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EDUCATION FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW - L'ÉDUCATION - AUJOURD'HUI ET DEMAIN

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Where the Wild Things Are

— *Outside Your Classroom*



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Happy New Year and welcome back!
We hope you enjoyed your holidays.

It's been a chilly start to the year for some, but the cold weather shouldn't deter us from enjoying the outdoors. Dressed in puffy coats and warm hats and mitts, young students across the country are getting ready to learn in their outdoor classrooms. The outdoor classroom is becoming increasingly popular in Canada with schools converting traditional concrete school yards into planned outdoor learning areas. Our feature article explores this topic from what kids do and learn in this unique space to curriculum connections, plus the physical and mental benefits of such a learning environment.

Elsewhere, in our Classroom Perspectives column, a fellow educator shares his personal suggestions on selecting your next picture book. For young readers, story time is a valued time in their day so it's important to consider the images, characters, academic value, and other elements in your search.

In Field Trips, we offer a long list of excursion opportunities to learn about Canada's rich aviation history. In the many aviation museums across the country, experts have carefully maintained the relics of Canada's contribution and participation in a century of flight. Visitors will learn about the science of flight as well as Canada's role in the Second World War where planes were first used in combat. Our other regular department, Web Stuff provides resourceful websites that teach students of all ages as well as parents and educators about Internet safety. Fun games and tutorial cover topics from privacy to cyber bullying.

We have a couple of exciting announcements to share with you in the coming months so connect with us on Facebook and Twitter to stay up to date. And if you haven't done so, sign up for a free trial of our educational resources, *The Shadowed Road* and *The Ruptured Sky*.

Wishing you the best that 2014 has to offer,

Lisa Tran,
Associate Editor
@teachmag

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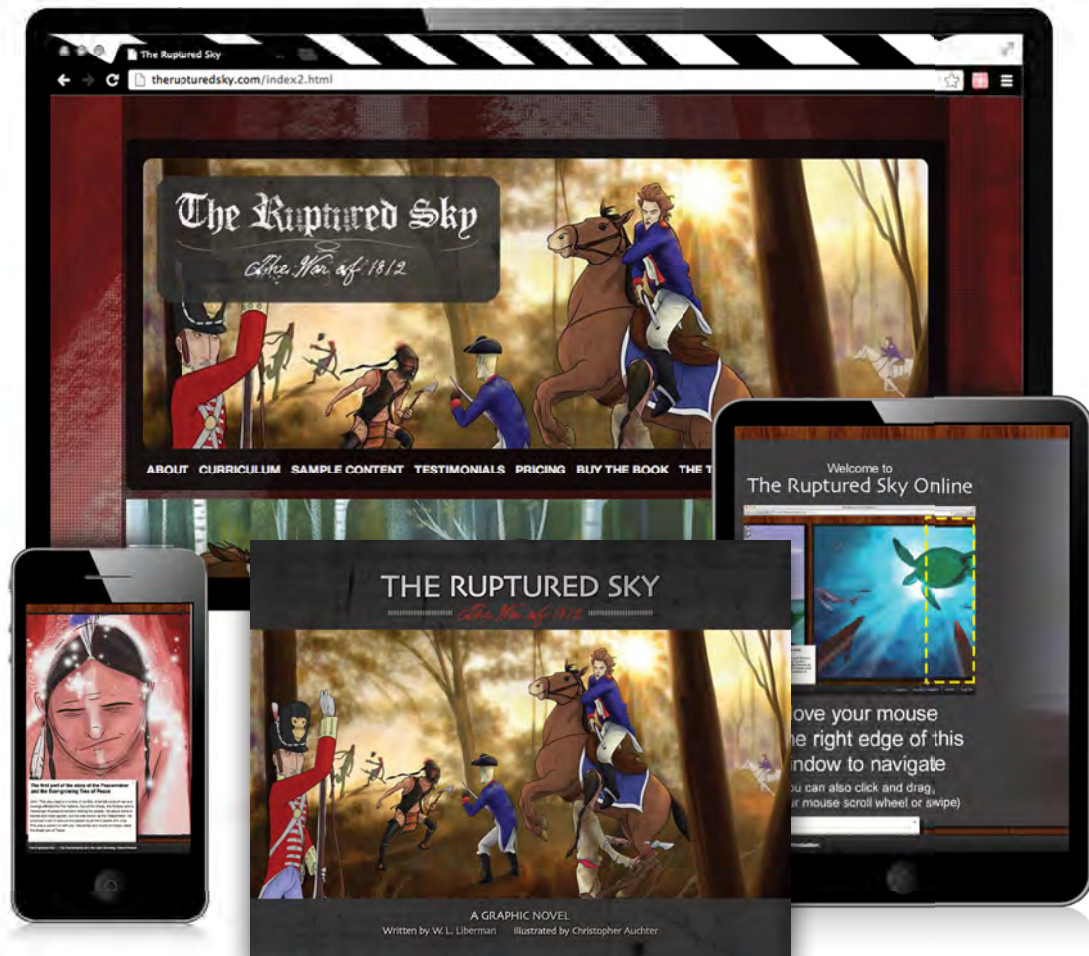
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EDUCATORS LOVE THE RUPTURED SKY!



The Ruptured Sky is a digital literacy title that explores the War of 1812 from First Nations perspectives. A great resource for teaching social studies, history, literacy, and First Nations curriculum.

SEE MORE INFO AT THERUPTUREDSKY.COM

field trips

Aviation

Book a flight for your next field trip! From the places we travel and the specially imported food we eat to the parcels we ship, we all benefit from the advent of airplanes. Canada is a country rich in aviation history. Museums coast-to-coast house specially preserved retired aircraft and artifacts. These unique collections contain a variety of planes from those flown by Canadians in the Second World War to modern commercial aircraft that fly passengers around the world. Taught by current and former airline and military pilots, retired educators, and other aviation specialists, the educational programs provide visitors with firsthand knowledge about the science of flight.

The Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum in Mount Hope, Ontario for example, holds their educational sessions in an aviation environment—even underneath an aircraft at times. Taught by pilots, retired educators, and other aviation specialists, the school programs teach elementary students the science and principles of flight or secondary students the role that Canadians played during times of war and that of peace.

Over at the Aero Space Museum of Calgary, the educational program teaches visitors the secrets of flight using real aircraft. Students will learn about the forces of flight, Bernoulli's Principle, Newton's Laws of Motion, and the control surfaces of an aircraft. The tour offers students tangible examples of abstract concepts.

The following is a long list of field trip opportunities. The numerous museums across the country are a testament to Canada's long and detailed history as well as continuing involvement in aviation.

Field Trip Opportunities

Alberta

Aero Space Museum of Calgary, Calgary
www.asmac.ab.ca

Alberta Aviation Museum, Edmonton
www.albertaaviationmuseum.com

Bomber Command Museum of Canada, Nanton
www.bombercommandmuseum.ca

Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame, Wetaskiwin
www.cahf.ca

British Columbia

Canadian Museum of Flight, Langley
www.canadianflight.org

British Columbia Aviation Museum, Sidney
www.bcam.net

Manitoba

Western Canada Aviation Museum, Winnipeg
wcam.mb.ca

Newfoundland and Labrador

North Atlantic Aviation Museum, Gander
www.northatlanticaviationmuseum.com

Nova Scotia

Atlantic Canada Aviation Museum, Bedford
atlanticcanadaaviationmuseum.com

Shearwater Aviation Museum, Shearwater
www.shearwateraviationmuseum.ns.ca

Ontario

Canada Aviation and Space Museum, Ottawa
www.aviation.technomuses.ca

Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, Mount Hope
www.warplane.com/kid-zone/education.aspx

National Air Force Museum of Canada, Trenton
airforcemuseum.ca/en/education

Quebec

Canadian Aviation Heritage Centre, Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue
www.cahc-ccpa.com

Or alternatively, contact your local tourism office to inquire about aviation museums in your area.



CURRICULA

FOR GRADES
5 TO 6

The following is a lesson plan excerpt from *The Ruptured Sky*, a graphic novel and digital literacy title. To see the full lesson plan or to learn more, please visit www.therupturedsky.com.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Language Arts,
Social Studies

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN THE WAR OF 1812

The *Ruptured Sky* looks at the War of 1812 from a contemporary time frame. Two First Nations teenagers, Chris and Angie, are working on a school project about the war. Chris' grandfather, John Montour, figures that the teenagers might like to hear about the events of the war directly from a group of First Nations elders. As each of the elders relates part of the story of the War of 1812, the people, places, and events come to life. Chris and Angie experience the war through these important stories. They hear firsthand about the great Shawnee war chief, Tecumseh, the Mohawk War Chief, Joseph Brant and his protégé, John Norton to name some. They come to understand how important the role of First Nations warriors was in key battles such as the taking of Fort Detroit, Beaver Dams, and Queenston Heights. Chris and Angie learn this story of long ago is still evolving, that the events of history still resonate and influence events of today. In the end, the story is theirs to continue.

Overview

As students read the graphic novel, *The Ruptured Sky*, they will gather additional information on the role of Aboriginal peoples and leaders who were involved in the War of 1812. Through the lesson steps, students will gain an understanding of historical significance, as well as reflect on how different perspectives affect what is deemed to be historically significant. Students will also examine, and compare, the markers in historical sites related to the War of 1812 that exist to designate historical significance.

They will then discuss the biases in perspective in the choice of markers and their subject material. Afterward, they will gather information about peoples that participated in the war and find any underrepresentation in acknowledging their role. Students will then write a text description for a new historical plaque to be placed at the site of one of the battles described in the novel to commemorate the role of an Aboriginal nation in the war, as well as design an additional historical marker (e.g., a commemorative coin, stamp, sculpture, map, or piece of stationary like a card, etc.) in order to highlight the participation and contributions of an Aboriginal leader in the same battle.

Key Concepts

Students will explore the concepts of historical significance and perspective, and how perspective affects what is deemed to be historically significant.

Historical Significance is based on the following principles:

- Dependent on perspective and purpose
- People, places, and events that have led to big changes over long periods of time for large groups of people
- Can be linked to a larger societal issue or reveals something important for us in today's times

Place:

- A unique space that has defining characteristics. This space may have some kind of significance. It may also have an emotional/psychological connection to the place because of its significance

Skills:

- Critical thinking
- Researching effectively
- Deconstructing bias
- Working with a partner and in small groups
- Communicating effectively (listening, speaking, and writing)

Time Required

Nine or more classroom periods, 40-60 minute sessions (plus time allotted for homework)

Lesson Steps

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Step One | Introducing the graphic novel, <i>The Ruptured Sky</i> |
| Step Two | The Battle of Beaver Dams |
| Step Three | Mohawk Perspectives: The Battle of Beaver Dams |
| Step Four | Conversation at The Big Wheel |
| Step Five | Causes of the War of 1812 |
| Step Six | Tecumseh |
| Step Seven | Battle of Chippawa |
| Step Eight | John Norton |
| Step Nine | Performance Task: Honouring Aboriginal participation in the War of 1812 |

Blackline Masters

- #1 The Ruptured Sky handout
- #2 Newspaper article/News report outline
- #3 Rubric: Summarizing information/Responding to questions in writing
- #4 Rubric: Oral participation in group/Class discussions
- #5 Rubric: Writing paragraphs/Short text descriptions
- #6 Rubric: Reflection journals
- #7 Maps Activity Rubric

Materials Required

- Internet access
- Writing paper and supplies
- A map of the locations of Mohawk communities (Example: www.peace4turtleisland.org/pages/mohawkmap.htm)
- A map of the battles and events of the War of 1812 (Example: [www.eighteentwelve.ca/cms/Uploads/War of 1812 Battles MAP.jpg](http://www.eighteentwelve.ca/cms/Uploads/War_of_1812_Battles_MAP.jpg))
- Wall map of North America
- Wall map of Southern Ontario
- Atlases
- Recommended resources
- Chart paper and markers
- Photo images (See individual steps)

INTRODUCING THE GRAPHIC NOVEL, *THE RUPTURED SKY*

Materials Required

For the Teacher:

- Chart paper and markers
- Image of a Great White Pine also known as an Iroquoian “Tree of Peace” and Guswentah, also known as a Two-Row Wampum belt (Examples: www.wampumchronicles.com/darrenwithwampum2.jpg)
- Wall Map of North America
- Wall Map of Southern Ontario

For Students:

- Copies of the *The Ruptured Sky*
- Internet access
- Blackline Master #1 *The Ruptured Sky*
- Reflection journals

Teaching/Learning Strategies

Part A

Show students an image of a Great White Pine and a Guswentah, or Two-Row Wampum belt and ask if anyone can identify what either one is.



Darren Bonaparte from the Mohawk community of Ahkwesáhsne standing next to Wampum belts.
(Source: www.wampumchronicles.com)

Provide students with basic information only... *they are both Iroquoian symbols of peace* (as they will read a more complete description in the novel).

Explain to students that they will be reading *The Ruptured Sky*, a graphic novel that highlights the participation of Aboriginal peoples in the War of 1812.

- *Why would we introduce a novel about war with symbols of peace?*
- *What was the War of 1812 about?* Students likely know very little at this grade level so teachers may need to provide an overview as follows:

Provide basic background overview to set the context for the reading of *The Ruptured Sky*.

Look at a map of North America and ask students to identify the countries that now make up North America.

Discuss the following:

- When did these countries come into being?
- Who were the first peoples in North America?
- Why did they refer to North America as “Turtle Island?”
- When did Europeans arrive?
- From what countries did they come? (Possible answers: Norway-Vikings, Spain, France, England, Denmark, and Holland)
- Why did they come?
- What other peoples also came? (Possible answer: Africans) Why did they come?
- As the Europeans struggled to acquire power over land and resources, what happened? (Possible answers: Conflicts with each other, conflicts with the original inhabitants.)
- What were the conflicts with each other about?
- What were the conflicts with Aboriginal peoples about?

Note: The intent is not to provide a comprehensive history of North America before the War of 1812, but to provide a brief, general overview of conflicts that arose and what the reasons for some of these conflicts were.

Ask if anyone has heard of “the American Revolution” and if so, to describe what it was about. Explain that this major conflict took place between the American colonies and Great Britain. The colonists resisted British rule and were determined to manage their own affairs, and to govern themselves. They succeeded and in 1776 declared themselves to be the United States of America. After the war, many of those in the American colonies who remained loyal to Great Britain left, either to return to Great Britain or to go to another British colony like Canada. We refer to them in Canada as United Empire Loyalists. They settled in Upper Canada (Ontario), New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and some in Lower Canada (Quebec).

Along with the United Empire Loyalists who came to Upper Canada after the American Revolution, there were many Aboriginal peoples who had fought as allies alongside the British.

Both the Loyalists and the Aboriginal allies settled on new lands given to them by Great Britain in return for their loyalty. Point out some of these on a map of Upper Canada. New settlers primarily from Great Britain (Scottish, Irish, and English) began to arrive as well, and settled in already existing settlements such as the Town of York or established new settlements, adding to the growing population and British presence in Upper Canada.

Thirty-six years later, however, war broke out again in 1812; this time the United States of America was determined to capture the British colonies to the north in order to control the continent.

The novel you are about to read will tell us a lot more about what led to the conflict and the events that took place during the war.

Invite students to read pages one to nine in Chapter One in class if time permits, or as a homework assignment and to respond to the following questions:

- Why is a Great White Pine called the Tree of Peace?
- Why is a Guswentah or Two-Row Wampum belt a symbol of peace?
- Why might Chris and Angie not be excited about the project that they have been assigned? Why do they

already seem more interested by the time they have heard the stories of the Tree of Peace and the Guswentah or Two-Row Wampum belt?

Have students submit the responses to their questions as an assessment for learning.

Part B

Discuss orally responses to the above questions in a large group setting.

Provide a brief explanation of the importance of “story” in Aboriginal cultures and note some similarities and differences between Aboriginal stories and European stories.

What other ways are there to learn other than textbooks? Brainstorm ideas orally (Possible answers: novels, oral stories, interviews, movies/films, audiotapes, computer, field trips, etc.)

Reflection Journal

Have students reflect on their preferred learning modes. Ask them to describe their preferred ways of learning and explain why.

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Beaver Dams

(Source: http://canadachannel.ca/HCOJR/index.php/E_The_War_of_1812)

THE BATTLE OF BEAVER DAMS

Materials Required

For the Teacher:

- Chart paper
- Blackline Master #3 Rubric: Summarizing Information/ Responding to Questions in Writing
- Computer Lab (Optional)
- Blackline Master #4 Rubric: Oral Participation in Class/ Group Discussions

For Students:

- Map of Mohawk Communities in 1812 (Example: www.peace4turtleisland.org/pages/mohawkmap.htm)
- Blackline Master #2 Newspaper Article/News Report Outline

Teaching/Learning Strategies

Begin with a general discussion about place and what that means e.g., what's your favourite place? What makes it special?

Introduce the idea of different kinds of places (e.g., sacred places, public places, favourite places).

Ask students to name a sacred place, as well as various other kinds of "places."

Introduce the term "significant" i.e., what makes a place important or special? We call this "significant."

Ask students to recall why Chris' grandfather had taken them to the site of the Battle of Beaver Dams i.e., Why were they surprised when they got there? What indication, if any, was there that this place had any "significance" of any kind?

Explore in more depth what is meant by "significance" and "historical significance." Have students share ideas orally.

Construct a definition for "significance" and for "historical significance." Ask students to provide examples of places they have visited and think have significance of some kind? What made them think it was "significant?"

Brainstorm and record on chart paper examples of how significance is marked in various places. (Possible answers: museum, plaque, monument with inscription, "park", mural, tour, brochure, active caretakers, tour guides, tombstones, etc.)

Pose a question to students: "How can we find out the significance of historic sites?" Brainstorm some sources of information (e.g., books, internet sites, etc.). Record only what students generate as an assessment for learning. The teacher may wish to prompt students with a couple of questions for the purpose of adding suggestions to the list e.g., when you visit a historic site how can you learn about what happened there? Record suggestions on chart paper and add to the list as new sources are revealed throughout the year.

What do Chris and Angie find at the site of the Battle of Beaver Dams? (A quiet tranquil scene.)

What is currently marking the Battle of Beaver Dams site?

(Teachers may ask students to find out in a dedicated computer lab lesson or do a walkthrough using a screen or create a bulletin board display or a handout of the historical plaque and/or image of site and monument.

Ask students to imagine that they are reporters and have witnessed the Battle of Beaver Dams. They must now write an article for the local newspaper. What would they include? (Who, Why? Where? When? What?) Assign as homework. Students will need to reread the chapter and record responses on Blackline Master #2 Newspaper Article/News Report Outline. Students submit their work to the teacher as assessment for learning.

Literacy Extension

Have students read the chapter orally as a script (as John, Chris, or Angie).

MOHAWK PERSPECTIVES ON THE BATTLE OF BEAVER DAMS

Materials Required

For the Teacher:

- Chart paper
- Graphic novel, *The Ruptured Sky*
- Map of Mohawk Communities in 1812
- Blackline Master #5 Rubric: Writing: Paragraphs/ Short Text Descriptions
- Blackline Master #3 Summarizing Information/ Responding to Questions in Writing

For Students:

- Paper for thumbnail sketches and taking notes

Teaching/Learning Strategies

Part A

- Why do you think Laura Secord became a heroine, but the Indian scout who accompanied her is only ever referred to as the "Indian scout?"
- Who were the Mohawks who participated in the battle? Locate the Mohawk communities on a map.
- Suppose you were one of the Mohawks. How might you have told the story differently?

When we see things differently we call this perspective; perspective is affected by many things.

In order to help students understand perspective in a more concrete way, teachers may ask them to look at a picture and respond independently to what they see or place something in the middle of the class and ask students to describe what they see. Why do students sometimes see different things? Why do students who've experienced



Plaque marking the Battle of Beaver Dams, Thorold, Ontario.
(Source: Parks Canada Agency / Agence Parcs Canada, 1989.
www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/image-image.aspx?id=14602#i1)



Battle of Beaver Dams Park in Thorold, Ontario.
(Source: <http://war1812.tripod.com/bdparc.html>)



Mohawk Communities

(Source: www.peace4turtleisland.org/pages/mohawkmap.htm.)

conflict and asked an adult for help, describe what happened differently?

- How can we find out more about the Mohawks who participated in this battle and the War of 1812 to hear their side of the story?

Look at the map of Mohawk communities in 1812. Highlight the names and locations. The teacher may wish to give a brief description of each community orally.

Part B (Optional)

Finding out more about the Mohawks who participated in the Battle of Beaver Dams

Teachers may wish to do this in a computer lab, if available. Ask students to read the suggested/other websites (good partner activity).

Kahnawake (also known as Caughnawaga)
www.kahnawake.com/community/history.asp

Kanestake
www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kanesatake,_Quebec

Akwesasne
www.akwesasne.ca/history.html

Students can take notes summarizing the key information about each community or read and report orally. The teacher may also project the website onto a screen and use a guided reading approach to read the websites and respond orally to questions.

The above can also be done in small groups with each group reporting on what they have learned. One group researches Kahnawake, one group Kanestake, one Akwesasne, one group Six Nations of the Grand River, and another group Mississaugas and Ojibwe.

Discussion Questions

- Who was Captain Dominique Ducharme? (Métis)
- Why would Mohawk people fight in the War of 1812?

The teacher may wish to summarize some key points of information as a collective/class record/reference point e.g., Mohawks had signed treaties with the Crown and they were bound in honour by the Wampum belt.

- How were certain stereotypical beliefs about Mohawk warriors used to instill fear in the Americans?

Ask students whether they think that people still have those stereotypical attitudes and beliefs about Mohawk warriors today. Give one or two examples and discuss.

Ask students to write a paragraph thumbnail on Mohawk Warriors as Peacekeepers or a thumbnail sketch of Captain Dominique Ducharme. Refer to Blackline Master #5 Rubric: Writing Paragraphs/Short Text Descriptions to assess student work.

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In today's digital golden age, the Internet has become the main way many of us communicate, learn, conduct research, and even shop for groceries. Given all the different social media platforms, there are even more avenues of open communication between anyone who has access to the Internet, including those who might be malicious. That's not to say we should avoid the Internet, but be aware of with whom we are interacting and what information we tag or share. Below are several websites that teach and promote cyber safety to children, parents, and educators.

Cybersmart

cybersmart.gov.au

Designed by the Australian government to support and encourage participation in the digital economy, Cybersmart is a program that provides information that educates children to be safe online. The website is geared towards kids and teens, parents, educators, and other teaching staff. The website includes free educational resources on topics such as, safety tips, cyber bullying, inappropriate or offensive content, privacy, security, unwanted contacts, and 'sexting.' There are fun games and resources broken down by age group: young kids, kids, and teens as well as a section specific to parents and schools.

Cyber safety tips from the Government of Canada

healthycanadians.gc.ca/kids-enfants/safety-internet-secure/index-eng.php
and www.getcybersafe.gc.ca

To ensure you're safe on the Internet, you must stay aware. These government websites offer advice for online safety including articles on important safety rules to share with kids, what to watch out for while online, photo sharing, webcams, and online gaming. Other topics on this site include signs that a child or teen may be experiencing problems online such as bullying or exploitation.

FBI Cyber Surf Islands

sos.fbi.gov

In this game created by the FBI, students travel to distant islands and learn about Internet safety. From a tropical island to a volcanic one, the game offers different destinations for each grade level beginning from Grade 3 to Grade 8. Once on the island, students visit different areas where they will complete mini games such as word searches for youngsters, to a more challenging one where they operate a wind mill whose blades contain important safety words. After students complete the mini games, they will take an examination to test their knowledge. With great graphics and an educational component, this fun site is a valuable resource for Internet safety.

Media Smarts

mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/educational-games

Media Smarts, Canada's Centre for Digital and Media Literacy, offers free online games to introduce kids to important issues in media and digital literacy. One of the games is called "How cyber-savvy are you?", a quiz that tests kids' knowledge about online security risks they may face each day. The site uses relatable scenarios such as receiving an email from your favourite online music store offering you a special deal on your favourite band's latest album... what do you do? Once the 11-question quiz is complete, the correct answers are shown with expanded tips on staying cyber safe. Other games include a digital literacy tutorial for secondary students, a tutorial for basic Internet literacy for students in Grades 4-8, as well as two fun online privacy games aimed at children aged 10 and under using pigs and pirates as themes.



Photo credit: Erin Van Stone, Sangster Elementary School

Where the Wild Things Are — Outside Your Classroom

By Martha Beach

The mid-December sun is peeking from behind the clouds and a cold breeze is blowing across the open soccer field. A line of grade two students, dressed in puffy coats, colourful hats and mitts, and carrying clipboards, skip along behind their teacher. They are heading to the back corner of the schoolyard, where a carefully formed semi-circle of large, white, flat stones sits surrounded by a half-dozen young trees, leafless for the approaching winter months. The teacher stops, facing the rocks. Students take a seat on the stones and hold their clipboards on their laps. The teacher has come prepared with a sack of supplies for a science experiment, some discussion questions, and of course his own set of warm mitts, hat, and coat.

This outdoor classroom is less than two years old, and it is the simplest form of an outdoor learning space. Outdoor learning is a growing trend in Canada. It has been building momentum since the 1990s and accelerated in the 2000s. Taking the cue from countries like Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and the United Kingdom, schools across Canada are converting their traditional, barren, concrete school yards into planned outdoor learning areas with shaded groves, greenhouses, and educational gardens. These spaces boast a multitude of physical and mental benefits that touch on everything from mental acuity and improved social behaviour, to physical fitness and higher energy.

An outdoor classroom is an educational facility and study area made of natural elements. All subjects and curricula can be taught in every season and to any age group, though younger classes, kindergarten to grade four, are more apt to use the areas. While a study by TD Friends of the Environment found, that 80 per cent of Canadian parents have had a “green” conversation with their kids in the last year, children spend an average of almost eight hours a day in front of a screen. That number has jumped by more than one hour in the past two years. Pair that development with rising childhood obesity rates and the need to get outdoors is overwhelming.

Inside the four walls there is one teacher and 30 kids for six hours a day, five days a week, 10 months of the year. Teaching outdoors seems like an obvious next step, especially when kids learn best by doing. “Learning outside

is a tangible opportunity,” says Cam Collyer, Program Director at Evergreen, a national not-for-profit that inspires action to green cities. “We’re all stimulated by nature; our body and mind are engaged. When the body comes alive with senses it stimulates your brain to learn and explore.” Collyer oversees the environmental organization’s work to create better outdoor spaces at schools across Canada. Over the past 20 years, 35,000 schools have envisioned their dream yards, and Evergreen has supplied the expertise to help them reach their goals.

“When you take kids outside, everyone is so energized,” says Carol Durnford, vice-principal at Monsignor Fee Otterson in Edmonton. “They go back into the school more invigorated and focused and ready to learn.” Physical movement increases blood flow to the brain. Furthermore, outdoor space allows for a deeper connection to education. “Outdoor learning is ongoing, versus a one-time field trip,” Durnford points out. Especially with science, it’s a real thing. “They can connect to the nature around them and it is a deeper learning experience.” Christine Merin, vice-principal at Mitchell Elementary in British Columbia, agrees. “It’s about living the experiences together. A teacher should attempt to creatively integrate the curriculum of math, science, or poetry into that experience.”

Part of creating a great outdoor space is about tailoring curriculum, and part is about landscape design. “It has to be built to handle the pummeling of children,” says Collyer. “It’s got to have good bones—those bones are trees.” In a typical



WHAT CAN BE TAUGHT OUTSIDE?

Almost any lesson can be taken outside. Science is the easiest. Math, poetry, drama, history, and language are all possible. Take a walk on a foggy day, and then write a poem about fog. Teach a lesson about the agriculture of Canada's first settlers, while planting your own squash seeds.

See the following tips below:

1. Whenever possible, have students work in small groups. That way, 30 kids aren't clamoring to look at the same cocoon or plant the same raspberry bush.

2. Spend any free-play time taking note of what the kids are interested in outside, you can probably incorporate it into a lesson later.

GARDENS ARE AN EASY AND COST-EFFECTIVE WAY TO ALTER AN OUTDOOR SPACE.

Many of these elements (tools, plants, seeds) can be donated.

Garden beds (\$300)
Shed (\$1,000)
Tools (\$400)
Seeds (\$50)

3. Have students help with design ideas, brainstorming, and research. If they help create the space, they will feel more responsibility towards caring for it.

4. Even natural elements should be size-appropriate for small children. Knowing you had them in mind, they will respond by wanting to participate and learn.

5. Add chalkboards to the inside of the shed doors so when they're open there is a place to write.

asphalt or concrete play yard, there is what Collyer refers to as "lollipop trees"; they stand alone, far from each other. "Lollipop trees get loved to death," Collyer says. Kids adore playing around them, near them, and on them. The ground surrounding the base becomes so compacted that rainwater is not able to reach the roots. The key is to have several groupings of trees, or "pockets of shade," and to protect the roots and trunk with a cage until they are big enough to survive. From there, layering on other elements—gardens, weather stations, seating, tool sheds, green houses—will only improve the yard.

There are many layers that help a child play or learn. A natural environment contains a great balance of spaces to learn and play mixed with things they can alter, touch, and manipulate. "We aren't interested in creating a whole forest, we're interested in creating a balance," Collyer says.

But getting outside also needs to balance with the rest of the school day. Going outdoors should be part of the natural flow of the school: "It's not a field trip outside," Collyer says. "It's not either-or, outdoor or indoor, it's the knitting of both." At Monsignor Fee Otter, students have a strong indoor-outdoor connection. "We gather data outside, review and organize it indoors, go back out to collect samples or get a different view, then go back in to discuss," says Durnford.

That outdoor connection to learning really starts with educators who want to take a lesson out to the field. But it's not easy at first. It may require a bit of tweaking to the regular lesson plan in order to follow the curriculum. Having support and resources for educators is important. Different organizations across Canada offer resources and workshops to help teachers learn the tips and tricks of taking classes outdoors.

The more professional development that lends itself to this type of education, the more useful the outdoors will become. "It can be total chaos if you don't set the stage," says Christine Marin, vice-principal at Mitchell Elementary in Richmond, B.C. "If you set the ground rules, once they are outside of those four walls they will be working cooperatively," Merin says. An engaged student is less likely to bother and bully their peers, so outdoor classes can help alter social behaviour.

Outside, social relationships shift a little. Students tend to open up, share and learn more. "The single biggest impact of learning outside is the expression of care," Collyer says. For starters, they learn about and care for the environment. "The kids are so respectful of their space," says Marin. Her students at Mitchell Elementary had a lot of input on their flower and vegetable gardens. When kids have a chance to give input and take care of the space themselves, they have a much deeper connection, she says. "They definitely feel responsibility towards the environment," Durnford agrees.

Students tend to also feel more responsibility to one another, finds Lisa Lockerbie, teacher at Sangster Elementary School's Nature Kindergarten (or Nature K for short) in Colwood, B.C., now in its second pilot year. "They take on the role of being care-taker when we're outside. They come together as a community," she says. "If someone falls, they help them up. If someone is forgetting the rules, the others remind them," Lockerbie says.

That altered social dynamic when learning outside is a huge part of outdoor education, but not just for school children. Programs like Wendigo Lake Expeditions' Project D.A.R.E. (Development through Adventure, Responsibility, and Education) in South River, Ontario, use the power of experiential outdoor education to enhance their therapy results. Now in its 40th year, D.A.R.E. is for at-risk youth who have exhausted all of the options in their community.

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"We are the last option in many cases," says Jeremie Carreau, a member of the leadership team. "Parents are at their wits ends but they don't want to give them up to the Children's Aid Society." Every part of the sometimes year-long

That outdoor connection to learning really starts with educators who want to take a lesson out to the field.

program is intended to help them re-establish themselves. "We use the outdoors—expeditions, rope courses, hikes—to teach them life skills," Carreau says. Being out in the forest for many months forces the inner city kids outside of their comfort zone. "It's about them thriving in a new environment and being courageous and pushing themselves to succeed. We are very intentional in how we use the outdoors to help youth explore their base emotions and how to handle them in different ways," says Carreau.

A strong base of studies, research and first-hand experiences of educators and students support the mountain of benefits, but an outdoor classroom doesn't grow overnight. A great schoolyard is built up bit-by-bit, flowerbed-by-flowerbed, and a few hundred dollars at a time. "The number one thing our kids are learning is patience," says Marin. She has a small fund but a big dream for the schoolyard at Mitchell Elementary. They have been working toward their goal for two years. Evergreen's own outdoor children's space at Brick Works has been in the works for three years, and they aren't done yet. But starting small is the best way to do it. "There is a lot to be seen in the smallest patch of grass," says Durnford.

In Canada, we may be playing catch-up to some European countries (Coombes Primary School in Britain has been teaching outdoor classes for 40 years to infants and small children), but we now recognize the importance of incorporating the natural world into our schools. Evergreen is just one organization, and Collyer is just one enthusiastic supporter, working towards better outdoor environments. "Schools have a huge role," Collyer says. "But we all need to be part of getting kids physically active and learning well."

Martha Beach is a recent graduate of Ryerson University's journalism program. Currently, she is a freelance writer and factchecker in Toronto.

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The Search for the Right Picture Book

By Paul Condello

I avidly recall a second grade class that would excitedly huddle around my rocking chair for story time. Students scrambled around sliding chairs to the carpet where I read heartwarming and sometimes zany tales. They reminded me that story time was counted among the most meaningful and cherished moments of a child's day. Story time is a child's portal into endless worlds, kingdoms, and dimensions. Children learn by, grow from, and discover the ways of the world through the literature a teacher brings into the classroom. Because story time is both a vital and valued experience in a young child's day, educators are called to wisely deliberate over the literature they read to their students.

One important factor in considering the purchase of a picture book, or borrowing one from the library, is the book's message. Many children's books have a moral, such as the importance of friendship or respect. Students learn important values about caring, sharing, and responsibility from books, and educators should try to choose literature that strongly emphasizes at least one or more values. Chris Van Allsburg's *The Polar Express*, for example, delivers a life lesson about the power of believing. Children glow in anticipation when teachers open the cover of this breathtaking and inspiring tale. I was also enchanted by this masterful and beautiful story as a child, and now recognize it among the works of fiction that built my love for literature and learning.

Another important element to consider when selecting a book is its academic value. Many picture books deliver fascinating information, the readers and listeners realize they are learning. For example, a group of children will finish a spooky tale about bats without recognizing at first that they have learned several important zoological facts about the habits of nocturnal creatures. Or, after reading a story about trains, children will discover what a conductor does.

The artwork is also an essential element of a picture book. A captivating story should be supported by equally

creative images. Warm, imaginative illustrations resonate with young audiences and hold their attention. They say a picture is worth a thousand words and when a book is filled with beautiful drawings, the story transcends language and reading capabilities, making it accessible to all.

Educators can also consider the illustrative and literary merit of a book by focusing their search on titles that have received literary awards. Mordicai Gerstein's *The Man Who Walked Between The Towers* has received the esteemed Caldecott Medal that is presented to only one picture book each year. Another annual award many educators will recognize is the Newbery Medal, which awards an author for the most distinguished contribution to American children's literature. Accolades are often trustworthy guideposts in the search for the next story time tale.



Whether perusing award-winning books or not-yet-discovered gems, always consider stories featuring endearing characters. A child often establishes a connection with a book through a character with whom they can identify or admire. Characters should be reflective of the struggles, joys, and aspirations that children experience in their own lives. Skilled authors and illustrators can craft characters that touch readers' hearts with their own. Children should discover an answer to their hopes and questions in a compelling storybook character. Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer in Rick Bunsen's children's book, features a beloved character loved by children around the world.

Through the critical evaluation of picture books, educators are able to introduce their classes to reading materials that are beneficial for moral and educational growth. Picture books inspire children to greatness, teach them kindness, enthrall their imaginations, and instruct them about the world. Selecting the right book for a classroom may be a weighty and critical task for an educator but can be very rewarding when you see the students' faces light up as they gather around for story time.

Paul Condello is a K-8 certified public school teacher based in the United States.



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