

# Indigenous Food Sovereignty and Health



**NASMC**  
Native American  
Studies  
Model Curriculum

# Indigenous Food Sovereignty and Health

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Lesson partner: Humboldt County Office of Education

## Grade Level:

9-12

## Subjects:

Health Education

## Time Frame:

45 minutes


## Lesson Slides:

 **Slides: Indigenous Food Sovereignty & Health**

## Lesson Script:

 **Teacher Script**

## Printables:

- Food Sovereignty Reflective Short Answer Response:  
 Food Sovereignty Reflective Essay Prompt
- Rou Dalagurr Food Futures Magazine Volume 1 Issue 1:  
[Rou Dalagurr Food Futures | Journals | Cal Poly Humboldt](#)

## Rubric:

 **Rubric Food Sovereignty Short Answer Reflection**

## Materials Needed:

- Open Access for Download/Printing: Rou Dalagurr Food Futures Magazine Volume 1 Issue 1 [Rou Dalagurr Food Futures | Journals | Cal Poly Humboldt](#)



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## Curriculum Themes

- ☒ History
- ☒ Cultural Strengths
- ☐ Law/Government
- ☒ Relationship to Place
- ☐ Cross Curricular Integration

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## Lesson Overview

This lesson introduces students to Indigenous food sovereignty and the concept of food futures, emphasizing the importance of traditional food systems in maintaining cultural identity. Through a focus on seaweed, acorns, and salmon, students will explore how these foods are integral to Indigenous cultures, health, and sustainable practices. The lesson also examines the impact of colonization on Indigenous food systems and the ongoing efforts to restore food sovereignty in communities. In this lesson students will explore connections between health of the land and health of the people and apply this to their own understanding of health and wellness.

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## Learning Goals

- Students will define food sovereignty and explain its importance to the health, culture, and sustainability of communities.
- Students will identify the cultural, ecological, and nutritional significance of foods like seaweed, acorns, and salmon in Indigenous food systems.
- Students will analyze the impact of colonization on Indigenous food systems and recognize the importance of restoring food sovereignty in contemporary contexts.

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## Background for Educators

Food sovereignty centers on the right of individuals, communities, and nations to control their own food systems. The Declaration of Nyéléni defines food sovereignty as the right to healthy, culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable, ecologically sound methods. It emphasizes the importance of local decision-making and the need to build knowledge and skills in food production, while also highlighting the essential role of Indigenous voices in shaping sustainable food systems. Revitalizing traditional food practices through Indigenous food sovereignty is crucial to reclaiming our food systems and fostering sustainability, both locally and globally.

In Northern California, Native communities maintain deep connections to traditional food sources and ecological practices that have supported a thriving, sustainable food system for thousands of years. These Indigenous food systems, which include practices like cultural burning, promoted ecological abundance while sustaining local ecosystems. Historical accounts often described



California's landscape as a "well-tended garden," shaped by Indigenous ecological knowledge. Despite ongoing efforts to destroy Native food systems through colonization, California tribes have remained resilient, developing movements around key foods such as acorns, salmon and kelp. These food sovereignty efforts not only preserve cultural practices but also respond to contemporary challenges like food insecurity and environmental degradation, providing a foundation for the revitalization of Native foodways.

Colonialism, especially during the Gold Rush and Spanish Mission periods, violently disrupted Native food practices. Spanish settlers banned Native peoples from consuming traditional foods and forced them into agricultural labor under harsh conditions, further eroding food systems. Later, policies such as the Dawes Act and the forced relocation of Native peoples onto reservations exacerbated this disruption, including attempts to eradicate food staples like acorns. The U.S. government also targeted Native food sources as a way to weaken and displace Indigenous populations, like the mass killing of buffalo and the destruction of agricultural fields. Today, the ongoing dispossession of Native lands continues to hinder access to traditional food sources, exacerbating food insecurity in many Indigenous communities. However, Native groups have remained committed to food sovereignty, working to restore traditional knowledge and practices through initiatives like community gardens, food security programs, and educational efforts aimed at rebuilding connections to the land and food systems. These efforts are essential not only for food security but for social and environmental justice.

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## Curriculum Standards

Health Education Standards: Nutrition and Physical Activity

9-12.2.1.N: Evaluate internal and external influences that affect food choices.

9-12.2.2.N: Assess personal barriers to healthy eating and physical activity.

9-12.7.4.N: Describe how to take more personal responsibility for eating healthy foods.

9-12.8.1.P: Support personal or consumer health issues that promote community wellness.

9-12.8.2.P: Encourage societal and environmental conditions that benefit health.

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## Teacher Directions

### **Think-Pair-Share**

Time: approximately (insert) minutes: 3-5 minutes

**Step 1: Ask students to work together in groups of 2-3.**

**Step 2:** Have students reflect through a discussion in their small groups about the following questions:

- i. Where does the food you eat come from?
- ii. What does it mean to have control over the food you eat and grow?

**Step 3: Ask students from each group to share with the class.**



## **Group Discussion**

Time: 3-5 minutes

**Step 1: Ask the class to reflect together in a large group after watching the short video about why food sovereignty matters.**

**Step 2:** Guide them through the following questions. If you can write down answers on the board or type them on the screen. From what we learned in the previous video let's talk a bit about why Food Sovereignty matters. According to the video: why does food sovereignty matter regarding the following areas? Are there any other reasons you can think of why food sovereignty would matter for people?

1. Health
2. Cultural and Traditional practices
3. Colonial Disruption

## **Group Reading/Reflection**

**Step 1:** Have students get into groups of three, each one reading a different FSL article (one reads the acorn article, another the one on seaweed, and the other the one on salmon).

- i. You can download the articles and print them ahead of time or you can ask students to access the articles digitally.
  1. Article #1: Baldy, Dr. Cutcha Risling (2024) **"We Are Acorn Eaters: Indigenous Foods Futures & Cultural Resurgence,"** *Rou Dalagurr Food Futures*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 5. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/foodfutures/vol1/iss1/5>
  2. Article #2: Reed, Dr. Kaitlin (2024) **"Salmon Is Everything: Controlling Rivers & Commodifying Kin,"** *Rou Dalagurr Food Futures*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 6. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/foodfutures/vol1/iss1/6>
  3. Article #3: Schroeder-Echavarria, Delaney (2024) **"Kelp Can Save the World,"** *Rou Dalagurr Food Futures*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 7. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/foodfutures/vol1/iss1/7>

**Step 2:** Ask students to annotate the article for finding information about the questions we will be exploring in the group discussion.

**Step 3:** Group Discussion:

- i. How are these foods tied to Indigenous knowledge and the health and identity of Indigenous communities?
- ii. How do these foods relate to larger ecological systems (e.g., the ocean, forests, rivers)?
- iii. How did colonization disrupt Indigenous food systems?
- iv. What are some consequences of this disruption on health, culture, and the environment?



## **Journal Reflection**

Time: 10 minutes and then assign journal reflection as homework.

**Step 1:** Activity: Reflection Essay. Students will complete a short personal reflection essay about the topics explored during the class. This can be done as a homework assignment or can be done in an additional class period with time for in class writing and reflection. Students should be able to use the notes they have taken throughout the lesson to help write their reflective essay.

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## **Scaffolding**

English language learners may benefit from the following strategies:

Emerging: Time to discuss the vocabulary terms and cultural concepts with a partner, perhaps drawing images that represent the concepts.

Expanding: The opportunity to annotate key points from the videos and compare these details with a partner.

Bridging: Write an extended reflection or essay based on a topic addressed in the lesson, making connections to prior knowledge or additional research.

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## **Additional Resources for Teachers**

Video: Native Foodways with the Cultural Conservancy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBJBgPO6PEg&t=308s>

Video: Indigenous Land Stewardship <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBITYChnFiE&t=1542s>

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## **References**

“Native American Food Sovereignty Explained.” (9:16)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LQD90ELcjl>

**Rou Dalagurr: Food Futures Magazine** <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/foodfutures/>

Article #1: Baldy, Dr. Cutcha Risling (2024) **"We Are Acorn Eaters: Indigenous Foods Futures & Cultural Resurgence,"** *Rou Dalagurr Food Futures*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 5.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/foodfutures/vol1/iss1/5>

Article #2: Reed, Dr. Kaitlin (2024) **"Salmon Is Everything: Controlling Rivers & Commodifying Kin,"** *Rou Dalagurr Food Futures*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 6. Available at:

<https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/foodfutures/vol1/iss1/6>

Article #3: Schroeder-Echavarria, Delaney (2024) **"Kelp Can Save the World,"** *Rou Dalagurr Food Futures*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 7. Available at:

<https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/foodfutures/vol1/iss1/7>

“What is an Indigenous Kitchen?” (PBS Voices)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQw5e5yA-ek> (9:42)



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## California Native American Studies Model Curriculum

The California Native American Studies Model Curriculum (NASMC) will support the design and development of open-source lesson plans, primary source documents, planning resources, teaching strategies, and professional development activities to assist California K-12 educators in teaching about California Native American Studies. Per AB 167, the NASMC is defined as lesson plans, primary source documents, planning resources, teaching strategies, and professional development activities to assist educators in teaching about Native American Studies. The traditional cultural knowledge within lessons, including Native language, art, media and stories, are owned by the respective Tribal nations, Native knowledge keepers, artists, producers and authors of the curriculum as indicated in each lesson.

