

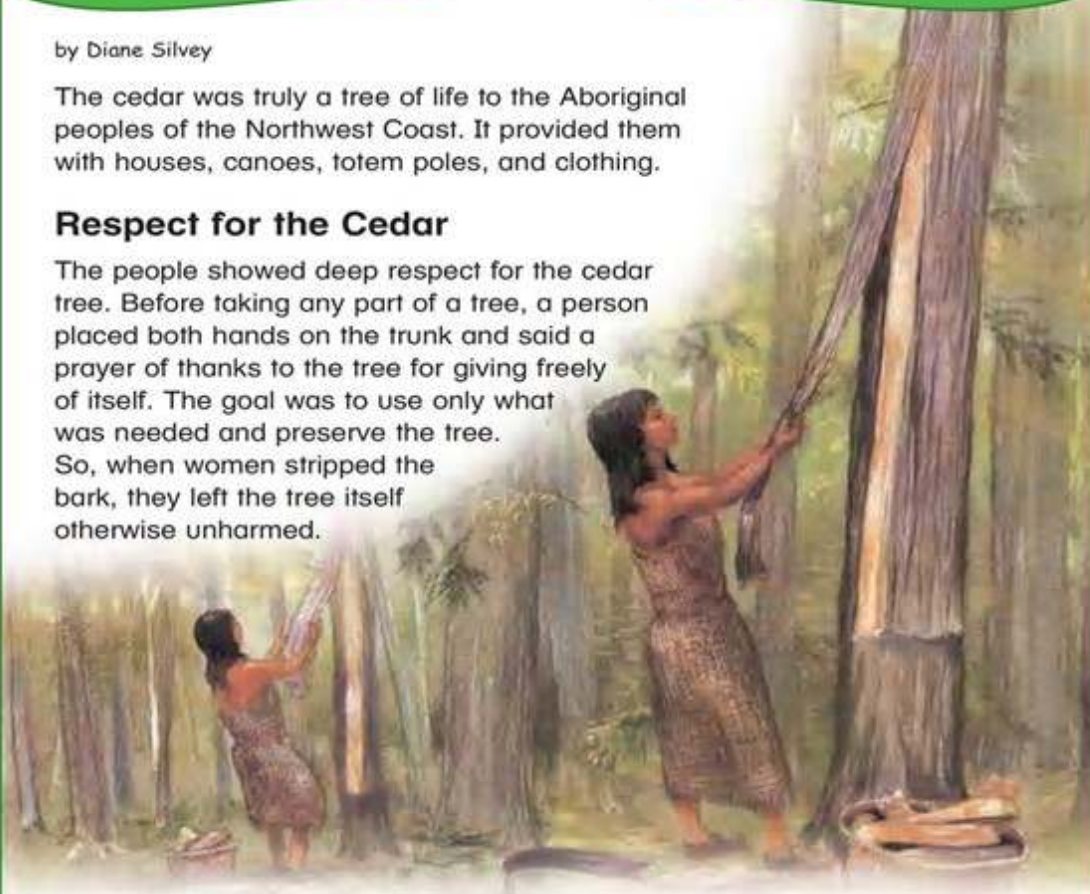
Cedar—The Tree of Life

by Diane Silvey

The cedar was truly a tree of life to the Aboriginal peoples of the Northwest Coast. It provided them with houses, canoes, totem poles, and clothing.

Respect for the Cedar

The people showed deep respect for the cedar tree. Before taking any part of a tree, a person placed both hands on the trunk and said a prayer of thanks to the tree for giving freely of itself. The goal was to use only what was needed and preserve the tree. So, when women stripped the bark, they left the tree itself otherwise unharmed.



Gathering the Bark

The women gathered the cedar bark. After a prayer, a slit was made near the bottom of the tree. Then a woman grasped the bark firmly with both hands and started walking backwards. As she did so, a strip of bark tore evenly up the length of the tree.