008, pp. 19-33).

Optional Pre-Program Activities

- Watch [time-lapse](#) of dandelion going to seed (Bromhall, 2010)
- Have a display of different wildflowers from the prairies accessible.
- Work together with your building operator and/or school board to see if you can section off a piece of the school field that will not be mowed throughout the year. Observe with the students what plants begin to grow here when given the chance.
- Practice saying the following words in the Îlethka (Stoney Nakoda) language. You can listen to the pronunciation on the [Stoney Dictionary Online](#) or download the Stoney Mobile Dictionary from the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).
 - Mâkoche (mahn-koh-CHAY): Earth
 - Wopeskaskan (whoa-PACE-SKA-SKAN): Crocus

Resources

- *A Pocket Naturalist's Guide: Alberta Trees and Wildflowers* by James Kavanagh (2016)
- *Wildflowers Across the Prairies* by F.R. Vance (1999)
- [Alberta Native Plant Database](#) by ALCLA Native Plants (n.d.)
- iNaturalist (2022) app from [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#)

Children's Books that Connect to Theme

Flowers

- *Planting a Rainbow* by Lois Ehlert (1988)
- *The Dandelion Seed's Big Dream* by Joseph Anthony (2014)
- *Little Dandelion Seeds the World* by Julia Marie Richardson (2021)
- *A Seed is Sleepy* by Dianna Hutts Aston (2007)
- *Tiny, Perfect Things* by M.H. Clark (2018)
- *The Curious Garden* by Peter Brown (2009)
- *Métis and Dandelions* by Leah Marie Dorion (2018)

Seasons

- *Over and Under the Snow* by Kate Messner (2011)
- *Goodbye Winter, Hello Spring* by Kenard Pak (2020)
- *Come Next Season* by Kim Norman (2019)

Îethka Language Books

- Ne Îethka Makochî Chach - This is Our Home by Mîni Thnî (Trudy Wesley)
- Âba Wathtech Înâ Mâkoche - It is a Good Day, Mother Earth by Sheri Shotclose
- Watâga Wîyâ: A's, Â's & B's ze yuthpe îkiyabich - Grizzly Bear Woman Teaches the A's Â's & B's by Tatâga Thkan Wagichi (Trent Fox)
- Îyâ Sa Wîyâ Wahogu-kiybi Cha - Red Mountain Woman Receives a Teaching by Red Mountain Woman (Tina Fox)

Pre-program Prep

- Take a walk around the schoolyard, looking for any blooming flowers. Depending on the time of year, you may see dandelions and white clover in the field, or even buffalo bean, asters, or wild rose along the edges of the schoolyard or in any adjacent alleyways. The very best kind of wildflower to observe with the students is the one that is blooming today, right where you are. If you are unable to identify a flower, you can use the iNaturalist app to help you. Simply download the app, take a photo of the flower, and click "What did you see?" The app will offer suggestions to help identify the plant

Materials Needed

- Students' reflective/nature journals, writing and colouring utensils, and sit pads
- An item that can be used as a talking stick for the final Talking Circle.

Lesson Plan

Opening Large Group Activity

Season Charades

- Gather students together in a circle to review the characteristics of each of the four seasons.
- Explain that we are going to play *Season Charades*: they will be divided into small groups and each group will be assigned one of the four seasons to act out for the rest of the class, using only actions and no words.
- Divide the students into small groups (of 3-5). Walk around and whisper to each group which season they are to act out. Give them a few minutes to plan and rehearse their actions together.
 - They may want to role play an activity that is done primarily in each season. For example – planting in the spring, shoveling in the winter, or raking in the fall.
- Invite the students back into the circle and have each group come into the middle of the circle, one at a time, to act out their season. When students in the circle think they know which season is being represented, invite them to raise their hand. Once many hands are raised, invite one student to share their guess. Continue until each of the groups have had a chance to act out their season.
- When each group has finished presenting, remind the students that the cycle of the seasons repeats every year and that each season has unique qualities. For example, in springtime leaves appear on the trees and shrubs and in autumn the leaves fall to the ground.

Large Group Discussion

Sitting in a circle

Îethka Connections

- Remind the students that this very place where we are learning today has been the home of Indigenous communities for many, many (thousands) of years. One of these communities is called the Îethka (ee-yethka) – or Stoney Nakoda.
- For the Îethka, the land is much more than just a place to play and learn, it is alive and takes care of us just like our big brothers and sisters or mothers and fathers do. In the Îethka language – the word for Earth means older brother land. Mâkoche. Do you want to try saying that? Mâkoche (mahn-koh-CHAY). Land is mâkoche.
- The land takes care of us by providing plants for food and medicine. After a long winter, the plants start to wake up and make flowers and berries again. In the Îethka community, the plants are welcomed back and

thanked for providing food for the people. To thank the plants the Îlethka people offer tobacco. This is an important way that they show mâkoche that they are thankful for everything the earth provides. It shows respect for the earth – to always give an offering before taking something from the land.

Nature's Gifts

- Nature gives us gifts in every season. Everything we need to survive we get from mâkoche. What do we need to survive? How does the earth provide these things for us?
 - Water
 - How does it feel to drink a glass of cool water when you're thirsty? Can you feel thankful now for that feeling?
 - Air
 - Let's all take a deep breath of this clean air that we need in every moment. Air can be delicious. Let's be thankful for clean air.
 - Food
 - What did you eat for breakfast today? How did that come from the earth? Let's be grateful for full tummies.

Large Group Activity **Sitting in a circle**

Wildflower Journeys

- In the **summertime** in Calgary there are many wonderful wildflowers that just seem to pop out of the earth – like beautiful little gifts for us to enjoy.
- Just like each of you is like a little gift in our class. Today you are going to pretend to be wildflowers.
- It's summertime and you have your most lovely colourful petals showing. If you're wearing pink, pop up out of the earth and show off your pink petals – you're a prairie wild rose. Let's say your name together: "prairie wild rose".
- If you're wearing purple, pop up out of the earth and show off your purple petals – you're a sticky geranium. Let's say your name together: "sticky geranium".
- If you're wearing white, pop up out of the earth, and stretch really tall to show off your delicate white flowers – you're northern bedstraw. Let's say your name together: "northern bedstraw".
- Everyone else pop up out of the earth and show off your petals. Say your names with me. How do these names feel in your mouth as you say them?

- Rosy pussytoes? Showy milkweed? Bearberry? Crocus? Cow parsnip? Mouse ear chickweed? Silverberry? Pale comandra? Showy Ladyslipper?
 - The wildflowers in Alberta have so many fun names to learn to say!
- In summertime, the prairies are so colourful. Each flower is like a gift. How can we offer our thanks for all of these beautiful flowers?
 - Some ideas: notice them, learn their names, smell them, draw pictures of them, take care of them, learn to protect them.
- It's **autumn** now and the colder winds are coming to blow the leaves off the trees. Your petals are falling to the ground, and you start to make seeds. Everyone shrink down to the ground like a wilting flower.
- Can you picture a dandelion? Their yellow petals have shrivelled away, making way for a cloud of seeds to grow in their place. Let's all blow our pretend dandelions and spread those seeds.
- We shrink back down onto the ground to get ready for winter. We send nutrients down into our roots so we can survive the winter. Curl up on the ground and get ready for a long winter sleep.
- *Speak more quietly during this section, as the flowers are sleeping underground.* It's **winter** now. You are resting underground for many months. The winter holidays come and go, and a new year begins. The snow keeps you covered like a blanket as Valentine's Day comes and you exchange cards with your friends and eat yummy chocolate. It has been many, many months since you got to show your pretty petals and you wait patiently underground for the days to get longer and warmer so you can wake up. Do you ever feel cozy in your bed at night? So comfy with the warm blankets on top? Resting in the dark night so you can be full of energy for the next day? That's what the flowers and seeds are doing underground! Resting to get all ready to wake up when winter is done.
- Finally, **springtime** is here! Snow is melting and in April, our first wildflowers begin to wake up. The little purple crocus bravely spreads her purple petals in the sunshine, giving food to the hungry bumble bees who are also starting to wake up after a long winter. Show me your purple crocus petals. Let's learn the word for crocus in the Îlethka language. It's wopeskaskan (whoa-PACE-SKA-SKAN). Let's say it together. Wopeskaskan helps to cheer us all and give us hope that spring is finally here.
- Let's all pretend we are the purple crocus or wopeskaskan, popping up out of the ground in the springtime. Pop up out of the ground and show me your pretty, purple petals.

- All throughout the spring and summer the hillsides and meadows and alleyways start to come to life with colour. Can anyone remember any of the other wildflower names we talked about before? Wake up and stand tall if you remember any of these flowers: prickly wild rose, sticky geranium, northern bedstraw, rosy pussytoes, showy milkweed, bearberry, crocus, cow parsnip, mouse ear chickweed, silverberry, pale comandra, and showy ladyslipper.
- When summer again turns to fall, the flowers again begin to wilt and dry up and prepare for the long winter. This same cycle happens over and over again, every single year. *Students can now crouch low to the ground and tuck themselves in for the long winter ahead.*

Sit Spot

See the [Sit Spot Guide](#) on the *Thimbleberry Learning Website*

- When you go to your sit spot, take a moment to look around. Do you notice any of nature's gifts right here? Draw a picture of one thing you notice that you are grateful for: one of nature's gifts. Something provided for you by mâkoche.
- Invite the students back into the circle. Have each student share what they have drawn and describe which one of nature's gifts they are thankful for today.

Song with Actions

- Sing and act out, together with the students:

The Tiny Seed

(Adapted from the traditional children's role playing song and sung to the tune of *Do You Know the Muffin Man*)

Curl up like a tiny seed, tiny seed, tiny seed
Warm sun and soil are what you need
Now you can start growing

Drink the rain and start to rise, start to rise, start to rise
Stretch up tall, arms opened wide
Now a flower's showing!

Bees come drink your nectar up, nectar up, nectar up
Sweet, it fills their tummies up
Now your fruit starts growing

Birds fly in and munch it down, munch it down, munch it down
 Spreading seeds all over town
 To keep the cycle going

Curl up like a tiny seed... (continue singing first verse again to demonstrate the cycle)

- What do we learn from the song?
 - What does a seed need in order to grow up and produce yummy fruit? (*soil, sun, water, pollinator – bees or butterflies*).
 - When will we find flowers growing here in Calgary? Winter? Spring? Summer? Fall? *Wildflowers bloom in Calgary from April to October.*
- Can you imagine what it would be like to curl up underground like a tiny seed? They are so patient while they wait underground in the dark soil for the right time to sprout.
 - Seeds are very wise and patient. They will wait until they have everything they need before sprouting into a plant. There have even been seeds that have waited for more than a thousand years to grow!
- The wildflowers each pop up out of the ground at different times. After being there all winter. Show me how you pop out of bed after a really good sleep – just like a wildflower pops out of the ground after a long winter's rest. Pop, pop, pop!

Wildflower Walk

- Take a walk together around your schoolyard to look for blooming wildflowers. You may see dandelions and white clover amongst the grass in the field, or along the edges of the pavement you may find other flowers blooming. Remind the students to get low and look closely. You might be surprised what you find!
 - If you have noticed something blooming, you can guide your students in that direction and allow them to discover these blooms themselves.
 - Gather students near the flowers and hand out their journals, crayons, or coloured pencils. Invite them to sketch the flowers or even grasses that they see. Students can also experiment rubbing dandelion blooms or blades of grass for colour.
 - Connect to these flowers with senses other than sight. How do they smell? How do they feel (touch them gently)? What do you hear near the flowers or in the community all around you?
 - If there is nothing blooming, you can begin a discussion about why there may not be flowers blooming here in the schoolyard. Are

there other plants that have taken their place (grass on the field)? Have they been mown down? Has the pavement covered them up?

- Invite students to invent the most beautiful wildflower they can imagine and draw it in their journals.
- While the students are drawing and colouring, you can engage them in a discussion about how to protect wildflowers.
 - Nature Conservancy Canada has a campaign called No Mow May. Community members are encouraged to leave their grass long in May, allowing wildflowers to bloom. This will provide food for hungry bees and butterflies as they wake up from a long winter's sleep.
 - We can also plant wildflowers in our gardens, or in the place of lawns.
 - Although they are beautiful, we should leave wildflowers free to grow to provide food for bees and butterflies. When you are out for a walk in your neighbourhood, or if you go to a city park, don't pick the wildflowers. Leave them there for others to enjoy and to support a healthy wild community.
 - An exception to this rule is dandelions: they are plentiful in Calgary and very hardy and will grow back.
 - As with any time we harvest something from the natural world, we can respect the principles of the Honorable Harvest:

Ask permission before taking. Abide by the answer.

Never take the first. Never take the last.

Take only what you need.

Take only that which is given.

Never take more than half. Leave some for others.

Use it respectfully. Never waste what you have taken.

Share.

Give thanks for what you have been given.

Give a gift, in reciprocity for what you have taken

Sustain the ones who sustain you, and the earth will last forever.

(Kimmerer, 2013, p. 183).

Active Transition

Free Play or Bumblebee Freeze tag

Explain to the students that bumblebees are great helpers to the wildflowers because they help them to make seeds to grow new wildflowers. Wildflowers are also great helpers to the bumble bees because they provide food from their nectar.

Tell the students that they are wildflowers. As they run, they are growing stronger. When they are tagged, they have to stop growing/running (*freeze*). To help them start growing again, they will need a bumblebee to tag them to *unfreeze* them. (any of the running wildflowers can transform into a bumblebee to unfreeze their classmates).

Talking Circle

We're all connected

- Invite the students to gather again in a circle and briefly review the learnings and activities from the day.
 - Seasons – each has its unique purpose
 - Îethka word for Earth – mâkoche – means older brother land
 - Mâkoche provides gifts each day we can be grateful for
 - In the spring, summer, and fall, we can enjoy the gift of wildflowers
 - In the winter, wildflowers rest underground, getting ready for a new season of blooms
 - Wildflowers are connected to bumblebees and need a good place to live and grow, and water to drink – just like we do!
- Wildflowers live together in wildflower communities. Each one is unique and special. Each one blooms at different times of the year.
- Just like the wildflowers, our class is a community of friends and learners and teachers. Each one of you is unique and brings something wonderful to our learning community. Each of your unique qualities make our class into a wonderful place to be and belong.
- Pass the talking stick around and have each student share their favourite learning from the day, or something they would like to remember.

Post-program activities

- *Watering Flowers* – adapted from *Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children* by Thich Nhat Hanh (2011)
Invite each of your students to draw the shape of a flower – large enough to fill up one sheet of paper. In the centre of the flower, have them write their name (alternately, if you are able to print a photo of the child's face, invite them to cut it out and paste it in the centre of the flower). Pass each child's flower around to the other students who will then "water the flower" by writing or drawing something in one of the petals that they appreciate or like about their classmate. Continue passing each of the flowers around until each of the petals has been filled in. Make a classroom display of these beautiful, thriving flowers.
- Make a display of nature's gifts that students notice in the schoolyard and display it in a classroom gratitude corner. Add to it throughout the year.
- Have each student choose their favourite Alberta wildflower. Invite them to create a wildflower identification card by drawing a picture of the flower and basic information about it on the back.
- Go for a walk in the school community to look for wildflowers. You'll have the most luck finding them in unmown lots and along the edges of alleyways. A field trip to a city park will also provide a great chance to spot some of Alberta's native flower species.
- Make [seed bombs](#) (Hull, 2018) using native wildflower seeds. Students can take them home, or you can find the perfect spot to launch them together!

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