

Traditional First Nations Foods Lesson Plans K-8

Foundational Knowledge

Our creative team acknowledges homelands of the Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth and Kwakwaka'wakw Families (as known as Vancouver Island). We honour families who have deep relationships with lands, waters, and forests since time immemorial. Healthy lands = healthy peoples. We want to highlight how colonization and current colonial policies has greatly impacted the health of ecosystems, food systems for all peoples. These lesson plans hope to create curiosity, connections and relationships with each other and food systems.

Our creative team below are grateful for this opportunity to share about traditional foods from our perspective and acknowledge the vast knowledge, perspectives and wisdom across Nations and communities.

Rachel Dickens, RD, CDE, B.S., M.ND

– Lax Kw'alaams First Nations, Tsimshian

I was born and raised in Prince Rupert and am of mixed heritage including East Asian on my mother's side and Tsimshian on my father's side. I work alongside the Nuu-chah-nulth people as a Dietitian and Diabetes Educator, and currently resides within Tla-o-qui-aht homelands.

Lucy Hemphill, B.A.

– Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nation

I am a mom to a toddler named Ali'was and I have worked to support land-based healing, food sovereignty and cultural revitalization in my community since 2011. I graduated from UBC with a Bachelor of Arts in First Nations & Indigenous Studies in 2019. I am currently working to develop language revitalization and healing programs in my community. I am passionate about reconnecting to ancestral

relational ways of being. In my spare time, I harvest and prepare traditional medicines and foods for my family and community.

Jaymyn La Vallee, B.Ed.

– Skwxwú7mesh and Kwakwaka'wakw

I grew up in Xwmélch'tstn (Capilano) in so-called North Vancouver, BC and Waglisla (Bella Bella, BC). I am currently learning my language, Kwak'wala, and working as a curriculum developer for the Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw Nations. I am passionate about working with the future generations, food sovereignty, and place-based learning.

Jared Qwustenuxun Williams

– Cowichan Homelands

I am a passionate traditional First Nations Foods chef who works for, and learns from, the Cowichan Elders. I spent my youth with my late grandmother and became familiar with many cooking methods and techniques used by my ancestors. Nights were spent dip netting salmon from the river and days spent preparing it for smoking. I graduated from culinary arts in 2001 and spent years working in restaurants across Vancouver Island. After gaining western culinary experience in niche restaurants like Rebar Modern Food, Spinnakers Brew Pub, and Cherry Point bistro, I moved back to Cowichan and became the Elder's Kitchen Manager for Cowichan Tribes. I work with many organizations as a traditional First Nations Foods advisor. Most recently, I was the keynote speaker for the Camosun and Songhees food sovereignty and reconciliation event, a featured guest on the Moosemeat and Marmalade television show, and I have been featured on CBC radio several times

for my efforts in First Nations food sovereignty. When I am not not working, I spend time with my family, harvesting, teaching, camping, and sailing on the Salish sea.

Fiona Devereaux, RD, MSc SDH Candidate

I am a white settler of Irish ancestry. I am a daughter, sister, auntie and friend. My parents immigrated to these lands for employment opportunities to Treaty 6 territory: homelands of Blackfoot, Cree, Sioux Peoples and homeland of Métis Nation (Saskatoon). I occupy unceded Coast Salish homelands of the Ləkʷəŋən Speaking Peoples of Songhees (Ləkʷəŋən) and Esquimalt (Xwepsum) Nations. I work as a dietitian and an anti-Indigenous Racism Educator.

Melody Charlie and Nitanis Desjarlais were foundational in sharing their wisdom and teachings of Traditional First Nations Foods in our first 2 planning meetings. Kleco, Kleco! This document was also reviewed by Dietitians - Jessie Newman, Amanda Henry, Rebecca Sovdi, Megan Dark and ISPARC's Robynne Edgar and Jessie Toynbee and art teacher Renee Sala.

Welcome to the first edition of the traditional food lesson plans, a resource for students to learn about traditional First Nations foods and the lands, waters, and forests they come from. The Ministry of Health, Office of Nutrition Policy and Promotion and BC Centre for Disease Control asked us to create some engaging activities for students to learn about who they are and Indigenous food systems. We acknowledge the diversity of over 200 First Nations, 35 Métis Nations and Inuit living away from home in the area now known as British Columbia. These lessons were created by a team of six passionate food leaders who came together to build lessons that support students learning around traditional First Nations foods. As noted above many of us are from, or live on, the homelands of the Coast Salish, Nuuchah-nulth and Kwakwaka'wakw Families (as known as Vancouver Island) so many of the stories and teachings are from these homelands. Please reach

out to your Indigenous Education departments to learn more and to engage with local Nations in your area in a good way.

We have created a suite of 3 lesson plans to support students learning about traditional First Nations foods:

Lesson 1 – Food is a Gift

Lesson 2 – Gift of the Seasons

Lesson 3 – Gifts of the Peoples

We encourage teachers to use these lessons with all their grades except for lesson 3 which we feel may be too advanced for K-2. We encourage teachers to use their own discretion for the other grades. We feel lesson 3 can provide teachers and students some great foundational understanding and insights into Indigenous food systems and how colonization has impacted them. We encourage teachers go through it and read some of the books to the children and adapt any parts of the lessons for their students.

Some Perspectives on What Traditional First Nations Foods Are:

- Wild harvested foods prepared with cultural recipes.
- Foods from plants, animals and seafoods used for food and medicine that can be passed down from previous generations, extended family, or friends.
- Foods harvested in a sustainable way that supports all living things. They are harvested in a way that does not harm the environment and provides the opportunity for future generations to use these foods.
- Important not only for nourishment and wellness but also a part of Indigenous cultures and spirituality, and a way to connect with languages, lands, forests, and waters.
- Traditional First Nations foods keep other traditions alive - See Appendix 1 for a visual.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Prior to facilitating these lesson plans, you are invited to review the article "[Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy in the Early Years](#)" to help frame your approach to conversations with students about cultural identity and to provide an opportunity to self-reflect on your practices related to high expectations, cultural safety and raising critical consciousness in the classroom.

Some other tools and resources to support your foundational understanding:

Resource: Challenging Racist "BC": 150 Years and Counting 150 years of Racism in B.C. [Listen and Learn](#)

Book: Indigenous Writes, Chelesa Vowels [Read](#)

Book: 21 Things about the Indian Act [Read](#)

Podcast: All my Relations [Listen](#) or Media Indigena [Listen](#)

Short Clip: Honour Senator Murray Sinclair [Watch](#)

Report: Aboriginal Racism in Canada [Read](#)

Webinar: Race and Privilege in the Everyday [Watch](#)

Short Clip: Decolonization is for everyone [Video](#)

Video: Mansbridge One on One: Cindy Blackstock [Watch](#)

Course: U of A course [Learn](#)

Course: Kairos Blanket Exercise [Learn](#)

Movie: We Were Children [Watch](#) or Indian Horse [Watch](#)

Movie: Colonization Road: The Path of Reconciliation is Long and Winding [Watch](#)

Glossary: Please see Glossary of terms at the end of this document.

Foundational Messages for Teachers

- This can be spoken to everyone in the class. By learning about how our cultures have been connected to foods, lands, waters, forests, and oceans, we can learn more about who we are and where we come from.
- In our families, our ancestors harvested, preserved, hunted, or gathered directly from the lands, waters and forests. They followed the seasons to provide food for their families and communities.
- Ancestors are our direct family connections or lineage; are the family in which we descended from. Thinking past parents, grandparents to great grandparents and before them:
 - Do you know where your ancestors came from? What is your cultural heritage? Irish, Chinese, Scottish, Japanese, Peruvian, British etc? *Some people don't know where their ancestors came from, and that is ok.*
 - What foods are special in your family? How do you share food in a special way? For example, do you or others in your household like to hunt, fish, bake, feast, garden, preserve?
- For most people much of the knowledge, skills and abilities about how to hunt, fish, harvest, tend and preserve food from the lands, forests and waters has been lost through the generations.
- Many of our ancestors have a variety of food knowledge and skills.

- Our connection to nature is reciprocal, which means we give to nature, and it gives back. We have a responsibility to care for it. When we care for the berries, our patches grow bigger and more bountiful. When we water and care for our gardens, they are more productive. When we harvest clams regularly, they are more abundant. The more we tend and care for the ecosystem, the more it produces for us.
- Nature is our grocery store, pharmacy, hardware store, house, and transportation for all aspects of life.
 - Thinking about where your ancestors came from and what that landscape might be like, how do you think they used knowledge about the lands, forests and waters? How did they engage with the natural world?

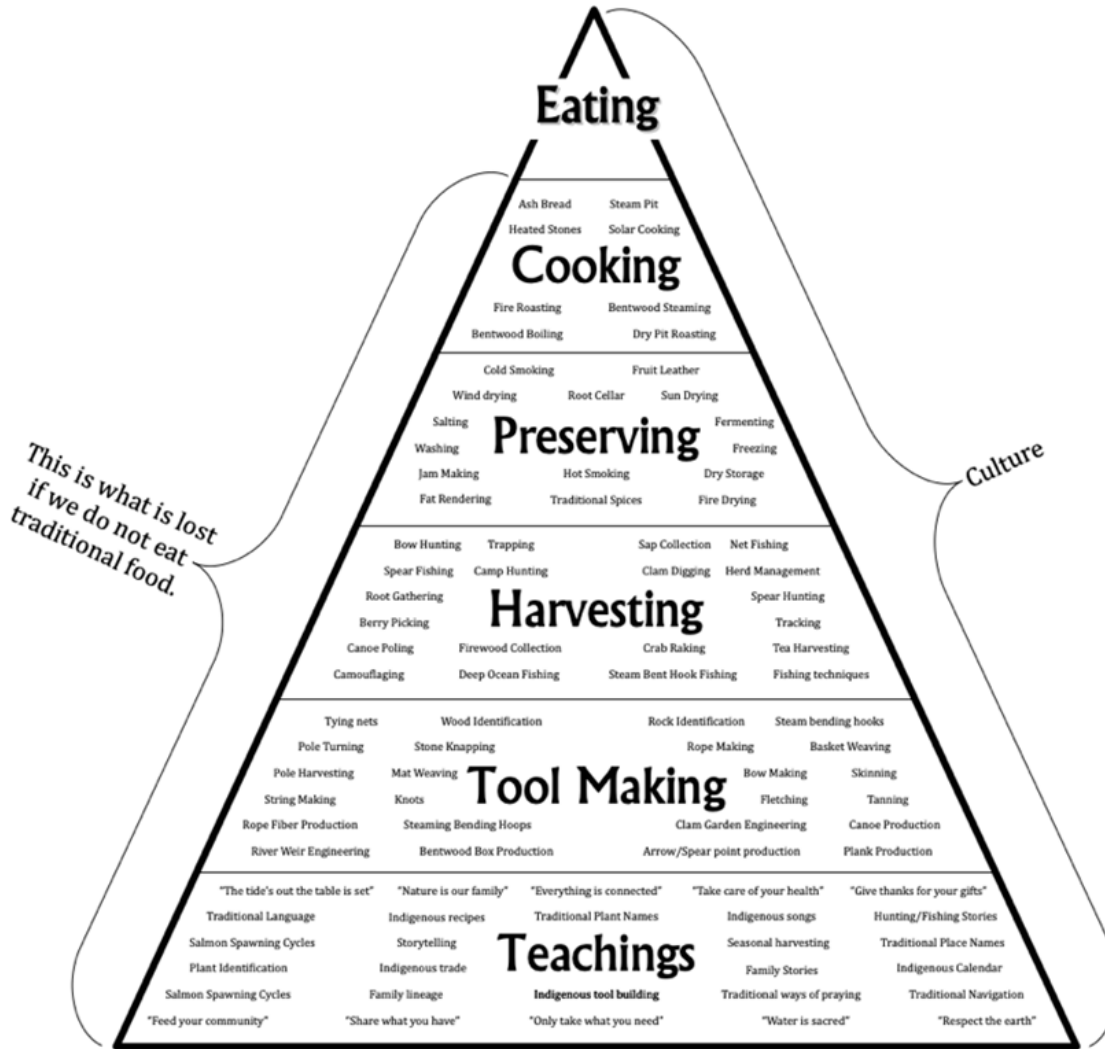
Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being

This can be spoken to everyone in the class. Teachers will share these key reflections and teachings shared by the Traditional First Nations foods creative team.

- In many First Nations communities, people maintain these teachings, skills, and abilities, and share them from generation to generation.
- Many First Nations, Metis and Inuit Peoples have maintained teachings about a deep and intimate connection to foods, lands, animals, forests, and waters. This relationship, spiritual connection is grounded in a relationship with all living things (All My Relations - we are all related, or all are related).
- Many describe this connection to other beings as family. WSÁNEĆ communities speak of salmon being their relatives. When fishing with a reef net they create a hole in the net so a whole school of fish won't be taken so the ones that are not caught will swim through the hole and make it back to their spawning river. ([Reef Net Fishing Video](#)).
- Nitanis, one of our collaborators, shared "First Nations Peoples are Peoples of lands, waters and forests; we are Peoples of salmon, Peoples of plants, Peoples of buffalo, Peoples of clams and Peoples of berries." Our connections have developed over a 14,000+ year relationship with these homelands.
 - How do you share foods with your community? Are there foods that connect you to your ancestors? Do you do any activities with your peoples that involve food? Berry picking, fishing, making bread, making soup etc. Who do you do that with? Who did you learn from?
- Lucy Hemphill shares "Our ancestors had deep connection to ecosystems, they acknowledge that the plants and animals had feelings; they gave their life for us so we could thrive. We honoured this sacrifice with our attention and care of the food".
- Each Nation and community has their own specific connection, traditions, and cultural teachings around foods. We are intimately connected to where we are from.
- We lived in an "economy of generosity". We gave and only took what we needed. Elders remind us that true wealth is having access to traditional First Nations foods, along with the knowledge of how to gather, prepare, preserve, and serve them. Food values and food traditions are a living legacy that links us to past, present and future generations.
 - Some of you are good cooks, gardeners, berries pickers, or like to fish or hunt. What is your food skill? Eating is always the fun part!
 - What is a food skill you would really like to learn?
 - How do you feel when you are engaged in this activity?

Why is Eating Traditional Foods Important?

Diagram by Jared Qwustenuxun Williams



Traditional Food Production Fosters Culture

#myexistenceisresistance

Appendix 2: Traditional First Nations Foods Found Across BC from the Land, Water, and Ground.

Foods from the Water

- Fish (Salmon, trout, ling cod, oolichans)
- Fish Roe (Salmon, Herring)
- Sea Foods (Octopus, Sea urchins, Rock stickers, Goosneck barnacles)
- Seaweed
- Sea asparagus
- Shellfish
 - Clams, Mussels, oysters
 - Crab
 - Prawns, Chitons
- Sea Mammals (whale and seal)

Foods from the Land

- Large Animals
 - Elk
 - Deer
 - Moose
 - Sheep
 - Caribou
 - Bear
- Small Animals
 - Beaver
 - Squirrel
 - Rabbit
- Birds & Eggs
 - Grouse
 - Duck
 - Geese



Plants above the ground

- Berries
- Flowers
- Tree bark, inner cambian, sap, leaves, lichen
- Plumb and crab apples
- Spruce or fir tips, shoots
- Greens, plants
- Nuts, seeds
- Mushrooms

Plants below the ground

- ROOTS
 - Camus
 - Spring Beauty
 - Bitter Root
 - Wapato
 - Mountain potato
 - Licorice Fern
- Other underground parts



Glossary:

Land acknowledgement of territory is an act of respect of local First Nations and their traditional territories. It is a recognition of their presence on the land in the past, present and future. It is usually given at the beginning of a meeting, class, performance, or other public gathering. It is the responsibility of the leader, host, or MC of the event.

Indian Act is a Canadian act of Parliament that concerns registered Indians, their bands, and the system of Indian reserves. Since its creation in 1876, it has controlled many aspects of economic, cultural, educational and personal lives of First Nations people.

Indigenous Peoples refers to the original inhabitants of the land and is a term that includes the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples in Canada. *Indigenous Peoples* are peoples defined in international or national legislation as having a set of specific rights based on their historical ties to a particular territory and their cultural or historical distinctiveness from other populations that are often politically dominant.

The first letters of the term are capitalized in proper noun form to recognize nationhood and a 's' included to recognize the plurality of Indigenous Nations that exist in the country. The term 'Aboriginal' is sometimes used interchangeably; however, the term 'Indigenous' is used internationally and is sometimes cited as a preferred term due to its association with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

First Nation is a term used to describe Aboriginal peoples of Canada who are ethnically neither Métis nor Inuit. This term came into common usage in the 1970s and '1980s and generally replaced the term "Indian," although unlike "Indian," the term "First Nation" does not have a legal definition. While "First Nations" refers to the ethnicity of First Nations peoples, the singular "First Nation" can refer to a [band](#), a [reserve](#)-based community, or a larger tribal grouping and the [status](#) Indians who live in them. For example, the Stó:lō Nation (which consists of several bands), or the Tsleil-Waututh Nation (formerly the Burrard Band).

Inuit refers to specific groups of people generally living in the far north who are not considered "Indians" under Canadian law.

Métis refers to a collective of cultures and ethnic identities that resulted from unions between Aboriginal and European people in what is now Canada. This term has general and specific uses, and the differences between them are often contentious. It is sometimes used as a general term to refer to people of mixed ancestry, whereas in a legal context, "Métis" refers to descendants of specific historic communities. For more on Métis identity, please see our section on [Métis identity](#).

Cultural Safety is a theory, a process, and most importantly an outcome that is based upon respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the Canadian healthcare industry. Cultural safety results in environments that are free of racism, discrimination, and where people feel safe when receiving care. Acknowledging and addressing Indigenous Specific Racism is a key part of creating safe environments for us to work and receive services.

Cultural Humility (defined by the First Nations Health Authority) is a process of critical self-reflection to understand personal and systemic biases and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based upon mutual trust. It involves humbly acknowledging oneself a learner in another's experience. It involves an ethical stance that steers clear of arrogance and involves being open to always interrogating white moral sensibilities.

Colonialism is a process by which a foreign power dominates and exploits Indigenous groups by appropriating Indigenous land and extracting the wealth from it. In Canada, colonialism has three major components: dispossession, dependence, and oppression. Indigenous peoples live with these forces every day of our lives. (Source: Henry & Tator, 2010, p. 380; Manuel, A. 2017, p. 19)

Patrick Wolfe (1999) emphasizes that settler colonialism is a structure and not an event and it is ongoing. In the process of settler colonialism, land is remade into property and human relationships to land are restricted to the relationship of the owner to property (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5)

The ideology that allows for colonization to occur is grounded in the belief that settlers are inherently superior to Indigenous peoples. The morals, values, and worldviews that follow from this belief are used to justify and perpetuate **colonial policies and practices** such as land confiscation; (human and natural) resource exploitation; imposition of settler laws and frameworks; racial segregation and two-tiered service provision; outlawing of traditional forms of governance, cultural practices, and self-sustaining livelihoods.

Colonial dynamics uphold and reinforce colonialism through systems and structures that continue to legitimize the state at the expense of Indigenous peoples. These **colonial patterns** underpin and enable individual, social, structural, systemic, and epistemic violence against Indigenous peoples. Canada is founded on colonialism, and it is the invisible framework that continues to perpetuate the inequitable status and living conditions of Indigenous peoples in this country today.

Colonization is the process by which a central power establishes and maintains control over other lands and peoples. The word is derived from the Latin word *colonus*, meaning farmer. This is a reference to the practice of sending settlers over to a new territory to take over and work the lands in order to establish claim over a territory. Control of a territory is often centered around eliminating, assimilating, and/or oppressing the original inhabitants of a land, as was – and continues to be the case - in Canada.

Although settlement in Canada began with British and French settlers in the 17th century, colonization continues to be upheld through descendants of the original settlers, as well as through more recent settlers from around the world – often referred to as immigrants - who arrived and settled in Indigenous territories thereafter. Colonization is therefore intimately linked to, and dependent on the ongoing actions and behaviours of settlers who establish and uphold the domination of a central power.

Indigenous food sovereignty (IFS) is a specific policy approach to addressing the underlying issues impacting Indigenous peoples and our ability to respond to our own needs for healthy, culturally adapted Indigenous foods. Community mobilization and the maintenance of multi-millennial cultural harvesting strategies and practices provide a basis for forming and influencing “policy driven by practice”.

While the language and concept of food sovereignty has only recently been introduced in Indigenous communities, the living reality is not a new one. Indigenous food related knowledge, values and wisdom built up over thousands of years provides a basis for identifying four key principles that guide the present-day food sovereignty movement in Indigenous communities.

Sacred or divine sovereignty – Food is a gift from the Creator; in this respect the right to food is sacred and cannot be constrained or recalled by colonial laws, policies, and institutions. Indigenous food sovereignty is fundamentally achieved by upholding our sacred responsibility to nurture healthy, interdependent relationships with the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food.

Participatory – IFS is fundamentally based on “action”, or the day-to-day practice of maintaining cultural harvesting strategies. To maintain Indigenous food sovereignty as a living reality for both present and future generations, continued participation in cultural harvesting strategies at all the individual, family, community and regional levels is key.

Self-determination - The term refers to our ability to respond to our own needs for healthy, culturally adapted Indigenous foods. The ability to make decisions over the amount and quality of food we hunt, fish, gather, grow, and eat. Freedom from dependence on grocery stores or corporately controlled food production, distribution, and consumption in industrialized economies.

Policy - IFS attempts to reconcile Indigenous food and cultural values with colonial laws and policies and mainstream economic activities. IFS thereby provides a restorative framework for policy reform in forestry, fisheries, rangeland, environmental conservation, health, agriculture, and rural and community development. (Source: Dawn Morrison)