Forest Walk – looking at the Maple Tree

Mavis Dumont

**Introduction to Forest Walk:**

Mavis introduces her series related to forest walks and things we see in the forest. She points out some of the different kinds of trees we see here on the west coast. She points out a cedar tree but she wants us to find a maple tree. In fact, she wants us to find some maple leaves for a fun art project she wants us to do. Do you know what a big leaf maple tree looks like? Do you know what a maple leaf from this tree looks like?

**Looking for a maple leaf**

Mavis looks for a maple leaf. She reminds us that some plants look very similar. She comes across a thimbleberry plant and its leaves look very much like a maple leaf. This is where it is so important to know your plants. Indigenous peoples, prior to contact had excellent knowledge about all the different plants. They knew which ones they could harvest for food and which ones they could harvest for medicine. Have you ever wondered how they knew which ones were safe to eat? They would watch the animals. If the animals ate it, then it was likely safe to eat.

**Found a maple leaf**

Mavis has lots of knowledge about the different kinds of plants and trees in the forest. How do you think she came to get all this knowledge? Mavis has done lots of learning. She has learned from elders and she has done her own research. Going for a walk with Mavis is like walking with an encyclopedia. She loves to harvest all kinds of plants. Next time she visits your classroom, ask her what kinds of plants she harvested.

**Some Facts about maple leaves and Indigenous connections to the maple tree**

Mavis shares some very interesting facts with us. We learn that maple syrup was introduced to the French settlers. Mavis shares the names of three First Nation groups that come from eastern Canada who taught the French settles how to harvest the ‘sweet water’ from the maple tree. They are the **Haudenosaunee**, **Mi'kmaq**, and the **Anishinaabe.** How do you think they learned how to harvest maple syrup from a tree? How did they know what time of year is best to harvest the syrup? This knowledge is sometimes called Indigenous knowledge. It’s knowledge about the land and all living things on it. Mavis tells us that the First Nations also taught the settlers how to cure meat. That’s an interesting word – cure. It means to preserve the meat so it will last a long time. Remember, long ago, we did not have refrigerators so First Nation peoples developed ways to preserve food. Mavis mentioned maple bacon! Doesn’t that sound good?

**A Colouring Activity**

Mavis has a wonderful activity for you to try. She asks students to trace their maple leaf. Then she asks students to draw in the veins using a felt pen. Notice that the veins go right to the tip of the leaf? There is lots of plant vocabulary to learn. Mavis says students can begin colouring their leaves using paints or felts. She suggests students use fall colours. Do you know the colours of fall? She also says there is another fun activity for students to try and it is called pointillism.

**Finished colouring project and more facts about maple trees**

Mavis shares lots of facts about maple leaves. Did you know that there are more than 150 varieties of maple trees in Canada? Maple trees are used to make furniture. Look around your house. Do you have any maple furniture? Mavis explains that the maple tree is a symbol of Canada. It is featured on our flag. Mavis teaches us that the maple leaf on our flag symbolizes unity, abundance, and tolerance.

**Mavis shares her pointillism project inspired by the maple leaf**

What is pointillism? Take a peek at this website that provides a kid friendly definition and examples of this art form. <https://www.ducksters.com/history/art/pointillism.php> You may have watched a previous video that Mavis made and she shared her buffalo art project. She used pointillism to make her buffalo painting.