

Bringing Métis Children's Literature to Life—Relatives with Roots

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Overview of Story: *Relatives With Roots: A Story About Métis Women's Connection to the Land* is about a Métis grandmother who takes her granddaughter out into the bush to teach her how to pick traditional medicines. As the granddaughter learns the traditional beliefs and stories about how the Métis people use the plants for food and medicine, she feels happy to be Métis with access to such wonderful cultural knowledge. This charming and vibrant book introduces young readers to key concepts in the traditional Métis worldview while focusing on the special relationship between a young Métis girl and her grandmother.

Themes in this book:

- Mentorship of grandparent
- Flora/Fauna—medicines, compatible growing
- Cultural practices/smudging/tobacco offering
- Making baskets
- Food: Tea/rose hips
- Traditional “how things came to be” stories
- Ways of teaching (Wisakechak stories), showing how, Look/Listen/Learn philosophy
- Drum/Singing

Possible Curriculum connections:

Language Arts

- Listen, comprehend, and respond

Science

- Biomes
- Plants—interdependence
- Seasons

Arts Education

- Jewelry (wolf willow)

Social Studies

- Worldview and Indigenous knowledge
- Relationship with land
- Cultural diversity and traditions
- Cultural change over time

Health/Physical Education

- Vitamins
- Values: respect, generosity, Mother Earth, sharing, caring, Circle of Life
- Medicines
- Healthy body and mind



Before Reading: Anticipation/Reaction Guide

Pass out the anticipation/reaction sheet. Have the students place true or false in the “before reading” column. Ask the students to listen carefully during reading to see if their prediction was correct (You can add or delete sentences depending on the grade level of your students).

Before Reading (T or F)	Relatives with Roots	After Reading (T or F)
	1. Medicines can be picked in the bush.	
	2. Birch sap comes from a poplar tree.	
	3. Kinnikinnick is traditional tobacco.	
	4. Rose hips give you an itchy bum.	
	5. Muskeg Tea is made from rose hips.	

During Reading: While reading stop from time to time and have students predict, connect or discuss by turning and talking to a partner.

Discuss: How are we “dependent on everything else in creation”?

Connect: What are you thankful for in your life?

Predict: What kind of allergic reactions could one get from eating rose hips?

After Reading: Have students return to the Anticipation/Reaction Guide and place a true or false in the “After Reading” column. Gather as a large group and discuss/prove your point by finding the page where it states that fact.

Everything is connected Lesson:

Collect pictures of animals and plants indigenous to Saskatchewan or to your area. (Old calendars and/or pictures off the Internet will work). Discuss how everything on Mother Earth is connected in some way or has similarities. E.g.: A beaver swims in the water and a duck swims in the water. They are similar in that they both rely on water. A frog hatches from an egg and a robin hatches from an egg, etc.

1. Sit all students in a circle. Give each student a picture of an animal (laminated the picture cards and attach a string. Place over head (like a necklace) so each child's hands are free to hold the string. Talk about each animal as you pass out the cards. (The students could have researched an animal beforehand so he/she knows something about them).
2. Use a ball of wool or string (large cord will work best): Have students roll the ball to another person while stating how their picture is similar or connected to the other person's picture. Hold onto the end of the cord and do not let go until the activity is completely done. Each person must roll to someone else while still holding onto their end of the cord. After completing this activity and everyone has had at least one turn, you will see how everything is connected and makes a web.
3. After activity: Have students take their picture card and make a list or draw a web of all other animals and plants connected to theirs in some way.
4. Connect this to the worldview belief that all creatures and plants have purpose and are connected. That is why we must respect every living creature and plant on this earth. We are all connected and need each other!



Links for Animals and Plants of Saskatchewan:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fauna_of_Saskatchewan

<http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/kids/animal-facts/animals.asp?region=sask>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flora_of_Saskatchewan

http://northernbushcraft.com/guide.php?ctgy=edible_plants®ion=sk

<http://www.cmste.uregina.ca/editable/FloraFauna/SaskFandF.html>

Additional Post-Reading Lessons for *Relatives With Roots*:

Conceptual Word Sort Lesson:

1. In the large group use large cards with words written on them from the story (assists comprehension) such as: willow, supplies, birchbark, basket, medicine, healthy, exquisite, cleanse, kinnickinnick, tobacco, offering, harmony, balance, fungus, wisdom, muskeg tea, rose hips, hazelnuts, cranberries, rhythm, buffaloberry, seeds, soothing, nutritious, rosary, wolf willow, traditional, Mother Earth, gifts, harvested, shrubby, prayer, and sharing.
2. Teacher models a conceptual sort (E.g.: on the YES side we put hazelnuts, cranberries, rose hips, cranberries, and buffaloberry, and put all other words on the NO side. Have the students try and determine why you put that collection of words together. They can't shout out the category until you have finished the sort. **Sort and classify** the words a couple more times to model how it is done. Another example might be: exquisite, soothing, nutritious, healthy (words to describe the medicines), etc.
3. Pass students out a list of the same words. Have them cut them apart and do their own sorts (maybe in pairs first). Have other students go around and guess the sorts.
4. Once several sorts have been done, determine which sorts you want to record. This will assist in developing comprehension.



birchbark	basket	medicine
healthy	exquisite	cleanse
kinnickinick	tobacco	offering
harmony	balance	muskeg tea
rose hips	hazelnuts	cranberries
rhythm	buffaloberry	seeds



soothing	nutritious	rosary
wolf willow	traditional	Mother Earth
gifts	harvest	shrubby
prayer	sharing	willow

