**Activity 6**

**Ethnobotany**

***Any outside activities should be considered carefully with the safety and well-being of participants in mind,***

***and recognizing any related First Nations’ directives about staying at home***.

This activity and the guiding questions are based on the FNESC resource “Science First Peoples Teachers Resource Guide <http://www.fnesc.ca/sciencetrg/> and the lesson plans offered at the BC Royal Museum <https://learning.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Native-Plants-Lessn-Plan.pdf>

**Plant based inquiry**

*“Traditional Ecological Knowledge about the diverse plants growing in their territories is key to the sense of place for First Peoples. When First Peoples go out on the land to pick berries, to dig bitterroot, to gather stinging nettle, bark or grasses, it provides a connection with the land and with the ancestors. This activity can teach students of all ages a connection with the land, and the traditional knowledge connected with the land.”*

If it is possible to do so safely, go for a walk in your neighbourhood, or have a parent take you out in the territory. Pay particular attention to the plants you see. Try to choose one specific plant that you find most interesting, and start investigating it, thinking about the following questions.

* What is the plant? What is its name? What is its traditional name?
* Is this plant used for food or for shelter? Or for making materials out of it? What do you know about this plant?
* If you can take a picture, make a sketch based on the photo. If appropriate and only if you can respectfully harvest a sample, take it home and draw your specimen.
* Can you find out what this plant is called in your language? Can you find out more about its traditional uses and how these uses are spoken about in your language? You might begin investigating this by looking it up at FirstVoices.com, or you might also contact an Elder or Knowledge keeper by phone or email to answer your questions. Ideas for closer investigation using the example of Salmonberry are below. You could think about:
  + What do we call Salmonberry in our language?
  + When are Salmonberries harvested? What do we call that season in our language?
  + Do I have a favorite traditional dish that includes Salmonberry? What is it called?
  + Are other parts of the Salmonberry plant used? What is the name of these parts in our langage (e.g. leaves, roots)
  + Where in our territory does Salmonberry grow? Does this place have a special name in our language?
  + Are there any traditional stories about salmonberries? Or songs?
  + How are the berries preserved?

**Extensions**

Students can choose a different plant each week and compile a personal ethnobotany guide to their immediate surroundings. The guide can include sketches, observations, language, and information about traditional stories, songs and uses.

Younger students can play Backyard Bingo while doing this activity:

<https://learning.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Backyard-Bingo-1.pdf>

For further reading, photos for plant identification, and activities, also look at this website at the Royal BC museum: <https://learning.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/pathways/native-plants-south-coast/>