

Traditional First Nations Foods Lesson Plans

FOOD IS A GIFT

Overview

Students will connect to the gift of food and how the lands, forests, and waters gift us our food and has for generations. Healthy lands = Healthy peoples.

“Attitude of gratitude.”

This lesson is focused on K-2 but can be used for all grades. We encourage that all 3 lesson plans be used together and adapted for learning level of your class.

What Students Will Learn

- Students will know whose ancestral homeland and traditional territories they reside on and will be able to identify which foods thrive or thrived in that area.
- Students will become curious who their ancestors are, and how they are connected to them and the land they are from.
- Students will understand the economy of generosity and that all foods are a part of the lands, waters, and forests around us.
- Students will begin to connect to the idea that food is a gift and how important it is to foster a reciprocal relationship to the environment and ecosystems that provide our foods.

TEACHING TIPS

Frontload students with vocabulary that might need to be revisited including: Indigenous, First Nations, Inuit, Metis, traditional foods. See glossary in Foundational Knowledge document.

Be sensitive to and respectful of your students. This may be the first time they realize that they are living on Indigenous Peoples’ homelands. Talk about this with curiosity and openness.

Please see appendix 2 in the Foundational Knowledge document for a visual list of traditional First Nations foods found across BC from the land, water, and ground.

Reflect on any emotions and feelings you may have when you explore this topic. Reach out for support and be open to learning as well.

Materials

- Pencils/crayons
- Paper
- List of traditional First Nations foods

Set the Table – 30 mins

- Set the Table with a map of Indigenous homelands and examples of which foods create the ecosystems around you.
- Use Native-lands.ca to find out whose ancestral homelands your school resides on and share a meaningful [land acknowledgement](#).
- Share a [language map within BC](#) and focus in on the area you live in.
- Brainstorm what foods come from these lands and the nature around them.
- Consider pairing up or dividing students in groups of 3. Have them learn about each other to make that cross-cultural connection and present to the class what they learned about their classmates.

Share a Story of Generosity – 15 mins

Read a story to set the tone with some curiosity and/or invite a local Indigenous community member to the classroom to share a seasonal food story. Contact the Indigenous education department in your school district to talk about how to invite a local Indigenous community member into the classroom.

Excerpt from *The Lost Girl*

by Ambelin Kwaymullina

For grades K-2, teacher can read. For grades 3-8, suggest students read in part or in full.

The girl had lost her way. She had wandered far from the Mothers, the Aunties and the Grandmothers, from the Fathers and the Uncles and the Grandfathers. She had hidden in the shadow of a rock and fallen asleep while she waited for her brothers and sisters to find her. Now it was night, and no one answered when she called, and she could not find her way back to camp.

The girl wandered, alone. She grew thirsty, so she stopped by a waterhole to drink, and then hungry, so she picked some berries from a bush. Then the night grew colder, so she huddled beneath an overhanging rock, pressing herself into a hollow that had trapped the warm air of the day. Finally, she saw a crow flying in the moonlight, flapping from tree to tree and calling 'Kaw! Kaw! Kaw!'. The girl followed the crow. She followed him through the trees and over the rocks and up the hills, until at last she saw the glow of her people's campfires in the distance.

The people laughed and cried at once to see that the girl was safe. They growled at her for her foolishness, and cuddled her, and gave her a place by the fire. Her little brother asked her if she had been afraid; but the girl said – 'How could I be frightened? I was with my Mother. When I was thirsty, she gave me water; when I was hungry, she fed me; when I was cold, she warmed me. And when I was lost, she showed me the way home.'

<https://www.creativespirits.info/resources/books/the-lost-girl>

Story Reflective Questions

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- Who/what helped the little girl?
- Has Mother Earth ever helped you?

Activity 1 – 30 mins

Sometimes we think new foods are scary. We want to help you see that many foods are not that different from the ones we are more used to.

Teachers prep – Use The Foundational Knowledge document to share some pictures of these foods.

- Do you eat or have you tried smoked fish? Do you know of any other foods that are smoked? For example, deli meats, smokies, pepperoni, bacon.
- Do you eat or have you tried [eulachan oil](#)? It is a treasured oil that was traded all over i.e. similar to olive oil
- Have you ever eaten stinging nettle or native lettuce- all native greens that can be used just like salad. See stinging nettles [video](#).
- Thimbleberries, salmonberries, huckleberries are all local traditional berries but many of us have not tried them before. They can taste just as delicious as raspberries, strawberries and blueberries. Thimbleberries and salmonberries are like raspberries, huckleberries are a relative of blueberries. Always make sure to ask an adult before eating berries in nature.
- Have you ever seen food cooked in pit ovens - [video](#). See how food is cooked in the ground and compare to an oven.
- Have you ever tried deer, moose, or elk meat? They can be cooked similar to beef and made into soups, stews, hamburgers and steaks.

Teacher's Prompt

Brainstorm why it's hard to try new foods. What can make it something you may be nervous about? Is it the texture, taste, or not knowing what it is? How can you make trying a new food more comfortable? Does knowing more about the food you're about to eat make it easier? How can you find out more about the foods you've never tried? What foods have you wanted to try but were too worried to?

Activity 2 – 30 mins

Draw a picture or art piece of one of the foods from the list of Indigenous foods that you have tried or would like to try. Students can draw where the food is found in nature. Ask students: what gifts has the food provided to you?

Post the students' pictures around the class or feature wall or create a collage. If you have time, have students tell a story about their drawing to the class and have the children share who they would like to eat with or gift their food to.

Wrap up the lesson connecting their creativity and sharing as their own gifts. Thank them for sharing their gifts with the class today.

Teacher's Prompt

- What foods swim in the rivers, lakes and ocean?
- What foods do you dig at the beach?
- What foods bloom in the early spring and summer?
- What foods grow from the ground?
- What foods walk on 4 legs?
- What foods fly in the sky and have feathers?
- What foods grow on logs or leaves in the forest?

Time



1.5 hours (varies by grade level and whether all the stories, poems and extension activities are included). Can be split up into 2-3 days.

Extension Activities

- For students who may need adaptations, you could do little pictures of the traditional First Nations foods for them to cut out and create a two-column page for them to glue the foods they know and don't know.
- The pictures could be posted up on the feature wall in the school on June 21st Indigenous Peoples Day along with a land acknowledgement.
- Each child could go home and ask their family about a food they are nervous to eat. The child could share the list of Indigenous foods and ask their family if there is one they have tried and one they would like to try and why?

Curricular Links	BC Curriculum Competencies K-2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Language • Physical & Health Education • Arts • Science • Social 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Peoples knowledge of changes in biodiversity over time • evidence of climate change over geological time and the recent impacts of humans: • physical records -local First Peoples knowledge of climate change • economic policies and resource management, including effects on indigenous peoples • origins, core beliefs, narratives, practices, and influences of religions, including at least one indigenous to the Americas • social, political, and economic systems and structures, including those of at least one indigenous civilization • scientific and technological innovations • philosophical and cultural shifts • interactions and exchanges of resources, ideas, arts, and culture between and among different civilizations • exploration, expansion, and colonization changes in population and living standards • visual arts: elements of design: line, shape, texture, colour, form (visual arts); principles of design: pattern, repetition, rhythm (visual arts), contrast

Curricular Links	BC Curriculum Competencies 3-5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Language • Physical & Health Education • Arts • Science • Social Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • story/text • forms, functions, and genres of text • features of oral language • food choices to support active lifestyles and overall health • practices that promote health and well-being, including those relating to physical activity, sleep, and illness prevention • nutrition and hydration choices to support different activities and overall health • factors that influence self-identity • visual arts: elements of design: line, shape, texture, colour, form (visual arts); principles of design: pattern, repetition, rhythm (visual arts), contrast

Curricular Links	BC Curriculum Competencies 6-8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Language • Physical & Health Education • Arts • Social Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relationships between people and the environment in different communities • diverse characteristics of communities and cultures in Canada and around the world, including at least one Canadian First Peoples community and culture • practices that promote health and well-being • elements of story • the knowledge of First Peoples • visual arts: elements of design: line, shape, texture, colour, form (visual arts); principles of design: pattern, repetition, rhythm (visual arts), contrast

Resource List

- Tend Teachers Guide – [Learn more](#)
- FNHA Traditional food [Fact Sheets](#)
- [NIDA](#) Food List, calendar
- Nuu chah nulth Seafood cards [Order here](#)
- Pacific Northwest plant cards – [Order here](#)
- Watcherseyes - [Learn more](#)
- Stinging Nettle - [Video](#)
- Deekers harvesting with family - [Video](#)
- Pit Cook Video Raven or Qwyatseek [Video](#)
- AWINAK'OLAS - [Video](#)
- Pyramid visual - Please see appendix 1 in the Foundational Knowledge document
- Pyramid video - first 9 mins [Video](#)
- Seasonal Calendar - This is not to encourage harvesting-https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mVT1Y88pNJ7V_yO-tpvzs10rAyoOTxn-/view
- Book, K-3. Lessons from Mother Earth (2002) by Elaine McLeod: https://www.strongnations.com/store/item_display.php?i=2076&f=3111,2,1136
- Book, K-3. From the Mountains to the Sea: We Share the Seasons (2015) by Brendha Boreham & Terri Mack. https://www.strongnations.com/store/item_display.php?i=5832&f=3111,2,1136
- BC First Nations Studies text, pg. 35-39 (Living on the Land) https://greatbearrainforesttrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Textbook_BC_First-Nations-Studies.pdf