

Throughout my childhood my parent's cultural values have largely contributed and influenced my lifestyle today. When my parents were growing up in their small country village in Cyprus, they always grew their own fruit and vegetable and farmed animals for food. As a result of this my parents have become highly resourceful and have brought this knowledge with them to Australia. For as long as I can remember we have always had a vegetable garden and fruit trees at home. Some of these include tomatoes, cucumber, beans, egg plant, Turkish yams (kolakas), figs, lemons and olives.



The photo on the top left is of our vegetable garden. At the moment it does not have much in it because it is winter. Currently we have chillies, onions and herbs.

The photo above is of our extremely overgrown lemon tree. Lucky for us lemons are used throughout Turkish cooking.

The photo on the left is of our fig tree. My grandfather planted this tree about fifteen years ago before he passed away.

My parent's value culture more than anything and have always raised my sister and I with cultural knowledge. As a young girl I remember helping my dad plant seeds and bulbs in the vegetable garden. I found great enjoyment in watching my vegetables grow and then being able to use them to prepare meals. My mum has always been very dominant in the kitchen and often insisted that I observe rather than cook. She always explained processes and taught me skills but never gave me the opportunity to cook independently. Even today, although I am an adult she still has to be a part of the cooking that takes place in our house. This is probably contributed by the fact that traditionally in the Turkish culture the men would provide for the family (hunting, money etc) and the women had control of the kitchen. Similarly in the traditional Indigenous culture it was the men who were responsible for hunting (large animals) and the women who were responsible for gathering staple foods and preparing meals. (Flood, 2006)

In our home meal times symbolise family time as food is regarded as an important aspect of our culture. "Our culture includes our whole system of beliefs, values, attitudes, customs and institutions. It shapes our gender, race and other social relations, and affects the way we perceive ourselves and the world and how we interact with other people and the rest of nature.... it has a central place in the complex notion of sustainability - and whatever form the future takes..." (United Nation of Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation, [UNESCO] 2005)


Cultural awareness has not only become important for me and my sister but also for our friends who visit. My parents often invite my friends into our home and encourage them to try Turkish food and to pronounce Turkish words. I have never felt embarrassed by this actually it has been the opposite. I feel proud to be able to identify with a background. We have history and traditions that have been passed down from one generation to another.




For the purpose of this assignment I prepared Kolakas (Turkish yams) because we have grown it in our garden for a few years and always enjoy preparing meals with it.



The photos above are of the Kolakas plants in my garden. The bulbs are under ground and dug up when ready to be used in cooking.

The preparation and cooking instructions are as follows:

Ingredients	Method
Two small Turkish yams (kolakas)	Peel and cut into small cubes. 

<p>Whole chicken</p>	<p>Wash and cut into small portions.</p> 
<p>Olive oil</p>	<p>Place chicken into pressure cooker and add olive oil. Fry until chicken is golden brown.</p> 
<p>Turkish yams</p>	<p>Once chicken has browned add Turkish yams. Stir.</p>
<p>Tomato paste</p>	<p>Add one heaped tablespoon of tomato paste and continue stirring.</p>
<p>One small Lemon</p>	<p>Add the juice of one small lemon and stir.</p>
<p>Salt</p>	<p>Sprinkle salt to taste.</p>
<p>Water</p> 	<p>Add enough water to cover all the ingredients in the pressure cooker. Place the lid on and cook for 15 minutes. Remove the lid and allow to simmer for a further 10 minutes.</p>

Rice	Serve with rice.
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I prepared this meal with Rebecca and together we were able to appreciate the delicious outcome. Due to my parents being overseas we ate the meal on our own. It was a strange experience cooking independently without my mum lending a hand. Overall it was a successful process and gave me a different perspective of meal preparation as I was able to compare it with traditional methods.

Although the Turkish yams and lemons were fresh from my garden all the other ingredients were purchased from the supermarket. I believe that in society today we take for granted how easy it is to access food, drinks and daily needs. For generations Indigenous people have lived with and from the land and have developed extensive knowledge on how to live sustainably. European settlement has disrupted this way of living and as result “there is a grave risk that much indigenous knowledge is being lost and, along with it, valuable knowledge about ways of living sustainably.” (UNESCO, 2005) European settlers brought with them many habits that hindered the Indigenous way

of life. One of which was food. “Almost every confrontation in the early years was about food” (Flood, 2006, p36) In the Indigenous communities animals such as fish and kangaroos, that were staple foods became scarce and as a result it became difficult for Indigenous people to find food. The indigenous people understood the importance of sustaining the food chain and only killed what they needed. European settlers did not appreciate (or understand) this balance and took far more than they needed. Soon enough overfishing and over killing land animals became a problem.

Sustainability is an issue that must be considered today more than ever. Langton and Ma Rhea (2003) draw attention to the growing Western interest in traditional knowledge because of its potential contribution to global ecological sustainability and to minimise the West’s pre-occupation with materialism. (Wilson, 2004) Sustainability can and should be introduced to students and can be reflected upon by talking about how Indigenous people were sustainable. It can be incorporated into the curriculum and implemented through a variety of teaching and learning strategies. Some of these strategies include:

- Experiential learning: learning is based on the way we process our experiences and our critical reflections on our experiences.
- Storytelling: stories are useful in engaging students while they learn important concepts, attitudes and skills.

- Values: the values and attitudes an individual possess affect the way we relate to other people and to all our activities in the environment.
- Enquiry learning: is a learner-centred approach that emphasises higher order thinking skills. It includes: problem solving, discovery and creative activities.

(UNESCO, 2005)

Implementing Indigenous traditions and knowledge in education systems can be a complex process and must be discussed in order for an appropriate balance to be met. It has been suggested by Langton and Ma Rhea (2003) that collaborative learning partnerships could be formed between local communities and mainstream curriculum managers to develop a framework to aim to solve this complex problem. The following are some strategies for people in leadership positions to work together in solving this problem.

- An agreement that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge should be a part in a Western science and technology curriculum.
- Both sets of associates have a clear understanding of their duties and rights in regards to including traditional knowledge in the curriculum.
- The value of Indigenous knowledge being acknowledged as important and worthy.
- The local knowledge that is included is accepted by knowledgeable Indigenous leaders and by Western experts, and is documented accurately.

- The rights and property of Indigenous people is recognised.

(Wilson, 2004)

Teachers also play a major role in implementing Indigenous knowledge into classrooms. The most important aspect to consider as educators is that we must aim to find a balance that respects and highlights all the diversity in our classrooms. We can do this by inviting families to be a part of the curriculum and by studying different areas of their culture that represent what is important to families.

During my teaching experiences if I had students in my class who were of an Indigenous background I would endeavour to provide as many opportunities as possible to provide a classroom environment that reflects Indigenous culture and diversity. I would do this by developing enriching lessons that would suit the needs of all my students. In particular when considering the needs of Indigenous students in my class I would consider the following when program planning.

- Language: Many years ago “without written language, Indigenous people relied on oral transmission to perpetuate culture.” (Flood, 2006, p140) As a result of this teachers must appreciate that it may be difficult for Indigenous students to learn as we predominantly do in society today, that is relying greatly on reading and writing. In certain circumstances students may not be able to receive help from

parents and grandparents who are not familiar with these learning styles. More importantly we must further consider that although in most cases while it may not be difficult for Indigenous students to learn as we do in society today, we must still aim to provide opportunities where students can identify with learning styles that compliment their traditional backgrounds. This is so that students are given the opportunity to value their traditional backgrounds. I would incorporate oral learning methods such as storytelling and home/school sharing. Home/ school sharing involves inviting students and their families to actively participate in the school curriculum. It is important for families to be a part of this process so that they can encourage their children to participate and so that they will be able to assist the teacher in their role. “Education needs to be exciting, and culturally engaging to encourage parental and community interest...” (Pearson, No date, [ND] p2) This then leads me to consider my initial reason for selecting this subject. I felt uneducated in catering for the needs of students with an Indigenous background and did not have any strategies for making connections with families. Through my readings and research I have developed new understandings that have been able to guide my teaching in this area.

- Learning styles: all students should be encouraged to actively participate in activities using a variety of learning styles. Traditionally Indigenous knowledge has been passed from one generation to the next through traditional education,

with adults teaching children practical knowledge of culture, environment and survival skills and techniques, through demonstrations and through a wide range of ceremonies, stories, songs, village meetings and taboos. (UNESCO, 2005) These aspects should be considered when program planning and opportunities should be given for students to learn in this way. For example Indigenous community leaders could be invited into the classroom to share and implement skills and techniques. They could explore the importance of these skills with students and make links to traditional methods. It is important for community members to become involved in this process so that students and teachers can make cultural connections with the real world.

It is not only important for these teaching and learning strategies to be provided for Indigenous students but for all students in the classroom. During my placement with a grade six class I was surprised to find how little the students in my class knew about Indigenous culture. During our topic on Melbourne history and early settlement very few students were knowledgeable in this area. Although initially surprised it soon occurred to me how this may be a result of teachers having little knowledge themselves in this area and therefore this has resulted in the information not being transferred to students. As educators it is our responsibility to preserve and maintain Indigenous knowledge. We have the important role in ensuring that the Indigenous culture and traditions stay alive for our future generations.

This subject has given me an insight into the value of maintaining Indigenous knowledge and has provided opportunities for me to develop the skills to plan and implement these skills into a classroom environment.

Overall I believe that all students have the right to feel safe in their school environment, where their culture is respected by teachers and students. Respect can be shown in many ways but most importantly it can be shown by actively participating, developing knowledge and implementing teaching and learning strategies.

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