



Harvest of the Moon: Revitalizing traditional Menominee food knowledge and healthy eating habits in youth

The **Kemāmeceqtaq** (“We’re All Moving”) team of Extension Menominee County/Nation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, worked with language and culture keepers and community artists to create a unique curriculum anchored in Menominee knowledge of the 13 moons and their associated Indigenous food practices. Harvest of the Moon was created to strengthen connections to food through the integration of Menominee language, Menominee moons, Menominee art, and Indigenous recipes. Together, this offers a complex learning system, passed from one generation to the next, with solutions for a healthy and thriving community. The program materials include posters for all 13 moons with original art, traditional moon teachings, the food as named in Menominee and English, recipes, suggested activities for virtual or group learning, and a coloring book. Youth in the Menominee Nation are learning about and revitalizing traditional food practices to improve the future health of their community.

Public Health Challenge

Four in ten Menominee County/Nation residents live with obesity, reflective of a long history of systemic oppression of Indigenous peoples by white settler-colonists. This has limited economic opportunities, access to healthy foods, and places to be physically active. The Menominee Nation has experienced generations of disruptive and unhealthy food systems, oversaturating the community with flour, sugar, and other processed foods, and creating barriers to millenia-old, healthy foodways. Today, Tribal nations in rural areas, like the Menominee Nation, are some of the primary victims of food apartheid – the systemic destruction of access to healthy and traditional foods.

Approach

The Wisconsin Harvest of the Month program, under the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension, is a school-based program that encourages children and



families to eat more fruits and vegetables, reduce food waste, and support Wisconsin farmers and the local economy. The goals of this program resonated with the goals of the Kemāmeceqtaq team for Tribal children and families in the Menominee Nation and offered possibilities for creating a powerful, culturally-specific adaptation.

Starting in early 2020, the team engaged with Menominee language and culture keepers and local artists to adapt the Harvest of the Month concept for the Menominee community. A first significant adaptation was to shift from *months* to *moons*, as moons are a culturally important marker of time and seasonality. The team worked to outline a calendar with the corresponding moon names in Menominee and with English translation, for example, *Pakwan-kēsoq* or “Budding Moon” for the May moon.

Knowledge keepers worked with the team to identify traditional Menominee foods related to the gathering, hunting, or fishing practices of each moon, like spruce tips in the early spring and wild rice in the late summer. The

curriculum names these foods in the Menominee language (e.g., *piakemenan* or “cranberries”) and includes recipes and learning activities that highlight the food and the season. For each moon, the curriculum is rounded out with Menominee moon teachings, songs, stories, pictures, advice, and original art of bandolier bags from a talented Menominee graphic designer, Daniel Grignon. Virtual learning activities and an accompanying coloring book extend learning opportunities further.

The [Harvest of the Moon](#) website offers the curriculum for download to any interested educator or community member.



Kāwāhtek Kēskekaen or spruce tips as featured on the *Wanāēw Kēsoq* (March moon) page

Results

To date, 118 total copies of the Harvest of the Moon curriculum materials have been downloaded online and 106 printed copies of the Harvest of the Moon distributed locally, along with 392 Harvest of the Moon coloring books. Educators, community leaders, and others have used the curriculum for a wide variety of purposes including school-based and community-based lessons, for planting and harvesting seasonal foods, for decolonized menu planning for elder meal sites, and to support language and culture reconnection.

In 2023, the Kemānceqtaq team surveyed recipients of the Harvest of the Moon materials, in virtual and hard copy forms. Respondents shared how they have used the materials, offered ideas for additions and improvements to the curriculum, and identified the benefits and values they saw in Harvest of the Moon. Respondents:

- Emphasized the value of culturally-grounded nutrition information and awareness of healthy, seasonal and traditional eating options
- Reported enjoyment among students in the hands-on learning activities

- Recognized impact from Harvest of the Moon for reconnecting and strengthening Menominee language, culture, and foods and promoting food sovereignty
- Reported sharing knowledge from the Harvest of the Moon with family, friends, students, colleagues, and community members

Sustaining Success

The Kemānceqtaq team is nearing finalization of a new version of the Harvest of the Moon curriculum with additional foods, recipes, language and cultural learnings for each of the 13 Menominee moons. The team will continue to provide Harvest of the Moon materials to community members and learning spaces, including Head Start, daycare centers, and elder meal sites. The team is collaborating with the local farmers’ market, food retailers, and others to increase access to healthy foods highlighted by the curriculum and to support a strengthened food system for traditional foods.

Quote

“Very important and beautiful knowledge and sharing with each generation to come. [Harvest of the Moon] must be shared and never forgotten.”

- Menominee Community Member

For more information, visit:

The *Harvest of the Moon* webpage:

<https://healthyliving.extension.wisc.edu/programs/harvest-of-the-moon/>

The Kemānceqtaq project webpage:

<https://menominee.extension.wisc.edu/kemamaceqtaq-were-all-moving/>

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Contact Information

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