



## Weaving - The Gifts of Cattails

### Organization

**Title:** Weaving - The Gifts of Cattails

**Summary:** Students learn about the many gifts that cattails provide from local Indigenous community members. With assistance from a community member students harvest cattails and create a cattail mat.

**Inquiry Question:** Inquiry Question 1. What are some local culturally significant tools and technologies that when utilized enter local Indigenous groups into a relationship of reciprocity with the natural world?

**Duration:** 2-3 class periods

**Learning Environment:** Classroom, outdoor

**Season:** All

**Materials:**

- Traditional Anishinaabe story in Anishinaabemowin about cattails: <http://ojibweproject.weebly.com/naumlnabushu-and-the-dancing-bullrushes-line-by-line.html>
- Pgs. 225 to 232 in Robin Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*. (Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. Milkweed Editions.)
- Short video segment available on the QUILLS website of Mandy Wilson, a community member from Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation, discussing the many gifts that cattails provide
- Video by Anishinaabe Knowledge Keeper Caleb Musgrave from Hiawatha First Nation outlining the various uses of cattails: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PxKNQ6vsvRQ>
- Wetland Shopping List.pdf
- Video segment on QUILLS website of community member Mandy Wilson demonstrating how to harvest cattails
- Video featuring Caleb Musgrave from Canadian Bushcraft focused on how to harvest cattails: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNXEiyBzKvs>
- Video segment on QUILLS website of community member Mandy Wilson demonstrating how to weave a cattail mat
- Cattail Mat Weaving.pdf
- Access to the Elbow Lake Environmental Education Centre
- Cattails

**Curriculum Links:**

Grade 7 Science and Technology: A1.1, A1.4, A3.3, B1.2, B1.3, B2.1, B2.2, B2.5, B2.8

Grade 9 Science: A1.1, A1.5, A2.2, A2.3, A2.5, B1.3, B2.7

Grade 9 Academic Geography: C1.4

**Meta Data:****Content Type:** Activity**Bundle:** Tools**Theme:** Invasive Species**Subject Area:** Art, Biology, Environmental Education, Geography, Health, Mathematics, Outdoor Education, Science,**Curriculum Focus:** 7, 9

An Indigenous community member should be invited into the learning space to help students harvest cattails and weave cattail mats.

A gift of the earth that provides for the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental wellbeing of both the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe locally is cattails.

**Spotlight on Language:**

- Anishinaabemowin: Apakweyashk
  - Kanyen'kéha: Aotáhsa
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- As an introduction to cattails, and their cultural significance, students read a traditional Anishinaabe story told in Anishinaabemowin and English about cattails:  
<http://ojibweproject.weebly.com/naumlnabushu-and-the-dancing-bullrushes-line-by-line.html>
  - Students (with an advanced reading level) can then read page 225 to 232 in Robin Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass* for an overview of the gifts that a cattail marsh provides.
- Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. Milkweed Editions.
- As a summary and to learn more about local Indigenous perspectives on cattails students can review **Overview of the Gifts of Cattails.pdf**. This information can also be found in **Gifts of Cattails Graphic.pdf**.

**Activity: The Supermarket of the Swamp**

- Student will complete a wetland shopping list found in the **Basket Wetland Shopping List Activity.pdf**. They will do this by explaining which part of the cattail can be used to provide particular gifts.

**Activity: Weaving**

- Another gift cattails provide local Indigenous community members is that they offer a great material for weaving. Linda Black Elk from Oceti Sakowin Territory shares that cattails are



waterproof so mats could be used to waterproof the roof of a wigwam or provide a waterproof surface to lay on.

- Teachers can show students video segment available on the QUILLS website featuring Mandy Wilson a community member from Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation demonstrating how to harvest cattails.
- Alternatively, this video featuring Caleb Musgrave from Canadian Bushcraft also focuses on how to harvest cattails: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNXEiyBzKvs>
- At Elbow Lake, with assistance from an Indigenous community member, students can harvest cattails and create their own cattail mat. Students can also follow instructions in the video clip embedded on the QUILLS website.
- Next, students watch a video featuring Mandy Wilson, a community member from Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation, made available on the QUILLS website, showing students how to weave a cattail mat. (Instructions also included in **Cattail Mat Weaving.pdf**.)
- With the assistance of an Indigenous community member students can practice making their own mats.
- At school, if cattails are unavailable, students can use alternate materials ie: grass or recycled strips of paper.

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).