

**Focus:**

Examine western and Aboriginal worldviews on “living and non-living things” in wetlands ecosystems while recognizing that all plants and animals have an important role in a wetlands community as they interact with one another.

**Curriculum Connection:**

**5.10-2** Understand that a wetland ecosystem involves interactions between living and non-living things, both in and around the water

**5.10-5** Understand and appreciate that all animals and plants, not just the large ones, have an important role in a wetland community.

**Teacher Preparation:****1. Living and Non-Living**

This is one of the most basic classifications in western science. Western and Aboriginal science have different roots culturally and historically. Thus, western and Aboriginal scientists look at this classification quite differently.

An Aboriginal worldview sees spirit in all living and non-living things, so that rocks, water and soil all have spirit to them. Water is considered to be sacred, not only for what it does for the human body and environment, but because of this spirit. There is no distinction or boundary between living and non-living things. Water is seen as part of the cultural landscape, and inseparable from land, people, ancestors and social relations.

It is different in western science, where there is a boundary of living and non-living things. Living things contain cells, which allow them to breathe, grow, change, reproduce and adapt to their environment. Non-living things do not have cells. They cannot breathe, change, grow or adapt to their environment. Western scientists do not consider there to be a spirit in rocks, water and soil. Non-living things are generally regarded as not holding or having spirit, though they are seen as having value.

The big difference is in the view of the spirit of things. In Aboriginal science, all things have spirit, while in western science, living things may hold spirit, and non-living things are spirit-less.

### Key Learnings:

- » In an Aboriginal worldview all components in nature are considered living things
- » In the Aboriginal worldview all elements of our surroundings and everything on Mother Earth
- » Plants and animals give us messages and teachings
- » Aboriginal worldview highlights respect for all living things, which includes everything on Mother Earth, from an Aboriginal perspective, leads to a healthy environment, including healthy wetlands

This influences what scientists teach about water. This view of living and non-living things informs the relationship that people have to the natural world and to the observations they make about it.

In western science, people build their knowledge of water through study of the properties of it. They may study the chemistry (e.g., oxygen and hydrogen molecules), and the function and cycle of water in the environment.

2. Photocopy enough "The Tea of Life" Worksheets for each student in the class. Review the worksheet prior to teaching the class for ease of explanation to the students.

### Note to Teacher :

It is important to communicate clearly to students that the sharing of Aboriginal worldviews, or any perspectives, is not intended to contradict the worldviews of others, but that all perspectives must be respected as valid.

This lesson plan has 2 parts. At the end of this lesson communicate to the students that tomorrow you will continue the learning with a different worldview for them to consider.

## Materials and Resources Required:



» "The Tea of Life" worksheet (Answer key included)



» Equipment required to view the film "The Tea of Life" with the students

## Launch:

Ask the students the question:

» Who can give me some names of living and non-living things that we might find in a wetland?



» When you name it tell me if I should write it down in the living or non-living category.

Draw a 2 column chart on the board with the titles "living" and "non-living" at the top. As the students call out examples record them in the appropriate column.

Indicate to the students that the class will now be viewing the first of 2 films on wetlands for this lesson. Remind students that science explains that in a wetland ecosystem, as in any ecosystem, there are interactions between living and non-living things.

## Activate:



Distribute "The Tea of Life" worksheets to each student and read it over with the class prior to watching the DVD/Online Video "The Tea of Life".

[www.sacredrelationship.ca/videos](http://www.sacredrelationship.ca/videos)



View "The Tea of Life" and have students complete the worksheet once the film is finished.

Students may work in partners to complete the worksheet so that they can discuss their thoughts on the questions before entering their responses.

Students should write down their own answers as they may not come to the same conclusion following their discussion.



## DID YOU KNOW :

THAT WATER IS USED IN ALMOST EVERY  
CULTURE TO WELCOME, BLESS AND CLEAN A  
CHILD AFTER SHE OR HE IS BORN?

### Connect:



Once students have completed their worksheets bring the students back to one large group. Ask students to share their answers to each question.

Facilitate a discussion, in conjunction with the sharing of answers to each question, that will engage students in the consideration of Aboriginal worldview regarding living and non-living things. Have students give examples of what might be different between the views and teachings of this Elder, Roy, from that which might come from a western scientist.

Using the information provided in the Teacher Preparation section, guide students to the understanding that for Aboriginal people everything in nature is living and everything has a spirit.

## The Tea of Life Worksheet

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What types of plants do we see and hear about in the film?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is Roy making in the pot?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Why is he making it? (what is it used for?)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Who uses this medicine?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. How does the water help the spruce trees?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What does Roy say the willows are doing? What message does he get from what he sees the willows doing?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## The Tea of Life Worksheet

### Answer Key

1. What types of plants do we see and hear about in the film?

Grassy plants, green moss, spruce trees, willows.

2. What is Roy making in the pot?

Muskeg Tea. He boils muskeg water and some plants to make a natural tea which is a medicine.

3. Why is he making it? (what is it used for?)

He is boiling medicine, or making tea, to heal the aches of the body and to make people well.

4. Who uses this medicine?

The Dene people use this medicine. All Aboriginal people make a similar medicine out of the plants that they know to be healing from their own area.

5. How does the water help the spruce trees?

The roots pick up the water and it travels to the needles to make them grow and to be healthy.

6. What does Roy say the willows are doing? What message does he get from what he sees the willows doing?

The willow is leaning into the hole and blessing the water so that it will make people well.