



Food and Culture at Bayfield School District



AmeriCorps
Wisconsin

Lindsay Larson *AmeriCorps Farm to School Program*

I write this reflection on the shortest day and longest night of the year; Winter Solstice. Biboon (Winter in Ojibwemowin) is a season for rest and contemplation; therefore, a perfect time to look back at my last few months as an educator at the Bayfield School District. Fond memories of elementary students picking cherry tomatoes off the vine and popping them into their mouths, harvesting, processing, and reseeding manoomin (wild rice), preparing herbal tea daily for staff and students, and taking the ferry across to LaPointe elementary all come to mind. I also reflect on the role I play in making this programming available.

My name is Lindsay Larson and I am an AmeriCorps Farm to School Educator. I work with students K-12 and teach nutrition and gardening lessons with a focus on traditional foods. In my adulthood, I have focused most of my career in the realm of food and medicine: managing and tending numerous gardens and farms, working in food service, spending many years as a baker, and starting my own herbalism business. But, nothing has been quite so rewarding as encouraging food sovereignty to the youth of our community. Seeing a 5th grader inoculate shiitake mushroom logs or having a kindergartener ask me if they correctly identified milkweed makes it all worthwhile.

A majority of students in the district have a connection to the Red Cliff Nation, and with that, integrating Ojibwe culture into the curriculum is encouraged in every grade level and discipline. In elementary gitigaan (garden) lessons this looks like using Ojibwemowin to explain the life cycle of a plant and name vegetables, as well as sharing the story of the three sisters and how they grow together. Traditional plants are also cultivated in the gitigaan like gete-okosomin (old squash). There are also opportunities for harvesting and/or processing of traditional, wild foods like manoomin, ziinzibaakwadwaaboo (maple sap), giigoonh (fish), wazhashkwedoons (mushrooms), mawinzwaan (berries), waawaashkeshiwi (venison), and mashkiki (medicinal herbs). This education has the intention of food sovereignty first and foremost. Giving youth the space to practice traditional harvest and growing methods is an ongoing process, and as a non-native educator I'm looking forward to learning more so I can continue to teach culturally for the students.



*Braden Cadotte reseeds manoomin
at Raspberry Campground*

Again, as I sit here on the Solstice with chilly toes and a warm heart, I think about the Spring Equinox - direct seeding root veggies and herbs, the Summer Solstice - tending the garden, eager for students to return, and one year from today, reflecting on all that has been carried with students through this programming and beyond, helping them connect with themselves, the earth, and the living beings we share it with.