

APPENDIX F:

Traditional Knowledge and Gratitude Walk

Traditional Knowledge refers to the evolving knowledge of the local environment acquired by Indigenous Peoples over hundreds or thousands of years through their unbroken relationship with their territories. Handed down through generations, Traditional Knowledge encompasses the worldview of Indigenous Peoples, which includes ecology, spirituality, human and animal relationships, and more.

While Indigenous Nations across North America differ from one another in many ways, one commonality that they share is considering other beings besides humans to be our relatives in the great web of life. Having a good relationship with our relatives in the natural world means respecting and honoring all beings. By giving thanks to them, we can develop relationships of reciprocity, balance, and sharing, in which the needs of one being are not more important than those of another.

Use this Gratitude Walk to help children reflect on who and what is alive in the natural world, and to share their greetings to other beings through giving thanks.

Gratitude Walk

Find a park, forest, or other nature area where you can go for a walk with your group. Begin your walk by modeling a slow pace and quiet mind, taking time to notice all the life around you. Different cultures have different ways of thinking about what is and is not “alive.” In many Indigenous understandings of the world, all of the natural world is alive.

Invite children to point out as many living beings as they can. Look for:

- Four-legged beings (squirrels, chipmunks, deer)
- Flyers (birds, insects)
- Swimmers (fish, some birds)
- Crawlers (bugs)
- All the different trees
- Flowers, mosses, and other plants
- Soil
- The weather (wind, sun, clouds, rain)
- Two-legged beings (people are part of the environment too!)

Talk about how all of these living beings are understood by Indigenous Peoples to be relatives, not just to each other but also to humans. They are our family! It is our responsibility to take care of them. Each of these beings has a role in the great web of life.

If you don't know what some of the beings are called, try to describe them based on what they look like, how they move, or how they make you feel. Encourage children to use their senses (seeing, hearing, touching, and smelling) to describe them.

As you notice each of these living beings, invite children to thank them out loud. Think about the role that each being has in the web of life. Do not disturb any of the beings around you; simply observe them, reflect on who they are, and thank them.