

Traditional First Nations Foods Lesson Plans

GIFTS OF THE SEASON

Overview

Interactive activity where students connect to the traditional First Nations foods of the area where they live and that supports students to connect and live with the seasons. From the wild greens of spring, to the berries of summer to the fall fish runs, seasonal foods connect us with the rhythm of the land and waters. For thousands of years, Indigenous Peoples organized to gather what is in the season and in return receive the nourishment that keeps them thriving all year long.

“When the Tide is Out, the Table is Set”

~ (Late Skip Sam, WJOLEEP First Nation) Youth [Video](#) – Nikosis

This lesson is focused on grades 3-5 but can be used for all grades. We encourage that all 3 lessons 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 traditional foods thrive or thrived in that area.
- Students will be able to identify the seasons and have increased insight that food is always seasonal.
- Students will be able to identify when food provides its most nutritious gifts.
- Students will develop a greater curiosity or desire to start watching and listening to the seasons and begin to associate the seasons with the availability of wild foods.
- Students will understand that food did not originally come from a grocery store and most foods were not available all year round. For hundreds of years our ancestors relied on local, seasonal foods they could grow/forage/hunt/fish and preserved them for use in winter and early spring.
- Students will be able to connect to what nature provides and when it happens.

TEACHING TIPS

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

Be sensitive to and respectful of your students as 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, 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.

- 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 or invite a local Indigenous knowledge keeper to the classroom to share a seasonal food story. This story came from a collaboration of Coast Salish plant and medicine leaders who created this [book](#).

Salmonberries are orange to ruby-coloured and are the same shape as raspberries and blackberries. They are the first berry of the summer. Salmonberry provides important food for many species. Hummingbirds, butterflies, and insects, including bees, drink the flower nectar. Salmonberries are eaten by many types of birds, squirrels, chipmunks, and larger mammals like coyotes, bear, deer, and elk. Salmonberry patches provide shelter for birds and small mammals. Many communities associate salmonberry with Swainson's thrush, ([listen to clip](#)) which is also called salmonberry bird. Salmonberry flowers are often in bloom when this bird returns from its winter grounds. Saanich Elders on south Vancouver Island teach that Swainson's thrush's song translates as, "Come on, all you dark ones! Come on, all you light-coloured ones! Come on, all you red-coloured ones! Come on, all you golden ones! Ripen, ripen, ripen, ripen!" Some Salish Elders teach us to look at the beautiful colour of the salmonberry. It is called salmonberry because of its beautiful colours and similar colour to salmon. When they are ready to eat, it is also the time the salmon begins to run. Salmonberries often grow along waterways including rivers and streams. If there is enough rain and the waters are healthy and flowing well, salmonberry flowers will be abundant, and salmon will be able to easily spawn up rivers and streams to renew their species. (story shared in a variety of Nations across the area commonly known as BC).

Materials

- Coloured pencils
- Chart paper or chalkboard



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.

Story Reflective Questions

- What do you remember about the story?
- How can we listen to what nature is sharing?

Teacher Preparation

Share with the class the life cycle and seasonal vitality of foods. Each food has its season and its specific time to be gathered and harvested.

Plants - Roots – summer and fall, leaves in the spring and flowers and berries in the summer.

Animals - are the healthiest after they have nourished themselves with the plants and bushes, gardens of the spring and summer. So fall is hunting time.

Shellfish – low tide, no contamination, no [red tide](#)

Lifecycle of Salmon - fresh and saltwater relationships. Return 4 years to the exact river they were hatched after being in the ocean. <https://www.salmonsociety.com/>

See resource list to share traditional First Nations foods visuals on screen and walk through all the foods.

Traditional harvesting calendar is provided to support your connection to which foods are harvested when.

Activity 1 – 60 mins

Art Project – Seasonal foods and ecosystems. Create a large pie chart cut into 4 seasons. Divide the class into groups of 4: Each group is given one season to create a visual of that season and the foods of that season. They will add pictures and drawings of the ecosystem and weather of that season. *What do we see, feel, smell and taste in spring, summer, fall and winter?* They will need to research their season and how they can represent each section of the piece they've chosen. At the end, they can put the pie back together and create a full year's cycle.

Time



1:45 hours (varies by grade level and whether all the stories and extension activities are included).
Can be split up into 2-3 days.

Extension Activities

- This could become a school-wide project and each class would create a Seasonal Round visual and have it on their feature wall.
- Each season the class could build off the teachings and foods in that season.
- Each season the class and school could go for a walk around the school to see if they can identify any of the foods or ecosystems for those foods.
- Homework – each season, students can find and take a picture of one food on a family walk to add to a class collage.

Curricular Links

- English Language
- Physical & Health Education
- Arts
- Social Science

BC Curriculum Competencies K-2

- ways in which individuals and families differ and are the same
- personal and family history and traditions
- needs and wants of individuals and families
- rights, roles, and responsibilities of individuals and groups
- people, places, and events in the local community, and in local First Peoples communities
- diverse cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives within the local and other communities
- relationships between a community and its environment
- key events and developments in the local community, and in local First Peoples communities
- relationships between people and the environment in different communities
- adaptations of local plants and animals
- local First Peoples uses of plants and animals
- properties of familiar materials
- effects of pushes/pulls on movement
- effects of size, shape, and materials on movement
- weather changes
- seasonal changes
- living things make changes to accommodate daily and seasonal cycles
- First Peoples knowledge of seasonal changes
- 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

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 • food choices to support active lifestyles 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 • 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

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 - see appendix 1 in 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 Brenda 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