

Introduction



Your journey through **Spring is about coming to know:** seeking Indigenous ways of knowing, particularly those related to Indigenous foodways. As we have shared in the previous seasons, the practices of harvesting, cultivating, sharing, and honouring food comprise one of many reciprocal relationships between Indigenous communities and their environment, history, and culture. We cannot capture the full diversity and complexity of all Indigenous food systems in this journey. Instead, we will introduce several examples and perspectives of traditional foods, teachings and practices from across Turtle Island. These examples will highlight the immense value that traditional foodways contribute to mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional health, as well as how engaging with these foodways builds relationships and kinship within communities and with all of Creation.

Learning objectives

This season will:

- Explore Indigenous and Western approaches to food guides and to describing a healthy diet.
- Highlight the connections between land, food, and culture in Indigenous worldviews.
- Introduce examples of Indigenous foods, traditions, and practices from across Turtle Island.
- Highlight perspectives on Indigenous food sovereignty and food security.
- Position Indigenous foodways within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teaching 9: What is a “healthy diet”?

(30 minutes)



The diets of Indigenous communities across Canada changed significantly with the arrival of settlers and the enforcement of destructive colonial policies. This change, which has been ongoing for 6–7 generations, has been referred to as a “nutrition transition,” but this narrow definition fails to recognize that food choices are often a socio-political by-product of environments, both structural (i.e., where you live and what is available there) and imposed. A healthy diet encompasses more than the act of eating; it also includes everything surrounding this action, with mindfulness of past and future generations.

Many of us have grown up with Canada’s Food Guide to inform our actions around food. Canada’s Food Guide is a policy and educational tool that aims to define and promote healthy eating for Canadians. A previous (2007) version, called “Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide,”

was adapted for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis to reflect certain values, traditions, and food choices. The two versions of the guide provided the same dietary guidance. However, the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis version included visual representations of traditional foods such as wild meat and berries, as well as foods such as bannock (scone) which are more recently cultural and familiar to today’s Indigenous generation.

When [Canada’s Food Guide](#) was updated in 2019, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis organizations did not advocate for the guide to be adapted. Rather, what we are now seeing is a surge of regionally developed guides built upon Indigenous ways of knowing.

Core resource: Read this news article, [“Community-Based Study Aims to Decolonize Canadian Food Guide”](#)



Core resource: Study the food guide from an Anishinaabe perspective, on page 4 of the [Waasegiizhiig Nanaandawe'iyewigamig Traditional Food Guide & Supporting Resources](#).

Pause and reflect

- How does this Anishinaabe Wiisiniwinan/Ge'inanjiget guide differ from food guides that you are familiar with?
- What do the traditional foods in this guide teach? What other teachings are shared in the guide? (Hint: browse through the rest of the guide beyond page 4).
- Is there a traditional food guide for the area that you live and work in? Who could you ask, or where might you search for one?

Key resource: Look through these fact sheets from the BC First Nations Health Authority and choose one food item that might be less familiar to you to review: [First Nations Traditional Foods Fact Sheets](#)

Pause and reflect

- What is unique about how the foods on these fact sheets are presented? What attributes of each food are highlighted?
- Did you notice the key message (Harvesting Food For A Healthy Lifestyle) repeated on the side on every fact sheet? What does it encourage?
- How do the traditional foods of British Columbia discussed on these fact sheets compare to the foods in the Anishinaabe Wiisiniwinan/Ge'inanjiget guide?

Key resource: Have a look at this cookbook and guide from the Métis Centre at the National Aboriginal Health Organization: [Métis Cookbook and Guide to Healthy Living](#)

Pause and reflect

- Is there a recipe that you'd want to prepare for yourself or to share?
- Have you tried any of these foods before? If so, did you know they were of Métis culture?



Journaling prompts

Complete the 'Journaling prompts' as part of the online course for certificate. Download and save this PDF to your computer. You can add your responses to the beige text box (to the right) by clicking on it. Your work could be lost if you do not do this. Be sure to save your work before you click on any link in the Learning Journey (Youtube video, PDF, website). If you do not save first, your work could be lost.

1. Throughout your life, what messages have you heard about a “healthy diet”? Whose perspective(s) are these messages from? How do they compare to the perspectives outlined in the article from the University of Winnipeg about decolonizing the Canadian Food Guide?
2. While it may be difficult for Indigenous communities to return to a diet and lifestyle that includes only local Indigenous foods, what opportunities do you see to leverage Indigenous foods and perspectives for better overall health of Indigenous communities and families?

Add your responses here by clicking on the beige box. Don't forget to save before moving on to the next page. If you do not save your responses, they may be lost!

If you do not want to work in a PDF, there is a Doc that you can download and save your answers - [here!](#)

Dive deeper—Additional resources, Teaching 9

Want to go deeper on a specific topic that was covered? Check out the following resources.

- [Pathways to the Revitalization of Indigenous Food Systems: Decolonizing Diets Through Indigenous-Focused Food Guides](#) (journal article)
- [Gifts from Our Relations: Indigenous Original Foods Guide](#) (guide)
- [Traditional Foods & Recipes on the Wild Side](#) (toolkit)



Teaching 10: Indigenous foodways – more than the food itself

(60 minutes)



Throughout the teachings to date, we have often referred to the multidimensional nature of Indigenous foodways. These encompass the land, relationships, stories, teachings, values, traditions, history, connections, techniques of harvesting, gathering, and cultivating... and of course the food.

We will continue to explore the dominant, Western capitalist view of food as a commodity alongside the Indigenous view of food as sacred, as love, and as a reminder of our responsibilities.

The following core resources explore teachings and stories about food through an Indigenous worldview.

Core resources:

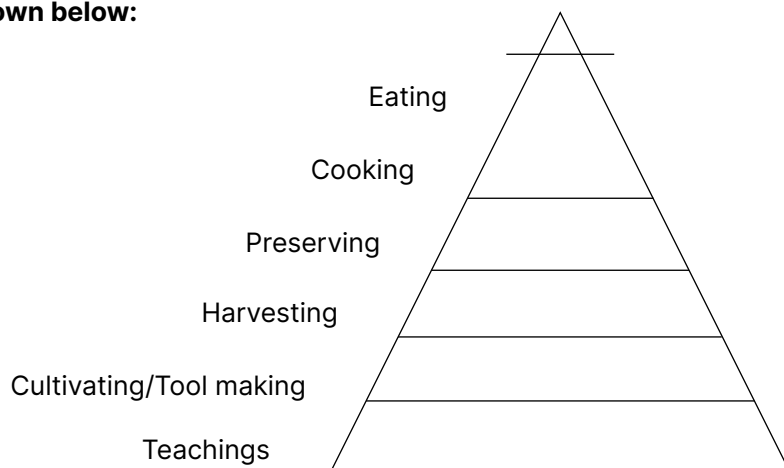
- Review the [*Foundations of an Indigenous Food System Model*](#) from [*The Sioux Chef*](#)
- Read the Ojibwe and Mohawk strawberry teachings in this resource, [*Strawberry Teachings*](#)
- Watch this video from the Nourish Traditional Food project: [*Planting the Seed - Traditional Food Project Gathering*](#) (5:37)

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1. What did you learn about the connection between the mind, body, spirit, and emotions?
2. How would you describe Indigenous food systems to someone who is not familiar with what you have learned so far on this learning journey?
3. What does "food is medicine" mean to you now?

Before opening the next resource, take a piece of paper and **draw a large triangle with six rows and label each row as shown below:**



Now, choose one food and think about it in relation to each row.

Take an apple, for example, and start with the activity at the top, eating: When and where do you eat apples? How do you eat them? Next, think about cooking: How do you cook apples? What do you know about cooking apples? Continue filling the triangle with what you know about preserving, harvesting, and cultivating apples, including the tools and knowledge used in these activities. Finally, record any teachings that you have related to apples.

Add your responses here by clicking on the beige box. Don't forget to save before moving on to the next page. If you do not save your responses, they may be lost! You do not need to add your drawing of the triangle into the box. If you do not want to work in a PDF, there is a Doc that you can download and save your answers - [here!](#)





Core resource: When you have filled in your triangle, look at the one by Jared Qwustenuxun Williams, Cowichan Tribes: [Why Is Eating Traditional Foods Important?](#)

Pause and reflect

- How does Jared's diagram compare to yours? What did you find most surprising or interesting in it? Had you ever thought about these layers of meaning and culture in food before?
- Is there anything you would change in, or add to, your diagram after seeing Jared's?
- When you support Indigenous foodways in health care, what else are you acknowledging and supporting? How might this in turn support Indigenous well-being?
- Are traditional foods available in the hospital you work at or at another health care institution close by?

Key resource: Watch the beginning of this video (to 1:19) to hear Tabitha Robin Martens, Cree-Métis, discuss the relationships between food security, food sovereignty, and Indigenous well-being: [A Conversation on Indigenous Food Sovereignty \(Highlights\)](#). While this video shows the highlights, you will find a link to the complete conversation in the additional resources below.

Dive deeper—Additional resources, Teaching 10

Want to go deeper on a specific topic that was covered? Check out the following resources.

- [A Conversation on Indigenous Food Sovereignty:](#) A webinar with panellists Dawn Morrison, Priscilla Settee, Tabitha Robin Martens, and Asfia Kamal
- [Food Sovereignty and Harvesting:](#) A report from the the Qikiqtani Inuit Association
- [Food Sovereignty: Valerie Segrest at TEDxRainier](#) (TED talk)
- [Indigenous Food Systems Network](#) (webpage)
- [Revitalizing Native Foodways](#) (article)
- [Food Secure Canada Discussion Paper 1: Indigenous Food Sovereignty](#) (discussion paper)

**“My mother Irene would say,
‘Everything has a season,’ and my
father, Chief Skidegate Dempsey
Collinson, used the phrase ‘When the
tide is low, the table is set.’”**

– Jenny Cross, Haida Knowledge Keeper

Teaching 11: Celebrating diverse Indigenous foodways

(75 minutes)



The previous teachings have focused mostly on the systems, contexts, and dynamics within and around Indigenous foodways. This teaching explores and celebrates the foods themselves! The diversity of traditional foods mirrors the diversity of Indigenous communities. Unique cultures are connected to each food system, and each food system reflects the local ecosystem. This exemplifies the intrinsic and honoured connection between Indigenous identity and land. The examples in this teaching also highlight the immense value that traditional foodways contribute to all facets of health—mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional—as well as how engaging with these foodways builds relationships and kinship within communities and with all of Creation.

The table on the right shows examples of Indigenous foods and the traditional territories in which they grow (please note, this table is far from comprehensive.) As you engage with the resources in this teaching, remember that each was created by a specific community and reflects the foods in their territory, and note the geographic location of that community.

Indigenous Foods	Traditional Territory
Fiddleheads	Mi'kmaq
Wild rice	Ojibwe
Maple syrup	Algonquin
Buffalo	Cree
Salmon	Coast Salish
Corn	Mohawk
Arctic Hare	Inuit, Innu
Strawberry	Kanien'kehá:ka



We start by introducing the practices and teachings of the Three Sisters: corn, beans, and squash. The Three Sisters are sacred foods to many Indigenous communities, particularly those of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquis) and Anishinaabe. Brenda LaFrance says:

“With one mind, we turn to honour and thank all the food plants we harvest from the garden. Since the beginning of time, the Food Plants, especially the Three Sisters, the corn, beans, and squash have helped the people survive. We gather all the Food Plants together as one and send them our greetings and thanks.” (from Words that Come Before All Else: Environmental Philosophies of the Haudenosaunee, p. 69).

There are many diverse stories and teachings about the Three Sisters, and we provide a few examples in the following core resources.

Core resources:

- Watch this news report about the planting of the Three Sisters at Mohawk College (Hamilton, Ontario) in 2016: [*Mohawk Welcomes the Three Sisters*](#) (2 minutes)
- Read this short introduction to the Three Sisters: [*Three Sisters Garden*](#)

Pause and reflect

- In the video, staff and students are invited to interact with the teachings and practices around these three sacred plants. Has anything like this happened at your facility for foods traditional to your region? If so, what were some of the takeaways of staff? If not, why do you think not?
- In all cultures there are traditions and ceremonies that involve food. The video and article touch on several points for ceremony in the life cycle of the Three Sisters. In your own culture, can you think of any ceremonies or traditions that involve celebrating food?

Next, we invite you to learn about the foods and foodways of the Inuit.

Core resource: This article features photographs showcasing several country foods of the Inuit: [*How Families Eat In The Arctic*](#)

Pause and reflect

- What strikes you in these photographs?
- Are any of the foods pictured and discussed familiar to you? Are they similar to those found in the region that you are situated?



Key resource: Look at pages 1 - 9 of this guidebook from the Selkirk First Nation: [Keeping Our Traditions at the Fish Camps: Our Ancestors' Gift to Our Youth](#). The guidebook is intended to spark conversation, to share stories and teachings, and to suggest teaching opportunities to aid in time-honoured processes.

Pause and reflect

- Do you have any stories that connect food and place the way the Selkirk Fish Camp does?
- On page 7, the Selkirk Nation members outline their traditional laws, Doòli. How do these compare to what you know about government laws, regulations, and policies related to fishing in Canada?
- Is fishing part of the traditional foodways in the region where you live? If so, is a license required, or what are the government laws?

Key resource: Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation is a remote Indigenous community on the east arm of Great Slave Lake in Canada's boreal forest, one of the largest intact forest ecosystems on Earth. In this video, Dene hunter and guide James Marlowe talks about his life and work amidst change, both in the environment and in the Dene lifestyle: [Indigenous Hunter Keeps Traditions Alive in Boreal Forest](#) (6 minutes)

Pause and reflect

- Recalling the rights of Indigenous communities, discussed earlier in this learning journey (see Teachings 4 and 7), how are rights being protected through James Marlowe's work and actions?
- What does James Marlowe share about the culture of sharing, protecting the land and waters, and the interdependence of the Dene and the ecosystem?



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1. This teaching has shared a few specific foods and foodways from across Turtle Island. Are any of these traditional to the region where you live and work?
2. Think about your own culture, family, and home. What foods are traditional to you? What stories are connected to these foods and the way that you obtain, prepare, and share them?

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Dive deeper—Additional resources, Teaching 11

Want to go deeper on a specific topic that was covered? Check out the following resources.

- [The Inuit and their Indigenous Foods](#) (video from an Indigenous communities nutrition project).
- [Ocean and Way of Life: Some Things We Know about Haida Culture and the Ocean and Rivers of Haida Gwaii](#) (teachings)
- [Traditional Plant Foods of Canadian Indigenous communities](#)
- [Moosemeat and Marmalade](#) (television series)
- [Chuck and the First Peoples' Kitchen](#) (television series)
- [Honouring Our Strengths: Indigenous Culture as Intervention Recipes](#) (recipes)
- [Exploring Indigenous Kitchens of North America with Sean Sherman](#) (interview—text and audio)
- [Native Foodways with the Cultural Conservancy](#) (an episode of the television series Tending Nature)
- [Food Security & Three Sisters Sustainability—Conversations in Cultural Fluency #3](#) (webinar)



The diversity of traditional foods mirrors the diversity of Indigenous communities. Unique cultures are connected to each food system, and each food system reflects the local ecosystem. This exemplifies the intrinsic and honoured connection between Indigenous identity and land.

– Food is Our Medicine, Spring, p. 11

Teaching 12: Foodways and COVID-19

(45 minutes)



The global COVID-19 pandemic forced us all to do things differently. On large and small scales, organizations and systems across sectors are adapting to changing circumstances, unforeseen challenges, and emerging opportunities. Food security, or rather insecurity, has been brought to the forefront throughout the course of the pandemic. Indigenous communities, particularly those that are rural and remote, feel increased pressure on their food systems as a result of disruptions in food supply chains, reduced ability to travel and harvest, and fewer occasions to celebrate and share food together.

The following resources illustrate the initial impact of COVID-19 on food systems and a timeless response that positions the community and community knowledge as experts.

Core resource: Read this article from April 2020:

[COVID-19 Did Not Cause Food Insecurity In Indigenous Communities But It Will Make It Worse](#)



Journaling prompts

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1. After reviewing the article, what solution to support food access issues did the government implement that undermined Indigenous communities in addressing food insecurity during the pandemic?
2. How did COVID-19 make food insecurity worse?
3. What forms of Indigenous foodways strengthened food security?

Add your responses here by clicking on the beige box. Don't forget to save before moving on to the next page. If you do not save your responses, they may be lost! If you do not want to work in a PDF, there is a Doc that you can download and save your answers - [here!](#)



Core resource: In June 2020, Nourish hosted two conversations about food responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in health care by/for Indigenous communities. These notes summarize the key themes that emerged: [Indigenous Food Responses to COVID-19 in Health Care](#).

Pause and reflect

- Do any of these themes reflect the reality where you live and work?
- What responses did you see (or contribute to) in your community/organization? What supported their efficacy? What was learned?
- Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your view of food security and food sovereignty? If so, how?

In the spring of 2020, the BC First Nations Health Authority released a toolkit for food planning during the pandemic. This resource positions the community and community's knowledge as experts and reflects food systems thinking. It acknowledges that every community is unique and has its own set of assets ("useful or valuable things, people or qualities") and needs. As a tool for decision makers and community leaders, it puts food at the centre for ALL community members, including those who live away from home.

Key resource: Open and review the content of the BC First Nations Health Authority toolkit: [Planning for Food Security: A Toolkit for the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). Note in particular the model showing the interconnected elements of the food system on page 3.

Keeping in mind the journaling prompts you answered above, recognize how this toolkit demonstrates a **self-determined approach, with community decision making and buy-in**, as the best approach to food systems planning.

Pause and reflect

- How might a resource like this be used beyond the pandemic?
- Given what you have learned so far, what is the significance of the long view in planning?

Dive deeper—Additional resources, Teaching 12

Want to go deeper on a specific topic that was covered? Check out the following resources.

- [Indigenous Food Sovereignty and COVID-19](#) (blog post)
- [What We Heard: Indigenous communities and COVID-19: Supplementary Report for the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada](#)
- [Climate Change and COVID-19: Reinforcing Indigenous Food Systems](#) (commentary)
- [Growing Resilience and Equity: A Food Policy Action Plan in the Context of Covid-19](#)
- [A Conversation on Indigenous Food Sovereignty:](#)
A webinar with panellists Dawn Morrison, Priscilla Settee, Tabitha Robin Martens, and Asfia Kamal



Reflections of Spring



Our journey through Spring has focused on how Indigenous foodways inform, and are informed by, diverse Indigenous worldviews. Is your ability to see the work with “two eyes” getting stronger? We hope so!

Here are some key reflections from this part of the journey:

- Mainstream public health has promoted a Western understanding of what a healthy diet looks like and focuses on physical health (and increasingly on mental health). Indigenous ways of knowing provide a different understanding of what a healthy, balanced diet looks like, and how it is a foundational part of overall well-being (physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental).
- When we think about getting food onto food service menus and patient plates, we also must think about what those foods represent: relationships, stories, teachings, values, connection to the land, traditions, history, skills, knowledge, and memories.
- A local, self-determined approach, with community decision making and buy-in, is the best approach to food systems planning. This work must be done in collaboration with the Indigenous communities of the region where you live.

You have made it through three seasons in your learning journey. New life and new possibilities are emerging. Do you sense them? Share them in a journal, with a colleague, or loved one. Gather your energy. The journey continues. Next we will move into Summer, where we look at ways of doing and offer pathways for moving forward.

If you haven't already, take some time now to complete the Journaling Prompts throughout this season and save the PDF. When you're ready, click the button below to access a webpage, where you can upload your answers.

Submit