**Snappers and Ladders Activity**

**Prep:
Overview of biodiversity**

* Overview of reptiles and turtles, how they are important to biodiversity
* Lifecycle overview and threats to populations

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| **Snapping turtle - Background information** |
| **Identification** | One of the largest freshwater turtles in Canada, the snapping turtle has an earthy coloured shell and hooked upper jaw. Spiky scales on its tail give it a prehistoric appearance. |
| **Lifespan** | Snapping turtles are generally long living with a lifespan of 40-50 years |
| **Habitat** | Snapping turtles live in many habitat types and can most often be found in water that is moving slowly, with a mud bottom and lots of aquatic plants |
| **Hibernation** | In the fall, snapping turtles will travel to find water bodies suitable for hibernation, where they will bury themselves in the mud and spend the winter in a primarily dormant state |
| **Diet** | Snapping turtles feed on both plants and animals (also known as omnivorous). They also help to keep waterways clean and healthy by scavenging large amounts of dead plant and animal matter  |
| **Survival** | Only a small percentage of hatchling turtles survive to maturity. Therefore, high survival rates of adult individuals are essential to maintain healthy populations. |
| **Threats** | * Listed as a vulnerable species under the Nova Scotia Endangered Species Act, snapping turtles face threats including habitat loss, pollution, road mortality and persecution
* Water pollution, such as agricultural runoff, is a major threat as polluted water bodies cannot sustain a significant snapping turtle population
* Turtles are threatened when habitats such as wetlands, streams, and nesting sites are altered or lost to urban and agricultural development
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| **Aggressive behavior (dispelling myths)** | Snapping turtles can be aggressive on land to defend against predators as they are unable to retreat into their shells. However, they are docile underwater and pose no threat to people swimming. |
| **Turtles and First Nations** | Turtles are very important to First Nations as they play a large role in ceremonies and cultural beliefs. For example, the continent of North America is referred to as Turtle Island and it is believed that the world was created on the turtle's back. |
| **What to do if you see a snapping turtle?** | If you see any turtles, you can observe them from a distance and avoid handling or removing them from their home.  |

**Snappers and Ladders**

**Instructions:** This is a team building game that aims to teach participants about the life cycle of the snapping turtle.Participants must line up at the start. Each participant will take a turn on the board until they step in the wrong direction. Participants must wait for their turn in line to get on the board. After the participant chooses their square on the board the instructor will read the corresponding note. Participants can move forward backwards and sideways on the board but not diagonally. If the participant has stepped in the right direction they can continue their turn, however if they stepped in the wrong direction they must get off the board and go to the back of the line. The game will continue until the correct path is found.

**Goal:** The goal of the game is to encourage teamwork and collaboration while teaching participants about the snapping turtles' life cycle and threats.

**Materials:** This game only requires a game board and an answer key. The game board can be made using packing tape and a tarp.

**Ages:** this game can be adapted to various age groups but works best with ages 9 and up.

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| A hungry raccoon ate the eggs | 1.Congrats you successfully hatched | Your egg was laid in a construction zone  | Wops! the egg was crushed | Predators attack! Again... |
| Oh no! you were born on the side of a busy highway | 2. You're now a hatchling: start on your journey towards the nearest wetland  | You were spotted by a hungry crow | You became a human's pet because you're 'too cute' | A dog thinks you are a fun toy |
| You're here but the wetland is gone.  | 3. You made it to the wetland!  | 4. You're now a juvenile turtle.  | A great blue heron thought you were delicious meal | The neighborhood kids thought you would make a fun pet |
| Your pond was turned into a golf course | You injured your shell | 5. You're successfully adopting to your life in the pond | 6. Your pond has plenty of your favorite foods: plants and aquatic insects | 7. You enjoy sitting on your favorite rock to regulate your body temperature |
| Chemical runoff from the golf course has made you sick | You are captured by poachers | Your wetland habitat is lost | Predators attack!  | 8. Now it is late fall and time to find a place to hibernate for the winter.  |
| Your wetland habitat is lost | You crossed the road in the wrong place!  | 11. You're safe, keep going!  | 10. You made it through your first winter | 9. You find a nice cozy mud bed at the bottom of a lake. A perfect place to hibernate! |
| You crossed the road in the wrong place!  | You ate a fishing hook | 12. You're safe, keep going!  | 15. You survived the winter and have continued to thrive for the next 5 years (Optional) | 16. Congrats! you made it to adulthood(Optional) |
| You lost a piece of your shell | Chemical runoff from the golf course has made you sick | 13. You're doing good, keep going! | 14. You're safe, keep going! (Possible game ending) | You're kidnapped by illegal poachers |