

Lesson Title:

The Many Uses and Smells of Tribal Plants

Brief Overview of Lesson:

Student's will gain knowledge about how natives in MT used five specific plants and will explore their distinct scents

Age group:

Materials (include books, songs, videos, and supplies):

Sage, Sweet Grass, Cedar, Cattail, Juniper

Vocabulary:

Traditional Knowledge: Information passed down through generations.

Smudging: A ritual act of burning sacred plants (like Sage or Cedar) for purification.

Aromatic: Having a pleasant or distinct smell.

Utility: Using something for a practical purpose (like making a mat from cattails).

IEFA Standard(s) Addressed:

Essential Understanding 3- The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern-day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs.

Learning Targets

(outcomes, including both concepts and skills - "students will be able to..."):

Students will be able to identify tribal plants and their uses

Students will be able to identify tribal plants by their scent

Instructional Sequence

(step-by-step learning plan): Include an introduction or “hook”

1. I will put a piece of Cedar or Sage inside a small bag. Pass it around and let them smell it through the bag without looking, then I will ask: Does this smell like a kitchen? A forest? A medicine cabinet? This smell is a hint about a very important Montana tradition.
2. I will ask the group what they know about plants and their uses, then ask what they would like to know. As they share, I will record their answers on a large paper
3. Everybody will make a big circle on the floor
4. I will present the 5 plants I have brought along
5. I will pass one plant around at a time, and encourage them to feel and smell. While it's being passed around, I will ask the children what they think it is used for. Once the children have shared their ideas, I will explain the plants' use.
6. I will repeat step 4 for the following plants
7. Once all of the plants have been passed around, I will ask the group what they learned today about the plants
8. I will ask what plant they liked more
9. I will Pass out sage baggies and explain that they are taking home a piece of living history that is still used by tribes like the Blackfeet, Salish, and Crow today.

Differentiation

(individual children with special needs or practice with the whole class):

Visual Anchor Chart: Instead of just a list of names, I will create a chart with a photo of the plant in the wild, a physical sample taped to the paper, and the Blackfeet Name alongside the English name.

Sentence Frames: During the wrap-up, I will provide frames like:

"I smelled the _____ and it reminded me of _____."

"The _____ plant was used for _____."

Assessment

(should match Learning Targets):

Can the children identify the plants by smell?

Can they name a use for one plant?

References:

Plant	The Scent	Tribal Use (Traditional & Modern)
Sage	Sharp, clean, earthy	Smudging, tea for sore throats, lining for Sun Dance lodges.
Sweetgrass	Vanilla, sweet hay	Braided and burned in ceremony; represents "the hair of Mother Earth."
Cedar	Woodsy, "pencil-like"	Purification, protection, and tea (high in Vitamin C).
Cattail	Mild, like cucumber	The "supermarket of the swamp": roots for flour, stalks for mats, fluff for diapers.
Juniper	Piney, gin-like scent	Berries used for food/medicine; branches used for protection/cleansing.