

QUEERING Outdoor Education



During the month of May 2025, a series of collaborations on QUEERING Outdoor Education took place. Together, the lessons from this project invite teachers across the district to find ways to incorporate, integrate and collaborate with nature as a teacher for biodiversity, supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion. Thanks to the collaborators: Glen Hansman, Jody Polukoshko, Judah Kong, Abby Palmer, Chantelle Appleby and Leslie Hunt for your commitment to finding connections with SOGI inclusion. The lessons are meant for accessible, school-based learning. The contributing teachers focused on lesson ideas connected to curricular Big Ideas, SOGI and every day lesson ideas. Two resource kits (backpacks) were also created to support QUEERING Outdoor Education. The resource kits will become available in the Fall of 2025.

Project: Nature is the ultimate teacher, but we must use all of our senses to learn the lessons of biodiversity. In BC, we have forests to teach us many of nature's lessons. The lessons of inclusion, equity and belonging are evident when we see the range of size, shape, colour, species, age and ecosystem that forests provide. Colonization and white supremacy culture have worked in opposition to nature, in land theft, anti-Indigenous racism, resource exploitation and seeing nature as objects from which to profit. As well, colonization has offered a pseudo-science narrative of binary gender, as exemplified by the saying "birds and bees" to analogize gender and assigned sex at birth and assumptions of sexual orientation. These harmful narratives and ways to talk about gender and sexuality need to be countered with empirical understandings of biodiversity and gender identity and sexuality. Two-Spirit, Trans and Gender Diverse (2STGD) folks have existed for time immemorial but colonial pseudo-science has shadow-banned and acted to erase 2STGD history.

Queering Outdoor Ed is an opportunity to work with the teachings of nature and the great outdoors as another lesson for teachers to use for SOGI inclusion. The resources created from this project will be aligned with the VSB district Policy 17 and Administrative Procedure 174.

Table of Contents:	2
Why Explore Identity Through Outdoor Education?	3-4
Unit Plan: QUEERING Outdoor Education Through Land-Based Learning	5-9
Notes from QUEERING Outdoor Education workshop May 28, 2025	11
Unit: Locating Yourself, Visualizing Diversity, and Representation in Media/Society	13-16
QUEERING Outdoor Education: Everett Crowley Park Day	17-19
QUEERING Outdoor Education: Primary Level	21-30
QUEERING Outdoor Education	31-34
Books on QOE	35-40



Why explore identity through outdoor education?

We are putting our ideas together sitting on Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh territory, in what is colonially known as Trout Lake Park. We encourage outdoor learners to reflect on who the stewards of the land have been and who continues to care for it, and to place all their learning and teaching in reflection of that.

Outdoor education traditionally excludes many people. People who are racialized, disabled, queer, trans, non-athletic, or those who live in poverty are rarely reflected in media and advertisements. We carry this messaging to our students when we bring them outside. Often outdoor activities are seen as something students must weather and get through if they are not already connected to the land, or as something that should be related to sports or athleticism. Our group is interested in exploring curricular threads that bring identity and relationship to the land to the forefront, and to help students and staff see each other as we are.

We also want to recognize that the land has always been here, and will continue to be here. Many of us think of the outdoors as something we travel to- a park, the beach, a garden. Wherever you are reading this, the Host Nations have cared for and will continue to care for the land since time immemorial. Based on what I know about Host Nations here, is that they take care of the land on behalf of all of us and see the future of all people as being intrinsically connected to the land and water. Yes we have built cities and changed landscapes, but the land is here even if buildings are too, and we take care of and learn about what is here. Plants grow in any crack in the sidewalk they can. It's important to think of outdoor education at school and in your neighbourhood not as a concession or making due in lieu of a field trip to a greener space, but an opportunity to connect learning with the land to the individual and whatever identity they bring with them. We learn with whoever is with us, and on whatever land we are on.

As a group, we acknowledge who is here and who may be here, and we find ways to welcome everybody. Those of us who are queer, trans, racialized, or disabled are here and are connected to the land whether we know it or not. Discovering that connection is a rich opportunity to connect art, social studies, physical education, and other curricular areas, and we can only foster that connection by ensuring we find ways to welcome everybody, and that we do so by name. We cannot meaningfully show "all are welcome" without explicitly including queerness (and other identities) in teaching. As educators we cannot assume that students have vocabulary or experience to identify themselves, and may not

feel safe enough to express their identities. That is why we welcome others by name in case others cannot name themselves.

In almost all grades, art curriculum includes a big idea relating to identity. The Grade 4 curriculum says, “Creative expression is a means to explore and share one’s identity within a community”. In Grade 11, “Visual arts reflect the interconnectedness of the individual, community, history, and society.” In Grade 7, “Experiencing art challenges our point of view and expands our understanding of others.” Identity and self expression are prominent themes and not only is the emphasis made for an enriching learning experience, it is a requirement.

In social studies we have big ideas such as “Explain and infer different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues...” in Grade 11, and in Grade 3 we have “People from diverse cultures and societies share some common experiences and aspects in life.” In Grade 9 we have “The physical environment influences the nature of political, social, and economic change.” Identity and land are intrinsically connected, and are reoccurring themes across multiple subject areas. Taking learning outdoors is not only a valuable way to explore these themes, but an excellent opportunity to explore marginalized identities and to continue setting the stage for a meaningfully welcoming learning environment.

In almost every curricular area in all grade levels there are opportunities to tie outdoor education to identity, and to use those themes to do meaningful exploration as a learning community. Below you’ll find a couple of suggested threads and ideas you can use in your own teaching practice in this package, and we hope you’ll be inspired to think of more ways you can use outdoor education to include, learn about, and welcome everyone in your learning community.

Ecosystems need every part to thrive. Decaying plants and animals are just as necessary as their living counterparts, and the specific biodiversity requires all community members to thrive. As a social community, we also need to have all our similarities and differences put together to have a rich culture. In nature, no two plants are alike even if they are the same species.

Primary – Who is in the classroom? How are we alike? How are we different? How are we stronger together?

Unit Plan: Queering Outdoor Education Through Land-Based Learning

Created by: Chantelle Appleby

This unit plan can be used at your discretion – you are welcome to use whatever best aligns with your teachings. The purpose is to ground students in understanding identity and queerness and to allow all people to learn, grow, and thrive outside without boundaries or judgement.

Grade Level: 4–7 (however, most lessons can be extended to better align with high school classes)

Duration: 4–6 weeks

Themes: Identity, Belonging, Queer Inclusion, Indigenous Knowledge, Environmental Stewardship

Big Ideas (BC Curriculum Alignment)

Social Studies:

- Diverse perspectives shape our understanding of the world.
- People's identities are shaped by their environment and experiences.
- Human and environmental factors shape changes in population and living standards.

Physical and Health Education (PHE):

- Understanding ourselves and our relationships helps us develop a positive sense of self.
- Experiencing different environments increases our understanding of and respect for the land.

Science:

- Living things are diverse, can be grouped, and interact in their ecosystems.
- All living things sense and respond to their environment.

English Language Arts:

- Exploring stories helps us understand ourselves and others.
- Texts can be a source of creativity, reflection, and identity.

Arts Education:

- Engagement in the arts fosters identity, creativity, and place-based learning.

Unit Overview

This unit supports QUEER-ing Outdoor Education by intentionally centering queer identities, honouring Indigenous oral-storytelling, and Indigenous traditional plant knowledge. Through read-alouds, land-based observation, reflective journaling, collaboration, and ecological restoration, students develop empathy, environmental stewardship, and a deeper understanding of inclusion, queer-identity, and belonging.

Essential Questions

- Who is here? Who has always been here?
- How does nature help us understand to identities outside of the heteronormative lens, belonging, and inclusion/exclusion?
- What can we learn from native plants and ecosystems? How do they take up space outside?
- How can we make space for everyone — both in nature and in our communities?

Lesson 1: Grounding in Identity and Queerness

Lesson Focus: Understanding queer identities and reflecting on who occupies space.

Activities:

- Takes students outside to a space where you can conduct a read-aloud
- Read from the SOGI kit (e.g., *From the Stars in the Sky to the Fish in the Sea* by Kai Cheng Thom)
- Class discussion: Who is taking up space? Who is here? Who has always been here?
- Identity map/drawing: Let students observe and discuss the Wheel of Privilege to better understand their identity and space they take up.

Nature Journal Prompt:

- Take a few quiet moments to notice what you notice around you. Who and what do you see? Trees? Insects? Birds? People? Plants?
- Now think about yourself:
 - Where do you belong in nature?
 - What kind of space to you take up?
 - Have you always felt welcome in outdoor spaces? Why or Why not?

Lesson 2: Understanding Allyship in Nature and Community

Lesson Focus: Exploring the concept of allyship within queer communities and its role in creating inclusive spaces in both human communities and natural environments.

Activities:

- Takes students outside to a space where you can conduct a read-aloud
- Read aloud a text that explores allyship (e.g., *Love, Violet* by Charlotte Sullivan Wild)
- Discussion: What does it mean to be an ally? How can people use their voice, actions, and presence to support 2SLGBTQIA+ classmates and communities?
- Outdoor connection: Identify species in nature that support or create conditions for others to thrive (e.g., nurse logs, pollinators, etc.). Discuss how these natural allies function in ecosystems and connect to allyship in the classroom and wider community.
- Group activity: Create an “Ally Action Plan” for the class — ways to support inclusion in the classroom, school, and outdoor spaces.

Nature Journal Prompt:

- What does allyship mean to me?
- How can I be like a nurse log or pollinator in my community?

Lesson 3-4: Ecological Injustice and Making Space

Lesson Focus: Using invasive species (e.g., English ivy) as a metaphor for exclusion and domination.

Activities:

- Takes students outside to a space for discussion
- Could introduce a read aloud about gender identity and exclusion.
- Discuss metaphors: Ivy as invasive, dominating space, limiting access to light.
- Optional outdoor work: Work with a non-profit or as a class to help remove ivy OR identify invasive species in the school/community garden.
- Highlight that much like native plants, queer people have always been here. It is essential to remove invasive species to make space for the native plants to thrive and regenerate natural ecosystems.
- Discuss how this relates to exclusion in society.

Nature Journal Prompt:

- What does it mean to make space for others?
- How do we see exclusion in our lives? How can we change this with what we've learned?

Lesson 5: Learning from Native Plants

Lesson Focus: Honouring what is native to the land, connecting to stories of always having been here, and weaving this with queer identities.

Activities:

- Plant species card activity using *Held by the Land Deck*: Identify native plants using cards; learn their Indigenous names and properties.
- Discuss: How are queer identities similar native plants?
 - Tease this out by inviting conversations around how native plants have always been here, much like queer people; drawing from week 3-4's connections.

Nature Journal Prompt

- Draw and describe native plants; what is their traditional name and what are some of their properties?

Lesson 6-8: Restoration and Representation

Lesson Focus: Stewardship and visibility.

Activities:

- Plan and create a small native plant garden.
- Write and illustrate storybooks, poems, or comics about belonging, nature, and queerness.

Celebration Circle:

- Reflect on the unit: What did we learn about queerness, identity, and land? What does it mean to belong?

Intermediate and secondary – Genetic diversity makes living populations stronger by having an opportunity to create individuals with different strengths and weaknesses.

Explorations:

- make observations in nature through drawing, photograph, or written description
- make a regular practice of drawing or observing the same plant regularly
- make comparisons between plants
- explore natural relationships between different parts of nature around your school
- look for ways plants express individuality or respond to the environment in different ways

Social media and media messaging rarely show queer or disabled (and other marginalized identities) people out in nature. Is this reality? Does it have to be reality? How can we make these spaces welcoming to all? Based on media ideas, who in the room feels welcome to learn outdoors? How can we change that? How can being outdoors be for everyone?

Explorations:

- Take time dissecting media representations of being outdoors, across recreation and athletics. Observe who is there and how often, and figure out what “type” of person seems welcome
- Brainstorm ways you could counteract that idea, or think of realities where this media image is not true
- come up with who is not perceived as an “outdoors” person
- think about accessibility as a group. What does the group need to get outside? How can we make it comfortable? How can we make choices where discomfort is not prohibitive? How do we recover as a group from discomfort, since there are great experiences that come with some discomfort (like being outside in the rain)
- choose outdoor learning activities that are accessible whenever possible

Notes from QUEERING Outdoor Education workshop May 28 2025

Nature Journal – Generating creative ideas: Everything is nature, but choosing to connect to nature takes courage (music video of Indomitable). Nature journal every day or once a week. End result (end of unit): a reflection on nature / a deep dive into nature with a land acknowledgement.

Visual Journal – Diversity and Personification: Integrate photography teaching (composition, lighting, contrast, shapes) with nature – take images of visuals. Photograph the unusual and make it beautiful; photograph the regular and make it unusual. Write a story based on somebody else's image where the subject is the main character (personification).

Diversity and Perfection: Find something beautiful and take a picture – was it different from the things around it, or the same? Find two things that are the same type of thing (same species, same flour, rock, sand) – how are they different from one another? All species are diverse. Listen to *Perfect to Me*. Journal / reflective writing: what are the benefits of diversity?

Questions by Judah

Who am I?

Where are we?

Who is here with me?

Who has always been here?

Questions by me:

What time of year is it?

What signs around me tell me that it's this time of year? (Length of day, angle of sunlight, plants, colours I can see, patterns that water is taking, social markers like festivals and sounds)

What is the weather doing?

How is my body feeling today?

What reactions does being outdoors elicit in me?

What other ways do I know of for being outdoors?

How welcome do I feel being me in this place?

Who else do I see here that reminds me of me?

Visual journal:

Go outside.

UNIT: Locating Yourself, Visualizing Diversity, and Representation in Media/Society

WEEK 1 – LOCATE MYSELF:

Day 1 – Who am I?:

Read “Where I’m From” by Nikki Grimes.

Read “Why I Can Dance Down a Soul-Train Line in Public and Still be Muslim” by Aisha Sharif. (Opening line : “My Islam be Black” – final line: “My Islam just has to be.”)

Students write “My ____ Be” (based on Sharif) OR “Where I’m From” poem.

Day 2 – Where am I?:

Go outside. Draw or photograph what you see, record what you hear, describe what you smell. You should have visuals (drawing or photography), audio (recordings on your phone), and words (descriptives of what you smell, taste, anything else you can’t capture with technology).

Day 3 – Who is also here?:

Ask students to research the population of Vancouver. What are the demographics here? Who is Indigenous, white, South Asian, East Asian, Black, cisgender, transgender, lesbian, gay, straight? A resource: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/canadian-cities/vancouver> Choose a demographic and find gathering spaces where those communities can gather (assign one demographic per group of 2 or 3). Students share out that day or the next day.

Day 4 – Who has always been here?:

In an ideal world, it would be great to go on a tour with a host nation:

<https://www.talaysay.com/vancouver>

If not, you could show students the Invictus Games intro:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYRFh7Nj3gs>.

Students could work in jigsaws – put them first in groups of 3, 3 groups get each of the host Nations (Tsleil-Waututh, Musqueam, Squamish). Ask students to research the history, culture, and current practices of their assigned nation. Then, jigsaw so there is one of each person in the next group. Each student should have facts about the history, culture, and current practices of each nation written down. Where do they gather? How do they gather? What traditions do they practice? What new ways of being are they practicing?

Then, ask students to write a land acknowledgement noting a specific element of each nation and a goal they have moving forward to learn more or do more to connect with or reconcile with those nations.

Day 5 – Culminative Project:

Students should integrate all these explorations together into a video. For example, using the visuals and audio from Day 2 as the background, they can start with a land acknowledgement, read out their poem, and then have some visuals about what they've learned about other communities. This could be done solo or in groups. If in groups, students could just share their favourite elements of their poems.

WEEK 2 - VISUALIZING DIVERSITY:

ONGOING - Nature Journal – Generating creative ideas: Everything is nature, but choosing to connect to nature takes courage (music video of Indomitable). Nature journal every day or once a week. End result (end of unit): a reflection on nature / a deep dive into nature with a land acknowledgement.

ONGOING - Lit Circle – Visualizing Queerness in Fiction: The Magic Fish, This One Summer, Lumberjanes, The Girl by the Sea, On a Sunbeam, Displacement, Heartstopper. Reading + meetings outside.

Diversity and Perfection: Find something beautiful and take a picture – was it different from the things around it, or the same? Find two things that are the same type of thing (same species, same flour, rock, sand) – how are they different from one another? All species are diverse. Listen to *Perfect to Me*. Journal / reflective writing: what are the benefits of diversity?

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Resilience + weather: Weather learning – what can we learn from nature? What does it gift us? "X teaches me..." (Rain teaches me... A hot day teaches me...) – Eventually, visualize the weather in some way (film, multimedia, visual art) and put your poem/narrative in it.

Resilience in Uniqueness: Some trees are gnarled, some are straight. When we produce trees for logging, they are equally spread and grow straight. The old growth trees that are still around are gnarled. The trees that are broken end up being mother trees.

Mother Trees: Matriarchs leaving a legacy to help others grow. 7 generations. Create 7 goals you would have to preserve our society for 7 generations. You can use the 7 Rs to guide you.

Cumulative Project: Create a graphic novel with nature as a key plot, character, or visual element.

WEEK 3 – WHO IS SUPPOSED TO PARTICIPATE IN OUTDOOR ED?

Day 1: Representation in Media:

Conversation 1: Look at outdoor ads (MEC - <https://www.mec.ca/en>, LULU - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKClS0Lp1n8> + <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6oB72IL2Yw>) and look at what types of people we see. Are they visible queer, disabled, fat, diverse race?

2: What does physical education look like in your life (PE limitations)?

3: What does outdoors look like in your life? When do you go outdoors? What do you think of when you think of “outdoors” vs what do you ACTUALLY see most of the time when you’re outdoors?

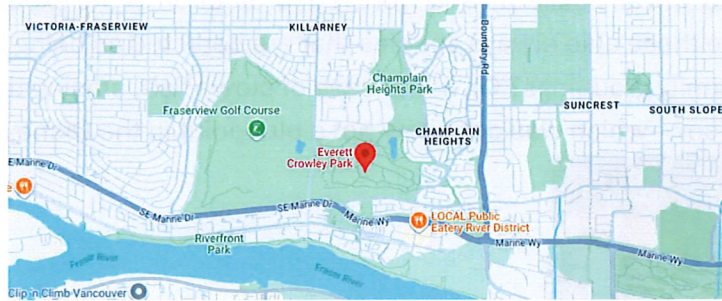
4: Who is missing in these spaces?

Day 2-5 (work periods for final project): How can we invite diverse people into outdoor spaces? Create an infographic for an event, an video ad for an outdoor company, or a diorama of an accessible outdoor space. This space should consider people of all genders, races, sexualities, abilities, and body types. How can we make a space that is accessible and joyous to all those identities?

QUEERING Outdoor Education – Everett Crowley Park day

Created by: Glen Hansman (he/him)

While this collection of QUEERING Outdoor Education lesson ideas was inspired by nature-based inquiry in Everett Crowley Park, the application of the ideas can be transferred to all outdoor learning spaces impacted by colonial human activity.



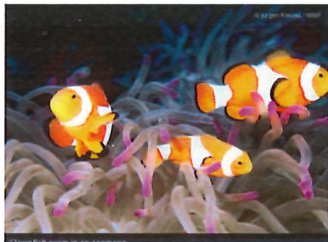
- “To queer” outdoor education – means more than adding SOGI-content to nature-based / place-based / environmental / outdoor education; means more than being responsive to queer / gender-diverse students or educators. Rather, it can be opportunity to unpack (outdoors) : the processes whereby “normal” and “marginalized” are created; how humans generally uphold binaries as ideals and the only possible reality / way of being; how identities are created; and, essentialist and biological determinist perspectives used to justify unjust treatments. It can be a rejection of universalness, and an embracing of messiness, the unresolvable, partiality, the contingent . . .



- How do normative approaches to the study of mammals and birds reinforce normative conceptions of the family and gender roles? (e.g. exclusive focus on reproduction-related sexual activity, primatology’s depiction of gorillas as models of nuclear family, chimpanzees as het-monogamous ideal, species that mate for life, etc. Meanwhile, behaviours / interactions / relationships that aren’t consistent with

this are **downplayed or erased**, or species who are capable of changing sex, or species who live outside of family structures, or species that engage in non-reproductive sexual activity, that have gendered behaviour that does not align with 21st century Western gender norms, etc.).

- How does school centre “charismatic megafauna” or normative conceptions of cuteness / kawaii as desirable and worthy of protection at the expense of other species. (Are these also always species that are depicted as being in hetero-normative family groupings? Or, in the case of clown fish, erasing the fact that they can change sex – which was definitely not a plot point in the Disney movies.)



- Does climate justice work require some strategic essentialism (for example, when trying to motivate people to take a particular action to save a certain species) . . . but if so, can it do so without resorting to normative reproductive arguments. Consider the number of articles in media about microplastics in placenta, testicles, etc. rather than effect on all life, quality of life on all species and the ecosystem in general. Reproduction is a concern, but not the only concern.
- EC Park and its history as a pre-colonial wilderness, relation to Musqueam people, garbage dump for colonizers, re-naturalized as an urban park for (settler) urban residents. What is the attention to species diversification in such as a space? Unpacking the binary of invasive species vs. native plants in a space build on top of human garbage ...
- EC Park as an examination of what we mean by “outdoors” or “being outdoors” or “being in nature” given human-made scars throughout, constant background noise of motorized vehicles, etc. False divide between nature and urban in such a space. EC Park as hybridity.
- Unpacking how humans curate “nature” by including, leaving out, culling, weeding out choosing what to replant or not.

- Depictions of nature in photos and art. When photographing a space like EC Park, do we leave the stump or plastic chair or No Smoking sign out of the frame? Do we wait for the dogwalkers and dogs to go around the corner before we take the selfie because the “better” photo is an idealized empty nature?
- *Idea for a photo essay: Dog Walker Drag*



“Whoooo whoooo? Be yoooouuuu” – anonymous. Photo Credit: S. Loewen

QUEERING Outdoor Education – Primary level

Created by: Jody Polukoshko (she/her)

The lesson ideas included here reflect a lot of collaboration and cooperation over years. The following people were teachers, inspirers, and resources: Tami McDiarmid, Karim Bhimani, Lee, Marjorie Dumont, Ditta Cross, and Mary Hotomanie.

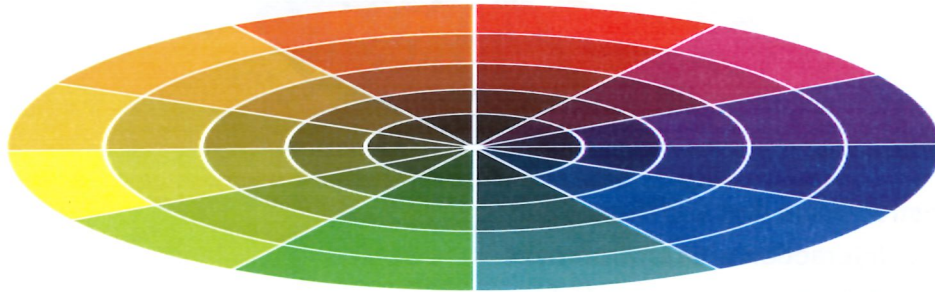


Guiding Principles:

1. Constructivism first and throughout
 - a. Interaction with environment
 - b. Building on prior knowledge
 - c. Co-creating knowledge
 - d. Assumption of new knowledge / frameworks
 - e. Discovery
 - f. Non-linear learning
2. Everything belongs
 - a. Invasive / Indigenous
 - b. Human intervention
 - c. Concept of “Yintah”
 - d. Known / unknown, inside / outside
3. Spectra and binaries
 - a. Deconstructing binaries
 - b. Deconstructing moralism / hierarchy
 - c. Noticing and connecting with change and relationships
4. Queering includes
 - a. Language and assumptions
 - b. Ways of being in the outdoors
 - c. The way we relate to students as learners and ourselves as teachers
 - d. Prioritizing fluidity of knowledge and experience

Tools:

- Colour wheel / paints / brushes
- Photography?
- Play – Debrief – Replay (Selma Wasserman Strategy)
- OWI (observe, wonder, infer)
- Anticipation Guide
- Memoir Writing
- What? So What?
- Current Events

**Lessons:****Colour Spectrum – shifting from the colour wheel**

- Introduction of spectrum
- Colour mixing – creating colours from nature without circles / framework
 - What did you notice? How did it feel? Is there a right / wrong colour? What colour do you connect with? Give colours names
- Coding colours
 - Subjectivity / objectivity / relationality
 - “truth” and science
 - Accepted knowledge and dissidents
 - Matching with paint chips? Did you create new things?
- Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being
 - Relationships and ethic of care
 - What does change / growth look like? Does nature have agency?
- Connect to other spectra

- Autism / neurodiversity
- Gender Identity / Sexuality
- Change over Time
- “Bodies are Cool” book shows change over time and variability, connect to PHE

Overlapping Relationships

- Draw concentric circles on a page, increasing in size – students can choose / draw own ideas, fill the page
- Walk outdoors, notice variation in life (soil, plants, bushes, trees, wildlife, vines)
- Choose a place where you see a lot of variability (colour, shape, size, age, etc.)
- Draw what you see in three circles, starting with close up, (immediate view, focus on a small area), then a section (between paths, field, cluster of trees), then whole park
- Discussion:
 - As you look outwards, what complexity do you start to see?
 - How much variation do you notice when you consider a larger space?
 - What is the connection between space / time and diversity or variation?
- Web interconnectedness you noticed in the park – whole group after walk
 - Plants, soil, animals, fungus, birds, insects, humans, rocks, trees
 - Draw lines where there are connections between
 - Name relationships where possible (supporting, predatory, etc. encourage possibility of more than one relationship for each)
- Connect to human communities and diversity – roles we choose or grow into
 - What if everyone was a hunter? Supporter? Decomposer? Food?
 - Does every part of nature have more than one way of participating?
 - Does nature change over time? What about people?
 - Bring back to ideas of diversity and balance over time, collectively, and individually
 - What changes or impacts balance? Does multiplicity or frequency change things? Does multiplicity or frequency impact the value of things?

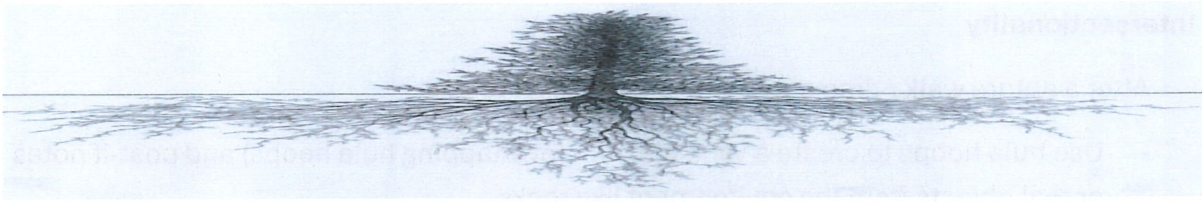


Everything Belongs

- SOGI DRT activity on diversity / monoculture – body movement, take the shape of a tree
- Does nature have rules? How do you know? What rules do people have for nature? Are those fair? Why? (chart discussion)
- Consider ideas of beauty / standards / conformity / hierarchy and relationship to capitalism, white supremacy, ableism, ageism, racism, queer- and transphobia
- Look at images of trees and nature – enjoy and say why. Connect back to subjectivity and appreciation for variation and diversity
- Connect with ideas about gender and binaries

TRANSformations

- Watch clouds moving and fluidity
- Look at or access knowledge about life cycles of trees / plants / animals
- Question / Discussion:
 - o Does anything stay the same over time? Say why you think so
 - o What spurs change?
- Self-reflection on personal change over time
- Journalling on movement, non-linear thinking, changing your mind, growing in expected and unexpected ways
- Consider change in land and nature
 - o [Everett Crowley reclaimed city dump](#)
 - o Fraser River Musqueam video (MOA)
 - o Stanley Park / Indian Act
- Use React with Non-fiction template [Non-Fiction Reading Power](#) Gear, p. 133 to respond to information about local reclamations, relocations, or changing landmass (above) to think about information while making connections



Personification / Simile / Metaphor

- What part of nature are you most like and why? (draw, write, free time) then explain and support using metaphor or simile (could be part of reporting cycle)
- Provide opportunities for students to reflect on self (board magnet vote) i.e. are you most like
 - o Roots – strong, quiet, deep,
 - o Bark – protective, seeing change
 - o Branches – reaching up and growing
 - o Leaves – change with time, environment

Invite students to create their own self-reflective personification of an aspect of nature

- o Who are your roots?
- o Who keeps you connected and strong?
- o What part of you is most like a leaf, changing and replacing?
- o What is the strongest and most resilient part of you? Etc.
- Use “Personal Memoir Organizer” from The Write Genre (Rog / Kropp) to tell a story from the perspective of a tree / plant / mountain / animal. Include details that help connect with the multiple roles and invite students to use first person voice to share knowledge about the chosen aspect of nature.
- For younger students, use the “SWBS” frame to tell a story centering nature.
“Somebody... wanted... but ... so”

Consent / Bodily Autonomy

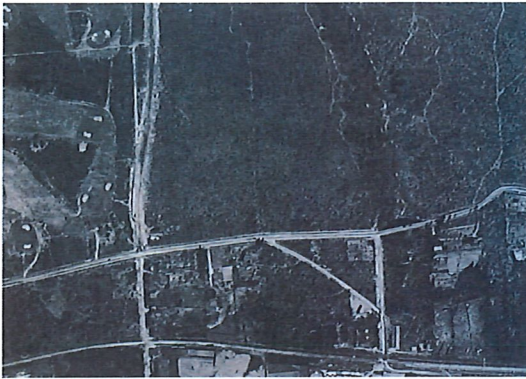
- What does respect for and stewardship of nature look like? How was it practiced by Indigenous people in BC? How do you practice it?
- Ethics of collecting and interfering
- Nature as living thing, changeable, resilient, but to a point
- Asking permission, reciprocity in collecting leaves etc.,
- Connect to community of people – consent required for touching, not making assumptions about how something wants to / will grow, being a watcher and noticing, asking questions

Intersectionality

After a nature walk / time outdoors

- Use hula hoops to create a venn diagram (overlapping hula hoops) and post-it notes or real objects from the environment like rocks
- Provide some categories and then solicit categories from students
 - o Green / brown
 - o Living / dead or growing / dying
 - o Old / new
 - o Strong / flexible
 - o Food / medicine
- Key is to note the number of in-between, subjective, or non-binary items or assessment of items – encourage disagreement and making arguments – what do you do with something if people don't agree with the categorization?
- Connect to gender identity / non-binary identity, fluidity of gender or sexual orientation and then to intersectional identities (race, dis/ability, gender, sexuality, age)
- Try a three circle venn diagram if they're up for it!
- Is a circle the best way to describe these groupings? What would be better?
- How does who we are and how do our experiences impact how we see this nature? Are all experiences the same? How are they different?
- Discuss the multiple locations that trees / plants hold – medicine, ceremony, protection, beauty, water and oxygen cycles, story, etc. and that they don't have to choose or only be known or respected for one part of their existence. It's all part of the relationships





Human Impact

- Is nature always correct?
- How do humans impact nature?
- Discussion:
 - o In what ways does science / humans change how trees, ground cover, forests, glaciers etc. exist in the world? Are all interventions negative or positive? Why?
 - o What about invasive / non-native species? (starlings, plantain)
- Read and consider information about logging, overhunting / overfishing, hydroelectric dams, cities, food farming, pesticides, urban growth etc
- Discuss and/or write / reflect:
 - o are these positive or negative interventions?
 - o Are they each necessary in all situations, if any?
- Read and compare human conservation efforts: reintroduced species, mason bees, bat boxes / bird feeders, controlled burns, Indigenous stewardship (video on rivers and wolves in Yellowstone Park)
- Compare and contrast Fraserview Golf Course and Everett Crowley Park – curated vs wild
- Connect and explain Assigned Sex at Birth, Intersex, Gender affirming care
- Review select municipal / provincial / federal laws or regulations (wildfire protections such as fire bans, invasive species import regs) and consider laws that protect people (Human Rights Code, UNDRIP, Declaration on the Rights of the Child)
- Work on Persuasive Writing skills (support in The Write Genre by Rog / Kropp for lesson plans and sample questions)
- Why are protections important for vulnerable groups of people, animals, plants, or geographical areas?

How does language impact understanding?

- Brainstorm words we use for nature and use “Brainstorm and Categorize” activity in Reaching for Higher Thought p.40 to consider positive / negative attributes and/or subjectivity of same.
- Ask whether we do the same for people? Do not brainstorm words, but connect to values judgements and subjectivities from earlier activities
- How does language connect to racism, queer- and transphobia, binaries?
 - o **Assumptions** about gendered roles in animal / bird / fish species, gendering of animals “he’s on the left side of the tree”, naming plants as gendered
 - o Consider alternatives to gendered language (what, instead of male and female plant parts, etc.)
 - o When we tell stories about nature, why do we feel compelled to gender nature?
 - o Do we do the same with people? What are some attributes that can sometimes feel gendered and how can we move away from them?

Play / Debrief / Replay

See Selma Wasserman’s work on this strategy as a science-based constructivist activity

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/15be3e621d77825146a5243f2d52ef59/1?cbl=1816512&pq-origsite=gscholar>

- Bring found items from nature (sticks, branches, leaves, seeds, pinecones, soil, rocks, moss, animal material where possible i.e. nest), magnifying glasses, rulers, etc.
- Talk about sustainable harvest and reciprocity to the land, including what will be done with the materials after the activity is complete
- Send students off to “Play” with the materials and sharing their observations with teacher as they play to chart including one or more of the following questions
- Sample questions for “Play”
 - o What tools would you like to have for making observations about...?
 - o What types of things are you noticing as you explore your materials?
 - o Why do you think ... ?
 - o How do you know ...?
 - o What questions do you have?
 - o What predictions can be made?

SOGI DRT drawing perspective activity

- Place a rock or other natural object on the ground in the centre of a circle. Choose an object with lots of natural variation and ensure that one aspect of it is hidden by the ground
- Ask students to draw the object as realistically as possible, to collect details and use shading and other techniques
- Collect the drawings and ask what students can see from the drawings?
 - o What perspectives can't be seen with your eyes?
 - o How did each of us draw something different, even though the object is the same?
 - o What is missing from your investigation?
 - o Is everything relevant visible? Can you predict from the visible attributes what the unseen side / aspect looks like?
 - o Can you be certain that viewing something provides all the information you need?

Binaries and cis-heterosexism in nature

- Information on use of Anticipation guide in Reaching for Higher Thought (Brownlie, Close, Wingren) p.73
- For younger students, "What? So What?" strategy supporting making inferences
- Video from <https://www.cbc.ca/documentaries/the-nature-of-things/mae-martin-explores-the-science-of-gender-and-sexual-fluidity-in-a-new-episode-of-the-nature-of-things-1.7150984>
- Key points:
 - o Nature doesn't subscribe to binaries
 - o Lots of examples of nature being non-binary or fluid

Educators and Reading / Writing / Thinking Strategies

Non-Fiction Reading Power Adrienne Gear 2008 Pembroke Publisher

Serious Players in the Primary Classroom Selma Wasserman, 2000 Teachers College Press

Reaching for Higher Thought: Reading, Writing, Thinking Strategies. Faye Brownlie, Susan Close, Linda Wingren, 1988 Arnold Publishing

The Write Genre: Classroom activities and mini-lessons that promote writing with clarity, style, and flashes of brilliance. Lori Jamison Rog, Paul Kropp. 2004 Pembroke Publishing

QUEERING Outdoor Education

Created by: Lee (they/them), SOGI DRT

Project: *Nature is the ultimate teacher, but we must use all of our senses to learn the lessons of biodiversity. In BC, we have forests to teach us many of nature's lessons. The lessons of inclusion, equity and belonging are evident when we see the range of size, shape, colour, species, age and ecosystem that forests provide. Colonization and white supremacy culture have worked in opposition to nature, in land theft, anti-Indigenous racism, resource exploitation and seeing nature as objects from which to profit. As well, colonization has offered a pseudo-science narrative of binary gender, as exemplified by the saying "birds and bees" to analogize gender and assigned sex at birth and assumptions of sexual orientation. These harmful narratives and ways to talk about gender and sexuality need to be countered with empirical understandings of biodiversity and gender identity and sexuality. Two-Spirit, Trans and Gender Diverse (2STGD) folks have existed for time immemorial but colonial pseudo-science has shadow-banned and acted to erase 2STGD history.*

Lesson Ideas:



Perspectives – a drawing exercise – visual engagement

Tools: paper and pen, object(s) in the centre that a group can gather around in a circle

1. Circle around the object

2. Class will spend 5 to 10 min sketching the object(s) in silence; ask students to keep the pencil on the paper, and work on details if they wish
3. What does this exercise teach you? Have students turn their image around to share in the circle. What do they notice?
4. What is point of view? Perspective?
5. Which points of view/ perspectives are unknown and why? (Consider POV of object(s), view from above, view from below)
6. How can this inform you of differentiation, diversity, inclusion and exclusion? Whose points of view become centred and whose marginalized/ erased? How can this impact being in community?
7. How does SOGI connect to this? How does anti-oppression connect to this?



Perspectives – a listening exercise: audio engagement

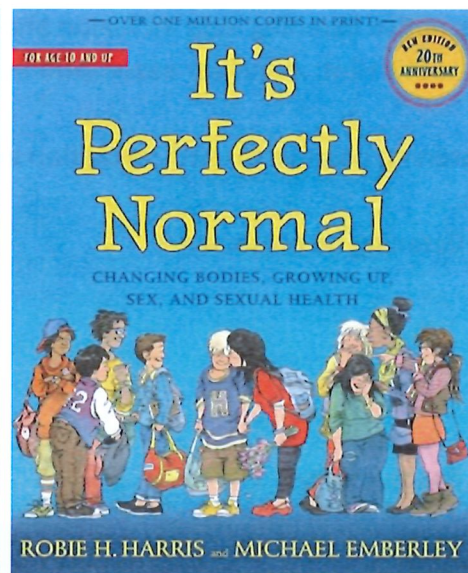
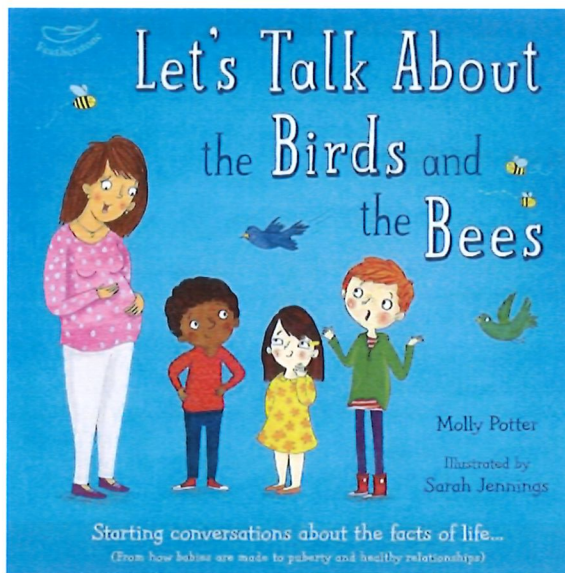
1. Listen for 5 to 10 minutes without interruption and distraction
2. Notice the sounds, which are nature-based? Which are machine-based? Describe what you hear.
3. What questions do you have about the sounds?
4. Do you think hearing humans can hear all of the sounds? Why or why not?
5. Who interprets the value of sounds? What happens with this evaluation?
6. How does listening to learn and listening to understand help communication and communities?

7. How does active listening help inclusion and belonging? How is listening a great SOGI inclusion tool? Hint: consider assumptions.
8. How is listening positive for self-regulation and co-regulation?
9. How can listening be protective?

Forests and Biodiversity



1. How is the photo on the left an example of SOGI-inclusion?
2. Compare the photos – what general lessons are there about biodiversity and human diversity?



Unpacking pseudo-science of Cisgendered, Binary Hetero-sexism

1. [Fluid: Beyond the Binary](#) (CBC Nature of Things documentary)
2. [Are there queer animals?](#) (World Wildlife Foundation article)
3. [Two-Spirit tradition](#)
4. [Genderless pronouns in some languages](#) – How does language normalize inclusion or exclusion?
5. [Intersex awareness](#)
6. [It Gets Better Canada](#) (supportive resources)
7. [VSB SOGI Sharepoint](#)
8. [VSB SOGI multi-language resources](#)

Books

Graphic Novels

Ash's Cabin by Jen Wang

"Ash has always felt **alone**. Adults ignore the climate crisis. Other kids Ash's age are more interested in pop stars and popularity contests than in fighting for change. Even Ash's family seems to be sleepwalking through life. The only person who ever seemed to get Ash was their Grandpa Edwin. Before he died, he used to talk about building a secret cabin, deep in the California wilderness. Did he ever build it? What if it's still there, waiting for him to come back...or for Ash to find it? To Ash, that maybe-mythical cabin is starting to feel like the perfect place for a fresh start and an escape from the miserable feeling of alienation that haunts their daily life. But making the wilds your home isn't easy. And as much as Ash wants to be **alone**...can they really be happy **alone**? Can they survive **alone**?"

Upstaged by Robin Easter

Best friends Ivy and Ash arrive for a third summer at arts camp, [where] Ash struggles to tell Ivy about ... developing feelings for her"-- Provided by publisher.

Rabbit Chase by Elizabeth LaPensee

Anishinaabe culture and storytelling meet Alice in Wonderland in this coming-of-age graphic novel that explores Indigenous and gender issues through a fresh yet familiar looking glass. Aimée, a non-binary Anishinaabe middle-schooler, is on a class trip to offer gifts to Paayehnsag, the water spirits known to protect the land. While stories are told about the water spirits and the threat of the land being taken over for development, Aimée zones out, distracting themselves from the bullying and isolation they've experienced since expressing their non-binary identity. When Aimée accidentally wanders off, they are transported to an alternate dimension populated by traditional Anishinaabe figures in a story inspired by Alice in Wonderland. To gain the way back home, Aimée is called on to help Trickster by hunting down dark water spirits with guidance from Paayehnsag. On their journey, Aimée faces off with the land-grabbing Queen and her robotic guards and fights the dark water spirits against increasingly stacked odds. Illustrated by KC Oster with a modern take on their own Ojibwe style and cultural representation, Rabbit Chase is a story of self-discovery, community, and finding one's place in the world.

Novels

Zombie Apocalypse Run Club by Carrie Mac (local author)

When seventeen-year-old queer twins Eira and Soren leave their survivalist home, they enter a world overcome by zombies and discover the only way to stay alive is to run.

A Constellation of Minor Bears by Jenny Ferguson

"Before that awful Saturday, Molly used to be inseparable from her brother, Hank, and his best friend, Tray. The indoor climbing accident that left Hank with a traumatic brain injury filled Molly with anger. While she knows the accident wasn't Tray's fault, she will never forgive him for being there and failing to stop the damage. But she can't forgive herself for not being there either. Determined to go on the trio's postgraduation hike of the Pacific Crest Trail, even without Hank, Molly packs her bag. But when her parents put Tray in charge of looking out for her, she is stuck backpacking with the person who incites her easy anger. Despite all her planning, the trail she'll walk has a few more twists and turns ahead. . . ."--Publisher.

Lucha of the Night Forest by Tehlor Kay Mejia

One girl caught between the freedom she always wanted and a sister she can't bear to leave behind. Under the cover of the Night Forest, will Lucha be able to step into her own power-- or will she be consumed by it? This gorgeous and fast-paced fantasy novel is brimming with adventure, peril, romance, and family bonds-- and asks what it means for a teen girl to become fully herself.

The Whispers by Greg Howard

"Eleven-year-old Riley's mom has disappeared and Riley knows that if he leaves tributes for the whispers, magical fairies that grant wishes, his mom will come back to him."--Provided by publisher.

The Best Liars in Riverview by Lin Thompson

While searching the woods that used to be their personal sanctuary, twelve-year-old Aubrey recalls the events and incidents preceding their best friend's disappearance and quietly questions their own gender identity.

King and the Dragonflies by Kacen Callendar

In a small but turbulent Louisiana town, one boy's grief takes him beyond the bayous of his backyard, to learn that there is no right way to be yourself.

Magodiz: a novel by Gabe Calderon

"For fans of *Love after the End*, a novel of Indigenous futurism in which Two-Spirit, LGBTQ+, BIPOC, neurodivergent, and disabled characters--survivors of a devastating war-- fight to save

what's left of their world' Mgdiz (Anishinabemowin, Algonquin dialect): a person who refuses allegiance to, resists, or rises in arms against the government or ruler of their country. Everything that was green and good is gone, scorched away by a war that no one living remembers. The small surviving human population scavenges to get by; they cannot read or write and lack the tools and knowledge to rebuild. The only ones with any power are the mindless Enforcers controlled by the Madjideye, a faceless, formless spiritual entity that has infiltrated the world to subjugate the human population. A'tugwewinu is the last survivor of the Andwnikdjigan. On the run from the Madjideye with her lover, Bl, a descendant of the Warrior Nation, they seek to share what the world has forgotten: stories. In Pasakamate, both Shkitagen, the firekeeper of his generation, and his life's heart, Nltwēs, whose hands mend bones and cure sickness, attempt to find a home where they can raise children in peace, without fear of slavers or rising waters. In ZhMng yang, Riordan wheels around just fine, leading xir gang of misfits in hopes of surviving until the next meal. However, Elite Enforcer H-09761 (Yun Seo, who was abducted as a child, then tortured and brainwashed into servitude) is determined to arrest Riordan for theft of resources and will stop at nothing to bring xir to the Madjideye. In a ruined world, six people collide, discovering family and foe, navigating friendship and love, and reclaiming the sacredness of the gifts they carry. With themes of resistance, of ceremony as the conduit between realms, and of transcending gender, Mgdiz is a powerful and visionary reclamation that Two-Spirit people always have and always will be vital to the cultural and spiritual legacy of their communities."--

Camp by L.C. Rosen

At Camp Outland, a camp for LGBTQIA teens, sixteen-year-old Randall "Del" Kapplehoff's plan to have Hudson Aaronson-Lim fall in love with him succeeds, but both are hiding their true selves.

Non-Fiction

Rise Up and Sing! Power, Protest, and Activism in Music by Andrea Warner

"Explores how music has contributed to the fight for social justice. Across eight areas of activism--the climate emergency, Indigenous rights, civil rights, disability rights, 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, gender equality, the peace/anti-war movement, and human rights--[the author] introduces some of the artists, past and present, who have made a difference both on stage and off"--Provided by publisher.

One Earth: People of Colour Protecting our Planet by Anuradha Rao

Looks at the lives of twenty environmental minority activists from around the world.

We Have a Dream by Dr. Mya-Rose Craig

Written by the extraordinary environmental and campaigner for equal rights Mya-Rose Craig-- aka Birdgirl--this book profiles 30 young environmental activists who are Indigenous people or people of color, from communities on the frontline of global climate change. Each speaks to the diverse set of issues they are fighting for, from water conservation, to deforestation, to indigenous rights, and shares their dream.

Picture Books

Together a Forest: Drawing Connections between nature's diversity and our own by Roz Maclean

"Joy and her peers are eager to visit a nearby forest for a class trip. But Joy's excitement quickly turns into anxiety when she is asked to choose one thing in the area for a school assignment. Seeing her classmates connecting with the natural environment, Joy discovers how each of their choices reflect the ways they relate to and interact with the world"--Provided by publisher.

The Wishing Flower by A.J. Irving

An LGBTQ-inclusive story about understanding your peers, your feelings, and yourself ... a love letter to longing, belonging, and longing to belong. Birdie finds comfort in nature and books, but more than anything she longs for connection, to be understood. At school, Birdie feels like an outsider. Quiet and shy, she prefers to read by herself, rather than jump rope or swing with the other kids. That all changes when Sunny, the new girl, comes along. Like Birdie, Sunny has a nature name. She also likes to read, and loves to rescue bugs. And when Sunny smiles at her, Birdie's heart balloons like a parachute ... this book will inspire readers to honor their wishes and show the world their truest selves"-- Provided by publisher.

Noodin's Perfect Day by Ansley Simpson

When Noodin's perfect day is interrupted, they decide to strike out for adventure instead - spending the day with their human, animal, and tree cousins in the city. But will Noodin ever get the pancakes they're craving? Come along and find out!

CBC Curio

Beyond the Binary The Nature of Things

<https://curio.ca/en/catalog/be010c83-830d-4256-a87b-b7f64ab647b3>

Popular nonbinary comedian Mae Martin explores the science of gender and sexual fluidity. Original broadcast: March 28, 2024.

Levi: Becoming Himself

<https://curio.ca/en/catalog/a04d1639-0a89-4684-8436-9223d3d073a7>

Identical Vietnamese twins, assigned as female at birth, were adopted to white Canadians. As one begins to navigate their gender identity, this family in North Vancouver, B.C. pulls together to support Levi becoming himself.

Can Core

Grounded Acres: Organic Farm

<https://www.can-core.ca/BC/title/t211310/3602>

Grounded Acres is a queer-run farm growing certified organic mixed vegetables and fruit on the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia. The film focuses on their growing practices that regenerate and contribute to the health of our ecosystems and how they create safer spaces in agriculture for 2SLGBTQIA+ folks like themselves. Program is in English with French Subtitles.

Going Two-Spirit Going Native Series

<https://www.can-core.ca/BC/title/t213077/3602>

First Nations societies embraced variances in gender and sexuality, and many nations even have distinct words to honor these people – Winkte (Lakota), Nadleehe (Navajo), Sipiniq (Inuit). In Winnipeg Drew meets the drag team, the Bannock Babes. They see themselves as modern day tricksters or shape-shifters, embracing both the masculine and the feminine while sharing important messages with a sense of humour.

Drew, made up as Drewcilla, puts the curve in Curve Lake! In Ponoka, Alberta, he meets Chevi Rabbit who has an accepting Indigenous family. A homophobic attack at the University of Alberta led her to become a respected political voice advocating for the two-spirit and trans community. Two performers are exploring Two-Spirit art in unique ways. In Seattle, Howie Echo-Hawk, stand-up Pawnee comedian, says humour is a form of survival. In Edmonton, actor Marshall Vielle wrote a play, 'Where the Two-Spirit Lives', to revitalize traditional understanding of people who combine the strengths of the fathers and mothers of their tribes. Two-spirit philosophy can be a positive force for everyone.

Ga Gitigemi Gamik (We Will Plant Lodge)

<https://www.can-core.ca/BC/title/t211278/3602>

This film features the beginning of Ga Gitigemi Gamik (We Will Plant Lodge), a planned ecological centre on a permanent Indigenous-stewarded site on Manitoulin Island, Ontario, where women and 2SLGBTQIA+ persons can work on the land together and (re)learn ancestral agricultural methods lost to colonization.

The documentary provides insight into the efforts to revitalize traditional agricultural knowledge, emphasizing the importance of cultural sustainability in farming.

NFB

<https://www.nfb.ca/film/into-light/>

Sheona McDonald's documentary captures a season of change as a mother and child navigate the complexities of gender identity together.

Puberty Part 2

https://www.nfb.ca/film/puberty-part_2/

Elder Marie Leo recounts her experiences going through puberty. Growing up on the Líl'wat Nation near Mount Currie, B.C., Marie details the important process of preparing for womanhood. The various tasks and duties she undertakes demonstrate a complex, beautiful journey a young Líl'wat person undergoes as they welcome adulthood and increased responsibilities.

This short is part of the *L'il'wata* series. In the early 1970s, at the outset of her documentary career, Alanis Obomsawin visited the Líl'wat Nation, an Interior Salish First Nation in British Columbia, and created a series of shorts that provide personal narratives about Líl'wat culture, histories and knowledge