THE VERY HUNGRY AZBAN

GRADES:
3rd - 5th grade and higher

SUBJECTS:
Natural resources, ecosystems, competition for resources, habitat fragmentation, and carrying capacity.
INTRODUCTION

The goal of this booklet is to provide you with the instructions and framework to successfully carry out your own version of The Very Hungry Azban in your classroom or at your educational institution. It is based on the book Azban’s Great Journey which is written by Abenaki author and Vermont Abenaki Artists Association member, Brian Chenevert. It is highly recommended that you purchase a copy of the book to read aloud to your class and use as a companion piece to this booklet.

MATERIALS

Optional, but highly suggested materials are marked as ** In order to complete this activity, you will need:
- A space suitable for participants to safely run in
- A copy of Azban’s Great Journey**
- Water tokens
- Food tokens
- The Instructions and Background sections of this booklet

TOKENS

In this game, you will decide on certain items to represent food tokens or water tokens. These are pieces that students must quickly collect in a limited amount of time.

When it comes to selecting items to use for tokens, we highly encourage you to be creative and recycle items that you may have laying around the classroom or at home such as pompoms, soda bottle caps, building blocks, scraps of construction paper etc.

If you are working with younger students, consider color coding the different tokens.
INSTRUCTIONS

1. Gather your materials.

2. Clear a safe indoor or outdoor space for movement.

3. This game will run students through several scenarios. Start with a best case scenario, where resources are readily abundant. We recommend aiming to have 3 food tokens and 2 water tokens per student at the start of the game.

A note on tokens: in order survive the day and move onto the next round, each student will need food AND water tokens. The bar for survival is dependent on how many supplies are available to you, BUT we suggest at least a combination of 3 tokens to survive.

4. Read aloud the Background page of this booklet to students.

5. Hide the tokens.

6. Set a timer for 2 minutes, feel free to adjust this time to the needs of the group.

7. Explain the rules of survival you have set for your game, or use ours. For older students, suggest a requirement of 2 food tokens and 1 water token to make it to the next round. For young students, just tell them they need 3 tokens to make it to the next round.

8. Start the timer and allow students to begin collecting tokens.

9. Repeat steps 5 - 8 to reset for the next round. With each round, begin to take away the number of tokens available. Students that do not meet the survival requirements are out until a new game.

10. Reference the scenarios chart (next page) and the page on scaling this activity up or down for age groups for assistance in creating new games to reinforce the lessons of this activity.
BACKGROUND

That tricky Azban has done it again, and outsmarted even himself. He planned a trip all across N'dakinna -- but he forgot to pack snacks!

Azban is a raccoon, one of the many animals that live in the woodland habitat of N'dakinna (the Abenaki word for their homeland). As a raccoon, he is very clever. Sometimes too clever. You see, Azban is a known for his mischief, pranks and getting into trouble by all who ever meet him. Sometimes he can get into tight spots where he needs to find a way to weasel out of them -- which is awfully silly, considering he is raccoon and not a weasel. One year, he decided to explore N'dakinna, an area that today is known for being a part of Canada and the United States, in order to have fun and meet his Abenaki neighbors. But he got lost!

Azban has to take a break and find himself a meal so he has the energy to find the path tomorrow. The days are also beginning to grow colder, as autumn approaches. He will need all the food he can get in order to make it to the next location on his trip before winter! Thankfully, he knows the area well and understands what kind of food it has to offer.

Most of N'dakinna is in a forest ecosystem, a certain area filled with plants, animals like him, and little organisms too. Like his Abenaki neighbors, he learned from his parents, other family members and elders how to respect the world around him, as well as how an ecosystem can help him survive. He knows that the rivers, lakes and streams can offer fish and crayfish to eat, while nuts, seeds and fruit he can eat all grow within the forest. If he knows where to look, there should be plenty of natural resources to eat and drink every day. However, Azban isn't alone in the forest!

There are many other animals here too, not the just the smaller ones that he may decide to eat. There are birds, bears, foxes, rabbits, deer and so many he can hardly count them. Many of them will be trying to use the same rivers and streams, or catch and harvest the same food as Azban, and this makes them competitors for the same resource. And don't forget, there are people nearby to who live in villages and towns. Those will one day grow into large cities that will cut into that forest habitat, and use the same water and food resources. But the forest can only provide a certain amount of food and water for a certain number of creatures. Anything past that amount will be beyond its carrying capacity, and those creatures will be at risk for not surviving to the next season.

Azban (and all of us, his friends) will have to be quick and clever in order to survive.
SCENARIOS

These scenarios are meant to give you ideas of how you can add or subtract more tokens, as well as engage students to begin thinking critically about how nature is affected by human activity, how nature affects human activity, and how we can adjust our behaviors to protect our furry friends and planet.

1. SEASONAL ABUNDANCE

Winters in N’dakinna can be brutally cold, with lots of snow. Other goods like plants and fruits are available, because most of them died off with the frost. But our summers and springs are beautiful. Animals have their babies in the spring, and plants bloom in the warmer months. Roleplay a winter scenario by taking away a handful of tokens. Roleplay a spring scenario by adding additional handfuls of tokens.

2. POPULATION INCREASES

Azban is a very lucky raccoon - he gets to see many places and meet friends on his adventures. In his travels, he begins to notice that more and more people are living in N’dakinna. Homes are getting taller, cities are forming and growing, and it’s getting very noisy! Roleplay some scenarios of population density growing. What happens when it grows slowly, or all of a sudden? Try slowly taking away tokens as students play to show a slow grow, then suddenly taking away extra at the start of each round.

3. SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

If students haven’t already inquired about this, make an announcement at the top of a round or game that in nature, things are not always fair. Some animals (like squirrels) hoard their food, while other animals will try to steal food from each other. Will they take extra food now, and try to sabotage other students? Consider also placing a large stash of tokens somewhere in the play area or room.

4. ALL TOGETHER NOW

Combine multiple scenarios into a single game! How long can students last?
SCALING UP

For older students, consider adding some of the following variables and scenarios:

- **Students are divided into groups such as:** people, prey, and predator. Include additional food tokens so that everyone must search for specialized food tokens.
- **Habitat fragmentation** from human encroachment (pictured below) threatens wildlife daily; have students start off in a large *safe base* and slowly make that space smaller with each round. Students must start and end each 'day' in that space or else they are out.
- **Add hazard tokens to avoid,** such as unclean water or food that wasn't suitable for their species. Have students incur a penalty for accidentally collecting them.

SCALING DOWN

For younger students, consider modifying these scenarios which require less critical thinking, but are still engaging and active:

- Instead of having food AND water tokens, just use **one type of token** to be collected
- **Incorporate an element of tag** into the game. Start off with someone as a wolf (a natural predator to raccoon) and try to tag other students. They can be out, or have their roles change to become wolves
- Instead of taking away available tokens when introducing higher population density, **incorporate local weather patterns.** What if a heavy storm came through and knocked trees over, would that increase or decrease the food available?