



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Making Spruce Gum Tea

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*Please read this Acknowledgement before the start of this lesson to respect the knowledge that is being shared and the Land of the People where the knowledge originates.:*

This lesson plan comes from a Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN) Elder who lives in the community of Dettah, NT. YKDFN Peoples are also known as Wiliideh Yellowknives Dene who live on their traditional territory known as Akaitcho Territory, which consists of the lands around the north of Great Slave Lake in Northwest Territories.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

*Upon successful completion of this lesson plan, students will be able to:*

1. Explore different areas during a medicine walk and identify trees that have spruce gum on them.
2. Appreciate the importance of offering tobacco or a gift to the land before harvesting.
3. Explore different methods of harvesting spruce gum - using tools or your hands.
4. Prepare the spruce gum into a medicine, and understand the significance of spruce gum as an Indigenous traditional medicine and how it is used.
5. Reclaim teachings that were once lost during colonization, and pass on the teachings to future generations.

### LIST OF ACTIVITIES

1. Harvesting the Spruce Gum
2. Making Medicine Tea

### MATERIALS

- Supplies: tobacco or gift offering; tools and containers
- Photograph of spruce gum on tree
- Photograph of spruce gum on a tree
- Short Video - Giving Thanks with Tobacco
- Supplies and Equipment: a pot (preferably an old pot), a large quantity of spruce gum, a heat source (fire or stove top), a strainer.



## Traditional Medicines

### Origin

Yellowknives Dene First Nation; Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning Dettah; Yellowknife Northwest Territories

### Learning Level / Grade

**Youth (up to age 30)**

Also: Families / Parents, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, Professional Development/Continuing Education, Post-Secondary, Early Childhood Education, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, Families / Parents



**360 mins**

### Related Subjects

Health, Indigenous Ways of Knowing & Being, On-the-Land

## DESCRIPTION

This lesson includes two activities. The first is on how to harvest the spruce gum, and the second is on how to prepare the spruce gum to use as medicine tea. Within this teaching, students will learn the importance and use of spruce gum in Indigenous traditional medicines. The activity requires being on the land during any season in an area that has spruce trees as well as a place to boil the medicine.

## HOLISM AND ALL OUR RELATIONS

*This lesson plan has been developed with an Indigenous lens that is holistic in nature, a way of being and knowing that acknowledges our relationships with 'all our relations', including plants and animals, other human beings, the water, land, wind, sun, moon, stars, and more - everything seen and unseen. With 'all our relations' in mind, this lesson plan has been developed with a focus on:*

- Participatory and experiential learning activities
- Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders
- Relationship with family, ancestors
- Different learning styles; attention given to mind, body, and spirit
- Connections are made with everyday life
- Nurturing healthy relationships in school and community
- Healthy relationship with self and identity
- Relationship with the land
- Personal reflection time (connecting with thoughts and feelings)

## TEACHERS' GUIDE

### Background/Foundational Information

- This lesson plan can be split up into different days or units. It can be featured in an Indigenous Studies class and can be incorporated into health and sciences as a pathway to explore the significance of traditional medicines within Indigenous communities. For this lesson, you will require accessibility to an area with spruce trees, which may be difficult for classes in urban/city settings. However, that does not mean it isn't possible; you may need to plan a field trip. The best way to know if there is an area near you to harvest spruce gum is to ask a local Elder or someone who knows the territory where you are.

## ACTIVITIES

## 1 - Harvesting the Spruce Gum

**Purpose**

The purpose of this activity is to get students out on the land to learn how to harvest spruce gum.

**Time:** 120 mins

**Activity Instructions**

For this activity students will be outdoors in an area that has spruce trees. This activity will show students how to harvest the spruce gum from the tree using either a knife or their hands. Students will have the opportunity to explore their surroundings to find a tree that has spruce gum on it, which will vary among trees. It is a hands-on learning activity that requires at least an hour on the land to give the students time to find spruce gum and to harvest enough to then make tea with it.

The short video (attached in the 'Materials' section below) shows someone giving thanks to the land and the trees from which spruce gum will be harvested. Two photos are also attached showing what spruce gum looks like.

**This activity is designed to connect with learners with these learning styles...**

- Spiritual (e.g., Relational) Learners
- Physical (e.g., Tactile, Experiential, Visual) Learners
- Intellectual (e.g., Rational, Logical) Learners
- Emotional (e.g., Feeling, Intuitive) Learners

**... in the following ways:**

**Spiritual learners** - This activity demonstrates the importance of land for Indigenous peoples. When harvesting we must always acknowledge and give thanks to the tree and the land for gifting us with the medicine needed to keep ourselves and our communities healthy. By being on the land and sitting with the tree while harvesting, the student can develop a relational connection to the tree and the place where the tree is.

**Physical learners** - This activity is a hands-on learning experience that involves both experiential and visual learning. The students will have to identify what trees are producing the spruce gum before being able to harvest it.

**Emotional learners** - This activity can be emotional and cause feelings in those who are learning the teaching for the first time. It may be difficult for Indigenous students who lost the teaching due to colonization but it is also a way for them to reconnect with their roots.

**Intellectual learners** - This activity takes both rationality and logic because the student will start to identify how the tree produces the spruce gum as well as the best way to harvest it. Students will learn that you can use tools or your hands but that one way will be easier depending on the spruce.

**Materials**

*Click the 'Link' to open and view videos.*

*To open and print files, please go to the 'files' folder accompanying this downloaded lesson plan.*

Resource Title	Type
Supplies: tobacco or gift offering; tools and containers	Supplies 📦
Photograph of spruce gum on tree one of two photographs	File (SPRUCE GUM 1.jpeg) 📄
Photograph of spruce gum on a tree second of two photographs	File (SPRUCE GUM 2.jpeg) 📄
Short Video - Giving Thanks with Tobacco	File (Paying the land - Tobacco .MOV) 📄

TEACHING NOTES

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## 2 - Making Medicine Tea

### Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to show how to make the spruce gum into a traditional medicine tea that can be used to relieve colds and maintain good health.

**Time:** 120 mins

### Activity Instructions

This activity will show students how to prepare spruce gum to use as tea. For this activity you will need: a pot (preferably an old pot), a large quantity of spruce gum, a heat source (fire or stove top) and a strainer.

After harvesting the spruce gum, you will then add it to a pot and bring it to a boil. It can take up to an hour to boil the spruce gum enough to become more liquidy. You may add water to make it less syrup-like. Once the gum is boiled, you can strain it to remove any excess bark, and let it cool. This tea is very concentrated so it is recommended to take in small sips.

### Materials

*Click the 'Link' to open and view videos.*

*To open and print files, please go to the 'files' folder accompanying this downloaded lesson plan.*

Resource Title	Type
<b>Supplies and Equipment: a pot (preferably an old pot), a large quantity of spruce gum, a heat source (fire or stove top), a strainer.</b>	Supplies 📄

## TEACHING NOTES

## ASSESSMENT

*This section contains information for assessing progress in students' learning. While Indigenous approaches to assessment may be highlighted, conventional assessment methods may also be discussed.*

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Click the 'Link' to open and view videos.

To open and print files, please go to the 'files' folder accompanying this downloaded lesson plan.

Resource Title	Type
<b>Gwich'in Resource for Spruce Gum</b>	<a href="#">Link</a> 
This resource provides background information on how to use spruce gum as well as how to harvest it. It includes the Gwich'in language and the different ways the Gwich'in people use spruce trees.	

## HOLISM AND ALL OUR RELATIONS

*This lesson plan has been developed with an Indigenous lens that is holistic in nature, a way of being and knowing that acknowledges our relationships with 'all our relations', including plants and animals, other human beings, the water, land, wind, sun, moon, stars, and more - everything seen and unseen. With 'all our relations' in mind, this lesson plan has been developed with a focus on:*

<b>Relationship with the land</b>
This lesson plan requires the group to be outdoors, which allows students to explore the land and to learn the different ways of how the land helps us heal. Students will begin to understand the importance of what the land has to offer and how Indigenous peoples have been using it since time immemorial to stay healthy. This lesson plan also provides an alternative to western medicine.
<b>Participatory and experiential learning activities</b>
<b>Relationship with family, ancestors</b>
This lesson plan can provide a way for students to connect with their family about the activities they learned. It can also be used as an outdoor activity for families to get out on the land to harvest medicine for themselves and other family members. This lesson plan can provide a pathway for Indigenous students to reconnect with their Elders and ancestors. It will allow them to get a better understanding of Indigenous ways of life and can be an activity their family may be able to extend their knowledge on.
<b>Connections are made with everyday life</b>
This lesson plan is a way for students to connect with their everyday life by understanding the importance of maintaining their health. During times of sickness we rely on western medicines that not all families may have access to; this lesson provides an alternative medicine that can be found on the land.
<b>Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders</b>
Were Elders or Knowledge Holders involved in the development of this Lesson Plan? Yes Can Elders or Knowledge Holders be invited to help teach part of this lesson plan? Yes
<b>Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders</b>
<b>Different learning styles; attention given to mind, body, and spirit</b>
<b>Healthy relationship with self and identity</b>

Students are encouraged to use this activity to connect with their identities as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. For Indigenous students, this can show them teachings that their ancestors might have used and the importance of keeping the teachings alive by passing them on to others. This may also be a way for them to connect with their Elders on traditional medicines and find out the different teachings and medicines used by their communities. For non-Indigenous students, this is a great way for them to reflect on the importance of Indigenous traditional medicines and acknowledge the sacred teaching.

**Personal reflection time (connecting with thoughts and feelings)**

An assignment can be to make a jar of spruce gum tea with a creative label explaining where the tea was found. They can then write about their experience with the activities in a journal or a letter. The journal or letter can be about what they enjoyed about the activities and how they plan to pass on the teaching. Once they finish reflecting in writing, they will then gift their jar of medicine tea to a family member or friend. When gifting it, they will need to explain how to use the tea and what the tea can help with.

## OTHER DETAILS

## RELATED LESSON PLANS

- [Medicine Walk](#)
- [Land-Based Education: Personal Reflection](#)
- [Consent from the Land with Spruce Boughs](#)

## CONTRIBUTORS

Name	Role/Job Title	Place
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## QUESTIONS/MORE DETAILS

For Questions contact: [Dechinta \(admin@dechinta.ca\)](mailto:admin@dechinta.ca) for more information.