

Pauquachin Hosts Pitcook and Celebratory Feast

On Saturday October 27th, 60 UVic Ethnoecology students were invited to participate in a traditional pitcook with the Pauquachin and Songhees Nations.



This event was one of a series of feasts held to celebrate traditional food and to raise awareness about the importance of whole natural foods in a healthy diet. Elders, like Joan Morris, are taking a leadership role in promoting healthy eating as a means to prevent and control diabetes.



Representatives from the Songhees welcomed us to the Pauquachin territory and gave their blessing to the pitcook.

A pitcook is a traditional way to steam food. First a pit is dug. Ours was about 5ft by 5ft and 2ft deep, large enough to cook for 200 people. We lit a hot fire inside which heated up about 100 dense, fist-sized rocks to the point of glowing.



A thick pole is placed in the middle of the pit to create a channel for the water. Layers are piled around the pole: salal, thimbleberry, food, thimbleberry, salal.



Then the pole is pulled out and water is poured down the channel. The steam is contained by two layers of burlap, and a thick covering of soil.



The veggies were left for three hours to steam. No steam escaped but the ground was warm to the touch, and the air was scented with the warm woodsy scent of steaming salal.

Meanwhile in the kitchen and beside the pit, the rest of the feast was being cooked: crab, halibut, salmon chowder and bannock.





A great day of feasting and sharing was enjoyed by all. Many thanks to our hosts and organizers of the event!

