

Winter Inquiry

Indoor / Outdoor activity

Curriculum: Science, Literacy, Physical and Outdoor Education, Career & Technology Studies



Introduction:

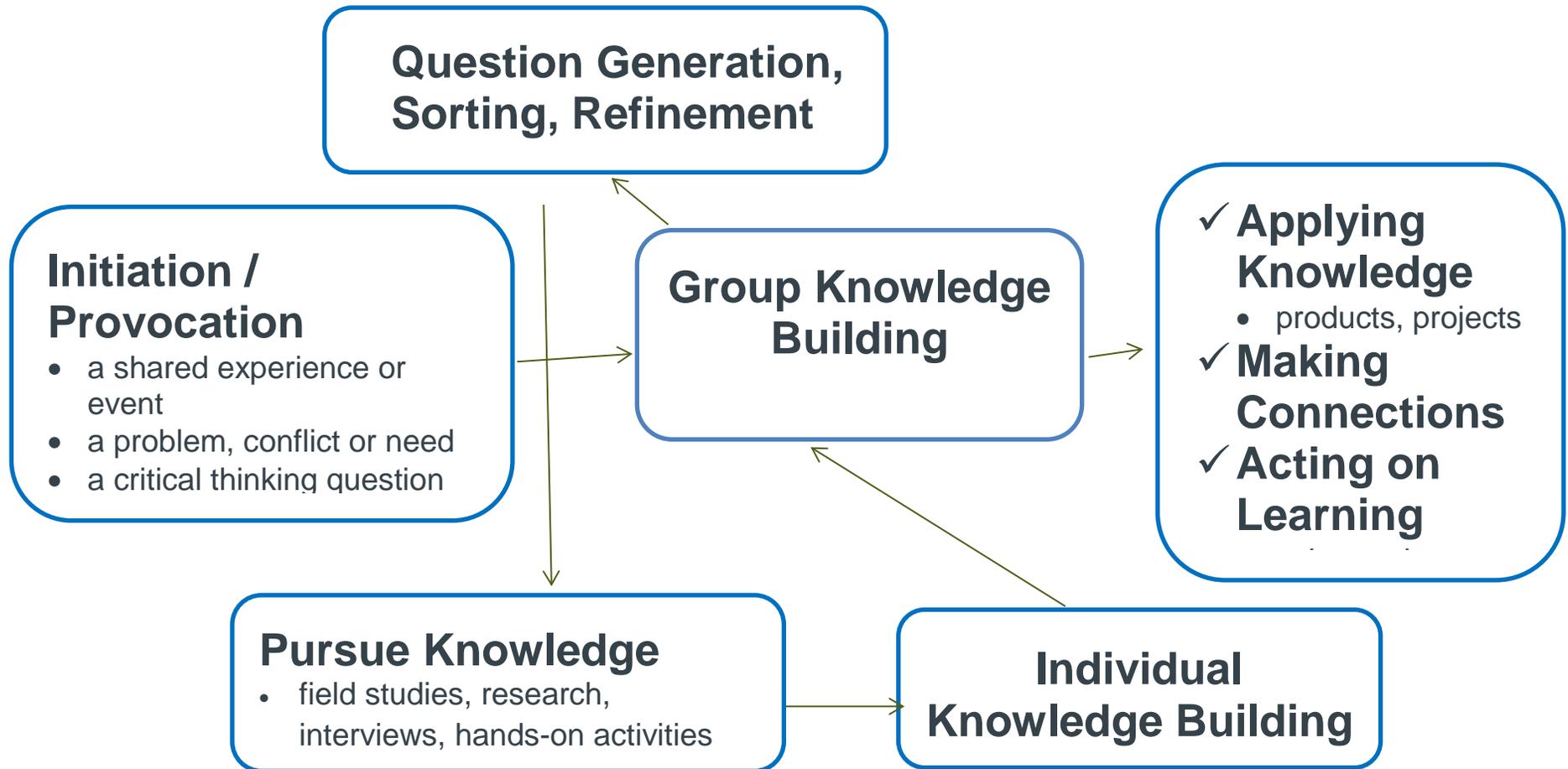
Winter is an exciting time to get students outside! While it may seem the landscape is in a dormant state, ecological processes are occurring and the intersection of human use and related issues presents a real world context for student learning. Alberta Parks and nearby natural areas provide an authentic learning landscape, supporting an Inquiry approach to learning. By adopting an Inquiry

approach, students are able to:

- **Make Real World Connections** – Alberta Parks and natural spaces provide opportunities for shared experiences to spark student curiosity or can present problems or conflicts for students to examine.
- **Become Active Citizens** – Learning in local spaces and parks supports student engagement in learning about their local area, promoting citizenship.
- **Integrate Learning** – Inquiry supports a cross curricular approach to learning resulting in a deeper understanding of issues and curriculum.
- **Critically Think** - Students connect their learning to their own knowledge and experiences, as well as, input from others who may have diverse viewpoints, presenting opportunities to critically think.
- **Act on Learning** – Students application of knowledge learned through the process often results in a benefit to Alberta Parks or the local community.

The following model presents a visual map for how Alberta Parks incorporates Inquiry into their field studies. Facilitated experiences in Alberta Parks supports the initial stages of an Inquiry through **Provocation**, be the source for **Building Knowledge** supporting an established Inquiry, or lastly can be the focus of student action projects resulting from their **Applied Learning**.

A Structure of Inquiry – for Alberta Parks



Adapted from Learning for a Sustainable Future's, *A Structure of Inquiry Learning*

Instructions:

- Watch the attached [Winter Inquiry video](#) (4:22 minutes) highlighting one program facilitated by Alberta Park Educators. In this example, students had a shared snowshoeing experience in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park. This park had a current issue that Managers needed to address: a non-profit organization had put in a request to build further snowshoe trails in the Sawmill/Chester Lake area. Students pursued an Inquiry on addressing this need of the public wanting further trail development and the need of the park to maintain its ecological integrity. In this Inquiry, Alberta Parks supported the process by initiating the Provocation for the Inquiry, providing access to Park experts, including Park Planners and Ecologists supported their Knowledge Building process and their Action on Learning through their presentations and recommendations to Park experts.
- Identify a nearby natural area or Provincial Park that could be adopted in your Inquiry. If possible, visit the park and/or reach out to Park Educators or Experts to gain a deeper understanding of the area, potential issues, conflicts or needs. Consider how you want to use the landscape to support an Inquiry: Provocation, Knowledge Building or Action on Learning.
- To start an inquiry, consider an overarching question that you can present students. Often the curriculum you want to address can be expressed as this question. The following overarching questions are a few prompts to help guide your thinking and to explore the possibilities of adopting a winter Inquiry project for your students.

Examples – Over Arching Questions to Start an Inquiry

Is snow a special substance?

How is our part of the Province special and unique?

How does human activity affect the diversity of living things?

How does snow impact wildlife?

How is Alberta's water supply impacted by climate?

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- Park Educators throughout the Province are a wealth of knowledge and can support student Inquiry projects directly or through connections to subject matter experts. To connect with your local Park Educators visit our website at www.AlbertaParks.ca .