

Tools for Predicting Weather

Indicators of Early Spring

1. Animals:
 - a. Fur – Animals have the ability to change colour to blend into their environments. For example, rabbits change their fur colour to brown before the snow begins to melt (Ron Ray).
 - b. Birds – The returning of birds from the south will indicate that spring is about to arrive (for example, horned larks and crows). Redpoles begin to sing in the trees (Stuart Prosper).
 - c. Skunks – Skunks are one of the first animals to return in the spring. One elder stated “you know spring is here when the skunks are out” (Yvonne Chamakese).

Indicators of the Length of Winter

1. Animals:
 - a. Beehives – Wild beehives are built to a height so that they will not be covered by snowfall. A beehive built high above the ground will indicate above-normal snowfall and most likely slower melting in the spring and a longer spring (Stuart Prosper).
 - b. Beaver food stash – Beavers will store large amounts of food for a long cold winter (Ron Ray).
 - c. Muskrat lodge – Muskrats will build their lodges higher and fuller if they believe it will be a longer winter. A higher lodge will help with ice cover and storage (Stuart Prosper).

Indicators of Storms

1. Trees & Birds:
 - a. Leaves – The leaves on black poplar trees will turn upward to show their shiny side when rain is approaching (Ron Ray).
 - b. Birds – Most birds will disappear when storms are approaching (Stuart Prosper). The common tern, a shore bird similar to a seagull, will make more calls when weather is changing or precipitation is approaching. Their call sounds like a “yeah” as if they are agreeing with something (Stuart Prosper).
 - c. The grey squirrel – Found in coniferous forests, the grey squirrel makes a whistling call when weather is changing or precipitation is approaching. You can hear this rising, whistling call more often with a weather change (Stuart Prosper).
2. Moon:
 - a. Shape – The shape of the moon will predict a storm the next day:
 1. Warning of storm – The moon will appear as a cup where the bottom is full and the top is curved.
 2. Rain or snow – The moon will tilt to give the impression that the cup will spill its contents.
 3. Storm – The moon will appear as an upside down cup. All the contents will appear to be pouring out of the cup.

4. Nice day – A half-moon shape will appear with no curvature present. It does not matter which half of the moon appears (Yvonne Chamakese).

Indicators of Wind

1. Sunset and sunrise:
 - a. Colour – There is an old saying that the colour of the sky will indicate the amount of wind present the next day: red sky at night – sailor’s delight; red sky at morning – sailors take warning. First Nations culture views the red sky in this same context (Yvonne Chamakese).
2. Birds:
 - a. Birds can help determine the direction of the wind. Birds will always face the wind so they are able to escape faster if they are in danger. They will get more lift from the wind if they face the same direction (Stuart Prosper).
3. Direction:
 - a. East – Winds from the east will be interpreted as a storm approaching (Stuart Prosper).
 - b. West – Winds from the west will suggest a change in the weather or sunny weather is approaching (Stuart Prosper).
4. Sundogs:
 - a. A sundog will predict that the weather will be cold and windy. Sundogs also indicate that there is moisture in the air (Stuart Prosper).

Long-Term Weather

1. White buffalo:
 - a. Lakota, Dakota, and Cree people understand the white buffalo as a legend (Anna-Leah King). According to a version of the legend, a white buffalo, disguised as a woman wearing white hides, appeared to two men. One treated her with respect, and the other did not. She turned the disrespectful man into a pile of bones, and gave the respectful man a pipe and taught his people rituals and music. She transformed into a female white buffalo calf and promised to return again.
<http://www.crystalinks.com/prophecyanimals.html>
 - b. The white buffalo is understood to appear on the plains before a major change in the weather patterns of that region. Native American prophecies say that a white buffalo will reunite all races of man and restore balance to the world. <http://www.crystalinks.com/prophecyanimals.html>
 - c. Another story tells of the white buffalo changing to the colours of the medicine wheel. The colours were white (north), red (south), blue (west), and yellow (east). Research suggests a white buffalo appeared in 1933 – this appearance was followed by the Depression. Other white buffalos were born in 2004, 2006, and 2007. Could this suggest that global warming is coming after the white buffalo? (Note: Climate change has affected the weather systems including animal behaviour.)

APPENDIX B

Cultural Weather Research

Now it's your turn!

Check with your family, friends, and the internet to see what you can find out about cultural sayings. Use a search for "weather sayings," or follow these links:

<http://www.cmos.ca/weatherlore.html> - Environment Canada

<http://www.dcrafts.com/weathersayings.htm>

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/education/primary/students/sayings.html>

Record the addresses of your top three websites here:

1.	
2.	
3.	

Animal behaviour that predicts weather:

Bees:

Cows:

Seagulls:

Other:

Wind that predicts weather:

East:

West:

Fishing:

Other:

Clouds that predict weather:

High clouds:

Tall clouds:

Other:

Other weather predictors:

A person's joint pain:

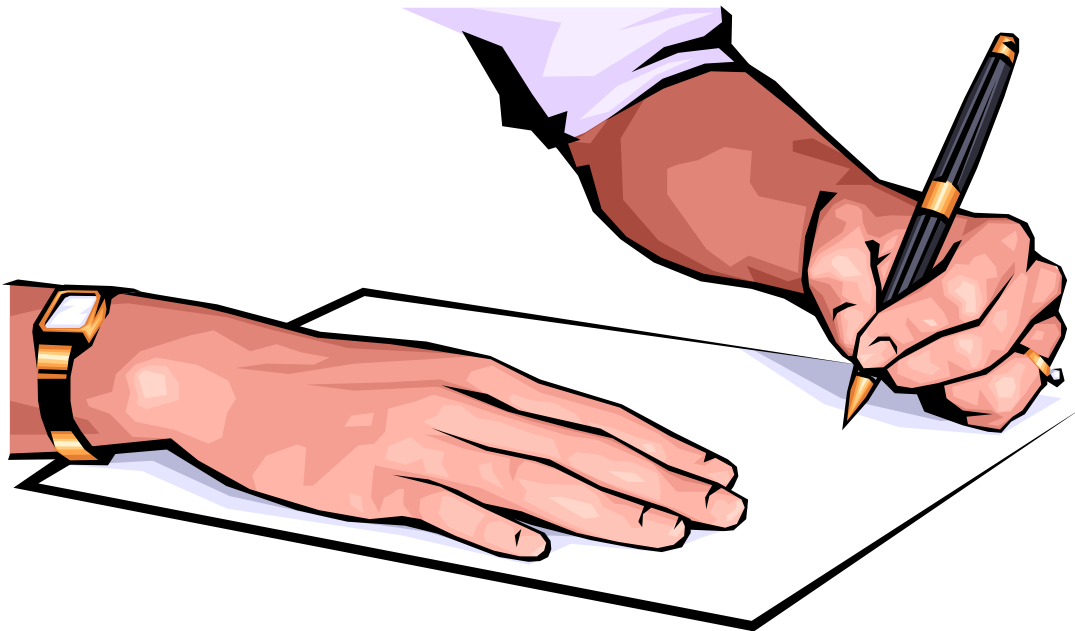
Chimney smoke:

Storms that come up fast:

Rainbow afternoon:

Dew:

Other:



Cultural Weather Research Answer Key

Animal behaviour that predicts weather:

- Bees: If bees stay at home, rain will soon come;
If they fly away, fine will be the day.
- Cows: Face the wind, cows face away.
A cow's tail to the west is weather coming at its best; a cow's tail to the east is weather coming at its least.
- Seagulls: Seagull, seagull, sit on the sand. It's never good weather while you're on the land.
- Other: Dogs can act up, go calm, or get excited when a storm approaches.
You can tell the temperature by counting a cricket's chirps.
Flies will swarm before a storm.

Wind that predicts weather:

- East: When the wind is in the east, 'tis neither good for man nor beast.
- West: Normal weather. The southeast wind was changing to a westerly so we knew blue skies were on the way and we could dry out the dampness in our gear.
- Fishing: When the wind blows from the west, fish bite best; when it blows from the east, fish bite least.
- Other: North wind means cold coming; south win warm.

Clouds that predict weather:

- High clouds: The higher the clouds, the better the weather.
- Tall clouds: In the morning mountains, in the evening fountains.
When clouds appear like rocks and towers, the earth's refreshed by frequent showers.
- Other: Mackerel sky, not three days dry.
When the stars begin to huddle, the earth will soon become a puddle.
When clouds look like black smoke, a wise man will put on his cloak.

Other weather predictors:

- A person's joint pain: Rain is on the way when people with joint or muscle problems such as rheumatism or arthritis have stiffness and discomfort.
- Chimney smoke: Chimney smoke descends, our nice weather ends.
- Storms that come up fast: Storms that come up fast never last. Rain long foretold, long last; short notice, soon will pass.
- Rainbow afternoon: A rainbow afternoon, good weather coming soon.
- Dew: Dew on the grass, rain won't come to pass. When grass is dry at morning light, look for rain before the night.
- Other: When the ditch and pond offend the nose, then look out for rain and stormy blows.
When a rainstorm is coming, dandelions close their blossoms tightly.

Whether the weather be hot,
Or whether the weather be not,
We'll weather the weather, whatever the weather,
Whether we like it or not!

