

Where Do We Begin?

A companion resource to [*Cooking in Two Worlds: A Process Guide for Incorporating Indigenous Foods into Institutions*](#)

Feeling uncomfortable or tentative is normal when embarking on a new journey. Embedding Indigenous foods within our schools, hospitals or institutions can feel overwhelming. The most important place to start is within ourselves and our cultural safety and humility learning journey. We must look inward and understand that we are embarking on a journey of learning, unlearning, and understanding. Working with Indigenous foods will involve learning about other cultures and food systems and meeting new people. This process will take time, care, and thoughtfulness. This journey will offer many moments of pause and reflection. Courage, curiosity, vulnerability, and time are key principles as you move forward.

It Begins With Us

As a society we are on a journey of understanding and truth telling. There are many **National Inquiry Reports** that all remind us that for generations we have not been listening to Indigenous peoples or their calls for actions. This journey begins with us and our work to understand, listen, and learn alongside Indigenous communities. We must learn how Indigenous communities want to move forward and ensure that they lead any possible collaborations or projects. The goal is that each of us can come together and respect what each other can offer.

Self-Reflection

Elders have shared that it will take seven generations to heal from the attempted genocide of Indigenous peoples. We are one of generations sharing spaces and having hard conversations with each other. We must reflect on who we are in these relationships and the impacts of power and privilege. We must ask ourselves what histories and dynamics our institutions bring into these relationships? What do our institutions historically represent? What might we not understand or see in these relationships?

Honoring Our Past

There is much to learn and understand about what has happened and continues to happen on these lands. Indigenous Nations hold an immense wealth of knowledge of their foods, lands, and waters. To move forward together we must acknowledge the destruction of Indigenous food systems and the intergenerational disconnection that has been created and sustained through ongoing colonial policies and Indigenous-specific racism. We must acknowledge that Indigenous voices, leadership, and food systems have been silenced and there is an opportunity to honour Indigenous leadership and food systems moving forward.

Moving Forward

Moving forward in relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities requires an understanding of how colonialism continues to benefit non-Indigenous people. As shown by disproportionate outcomes of health, social, educational, and financial inequality there are historic and systemic systems of power and privilege at play. When navigating these new relationships, it is integral that we are mindful of our biases, privileges, and power.

More information on cultural safety and humility and links to resources to help your cultural safety journey can be found in [*Cooking in Two Worlds: A Process Guide for Incorporating Indigenous Foods into Institutions*](#).

"The only way we are going to educate the world is by inviting them in and watching the traditional food preparation process." –Jenny Cross, Haida Elder

Where Do We Begin?

Scenario

You sent an email to the local Nation's Health Director and a letter to their Chief and Council, but we haven't heard back. We would like to get this work started and move forward. Why won't they respond? Is there anything else we can do?

Self-Reflection

Questions are a tremendously powerful way to engage in curiosity, vulnerability, and humility.

- » Who are you?
- » Who are you in relation to Indigenous people and Indigenous homelands?
- » What have you learned about Indigenous people through your upbringing, media, and from peers and role models?
- » What assumptions and judgements might you bring have brought to this work?
- » What might your institution represent?
- » What is your institution's relationship with the Indigenous communities whose lands we are in?
- » What do we understand about the priorities and resources of these Indigenous communities?
- » Have you paused to intentionally and thoughtfully reflect on these questions and your relationships and understanding of colonialism?

Process Reflection

- » Where did the idea for the project originate from?
- » Does the project goal align with the priorities of the local Nation?
- » If your institution has Indigenous liaison staff, did we seek their advice when reaching out?
- » Would this project build on an existing relationship our institution has developed with the local Nation, or is this our first connection?
- » Were you asking the local Nation to discuss a project idea, or to participate in a project which has already been planned?
- » Did your request consider the capacity of the local Nation to participate?
- » Does the project have funds to compensate Indigenous Knowledge Holders, Elders, cooks, or communities appropriately for their time and expertise?
- » Did you communicate your request clearly and respectfully?

Next Steps

If on reflection, you believe your communication:

- » Described the objectives and intent clearly and respectfully.
 - » Asked for participation in discussing an idea rather than a consultation.
 - » Reflected and acknowledged your institution's current relationship with the local Nation.
 - » Indicated what funds were available to compensate people for their time.
 - » Has given a reasonable time to respond.
- » Consider following your written communications with a phone call or going to the Nation in-person to ask for advice on how and who to connect with.
 - » Consider reaching out to:
 - Local Elders your institution has a relationship with Local Indigenous caterers, restaurants, or food producers.
 - Local Friendship Centres, Health Authorities, Indigenous liaisons, or other Indigenous agencies
 - Are there any community events coming up you could attend and begin building relationships?