Cedar Narrative



The Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians extensively use the wood of the Western Red Cedar trees. Western Red Cedar trees are abundant in many places, and their wood is generally softer for carving and splitting. The ***miluk*** and ***hanis*** Coos Tribes shared word for cedar is ***tlahalimil***. The Lower Umpqua People and Siuslaw Tribes also share a word for cedar: ***q'achtii.***

We have a saying: "Cedar is our life" because of its importance and many versatile uses.

Cedar trees grow as part of forest ecosystems, alongside other plants, animals, soil, and water systems. These trees provide shelter and habitat and are part of a larger network of life in the forest. Knowledge about cedar comes from generations of observing the land and the trees, including how they grow and change in different conditions. This knowledge guides how cedar is cared for and gathered so the tree and forest can continue to grow and remain strong over time.

Caring for cedar is not only about how it is used, but also how it is tended. This includes taking what is needed in ways that allow the tree and forest to remain healthy. When these relationships are not maintained in the same ways over time, the forest may require additional care to continue to function in a healthy way.

In Southwestern Oregon, there is also a Port Orford Cedar tree. While some people do like this wood, it is not as favored by many others. The Port Orford Cedar wood is heavier than Western Red Cedar. It is harder to carve, and if it is made into canoes, they are much heavier and harder to bring onto land to dock or secure out of the water.

Historically, Western Red Cedar provided materials for housing, transportation, clothing, tools, and more. Cedar wood was used for constructing plank houses, making canoes, creating clothing and accessories like hats and capes, and crafting tools and utensils. Some parts of the Western Red Cedar tree also have medicinal properties.

Housing: Cedar wood has a distinctive smell that many insects avoid and contains natural oils that help it resist rot and decay. Because of these qualities, cedars were widely used to construct buildings in the village, including plank houses for individual and extended families, as well as community gathering spaces.





Transportation: Cedar wood is rot-resistant and can float on water, which makes it a good material for canoes. The Tribes made canoes in different sizes. The largest canoe, called ***aluudaq,*** can carry many people and is used in bays and the ocean. A medium sized canoe is called ***maxmax.*** The smallest canoe, called ***k'u'wuts,*** carries one or two people***.***

Clothing: Cedar was also used to make clothing. The cambium, a thin layer just under the bark, was pounded to soften for use. It was then woven and sewn into skirts and capes. Hats were made from strips of cedar bark that were not pounded. Cedar clothing could help protect people from rain.



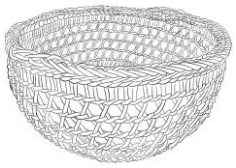
Tools, Utensils, and Accessories:
Mats: Cedar strips were woven into mats of many sizes. These mats were used for sleeping, sitting, and insulation in homes. They were also used to dry foods like berries and fish in the sun and could be sewn into blankets.



Vessels: Cedar wood was carved into bowls, boxes, plates, spoons, and ceremonial objects. Canoe bailers, used to remove water from canoes, were also made of cedar.

Cords and Twine:
Flexible cedar branches were stripped of bark and thinned to make strong cords. These cords were used for fishing line, rope, and other purposes. Cedar roots were also harvested and used to make twine (string).

Basketry:
Cedar strips and cedar roots were used to weave baskets. These baskets were used for storage, cooking, and ceremonial purposes.



Medicines and other uses:
Cedar was also used for medicinal purposes. The leaves, berries, and bark are utilized in remedies to help heal wounds and relieve pain. The needles of the Cedar tree (the green part) can be used to make tea or oils. The scent of the Cedar tree from the oil or wood, was also used for purification and cleansing.

Every part of the Western Red Cedar tree is used: nothing is wasted. Cedar is gathered with care and knowledge so that the tree and the surrounding environment can continue to support life over time. The bark, limbs, cambium, wood, and roots all have a purpose and use. Members of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw continue to harvest and use Western Red Cedar today.

The Cedar Tree and all that the tree gives are still held sacred.

Name:_____

CEDAR Comprehension Worksheet

Instructions:
1. Read the Cedar Narrative.
2. In teams or individually, answer the following questions.
3. Use short answers to show your thinking. You may use words, phrases or simple sketches.

How is Cedar used?

- What are 4 things Cedar is used for?

_____ _____

_____ _____

- Why is Cedar a good material for making clothes in a Western Oregon climate?

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_____

- What patterns do you notice in how Cedar us used?

_____

_____

- BONUS: Which use of Cedar surprised or stood out to you? Why:

_____

_____

Why is Cedar Important?

- Why is Western Red Cedar a good material for canoes?

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- Which type of Cedar is easier to work with and why:?

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- Why is Cedar so important to the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw People?

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- BONUS: How do Cedar's uses show that people depend on it?

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How is Cedar cared for?

- What does the Narrative show about how Cedar is cared for?

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- Why might caring for Cedar be important?

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- Why is Cedar still used and important today?

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- BONUS: How does caring for Cedar help it continue to be used over time?

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