

# A Calendar on Turtle's Shell:

## Music - Drama - Social Studies - Language Arts

### Educational Activity

Students improvise drumming patterns to represent character traits found in a First Nations creation myth. They learn about and create lunar calendars.

### Materials

- ❖ Class set of "Creator and the Seasons"
- ❖ Native drumming sound clips from [www.artsalive.ca/musicresources/](http://www.artsalive.ca/musicresources/)
- ❖ 5 or more drums (see suggestions for drum-making at [www.artsalive.ca/musicresources/](http://www.artsalive.ca/musicresources/))
- ❖ Calendar showing phases of the moon
- ❖ Student activity sheet: Turtle Calendars (page 28)
- ❖ Optional: *Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back: A Native American Year of Moons*, Joseph Bruchac, Putnam, 1997, ISBN: 0698115848

### Lesson Map

#### Reading and Discussing

- ❖ Read the story "Creator and the Seasons" on pages 29 to 32 using strategies appropriate for your class.
- ❖ List the various characters in the story and their specific traits.

#### Creating

- ❖ Listen to the sound clip of First Nations drumming on the website. Notice the different tone colours, pitches, rhythms, and textures.
- ❖ Experiment with the different sounds that can be produced on drums. Discuss tempo, rhythm, and dynamics. (See the Four Seasons Listening Guide on page 9).
- ❖ Create a short musical theme for each character.
- ❖ Dramatize the story. Have several students read parts aloud, including the narrator, while others play the drums before each character speaks.

#### Learning About the First Nations Calendar

- ❖ Count the number of full moons in a year (13), using a conventional calendar for reference. Chart the dates of each moon.
- ❖ Using the activity sheet on page 28, count the number of large scales on the turtle's back (13).
- ❖ Share: *The turtle was recognized by First Nations peoples to represent the lunar calendar because it usually has thirteen large scales.*
- ❖ Discuss: *Why do you think the First Nations people followed the moons?*
- ❖ Share the following with the students:

Before the Gregorian calendar came into use, many civilizations around the world, including the First Nations of Canada, used a lunar calendar based on thirteen full moons. The seasons moved in relation to these moons, and each moon had a specific name according to the season, weather, or some natural phenomenon that occurred during the time when that moon was full. Some of these names include:

"Sun Has Not Strength to Thaw" (January for the Algonquin)

"Strawberry Moon" (May for the Potawatomi)

"Frost Sparkling in the Sun" (February for the Northern Arapaho)

"Freezing River Maker Moon" (November for the Abenaki)

- ❖ Have students complete and display the activity sheet, using the date chart as a reference.

