

AREA: Spring Foods

TOPIC: Beaver *sts'ool*

CONCEPTS

1. The beaver is a large, fur-bearing animal with specific biological and behavioural characteristics.

2. Beaver was/is found in the vicinity of traplines along the Skeena River, on Dundas Island and along the Ecstall River.

3. A trapline is a designated area where people in a family can trap.

a) trapping was/is a family activity. In the past more families went out trapping than in the present.

b) traplines must be registered with the provincial government. Provincial trapping regulations apply to Indian people.

4. Different kinds of traps were/are used for trapping beaver.

a) in the past the deadfall trap was mainly used for trapping beaver.

b) it is illegal to use the conventional leghold trap for land trapping of beaver. The leghold trap would cause an animal extreme pain. Often the animal would chew its own leg off to escape from the pain of the trap.

INTENDED LEARNINGS

Students will be able to:

1.1 Describe two specific biological and three specific behavioural characteristics of the beaver.

1.2 Given a number of pictures of fur-bearing animals, students will be able to correctly identify the beaver.

1.3 Describe and/or illustrate a beaver's habitat.

2.1 Locate and indicate on a map of Port Simpson the areas where beaver was/is trapped.

3.1 Explain the following:

a) what a trapline is.

b) who went/goes out trapping beaver.

c) how traplines are registered.

3.2 Name three provincial trapping regulations that apply to Indian people.

4.1 Name three traps used for trapping beaver in the past and the present.

4.2 Describe the leghold trap, stating the restrictions on its use.

4.3 Describe how the special beaver trap worked.

c) Many trappers would use a special beaver trap. This would consist of a steel trap with a rock and chain functioning as an anchor. A line went from the trap, which was either in the water or right beside the water's edge, up onto the shore where it was secured under a rock, around a tree, etc. When the beaver was trapped it would head for the deeper water and drown. Later the trapper would come by and pull in the line attached to the trap and remove the beaver.

5. Tsimshian people mainly trapped beavers for their fur.

a) before contact the Tsimshians trapped beaver for furs to use as clothing, headdresses, blankets and slippers to trade with other Indian groups.

b) after contact the Tsimshians used beaver fur for the following purposes:

- i) to trade for commercial trade items at the Hudsons Bay Company at Fort (Port) Simpson.
- ii) to sell to the Hudson Bay Company, at Fort (Port) Simpson.
- iii) after the Hudsons Bay Company pulled out of Port Simpson trappers from Port Simpson sold their furs to fur buyers in Prince Rupert, and, more recently, in Terrace.

5.1 Explain how the Tsimshians would use beaver fur before and after contact.

5.2 Role-play a scene where an Indian from Port Simpson is trading his furs with a Hudson Bay Company trader.

6. Beaver skins were/are prepared in a certain way.

a) beavers were/are skinned with very sharp knives.

b) the skin used to be stretched out on a frame. Now it is nailed to a piece of plyboard.

c) in the past the skin was scraped with stone, bone, and/or shell scrapers. Today it is scraped with a *kwduus*.

7. As the beaver on Dundas Island only have cedar trees to eat, their meat has the taste of cedar. The meat must be soaked for four days in order to remove the taste of cedar.

8. Beaver meat was/is eaten, especially the tail.

a) beaver meat can be roasted or boiled with salt and potatoes.

b) beaver tails or '*wax̄* were/are roasted by the fire or baked in the oven.

9. Beaver meat was/is preserved:

a) in the past the meat was dried, smoked or salted. The women would slice the beaver meat into thin strips and dry them. Half-dried beaver meat is called *ts'a'oomti*. Dried beaver meat was chewed or it was steamed.

b) today beaver meat is smoked and jarred or frozen. It is also dried as in the past. Dried beaver meat is steamed for a few minutes before eating.

6.1 Describe how a beaver skin was/is prepared in the past and in the present.

6.2 Draw a picture of a *kwduus*.

7.1 Explain why beaver from Dundas Island tastes like cedar.

7.2 Explain how the cedar taste can be removed from the beaver meat.

8.1 Describe how to cook beaver meat and beaver tails.

8.2 Plan a menu for a meal which includes beaver meat as its main dish.

8.3 Give the Sm'algyax word for beaver tail.

9.1 Compare the methods of preserving beaver meat in the past and in the present.

9.2 Give the Sm'algyax word for half-dried beaver meat.

10.1 Read the story "The Beaver and The Porcupine".

10.2 Illustrate the story.

10.3 Create their own story about a beaver.

THE BEAVER AND THE PORCUPINE

by Allan Brooks

As a beaver was swimming around its pond, a porcupine walked across the beaver dam and greeted the beaver.

The beaver asked "Do you want to go for a ride?"

"Okay", the porcupine answered, as he jumped on the beaver's back.

The beaver said "I'm going to dive. As soon as you want air scratch my back". So down he dived.

It wasn't long before the porcupine scratched his back. The beaver came up so the porcupine could get air and then he dove again.

During this second dive the beaver decided to play a trick on the porcupine. The porcupine was scratching and scratching the beaver's back but the beaver did not come up. The beaver stayed under the water until the porcupine almost drowned. Finally, the beaver came up and put the exhausted porcupine on a little island in the middle of the pond. Then the beaver went away and left the porcupine there.

After the porcupine recovered his strength and realized his situation he started to sing a song calling for the North Wind.

The North Wind began to blow. The porcupine sang to the North Wind once more. The North Wind blew some more.

The North Wind blew so much that the beaver's pond turned to ice and the porcupine was able to walk across the pond and get away from the island.

PORT SIMPSON RECIPES

Smoked Beaver Meat      *ts'a'oomti*

Cut the meat off a beaver carcass. Place 2 tablespoons table salt into a large pot of cool water. Place your beaver meat into the pot and soak overnight. (Note: Beaver that is obtained from Dundas Island where there are only cedar trees for the beaver to eat should be soaked three or four days to remove the taste of cedar.)

Drain the meat the next day.

Cut the meat into large strips about 2 to 3 inches thick.

Hang strips of meat in the smokehouse and smoke for 2 or 3 days.

If desired, smoke the meat until it is totally dry.

If the meat is for jarring, smoke it until it is half dry.

Then cut the strips of meat until they are the length of the jar. Place the meat in the jar and add  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon table salt and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup or 1 cup water.

Seal the jars and boil them vigorously for two hours.

To cook beaver meat:

Put pieces of dry-smoked beaver meat into a half-filled pot of water and steam for half an hour. Eat with potatoes. This is called *ts'a'oomti*.

Pauline Dudoward

Beaver Tail      *waxl*

Cut off the tail from a freshly killed beaver.

Place the beaver tail on a stick and roast it by the fire. Keep turning the tail and roast it until it is done.

This is the only way to cook and eat Beaver Tail.

Pauline Dudoward

# sts'ool - BEAVER

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