# The Mush Hole: Colonial Food Legacies Among the Haudenosaunee Photo Essay

# Digging In: Facilitating Dialogue and Action

## KEY THEMES AND TERMS

Colonization, residential schools, historical trauma, the five white foods, commodity foods, psychology of eating, collective indigestion, cultural genocide, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Haudenosaunee pre-contact foods, corn and culture

## CATALYZING CONNECTIONS

### DECODING QUESTIONS

- *Description:* What stories are told? How did you feel reading them?
- *Personal Connection:* Does this story connect to your personal experience?
- *Common Themes:* What are the social issues/themes that emerge from our personal stories? Is there a common issue that is shared among us?
- *Social Analysis:* How did this come to be? 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 is food integral to the experiences Indigenous People had in residential schools?
- How did the Canadian government exploit the malnutrition of Indigenous children in residential schools?
- How does trauma get passed on from generation to generation? How does the psychology of eating help us understand this process?
- What would “collective indigestion” look and feel like? How have colonial foods - such as the five whites - contributed to the current health crisis in Indigenous communities and beyond?
- What are some of the ways that Chandra and other Haudenosaunee food leaders are trying to recover healthy eating practices? What are the obstacles to doing that?

## HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

Try to create a snack for your group/class that does not use any of the five whites. Share the food then reflect on the experience.

Download the 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and identify ones that could be connected to food sources, ideas, and practices.

Organize a meal with friends to discuss these issues.

## INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

What did you know (or think you knew) before this photo essay and what have you learned? What were you taught about cooking, growing food, or saving seeds?

Chandra suggests that all North Americans suffer from the five whites and processed foods.

- Interview someone who is over 70 and ask them to trace the shifts in their eating practices over the decades.
- Interview someone who has arrived in North America in the past decade, and ask them to compare their eating practices in their country of origin and in their new home.
- Compare the food offered in residential schools to the menus in prisons today. How are they similar or different?

## INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

What are the ways that Indigenous communities or people in your community are organizing to improve diets and food systems? What foods would be part of the Indigenous diets in your region? What food memories do you have from your school experiences? How are schools in your area organizing to improve the quality of food available for the students? Are there any programs that support local, sustainable menus?

# Digging Deeper: Resources for Further Research and Action

## VIDEO

CBC News: The National. "Hunger experienced in residential schools linked to present-day health problems." August 14, 2017. [YouTube Video].

## MUSIC

MyMoppet52. "Buffy Sainte Marie - My Country 'Tis Of Thy People You're Dying (Education)." May 20, 2015. [YouTube Video].

Last Night In Paris. "Pura Fé - Sacred Seed." April 9, 2015. [YouTube Video].

Michael Hwang. "'Is Sorry Enough' - by Murray Porter and Elaine Bomberry." September 16, 2013. [YouTube Video].

## BOOKS & ARTICLES

Adams, Amber Meadow (Tsi Kanatáhere). (2020, Sept. 23). *Letter to a stranger: To my grandmother, C/O The Mush Hole*. Off Assignment.

Belke, Terry. (2016, Nov. 24). *The Thomas Indian school: A forgotten tragedy*. WGRZ News.

Dockstader, Karl.(2021, Jan. 23). *Outdoor dance performance at residential school aims to 'reclaim it with our imagery'*. CBC News.

Eshet, D (2015). *Stolen lives: The Indigenous people of Canada and the Indian residential schools*. Facing History and Ourselves.

Graham, Elizabeth. (1997). *The Mush Hole : Life at two Indian residential schools*. Waterloo, ON: Heffle Pub.

Huang, Sunnie. (2015, June 14). *Residential school survivors grateful for truth, now comes reconciliation*. CBC News.

Hudes, Sammy. (2017, Aug. 15). Study links hunger in residential schools to Indigenous health problems today. *Toronto Star*.

Johnson, Missy. (2020, June 12). *Turning food into a weapon in the battle against colonialism.* The Tyee.

Mosby, I., & Galloway, T. (2017). 'The abiding condition was hunger': Assessing the long-term biological and health effects of malnutrition and hunger in Canada's residential schools. *British Journal of Canadian Studies, 30*(2), 147-12.

Mountain, Antoine. (2017). *From Bear Rock Mountain: The life and times of a Dene residential school survivor*. Brindle & Glass: Touch Wood Editions.

Owen, Jade. (N.d). *Food as a weapon in the residential school system. Food Secure Canada*.

Tennant, Zoe. (2016, May 20). *Does bannock have a place in Indigenous cuisine?* The Walrus.

Tennant, Zoe & Johnson, Falen. (2021, April 19). The dark history of Canada's Food Guide: How experiments on Indigenous children shaped nutrition policy. [Audio podcast episode/article]. In *Unreserved*. CBC Radio.

The OA Editors. (2020). *Behind the Essay: Amber Meadow Adams.* Campaign-Archive.com.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2016) *A knock on the door: The essential history of residential schools.* University of Manitoba Press in Collaboration with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

Vincent, Donovan. (2005, June 13). Aboriginals push to save former Ontario residential school known as 'Mush Hole'." *Toronto Star.*

Yanchyk, Brandy. *Every Child Matters: Reconciliation through Education.* Directed by Brandy Yanchyk, CBC Gem, 2020.

## ORGANIZATIONS & WEBSITES

- **Mush Hole Project**
- **Deepening Knowledge - Resources For and About Aboriginal Education**
- **Facing History - Residential Schools**