

Our Inheritance, Their Inheritance

Activity Information

Grade Level:	High
Subject Area:	Science, Social Studies
Duration:	35 – 60 mins
Group Size:	Small Groups or Independent
Purpose:	To help students understand the importance of protecting our natural resources for future generations. Students are introduced to the idea that what one generation does can, in some respects, improve or lead to a deterioration in quality of life for future generations.

Teacher's Notes: *The Maritime Barrens ecoregion is the most populated region in the province and has seen the most severe changes to the ecosystem due to human activity. This region was once covered by forests, however extensive logging by European settlers and widespread fires that came with the railway in the 19th century permanently changed the landscape.*

As a people, it is our responsibility to ensure the health and safety of our land and oceans for the benefit of both current and future generations. This activity will allow students to consider the costs of such human carelessness, what mistakes we have inherited from the past and what we can do now to ensure we pass on a greater legacy.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Inheritance Chart (BLM – one per group)
- Ecoregion Brochures: 6b, 6c, 6d (one of the three per student)
- Ecoregion Brochure for the region your hometown is in. (optional: one per student)
- Blank sheet of paper for each group

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- List ways in which our lives are affected by our natural resources.
- Propose ways in which our use of our natural resources (such as the forests) will affect future generations.

PROCEDURE:

Part I (Discuss) 5 – 10 minutes:

Have students think of how our lives have been affected by the activities and decisions of our ancestors. Focus the discussion by then asking students to think about how our lives and our province have been beneficially and adversely affected by our forest resources and industry.

Part II (Reading) 10 – 20 minutes:

Divide the class into three groups to do a class review of three of the Maritime Barrens subcoregions including: 6b Southeastern Barrens, 6c South Coast Barrens and 6d Central Barrens. Students will work independently or in smaller groups and specifically focus on what has changed, for better or worse, in the region. Students should identify the major landscape changes that have occurred as well as protected areas that have been established.

If students are working in groups, they may choose to divide up the reading and report back to their group on what they found. The option here is to assign the reading as a take-home exercise prior to moving onto Part III.

You may also wish to have students review the brochure for their hometown region also considering changes, for better or for worse, in that ecoregion.

Part III (Activity) 10 – 20 minutes:

Using the Inheritance Chart, each group can make their own list of the positive and negative inheritances relating to the land and resource use. Encourage students to come up with ideas from their own experiences. Lists can then be shared and discussed as a class. Some examples might include:

Today's inheritance:

- Roads and highways have made most communities accessible by land.
- Forest industries have provided generations of employment.
- Automobiles and ever advancing technology is making logging easier and safer.
- Clear cutting in the past has left some regions unable to regenerate.
- Search and rescue, cell phones, and radios are available for greater safety.
- The loss of official provincial protection of 46 parks to privatization.
- Traditional knowledge about caribou migration paths, fish breeding grounds, and other natural patterns.
- Overuse of land and forest resources because tradition dominates new ideas.
- Success stories in protecting some endangered species.

In completing the second half of the chart, groups imagine themselves as young people in two generations' time and list ways in which the past few generations have a) enhanced and b) undermined their quality of life. Have them put a date of 50 or 60 years in the future on the second half of the inheritance chart. Some examples may include:

Tomorrow's inheritance:

- A shift in focus from seeing natural areas not as trees to be cut, but as spaces to be enjoyed through ecotourism.
- More intense use of those trees that are forested with the development of secondary industries. (Cut fewer trees and make smarter use of them.)
- Stock of scientific knowledge to help make good decisions regarding the use of our natural resources.
- Greater involvement of local people in government conservation initiatives such as the establishment of a system of protected areas.
- The successful regeneration of clear-cut land, and effective use of selective cutting due to better management and decision-making.
- The total loss of significant natural areas due to slow action or inaction.
- The extinction of a herd of woodland caribou due to habitat loss.
- Labrador becoming North America's favourite vacation destination, as radical climate change makes the south uninhabitable.

A comparison of the two sets of lists can be very instructive. Do we risk leaving a more diminished inheritance for future generations than our ancestors left us? Is there a shift of emphasis in the positive and negative aspects of our own inheritance? What main problems are we leaving people in the future? Are these problems that could be easily solved right now?

How should we set about leaving a better inheritance? Are there small changes we could make in our lifestyles that would make a big difference for future generations? Should we be thinking more about the importance of establishing protected areas?

Part IV (Writing) 15 – 20 minutes:

"The world is at a critical turning point. There is significant uncertainty about how things will go in the next few years, but there is growing consensus that the decisions we make as a society, at this critical point, will determine the course of the future for quite some time to come."

Robert Constanza, SAMPAA Proceedings, 2002

Ask students to compose a letter to a decision-maker pointing out what is and what is not being done to ensure that future generations enjoy equal life benefits and opportunities from our natural resources.

Refer to the "Take Action" lesson plan for ideas on how to format this letter.

Extension Activities:

1. This activity could easily be adapted to relate the cod fishery, our relation of the sea and its resources.

