

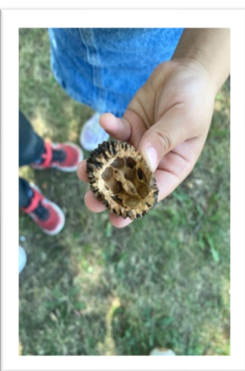
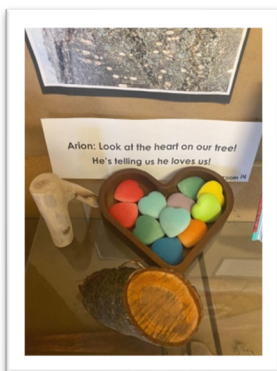


Stories of Climate Change Education

Toronto District School Board - Climate Literacy & Leadership Program 2026

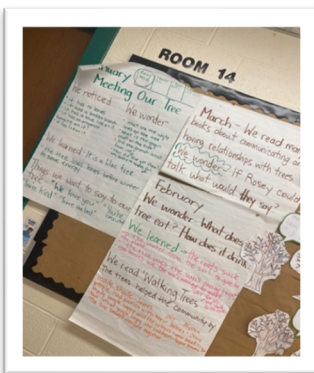
Roots and Stories: Our Living Playground

Ericka Bonilla, Teacher-Librarian, Wedgewood Junior School,
Kindergarten to Grade 5



Learning Outcomes:

- Students will be able to form a relationship of kinship with a specific tree, shifting their perspective from seeing trees as objects to viewing them as living relations. By treating the tree as kin, students will demonstrate care, responsibility, and reciprocity in their interactions with the natural world, aligning with both Indigenous Ways of Knowing and environmental education goals.
- Students will develop an understanding of Land as First Teacher by integrating Indigenous worldviews into their daily observations. They will be able to articulate how this relationship shapes their responsibility toward the environment and will commit to sustainable acts of stewardship, such as creating a "Promise to the Tree".

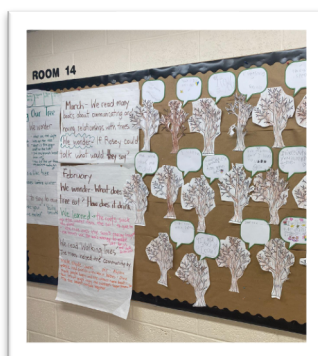


Climate Concepts:

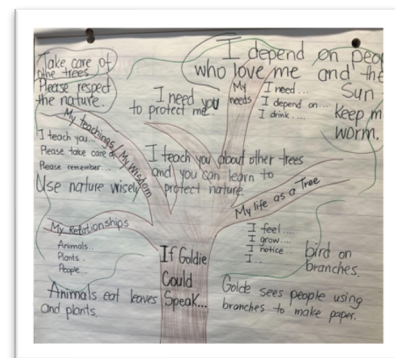
- **Identity affirming:** By engaging with trees as "kin," students see their own roles as caretakers and storytellers reflected in the natural world, fostering a sense of belonging and personal connection to the Land.
- **Responsibility and Reciprocity:** Students learn that a relationship with the environment involves a two-way exchange of care, where they move beyond just using the Land to actively honouring and protecting their kin through stewardship.
- **Interdependence:** Students discover how trees, fungi, and



- Students will be able to document and share the story of their adopted tree through diverse media and art forms, including tree journals, oral storytelling, podcasts, and dramatization. They will demonstrate the ability to translate scientific observations (such as growth patterns and seasonal changes) into creative narratives that build curiosity and hope regarding complex systems like climate change.



wildlife rely on one another for survival, mirroring the interconnected nature of our own human systems.



Learning Activities:

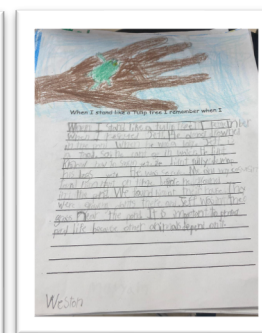
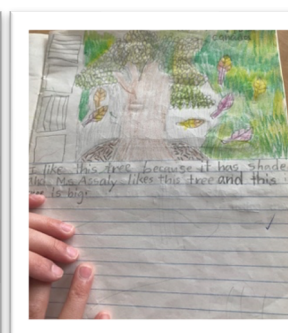
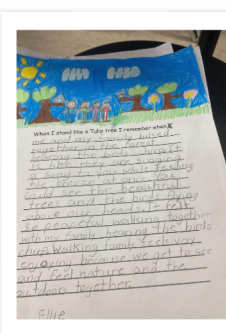
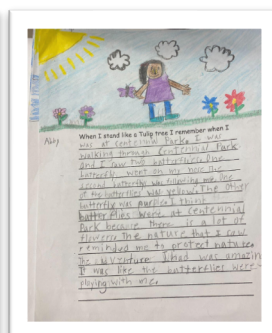
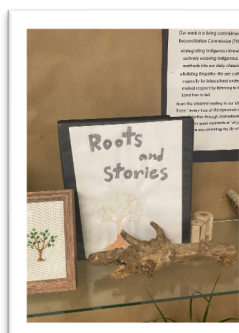
Collaborative Inquiry Question: *By observing, understanding, and honouring their stories, what can we learn when we see our trees as kin?*

Overview: The Roots and Stories project was a 10 to 12 week collaborative inquiry for students in Kindergarten to Grade 5 that used Indigenous worldviews to reframe trees as living relatives rather than objects. The inquiry was structured into four distinct phases involving both educator-led facilitation and student-driven exploration.

Fostering Relationships: The inquiry began with a two-week tree-adoption phase where students established a relationship of kinship by naming their specific tree and researching its ecological role.

Slow Pedagogy: During the observation phase, students engaged in “Sit Spots” and deep sensory reflection to build a creative narrative from the tree’s perspective.

Making Learning Visible: In the dramatization phase, students used digital tools and various art forms to develop an artefact to make their learning visible.



Celebration of Learning: Finally, the project culminated in a community “Roots Festival” and the creation of a digital tree trail, where students shared their multimedia stories and commitments to stewardship.

Lessons Learned:

- This experience reinforces the belief that teaching should be relational and reciprocal rather than just transactional, moving away from viewing the environment as a commodity. By framing trees as kin, it aligns more specifically with Climate Change Education by shifting the focus from “learning about” nature to “learning from” the Land as a primary teacher.
- The inquiry pushes thinking toward the “Wood Wide Web” and the social connectivity of forests, as highlighted by resources like *Finding the Mother Tree*. The idea that a forest is a community held together by “Mother Trees” extends the curriculum beyond basic biology and into the realm of social-ecological systems, encouraging students to see themselves as part of a complex, supportive network.
- Through this collaborative inquiry, there is a deeper understanding of CCE as a multidisciplinary effort that blends scientific observation with creative storytelling and Indigenous Ways of Knowing. It emphasizes that effective climate education is not just about sharing facts about a crisis, but about fostering a foundational sense of empathy and stewardship that empowers students to act with care and responsibility.

Key Resources:

- ***Finding the Mother Tree***
by Suzanne Simard
- ***Making Kin with Trees: Three Educators and Children Entangled with Treescapes*** by Stephanie Jones, Lindsey Lush and Sarah Whitaker
- ***Do Trees Have Mothers?***
by Charles Bongers