



## Stories of Climate Change Education

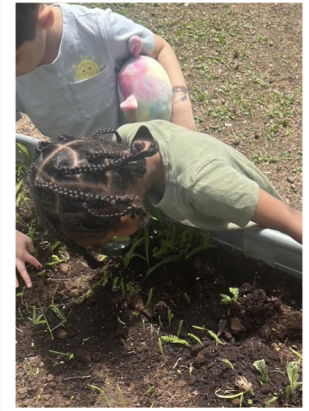
Toronto District School Board - Climate Literacy & Leadership Program 2026

# Teaching Reciprocity Through Connection and Care

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Inquiry with Grades 1&2



Earth Month clean up-  
looked as earth as our family



### Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Develop observation skills by spending time outdoors noticing patterns, plants, animals, and seasonal changes.
- Reflect on personal connections to places and understand why land and nature are important to different communities.
- Understand how treaties establish shared responsibilities to care for the land and live together respectfully.
- Take meaningful actions to care for the environment through planting, stewardship, art, and community action.

### Climate Concepts:

- **Interdependence:** People, plants, animals, and the land are interconnected, and our actions affect the communities and environments around us.
- **Responsibility & Reciprocity:** Caring for the environment involves responsibility, respect, and giving back to the land and living things that support us.

### Learning Activities:

**Collaborative Inquiry Question:** How can I instill a sense of reciprocity, responsibility and action in my students about the environment?

**Summer/Fall:** We began the year by intentionally reframing our schoolyard as a place of learning and wonder rather than just a space for recess. I introduced regular outdoor learning through nature journaling, providing students with mats, clipboards, and journals to support focused observation. Together, we practiced slowing down and noticing the living world more intentionally, using prompts that encouraged attention to detail, patterns, textures, and the use of all senses.



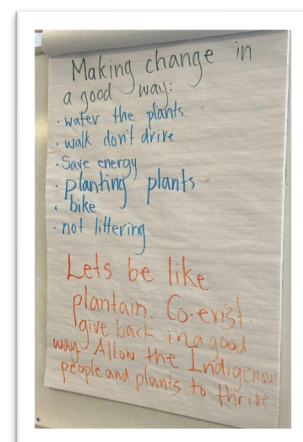
**Late Fall:** As students became more comfortable observing, we began to deepen our understanding of the living things in our schoolyard. I introduced Indigenous ways of knowing plants and trees as kin, focusing on their gifts as sources of life, and medicine. Students shared their own knowledge and experiences, including how plants are used in their cultures or daily lives. We also explored how some Indigenous languages name living things based on what they do or how they support life, such as describing an owl as “the one who hoos” or a strawberry as “heart berry.” This helped students recognize each living being as unique and meaningful, and strengthened their connection to the land.

Example of a plant information card we posted in our schoolyard



**Winter:** Our focus shifted to reflection and relationships with place. Students explored meaningful places in their lives through guided prompts, recognizing that places hold memories, emotions, and a sense of belonging. I then extended this thinking by introducing the story of Turtle Island and the concept of treaties as living agreements. Students began to understand that we are all treaty people with shared responsibilities to care for the land and live respectfully with one another. We also explored Indigenous art as a form of storytelling, and students created their own pieces inspired by these ideas.

**Spring:** As students developed stronger connections to the land and a deeper understanding of responsibility and reciprocity, we began exploring what it means to give back. Students discussed how learning about the environment should lead to action, and that responsibility involves not only knowing about the land but caring for it in meaningful ways. Together, we brainstormed tangible ways we could take action as a class and contribute positively to the spaces we learn and live in. This connected to Robin Wall Kimmerer’s idea of “being a plantain” as a model for caring for our schoolyard ecosystem. Students shared ideas about caring for plants and animals, reducing harm to the environment, and bringing greater attention to the living things around us. These conversations helped students begin to see themselves as active participants in caring for their community and environment.



#### Lessons Learned:

- Students developed stronger observation skills and deeper connections to nature through regular outdoor learning and nature journaling.
- Indigenous perspectives helped students understand the land as living, interconnected, and deserving of care and respect.
- Personal reflection helped students connect emotionally to places and better understand stewardship and responsibility.
- Hands-on actions such as planting and caring for the schoolyard helped students see themselves as active contributors to environmental change.

#### Key Resources:

- *Native Land Digital. (n.d.). Whose Land.* <https://www.whose.land/en/>
- *YouTube Education. (n.d.). Treaties and Indigenous perspectives [Video].* <https://www.youtubeeducation.com/watch?v=HtUIMJwHKRI>
- *Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults, Kimmerer, R. W., & Monique Gray Smith. (2022). Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants.*