



## Indigenous Storywork – Opening Stories

We invite you to begin with an old story we first heard from Skagit elder, Vi Hilbert, [How Nettle Saved the People](#), as told by S'Klallam storyteller, Roger Fernandes.

## Indigenous Science - Overview

Our plant relatives, even when disturbed by human people's detrimental actions, appear to live Mino bimaadiziwin - The Good Life. While we tend to think of Mino bimaadiziwin -The Good Life as what we human people aspire to, perhaps we can ponder this teaching in relation to our plant relatives. Mino bimaadiziwin might be described as: *Using our inner energy to move through time and space in the state of our character and nature in a condition of health and wellness in all parts of our being.*

The video activities in this section will help us understand our relations with our food, primarily food that is gifted to us by our plant relatives. And, of course, this means we will be conversing about water, bird, wind, sun, critter, and other human relatives since we are so closely connected. We Indigenous people understand that we have responsibilities to foster balanced relations with those who share themselves so that we might maintain our health. Eating is not optional for human people. We all must eat regularly. Given this, our food activities are jointly grounded in both Indigenous understandings of relational balance and in current realities regarding food availability, particularly for human people who live in urban and small town areas.

By Food Sovereignty, we mean that we are claiming this responsibility. We acknowledge that our roles in the food web have been developed over millennia and that they predate the nation-to-nation treaties in which we gifted some of the lands and resources we formerly used to colonizers.

By First Foods, we are referring to the plant relatives that grew and developed with us over time on Turtle Island and the lands to the south of us. Many foods we commonly eat today have traveled to us from all over Mother Earth - we will not be talking about them in these videos. Valerie Segrest and Elise Krohn share knowledge about [First Foods around the Salish Sea](#).

## Arc Gifts and Teachings

The food activities included here encourage us to remember our Indigenous values and understandings as we go about our regular activities of acquiring, processing, and eating food. We understand that human people on Turtle Island have developed relations with naturally occurring foods as well as enhancing these foods to better accommodate our particular needs. Often this is referred to as agriculture. Since time immemorial human people have built complex relations with our plant relatives so that we might better receive their gifts (hybridization). Of note, these relations include: development of maize from a wild grass-like relation; management of patches of berry relatives in northern forests; enhancing shellfish relatives on estuary shores; supporting the growth of plant relatives by adding soil nutrients; and, learning the cycles of migrating fish relatives as they developed after the last ice age.

## Our Gift - Our Indigenous Pedagogy

As these ISTEAM materials are being developed during summer of 2020, we are challenged by a pandemic's necessitated remoteness. We yearn to sit by your side on the sandy beach of the Salish Sea, wade through the waters of the Chicago River, and walk the woodland paths near Daybreak Star and in Labagh Woods. We yearn to laugh and wonder with you while listening to cottonwood's leaves rustle in the wind, watching otter scramble along the shore, and osprey dive into the water, and Grandmother Cedar protect those living beneath her. We yearn to gather at lunch and share food together.

So. As our ancestors have done since time immemorial, we take responsibility to change and adjust while keeping deep values. We invite you to listen to an elder talk about her relations with food in several 5 Minute Videos. We tell the story of the place where she is now quarantined; where she has used the teachings of her mother and grandmothers and aunties to grow, buy, eat, and preserve food. Ideally, we would eat the foods as they developed with us, side by side, for thousands of years. For those of us living in or near cities, we can practice food sovereignty by gathering First Foods when we can, by growing First Foods or their close relatives where we have dirt, by purchasing First Food relatives at our local grocer, and by thanking all the foods from any of these sources for sharing their gifts with we human people so that we might live healthy.

### **Indigenous Observing and Activities by Season**

The Food Sovereignty and First Foods materials are shared via 5-minute videos in which Elder Jeanette shares conversations about foods that she grows and processes. Each video asks some questions about our relations with food and the roles human people have made in the lives of our plant relatives. Some videos talk about growing food while others show how to preserve foods by freezing, canning, drying, or pickling. The videos began in June 2020, during warming and growing time near the Salish Sea, and will continue to be made and posted throughout the dates of ISTEAM, hot time and harvesting time, and perhaps beyond. These videos are available to view on our [Indigenous Education Tools](#) website.

### **Relationships with Other Arcs**

This year, 2020, ISTEAM storyline arcs include sharing time with our relations water, birds, plants, and foods. The videos in this storyline arc are about our reciprocal relations with plant relatives. Plants grow best when their relationship with water is well-balanced - some like a lot of water such as huckleberries and others prefer less such as corn. Water also takes on its cleansing role when we human people prepare plant relatives to eat and to preserve. Bird relatives not only lighten our emotions with their songs, but they also spread plants widely by eating and then pooping out the seeds. We understand that we share the gifts of plant relatives with our bird relations.

### **Visioning our Future - How might climate change impact foods?**

About 14,000 years ago human people were living around the Salish Sea while an ice sheet was receding to the north. The climate was slowly changing and our ancestors learned how to keep strong relations with their food during that time. Today, we are experiencing a very rapid climate change exacerbated by human people activities such as burning fossil fuels in cars and trucks. We don't know exactly what this will mean for our plant, bird, and water relations. Some plant relatives might be challenged to continue growing in these new conditions. We **do** know that we can be responsible to slow the change by eating foods that are local and seasonal. Transporting foods from far away greatly increases the amount of damaging chemicals put into the air from trucks.