

Traditional Food Systems on the Flathead. Artwork by Sashay Camel

HEALTHY + SUSTAINABLE DIETS FOR ALL

# DECOLONIZING DIETS

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## OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Review the concepts of Decolonizing Diets and Food Sovereignty: definitions, visual frameworks, and importance
- ▶ Examine linkages of Indigenous Food Systems and Sustainability
- ▶ Discuss what we can learn from our ancestral ways of eating in our current modern context
- ▶ Note: Decolonizing diets does not mean that we need to eat like our ancestors, rather it is about recognizing our ancestral diets, how they changed, and empower us to think of strategies to apply our ancestral ways for supporting healthy and sustainable diets in our communities today.

## DECOLONIZING DIETS

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**DECOLONIZING OUR DIETS MEANS THAT WE ARE TRYING TO RECONNECT WITH HEALTHIER WAYS TO NOURISH OURSELVES. THIS MEANS CONNECTING TO OUR ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE—KNOWLEDGE THAT HAS BEEN PASSED DOWN FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS IN THE AMERICAS.....**

**FOOD SOVEREIGNTY WOULD BRING ACCESS TO THE HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOODS OUR ANCESTORS ATE.**

**Dr. Luz Calvo**

## BENEFITS OF DECOLONIZING DIETS

- ▶ Reclaiming cultural identity
- ▶ Empowerment
- ▶ Healing trauma
- ▶ Improved energy and mood
- ▶ Enhanced food security nutrition, dietary quality, and health
- ▶ Enhanced sustainability for supporting planetary health



**FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IS THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES, COMMUNITIES, AND COUNTRIES TO DEFINE THEIR OWN AGRICULTURAL, LABOR, FISHING, FOOD AND LAND POLICIES WHICH ARE ECOLOGICALLY, SOCIALLY, ECONOMICALLY AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE TO THEIR UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES. IT INCLUDES THE TRUE RIGHT TO FOOD AND TO PRODUCE FOOD, WHICH MEANS THAT ALL PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO SAFE, NUTRITIOUS AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE FOOD AND TO FOOD-PRODUCING RESOURCES AND THE ABILITY TO SUSTAIN THEMSELVES AND SOCIETIES.**

**Food Sovereignty: A Right for All. Political Statement of the NGO/  
CSO Forum for Food Sovereignty. 13 June 2002, Rome**

**AN AFFIRMATION OF WHO WE ARE AS INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND A WAY, ONE OF THE MOST SUREFOOTED WAYS, TO RESTORE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORLD AROUND US**

**White Earth tribal member and writer Winona LaDuke**

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## FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

- ▶ While the definitions of food sovereignty vary, they all focus on localizing food systems where food providers have control over their resources and put into question issues of control and social justice
- ▶ Determining where our food comes from and how it is procured and produced
- ▶ Food sovereignty can support sustainability by localizing food systems as well as supporting ecologically sound agriculture, livelihoods, food justice, empowerment, equity, and access to healthy and culturally desirable foods.
- ▶ In the United States, the food sovereignty movement is especially relevant to Native American tribal nations, who have been systematically marginalized and largely stripped of their traditional food systems.

## DECOLONIZING DIETS IS A STEP TOWARDS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND SUSTAINABILITY

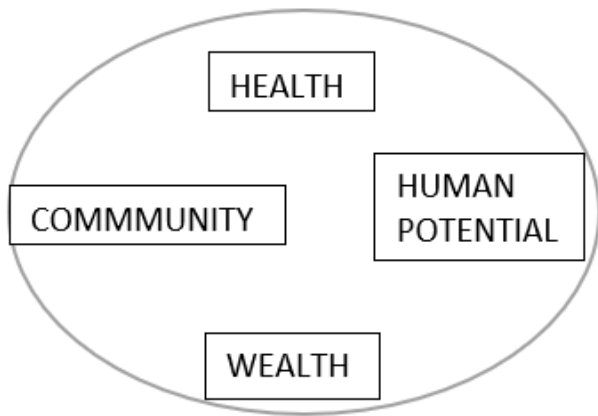
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**WE BELIEVE THAT MADRE TIERRA/ MOTHER EARTH PROVIDES FOR ALL. THESE SHOULD BE OUR COMMON INHERITANCE: HEALTHY SOIL; CLEAN DRINKING WATER; WILD FOODS, SUCH AS GREENS, MUSHROOMS AND BERRIES; HEALTHY STREAMS AND OCEANS FILLED WITH FISH AND MARINE LIFE; AND WILD GAME. FOR MILLENNIA, HUMANS LIVED IN HARMONY WITH THE NATURAL WORLD, TAKING CARE OF THE SOIL AND HARVESTING PLANTS AND ANIMALS SUSTAINABLY. STARTING WITH COLONIZATION AND CONTINUING THROUGH THE CAPITALIST EXPANSION, OUR COLLECTIVE ABILITY TO SUSTAIN OURSELVES AND LIVE IN HARMONY WITH THE CYCLES OF NATURE IS BEING DESTROYED.**

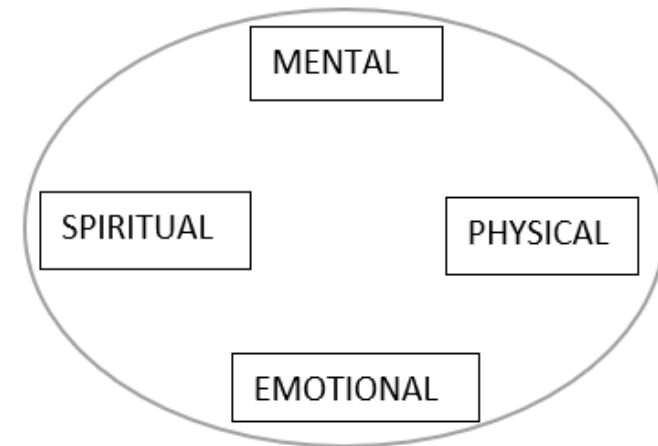
**Dr. Luz Calvo**



PURPOSE OF A FOOD SYSTEM  
A. LEOPOLD SUSTAINABLE  
AG CENTER



NATIVE AMERICAN  
MEDICINE WHEEL



HOW DO INDIGENOUS FOOD SYSTEMS COMPARE TO SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS?

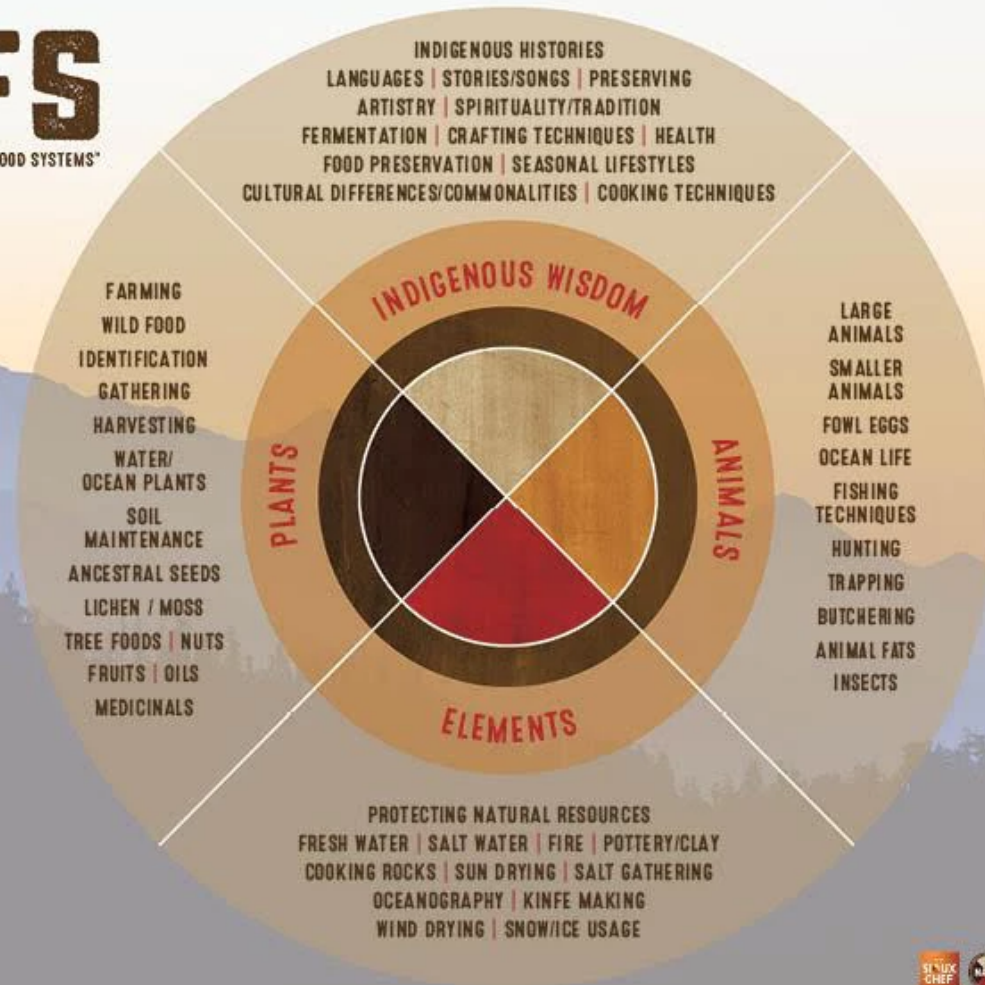
# FOUNDATIONS OF AN INDIGENOUS FOOD SYSTEM MODEL

## NĀTIFS

NORTH AMERICAN TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS FOOD SYSTEMS\*

### UNDERSTANDING THE FOUNDATIONS OF INDIGENOUS FOODS SYSTEMS:

- 1  
REMOVAL OF COLONIZED THOUGHT
- 2  
RECONNECT SPIRITUALLY, MENTALLY, PHYSICALLY WITH THE NATURAL WORLD
- 3  
UNDERSTAND AND BUILD INDIGENOUS FOUNDATIONS
- 4  
REGAIN, RETAIN, SHARE, PRACTICE KNOWLEDGE



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DECOLONIZED DIETS ARE SPECIFIC TO EACH INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY

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**IN OUR DECOLONIAL FRAMEWORK, THERE IS ROOM FOR MULTIPLE WAYS OF EATING, AND WE DON'T BELIEVE EVERYONE NEEDS TO MAKE THE EXACT SAME FOOD CHOICES....WE WANT A WORLD THAT FITS MANY WORLDS.... INSTEAD OF TRYING TO IMPOSE ONE DIET ON EVERYONE ...WE SEE THE PREPARATION OF FOOD AS A CREATIVE ACT OF RESISTANCE.**

**Dr. Luz Calvo**

**WE CALL ON PEOPLE OF ALL ETHNICITIES TO CONNECT WITH THEIR ELDERS NOW TO RECOVER THE VITAL CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE WE NEED TO SURVIVE. WE NEED TO RECLAIM OUR ANCESTORS' WISDOM.**

**WHAT FOODS DID THEY EAT?**  
**HOW WAS FOOD PREPARED?**  
**WHAT HERBS AND PLANTS DID THEY USE FOR MEDICINE?**  
**HOW DID THEY CONDUCT THEIR CEREMONIES?**

**Dr. Luz Calvo**

# INDIGENOUS FOOD SYSTEMS ON THE FLATHEAD RESERVATION: PRE- ALLOTMENT



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# INDIGENOUS FOOD SYSTEMS ON THE FLATHEAD RESERVATION: PRE-ALLOTMENT

**Since time in memorial the Selish, Ksanka, and Qlispe people** had a nomadic lifestyle of hunting, fishing, and gathering, occupying a homeland of 30 million acres. Since the Treaty of Hellgate in 1855, the lifestyle and food system was greatly disrupted. Yet, to survive, the people were successfully adopting a new agricultural food system.

## **Pre-Allotment and Homesteading Agricultural Facts:**

- In 1856, 51 fields growing potatoes, cabbage, beets, 150 acres of wheat, oats, and peas; 3000 'superior' horses, 400 cattle. (Lansdale first Indian Agent, Flathead Agency)
- In 1902, 25,000 acres cultivated producing 125,000 bushels of grain, 20,000 bushels of vegetables, 23,000 horses, 27,000 head of cattle, and 600 bison



# INDIGENOUS FOOD SYSTEMS ON THE FLATHEAD RESERVATION: POST- ALLOTMENT

## **Post-Allotment and Homesteading Agricultural Facts:**

- Cattle ownership decreased to 500, horses were minimal because of forced governmental removals.
- By 1931 Indians cultivated 1,249 irrigated acres, others cultivated 52,649 acres.

(Trospen, Ronald L. 1974 The Economic Impact of the Allotment Policy on the Flathead Indian Reservation. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Economics, Harvard University.)

**By 1935, Federal land policies had reduced Indian land holdings to 400,000 acres, dismantling the tribal land and food system.**

- Since 1935, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes have purchased approximately 300,000 acres of agricultural and conservation lands implementing the vision of returning the Reservation land base to Tribal ownership.

## FOOD SOVEREIGNTY PROJECTS ON THE FLATHEAD RESERVATION

- MISSION VALLEY IN MOTION- YOUTH GARDENING
- DINNER IN THE GARDEN
- FDPIR NUTRITION EDUCATION IN COMMUNITY GARDENS
- FOOD DISTRIBUTION
- HEALING THE JOCKO VALLEY
- ADVANCING HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE DIETS FOR ALL



FDPIR personnel, Marlene Rorvik and Mike Pierre, Commodity Store St. Ignatius, Montana



Youth harvesting potatoes



Salish Kootenai College garden and greenhouse facility supports students growing vegetable starts for gardens and produce for Senior Centers, Food Banks, and Community gardens.



The MOST PREVALENT  
WILD FOODS PROCURED on the  
FLATHEAD RESERVATION  
(based on interviews with 40 participants)

**Wild Game**

*Deer · Elk  
Bison · Moose*

**Wild Fish**

*Trout · Bass  
Pike*

**Wild Plants**

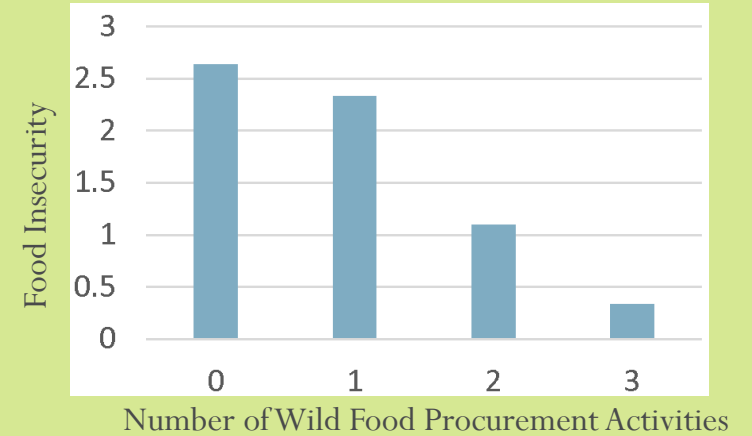
*Huckleberries · Chokecherries  
Bitterroot · Mushrooms*



Artwork by Angie Mangels

## How WILD FOODS DECREASE FOOD INSECURITY

This graph demonstrates a linear relationship between wild food procurement and food insecurity on the Flathead Reservation. Half of the participants in our study were food insecure. Participants who did not hunt, fish, or harvest wild plants were the most food insecure on average of study participants. Conversely, participants who hunted, fished, and harvested wild foods experienced the lowest food insecurity on average.



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## “COLONIAL FOODS”

- ▶ Refined grains (ex: white bread, white flour)
- ▶ Ultra-processed foods (ex: potato chips, packaged cookies and cakes)
- ▶ Foods high in sugar, salt, and fat (ex: breakfast cereals, sugary drinks)

## ACTIVITY

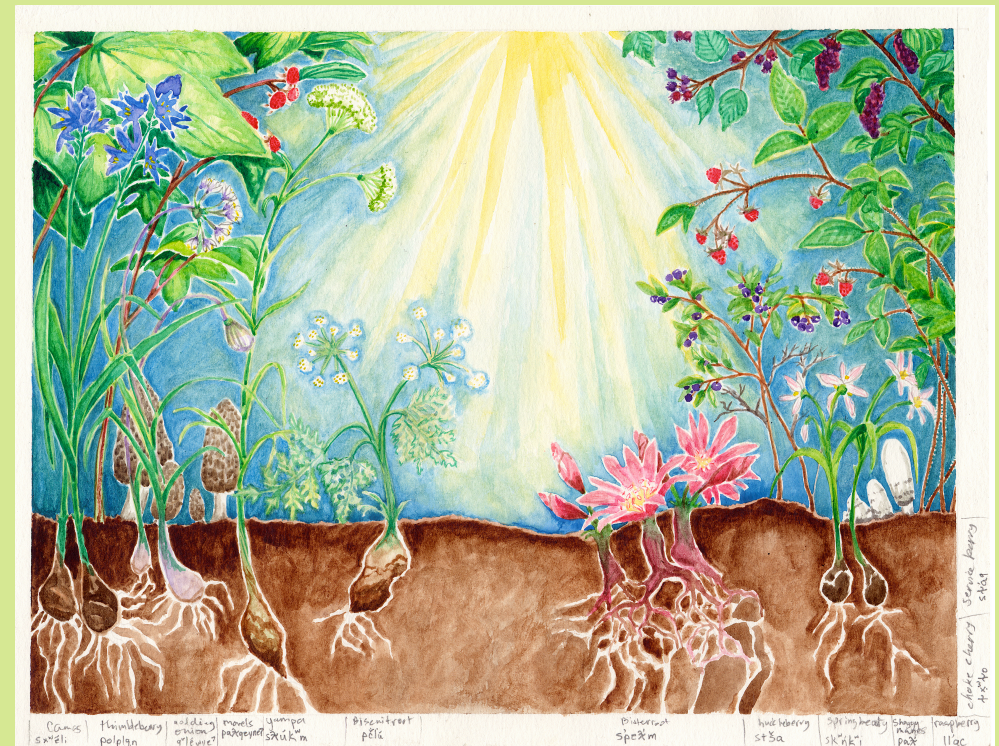
- ▶ Look through your kitchen. What ingredients may be considered as indigenous versus colonized?
- ▶ What local, natural ingredients would you add to your kitchen to “decolonize” your family’s diet?



Artwork by Sashay Camel

## STRATEGIES TO DECOLONIZE DIETS

- ▶ Eat seasonal and local foods
- ▶ Plan meals ahead of time
- ▶ Support local farms and food enterprises
- ▶ Cultivate, harvest, and process your own food
- ▶ Replace commonly consumed refined grains such as wheat with whole grains (such as amaranth or spelt), pseudo grains (such as buckwheat or quinoa), or pulses (such as lentil or chickpea).
- ▶ Replace ultra processed snack foods with whole food snacks.
- ▶ Replace refined sugar in recipes with sweet fruit or vegetables.
- ▶ Connect with your elders to learn about ancestral food systems: What foods did they eat? How was food prepared? How did they conduct their ceremonies?
- ▶ Buy from Native-owned food enterprises online
- ▶ Share your ideas!



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## BENEFITS OF DECOLONIZING DIETS

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## KEY TAKE AWAY

- ▶ Decolonizing diets does not mean that we need to eat like our ancestors, rather it is about recognizing our ancestral diets, how they changed, and empowering us to think of strategies to apply our ancestral ways for supporting healthy and sustainable diets in our communities today.



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