

# Trees in Our Community: Past, Present and Future



## Activity Info

**Level:** primary/junior

**Subject:** environmental science, language arts, visual arts, history, human geography

**Skills:** observing, noting patterns, interpreting and communicating information

**Duration:**

Part 1: one class + field trip or independent observation time

Part 2: one class + research time

**Group:** individual or small groups; class

**Setting:** outdoors and classroom

**Preparation:** Copy of activity sheets; if you are planning a field trip or walking tour, make the necessary preparations.

**Optional:** obtain *The Man Who Planted Trees* [book or video format]



## Summary

Students will observe trees in their local community and follow up with an in-class discussion about past and present patterns of trees and tree communities. Students will then apply this information through a creative story, drawing or mapping exercise. In Part 2, students will explore the role that trees have played in the lives of local residents — the early Native community, the early settlers and today.



## Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- make, record and discuss observations about the trees in their community, past and present
- discuss the roles trees played in the lives of local residents — past and present
- imagine what the tree communities will look like in the future



## Background

Although there are parts of Canada where trees are scarce, to most Canadians, trees are a part of everyday life. You may live in a rural area or one of more than 350 communities that depend on forestry, directly or indirectly, or you may live in a town or city, seemingly far away from our forests. But no matter where you are, trees are a vital part of life.

*Adapted from activities appearing in a variety of sources including Ontario's Focus on Forests and materials produced by the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association.*

## Part One: Trees in our Community

1. **Using the enclosed *Trees in Our Community* activity sheet**, ask students to observe the trees in your community — they should observe individual trees, and groups of trees, noting patterns, types of trees, ages, sizes and so on.

**Option:** You may wish to take your class on a field trip to the highest point overlooking your town or city [e.g. a tall building, or a high ridge overlooking town] or do an on-the-ground walking tour.



If you live in a rural area or forest community, ask your students to look at the following:

- Is there a woodlot[s] or forest near your community? Where is it located? Is it set aside for any purpose [e.g. maple syrup, nature reserve, firewood]?
- Are there signs that a local forest or woodlot was planted [e.g. trees in rows, all the same type, or age]?
- Are there signs of natural regeneration taking place [seedlings sprouting along roadsides, or growing up under the larger trees]?
- Has there ever been a forest fire in this area? How do you know? What signs are left behind?

2. **After the students have completed their observations**, discuss their findings. As a group draw some conclusions about your community before and after people settled here. Where are the trees located and why are they here? What patterns can you see?

3. **For younger students:** Identify the oldest tree in your school yard. Why do you think it is the oldest? Draw a picture or write a story about its life. Some ideas to get started: What was happening the day it was planted? What events has it seen in its life? Who shares its world? Look closely. Does it produce nuts or berries? Are there nests in its branches? Who sits on its limbs?

**For older students:** Ask the students to draw a sketch map of the trees and forests in your community today and at one time from the past. Pick a time appropriate to your community — in some places, there may have been big changes in 10 or 20 years, in others, change may be more gradual. For additional information your students may want to interview a long-time resident of the area, or visit a local library or museum may have historic photos, maps or a county atlas that might show what your community looked like in the past.

4. **Your students have looked at the changing patterns of trees**, past and present. Ask them to look into the future 50 years from now. What do they expect their community to look like? Will there be more or less trees? Are there ways they can affect this future?

## Part Two: Valuing Trees

1. Using the *Valuing Trees* activity sheet, ask students to research the way wood was used by local residents — past and present [a few examples are provided to help them].

2. After the students have completed their research and filled in their activity sheets, discuss their findings in class. Do not forget to discuss a range of values for our forests - spiritual, aesthetic, recreational, wildlife and so on. [If you need some help see *Forest Values*, page 23]

3. **Canada's Model Forests and others** look at opportunities to value the forest in different ways. Ask the students to look at the different ways that trees were and are used in their community. If these uses have died out, are there benefits to bringing back this use? [See *insert* Relearning Old Skills.]



## The City Forest

When people first think of cities they think of buildings, pavement, sidewalks and other human signs but, in a healthy city, there are also trees. Lots of them. You can see them lining the streets, in yards, parks, ravines, and greenspace corridors, and there are other green patches such as wetlands and even woodlots. This is the urban forest.

It is only recently that we have recognized the urban forests' value to people and the environment. Think about the important role that a single tree plays in nature and then imagine the combined effect of the trees in our yards and greenspaces. City trees combat air and noise pollution, provide oxygen, protect soil, filter water and provide food and habitat for wildlife. On the human front, trees provide the often-harried city dweller with a touch of nature and with places to stroll and unwind. A city's natural areas have recreational, aesthetic and even health benefits for its human residents.

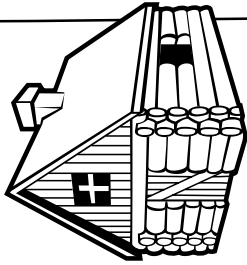
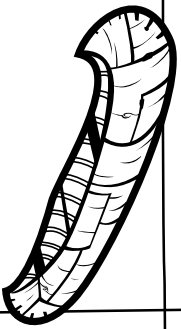
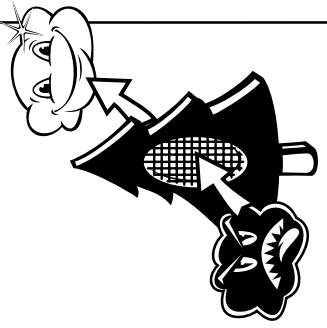
### Relearning Old Skills

There are numerous examples of partners in the Model Forests and other communities working together to redevelop old skills that will benefit their forests. Akwesasne First Nation, a partner in the Eastern Ontario Model Forest, is one example. They have revived a thriving commercial basket- and snowshoe-making enterprise using locally grown black ash as the raw materials.







| <b>USING TREES</b>                  |   |               |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------------|---|
| <b>Community Name:</b>              | <b>Building</b>   | <b>Energy</b> | <b>Three Other Examples of How Trees Were/Are Used</b>  |
| <b>Who lived here?</b>              |   |               |   |
| <b>Who lived here?</b>              | <p>In most Canadian communities, settlers built their first homes from local logs.</p>  |               | <p>Transportation:<br/>Canoes were built by aboriginal people in most parts of Canada.</p>  |
| <b>Who lives in your community?</b> |   |               | <p>Trees provide oxygen and help to clean the air.</p>                                    |

350 YEARS AGO

150 YEARS AGO

TODAY

