**Lesson 17 (Midaaswi shi niizhwaaswi):**

**Introduction to Foraging (Foraging Part 1)**



**Lesson Objective**

* The family will understand that we all have the right to gather food and medicine (forage) from the land and water to nourish us. We are all connected to the natural environment. The Earth nourishes us; when we reciprocate care back to the land, we uphold the right of future generations to access food and medicine in their communities as it exists within ours.
* The family will identify the ways they can show respect, reciprocity, and care for the land and water as they forage. We are all responsible for taking care of our environment.

**Medicine Wheel Wisdom**

Knowing who we are is understanding our connection to the Earth and our plant relatives. This connection keeps our spirit strong and is symbolized by the Southern direction of the medicine wheel. The South represents our connection to the lands, waters, and all living things which sustain us and provide us with all we need. We must show respect for the wisdom of our plant relatives and care for them so they may sustain future generations.

**Family Outcomes (PICCOLO):**

* Attends to the child’s actions.
* Is physically close to the child.

**Child Behavior Outcomes (LOLLIPOP):**

* See the Behavior Outcomes table for Moon-specific outcomes.

**Home Visitor Lesson Overview**

**Materials Needed:**

* Leave behind materials
	+ Foraging in Different Seasons handout
	+ Universal Edibility Test handout
	+ Respectful Harvest Guidelines handout
	+ Children’s Foraging Checklist
	+ Tobacco Offering Information Sheet [Ojibwe & Potawatomi versions available]
* Materials to make tobacco ties
	+ Loose tobacco
	+ Cloth squares
	+ Ribbon/twine/string

**Introduction to Foraging Lesson & Activity**

1. **Introduction to Foraging**
2. Discuss the concept of foraging.

***[Home Visitor Notes]: Foraging is the act of gathering medicinal plants and/or food from nature; it can be as simple as picking blackberries from a bush. Foraging is an activity that can be enjoyed at any time of year, though in winter yields will be much lower. Generally, spring and late summer/early autumn are the peak foraging times, when the widest variety of wild foods will be available and at their best. Foraging is about enhancing your diet with tasty and nutritious seasonal plants that the Earth provides, not replacing whole meals. It is our responsibility to respect, to show reciprocity to, and to care for the land, so that future generations may also enjoy what the Earth has to offer us.***

* 1. Using the **Foraging Brainstorm Activity handout**, ask the family what types of plants they can forage for in the current season; where they can look for the plant; and how the foraged items can be used. Allow the family to ask questions about foraging and continue with the lesson.
1. Discuss the importance of responsible foraging, respecting nature, and only harvesting what you will use. Provide the family with the **Respectful Harvest Guidelines handout** and read the handout aloud with them. Discuss any thoughts or questions that arise for the family.
2. Provide the family with **the tobacco offering information sheet**. Go over it with them and make sure they have an opportunity to ask questions.

***[Home Visitor Notes]: Tobacco offerings hold deep cultural and spiritual significance. Tobacco is a sacred and powerful plant used to connect to the spiritual world, offer prayers, offer thanks, and to show respect to the Earth and all living beings. Tobacco is offered when taking anything from the Earth, in hunting, fishing, harvesting rice, or foraging for plants and medicines. Offering a pinch of dried ceremonial tobacco symbolizes our connection to nature, our ancestors, and the spiritual world and highlights the interconnectedness of all life and the importance of preserving cultural heritage for future generations. Today, we will be making tobacco ties to give as an offering when we forage during the next time we meet. When we find a plant we want to forage, we will greet the plant and introduce ourselves, and then state our intention of how the plant will be used (for healing, to feed yourself/others, etc.).***

Be mindful of moon-time teachings.

1. Highlight safety guidelines, including avoiding poisonous plants and being mindful of fragile ecosystems

***[Home Visitor Notes]: We want to forage away from roads and well-established walking paths, away from areas with possible contamination, and away from protected lands. It is unsafe to forage near the roadside or ditches because trash, chemicals from cars, and salt from winter months contaminate these areas. Additionally, we must be mindful of areas which may have been treated with chemicals, such as insecticides, pesticides, and lawn fertilizers. These chemicals are harmful to our health and are unsafe for consumption. More information on protected lands and where to avoid foraging can be found on the Michigan DNR website if families are unsure of where they can forage outside of their community.***

* 1. Emphasize the importance of respecting the land

***[Home Visitor Notes]: Plants can have both positive and negative impacts on our bodies; we must be mindful of and respect the natural environment. It is incredibly important to understand proper plant identification to avoid harming our health or well-being, or the health of the land. We must respect the teachings and purpose of all living beings.***

* 1. Provide the family with the **Universal Edibility Test handout**.

***[Home Visitor Notes]: This Universal Edibility test walks you through how to test plants which you are unable to positively identify from their appearance. This test should only be used as a last resort and is relatively time-consuming. In instances where we are unsure about if a plant is safe to eat or not, it is best to consult experts, such as Tribal Elders or expert foragers. Never eat anything you cannot positively identify and deem safe to eat/touch!***

1. Using the **Foraging Brainstorm Activity** and **Foraging in Different Seasons Handouts,** the family will select an in-season plant to forage. During the next visit, the home visitor will help the family forage in a safe and familiar place, including helping the family to identify what parts of the plant are edible and brainstorming how to cook with them (what parts of the plant to use, which to avoid).

**Activity: Making Tobacco Ties**

* Using what the family learned from the **tobacco offering information sheet**, create tobacco ties with the family. These will be used during the foraging activity during the following visit.

***\*Prior to the next visit, pick a spot to meet the families to forage. This can be a spot they know and are familiar with, or a recommended spot nearby the family’s home. It is recommended for this lesson that families be made aware they will be foraging outside and to dress appropriately for weather conditions. It is recommended to wear long pants, long sleeves, closed-toe shoes, and gloves when foraging to protect from plants, branches, or insects. Review the materials for this lesson and note the Tools and Recommended items.***

**Lesson 17 (Midaaswi shi niizhwaaswi):**

**Foraging in Nature (Foraging Part 2)**



**Lesson Objective**

* The family will demonstrate how to safely forage together in their community and will be prepared to support and encourage the each other’s excitement and curiosity of the natural environment.

**Materials Needed:**

* Leave behind materials
	+ Foraging journal/log
* Tools for foraging
	+ Foraging reference guide or phone app (Google Image search, PlantNet app, Picture This app)
	+ Reusable bag or basket to hold foraged items
	+ Tobacco ties
* Recommended items
	+ Drinking water
	+ Sunscreen
	+ Bug spray
	+ Gardening gloves
	+ Scissors or a knife for harvesting

**Foraging in the Nature Lesson & Activity**

1. **Nature Walk and Observation**
2. Begin your foraging adventure with a nature walk through a safe and familiar place, which you previously agreed on with the family. Focus on taking time to observe the environment around you; we can find food and medicine high and low in nature. This is a great opportunity for children to practice observation and curiosity of the environment to find food and medicine in nature.
3. Encourage children to observe and appreciate the natural surroundings, pointing out different plants, trees, and wildlife you see as you explore the area.
4. **Plant Identification**
5. Using field guides, Google Image Search, a smartphone app, or knowledge from exerts or wisdom-keepers, practice identifying edible plants in the area. Have the family practice identifying any plants they notice or express interest in. Try to search in places where the plant you are looking for would be.
6. Teach children to recognize and differentiate between safe and potentially harmful species. Children must be observant of what they are looking for and mindful of potential dangers in the wild (i.e., wild berries and mushrooms are not always safe to eat).

***[Home Visitor Notes]: We must possess a certainty of a plant’s identification before foraging. Children must have parental permission before collecting a plant. Some plants may be good for us, but some may also hurt us. We should never eat anything we are not 100% sure of.***

1. **Responsible Foraging and Harvesting**
2. Display mindfulness of how to properly forage the plant so it may continue to provide nutrition for others (future generations). Observe the prevalence of the plant in your location; is there enough to forage for the family to use while still leaving half or more for others?
3. Providing guidance to the family, they will forage the edible plant(s) you have successfully identified together.

***[Home Visitor Notes]: Plants are relatives and should be treated that way. Before taking from our plant relatives, it is important for us to ask permission and honor their sacrifice. After we hear our answer, we can offer tobacco as a show of our thanks. When offering tobacco to your plant relative, introduce yourself and tell them how they will be used, such as to feed your family or to help with healing. Then, with your left hand, gently place the tobacco in the earth next to or nearby the plant.***

* 1. Have the family introduce themselves and ask for permission to forage the plant; take time to connect with nature; ask the family what they felt from the land. If all parties agree that the land has granted permission to use the identified plant, offer your ceremonial tobacco, express thanks to the Earth for what is has provided for you, and proceed.

***[Home Visitor Notes]: When foraging, we want to limit our harm to the land as much as possible. It is important for us to be mindful of where we step and even where we park our car! When we take care of the environment, there are more opportunities for the land to continue to provide for us, and the generations after us. It is our responsibility to ensure that not only are the plants able to provide for the next generation, but that we are also sharing our knowledge and experience with others to ensure the health of our plant relatives.***

* 1. Draw connections to the Respectful Harvest handout you discussed with the family during the previous home visiting lesson. Remember principles of leaving enough for others (no less than half) and not taking the first or last of a plant.

***[Home Visitor Notes]: It is important to leave some of what you want to forage behind for other foragers, insects, mammals, and plant repopulation***. **If we take everything, we cannot share with other foragers or future generations who may need the care or knowledge of a plant relative.**

* 1. Forage the part of the plant that you want to take and pack it away into the bag or basket you brought. Make sure to leave the plant healthy and undamaged as you take from it; be mindful of being precise and careful when cutting the plant away.
	2. Head back to where you started and conclude the activity with the lesson wrap-up below.

Every wild grown plant has a teaching and a purpose; some are for food, some for medicine, and some may be poisonous. Knowing what is safe to pick, use, or eat is an important skill that protects our health and the surrounding environment.

**Lesson Wrap-Up:**

1. **Sharing and Learning**
2. Prompt the family to discuss what they learned during the foraging experience. What did they find the most interesting or exciting?
3. Share interesting facts about the plant(s) they found, their uses, and the benefits of foraging sustainably, or look up the plant as a group and answer these questions together.

***[Home Visitor Notes]: Allow for open conversation here. This is an opportunity to ask questions and explore concepts as a group, encouraging interest.***

1. **Wrap-up and Reflection**
2. Encourage the children to express their thoughts and feelings about the foraging adventure.
3. Emphasize the importance of preserving natural habitats and making conscious choices as foragers.
4. **Optional: Recipe Session**
5. Prior to leaving, have a brainstorming session with the family for how to use the foraged item. Spend time as a group researching what parts of the plant are best to use and what recipes sound exciting and are easy for the family to cook together.

***[Home Visitor Notes]: It is highly recommended to use everything that you pick or forage in the wild. We should not waste the gifts which the Earth has provided for us, and should be mindful of properly storing what we don’t use. Taking the time to research proper plant storage can ensure we store foraged items properly to preserve their quality and flavor, but also so we reduce our risk of foodborne illnesses. When we store foraged food and medicine correctly, we can extend its shelf life, share it with others, and fully enjoy our harvest while respecting the gift we have received from the Earth. Some plants may need to be stored in a specific way; some plants may need to be frozen, preserved, or dried. Using online resources can help determine the best way to store foraged plants, but knowledge from wisdom-keepers or Elders who have experience with foraged foods and medicines is highly recommended.***

1. If you've successfully gathered edible plants, the family can conclude the day with a simple cooking session of the meal or snack they chose from the brainstorming session, using the foraged items. Ensure the family knows which parts of the plant are edible and which are not. If the family wants to save what they foraged, ensure they know how to store it properly to avoid any risk of sickness.
* Leave-behind materials
* Foraging journal