

Weather and Seasons

by Gay Luke

Summary

Through discussion and looking at pictures, students will examine the seasons and seasonal activities, including the Salish months and traditional Salish activities for each month. They will also discover why certain activities are done at the same time each year.

Grade level K - 1

Time required

Option to teach this unit as you introduce each month of the year or to spend a few days going through each month of the year and each season

Materials/Technology

Pictures of each season
List of Salish months – see attached

Markers or crayons

Drawing paper

*Special resources available in complimentary RSI curriculum tub

Objectives

The student will:

- 1) Name each season of the year.
- 2) Understand why the same activities were and are done at the same time each year.

Materials included in RSI Curriculum Tub

How the Summer Season Came The Indian Reading Series (Stories and Legends of the Northwest)

Tepee, Sun and Time (The Indian Reading Series) Thomas E. Connolly,
Salish Indian Hymns (tape 2, funeral and seasonal hymns) Johnny Arlee,
two cards with pictures of elk and moose

Montana Science standards addressed

- 1) Students demonstrate knowledge of the composition, structures, processes, and interactions of Earth's systems and other objects in space.
- 2) Students understand historical developments in science and technology.

Assessment

Each student will make a five-page book entitled My Seasons Book, which will contain the name of each season and the student's drawing of what happens during each season.

Materials included in RSI curriculum tub

Ktunaxa calendar (learning aide to learning Kootenai language and history),
Montana wildlife poster, Montana Wildlife (a beginner's guide to the state's most remarkable animals); Gayle C. Shirley,
Parfleche, Buffalo hide,
sinew,
animal models of; deer, elk, and buffalo,
5 packs of markers,
birch bark basket,
2 jars of Huckleberry jam,
2 jars of Chokecherry jam,
Wild Berries of the West; Betty B. Derig, and Margaret C. Fuller,
Willow Bark Rosehips (an introduction to common edible and useful wild plants of North America); Fritz Springmeyer,
Quay-Lem-U-En-Chow-Men (a collection of hymns and prayers in Flathead-Kalispell-Spokane Indian Language);
Stories From Our Elders (Flathead Culture Committee) The story of the origins of the Seasons by Pete Beaverhead;
How the Summer Season Came The Indian Reading Series (Stories and Legends of the Northwest)
Tepee, Sun and Time (The Indian Reading Series)
Salish Indian Hymns (tape 2, funeral and seasonal hymns) Johnny Arlee,
two cards with pictures of elk and moose

Procedure

1. With students, discuss the four seasons of the year. Show a picture of each season, talk about activities people participate in during this time, what happens outside, and how the animals change. Possibly list or draw children's suggestions on the marker board for all to see.

Spring: Trees get leaves, plants grow, rainy, weather is warmer
Animals are born
Kids ride bikes, wear light jackets, etc...

Summer: Fruits and vegetables grow and ripen, weather is often very warm
Baby animals are growing, lots to eat
Kids swim, and play outside, wear shorts

Fall: Days get shorter and cooler, leaves turn color
Animals are fat; coats get thicker and turn color
People harvest foods, wear warmer clothes

Winter: Days are short, cold, and snowy
Some animals hibernate, others live on stored food
People dress warm, sled, ski, etc...

2. After discussing seasons, introduce Salish months and activities (see below), talking about what is happening during each time of year. Put the months in groups under each season or tell what activity happens and have the students say what season this activity should be under.
- 3) Discuss why people and animals do the same things at the same time every year.

Salish Calendar Months

(Julie Cajune compiled this seasonal calendar with information from the Salish Culture Committee and an outline created by Susan Lefthand Dowdal. It is copyrighted and provided for educational use only.)

January – The Shake Hands Month/The Shooting Month

During this time, the middle winter months, the people would gather for Jump Dance. The Shake Hands song would be sung with everyone in a circle shaking hands with each other. This was a sacred and happy time of prayer and thanksgiving. The people would dance for good hunting, a plentiful harvest, good health, and the well being of their children and relatives. This community tradition is still practiced today. In the past, Indian people adopted and integrated the tradition of shooting a gun to herald the New Year. This new custom created the new month name, “the Shooting Month.”

January support materials included

Jump Dance; Bill Farnsworth, tape 2 Salish Hymns. Side B song 3- “The New Years song”; words to this song in English on page 27 of Quay-Lem-U-En-Chow-Men book. It’s the let’s be happy and sing New Years song.

February - The Coldest Month

This month seemed like the coldest after a long, hard inter. During this time of year the snow was deep and the temperature often fell below zero.

February support materials included

Winter Months (The Indian Reading Series)

March - The Month of the Geese

When the geese were spotted flying in from the South, it was a good sign that the winter months were coming to an end. It was time to look ahead to warmer weather. During this month and throughout the year, some of the people would go to certain lakes to snag and trap fish. Sinew and bone hooks were used for snagging, while fish weirs were used for trapping.

March support materials included

Montana Wildlife (A beginner’s field guide to the state’s most remarkable animals), Montana wildlife poster. A spool of sinew is included in this tub. Also if you call The People’s Center in Pablo and talk to Germaine White, she will have a replica of a fishing weir to check out and take to your classroom to show to students.

April - The Buttercup Month

The first thunder is heard this month. All the hibernating animals would be coming out. Coyote stories were put away and not taken out until the next year's snowfall. Spring brought the buttercup. The Salish people used the buttercups a medicine. Other wildflowers such as yellow bells were used as a fruit and sometimes mixed with bitterroot.

April support materials included

Wild Berries of the West; Betty B. Derig, and Margaret C. Fuller, Willow Bark Rosehips (an introduction to common edible and useful wild plants of North America). Contact Steve Klotzel or Joann Bigcrane at the tribal preservation department to obtain a buttercup sample.

May - The Month of the Bitterroot

Bitterroot was usually dug in late April or early May. A group of women would be sent out to check on the bitterroot to see when it was ready to dig. Bitterroot is gathered when the plant is without a flower-the roots are easy to peel at this time, when the plants are young. The first roots are dug ceremonially for a first feast for the community. People gave thanks for these fruits of the season and prayed for a plentiful harvest throughout the season and for future generations. After this feast, individuals and families would go out to harvest large quantities of the roots. The roots would be peeled, cleaned, and cooked fresh with berries or meat. What was not eaten fresh would be dried and stored in woven root bags or a parfleche. The bitterroot tradition remains today.

May support materials included

Contact Steve Klotzel, or Joann Bigcrane at the preservation department to obtain a sample of the Bitterroot. Parfleche sample included in kit, Wild Berries of the West; Betty B. Derig, and Margaret C. Fuller, Willow Bark Rosehips (an introduction to common edible and useful wild plants of North America)

June - The Month of the Camas

Camas plants have a bulbous root that is usually ready for harvest in June. Camas bulbs are baked with black moss in earthen pits for three days. After baking, the bulbs were dried and stored for later use. Baked camas is delicious and has a licorice like flavor. During this time people would also be making bark baskets from cedar and birch trees. The baskets would be used for berry picking. Tipi poles would be cut now, as the bark would peel easy. When the wild roses were in bloom, the people would know that buffalo would be nice and fat. Salish hunting parties would then travel to the plains country for their summer buffalo hunt.

June support materials included

Wild Berries of the West; Betty B. Derig, and Margaret C. Fuller, Willow Bark Rosehips (an introduction to common edible and useful wild plants of North America). Also contact Steve Klotzel or JoAnn Bigcrane at the tribal preservation department to obtain a sample of the Camas plant. Birch bark basket included.

July - The Celebration Month

During the middle of the summer months, the people would gather to celebrate and give thanks. Many people would donate items to help with the celebration so that everybody would have a good time. The first day of celebrating would be a memorial to honor those who passed away, and then all the different dances would begin.

Support idea for July

Contact Germaine White at the People's Center, she is in charge of education, to see if she knows of a community member that would come and teach a dance to your students.

August – The Huckleberry Month

The Salish gathered many different types of berries during the summer months-service berries, foam berries, thimbleberries, and raspberries. In August the huckleberries would ripen. Women would pick the berries filling their bark baskets. If the huckleberries were plentiful, people would pick enough to last through the seasons. Huckleberries were also used as a medicine. The bushes would be boiled to make a tea for backaches and kidney ailments.

August support materials included

Wild Berries of the West; Betty B. Derig, and Margaret C. Fuller, Willow Bark Rosehips (an introduction to common edible and useful wild plants of North America). 2 jars of Huckleberry jam are included in the tub for students to taste.

September - The Chokecherry Month

Chokecherries were gathered and then dried whole or pounded into patties and dried. Later they would be made into soup. The bark of the chokecherry tree was also used as a medicine for stomach illness. Oregon Grape was also harvested in September. The roots were used as a medicine and also to make a brilliant yellow dye.

September support materials included

Wild Berries of the West; Betty B. Derig, and Margaret C. Fuller, Willow Bark Rosehips (an introduction to common edible and useful wild plants of North America). Chokecherry jam included for students to taste.

October - The Hunting Month

In the fall, hunting dominated the people's activities. The harvesting of elk, deer, moose, and buffalo began in earnest. One particular method of hunting was to build a type of corral out of tree branches. Deer would then be herded into the corral. After enough deer had been killed, the corral would be taken down to let the rest go. The meat would be taken back to camp for the women to cut up and dry.

October support materials

Wildlife of Montana poster, Montana Wildlife (a beginner's guide to the state's most remarkable animals); by Gayle C. Shirley, also toy replicas of baby deer, buck, and buffalo for students to handle, two cards with pictures of moose and elk, buffalo hide.

Possible field trip

Call Germaine White at the People's Center in Pablo to set up a field trip in coordination of the annual Elders social. Lucy Vanderburg is also a possible contact to coordinate this. At this annual social traditional meat drying will take place.

November - The Storytelling Month

After hunting trips were over and enough food was stored for the winter, the people would be drawn inside by the cold winter season. Clothing and tools would be made or repaired. With the first snow on the ground, elders would tell Coyote stories. Please check your school library for a book of coyote stories to read to students. A book can also be obtained at the People's Center in Pablo.

Possible connections

Corvalis school created a video entitled "Coyote and the Clearwater Monster." Call the school to obtain a copy of this video that was created by students telling this story.

December - The Trapping Month

During the winter months the people would trap martin, weasel, mink, and otter and beaver, and their furs would be nice and thick. The pelts were used for many things both functional and decorative. The beaver was trapped not only for fur, but for food and medicine also.

December hands-on connection

Call the People's Center to check out their educational trunk containing hides and furs of native animals. Contact Germaine White.