



BEING STILL IN NATURE GRADE 5-8

Be guided through nature by Mi'kmaw poet Shalan Joudry as you practice stillness in nature.

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN:

- How to relax and let nature explore you instead of you exploring nature
- How to calm your mind

CURRICULUM OUTCOME:

- Discovering oneself through nature, understanding the reflections of an L'nu poet about being still in nature

MATERIALS:

- Open heart, still mind

This is an individual outdoor activity, it can be done in outdoor spaces of the school, home, backyard, or nearby parks/trails

WHAT TO DO:

1. Ask the class what they like the most about nature walks.
2. Share this small essay/ reflection by Shalan Joudry, an L'nu poet, storyteller, mother, and ecologist with the class. Here is what she feels:

"Our Elders, L'nu Elders and cultural leaders have been encouraging us to slow down".

"Teluisi shalan joudry. Tleyawi Mi'kma'ki, aq wiki L'sitkuk. I'm a poet, storyteller, mother and ecologist. My partner, Frank Meuse, tells us instead of going into the forest to observe it, we also need to sit and let it observe us. I started doing that a few years ago and it reminded me of how I spent time in the forest when I was a teenager. I would sit on a rock and stare at a brook or a mossy landscape for hours and daydream".

"Later, I thought that was being unproductive. We're often guilty in some way to be more productive in our jobs and lives".

"I remember an elder saying that watching a fire burn is his way of meditating. I think being still in the forest is like that for me. The first few minutes my mind is still buzzing with thoughts and I talk to myself for a while. Eventually, I'm not sure how, but before too long my thoughts slow down, my mind is settled, like a fog clearing. I'm more ready to hear the birds and the way the trees sound in the breeze. I'm more ready to just smell the scents of the forest, without naming them or calculating them, just breathing them in".

"I imagine back to the time of our long-ago ancestors here. I can appreciate that life wasn't easy living completely off the land. I think they must have had better mental health than we do today. The land and water kept them well. But now, too much is happening in our day to slow down enough to really get the most potent attributes of nature. When we go camping or hiking, it's lovely and healthy, but I believe we miss out on something more profound. The real medicine comes in the stillness".

"To me, sitting in nature long enough, reminds me about what it means to be part of the land, what it means to be human".

1. Inspired by these reflections by Shalan Joudry, Encourage the class to go for a walk in the Riverside's Knowledge path and let them spend some time in nature without given any specific task.
2. After their time spent outside, the teacher can have a discussion with the class about how the students felt and if it was different from other nature walks? Was nature exploring them or they ended up exploring nature? Did they feel unproductive? Is being in nature good for mental health? Any other special observations/reflections by the students can be noted.
3. After the discussion, ask students to journal about their experience on how they felt and what they think of the above reflections by Shalan Joudry.
4. Ask the students if they would be willing to take more walks like this, what did they learn from this activity?

ASSESSMENT:

- Learners could be assessed on their openness and willingness to understand the above writers view of point.

EXTENSION

- Older learners could read authors book- "[Elapultiek- We are looking towards](#)"

CREDIT/REFERENCES:

This activity was inspired by the reflections of [How being still in nature can remind us of what it means to be human | CBC News](#) by Shalan Joudry.