

Food and Immigration Conceptual Plan

February 21, 2024



DI2019.105.5 Photograph of food on a table during Ramadan, 2017

1. Exhibition Topic Rationale

The topic of food has ranked highly in our multi-year survey, showing that it is a topic of interest to a wide audience. This topic also presents many opportunities to capture the highs and lows of Canadian immigration history. It is very relatable and lends itself well to opportunities for our audience to share their food experiences with us. This exhibit can serve to develop new relationships and partnerships with experts and community groups across Canada. There are many parts of our collection that reflect this topic and it has strong potential to interest hosts in its traveling form.

2. Goals

What does the project want to accomplish for the organization?

- Attract a large audience to the Museum.
- Secure hosts for a fully booked tour including new and high profile locations across Canada.
- Raise our profile by showing that the Museum is a leader in content and presentation.
- Showcase and promote diversity in the Museum collection.
- Create new opportunities for community engagement.

3. Audience

This exhibition will be of interest to our current high-season audience (out-of-province tourists, retirees, families with older children). There is a strong potential for new audiences based on the successes of food-related public programming. These include families with younger children, newcomers, and 18-35 year-olds.

Food is of interest to our established hosts, small and large, and their reading of their audiences. It has the potential to attract audiences at new and high profile locations across Canada.

4. Interpretive Theme Statement

Canada's food is as diverse as its peoples. Much of what we eat, and how we eat it, is shaped by the adaptability, challenges and impacts of immigrant communities in Canada.

5. Themes and sub-themes:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) EAT: Hunger and the need to eat is a driving force in people's decision to migrate to Canada. The first meal in Canada is often a pivotal experience in an immigrant's first impression of their new country.
 - 2.1 - First Taste of Canada:
 - 2.2 - Hunger and Hope:
- 3) MAKE: Hundreds of years of immigration history have shaped the way that much of our food is made in Canada. From the kitchen to the field to the factory, food industries depend on immigrant labour and creativity.
 - 3.1 - Food Remixed
 - 3.2 - Business of Food
- 4) SHARE: Whether it is at a public food festival or at the dining room table, the act of sharing a meal is a way to connect and celebrate cultural identities in Canada.
 - 4.1 - Sharing Culture through Food
 - 4.2 - Food as Memory

5) Conclusion

6. Cross Themes:

- Indigenous perspectives and examples.
- Personal stories that reflect larger group experiences: First-person narratives about food offer powerful ways to illustrate larger issues and processes.
- Diversity of representation.

7. Interpretive techniques and approaches

- Humour
- Myth busting
- Accessible approaches
- Innovative uses of Oral History
- Immersive environments
- Visitor generated content
- Tangible props
- Opportunities for visitors to be creative
- Sensory experiences (smell or taste)

8. Visitor Outcomes – Think, Feel, Do.

After leaving the exhibit, we want visitors to...

Think about...

- how immigration shapes how we eat in Canada.
- how Indigenous food practices have influenced the way Canadians eat.
- the differences and similarities between cultural food traditions.
- reactions to different food traditions.
- how food is a way to keep culture alive through generations.
- where food comes from and the work and sacrifices it took to get to our plates.
- how there is no defined Canadian cuisine; it is diverse and ever-changing.

Feel...

- hungry
- nostalgic/ longing
- represented
- empathetic
- surprised
- respectful
- curious

Do...

- be inspired to try new food
- rediscover family food traditions
- share their food experiences with friends, family and community.
- contribute to food security in their community (food bank/community garden)
- support a local food business

8. Scope:

- Geography: Focused on food experiences in Canada.
- Time period: Historical examples, mainly 19-20th centuries, through the lens of contemporary experiences.

- Content: Connected to Canadian immigration.

Conceptual Plan - Canada's Global Kitchen (*placeholder title)

1. Introduction

Interpretive Theme Statement: Canada's food is as diverse as its people. The way we eat is shaped by over 400 years of immigration and relationship building between First Peoples, settlers, and newcomers.

Key messages:

- The adaptability, challenges and impacts of immigrant communities in Canada have shaped much of how we eat.
- Food traditions are often the first thing you share with others and the last element of your culture that you hold on to.
- Immigration can sometimes divide people, but food can bring us together.
- We eat, cook and grow on Indigenous lands
- Food in Canada has been shaped by relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Emotions: Excited, respectful, hungry, nostalgic, connected.

Potential Resources:

- Large, exciting, colourful images.



DI2014.616.1 Photograph of the Bogie family dining on board the SS Georgic, March 1952

2. Eat (the sequence of sections Eat – Make - Share may be changed or be non-linear)

Interpretive Theme Statement: Food is essential for survival and adaptation - much of what we eat is dependant on both availability and cultural identity.

Key messages:

- The first meal in Canada is often a pivotal experience in an immigrant's first impression.
- People have come to Canada because of a lack of food and the promise of abundance.
- The arrival of immigrants and colonists have profoundly impacted the way Indigenous peoples eat.
- Indigenous Peoples had rich food practices prior to settler contact and Indigenous Peoples continue to share a collective identity through food.

Subthemes:

- First Taste of Canada
- Hunger and hope

Emotions: Empathy, nostalgia, surprise, excited to engage.

Potential Resources:

- WHO bracelet of life
- Infographics: Hunger hot spot <https://www.wfp.org/publications/hunger-hotspots-fao-wfp-early-warnings-acute-food-insecurity-june-november-2023>
- Countless Journeys Podcast, season 4: Food (Mohyeddins' Mission, Saul Reichert's "Share an Egg" story)
- A Ten Year Study by the Assembly of First Nations on Food security currently for Indigenous peoples in Canada:
https://www.fnfnes.ca/docs/FNFNES_draft_technical_report_Nov_2_2019.pdf
- Canada's food guide history: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canada-food-guide/about/history-food-guide.html>

Potential key stories:

- Oral histories and written story accounts of first food impressions (e.g. "Bananas!" or "How many eggs?")
- Pier 21 food smuggling stories and reasons for confiscation
- Irish potato Famine – a historically large movement of people based on hunger and offers an example of a so-called European food with Indigenous roots.
- European and American settlement of Western Canada – the promise of abundance
- Postwar immigrants, displaced persons and Holocaust survivors – escape from rationing and wartime starvation
- Example of pre-European Indigenous food practice that was greatly affected by the arrival of colonists – the prairie Bison.

3. Make

Interpretive Theme Statement: Hundreds of years of immigration history have shaped the way that much of our food is made and produced in Canada.

Key messages:

- Immigrants bring rich food cultures to Canada, which often evolve based on new ingredients, tools and circumstances.
- Many classic Canadian dishes are the results of culinary adaptations.
- From the kitchen to the field to the factory, food industries depend on, and has at times exploited, the creativity and labour of migrants and immigrants.
- The food service industry provides economic opportunities for immigrants as well as a way to build community.
- Indigenous food has adapted and changed with the arrival of settlers and immigrants.

Subthemes:

- Food remixed
- The business of food

Emotions: Surprised, curious, creative, reflective, connected, pride.

Potential Resources:

- Oral histories (Neepawa examples)
- Artifacts (tools)
- Chinese pancakes cooling tool
- Historical maps showing immigrant-run restaurants
- *HMCS Uganda* baker photo
- Popular hybrid foods
- Chef Andrew George cited Tea Creek Farm: <https://www.teacreek.ca/>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/flying-dust-riverside-market-2017-1.3973336>
- <https://www.producer.com/news/first-nation-establishes-market-garden/>
- [Ontario okra grower](#)



Glenbow Archives Poster - 26

Potential key stories:

- People bringing in specific tools to cook their food in Canada (Cheese moulds, wine press, Kibbeh rocks).
- The Indigenous origins of maple syrup and its evolution to an industry.
- Popular hybrid dishes (Bannock, pasta-making, Montreal-style bagels, Jamaican patties, donairs, pierogis, and kibbeh).
- Chinese restaurants in small towns – symbols of rural multiculturalism through economic necessity.
- Kensington market – a world of food in downtown Toronto.
- Seasonal agricultural workers – Filipinos in processing plants in Manitoba and PEI.
- Community gardens as a source for ingredients from other countries and food security (African garden in Dartmouth, Immigrant-focused garden in Montreal, Indigenous-focused garden in BC and Saskatchewan)



Library and Archives Canada, a148758

- Who cooks in your house? – an exploration of gender roles in our visitor's kitchens.

4. Share

Interpretive Theme Statement: The act of sharing a meal or recipe is a way to connect, recreate and celebrate cultural identities in Canada.

Key messages:

- Sharing food is an important part of maintaining links to one's place of origin.
- Your memories are strongly linked to smell and taste. When we eat, we remember – the passing down of food traditions can keep memory alive.
- Sharing a meal can set the table for curiosity and openness to learning about new cultures and traditions.
- Not all food traditions are passed on and some may mourn that loss.
- Food traditions are sometimes the last cultural vestiges of family heritage.
- Indigenous peoples have shared food knowledge with settlers for generations, keeping them alive in early settlement and contributing to the rich food culture we share today.
- Indigenous Peoples are revitalizing food practices for future generations. This revitalization connects to land, environment, the health of people and ecosystems.

Subthemes:

- Sharing culture through food
- Food as memory

Emotions: nostalgic, curious, connected, open, generous, respectful, hungry, sad for what is lost, bittersweet, joy.

Potential Resources:

- Cookbooks (Lela Umedaly's book of Indian-African-Canadian recipes – connected to her daughter, Umeeda Switlo's OH)
- Edith Gluck's recipe book <https://museeholocauste.ca/en/objects/edith-glucks-recipe-booklet/>
- Overview of Canadian food festivals: <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2015/nov/28/canada-best-food-festivals-foodie-experiences>
- Canada's food guide about the importance of sharing meals: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/eat-meals-others/>
- Niqitsiat (Healthy Food), a cooking hosted by Inuk cook Rebecca Veevee, Niqitsiat showcased Inuit food, such as muskox, caribou, seal and arctic char.
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/country-food-inuit-food-in-canada>

Potential key stories:

- Featured foods that share cultural memory (Pho, Réveillon, Zweiback, Jerk chicken, Montreal-style smoked meat, Inuit example)
- Oral histories and written story accounts of food traditions that were lost or nearly lost (Senna and Bread root, Sauerkraut).

- Food/Cultural festivals and feasts across Canada – sharing the joy and satisfying curiosity for different food traditions at events like Oktoberfest in Kitchener-Waterloo, Lebanese festival in Halifax, Taste of the Caribbean Festival in Montreal, Taste of the Danforth, and an example of an Indigenous feasts (possible idea to have a panel representing food festivals in each province so hosts can have content from their province).
- Indigenous people shared important food practices that kept settlers alive: spruce beer, smoking and drying techniques, pemmican.



Taste of the Caribbean Festival - Friday, 27

5. Conclusion

Interpretive Theme Statement: Canada’s food is as diverse as its peoples. Much of what we eat, and how we eat it, is shaped by the adaptability, challenges and impact of immigrant communities in Canada.

Key messages:

- Food connects people to the past, to place, and to other people.
- We eat what we are –our food choices reflect who we are as individuals, families and social groups.
- What is Canadian food anyways? An open ended question for visitors to consider and share their responses.

Emotions: Hungry, curious, fulfilled, reflective, inspired to try new food, document old recipes, think of where their food comes from.

Potential Resources:

- Takeaway activity
- Quotes relating to defining “Canadian” food from a range of perspectives.



CMIP Internal photo, Winter potluck 2017