

Food, Colonialism and Identity

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Introduction

Food is an integral part of any culture or society. Not only does it sustain human life, but it can be an expression of familial traditions, religious beliefs, seasonal celebrations or even a sharing of neighbourly good will. When one lives in a multi-cultural society, such as Canada, food can also become an expression of cultural diversity and personal identity - who **we** are, who **I** am.

As the cultural landscape is so diverse in Canada, inclusivity can be important in helping to maintain harmony in communities. Schools can play an important role in developing knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that foster respectful interactions with students who are different from themselves. As food is an integral part of every culture, it can be a vital tool for teaching Canadian students about diversity and inclusiveness (Pazzaglio and Williams, 2012, p. 577).

Culture can also be an expression of personal and community choices - what we eat, what we wear, where we live. Historical events can have an impact on these choices. As food is common across all cultures, teachers can use food to tie historical events, such as colonialism, to personal and community food choices. Students can be asked to critically evaluate food decisions, that on the surface can seem to be free individual choices, but rather are the result of much wider influences such as politics, economics and even geography (Resor, 2012, p. 236).

As a Home Economics teacher, who teaches in a predominantly Caucasian school, teaching students authentically about culture, cultural diversity and inclusivity can be challenging at times. My presentation today describes my journey in creating a learning plan to help my grade 9 students make connections between historical events, personal and collective choices, cultural diversity and cultural inclusivity by using food as a connective theme.

Background

My cultural food journey began a year ago. I had informally asked my grade 8 students to answer the following question: If a foreign visitor came to Canada and asked you for some examples of Canadian cultural foods, what would you tell him/her? To my surprise, the students struggled to answer the question. I overheard snippets of conversation "pizza - nah that's Italian" or "sushi - but that's Japanese." After fifteen minutes, I had the students turn in their group discussion

papers and found the lists to be short but fairly consistent. Top answers included: maple syrup, poutine, back bacon and pancakes. To my surprise there also was no mention of First Nations foods, although maple syrup was mentioned indirectly. I wondered at their struggle and whether my question was too broad and perhaps, before we attempted to answer the visitor's question, we needed to discuss what is meant by culture; what is Canadian; is Canadian culture defined only by the present or does it include the past; is Canadian food culture strictly that which we see in the media or on a restaurant menu?

A few months later, I had a second cultural encounter with my students, but this time with my grade 7s, as I was demonstrating how to cook fried rice. As we were discussing the culturally diverse ingredients that could be included in this recipe, my only Asian student in the class excitedly began to share with us the different kinds of soy sauce his family uses, the different types of rice they buy at the store and what ingredients his mom uses in their fried rice recipe. A normally quiet boy, I was pleased to see his engagement with the lesson, how he readily identified himself culturally with the food being prepared, but also his willingness to share with his classmates his food heritage, which in turn increased their interest in what was being cooked. This little encounter demonstrated the power that food can have as a tie to who we are, its ability to demonstrate inclusivity by the sharing of food and normalizing that which may appear different. I wondered if I might be able to duplicate this personal connection, with food, with students in my other classes.

Also at this time, the Home Economics department at my school decided to offer a new course entitled "Cultural Cooking 9". As I would be teaching this course, I was excited to have a venue to begin addressing some of the questions I had begun to ask myself when teaching my grade 7s and 8s about what Canadian food culture meant and the impact that cultural cooking can have on student engagement, but also, their personal connection to food.

Lastly, in early spring of last year, the BC government released the new Home Economics curriculum document. The new learning outcomes provide teachers with exciting opportunities to introduce cultural foods into their teaching, but more specifically, the inclusion of First Nations traditional foods. This inclusion of First Nations traditional foods would provide my students with the opportunity to explore Canadian cultural food history and to better understand the reciprocity of food sharing that occurred between the First Nations peoples, the first European settlers and other cultures.

These four events, plus the reading of the articles by Pazzaglio and William (2012) and Resor (2010) paved the way for me to develop an introductory unit for my grade 9 Cultural Cooking class that not only explores what is meant by Canadian cultural foods, but also helps students to find personal connections to their cultural food heritage and to further cultural diversity and inclusivity.

Unit Theme: Food, Colonialism and Identity

Grade Level: These activities are designed for students in grade 9.

Guiding Questions:

1. What does it mean to eat Canadian cultural foods?
2. How has colonization influenced the cultural food heritage of the First Nations peoples?

Provincial Learning Outcomes

Students are expected to know about

First peoples traditional foods, including ingredients, as well as, harvesting and gathering.

Activity #1: Exploring Culture

- a. Working in small groups and using collaborative/cooperative learning strategies, have students discuss the following question: What is culture?
- b. Read the story entitled ***Same, Same but Different*** by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw.
- c. Returning to their small group discussion, have students discuss how the story defines culture. Does this discussion lead them to make any changes to their definition of culture? Groups should be prepared to share their definition to the class. Teacher should point out similarities and differences. Can the class reach consensus on one definition of culture?
- d. Working independently, students identify their own cultural heritage by answering the following journal questions: What is your cultural heritage/Where do your ancestors come from? Do you eat foods that are traditional to your culture? Provide some examples. What are some traditional foods that you eat on holidays (birthdays, Christmas, Canada Day, etc.) Students share their answers with their small groups.
- e. Having defined culture and having reflected on their own cultural food heritage, have the small groups define Canadian Cultural Foods. Guiding discussion questions could include: How are foods and culture related? What factors influence the food choices we make? Groups should be prepared to share their definition to the class. Teacher should point out similarities and differences. Can the class reach consensus on one definition of Canadian cultural foods?
- f. Using this definition, have students generate a class list of Canadian cultural foods.
- g. For assessment, have students complete an exit slip describing two things they learned about food, culture and Canada.
- h. An extension activity could include having students bring a traditional/cultural family recipe to class and in small groups share the significance of this food for their family - when this food is eaten and why.

Activity #2: Bannock: A Traditional Food in a Modern World

- a. Invite one or two First Nations elders to share their family stories about the preparation and eating of bannock. (My school's two First Nations Advocates came and shared their family bannock stories with my class. Their bannock stories were rooted in two different historical events: residential schools and First Nations reservations. These events impacted their family's honored traditions of inheritance and the right of choice to gather and hunt traditional foods for their families).
- b. Teacher demonstrates a recipe for Bannock Tacos. (Recipe can be found in Appendix A). During the demonstration, the following topics can be presented and discussed:
 - i. How colonization affected the daily food supply for the First Nations peoples.
 - ii. History of bannock.
 - iii. Differing ingredients and preparation techniques for making bannock.
 - iv. First Nations sustainable agricultural practices.
 - v. Cultural profile of a taco.
 - vi. Nutritional profile of bannock taco.
 - vii. Define food fusion and discuss how a bannock taco meets the criteria.
- c. Students complete the recipe sheet and hand into the teacher.

Activity #3: Bannock Tacos in the Making

- a. Students prepare and serve the bannock tacos.
- b. Students' tacos are assessed according to established criteria set out by the teacher during the demonstration.

Activity #4: What does it mean to eat Canadian?

- a. In small groups, have students complete the Bannock mind map. (Mind map can be found in Appendix B). Hand in to the teacher.
- b. Working independently, students are to complete a journal entry that addresses the following questions: What did you enjoy learning the most in this unit on Canadian Cultural Foods? What impact did Europeans and other cultures have on the food choices of the First Nations peoples? Now that you have learned a little about Canadian Cultural Foods, how would you answer the foreign visitor's request for some examples of Canadian cultural foods?

Student Assessment

Formative Assessment

Activity #1 - feedback from class discussions, journal entry regarding family cultural/traditional recipe and exit slip.

Activity #2 - completed recipe sheet.

Activity #3 - teacher/student conference on meeting established recipe criteria.

Summative Assessment

Activity #4 - bannock mind map and individual journal entry.

Journey's End

The unit on Food, Colonialism and Identity has come to a conclusion and it's time to reflect on what has been learned, both by my students but also by me. The students indicated that they really enjoyed learning about Canadian cultural foods and were thrilled to be making a First Nations cultural twist on one of their favourite foods - tacos. My non-aboriginal students expressed excitement at using bison meat and found the different ways of cooking bannock, especially on a stick over a fire, very interesting. My First Nations students were excited about cooking the bannock tacos because we had never included a First Nations food in our school cooking repertoire before and they felt a sense of pride at this inclusion. Also, although many had eaten bannock before, or had made it with grandparents or aunts, some had never made their own bannock and were excited to have that personal experience. Both groups of students demonstrated some understanding of the complex relationship between how dominant political groups can affect the availability of food and the limiting of food choices for the minority cultural group. But there was also an awareness of how positive cultural contacts can alter food choices and can create new and interesting foods.

Overall, I felt the unit to be a success. I felt that students began to understand the complex and diverse nature of Canadian food culture. Students had the opportunity to make personal connections to their own cultural food heritage and identity. Also, students were able to demonstrate inclusivity by being inspired by and accepting of the food stories shared by the First Nations Advocates, as well as, by showing a willingness to try a new food/ingredient.

Looking to the future, I would like to be able to collaborate with the Social Studies 9 teachers and see if we can tie First Nations studies, colonialism and food more strongly together and therefore make learning cross-curricular and more meaningful.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Lana Donaldson and Crystal Prince, First Nations Advocates at Glenrosa Middle School, for sharing their family bannock stories with my students. Their stories made learning authentic and generated an enthusiasm for and deeper understanding about First Nations culture.

Appendix A

NAME: _____
 BLOCK: _____ UNIT: _____
 DATE: _____
 OVEN TEMP: _____ 'C _____ 'F
 TIME _____

PRODUCT # _____

Bannock Tacos

COOKERY PRINCIPLES

NUTRITION

EQUIPMENT

INGREDIENTS

- | | | |
|-----|----|------------------|
| 200 | g. | ground bison |
| 2 | mL | chili powder |
| 2 | mL | oregano |
| 2 | mL | paprika |
| 1 | mL | cumin |
| 1 | mL | onion powder |
| 1 | mL | garlic powder |
| 1 | mL | pepper |
| 0.5 | mL | salt |
| 200 | mL | diced tomatoes |
| 80 | mL | frozen corn |
| 80 | mL | black beans |
| 1 | | piece raw squash |
| 50 | mL | water |
| 2 | | lettuce leaves |
| 1 | | block of cheese |
| 60 | mL | margarine |
| 500 | mL | flour |
| 15 | mL | baking powder |
| 2 | mL | salt |
| 200 | mL | water |

METHOD

- ____ 1. Prepare for lab. _____.
- ____ 2. Preheat the oven.
- Taco meat
- ____ 3. Wash the squash, peel it and then cut into 1 cm dice.
- ____ 4. Wash and shred the lettuce.
- ____ 5. Grate the cheese on a paper towel.
- ____ 6. In a non-stick frying pan, brown the meat on medium heat. Use a wooden spoon to break up the meat.
- ____ 7. Add the spices when the meat is browned and cook for 1 minute.
- ____ 8. Add the diced tomatoes, squash, corn, beans and water and cook for 5 minutes or until squash is tender and liquid is mostly absorbed.
- ____ 9. Place the toppings on top of the bannock as follows: meat mixture, lettuce and cheese
- ____ 10. Serve with sour cream and extra salsa if desired.

Bannock

- _____ 11. *In a large bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt.*
- _____ 12. *Cut in the margarine until it resembles coarse meal.*
- _____ 13. *Make a well and slowly add water.*
- _____ 14. *Using a fork, push the flour through the liquid to form lumps of dough. Using your hands, bring together the lumps of dough.*
- _____ 15. *Place dough on the counter and knead 10 times.*
- _____ 16. *Shape the dough into a ball and cut into 4 even sized pieces.*
- _____ 17. *Shape each piece into 6 cm ovals about 2 cm thick.*
- _____ 18. *Place on an ungreased baking sheet and bake until golden.*

TEST FOR DONENESS

- 1. *Meat is cooked through and completely browned.*
- 2. *Bannock is cooked through and golden brown.*

STANDARDS:

- 1. *Meat is thoroughly cooked, thick and well spiced.*
- 2. *Bannock is golden and cooked through.*
- 3. *Vegetables are evenly diced and lettuce is shredded.*
- 4. *Pleasing in flavor.*
- 5. *Attractively presented.*

<p>TRAY</p> <p>Small c. c.- _____</p> <p>Small c. c.- _____</p> <p>Sm. bowl.- _____</p> <p>Sm. Bowl - _____</p> <p>Liq. Meas. - _____</p>

Table setting

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Duty _____

Mis en place _____

Clean up check _____

1. What are the 3 food safety rules you must follow in this lab? _____

2. What are 3 protein substitutions we can make for this recipe? _____

3. What is the cultural food history of bannock? _____

4. What makes Bannock Tacos a "fusion" food? _____

5. Which traditional First Nations agricultural practices would make some of the ingredients in this recipe sustainable? _____

Appendix B

References and Resources

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