



Tracking and the Secret Life of Animals

Organization:

Title: Tracking and the Secret Life of Animals

Summary: Students learn what signs in nature reveal about local animal behavior and how to identify animals through the tracks they leave behind.

Inquiry Question: Inquiry Question 3 (Hunting and Trapping): How does seeing oneself as a part of the natural world as opposed to a steward of the natural world foster a more holistic relationship with the land?

Duration: 1 class period

Learning Environment: Outdoor

Season: Winter

Materials:

- The Secret Life of Animals.pdf
- Tracking.pdf
- *Moon of the Crusted Snow* by Waubgeshig Rice
- Access to the Elbow Lake Environmental Education Centre

Curriculum Links:

Grade 9 Destreamed: A1.1, A2.4, A2.5, B1.3

Grade 10 Academic: A1.1, A1.10, D2.3, D2.8, D2.9

Grade 10 Applied: A1.1, A1.10, D2.7, D3.7

Meta Data:

Content Type: Activity

Bundle: Food

Theme: Global Climate Change

Subject Area: Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Education, Geography, History, Outdoor Education, Physical Education, Science

Curriculum Focus: 9, 10

- Teacher begins by discussing with students how animal tracks can help us understand what is happening in the natural world. For instance, most of the activity that happens in the animal world happens away from our view. Animal tracks, however, provide us with a way of finding out more about the secretive lives of animals. Tracking is a universal activity that is done by people around the world including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe people local to this land base.
- Anishinaabe Knowledge Keeper Caleb Musgrave from Hiawatha First Nation has a YouTube Channel and podcast called *Canadian Bushcraft*. Here teachers and students can learn more about animal tracking. *Learning Nature's Language* with Chris Gilmour is also another excellent source.



- In these sources, Anishinaabe Knowledge Keeper Caleb Musgrave shares that observation and curiosity are the two most important skills a tracker can have. For this reason, tracking should always be started with a period of quiet observation. Students can practice sitting still and watching the environment around them. I.e.: what can they hear, feel, smell, and even taste? Tracking requires asking questions of the land and having the patience to hear the answers.
- Next, a tracker will look for SPOOR. SPOOR refers to the term for all of the signs left behind by animals. A tracker will also attempt to interpret the size, shape, and pattern of tracks. Use **The Secret Life of Animals.pdf** to lead a discussion with students regarding background knowledge needed by a successful trapper.
- At ELEEC a tracking activity will be offered. Teachers may also feel comfortable offering this activity in an outdoor space near their school by following the instructions included in the **Tracking.pdf**.

Optional Extension:

Students may choose to read the book *Moon of the Crusted Snow* by Waubgeshig Rice to learn more about Anishinaabe Hunting, Trapping and Tracking.

The learning represented in these activities reflects Big Idea B. in the Indigenous Knowledge Learning Bundle: “Indigenous Knowledge is Place-Based”. To help your students learn more about this Big Idea check out the Learning Activities titled: *Land-Based Meditation*, *Land Acknowledgement Workshop*, *Ceremony Ensures Right Relations with the Land*, *The Clan System*, and *The 13 Moons* found in the *Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being with the Natural World* Learning Bundle (Grades 7-10).