

Saskatoon Berries

TEACHER RESOURCE BOOKLET



Secwepemc Cultural Education Society

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Prepared by Janice Dick Billy

Saskatoon Berries

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Saskatoon Berries

OVERVIEW

The survival of the Secwepemc people was dependent on the natural environment and the materials and resources available within it. The Secwepemc interacted with their physical environment to meet their basic needs - food, clothing, shelter, medicines, tools and implements. The Secwepemc respected and appreciated the land, water, air, plant and animal life. The Secwepemc took only what was needed for survival. Nothing was wasted. Thanks was given to the Great Spirit and to all the plants, animals and resources before and after they were used. The saskatoon tree and saskatoon berry are two examples of how the Secwepemc utilized the natural environment.

Funding for this project was provided by the
Aboriginal Education Branch, Ministry of Education &
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Teaching Suggestions

Lesson 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Brainstorm and cluster the topic "wild berry picking". Brainstorming may be done in small groups. Begin session by asking, "Have any of you ever picked wild berries?"

Other questions to ask:

What preparations did you make?

What kinds of berries did you pick?

Where did you go to pick the berries?

How did the berries taste?

What did you do with the berries?

Methods of preservation.

If no students have had experience relate to picking domestic fruit such as strawberries or apples.

If the session was done in small groups, join as a whole group to share and collaborate. Make one master list.

2. Tell students they are going to learn about saskatoon berry picking among the Secwepemc people.

Show the video, "The Saskatoon Berry".

The following questions may be used as a guide for discussion or the students may group to record their answers.

1. What are some things you observed in the video?
2. Compare your experience of berry picking to the one shown in the video. How was it different/similar?
3. In what ways did the Secwepemc prepare for berry picking?

How is it different/similar to your preparations?
4. How did the Secwepemc use the saskatoon berries long ago? Today?
5. What evidence did you see of the Secwepemc using the natural environment?

Lesson 2

1. Terms and concepts to develop: traditionally, hunters and gatherers, vegetation, harvested, elevation, deciduous.
2. Present the following information "Saskatoon Berry" to students. Students may be divided into groups of four and each take turns reading a section orally.

SASKATOON BERRY

The Secwepemc People traditionally are hunters and gatherers. All the plant foods they used were harvested from the vegetation in the area. The Secwepemc harvested many different types of wild roots, bulbs and berries for food. Saskatoon or service berries were the most important berries to the Secwepemc.

Habitat

The saskatoon tree can be found in dry wooded areas and in open slopes and hillsides in well-drained soil.

Description

The Saskatoon berry grows on a deciduous shrub between 3 to 23 feet high. Its bark is smooth and reddish to grey-black in colour. Its branches have round to oval shaped leaves. The leaves are bluish-green and generally sharp-toothed around the edge of the top half. The flowers, which usually bloom in April and May, are white with five long, narrow petals which form erect clusters. The berries usually ripen continually from late May to July, depending on the elevation and climate. The ripe berries are reddish-purple to dark blue and are often seedy. Some native people maintain there are up to eight different kinds of saskatoon berries. In the Chase area, two varieties are picked - speqpeq7i and stsaqwu.

Uses

The saskatoon berry was harvested in great quantities. It was eaten fresh and preserved for winter use.

The saskatoon tree had many other uses. The wood is hard, straight-grained and tough, making it an ideal material for arrow shafts. The branches could be made harder by heating it over a fire and it could be easily molded while still hot. Saskatoon wood was also used for making digging sticks, spear and harpoon shafts and other tool handles.

Secwepemc people also made basket frames and cross-pieces for canoes out of saskatoon wood. Green twigs from the saskatoon wood were used in the hot rock method of cooking. They were laid at the bottom of birch bark baskets to prevent the hot rocks from burning through the bark. These twigs were also used for lining steam cooking pits and as salmon spreaders for drying and cooking salmon.

The whole saskatoon plant - sticks, leaves and roots were boiled together to make a medicine for arthritis.

The berry used by itself, or mixed with alder bark, was used as a dye to colour hides.

Present Uses

Today saskatoon berries are picked and eaten fresh, canned or frozen. Some people preserve the berries by sun-drying. The berries may be boiled until they are soft and pulpy. The mixture can then be thickened with flour like a gravy and sweetened. This makes a delicious dessert.

3. Each group or individual student may work on the following activities:

List all the uses of the saskatoon tree.

- List all the uses and methods of preparation of the saskatoon berry. Recall those mentioned in the video, "The Saskatoon Berry".
- Illustrate the saskatoon tree - one showing the leaves and blossoms and one showing the leaves and berries.
- List as many other uses you can think of for dried saskatoons.
- List all the objects made from natural materials mentioned in the video "The Saskatoon Berry".
- List other wild plants (eg. mushrooms) you have gathered. How did you prepare/preserve them?
- Write a story or poem about your berry picking experience.
- Each group or individual may share their information with the total group.

N.B. The students may illustrate their information rather than making lists.

PROJECT SUGGESTIONS

1. View the video, "Birch Bark Baskets" by Mary Thomas. The Video is available for loan from the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society Library. Students could try making their own baskets out of paper. A pattern for a basket is available in the, "We Are the Shuswap" resource binder - S.D. #24 - Spring section.
2. Learn the poem "Blueberries" by Orin Cochrane. Students may try making up their own poems by using this pattern.
3. Recipes to try. Obtain some frozen or dried saskatoons. Use fresh if they are in season.

Likamin

Boil about 2 pounds of saskatoons (fresh, frozen or canned) until soft. Mix together 2 tablespoons of flour with about 1/2 cup water to make a fairly thin sauce. Add to the cooked berries. Cook until sauce thickens. Add 1/4 cup of sugar. Eat and enjoy.

Trail Mix

Mash jerky until soft. Mix in dried saskatoons. Use for food when going on a long hike.

Bannock with Saskatoons

In a large bowl combine:

4 cups flour

3 rounded teaspoons baking powder

1/2 teaspoon salt

Mix dry ingredients well. Cut 2 tablespoons fat into dry ingredients. Add about 1 cup dried or fresh saskatoons. Add a mixture of 3/4 cup milk and 3/4 cup water. Gently mix the ingredients to form a soft dough. Knead dough 8 to 10 times. Overworking the dough will make the bannock tough. Roll out dough on a lightly floured surface. Cut in squares. Bake in 425 degree oven for 20 to 25 minutes. When done, it will be golden brown in colour.

Campfire Method

Cut the bannock dough into strips about 1/4" thick and 1" wide and 4" long. Wind the dough, spirally, around a stick about 1/4" thick. Hold the stick about 8" from the fire. Rotate it slowly until the bannock is golden brown.

4. Role play the berry picking experience. One student could take the role of child, one of mother and one of grandmother. Children were allowed to pick, eat and play. Mother and grandmother worked very hard to pick many berries.
5. Research other wild berries harvested by Secwepemc people. Include: Habitat, description, uses, preparation, preservation, illustrations. Some suggestions: huckleberry, wild blueberry, raspberry or strawberry, black cap, chokecherry, soapallie (soap berry). Write a field guide for the class library.
6. Invite Native resource people to come in and talk about native foods. Resource people are listed in "We Are The Shuswap" resource binder.
7. Discuss survival in the forest. How would you survive if you were lost in the forest?

RESOURCES

1. Video "Birch Bark Baskets" by Mary Thomas. Available at the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society Library.
2. Video "The Saskatoon Berry"
3. "We Are The Shuswap" resource binder - S.D. #24 - Spring file.
4. Canned, fresh or frozen saskatoons.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Foods of the Shuswap - Shuswap Cultural Series Book 2 - Secwepemc Cultural Education Society.
2. Lak-La Hai-ee Shuswap Indian meaning "to tell". Presented by Ursula Surtees. Illustrated by Gwen Lamont. Published by Lamont-Surtees, April, 1974.
3. Plants in B.C. Indian Technology. Nancy Turner. B.C. Provincial Handbook #38.

OTHER RESOURCE MATERIALS

AUDIO VISUAL PRODUCTIONS

(resource booklets available)

- The Saskatoon Berry (7 min.)
- Smoking Salmon (16:30 min.)
- Spearfishing on the South Thompson (8:30 min.)
- Smoking Deer Meat (7:00 min.)

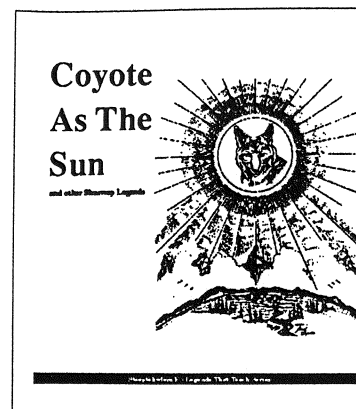
SHUSWAP COMMUNITY HANDBOOK

The "Shuswap Community Handbook," was developed to present information on the culture, history and contemporary lifestyle of Secwepemc people. It is intended that this manual will serve as background information and as a resource for teachers of Shuswap First Nations children.

SHUSWAP MAPS

A series of wall maps (30"x40") and small working maps (8 1/2"x 11") for students have been developed in the following areas:

- Shuswap Nation Fishery Management Plan
- Shuswap Traditional Place Names
- Residential Schools Attended by Shuswap People
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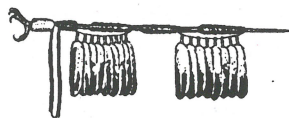
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Printed in U.S.A.



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