



FORESTS OF THE FIRST STEWARDS

3rd - 5th Grade Discussion Guide

Episode/Lesson Plan # 2 – MTE and End Use Products (Grades 3-5)

INTRODUCTION

Welcome back to the Menominee Forest! In the last lesson, we learned the history of the Menominee people and how they've taken care of their forests for centuries through sustainable forestry. So, what happens to the trees they carefully harvest?

In this episode, we'll follow the journey of a tree - from the forest to something people use every day. We'll visit Menominee Tribal Enterprises, where trees are carefully selected, harvested, and turned into wood products. The Menominee have been doing this for generations, using knowledge passed down over time to make sure the forest stays strong and healthy.

Then, we'll see another important part of forest care in action. We'll visit the Fire and Forest Management Station and learn how forest crews work to keep the Menominee Forest healthy and balanced. We'll explore how tools like controlled burns and forest floor management help reduce wildfire risk and support new plant growth. We'll also learn how these practices connect to long-standing traditions of caring for the land.

In this lesson, you'll discover how people use natural resources in careful and respectful ways - both by turning trees into useful products and by actively managing the forest itself- so that the forest stays healthy for the future.





Educational Partners:



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES (GRADES 3-5)

- i. Explain how forest resources are used and managed through both harvesting and forest stewardship practices.
- ii. Recognize the role of cultural practices in forest management.
- iii. Understand how forest management practices support healthy forests and connect to cultural stewardship

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

This lesson aligns with the following standards:

1. NGSS (Science)

- a. 4-ESS3-1: Obtain and combine information to describe how humans use natural resources.
- b. 4-PS3-4 (optional for energy in processing demos): Apply scientific ideas to design, test, and improve a device that converts energy.

1. Common Core (ELA)

- a. RI.3.3 / RI.4.3: Describe the relationship between a series of events, concepts, or steps in a process.
- b. SL.3.1 / SL.4.1: Engage in collaborative discussions, expressing ideas clearly and providing evidence.

LESSON TIME ESTIMATE AND SUMMARY

(Approximately 30-45 minutes total)

Learning Objective	Activity	How Students Show They Learned	Time Estimate
Explain how trees are transformed into products	Watch the MTE segment; follow the journey from tree selection to finished wood product	Students create a tree-to-product sequence drawing showing each step (tree - harvest - mill - product) and explain the steps through a story	13-15 min
Recognize the role of cultural practices in forest management	Learn about how practices were passed down from Chief Oshkosh and how culture guides forest care	Students create a short story, or tell the story through art, showing how people care for the forest and why it matters	10-12 min
Understand how forest management practices support healthy forests and connect to cultural stewardship.	Watch the fire crew segment; explore how Menominee use fire to help take care of their forest	Students design a healthy forest plan showing ways people might care for a forest (examples: controlled burns, clearing debris, planting trees, protecting wildlife areas).	15-20 min



BEGINNER VOCABULARY

1. **Felling:** Felling is the process of safely cutting down a tree. It's an important step in forest management and helps make space for new trees to grow. Think of it as preparing the stage for the next act of the forest, giving younger trees room to thrive.
2. **Allowable Cut:** The amount of timber that can be harvested during a certain time (like one year) while keeping the forest healthy. Think of it as a spending limit for the forest, you only take what can grow back.
3. **Board Foot:** A board foot is a way to measure wood. It equals a piece of wood that is 1 inch thick, 12 inches long, and 12 inches wide. Think of it as a measuring cup for lumber, helping people keep track of how much wood they have.
4. **Cellulose:** Cellulose is what gives plants and trees their strength and structure. It helps them stand tall and grow strong. Think of it like the framework inside a building that holds everything up.
5. **Hardwood:** Hardwood refers to certain types of trees like oak and maple. These trees usually have wide leaves and produce seeds inside fruits or nuts. Think of it as a group of trees with similar characteristics, not just wood that feels hard.
6. **Sawmill:** A sawmill is a place where logs are cut into usable wood like boards and planks. Think of it as a workshop where trees are turned into building materials.
7. **Prescribed Burn:** A prescribed burn is a fire that is carefully planned and safely managed by trained forest crews. It is used to help clear extra leaves, branches, and plants from the forest floor. This helps keep the forest healthy and can also help new plants grow. Think of it like a planned "clean-up fire" for the forest.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

• Menominee Tribal Enterprises (MTE)

- MTE is the Menominee Nation's forestry and wood products operation.
- It manages the forest, harvests trees, and processes them into wood products that support local communities.
- These practices are based on knowledge passed down through generations, including leadership from Chief Oshkosh.

• Forests to Product

- Trees are carefully selected before harvesting to keep the forest healthy.
- After harvesting, logs are taken to a sawmill where they are cut into boards and other materials.
- Wood from the forest is used to create products like flooring, furniture, and building materials.

• Sustainable Forestry in Action

- The Menominee harvests only what the forest can regenerate (allowable cut).
- Not all trees are cut; many are left to grow, supporting wildlife habitat and future forests.
- This careful balance helps the forest stay healthy for generations.



• Real-World Connection

- Wood from the Menominee Forest is used to create a wide variety of everyday products, including flooring, furniture, and building materials.
- Menominee hardwoods, such as maple, are known for their strength and quality, making them ideal for long-lasting wood products.
- These products reflect the careful balance between using forest resources and keeping the forest healthy for future generations.
- Controlled burns and prescribed fire are tools used to prevent wildfires and create healthier forests.

• Cultural Connection

- Forestry practices are guided by traditions and values passed down through generations.
- These practices reflect respect for the land and a responsibility to care for it.

LEARNING PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

- Show a short clip or image of a finished wood product.
- Facilitate a discussion with students:
 - Where do you think this wood came from?
 - How do trees become something we can use?
- Connect back to the Menominee Forest and explain that students will follow the journey of a tree from the forest to a finished product.





2. Activity 1: Forest to Product (MTE)

- Students explore how trees are selected, harvested, and processed into wood products.

3. Activity 2: Cultural Connection to Forest Practices

- Students learn how cultural values and traditions guide forest stewardship across generations.

4. Activity 3: Real-World Connection

- Students connect forest stewardship and prescribed burning to forest management.

5. Conclusion

- Facilitate a discussion:
 - What did you learn about how trees become products?
 - Why is it important to use forests responsibly?
- Students share one thing they learned or one story they created.





6. Teacher Tips:

- Keep explanations simple and connect ideas to real-life examples (homes, floors, cardboard, toothpaste, etc.).
- Encourage creativity through drawing, storytelling, and physical activity.
- Reinforce the connection between forest care, culture, and everyday products.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Learn about Menominee History and Forest Practices

- Objective: Explain how trees are transformed into products.
- Materials: MTE video segment, paper, crayons/colored pencils/markers.
- Steps:
 - Show the Menominee Tribal Enterprises (MTE) video segment. Pause to highlight key steps: tree selection, harvesting (felling), and processing at the sawmill.
 - Introduce vocabulary as it appears (i.e., felling, allowable cut, board foot, hardwood).
 - Discussion:
 - What happens first?
 - What happens next?
 - Students create a tree-to-product sequence drawing showing each step (tree - harvest - mill - product).
 - Students share their drawings with classmates, explaining one step in the process.
- Tips:
 - Younger students can label with pictures instead of words.
 - Encourage arrows or sequencing to show the process clearly.

Activity 2: Cultural Connection to Forest Practices

- Objective: Recognize the role of cultural practices in forest management.
- Materials: Paper, crayons/colored pencils/markers.
- Steps:
 - Share how forestry practices are passed down through generations, including leadership from Chief Oshkosh.
 - Discuss how traditions and values help guide how the forest is cared for.
 - Why is it important to take care of something for future generations?
 - Students create a short story or tell the story through art, showing how people care for the forest.
 - Students share their ideas with a partner or the class.
- Tips:
 - Encourage personal connections (family traditions, taking care of something important).
 - Students can draw instead of write if needed.



Activity 3: Fire and Forest Management

- Objective: Understand how forest management practices support healthy forests and connect to cultural stewardship.
- Materials: Fire crew / Forest Management Station video segment, paper, crayons/colored pencils/markers.
- Steps:
 - Show the Fire and Forest Management Station segment.
 - Discuss how forest managers use tools like controlled burns and careful forest floor management to support healthy ecosystems.
 - Explain that fire has been used for generations as a forest care tool in many Indigenous communities, including the Menominee, as part of a long tradition of stewardship.
 - Discussion prompts:
 - Why might fire be helpful for a forest instead of harmful?
 - What do you think happens to the forest floor when too many dead plants and leaves build up?
 - Student activity:
 - Students design a healthy forest plan showing ways people might care for a forest (examples: controlled burns, clearing debris, regenerative practices, protecting wildlife areas).
 - Students share their design and explain how their choices help keep forests healthy.
- Tips:
 - Keep language focused on care and balance rather than damage or destruction.
 - Emphasize teamwork between people and forests.
 - Allow drawings or simple labeled diagrams for accessibility.





References

For additional information:

- <https://menominee-nsn.gov/CulturePages/BriefHistory>
- <https://www.menominee.edu/sustainable-development-institute>
- <https://www.mtewood.com/>

Additional Resources from LEAF: Wisconsin's K-12 Forestry Education Program:



LEAF-Wisconsin's K-12 Forestry Education Program
College of Natural Resources
University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point

- [Lesson 1: American Indians and the Forest](#)
- [Lesson 7: Sustaining Our Forests](#)
- [Career Profile - McKaylee Duquain](#)
- [Wisconsin Forest Tales](#)
- [K-1st Grade Field Enhancement - Sensing the Forest](#)
- [2nd-3rd Grade Field Enhancement - Observing Forest Interactions](#)
- [4th Grade Field Enhancement - Unlocking a Forest's Past](#)
- [5th-6th Grade Field Enhancement - Studying Forest Layers](#)
- [5th-6th Grade Field Enhancement - Woods Worth](#)
- [5th-6th Grade Field Enhancement - Competition in the Forest](#)