

Title

“Dinner’s Served”: Traditional Lakota Foodways and Feasting

Grade Level

College

Duration

Three to four one hour and twenty-minute class periods, and one additional afternoon outside of class (field trips may be necessary and students will be expected to do individual and group work outside of class time).

Goal

Students will learn about Lakota foods and feasting from the oral traditions, written ethnographical accounts, and interviews/conversations with elders. Students will also help to prepare a more traditional meal for those who helped them gather information, allowing them to show respect for the food source and reciprocity to the elders.

Objectives

Students will be able to see how feasting and the foods consumed connect to important aspects of Native culture (may include “Wisdom Sits in Places,” “All My Relations,” “Oral Traditions,” and “Circle of Life,” reciprocity, relations, respect). Students will be able to understand the importance of food in Lakota culture and how most, if not all, major ceremonies and council meetings were celebrated with a feast. Students will also be able to better understand the importance of asking permission and giving back, hopefully inspiring them to take these lessons back to their homes and communities in order to make a positive difference.

South Dakota Standards

This lesson is designed for a college level course, so there are no South Dakota standards to be met. However, there will be standards outlined by the specific department or university, and the course can be adjusted to meet those requirements as needed.

Cultural Concept

Food is one of the most basic elements of human survival. All cultures eat, and the Lakota Sioux are no exception to this rule. In fact, food is one of the main reasons that the Lakota people came to the earth according to the oral traditions. Everyone has to eat, and understanding the cultural uniqueness of foodways helps us better appreciate what it means to be Lakota.

Cultural Background

It was at a feast where *Hanwi* hid her face after being shamed, eventually leading to the banishment of *Tate*, *Ite* and others to the earth. When Wizzard decided who should be the most powerful of the winds, he asked for food to help make his decision. It was with the promise of abundant meat that seven Lakota families decided to come to this world. Whenever a council would meet to make major decisions the meeting was concluded with a feast. A *Sihasapa* chief even gave a feast to Father DeSmet (Enochs 8). At these ceremonies there were rules that were strictly adhered to, and if not relations and roles would have been altered. The gathering of food dictated the movements of the bands, as well as the actions conducted during certain times of the year. Food was not only necessary for survival, it helped structure and maintain Lakota Society.

Student Activities

As this is a college class, the teacher will spend part of the time lecturing on the topic. This will include introducing the topic and foods, as well as encouraging discussion. Many of these activities may be done outside of class time, and the final product can be presented to the entire class to encourage discussion. The following are examples of activities that could be incorporated:

1. *Wipazuha-waste-wi* literally translates to “the moon when juneberries are good” (Lakota Language Consortium 614). In English we would refer to this as the month of June. In small family groups the students will look up the literal translations of the months using the Lakota Language Consortium *New Lakota Dictionary* and *A Dictionary of the Teton Dakota Sioux Language* (see Chart 1). They will draw or create a story representing the seasonal round to illustrate what foods would be gathered during what moons and times of the year. They can also refer to ethnographical sources for accounts. [Ideally these small family groups would have been assigned at the beginning of the quarter/semester so relationships could be formed and the importance of kinship would underlying all future lessons.]
2. The oral traditions are rich with examples of food and feasting. Oral traditions should be read (or “remembered”) as a class, encouraging the students to focus on the role of food in the story and some of the lessons offered. “When the Wizard Came,” “The Feast by Tate,” and “How the Lakota Come Upon the World,” all from *The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Dakota*, could be shared. While in their family groups, students will find additional Lakota stories and share them with the class, pointing out the role of food.
3. In addition to reading the oral traditions, students would also read:
 - a. Chapter 22: Oglala Society Customs in *Lakota Society* by James R. Walker (pages 50-67)
 - b. Chapter 23: Communal Chase of the Buffalo in *Lakota Society* by James R. Walker (only pages 74-76)
 - c. Chapter IV: Home and Family in *Land of the Spotted Eagle* by Luther Standing Bear (pages 83-119, emphasize pages 86-89)
4. Elders are a wealth of knowledge and learning to work collaboratively with living informants is essential in the post-modern world to properly study any culture. Elders who are willing to help, and who have a knowledge of foodways, will be invited into the classroom (or the students will travel to them depending on health and funding). In their family units they will each talk with elders about hunting, gathering and preparing traditional foods to supplement the readings.
5. Nutrition in Indian Country is a problem that has lead to many stereotypes and misunderstandings. In order to understand how the diet of Native people was colonized, students will use the internet and books to find dietary information on as many of the foods as they can. They will then make a chart comparing the calories, vitamins, and other nutritional values of these foods to the foods we eat today. This gives it a modern day application, but also gets the class thinking about the total colonization of Native lifeways.
6. Students will be asked to refer back to an earlier lesson on buffalo and review how buffalo was used specifically as a food source, both in everyday and ceremonial meals. This may include drawing a buffalo and identifying the parts of the animal that would

have been consumed. Students will also be asked to connect how the mass slaughter of the buffalo colonized the diet of the Lakota.

7. The final activity students will participate in is to help prepare a meal for the elders and themselves. The teacher will be responsible for arranging to have all the items for the meals, but only in the rawest available form. With help from the elders who spoke with students earlier in the lesson, students will be responsible for all preparations, including asking/prayers for the food. Because it might only be possible to have a tasting of the traditional items, students will also research cookbooks to find a traditional recipe to cook for the elders to create a more hearty meal. Each family may choose to do a dish and would be responsible to bring the ingredients. They will then serve their elders as a way to show reciprocity for the information that was offered to them. During this meal the family groups will present their final oral tradition project [assessment] about foodways and feasting.

Resources

Buechel, Rev. Eugene (1970). *A Dictionary of the Teton Dakota Sioux Language* (Rev. Paul Manhart, ed.). Pine Ridge: Red Cloud Indian School.

Lakota Language Consortium (2008). *New Lakota Dictionary*. Bloomington: Lakota Language Consortium, Inc..

Standing Bear, Luther (1978). *Land of the Spotted Eagle*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Walker, James R. (1982). *Lakota Society* (Raymond J. DeMallie, Ed.). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Walker, James R. (1917). *The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Dakota* (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History). New York: American Museum of Natural History.

- Lakota cookbooks
- Outlines of buffalo
- Cooking utensils
- Traditional Lakota foods which come from a respectful source
- A group of willing elders

Assessment

Since time immemorial, cultural knowledge has been passed down through the oral traditions. Students, either individually or in their family groups, will be asked to use oral traditions to teach others in the class and the Lakota elders what they have learned about traditional Lakota feasting/foodways and how feasting/food connects to Native constructs. Students will be strongly encouraged to remember that oral traditions are more than just stories. Art, song, dance, clothing, and ceremony are also examples of the oral traditions and can be incorporated into their final project. Students will also be assessed on their individual contribution to the other activities, their role in the family groups, and their participation in class discussion at the end of the semester.

References

Buechel, Rev. Eugene (1970). *A Dictionary of the Teton Dakota Sioux Language* (Rev. Paul Manhart, ed.). Pine Ridge: Red Cloud Indian School.

Enochs, Ross Alexander (1996). *The Jesuit Mission of the Lakota Sioux: A Study of Pastoral Ministry, 1886-1945*. Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward.

Lakota Language Consortium (2008). *New Lakota Dictionary*. Bloomington: Lakota Language Consortium, Inc..

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Note: This list is nowhere near exhaustive and teachers should seek other sources to enrich the lesson.

Developer

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Please note that this lesson was not designed to stand by itself. This lesson is designed to be just one component of a quarter/semester long course about the Lakota people or American Indian tribes.

Chart 1: The list of months with a literal translation.

Western Months	Lakota Months	Literal Translation
January	<i>Wiotehika wi</i>	“the hard moon”
February	<i>Wiocokanyan wi</i>	“the middle moon”
	<i>Cannapopa wi</i>	“moon when tree cracks (of the cold)”
March	<i>Tiyoheyunka wi</i>	“frost-in-the-house moon”
	<i>Istawicayazan wi</i>	“the moon when people have sore eyes”
April	<i>Siyo istohcapi wi</i>	“the month of March”
	<i>Pezito Wi</i>	“the green grass moon”
May	<i>Magaksica agli wi</i>	“the moon when ducks return”
	<i>Wihakactacepapi wi</i>	“the month of April”
	<i>Canwapeto wi</i>	“moon of green leaves”
June	<i>Canwape Nableca wi</i>	“moon of unfolding leaves”
	<i>Wojupi wi</i>	“the moon of planting”
	<i>Tinpsinla itkaca wi</i>	“the moon when turnip seedpods mature”
	<i>Wipazuka-waste-wi</i>	“the moon when juneberries are good”
July	<i>Wakicepa wi</i>	“animals become fat again moon”
	<i>Canasapa wi</i>	“the month when the chokecherries are black”
	<i>Waziskeca wi</i>	“the month of the wild strawberry”
August	<i>Wiocokanyan wi</i>	“the middle moon”
	<i>Kantasa wi</i>	“the month of the red (ripe) plums”
September	<i>Wasuton wi</i>	“moon when things ripen”
	<i>Canwapegi wi</i>	“brown leaves moon”
October	<i>Canwapekasna wi</i>	“wind-shakes-off-the-

November	<i>Takiyuha wi</i>	leaves-moon” “ruminant’s rutting moon”
	<i>Waniyetu wi</i>	“winter moon”
December	<i>Tahecapsun wi</i>	“shedding horns moon”

Buechel, Rev. Eugene (1970). *A Dictionary of the Teton Dakota Sioux Language* (Rev. Paul Manhart, ed.). Pine Ridge: Red Cloud Indian School.

Lakota Language Consortium (2008). *New Lakota Dictionary*. Bloomington: Lakota Language Consortium, Inc..