



Date: _____

Bison Unit: Lesson 5 - How to Cook Bison Brains

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Please read this Acknowledgement before the start of this lesson to respect the knowledge that is being shared and the Land of the People where the knowledge originates.:

We respectfully acknowledge the original lands of the Indigenous Peoples of Treaty 4: Cree, Saulteaux, Nakota, Dakota, Lakota and Treaty 6: Cree, Saulteaux, Dene, and Dakota whose knowledge inform this lesson. As well, we acknowledge the homeland to many winged, four-legged, crawling, and water creatures.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this lesson plan, students will be able to:

1. Define and demonstrate cooking terms and procedures (boil and simmer animal brains). (COM, TL) [Commercial Cooking 10, 20, 30 (4.5A)]
2. Understand how basic stocks are made. (TL) [Commercial Cooking 10, 20, 30 (5.2B)]
3. Understand meat composition, aging, cuts, and cooking methods. [Commercial Cooking 10, 20, 30 (10.1)]
4. Students will demonstrate what they learned by observing the videos.
5. Students will critique and re-iterate what the procedure is, what else can be added (as ingredients) to the mixture of brains and boiling.

LIST OF ACTIVITIES

1. Learning How to Boil and Cook Bison Brains

MATERIALS



Indigenous Ways of Knowing & Being

Origin

Buffalo People Arts Institute
Regina
Saskatchewan

Learning Level / Grade

12

Also: 10, 11, Youth (up to age
30), Post-Secondary



50 mins

Related Subjects

Biology, History, Indigenous
Language, On-the-Land,
Social Studies, Science

DESCRIPTION

This lesson plan involves the process of cooking bison brains. In Part 6 of the Buffalo Hide Tanning and Teachings Video series, the [Buffalo Peoples Art Institute](#) share how to brain a hide. This lesson will provide more information related to the overall technique in cooking and boiling brains used for softening a hide.

HOLISM AND ALL OUR RELATIONS

This lesson plan has been developed with an Indigenous lens that is holistic in nature, a way of being and knowing that acknowledges our relationships with 'all our relations', including plants and animals, other human beings, the water, land, wind, sun, moon, stars, and more - everything seen and unseen. With 'all our relations' in mind, this lesson plan has been developed with a focus on:

- Language and Culture
- Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders
- Relationship with family, ancestors
- Relationship with the land

TEACHERS' GUIDE

Background/Foundational Information

- **Subject:** Indigenous Studies 10/20/30 **Grades:** 10-12

Topic: Learning to tan the hide of a Plains Bison.

Essential Question: How did Indigenous Peoples accumulate the knowledge of bison hide tanning and the use of bison brains?

ACTIVITIES

1 - Learning How to Boil and Cook Bison Brains

Purpose

Students will learn the process of boiling bison brains for bison hide tanning.

Time: 20 mins

Activity Instructions

Motivational Set: Explain to students the importance of traditional knowledge and passing it on.

Creating functional hides for clothing and tipi making is a long and drawn out process. One important procedure is called 'braining the hide'. This is done by having brains of a bison or a moose ready for the braining. To prepare the brains for braining, one actually has to boil the brains and this is the most important step to tanning a hide.

This type of traditional knowledge would be shared through stories that Elders and knowledge holders would typically teach. For now, we will look at a variety of videos to learn and draw from to get a sense of how brains are boiled or cooked, and how they break down into a type of broth.

Main Procedures/Strategies:

1. Introduce the importance of learning traditions and knowledge from Elders and knowledge holders.
2. Ask students if anyone has ever been involved in traditional hide tanning and the boiling of brains?
3. Explain that you are going to show a couple videos that goes through the steps involved in boiling and cooking brains to tan a hide.
4. In *Buffalo Hide Tanning and Teachings – Part 6 – Braining a Buffalo Hide*, they boil and blend the brains. In the video called, *Brain Tanning – Tanning Leather*, they boil and mush down the brains. Both are methods work, but cooking by boiling is an essential component of breaking down the brains until they are soft and mushy or a thick broth.
5. Cooking time will vary, most likely between 20 - 45 minutes depending on the boiling and breaking down of brains. The cooking time will vary depending on cooking method and whether the cooking is happening on a fire or on a stove.
6. Once the brains are cooked and broken down, the next technique also varies. Sometimes soap, or fabric softener is added to the solution with water to the brains. To make the brains more mushy and broth-like, a blender can be used.
7. The 'braining of the hide' is now applying the solution to the hide. This is usually done three times over.
8. Soak the tanned hides with the brains for a length of time (in the video it is done over a couple nights).
9. After this stage is done, a scraping of the hide is needed again. Unfold the brained hide and scrape again while the hide is wet and soft. Careful attention is made not to make or tear any holes in the hide.
10. This procedure is done at least three times, also while wet the sewing of the hide is done in order to repair any holes or tears.
11. The hide is stretched out again and dried.
12. Smoking of the hide is the last procedure, which the NCCIE videos will show. *Buffalo Hide Tanning and Teachings – Part 7 – Smoking a Buffalo Hide*

Adaptations/Differentiation: *Have an expert come in and demonstrate how to tan hide or if possible, join a hide camp as an overnight field trip.*

Closing: Pass around hides for students to see and feel. Have them come up with a list of items that could be made out of the hide.

Prepare some questions you could ask an Elder or knowledge holder about braining and hide tanning. Gift the Elder with tobacco when requesting this knowledge. If it is not an option to experience this on the land, see if an Elder or knowledge holder can bring a hide to show students and explain how braining and hide tanning is done.

This activity is designed to connect with learners with these learning styles...

- Physical (e.g., Tactile, Experiential, Visual) Learners

... in the following ways:

This activity connects with *physical learners* because it involves watching, observing, and listening. Have students

make notes about the hide tanning process. Students can physically learn how to do this by boiling, cooking, and preparing bison brains.

Suggested Adaptations for Different Kinds of Learners

If students become physically sick in the learning of these methods they can watch the videos provided.

TEACHING NOTES

ASSESSMENT

This section contains information for assessing progress in students' learning. While Indigenous approaches to assessment may be highlighted, conventional assessment methods may also be discussed.

Formative Assessment - Request that students recall the bison brain cooking technique (Formative Assessment).

Summative Assessment - Ask students the following question:

1. What have students learned in regards to the most essential step to tanning hide?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Click the 'Link' to open and view videos.

To open and print files, please go to the 'files' folder accompanying this downloaded lesson plan.

Resource Title	Type
Brain Tanning - Tanning Leather	Link 
In this video they are cooking bison brains to soften a hide. At 28:00 minutes into the video they share about cooking, boiling, and breaking down the brains.	
Hide Tanning: The Woods Cree Way	Link 
<p>This video shows the 13 steps in tanning a hide and how to cook and boil the brains. The actual cooking is 7:38 minutes into the video.</p> <p>The 13 steps in point form are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Skinning 2. Soaking 3. Stretching 4. Fleshing 5. Scraping & thinning 6. Braining 7. First smoking 8. Second soaking 9. Softening on ring 10. Wringing out 11. Drying the hide 12. Softing & fluffing 13. Final smoking 	
Saskatchewan Archaeological Society	Link 
<p>Trappers and Traders Card Game – Saskatchewan Archaeological Society</p> <p>Contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone: 306-664-4124 • Website: www.thesas.ca • Email: general@thesas.ca • https://thesas.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Trappers-and-Traders-Teachers-Guide.pdf 	
Offally Good Cooking	Link 
This is a website dealing and sharing information in detail about how to cook brains, where to purchase brains of animal parts, preparing and poaching brains.	
Commercial Cooking Curriculum 10, 20, 30 (SK)	Link 
Buffalo Hide Tanning and Teachings – Part 6 – Braining a Buffalo Hide	Link 
In Part 6 of the series, the Buffalo People Arts Institute demonstrate how to prepare the buffalo hide for braining, how to brain the hide, and how to scrape a brained hide.	

Resource Title	Type
Buffalo Hide Tanning and Teachings – Part 7 – Smoking a Buffalo Hide	Link 
In Part 7 of the series, the Buffalo People Arts Institute smoke a buffalo hide.	

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Relationship with the land
Students will be out on the land while learning to tan hide. Students will learn the connection to the bison. Students will make cultural connections to the significance of bison, and have a deeply rooted relationship to the bison. Students will have an understanding of how much the buffalo was utilized in everything the First Nations and Métis needed, such as shelter, clothing, and food. Learning to cook on an open fire is also a process of connecting to the wood, and then watching, observing and being responsible for the boiling of the brains.
Language and Culture
N/A
Relationship with family, ancestors
N/A
Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders
Were Elders or Knowledge Holders involved in the development of this Lesson Plan? No Can Elders or Knowledge Holders be invited to help teach part of this lesson plan? Yes
Intergenerational learning with Elders/Knowledge Holders
Healthy relationship with self and identity
N/A

OTHER DETAILS

This Lesson Plan aims to meet curriculum expectations or outcomes for: Saskatchewan Yes

Unit Plan Title: Bison Unit: Lesson 5 of 5

Stream: General, Academic

RELATED LESSON PLANS

- [Bison Unit: Lesson 4 – Bison Hide Tanning \(Let’s observe the process\)](#)
- [Bison Unit: Lesson 3 – Bison Produce and Hunting Procedures](#)
- [Bison Unit: Lesson 2 – The Bison and Background Information](#)
- [Bison Unit: Lesson 1 – Connection and Interdependence Between Humans, Animals, and the Natural World](#)

CONTRIBUTORS

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QUESTIONS/MORE DETAILS

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