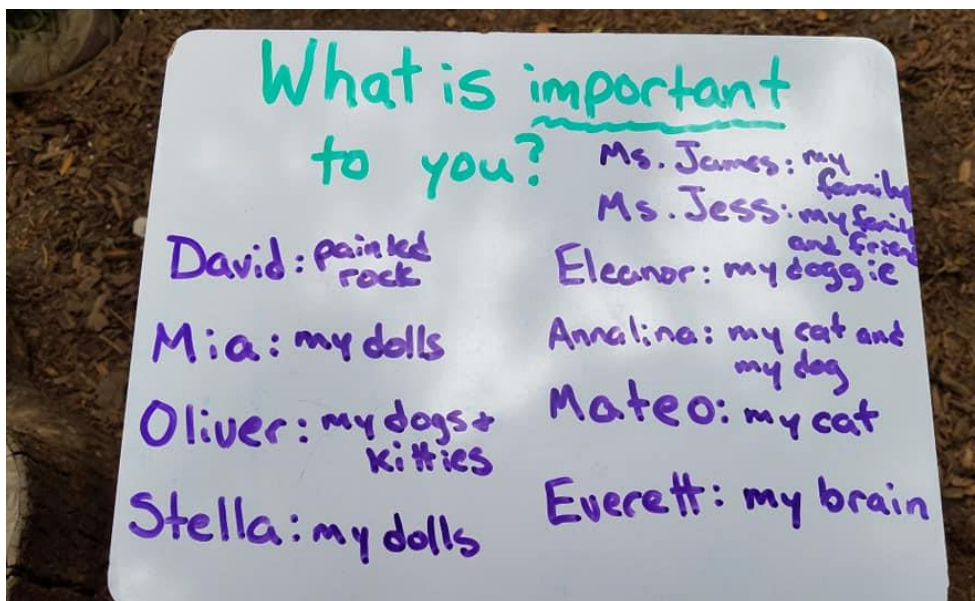


We focused on the Since Time Immemorial Early Learning Curriculum during our three week summer preschool session at Nurture in Nature Preschool. This is an all outdoor session for students heading into Kindergarten in the fall. Our school is onsite at the nature center, a 72 acre wildlife preserve that consists of wetland, Douglas fir forest and meadow habitat. Each week consists of three 4 hour days, so our time was limited. We adapted the curriculum to flow with our ongoing environmental and science themes, and our habitat at Snake Lake.

Summer Session, Week 1

Our first week focused on who we are and storytelling. Through sharing what is important to us we were able to gain a better sense of who we are, and we also read the book *A River Lost* to learn about people who lost something very important to them and how this affected them. Throughout our first week we explored various ways of storytelling and how we can learn from paying attention to someone else's story.

Day 1 - We began by going around the circle and sharing what is important to us.



After discussing our answers we all decided that family really is very important to all of us. Then we drew pictures of our families to add to our All About Me collages that we would be doing later in the day.



After we hiked to our forest circle site we read the book *A River Lost* by Lynn Bragg. Before starting the book we passed a laminated image from the book to each student and asked them what they thought this story was about. We discussed how the people in the story were dressed differently and were using different tools and techniques, and how that could mean the story was set in a different time. We asked what are the people doing in these images? What do these images tell you about what is important to them? Students were asked to hold on to their image and let us know when they saw it pop up in the story. This kept them engaged and anticipating what would happen next.



Our next activity was creating our All About Me collages. We added our family pictures and also cut images out from magazines that represented our favorite foods, hobbies, animals, sports, etc. Friends were excited to share these with each other when they were finished!



Day 2 – This day was spent hiking our trails and for our journey we introduced Journey Sticks. Each of these decorated sticks were lined with rubber bands for our friends to tuck treasures in along the way. Collecting items from travels is another way to tell a story of your journey.





We stopped on our way to the first bridge that crosses over Snake Lake to read the story of *Nanabosho* by Joseph McLellan. Before leaving this spot some friends chose to put an item in their journey stick that was green to represent the turtle's shell. Then we headed to the first bridge to see if we could spot any turtles.



We spent the entire day on the trails, making observations and collecting Journey Stick treasures that would help to tell the story of our day to our families. Our last book of the day was *Giving Thanks* by Jake Swamp, the Native American telling of the many things nature provides us that we are thankful for. Then we shared what things in our natural world WE are thankful for!



Day 3 – This day we focused on reading the stories we find in nature. How do animals tell stories? What does the animal's fur or scat tell us? Scratch marks on trees, or animal tracks always leave a story behind! We looked at some cool biofacts to learn more about an animal's story, and on our hike we looked for signs of animals and the stories left behind!



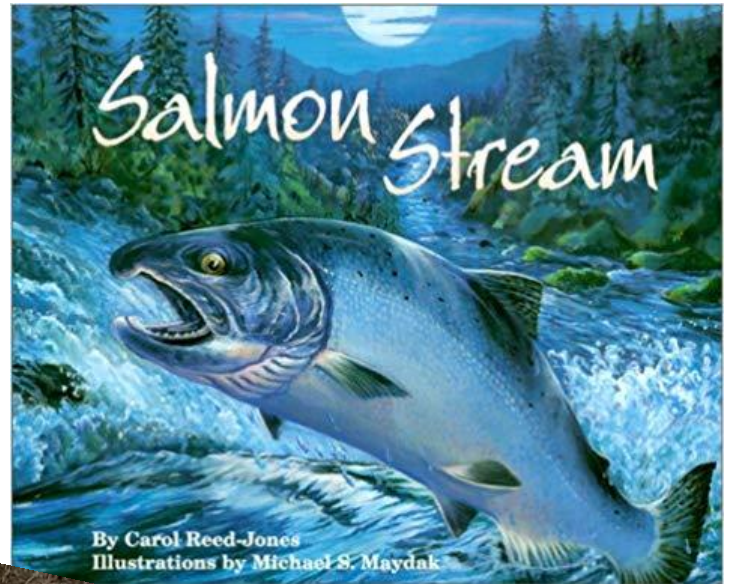
On a stop along our way each friend was given the opportunity to tell their own story about an animal using the animal rocks from our Tacoma Rocks collection (this collection was donated by the Tacoma Rocks community and consists of many different animal and plant themed rocks to use in nature lessons and activities!). We encouraged friends to include the four elements of habitat in their story - food, water, shelter and space. Students used the natural materials they found along the trail to create their animal's habitat and tell their story to the group!



Summer Session, week 2

This week focused on the importance of salmon, to native peoples and also to our region. We learned about the salmon life cycle through books, games and song. We also had a visit from another educator at the nature center who taught us more about salmon spawning and behaviors. *A River Lost* was revisited as we participated in a resource trading activity and we also had fun doing a salmon print on t shirts using a rubber salmon!

Day 1 – On this day we introduced the salmon life cycle by reading *Salmon Stream* by Carol Reed-Jones and acting out the stages with movement. We also used salmon life cycle rocks to illustrate the continued cycle of the salmon's life.



A fellow educator on staff came to visit our class and talked more about the process of salmon spawning and gave our friends an idea of how many salmon eggs are laid and how many actually survive. The numbers really surprised our friends!

We also got to see the eggs, alevin, and smolt up close!



Each friend got a chance to act like a salmon preparing to spawn by clearing dirt away with their tail to create their redd (we used clear glass marbles in place of gravel).



We also introduced this salmon song with movements. We sang this song each day and the kids really enjoyed it and it helped them to remember the salmon life cycle! The last verse was added to include the Salish word for salmon, *In-tee-tee-huh*.

Just a little egg I am,
buried under rocks and sand.
Soon I'll be an egg with an eye,
an alevin and a little fry.

Chorus: I'm a salmon (clap clap)
I'm a salmon (clap clap)
I'm a salmon, I'm a salmon, I'm a salmon (clap clap)

Just a little smolt I am,
Catch me, catch me, if you can.
Predators think I look tasty,
but I have lots of friends with me.

(Chorus)

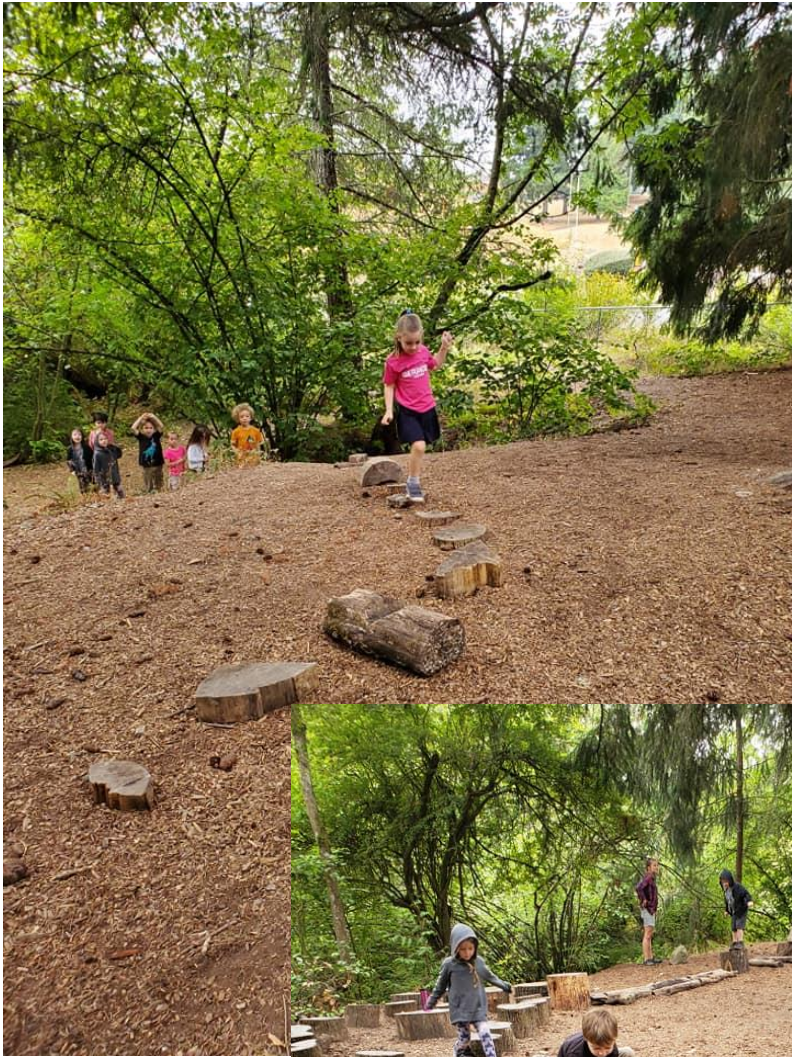
A great big salmon is what I am,
Swimming in the big ocean.
Back to the river, I'll smell my way,
Maybe you'll see my kids someday.

(Chorus)

In-tee-tee-huh is what I am
A gift to First Peoples of this land
I feed you, you care for me
Let's all celebrate my journey!

(Chorus)

Day 2 – This day focused on healthy river habitat for both salmon and people. Our first activity though, was a salmon obstacle course! This demonstrated how difficult and amazing a salmon's journey is. We set up our obstacle course in our school yard with logs, tree rounds and stump piles so our friends had to balance, climb and leap to make their way upstream to spawn!



Our next activity was about land development on a river – how does it impact the folks downstream? Every friend was given a blank piece of paper with a river drawn on one end of it and they were told that they just inherited a million dollars and land on a beautiful river. How would you develop, what would you do? They were asked to draw a picture of how they would develop their land. Among our answers were: a hotel, a private beach with brought in sand, a nature center, apartment buildings...

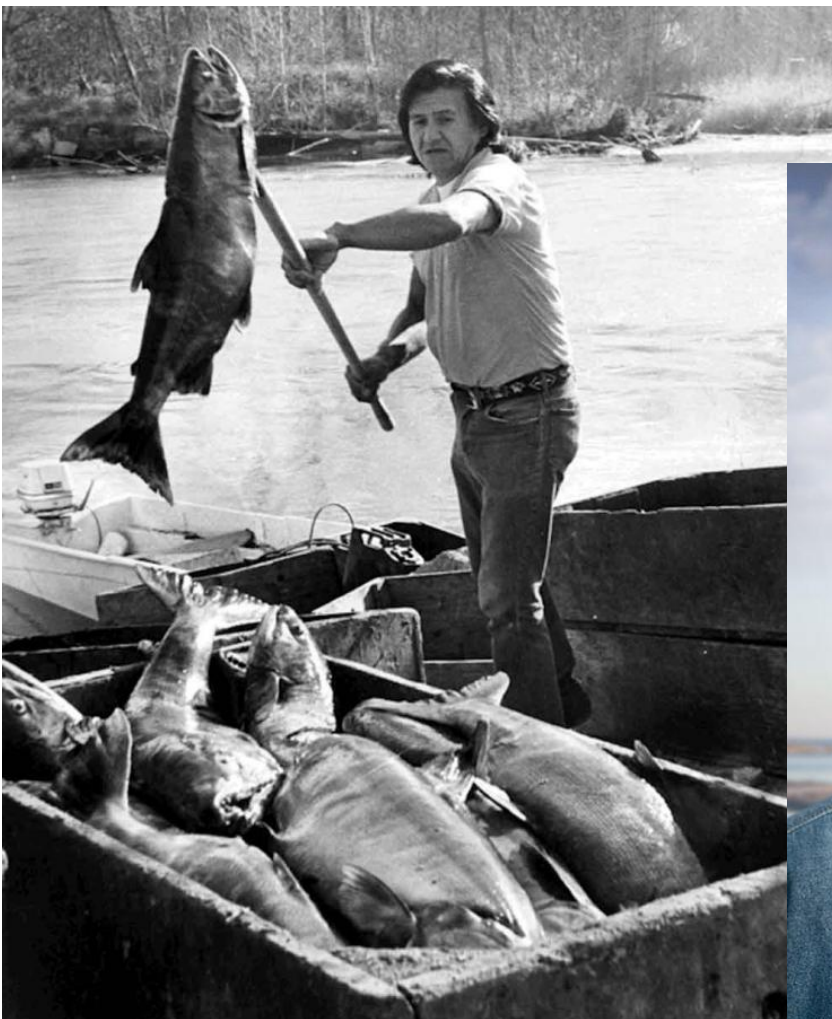


When their drawing time was up we arranged their papers so the river lined up and had each friend explain how they developed their land. We had “pollutants” on hand to sprinkle on their land as they described their development (the “pollutants” represented oil from machinery, chemicals from fertilizers and pesticides, litter, etc). These pollutants were then washed into the river by rain and run off and moved downstream. We asked the neighbor downstream how they felt about the pollutants that were moving through the river. This led to great discussion about how everyone felt about the health of their point in the river. We also used the salmon life stage rocks to illustrate where the salmon may be at different points in their life in the river.



Following this activity about healthy habitat for salmon we spoke about Billy Frank Jr and shared how he and many other native people fought for their rights to fish for salmon and protect the salmon's habitat for generations to come. We shared these images and words.

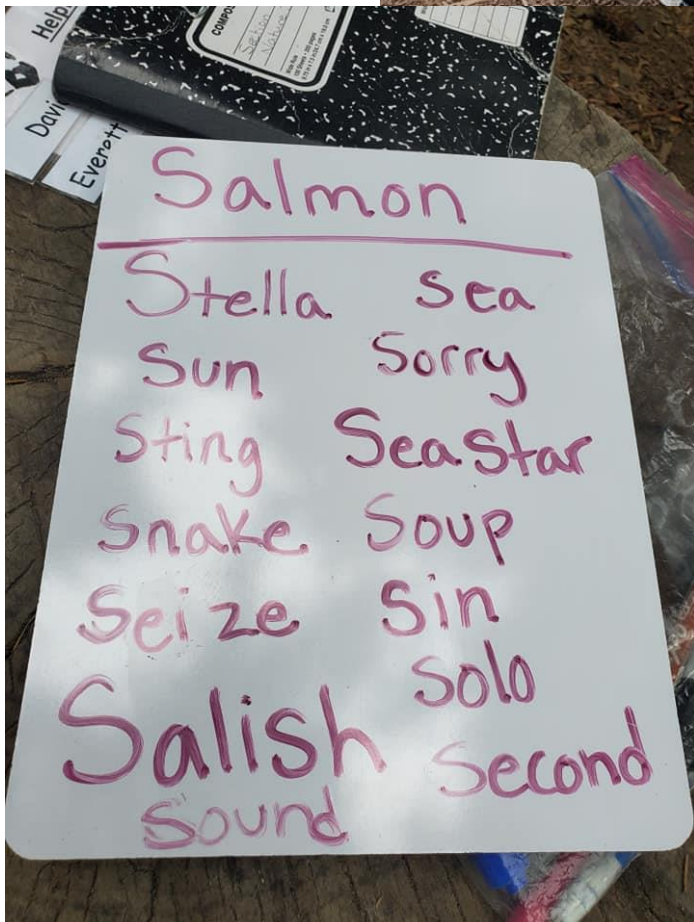
“I don’t believe in magic. I believe in the sun and the stars, the water, the tides, the floods, the owls, the hawks flying, the river running, the wind talking. They’re measurements. They tell us how healthy things are. How healthy we are. Because we and they are the same. That’s what I believe in.” - Billy Frank Jr.



The last activity of the day was step one of our salmon prints on t shirts. Friends painted the rubber salmon brown and then we made the initial print on the shirt they brought in.



Day 3 – This day started with a salmon memory game. Not only did this help friends review the different species of salmon – Sockeye, Pink, Chum, Chinook, Steelhead and Coho – it was also a chance to practice turn taking, following the rules of a game, and good sportsmanship.



We also threw in a quick brainstorm of other words that begin with the letter S!

Our next activity was called Trade Between the People. We revisited *A River Lost* to discuss the value of salmon that went far beyond food. Our friends were reminded that salmon were also used to trade for other resources that may not have been readily available in their region. To prepare for this activity we referred to the book *The People of Cascadia: Pacific Northwest Native American History* by Heidi Bohan.

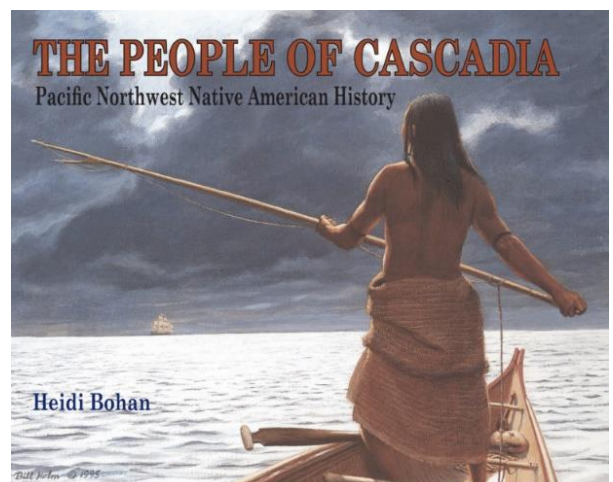
We split into two groups to “gather” resources from designated “land”. One group was from the coastal forested area (gathering huckleberries, salmon and making woven baskets for trade) and the other was from an inland plains area (bringing horses, bison robes and camas root for trade). We told our friends that, after our trade, they would need to have enough resources to prepare them for the upcoming winter.



After our first trading session we discovered that we did not have an evenly distributed amount of resources. We decided to break into our groups again and come up with a different plan for distributing resources and trading so that everyone would have what they need.



After this activity we discussed how all tribes had their own language and in order to come together and trade with one another they developed a common language: Chinook Jargon. We shared the *Lifting the Sky Story* (p.88) from *The People of Cascadia* about the power of having a common language.



Our last activity of the day was finishing our salmon prints on t shirts. Now that the brown paint was dry, we used small brushes to add detail to our salmon.

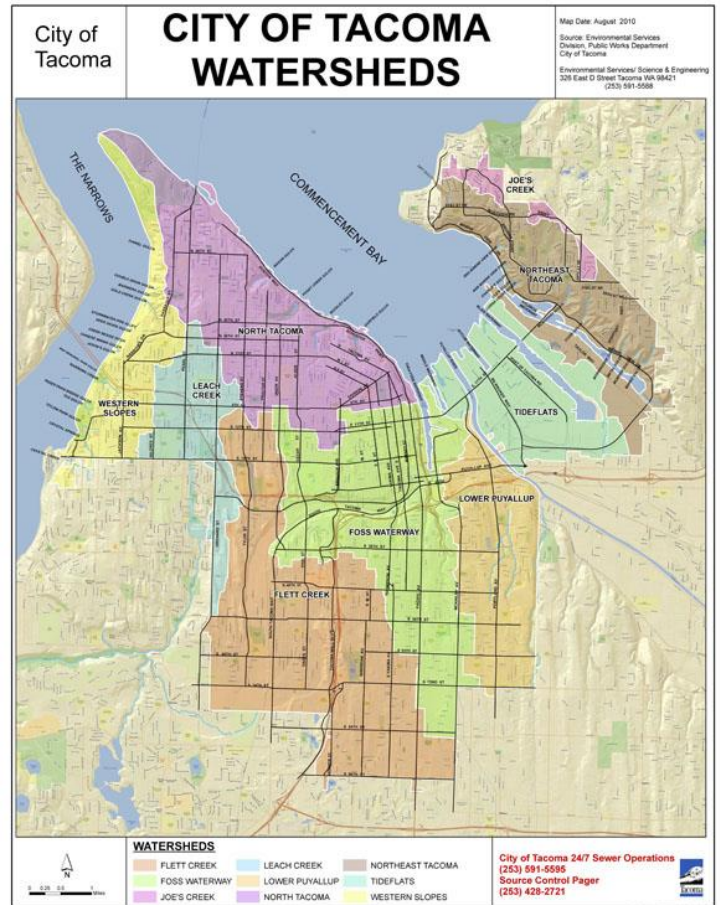


Summer Session, Week 3

Our final week focused on the importance of a healthy watershed for both animals and people, and the water cycle. We discussed the components of a watershed and explored the consequences of pollution by creating a watershed model. We also used our salmon eyes to explore a watershed from a different point of view. And we investigated Snake Lake's headwaters, starting with the storm drain out on the street.

Day 1 – We began our day by looking at a map of the watersheds in our area and focusing on the watershed that Snake Lake is a part of.

Then our friends were each given a piece of paper and told to crumple it up to make their own watershed “map.” We then traced the lines left behind when we uncrumpled our paper with blue ink...



We were able to watch the blue “water” run down from higher elevations! This activity allowed us to go over vocabulary such as upstream, downstream, estuary, and run off.

We noticed some watershed lines revealed mountains similar to Mt. Rainier! We discussed how the Native American name for the mountain is Tacoma (or Tahoma) and that it was given long before the mountain came to be known as Rainier. We shared that the original name means "mother of rivers". Our friends found this original name to be quite meaningful.



Next we headed to the first bridge to take a sample of water from Snake Lake. We read from *One With the Watershed*, and talked about what the different colors of water might indicate in regards to the lake's health.



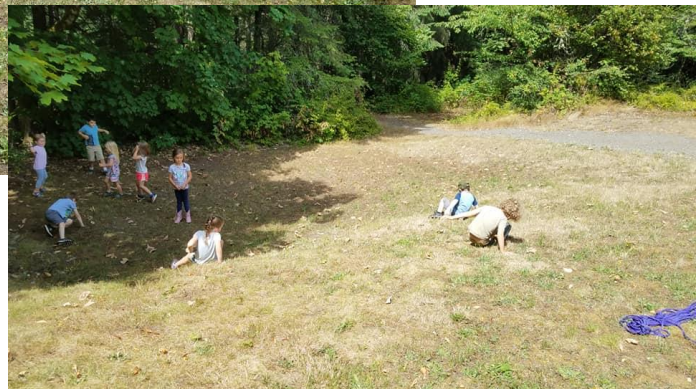
Next we created a watershed together! We used our water table and added mountains out of rocks for higher elevations and we used other natural materials to represent forests, an estuary and the rest of the lower elevations. We also added critters and an image of *In-tee-tee-huh* in the appropriate spots. Then we each found a rock and placed it in the watershed model to represent our home. Some friends chose to live high in the mountains and others chose to live down on the “beach.”



Then we added water to our model and observed the way it flowed downstream!



To finish our day we set up an obstacle course that had our friends act out being a drop of rain that fell in the mountains and travelled downstream and eventually through river rapids and then out to the open ocean!



Day 2 – This day focused on the components of a healthy wetland! First we put on our salmon eyes and shared what we saw from this different point of view. What do we see as we look up? What color is the water around us? Is it clear and clean?

Our next stop was out to the storm drain on the street. This storm drain collects run off that then travels to the headwaters of Snake Lake. We discussed the color of the water at this point and what it could mean.



After examining the headwaters of Snake Lake we then headed to the first bridge to compare the two different points. But first we made a stop along the way to use our Wetland Metaphors bag. Each item in the bag represents an important feature of the wetland habitat.



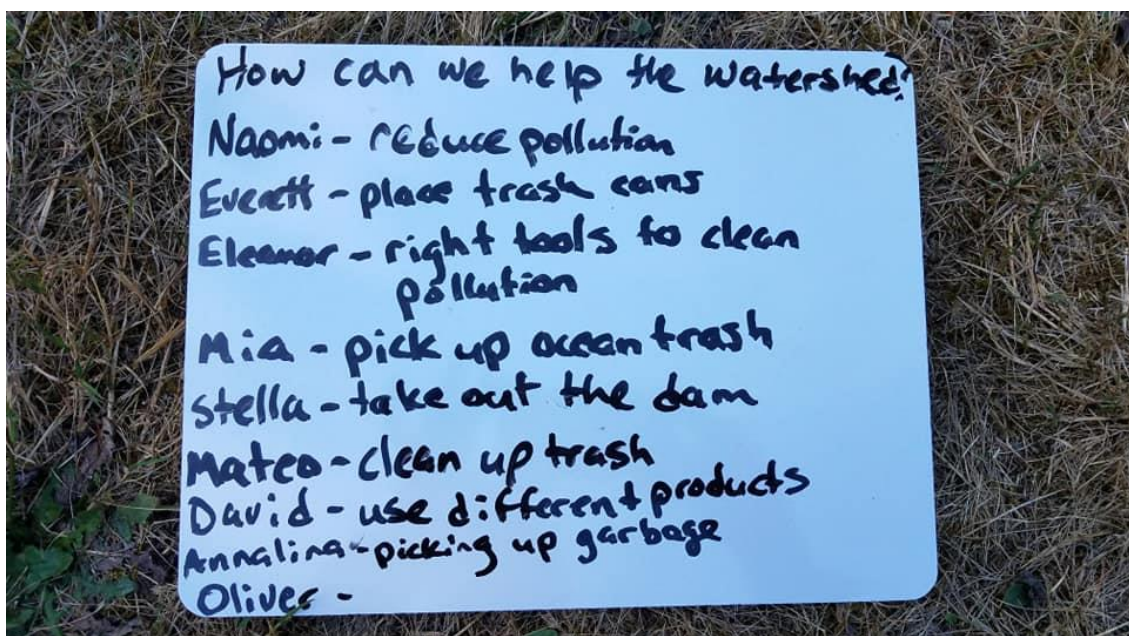
The first item pulled out of the bag was a baby in a cradle. This represents the fact that many animal babies are born in a wetland where there are ample places to make nests, hide from predators and find food. The second item was a pillow, representing that wetlands are a great resting spot for animals. The mirror in the bag represents who can take part in caring for wetlands! The sponge in the bag represents how wetlands soak up and filter the water that pass through them. The box of cereal in the bag represents the fact that animals can find a lot of food for themselves in the wetland. And the bar of soap in the bag represents the many plants in wetlands that play a role in cleaning the water that pass through them.



Next we revisited our watershed model and this time added some land development: a farm and a dam. We talked about what types of pollutants this land development creates. We also added our animals back in the watershed, including salmon, and then...it rained!



After seeing the pollutants flow downstream in our model and how they impacted the animals and water we talked about what we could do to make our watersheds healthy!



Day 3 – Our last day of this summer session was a half day and we spent it having fun with our recycled materials water wall and then we decided to do our part in keeping our wetland clean by picking up litter around Snake Lake!



*Nurture In Nature Preschool Summer Session 2019 Teachers: James Krolikowski and Jess Brewer
Curriculum overview prepared by James Krolikowski
Nurture in Nature Preschool at Tacoma Nature Center*