



Weaselhead Grade 6 At School Field Trip Teacher's Guide **Dark Skies and Storytelling**

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Thank you for your participation in our Grade 6 Weaselhead Education Program! This program is specifically designed to meet cross curricular learning outcomes focused on the new Alberta Science and Social Studies curriculums. This program is focused on Earth Systems, Living Systems, and the Scientific Method. Historical perspectives are explored through timelines, maps, and stories. Our program is led by a Weaselhead Naturalist who brings their own expertise and personal experiences to your lessons.

The following items have been enclosed in this Teacher's Guide package:

- Curriculum Connections
- Program Objectives
- Participant Guidelines
- Program Outline
- Activities
- Background Information on the Weaselhead Area

Curriculum Connections

Science: Students learn how plants and animals are adapted to dark skies. They will learn how evidence is used to understand the effects of artificial light and how the night sky connects with seasons. Students investigate the characteristics and components of and interactions within ecosystems

Social Studies: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the people and the stories of Canada and their ways of life over time through the use of the night sky.

Guiding Questions

Science

Living Systems

- How are organisms supported by vital biological processes and systems?
- How does light affect the activities of plants and animals?
- In what ways are ecosystems complex?

Scientific Method

- How does evidence lead to understanding?

Space

- In what ways can the solar system be explored?

Social Studies

- In what ways does civic participation support democratic societies?

- How can the night sky be used to understand culture and history?

Program Objectives

Students examine evidence to better understand how dark skies contribute to the life histories of plants and animals. They learn about the use of night skies to tell stories that shape cultural histories.

Before the Program

Pre program preparation

- Students should have a journal or clipboard with blank paper.

Field Trip Program Outline: 1 ½ hours

5 minutes	• Introduction, Land Acknowledgement
40 minutes	• Learning about the structure and function of the various parts of plants and animals and how artificial light can change how they survive. • Activity: Build A Tree and Build a Beaver
35 minutes	• Discovering the importance of the night sky and how that relates to different cultures • Activity: Night sky storytelling.
10 minutes	• Wrap up discussion focusing on the importance of dark skies.

Activities

- Build a Tree: Learn about external and internal tree structures in relation to function. Students take on the roles of heartwood, sapwood, cambium, bark, and roots and learn how changes in light availability through the seasons and in urban areas affect trees.
- Build a Beaver: Learn about the external and internal adaptations for nocturnal survival.
- The Night Sky and Storytelling: Students learn how stories connect people to the land and help explain phenomena. They will also discover how human activity has impacted our ability to see the night sky and learn about the Weaselhead's work to become a Nocturnal Sanctuary.

Weaselhead History

The Weaselhead area has a name shrouded in mystery. Like so many Indigenous stories, how the Weaselhead got its name has been lost over time. What we do know is that although there are weasels that call this area home, the name has nothing to do with actual weasels!

Weaselhead is a traditional Blackfoot last name so the name may be related to someone from the Blackfoot Confederacy. There is written history of a man with the name Weazel Head on the Tsuut'ina reserve as well, but little is known about where he originated. Early settler Sam Livingston, whose house is now part of Calgary's Heritage Park, was the first European to settle in the Elbow River valley, now known as the Weaselhead.

Between 1910 and 1990, Tsuut'ina reserve and parts of the Weaselhead were used for military training exercises. Foxholes and signs warning of ordinances possibly left behind remind of this history even today. The last time an exploded device was found was during the floods of 2013.

The City of Calgary bought what is now the Weaselhead from the Tsuut'ina Nation in 1929 to build the Glenmore Reservoir, which still provides roughly 40% of Calgary's drinking water.

Today, this protected area spans 404 hectares (989 acres) and is bursting with diverse habitats. Wander through dense White Spruce forests, leafy Balsam Poplar groves, and colourful wildflower meadows. The Elbow River winds through it all, with floodplains, beaver ponds, and wetlands teeming with life.

As you explore, you'll uncover clues to the area's rich history. Fossils in sandstone cliffs date back 35 million years, and traces of ancient river paths still shape the landscape. You can find evidence of Indigenous campsites and buffalo hunts, as well as remnants of a military training base that once operated here.

With over 480 plant species, including rare ones like the Western Wood Lily, the Weaselhead is a wildlife haven. Frogs, salamanders, and more than 200 bird species thrive here, while larger animals like moose, bears, and even cougars visit throughout the year.

The Weaselhead is a living tapestry of Calgary's natural and cultural history, offering a rich, engaging experience for all who visit.

REMEMBER: This is a natural area park. It is illegal to remove anything from the area. Fossils and certain plant species are protected in Alberta.