

Food Sovereignty Introducing Indigenous Culinary to K-5th School Systems

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Author Note:

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Context

At present, I am employed as a Native American Interventionist (grades Kindergarten through 5th grade) with the Flagstaff Unified School District, (FUSD).

As a Native American Interventionist, the Native American Education Support Program (NAESP), I work as an RTI-reading tier intervention in small groups, parent liaison, and with the counseling program to promote cultural awareness to students, staff, and parents. The NAESP Mission statement states: "Producing culturally responsive educational support that promotes awareness and sensitivity of Indigenous students through programs that serve students, families, educators, and the community." Flagstaff Unified School District serves 9,100 students that includes the following: Elementary Schools, Middle Schools, and High Schools.

FUSD Elementary Schools listed below:

Cromer Elementary
De Miguel Elementary
Killip Elementary
Kinsey Inquiry and Discovery School
Knoles Elementary
Leupp Public School
Marshall Elementary
Puente de Hozho Elementary
Sechrist Elementary
Thomas Elementary
Norther Arizona Distance Learning

Currently, I work at Weitzel Puente de Hozho Bilingual Magnet School. The enrollment of the school is approximately 500 students. The enrollment at the school I serve is 21.07 percent Navajo, 46.97 percent Spanish, and 28.81 percent white attending Puente de Hozho.

The City of Flagstaff, Arizona, is a border town, near the Navajo Reservation and presently, the Flagstaff population has nearly 76,000 residents. The surrounding tribal communities include the following: Leupp, Cameron, Grand Canyon, and Apache Havasupai. Most of the students that come from these communities attend FUSD from grades K-12th. The FUSD provides transportation to and from Leupp and Cameron.

I was born in Tuba City, Arizona and I resided in Page, Arizona. Also, I attended Page Unified School District for grades K-12th, and I graduated Page High School in 1992. I moved to Flagstaff to attend Northern Arizona University to obtain my teaching degree, master's degree in early childhood, and master's degree in education leadership. I worked at several Bureau Indian Education (BIE) Boarding Schools as an Elementary Teacher: Shonto Preparatory School, Leupp

Incorporated Schools, Hunter's Point Boarding School, and Jeehdeez Elementary School before COVID-19 happened on the Navajo Nation. I currently, reside in Flagstaff, Arizona.

Rationale

Healing with grief through cooking is one of the many ways I tried to overcome lost from my loved ones living on Navajo Nation during COVID-19. The quote: *"Good food is the foundation of genuine happiness"* by Augste Escoffier or my mother would tell me: "A way to a good husband is through his stomach." I believe that learning stories, food, and ceremonies is a foundation to becoming cultural aware of one's identity. My mother's family consisted of five sisters and five brothers. My mother was the main chef or cook for her family. Most Navajo women can cook homemade food and prepare traditional dishes without using measuring cups, kitchen tool, or any help. They are professionals or master chefs at cooking.

When I was working at Killip Elementary School, I ran into another great mentor named, Deborah Onsa. She can cook traditional Hopi food. During our Heritage Club 2022-2023, she would cook blue mush or piki, corn frittlles, and other Hopi traditional foods. She told the students that they must try to eat traditional foods and learn their stories. She would always read a Hopi story or Indigenous stories to Killip students, and she would explain the moral or cultural significance of the story. She was involved in gardening, and she told me that I had to be the next generation to teach our cultural values, food, and stories. She was very sincerely on revitalization of the Hopi Language and culture by teaching the Hopi Language and Culture Summer Program at Killip Elementary.

Another great role model, I enjoyed working with is named Annabelle Smallcanyon. She works at Leupp Elementary School as the Navajo Language Instructor. In addition, she worked with the Navajo Language and Culture Summer Program at Killip Elementary. She provided Navajo lessons, and she was very good at teaching Navajo songs, Navajo Games, Navajo Stories, and providing cultural activities in the classroom. She did a great presentation at the 2023 Navajo Johnson O'Malley Conference: *"Building the Future: Reigniting the Culture and Language"* at Twin Arrow Casino Resort on August 21-23rd, 2023. At the Johnson O'Malley Conference, Mrs. Smallcanyon presented Navajo vowel activity with rubber bands. She did a Navajo Code Talker presentation of her father, George B. Willie, Sr. Also, so did an interactive game called the Navajo Stick Game. She is a great mentor and Navajo teacher.

During the Navajo and Hopi Language and Culture Summer Camp 2023, I meet Gayle Gratop and she works as Assistant in Extension Master Gardener Program Coconino Cooperative Extension University of Arizona. She provides Agricultural Literacy Professional Development for Teachers or Administrators who are interested in agriculture. I am going to take her Fall Class 2023 entitled: *Growing Futures in Arizona Agriculture*. I am an intermediate gardener; however, I plan on learning horticultural therapy later in the future.

As a Native American Interventionist, my goals are to provide academic support, culturally awareness, and emotional support to K-5th grade students. I will provide support, by a simple wave, or smile to keep students motivated in learning. Due to COVID-19, most of the Navajo students have gone through grief by losing loved ones through the pandemic. I worked with two great school counselors at De Miguel Elementary named Jamie Smith and Killip Elementary named Samantha Runger. De Miguel Elementary provided Everybody Matters, Character Strong, and Restorative Practices programs. Killip Elementary School provided Everybody Matters, Be Kind Academy, and Restorative Practices programs. Also, another behavior program incorporated by principal, Ryan Chee, from Leupp Elementary incorporated called Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI). Counseling services at FUSD is vital to students who are going through hardship emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually. Implementing counselor services in schools, Indian Health Care Services, or other counseling services can provide a positive path for Native American students to “Walk in Beauty.”

Native American Community Action (NACA), Sacred Peaks Indian Health Services, and other Native American resources helping with the high risk of diabetes in Native American population, good eating choices and learning how to cook healthy foods. It is vital that students at a young age are introduced to his or her cultural recipes. NACA provides a wellness center for Native American to assist in Health Promotions, Behavior Health, Family Health, and Community Services. NACA provides a Diabetes Self-Management Education (DSME) program designed to empower Native Americans with diabetes to learn how to manage their diabetes care and treatment by using the 7 Self-Care behaviors to help participants achieve behavior change with include: Health Eating, Being Active, Monitoring, Taking Medication, Problem Solving, and Reducing Risk (NACA website, 2024). Puente de Hozho has an afterschool program called Pathways for Youth that promotes self-esteem, educational enrichment, homework assistance, physical fitness, traditional practices, and cultural values to children in grades 1st through 5th and their families.

Topic Summary

Among Native American communities nationwide there is a serious presence of food related illnesses on an epidemic scale. Obesity, Type-2 Diabetes, Type-1 Diabetes, Hypertension, Coronary Heart Disease, Sleep Apnea, and cancers. In the 1800s-1900s Navajos lived off the land without any diseases. They ate organic food and fresh mutton, no preservatives or sugar. Diabetes was not an epidemic to our people; however, in the 21st Century diabetes is one of the most dangerous health concerns on the Navajo Nation.

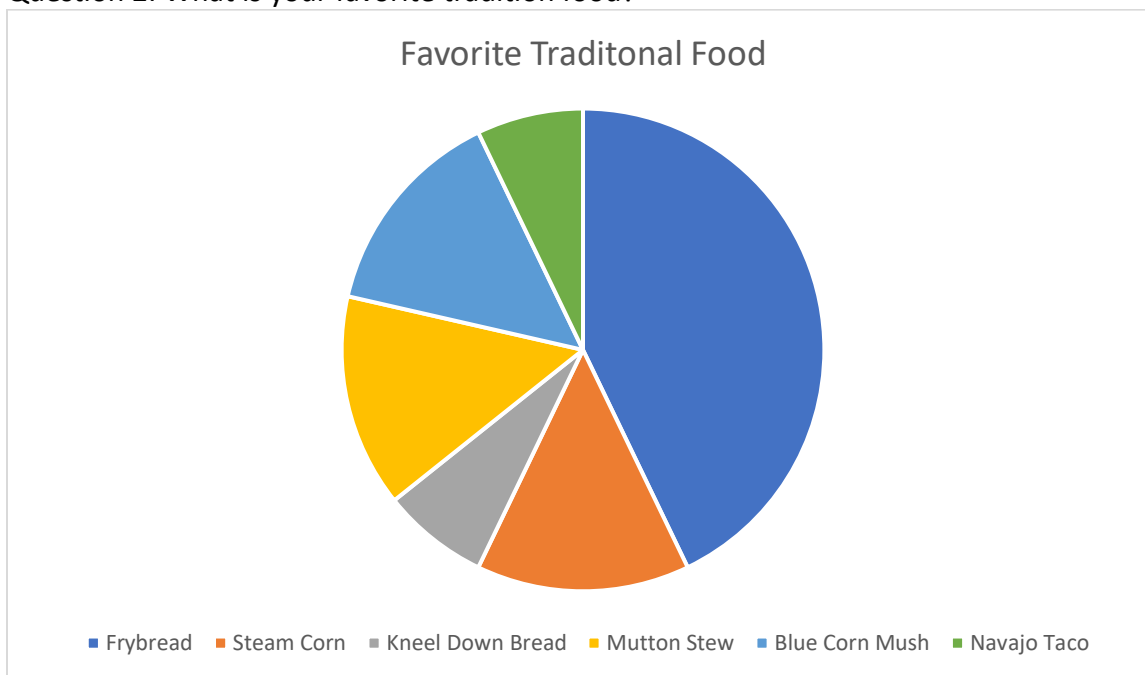
In the article entitled, “Culturally Responsive School Counselors and Programs: Addressing the Needs of All Students” it stated, culturally responsive comprehensive guidance initiatives in schools should be based on two important premises: (1) All young people can learn and want to learn; and (2) cultural differences are real and cannot be ignored. Counselors might consider using culturally specific curriculum materials to cultivate self-pride from several cultural perspectives in individual and group interactions.

Puente de Hozho 's curriculum is based on International Baccalaureate (IB) units. Its mission is to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. Furthermore, the IB, learning to communicate in a variety of ways in more than one language is fundamental to the development of intercultural understanding. IB programmers, therefore, support complex, dynamic learning through wide-ranging forms of expression. All IB programmers require students to learn another language. Intercultural understanding involves recognizing and reflecting on one's own perspective, as well as the perspectives of others. To increase intercultural understanding, IB programmers foster learning how to appreciate critically many beliefs, values, experiences, and ways of knowing. The goal of understanding the world's rich cultural heritage invites the IB community to explore human commonality, diversity, and interconnection. (IB Handbook, 2012)

My target goal was to increase Diné parent involvement for Puente de Hozho. On September 21st, 2023, Puente de Hozho established a Diné Parent Committee. I provided a Native American Parent Survey for feedback for Food Sovereignty Introducing Indigenous Culinary to K-5th School Systems. Food Sovereignty can be defined as: "The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute, and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations (Frisbie, 2018, pg 34)."

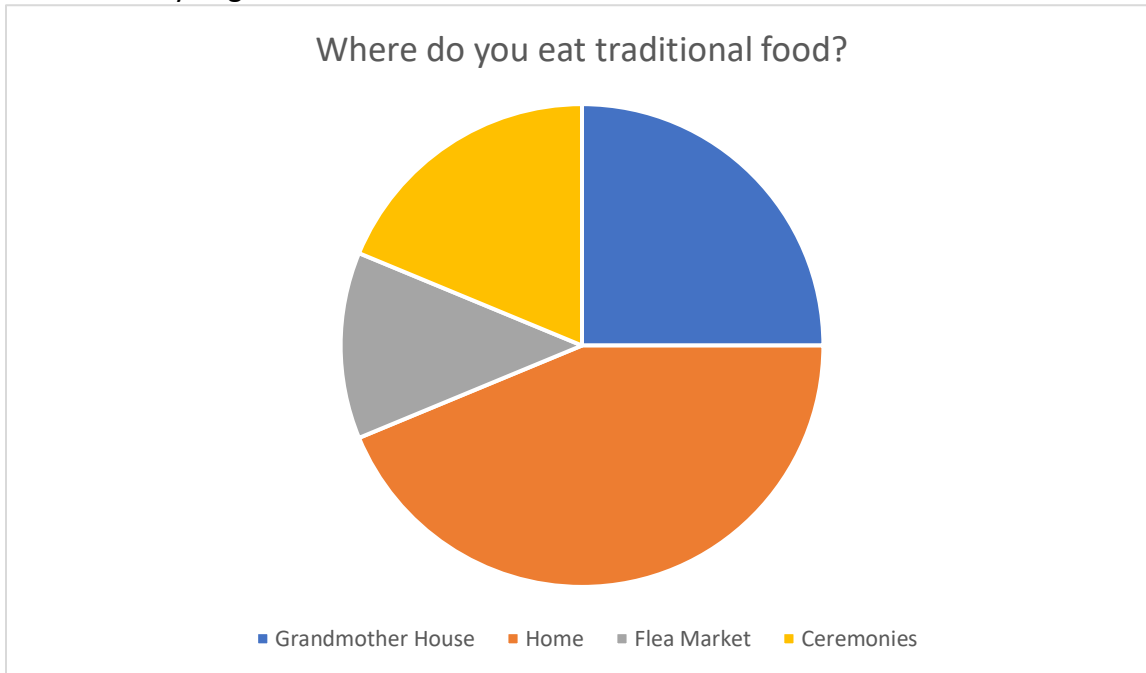
Question 1: Have you heard about food sovereignty? 25 % did not know about food sovereignty.

Question 2: What is your favorite tradition food?

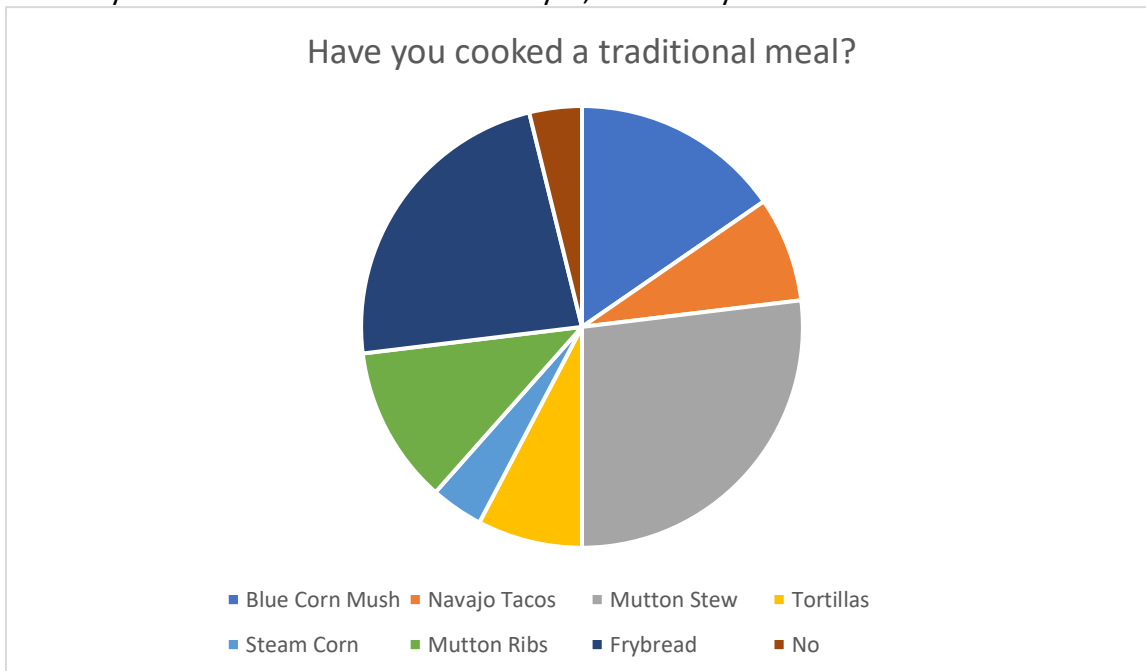


3. Do you know any Indigenous or traditional chefs? 25% did not know any traditional chefs.

4. Where do you go to eat traditional food?



5. Have you cooked a traditional meal? If yes, what did you cook?



6. Do you have a traditional recipe how to make a traditional meal? 25% did not have a traditional recipe how to make a traditional meal.

7. What is your favorite cookbook or Native American website to obtain recipes? 25% did not have cookbook or Native American website to obtain recipes.

Based upon my data from Native American Parent Survey 25% of Diné parents knew about food sovereignty and they wanted to promote more Indigenous cooking for Puente de Hozho. The Diné Parent Committee provided Blue Corn Mush Pancake demonstration, Blue Corn Mush Recipe bags, and Navajo Taco sale. The Diné Parent Committee has 35% parent involvement, and my goal is 80% at the end of the school year.

Example of Lesson

How to make Blue Corn Mush Recipe by Diné Parent Committee Mini Cookbook (2024).

Navajo Blue Corn Mush (Cook Time: 10 minutes)

Tóshchíín

½ Cup Roasted Blue Corn Flour

1 teaspoon Juniper Ash

2 Cups of Cold Water

Simple and Quick

- 1) In a bowl mix the flour and juniper ash together with a whisk until evenly distributed. Set aside.
- 2) Place water in a pot making sure it does not exceed halfway. Add the flour mixture while the water is cold as to not create large lumps.
- 3) Cook mixture on medium high, stirring constantly so the bottom of the pot doesn't burn. Cook until thickened or desired consistency.
- 4) Optional: Top with fruit, nuts, honey, or sugar.

How to make Blue Corn Pancakes Recipe by Alana Yazzie (2024).

Yield: 8 Pancakes	Prep Time: 10 minutes & Cook Time: 20 minutes
¾ cup (90 g) all-purpose flour	1. Medium bowl, whisk together the flour, cornmeal, baking powder, baking soda and salt.
½ cup (90 g) roasted blue cornmeal	2. In a small bowl, whisk together the eggs, yogurt, oat milk, and melted butter until combined.
1 teaspoon baking powder	3. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and whisk until combined.
¼ teaspoon of salt	4. Warm up a medium pan or griddle over medium heat for 5 minutes.

2 large eggs	5. Spray nonstick spray or add butter to the skillet. Scoop ¼ cup (60 ml) of the pancake batter onto the skillet.
1 cup (230 g) nonfat vanilla Greek yogurt	6. Let it cook for 2 to 3 minutes, until bubbles start to form on the surface.
½ cup (120 ml) oat milk	7. Cook the other side for 1 to 2 minutes, until bottom is light brown color. Repeat with the remaining batter.
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted	8. Serve warm with berry compote on top
1 cup (230 g) Berry Compote	9. Enjoy!

If you have trouble finding ingredients, you can go to Navajo Agricultural Products Industry, Farmington, New Mexico or visit the website: <https://napi.navajopride.com/products/> to buy Blue Corn Flour and Juniper Ash.

Conclusion

In conclusion of this paper, Food Sovereignty Introducing Indigenous Culinary K-5th in School Systems is promoting a healthy choice to eating Native American Foods. Some Indigenous Chefs were on live zoom cooking demonstrations, famous cooking shows, and Indigenous Conference throughout Canada and United States, each chef shares their Indigenous cooking skills and recipes for others to enjoy.

My goal for Puente de Hozho was to bring a top chef to demonstrate a cooking demonstration for the students. Hopefully, FUSD can bring several famous Indigenous Chefs to present a cooking demonstration for Native American students throughout the school district. Puente de Hozho has a Diné Parent Committee, and we established Native American cooking demonstrations on a parent involvement-based approach to work on Introducing Food Sovereignty Introducing Indigenous Culinary K-5th in School Systems throughout the school year.

On May 13th & 14th, 2024, Puente de Hozho presented “Yazzie the Chef” wealth of knowledge of Indigenous Food Sovereignty. Brian Yazzie was born and raised on the Navajo Nation with a rich Navajo culture in his hometown of Dennehosto, Arizona. He has worked alongside, The Sioux Chef, Sean Sherman, in Minnesota striving to keep Indigenous ingredients well and alive, with zero colonial influence. Brian Yazzie built his own company, Nativ Bowl, to sever his community in Minnesota with food that not only focused on Indigenous influence, but also a focus on nutrition. “Yazzie the Chef” brought Thalia Roessel another Navajo Indigenous Chef. She was featured in the Navajo Times article entitled, *Navajo Sugar: Diné chef Thalia Roessel incorporates Todineeshzhee’ roots in recipes*. Also, Thalia Roessel was featured in Phoenix New Times entitled, *Getting Lost with Erin French*. She shared her Indigenous Chef Knowledge, and she built her own company, Café Gozhoo. I was amazed with the two Diné Chefs who provide Puente de Hozho their Chef stories and motivate students to eat healthy and be proud of their Diné Foods.

Brian Yazzie presented Importance of healthy eating, Indigenous foodways. Then, he did a cooking demonstration of Blue Corn Bites Parfait. The students at Puente de Hozho were excited and they were thrilled to get hands on experience during the cooking demonstration. They all enjoyed eating blue corn bites parfait with strawberries, blueberries, sunflower seeds, whipped cream, mixed berry sauce, and fresh mint. Brain Yazzie shared his childhood stories and provided students with humor, parfaits, and a memory of how he provided a cooking demonstration for Puente de Hozho Diné students. He gave several students stickers, t-shirts, and photographs.

Food Sovereignty can be defined as Pedal and Plow (2016) in book by Charlotte Frisbie stated: "The right of people and sovereign states to democratically determine their own food, agriculture, livestock, and fisheries systems and policies." University of Arizona Director of the Indigenous Resilience Center, Dr. Karletta Chief provided Puente de Hozho a Food Sovereignty Grant to provided "Yazzie the Chef" to do a two-day presentation that estimated cost of \$3,500.00. The Diné Parent Committee helped volunteer their time throughout the year and "Yazzie the Chef" was our last cultural event for the school year. So many people were involved with "Food Sovereignty Introducing Indigenous Culinary to K-5th school systems." In conclusion, the famous quote, "*It takes a village to raise a child.*" It took all the Puente de Hozho staff, parents, students, community, and Diné Parent Committee to make a great team to provide Indigenous foodways.

Reclaiming Indigenous Foods and Foodways is a new pathway for Indigenous Culinary Chefs. I have collected several Native American cookbooks and plan on building a collection of Indigenous cookbooks. My new collection of Indigenous cookbooks includes the following:

- 1) *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen* by Sean Sherman with Beth Dooley.
- 2) *Seed to Plate, Soil to Sky Modern Plant-Based Recipes Using Native American Ingredients* by Lois Ellen Frank Culinary Advisor Walter Whitewater.
- 3) *Food Sovereignty the Navajo Way Cooking with Tall Woman* by Charlotte J. Frishie with recipes by Tall Woman and Assistance from Augusta Sandoval.
- 4) *The Modern Navajo Kitchen* by Alana Yazzie.
- 5) *Diné Mini Cookbook Traditional Recipes* by Puente de Hozho Diné Parent Committee

I hope to build a Shima (Grandmother) Cookbook shelf and learn to cook Indigenous Cuisine. I hope to visit Indigenous restaurants and cafes supporting my local Indigenous Culinary Chef(s) throughout the United States from 574 Federal Recognized Tribes. As Lois Ellen stated, "Today there is a Native foods movement focusing on food sovereignty, the revitalization of Native American foods, and the re-indigenizing of Ancestral Native American foods, and it is growing." Zoom or In-person cooking demonstrations can be accessed with a push of a button and the internet has billions of cooking recipes. Television shows such as Top Chef, Chopped, Master Chef, Hell's Kitchen, Iron Chef, Chef's Table, etc. Culinary classes can be taken in high school and cooking can be a career choice. Eventually, everyone must learn to cook and if you got talent to cook, you have a gift to give to people to share your Cultural Cuisine.

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