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# IN THIS ISSUE

## EDITORIAL

*Canadian Food Studies evolves*
Ellen Desjardins, Wesley Tourangeau

## RESEARCH ARTICLES

*Culinary tourism on Cape Breton Island*
Erna MacLeod

*Supply management and the business activities of Ontario meat processors*
Rita Hansen Sterne, Erna van Duren

*Honouring the grandmothers through (re)membering, (re)learning, and (re)vitalizing Métis traditional foods and protocols*
Monica Cyr, Joyce Slater

*Nimíciwinán, nipimátisiwinán – "Our food is our way of life": On-Reserve First Nation perspectives on community food security and sovereignty through oral history in Fisher River Cree Nation, Manitoba*
Shailesh Shukla, Jazmin Alfaro, Carol Cochrane, Cindy Garson, Gerald Mason, Jason Dyck, Brielle Beudin-Reimer, Janna Barkman

*Food Network's food-career frenzy? An examination of students' motivations to attend culinary school*
Ryan Whibbs, Mark Holmes

*Farm safety: A prerequisite for sustainable food production in Newfoundland and Labrador*
Lesley Butler, Ewa M. Dabrowska, Barbara Neis

*The role of alcohol in Canadian family food practices: Commensality, identity, and everyday tastes*
Brent Hammer, Helen Vallianatos

## BOOK/ART/EVENT REVIEWS

*The Eating Instinct: Food Culture, Body Image, and Guilt in America by Virginia Sole-Smith*
Meredith Bessey

*Concentration and Power in the Food System: Who Controls What We Eat? by Philip H. Howard*
Chloé Poitevin-DesRivières

*A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat by Eric Holt-Giménez*
Jennifer Sumner

泰国美食
观音斋
Sombat Thai Food
觀音齋 Kwan Im Vegetarian
Localmotive Farm

This issue showcases insights into culinary tourism and culinary school, consumption behaviour patterns, and agricultural/farm issues (farm safety and supply management). Two articles feature valuable perspective son food and food sovereignty from Métis grandmothers and Cree Elders. The emphasis on qualitative and investigative research illustrates a respect for studies that delve into deeper layers of understanding about food-related topics. The reviews recommend books that have documented examples of political-economic dominance in the food system and how this hegemony continues to influence the foods made available to us and even to the way many of us feel about food.

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Canadian Food Studies La Revue canadienne des études sur l'alimentation

Editorial

# *Canadian Food Studies* evolves

Ellen Desjardins and Wesley Tourangeau

> *The feast continues, not just among academic faculty and students, but shared with health professionals, artists, teachers, farmers, fishers, environmentalists, chefs, and colleagues from NGOs, food networks and policy councils. Collectively, these actors form the voices and visuals of the Canadian foodscape. The purpose of our journal is to offer a professional, academic forum for the astonishing breadth and depth of material that they can produce.*
>
> *- Editorial, Volume 1, Issue 1*[1]

The vision for *Canadian Food Studies/ La Revue canadienne des études sur l'alimentation* has remained steadfast over the past six years, with 13 issues of high-quality publications from across the Canadian foodscape, including audiovisual pieces, commentaries, perspectives, field reports, and original research articles. During this time, the journal has become a core element of the Canadian Association for Food Studies. Interest in the journal continues to grow, and the journal itself continues to evolve.

The current issue is no different in its diversity and breadth. It showcases insights into culinary tourism and culinary school, consumption behaviour patterns, and agricultural/farm issues (farm safety and supply management). Two articles feature valuable perspectives on food and food sovereignty from Métis grandmothers and Cree Elders. The emphasis on qualitative and investigative research illustrates a respect for studies that delve into deeper layers of understanding about food-related topics. The reviews recommend books that have documented

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[1] Desjardins, E. (2014). Voices and visuals from the Canadian foodscape. *Canadian Food Studies/La Revue canadienne des études sur l'alimentation*, 1(1), 1-3. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.15353/cfs-rcea.v1i1.43

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examples of political-economic dominance in the food system and how this hegemony continues to influence the foods made available to us and even to the way many of us feel about food.

This will be the last issue for which Wesley and I have served as Managing and Associate Editor and Editor-in-Chief, respectively. As two of the founding editorial members, we were part of the original team that created the journal's aims and scope, developed the bilingual journal structure, and inaugurated the first issue in May 2014. We are grateful to our fellow editors and colleagues with whom we have worked closely over the years. At this stage of the journal's evolution, we think of it as repotting a cherished plant—a necessary change for the journal to grow and realize its full potential.

Having recently secured three years of funding from SSHRC (the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada), the editorial team and the CAFS journal governance committee have begun to implement a new governance structure, and a larger team of associate editors will be invited to join this new *editorial collective*. The intention is to make changes that promote a sustainable future for the journal, and to continue the ambition of attracting valued contributions from a wide variety of disciplines, voices, and perspectives.

The editorial team appreciates their continued collaboration with the CAFS Journal Governance Committee: Charles Levkoe, Jennifer Brady, Susan Aitken, and Marit Rosol. We also thank the University of Waterloo for providing our OJS online platform, plus essential library staff support. Importantly, we wish to thank SSHRC for funding *Canadian Food Studies*, starting in March 2019.

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Canadian Food Studies
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Original Research Article

# Culinary tourism on Cape Breton Island

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## Abstract

Cape Breton Island is a well-known North American tourism destination with long-standing attractions such as the Cabot Trail and more recently developed world-class offerings such as the Cabot Links Golf Course. Tourism contributes significantly to Cape Breton's economy, particularly since the mid-20th century as traditional resource-based industries have declined. In the 21st century, culinary tourism has become increasingly important to expand the island's tourism offerings and to provide "authentic" tourism experiences. This study examines local-food tourism in Cape Breton to illuminate its cultural and economic significance. I conducted interviews with food producers, restaurateurs, government representatives, and tourism executives. I also consulted websites and policy documents and compared local stakeholders' experiences and perspectives with official tourism strategies. Promoting culinary tourism raises questions of power, autonomy, inclusion, and accountability. My study accentuates possibilities for aligning economic and ecological goals to create resilient communities, foster equitable social and ecological relations, and establish Cape Breton as a culinary tourism destination.

Keywords: culinary tourism, ecological food, Cape Breton, sustainable communities, local economies

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## Introduction

Cape Breton Island is a well-known North American tourism destination with long-standing attractions such as the Cabot Trail (established 1932), Cape Breton Highlands National Park (established 1936), and Fortress Louisbourg National Historic Site[1]; more recently developed world-class offerings include Celtic Colours Music Festival (established 2007) and Cabot Links Golf Course (established 2011). Tourism contributes significantly to Cape Breton's economy, particularly as traditional resource-based industries such as cod fishing, coal mining, forestry, and steel- making have declined since the mid-20th century, exacerbating unemployment and outmigration across the island. Cape Breton's history of economic challenges is an essential factor in the region's reliance on tourism as an income generating and economic development strategy. Regional tourism promotion also is part of broader, national efforts to brand Canada as a world-class tourism destination.[2]

Culinary tourism, in particular, has become a significant focus of efforts to expand Cape Breton's tourism offerings (ICON, 2015, p. 2), a development that reflects global trends to advance ecological food practices and provide "authentic" touristic experiences. Yet, in contrast to regions such as British Columbia, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island that have linked varied food experiences to create a recognizable brand, Cape Breton has been unsuccessful to date in integrating its culinary offerings to promote the island as a culinary destination, and most visitors happen upon local food events rather than choosing the island for its distinctive culinary offerings. Food practices in Cape Breton also have received little scholarly attention.

"Ecological food" refers to foods produced in small-scale operations using traditional practices such as raised bed planting and crop rotation, natural forms of animal feeding such as free range and pasturing, and nonchemical methods of soil enhancement and pest control such as mulching and companion planting (Magdoff, 2007).[3] The term distinguishes fresh, locally produced, and environmentally sustainable foods from those produced through conventional methods within the industrial food system (Seed and Rocha, 2017). Additionally, "ecological" represents a broader category than "organic" and includes foods produced using ecological methods that do not have organic certification (Magdoff, 2007). "Local" food, however, is not necessarily ecological because foods grown in a given region can be conventionally produced. In Cape Breton, all farms are relatively small-scale and incorporate some traditional techniques such as pasturing but commodity producers also rely on conventional agricultural products such as chemical fertilizers and commercial feed.

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[1] The Canadian federal government designated French colonial Louisbourg a national historic site in 1928 and began reconstructing approximately one-quarter of the 18th-century town and fortifications in 1961.

[2] The Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) hosted a series of regional Round Table Discussions from October 1999 to May 2001 in St. John's NL, Charlottetown PEI, Vancouver BC, Niagara Falls ON, Saskatoon SK, Winnipeg MB, Edmonton AB, and Montreal QC. These sessions brought together key individuals from the culinary and tourism sector to explore possibilities for establishing Canada as a tourism destination. In June, 2001, Halifax hosted the "National Tourism and Cuisine Forum" and the CTC released its culinary tourism development strategy, "Acquiring a taste for cuisine tourism" in 2002 (Deneault 2002). In a 2006 study of culinary tourism marketing in Canada, Hashimoto and Tefler suggest that cultural diversity and regional product availability complicate efforts to market Canada as a culinary tourism destination but argue that celebrating diversity, embracing global culinary developments, and supporting local food practices can create an appealing and distinctive national brand (Hashimoto and Telfer 2006: 37).

[3] Greenpeace International (2015) states that ecological farming "respects nature and biodiversity…. ensures healthy farming and food…. protects the soil, the water, and the climate…. [and] places people and farmers—consumers and producers, rather than the corporations who control our food now—at its very heart."

Existing research has explored links between food practices, cultural identities, and notions of place and argued that culinary tourism strategies can strengthen local economies and reinvigorate rural communities (Bessiere & Tibere, 2013; Everett and Aitcheson, 2008; deSalvo Hernandez, Clemente, & Calzati, 2013). When sensitively and collaboratively implemented, local food tourism creates employment, diversifies local economies, and validates cultural identities by showcasing distinctive tastes and culinary practices. Renewed interest in locally produced foods and traditional skills can revive regional and ethnic identities and contribute to environmental sustainability (Everett & Aitcheson, 2008; Hashimoto & Tefler, 2006). For tourists, experiencing local food traditions fosters a sense of connection with rural communities and their inhabitants that can encourage resistance to the global industrial food system (Everett, 2012; Schnell, 2011; Schnell, 2013; Sims, 2009).

Yet, importantly, these studies emphasize that benefits of local food tourism are not universally experienced. Assessments of culinary tourism must take into account the impact of economic development on local food producers *and* natural environments (Dougherty, Brown, & Green, 2013; Everett, 2012). Successful local food tourism initiatives typically arise in regions with social and natural capital, such as strong social networks and iconic foods that are closely connected to local history and culture (Dougherty et al, 2013; deSalvo et al). For culinary tourism initiatives to be meaningful, host communities should participate in decisions about how they will be represented and which foods will be promoted as "authentic." Economic and ecological priorities can conflict as demand for local food experiences increases; therefore understanding divergent perspectives and balancing competing objectives are crucial for responsible and sustainable culinary tourism development (Everett & Slocum, 2013; Sims 2010).

This study focuses on food producers who practice ecological techniques—with or without organic certification—and restaurateurs who serve ecological foods in their establishments.[4] In this context, I ask: How do local food experiences contribute to the island's appeal as a tourism destination, and how might such initiatives be enhanced to sustain rural communities? Can culinary tourism advance Cape Breton's ecological food movement and encourage awareness of and appreciation for local cultures and natural environments? What specific challenges and possibilities exist in Cape Breton, and how do these factors relate to circumstances in comparable regions undertaking similar strategies?

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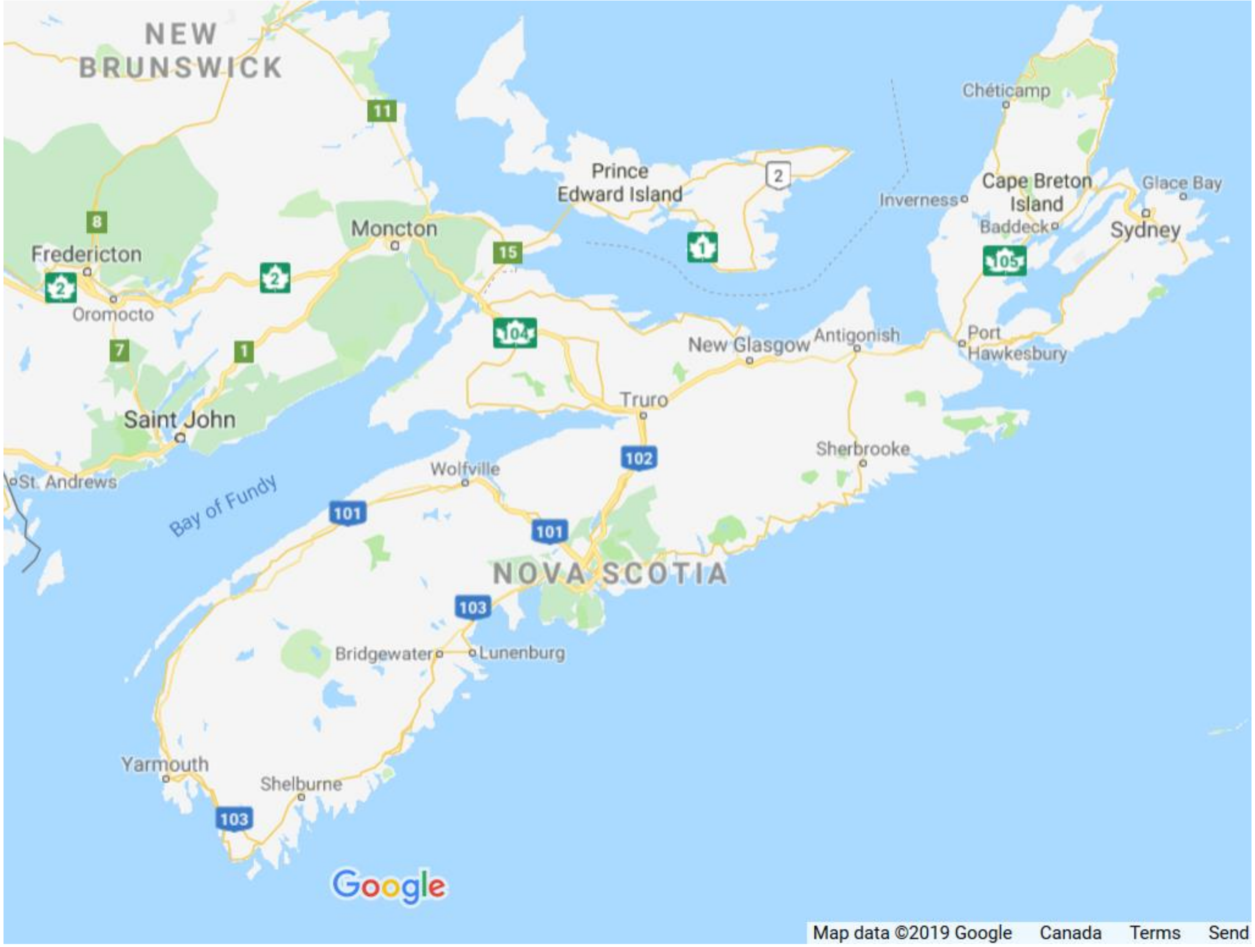
[4] I use the terms "ecological," "local," and "local-ecological" to indicate these foods.

## Methods

To answer these questions, I began by examining websites and policy documents of organizations involved in promoting tourism during 2016 and 2017 on Cape Breton Island and throughout Nova Scotia (see map in Figure 1 for context). I contextualized unfolding culinary tourism events in Cape Breton by exploring developments in comparable regions, and by reviewing the existing literature on local food tourism in rural communities within Atlantic Canada, across North America, and in the United Kingdom. In addition to academic publications, I reviewed recommendations contained in the "Culinary Tourism Roadmap"—Cape Breton's culinary tourism strategy document—in order to compare official strategies with local stakeholders' experiences and perspectives. This analysis is part of my ongoing research into local-ecological food practices in Cape Breton involving interviews and participant-observation at farmers' markets, workshops, food festivals and other culinary events, as well as analysis of archival documents and agricultural and tourism policies (MacLeod, 2016, 2017).

**Figure 1:** Map of Nova Scotia, including Cape Breton Island (upper right). Created using Google Maps.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Oromocto
Saint John
St. Andrews
Moncton
Prince Edward Island
Chéticamp
Inverness
Cape Breton Island
Baddeck
Glace Bay
Sydney
Port Hawkesbury
Antigonish
New Glasgow
Truro
Sherbrooke
Wolfville
Bay of Fundy
NOVA SCOTIA
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In the next phase of my research, I conducted interviews with 15 individuals with diverse occupations, including food producers, restaurateurs, representatives of the Department of Agriculture, and representatives of the tourism industry.[5] Interviews took place at farms, restaurants, farmers' markets and other locations where I could observe and experience the island's expanding local-ecological food offerings. I asked open-ended questions that encouraged interviewees to describe their experiences and to reflect on the possibilities and challenges of expanding local food initiatives and building a sustainable culinary tourism industry in Cape Breton. We also discussed their reasons for working to advance sustainable local-food tourism practices. Participants' experiences and perspectives varied but interviews also revealed shared values and concerns. All interviewees expressed concern for Cape Breton's struggling economy and identified challenges such as limited availability of local-ecological food and a short tourism season, and all emphasized opportunities for establishing Cape Breton Island as a recognized culinary tourism destination. Because each interview was unique in its focus, I coded responses by comparing and contrasting participants' disclosures and carefully noting differing viewpoints, points of agreement, and recurring themes.

## Findings and analysis

This study includes contextual research into tourism and agricultural practices in Cape Breton and interviews with people directly involved in various aspects of local-food tourism on the island. To present my findings, I begin by analyzing contextual factors. I identify key features of Cape Breton's culinary tourism industry and key strategies for marketing these features as tourist experiences. I then examine interview data to understand the divergent experiences and perspectives of food producers, restaurateurs, and tourism promoters and to identify points of agreement and differing opinions. Finally, I integrate contextual and experiential findings to explore key challenges associated with culinary tourism development in Cape Breton and in other destinations. These challenges include questions of power and autonomy, issues of transparency and accountability, and the complexities of transforming food production processes into aesthetic experiences for tourists.

### *Seafood, culture and climate: key features of culinary tourism*

My findings related to context reveal that Cape Breton possesses numerous advantages for developing ecological food practices and local food tourism. The island's coastal location and traditional reliance on the fishery for subsistence and economic survival makes seafood—and particularly shellfish—an important local food offering (ICON, 2015). In addition, many of the island's rural communities have sustained traditional linguistic and cultural practices that authenticate local foods and appeal to tourists' desires to connect with the people and places they visit (Farmer 2, April 28, 2015). Finally, Cape Breton has a moderate climate, varied grasses, and uncontaminated soils, along with an abundance of abandoned farms and natural pollinators that creates a favourable environment for practicing traditional farming techniques (Farmer 1, October 25, 2014; Farmer 2, June 25, 2014; Farmer 3, April 28, 2015; Farmer 4, July 21, 2016; Farmer 5, August, 15, 2016; Farmer 6, August 16, 2016).

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[5] To respect research participants' privacy, I have omitted names and identifying information throughout most of my analysis. Where participants named are included, the individuals named have agreed to be identified.

Agriculture has always contributed to Cape Breton's economy, but historically farms have been located—for the most part—in regions such as Inverness and Victoria Counties, and near the Bras d'Or Lakes and the Mira River. All existing farms on the island are relatively small scale, and farm start-ups are predominantly ecological and artisan operations (MacLeod, 2016; NS Department of Agriculture Representative, February 19, 2015).

Yet these possibilities coexist with significant challenges, including Cape Breton's remote location, poor soils, unpredictable weather conditions, and short growing season. Of particular significance to my study, divergent views among various stakeholders, as well as conflicts between economic and ecological values, complicate shared goals of sustaining rural communities and promoting the island's distinctive culture. It is clear that promoting culinary tourism raises questions of power, autonomy, inclusion, and accountability.

My study acknowledges pitfalls but accentuates potential opportunities for sustaining Cape Breton's natural environments and distinctive cultures and marketing these qualities to establish the island as a culinary tourism destination. I explore possibilities for aligning economic and ecological goals to create resilient communities, establish equitable social relations, ensure animal welfare, and nurture natural environments.

## *Promoting local food and culinary tourism experiences in Nova Scotia*

Within Nova Scotia, tourism is promoted through several governmental, industry, and nonprofit organizations. Cape Breton's tourism and culinary offerings are included in these promotions but are positioned as part of an authentic Nova Scotian experience rather than as representative of a distinct island culture with its own heritage and traditions (see Figure 1). Tourism Nova Scotia is a "private sector led Crown corporation" with a mandate to expand the tourism industry and its contributions to the provincial economy (Tourism Nova Scotia 2018). The corporation's mandate includes a commitment to "strengthening Nova Scotia's reputation as a place to enjoy authentic, quality food experiences and food culture" (Tourism NS Strategic Plan, 2017-2022; ICON, 2015, p. 10). Nova Scotia Tourism's strategic plan does not focus specifically on culinary offerings; rather, the document includes food experiences as one way to showcase the province's cultural diversity. Culinary experiences are promoted on the agency's website, through social media, and in the *Doers and Dreamers* Guide to Nova Scotia.[6] .

Additionally, Taste of Nova Scotia (Taste NS, 2017) is a provincial marketing association established as a combined public-private sector initiative in 1989. It consists of over 180 members from the public and private sectors: restaurateurs, food producers (farmers and fishers), and food processors (chocolatiers, bakers, winemakers, etc.). Seventeen Taste of Nova Scotia members are from Cape Breton (ICON, 2015). The association's mandate is to "facilitate the growth of our members while promoting the unique quality of our Nova Scotia food and beverage products to consumers both locally and around the world."[7] To this end, Taste of Nova Scotia promotes culinary tourism experiences, participates in event planning, and assists export market development. Some of its key partners include the Nova Scotia Tourism Agency, Nova Scotia Agriculture, Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Winery Association of Nova Scotia, The Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia (RANS)[8], and Slow Food Nova Scotia.[9]

Taste of Nova Scotia initiated the Chowder Trail in 2013 in a joint promotion of 30 participating restaurants, each offering its unique chowder recipe. Within two years, the number of participating restaurants doubled and, as of 2016, eleven participants were located in Cape Breton. People traveling along the trail can purchase chowder at various restaurants and receive stamps at each location entitling them to a prize.[10] In 2017, Taste of Nova Scotia incorporated this initiative into a province-wide "Seafood Trail" that includes a Lobster Trail, Oyster Trail, and Fish and Chips Trail. The agency's website states that the Seafood Trail consists of "restaurants, retail, and fisheries experiences that highlight our province's incredible seafood projects" (Taste of Nova Scotia, 2017). In 2015, Taste of Nova Scotia partnered with the Nova Scotia Tourism Association (NSTA) and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) to promote The Good Cheer Trail, which operates on a similar concept but guides visitors to participating wineries, craft breweries, cideries, and distilleries for tastings of wine, beer, cider, and alcoholic spirits paired with "local cuisine" (Tourism Nova Scotia, 2017). Four tastings are offered in Cape Breton locations: Big Spruce Brewing, the Glenora Distillery, Breton Brewing, and Fortress Louisbourg National Historic Site.[11] The event's website invites visitors to tastings from over 50 locations across the province and celebrates the Good Cheer Trail as the first of its kind in Canada.

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[6] In addition, Select Nova Scotia is a provincial government consumer awareness program that promotes local businesses and locally produced food and other goods (Nova Scotia Government, 2017).

[7] See Taste of Nova Scotia's website (http://www.tasteofnova scotia.com /about/).

[8] The Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia (established in 1947) is a nonprofit association that promotes the food and beverage industry through advocacy, marketing and promotion, partnerships, outreach, and consumer education (ICON, 2015: 11). The association has members from across the province, but the majority are Halifax establishments. Three members are from Cape Breton: Cabot Links, Big Spruce Brewing, and Nova Scotia Community College, Marconi Campus (ICON, 2015: 11).

[9] In addition to the partners identified above, the full list of key partners on the website includes the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the Nova Scotia Economic and Rural Development and Tourism Association, Select Nova Scotia, the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Association of Chefs and Cooks, the Waterfront Development Corporation Limited, Destination Halifax, the Nova Scotia Community College, and the Canadian Tourism Commission.

[10] In 2017, the website stated that collectors earning ten stamps would receive a Seafood Trail tee-shirt designed by a Nova Scotia artist (http//www.novascotiaculinarytrails.com/trails/seafood).

Culinary experiences such as the Chowder Trail and the Good Cheer Trail have been fairly successful to date, but some Cape Breton restaurateurs have criticized uncertain returns for investment as factors that exclude small businesses from the potential benefits of collaborative promotion (ICON, 2015, p. 9; Restaurateur 5, October 31, 2017). A tourism marketer acknowledged that these events are "good ideas" but suggested that potential tourism revenues from such developments are limited without an integrated marketing strategy to package and promote culinary experiences across Cape Breton Island and throughout Nova Scotia (personal communication, CEO DCBA, May 5, 2017).

### *Cape Breton Island as a culinary tourism destination*

In 2015, Destination Cape Breton Association (DCBA), a not-for-profit tourism marketing organization, was created specifically to promote Cape Breton Island as a distinctive tourism destination. Since 2010, DCBA is funded through a marketing levy[12] (i.e. hotel tax) with matching funds from Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation (ECBC)[13] and additional financial resources from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) and partnering organizations such as Parks Canada and Tourism Nova Scotia (Tulle, May 5 2017).

A report, the "Culinary Tourism Roadmap" (ICON, December, 2015) surveys culinary experiences across the island and identifies directions for enlarging food related offerings and branding Cape Breton as a culinary destination. Its broad recommendations include developing links with the slow food movement; expanding the range of available themed itineraries; and showcasing the island's pristine natural environment and artisanal food production and harvesting practices. More specific recommendations include marketing oysters as a traditional food of the Mi'kmaq people and present-day local-ecological food product; and branding Cape Breton as a lobster and seafood destination through the establishment of a shellfish festival and centre for culinary excellence at the Marconi Campus of the Nova Scotia Community College (ICON, 2015, pp. 22-34).

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[11] Big Spruce and Breton Brewing produce craft beer; the Glenora Distillery produces single-malt scotch, and Fortress Louisbourg offers tastings of its branded rum produced by Authentic Seacoast Company.

[12] The marketing levy came into effect in January 2011. In its first year, it generated approximately $460,000 dollars that was matched by funds from ECBC. The levy has grown annually and has been capped at $640,000 for the past three years.

[13] ECBC was disbanded in 2014 and its responsibilities were assigned to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) and Public Works and Government Services Canada (http://www.ecbc.ca/index_intro.php). ACOA has continued to support DCBA.

Presently local food tourism offerings are expanding across Cape Breton Island but, since completing the Culinary Tourism Roadmap, DCBA has been unable to find an organization willing to implement its proposals. Consequently, the association's recommendations have not been extensively endorsed or enacted. The challenges of achieving such goals may reflect ineffective communication between government agencies, industry partners, ecological producers, and restaurateurs; but conflicts between ecological and economic values also complicate efforts to develop a unified culinary tourism strategy.

### *Stakeholder involvement in local food tourism*

Contextual factors enable and constrain culinary tourism developments in Cape Breton, but these developments also are fundamentally shaped by the contributions of local food producers and restaurateurs. The discussion that follows focuses on interview data to integrate contextual and experiential findings and illuminate stakeholders' experiences, perspectives, and motivations for participating in local-food tourism.

Several of my respondents emphasized that establishing equitable and sustainable culinary tourism developments requires collaborative efforts among ecological food participants, tourism promoters, policymakers, and funding agencies (Restaurateur 2, June 15, 2017; Restaurateur 5, October 31, 2017). One chef stated that Taste of Nova Scotia's membership fees and other costs are prohibitive for small businesses and thus do not promote ecological culinary tourism. He recommended cooperative association as a potential alternative:

> If you did a Taste of Nova Scotia tour right now, I don't think it would reflect what we can potentially offer…I think if there was going to be a local food tour on the island it would have to come from restaurants or people that really cared about the local and not just ones that say they're local and have just a lobster on the menu or something. So it would have to be cooperative or something… (Restaurateur 5, October 31, 2017).

Events created through government-industry partnerships have proven popular with some travelers and reveal that possibilities exist for establishing Cape Breton as a culinary tourism destination. In addition to such initiatives, food producers, restaurateurs, and tourism operators around the island have individually and collaboratively developed various culinary offerings over the past decade and achieved varying levels of success. Numerous inns, restaurants, and food trucks feature local-organic foods—to varying degrees—on their menus, and some have organized special event dining experiences featuring Nova Scotia wines, spirits, or craft beers paired with local food.[14]

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[14] Examples of Cape Breton food establishments that feature local-organic ingredients include restaurants such as the Bite House, Governor's Restaurant and Pub, and Flavor on the Water; inns such as the Telegraph House and the Chanterelle Inn; and food trucks such as Cruisin' Cuisine, Lil Rollin Bistro, and the Mermaid Mobile.

Some establishments have limited their involvement to offering specific dishes prepared with local ingredients on their menus, but several restaurateurs have been centrally involved in promoting local-ecological food. For example, Scott Morrison, chef and owner-operator of three restaurants in Sydney, participated for several years in an annual local food challenge that encouraged island residents to become locavores for one month in September. In the event's first year, Morrison hosted the opening-night dinner in one of his establishments and offered daily specials featuring local ingredients for the 30-day challenge. Canadian geographer Lenore Newman (2017), in her book *Speaking in Cod Tongues: A Canadian Culinary Journey*, emphasizes the importance of restaurants and other food vendors in defining distinctive regional foods that comprise Canadian cuisine (Desjardins, 2017). She states that "local cuisines" embody geographical and cultural associations. Recalling her travels across Cape Breton Island, Newman includes Acadian dishes (fricot, chiard, and butterscotch pie)[15] among iconic local foods (p. 171).

Ardon Mofford, owner-operator of Governors Pub and Eatery in Sydney, has played a prominent role in procuring and promoting local food in Cape Breton. Mofford and his sister Pearleen organized the *Right Some Good Festival*, one of Cape Breton's most successful culinary events. *Right Some Good* was a pop-up dining event that paired world renowned and local chefs to create themed dishes using local ingredients at locations chosen to showcase Cape Breton's natural beauty and cultural traditions (ICON, 2015, p. 13). The festival was offered throughout Cape Breton from 2011-2013 and extended to Halifax in 2014. It generated significant revenues and attracted North American-wide media attention, but inadequate infrastructure and unreliable funding led to discontinuation of the event in subsequent years. Reflecting on *Right Some Good's* contributions, Mofford suggested that funding agencies need a broader framework for assessing the value of such events:

> Everything on the menu was local except for little things like…caviar and we'd get it out of New Brunswick or something, but 80% of everything that was on a plate was from Cape Breton Island and the staffing was mostly from here. It was just a really cool event and what happened is that the funding dried up…. and again it's how do you equate the value of something like that? You know, there's always the numerical value, like 'hey it cost $500,000 to execute that; there's only $250,000 worth of revenue so then it cost $250,000—it wasn't worth it.' Because that's an accountant's way of looking at if something has any value. But *Huffington Post* wrote their first article ever about Cape Breton Island from a *Right Some Good* Food festival sitting on a dock with scenic beauty…. And then you were exposed to the *New York Times* because we brought in all these travel writers that never came to Cape Breton before, but because they're all foodie fanatics they came to the events…and they wrote stories about the chefs, they wrote stories about the food, they

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[15] Fricot is a hearty meat and vegetable soup and chiard is a dish made of fried onions and potatoes.

> wrote stories about the products, they were guests at the events, they spoke at the events, and then they exposed themselves to the whole island, Destination Cape Breton, made partnerships along the way. And those are the things that came from food…

His comments suggest that, viewed in light of their indirect and long-term benefits, events such *Right Some Good* have substantially higher value than can be captured in short-term economic assessments and therefore warrant subsidization. According to DCBA's strategic plan, *Right Some Good* provides justification for hosting future high-profile culinary events in Cape Breton (ICON 2015, p. 13).

Morrison and Mofford own large dining establishments and source both local-organic and conventionally produced ingredients. They identified two challenges for restaurant owners serving larger clienteles: the limited availability of ecological foods in Cape Breton and prevailing customer expectations regarding affordability and consistency. Importantly, however, some smaller establishments in Cape Breton have been successful in building businesses entirely committed to ecological food (Restaurateur 3, July 6 2017; Restaurateur 5, October 31, 2017). These establishments acknowledge that sourcing and preparing local-organic ingredients are time consuming and expensive processes, but they see significant potential for expanding these offerings in Cape Breton. One respondent stated that many visitors to Cape Breton are dissatisfied with the island's franchised and industrially prepared restaurant offerings and longing for fresh, wholesome dishes that represent the island's food traditions (Restaurateur 4, October 31, 2017). Another suggested that cost can be a more important consideration than ecological commitments for many tourists, but nonetheless emphasized that customers' enthusiastic responses consistently reaffirm his exclusive focus on promoting local-organic food (Restaurateur 3, July 6, 2017).

In addition to these relatively high-profile culinary experiences, several communities have organized food festivals and/or incorporated food events into local celebrations (e.g. Whitney Pier Melting Pot Multicultural Festival; Seaside Lobsterfest in St. Peter's; Louisbourg Crabfest). Farmers' markets and events such as strawberry festivals and codfish suppers also have become popular tourism attractions. As stakeholders work to enlarge Cape Breton's range of culinary offerings, the Pan-Cape Breton Food Hub Co-operative is a key development that facilitates networks between producers and consumers. The Food Hub, established in 2015, is a nonprofit organization with a mandate to collect, promote, and distribute locally produced foods (ICON, 2015, p. 21). The association brings together over 30 food producers and harvesters and an increasing number of restaurant owners and household customers (*Cape Breton Post* 3 February 2017). Membership increased substantially in 2016 and organizers are working to attract additional producers and consumers (*Cape Breton Post* 3 March 2017).

The importance of Cape Breton's Food Hub is evidenced in industry reports and scholarly investigations that identify distribution networks as crucial components in the successful establishment of ecological food practices and culinary tourism initiatives (ICON, 2015; Everett and Slocum, 2013; Inwood, Shoshanah, Sharp, Moore, and Stinner, 2008). Overwhelmingly, respondents in this study described the Food Hub as invaluable for connecting food producers, restaurateurs, and household consumers. One farmer stated that the network had enabled him to substantially increase his customer base and, as a result, leave his job to farm full time (Levangie August 15 2016).

All restaurateurs emphasized the challenges of accessing adequate supplies of local-organic ingredients and applauded the Food Hub for facilitating communication between producers and chefs and for reducing the labour required to source ecological food. Only one chef stated that his pre-existing relationships with producers made the Food Hub convenient—rather than essential—for procuring menu ingredients: "I'm a member of the Hub for sure but the hub offers almost the same resources that I've already fixed for myself…" (Restaurateur 2, June 15 2017). More typically, restaurateurs credited the Food Hub for making their businesses workable: "it's now easy to do because of the Food Hub. You know I've got a Food Hub order in this morning and we're checking it off and I'm thinking 'Holy Moly,' there's probably nine different distributors on that order and if we had to order this—imagine calling nine distributors!" (Restaurateur 3, July 6 2017). This respondent also argued that additional services and networks were necessary to facilitate access to local-organic food.

### *Motivating factors for restaurateurs*

When asked about their reasons for promoting local-organic food, restaurateurs expressed commonalities and differences. All respondents in my study identified Cape Breton's unique cultural and environmental characteristics, and several spoke at length about the many factors that position Cape Breton as an important culinary tourism destination (Restaurateur 2, June 15, 2017; Restaurateur 4, October 31, 2017). Most respondents identified personal rather than political motivations, and health was a predominant concern for many restaurateurs who questioned the nutritional value and potential harms of industrially processed convenience foods (Restaurateur 1, August 5, 2015; Restaurateur 2, June 15, 2017; Restaurateur 3, July 6, 2017).

One respondent described his interest in local-organic food as partly personal—the result of his wife's health concerns regarding mass produced and processed foods—and partly "good business," explaining that consumers are increasingly conscious of where their food comes from and how it is produced (Restaurateur 1, August 5, 2015). He also expressed an ethical commitment to supporting local communities and enhancing Cape Breton's economy: "And beyond that it was most important I think from when I moved back to Cape Breton to try to keep most of our dollars here on the island as much as possible." This individual did not describe his involvement in promoting local-organic food as a political commitment, yet his concerns about human health and community autonomy embody a critical awareness of the global-industrial food system and its impact on people and localities. Other restaurateurs in this study expressed similar desires to support local farmers and rural communities by offering fresh, wholesome food to their customers (Restaurateur 2, June 15, 2017; Restaurateur 3, July 6, 2017; Restaurateur 4, October 31, 2017; Restaurateur 5, October 31, 2017).

One restaurant owner and chef identified his family background in tourism and hospitality as an important influence on his local-organic food interests (Restaurateur 2, June 15, 2017). His father is a retired chef and his parents operated a small hotel in Cape Breton while he was growing up. This respondent described procuring local food as the way things were done in Cape Breton at that time—diets were much more seasonally oriented, and farmers and fishers sold farm-gate, at the wharf, or delivered foodstuffs to the hotel. He was not unconcerned about health but emphasized taste and freshness as more important factors in his decision to accentuate local food in his restaurant. Community development was crucial for this local food advocate, who described supportive social networks and sustainable economic practices as fundamental to individual well-being and community survival. Contributing to rural autonomy and resilience has become an ethical commitment that shapes this respondent's decisions and vision:

> It's ethical for me now yes, it's definitely an ethical thing now. You know we need our communities to grow, we need people to stay here and the only way we can do that is if we support each other. And people really gotta change their mindset, we've have to re-educate everybody into believing that. I mean for the amount of money you're going to save by going to Walmart and buying a case of certified Angus steaks for 20 dollars—two dollars each a steak—that's been marinated to death and when you put it in your mouth it just kind of minces between your teeth, it just drives me because you know what? You're eating that because you got it for two bucks from God knows wherever it came from.… But if we don't change that, if we don't change the mentality of ordering jewelry from China, or hats, everything coming in mailboxes, then you lose those types of shops, you lose your downtown cores. You lose where people [don't] invest in your communities...

Concerns about health and commitment to the economic stability of their communities were the main motivations of most restaurateurs in this study. For some respondents, these concerns encouraged broader environmental and animal welfare interests that intensified their involvement in local food practices. Yet for others political awareness was the motivating factor that inspired their commitment to promoting ecological food as a pleasurable, wholesome, and sustainable way of life:

> Well it's simple I think. Ecological food as in organic food or well taken care of agriculture is just better food, right from the start, right? So we travel extensively around the world and we've seen a lot of those concentration camps of animals in California and those massive fields of carrots, onions, you name it. And it's not the way to go; we got

> introduced four or five years ago to the principle called permaculture and it makes a lot more sense that way than what it is now (Farmer 5, October 31 2017).

For these individuals, creating delectable food experiences is a tangible way of enlarging critical awareness and demonstrating that alternatives to the industrial food system exist.

### *Contextualizing challenges for local food tourism in Cape Breton*

Despite the committed efforts of ecological food participants, local food tourism remains a marginal—albeit promising—practice in Cape Breton. Tourism Nova Scotia statistics indicate that in 2017 only one percent of visitors listed culinary experiences as a main reason for vacationing in the province.[16] In the same year, DCBA reported that visitors to Cape Breton identified coastal scenery, sightseeing, outdoor adventures, cultural experiences, and heritage as the island's main attractions (Jala, *CB Post*, 4 October 2017). Some of these visitors discover interesting food experiences along the way, but my respondents emphasized Cape Breton's potential to become a recognizable culinary destination comparable to more successful ventures in areas facing similar circumstances. For example, DCBA's Culinary Tourism Roadmap identifies coastal Maine, Ontario's Prince Edward County, Vancouver Island, and the province of Prince Edward Island as places modelling "best practices" in local-food tourism (ICON, 2015, p. 14).

Developments in Prince Edward Island invite comparison with Cape Breton's situation because these regions have many similarities, including climate, culture, geographic proximity, and island status. However, a significant difference with regard to culinary tourism is that, in contrast to Nova Scotia's emphasis on specific dining experiences and food events, Tourism PEI has introduced a unified marketing campaign to promote the island's fertile soils, abundant fisheries, and wide-ranging locally produced foods. The agency's website brands Prince Edward Island as "Canada's Food Island" and provides links to tourist experiences such as the Culinary Trail, the Fall Flavours Festival, and the International Shellfish Festival.[17]

Commenting on this disparity, Mary Tulle, CEO of Destination Cape Breton, remarked that the absence in Nova Scotia of a coordinated marketing strategy impedes Cape Breton's—and the province's—efforts to bring together divergent stakeholders and create a shared vision for advancing local food tourism initiatives (May 5, 2017). Disconnected events do not serve as a principal motivator for potential visitors, so culinary experiences remain at best a secondary consideration for travelers, and many visitors learn about local food cultures after arriving in the province (ICON, 2015). Without a clearly defined marketing plan, local food advocates and tourism operators in scattered rural communities have no effective mechanism for integrating their events into a larger and more meaningful experience of place and culture. A more unified strategy could attract more visitors and encourage people to extend their stay in the region in order to participate in linked events at various locales. For example, events combining the island's music and food traditions have potential as meaningful and profitable forms of tourism development (MacLeod, 2016).

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[16] Tourism Nova Scotia website (http://tourismns.ca/sites/default/files/2017 VES Full Year report.pdf). Twenty-six percent of visitors listed scenery and natural landscapes and 12% listed the seacoast and ocean as the main reasons for visiting Nova Scotia. Six percent identified Nova Scotia's culture and 5% identified the province's heritage as the province's main attraction. The website does not provide specific statistics for Cape Breton Island.

[17] Tourism PEI website (http://www.tourismpei.com/culinary-pei).

Notably, island residents often self-identify as Cape Bretoners rather than as Nova Scotians, and Cape Breton identity is often defined in opposition to local perceptions of mainlanders' indifference and contempt. Critical analysis of culinary tourism initiatives in other regions demonstrates that appreciation for local attachments and cultural distinctions is important for developing meaningful tourism strategies because food practices contribute significantly to cultural identities and understandings of place (Bessiere & Tibere, 2013; deSalvo et al, 2013). When collaboratively and sensitively enacted, local food tourism can revitalize rural communities and validate local identifications by providing employment, increasing economic resilience, and celebrating the divergent tastes and practices of residents (Bessiere & Tibere, 2013; deSalvo et al, 2013; Everett and Aitchison, 2008). Engagement with local food traditions can encourage tourists to identify with the people and places they visit, and these affiliations are not trivial. To the contrary, appreciation of local food cultures can engender critical awareness and subtly challenge the industrial food system (Everett, 2012; Schnell, 2011; Schnell, 2013; Sims, 2009).

### *Questions of power and autonomy in culinary tourism*

Developments in other regions suggest that marketing food traditions can benefit rural communities, but expansion of culinary tourism also raises questions of power and autonomy. Which food practices are valued as "authentic" and appealing? Do local communities have a voice in determining how their traditions are promoted? Local food and culinary experiences are often viewed as responsible and sustainable forms of economic development but increasing demand for local foods can entail significant costs for ecological producers and natural ecosystems (Dougherty et al., 2013; Everett, 2012). Scholarly critiques of culinary tourism in other locales have shown that restaurateurs typically have significant power to influence transactions with their suppliers and demand lower prices for locally produced ingredients (Dougherty et al., 2013, pp. 20, 21). Restaurateurs usually are fewer in number than food producers and generally have more educational capital and higher-class positioning. They may be more concerned with taste, freshness, and appearance than with production methods and therefore may not feel constrained by producers' ecological and social justice values. Restaurateurs also can influence public perceptions of local and "good" foods through advertising, menu offerings, staff recommendations, and events such as tastings and cooking classes.

Relations between food producers and restaurateurs in Cape Breton illustrated some of these tensions. One respondent criticized restaurateurs for demanding low prices from farmers while charging premium prices and catering to an affluent clientele (Local Food Advocate, August 21, 2013)**.** Yet restaurateurs emphasized that their operations were not lucrative. They identified numerous constraints including competition among dining establishments operating in Atlantic Canada's short tourism season, and limited consumer demand for local-organic foods (Restaurateur 1, August 5, 2015; Restaurateur 2, June 15, 2017; Restaurateur 3, July 6, 2017; Restaurateur 4, October 31, 2017). One respondent explained that local-organic culinary experiences appeal to a niche market; the majority of diners are accustomed to industrially produced foods and value price and convenience above the distinctive qualities of artisan foods:

> [W]e realized as we got through the summer that people were less and less concerned with where the food came from. They wanted it to be awesome, delicious and price—that's what people consider first. The minority of people really, really care when it comes down to it if it's local or not. (Restaurateur 1, August 5, 2015).

## *The importance of advertising: Transparency and accountability*

Consumers' expectations thus constrain restaurateurs' decisions about how to position their businesses, but food producers and restaurateurs in this study also recognized the importance of local food tourism in shaping consumers' choices. Both groups agreed that culinary tourism is beneficial to food producers when dining establishments purchase ecological ingredients and promote local suppliers through advertising, menus, and staff recommendations. Owners of small-scale dining establishments were able to source ingredients entirely from ecological producers and took pride in promoting their suppliers to customers (Restaurateur 3, July 6, 2017; Restaurateur 4, October 31, 2017; Restaurateur 5, October 31, 2017). Those operating larger establishments sourced local-organic ingredients as much as possible but also relied on conventionally produced foods to serve their clientele. All respondents emphasized the importance of honesty with food producers and customers about menu sourcing (Restaurateur 1, August 5, 2017; Restaurateur 2, June 15, 2017).

Yet unequal power relations are distressing and injurious when restaurants advertise local-organic menu offerings—in some cases explicitly claiming to support local farmers—but do not purchase ingredients from small-scale, ecological producers (Local Food Advocate, August 21, 2013; Restaurateur 1, August 5, 2015; Restaurateur 2, June 15, 2017). Restaurateurs in this study suggested that some establishments made insincere claims about how they source their ingredients and criticized this dishonesty as detrimental to producer-consumer relationships:

> [T]hat's kind of false advertising what they're doing; they're saying that they're local, they're local, they're local, because we've heard it too because we became friends with a lot of the farmers that we get our produce from and some of them do say that [certain restaurateurs] come once a year maybe and buy something and then never come back, and then how is their menu—they might get a quarter of a cow or something and say that they're local beef, but then all summer long? Obviously, they went through that quarter cow and they never came back (Restaurateur 4, October 31, 2017).

One respondent criticized false advertising as entirely unfair to ecological producers but expressed less concern about the impact on his business of competitors' questionable claims to local-organic status. He suggested that many consumers are uninformed—and in some cases undisturbed—about the origins of their food:

> You know what, I give that a bit of thought because we tell everybody [that] we buy from the local farmers. I'm sure when they sit down they assume every restaurant…is buying from the local farmers, you know what I mean? I'm sure they do. If I went to—up the Valley—and they said they were buying from the local farmers, I'd think 'yeah I'd expect you to'—you know what I mean? They don't understand that most people are buying it from—and it's being shipped from California or wherever it's coming from, so no I'm not worried… (Restaurateur 3, July 6 2017).

In voicing their unequivocal disapproval regarding dishonest promotional strategies, some restaurateurs acknowledged that slim profit margins and the fluctuating availability of local-organic foods contribute to such behaviour:

> I know it's really sexy right now for chefs to [promote the] local, local, local thing and they kind of use it more as a marketing tool than as committed to the local product. And I don't mean to be critical but…a lot of them will buy, like, microgreens and say fresh local salad and you're sprinkling a microgreen or an alfalfa sprout that's grown in a greenhouse; or they'll buy some local spinach but then everything else…is not a local product. Now I'm not being critical because the issue is supply …. in our business, our margins are so small…there's so many more variables that we deal with in the restaurant business and we have to be frugal…. There's so much more to do from a local standpoint but it's a matter of getting all the components together. (Restaurateur 2, June 15, 2017)

Respondents' comments reveal a nuanced understanding of the challenges they and their associates face, and a reluctance to point fingers at business owners who misrepresent their local commitments to appeal to potential consumers. Importantly, however, these misrepresentations have repercussions for local food producers, and restaurateurs who capitalize on the appeal of ecological foods without supporting artisan producers are accountable for the harms that arise from their insincerity. Their businesses may profit from their beneficent image, but ecological producers do not share this benefit and may experience missed sales opportunities if consumers believe they are supporting local-organic practices and feel less inclined to visit farmers' markets or other venues that actually offer local-organic foods. These missed opportunities are particularly damaging for small-scale producers because many are struggling to make ends meet and maintain their operations. Over the long term, superficial claims to local-organic ingredient sourcing may backfire and contribute to consumer cynicism and apathy as people become aware of duplicitous advertising:

> I mean local farmers will probably tell you [false advertising is] a massive thing…. lots of people think 'oh well you're promoting local' but how much are you actually buying local? Nobody knows what anybody else is doing. I could tell you this lettuce is local just like I could tell you this is a Cape Breton grown beet; you don't know. Same with going to the grocery store and 'this is organic, this is not organic'; you have no idea—where did this come from, you know? So there is a trust issue… (Restaurateur 1, August 5, 2015).

On a more hopeful note, enhanced consumer awareness of duplicitous advertising practices could encourage demands for accountability and transparency from restaurant owners that would permit informed and responsible consumption and result in increased markets for ecological producers.

### *Transforming production processes into tourist experiences*

Existing research reveals that questions of power and autonomy also arise when production places become consumption spaces; for example, when tours and product tastings are offered on farm premises (Everett, 2012). Such offerings expand opportunities for marketing ecological food, but they also empower consumers to influence food practices in ways that may conflict with producers' ecological values and work priorities. Some routine and necessary farm activities may not appeal to visitors, and regulations may prohibit public access to food production processes. In a study of culinary tourism in Ireland (Everett, 2012), farmers described the challenges of transforming production processes such as cheesemaking into entertaining consumer experiences and reported feeling pressured to adapt their performances to meet tourists' expectations of quaint rural folk and rustic farming communities (p. 550). These constraints raise questions of authenticity: Do visitors actually gain access to and participate in the everyday work of ecological food production, or are their experiences altered or sanitized, providing only a simulation of what takes place out of public view?

Significantly, producers also have agency in these situations and can intentionally adapt their performances and practices to balance conflicting needs and expectations, but the pressure to transform production sites into tourist attractions can entail significant economic and environmental costs. As an example, a beekeeper I interviewed explained that offering farm tours would respond to requests from tourists and community members, and potentially provide additional revenue to sustain her operation. Yet domesticating the property to permit visitor access (for example, cutting back tangled and thorny natural pollinators) would destroy natural bee habitats and require financial investment in equipment and labour. Offering tours also would infringe on time devoted to actual beekeeping and might require hiring additional employees that she could not afford (Farmer 4, July 21, 2016). Several farmers raised similar concerns, expressing a desire to develop entertaining and educational culinary tourism experiences that would encourage visitors to embrace ecological food practices but acknowledging that modest revenues and intensive labour made such endeavours practically unachievable—at least in the short term (Farmer 1, June 25, 2015; Farmer 4, August 15, 2016; Farmer 5, August 16, 2016).

## Conclusion

This study explored the questions: How do local food practices contribute to the island's appeal as a tourism destination, and how might such experiences be enhanced to sustain rural communities? Can culinary tourism advance Cape Breton's ecological food movement and encourage awareness of and appreciation for local cultures and natural environments? What specific challenges and possibilities exist in Cape Breton, and how do these factors relate to circumstances in comparable regions undertaking similar strategies? My findings, both contextual and experiential, suggest that effective strategies can build on local environmental and cultural characteristics to market the island as a culinary tourism destination. Qualities such as rural traditionalism and natural landscapes are central in tourism imagery for the entire province of Nova Scotia. As an example, Taste of Nova Scotia accentuates seafood, particularly lobster, as an iconic traditional local food offering.

Turning specifically to Cape Breton, the island abounds with rugged natural beauty, undeveloped fields and forests, small-scale farms, fishing communities, and rural traditions. These features are promoted within the DCBA Culinary Tourism Roadmap as "authentic" and appealing to both tourists and professional chefs. The Roadmap (ICON, 2015) states that interest in culinary tourism is growing and recommends that Cape Breton's brand feature hard shell lobster as a distinctive local food with national and global appeal.[18] Research into culinary tourism in other regions suggests that these initiatives are most successful when community members have a voice in determining how they will be represented and when tourism offerings align with local food traditions. Consequently, the Roadmap suggests that Cape Breton's seasonal fishing operations present opportunities for "sustainable shellfish" and "Slow Fish" branding (ICON, 2015, p. 23).

Yet the question of how much culinary tourism can expand in Cape Breton without overwhelming ecological producers—and without threatening fragile ecological resources and environments—remains to be seen. Recommendations put forward in the Culinary Tourism Roadmap have not been implemented and the absence of a unified strategy impedes efforts to coordinate food related events and appeal to visitors' desires for "authentic" experiences of local cultures. The Roadmap encourages sustainable food practices but, as a tourism marketing agency, DCBA supports all initiatives that have potential tourism appeal and does not distinguish between ecological and conventional food offerings in its promotion of local food establishments and events. Increasing consumer demand for lobster, snow crab, and other types of seafood could position Cape Breton as an appealing culinary tourism destination, but greater demand and the potential for higher profits could place pressure on policy makers to extend fishing seasons and relax regulations that protect marine species and fragile ecosystems.

Several challenges presented themselves as a result of this study. At the provincial level, Taste of Nova Scotia promotes "local food" but does not differentiate between ecological and conventional offerings and, in addition, this agency requires that participating establishments pay membership fees that are often prohibitive for small businesses. Advocacy for ecological practices thus resides with producers and their supporters who often lack the financial resources and social-political power to advance their interests (Local Food Advocate, August 21, 2013; Farmer 2, April 28, 2015; Farmer 3, July 21, 2016). Unequal power relations extend to questions of inclusion: tourism marketing agencies promote touristic culinary experiences but are not mandated to actively support nondominant communities or ensure diverse representations of local food cultures. Cape Breton's situation is further complicated by the island's geographic, economic, and cultural marginalization within Nova Scotia and in national and international contexts.

On a more positive note, tourism marketing in rural communities within Canada and in other countries—such as Prince Edward Island's unified promotion of various food events and branding as "Canada's Food Island"—suggest that effective promotional strategies can overcome geographic disadvantages. Establishing cooperative relationships between divergent communities and with ecological food participants—producers and restaurateurs—would enhance Cape Breton's reputation as a distinctive, inclusive, and sustainable culinary tourism destination. Ultimately, enthusiasm for culinary tourism development must be tempered with respect for natural ecosystems and local communities, and with awareness of the pitfalls inherent in commodifying cultural groups and their traditions. Developments in other regions indicate that ecological food initiatives, including local food tourism, have the potential to revitalize rural communities and enhance local autonomy by enriching social networks, creating economic opportunities, and nurturing human connections with other species and natural environments. Achieving these goals will demand collaboration, critical awareness, and responsiveness to evolving circumstances from all stakeholders—policy makers, tourism promoters, consumers, and—crucially— restaurateurs and food producers.

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[18] The Culinary Roadmap (ICON, 2015) also identifies other shellfish, including oysters, as iconic foods and states that oysters represent a traditional Mi'kmaq food and a popular contemporary dish. The document recommends that Cape Breton promote "sustainable seafood" and "Slow Fish" (p. 23).

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Original Research Article

# Supply management and the business activities of Ontario meat processors

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## Abstract

Canadian supply management policies in dairy, poultry and eggs have been hotly debated for over 50 years. During the most recent renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 2017-2018, the U.S. threatened to cancel NAFTA if concessions were not made to Canada's supply management policies in agriculture. During the renegotiation, many arguments for and against supply management in agriculture were repeated, some were updated, and some newer perspectives relating to sustainability and social responsivity were more enthusiastically discussed. Most arguments critical of supply management have been developed using economic analyses of market and industry-level impacts of supply management. On the other hand, supportive arguments are often qualitative, focus on the survival of smaller farms and generally lack empirical investigation based on application of relevant theory. This paper uses management theory to investigate the impact of supply management of management and business activities on food processing firms. We use a framework that links business activities with the broad regulatory environment to interpret evidence from a study of independent meat processors in Ontario, Canada, particularly those that processed turkey, which is a supply managed sector; and pork, which is not. Results suggest that the broad regulatory environment facing Ontario meat processors is of greater concern to managers of independent processing businesses than the specific regulatory environment of supply management. Results also suggest the value creation activities and strategies used by a business may affect how managers assess opportunities and challenges in this specific regulatory environment.

Keywords: Management, public policy, meat industry supply management, international trade, value chains

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## Introduction

In October 2017, the United States government first signalled it might cancel the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) if Canada did not make concessions to policies that regulate pricing and production for some supply-managed agricultural products. As a result supply management policies covering dairy, chicken, turkey, and egg production in Canada again became the subject of public debate. Beginning in the 1970s, the debate about supply management has made heavy use of research conducted by agricultural economists, who have generally focused on developing market and industry level impacts on economic welfare using econometric analysis grounded in partial-equilibrium micro-economic theory. Proponents of supply management have been supported by a variety of researchers including rural sociologists, selected agricultural economists, geographers and historians whose work has often been dismissed as lacking empirical evidence and focusing too much on the benefits for farmers, and not the impacts on other members of the value chain. However, despite the increasing attention and impact of researchers whose work supports supply management from disciplines such as geography, sociology and history, our research revealed that research grounded in "management theory" was largely absent from *any* work on the conduct and impact of supply management. As such, this research was motivated by the need to add a management theory perspective to the supply management debate in Canada.

This paper presents the results of a study that examined interrelated questions: How do (a) the broad regulatory environment and (b) a specific regulatory environment affect business activities? Both the broad regulatory environment and the specific regulatory environment generally comprise external factors, which means that managers and businesses cannot control them and must instead respond using business strategies (which managers and businesses can control). However, the specific regulatory environment can be influenced by managers' decisions and businesses' activities in the economic and political sphere. This influence is not examined in this paper[1].

The general question examined in this study is: How do the business activities of firms relate to the broad regulatory environment? The specific question is: "How do the business activities of meat processors in Ontario relate to the supply management environment, particularly those that process turkey and pork?" These questions are examined in the contexts of both broad and specific regulatory environments by focusing on how the environment affects business activities. Business activities include any process for making decisions about a business as well as the processes for implementing them. They include management activities termed "functional or primary activities", such as operations and marketing and "support or secondary activities" such as human resource management and financial management (Porter, 1985). Both types of activities are important to "value creation", which is the main function of a business. Businesses create value using resources, competencies, and capabilities to create a competitive advantage through superior efficiency, quality and/or superior customer responsiveness (Barney, 1991; Barney, Wright, & Ketchen, 2001).

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[1] The issue of how businesses affect the regulatory environment is important and relevant to understanding how supply management has evolved and impacts businesses, consumers and other stakeholders—but this is not addressed in this paper. Also, the broad regulatory environment may also be affected by lobbying and other activities related to business-government relations, but the impact of these activities is generally considered to have less impact on any one economic sector, industry, or industry segment.

Given the study's focus on the impact of the broad and specific external environment on the activities of a businesses, it is organized as follows: Section 1 provides a brief background on supply management in agriculture, including an explanation of the key policy instruments and a summary of arguments both supportive and critical of supply management. It concludes by identifying gaps in knowledge about supply management. Because the focus is to understand how regulations in the external environment are linked to business activities, Section 2 describes a framework that links these ideas. In Section 3, the method, logic, and propositions used in this research are described. Section 4 shares results for both the broad regulatory environment and the specific regulatory environment. In Section 5, results are discussed that help us understand the value-creating activities of businesses and how these may be related to supply management regulations. Section 6 presents conclusions and suggests the impact of the broad regulatory environment on business activities is greater than is the impact from the specific regulatory environment that comprises supply management regulations. Implications for policy makers and managers and study limitations are also discussed.

## Background

### *Supply management in Canada*

Debates about market interventions preceded the introduction of the Farm Products Marketing Act (1967) in Ontario [2]. Usually, the debate heats up when trade negotiations are under way. The policies that govern the production and marketing of "dairy and feathers"[3] agricultural products have been the subject of reports by academic researchers, policy organizations, think-tanks, consultancies, government enquiry, and media coverage for over 50 years[4]. (Barichello,

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[2] The Agricultural Products Marketing Act of Canada (1985) consolidates many regulations for provinces, some of which restrict supply and pricing for some agricultural products; however, the Farm Products Marketing Act of Ontario (Farm Products Marketing Act, R.S.O. 1990) contains the regulations that concern supply management for the production and pricing of turkey in Ontario, so they are the focus here.

[3] Dairy and feathers refers to the product of dairy cows, not other animals that produce milk, while feathers refer to turkeys, chicken and eggs, and does not include ducks and other birds.

[4] The references that are provided in this section are illustrative of the research conducted on supply management. They were selected to provide a general overview of the types of research approaches and output that have been used in the debate. The list is far from exhaustive.

Cranfield, & Meilke, 2009; Forbes, Hughes, & Warley, 1982; Hall-Findlay, 2018; Hoskins, Mumey, & Beck, 1994; Knutson, Romain, Anderson, & Richardson, 1997; Martin & Warley, 1978; Mussel, 2017; Mysicka & McKendry, 2013; van Duren, 1993; van Duren & Brown-Andison, 1995). Most discussion about supply management in Canada's agriculture and food sector, however, has examined the regulations at the level of the market through the lens of "economic welfare". Despite conjecture by economists, there remains a gap in understanding how these regulations are related to the value-creating activities of businesses.

Supply management policies in Canada were created to help producers of some agricultural commodities survive the boom and bust cycles typical for some agricultural products. The term *supply management* in Canada refers to a set of policy instruments enacted through regulations. First, the regulations limit production (the supply) of dairy products, eggs and poultry that can be produced. Second, they set product prices in Canada based on the estimated costs to produce the product. Third, the regulations set limits for import quantities and apply tariffs to ensure the product price can be maintained at its intended set level. Not surprisingly, interpretations of these definitions that have been offered by various stakeholders stress different elements of supply management. For example, some refer to the intended outcome from the regulations such as a "…fair return to the producers…" (FarmStart, 2010, p. 6). Others focus on intervention in a free market. For example, they "replace the supply side of the market place"; Forbes, 1982, p. 27). Others pointed to the similarities between supply management regulations and the agricultural subsidies used in other countries and categorized supply management with other "agricultural commodity stabilization programs" (Spriggs & Van Kooten, 1988, p. 1).

Supply management policies in Canada have legal mandates and the regulations are enacted through regulatory organizations referred to as *marketing boards.* Although the jurisdictional authority of marketing boards in Canada varies by agricultural product, supply management marketing boards are considered to have the greatest authority because their mandate includes (a) the authority to set prices for products, and (b) the authority to control supply of the product by regulating production and marketing using quotas (van Duren & Hansen Sterne, 2015).

## *Support and criticism of supply management*

There are a range of criticisms expressed about supply management in Canada. Most can be organized into three categories: (1) economics-based; (2) consumer-focused, and (3) producer-focused. More recently, more research using sustainability and systems-based perspectives has emerged and we consider these as a fourth category. Much of this research and perspective is generally supportive of supply management.

Economics-based: These criticisms arise from a traditional, economics-based perspective and focus on policy impacts at a market and industry level. These criticisms include, but are not limited to the following:

- the policies constrain and reduce competition and contribute to inefficiencies in the system that lessen overall productive capacity and interfere with free market price signals (Petkanchin, 2006);
- the policies decrease market innovation (Robson & Busby, 2010);
- the policies limit market expansion opportunities (Mussell, 2012); and
- businesses that operate in an environment influenced by marketing boards have little motivation to seize new opportunities or innovate (Forbes, 1982; Thompson, 2011).

Support for the policies note that the policies encourage the viability of small-scale farms without the continual need to increase the scale of production.

Consumer-focused: These criticisms focus on consumer level impacts and argue that supply management policies are unfair for consumers because consumers should not pay unfairly inflated price, and that there is an undue burden on lower-income consumers (Hart, 2005), particularly when these are inflated to cover administrative costs of the board (Sparling, 2011, Tamilia & Charlebois, 2007). While these consumer-level arguments are interesting, they do not address how alternative strategies (for example, subsidies from governments to producers) are considered fairer for consumers or address lower incomes more generally.

Producer-focused: These criticisms focus on producers, specifically primary producers of farmers: (1) the policies create high entry costs due for new producers who must buy quota (Hart, 2005); (2) the policies force the relinquishment of export opportunities in exchange for domestic producer protection (Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity, 2010); (3) there is a reliance on marketing boards to respond to market changes which leads to a lack of managerial skills (Tamilia & Charlebois, 2007); and, (4) market opportunities are restricted because relationships are limited between producers and processors in value chains (Mussell, 2012).

Sustainability and system-based: There are also arguments supportive of supply management, and many of these have been made producers in supply managed sectors of agriculture and from the organizations that represent them (for example, National Farmers Union). However, given increasing societal interest and concern about sustainability, social responsibility by business and the complexity of value chains and market dynamics in the food system, arguments focusing on these issues have gained more attention, although some of these arguments have been raised in the past[5]. Supportive arguments focus on the benefits to rural communities and to societies from ensuring producers in the value chain are successful. These include (but are not limited to): (1) the policies ensure producers are fairly and equitably compensated for their work without requiring government subsidies[6]; (2) the policies support high product quality standards; (3) the policies support rural communities and industries in developing countries are not hurt by exports from developed countries (Oxfam Canada, 2007); (4) there is less waste in the system because resources are more highly valued, and, (5) the policies protect producers from boom and bust cycles of the free market and ensure a consistent, supply of product domestically. Some supportive arguments address broader issues related to larger-scale agricultural production. The policies ensure that waste in the system is reduced because production is limited to only what is needed. Also, the policies support an environment better able to weather climate change impacts (Muirhead & Campbell, 2012). Last, the policies also support improved animal welfare (Qualman, 2012).

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[5] Gervais, Guillemette & Romain (2007) provide an in-depth analysis of welfare implications from two different mechanisms for pricing in the Canadian chicken industry providing one illustration of the complexity of food value chains. Supply management may be an appropriate in light of two potential market failures. First, Coffin, Romain and Douglas (1989) argued that market and price risks associated with chicken production and processing activities are significant while no insurance and/or this hedging mechanism exist to perfectly redistribute risks across agents in the supply chain. Second, supply management can potentially counter-balance the existence of market power beyond the farm gate. Fulton and Tang (1999) found significant departures from perfect competition in the chicken industry but could not identify which group exercises market power.

On reviewing comments both critical and supportive of supply management, it is noticeable that none address how the regulations supporting supply management might affect the business activities of smaller food *processing* businesses. Some research indicates that large processors may have adjusted to the system without significant adverse impacts on their business, because these larger processors are often multinationals who can manage the impacts of specific regulatory environments across different jurisdictions in which they operate (Larue & Lambert, 2012; van Duren & Brown-Andison, 1995). Some high level executives of these firms will say they have been co-opted. There is much anecdotal evidence about industry-level impacts, but there has been no single study focused on how supply management affects activities at the business level. In the management discipline, this gap is notable because it is at the business-level of analysis where managers consider external environmental factors to make decisions about business strategies and activities.

## *Supply management and businesses*

The context for the supply management debate has been characterized as one of "clashing ideologies" (Mussell, 2010, p. 2). It can be argued that every point of view in the debate makes assumptions arising from a specific worldview, including those from neo-classical economics perspective—for example, a focus on agricultural products as commodities, the growth requirement for welfare, and perceived limits on resources (Hansen Sterne, 2016).

Key arguments in support of supply management policies usually include the following: commodity pricing is fair to businesses at the producer level, pricing is predictable for consumers, quality programs are supported by the industry, farm income is equitable and predictable, rural communities are supported, and the system supports innovation, research, animal welfare, and environmental sustainability (Egg Farmers of Canada, 2015; McIsaac, 2008;

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[6] Farmers in supply managed industries are eligible for the same types of generally-available government supports as farmers in other industries, which is consistent with the types of government supports that have evolved as being permissible over several rounds of GATT and WTO negotiations,

Miner, 2011; Nudds, 2012). Until recently, a focus on pricing supports and production limits reinforced the view that agricultural products were commodities without differentiating characteristics. From a management perspective, this limits the competitive strategies available to businesses, but there is evidence that some producers in supply managed industries are innovating to serve new consumer demands (for example, organic turkey, free-range eggs) arising from "new food economies" (Blay-Palmer & Donald, 2006, p. 383; van Duren and Brown-Andison, 1995 ). New product innovation, however, is only one type of innovation that can create additional value. Product, process, and organization innovation can occur at any level of the value chain (for example, processing or retail levels); it may require collaboration across the chain. Even though producer innovation may be more likely when returns to the business are greater (Pelletier et al., 2018, p 11), others argue that higher returns reduce the incentive to innovate more broadly (Forbes, 1982; Thompson, 2011).

Opponents of supply management also make assumptions. One is that economic growth in industry is important to increasing the welfare of a country's citizens. Growth in size can be achieved by increasing the value of resources without increasing the amount of inputs required or by rearranging the use of resources. Daly (1987) was among the first to observe that economists often approach growth as increased scale rather than "qualitative improvement in the structure, design, and composition of physical stocks and flows, that result from greater knowledge, both of technique *and of purpose*" (italics original, p. 323). Assumptions about growth, therefore, can ignore growth potential using other resources, for example, skills, and competences.

Arguments in the supply management debate have remained similar for decades, so it is important to consider these against the backdrop of changes occurring in some food value chains. For example, there are demand changes that are affecting both production and processing levels of meat value chains from the growth in demand for organic food (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2017a) and halal meat products (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2017b). A study by FarmStart argued that supply management has benefits for conventional farming, but should be modernized to address other types of production (e.g. less conventional farming, niche farming), and to address the need for new farmers who are not likely to have the economies of scale to support quota investments (FarmStart, 2010, p. 6).

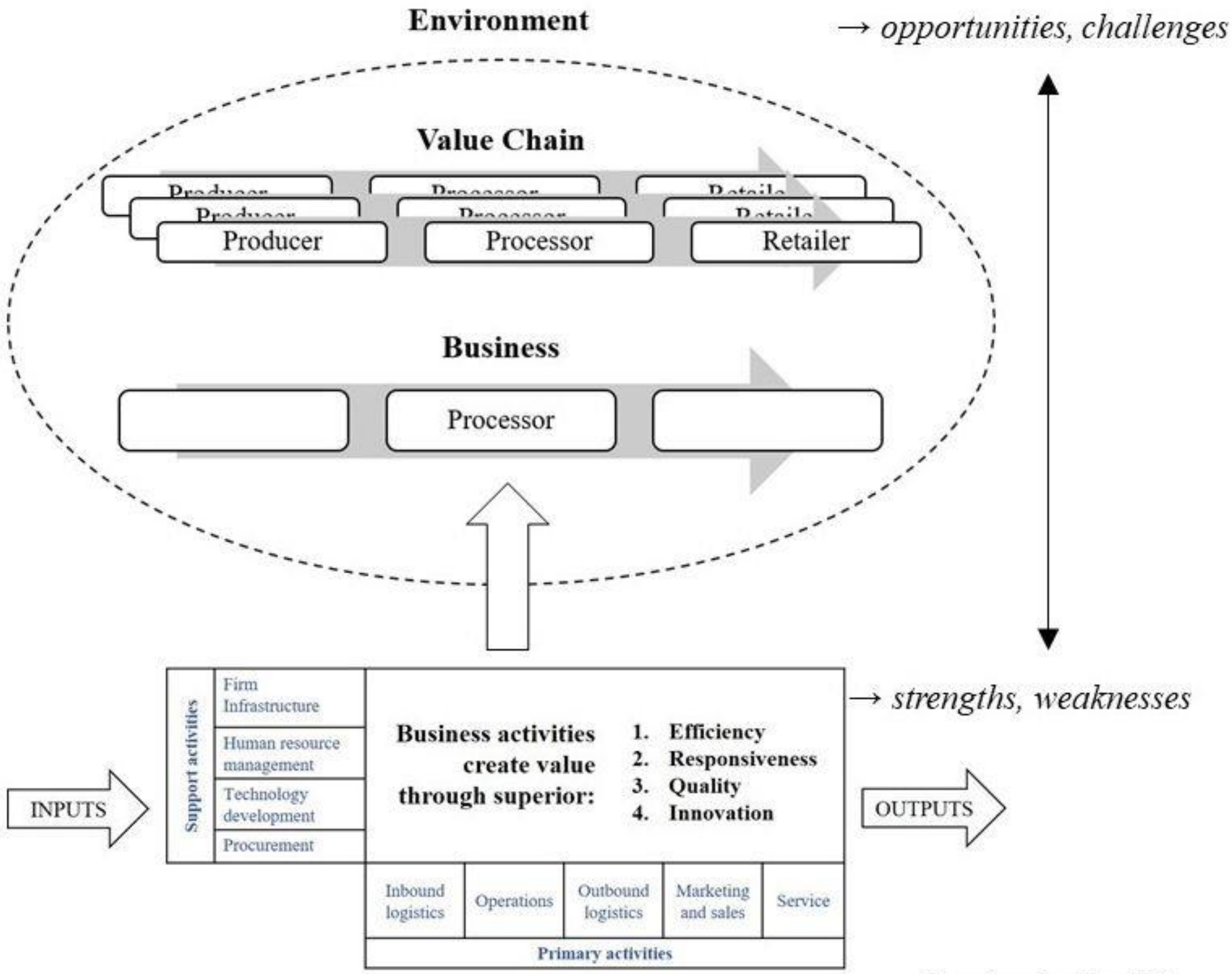
The report further underscores that policies should be modified to meet the needs of producers using a diversified strategy, and it argues that these changes will also help producers increase their resilience by reducing risk (p. 25). If supply management *does* limit producers from adopting a variety of strategies to create value, this may present a problem for some producers. However, it does not necessarily follow that these impacts on producers would have set effects on other levels of the value chain (for example, processors). These businesses do choose the strategy by which they create value. Following this logic, if supply management *does not* limit the strategies available to processors in the value chain, then the processing industry should show evidence that different types of activities are used to create value.

### *Linking regulatory environments to business activities*

Businesses need to create value and earn profits and sustain this dynamic to continue as businesses. To investigate how broad and specific regulatory environments impact business activities, this section links ideas about supply management to frameworks used by management scholars to conceptually link business environments with value creation through business activities.

Management scholars have developed a variety of frameworks to help understand how businesses achieve success. For example. some approaches address the external environment of a business to assess opportunities and challenges; others address exchanges between businesses in value chains. Still others examine how businesses can best create value through business activities. Figure 1 illustrates several levels of analysis used to explain how businesses are successful; these levels and the relation between them are described next.

**Figure 1**: Environments and business activities


Environment
→ opportunities, challenges
Value Chain
Producer
Processor
Retailer
Business
Processor
→ strengths, weaknesses
Support activities
Firm Infrastructure
Human resource management
Technology development
Procurement
Business activities create value through superior:
1. Efficiency
2. Responsiveness
3. Quality
4. Innovation
INPUTS
OUTPUTS
Inbound logistics
Operations
Outbound logistics
Marketing and sales
Service
Primary activities

Hansen Sterne & van Duren, 2019

The *environment* of a business comprises many factors (for example, political, economic, social-cultural, technological, legal, and environmental-physical) that create opportunities and challenges for businesses. Managers cannot control these factors but can respond to them using business strategies and activities. *Value chains* comprise organizations that coordinate exchanges of products, processes, and information. Theoretically, each level in the chain can add value as the product, service or technology is transformed from the primary-producer level to retailer[7] level before making its way to an end user.

Next, individual *businesses* create value through activities (Porter & Millar, 1985) and receive profit in exchange for creating this value. Finally, managers direct *primary activities* (for example, operations, marketing activities that relate to the transformation of inputs into outputs) and *secondary activities* (e.g. human resources, procurement that support primary activities) to create a unique competitive advantage (Hill, Jones, & Schilling, 2015, p. 118) that is different from, or better than, that offered by the competition. Value can be created in a variety of ways, but the following approaches are widely considered as useful in guiding managers' decisions:

- Businesses can create value through superior efficiency using economies of scale and process improvements
- Businesses can create value through superior customer responsiveness by focusing on and satisfying customer needs
- Business can create value through superior quality by improving product and service quality and production excellence
- Businesses can create value through superior innovation by focusing on market positioning and research and development activities.

Using these approaches, managers make decisions that coordinate and integrate value creation activities for the business. Their goal is to make the organization successful while taking into consideration the non-controllable factors that present challenges and opportunities in the external environment of the business.

The framework shows one way of thinking about the relationships between the external environment and the activities of businesses; it also provides the logic used to consider the business activities of Ontario meat processors in relation to regulatory factors in the environment. The environment in which businesses operate has many dimensions. Figure 2 attempts to simplify by listing commonly-assessed factors in the environment. One of these are *legal factors* which includes regulations, laws and rules that affect all businesses; this can be referred to as the *broad regulatory environment* of a business. A *specific regulatory environment* can be described as a part of the broad regulatory environment and—in this research—refers to the environment where businesses are subject to supply management policies and regulations.

In this study, we wanted to understand how the business activities of Ontario meat processors relate to broad and specific regulatory environments. Businesses that process turkey and/or chicken (for example) operate in a specific regulatory environment (supply management), while businesses that process only beef and/or pork (for example) operate outside it. Most meat processing businesses in Ontario, however, process multiple sources of protein so they operate both inside and outside of the specific regulatory environment of interest (supply management).

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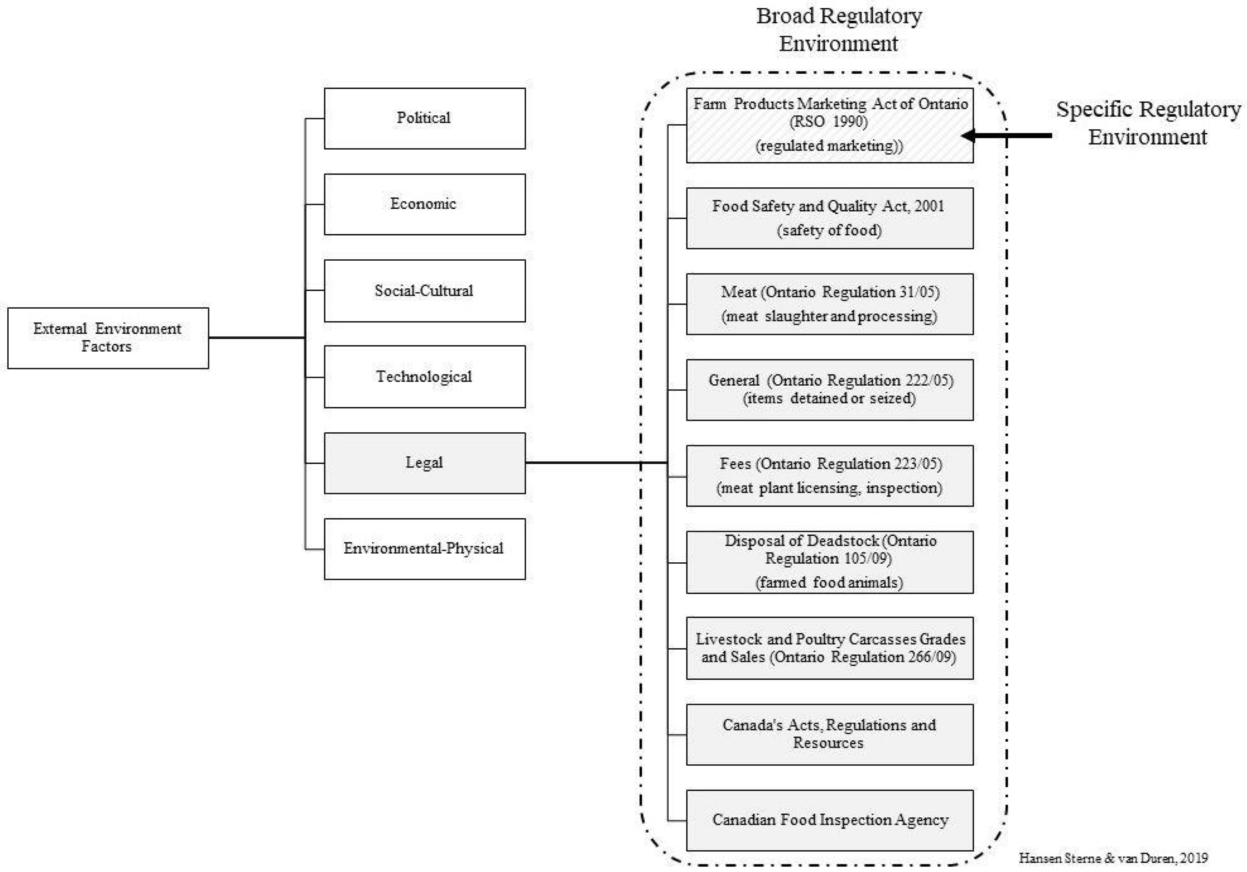
[7] This describes a simple value chain for illustrative purposes.

**Figure 2**: Broad and Specific Regulatory Environments of Ontario Meat Processors


Broad Regulatory Environment
External Environment Factors
Political
Economic
Social-Cultural
Technological
Legal
Environmental-Physical
Farm Products Marketing Act of Ontario (RSO 1990) (regulated marketing))
Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001 (safety of food)
Meat (Ontario Regulation 31/05) (meat slaughter and processing)
General (Ontario Regulation 222/05) (items detained or seized)
Fees (Ontario Regulation 223/05) (meat plant licensing, inspection)
Disposal of Deadstock (Ontario Regulation 105/09) (farmed food animals)
Livestock and Poultry Carcasses Grades and Sales (Ontario Regulation 266/09)
Canada's Acts, Regulations and Resources
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
Specific Regulatory Environment

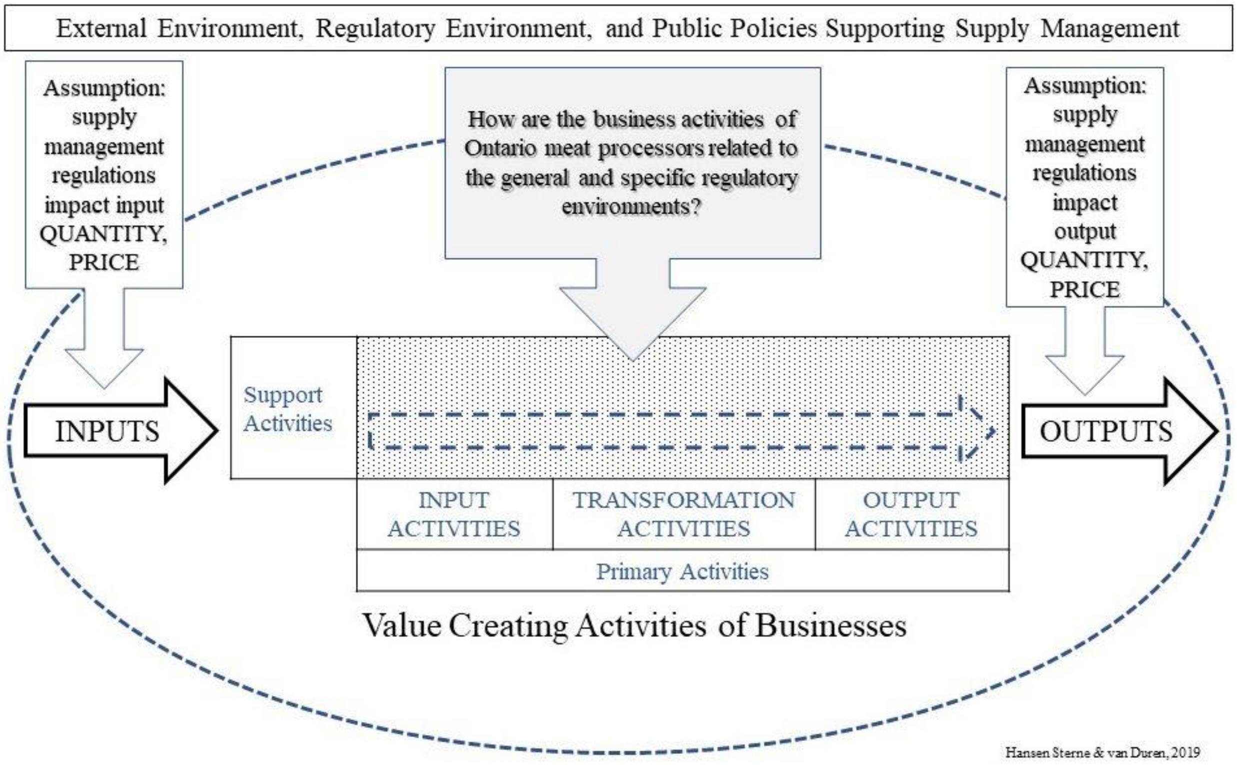
Hansen Sterne & van Duren, 2019

## The case research method

The question we sought to answer here is: How do the business activities of Ontario meat processors relate to broad and specific regulatory environments?

Propositions were developed in order to explore the relationship between the specific regulatory context and the business activities of Ontario meat processors and to direct the attention of researchers during the investigation (Yin, 2009, p. 28). Primary business activities were grouped into categories according to their role in value creation, beginning with activities related to the procurement of inputs, the transformation of those inputs, and those related to selling and distributing outputs. Because existing knowledge suggests that supply management affects the quantity and price of supply-managed inputs and outputs, it is logical that business activities at these phases would be affected for businesses that used supply-managed meats (for example, turkey) in their transformation (processing) activities. Logic also suggests that transformation activities may be impacted by supply management because those businesses processing high value products are more likely to focus on efficiency, decreased waste, or increase product innovation to create value and increase margins. Figure 3 illustrates the assumptions and logic used in creating these propositions.

**Figure 3:** Logic and propositions linking regulatory environments with business activities.


External Environment, Regulatory Environment, and Public Policies Supporting Supply Management
Assumption: supply management regulations impact input QUANTITY, PRICE
How are the business activities of Ontario meat processors related to the general and specific regulatory environments?
Assumption: supply management regulations impact output QUANTITY, PRICE
INPUTS
Support Activities
OUTPUTS
INPUT ACTIVITIES
TRANSFORMATION ACTIVITIES
OUTPUT ACTIVITIES
Primary Activities
Value Creating Activities of Businesses

Hansen Sterne & van Duren, 2019

As part of the case method, two pilot studies were conducted. The first pilot study was conducted for formative reasons and helped to develop interview questions. The second was used to test revisions to the interview guide and to help the researcher gain experience in using the guide. This study's use of case research method of inquiry closely followed Yin's (2009) work. This included the use of an extensive case study database that added data from secondary sources (for example, company websites and media reports) to that collected in interviews.

A multiple case design was used to allow data to be gathered from meat processing businesses in three specific regulatory contexts. The first context comprised businesses that processed meat/poultry inputs from both supply managed *and* non-supply managed producers. The second context comprised businesses that processed inputs only from supply managed producers. The third context comprised businesses that processed inputs only from non-supply managed producers. Replication logic was used to select cases for each context. According to best practices for case study research methods (Yin, 2009), *literal* replication was used within each context to select cases where similarities were expected while *theoretical* replication was used across contexts to select cases where differences were expected due to the specific regulatory environment.

## Results

Results presented here describe the business activities of fourteen Ontario meat processing businesses operating in three regulatory contexts:

1. Ten cases operated in the BOTH regulatory context. These businesses processed multiple meat inputs that were supply managed and not supply managed. Each did process turkey (the supply managed input of interest in the study) *and* pork (the non-supply managed input of interest in the study)[8];
2. Three cases operated in the SM (supply managed) regulatory context. These businesses did not process any non-supply managed inputs. Each of the three businesses processed turkey; and,
3. One case operated in the NSM (non-supply managed) regulatory context. This business processed only non-supply managed inputs and did process pork.

A case study database was used to track descriptive attributes that could be used to categorize cases in the study during analysis. For example, most cases were privately-owned businesses and were also incorporated; nine cases were firms of 30 years of age or more and none of the cases were less than five years in age. Table 1 describes the number of cases in the study by size of the business and provides the number of processing plants in Ontario and Canada for comparison purposes. Table 1 also shows the relatively high number of smaller processors that comprise the meat processing industries in Ontario and Canada.[9]

Analysis of the data comprised a series of steps that were iterative (but described here for simplicity as linear). Transcripts were read, concept maps were created from themes arising from the data, transcripts were read again, data from other sources was entered into case database, data was coded using NVivo software, transcripts were read again to capture illustrative quotations. Analysis continued through writing of individual case reports and comparative reports as recommended by Yin (2009). Inductive reasoning was used throughout the analysis, a practice that allows researchers to explore possible relationships between key concept areas but is not intended to provide causal evidence.

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[8] The majority of meat processing businesses in Ontario process multiple protein inputs and would be categorized as the BOTH regulatory context.

[9] Further description of the cases is not possible without identifying specific participants.

**Table 1:** Summary of Cases in Study and Number of Businesses Processing Meat (2012)

| Firm Size[10] | Cases in Study | Percent of Total | Plants in Ontario | Percent of Total | Plants in Canada | Percent of Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Micro | 1 | 7.1% | 49 | 18.7% | 143 | 19.7% |
| Small | 9 | 64.3% | 165 | 63.0% | 453 | 62.3% |
| Medium | 2 | 14.3% | 40 | 15.3% | 108 | 14.9% |
| Large | 2 | 14.3% | 8 | 3.1% | 23 | 3.2% |
| Total | 14 | 100.0% | 262 | 100.0% | 727 | 100.0% |

Researchers used *member check strategies* to support quality at two points in the research. First, because participants were assumed to be competent to share what they believed to be true (Hirschman, 1986, p. 244), transcripts of each interview were sent to each manager to confirm their accuracy. This step supported credibility in the research and permitted participants to verify data, make modifications to the transcripts, and offer additional explanatory detail (Bitsch, 2005). Second, member checks also included a presentation of the preliminary results by researchers to an audience of Ontario meat processors at an industry meeting. This step allowed researchers to share initial observations and relevance (Van de Ven, 2007) with an industry group that included participants and non-participants alike. Comments received from this audience indicated that initial results were an accurate representation of what industry managers experienced.

As ten cases of the fourteen were businesses that operated in the both context, researchers had an opportunity to learn from managers who made decisions in both specific regulatory contexts. Evidence about the broad regulatory environment is described first. This provides a backdrop for the evidence presented about the specific regulatory environment described second. Specific quotes from case transcripts are intended to highlight information provided by participants.

### *Impacts from the broad regulatory environment*

Managers were first asked to address opportunities and challenges the business faced in the environment. Responses that related to regulations of any type were classified during analysis as negative, positive, or neutral based on their impact on business activities and are discussed in this order. It is important to note that the comments shared here are not theoretical, but were, in fact, based on the experiences shared by managers in meat processing businesses.

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[10] Industry Canada uses the number of fulltime employees to create size ranges that translate to firm size categories: micro = 1 to 4 employees, small = 5 to 99 employees, medium = 100 to 499 employees, and large = 500+ employees. https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cis-sic.nsf/eng/h_00005.html )

### *Negative responses*

Managers described challenges in the business environment that were related to regulations. These comments related to food safety regulations. Some comments related to interactions between managers and food safety regulation inspectors. Managers described the power or authority of inspectors. One manager indicated food inspectors "win in the end". Inconsistency and lack of transparency emerged as a problem based on the comments of many managers. Managers described a lack of trust and observed that food safety inspectors wouldn't put anything in writing when requested to do so. Some described food safety regulations as impractical or unrealistic, particularly by managers of businesses who had not been subject to a product recall nor a food safety incident. Some described the level of detail in food safety regulations as unnecessary. One manager described highly-detailed, food safety regulations in the industry as open to interpretation, and indicated this caused confusion for managers and time delays for both businesses and value chains.

The detailed and changing nature of these regulations meant time and skill were always required for a business to stay in compliance. Another manager waved a hand toward the end of the office while he described the numerous shelves that held reference binders for different regulations and their updates. Managers noted that the time required to deal with regulations put pressure on other business activities. One described how time resources were always required when regulations were involved. Managers also described that despite frequent updating, labelling regulations had still not kept pace with changing demand. Current labelling regulations, for example, were often a few years old and would not necessarily meet the needs of current customers.  Managers also described how business activities were also impacted by regulations that "change an awful lot" in the industry. Regulations could also change or be revised more often than was practical, and regulations rarely had the flexibility to address the unique physical nature of each processing facility. Finally, some managers also described how they had to hire professionals with expertise in meat processing regulations to reduce the time burden of regulatory compliance and free up time for other business activities.

### *Positive responses*

Managers also described opportunities in the business environment related to regulations. These comments also related to food safety regulations. Some described a preference for a relaxed approach with food safety inspectors and considered the inspector as a "third eye" that could make helpful suggestions, particularly for items that may have been overlooked by staff or managers. Food safety regulations could also be viewed as "goals that we strive for" rather than barriers. Managers supported regulations related to consumer health (for example, allergies and food sensitivities) and believed there was value in meeting labelling regulations. Some noted that labelling regulations could form a positive part of sales and marketing activities for some customer segments. Some managers described they had the opportunity to work with the

Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to develop practical solutions for a variety of regulatory challenges related to industry food safety. One manager noted it was less stressful if one adopted the mindset that food safety regulations were a necessary part of the regulatory environment; it was best, therefore, to focus attention on the industry benefits received from food safety regulations rather than on complaining about unfair treatment by inspectors. Working with inspectors who knew industry regulations could support product and processing quality and increase processing knowledge.

#### *Neutral responses*

Managers also described aspects of the business environment that related to regulations but were categorized as neutral with respect to impact on business activities. They described the need to work with different levels of government to address industry regulations. Managers indicated that regulations were also regularly discussed with other members of the processing industry. Several managers noted on inconsistencies among regulatory jurisdictions (for example, between provinces and countries) but also noted that inconsistences could be problematic for some businesses but not for others. Inconsistences could be related to interprovincial and international differences in export regulations or to gaps between federal and provincial processing standards that consumers had perceived (for example, standards in Ontario versus Canada in the past). Managers also observed that the range of industry regulations and inspections could be considered the foundation of a strong industry, and that consistency in processing industry regulations was important because all firms in an industry could be affected by the same problem.

In summary, when asked about challenges and opportunities presented by the general environment, managers referred to food safety regulations and to some jurisdictional issues related to these same regulations.

### *Impacts from the specific regulatory environment*

Comments made by managers about the supply management regulations were categorized by researchers as negative, positive, or neutral based on their impact on business activities and are presented in this order. It is important to again note that the comments are not theoretical, but were, in fact, based on the experiences of managers in meat processing businesses.

#### *Negative responses*

Comments that were categorized as negative were those that provided challenges for business activities. Managers described how working with marketing boards cost businesses time resources due to bureaucracy and the politics around decision making. One manager used the word "brutal" while recounting a personal experience with a marketing board[11]. Managers described how time resources could be in short supply because of lengthy delays in decision making by marketing boards and the time it routinely took to resolve issues. Time delays had costs for businesses and took time resources away from other important issues. Managers described a lack of transparency when dealing with some marketing boards and indicated they were interested in the details of how supply management worked with respect to calculations for pricing and quota. Other managers talked about the theoretical limits of the supply management system on processing activities for products that required inputs with specific characteristics (for example, organic poultry).

Additional negative responses to supply management regulations in the specific regulatory environment were described by managers of larger processing businesses that relied on processing a higher volume of inputs. These managers felt their processing activities were impacted because they had to process at a high volume in order to manage constraints created by supply management. They described how processing activities could be impacted because of a limited quantity of raw inputs that could be procured in a timely fashion. Managers described challenges faced in planning activities. When planning new products using supply managed inputs, managers reported challenges when developing and evaluating growth scenarios because of uncertainty in obtaining inputs in a timely way. Managers described that they were unfairly shouldering risk the processing level of the supply chain. When asked to clarify, managers described how supply management regulations impacted purchasing activities; fewer alternative suppliers increased vulnerability of processors during disease outbreaks or following severe climate events. Managers described how justifying capital investments made financial planning activities more challenging. The higher costs of supply-managed inputs did not always processors to price products high enough to gain returns considered reasonable.

### *Positive responses*

Comments categorized as positive were those described as providing opportunities. Managers described how supply management regulations offered opportunities for processing businesses because they supported consistent and predictable prices and quality for inputs. Consistent quality and predictable pricing, in turn, supported purchasing activities and quality control activities in the business. Managers noted that processors were concerned about efficiency and waste reduction and all operations activities in the business focused on making wise use of all inputs. Managers observed that supply management regulations were not as important as other concerns they had, relatively speaking, because they were focused on building specialized skills[12] considered important to the differentiation strategy by which their business competed. Managers described how the acquisition of further processing capabilities[13] allowed the business to create new and unique meat products. One manager described the relationship between business strategy and supply management regulations as follows: "If you're processing a lot of poultry then (supply management) would be an issue".

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[11] The specific marketing board, although identified in the interview, cannot be identified in this paper for reasons of participant confidentiality.

#### *Neutral responses*

Managers also described aspects of the regulatory environment that were categorized as neutral with respect to impact on business activities. Other managers described how the political climate varied by marketing board. The impact on business activities from the political climate varied because it could affect the amount of time a business had to invest to resolve issues. Managers described a variety of experiences with marketing boards. One had experience with two marketing boards and observed that supply management regulations did not impact business activities but was simply a "marketing thing (with) ups and downs like anything else". Another described supply management as a relationship between farmers and abattoirs.

In summary, when asked about challenges and opportunities to business activities from the regulatory environment, managers shared a variety of experiences and opinions. Some comments suggest that the size of the processing firm (and the strategy used by the processor to create value) affects the perspective that the manager has about the impact of supply management regulations on business activities.

## Discussion

The results in the research are discussed next, first, according to the general environment and second, according to the regulatory environment.

### *Business activities and the broad regulatory environment*

Results suggest that managers in the Ontario meat processing industry hold a range of perspectives. Some see opportunities arising from the general environment while others see challenges. The variation in perspectives can be largely explained by the perceived impact of this environment on their business activities.

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[12] Specialized skills for smaller processors included butchering capabilities that supported the production of specialty products (for example, "broils" that required more than one type of meat input, sausages with proprietary recipes, or meat products using ingredients that supported special consumer dietary needs). Specialized skills also included marketing and communications expertise developed so processors could use direct-to-consumer marketing.

[13] Further processing activities are those activities that occur following slaughter and primary processing of animal carcasses.

Challenges presented by the general environment included issues related to working with food safety regulatory agencies (lack of time, expertise, trust, or opportunity); the frequency with which food safety regulations changed; inconsistencies in labelling regulations; and, gaps between regulatory jurisdictions across the country. Challenges impacted business-level activities by depleting time resources and increasing the need for specialized knowledge and skills to manage regulatory requirements. Despite these challenges, opportunities for businesses included: opportunities to improve learning capabilities; opportunities to support social or consumer health objectives (for example, for allergies or food safety) through product innovation; and opportunities to support marketing activities through labelling regulations that build consumer trust.

Managers drew on their past experiences with food safety regulatory personnel when describing impacts as challenges and opportunities. This suggests that relationships with regulators could also have an impact on how industry businesses choose to frame challenges and opportunities that can impact their business activities. The variety of experiences described also suggests there are managers open to closer ties with regulators despite the challenges found in these relationships. Closer relationships are perceived by managers as being useful in addressing the challenges and opportunities in the broad regulatory environment.

Food safety and labelling were regulations mentioned by all managers when asked about challenges and opportunities in the broad regulatory environment. However, the absence of comments across all cases (that is, all meat processing businesses in this research) that related to supply management regulations specifically suggests that supply management regulations were not considered the most important set of regulations in the broad regulatory environment. Instead, it appears that the sum of all regulations affecting meat processing businesses was top of mind for managers in the Ontario meat processing industry.

### *Business activities and the specific regulatory environment*

Despite a dominant market-level narrative about the impacts from supply management regulations, it cannot not be categorically assumed that the regulations are assessed as a challenge to business activities by Ontario meat processors. However, our results suggest that a regulatory environment with supply management may be a greater concern for managers of larger processing businesses than for smaller businesses. Managers noted both challenges and opportunities for business activities that were related to supply management, but these comments differed by business size and were related to the generic strategy (differentiation or low cost; Porter, 1980) used by the business to create value. On a related note, it is interesting that industry associations representing meat processors also differ by the size of businesses they represent (for example, Canadian Meat Council represents larger processors, Ontario Independent Meat

Processors represents smaller processors). Why might the size of a business be important when considering the impact on business activities from the regulatory environment?

Larger processors are more likely to make use of a low-cost strategy and these businesses create value by focusing on business activities that support this strategy, for example, negotiating prices of inputs, processing efficiently, and quickly innovating to introduce and produce new meat products that respond to broad consumer trends. Business activities in larger businesses are designed to encourage a broad set of customers to purchase the products offered by the business where the low cost of the final product is a source of value for the end consumer. A low-cost strategy is challenging for processors who use supply managed meat inputs because the regulations create barriers for business activities developed around large input volume, efficient processing, and lower final product pricing.

Businesses may adjust business activities to create more value through their procurement activities. For example, they may include negotiating skills to keep down input costs. Supply management regulations can constrain these business activities or encourage other procurement strategies; for example, buying partly processed food components. In addition, businesses using a low-cost strategy often operate with narrow profit margins and have less control over margins in supply managed regulatory environments. A low-cost strategy requires a business to create value through efficiency that is achieved by increasing processing volume and marketing activities. Results suggest that creating value through these efficiencies could be limited by supply managed ingredients because of production quotas.

Finally, businesses using low-cost strategies may also create value through business activities such as innovation and customer responsiveness. Production quotas for supply managed inputs could limit the ability of larger firms to react quickly to changing customer demands because the volume of meat inputs available may not always meet processor needs. Practically speaking, however, larger processors do work with supply managed producers to help estimate demand. This challenge may, therefore, be an example of larger processors wanting to extend control over the specific regulatory environment that manages the production of some meat-based inputs.

In the same vein, smaller processors are more likely to use a differentiation strategy and focus efforts on business activities that support this strategy. For example, they may focus on marketing activities like connecting with consumers to get feedback about their products or ideas for new products. They could also develop and use specialized processing activities to create unique products with higher margins that appeal to narrower market segments. Business activities can be designed to encourage multiple and smaller segments of customers to purchase differentiated products and services offered by the business, based on perceived value of the product attributes at a higher price. As a result, supply management environments can create opportunities for the business activities of smaller processors. Smaller processors were creating value through business activities that supported a differentiation strategy, for example, highly-trained staff and expert butchers who processed, packaged, and delivered meat products to niche markets. A regulatory environment with supply management may support these business activities because the system provides consistent quality and predictable pricing.

As a result, businesses do not necessarily have to develop specialized procurement activities as do the larger processors. Instead, smaller businesses can focus on specialized processing activities that support a differentiation strategy, such as increasing knowledge and capabilities that support the processing of specialty meat products (e.g. gluten-free, allergen-free) for important niche markets. Because smaller businesses can focus on niche markets in which consumers pay a premium, smaller firms are able to capture the margin needed to cover input costs that are dictated by the supply management system and beyond the control of the processor.

## Conclusion

Part of the specific regulatory environment for some Ontario meat processing firms is a set of regulations referred to as supply management. The propositions suggested that inputs, transformation, and output activities would be impacted by the regulatory environment and results support this connection. Results showed that managers of meat processing businesses had a variety of perspectives about the impacts on business activities from the broad regulatory environment. They suggested that the impacts from food safety regulations specifically were perceived as an impact on business activities including input, transformation, and output stages of value creation. Results also showed that the size of the meat processing business may be related to the perceptions of managers about the impacts from the specific regulatory environment. Industry managers described challenges and opportunities that were related to supply management regulations, but their perceptions differed according to the size of the business and were related to the generic strategy (differentiation or low cost) that the business used to create value.

Results in this study indicate that it is important to consider the size of the business and the generic, value-creating strategy used to create advantage before considering how supply management regulations could impact business activities. The complete set of government-enacted regulations that impact businesses in the Ontario meat processing industry provide a greater challenge for processors than were supply management regulations specifically. This research also found that a variety of business activities supported value creation in the Ontario meat processing industry. Regulations supporting supply management provided challenges for larger businesses that created value using a low-cost strategy while smaller businesses that created value using a differentiation strategy saw opportunities.

There are limitations in the research. The case method of research was an appropriate method by which to study the research question. However, while the method provided flexibility for researchers and descriptions of business level activities for specific regulatory contexts, all managers interviewed worked for businesses that were successful (as defined by their existence at the time of data collection). It would be interesting to have included interviews with managers of businesses that no longer existed. Some processors closed in the late 2000s when government-enacted regulations for meat inspection in the province of Ontario changed. It would, however, be difficult to locate these managers; furthermore, several industry contacts told researchers these managers would be unlikely to participate or unwilling to recall their experiences.

In addition, there are few processors that operate in supply managed (SM) or non-supply managed (NSM) environments; some managers in these regulatory contexts would not agree to participate in the research or could not be reached. As a result, there were few other processing businesses that could be contacted as replacements. To address this challenge, the researchers relied on data provided by businesses operating in the BOTH specific regulatory environment.

This research makes several important contributions. First, the research presents results that suggest that a set of highly-criticized Canadian regulations present both challenges and opportunities for the business activities of Ontario meat processors. This is important because reports that have claimed that supply management regulations negatively affect the competitiveness of the Ontario meat processing industry. This research suggest that specific sets of regulations may, in fact, offer opportunities for value creation by supporting some business activities. Second, the research addresses a gap in knowledge about the impact of specific regulatory environments on business level activities. Reports critical of supply management conduct market-level analyses but make conclusions at the business level. Third, the research demonstrates the use of multiple management approaches to create a framework that can help us think about business-level activities in specific regulatory environments. Existing management theories can provide knowledge helpful when considering value creation under a variety of settings, including a specific regulatory environment as described here.

Implications of this research are fourfold. First, policy makers should consider that business level strategies are the foundation of value creation using the management approaches applied here. It is important to consider the variety of strategies and business activities used by businesses in an industry to create value when considering the impact of policy changes or drafting new policies. Second, managers of businesses in value chains with supply management regulations may gain insights into how changes to supply management could impact business activities in the future. The insights provided by this research may help managers think about the business activities used to create value when they update strategic plans vis-à-vis expected and unexpected changes in their regulatory environment. Third, decision makers in government may wish to consider the challenges that highly-regulated industries face and the impact on business activities from a collection of regulations rather than a single set of regulations.

While managers in this research indicated they saw both opportunities and challenges to the general environment, it is important that governments support these industries through marketing, trade, and export policies that leverage the value created through the strategies and activities of businesses in a specific regulatory environment. Last, provincial and federal governments must carefully consider impacts (intended or unintended) from future trade negotiations. The Canadian government may need to plan how it will support the processing sector if the agreement is terminated. The Ontario meat processing industry is diverse with a range of processors nimble enough to develop business activities that can successfully support differentiation or low-cost value creation strategies. It is important to understand, however, that business activities develop in a specific regulatory environment, and rapid changes to this environment may impact industry diversity by affecting some businesses more than others.

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Original Research Article

# Honouring the grandmothers through (re)membering, (re)learning, and (re)vitalizing Métis traditional foods and protocols

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## Abstract

In Canada, Métis cultural restoration continues to advance. Food practices and protocols, from the vantage point of Métis women who were traditionally responsible for domestic work, qualify as important subjects worthy of study because food and food work are integral components of family health and well-being. This qualitative grounded theory study explored Métis cultural food in Manitoba, Canada, with the intent to honour Métis women. In-depth interviews were conducted with Métis residents of urban Winnipeg and southern rural Manitoba. Results indicate that women were traditionally the keepers of culinary knowledge and practices in Métis families, and were highly resourceful in feeding large families and often other community members. Traditional foods were often land-based (wild and cultivated) and frequently enhanced with market foods. There is a strong sense of history, pride, identity, and desire for revitalization through cultural activities such as food practices; however, disrupted cultural knowledge translation around food and the nutrition transition to unhealthy Western diets present challenges. Results of this research will provide Manitoba Métis people with opportunities for critical reflection on food and their identity as Métis; food origins; the role of food in our lives; and how ecological and political structures affect the production and consumption of food. In addition, this research will provide an alternative discourse as it relates to Métis food, supporting a holistic approach to overall health and well-being that is self-affirming and strength-based.

Keywords: Métis, Canada, food, identity, traditional food, Indigenous

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## Introduction

> We Métis carry the stories our grandmothers told. We carry them and we survive. (Mayer, 2007)

Food practices and protocols, from the vantage point of Métis women who were traditionally responsible for domestic work, is an important subject because food is both medicinal and cultural. When cultural knowledge associated with foodways[1] is shared within and among communities, food has the capacity to heal and nourish the human spirit and create shared identities. Métis people, the children born of the coalescence between First Nations women and European traders during the Fur Trade (1600-1800s), are one of three recognized Indigenous groups in Canada under Section 35(2) of the Canadian Constitution Act [Canadian Constitution, 1982, s35(2)], and are (re)asserting and (re)vitalizing Métis cultural identity. Exercising Métis rights and identity have been important goals of past and present pursuits, which have paved the way for further exploration regarding Métis cultural health in Manitoba (Préfontaine, Dione, Young, & Farell Racette, 2003). Métis are shedding the layer of shame that has inflicted our people over the last century due to racist and oppressive policies meant to keep us down as a nation. Despite the heresies of colonial oppression, Métis collectively stand in solidarity with pride, consciously vocalizing a readiness to (re)assert cultural roots.

The purpose of this research was to investigate Métis people's perceptions and experiences of food practices and foodways taught from women in their families. Importantly, by exploring women's work, Métis participants were given a platform to honour Métis women for their unique role in nurturing family life, specifically in the domain of foodwork. Throughout this research, questions were asked such as: What do urban and rural Métis people consider traditional foods? How are these traditional foods linked to Métis identity and well-being? What important cultural lessons are associated with Métis traditional foods? How can traditional foods be (re)learned, (re)membered, and (re)vitalized in rural southern Manitoba including urban Winnipeg? What are potential barriers and/or opportunities to accessing and consuming Métis traditional foods?

## Background

Métis women are the culinary vessels in their homes. Food is essential to sustaining Métis health and family life, which are intrinsically connected. Yet, neither subject has been empirically explored. Consequently, a cultural-health gap exists. In Canada, Métis cultural restoration continues to advance within the Canadian narrative, where we as Indigenous[2] women aim to create space and capture the fruitful seeds of our epistemologies in their many spheres, including food and foodwork, because as Smith (2012) so eloquently asserted "Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our ways, for our own purposes" (p. 29).

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[1] Foodways - the production, preparation, serving and eating of food (Parsons, 2014)

[2] The term Indigenous carries political implications for the First Peoples of the world, respecting that Indigenous peoples are bounded by similar worldviews yet our cultures are uniquely distinct.

Moreover, prior to the emergence of female Indigenous scholars in recent decades, women's roles were absent from the literature, or where present, contained white-male biases (Van Kirk, 1980). Importantly, contributions of Indigenous research and epistemological worldviews that are not written in the spirit of collaboration *with* Indigenous peoples *for* Indigenous peoples arguably lack meaningful posture. Consequently, in keeping with principles of Métis ethics, this research was conducted by a Métis scholar with other Métis community members.

Furthermore, although Indigenous groups share similar worldviews, Métis culture is a fusion of diverse cultural sources and is celebrated as unique (Saul, 2008). Importantly, recognizing, respecting, and addressing distinct needs of all three recognized Indigenous groups in Canada are key components of reconciliation as outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). It becomes vital then, that pan-Indigenous perspectives are avoided that may otherwise stifle Métis representation, self-determination, and cultural identity (Evans et al., 2012).

### *Métis philosophies*

Métis philosophies are based on Métis cultural values and principles that have been laid out by Métis Elders. The Métis philosophies outlined below informed this research, and were derived from *In the Words of Our Ancestors: Métis Health and Healing* (Métis Centre, National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2008). The Métis philosophies suggest that:

- women are the life-force behind the centrality of family;
- knowledge must be shared;
- people should seek the knowledge from those who have the knowledge;
- Métis are encouraged to learn the Michif language from oral histories and traditional knowledge;
- acknowledging the person who shared the knowledge is to honour the person and their oral traditions; and
- learning and recording the Métis cultural protocols is important in order to pass the knowledge down.

## Methods

This qualitative research was informed by Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) methodology to explore Métis foodways and cultural protocols while at the same time honour Métis women.

CGT aims to explore social processes where prior theories do not adequately exist. It captures the fluidity of on-going interaction between researcher and participant and thus actions and meaning are shaped (Hallberg, 2006). CGT was suited for this research because it "located the research process and product in historical, social, and situational conditions" (Charmaz, 2016). This critical inquiry investigated Métis historical foodways, their social context, and how these manifest in people's lives today. CGT also acknowledges the roles of participants as well as the researcher in knowledge construction (Watling, 2012). This is consistent with the Métis philosophies outlined above. CGT has also been identified as suitable methodology for Indigenous research (Elers, 2016; Kandasamy et al., 2017) as well as investigating sociocultural aspects of food (Blow, Patel, Davies, & Gregg ., 2019).

The population of interest for this study was Métis people who reside in Winnipeg, Manitoba (MB) and surrounding rural communities in Manitoba. Participant recruitment utilized purposive and snowball sampling (Braun & Clark, 2013). The lead researcher contacted members of the Métis community who she knew were cultural knowledge keepers. They recommended initial participants as part of the sampling process. The sampling process led to women and men who could provide insight into family food traditions.

A semi-structured interview guide was generated with the help of four Métis community members. In-person feedback was collected at individual meetings and incorporated into the final guide. Prior to the interviews, participants completed a brief demographic questionnaire. In addition, participants were asked to name the women in their lives who have had the most impact in their families as it relates to culinary preparations, food knowledge, and cultural protocols.

All interviews took place in participants' homes using the Kitchen Table reflexivity approach (Kohl & McCutcheon, 2014). This approach shifts the interview dynamic to allow greater agency over their narrative because the dialogue occurs in their familiar setting. Interviews ranged from one hour to three hours, not including time spent getting to know each other. All interviews except two were digitally recorded. Two participants preferred not to be digitally recorded, however, were comfortable with note-taking during the interview. With permission from participants, note-taking was practiced during all interviews.

All interviews were conducted and transcribed verbatim by the researcher or trained transcriber. NVivo software was used to organize the data and facilitate analysis. Within hours of the conducted interviews, detailed reflexive memos were recorded in a journal which contained personal reflections on the researcher's experience of interviewing members of her Métis community. For this study, open and complete coding, by hand, allowed for core categories to emerge. Open coding is the initial process to begin assigning codes (labels) to excerpts whereas complete coding is the process of assigning labels to the entire data set (every excerpt) (Charmaz, 2006). The two approaches worked in tandem with each other. For example, all sentences, one at a time, in the transcription were carefully scrutinized while asking "how does the data relate to the research questions?"

Next, the constant comparative approach was utilized which compares transcript data in order to explore variations, similarities and differences which help move core categories into themes and sub-themes (Dick, 2000). Flipping back and forth among the data sets, distinct themes from the core categories emerged. Themes are the *central organizing concepts* that have answered your research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Lastly, axial coding served to collapse relationships between themes and sub-themes. Axial coding serves to connect relationships between themes and sub-themes based on similarities in the categories (Hallberg, 2006). This can be interpreted as unveiling the story. For this research, five themes and eight sub-themes emerged.

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board and individual consent was obtained from all participants. In addition, approval for this project was granted by the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) to ensure the project and methodology employed were culturally appropriate.

## Results

A total of 21 in-depth face-to-face interviews took place throughout rural and urban Winnipeg, Manitoba. Three dyads included mother and daughter, brother and sister, and cousins. One triad consisted of a mother and her two daughters. A group consisted of five females, of whom four are Elders. Eighteen women and three men ranged in age from 37 to 79 years old. Eleven people resided in urban Winnipeg, whereas, the other ten lived in rural areas surrounding Winnipeg including locations such as: Lorette, Stonewall, St. Laurent, St. Anne, and St. Malo. Findings of this research were based on personal experience and memories of food and the important women in participants' lives. All participants in this study could vividly recall childhood memories associated with the foods and recipes prepared by women in their families. Participants described their personal or family food history over multiple generations. These memories provided a lens on the Métis "foodscape" in Manitoba.

In the upcoming sections five themes are described and include: powerful memories; Métis women at work; matriarchal culinary vessels; Métis food heritage and identity; wanting a resilient food system. The first theme describes various foods that made up participants' diets including foods deemed traditional. The second theme describes *how* such foods and dishes were prepared, followed by the third theme which describes how foodwork played a role in relationships and space. The fourth theme links food practices to identity, and the final theme provides a platform for self-determination.

### *Powerful memories: Métis food landscapes and protocols*

For Métis families in this study, powerful childhood memories were associated with hunting, harvesting, gardening, farming, fishing, and neo-traditional[3] recipes that combined both land and market foods. Discussing memories for participants also revealed how certain *types* of foods or meals came to be understood as *traditional.* The term traditional was connected to factors such as: if it were hunted; its deliciousness; familiarity; if prepared for special occasions; if prepared in abundance; and importantly, the stories attached to the recipes that their grandmothers prepared.

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[3] Neo-traditional foods are market foods/ingredients that contribute to cultural recipes that are viewed as traditional

Many ingredients were purchased from the store including flour to make bread and bannock, which for many participants was served daily. Urban and rural participants grew up consuming primarily the same foods but not necessarily at the same time in their lives. This is because, at one point or another, all participants had stated that they either lived with their families in rural communities or maintained ties with family members who lived in rural communities. When families migrated to Winnipeg foods such as wild game, water fowl and fish became less accessible.

Wild game such as moose, muskrat, venison, and rabbit were reported as traditional as were water fowl such as duck, geese, and muskrat because of their presence in participant' diets. Three participants reported also eating beaver, however, their responses suggested that beaver was not necessarily a desirable meat and was consumed when other game was unavailable. Fish such as jack, pickerel, sucker, and white fish were the most commonly mentioned fish that were consumed.

Within Métis families, a large part of women's work was gardening. Although a variety of vegetables were viewed as an essential part of participants' diets, the term traditional was used to describe only potatoes. Some families reported harvesting two gardens, while for another family had three gardens, producing potatoes, vegetables, and flowers. Contrarily, one family reported that they did not have access to a garden and felt that only families "with money" had gardens.

Saskatoon berries, raspberries, low bush cranberries, mossberries, and strawberries were referred to as traditional foods by several participants because they were often available, delicious tasting, and reminded participants of their mothers. Gathering berries was laborious and that duty was assigned to children.

Many participants reported living on a farm and raising livestock, which provided chicken, pork and beef, ingredients in several family recipes. For example, chicken pot pies, cabbage pork soup thickened with flour, and pork stew were family favorites. Cattle were of importance because they provided milk, cream for butter, and ground beef for hamburger, considered a versatile ingredient. It was used in soups, mixed in with gravy and poured over boiled potatoes, or made into meatballs known as "les boulettes" all of which are still viewed as family classics and enjoyed by some participants today.

Wild rice, a plant crop, was also referred to as traditional food. It was a dish that participants vividly remembered eating because of the rigorous process involved to harvest it. Often participants spoke of meals that combined traditional foods (grown, harvested, or hunted) with purchased goods such as dried peas, macaroni, rice, and processed meats and cheeses. These 'neo-traditional' recipes became popular 'go-to' dishes for many Métis families because of the volume they provided, inexpensive ingredients, good taste, and convenience they afforded busy mothers. These dishes became staple foods in the diets of Métis families and have since attained traditional status among Métis families.

> Yeah I don't understand it but his favourite is bologna and jam, bologna and strawberry jam. You cannot get more Métis than bologna and strawberry jam sandwich, like you can't. [F, Urban]

Other purchased foods included bacon and fats such as lard and butter, which were used for baking and frying. Bacon fat drippings were saved and stored in cans to reuse for spreads, re-frying, or flavouring. Often, warm grease was enjoyed with a slice of bread or bannock, where the texture of the bread made it easy to soak up the fat.

For participants, discussing bread and bannock brought positive memories associated with their mother or grandmother's delicious recipe. A positive memory for many participants included watching their grandmothers leaning over a large table while making several loaves of bannock or bread for the week.

### *Celebratory meals & desserts*

For participants, memories of celebratory holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's included a great deal of special food when grandmothers pulled out their best recipes. Some food terms were described in Michif, the Métis language. *"*Les boulettes*"* (oversized boiled meatballs) were deemed a Métis specialty by several participants and usually only served during holiday gatherings due to the amount of work required to prepare the recipe. Rabbit's brains, headcheese, "boudan" (blood sausage), and pea soup were also remembered as specialty Métis foods.

Additionally, holiday celebrations meant that special desserts were made. According to one participant, pies were often made by a designated woman in the family whose specialty was baking. The technique required for mastering lemon meringue pie from scratch required specific culinary skills; hence, participants expressed that only women who were deemed *great cooks* could successfully make meringue pie. Three families expressed that, despite the dessert being a family favorite, lemon meringue pies were no longer made from scratch because of lack of skill and/or time, or the recipe had not been passed down; therefore, pre-packaged pies were opted for instead.

"Potato sac" or "pudding in a bag" was a favorite Métis dessert served at Christmas dinners and included dried fruit such as raisins or currents. The sweet dessert had the texture of fruit cake and was eaten warm with a brown sugar sauce poured over it. This was made from brown sugar and butter and heated on the stove. Bread pudding was another cherished recipe made with brown sugar. The labour and process it took to make these desserts, in addition to their deliciousness, is why they were deemed traditional specialty dishes.

"Tourtierre" was another common specialty savoury pie served during holiday meal gatherings; however, the ingredients for what makes this pie traditional were controversial. Some participants argued that traditional tourtierre should only be made purely with pork, and never to include beef, whereas, others stated that a combination of beef and pork ingredients still constituted a traditional pie.

> When I grew up it was a big deal about meat pie was whether you put 100 percent pork in it which is the French recipe or if you mixed in the beef to cut the porkiness, and what percentage was the sweet spot if you believed in mixing the two and there was no other kind, like I was quite a bit older before someone snuck in an onion or a mushroom. [F, 58, Urban]

### *Métis women at work: Culinary methods and preservation*

Participants described how their mothers prepared and preserved foods for their families. Such knowledge provides insight into Métis culinary methods, which were described as laborious and time consuming. Large intergenerational Métis families meant women had to batch cook in large quantities to provide the food volume to meet their family's dietary needs. Bread and bannock along with vegetable or meat soups or stews were foods made frequently and in abundance. Meats were usually served with potatoes (boiled, fried, or mashed) and a combination of other garden vegetables that had been boiled or pickled. One family particularly enjoyed the taste of boiled cow neck bones, a process that took several hours.

Families caught their own fish, which was prepared and eaten in several ways including sandwiches, fish cakes, and soup. Fish soup was made by boiling the head of the fish. Women canned fish, which was prepared at home, mixed with mayonnaise and used as a tasty sandwich filling. Additionally, fish was smoked in outdoor smokers, baked whole with the scales removed, or steamed directly on top of potatoes.

Various ingredients were added to wild rice dishes including butter, onions, celery, mushrooms, and at times bacon. Bacon, a high cost commodity, was viewed as a speciality item and therefore held a prized status in dishes. For example, one participant explained that her family only purchased bacon on pay days, representing relief from weeks of hardship.

> Granny would put mushroom, celery, onions, mushroom soup... sometimes, uh bacon. It was always, we knew that she got paid if there was bacon in it. [F, Rural]

Berries were gathered and eaten fresh or mothers preserved them into jams and jellies. They were enjoyed in many ways including ice cream topping, in pies, or eaten with milk.

Traditionally, women cooked with only salt and pepper or minimal spices, which some participants described as the "Métis way of cooking". For some, this bland cooking is still preferred in their adult life. Sometimes more flavours and spices were introduced later in life, usually by the children of families who moved into urban centres and had greater access to a wider range of foods.

### *Preservation methods*

Pickling, canning, and cold storage were the most common preservation methods reported. Commonly, women prepared a variety of pickles such as dill, sweet, bread, and mustard. Meat and fish were also preserved through a process of canning in salt and vinegar. According to one participant, using vinegar to can meat was necessary to soften bones. The same participant stated that a high level of culinary skill was necessary to can meat otherwise, if done incorrectly, it could cause illness. Additionally, whole cleaned fish were preserved by freezing it in empty milk cartons filled with water. Berries were canned in jars with sugar and referred to as "preserves". Berry recipes that did not gel properly were used for other purposes such as syrup because food waste was rarely practiced. One participant referred to this un-gelled syrup as "failed jam".

## Matriarchal culinary vessels on the home front: Roles & relationships

Community building and family bonds were established and strengthened as a result of the workings within the kitchen, where Métis women asserted their territorial influence. Food teachings occurred through the complex web of intergenerational kinship among women and their families.

### *Party's in the kitchen: Métis women embrace family and community*

For Métis women, food work was a conduit to family connectedness and community bonds. Women, as the main family food providers, were busy from morning to night orchestrating the meals for family and friends. The kitchen was deemed the place to connect, laugh, and share stories. Kitchens were community hubs and food was the centre of this hospitability. Regardless of who you were or the reason for the visit everyone was welcome in Métis homes. Participants acknowledged that despite the impoverishment of many Métis families, whatever food was available was shared with family and guests. Some participants felt that such gestures signified the "good old days." Cultural food mannerisms included staying to eat, regardless of how short the visit was intended to be. To decline an invitation would have been construed as rude.

> And you can't say no either, even if you go drop something off and you owed someone money and you'd go…. they're eating and it's like—oh

> darn they're eating…here's the money, quick and go. Nope you sit down here…oh ok I gotta eat. [F, Rural]

Some participants expressed that they were considered a *"favourite"* grandchild, which was conveyed each time they were selected over others to partake in kitchen work. The time spent alone with grandmother in the kitchen, in silence, was representative of the strong relationships that existed between them. Kitchen-time awarded to grandchildren was deemed prestigious and held in high regard because it was an opportunity to bond.

Additionally, family bonds were also evident in the role that an aunt played. Aunties were viewed as loving and nurturing individuals who provided foundational "glue" among families, often gifting desserts and other sweets to nieces and nephews. Many participants mentioned that their aunts provided culinary guidance in ways their mothers did not and played a key part in the process of transmitting cooking skills. Aunties were viewed as affectionate and gentle when answering food-related questions, whereas mothers' responses to foodwork were at times deemed strict or abrupt, thus participants described that they would seek culinary advice from an Aunty. Through the language of edification, it was evident that these women played an important role in transmitting culinary knowledge to nieces.

### *Grandma's kitchen was her domain*

Participants' personal accounts expose that kitchen territory was understood to be strictly the matriarch's domain, and kitchen access was granted according to age. Young children were not allowed in the kitchen and were often told to go play outside. The responsibilities of the more tedious tasks of peeling, chopping, and or washing dishes were assigned to older female children.

> I guess I've been cooking since I was very young. Like I've been cooking for my family since I was 9 years old. It is because I'm the oldest. [F, Rural]

A common perception for several participants was that they did not learn how to cook from their mother simply because they were not allowed in the kitchen. Some participants report that learning to cook was a skill developed later in life, after they had married. However, some participants expressed negative emotions and feelings of inadequacy because of missed kitchen-work opportunities, due to dismissals. For example, one participant projected frustration towards her mother when sharing her personal experience of being ousted from the kitchen at a young age. For her, feelings of rejection, anger, and disinterest in kitchen work have manifested throughout adulthood.

> When I was growing up I remember trying to do dishes when I was three years old and I dropped one…never, ever allowed to touch dishes again. To this day I can't stand doing dishes and she gets mad because I don't

> like doing the dishes – 'you'll break it'! She would never let me touch the dishes growing up and I don't like doing dishes now. [F, Urban]

Another participant felt that, had she been allowed to participate in the food work as child, she may have become a stronger cook as an adult and perhaps would enjoy the task more than she does. Her rationale is based on the differences she sees between herself and her sisters, who she feels are better cooks because they were allowed to help in the kitchen.

## *Métis food heritage and culture provide further insight into Métis identity*

Study results demonstrated that Métis communities were diverse, and therefore, it was common to incorporate ingredients or swap recipes shared by other women in the community. Throughout interviews, at times, there was a pull from participants directing comments into either their Indigenous heritage or towards their European heritage. For example,

> "Do you want me to access my Métis side through all of it?" [F, Rural].

Another participant expressed uncertainty whether cucumber sandwiches, a food he grew up eating, could be classified as a Métis food because it was recognizable as European:

> "Cucumbers though, we thought that was our English heritage not our Métis heritage." [M, Urban].

Participants also identified important cultural food values and beliefs rooted in land knowledge, hunting practices, and ceremonial practices.

### *Fusion cuisine*

Several participants discussed how their grandmothers "borrowed" recipes from their neighbors or married into lineages that would introduce them to recipes from other heritages, typically European. This was the result of settler immigration to Manitoba from predominantly European countries and living in close settlements in the Red River Valley. Participants who grew up in St. Laurent reported that holiday celebrations with community members included various Polish and Ukrainian dishes such as perogies[4] and holopchi[5]. One participant's family favored a dessert called vinatartar,[6] which originated from Icelandic traditions and how the dessert came to be absorbed in her family is described below.

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[4] Perogies are a small dough dumpling with a filling such as potato or cheese, typically served with onions or sour cream.

[5] Holopchi are Ukrainian cabbage rolls made from hamburger (or sausage), rice, and onion rolled into a cabbage leaf.

> …and on my Grandma's side because we lived in the Red River Valley and so there was lots of Icelandic people there back in the day. And so it was a delicacy. [F, Rural]

Some participants expressed dual identities when discussing their food experiences. For example, participants would describe foods such as wild meats specific to their Indigenous heritage; whereas European foods were often connected to their European heritage. Because of their Métis heritage, people frequently categorized food as being from one world or the other.

### *Rooted land-based food values and beliefs*

The analysis of Métis foodways and protocols showed that participants had strong intrinsic connections to the land. Many participants felt that spending time in the bush, whether picking berries, hunting, or cooking outdoors, evoked a sense of rootedness to a preferred way of living. For one of the elderly participants, her childhood memory of travelling far distances to a remote island that lodged her family's small cabin meant staying connected to what was an important part of her childhood—outdoor camping and distant relatives. She expressed that, for her, those experiences in the "bush" provided opportunities that were inaccessible in the city.

Deep embedded values and protocols revolved around respectful ways to honor the hunting process including the tools required and the cultural processes adhered to after the animal was killed. For example, it was important to ensure that guns and ammunition were protected and securely stored. Also, it was important to avoid killing does (female deer) to ensure the life-cycle flourished. Several participants explained ways to utilize all parts of an animal to show the animal respect and honour for giving its life. For example, eyeballs could be used for fishing and bear fat could be used for baking or skin cream. Additionally, meat was never to be wasted, left to spoil, or sold; rather you took only what you needed to feed your family and gave away the rest.

> I mean 'cause you have to respect everything. Like, I mean like you don't want to waste, to say like bagging a moose and losing half the moose… like you never want to do that. You have to be respectful because you don't want to waste anything because that moose gave its life. [F, Urban]

Additionally, participants unveiled important spiritual customs that governed food traditions during community gatherings, events, and holidays. Some participants stated that they grew up in small towns referred to as Missionaries. Missionaries were designated Catholic rural communities, which is why some Métis families' faith is rooted in Catholicism. However, others revealed that they preferred to practice spiritual beliefs from their Indigenous heritage. Still, one family felt most comfortable attending a Catholic church in Winnipeg, which amalgamated both Christian and Indigenous beliefs. Regardless of which faith was practiced, giving thanks before a meal to show gratitude for food was a practice that the majority of participants partook in as children and still practice as adults. For example, some participants would make the "Sign of the Cross", a Catholic practice, before a meal, whereas one participant stated that for her, she smudged[7] throughout the process of preparing, cooking, and serving foods to loved ones at a feast[8].

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[6] Vinarterta is Icelandic cake made with multiple layers and fruit filling in between.

## *We want a resilient food system: Giving rural & urban Métis a voice*

For Métis participants, this research was a way to express their identity, as well as identify challenges and barriers in our modern food system. A strong desire to (re)learn, (re)member, and (re)vitalize Métis food stories was expressed.

### *The road we are walking*

Some participants discussed barriers to accessing traditional land-based foods such as wild meats. Limited access to wild meat within city limits was a primary concern among participants who expressed feelings of doubt and despair regarding viable solutions that would otherwise overcome their grievances. For example, participants who lived in urban locales reported that in order to acquire wild meat or fish they rely on family members who lived out of town to bring it in when visiting. Other participants complained that receiving meat and fish was becoming more seldom as years passed and therefore went without because accessing wild meat was difficult and costly within city limits.

> There was one lady we used to get cream from and the government stopped her from selling her cream because it was some kind of regulation, health regulation. I said what health regulation; I grew up on a farm. We ate dirt and we are still here! Yeah, it's very frustrating when it comes to that. [F, Urban]

Participants identified health benefits that traditional land-based foods provide, yet expressed both concern and shame when discussing their current diets, which consist mainly of less than nutritious processed market foods. Participants also expressed sadness, guilt, and regret because food work, recipes, and cultural knowledge were being replaced with hectic schedules and loss of desire to "scratch" cook.

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[7] Smudging is a First Nations ceremony, where sage is burned during the act of praying.

[8] A feast is First Nations term used to represent a food gathering.

Many participants were concerned that Métis food practices were not being taught to youth, and therefore felt that the fate of Métis foods and protocols prompted the need for immediate action. Some felt that the responsibility of teaching food skills should lie with parents whereas others argued that children must also be held accountable for the transfer of knowledge to be successfully maintained. One mother felt that the problem with today's youth is their lack of interest in cooking and that they are instead choosing processed market foods over taking the time to learn about traditional foods and cooking methods. The same participant, who was frustrated at her daughter's unwillingness to cook, felt defeated trying to teach her daughter to cook. One family expressed regret that they had not learned some of their favorite recipes from their grandmother prior to her death and felt those recipes were now lost.

> I wish that I would've learnt that or been old enough where now cause I'm so interested in knowing and into food and baking and stuff I wish that I would have been old enough to learn when it was being taught. But now that everybody's older…passed away, you don't get that. [F, Urban]

### *The road we want to walk*

Participants expressed the need to act, recognizing the importance of preserving Métis food work. As a measure to teach Métis recipes and share important cultural stories, several participants had offered their services to assist in reasserting Métis foodways through cooking, knowledge sharing, or hunting. As one participant put it, the solution to ensure the survival and revitalization of Métis food culture entails women taking the lead.

Some participants expressed the importance of actively becoming involved in their food system as evidenced by their desire to move away from packaged and processed foods, recognizing how impersonal the food process had become. One woman said she despised grocery shopping because for her the idea of food as a commodity that was transferred through several hands and venues was an unnatural process, which left her feeling angry.

> Somebody made it, then they put it in a package…then moved all those packages and took them to the store and then somebody moved all that and put it on a shelf. And then I'm gonna get it and I'm putting it in here. Like how many times has this stuff been moved around? Like that just irritates me! [F, Rural]

Participants wanted to ensure that important messages such as "cook with minimal spices" and "eat together" and "don't be ashamed of your identity" were voiced to youth. Another participant strongly felt that Métis culture must be reasserted in the mosaic of Canadian culture if dignity was to be restored.

## Discussion

### *Relationships built upon food*

This research demonstrates the importance of Métis traditional and neo-traditional foodways in revitalizing Métis identity and the interconnectedness among women (grandmothers, mothers, and aunties) in Métis families. Through remembering how the matriarchs governed food work, forging the bonds of family and community, a path is opened to relearn about Métis women's roles in the home and how such roles shaped families. Additionally, transferring knowledge means that questions about heritage can be answered and relationships can be established. Importantly, participants' love of their grandmothers and aunts was evident through memories of food work, which strengthened familial bonds. Children had fond memories of traditional foods being prepared but there were challenges with respect to how culinary skills were and continue to be (or not to be) transferred.

Bonds among Métis women were multi-faceted and complex. Further exploration of bonds between female family members may provide context into the reciprocity of food work between sisters and their children. Additionally, exploring the familial roles among Métis women would serve as an intricate element towards further understanding how women work within their own groups. For Indigenous women in Canada, reclaiming matriarchal roles, as was once practiced, would be of paramount service to self-healing and empowerment. Indigenous women, given the platform, have the ability to spearhead conversations of reconciliation within Canada, beginning within the necessary changes needed to advance familial and community healing.

Despite impoverishment, Métis women demonstrated that they were highly resourceful and capable of nourishing their families and communities. This sharing was how Métis communities were formed in the midst of the harsh social landscapes that tried to marginalize them. Métis identity was, in part, formed through the creation and sharing of food customs. Offering visitors home cooked meals was how women fused community and exercised neighborly good will. Bhawra, et al (2015) determined that relying on family to share food was in fact a coping strategy used to mitigate food insecurity for Urban-Métis living in London, Ontario. Such strategies are indicative of the tight-knit bonds within Métis families and the integral role of food.

For Métis families in this research, recipes and food work were associated with healthful diets; however, participants felt that urban living has negatively impacted access to preferred foods such as wild meat and other land-based foods. If colonization began with the intent to acquire land then reconciliation with Indigenous peoples must include the restoration of land to Indigenous peoples. In this way geographical space provides access to food and food ways, thereby creating opportunities to restore cultural values important to Indigenous groups.

## Traditional foods (re)visited

Traditional Indigenous foods, although no one definition exists, are rooted in the concept that food should be: accessed from natural sources (Kuhnlein, 2014), consumed by a regional population (Kim, 2003), wild-harvested (Power, 2008), and culturally accepted (Kolahdooz, Nader, Yi, & Sharma, 2015). While these definitions satisfy in part how the Métis families of this research identify traditional foods, these definitions fail to acknowledge other important factors that make up Métis food ways.

The rhetoric surrounding *traditional foods,* while important, is flawed. The literature suggests that traditional foods are solely cultivated from the land, which fails to acknowledge foods and recipes that have evolved into traditional meals throughout generations, mainly with the incorporation of bartered or purchased ingredients, such is the case with the Métis families interviewed in this study. For example, berry jams, hamburger soup, and tourtierre (meat pie) are Métis traditional dishes that incorporate not only purchased ingredients, but also land based foods such as berries and wild game. Importantly, these dishes also embody the duality of Métis identity.

Most likely, neo-traditional recipes have been overlooked in the discourse of traditional foods because of the consequential link between health and negative outcomes for Indigenous people. There is a plethora of literature that suggests energy-dense and nutrient poor foods have attributed to diet-related chronic diseases that disproportionally affect Indigenous populations compared to non-Indigenous groups (Bhawra et al., 2015; Bowser, Utz, Glick. & Harmon, 2015;; Nakano, Fediuk, Kassi, Egeland, & Kuhnlein, 2005; Power, 2008;). For several reasons, market foods for Indigenous people are associated with negative emotional consequences. For example, market goods namely flour, lard, pork, and sugar were, historically, the rations provided to on-reserve First Nations people by government officials. This provided families with minimal and often sub-standard food, which many consider a form of "weaponized hunger" that left many emotional scars (Martens, 2016). More so, the same ingredients listed above, in addition to alcohol, are better known as the "five white sins" according to Indigenous youth in British Colombia (Provincial Health Services, 2011). However, these foods did become woven into the fabric of Indigenous, and in particular Métis life, representing the incredible resiliency that has been exhibited to overcome centuries of oppression. These foods cannot be dismissed, but must be understood in the context of Métis histories.

Additionally, the partisan definition(s) leave little escape from the stigmatization and prejudices associated with recipes and foods that are not otherwise acknowledged under the demarcation of the term. For instance, Devon Mihesuah (2016), a highly acclaimed Navaho food activist argues that "Many Natives continue to act on their insecurities by making bad dietary and lifestyle choices" (p. 56). Although Mihesuah's work underpins important necessary steps required to reconnect Indigenous people to ancestral land knowledge, thereby circumventing diet related health problems, her message may be construed as offensive for Indigenous families who choose to identify nuanced recipes as traditional.

The last noticeable flaw in the discourse of traditional foods is there is no mention of shared-stories or lessons learned from the kitchen. The literature suggests, urges, and even demands that Indigenous people speak for themselves about themselves (Cardinal, 2006; Kuhnlein, 2014; Power, 2008; Smith, 2012;). The discourse surrounding Indigenous food culture has only begun to uncover an array of untapped cultural recipes, knowledge, and stories from the kitchen. For the Métis participants of this research another story exists. Flour, lard, and sugar, are demonized ingredients, however, these same ingredients created cherished recipes such as berry pies, heartier soups, and baked breads. These recipes were made from scratch by women who worked hard to provide sustenance to their families, while at the same time building familial and community bonds. This work deserves respect and freedom from shame.

## *Giving credit where credit is due*

The performance of food work provided the opportunity for women to assert their power within the domain of their kitchen. Food work, as a conduit of power, adds a new element of gendered authority that “suggests women have more agency and autonomy than might otherwise be assumed” (D’Sylvia & Beagan, 2011, p.285). Métis women were physically and emotionally strong, which is evident in the way wives and mothers successfully accomplished overwhelmingly multiple tasks of making a home, usually with little financial means.

From a feminist perspective, the constructed gendered role of women’s domestic work has well been documented and scholars continue to argue against the rhetoric that portrays women’s domestic labor as less than important, subordinate, and inferior work (Lewis, 2015; Tolleson-Rinehart & Carroll, 2006). In an effort to advocate for women’s important domestic roles, Deborah Simonton (1998) in her manuscript titled *A History of European Women's Work 1700 to the Present,* argues that stereotypes that demean women’s work are a Western concept, absent of cultural ontologies and *women’s* perspectives, and therefore does not accurately represent the whole picture. She argues that research linking domestic work and family from the perspectives of women, outside the economic domain, is relatively a new area of research (Simonton, 1998). Research aimed towards Indigenous women, emphasizing their abilities rather than *dis*-abilities, is well overdue and would serve as an excellent contribution to the literature.

## *Food, well-being, and identity*

Métis food was an expression of this group’s unique identity which, for the participants of this study, was directly linked to personal and cultural health and well-being. Many participants stressed the centrality of food to celebratory meals, which held significant importance because holiday celebrations were deeply rooted in family togetherness. Further, when similar food practices arose in interviews that other interviewees also mentioned, participants felt this synergy was a cultural connection which reinforced Métis identity and belonging. These shared food ideologies reinforce a sense of belonging (Cantarero, Espeitx, Lacruz, & Martin, 2013; Woolley & Fishback, 2016).

The importance of transmitting Métis food ways to youth is a direct reflection of cultural pride. Knowledge translation to retain cultural knowledge has been widely understood to be of significant importance for Indigenous communities (Adams, et al., 2012; Hammelman, & Hayes-Conroy, 2015; Kuhnlein, 2001, 2014; Power, 2008; Provincial Health Services Authority, 2011). Asking Métis people to share stories related to their culture inevitably draws out discussion related to identity, and for some, an opportunity to grapple with their identity. Reasons for the identity gap are directly related to Canada's oppressive historical acts of violence towards Indigenous peoples (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012). Many participants vocalized some form of displacement regarding their Métis identity, whether it was directly related to parents' who masked their identity due to shame or stereotypical patterned political and societal messages, that according to Bhawra et al. (2015) have excluded Métis as being accepted as either fully Aboriginal or European people. In many ways, this *in-betweenness* and uncertainty has left open wounds for some participants. Yet, despite the attacks on identity and historical challenges that Métis have faced and still do, there is a strong pushback from Métis families and communities to remain grounded in their pursuit to restore Métis identity, and to do so with pride.

## Moving forward

Overwhelmingly, the Métis people in this study expressed dissatisfaction regarding the disconnect between their current diet and the diet they grew up on that they felt was healthier on multiple levels—for themselves, the environment, and their communities. Many expressed the need to have autonomy within their food systems, for example, wanted greater access to wild meat. Several reasons that contribute to the decline in accessing traditional food systems have been documented in the literature including: dwindling of species availability and harvesting areas; time and energy constraints due to employment that also interrupts knowledge transfer to youth; the influx of inexpensive low nutritional market foods that sacrifice quality over quantity (Kuhnlein. 2001); and ecosystem threats (Food Secure Canada, 2011).

Importantly, participants were also very concerned with losing valuable cultural recipes and knowledge, if these are not passed down to the next generation. As one researcher put it, "cooking styles" of various global Indigenous populations are increasingly becoming threatened, in favour of mono diets, which inevitably will lead to adverse health impacts (Kim, 2003, p. 223). Furthermore, the number of Métis youth is increasing, however, the Elderly population is declining, (Statistics Canada, 2011) and along with them valuable cultural knowledge. The need for immediate action cannot be overstated in this context.

## Conclusion

For the Métis families in this study, food from the land obtained through gardening, gathering, hunting, and harvesting, and prepared by important women in their lives was deeply connected to their sense of familial and cultural identity. This was reflected in their values, beliefs, and intimate knowledge of the land which is central to Métis history and distinctiveness, as well as kinship. The discourse of food and the way it was used has long-established meaningful connections to Métis heritage. Despite their many hardships, Métis communities in and around Winnipeg had a wholesome vibrant food culture with celebrations, ceremonies, and rituals, some, not enough of which continue today.

Reminiscing, sharing stories, describing food roles, and honouring the important women in participant's lives is a positive dimension of Métis history. For participants, family and food underpinned the role of the family matriarch, and food was a powerful connector and symbol of identity. This research demonstrates also that food is a powerful lens through which Métis people can assert cultural pride.

As a result of historical policies of marginalization, however, Métis peoples 'migration to urban areas negatively impacted their diets, specifically through reduced access to traditional land and lack of space to grow gardens. Participants want solutions to reverse this. In addition, they are concerned about teaching cultural food knowledge to future generations. The matriarchal *culinary vessels* are passing away and traditional foodways and cooking are disappearing. Access to traditional land and food production methods, along with traditional food education strategies, are necessary to help Métis peoples maintain cultural food sovereignty. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) Recommendations, if upheld, become an integral and pragmatic step in a positive direction

### *Limitations and future work*

Although there is much strength in this project there are limitations. This project interviewed 21 participants in Manitoba. Interviewing Métis people from another region, as a comparative study, has the potential to add a unique rich perspective to the literature.

This project has provided the first evidence-based research on Manitoba Métis food traditions and protocols, which have the potential for inclusion in curricula and programming. To date, much of the school-based Indigenous programming throughout Manitoba is First-Nation centric, yet a Métis perspective is critical for Indigenizing educational content and contributing toward *reconciliAction*, as recommended in the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action (The Truth Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

In addition, this study will provide educators with an alternative discourse as it relates to food. Rather than focusing solely on nutrients, although an important subject, culturally-based food education provides an important holistic approach to overall health and well-being.

Furthermore, this research adds to the Indigenous philosophy pushing important Métis epistemologies into the literature and academic instructions.

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Original Research Article

# *Nimíciwinán, nipimátisiwinán* – "our food is our way of life": On-Reserve First Nation perspectives on community food security and sovereignty through oral history in Fisher River Cree Nation, Manitoba

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## Abstract

Food insecurity in Indigenous communities in Canada continue to gain increasing attention among scholars, community practitioners, and policy makers. Meanwhile, the role and importance of Indigenous foods, associated knowledges, and perspectives of Indigenous peoples (Council of Canadian Academies, 2014) that highlight community voices in food security still remain under-represented and under-studied in this discourse. University of Winnipeg (UW) researchers and Fisher River Cree Nation (FRCN) representatives began an action research partnership to explore Indigenous knowledges associated with food cultivation, production, and consumption practices within the community since 2012. The participatory, place-based, and collaborative case study involved 17 oral history interviews with knowledge keepers of FRCN.

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The goal was to understand their perspectives of and challenges to community food security, and to explore the potential role of Indigenous food knowledges in meeting community food security needs. In particular, the role of land-based Indigenous foods in meeting community food security through restoration of health, cultural values, identity, and self-determination were emphasized by the knowledge keepers—a vision that supports Indigenous food sovereignty. The restorative potential of Indigenous food sovereignty in empowering individuals and communities is well-acknowledged. It can nurture sacred relationships and actions to renew and strengthen relationships to the community's own Indigenous land-based foods, previously weakened by colonialism, globalization, and neoliberal policies.

Keywords: Indigenous food sovereignty, Indigenous food security, Indigenous food systems, Indigenous food knowledges, On-Reserve First Nation, Manitoba

## Introduction: Indigenous foods and food systems

> *The kids I am teaching right now, what I'm talking to them about is not really their fault. I asked them, 'what are the activities that your parents do?' And a lot of them say, 'my parents are not into those kinds of things'. And I say, 'what about your grandparents'? And they say, 'my grandparents were into that and we've seen them do that'. A lot of parents that I know, it's not really their fault either, because they have been taken away from that part of our culture. – Jack, April 8, 2013*

Indigenous communities throughout Canada have experienced drastic changes to culture over the past hundred years, including traditional forms of food collection, cultivation, and processing (Thompson et al., 2011). Today within reserve communities, diets have changed drastically towards nutrient-poor market-based processed foods (Kuhnlein & Turner, 1996; Kuhnlein & Receveur, 1996; Neufeld & Richmond, 2017). This is causing diet-related health conditions including diabetes and heart disease (Elliot, Jayatilaka, Brown, Varely, & Corbett, 2012) and obesity (Health Canada, 2015). Indigenous peoples in Canada today participate in a combination of two food systems: conventional (market) food systems (Elliot et al., 2012) and Indigenous (local) food systems (Council of Canadian Academies, 2014).

Indigenous or local food refers to all "food species that are available to a particular culture from local natural resources and the accepted patterns for their use within that culture" (Kuhnlein & Chan, 2000, p. 596). Market foods, on the other hand, are available in local grocery stores, which are supplied from industrial scale agriculture, animal husbandry and allied sectors and supported by a well-established market network. The contemporary diet of many Indigenous communities are dominated by market-based foods, most of which are of poor in nutritional quality (Willows, 2005). The interaction of these systems is of interest (Kuhnlein et al., 2006) due to the increased acceptance of the role and importance of Indigenous foods in maintaining healthy Indigenous communities (Kuhnlein, Erasmus, Spigelski, & Burlingame, 2013).

While Indigenous food systems are as diverse as the myriad of Canada's ecosystems (Wittman, Desmarais, & Wiebe, 2011), an example illustrating the composition of such a system is well documented by Kuhnlein et al., (2013). The Gwich'in community (also known as the *Tetlit Zheh* community), in Canada's Northwest Territories, have an Indigenous food system based to a large degree on the harvesting of local wildlife. In particular, the Porcupine caribou is regarded as an essential element of this system. Other essential wild harvesting consists of large animals, (moose, Dall sheep, and bear), small mammals (rabbit, beaver, muskrat, squirrel, porcupine, etc), fish species (whitefish, char, trout, loche, and inconnu), and birds (migratory ducks, geese, spruce hen, and swan) along with numerous edible plants.

The food system encompasses the practices which govern the processing and community distribution of the harvested animals, as guided by Elder oral tradition and cultural values. (Kuhnlein et al., 2013). Indigenous food systems thus include sociocultural meanings, acquisition/processing techniques, use, consumption, and nutritional consequences for people using the food" (Kuhnlein et al., 2009, p. 19).

Indigenous food has also been referred to as "country food" or traditional food, (Gombay, 2010; Council of Canadian Academies, 2014; Thompson, Kamal, Alam, & Wiebe, 2012; Bolton, Davidson-Hunt, 2015). Indigenous food has the potential to provide more health benefits than conventional market based foods (CCA, 2014), and also contributes to the facilitation of knowledge transfer and cultural resilience (Elliot et al., 2012; Gombay, 2010; Johns & Sthapit, 2004). For many Indigenous peoples, Indigenous foods are linked with identity and mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional health (Gombay, 2010; Turner & Turner, 2008). Pierotti (2011) describes the role of hunting, fishing, and harvesting of Indigenous foods as an integral component to a complex and layered worldview including one's relationships with, and responsibility to, the environment.

While research is revealing the benefits of Indigenous food systems in reducing food insecurity (FAO, 2009; Himli et al., 2012; Kuhnlein, Erasmus, & Spigelski, 2009), the potential of Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in food security policy and programs are often undermined. Indigenous food systems are thus organically supported by an emerging theory on 'Indigenous food sovereignty' in Canada as demonstrated by the pioneering work by Indigenous Food System Working Group from British Colombia, Canada.

## *Indigenous food sovereignty (IFS) as the backbone of Indigenous food systems*

Indigenous food sovereignty (IFS) has been recognized as the strategic practice of Indigenous peoples to sustain traditional practices of harvesting, which include fishing, and hunting, and respecting the "sovereign rights and power of each distinct nation" (Morrison, 2011, p. 98). The Indigenous food sovereignty framework invites scholars and practitioners alike to explore the diversity of circumstances and relationships Indigenous people have with their traditional foods and food systems.

IFS recognizes and underscores the rights and uniqueness of Indigenous groups in defining and managing their own Indigenous food systems. A useful framework for exploring IFS was conceptualized from an Indigenous perspective from the West coast of Canada, within the last ten years. It identifies the four following pillars: 1) sacred or divine sovereignty, 2) participation, 3) self-determination, and 4) legislation and policy (Morrison, 2011). *Sacred or divine sovereignty* acknowledges food as a gift from the Creator, and as such it is a sacred responsibility to take care of the source of that gift, namely, the land including plants and animals (Morrison, 2011). *Participation* is necessary at the individual, community, and regional level to actualize *self-determination* ("the freedom and ability to respond to our own needs for healthy, culturally-adapted indigenous foods" (Indigenous Food Systems Network, n.d., para 3-4). These principles are then supported through *legislation and policy* to ensure food sovereignty while navigating public policy, law, economic, and political structures and processes (Indigenous Food Systems Network, n.d., para. 5; Morrison, 2011).

## *Indigenous food systems: Manitoba context*

In Manitoba, colonization resulted in the involuntary intrusion of external policies and practices into Indigenous ways of life (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015), drastically affecting individual and communal control of local food systems (Campbell, Diamant, Macpherson, & Halladay, 1997; Cidro, Adeskunle, Peters, & Martens, 2015). Harvesting, hunting, gardening, and most cultural and spiritual practices were regulated or banned. As a result, the loss of access to and practice with Indigenous foods has eroded community knowledge about food and relationships with food (Gaudin, Receveur, Walz, Girard, & Potvin, 2014), weakening cultural resilience, and local health and food security (Cidro et al., 2015; Skinner, Hanning, Desjardins, & Tsuji, 2013).

There are limitations on research studies that examine food security among Indigenous communities in Manitoba. For example, many studies use the food security framework (FAO, 2009), which does not adequately capture community-based or Indigenous perspectives (Power, 2008; Willows, 2005), or the consideration of Indigenous foods (Cidro & Martens, 2015; Hilmi et al., 2013; Neufeld and Richmond, 2017). Research studying the impacts on health from changes in diet is typically focused on urban First Nation populations, rather than First Nations people on-reserve (FNFNES, 2017). Among the scholarship pertaining to First Nation populations on-reserve in Manitoba, the focus is predominantly on Northern and remote communities, which in most cases are affected by lack of access to certain service infrastructure, such as roads (Rudolph & McLachlan, 2013; Thompson et al., 2011; Thompson, Wiebe, Gulrukh, & Ashram, 2012).

More recently, several studies have used a community-based Indigenous research approach to engage and improve community food security in Northern Manitoba. For instance, a participatory action approach was used to engage Cree youth in long-term food security planning (Islam, Zurba, Rogalski, & Berkes, 2017) in Norway House Cree Nation. In another community-based research from O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation (OPCN), Kamal and co-researchers (2015) designed a community-based food program called Ithinto Mechisowin (IMP) ("food from the land") to improve access to, and restoration of, their own Indigenous food systems and IFS. Very little literature is available pertaining to Indigenous perspectives and community-based research on food security in southern Manitoban communities (Neufeld & Richmond, 2017; Shukla et al., 2014). Notwithstanding irregular flood events, Fisher River is generally connected to southern service infrastructure (Statistics Canada, 2007). This research, therefore, addresses the gap in knowledge about southern Canadian communities by undertaking a case study intervention from a southern Manitoban First Nation community. We sought to explore community perspectives on food security as well as to identify barriers and opportunities for increasing food security in the community, using a community-based participatory research approach.

The central purpose of the research was to understand and explore Indigenous food security and sovereignty from the community perspectives. Our specific objectives were (a) to derive meanings and interpretation of food security and IFS from FRCN knowledge keepers' perspectives; (b) to understand local challenges in implementing IFS in FRCN; and (c) to generate recommendations to enhance IFS in FRCN.

## Methodology

Following a participatory approach (Creswell, 2013), our collaborative research project used a qualitative research design and used oral history as a strategy to allow the exploration of complex phenomena (Okihiro, 1981) through in-depth semi-structured interviews with 17 FRCN knowledge keepers. Our collaborating partners, who are also co-authors of this paper, suggested that in the context of FRCN, *knowledge keepers* was an appropriate term to use for the participants, as it was more representative of the diversity in age and the important role they play in the community. The knowledge keepers in this research represent the participating FRCN community members in this study, who possess a specific knowledge, skill and understanding of Indigenous foods, associated cultural history and common usages. In many cases, these individuals are also recognized by the local community as "community Elders".

Oral history as a community approach to data collection emphasizes "the telling of cultural and personal stories; a method many Indigenous communities have practiced for generations…[and] provide opportunities to respond to [the] relatively newer topic of Indigenous food sovereignty in a contextual and effective way" and works to foster relationships that empower knowledge keepers (Shukla et al., 2014, p. 5). Furthermore, the choice to adopt an oral history strategy privileges the inherent oral nature of Indigenous knowledge transmission (Hart,

2002) and allowed the researchers to honour participants' stories (Kovach, 2010). Our methodological approach responds to the call to use a qualitative and community-based approach by the Indigenous food security researcher (Powell & Jiggins, 2003; Willows, 2005) and to make visible and empower Indigenous community voices (Skinner et al., 2013).

In alignment with an Indigenous research methodology (Kovach, 2010), relationship building was a focal point of all research-related activities. The intent was to maintain long-term personal relationships as well as a long-term partnership between the University of Winnipeg (UW) and the FRCN community. Secondly, the study was conducted in collaboration with the FRCN Health Services and FRCN Band Council members from October-December 2012, with the prior and informed consent of knowledge keepers. FRCN Health Service representatives provided input at the study's design stage and in preparation of the oral history interview checklist (Figure 1). This also served to coordinate the logistics throughout the research process by engaging local contacts to help identify potential interview candidates and arrange interviews.

**Figure 1:** Checklist of questions for FRCN knowledge keeper Interviews

1 What is your favorite food?
2 Where do you get your food from?
3 Is the way you eat now similar to the way you ate as a child? How about community in general?
4 What are some staple local foods? What values do these food hold?
5 Do you choose your foods based on nutrition, price, access, cultural value or other considerations?
6 Are there foods you would like to have greater access to?
7 Food security is a term that means different things to different people. What does it mean to you?
8 Are there any food security concerns in your community? What can be done to address these issues?
9 Do you play a role in making or sharing food?
10 Where did you learn what you know about food? (From who? How?)
11 Do you teach what you know?
12 Are there local foods that have disappeared or changed?
13 Do you think younger generations have enough knowledges about food?
14 In any community programs, what food you would like to see promoted? Why?
15 Is there anything else you'd like to share (stories, comments, etc.)?

All knowledge keepers were living on the FRCN reserve during the time of the interview and were asked where they preferred the interview to take place, either at the FRCN Health Services office or their homes. An interview checklist guide (Figure 1) was memorized by researchers from University of Winnipeg and was brought to each interview for reference. Interviews were one and a half to two hours in duration and conducted through conversation, often over tea, refraining from the use of academic jargon. FRCN Health Services acted as a gatekeeper to ensure that community-based cultural protocols (First Nations Centre, 2007) were followed throughout the research process. The Human Ethics Board of the University of Winnipeg also reviewed and approved the research.

With the approval of knowledge keepers, interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded according to themes specific to the above three objectives. Each objective was then organized into a result category. Within each result category, the frequency of themes was tabulated into percentages to identify what knowledge keepers spoke of most, making reference to the weight of the perspectives and knowledge they wanted to highlight and share. Further data was gathered from a field course on "Indigenous food systems" facilitated by the primary researcher in collaboration with Charles Sinclair School and knowledge keepers from FRCN. For a final project, one student group filmed a video documentary that was made public on YouTube in February 2017, following FRCN cultural protocols and approval from participating knowledge keepers and community members. Some quotes were also used from this video, edited by University of Winnipeg student Donna Kurt. Pseudonyms have been used throughout to protect individual identities and for document consistency.

Results were verified through peer-audit among the four academic team members, as well as research team members checking with selected respondents in FRCN. The research team also made three visits to FRCN for community sharing presentations with residents, band and council members and Health Services in February 2014. Prior to the finalization of any publication of research, FRCN was contacted for consent as according to OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) Principles (First Nations Centre, 2007). Our analysis focuses on revealing and understanding Indigenous perspectives on food security and IFS through thematic data analysis.

## Findings

All knowledge keepers discussed perspectives in line with Morrison's IFS framework (2011). Participating in both conventional (market) food systems and local Indigenous (Cree) food systems, knowledge keepers understand food beyond the political and neoliberal frameworks of food security. Knowledge keepers spoke to a deep connection to food that is metaphysical and culturally inherent to their identities. The interviews highlight their personal, communal, and spiritual relationships with food. We have summarized our findings in Tables 1, 2, and 3, according to the three project objectives. Each table demonstrates theme frequency in percentages and identifies sub-themes, which are further supported by relevant quotes from knowledge keepers. The inclusion of participant quotes were meant to illustrate the experiences and understandings of community perspectives on IFS and honour the voices of the participating knowledge keepers.

### *Indigenous perspectives on meanings and interpretation of food security and IFS*

Scholars and practitioners significantly shape the discourse pertaining to both food security and food sovereignty. The definitions and meanings of these terms are often assumed, without giving voice to community-led understandings. In alignment with an Indigenous research paradigm, founded on reciprocity and relationship (Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2010), our intent was to not impose our own understanding of food security and sovereignty, but rather to engage in a dialogue which would reveal knowledge keepers' understandings of food security and sovereignty, and how these concepts related to their community.

**Table 1:** Community perspectives on food security using IFS lens

| ***Food security is:*** | % times theme is reported in knowledge keeper responses, n = 17 |
|---|---|
| **Access to food** | 67% |
| Traditional land-based foods | |
| A harvester who can share traditional foods | |
| Store-bought foods | |
| Healthy foods/good medicines | |
| Healthy store-bought foods | |
| Culturally relevant foods | |
| Affordable store-bought foods | |
| **Beyond sustenance** | 17% |
| For health | |
| For medicinal purposes | |
| Preventing diet related illnesses | |
| Maintaining health during illness | |
| For ceremonial purposes | |
| Tool to preserve traditional and land-based foods | |
| Spirituality | |
| **Traditional lifestyle** | 12% |
| Traditional knowledge | |
| Traditional lands | |
| Ability to practice traditional preservation methods | |
| Being able to plan season/licenses | |
| Physically being able to practice harvesting | |
| **Healthy environment** | 5% |
| Animals have access to good medicines | |
| Water health | |
| Land health | |

What we heard during these conversations was that identity and culture were significantly tied to their interpretations. Several of the key themes that emerged from the interviews are: 1) access to food; 2) beyond sustenance; 3); traditional lifestyles, and 4) healthy environment.

### *Access to food*

From the community's perspective, food security is, in part, having access to traditional wild harvested foods. It is also access to fellow community members who are skilled in hunting, fishing, gardening, or edible plant harvesting. This theme proved highly relevant to elders who have difficulties going onto the land themselves (due to physical abilities in old age, acute or chronic ailments, and/or disability).

> We always had a garden…I'd love to have a garden but I just can't take care of it the way I want to the way you have to take care of it. (Maria, 2016)
>
> I can't walk anymore in the bush, even to go berry picking, I don't go berry picking too much. (Janet, 2016)

Hunters tended to share their catch widely throughout the community, including with elders who are not able to hunt for themselves. However, the concern was expressed that there are not many hunters left in the community.

Store-bought food is also an important element of community food security and ones' sustenance and requires financial and logistical resources to access food from the on-reserve grocery store. Jessie (2016) explains "[my family use to] go to the trapline seasonally when they needed to". "Getting those fresh vegetables, [at the grocery store] where it is costly" is an option, but not preferred (Jessie, 2016)

### *Beyond sustenance*

Diet was commonly related as being important for health, preventing illness, maintaining health during illness, and is an important part of ceremony.

> All the time I ask for the food to be blessed that I'm eating…that it'll work in a good way in my body. (Lisa, 2013)
>
> [At ceremony] for those that have passed on to the spirit world, we feed them too. There's a four-year cycle that we do. We offer into the fire a plate of food to help her. And then we all feast. We all eat. (Sally, 2013)

### *Re-valuing the Indigenous food and associated knowledges*

Throughout interviews, the knowledge keepers stressed the role that food played in their personal development. For example, one elder, Lisa, described her relationship with food as a child. Reminiscing about the foods she would eat, Lisa describes her distaste for food at the residential school and her excitement upon returning home to enjoy the foods her mother made. Without much interest for cooking herself, Lisa relied on store-bought foods while raising her children, until she began to recognize growing rates of cancer and diabetes in the community that made her question the root cause of these illnesses.

> [I] began to [appreciate] and recognize the value of traditional foods…the only way I could talk about it is the spiritual value of food…we do a lot of feasting…blessing…and memorial feasts for our relatives who have passed on…[It] doesn't have to be anything big… maybe wild meat, rice, raisins, berries, tea or water…because I've learned along the way, where they are, they like to get that food and they like to be remembered… because they say that our relatives that have passed on can come and look after us where they are. (Lisa, 2013)

### *Healthy environment*

Food security requires a healthy environment where land and water are healthy, where animals consume good medicines in the environment.

> They are very healthy foods because they ate all the natural medicines from the water in the bush eh? And all that medicine we absorb into our bodies. (Jane, 2013)

> When we plant those seeds into the ground we pray that we reap a good garden, and then afterwards of course we have to say thank you to the food that was provided, it came from the earth. (Lisa, 2013)

A theme reinforced by nearly all knowledge keepers, is that Indigenous *food is a medicine* for mind, body, and spirit (Alfaro & Shukla, 2016). The acquisition and consumption of food had a spiritual significance, in particular as it related to ceremony, whether memorialization of loved ones of celebratory feasts. In this light, food security can only exist when the community has the knowledge to practice and preserve cultural food traditions and land-based foods are accessible.

### *Local challenges in implementing IFS*

The common community perceptions pertaining to challenges or barriers to food security and IFS are as follows: 1) less involvement in traditional practices; 2) environmental changes; and 3) options for store-bought food.

**Table 2:** Local perceptions of challenges to food security and IFS

| ***Challenges to food security and IFS are:*** | % times theme is reported in knowledge keeper responses, n =17 |
|---|---|
| **Less involvement in traditional practices (because)** | 44% |
| Elders (physical ailment) | |
| Elders (passing away) | |
| Youth (no value for traditional foods) | |
| Youth (no knowledge) | |
| Parents (stopped practicing, no value) | |
| Parents (no knowledge for traditional foods) | |
| Parents (have addictions and don't pass on knowledge to youth) | |
| Laws, regulations regarding harvest make difficult | |
| Technology, media is distracting | |
| Wage economy takes too much time | |
| Not enough community involvement/dynamic to encourage community participation | |
| **Changes in lifestyle** | 25% |
| Influence of dominant model that improves access to modern foods through markets | |
| Reservation life, less mobility than traditional habits | |
| Residential school changed lifestyle of person, family, community | |
| Addictions influence choice | |
| Modern developments affect lifestyle (i.e., water plants, agri-business, fridges) | |
| **Environment changes** | 25% |
| Flooding/disasters | |
| Pollution | |
| Land degradation | |
| Forest degradation | |
| Less populations of land and water animals | |
| Water degradation | |
| Have to go further to harvest than traditionally | |
| Population of animals diseased = bad medicine | |
| **Options of store-bought food (are)** | 8% |
| Healthy options limited | |
| Healthy options too expensive/processed foods are less expensive | |
| Healthy options are infrequently available | |
| **No physical barriers to achieve land-based food security** | 1% |

### *Less involvement in traditional practices*

The decline in individual and community involvement in traditional practices is complex and rooted deeply in histories of control and oppression from colonial practices. Elder Donna recalled her time in residential school in Cross Lake, Manitoba from 1951 to 1952 when she was severely sick and was hospitalized in Norway House, a remote region of Northern Manitoba. Her declaration that “I was totally isolated and too afraid to ask for traditional foods”, revealed a missed opportunity which could have helped her heal physically and psychologically (Donna, April 1, 2013). When Donna’s family relocated to FRCN they had a trap line and lived off the land without ever being hungry (Chartrand-Eishchen, Mulhall, & Ozero, 2016). These findings are well-echoed in the *Truth and Reconciliation* (TRC) report’s findings that the food served in residential schools were of poor quality, insufficient, and mostly unfamiliar (TRC, 2015) to children. The TRC report further notes, “In their home communities, many students had been raised on food that their parents had hunted, fished, or harvested. These meals were very different from the European diets served at the schools. This change in diet added to the students’ sense of disorientation” (TRC, 2015, p. 91).

Few knowledge keepers spoke directly to the negative impact of federal regulations on mandatory schooling that required all children to attend an English boarding school from September until June each year. Prior to this regulation, children were involved in all almost all aspects of food acquisition, production, distribution, and consumption. The children’s school schedule interrupted their participation in the spring and fall harvests along with their families. Not only were there less hands to help, it also did not provide the chance for children to learn through experience and parents to pass on vital knowledge about the traditional food system.

Growing up, most knowledge keepers described that gardens provided substantial contributions to family household food security. This changed in some households, as the constraints of growing a garden varied over time. For some families, as their parents found work and their households transitioned to a modern wage economy, many families found it difficult to sustain the level of effort required to maintain their gardens. For other families, illness and old age led to gardeners unable to maintain their gardens as they once did in good health, reducing their food security. Three knowledge keepers talked specifically about the role of welfare payments interfering with gardening practices. Paige described it as follows: “…they [federal government handling welfare payments] said, ‘Look you have a garden, you have food. You don’t need this money.’ And what are you going to do? If you’re knees aren’t good anymore you’re going to take the money” (Paige, 2013).

It was communicated on several occasions that a lack of wild food harvesting, whether hunting, fishing, trapping, or gathering, has resulted in the community forgetting about the value of “the old ways” (Kurt, 2017).

> Our people today are very sick people because of illnesses contributed because of how we eat…Many years ago our people were healthy…Time

> has changed…we used to walk, canoe, to find game and family. Today we just drive to the grocery store" (Wayne, 2017).

The lack of values and interest in Indigenous food systems by FRCN youth was also considered an important factor contributing to reduced involvement in traditional food practices. To further support these claims, Jack, a knowledge keeper, describes that if and when youth are interested in participating in traditional food practices, many do not have anyone in their life to show them because their parents don't know how. "They're trying to find someone that will take them but that's just a matter of who it is. I'll say it's few and far between" (Jack, 2017). Further, "people used to share more in general in generations before. Might be people have less to share, financial restraints, maybe some people want more for themselves" (Lois, 2013).

### *Environment changes*

All knowledge keepers identified having noticed negative environmental changes throughout their lifetime. These changes were identified in the interview in relation to the challenges they created to the maintenance of their food traditions, including the access and quality of their traditional foods. More specifically, knowledge keepers spoke to: the increasing prevalence of pollution; water, land, and forest degradation; decline in land and water animal populations; the negative role and effect of flooding/disasters; and declining animal health due to pollution.

The river that flows through FRCN had once been a place to bath and drink from. Within the lifespan of the knowledge keepers surveyed, this water became heavily polluted, removing the level of access to foods and habitats for learning. Now no longer able to swim in the river or collect from inside or near by the community, people must travel away from FRCN to collect or purchase food instead.

> Growing up in front of the house the water was clear – you could put your hand right to the bottom and see the rocks at the bottom of the river. But now you can't see even a foot into the water…They say the medicines are turning black in there. (Jane, 2017)

Lisa, a local knowledge keeper, spoke about the connection of water to land and the effects on the plants. Lisa collects foods for ceremony including berries, sage, and sweet grass only from land at a distance away from the community and long rivers because of the pollution in the water. She stressed that taking medicine that is not pure or that is tainted, is bad medicine that will not work and could make you sick (Lisa, 2013).

Within the past few years hunters and fishers are witnessing a decline in animal health. One Elder, Bill, shared his knowledge of a moose that was caught a few years back. He shared that it was being quartered in the wild when one of the hunters noticed that the flesh of the moose looked odd. No hunter ever leaves parts of an animal behind, he said. Unable to provide much detail of the exact condition of the flesh, he was troubled by the mere event. This moose was left whole in the wild for the hunters feared getting sick from eating it. Additionally, sores on tainted fish have been discovered around FRCN. Bill discussed the first time he saw a fish with sores when he was fishing with his nephew.

> One of them was like that. I don't know what's causing that. Too much garbage in the waterways I guess. Too much sewage getting dumped into the rivers. City of Winnipeg dumping too much in the rivers. Saying 'it's overflowing, an accident'. They dumped millions of litres. (Bill, 2013)

### *Options of store-bought food*

Community members communicate that while they had a sense of food security with store-bought food, there was a sense that it was not necessarily healthy food, and that healthy options were often limited or too expensive. Many community members drove three hours to Winnipeg for the majority of their food. This is a logistical hurdle for most Elders, who may have difficulty driving this distance themselves. Dot elaborated: "We have a store here but the food is still expensive and they don't have everything. They don't have fresh stuff here either, fresh vegetables eh. It's hard" (Dot, April 15, 2013). Despite the presence of the grocery store, sentiments regarding preference for foods that come from the land were emphasised by young and old generations of community members.

The main cause for reduced involvement in traditional practices is due to changes in lifestyle. It can be explained further through the influence of the market economy; the historical influence of the reservation system; the detrimental role of colonization from residential schools on individual, family, and community structures and lifestyles; the impact of intergenerational trauma and addictions; and the ease of modern developments such as technology that shift individual practices away from traditional ways. Furthermore, we found that (Table 2) environmental changes and perceptions of pollution have drastically influenced FRCN community members away from practicing harvesting, fishing, hunting, and gardening on a regular basis, and/or require people to travel further to acquire these foods and medicines. The decline in oral history of Indigenous food systems in FRCN, coupled with the gradual loss of knowledge keepers, resulted in the loss of transmission of Indigenous food knowledges to younger generations who are the *knowledge carriers*.

## Community suggested strategies and opportunities to improve food security and sovereignty

An overarching theme expressed by knowledge keepers regarding their understanding of FRCN's "food security" and "food sovereignty" largely revolved around the idea of *control*, in both a historical and contemporary context. Throughout the interviews, community strategies identified were reflective of the four pillars of Indigenous food sovereignty (sacred sovereignty, participation, self-determination, and legislation and policy) (Morrison, 2011); however, explicit references to Morrison's pillars were not identified.

Community recommendations to enhance food security and IFS in FRCN that emerged from our conversations are presented in Table 3. These findings emphasized the opportunity and role of education in intergenerational transmission of traditional food knowledges for change, primarily through 1) the existing education system; 2) community-based education initiatives; 3) working with and strengthening existing community resources; 4) promoting self-production; and 5) the promotion of culture and identity. Knowledge keepers stressed the role of youth in the revitalization and future of FRCN and further community empowerment.

**Table 3:** Recommendations to enhance food security and IFS in FRCN

| *Opportunities for food security and IFS* | % times the theme is reported in knowledge keeper responses, n =17 |
|---|---|
| **Create change through education system** | 30% |
| Bridge knowledge gap - parents/Elders could help | |
| Make changes to regulations (e.g., no junk food) | |
| Encourage youth to engage with community | |
| Build on individual youth potential (character, skill) | |
| **Create change through community education** | 25% |
| Encourage education through traditional teachings/values | |
| Encourage education through health lens | |
| Encourage hands on learning and practice | |
| **Work with FRCN land & community resources** | 16% |
| Improve water quality in the community | |
| Recognize the potential of resources in community | |
| Encourage sharing of resources/harvest | |
| **Promoting self-production** | 11% |
| Community gardening | |
| Box gardening | |
| Chicken farming | |
| Personal garden | |
| **Promotion of culture & identity (as a foundation to food)** | 10% |
| Learn traditional culture & beliefs | |
| Promote community/family practices | |
| **Create economic opportunities in community** | 4% |
| Support local gardeners, healers, etc. | |
| **Create programming that is not yet in FRCN** | 4% |
| Youth mentorship program | |
| Get a community pool | |

### *Create change through formal educational system*

According to those surveyed, the primary solutions to enhance food security and IFS are to bridge generation gaps between the aging Elders and traditional knowledge deprived youth; build on individual youth potential (specific characters and skill sets); and encourage youth to engage in community. Some knowledge keepers believe that schools should move to restrict access to unhealthy, highly processed foods from K-12 in schools.

Jack is celebrated widely by community members as the facilitator of a program that helps to bridge the gap with youth and Indigenous ways-of-being and promotes wild foods. This program is successful in inspiring the engagement of youth, aged 15-16, in traditional practices of gathering, hunting, fishing, and outdoor skills for high school credit. This is the only program of its kind available to FRCN students, and its benefits were widely discussed by respondents. Benefits included: students experiencing an increased sense of self-esteem; passion for learning Indigenous ways; participating in wild harvesting outside of school hours; basic survival; and, cultural awareness (Kurt, 2017).

Though the programming has a waiting list for registrants every year, funding is still always at risk. There is a maximum capacity of 16 students, and a wide array of teaching that includes canoeing, hunting, trapping, harvesting, and processing of foods. Jack has an unsustainable workload demand because of this, and also spends time writing grant applications, in addition to holding a contract teacher position. “I’d rather be spending my time with the kids instead of sitting down writing budget proposals”, he says (Jack, 2013). Knowledge keepers agreed that programming such as this needs to be better supported in schools, as local organizations are foundational to community health and nutrition (Pimbert, 2008).

### *Create change through community education*

Knowledge keepers shared a sense that they have a strong role to play in the community’s development. They shared a feeling of responsibility to encourage more community-based education, with a focus on hands-on-learning with traditional teachings and values. Many knowledge keepers acknowledged the cooperative spirit and supportive role of FRCN community in working towards positive changes to improve their health and food security.

Some community resources, such as earnings from slot machines in FRCN, sponsor food-related community projects including the school breakfast program and school garden. Jesse describes the benefit of supporting projects that are educational and promote healthy living in schools but also reach parents at home. “Bringing it into the school [and]…giving people that awakening of the importance of living off the land [is invaluable in increasing awareness and connection to food]”, says Jesse (Kurt, 2017).

Many knowledge keepers were still involved in some form of traditional food practice including hunting, fishing, gardening, berry picking, and medicine collection. They expressed deep interest in passing on their ancestral food knowledges when they had opportunities to interact with youth through their family structures or community involvement. “We have been bringing back Elders within our school to teach [respect] again so that it doesn’t get totally lost”, (Lisa, April 14, 2013).

Grandparents placed the greatest value on traditional food harvesting practices. However, most parents did not engage in traditional harvesting, processing, consuming, or distributing of food. Those who did were passionate about teaching the skills, as Jesse explains:

> I think it is a need to push because when I was a young mom I did a lot of cooking from scratch…I knew how because my mom taught me how. But today there is a lot of that missing in our younger generations. How I know that is because when I go to have cooking classes with the young women, there is a lot of things they don’t know and even by comments that they make, a couple of ladies, these are from are pre and post-natal groups, you know they say, ‘you know I wish some days I can just go home and make a home cooked meal for my boyfriend or my kids’. Because its mostly Kraft dinner, cutlets, and things they can just cook up eh and I see a desire and need for me to learn and just push that, eh. (Jesse, 2013)

### *Promoting self-production*

Knowledge keepers urged the rediscovering of once-common practical practices in FRCN, including maintaining personal gardens and chickens, and community gardens:

> That’s how I was brought up, used to work on the farm. My dad was a fisherman and he raised a farm. He knew what to do, how to provide food to eat. He raised beef, ducks, and chickens. We had to prepare those for the winter, cattle too, to milk. All of us worked hard, my brothers and my sisters. Sometimes I tell my children about that, the way we were brought up. I try to encourage them. (Robert, 2013)

### *Promoting culture and identity*

Food was seen to be foundational to understanding one’s culture and identity, and knowledge keepers were seen to play a critical role within the community to ensure the connection was made.

> I think there is going to be more [Indigenous knowledge] because there is a lot of young people interested in it right now. Like compared to what there was…there are families that go and pick herbs and stuff like that, there are a few families around like that. (Anna, 2013)

Anna continued to share that many children within those families take part in cultural practices such as Sundances and sweats and are learning "the red path". Ashley further describes the cultural context of learning:

> First Nation people, we teach our children. It's a way of doing, we teach our children from doing things with them, right from small, right from babies to adults. It is just like a baby that is put in a tikanagan and the baby is propped up right there while mom has to do something, so while mom is doing something, baby is laying there and watching and observing, and seeing and hearing and tasting. So that whole learning process starts at an early age. (Ashley, 2013)

Knowledge keepers agree that community involvement in traditional food practices is evolving, and that the community is witnessing more youth becoming engaged in cultural food ways, which is having a positive impact on the community. The education system has a big role in bridging connections between youth and knowledge keepers, and more community education and outreach is required throughout the community to enhance collaborative learning. Learning by practice (and the role of the family unit) is extremely important in ensuring knowledge is maintained and passed onto future generations.

## Discussion

The community spirit and collective efforts to enhance food security and revitalize their own Indigenous food systems is well echoed in IFS as a social learning model (Morrison, 2011). Such a vision of IFS in FRCN and is reflective of the experiences shared by FRCN knowledge keepers, despite these individuals not having had previously heard of the framework. Influenced by two food systems—modern market based (commercial) foods and Indigenous foods—FRCN has been gradually moving towards IFS despite the barriers to food security. FRCN is in the process of asserting more control over their food system, and is strengthening cultural and community health and wellbeing through relationships with food. In half of the cases, an interviewee's response, when asked what food security meant to them, related to food security as access to food for consumption. On first impression, this response aligns with a food security paradigm (FAO, 2009). However, direct connections to Indigenous foods were evident when knowledge keepers described key foods not found in the market based food system (such as muskrat, deer, moose, and rabbit). Such foods were identified by every interviewee as essential to one's food environment, pairing closely with concepts of identity and self-determination.

In general, food was almost always mentioned in the context of coming *from the land,* and it was expressed culturally as *food that is shared* (not bought). Foods from the land possess significant cultural and spiritual value. Therefore, access to traditional, land-based foods is integral to one's identity and overall physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health and wellbeing. Community perceptions of cultural values and perspectives place layers of food issues in FRCN. This is evident through the frequency of knowledge keepers' responses, corresponding to sentiments and embodiment of the pillars of IFS.

Not all community members and age groups viewed food in the same way. However, knowledge keepers note that youth and adults within the community are expressing interest in alternate approaches that draw from an Indigenous worldview, moving FRCN closer to IFS. Knowledge keepers' responses, oral histories, and stories reveal their individual and collective sacred connection and relationship to food. Beyond food sovereignty, knowledge keepers underscore an Indigenous worldview, which exhibits a deep acknowledgement and readily accepted role of upholding a sacred responsibility to "interdependent relationships with the land" (Indigenous Food Systems Network, n.d). Some knowledge keepers directly describe Indigenous food as *sacred*. Other knowledge keepers described wild Indigenous food as *gifts* of the Creator, maintaining that nature and animals should never be disrespected. Access to food, its harvesting, and consumption are to be approached respectfully and are returned to mother earth to share with other creations. *Sacred or divine sovereignty*, and the necessity and desire to practice and maintain cultural harvesting practices to continue them for future generations (*participation*), align with IFS's first two pillars (Morrison, 2011).

In sharing stories and responding to *self-determination* (the third IFS pillar), knowledge keepers have varying ability to respond to their own needs for healthy and culturally appropriate foods primarily due to their age, varying health conditions, and varying economic conditions. Knowledge keepers rely on family, friends, and community to access most foods, and no interviewee is completely dependent on grocery stores. Further, knowledge keepers often conveyed an ability to "reconcile Indigenous food and cultural values with colonial laws and policies and mainstream economic activities" (Morrison, 2008).

Food is medicine and medicine is food—this concept was prevalent throughout interviews in the manner in which knowledge keepers spoke of "good food" (that contributes to one's overall health and wellbeing) and "bad food" (that contribute to sickness and do not contribute to good health). When describing the traditional foods they grew up with and their stories, knowledge keepers became filled with energy and excitement. When speaking of changes since then, knowledge keepers described the (primarily negative) effects of assimilative external policies with sentiments of understanding, as well as hope for enhanced realities for generations.

Community responses broadly illustrated the challenges to food security (Table 2), and they revealed significant histories in FRCN. The experience of these challenges stemmed largely from external influences and drivers; and the outcome was reduced ability of the FRCN community to remain self-sustaining. Involvement in traditional practices was, for many years, in serious decline due to various legislative policies that continued to oppress Indigenous peoples, stemming from the Indian Act. Particularly, all knowledge keepers spoke of the role of outlawed ceremonies and residential schools that destroyed the traditional food systems of FRCN. The role and rapid effect of changes in lifestyle from traditional to modern lifestyle caused instability in social structure (Hill, 2013) and further perpetuated the decline in participation of and in Indigenous food systems (Gombay, 2010). These experiences in FRCN are similar to the ones reported in studies by Cidro & Martens (2015) and Gendron, Hancherow, & Norton (2006).

Barriers to IFS were primarily attributed to the loss of Indigenous knowledge about food and environmental changes. Environmental health became a prominent and dynamic discussion piece in every interview. As supported by other research (Skinner et al., 2013; Pingali, Alinovi, & Sutton, 2005), decline in local environmental conditions were highlighted by knowledge keepers. These included water quality decline, forest degradation, and decline in land and water animals, and the role of flooding /disasters in reducing both individual and communal food availability. These sentiments directly support the claim that environmental degradation is of serious concern to establishing IFS (Morrison, 2011; Coté, 2016). They directly influence food consumption behaviour based on the perceived presence of pollution (Campbell et al., 1997; Hlimi, Skinner, Hanning, Martin, & Tsuji, 2012).

Moreover, FRCN community members are traveling further from FRCN to access the healthiest and safe food available because of concerns with environmental contamination. While market-based foods offer a variety of options to community members for food to consume, especially in times of crisis or traditional food unavailability, store-bought foods tend to be highly processed and understood to be unhealthy (Neufeld, 2003). Similar to research conducted by Rudolph and McLachlan (2013) in Northern Manitoba, knowledge keepers described that while nutritious food are often available at the grocery store, these options are usually limited and more expensive than processed foods.

Residential schools greatly impacted the passing of knowledge to younger generations (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015; Elliot et al., 2012), and prevented their ability to participate in Indigenous food systems (Coté, 2016, Neufeld & Richmond, 2017). Community structure prior to residential schools was heavily reliant on the role of children in food cultivation, processing, and consumption (Morrison, 2011; Health Canada, 2004). This was exemplified by knowledge keepers in reference to federal regulations on mandatory schooling. Removing children from the ability to participate in these life skills drastically changed the food security of each household towards the forced dependency on market-based foods and eroded the ability for transmission of knowledge.

*Participation i*s a key pillar to IFS; it articulates the conceptualization of culturally appropriate, shared foods, but it also reveals the weakening of ties to market-based foods (Morrison, 2011; Kuhnlein & Turner, 1996; PFPP, 2011; Pati & Shukla, 2015). FRCN is varied in its relation to participation in its food system. In general, laws and regulations can make harvesting difficult; there is not enough involvement and dynamic to encourage impactful community participation; and youth's interest in traditional foods have started to increase only recently. While knowledge keepers' perceptions that youth food preference and taste are attuned more to highly processed foods (McMullen, 2012), without further research with youth themselves this cannot be verified for FRCN. Disinterest in practicing cultural livelihoods

(Morrison, 2011; Abrell, Bavikatte, & Jonas, 2009) may result from changes in family structure, high accessibility of market based foods, parental reliance on economic ventures, the effects of residential schools, and the introduction of social assistance—all of which have been shown to be detrimental to Indigenous food systems (Turner & Turner, 2008).

Elders rely on community sharing in order to access foods important to their health and wellbeing. The role of sharing is of significant importance in all First Nation communities, particularly in conduct with elders, as their plate is usually made by someone from the community and given to them to eat first before all other adults as a sign of respect. Sharing in this way is expected community behaviour, and directly influences elder confidence in knowing that their next meal will in fact come and will come in a good way. This important community protocol further lends insight to the importance and impact of traditional foods and was described as deeply profound. Food was not simply a means for filling one's stomach. Thus, the knowledge of food and its spiritual connection to the environment is extremely significant to knowledge keepers (Shukla, 2015). The negative effects of colonization have greatly changed livelihoods and practice away from traditional modes of accessing food, and market based foods have facilitated this transition. Nevertheless, it can be said that market-based foods have supplemented traditional diets during times of crisis and food unavailability (Cidro & Martens, 2015).

Perceptions of opportunities for IFS in FRCN were varied, and centred on the role of education. This education included formal and informal avenues, focusing on youth and the importance for youth to learn from knowledge keepers (Gendron et al., 2006). It is important to highlight that the concept of "change" was highly stressed by knowledge keepers. Change towards Indigenous ways-of-being that promote learning, sharing, environmental awareness, connection to the land, pride in identity, strong culture, and self-governance were all discussed throughout each interview. The role of education were perceived to fall in the hands of formal schooling (K-12) at the community level and families (household level) equally. Knowledge keepers agreed that the role of family in teaching their children food knowledge is extremely important; this idea is supported throughout literature (Rudolph & McLachlan, 2013; Turner & Turner, 2008; Gaudin et al., 2014). Where families are unable to fill this need (due to many reasons including the multigenerational impact of residential schools and the rapid shift from Indigenous livelihoods to colonial livelihoods), the formal school system was seen as a desirable alternative venue to ensure that youth are knowledgeable about and are practicing food skills. Food was universally perceived to be an important vehicle for cultural awareness and positive behaviour.

Since there are not many Elders left in FRCN, a strong educational support is necessary in the community in order to engage youth to lead FRCN into its future. One outdoor education program was recalled by a local youth:

> School can sometimes feel like a prison... this class is a chance to escape and get outdoors doing something... (Youth from FRCN, personal communication, 2016)

## Conclusions

Since May 2015, the FRCN Outdoor Education program has also been in collaboration with University of Winnipeg (UW) on a new Indigenous food systems field course. This has helped the revitalization of Indigenous food knowledges by connecting FRCN youths, University of Winnipeg students, FRCN band, council, community members and knowledge keepers.[1] Also, with the help of the UW research team and outdoor education program, a community garden pilot project was initiated in FRCN in spring 2017 with funding support of Northern Manitoba Food Culture and Community Collaborative (NMFCC)

> You know in life nothing ever stays the same – there are always changes…in the area of life…Our beliefs and values might change when we were young but the natural laws never change – the creator – those never change never. One of those is respect. Respect for the food we eat. Respect for the plants we eat. If we don't respect that food or that plant it might hide and we can't find it. Those things never change. Nothing ever stays the same. (Alexandra, 2017)

The results of our study show that in addition to community-based learning of Indigenous food systems, formal education is perceived to play an important role in achieving IFS in FRCN. Interviewees felt that formal education needs to be more involved in teaching youth about Indigenous foods and Indigenous food systems, particularly given the competing and influential role of the conventional market-based food systems. In FRCN, both formal and informal education regarding Indigenous food systems are vital to ensure that no more knowledge is lost and existing knowledge is promoted. The opportunity that FRCN outdoor education provides in educating youth about traditional foods is valued as extremely important by youth and knowledge keepers.

Despite many challenges to community food security and IFS, most knowledge keepers described their confidence and unwavering support and love for their community, and the untapped potential of FRCN community members. Knowledge keepers spoke of the importance of embedding the value of traditional foods in youth and community, and youth were described as the key to the future. Family and community structures had once shifted away from

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[1] See http://news-centre.uwinnipeg.ca/all-posts/learning-about-indigenous-foods-in-the-field/

Indigenous ways-of-being, they said, and are now beginning to return to honour Indigenous values and histories at a more visible level within the community.

Our findings contribute to the emerging field of IFS and add further contextualization to the Canadian definition and understanding of IFS. This information can also be further extrapolated to understand the principles of and variations to food sovereignty within a global context. The responses of FRCN knowledge keepers underscore the restorative potential of Indigenous food sovereignty in empowering individuals and communities to engage in sacred relationships and action—to renew and strengthen relationships to their traditional foods and lands. IFS has worked to further legitimize Indigenous demand for change in Canada towards holistic food systems that build local community and culture.

Out of 17 knowledge keepers interviewed in 2013, three of them have since passed away. With the passing of each elder, the unique food history, personal stories and Indigenous food knowledges also disappears (Simon, FRCN Councillor, and May 2013). This decline in knowledge keepers is a physical representation of the decline in cultural knowledge of FRCN. With the gradual loss of knowledge keepers continues the loss of knowledge unless stronger intergenerational mechanisms of knowledge transfer emerge.

The FRCN community, like many other Indigenous communities in Canada, are gradually empowering their own IFS in meeting their community food security needs in a time of unprecedented changes and challenges (Settee & Shukla, 2019). Revitalization of their Indigenous foods and associated knowledges and practices is not only important in ensuring their own food security for the present and future generations, but also helps to revitalize past traditions in an era of reconciliation.

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Original Research Article

# Food Network's food-career frenzy? An examination of students' motivations to attend culinary school

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## Abstract

This research presents the findings of a year long study, undertaken between 2016 and 2017, seeking to understand the degree to which students are influenced to attend culinary school by food medias, social media, and the Food Network. The notion that food medias draw the majority of new cooks to the industry is often present in popular media discourses, although no data exists seeking to understand this relationship. This study reveals that food medias play a secondary or tertiary role in influencing students to register at culinary school, while also showing previously unknown patterns related to culinary students' intention to persist with culinary careers. Nearly 40 percent of this sample do not intend to remain cooking professionally for greater than five years, and about 30 percent are "keeping other doors open" upon entry into culinary school. Although food celebrity certainly plays a role in awareness about culinary careers, intrinsic career aspirations are the most frequently reported motivation.

Keywords: culinary school, social media, chefs, Food Network, motivation

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## Introduction

In recent years, many journalists, chefs, and scholars have commented on the degree to which food medias and the Food Network have motivated individuals to attend cooking school. These diverse voices indicate that the traditionally high staff turnover rates associated with the foodservice industry are currently related to burnout generated during millennials' fleeting excursions into professional cooking, as part of mostly unrealized bids for fame (Sherman, 2015), money (Kummer, 2016), status (Pizam, 2016), and celebrity (Mintz, 2016). Although this may be true for some new cooks, published data regarding culinary school students is limited.

To the best of the authors' knowledge, this study is the first assessment of culinary students' motivations to attend culinary school. Our basic hypothesis was that traditional influence brokers (family, friends, secondary school teachers and guidance counselors) play a more important determining role than do non-traditional influence brokers (Food Network, Instagram, Facebook, celebrity chefs). This paper presents the development, deployment, and analysis of a year-long study conducted by the authors in conjunction with culinary students at the Chef School, George Brown College, Toronto. It seeks to understand the influences that led students to register in culinary vocational training. While food media does play a significant role in leading individuals to become culinary students, a more nuanced picture emerges under closer scrutiny.

## Background

During the 1990s, the public became more aware of professional chefs through expanding food television programming. The Food Network, for example, began broadcasting in the USA in 1993, and in Canada in 1997. In 2000, the CRTC granted a broadcasting license (CRTC, #2000-217) for the Food Network Canada, and the network went live later that year. Since then, Americans and Canadians have had 24-hour access to a vast number of cooking shows that invite viewers into their kitchens to see chefs' secret recipes, behind-the-scenes operations, nightmares, and renovations. Most sources point to the emergence of the Food Network and the Food Network Canada as being one of the most important factors in increasing societal awareness of, and interest in, cooking (Baker, 2016; Hayward, 2018; Kummer, 2016; Meehan, 2016; Mintz, 2016; Pizam, 2016; Pratten, 2003; Sherman, 2015).

Although assessing the impact of the Food Network can be complex, the mechanics through which food celebrities attract and maintain viewers' attention has received some attention. Johnston et al. (2014) analysed the complex mechanics of this process, pointing to the colloquial yet informed "personas" of Food Network presenters that assist in creating solidarity and trust between the viewer and the star-teacher. Piper (2015) noted that the adoptive personas of Food Network celebrities must strike just the right balance to have credibility with viewers; hosts must seem both expert and familiar to create viewer affinity and increase the likelihood of piquing viewer interest while maintaining credibility. Given that hosts are often chefs, it seems that a combination of their work histories, purported skill level, personality, style, and knowledge provide the backbone from which viewers can be assured of the hosts' credibility.

Some scholars (Matwick & Matwick, 2014) have already analysed the role of storytelling in increasing viewers' trust and interest in food shows, such as those of Paul Bocuse, Gordon Ramsay, and Jamie Oliver. In striking the right balance of stories and work histories, producers increase the chance that viewers will perceive the host as familiar, credible, trustworthy, and inspiring, thus increasing viewers' willingness to, as Piper (2015) noted, "try something new." Indeed, in the context of the present inquiry, storytelling of work histories is one of the most important aspects of food media's influence on culinary school attendance.

A large number of recent popular press articles suggest that culinary graduates think that by attending culinary school they will become an executive or celebrity chef. "TV is one reason. They all want to be Anthony Bourdain," said Chris Coombs, chef/owner of Boston Urban Hospitality. "The television era has warped the perception of how much work it takes to get from where they are to where he is." (Sherman, 2015, p.7). Regarding the power of food medias to draw individuals into cooking and, by extension, culinary school, Corey Mintz (2016) noted, "Students are lured into cooking school by television programs that idealize restaurant life with celebrity chefs. But working in a professional kitchen can be a tough slog." ( p.1). Other journalists mention themes like romanticizing (Meehan, 2016) and glamourizing (Baker, 2016) culinary labour, and the lure of celebrity (Kummer, 2016) when explaining why culinary students enter cooking schools.

Beyond the popular press, scholars are increasingly turning their attention to cooking schools. Hertzman and Maas (2011) suggested that the dramatic increase in culinary schools and cooking programs is attributable to the rise of the Food Network, while Pizam (2016) suggested that a simultaneous revolution in public perceptions of the culinary trades aided the public in settling on culinary vocations with greater ease. Pratten (2003) noted similar increases in the popularity of cooking schools in the U.K. Although quantitative data supporting these assertions is not presented, they agree with the popular press.

Although culinary school might be seen as an entry pathway to the culinary industry, studies by Martin (2007) and Woolcock (2011) found that trainee cooks often have an ambivalent relationship with formal education. Woolcock (2011) found that Australian male trainee cooks reported a greater preference for skills-based courses over theoretical courses, even when these were related to vocational subjects. Martin (2007) found that Australian males are less likely to persist at culinary vocational training than their female counterparts, and that males were more likely to seek out "unconventional" training agents. In contrast, Martin (2007) found that female Australian trainees were more likely to persist with their vocational education until completion, with Woolcock (2011) finding that Australian females were significantly more aspirational in their future plans than males.

How students select vocations and vocational schools for cooking has had little coverage from scholars. According to Brown (2002), models illustrating students' vocational selection processes are difficult to construct in a manner that adequately captures the complexity of the interplay between personal choices and external forces, while generalized descriptions are more useful. Mocetti (2012) found that family background had the strongest influence on vocational selection. Carless and Prodan (2003), on the other hand, found that previous exposure to a vocation did not result in increased career commitment, self-efficacy and job attainment confidence. Pratten (2003) suggested that motivations to enter the culinary industry may be based on a desire to become "a great chef" or to own a restaurant, although no data was supplied at the time.

A variety of hypotheses have been proposed regarding early-career culinary industry attrition focusing on individuals' personalities, management, and inability to meet career goals. Personal locus of control came to the attention of Hsu-I (2006) who suggests that post-graduation industry persistence correlates highly with individuals' who possess a high degree of recognition of internal locus of control. Conversely, foodservice workers with a high degree of external locus of control were significantly and negatively correlated with job satisfaction (Hsu-I, 2006). Kummer (2016) suggested that inability to meet high costs-of-living in major urban centers may influence culinary industry workers to search for more lucrative positions. Tongchaiprasit and Ariyabuddhiphongs (2016) found that by maintaining greater autonomy in ones' ability to create and innovate, cooks and chefs remain more satisfied for longer periods of time. Robinson and Beesley (2010) found that autonomy over the creative process was more important at different phases in cooks' careers, more important during early career phases and lesser in later, post-orientation career phases. Importantly, job stress and disorganization among management were found to be two more prominent factors than creativity in assessing job satisfaction (Tongchaiprasit & Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2016). Rowley and Purcell (2001) and Kang et al. (2010) suggest that it is ultimately management's ability to create a satisfactory culinary work environment and decrease labor turnover, rather than any relationship to food media or quest for celebrity.

## Hypotheses

At present, there is no extant data regarding what motivates students to attend culinary school nor what forces might play a role in influencing that decision. It is logical to assume that, based on the literature, food medias play an important role in this decision, although the exact nature of that role and its importance in relation to more traditional influence brokers is not understood. Food media may be important in the culinary-school decision-making process, but is it more influential than secondary school faculty? What is the relationship between food media, secondary school faculty, and kin and friend networks? In order to provide clarity regarding this process, the researchers have divided their analysis into three primary hypotheses.

The first hypothesis is that non-traditional influences like food medias play a secondary role in relation to more traditional influence brokers like family, teachers, and personal experiences when it comes to individuals electing to enter the culinary industry via formal education. "Traditional" influence brokers are defined here as kin and fictive kin networks: family, friends, and secondary school teachers and guidance counsellors. "Non-traditional" influence brokers are defined as food medias including the Food Network, the Food Network Canada, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and other similar platforms.

The second hypothesis is that those entering culinary school are certain that they want to be chefs. The degree of certainty about a future culinary vocation is not self-evident. Vocational schools prepare students primarily for industry culinary positions, although the popularity of cooking suggests that some students might attend simply to increase their culinary skills.

The third hypothesis is that students have misguided views of career-advancement timelines and remuneration norms. In many popular-press accounts, chefs allude to the existence of a trend of cooks leaving the industry. This trend is often mentioned in tandem with the notion of celebrity-derived wealth and status as driving culinary-school registrations. H3 tests the notion that culinary-school registrants have unrealistic expectations regarding future income and advancement possibilities, and that this might drive industry attrition.

## Method

A mixed-method, multiple-approach design was used to address the hypotheses. Survey data were collected via a purpose-built questionnaire developed by the research team. A total of 62 questions were developed, requiring a combination of Likert-scale, true or false, matrix, and open-text answers. Survey questions tested eight general thematic areas:

1. Demographic and regional information
2. Personal culinary work or education history
3. General education history
4. Degree of certainty that respondents want to enter the cooking industry
5. Views on the importance of family, friends, teachers and guidance counselors in arriving at a decision to attend culinary school
6. Views on the importance of food television, food media, and social media platforms with food content (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) in arriving at a decision to attend culinary school
7. Views on pay, status, celebrity, advancement in the culinary industry
8. Future plans

To ensure content validity of the survey instrument, a two-stage review occurred. First via focus group and after via field testing by subject matter experts. Focus groups were consulted online and in-person by researchers and included peers in the areas of culinary arts and food studies. After having reviewed feedback, the team undertook minor revisions to ensure clarity of some questions. Simple random sampling (SRS) was used to contact respondents, all of whom were students of George Brown College Chef School. The survey was administered during class time, during the first two weeks of class, via the online I:Survey platform with course professors facilitating deployment. Upon cleaning, 29 respondents were found to have answered less than 50 percent of questions, leading to 202 clean responses. Females comprised 46 percent and males comprised 54 percent of the population; no students selected genders outside of male or female. The data were then entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), scanned for completeness, coded, and analyzed using a mixture of frequency, cross-tabulation, and two-tailed t-tests. Degrees of influence have, for the purposes of this paper, been defined as: "primary," upper thirty-third percentile of rankings; "secondary," middle thirty-third percentile of rankings; "tertiary," lower thirty-third percentile of rankings.

## Results

### *Hypothesis 1*

When considering entering the culinary industry as a vocation, a combination of traditional and non-traditional influence brokers played a role in the decision-making process. The ability to tap into anticipated knowledge of culinary professors, family's knowledge of respondent's personalities and preferences, and the vogue of Instagram and photo-sharing sites were the primary influencers according to all respondents (Table 1). Food Network Canada and social media such as Facebook and Twitter ranked in a secondary position, at 3.3 and 3.1 respectively, while secondary school teachers and guidance counsellors were reported to have played a tertiary role.

In terms of age and gender differences, access to culinary professors was more important to those under 21 years of age ($p < 0.01$), than it was to those above 21 years old. Perhaps predictably, secondary school teachers and guidance counsellors played a more important role for younger respondents than they did for respondents above 21 years old. Family was an equally important influence to both age categories. Although the research team controlled for gender, no statistically significant difference was observed in terms of motivators to consider a culinary vocation.

Quite different results were elicited from questions regarding the purpose of attending culinary school (Table 2). Neither traditional nor non-traditional influence brokers played as influential a role as intrinsic motivations. Registrants to culinary school seemed to be primarily motivated by personal interests and employment goals. Personal goals such as wanting to be able to cook meals for family, friends, leisure, and satisfying an "emotional attachment" to food influenced culinary school registrants far more than anything related to food medias. Interestingly, food medias and the Food Network fell into secondary influencer rankings, given that their average scores ranged between 3.0 and 2.7. Food media available online, including YouTube, Facebook, food shows, the Food Network, and culinary celebrity influencers all ranked below our primary influencers of personal and career goals. Yet, as in the case of vocational selection in general, food medias ranked above teachers. Interestingly, in terms of deciding to attend culinary school, kin and fictive kin networks occupied tertiary positions, below 2.5. This was a different outcome than that which was elicited by questioning regarding general family influencers on the decision to pursue a culinary vocation.

**Table 1:** Influencers for selecting a culinary vocation

| Influencers to Enter Culinary Industry | All /5 | Years in North America | | Age | | Gender | | Years in North America | Age | Gender |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Under 3 | Over 3 | Under 21 | Over 21 | Male | Female | Under 3 vs. Over 3 | Under 21 vs. Over 21 | Male vs. Female |
| College culinary professors | 4.0 | 4.2 | 3.7 | 4.3 | 3.8 | 4.1 | 3.8 | .5 ** | .5 ** | .2 |
| Family | 3.9 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 3.8 | 3.9 | 3.9 | .0 | .3 p | -.1 |
| Instagram and photo-sharing sites | 3.4 | 3.7 | 3.1 | 3.5 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.4 | .5 ** | .3 | -.1 |
| Food Network Television | 3.3 | 3.7 | 3.0 | 3.4 | 3.3 | 3.4 | 3.2 | .7 *** | .1 | .1 |
| Facebook, Twitter, and other similar platforms | 3.1 | 3.5 | 2.8 | 3.2 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 3.0 | .7 *** | .2 | .1 |
| Secondary-school guidance councillors | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.6 | 2.9 | 2.4 | 2.7 | 2.5 | .2 | .5 * | .2 |
| Secondary-school teachers | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.9 | 2.4 | 2.7 | 2.4 | -.1 | .5 ** | .3 |

T-test = $^{p}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Age and gender were the primary controls that proved richest with statistical divergence. Those under 21 years of age were more inclined to be influenced to attend culinary school in order to achieve intrinsic and extrinsic personal goals including satisfying the desire to cook well for family, friends, and while entertaining, ( $p < 0.05$). As well, those under 21 were more likely to see YouTube videos and the Food Network as being influential ($p < 0.05$). Those under 21 found the notion of food celebrities influencing their decision to attend culinary school more influential than those over 21, ($p < 0.001$), with those under 21 ranking food celebrities as a secondary influencer, and those over 21 ranking them as a tertiary influencer. Although ranking as secondary and tertiary influencers, kin and fictive kin ranked differently in influencer status among the two age groups, with parents, predictably, ranking as more influential for those under 21.

Within gender groups, a number of interesting patterns emerge. Females are much more likely to be influenced by their parents ($p < 0.05$). Males, in general, feel more strongly about the reasons for which they entered culinary school. In all areas where there was a significant statistical difference between the two groups, discounting parental influencers, males scored higher in responsiveness to variables, especially those which included intrinsic and extrinsic personal motivations: cooking for family ($p<0.01$), cooking for friends ($p<0.01$), and cooking while entertaining ($p<0.05$). Using culinary skills to benefit kin and fictive kin networks, whether in day-to-day cookery or entertaining, motivated males more than females. Additionally, females were generally less willing to commit to specific reasons for attending culinary school. Although not statistically significant across all categories, the trend was present in all influencer responses except parental.

**Table 2:** Influencers for attending culinary school

| **Influencers in Attending Culinary School** | **All /5** | **Years in North America** | | **Age** | | **Gender** | | **Years in North America** | **Age** | **Gender** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Under 3** | **Over 3** | **Under 21** | **Over 21** | **Male** | **Female** | **Under 3 vs. Over 3** | **Under 21 vs. Over 21** | **Male vs. Female** |
| I want to be able to cook for my family | 3.9 | 4.0 | 3.8 | 4.1 | 3.8 | 4.1 | 3.7 | .2 | .3 | .5 ** |
| I want to run my own business | 3.8 | 3.7 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.9 | -.2 | .1 | -.1 |
| I want to be a restaurant/hotel chef | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 4.0 | 3.5 | 3.8 | 3.5 | .1 | .5 * | .3 |
| I want to be able to cook for my friends | 3.6 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.8 | 3.4 | 3.8 | 3.3 | .0 | .4 * | .6 ** |
| I want to be able to entertain | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.9 | 3.3 | 3.8 | 3.3 | .0 | .5 * | .5 * |
| I have an emotional attachment to food | 3.5 | 3.4 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.6 | -.3 | .0 | -.1 |
| It seems fun | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.4 | 3.5 | 3.2 | 3.3 | 3.4 | -.1 | .3 | -.1 |
| Food media available online (eg. Youtube) | 3.0 | 3.2 | 3.0 | 3.3 | 2.9 | 3.1 | 3.0 | .2 | .4 * | .1 |
| Food Shows | 3.0 | 3.1 | 2.9 | 3.1 | 2.9 | 3.0 | 3.0 | .2 | .2 | .0 |
| A perceived lifestyle | 2.9 | 2.8 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 2.8 | 2.9 | 2.9 | -.2 | .2 | .0 |
| Food Network Television | 2.8 | 3.0 | 2.7 | 3.1 | 2.6 | 2.8 | 2.8 | .4 p | .5 * | .0 |
| Parents | 2.8 | 2.6 | 2.8 | 3.2 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 3.0 | -.2 | .8 *** | -.5 * |
| Culinary Celebrities | 2.7 | 2.9 | 2.6 | 3.1 | 2.5 | 2.8 | 2.7 | .2 | .7 *** | .1 |
| The popularity of cooking | 2.7 | 3.0 | 2.4 | 3.0 | 2.5 | 2.7 | 2.6 | .6 ** | .5 * | .1 |
| Friends | 2.5 | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.8 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 2.6 | -.2 | .4 * | -.1 |
| Teacher | 2.2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.6 | 2.0 | 2.4 | 2.0 | -.1 | .6 ** | .3 |
| Non-cookbook food-related literature | 2.2 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 2.3 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.2 | .1 | .3 | -.1 |

T-test = $^{p}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

## *Hypothesis 2*

Concerning the reasons that students decided to attend culinary school, a number of interesting patterns emerge (see Table 3). Only 81 percent of students claimed to be “totally sure” that they wanted to be a cook/chef. When asked whether or not they are “keeping other doors open as well,” 71 percent of students responded in the affirmative. Perhaps even more surprisingly, more than one third (38 percent) of all respondents do not see themselves cooking professionally for more than five years. Those with previous culinary experience (37 percent) did not see themselves cooking professionally in five years. Those without previous related experience (40 percent) did not see themselves cooking professionally beyond five years (see Tables 3 & 4). Those who intended to complete more postsecondary education upon graduating from culinary school were less likely to be “totally certain” that they want to be a cook or chef (see Table 5).

**Table 3:** Rationale for attending culinary school

| Desire to, and Rationale for Entering Culinary School | All | Years in North America | | Age | | Gender | | Years in North America | Age | Gender |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Under 3 | Over 3 | Under 21 | Over 21 | Male | Female | Under 3 vs. Over 3 | Under 21 vs. Over 21 | Male vs. Female |
| I came to culinary school because I am totally sure that I want to be a cook/chef: | .80 | 81% | 79% | 83% | 78% | 80% | 80% | 1% | 5% | 0% |
| I came to culinary school to explore the idea of cooking as a profession, but I am keeping other doors open as well: | .71 | 75% | 70% | 68% | 74% | 71% | 72% | 5% | -6% | -1% |
| I came to culinary school because I believe that culinary skills will be important to my future since I aspire to a food-related career, but I do not intend to stay cooking professionally for more than 5 years after graduating: | .38 | 46% | 32% | 34% | 41% | 36% | 40% | 13% p | -7% | -4% |

T-test = $^{p}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

**Table 4:** Rationale for attending culinary school (education/experience)

| **Desire to, and Rationale for Entering Culinary School** | **All** | **Education** | | **Previous Experience in Culinary Industry** | | **Previous Experience Related to Culinary Industry** | | **Education** | **Previous Experience in Culinary Industry** | **Previous Experience Related to Culinary Industry** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Degree or More** | **No Degree** | **Exp** | **No Exp** | **Exp** | **No Exp** | **Degree vs. No Degree** | **Exp vs. No Exp.** | **Exp vs. No Exp.** |
| I came to culinary school because I am totally sure that I want to be a cook/chef: | .80 | 83% | 71% | 80% | 80% | 81% | 80% | 13% p | 0% | 1% |
| I came to culinary school to explore the idea of cooking as a profession, but I am keeping other doors open as well: | .71 | 72% | 69% | 76% | 64% | 75% | 70% | 2% | 12% p | 5% |
| I came to culinary school because I believe that culinary skills will be important to my future since I aspire to a food-related career, but I do not intend to stay cooking professionally for more than 5 years after graduating: | .38 | 40% | 35% | 37% | 40% | 49% | 33% | 5% | -2% | 16% * |

T-test = $^{p}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

**Table 5:** Rationale for attending culinary school (future educational aspirations)

| **Desire to, and Rationale for Entering Culinary School** | **All** | **Intent to Obtain Another College Diploma after Graduation** | | **Intent to Obtain University Degree after Graduation** | | **Intent to Obtain College Diploma after Graduation** | **Intent to Obtain University Degree after Graduation** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Intent** | **No Intent** | **Intent** | **No Intent** | **Intent vs. No Intent** | **Intent vs. No Intent** |
| I came to culinary school because I am totally sure that I want to be a cook/chef: | .80 | 72% | 86% | 80% | 81% | -14% * | -1% |
| I came to culinary school to explore the idea of cooking as a profession, but I am keeping other doors open as well: | .71 | 64% | 78% | 75% | 70% | -14% * | 5% |
| I came to culinary school because I believe that culinary skills will be important to my future since I aspire to a food-related career, but I do not intend to stay cooking professionally for more than 5 years after graduating: | .38 | 36% | 40% | 38% | 38% | -4% | 0% |

T-test = $^{p}$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.00$

### *Hypothesis 3*

The notion that students have unrealistic career expectations is true in some areas, but untrue in the areas of motivation due to goals of gaining food celebrity status. In terms of beginner salaries, the average culinary school entrant expects to receive an annual salary of around $20,000.00 CAD for the first three to four years, with the average respondent not expecting to receive around $30,000.00 per year until about four and a half years of experience (see Table 6). Based on current market rates as of April 14, 2019, line cooks working in Toronto receive, on average, $14.00 per hour, with the low end of the scale sitting at $14.00 per hour and the high end being $18.00 per hour (JobBank.gc.ca, 2019). Since the majority of jobs are minimum-wage, the *average* and the *low end* of the scale are the same. If we extrapolate based on the average wage, and assume a 40-hour work week, although unrealistically short for some working in the industry, current annual salaries within the Toronto region equal around $29,120 per year. Therefore, if we confine ourselves to the first five years of a recent graduate's career trajectory, the average individual has realistic remuneration expectations.

The difficulty seems to begin around years four to seven. By year seven, the average respondent expected to receive an annual salary of around $40-50,000.00. Given that it takes cook apprentices two years of part-time education and a minimum of 6,000 hours, or three years, of on-the-job training to become Red Seal journeyperson cooks, there is a longstanding notion in Canada's culinary industry that one is still quite junior in their career during years four to seven *after* having completed culinary school. Although sous chef promotions may occur toward the end of years four to seven, JobBank reports that sous chefs working in Toronto as of April 14, 2019, were being paid $16.00 per hour, on average (JobBank, 2017). Using the same extrapolation, this equals an annual wage of around $33,000.00. Executive chefs often have decades' worth of experience meaning that occupying sous chef positions can last for quite some time during one's career, well beyond seven years. Therefore, entry-level expectations are not unrealistic, but expectations of regular wage increases do become unrealistic around years four to seven, and highly unrealistic after that point. This expectation does not differ, statistically, based on the students' age, gender, or time living in North America.

In a similar manner, there appears to be an expectation of consistent, teleological increases in the number of years required to progress through the hierarchy of the kitchen brigade toward the position of executive chef (see Table 7). Students from all groups expected to become sous chefs within the six-year mark, although males expected it to take slightly longer to achieve executive chef status than did females. Especially problematic is that students do not seem to take into account the idea that many in Canada's culinary industry do not count culinary school as cooking experience, so students should be adding one to two years on to each of their estimations depending on their length of time spent in school.

**Table 6:** Expected wages based on tenure

| Wage Expectation | All Years | Years in North America | | Age | | Gender | | Years in North America | Age | Gender |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Under 3 | Over 3 | Under 21 | Over 21 | Male | Female | Under 3 vs. Over 3 | Under 21 vs. Over 21 | Male vs. Female |
| Less than $20,000/year | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 2.4 | 2.2 | -0.1 | 0.1 | 0.2 |
| $20,000-$30,000/year | 3.2 | 3.3 | 3.1 | 3.4 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.3 | 0.2 | 0.3 | -0.2 |
| $30,000-$40,000/year | 4.7 | 4.9 | 4.5 | 5.3 | 4.2 | 4.6 | 4.8 | 0.5 | 1.0 * | -0.2 |
| $40,000-$50,000/year | 6.9 | 7.3 | 6.5 | 7.3 | 6.5 | 7.0 | 6.7 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 0.2 |
| $50,000-$60,000/year | 8.6 | 8.9 | 8.4 | 9.2 | 8.1 | 8.5 | 8.6 | 0.4 | 1.1 | -0.1 |
| $60,000-$70,000/year | 10.6 | 10.4 | 10.6 | 11.1 | 10.1 | 10.6 | 10.6 | -0.2 | 1.0 | 0.1 |
| $70,000-$80,000/year | 12.6 | 11.6 | 13.2 | 12.8 | 12.4 | 12.8 | 12.3 | -1.6 p | 0.4 | 0.5 |
| $80,000-$90,000/year | 14.0 | 13.4 | 14.4 | 14.2 | 13.8 | 14.1 | 13.7 | -0.9 | 0.4 | 0.4 |
| $90,000-$100,000/year | 15.4 | 14.8 | 15.8 | 15.7 | 15.1 | 15.5 | 15.2 | -1.0 | 0.5 | 0.3 |
| More than $100,000/year | 17.4 | 16.9 | 17.6 | 17.6 | 17.2 | 17.8 | 16.9 | -0.7 | 0.4 | 0.9 |

T-test = $^{p}$ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.

**Table 7:** Expected advancement based on tenure

| Position Expectation | Years | Years in North America | | Age | | Gender | | Years in North America | Age | Gender |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Under 3 | Over 3 | Under 21 | Over 21 | Male | Female | Under 3 vs. Over 3 | Under 21 vs. Over 21 | Male vs. Female |
| Executive Chef | 12.0 | 11.4 | 12.4 | 12.1 | 11.8 | 12.5 | 11.2 | -0.9 | 0.3 | 1.3 |
| Sous Chef | 6.5 | 6.4 | 6.6 | 6.6 | 6.5 | 6.8 | 6.1 | -0.2 | 0.1 | 0.8 |
| Red Seal Cook | 5.4 | 4.5 | 6.1 | 4.9 | 5.8 | 5.3 | 5.7 | -1.6 * | -0.9 | -0.4 |
| Line Cook (no red seal) | 1.5 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.5 | -0.1 | 0.3 | 0.1 |
| Apprentice | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 1.3 | 0.2 | 0.1 | -0.4 |
| Other | 4.5 | 3.2 | 5.5 | 4.0 | 4.8 | 4.4 | 4.5 | -2.2 * | -0.7 | -0.1 |

T-test = $^{p}$ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.

## Discussion

Initially the research team suspected that secondary-school faculty played a more important role in the decision-making process of students than the popular press, who emphasize food media and celebrity, were attributing to them. This hypothesis was proven incorrect, and is rejected. While secondary-school faculty play a tertiary role, the role played by media is secondary in nature to the role played by personal interests, career goals, and the desire to share cooking with family and friends.

This research did confirm that those entering culinary school were there to be chefs (80 percent), although, as was suspected by the research team prior to the study, more culinary-school students were considering other employment areas than they were openly admitting to faculty. More than 70 percent of the population was "keeping other doors open," and 38 percent of the population does not intend to remain cooking professionally in five years. This is a highly transitory vocation, seemingly used as a springboard into other careers and vocations.

This research confirms that, while culinary students have early-career pay and progression notions highly reflective of reality, divergence occurs around years four to seven in that pay and position increases do not occur in such a neat, progressive manner. Celebrity and food media has only a secondary or tertiary role in motivating students to register at culinary school, and a negligible role in early-career occupational attrition. Assessment of *post facto* attrition from the culinary industry should not be based on numbers of graduates from culinary education institutions. A large proportion of students attending culinary school are uncertain of their reasons for enrolling in the program. Certainly, they are interested in food, but many do not have finite ideas regarding what to do with this interest upon graduation. It would be beneficial for culinary education institutions and industry chefs to work with students to develop informed, evidence-based career strategies that balance differing long-term goals in these respects.

## Conclusion

Food medias do play a significant but secondary role in attracting people to the food industry and culinary school. However, respondents did not expect to become celebrities through entry into the food industry. Primarily, students are attracted by the idea of working with food because it satisfies intrinsic goals that are far more significant than their interest in food celebrity. In fact, it would seem that food media and its popularity is related to an intrinsic interest in food shared by many in wider society, rather than creating such interest.

In the future, the Food Network and television in general will become less important. Although the Food Network did play an important role in getting people to think about cooking school and culinary vocations, this was always a secondary or tertiary role. Further research should focus on what respondents hope to achieve by entering cooking school and what patterns exist in terms of long-term ambitions. Kummer's (2016) suggestion that further analysis be undertaken focusing on the impact of high cost-of-living seems especially pertinent in this regard. Future research should also examine the ability of variables such as increased compensation, benefits packages, meaningful professional development, education support, diversity strategies within the workplace, funded stages and other prerequisites to mitigate the outward flow of foodservice workers from high-skill culinary positions.

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Original Research Article

# Farm safety: A prerequisite for sustainable food production in Newfoundland and Labrador

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## Abstract

A sustainable approach to food production must address both environmental sustainability and the wellbeing of food producers. Farming is one of the most dangerous occupations globally with high rates of injury, fatality, and occupational disease. However, occupational hazards and the practices that lead to unsafe working environments are often overlooked in sustainable food system research. Poor management of occupational health and safety (OHS) can potentially threaten the survival of individual agricultural operations through injury and illness of the operator, family members, and employees. Gaps in agricultural safety knowledge, prevention, and compensation have been unevenly addressed in Canada. This paper presents findings from the first study of agricultural OHS in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). Findings from a 2015-2016 survey of 31 food-producing operators representing 34 large and small operations in three NL regions show: 1) that hazards present within these operations are similar to those found in other contexts; 2) accidents are relatively common and most are not reported to workers' compensation; 3) some participating operators were unsure whether their farms are subject to the regulations in the NL OHS Act; and, 4) there are gaps in workers' compensation coverage. Some reliance on local and international volunteers and limited safety training point to other potential vulnerabilities. Study findings highlight the need to incorporate a focused strategy for injury prevention and compensation into efforts to develop a stronger and more sustainable food system in NL. We outline an agenda for future action relevant for NL and other places facing similar gaps and challenges.

Keywords: sustainable food systems, agriculture, occupational health and safety

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## Introduction

Agriculture is considered to be one of the most dangerous types of work in Canada and globally (Canadian Agricultural Injury Reporting, 2016; Donham & Thu, 1995; International Labour Office, 2011). Relative to its substantial direct and indirect impacts on agricultural workers, their families, and their communities, prevention of occupational injuries, diseases, and fatalities in agriculture has received limited public attention and resources (Leigh, McCurdy, & Schenker, 2001), including among critical food studies researchers.

Sustainable agriculture as defined by Hanson (1995, p.591) includes four key aspects: 1) the reduction in chemical use and of excessive cultivation while retaining or enhancing profitability; (2) production of food that will meet the demands of consumer needs; (3) habitat protection as part of agricultural management; and (4) enhancement or protection of agricultural jobs, communities, and the health of agricultural producers. As noted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2014), one of the five principles of sustainable food and agriculture should be to "improve livelihoods and foster inclusive economic growth." Under this principle, the FAO notes that "agriculture can only become sustainable if it provides decent employment conditions to those who practice it, in an economically and physically safe, and healthy environment" (FAO, 2014, principle 3, p.1). Furthermore, Donham and Thelin (2016) argue that "an extremely significant factor seldom mentioned in sustainability and growth in agricultural productivity is sustaining the health and safety of the people who do the work—the human capital in the agricultural industry" (p. 30).

Both industrial and smaller scale agricultural production have the potential to affect the health of sector operators, employees, and volunteers or interns (Tegtmeier & Duffy, 2004). Weiler, Otero, & Wittman (2016) note that alternative food networks are often based on labour-intensive farming models and these kinds of initiatives "often gloss over oppressive aspects of farm labor by promoting a romanticized agrarian ideology" (p. 1141). Similarly, Shreck, Getz, & Feenstra (2006) found minimal support among certified organic farmers in California for the incorporation of social standards (including protection of the health of workers) into certification processes.

Work-related injuries, illnesses, and fatalities in agriculture have the potential to impose heavy health and financial burdens on operators and their families, and on employees and their families. Family owned businesses are vulnerable when the health of the primary producer is compromised. As indicated by Leigh et al. (2001), "when the farm owner or operator is off work for more than a week, serious economic consequences can ensue. Expenses of the business continue and may even increase" (p. 245). Related concerns about agricultural safety are captured in the catch phrase adopted by the Sustainable Farm Families Project: "There is no point in having a healthy bottom line if you're not there to enjoy it" (as cited in Brumby, Willder, & Martin, 2009, p. 3). The direct costs of farm injuries and chronic ill health may lead to bankruptcies, as well as many indirect costs, thereby affecting the well-being of small rural communities and to some degree, of society as a whole (Rathke, 2015; Whelan, Ruane, McNamara, Kinsella, & McNamara, 2009). Poor safety practices can also affect efforts to diversify farm operations through such initiatives as agritourism (Rathke, 2015).

On smaller operations, limited incomes and related challenges around the affordability of and access to safety training, equipment with up-to-date protective features such as roll-over protection on tractors (Day et al., 2009), and limited resources to pay for workers' compensation and other forms of insurance can augment the risk of injury and illness to operators and employees (Gundersen & Offutt, 2005).Health and safety issues are also present on larger agricultural operations such as those in horticulture and dairy, poultry, and hog production (Horrigan, Lawrence, & Walker, 2002). Because of compensation coverage and access to specialized training, larger operations may be more insulated from the social and economic effects of injury, illness, and fatality but they are not necessarily safer places to work. Thus, it is important that initiatives to achieve sustainable food systems incorporate attention to occupational health and safety (OHS) across diverse types of agricultural operations and contexts.

In this study, relevant findings from the first study of OHS on food-producing agricultural operations in the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) are presented. They are linked with questions related to sustainable food systems and food security. NL has had an agricultural sector since the 19th century. Its agricultural sector is small compared to other Canadian provinces. In 2011, only 0.25 percent of the total number of Canadian farms were located in NL (Statistics Canada, 2011) but growth of the sector is a priority of the NL provincial government which recently almost doubled the amount of crown land available for agricultural development (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2017). Most food produced in NL agriculture is sold within the province. The promotion of the local food production sector is a key aspect of efforts to reduce currently high dependence on costly and insecure supplies of imported food in order to enhance food security and the health of people in NL (Food First, 2017). Thus expansion of the sector is a key element of provincial government plans to diversify the provincial economy. Identifying and addressing threats to the health of operators, their families, and their employees is important to the future sustainability of the NL food system.

Research on OHS on Canadian farms has been concentrated in provinces with large agricultural sectors (such as Saskatchewan) and has focused on a limited range of issues including tractor and other machinery-related hazards, hazards to children, animal and containment-related hazards associated with large, industrial operations and, more recently, occupational health issues associated with increasing reliance on Temporary Foreign Workers (CAIR, 2011). Research, surveillance, and targeted injury and illness prevention programs are limited in other parts of country, including provinces like NL with small, highly dispersed agricultural sectors.

This study of agricultural safety in NL was part of a national research program on agricultural OHS implemented between 2014 and 2017 (Neis, Dabrowska, Butler, & Vincent, 2017). We used a community-engaged approach, seeking input into the design of the study, interpretation of the results, and dissemination of the findings from a multi-stakeholder advisory committee formed specifically for this research. We report here on a sample of food-producing operators' self-reported knowledge and experiences with hazards and injuries, the workers' compensation system, the OHS regulatory system, and operators' experiences with safety training.

The purpose of our study was to address the gap in research on agricultural safety hazards, safety training, regulatory knowledge, and compensation coverage in the agricultural sector in NL—in order to help ensure efforts to rapidly expand and diversify the sector, and to achieve greater food security.

## Methods

This research began with a literature review of agricultural safety research contextualized for the province's agricultural sector characteristics (Butler, Neis, & Vincent, 2015). WorkplaceNL[1], the provincial workplace compensation commission, provided a summary of workers' compensation claims data for the agricultural industry between 2008 and 2013. The results of this background research, including an identification of types of hazards and input from our community advisory committee, informed the design of a survey questionnaire with mainly structured and some open-ended questions on operator demographics, numbers and types of employees, commodities produced, hazards, experience with injuries, workers' compensation coverage, and attitudes towards the compensation system, as well as operator awareness of OHS laws that apply to the agricultural sector. Where appropriate, structured questions include an open-ended "other" option. The interview schedule[2] was pre-tested and further adapted based on results from the pre-test.

### *Participant recruitment*

In order to determine the size, composition, and distribution of the larger population from which to recruit our sample, we first compiled a directory of Newfoundland agricultural operators using information derived from numerous public sources including census information, agricultural industry documents, information from operators, and snowball sampling based on suggestions by participants. A total of 182 food agricultural operations were identified using these means. Some sources have suggested that there are over 500 farms in the province (Statistics Canada, 2011; Department of Natural Resources, 2014). Given how it was developed, the directory was likely skewed towards more commercial operations with a visible presence online and in the industry. A representative of the NL Federation of Agriculture confirmed that their organization has approximately 200 active members (M. C., personal communication, July 14, 2015).

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[1] www.workplacenl.ca

[2] A copy of the interview schedule can be found at www.mun.ca/safetynet/projects/Interview_Schedule.pdf.

In a bid to ensure the representativeness of the sample, we used a purposive sampling method (Jupp, 2006) by clustering the 182 operations in our directory by region and commodity group and attempting to recruit proportionally from each. The regions included: the Avalon (n=88), Central (n=51), and Western (n=46). The commodity group clusters encompassed meat producing farms (n=25), dairy farms (n=30), vegetable farms (n=30), fruit/berry farms (n=21), horticultural operations (n=40), and honey farms and mixed commodity farms (n=36). Operators within each commodity group were contacted by phone or by email until the predetermined participant quota was reached. As part of its support for the study, the NL Federation of Agriculture emailed a recruitment letter to its membership in Spring 2015. In an effort to increase participation, flyers were also distributed at the annual Conference of the Federation of Agriculture in Winter 2016. We attempted to contact all operators listed at least once.

Our recruitment strategy resulted in a diverse sample that encompassed a broad range of commodity groups and operations of different sizes and included the three main agricultural areas on the Island of Newfoundland. In total, 31 interviews representing 34 distinct agricultural operations were conducted with food producers. Interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes.

### *Survey administration*

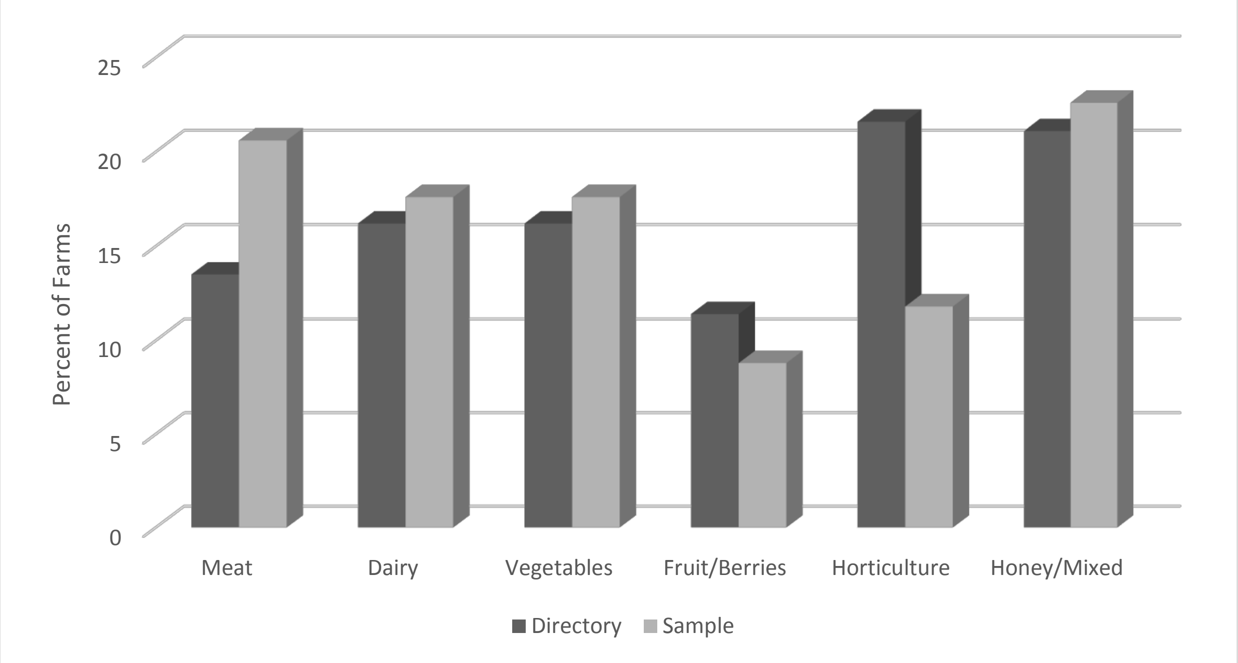
The survey was administered during face-to-face interviews with operators in a place convenient to participants (e.g., on their farms, in their homes, or at a centralized location selected by them). Interviews were not audio-recorded; responses were hand-recorded (written or typed) during the interviews with efforts made to capture close-to-verbatim responses to open-ended questions. Data entry and data analyses were conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v.23*)*. Hand-written responses to open-ended questions from all participants were transcribed and combined with typed responses. All answers were then analyzed using SPSS and Excel software, clustered by question, grouped into themes, reviewed, and used to generate summaries and relevant quotes.

The research design, recruitment strategy, and consent forms for the study were approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research of Memorial University. Our research results will be presented in five categories: hazards, accidents, injuries, and illnesses; OHS training; knowledge of OHS regulations; workers' compensation coverage; and safety and compensation of volunteers and temporary foreign workers (TFWs) (Butler et al., 2015).

## Results

The types of hazards associated with agriculture vary across commodity groups. Figure 1 compares the distribution of commodity groups in our NL directory to the distribution of commodity groups in our study sample. The proportion of dairy, vegetable, fruit/berry, and mixed commodity farms in our sample was relatively similar to their proportion in the industry directory, but horticultural operations were slightly under-represented and meat producers slightly over-represented. It is worth noting that some participants had multiple farms producing more than one type of commodity.

**Figure 1**: Agricultural commodity group distribution and study sample population (percent).



The mean age of participating operators was 50.1, slightly lower than the mean age of 55.0 for NL farmers in the 2011 census (Statistics Canada, 2011). In 2011, 23.3 percent of NL farmers were women (Statistics Canada, 2011), whereas only five (16.1 percent) of our 31 operators were women. The size of operations in the sample ranged from less than 10 acres to more than 600 acres with a median size of 65 acres. The number of paid employees ranged from zero to 39, with a mean and median of 8.0 and 4.0, respectively. The similarities in many of the means and medians for different commodity groups (Table 1) indicate that for most there was not a lot of variability in the number of paid employees in our sample. The exceptions were dairy, fruit, and horticulture operations, which generally had more employees.

**Table 1:** Mean and Median Number of Employees, by Commodity Group

| **Meat** | **Dairy** | **Vegetables** | **Fruit** | **Horticulture** | **Honey/Mixed** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean 4.71 | Mean 17.3 | Mean 4.0 | Mean 13.3 | Mean 12.3 | Mean 2.9 |
| Median 0.0 | Median 14.5 | Median 2.0 | Median 15.0 | Median 3.5 | Median 3.0 |

Ten (32.3 percent) of our 31 participants reported having no paid employees, and five (16.1 percent) reported using volunteers or family and friends to help out. Of those who reported using volunteers three were vegetable/fruit operators. Some indicated that they gave volunteers free produce in return for help during harvest. On average, 39.5 percent of paid employees were full-time, 26.3 percent were part-time but year-round, and 34.2 percent were seasonal. Of the 22 operators with paid employees, 13 (59.1 percent) employed workers primarily from the local area, two (9.1 percent) sourced workers from other parts of the province, and seven (31.8 percent) had employees who came from other locations including from other countries. This latter group includes temporary foreign workers.

### *Hazards, accidents, injuries, and illnesses*

In interviews, operators were asked to select from a list of occupational hazards potentially found on their operation(s). More than 80 percent of respondents indicated the following hazards were present on their operations: bending, lifting, twisting, and/or repetitive motion; slips, trips, and falls; tractors, chainsaws, and other equipment; and noise. Between 70 and 80 percent also indicated the presence of: heat, cold, or wind; power take-off; crushing dust; fatigue; and work-related stress. Chemical exposures, working alone, allergens, ATVs, and animals were selected by more than 50 percent of operators.

For each selected hazard participants were asked, “Has this hazard ever been the source of an accident, injury, or illness on your farm/operation?” Almost 60 percent reported experiencing injuries on their operations (18 of 31) with bending, lifting, twisting, and/or repetitive motion identified as the hazard most likely to be a source of injury (n=11), followed by slips/trips/falls (n=10), and animals (n=6). Types of injuries reported in the interviews included cuts and knocks from chainsaws or other sharp equipment, animal bites/kicks, and instances of being dragged by an animal. Injuries from hazardous weather included hypothermia and frostbite, while eye injuries were associated with chemical and dust exposure. Operators also identified crushed fingers and toes, broken and sprained knees and ankles, heavy lifting injuries, and carpal tunnel syndrome.

## *OHS Training*

One way to help reduce the risk of injury, illness, and fatality is through formal training in health and safety and particularly in agricultural safety. Formal training in agricultural safety was limited among our interviewees and among their employees. When asked, only 16 (51.6 percent) of our interviewees reported having formal agricultural safety training, eleven (35.5 percent) participants reported transferrable safety training from another job or source outside of their agricultural experience, and four (12.9 percent) reported no formal training at all.

Nine (37.5 percent) of 24 agricultural operations employed more than 10 employees and were considered ‘larger operations.’ Under the law, operations with 10 or more employees are required to have joint worker-management health and safety committees. Operations with fewer than 10 employees are required to have health and safety representatives. When asked, “What kinds of training/experience do your employees/volunteers have?” three operators (11.5 percent) said that their employees had training from an on-site OHS committee. Five of the larger industry operators reported having a safety representative on their farm, “to help with injury prevention.” Only eight (36.4 percent) of the 22 operators with employees reported that their employees had at least one of the following: basic first aid, pesticide application, WHIMIS, or CPR. One participant suggested safety should be second nature in that employees should always be properly trained and slowly eased into hazardous work. Another noted, “I don’t have much knowledge, but I always train my employees. It is an even better idea to go to farms and help people to avoid making heartbreaking mistakes.”

Not all employees had general farm experience, another potential source of vulnerability. Only 10 (45.5 percent) of 22 participants with employees reported their employees had some degree of farm experience. Another 10 (45.5 percent) indicated their employees, “get experience as they go.” In these cases, limited safety training was provided by the operator and typically consisted of ‘do’s and don’ts’. Some participants noted that while their employees have little safety training, they limit the tasks and responsibilities around operating dangerous machinery for these employees. For instance, one participant noted that in order to ensure safety, employees were allowed to perform only very rudimentary tasks and were prevented from being, “let loose on whatever they wanted to do.”

Twelve (38.7 percent) of our 31 participants expressed an interest in learning more about training, education, and awareness programs. As indicated above, some have access to health and safety training through work in other sectors and can use this training on their operations. However, this training would not necessarily always be sufficient for injury and illness prevention in agriculture. Under Regulation 5/12 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2012), employers are required to carry out risk assessments and have responsibility for their own safety and that of their employees and volunteers. Failure to meet the obligations of *the Act* could result in failed inspections and, potentially, in stop work orders as well as, in the event of an injury or death, prosecution and fines. This, and the evidence of accidents, injury, and illness among participating operators point to the need to develop a comprehensive and effective health and safety injury prevention program that encompasses training and strategies that work well for small and large operations engaged in diverse activities, dealing with labour turnover, and often located in remote areas.

### *Knowledge of OHS regulations*

Interview participants were asked about their knowledge of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act & Regulations* (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2012), including if they were, "aware of this legislation and the ways in which it applies to you?" Of the 31 participants, only 12 (38.7 percent) said that they were familiar with the legislation. Only those who had experienced a visit from an officer appeared to be aware of the implications of *the Act* for their operations. Nine (29.0 percent) out of 31 participants reported they had received a visit by an OHS officer, four of those were associated with dairy operations.

Eight (25.8 percent) of 31 participants expressed concerns about what they see as a system designed for other kinds of operations being used to regulate their small farms. One participant said he only earns a minimum profit and has a yearly income of about $20,000 per year. He added that, "government needs to be careful not to introduce safety legislation that will end up rendering a farm unproductive … safety should not equate to inefficiency." Five participants indicated that government enforces a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to farm safety which may not work in this industry as hazards vary widely depending on the type and size of operations. One operator commented, "They are out of touch with farming. They have one system catering to everyone, but it doesn't work for everyone. We are trying to follow all the guidelines but this is very hard for us."

### *Workers' compensation coverage*

Workers' compensation is a no-fault insurance system within which coverage provides compensation for lost wages and for medical and other costs in the event of an accident, injury, or illness. It also protects employers from the risk of being sued by an affected worker and thus may be important in terms of limiting risks to the sustainability of food producing operations. Agricultural operators in NL are eligible for workers' compensation and, if they meet the general registration requirement for employers in the province, are required to register with WorkplaceNL. As indicated by the WorkplaceNL representative on our advisory committee:

> According to the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act* (the Act), c19, s2, "[a]n employer is considered to be any person or entity engaged in business in Newfoundland and Labrador" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2012; WorkplaceNL, 2016b). This

> encompasses sole proprietorships as well as partnerships and corporations. Incorporated agricultural operations must register with WorkplaceNL and coverage is mandatory for all workers, including the owner, director, or managers. Agricultural operations that are non-incorporated, such as some sole proprietorships or partnerships, are not required to register if the only workers are the proprietor or partners. However, if a non-incorporated agricultural operation hires a worker, then they are required to register. Optional personal coverage is available for owners of non-incorporated operations on a voluntary basis. Under the Act, any individual who meets the definition of a worker (family member or not) would be entitled to potential benefits in the event of a workplace injury. However, volunteers are not covered (L. B., personal communication, April 19, 2016).

Interviewees were asked if they had workers' compensation coverage. The self-reported compensation coverage patterns for the 34 agricultural operations owned by the 31 participants are summarized in Table 2. Of the 24 operations with employees, 20 (83.3 percent) had workers' compensation coverage for their employees, while four (16.7 percent) did not. All incorporated farms with employees had coverage, and 10 (71.4 percent) of these 14 incorporated farms had coverage for the owner/operator as well. However, owners of both incorporated (3) and non-incorporated (7) operations without employees all indicated they were not paying workers' compensation premiums and therefore were not covered.

**Table 2:** Participants' Self-Reported Compensation Coverage

| *Operations with Employees (N = 24)* | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Coverage for Employees?** | **Incorporated** | **Non-Incorporated** |
| Yes | 14 | 6 |
| No | 0 | 4 |
| **Coverage for Owner/Operator?** | **Incorporated** | **Non-Incorporated** |
| Yes | 10 | 2 |
| No | 4 | 8 |
| *Operations without Employees (N = 10)* | | |
| **Coverage for Owner/Operator?** | **Incorporated** | **Non-Incorporated** |
| Yes | 0 | 0 |
| No | 3 | 7 |

Of the 60 total injuries and illnesses reported in the interviews, only 14 (23.3 percent) had been reported to WorkplaceNL. Registered operators had reported only 50 percent of the accidents they indicated had taken place on their operations.

Interviewees' comments provide some insight into operators' perceptions of, and concerns about, workers' compensation. When asked about the compensation system, one operator stated that workers' compensation, "is there for the workers and for the farmers, so it protects both parties." However, some operators reported concerns about the system. The most commonly reported concerns referenced paying, "premiums disproportionately high for small operations," and, "a lack of support for farmers." Four operators of farms with employees talked about their income level and difficulties paying workers' compensation premiums. Some suggested that the system, "does not [take] the type of farming into account when assessing insurance premiums."

It is difficult to compare premiums across provinces by industry but the average compensation assessment rate for the NL agricultural sector between 2012 and 2016 was $4.66 per $100 of payroll (WorkplaceNL, 2016a). Premium rates for individual enterprises could be higher or lower than this amount because of experience-based rating. Depending on the number of employees, wage levels, and seasonality, premium rates could be costly for food producers with relatively low incomes and narrow profit margins.

### *Safety and compensation of volunteers and temporary foreign workers (TFWs)*

While 24 (70.6 percent) of the agricultural operations included in this study had paid employees, most of these employees were family members or came from other families in local areas or regions. Some smaller operations (5) relied on volunteer help from unpaid family and friends and international volunteers recruited through programs like World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOFers). The latter work on farms in exchange for food, accommodation, and experience (WorldWide Opportunities on Organic Farms, 2015). In NL, volunteers are not eligible for workers' compensation. This lack of workers' compensation coverage is an issue of concern for both these volunteers and the operators. To help address the financial threat to the farm of potential risks of injury to farm visitors and volunteers, some of the producers had purchased insurance coverage from private or co-operative farm insurance providers. It is unlikely that volunteers are receiving adequate safety training because, as noted previously, very few agricultural operators offer this training, even to paid employees.

TFWs are common in some parts of the agricultural sector in Canada but they are not common in NL. Of the 15-17,000 workers who came to Canada on approved Labour Market Impact Assessments under the Primary Agriculture Stream in 2016 and 2017, only 13 workers were brought into NL (Statistics Canada, 2017). In the case of TFWs, employers are supposed to provide health insurance and, as paid employees these workers should be covered by workers' compensation in NL. One of our participants indicated that language barriers can affect the safety of both internationally recruited WWOOFERS and TFWs.

## Discussion

The commercial agricultural sector in NL is a small but diverse and dynamic sector of the economy that plays a key role in the local food system. There is strong government interest in expanding the sector beyond current levels of production and the provincial government is encouraging and providing funding for development and diversification (Farm Industry Review Board, 2014).

Our survey findings from a stratified sample of 31 operators representing 34 food-producing operations point to a) diverse hazards and types of injuries; b) uneven and limited awareness of health and safety regulations; c) a lack of adequate safety training, particularly among employees and volunteers; d) gaps in workers' compensation coverage; and e) concerns among some operators about existing compensation and regulatory systems. Based on these findings we conclude that threats to the health of operators, employees, and volunteers need to be addressed to help ensure the sustainability of the NL food system and outline an agenda for future action linking agricultural OHS to food security/sustainable food systems in NL that is potentially relevant for other contexts.

Findings from this study of OHS in NL agriculture suggest that hazards and injuries are diverse, widespread, and similar to those found in agriculture elsewhere. Although operators and their employees fall under provincial OHS legislation in NL (unlike in some other places), awareness of the requirements of the legislation is limited among operators. Similarly, while operators are eligible and, in many cases, required to register with and pay into the workers' compensation system, coverage is incomplete, particularly for the operators themselves. Evidence of substantial under-reporting of work-related injuries and illnesses to workers' compensation, even among operations with compensation coverage, suggest compensation data do not capture the full burden of injury and illness in the sector and that operators, their families and employees, as well as the public health care system, are carrying some of this burden. As noted in interviews reliance on unpaid family, local, and international volunteers is common on some operations, especially smaller ones. Volunteers are not eligible for workers' compensation creating another potential layer of vulnerability for both volunteers and operators.

Study findings also point to substantial gaps in training, particularly among employees and volunteers, and capture some concerns among operators about the regulatory and compensation system and their interest in training. Some operators report compensating for a lack of training of some employees by allocating work that is more hazardous and requires training to those with appropriate training and experience. Investment in appropriate training for operators and employees has the potential not only to improve safety, but also to contribute to the sustainability of operations by allowing employers to make fuller use of their employees.

That said, training takes time and resources and needs to be available and affordable. It can prove costly, particularly in contexts with high labour turnover.

Lack of compensation coverage and, where coverage exists, a failure to report accidents, injuries, and illnesses means that medical and lost time costs are likely borne by the workers, food producers, and their families or by separate insurance coverage, rather than the compensation system. Those without compensation coverage are at risk of being sued by injured and ill workers and volunteers.

Many interviewees are concerned about the hazards in the sector and are interested in learning more about ways to improve safety. However, some feel that the compensation and regulatory systems are not designed to address the sector's diversity and culture, especially relating to experience and training. Operators' concerns that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to training, regulation, and compensation is unlikely to work well for small operations are supported by the findings of research on OHS in small and medium-sized enterprises from elsewhere (Breslin et al., 2010; Eakin, MacEachen, & Clarke, 2003).

A small number of NL agricultural operators are now using TFWs in order to meet their labour needs. Reliance on TFWs may increase in the future due in part to the aging population and workforce in the province (particularly in rural areas), and due to provincial plans to double the size of the industry. Some smaller operators in particular rely on volunteers – a practice that may also increase. Research conducted in Australia (Underhill & Rimmer, 2016) suggests that volunteers are vulnerable and are often not covered by workers' compensation insurance, as is the case in NL. In the Yukon, which also has a relatively small agricultural sector, legitimate agricultural operations are able to purchase coverage for volunteer workers (Yukon Legislative Counsel Office, 2008). Access to this coverage might help reduce overall insurance costs and the risk of being sued among NL operators who rely on volunteers.

Overall, our findings indicate that small operators, and indeed most operators, are confronting serious challenges related to training, injury prevention, and compensation that may be hard for them to address on their own, at least in the short term. This puts them at risk, poses a threat to efforts to enhance short and long-term food security in the province, and needs to be addressed in programs to expand, diversify, and increase the sustainability of the NL food system. In this context, based on the study results, and drawing on insights contained in Nelson, Lee, Gasperini, & Hair (2012), we developed and shared with the NL Federation of Agriculture, WorkplaceNL, provincial regulators, and others who acted as advisors on our original study, an agenda and key action items that could be used as a guide for future action on OHS in agriculture (see Table 3). The agenda and action priorities focus on the need to invest in coordinated efforts across industry, government, workplace compensation, and research/training institutions to identify best practices for reducing injuries/diseases across large and small operations that take into account commodity types and operation structures of the NL agricultural industry.

**Table 3:** Agenda and Action Priorities to Guide Efforts to Enhance the Capacity for Injury and Illness Prevention and Compensation among NL Agricultural Food-Producers (modified from Nelson et al., 2012)

| | |
|---|---|
| Best Practices | Identify the best evidence-based strategies and practices for eliminating and controlling hazards and reducing the risk of injuries/diseases among agricultural operators and employees on small and large operations in NL. |
| Research and Knowledge-Transfer Priorities | Identify further research and knowledge-transfer priorities for the sector. |
| Education/Training Needs | Identify the educational/training programs needed to produce an agricultural labour force with the knowledge required to work safely. |
| Industry Roles | Outline the role of agricultural operators and related sectors and services in promoting agricultural safety. |
| Public and Organizational Policy | Explore ways to ensure federal/provincial and WorkplaceNL policies and programs meet the needs of owner-operators, workers, and volunteers in the sector. |
| Farm Organizations | NL has funded safety sector councils with multi-stakeholder involvement for other sectors. Would a safety sector council help to ensure ongoing dialogue and coordinated efforts to improve OHS in agriculture? |
| Vulnerable Workers | Draw from work done elsewhere to design effective programming for vulnerable workers (including young people, TFWs, volunteers). |

Acknowledging that this is the only known study of OHS in agriculture in NL, and that greater resources and experience with agricultural safety research and prevention exist elsewhere, identifying, transferring, and adapting best practices from elsewhere for the NL context is prioritized in the agenda. Gaps in knowledge need to be addressed with further research. There is a clear agricultural safety training deficit on many operations that needs to be addressed both for the current and for future operators, workers, and volunteers. The province currently lacks an agricultural safety association but multi-stakeholder safety associations exist for other sectors in the province to help ensure sustained, coordinated, and systematic attention on improving OHS. The establishment of such an association with representation from the NL Federation of Agriculture, relevant government departments, and WorkplaceNL, as well as worker representatives is an important action item for future discussion.

## Conclusion

Research done elsewhere has shown that OHS is an important issue to farmers and their employees because hazards are common in the sector and injury and fatality rates are high (Barnetson, 2010; DeGroot, Isaacs, Pickett, & Brison, 2011; Galizzi & Zagorsky, 2009).

Expansion and diversification of local agricultural production is essential to food security, particularly in remote contexts like NL, and can help support the development of rural economies and more sustainable food systems. Thus, incorporating strategies for the identification and elimination of hazards and for monitoring, treatment, and compensation of injuries and illnesses should be part of sustainable food system planning.

The first of its kind in NL, this study was part of a larger community-engaged research initiative carried out in collaboration with a multi-stakeholder advisory committee that included representatives from key government, industry, and compensation players in the province. Findings point to widespread and diverse hazards similar to those found in agricultural operations elsewhere. They suggest accidents are common and most have not been reported in part because not all operators are registered with the provincial compensation agency. There appear to be serious gaps in safety training related to agricultural safety, particularly among employees.

The study has limitations including, particularly, the relatively small sample of operators surveyed. Issues with the representativeness of that sample mean we cannot generalize across the full population. Another limitation is the reliance on self-report and recall of information on hazards, accidents, and injuries. Small sample size and confidentiality requirements limit our ability to do a finer scaled analysis of variability across types of operations and to explore in-depth complex issues such as the relationship between operation viability, types of production, and health and safety on these diverse operations.

While our findings are indicative of financial vulnerabilities linked to OHS and lack of compensation coverage on many of these operations, we did not ask about farm incomes. Low net incomes, common among farmers in Canada (Qualman, Akram-Lodhi, Desmarais, & Srinivasan, 2018), may be contributing to concerns expressed by some interviewees about the potential consequences of health and safety regulations and compensation costs for the viability of their operations and to the fact that some operators are not covered by workers' compensation. However, survey questions did not address farmer incomes so this would need to be addressed in future research. Some operators indicated that they limit the risk of injury by limiting delegation of certain jobs only to those with training. However, farms are often short of labour, particularly during busy times, and, as shown in research done elsewhere, it is not uncommon in agriculture for employees without adequate training to be assigned to such jobs, in some cases with tragic results (Underhill & Rimmer, 2016). This may happen in NL but can't be confirmed. This is another important area for future research.

NL operators do not currently employ very many TFWs. Existing research on TFWs in Canadian agriculture (Hennebry, 2012; Preibisch & Otero, 2014) has confirmed that language barriers, less safety training and/or education, long work hours, payment by the piece (which can influence work habits), regulatory constraints on their ability to change employers, and related vulnerability to 'black-listing' and deportation if they complain about health and safety or are injured or made ill by their work can contribute to high accident rates among these workers (Frank, McKnight, Kirkhorn, & Gunderson, 2004; Hennebry, 2012; McCurdy & Carroll, 2000).

These issues and the potential vulnerabilities that come with reliance on volunteers identified above should be addressed in the future as part of any plan to expand and diversify the sector.

Based on our findings, we have developed and shared an agenda and list of priority actions to guide efforts to enhance the capacity for injury and illness prevention and compensation among NL agricultural food-producers, along with a set of recommendations (Neis et al., 2017). Taken together, these tools can help position similar regions in the process of expanding and diversifying production to ensure promoting health and safety is a core principle in those initiatives. In NL, there is no targeted initiative for injury and illness prevention for the agricultural sector. Research and development initiatives currently focused on expanding and diversifying the agricultural sector in NL do not have built into them agricultural safety expertise or systematic attention to potential health and safety issues that might arise with the development of new types of production and the introduction of new technologies.

Health initiatives in rural areas often focus on agricultural OHS (Hagel, Pahwa, Dosman, & Pickett, 2013), but this is less common in regions where the sector is relatively small and widely-dispersed as in NL. A food policy for NL and indeed, a Canadian food policy that seeks to achieve sustainable food systems, should include attention to protecting the health and safety of farmers and farmworkers.

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Original Research Article

# The role of alcohol in Canadian family food practices: Commensality, identity, and everyday tastes

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## Abstract

The authors use an anthropological lens to examine the role of alcoholic beverages and their consumption within everyday food practices of contemporary Canadian families. Anthropology and anthropologists have a long history of interest and fascination in the ceremonial and ritual use of alcohol within a diverse range of societies and cultural groups. The focus has typically been on the positive social and cultural values of these practices. In this exploratory study, the authors draw on data gathered from a cross-Canada project exploring Canadian family food practices. As part of this study, participants were asked to take photographs of images they felt represented their everyday family food practices. The authors examine participants' discussions of photographs they took containing images of alcoholic beverages. Findings represent three themes which suggest the diverse and changing roles that alcohol may have within a contemporary Canadian context: commensality and the taste experience; everyday tastes; and taste and identity change.

Keywords: alcohol, family food practices, photographs

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## Introduction

Alcohol is a fundamental component in the food and drink practices of Western culture (Anderson, 2010; Gately, 2008). Since humans first discovered the results of grain and fruit fermentation, alcohol production has been an important agricultural by-product and its consumption an important source of calories and nutrients for adults and children (Chrzan, 2013). However, through the development of large scale distillation and its growing role in economic trade, alcohol and its place in family food practices began to change in the 19th century. As Chrzan noted, “for the first time in history alcohol was cheap and concentrated enough to encourage intoxication on a regular basis” (2013, p. 7). Scholarly research and writing on alcohol's role in family food practices reflected that change as well.

Early 19th century scientific and health fieldwork, research, and literature focused on the social problems and deviant behavior caused by alcohol consumption. For example, alcohol consumption to the point of drunkenness was seen to represent a failure of human will (Valverde, 1998). Alcohol overconsumption was medicalized and the label *alcoholism* emerged with an understanding of this disease as an addiction; in turn, as a disease, medical interventions were deemed appropriate for treatment. Negative experiences of alcohol consumption contributed to first wave feminist and temperance movement discourse which labeled alcohol as a societal evil; limiting alcohol distribution and consumption became an important part of these social movements (Chrzan, 2013; Trenholme Cole, 1913).

With shifting attitudes towards alcohol in both Europe and North America over the past century (Gately, 2008; Standage, 2005), including the concept of drinking moderate amounts of alcohol for pleasure (de Garine, 2001a) as opposed to a societal evil, many scholars struggled with distinguishing positive and negative aspects of alcohol consumption (Valverde, 1998). The negative aspects of alcohol consumption in terms of health and social problems are well documented in scholarly publications such as *Alcohol, Research & Health* (Bloomfield et al., 2003; Paradis, Demers, & Picard 2010) and the *Journal of Mixed Methods* (Ames et al., 2009).

In contrast, Mary Douglas, in her seminal edited volume titled *Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology* (1987) suggested that anthropologists working in different societies had documented places where alcohol and alcohol practices were not primarily viewed as problematic or pathological. Douglas proposed that consumption of alcoholic beverages was better understood as possessing symbolic meanings for different cultures. Furthermore, these symbolic meanings within a culture may vary according to one’s gender, age, religion, education, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity, and in turn influence people’s alcohol consumption. What continues to be underrepresented in the literature are examinations of how people view and talk about alcohol and its consumption in relation to their everyday food practices. The term "everyday" in the context of this paper is not meant to imply that participants consume alcohol every day but rather that the consumption is considered part of a normative food/drink consumption pattern.

This paper addresses this gap in the literature by exploring the roles alcoholic beverages have within everyday food practices of contemporary Canadian families as revealed through qualitative interviews and photographic images. Using data from a cross-Canada qualitative study exploring Family Food Practices (Beagan et al., 2014), this paper, written from an anthropological perspective, seeks to learn more about literal and symbolic meanings that alcohol and its consumption have for individual participants and their families. An anthropological lens contributes to broader food studies concerns on how food and drinks function as symbolic objects that are used in everyday performances of identities, in unique sociocultural contexts both within the home and in more public contexts, to illustrate individual and familial social locations.

## *Alcohol consumption and commensality*

Douglas (1987) called for anthropologists to take up the study of alcohol and its use as a primary research objective. She suggested that traditional historical accounts lacked the necessary structured approach and symbolic analysis required by anthropologists. While Douglas' suggestion reflected her own theoretical approach, it is significant for presenting a platform for the discipline to engage with alcohol and its consumption. She proposed that alcohol and alcohol consumption could be a medium for constructing people's social worlds and that those social worlds vary for different people in different places: "Sampling a drink is sampling what is happening to a whole category of social life" (1987, p. 9). The recognition that categories of social life fluctuate is important when investigating the alcohol practices of a place such as Canada, which is generally not recognized as having a distinctive drinking culture (Kairourz & Greenfield, 2007) despite a colorful 350-year history of beer production and consumption (Winn Sneath, 2001).

Heath (1987) built on Douglas' anthropological approach by presenting a summary of a decade's worth (1970-1980) of cross-cultural, interdisciplinary studies. Heath emphasized the construction of different social worlds between and within the various societies examined. Significant for our paper is Heath's view that alcohol and its consumption are often associated with everyday behavioural norms in many societies and not always related to deviant behavior.

De Garine (2001a, 2001b) continued developing an anthropological perspective through a framework for examining why humans drink. De Garine's framework describes four styles of drinking alcohol: 1) seeking mild inebriation to enhance pleasure at social gatherings; 2) everyday alcohol consumption accompanied by food consumption; 3) binge drinking, characterized by youthful exuberance or rites of passage; and 4) deliberately seeking intoxication or despair drinking. He emphasized that each culture may have its own drinking behavior, often marking social and economic status. While the negative aspects of alcohol consumption (alcoholism, associations with crime and family abuse) must be recognized and addressed, de Garine noted that drinking alcohol is also associated with upbeat social activities and events, such as during meals or festive events. This approach to examining the social role of alcoholic drinks is echoed by Chrzan (2013), who traces shifts in sociocultural value of alcohol in different times in the United States from a cause of social ills to positive perspectives on moderate, quotidian consumption.

Black and Ulin (2013) fully embrace Douglas, Heath, and de Garines's call for anthropology to place alcohol (specifically wine) at the center of exploration in social and cultural issues around the production and consumption of wine. Themes of power, politics, and place are presented within historical, ethnic, and geographical context, from well-established vino-cultural areas such as France and Spain, to places where wine growing is more recent including Australia, Chile and the United States. A strength of this book is the inclusion of places arguably less familiar to contemporary wine cultures such as Georgia and Lebanon. Calls for "doing anthropology at home" (2013, p.4), of blurring boundaries between "field" and "home" resonate with our work and approaches, as we, as Canadian anthropologists, take on the challenge of turning a critical gaze to explore drinking cultures within a Canadian context.

Also of relevance to our framework for examining drinking cultures are notions of commensality, specifically its role in the construction of food and drink practices shaping individual and group identities. Commensality goes beyond its literal translation of eating at the same table to the sharing of food and drink as a necessary component of social organization, as a way to bond participants to an experience (Fischler, 1988, 2011). Arguably, taste preferences are formulated through commensality, in turn shaping identities and notions of self and other. We suggest that participants' inclusion of alcohol and its consumption in their stories and photographs may represent, among other issues, commensality: a belief, acceptance, or desire that alcohol consumption, as part of their everyday family food practices, may convey a sense of belonging, sharing, and celebration that transcends the standard annual holiday or special event. Thus, building on anthropological understandings of the social value of alcoholic drinks, our objective in this paper is to explore literal and symbolic meanings of alcohol and its consumption among study participants who resided in distinct places and regions within Canada.

## Process

Data for this paper was drawn from the Canadian Family Food Practices Research Project (Beagan et al., 2014). The purpose of this cross-national project was to illuminate how various social and geographic environments may shape individual and family eating habits and dynamics around food choices. There were ten research sites across Canada, with rural and urban locales sampled in the following provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Nova Scotia, and Ontario. Nine to 11 families were recruited from each site. The inclusion criteria for participating families specified that each family needed to have at least one adult and one teenager willing to participate, were comfortable speaking in English, and had lived in the community for at least two years. Purposive sampling was employed in order to obtain diverse cultural representations of social class, defined by education and income. Each participant was interviewed twice with the second interviewed centered on discussions of photographs that they took. Further details on the general methodology are available in Beagan and colleagues' text (2014).

This paper focuses on the data from the adults' second interview when participants' photographs that represented their everyday individual and family food habits and preferences were discussed. To avoid any potential conflicts arising from underage drinking of alcoholic beverages, only adult participant interviews and photographs were analyzed for this paper. A list of suggestions, such as *foods and drinks you really like or dislike*, and *meals that you eat at home*, was provided to the participants to serve as a starting point for photo-taking. This photo elicitation technique was used to engage the participant in the research process, to encourage reflection on the photos, to promote discussion, and to allow the interviewer to ask probing questions to get at deeper meanings behind the photographs (Power, 2003, Sharma & Chapman, 2011). Participants were asked to describe the photographs that they had taken and to explain why they took them. For the purposes of this paper, all transcripts from the adult second interviews of the Canadian Family Food Practices Project were queried using Atlas.ti 5.2 software with the "Alcohol" code as the selection criteria. This code was applied to interview text that included discussions on beverages containing alcohol, such as beer, wine, coolers, mixed liquor drinks, and/or the consumption of those beverages.

In addition to the "Alcohol" text queries, all participant photographs (N=4205) were examined and coded for images representing alcohol or alcohol consumption. Ninety-two photographs were identified and coded "alcohol." The corresponding passage from the interview was consulted to verify if the image was discussed or referenced by the participant as alcoholic. If the discussion in the passage did not verify the image as being coded "Alcohol" or discussed as related to alcohol, the photograph was not included in this analysis. Eight images were eliminated resulting in 84 photographs, from 39 families representing all ten research sites, examined for this paper. Our inductive analysis revealed three main themes around the consumption of alcohol and everyday family food practices: 1) commensality and the taste experience; 2) everyday tastes; and 3) taste and identity change. We selected three photographs, and participant discussions about them, from three different families to provide a snapshot of these main themes. Brief discussion examples from other families are used to further illustrate each theme.

## Findings and discussion

### *Commensality and the taste experience*

The first thematic example comes from the parents of a participating family located in the urban locale of Vancouver from the British Columbia research site. The photograph (Figure 1) and accompanying story feature a wine storage area located in the participant's home basement with six cardboard wine boxes lying on their side and partially filled with wine bottles.

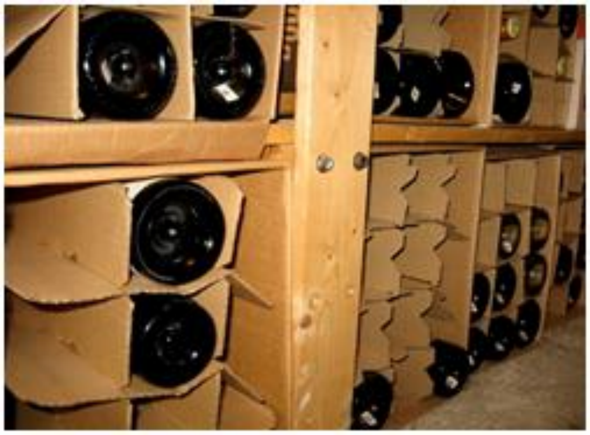


**Figure 1:** Commensality and the Taste Experience. Wine storage area.

The conversation describing the image featured the father (F) and mother (M) of the family along with the Family Food Practices study interviewer (I). The father begins to describe what the image represents:

> F1: That's another aspect of our lives that we enjoy. I'll just speak for myself. Which is yearly we go into the Okanagan and we buy maybe ten cases of wine. Or more.
> M1: [laughing]
> F1: Is it more?
> M1: I don't know.
> F1: Fifteen cases? I don't know.

In this passage the father describes an annual family trip to the Okanagan region of south-central British Columbia which is approximately a five-hour drive from Vancouver. The Okanagan region is home to the second largest wine producing region in Canada, having been established as a commercial producer in the early 1980s (Aspler, 2006). The father describes the pleasure of drinking wine at the start of his story when he stated, “That's another aspect of our lives that we enjoy" and acquiring the wine is strongly associated with memories of family trips to a scenic part of the country. This aligns with de Garine’s (2001a) suggestions of the social symbolic values of alcohol. These memories include place, in this case the Okanagan, as a literal and symbolic marker of a broader family taste experience. A *taste experience* is a multi-sensorial concept where a product has the ability to elicit physical elements of a place—geography, geology, climate, and weather—and then more importantly, the people, their customs, traditions, and their ancestral heritage within a physical and temporal space (Trubek, 2008). The taste experience conveys knowledge. For the parents, this nondescript image of six cardboard boxes lying on a basement floor (you cannot even tell the exact contents of the boxes from the image) invokes the sharing of that experience and bonding with their sons, a form of commensality.

The large quantity of 10 to15 cases purchased on the annual yearly trip to the Okanagan arguably becomes infused with the memories of this wine producing area. The laughter and banter between the mother and father concerning the uncertainty of the number of cases they purchased further suggests that they perceived this to be a pleasant experience that is in no way representative of deviant behavior. The father continues to elaborate on the pleasures of owning these bottles of wine:

> F1: And that's enjoyable as an event and it's very nice not to have to go to the liquor store. Anytime you want to buy, or drink something rather, you go down and you consult your—what you've got the basement.

In this passage, the father reiterates that the trip to purchase wine was both "enjoyable" and an "event." Arguably, the pleasant memories of the family trip affected taste experiences months later. The mother reinforces the father's comments and adds to how their values link to family commensality and the taste experience around alcohol consumption practices:

> M1: Yeah, exactly. It's also nice to go and experience the landscape where the wine is from. It means more.
> F1: And also, the boys are really interested in that too. That's a really great part of their year.
> M1: Although it's awful that they won't let kids taste wine. They are allowed to taste it at home, but they are not allowed there.
> I: Okay. So the boys come along with you?
> M1&F1: Yeah.

The mother’s comments on how the physical landscape of the Okanagan contribute to their overall travel and taste experiences, "It's also nice to go and experience the landscape where the wine is from." This wasn’t an exclusively adult experience, for "the boys are interested in that too." The family trip was more than simply going there on holiday to purchase an alcoholic beverage. The sharing of the taste experience and commensality promote a sense of family bonding.

The mother's comments further suggest an understanding of the concept of *terroir* where the physical and social environments of where a food or drink product is from contributes to the overall cultural knowledge and taste experience of consuming it (Black & Ulin, 2013; Trubek, 2008). The mother's comments about the boys’ inability to sample and taste the wine while at the winery highlight divergences between family values with societal rules and expectations. The legal drinking age in British Columbia is 19 (British Columbia Government-Liquor Control and Licensing Branch, 2017). This would support the participants' position that under these circumstances, as part of family food practices at home, the consumption of alcohol is representative of a pleasurable and positive experience and not of deviant behavior, even for underage drinkers. The interviewer then prompts the father to continue with the story:

> I: So they have a selection you can taste type thing and you decide from there?
> F1: Yeah. So that's, and it really is just a lovely thing to share with [the mother]. To discuss you know, shall we try, you know I don't know the [brand name] something or other for this meal or you know. So, it's not that we're wine snobs or even very expert at it all, but we ...
> M1: No, and I've got a terrible memory for taste. But, it's just another way to fit pleasure into life. Yeah.
> I: It certainly would be a pleasure to walk downstairs and see that, stacks of wine.
> M1: [laughs]

Here, the father states that the sharing of the wine in social gatherings is an important component of alcohol consumption and commensality as suggested by de Garine's (2001a) first component of his drinking framework (alcohol consumption as part of the pleasure of social gatherings). The pairing of a certain wine "the [brand name] something or other for this meal" reflects the connection that some alcoholic beverages can have with food as part of a regular diet as suggested by de Garine's second style of drinking framework (food consumption regularly accompanied by alcohol). The mother concludes their story by reinforcing their belief which supports Heath's (1987) position that alcohol and alcohol consumption can represents positive and pleasurable behavior within their family food practices, "it's just another way to fit pleasure into life."

Another example that illustrates commensality, connecting and bonding through food and drink comes from a family in the urban Nova Scotia site. When the interviewer asks the mother if she gets the kids involved in meal preparation she responds:

> M4: I do get the kids involved - that's when it's so much fun. And when my [partner] does it, I mean I love on a weekend when we get a glass of wine and we just chop food. We just do it together, it's so wonderful. It's so meditative, it's so relaxing, and then we have our meal.

This brief passage illustrates that the consumption of alcohol is part of a broader taste experience that involves the children and meal preparation. It also speaks to Fischler's (2011) notion of commensality by referencing "fun," "together," "meditative," and "relaxing" to convey a positive family experience.

### *Everyday tastes*

The second thematic example of alcohol consumption, as part of a everyday family food practices, is represented in the example from the father of a family in the Toronto neighborhood of South Parkdale, part of the Ontario research site. South Parkdale was selected as a research site to represent a community of low socioeconomic status when compared to North Riverdale, another Toronto neighborhood (Beagan et al., 2014). The father's photograph (Figure 2) displays a glass sitting on a desk that is half full with beer. In front of the glass is a paper napkin with some almonds sitting on it.

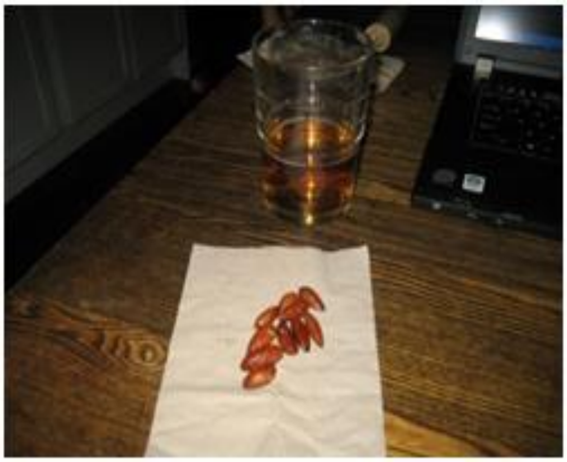


**Figure 2:** Everyday Tastes: beer and nuts

The beer and almonds are situated beside a visible keyboard of a computer. The participant's accompanying short story provides some context to the image and speaks to de Garine's (2001a) quotidian nature of alcohol consumption within everyday family food practices:

> F2: Right, right. So the first one, I was sitting at night after dinner late in the evening working and I had a beer and some almonds, and you said take food and it's food so that's what I did. I like beer and almonds. So that's it.
> I: You normally would have them together?
> F2: No, not necessarily. In fact I hardly ever have snacks with beer but I was hungry that night and there were some almonds there. We don't eat snacks that often.
> I: Were you working on the computer did you say?
> F2: I was, yeah.
> I: Oh, okay. So it's -
> F2: Late in the evening. That's why the computer is there, yeah.

The first interesting observation is the father's suggestion that he considers beer a food, or at the least beer and almonds as food, and that he enjoys the combination, "I like beer and almonds." The participant quickly clarifies that he seldom has a snack with his beer, suggesting that this is an alcoholic beverage that he regularly enjoys on its own in the comfort of his home. His simple and direct response, "You said take [photographs of] food ... So that's it." suggests that the practice of having a beer in the evening after dinner is part of his regular food and drink practices. This supports Anderson (2010) and Chrzan's (2013) position that alcohol *is* food in some instances and aligns with de Garine's (2001a) second consumption style: alcohol consumption accompanied by food consumption.

This image and description may also suggest, although this short story does not provide any direct evidence, how the computer and working at home may replace going out to the local pub as a new convenient and cost effective way to combine alcohol consumption with a snack food without leaving the comforts of your home (Foster, Reed, Karunanithi, & Woodward, 2010).

Another illustration representing convenience, everyday tastes, and the casual nature of alcohol and food practices comes from a mother in the Alberta urban site of Edmonton when describing the contents of the photograph depicting her kitchen and dining area in her home:

> M5: Our wine rack lives there. We usually have quite a few bottles hanging around. Which is funny, we don't drink that much wine but it's nice if someone invites you somewhere [for dinner], just grab a bottle and take it, or someone will bring you a bottle.

This short passage conveys the everyday or quotidian nature of the role that alcohol can play within family food practices. The mother references the inanimate object of a wine rack "living" on her kitchen counter as if were a natural and convenient feature. She acknowledges the volume of wine in the rack as simply "hanging around" to suggest they are part of the regular occurring visitors to her home along with the "someone." And even though they do not drink much wine anymore, the casual quotidian nature of the practice is reinforced by her comments, "just grab a bottle and take it." This suggests how the sharing of food and drink forms a necessary component of social organization (Fischler, 1988, 2011).

A third example representing everyday tastes comes from the urban site of Halifax in Nova Scotia. The mother of the family is discussing a photograph she took of a pasta salad:

> M6: It was just a family dinner. There'd be salad there as well. Wine and milk of course.

The quotidian nature of the practice is exemplified by the phrase "It was *just* a family dinner." The combination of wine at the family dinner with milk and the expression "of course" suggests that these are both regularly consumed beverages for this family.

The discussions accompanying these three participants' photographs illustrate the causal everyday nature of the role that alcohol can play in family food practices. The simple images and their brief descriptions reflect how alcohol may be used to construct their social worlds (Black & Ulin, 2013; Chrzan, 2013; Douglas, 1987) and represent positive experiences.

### Taste and identity change

This third thematic example of alcohol consumption as part of family food practices, is represented by the father of a family in Athabasca, the rural locale of the Alberta research site.

This example is notable as it represents a significant change in the father's alcohol consumption practices as they relate to their changing family preferences and identities as illustrated through food practices. This change in practices first came to light in the first phase of the research process during a photo elicitation activity (Beagan et al. 2014, p. 248). The father responds to a stock image representing a meal laid out on a table with wine visibly present:

> F3: Sunday dinner, yes. With the wine and everything else.
> I: With wine?
> F3: Yeah. My wife and I.
> I: Ok - was that something you've always had? You as a parent? The two of you?
> F3: No - we have - this routine we started probably since Christmas. I got into wines heavy. [Laughs] I've started to learn a lot about wines and read about wines and built myself up a cellar.

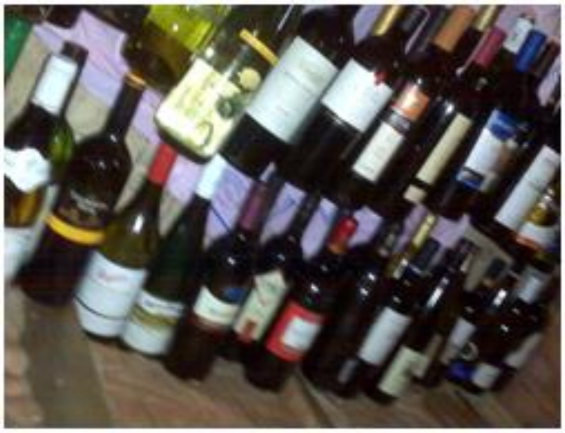
In this passage the father explains that drinking wine with food is a recent alcohol consumption practice having begun the past Christmas; this interview took place the following July. The father goes on to explain how the change came about when he was given a wine book for Christmas which created a new interest for him, providing an alternative alcohol consumption practice:

> F3: Yes. I'm a beer drinker - I've drunk beer all my life. I love beer, and I love - not just beer to get all plastered up with the boys- but micro-brews and brew tastes. And the beers around the world I really like. So I can sit and drink beer all the time. So they said, "Try some wine." I can't even remember who gave me the book -it was just laying under the tree. And then I started reading it. This one I got really interested in - it was very well-written. For a person like me that's learning, trying to learn about wine-tasting is tough, it's hard.

This shift in alcohol consumption practices, from beer to wine, and self-identification "I'm a beer drinker," may be viewed through a lens as a marker of change in social status (Bourdieu, 1984), that wine consumption represents a sign of distinction, a taste of luxury whereas beer consumption represents the taste of necessity for the lower social classes. However, the father makes it clear in the passage, that he is not just interested in alcohol consumption for the reason to "get plastered" which would represent de Garine's (2001a) fourth style of deliberately seeking intoxication or despair drinking. Instead, the father explains that he likes to drink beer to experience the different tastes from around the world and the beers of the micro-brewers. This would fit with the current trend of some beer drinkers preferring the flavors and taste experiences provided by craft beers and small specialized brewers which may now be considered a marker of higher social status among conventional beer drinkers in Canada (*Financial Post, Retail and Marketing*, 2015). This marker of change is further supported by the father's expressed desire to learn something new, to acquire knowledge that he did not possess before.

The previous two passages also serve to foreshadow the second phase of the research process where participants were asked to take photographs of images that they felt represented their everyday family food practices and father (F3) spoke to one of his photographs (Figure 3):

**Figure 3:** Taste and Identity Change. Wine Selection.



> F3: Yeah, my wine selection. I've actually got them on the floor in the basement, cos I haven't built wine racks yet, because as I was telling you I just got into this over the winter and didn't start collecting till the spring.
> I: So this is in your home? Your own collection?
> F3: Yeah. I've got a few bottles down there. I'm trying to buy reds and whites, Chardonnays and that sort of thing that will age because, of course, with wines, as you probably know, what you're paying for a lot of times, there is of course good wineries as well but you're paying for them to hold onto the bottles as well, if its good wine. I'm trusting people with this. Like reading wine books, and also on the internet. And I go by what some experts who know a lot more than I do say about wine. And if it's a good value, I'll buy it and save it. I'm not a real expert to say, "Boy, that's going to be a real good wine!" Because it's something I'm still learning.

Here the father explains that since he received a book about wine as a Christmas present he has shifted his alcohol consumption practices and knowledge acquisition to that of wines. He speaks of storing wines in his own cellar and aging them, as well of the cost factors that are involved. He also reiterates the role of knowledge to the taste experience (Trubek, 2008), "I'm still learning."

Then the father shifts his discussion to the role of his alcohol consumption connected to his and the family's food practices, as illustrated in this passage:

> I: Now one of the things you mentioned is that you like to pair it with food. That's one of the things you can even research and look for?
> F3: I do rate them myself and I keep a book on it. I write down if I find a good one – if it's something that has a nice solventy varsol smell, I'm not going to get two [laughs]. But at the same time, if I do find a good one I will mark it down in my book and I'll also put in there what we had it with, that sort of thing. I'm still learning about that – it's a wide open field. It's still – it depends what you would like to have it with. A lunch person might like with bison a Merlot and the next person might like a Chardonnay. Nobody says it has to be this way or that way. It's the way you want to drink it. And that's what's nice about wine.
> I: Do you think with your interest in wine, has it made you want to try different foods?
> F3: Yes, it has. Well, when we were on the coast, I ate some lamb. And that's something – I've never got into the sheep end of things. I'd like to a little more. And some of the cheeses, I think cheeses I've never tried. We've been the traditional Alberta cheddar and mozzarella eaters and havarti, but not the real crazy cheeses. I'd like to try that paired with wine – I don't know if I'd just like to sit down and eat cheese like that, I'm not a big fan of cheese anyways, but with wine, maybe, and with some of the sausage.

In this passage we see how the father engages with wine as a way to explore new foods, "I've never got into the sheep end of things" and "cheeses I've never tried." The passage also illustrates connections to place: "when we were on the coast" and "traditional Alberta Cheddar" which suggest an embodied taste of place (Trubek, 2008). The father is associating food products and activities with a place that represent a new experience compared with his perception of a traditional food and practice from where he lives. The pairing of foods and wine may function as a primary marker of social status, as in a foodie, or elitist in the Bourdieu sense. These passages illustrate how drinking and eating may shift from sustenance to a statement of values (Johnston & Baumann, 2010; Trubek, 2008). However, these values do not always aligned with the notion that wine is perceived as a luxury good which confers high status on the consumer, but rather can reflect that consumers (such as one from rural Alberta) are increasingly aware of cosmopolitan food and drink behaviors and choose to incorporate into their own everyday family food and drink practices in ways that are meaningful to their own values (Black & Ulin, 2013).

## Conclusion

Early fieldwork, research, and literature have tended to focus on alcohol as problematic and representing deviant behavior within communities (Douglas, 1987; Heath, 1987). The rationale for this paper was built upon Douglas's and Heath's call for anthropologists to take up the study of alcohol and its use as a primary research objective, and on De Garine's (2001a) category of "permanent everyday alcoholisation," which is commonly accompanied by food consumption and is the most relevant for our analysis of the cultural variability in meanings of quotidian alcohol consumption in contemporary Canadian society.

For this exploratory study, the discussions around photo images participants took to provide qualitative examples of what and how participants represent and describe alcohol and alcohol consumption within their everyday family food practices. The stories they told around their photographs suggest that alcohol and alcohol consumption may be part of regular and positive practices and not representative of health problems or deviant behaviors. This would support Douglas's premise that alcohol and alcohol consumption practices are variable and need to be studied within the cultural context of what it is that people actually say about these practices.

In the examples presented in this paper, the consumption of alcohol, primarily wine and beer, is considered part of the participants' everyday food and beverage practices. The low incidence of non-wine or beer photographs (approximately 10 percent of those examined for this paper) might reflect that other alcoholic beverages (spirits, ciders, coolers, etc.) are not considered part of everyday family food practices. The fact that alcohol and its consumption was not specifically addressed or elicited as part of the larger Family Food Practices study would support the notion that the participants who spoke and took pictures of wine and beer considered them as positive and part of their regular food and beverage habits. This supports Heath's view that alcohol and its consumption are often associated with everyday behavioural norms in many societies and not always related to deviant behavior. However, we recognize that participants in such a study would most likely be reluctant to take photographs of alcohol and then describe them in terms of negative or problem behavior. We understand that alcohol and its consumption is not always pleasurable and positive, and in face may represent negative and deviant behavior.

It is also important to acknowledge that the 84 photographs examined for this paper represent only 2 percent of all the photographs taken (4205) and 39 families out of the 100 who participated in the larger Family Food Practices study. While the three themes identified for this paper were representative of those 84 photographs and accompanying discussions, they are not meant to be representative of all participating families' perceptions and experiences of alcohol within their everyday family food practices. Nor do we claim that these three themes are representative of all Canadian family food practices. The data explored for this paper did not allow for an in-depth analysis of all socio-cultural factors contributing to identity and the social construction of family food practices for the study participants.

Our purpose in this paper was to use an anthropological perspective in the study of alcohol and its use as a primary research objective. The examples represented speak to the social acceptance of alcohol consumption outside of the traditional holiday celebrations (Kairouz & Greenfield, 2007) and reflect some of the reasons why people are consuming more alcohol at home, such as convenience and cost, rather than drinking outside of the home at restaurants or pubs. This social acceptance and participants' clear expressions of the pleasure and joy that alcohol consumption plays in their everyday family food practices may be reflective of a democratization process that is occurring within contemporary Canadian food practices.

Further research on this topic with a larger sample size would be needed to add weight to this theory. The three themes we chose to represent: commensality and the taste experience; everyday tastes; and taste and identity change illustrate a general principle that eating and drinking practices may reflect changes in meanings behind those behaviors and practices (Johnston & Baumann, 2010). The sharing of food and drink, and now the experiences and knowledge surrounding those foods and drinks, area necessary components of social organization for the study participants.

This research seeks to gain a greater understanding of the literal and symbolic meanings that alcohol and alcohol consumption may hold for individual participants. How is this meaning represented within the family context, and does this meaning transmit markers of sociocultural identity? Future in-depth examination and analysis of this data may reveal various attitudes and practices that speak to gender, age, religion, education, socioeconomic status and ethnic differences across the different regions or between urban and rural components of Canada.

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Book Review

# The Eating Instinct: Food Culture, Body Image, and Guilt in America

Virginia Sole-Smith
Henry Holt and Company, 2018, 304 pages

Review by Meredith Bessey

It is hard to go anywhere these days without hearing refrains of "I'm so bad for eating this", or "I can't, I'm being good today." While dieting for weight loss has become passé in recent times, with companies like Weight Watchers re-branding to focus on wellness instead of weight loss, we are still, as a culture, obsessed with what we eat and with our weight (Chiu, 2018). Virginia Sole-Smith's recent book *The Eating Instinct* explores this issue through personal stories and research. While the book was inspired by her own daughter's struggles with eating, Sole-Smith interviews other parents, scientists, health care providers, and food activists, to explore the question of why it is so difficult for us to feel good about eating.

Each of the book's seven chapters explores a different facet of the North American relationship with food. The first and last chapters address Sole-Smith's daughter Violet's pathological relationship with food that began when she had a feeding tube inserted due to medical issues. The remaining five chapters examine "clean eating", feeding children, picky eating (including avoidant-restrictive food intake disorder), food and poverty, and gastric bypass surgery. Sole-Smith is a reporter by trade and her writing is clear and concise, warm and compassionate, both when telling deeply personal stories and when reporting on statistics and the academic literature. While the issues she describes in the book may seem disparate at first glance, Sole-Smith is adept at drawing connections and tying these various issues back to our broader problematic food culture.

Of particular interest here is the connection that Sole-Smith draws between the alternative food movement and common problematic relationships with food. Chapter two, *Chasing Clean* features Christy Harrison, a dietitian in Brooklyn, New York who hosts the popular podcast *Food Psych* and teaches online courses focused on intuitive eating (Food Psych Programs Inc.,

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2017). Harrison was a food writer before studying to become a dietitian, and is described as “really struggling with food” (p. 35). She relates how learning about the alternative food movement described through books like *Fast Food Nation* and *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* enabled her to connect her food anxieties to a larger trend. Harrison says it made her feel that she “wasn’t just this vain, selfish person trying to lose weight” (p. 38), but that a social justice framework had been added to her desire to eat optimally. Sole-Smith also discusses her own experience with the eco-food movement as a food writer: “So I embraced the eco-food movement, because—on the surface, at least—it wasn’t about calorie counting or crash diets” (p. 37). Yet she makes an astute observation, namely that the expression “you are what you eat”, common within the alternative food movement, further entrenches the idea that if you eat bad foods, you’re a bad person (p. 41).

Chapter five, *Eating While Black*, explores the experiences of low-income people of colour, while also problematizing and critiquing the alternative food movement. Diet culture has evolved from the calorie-counting of yesteryear to an obsession with clean eating and whole foods, driven in part by food writers like Michael Pollan and Mark Bittman. Sole-Smith discusses the alternative food movement’s focus on low-income, mostly black, urban neighbourhoods and the resulting impact on these communities. She interviews two women, Sherita and Tianna, who discuss the increased pressure they feel to shop at Whole Foods, buy fancy bread, and make seitan. She asks “whether absorbing the alternative-food movement’s brand of clean, whole eating has actually helped women like Sherita and Tianna—or whether it has introduced them to a new set of unattainable standards, driven by diet culture, now wearing organic farmer’s overalls” (p. 143). These two chapters in particular lead to questions about how messaging by the food industry, the food system, and “whole foods” continuously embed the polarizing concepts of good and bad foods. Are these messages helping, or making people feel worse? What is the alternative food movement’s role in disordered eating and obsession with eating “right”? Little academic literature has been published on this topic, but some scholars have critiqued the healthism and nutritionism that is rife within much of the alternative food movement (Brady, Gingras, & Lebesco, 2019; Hite, Parker, & Brady, forthcoming). This book underscores the need for more academic inquiry into this area to help the alternative food movement avoid healthist and classist arguments for food system reform.

This book is well suited to a general audience that has an interest in food culture and that wants to explore troubled relationships with food, but also to academics and health professionals. The author provides an extensive list of sources, both academic and popular press, for readers who want to explore these topics in more depth. Sole-Smith notably gives no advice on what to eat or not eat, and ends the book by simply stating “the only way to learn to eat is by eating” (p. 239)—which is perhaps easier said than done.

Overall, *The Eating Instinct* is well-written and satisfying to read but is not without short-comings. Although Sole-Smith does problematize the so-called obesity epidemic, particularly when discussing the Health at Every Size™ movement in chapter six, she does discuss obesity non-problematically at various points. For example, she states that some experts “argue that that the preservation of the ability to self-regulate is at the crux of solving both childhood obesity and pediatric feeding disorders" (p. 20). Fat acceptance advocates would argue that pathologizing obesity undermines work done to prevent and treat eating disorders (Adams, 2017). The book would have benefited from a more in-depth and critical appraisal of the obesity discourse (Brady & Beausoleil, 2017).

*The Eating Instinct* is touching and thought-provoking, while also highlighting how complicated eating has become in our current culture. It left me asking, how can we, as food scholars and activists, help to uncomplicate these messages?

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Book Review

# Concentration and Power in the Food System: Who Controls What We Eat?

Philip H. Howard
Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016, 207 pages

Review by Chloé Poitevin-DesRivières

The conventional food system, despite its many faults, offers consumers a seemingly infinite number of food and beverage choices, uniquely packaged according to their types and brands. In his book *Concentration and Power in the Food System*, Philip Howard reveals that this apparent product and brand diversity is an illusion, since the majority of what we eat is controlled by a small number of large corporate conglomerates. He provides an overview of the ways in which power is distributed throughout the different stages of the food supply chain, which exposes the often hidden relations that structure the food system.

Howard begins by outlining his aims and theoretical perspective. He emphasizes the need to go beyond the narrow definition of power derived from classical economics, to engage with a broader and critical political economy that draws on Nitzan and Bichler’s *Capital as Power* (2009). *Capital as Power* emphasizes capitalism as “a mode of power rather than a mode of production”. He refers to the ways in which large food firms benefit from capitalism not only in acquiring profit but also in gaining the ability to shape government policy, economies, and socio-cultural norms. This framework leads Howard to inquire why firms organize the way they do, how governments interact with and impact these arrangements, and, most importantly, who benefits from or is disadvantaged by the concentration of power in food systems.

In addressing these concerns about the extent and impact of the distribution of power, the subsequent chapters delve into the distinct efforts and strategies used by firms to “restructure society, overcome restraints on concentration, and increase their control,”

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(p. 15). Howard dedicates most of the book to detailing specific instances in which large firms have acted to secure and grow their power in various aspects of the food supply chain. He begins with retailers—the actors nearest consumers—and then moves on to distributors, manufacturers, and processors, ending with producers.

In outlining power relations, the book tends to play into the "big is bad, small is good" rhetoric that is often used in food studies literature to oppose conventional food systems processes. Nevertheless, Howard demonstrates that this characterization has merit. While each chapter focuses in on a specific phase of the food chain and/or a commodity—highlighting specific industries and their strategies for concentrating power—the same theme remains consistent throughout the book: the story of large companies restricting access to, or pushing out, smaller competitors from the market.

At almost every step in the food chain, larger firms have come to dominate the market as they are emboldened by weakened, antitrust legislation that has enabled buy-outs and acquisitions of smaller competitors. As a result, this has significantly reduced the number of actors in and the competitiveness of the market, which has in turn negatively impacted smaller firms and consumers. In effect, the concentration of power in food systems drives down wages in food retail and processing, increases food prices for consumers, intensifies farmers' reliance on agricultural subsidies, and contributes to the homogenization of crop types and livestock breeds.

Howard effectively argues that decision-making processes, in both supply and demand, are relegated to a small number of individual and corporate actors. For instance, when purchasing foods consumers interact directly with retailers. These *gatekeepers* hold immense control over what foods are available and how they are displayed on shelves, which impacts the ways in which consumers purchase food. Beyond controlling food availability, Howard also stresses the impact that dominant firms have over peoples' food knowledge and abilities. While firms require continuous market growth to ensure profitability, there are limits to what foods consumers are willing to buy. In order to circumvent these limitations, firms attempt to instigate new consumption patterns through advertising, introducing novel processed foods, and creating new markets. Howard links these tactics to the process of de-skilling, or decreasing consumers' food literacy by employing marketing practices that favour convenience and one-way flow of information.

In addition to restricted flow of information, the lack of transparency throughout the food system also obscures power relations. Howard attempts to reveal how firms conceal the extent of their involvement in the food supply chain, pointing out that such practices mediate the concentration of power. For example, he points to "stealth ownership" as a strategy that enables a larger firm to hide their involvement in or acquisition of a brand or smaller firm. This tactic was clearly demonstrated in Howard's example of the beer industry that shows how large brewers, seeking entry to the rapidly growing craft beer market, mislead consumers through their purchase of existing small breweries or by introducing “fake craft beers” (p.57).

Howard also outlines the ways firms have controlled supply in order to gain direct control over food processing and agricultural inputs, pointing out that because many farmers have no choice but to sell to food processors, the latter are able to set production conditions. In some industries, such as pork production, processors have increased their power through the vertical integration of their operations and/or primarily purchasing from larger-scale producers.

The suppliers of agricultural inputs further dictate terms to farmers through their majority control of crop and livestock genetic material. Howard shows the extent of control that a very few large seed and pesticide firms, such as Monsanto (now Bayer) and DuPont, have gained through intellectual property rights. Most concerning to him is the “imposed homogeneity” of foods produced through the reduction of the number of types of seed varieties and livestock breeds that are available on the market, as well as through the loss of common resources to privatization, which prevent farmers from engaging in traditional seed-saving practices (p. 82).

Although the production side of the food system faces the least amount of power concentration in the supply chain, food producers have still faced difficulties in terms of power imbalances. Howard demonstrates this by dissecting the role agricultural subsidies have played in favouring high-value commodities and in diminishing the number of small- to medium-sized farms in the United States since 1935, in favour of large-scale operations. He links the endurance of government subsidies to the increased concentration of power in processing and agricultural inputs, and again notes the role of corporate influence over government policy.

The prospect of achieving a fair and sustainable food system seems rather bleak in the face of the uneven concentration of power throughout the supply chain. While at the end of each chapter Howard outlines potential ways forward, the challenges seem insurmountable as he notes the myriad ways in which dominant firms often co-opt these solutions. For example, in the latter part of the book he points to the organic food industry, once seen as a viable alternative to conventional food production, as an example of dominant firms colonizing a movement built on social and ecological values. Again, transparency is an issue as larger firms buy out organic brands and exert their power in order to weaken standards.

Throughout this chapter, Howard raises objections similar to Guthman’s (2003) well-known analysis of pre-washed and bagged salad greens, pointing to the assimilation of sustainable and alternative modes of food production in order to incorporate them into a neoliberal agricultural system. However, he does not completely dismiss the potential benefits organic farming might have in reducing chemical inputs and inciting consumer consciousness. Howard also touches on the creation of markets for bagged salad as a facet of consumer de-skilling processes in chapter four (p. 65).

In his concluding chapter, Howard raises the question of whether food production is necessarily headed toward a global monopoly. He also questions the sustainability of the efforts aimed at resisting dominant firms, asking whether alternatives to conventional food production are doomed to be incorporated into the mainstream practices. While no clear solution is offered, he hints that the growth of firms and the scale of production are subject to the limits of markets and of biophysical environments.

Howard's overview of power distribution and concentration in food systems offers specific examples centered in a North American context; however, I feel that the broad lessons and concepts can be applied elsewhere. What sets this book apart from others is the use of illustrative tables and figures, which provide an effective and accessible means of dissecting aspects of power and concentration, allowing readers to visualize the extent of concentration in different food industries. Howard's graphs, illustrations, and maps provide roadmaps to trace different power relations and distributions. A number of Howard's other scholarly works (DeLind & Howard, 2008; Howard, 2009; Howard, 2014) include similar figures, and I have found these to be striking and often more effective than written descriptions in exemplifying concepts and issues. I also enjoyed the addition of quotes from popular works of science-fiction (notably passages from television shows *Firefly* and *Star Trek*) at the beginning of each chapter, as they provide an enlightened interpretation of the moral quandaries that frequently frame power issues in food systems.

Overall, Howard has drafted a book with an intriguing chronicle revealing the role of dominant firms in food systems and he provides clear links between theoretical conceptions of power and the grounded realities of different food systems actors. While the book appears brief at just over 200 pages, he manages to cover significant ground, delivering a comprehensive guidebook to understanding and conceptualizing power in food systems. One of the book's greatest strengths lies in the exhaustive accounts of the diverse tactics employed by firms in the pursuit of power, through which readers can see for themselves the breadth and depth of this hegemony in all aspects of the food system. Howard's book is a valuable addition to the interdisciplinary series *Contemporary Food Studies: Economy, Culture and Politics*, intended for upper-level students, as he captures the intricacies of power relations in an accessible manner, without overly-simplifying the more complex political economic notions that underpin food systems processes.

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Book Review

# A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat

Eric Holt-Giménez

Monthly Review Press/Food First Books, 2017, 280 pages

Review by Jennifer Sumner

This book should be required reading for anyone interested in food. The topic is not a side issue of special interest, but central to how food gets to us every day of the year. As Marion Nestle states in her foreword, "I think the food movement needs this book, and I am tired of having to treat capitalism as the 'C word', never to be mentioned in polite company" (p. 9).

I couldn't agree more. I grew up during the Cold War, when no-one mentioned the word "capitalism" for fear of being branded a Communist. As a result, many people of my generation grew up not knowing how capitalism actually works, even though we lived it on a daily basis. This political/economic illiteracy continues into the present, as people try to grapple with the problems they see around them: why do some go hungry, why is junk food cheaper than nutritious food, why is the environment deteriorating on so many fronts and why are farmers are failing across the world? Nestle argues that capitalism is a great place to start understanding why they exist. She explains, "If we want to create a food movement with real power, we need to know what we are up against" (p. 12). This is the task of Eric Holt-Giménez—to help us understand what we are up against if we want to change the food system. He visualized the book as a primer to the economic system called capitalism, as seen through the lens of the food system. In essence, it is a "political-economic tool kit for the food movement" (p. 18).

According to Holt-Giménez, the first lesson we as activists and academics must learn is that the food system is not broken, in spite of our passionate arguments to the contrary. As he points out, the food system "is working precisely as a capitalist food system is supposed to work." That is because it operates within a larger economic system in which

> …profits take precedence over any other human value. A capitalist food system keeps labor and all other costs to a minimum and provides an enormous overabundance of cheap food, consequences be damned (Nestle, p.11).

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With this in mind, Holt-Giménez proposes that the basic questions posed in the study of capitalism should be: Who owns what? Who does what? Who gets what? What do they do with it? He then addresses these questions in a series of chapters that lay out the contentious, often hidden, terrain of capitalism, including the origins of our food system, the commodification of food, land and property, the links between capitalism, agriculture and food, power and privilege in the food system, gender, race and class, and capitalist crises and solutions. He concludes with a nod to Naomi Klein and her book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. Taking his cue from Klein's thesis that the present neoliberal form of capitalism is incompatible with reversing climate change, Holt-Giménez adds that "it is also incompatible with a healthy, equitable, and sustainable food system" (p. 56). For all of us interested in alternative food initiatives, he points out that creating alternative markets is not the same as shutting down capitalist markets. Instead, he emphasizes that:

> Our food systems should and *could* feed everyone equitably and sustainably while providing dignified livelihoods and ensuring a good quality of life. To build a good, clean and fair food system, we need to build an alternative to capitalism, a system designed to concentrate massive amounts of wealth and power in fewer and fewer hands, no matter the cost to people or the planet (p. 213).

After reading this book, it becomes clear that "capitalism is the silent ingredient in our food" (p. 233). We need to understand the effects of this ingredient on our bodies, our families, our communities, our environment, and our future. Holt-Giménez's engagingly straightforward writing, aided by a useful glossary, invites the reader to see the food we eat through political-economic lenses in order to better formulate alternatives—based on the understanding that "we can't change the food system without transforming capitalism" (p. 172). My only quibble with this illuminating book is that the glossary did not go far enough. For example, it lacks entries on capitalism itself and on the public sphere, one of the many casualties of capitalism.

*A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism* gives people interested in food studies a great deal to think about. After reading this book, it becomes depressingly clear that no amount of tinkering around the edges of the capitalist food system will bring about the changes we desire. On the contrary, "if we care about people as much as we do about food, and if we really want to change the food system, we'd better become fluent in capitalism" (p. 233).

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