

What Are the Seasons?

Cindy Fry, Sandy Kelnhofer, Barbara Quintasket
Paschal Sherman Indian School, Omak, Washington

Summary

Students learn about seasons and how they are part of a continuous circle.

Grade level

First Grade

Time required

Two hours

Materials

The book, *Round and Round the Seasons Go*

[Seasons Wheel](#)

[Okanogan Salish words for months of the year and seasons](#)

Science journals

[Pictures of children's seasonal activities](#)

Photos and cultural artifacts related to traditional seasonal activities

Goals

By completing this lesson, students will

- 1) use their senses to make seasonal observations,
- 2) learn the Salish words for months and seasons,
- 3) learn about the Circle of Life,
- 4) learn about traditional seasonal activities of the Okanogan people and
- 5) develop inquiry process skills.

Science standards addressed

National Science Standards

- Abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry
- Changes in Earth and Sky
- Life cycles of organisms
- Types of resources

American Indian Science Standards

- Changes in Earth's surface, weather fluctuations and movements of celestial objects and how they affected historical American Indian community locations, annual migrations, and agricultural and ceremonial cycles.

Teacher tips

Ask an elder to teach students the Salish words, and to talk with them about the Circle of Life and seasonal activities of the Okanogan people. Gather photos and cultural artifacts related to traditional seasonal activities, such as a digging stick, fishing weir, etc.

Background information

As with many Native American cultures, the Circle of Life is a significant part of the philosophy and perspective of the Okanogan people. The progression of the seasons is one example of the cyclical nature of life. In times past, the Okanogan people engaged in seasonal activities that were part of this circle in order to survive. Fishing for salmon, digging bitterroot, digging for camas, hunting, ceremonies and moving into their seasonal homes are all examples of seasonal activities that were part of the traditional Okanogan lifestyle. Today, many of these activities still occur.

Procedure

Engagement

Read *Round and Round the Seasons Go*. Facilitate a discussion about the four seasons.

Exploration

Take students outside and ask them to record in their journals observations that indicate the season. Assist them in using all of their senses in making observations (e.g., smell flowers, touching plants, tasting berries, etc.).

Explanation

- 1) Share student observations about the season. Brainstorm ideas for observations that students would expect in other seasons.
- 2) Have students cut out their Seasons Circle. Tell students that they are going to fold their circle into four parts, or quarters, one for each season. Fold in half, then in half again. Write the Okanogan and English words for the months around the outside edge of the wheel. Next, write down the Okanogan season name in the appropriate quarter. Ask an elder to teach students the Okanogan words for months and seasons. Discuss how one full circle represents a whole year, and that it happens in a continuous cycle.

Elaboration

Create a large circle chart, similar to the students' Seasons Circle. Invite an elder to talk about the traditional activities that the Okanogan people take part in during each season. Show students pictures of Okanogan people engaged in traditional seasonal activities, and artifacts related to these activities. Write or draw symbols of the traditional activities in the appropriate quadrant of the large Seasons Circle.

Evaluation

- 1) Have students color pictures of seasonal activities. Have them place them in the appropriate quadrant of their Seasons Circle, as they say the season name in Salish.
- 2) Assess student journal entries of seasonal observations.

Follow up activities

- 1) Practice saying the Salish words for months and seasons.
- 2) Revisit the circle chart each season and add student comments.
- 3) Take students to seasonal cultural events like a bitterroot dig, camas dig, etc.

Resources

Books

Lanczak, R. (1994). Round and round the seasons go. Creative Teacher Press Science Series.