Environmental Education Activity

Caribou Game

Age/Grade Range

- Ages: 11+

Group Size

- 15-30 students

Time

- Set-up: 2 minutes
- Activity: 10-20 min

Materials

- Paper Caribou Antlers (optional)

Set-Up

Find a large space where students will be able to run around in.

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Topics

- Ecology and Animals

Objective

- Introduce kids to being in the role of someone/something else.
- Learn what caribou need to survive. Learn how the population cycles over the years.
- Physical warm up.

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Activity Directions

1. This game gets the kids thinking like animals. Clear a large playing area and divide the class into two groups: Caribou and Habitat.
2. To start, about a quarter of the group can be caribou. They stand in a line at one end of the playing field. Everyone else begins as part of the habitat. They stand in a line at the other end of the field (not super far away though, the width of a gym or a bit less would be sufficient). The caribou and the habitat turn their backs to each other, so they face opposite directions.
3. Each individual picks one of three symbols that represent the caribous' needs:
    a. Water (they put one hand up to their mouth like they are drinking a glass of water)
    b. Food (they put one hand on their stomach)
    c. Shelter (They form a little 'tent' above their heads with both their hands).
4. While the caribou are picking what they need, the habitat is deciding what they will supply (one of the three things above). Everyone must hold on to the symbol they choose for the rest of the round.
5. On the count of three, everyone turns around at the same time. The caribou run to a member of the habitat that is supplying what they need (that is holding up the same symbol). Only one caribou allowed per habitat member. Both the surviving caribou and the habitat that supplied its need become caribou for the next round. If the habitat doesn't fulfil a caribou's need, the animal dies and becomes part of the habitat for the next round.
6. Allow time to play several rounds. You will see that the caribou population is continuously going up and down.

Questions/Points of Discussion

1. Did the caribou population stay the same size, or did it change?
2. What do you think would happen if we added twice as many people onto the habitat side?
3. What would happen if we took half the habitat people out of the game?
4. What other things, besides habitat, might affect caribou populations?

Pairs Well With

- Ecotheatre workshop

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