



HEALTH

The Importance of First Foods

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- **Lifeways**
- **Time Immemorial**

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student will understand

- what first foods are,
- why first foods are important to Oregon Tribes, and
- what Tribes are doing today to protect first foods.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- How do first foods help Oregon Tribes stay strong?

REQUIRED TIME

- 30 minutes

Overview

This lesson introduces kindergarten students to the concept of first foods. Students learn about common first foods across Oregon Tribes, focusing on the example of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR). Students also learn about traditional migration patterns and what the CTUIR is currently doing to protect these foods.

Background for Teachers

The Essential Understandings, Since Time Immemorial is about the collective story that Oregon Tribes are part of North America and have always been here. It is also about the numerous Tribes, Nations, and Bands that are within the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon. As distinct sovereign Nations, there is variation among these Tribes with each having their own cultures, ways of being, lifeways and languages.

The Essential Understanding, Lifeways, focuses on the idea that Native cultures and traditions are shaped by their environment,



including the use of rivers and lakes for food, travel and ceremonies. Lifeways include the strong, traditional systems and legacies that Native people have developed and sustained.

First foods are traditional foods that have sustained Oregon Tribes since time immemorial. Some of these foods include water, salmon, deer, cous (a root) and huckleberries, among others. Tribal governments actively work to protect access to these foods, restore habitats where they grow and teach Tribal members about their importance. This lesson will look at an example of the first foods of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, which includes the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla Tribes.

The CTUIR Tribal government has a First Foods Program, which helps ensure these traditional foods remain available for future generations. This is one way the Tribal government exercises its sovereignty to protect the health and well-being of its people. First foods are not just nutritious but also hold cultural and spiritual significance.

Considerations for Teachers

Practices

While teaching this lesson, the following principles can help guide your decision-making and engagement with students.

STANDARDS

Oregon Kindergarten Health Standards

- **K.WHP.7:** Understand the importance of access to clean air, clean water, food, and shelter.
- **K.FNP.1:** Understand that food comes from plants and animals and provides energy to help people grow, develop, and learn.
- **K.FNP.4:** Analyze how people eat and prepare foods differently based on culture, personal preference, and availability.

MATERIALS

What materials are needed for students to engage in this activity?

- Slide deck
- First Foods Circle materials (pictures or objects for floor display)
- Drawing paper and crayons



- Focus on teaching the Essential Understandings through first foods.
- When sharing content with students, address the "why" not just the "what."
- Explain why these foods matter to the tribal community.
- Highlight the strengths of Oregon Tribes in maintaining traditional food practices.
- Ensure your teaching practices are accessible and appropriate for Native and non-Native students by focusing on respect for traditional knowledge.

KEY WORDS and IDEAS

- **First foods:** Traditional foods that have special importance to Oregon Tribes
- **Healthy:** Good for our bodies and minds
- **Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation:** A Native American Tribe in Oregon that includes the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla Tribes

Assessment

During this lesson, observe and listen to students during discussions and as they work independently and collaboratively to determine how their learning is progressing. Write down what you notice about what students say and do in relation to the success criteria. Use this formative information to provide feedback to students and plan next steps.

At the end of the lesson, provide students with an opportunity to reflect on their learning through a simple thumbs-up thumbs-down self-assessment for each success criteria statement.

Success Criteria

- I can explain what first foods are.
- I can name one of the first foods that are important to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.
- I can describe what one food does to keep the body strong.

For the following activities, use the slide deck to support your implementation.



Opening

Time: 10 minutes

Step 1:

Gather students in a circle.

Show students a simple map of Oregon. Point out the Tribe closest to students on the map. Explain that they all have important foods, and they may be familiar with some of them. Tell students that Tribes in Oregon have first foods, and they are going to learn about the ones that the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation have.

Step 2:

Review the Essential Question with students. Give them an opportunity to answer, question and wonder.

- How do healthy foods help Oregon Tribes stay strong?

Step 3:

Review the learning outcomes and success criteria with students so they understand what the intended learning is and what it looks like when they have achieved it.

Step 4:

Review the key words and ideas with students.

Step 5:

Explain to students that for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and other Tribes in Oregon first foods are the heartbeat of the community.

Teachers read:

- The Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla Tribes have lived in the same area for a very, very long time, longer than anyone can remember!
- The Tribes believe the earth gives them all the food they need. Before they eat any new foods each season, they say "thank you" with special celebrations. They still have a Root Feast today!



- The tribal government works hard to protect these special foods.
- They want to make sure there will always be clean water, healthy salmon, plenty of deer, growing roots and sweet berries for their people.
- These first foods help keep the people strong and healthy

Hook Activity

Time: Approximately 10 minutes

Step 1:

Share with the students that Tribes in Oregon, like the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla Tribes, have lived in the same area for a very, very long time, longer than anyone can remember! These Tribes follow a special food circle. Important foods to many Oregon Tribes, like the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla are

- Water (which is in the center of the circle)
- Salmon (fish from the rivers)
- Deer and elk (animals from the forest)
- Roots like cous (plants that grow in the ground)
- Berries like huckleberries (sweet fruits that grow on bushes)

Step 2:

Explain to students that long ago, Native American families in Oregon would move from place to place to find these foods:

- In spring, they went to big rivers to catch salmon.
- Then they went to the hills to dig for roots.
- In summer, they went to the mountains to pick berries and hunt deer.
- In fall, they went back to the rivers for more salmon.
- In winter, they stayed in warm camps and ate the foods they saved.

The Tribes believe the earth gives them all the food they need. Before they eat any new foods each season, they say "thank you" with special celebrations. They still have a Root Feast today!

The Importance of First Foods



The tribal governments work hard to protect these special foods. They want to make sure there will always be clean water, healthy salmon, plenty of deer, growing roots and sweet berries for their people.

These first foods help keep the people strong and healthy.

Step 3:

Group Talk: Ask students if they can identify different foods in the pictures.

- What plants and animals do you see that can be food?
- Have you ever tried any of these foods?
- Share with your neighbor one thing that you have learned about first foods.

[Pause here if completing the lesson over two days.]

Main Activity

Time: Approximately 15 minutes

At the end of this packet, you will find the First Foods Handout for students and First Foods Cycle. You will need to cut out each item to create a simple "First Foods Circle" in the classroom, making posters from the attached cards, or print out the cards and distribute one to each student.

Step 1:

Spend time on each of the four foods, either looking at the poster or at their individual cards. Note, the same information is also on the slides.

At each poster or for each food, students can talk about

- What the food is (salmon)
- Where it grows and when it was eaten (rivers, spring and fall)
- How it helps bodies grow (helps people have strong muscles)

After visiting each station, ask

- Which food would you like to eat?

Ask students to draw a picture of the food and show where it grows.

Closing

Time: Approximately 10 minutes

Step 1:

Review key points: "Today we learned about special foods to Oregon Tribes called first foods."

Directions to students:

- Tell your neighbor two things:
 - Why first foods are important to Oregon Tribes like the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
 - How the food helps one's body

Afterwards, ask a few students to share with the whole group.

Step 2:

Ask students to self-assess based on the success criteria. They can pick their level of learning (sort of or yes) and share with a peer.



Additional Resources

- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation website: <https://ctuir.org/>
- Children's books about traditional foods (teacher resource list can be developed)
- Sean Sherman, Sioux Chef: <https://seansherman.com/>
- Javelina Indigenous foods restaurant in Portland: <https://www.javelinapdx.com/>
- Fun Top Chef video for teachers:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWJki48ow90>

Student Self-Assessment





Name:

Directions: Read aloud the lesson Success Criteria in the first column to students. Have them indicate if they were able to meet the criteria by marking it in the handout, with hand gestures or by sharing aloud. Ask students to explain why they chose “not yet” or “yes” to a peer.

Success Criteria “Can I...”	Not yet	Yes
		
give an example of a first food?		
say why first foods are important?		

describe what one food does for my body?		
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<p>Salmon Rivers Spring Strong muscles Healthy brain</p>	 <p>PICRYL.com</p>
<p>Huckleberries Mountains Late summer Strong heart Healthy digestion</p>	 <p>Laurel F, CC BY-SA 2.0 , via Wikimedia Commons</p>
<p>Cous (Biscuit Root) Hillsides and fields Early summer Strong lungs Vitamins and minerals</p>	 <p>Adamschneider, CC BY-SA 4.0 , via Wikimedia Commons</p>
<p>Deer Mountains Late summer Strong muscles Strong bones</p>	 <p>Photo by Barabara Wheeler</p>

