

# FireSmart™ BC Education Program

 **BRITISH COLUMBIA**  
**FireSmart™** (Grades 2–3)



# Lesson One

In this lesson, students will identify three important ideas about fire by exploring how First Peoples used fire to care for the land.



## Lesson Question:

What important lessons can we learn about fire from First Peoples?

## Lesson Challenge:

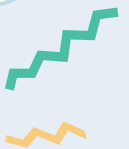
Create a picture that shares three important lessons about fire that can be learned from First Peoples.

## Big Ideas

- Materials can be changed through physical and chemical processes. (Grade 2 Science)
- Living things are diverse, can be grouped, and interact in their ecosystems. (Grade 3 Science)
- Local actions have global consequences, and global actions have local consequences. (Grade 2 Social Studies)
- Learning about First Peoples nurtures multicultural awareness and respect for diversity. (Grade 3 Social Studies)
- Indigenous knowledge is passed down through oral history, traditions, and collective memory. (Grade 3 Social Studies)
- Indigenous societies throughout the world value the well-being of the self, the land, spirits, and ancestors. (Grade 3 Social Studies)

## Suggested Materials

- **Activity Sheet A:** Thinking About Important Lessons (one copy for each pair or small group)
- **Activity Sheet B:** My Thoughtbook (one copy for each student)
- **Activity Sheet C:** Identifying Important Lessons About Fire From First Peoples (one copy for each pair or small group)
- **Background Information:** First Peoples and Fire (one copy for each pair or small group)
- **Activity Sheet D:** Describing Important Lessons About Fire From First Peoples (one copy for each student)



## Activity



Consider taking the opportunity to begin this lesson by acknowledging the traditional territories upon which the class is learning. Model for students taking time to think about what the land acknowledgement means. Share how you show respect and honour for the peoples and the land and invite them to do the same.

While this lesson does include some examples of First Peoples' perspectives and knowledge about fire, please be mindful of the following when using this lesson:

- Students can use the thinking strategies in this lesson to learn more from local First Peoples' knowledge and stories. Consider inviting Elders and Knowledge Keepers into the classroom to provide local examples as the content for this lesson, remembering to respect that not all First Peoples' knowledge can be shared.
- Follow proper protocols when inviting an Elder or a Knowledge Keeper to the classroom. Your school or district likely has guidelines for collaborating with local First Peoples.

## Start the Thinking



1. Ask students if they have heard the expression "to learn an important lesson." Discuss what it means "to learn an important lesson" and how we can know if a lesson is important. Invite students to share their thinking with the class.
2. Organize students into pairs or small groups and provide each group with a copy of Thinking About Important Lessons (Activity Sheet A).
3. Ask groups to decide which lessons from the activity sheet are important lessons.
4. Encourage students to share their decisions and thinking with the class. Ask students to describe what the important lessons have in common or how they are different from those that are not important lessons. As students share, co-construct or share the criteria for an important lesson. An important lesson can help us:
  - understand something better.
  - change how we think or act.
  - live in a good way with ourselves, other people, and the Earth.

Consider posting the criteria for use later in this lesson.

5. Ask students to revisit the activity sheet and their decisions about which statements were important lessons, this time using the criteria to guide their thinking. Prompt students to share their decisions with the class.



6. Introduce the lesson question and challenge. Briefly explain that the goal of this lesson is to learn three important lessons about fire from First Peoples.
7. Provide each student with a copy of My Thoughtbook (Activity Sheet B). Explain that a Thoughtbook is a place to draw or write their ideas that can help answer the lesson question and challenge. Guide their attention to the left-hand column and invite them to use words or pictures to describe any important lessons about fire that they know. Assure the students that their ideas can be big or small and in words or in pictures, and that they will be able to change and add to their ideas during this lesson.

## Grow the Thinking



1. Provide each group with a copy of Identifying Important Lessons About Fire From First Peoples (Activity Sheet C) and Background Information: First Peoples and Fire
2. Briefly explain that for thousands of years, First Peoples have used fire to help care for the land. Carefully set fires, or cultural burns, are important ways that First Peoples act as caretakers for the land.
3. Guide students' attention to the left-hand column of the activity sheet. Review the guiding questions and inform students that they will look for information about how First Peoples used fire that belongs with each of the questions.
4. Read the statements about cultural burning from the background information. Model how you might note information from one of the statements in one of the guiding questions (e.g., When? Cultural burns were often done in spring or fall). Continue reading each of the statements, working with students to collect information for each of the guiding questions. For older students, ask them to read the statements and to find information for each of the guiding questions.
5. Review the information that students have noted, inviting them to suggest any important lessons that they may have learned. Encourage them to use the criteria for an important lesson to guide their thinking.



6. Ask students to read or listen to additional sources that describe First Peoples’ traditional knowledge and uses of fire as a way to care for the land. These sources could include:

- stories or wisdom from a local Knowledge Keeper or Elder
- excerpts from videos such as the following:
  - [https://vimeo.com/708338114?embedded=true&source=vimeo\\_logo&owner=93909388](https://vimeo.com/708338114?embedded=true&source=vimeo_logo&owner=93909388)
  - History of Fire: <https://prescribedfire.ca/history-of-fire/>
  - A Conversation With Fire Keepers: <https://prescribedfire.ca/cultural-burning/>
  - Indigenous Cultural Burning—Shackan: <https://firesmartbc.ca/resource/indigenous-cultural-burning-shackan/>

Prompt students to look for information for each of the guiding questions as they listen or watch.

7. Invite students to share their information with the class. As they share, prompt them to choose three important lessons about fire. Remind them to use the criteria to guide their decision-making. Direct them to note their choices at the bottom of the activity sheet.

## Reflect on the Thinking



1. Guide students’ attention back to the Thoughtbook and their first thoughts of important lessons about fire. Ask students to note three important lessons about fire in the right-hand column, encouraging them to use ideas from any of the sources that they used during this lesson.
2. Provide each student with a copy of Describing Important Lessons About Fire From First Peoples (Activity Sheet D). Direct students to create an image that shows at least three important lessons about fire that we can learn from First Peoples.



# Activity Sheet A: Thinking About Important Lessons



It is better to give  
than to receive.

Biking is my  
favourite activity.

Sometimes I get  
scared in the dark.

Be kind.

It rains more  
often in spring.

It's important to  
learn from our mistakes.

Vancouver is a city  
in British Columbia

Never play  
with matches.

# Activity Sheet B: My Thoughtbook

## My first ideas:

What important lessons should we know about fire?

## My final ideas:

What important lessons should we know about fire?



### Criteria for an Important Lesson

An important lesson can help us:

- ✓ Understand something better
- ✓ Change how we think or act
- ✓ Live in a good way with ourselves, other people, and the Earth

# Activity Sheet C: Identifying Important Lessons About Fire From First Peoples

## Guiding Questions

## Details From Story

**Who**

Who used cultural burning?

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**When**

When was cultural burning done?

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**Where**

Where in British Columbia has cultural burning been used?  
Where are cultural burns done?

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**What**

What are some of the benefits of cultural burning?

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**Why**

Why is cultural burning important?

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**How**

How are cultural burns done?

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# Activity Sheet C: Identifying Important Lessons About Fire From First Peoples

**My Choice of Three Important Lessons**

**Reasons for My Decisions**

1.

2.

3.



## Criteria for an Important Lesson

An important lesson can help us:

- ✓ Understand something better
- ✓ Change how we think or act
- ✓ Live in a good way with ourselves, other people, and the Earth

# Background Information:

## First Peoples and Fire

- Generations before the arrival of European settlers, First Peoples cared for the land with fire. First Peoples often used cultural burns, or carefully set fires, to care for the land. Carefully using fire was one important way First Peoples acted as caretakers of the land.
- First Peoples believe that fire is sacred and that is to be respected.
- Small fires were started in carefully chosen times of the year, such as early spring or late fall.
- In some Indigenous communities, being a fire keeper was an important role. Fire keepers had special knowledge and skills. This knowledge was often shared in families and passed down through generations.
- For thousands of years, First Peoples have known that these carefully set fires could have many important effects for ecosystems:
  - The fires burn dead grass and help new plants, like blueberries and huckleberries, to grow. Bears, moose, and other animals would then come to eat the new plants. The fires would also burn pests that could harm the plants.
  - Cultural fires could also help the growth of plants that could be used as medicine.
  - Cultural fires helped seeds from some plants and trees, like the lodgepole pine tree, open up and be able to grow.
  - There was usually more and different kinds of plants and trees, or greater biodiversity, in areas that had cultural fires.
  - The cultural fires used by First Peoples help keep wildfires small. Cultural fires could burn the fuel on the ground such as dead grass, leaves, and trees. If a wildfire started, it would not be as big or as hot.
  - There were fewer big wildfires in areas where cultural fires had been used.
- For example, the Syilx People of the Okanagan Nation in the southern interior of British Columbia continue to use cultural burns to reduce the chance of very large wildfires. Following the wisdom of Knowledge Keepers and Elders, dead wood, plants, and grasses are gathered and then burned in a careful way.

