


**Focus:**

- » Students recognize that plants can produce their own food.
- » Recognize that all animals, and some plants, rely on other food sources.
- » Understand that food chains are sequential and that the preservation of a wetland relies on the natural balance within food chains and food webs.

**Curriculum Connection:**

- 5.10-6** Identify the roles of different organisms in the food web of a pond or wetland:
- » Producers- green plants that make their own food using sunlight
  - » Consumers- animals that eat living plants and/or animals
  - » Decomposers- organisms, such as molds, fungi, insects and worms, that reuse and recycle materials that were formerly living

**Teacher Preparation:**


The phrase “everything is connected” describes the relationships of plants and animals in an Aboriginal perspective. For example, all of the flora and fauna that come in contact with the wetland are connected. Thus the birds, cattails and all mammals in the area are connected and thus related (have a relationship).

Aboriginal Elders have spoken about the silence that they hear when they are in wetlands. Where there once was music from songbirds, there is now silence. In a Teaching Circle, one Cree Elder said, “There are certain birds and animals, particularly the birds that the old people talked about, that work with the water. They sing and you use to hear them in the old days. And it seems like there are less and less of these birds in the animal world now. We understand, they are our friends, our relatives and the people always had high regard for these things and they were also bringing messages to us, wherever we were at in this lifetime and where we are going.”

The Elder is referring to a significant change he has observed and the cultural meaning he places on it. He later attributes these changes to the ecosystems, to issues such as over hunting, introduction of species not indigenous to an area and other human interference with wetlands.

The “circle of life” that is taught in this lesson refers to the balance between populations of producers, consumers and decomposers.

Within a healthy circle of life, there is a relationship of respect between all living things. Every living thing plays an equal and important role in the Aboriginal worldview and therefore deserves the same respect and protection.

As the Elder states “We hear rain birds before it’s going to rain. They’re talking. There are a lot of signs like that in nature. If we pay attention we will learn what they are saying. How to protect ourselves. How to look after these things. How to respect them. That’s the biggest job we have is to try and discipline ourselves to respect these things in nature.”

In a western science worldview, each species has a role in the food chain. In the Aboriginal worldview, each species has a relationship to other animals.

**Key Learnings:**

- » Producers are green plants that make their own food through the process of photosynthesis
- » Primary (first level) consumers eat plants. (Herbivores)
- » Secondary (second level) consumers eat small animals and insects (Carnivores). They are often eaten by larger animals and humans
- » Final Consumers eat secondary consumers and are not eaten by other animals. Humans are final consumers
- » Decomposers live off of organic matter that is no longer living to break them down and recycle them

1. Preview the video "Return to the Source"

**Materials and Resources Required:**

- » DVD/Online Video "Return To The Source"  
[www.sacredrelationship.ca/videos](http://www.sacredrelationship.ca/videos)

**Note to Teacher :**

There are 17 questions on the worksheet "Return to the Source". You may wish to take 2 class periods and have each group examine all 17 questions. Alternatively, you may wish to assign a certain number of questions to each group for their small group discussions and have each group report back to the full class with their response to save time.

### Launch:



Ask students, "What did you eat for dinner last night?" Continue to take answers from different students until examples of vegetables, meat, milk, grains, etc have been offered by students. As each student gives an example discuss with the students HOW that food came to us (briefly) with a focus on the concept that we are consumers (omnivores) as we eat plants (salad, vegetables, etc.) and meat from other animals. Discuss with students that plants are producers because they produce their own food and that animals are consumers as they rely on other sources for their food.

### Activate:



Once students seem to have a grasp on the concept of producers and consumers introduce the students to the video "Return to the Source".



Distribute the "Return to the Source" worksheets and review with the students prior to watching the video.

View the video with students.

### Connect:

Once the students have had a few minutes to complete the parts of the worksheet that they can on their own, place students in small groups to discuss each question on the worksheet and complete their own answers following the discussion.



Once students have had sufficient time to go through the worksheet and discuss in their small groups, ask each group to prepare a brief oral statement back to the class outlining the most important learning that they received through watching the video.



### DID YOU KNOW:

THAT FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADITIONAL FOODS AS MEDICINES. THEY ATE 'BALANCED MEALS' FOR THOUSANDS OF YEAR BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF EUROPEANS. THE MEALS CONSISTED OF FISH, WILD MEAT FROM MOOSE, DEER, ELK, BUFFALO, CARIBOU, RABBITS, BEAVERS, AS WELL AS BERRIES, ROOTS, WILD VEGETABLES, WILD RICE AND OTHER PLANTS FROM THEIR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT. THE LOSS OF THIS BALANCED AND HEALTHY DIET HAS CAUSED HIGH RATES OF DIABETES IN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN CANADA AND AROUND THE WORLD.

## Balancing Act Worksheet

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What does the name of the Beaver Bundle members mean?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What does the Beaver Bundle represent?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What does Ryan say about human beings as the newest arrivals on the scene?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why does he take out the tobacco?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Why did Ryan need to gather food at the end of summer and the end of winter?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What 4 things did the Elder tell Ryan to feed people?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Why did Ryan only take 2 out of the 7 eggs in the nest?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What did Ryan learn about gathering eggs after the birds were already sitting on the nest?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. How long do you have to collect the eggs from the geese before they start to incubate the eggs?  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Why is it important to take the duck and goose eggs during the time before they have a full clutch?

---

11. What does the Blackfoot name for Blackfoot territory mean?

---

12. Who did Ryan learn the importance of the food from?

---

13. What does Ryan say he's concerned about at the end of the video?

---

14. When Ryan says that something is going to have to change what do you think he means by that?

---

15. Why does Ryan think the magpie is interested in what he is doing?

---

16. Where does he say the wisdom about how to sustain life in his territory will come from?

---

17. Who are the producers and consumers in this story? How do we learn about maintaining balance in this story?

---

---

---

## Balancing Act Worksheet

### Answer Key

1. What does the name of the Beaver Bundle members mean?  
**I belong to the water.**
2. What does the Beaver Bundle represent?  
**Treaty between man and the animals.**
3. What does Ryan say about human beings as the newest arrivals on the scene?  
**We are like children (of the earth) and we have to learn how to fit in.**
4. Why does he take out the tobacco?  
**He is making an offering. This shows that there is a need for balance in everything... even in taking from the land and giving back.**
5. Why did Ryan need to gather food at the end of summer and the end of winter?  
**The Beaver Bundle Society hosts 2 "public" ceremonies that they invite a lot of people, as a part of it they feed the people.**
6. What 4 things did the Elder tell Ryan to feed people?  
**Buffalo tongue, pemmican, Saskatoon berry soup and duck eggs. The Elder told Ryan that the source of the bison is gone, but the source of the berries and eggs is still here- Elder said they have to go out and gather these.**
7. Why did Ryan only take 2 out of the 7 eggs in the nest?  
**Because if he took them all there would be no new geese born that year.**
8. What did Ryan learn about gathering eggs after the birds were already sitting on the nest?  
**If a bird is sitting on the nest it's too late to get the eggs.**
9. How long do you have to collect the eggs from the geese before they start to incubate the eggs?  
**1 week.**

10. Why is it important to take the duck and goose eggs during the time before they have a full clutch?  
Because they are eggs that you can eat and the water fowl will replenish (replace) the missing eggs until they have a full clutch to sit on.
11. What does the Blackfoot name for Blackfoot territory mean?  
The place that feeds us.
12. Who did Ryan learn the importance of the food from?  
The birds.
13. What does Ryan say he's concerned about at the end of the video?  
How are the Blackfoot going to sustain their lifestyle: how are they going to live long term here?
14. When Ryan says that something is going to have to change what do you think he means by that?  
That we are going to have to be much more aware of how we interact with wetlands and the life in wetlands so that we don't create an imbalance that wipes out the plant and animal life.
15. Why does Ryan think the magpie is interested in what he is doing?  
Because the magpie gets what Ryan leaves behind. He should not leave behind garbage because the crows, ravens and magpies pick that up and it can be damaging to them.
16. Where does he say the wisdom about how to sustain life in his territory will come from?  
From the animals and the Elders that pass on the wisdom from one generation to the next. This continues over generations of Aboriginal people.
17. Who are the producers and consumers in this story? How do we learn about maintaining balance in this story?  
The geese and ducks are producing eggs for the human beings to eat, but the geese are actually also consumers that consume the grasses and plants from the wetlands. The grasses and plants are producers. In this case the geese and ducks are primary consumers and the human beings are secondary (and in this case final) consumers. If we do not protect the wetlands we destroy the balance and in the end we destroy ourselves.