

LIFE IN THE LONGHOUSE: VIDEO

DIGGING IN: FACILITATING DIALOGUE AND ACTION

KEY THEMES AND TERMS

Longhouse, clan, matrilineal, “good mind”, sustainable villages, mound agriculture, ceremonies, songs, nixtamalization, passenger pigeon

CATALYZING CONNECTIONS

DECODING QUESTIONS

- *Description:* What stories are told? How did you feel reading them?
- *Personal Connection:* How can you connect this story to your personal experience or stories in your family?
- *Common Themes:* What social issues/themes are raised in these stories? Is there a common issue shared across contexts?
- *Social Analysis:* What are the historical and social processes that created this situation?
- *Planning for Action:* What can be done? How does this inspire me to change my actions?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- How does the longhouse reflect the values and way of living of the Haudenosaunee?
- What understanding of nature and human-animal relations is reflected in the clan system?
- Why does Rick say that the Haudenosaunee had the first sustainable villages? How did moving around contribute to their sustainability?
- How does mound agriculture, or the “three sisters”, represent both sound agriculture and a model for social relations?
- What was the basis of food security for the Haudenosaunee pre-contact? How did the early colonizers threaten that security?
- **Rick** suggests that animals were “a virtual hardware store” of useful items. What are some of the uses he names? Investigate other animals and name how they could be harvested and transformed for multiple purposes.
- The passenger pigeon was one of many beings that became extinct through processes of colonization. Research the story of the passenger pigeon. What other extinctions can you identify?

HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

Rick describes the process of nixtamalizing corn to bring out its greatest nutritional value. Have one person or the group try this process with either limestone or wood ash.

Rick recalls the songs sung while pounding corn. Ceremonies, songs and stories accompanied all aspects of the food cycle – whether for growing, gathering, hunting or fishing. Do group research on songs that relate to food activities in your area, and practice it together.

In the hunting practices of the Haudenosaunee, nothing of the animal was wasted. If your group includes carnivores, prepare a meal (or two or three) from a whole chicken (or other animal). See how many different kinds of dishes you can make from one animal. Talk about how the modern supermarket robs us of this knowledge and experience.

INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Rick offers this challenge for group problem-solving: If you had to feed a community of 600 with corn for a whole year, how many corn stalks would you need? One stalk would produce one or two ears of corn. Two ears of white corn could produce one loaf of corn bread, on average. One loaf could feed eight people for one meal. If one person could produce ### stalks a year, how many people would it take to feed everyone?

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DIGGING DEEPER: RESOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND ACTION

VIDEO

- Deyohaha:ge and Six Nations Polytechnic video series with Thru the Red Door
 - [Haudenosaunee \(People of the Longhouse\)](#)
 - [Food Security & Three Sisters Sustainability - Conversations in Cultural Fluency #3](#)

BOOKS & ARTICLES

National Museum of the American Indian. (2009). [Haudenosaunee guide for educators](#). Washington, DC: Smithsonian.

Kimmerer, R. W. (2015). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed Editions.

ORGANIZATIONS & WEBSITES

- [Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry](#)