



Cook what you love, love what you eat

RECONCILI-ACTION

Grades 7 - 9

Week 5



Stop! Have you watched our training video yet? This workshop series covers subject matter that requires basic knowledge of anti-oppression and anti-racist concepts. Facilitation of these workshops must be undertaken with thoughtful consideration of the content. Before you start, make sure you've watched our training video and read through the lesson plan in its entirety.

Learning objective:

Participants will learn about the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous foodways, taking a look at how residential schools disconnected youth from traditional cultural diets. This week's recipe will give participants the opportunity to explore how 'decolonizing' food is a way for Indigenous Communities to reconnect with and reclaim identity.



Workshop length:
2 hours



Recipe: Three Sisters stew



Curriculum links: Health and Physical Education; Language; Social Studies; History



Topics covered

- Food tradition sharing
- What is colonialism?
 - Impacts on culture and identity..
- Residential schools and diet.
- Decolonizing Indigenous foods.



Workshop materials

- Chart paper
- Sticky notes
- Food Secure Canada handout
- "Archival menus" activity resources
- Sharpies or other markers



Cooking materials

Tools

- Cutting boards
- Knives
- Large stockpot
- Wooden spoon
- Measuring cups
- Baking sheet

- Frying pan

Ingredients

- Refer to **supporting documents** for recipe details

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Key Reminders



Group & Land Acknowledgement

FoodShare acknowledges that the sacred land in which we operate is situated upon the traditional territories of the Wendat, Haudenosaunee (Ho-den-oh-sho-nee), the Anishinabeg (Ah-nish-in-nah-beg), and the Mississaugas of the Credit. This territory is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Anishinabeg and Haudenosaunee allied nations to peaceably share and care for the lands around the Great Lakes. FoodShare recognizes the many Nations of Indigenous People, who presently live on this land, those who have spent time here and the ancestors who have hunted and gathered on this land known as Turtle Island.



Equity, Diversity & Social Justice

Notes:

Brainstorm ways in which you can avoid marginalization due to participants' race, ethnicity, sex, age, physical or mental ability, culture, ancestry, language, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic background or due to stereotypes. How can you make space for all learners?

Key Terms:

Indigenous Peoples – On Turtle Island (what is known as North America), the Nations and Communities of people who are the original inhabitants and traditional caretakers of the land. This includes First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Communities.

Colonialism – A systematic process in which settlers use force to take over land inhabited by Indigenous groups. Colonialism is ongoing, continuing today here in Canada in many forms – both visible and subtle.

Settler – Historically, a settler was a person who migrated to and colonized an area. Today, we use the term to refer to the “non-Indigenous peoples living in Canada who form the European-descended sociopolitical majority (white people).” *There are many understandings of what a ‘settler’ is – here, we are using the definition attributed to [Chelsea Vowel](#), a Métis scholar.*

Forced assimilation – A process of stripping people of their traditional culture and knowledge, and imposing settler worldviews and ways of living on people. Used as a means of controlling and oppressing a group of people.

Residential schools – The [residential school system](#) was a tool in the Canadian government's broader plan of assimilation. Indigenous children were removed from their families and communities against their will to be put in schools where they were forced to adopt European traditions, languages, and lifestyles. These schools operated for more than 160 years, with the last residential school closing in 1996.

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Decolonization – For Indigenous Communities and Peoples, “[decolonizing is about reclaiming what was taken and honoring what we still have.](#)” Decolonization involves both Indigenous resurgence (reclaiming and revitalizing land, knowledge, traditions, approaches), and dismantling structures that perpetuate colonial power dynamics. For [non-Indigenous people](#), decolonization involves working in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples, shifting colonial relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples, and unlearning colonial mentalities.



Taste of tradition (15 minutes)

Begin the workshop with a sharing circle. Invite participants to share their food 'tradition' story with the group (*take-home activity from Week 4*). You might ask follow-up questions like:

- What do you love about this food tradition? How does it make you feel?
- Where did you learn about this food tradition?
- *If participants choose their own tradition:* How is this food tradition connected to your family? Culture? Home? Does it remind you of a specific person or place?
- *If participants choose to research a tradition:* What's interesting about this tradition? Why do you think it's meaningful for people?

Once all groups have presented: Discuss the concept of 'tradition' itself.

- **Ask:** What is a tradition? How are they passed down?
 - **Talking point:** A tradition is "the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation."
- **Prompt:** Cultural traditions around food are important. Why?
 - They reflect our histories and where we came from, helping us to learn about and better understand our own identities.
 - Food is more than just lunch! It's certainly a source of nourishment, but it's also a source of comfort, a means of survival, and a meeting point for people and communities to come together.
 - **Ask:** Is there anyone here whose parents or grandparents were born in a different country? Does the food that they cook for you make you feel more connected to that place?



Indigenous traditional knowledge (20 minutes):

Use the previous activity to segue into a discussion about defining Indigenous traditional knowledge. You can use a large sheet of chart paper to facilitate the conversation popcorn-style in a large group, or hand out sticky notes for participants to write ideas on individually first, followed by a group conversation.

Prompt: We just talked about the importance of traditions in cultural identity and building community. Many of us in this room are lucky enough to be able to learn about our families' traditions that have been passed down through generations.

Ask: What happens when cultural traditions are stopped from being passed down? How does this impact the community?

- Share participants' ideas and responses on chart paper.

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Ask: Can anyone define colonialism? Here are some key points to highlight in this discussion¹.

- **Stolen land:** Colonization involves a group of settlers taking control over another group and the land they inhabit, using violence and force.
 - Here, we are talking about European settlers colonizing Turtle Island and the Indigenous Peoples who have lived here for thousands of years (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis).
- **Destruction of relationships:** Colonialism seeks to destroy the relationships that people have with each other and with the land.
 - The destruction of Indigenous Peoples' relationships benefits the colonizer, giving them more power.
- **Forced assimilation:** Colonialism imposes settler worldviews and ways of living on people as a means of controlling and oppressing.
- **Not a relic of the past:** In Canada, colonization began many years ago, when European settlers came to Canada, but it is an ongoing process that continues today.

To deepen the conversation, share the following excerpt from Food Secure Canada's [discussion paper](#) (handout found in supporting documents). Walk through the passage with participants, defining any complex or confusing words.

The arrival of European settlers and their beliefs that the land was largely empty (terra nullus), and Indigenous peoples' limited understanding of the European style of land ownership and agriculture, was used to justify the expulsion over the centuries of Indigenous peoples from their historical land and food systems. The Indigenous traditions around food, as well as their languages and wider culture, were treated with contempt and viewed as detrimental to models of progress and development introduced by the settlers. The Indian Act, legislated in 1876 only made things worse since now all spheres of First Nations and Inuit life including their connection to Indigenous land and food systems, are controlled by colonial governments without any meaningful consultation.

Circle back to the chart paper with notes about cultural traditions. Prompt participants to make connections here. **Ask:** How does colonialism impact the transmission of Indigenous traditions?

Key connections to highlight:

- Colonialism purposely tries to prevent traditional knowledge from being passed on.
- Colonialism seeks to destroy the relationship Indigenous Peoples and Communities have with their traditional knowledge and practices (including food).
- Colonialism tries to make communities 'assimilate' by forcing settler ways of living onto them.

Today, we'll be doing an exercise together to take a closer look at one of the ways that Canada tried to disconnect Indigenous Communities from their traditions – through **colonization**. Then, we will explore the ways

¹ <http://www.foodjustice.org/settlercolonialism>



in which Indigenous Peoples and Communities here on Turtle Island have resisted and reclaimed these traditional practices – through **decolonization**.

- You might check in with the group at this point to see how everyone is feeling. Talking about this stuff is hard and can feel very heavy for youth. Take a break, if needed!
 - **Reminder:** You may have Indigenous youth in your group who have personal experiences with the harmful effects of the residential school system. You may also have Black youth whose families came to this country through forced migration and slavery, and for whom the label "settler" doesn't apply. Be mindful of these experiences that exist within your group and provide space for people's feelings as needed.
- Highlight that although you are talking about the destructive impacts of colonialism, you will be moving into a hands-on cooking activity around the strength and resilience of Indigenous Peoples, and the vibrant and joyful histories they have. It's important to talk about both!



Archival menus (15 minutes)

For this activity, use the resources (found in supporting documents) from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation – this includes 2 different menus from All Saints Residential School, nutritional values for menus, a letter from Miss Eden, and a letter from the school's "Indian Agent."

Hand out copies of the two menus and nutritional information sheets from the school to pairs of participants; ask them to compare the menus. **Ask:** What do they notice about each one? How would they feel about being served these meals?

As a large group, prompt a conversation about the menus.

- Inform participants that one of the menus is fake – ask them which one they think it is, and why.
 - The fake menu was shared by the school and the school's Indian Agent as a way of covering up what was really going on at the facility. This menu is the 'official' menu that was recorded in government records – this highlights who has the power to write history.
- Read excerpts from Miss Eden's letter (page 2 and 3) and the Indian Agent's letter to provide more context and draw connections between colonialism and food.
 - You might share this quote from Food Secure Canada's [discussion paper](#) to deepen the connections here: "Residential schools made a bad situation worse by serving minimal amounts of poor quality foods to children and refusing any allowances for traditional foods in their diet. Thus, not only were children malnourished but they lost much of their traditional knowledge regarding food preparation along with their languages and other aspects of their cultures."
- **Talking point:** Food systems are not separate from culture and identity – they are woven into every fabric of our lives.
- **Ask:** What effects do you think separating children from their culture had? What about their families and communities they were forced to leave behind?

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- Challenge participants to think how they would feel if they were in this situation – How would they feel about being introduced to new foods that they were not familiar with?
- **Ask:** How do you think the overall health of Indigenous Communities changed as a result?
 - “The legacy [of residential schools], linked to poverty, was a poor diet and epidemic proportions of food related illnesses (i.e. diabetes) amongst many of the Indigenous Peoples in Canada.” ([Food Secure Canada](#))
- **Take-away point:** Destroying the relationship communities have with their traditional foodways and food practices has impacts beyond simply ‘diet’. This is a project of colonialism that disconnects people from their identities, families, and culture.



Let's cook! (1 hour)

Refer to supporting documents for “Three sisters soup” ingredient list and recipe.

Once in the kitchen, review any safety rules that apply to that space:

- Hairnets/gloves;
- Handwashing;
- Knife handling;
- Cross-contamination;
- And, how to use stovetops, ovens, and other appliances.

Divide the class into small teams. Hand out the recipe and show each team their prep station. Ask participants to organize who will complete each prep duty and help by demonstrating. Duties could include: reading the recipe, measuring, washing, cutting, mixing, etc.

Tip: Hand out a sign-up sheet for cleaning duties now to expedite the clean-up at the end.

Why did we pick this recipe for today? **Talking points for three sisters soup include:**

What do you know about “Indigenous foods?”

- Many mainstream beliefs or assumptions about Indigenous foods are incorrect.
 - *Batter up!* Bannock (fry bread) is a food that many settlers first think of when we talk about Indigenous foods. But, what most settlers don't know is that it uses ingredients like white flour and sugar that were [introduced by settlers](#), so it's not a food tradition that has existed since pre-colonization.
 - *Moose, deer, elk, oh my!* Not all Indigenous Communities' traditional diets were meat-based – although hunting was important, growing, gathering, and foraging were also central.
 - *A relic of the past?* When people talk about Indigenous cultures (and specifically Indigenous foods) there is often a sense that it is something located in the past. This is not true! Indigenous cuisine is a living, ever-evolving thing – using elements of traditional cooking (methods or ingredients), but presenting them in new ways.

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Indigenous cuisine tells a story of (de)colonization.

- Today's recipe is from "tawâw" – a cookbook written by Cree chef Shane M. Chartrand.
 - This cookbook showcases "progressive Indigenous cuisine" – in the foreword, we are told that "in order to adopt Indigenous traditions and food culture, to celebrate that culture, and to show it in a new way, we cannot forget to discuss how we relate to food traditionally."
 - tawâw means: "**come in, you're welcome, there's room**" – it invites settlers to engage with these dishes and traditions.
 - "Where you have Indigenous ancestors or not, everyone in North America should be learning about the First Nations' cultures that surround them."
 - We must be mindful when we're doing this type of learning – ensuring that we are not romanticizing or appropriating Indigenous cultures, but instead **thinking critically, considering our own positions** (if we are settlers), and **(un)learning**.
- Returning to, exploring, and repurposing traditional foods is a form of reclaiming the knowledge and practices that colonialism tried to destroy.
 - "More than just a cookbook, this is an **act of reclamation** leading to the revitalization of your taste buds for Indigenous cuisine."
 - Shane talks a lot about **decolonizing** Indigenous food as a way of healing – what ingredients, dishes, techniques existed pre-colonization? How can those be recovered and revived today?

Teachings from the land.

- In this cookbook, Shane writes: "**Recipes come to me when I think about what grows together.**" This is a common quality in many Indigenous dishes – how do these different elements relate to one another in the natural world?
- This dish utilizes traditional Indigenous knowledge around land and growing.
 - "Squash, corn, and beans have long been known as the 'three sisters' in Indigenous communities. In gardening terms, they are companion plants, supporting and nurturing one another as they grow. The corn shoots skyward, providing a natural pole for the beans to follow as they climb. As they do, they provide some extra support to keep the corn upright. The squash grows low, controlling weeds and keeping the sun off the soil to prevent unnecessary moisture loss. Nutritionally, they provide a combination of protein (beans), carbohydrates (corn and squash), and vitamins. The squash even provide a small amount of fat in the oil contained in their seeds."
 - Indigenous cooking is in tune with the environment – it gives us "new ideas about sustainable living – the interdependence of beings, living *with* the earth instead of *on* the earth."



Conclusion and consolidation:

Enjoy your meal together! Serve three sisters soup without any sides (it has everything you need in there!) Set up a space where everyone can eat together and chat during the meal. To prompt conversation while you eat, you could ask:

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- Have you had three sisters soup before? Where?
- Can you think of any other ingredients that are found in nature together that could be used in a recipe? (e.g.: carrots and onions; tomatoes and basil)
- What was your favourite part of being in the kitchen today?



Take-home messages:

- End the session with a quick group debrief. You can either do this as a large group (popcorn style) or in smaller teams (with reporting back).
- Ask participants to list the three most important or interesting things they learned during the session, and then invite them to share this with the group.
- Review responses as a large group, adding in any key take-home messages from below that might have been left out:
 - Colonialism involves settlers using force to take over land inhabited by Indigenous groups. It is ongoing, continuing today here in Canada.
 - Forced assimilation imposes settler culture onto Indigenous groups, trying to erase Indigenous identity, knowledge, and ways of life.
 - Food is inherently tied to culture and identity. The Canadian government uses mechanisms like residential schools as a way to try to cut those ties.
 - Decolonizing food is a way for Indigenous Peoples and Communities to reclaim their identities and cultures
- **Option:** have participants complete the [Kahoot quiz](#) now, or provide them with the link to complete after the session.

Clean up! Using the sign-up sheet handed out at the beginning of cooking, have everyone help out with the basic cleaning duties (clearing tables and plates, loading the dishwasher, putting foodstuff away).



RESOURCES

Resource:**[Land Acknowledgement Video](#)**

“The GTA has been home to Indigenous peoples for millennia. Here, Sara Roque and Selena Mills share their reflections on this land”

Resource:**[‘It’s My Party’ National Indigenous Peoples Day](#)**

TVOkids show hosted by kids, who spend the episode attending a traditional Pow Wow and learning about Indigenous cultures.

Resource:**[Water protector Autumn Peltier speaks at UN](#)**

Canadian water protector and activist Autumn Peltier from Wiikwemkoong First Nation on Manitoulin Island addresses the UN for the 2019 Global Landscapes Forum.

Resource:**[Deepening Knowledge](#)**

Educator resource website designed to help teachers infuse more Indigenous content into their practice.

Resource:**[Chelsea Vowel Blog Post, ‘A rose by any other name is a mihkokwaniy’](#)**

Educator resource providing a helpful breakdown of ‘what to/what not to call’ Indigenous Peoples, and the meanings of each term. Could also be shared with students, depending on whether language is considered age-group appropriate.

Resource:**[‘The History of Food in Canada is the History of Colonialism,’ The Walrus](#)**

Educator resource providing historical context on this week’s theme and content.

Resource:**[‘Turning Food into a Weapon in the Battle against Colonialism,’ The Tyee](#)**

Educator resource with more background information about Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives.

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