



## Introducing Corn-Teacher Handout

- Have students close their eyes and picture a cob of corn. Next, have students describe what they were picturing. Following this, project (or share) the images below to the students and ask them how many were picturing something similar.



- Explain to students that while this is what we typically think of when we think of corn (because this is the variety of corn widely sold and enjoyed locally) this is not what corn in this region has always looked like. In other words, corn like many other foods has been colonized. Corn originally arrived in North America from Mexico. Yellow corn



varieties often referred to as “dent” corn developed by early colonizers who cross breed different corn varieties to develop a sweet and easily digestible variety of corn.

- Indigenous or heirloom varieties of corn have tremendous variety. For instance, Flint corn as depicted below comes in many different colour variations.



- The variety of corn that Haudenosaunee confederacy planted locally is referred to as Iroquois White Corn. This heirloom seed dates back to 1,400 years ago.





- Traditionally (and for many community members today) every part of the corn was/is utilized. White corn kernels have a hard outer shell and are filled with a powder that can be ground into flour. To learn more about traditional grinding practices look at Learning Activity 5- *Food Production: The Grinding Stone* in the Tools Learning Bundle. Husks can also be braided and woven into cornhusk baskets and dolls.
- White corn was grown with the greatest abundance in the 1700s, however, it was targeted by European settlers who recognized that damaging corn would be more detrimental to the Haudenosaunee than burning down villages. For instance, villages can be immediately rebuilt while it takes years for corn fields and their crop yield to be restored. For this reason, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans intentionally burned 500,000 bushels of Haudenosaunee corn.
- This attack was historically significant as it prompted Haudenosaunee community leader, Handsome Lake, to have a vision that prompted him to make a promise to the corn. He pledged for the community to take care of corn in the same manner they would care for their babies.
- Inspired by the vision of Handsome Lake, today many community members are looking to corn as a means of reconnecting to culture through Indigenous resurgence. For instance, the name in many Haudenosaunee languages for corn translates into “it sustains us” or “our life”. Resurgence movements across the Haudenosaunee confederacy are growing traditional varieties of corn in both large-scale food sovereignty initiatives and personal home gardens.
- It is recognized that in the same manner that Manoomin informs Anishinaabe culture and life ways, seeds underpin the collective identity of the Haudenosaunee. For instance, Mary Arquette from Akwesasne First Nation states:

*“Keeping our language and our seeds alive is important because without them we no longer exist as a people. Without them, we are not able to communicate with the Creator or with other species on the planet. It’s the way we pick medicine. It’s the way we live.”*

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