

Balancing the Boreal: Indigenous Traditional Use & Boreal Forest Management Lesson Kit

“BALANCING THE BOREAL” VIDEO

OVERVIEW:

The “Balancing the Boreal” video introduces the topic of Indigenous peoples’ traditional use in the boreal forest and sustainable forest management. A discussion guide is included with the video to help facilitate conversations in the classroom.

VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE:

The following discussion guide may be used by the instructor to complete this section of the lesson. Instructors are encouraged to supplement this discussion guide by inviting professional foresters, Indigenous traditional land use technicians, land users and/or Elders to participate in the lesson.

1. What is Indigenous traditional use?

Broadly, traditional use can be defined as the practicing of a way of life that takes a holistic approach to utilizing the forest land base and its many resources for the teaching of cultural practices, languages, spiritual learnings, as well as for the acts of hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering. Traditional use is based on being in harmony with the land, and comprises activities that are practiced for subsistence, including food, shelter and clothing, spiritual guidance, medicinal healing and celebration. The practice of Indigenous peoples’ traditional uses is learned over generations and includes knowledge and cultural protocols that are passed down from Elders, knowledge holders and traditional land users.

Emphasis should be placed on traditional use as connected to historical, traditional and contemporary Indigenous cultures and ways of life. Students may be asked to reflect on their cultures, traditions and family knowledge.

2. What are some traditional resources located in the boreal forest?

- Large game, such as elk, deer, caribou and moose
- Fur bearing animals, such as rabbits, wolves and lynx
- Fish, such as arctic grayling, whitefish and pickerel
- Trees, such as birch, aspen and spruce
- Plants, such as willow, berries, medicinal plants
- Water

Emphasis should be placed on the fact that the boreal forest provided many resources used by Indigenous peoples for subsistence, spirituality, language, culture, knowledge and the development of ways of life.

3. Discuss the importance of traditional resources (big game, furbearers, fish and plants) to Indigenous people and communities. What role did these resources play in daily life?

The boreal forest and its resources provided food, clothing and shelter for Indigenous communities, as well as for the development of economies, art and spiritual life. Additionally, in addition to providing for

sustenance, and cultural and spiritual practices, the boreal forest's vast resources were also important sources of knowledge for Indigenous peoples about how to use these resources, their interconnectedness through ecosystems and sustainability.

Emphasis should be placed on providing for not only basic, long term survival needs, but also that the boreal forest provided for the development of culture, language, spirituality and Indigenous identities. The discussion should also emphasize the development of knowledge by Indigenous peoples over time about the boreal forest ecosystems, science and sustainable use. Students may be asked how they or their households use the forest's resources for their daily lives.

4. Discuss the importance of the forest to Indigenous communities today. Discuss why the forest is important to you.

The boreal forest is an integral part of Indigenous peoples, communities and cultures. The forest and its vast resources provide shelter, food, spirituality, ceremony, medicines, language and ways of life. From an Indigenous perspective, the boreal forest is rooted in culture, and every part of it has life and spirit – the forest is a part of who they are as Indigenous peoples.

For Indigenous communities, the boreal forest is a tool that provides knowledge about how trees, animals, birds, insects, plants, water, soil and air interact over time and geography, and how these complex ecosystems impact the inhabitants of the land. This cultural relationship to the boreal forest has taught Indigenous peoples how to hunt, trap, fish, gather, conduct spiritual practices and heal – or utilize the boreal forest's resources – in a way that sustains the forest, as well as the identity of those Indigenous peoples who call the forest home.

Emphasis should be placed on the connection of the forest to the culture of Indigenous communities. Students should discuss how the forest may be important to them as individuals, their families, their communities and/or society at large.

5. Discuss the foundations for inclusion of Indigenous traditional uses within sustainable forest management.

Not only is protecting Indigenous traditional use within sustainable forest management required by law and government legislation, regulations and policies that govern natural resource development, but balancing economic, environmental, social and cultural values is a key principle of the practice of sustainable forest management.

Emphasis should be placed on the concept of Indigenous traditional, its connection to treaty and Aboriginal rights and how governments have enacted legislation and policies that require forest companies to address Indigenous rights and traditional uses in sustainable forest management planning. Students may also discuss the goals of sustainable forest management with respect to balancing different values, and the notion of corporate social responsibility. Students may compare and contrast these drivers.

6. Discuss the concept of consultation. Why is consultation important?

Consultation is a mechanism by which forest companies work with Indigenous communities to identify impacts to Indigenous rights and traditional uses that may arise from sustainable forest management planning. Identifying and mitigating these impacts is part of developing forest management plans.

The concept of consultation was articulated by the Supreme Court of Canada when it determined that the Crown has a legal duty or obligation to consult with Indigenous communities about the impacts of resource development activities on treaty and Aboriginal rights before decisions are made. The goal of consultation is to not only identify the potential impacts to Indigenous rights, but to also avoid, mitigate or accommodate these potential impacts. Through policy and legislation, governments like the Province of Alberta have delegated consultation to resource development companies.

Consultation is important because it is a legal tool for Indigenous perspectives and concerns to be heard and addressed during the natural resource development decision-making process.

Emphasis should be placed on the legal origins of consultation and its connection to the protection of Indigenous rights and values within sustainable forest management planning.

7. Is it important to preserve traditional cultures in contemporary society?

There is no right or wrong answer. Students should be encouraged to discuss their viewpoints on preserving traditional cultures in contemporary society from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders.

8. Why is it important to preserve Indigenous cultures and traditional uses of the boreal forest?

The boreal forest is an integral part of Indigenous peoples, communities and cultures. The forest and its vast resources provide shelter, food, spirituality, ceremony, medicines, language and ways of life. From an Indigenous perspective, the boreal forest is rooted in culture, and every part of it has life and spirit – the forest is a part of who they are as Indigenous peoples.

Because many Indigenous cultures are connected to the forest, protecting those uses is of significant importance from the standpoint of preserving their cultures for generations to come.

9. What is the role of forest companies in the preservation of traditional resources in the forest?

Forest companies can play an important role in preserving traditional resources in the boreal forest. Through consultation, forest managers can learn about the resources that are important to Indigenous communities and protect them by making changes to their forest management plans. These changes could include placing tree buffers around cultural sites, slowing the pace of timber harvesting, altering the footprint of cutblocks, shifting the timing of timber harvesting activities, etc.

10. Should resource development companies, including forest companies, address Indigenous interests in land management activities? Discuss the economic and social aspects.

Forest companies are required by law in Alberta to consult with Indigenous communities with respect to their planned forest management activities. This is true for other resource development sectors as well. Emphasis should be placed on considering the economic, environmental, social and cultural aspects of these requirements from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders.

- 11. Consider the perspectives of Indigenous communities, governments, resource development companies and other communities. How are they different? How are they the same?**

There is no right or wrong answer. Students should be encouraged to discuss their viewpoints on this question from the perspectives of various stakeholders.

- 12. Is it possible to incorporate different perspectives in the management of the boreal forest? What are the benefits? What are the costs?**

Sustainable forest management is based on the principles of balancing economic, environmental, social and cultural factors; however, there are both benefits and costs created when working to achieve balance.

Students should be encouraged to discuss their viewpoints on this question from the perspectives of various stakeholders.

- 13. Discuss the different ways in which we see the forest? How do you use the forest? How do other people you know use the forest?**

There is no right or wrong answer. Students should be encouraged to discuss their viewpoints on this question from the perspectives of various stakeholders and consider how the forest may be important to them as individuals, their families, their communities and/or society at large.

- 14. Discuss challenges with respect to balancing various values in boreal forest management, including social, cultural, economic and environmental values. Use your own experiences trying to balance different the perspectives of different stakeholders.**

There is no right or wrong answer. Students should be encouraged to discuss their viewpoints on this question from the perspectives of various stakeholders and consider an example from their own experience of when they had to balance different needs to achieve a goal.